

I
Became
a
Doting
Father





I Became a Doting Father

STORY: Kiwoo ART: Sayan

- *A sweet, soapy story that appeals to younger people, based on the “what if” factor, and parents, watching our young lead struggle with parenthood*

24-year-old Juwon Lee works part-time at a convenience store and lives alone in his small apartment. One day his uncle passes away and leaves behind a 4-year-old daughter, the cute little Yeondu. Instead of letting her be sent to an orphanage, Juwon steps up and decides to be her new guardian.

GENRE:
COMEDY

ONGOING
COMIC

100
CHAPTERS

PERFECT FOR A:
DRAMA SERIES

TONE:
HEART-WARMING

ADULTS
18-34

RIGHTS
MANTA/RIDI



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STATS: ~2M Views

COMPS
Party of Five, This is Us

Juwon Lee came from a massive (but massively dysfunctional) extended family, something he confronted during the funeral of his alcoholic uncle, when, mostly out of spite, he (suddenly) agreed to become the legal guardian of his four year old niece.

With nowhere else to go, despite being surrounded by blood relatives, the orphaned girl was going to be placed into foster care – a ward of the state.

It reminded Lee of a similar moment, when his father died on his eighteenth birthday. Rather than being taken in or even emotionally supported by family, he was told that it was “great luck” that his father died the moment he became a legal adult and “could take care of himself”.

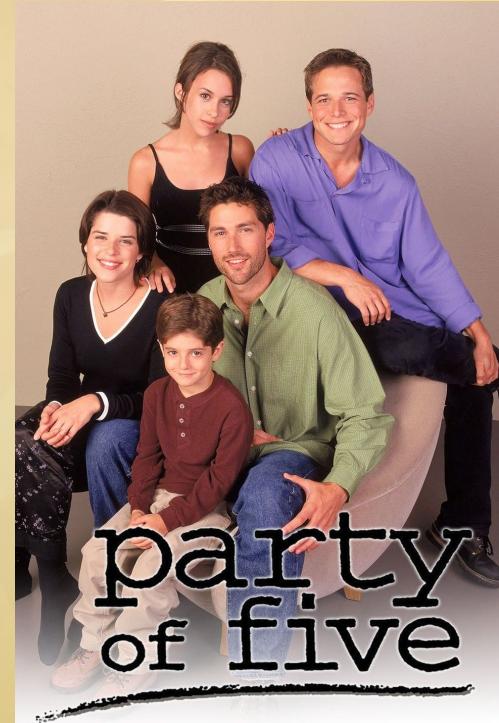
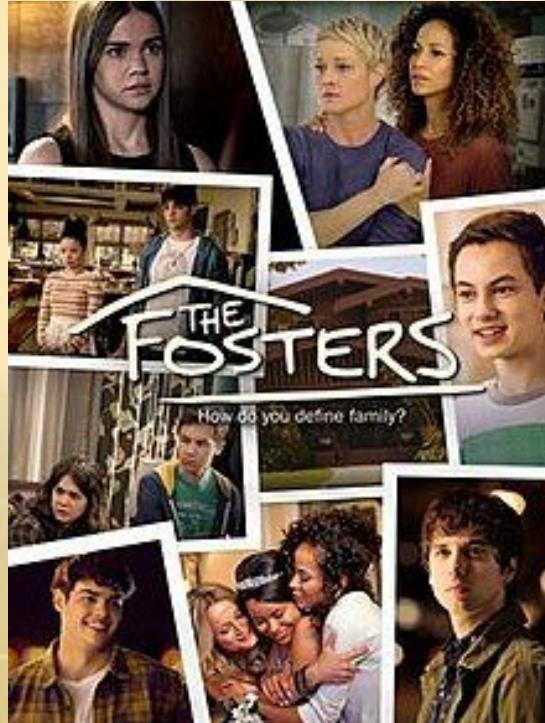
His mother died giving birth to him, and he didn’t talk to his maternal side of the family since (which only consisted of his maternal grandmother).

In the years since, Lee eked out a living as a part-time community college student and a part-time convenience store clerk in a studio apartment with rising rents. His father succumbed to cancer, which bankrupted him, leaving Lee with nothing – experiencing the cold shoulder of his rotten relatives.

It’s been tough and lonely and scary – he couldn’t imagine how that same loneliness would affect his niece. He spent the reception after the funeral trying to shame an aunt, uncle, cousin, etc., to take pity on the girl. When no one would, his pity turned to rage and, clouded by that righteous anger, he volunteered to take her in, himself. Did he think it through? No. Does he know what comes next? Definitely not. Does he regret it? He probably should, but seeing the shock and shame on his family’s face makes whatever travails that come next more than worth it.



Think THIS IS US, THE FOSTERS or PARTY OF FIVE, this is a heartwarming and heart wrenching slice of life drama about an unlikely "father" who still trying to figure out his own life and his "daughter" who, coming from a background of trauma, is trying to learn how to trust having a family - even if that family is decidedly unconventional.





I BECAME A DOTING FATHER is about finding your own way when the traditional approach lets you down. It's about embracing the new, the unconventional and the emotionally resonant over the expected or the traditional.

Society preaches about strong family bonds, working hard, going to college, getting a good job, getting married, buying a house and creating a family of your own (with your own parents there to willingly pitch in as grandparents). But that Hallmark card breaks down for many of us, particularly in families that offer only abuse or neglect. The whole trajectory of American life gets scuttled on the launchpad – but even if it didn't, college isn't for everyone, and "job security" is a joke.

But the emotional drive to have the sanctuary and emotional support of a loving family doesn't go away. But if blood relations are not an option, the only choice is to recreate what you are missing on your own – "found family", "Friendsgiving", fandoms and online communities are all examples of reclaiming something that has been lost in a new, modern way.

I BECAME A DOTING FATHER focuses on an unusual family that, ironically, wants all the traditional milestones but has no choice but to pursue them in a fresh, creative way, fueled by both IRL and online relationships.

Lee

24 YEAR OLD (ADOPTIVE) DADDY

Lee can't catch a break, but he tries not to let his bad luck get him down. Taking on Yeondu has turned his life upside down, but it's not like things were going that great before. He has no immediate family, no friends, no girlfriend, no career path and has been kind of drifting along with a part-time job as a convenience store clerk and a part-time community college student, eating junk food in his studio apartment, alone.

Now, in one afternoon, he has more responsibilities than he could ever imagine, as well as the start of the first real human connection he's had in years. One rash, emotional decision has plugged him back into the game of life in a big way. He soon realizes he will do things – take chances, ask for help, stretch himself and go for the brass ring – for this girl in ways he never would for himself. Lee the unencumbered twentysomething was kind of a dud, but Lee the "doting father" can't afford to be anything less than amazing. He's got a little girl's two big brown eyes looking up at him, and he won't disappoint her.

Over the series, Lee will take on any challenge and blossom into a vibrant, creative adult, who's unafraid to build a spectacular future, all to provide the best life for this charge – but he'll eventually learn the hard lesson that to truly love another, you need to learn to love yourself.





But loving another is part of his journey, although he's in no rush to complicate his brand new family dynamic by bringing in a "mommy" to the family unit. Still a series of potential loves will give the series sweet, romantic moments and also zany moments of misunderstandings, secret longings and rivalries.

His engine for humor is his way to leap before he looks, then having to scramble to roll with the consequences, but that's also what makes him endearing and, ultimately, successful.



Yeondu

LEE'S NIECE/FOUR YEAR OLD ADOPTIVE DAUGHTER

Stray cats have better lives than Yeondu. She comes to the funeral of her father, a physically abusive alcoholic, malnourished, skittish, dirty and bruised. Worse, she's not met with love, but with rejection – except for Lee, who fights to take custody of her. Despite her situation, Yeondu is entirely innocent and without guile.

What follows is a slow process of Yeondu coming out of her shell and learning to trust Lee, just as Lee builds trust by ensuring her safety, feeding her and slowly building a community around her that will help her and guide her in various ways.

The engine for Yeondu's humor will focus on her figuring out the world. Some of this is normal for a kid, but some is the result of her previous situation, such as not knowing about playgrounds.

She will bond with a stray cat, Tawny, who will be the silent recipient of her deepest feelings, fears and humorous misunderstandings.

Yeondu will have strong (seemingly arbitrary) likes and dislikes, which will be another source of humor, especially as Lee bends over backwards to get everything to Yeondu's liking and fails more than he succeeds.

Yeondu's series arc focuses on her maturation, with specific energy on trying new things and learning how to navigate the challenge of discerning who to trust and who to avoid – both kids and adults.



The painful reality is Lee is not qualified to be Yeondu's dad – at least not at first. But seeking help is actually his motivation for getting out of his own shell (and his own rut). In the purest example of “it takes a village”, the people who engage with Lee for Yeondu’s benefit (both in real life and virtually) are the source of episode engines, humor and romance. In short, it is the “village” that makes this show extra special!





Grandma

The most crucial member of Team Lee is both the most crucial and the most reluctant! Grandma lives in a rural area, far away. Her daughter was Lee's mother – and, as Lee's mother died giving birth to Lee, she's always held a grudge and withdrew from his life. She also withdrew from her son, who was Yeondu's father. Generally, being gruff and mean are her superpowers. However, Lee needs her consent and support to become Yeondu's legal guardian. Instead, Grandma arranges it so they are both responsible for Yeondu, meaning she will have long-lasting control over Lee and could take Yeondu away at any time.

At first, Grandma will be a little-seen antagonist, who motivates Lee and serves to threaten his parentage of Yeondu if he fail (and, as stated above, he'll fail often).

Eventually, especially after a vacation in the county at Grandma's house, she'll mellow and, in later seasons, actually become Lee's protector and advocate, helping him become not just Yeondu's guardian but adoptive parent. However, even her most loving gesture will still be obscured by her gruffness and lacerating humor.



Juyeon

MOM, NEIGHBOR, LOVE INTEREST?

How does a parenting noob like Lee figure out thorny issues like daycare, school enrollment and playground etiquette? That kind (and kind of attractive) mom with a child the same age as Yeondu! Sure, she seems curt, overwhelmed and her clothes are ugly and stained in weird places, but she has other priorities! But both her and Lee's priorities shift slightly when they eventually learn the other is single. Until one is brave enough to make a move, they will just be ride-or-die allies in the battle to be good parents. At first, she will be full of derision, lording her superior parenting knowledge over the hapless Lee, but parenting makes fools of everyone and eventually, Lee will be there for her - as an emergency babysitter, a chaperone for the zoo trip and the guy to empty that mousetrap. They realize they make a pretty great team, could it be more?



Jihye

LEE'S HIGH SCHOOL CRUSH, NOW AN IVY LEAGUE COLLEGE STUDENT PURSUING HER DREAMS

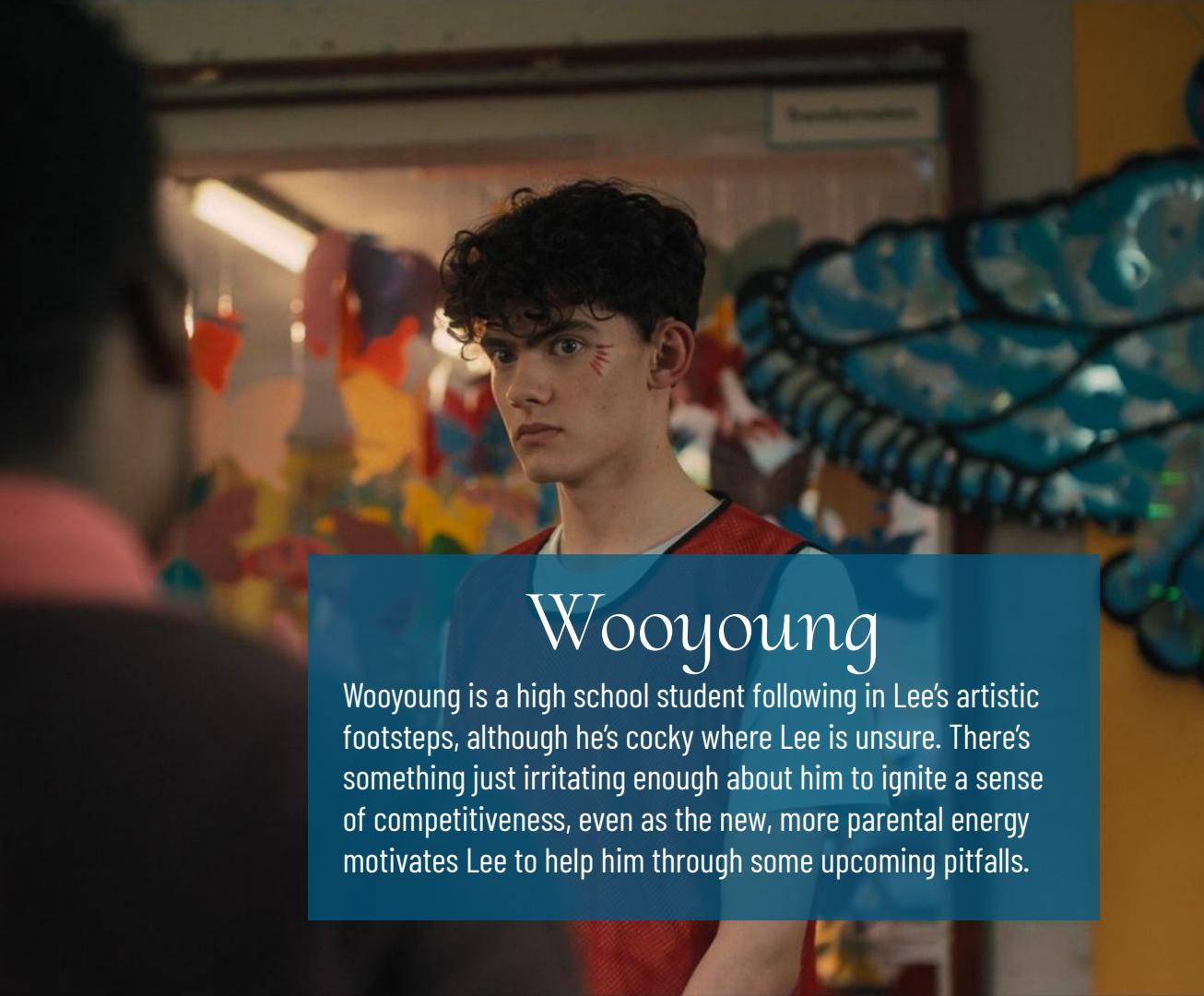
She represents the path not taken. What if Lee's dad hadn't died when he did? What if Lee pulled great grades, instead of falling apart? What if he had the money for even the college that accepted him, instead of having to rent an apartment and find a job at a convenience store? He still has one friend who illustrates that path – both the good, such as smart and upwardly mobile friends, interests, activities, a knowledge of cool bars, restaurants, fashion and vacation spots, and, y'know, a future... but also the bad, specifically the intense and unrelenting academic pressure that causes her to disappear for weeks on end. He's always harbored a crush on her, and the world lights up when she has time for him... but she never has time for him, not consistently. And consistency is the one thing he needs, now that he's responsible for Yeondu. Is there a future for this odd couple?

Mr. Hong

Lee's old high school art teacher reconnects with Lee once he starts picking up the brush again, and serves as a kind of "sketchy" father figure... in more ways than one.

Wooyoung

Wooyoung is a high school student following in Lee's artistic footsteps, although he's cocky where Lee is unsure. There's something just irritating enough about him to ignite a sense of competitiveness, even as the new, more parental energy motivates Lee to help him through some upcoming pitfalls.





The Bros

Lee's social circle before Yeondu came along consisted of two guys who provided everything Lee required - buddies for co-op video games, drinking and watching sports. Watching how they react to Lee's new circumstances is hysterical, heartwarming and occasionally shocking (as they are not all as useless or wrong-headed as they first appear).



Yoonyoung

One of Lee's Bros' sister is an art therapist, who helps Lee (and us) gain insight into Yeondu's emotional state. She is there for Yeondu and doesn't think much of Lee, her brother's idiot friend, so there are no love matches here.

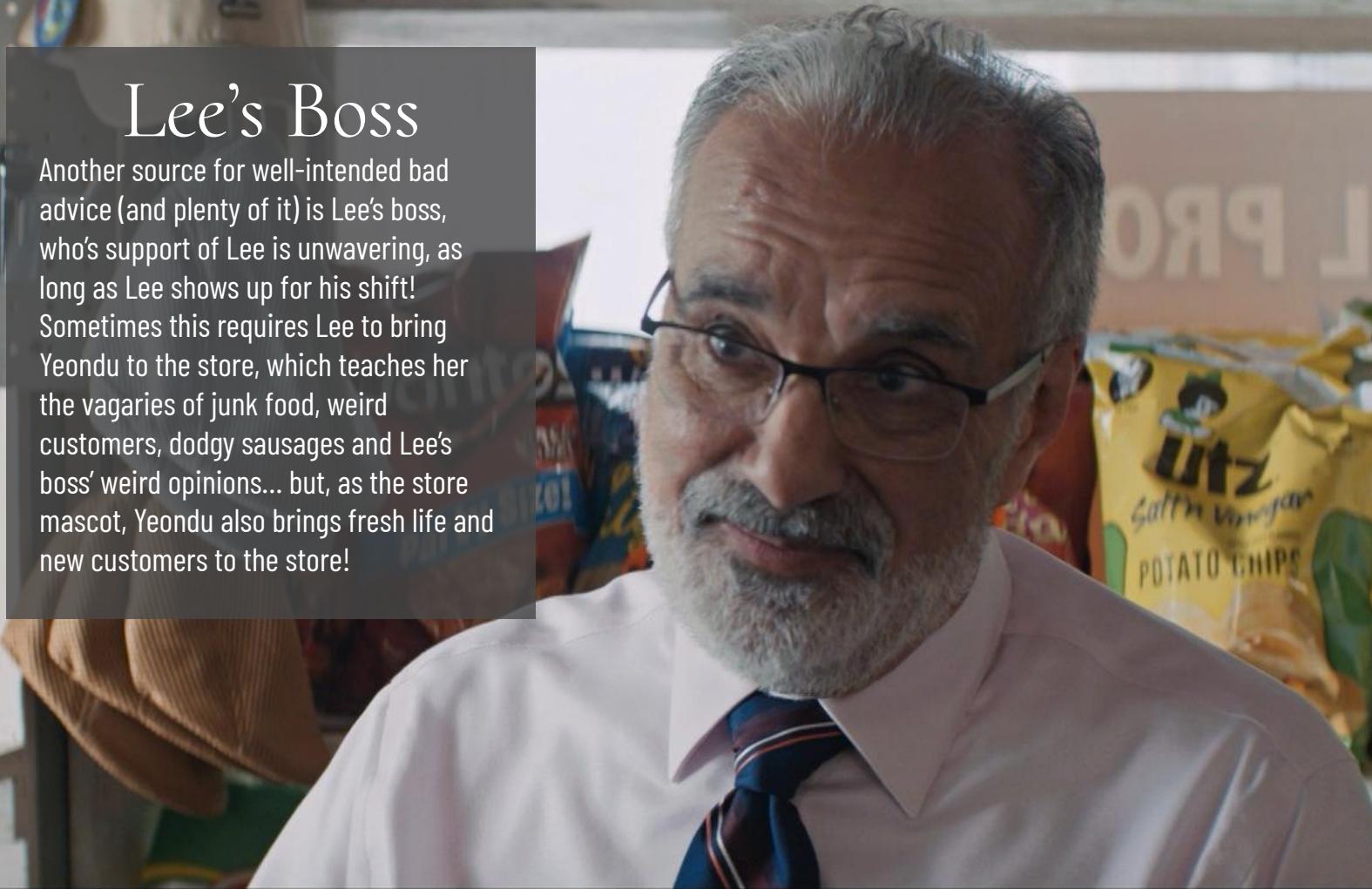


Mr. Eden

Another of Lee's Bros has a dad who runs Eden, an online clothing store on the verge of shutting down. A symbiotic relationship with Lee and Yeondu helps them save their business.

Lee's Boss

Another source for well-intended bad advice (and plenty of it) is Lee's boss, who's support of Lee is unwavering, as long as Lee shows up for his shift! Sometimes this requires Lee to bring Yeondu to the store, which teaches her the vagaries of junk food, weird customers, dodgy sausages and Lee's boss' weird opinions... but, as the store mascot, Yeondu also brings fresh life and new customers to the store!





Sua Yoon

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER

Lee starts a vlog, which starts building an audience on YouTube and Instagram. Pretty soon, the good (free stuff) and bad (sketchy people) start popping up in his DMs – along with the really nice young entrepreneur who, over time, proves to have Lee and Yeondu's best interest at heart. She takes the role of his manager and digital security expert, to make sure Yeondu is safe. Of course, it's all strictly business... until it isn't?

An intriguing and contemporary aspect of the story is that Lee's online life and subsequent network of relationships is just as vital as those he met in real life.

From a **Minecraft streamer** to a **chef** to an **artist**, these online avatars help Lee navigate the early challenges of parenthood, but, through interaction, quickly become real life confidants.





Structure

Each episode would have an A story for Lee, learning how to become a parent and addressing some immediate crisis or conflict:

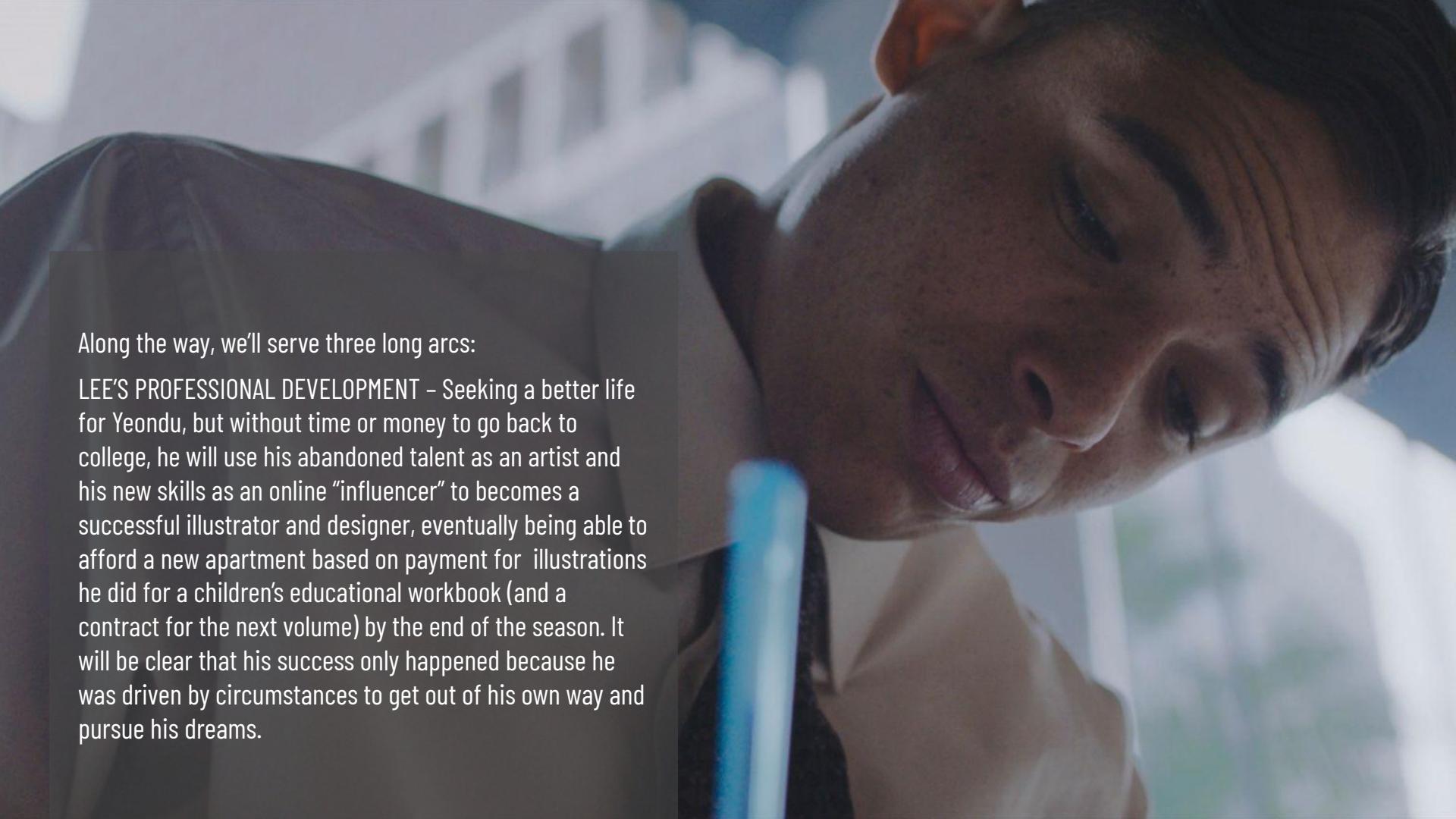
EXAMPLES

- Childcare
- Kindergarten enrollment
- Bro time vs. Parent time

Each episode would have a B story for Yeondu, mostly played for laughs, leaning on her lack of socialization or her indomitable spirit.

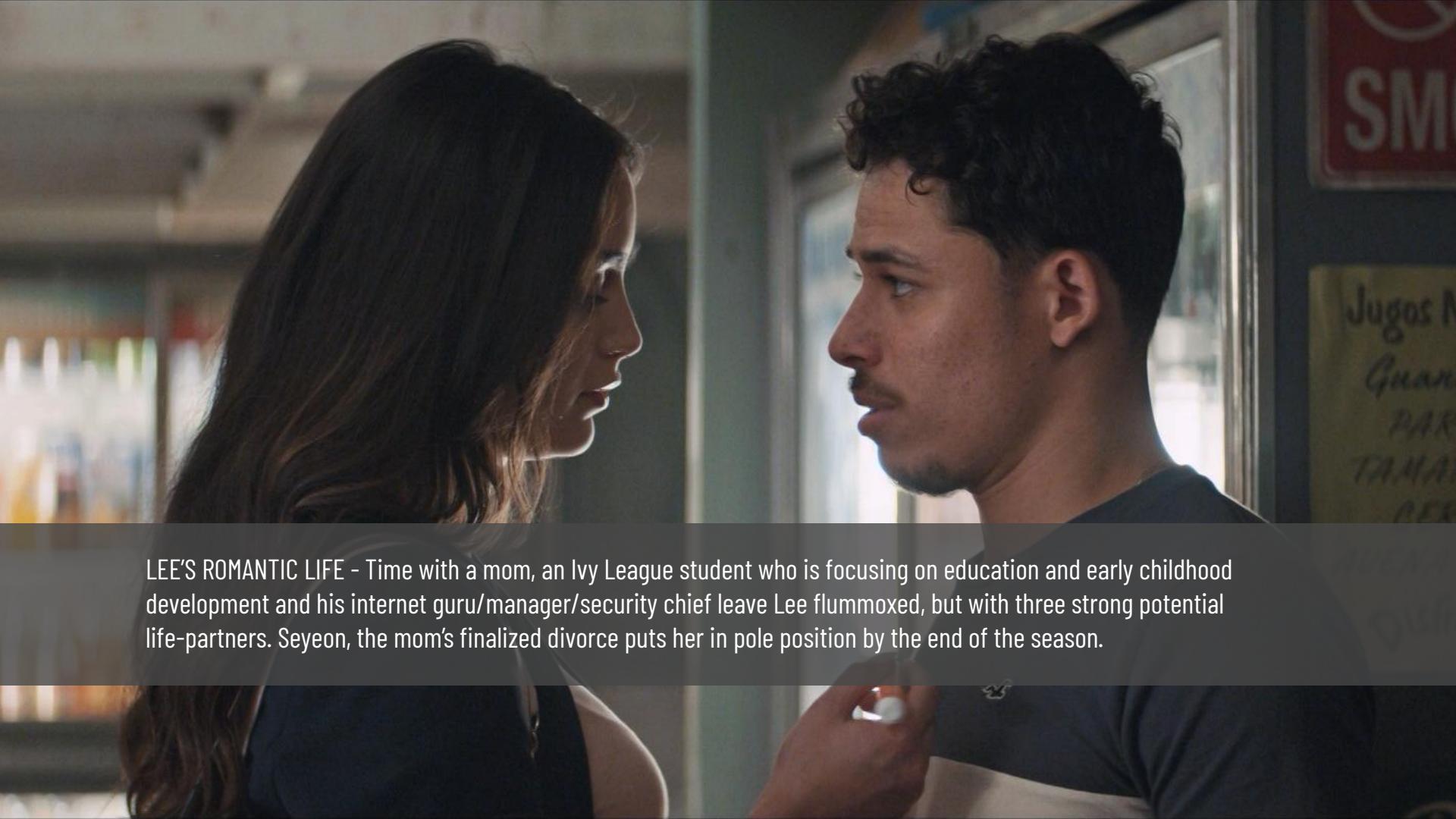
EXAMPLES

- Sugar overload
- Overcoming a simple fear
- Discovering the playground

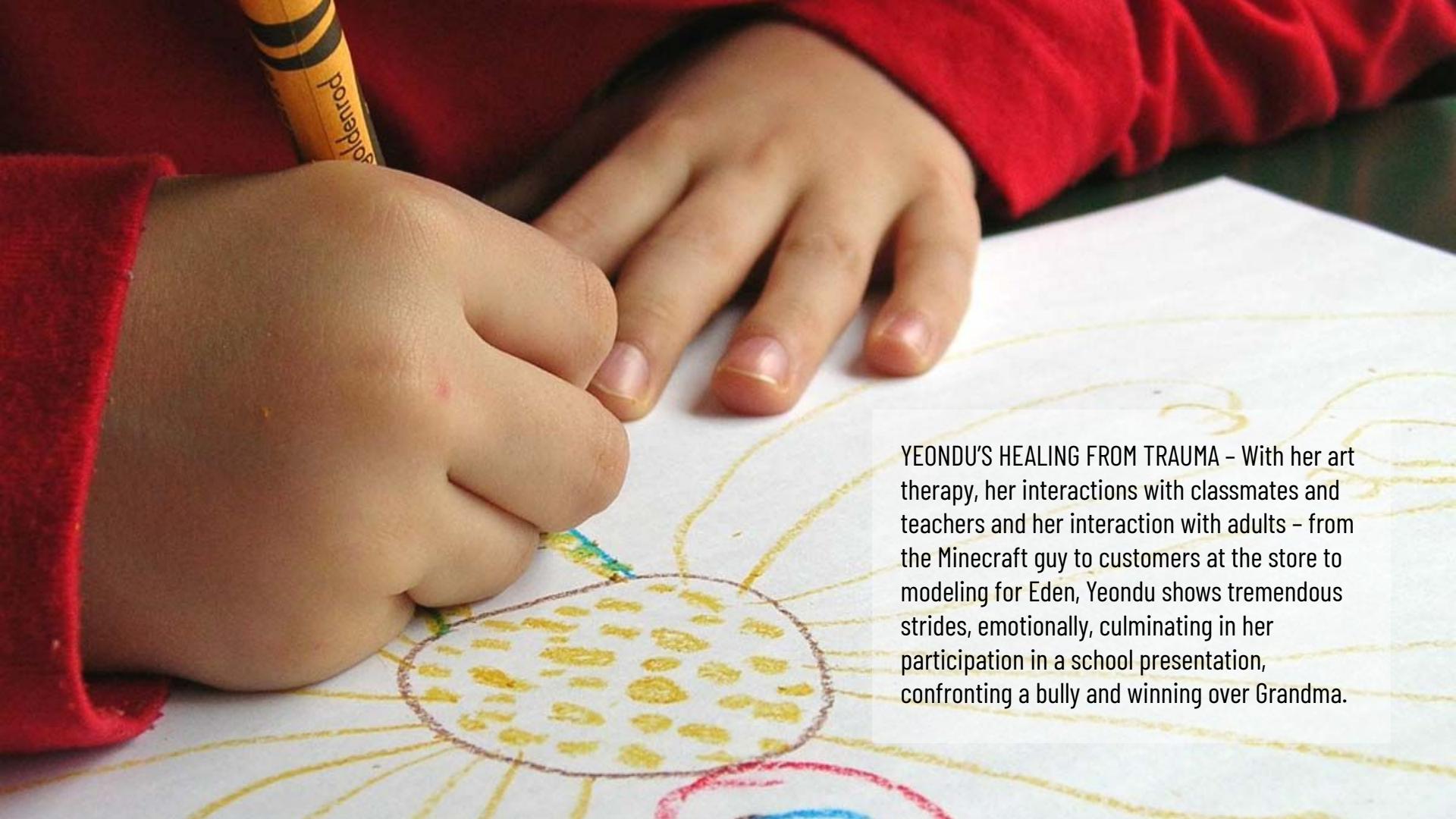


Along the way, we'll serve three long arcs:

LEE'S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT - Seeking a better life for Yeondu, but without time or money to go back to college, he will use his abandoned talent as an artist and his new skills as an online "influencer" to becomes a successful illustrator and designer, eventually being able to afford a new apartment based on payment for illustrations he did for a children's educational workbook (and a contract for the next volume) by the end of the season. It will be clear that his success only happened because he was driven by circumstances to get out of his own way and pursue his dreams.



LEE'S ROMANTIC LIFE - Time with a mom, an Ivy League student who is focusing on education and early childhood development and his internet guru/manager/security chief leave Lee flummoxed, but with three strong potential life-partners. Seyeon, the mom's finalized divorce puts her in pole position by the end of the season.



YEONDU'S HEALING FROM TRAUMA – With her art therapy, her interactions with classmates and teachers and her interaction with adults – from the Minecraft guy to customers at the store to modeling for Eden, Yeondu shows tremendous strides, emotionally, culminating in her participation in a school presentation, confronting a bully and winning over Grandma.



With heart and humor, *I BECAME A DOTING FATHER* takes the stalwart TV trope of a non-nuclear family to new heights, by tracing two damaged but optimistic people trying to make a family the best they know how – through genuine outreach to friends of all stripes and from all directions (including those they meet online) and by following their dreams.