



Even if...

ORIGINAL STORY: HYE EUN SEO

01



Even If...

STORY: Hye Eun Seo

- *He's using her to kill her brother (because her brother's actions led to the death of his sister). It's a callous lie... until it turns to love. Truly one of the most compelling, dynamic soapy crime thrillers.*

Woohyun lives life on autopilot as a high-ranking member of a crime syndicate. But all that changes when his sister, conned by her boyfriend, commits suicide. Wanting revenge, Woohyun targets the boyfriend's sister, Yoohwa. But as their lives collide, she slowly weakens his resolve... and his heart.

GENRE:
THRILLER

**COMPLETED
COMIC & NOVEL**

**51
CHAPTERS**

PERFECT FOR A:
DRAMA SERIES

TONE:
SUSPENSEFUL

ADULTS
18-34

RIGHTS
MANTA/RIDI



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STATS: ~1M Views

COMPS

Eastern Promises. Big Little Lies

Woohyun, aka

Sonny

Who is Sonny?

Sonny is an actor's dream, that's who Sonny is. You could make the argument that he is three different people fighting for one soul.





When we meet Sonny, he's a ruthless and remorseless Capo in a crime syndicate, treated like a son by the Don. The Outfit is a pernicious blend of legitimate and illegitimate businesses to the point where Sonny can't even really tell the difference. It's the usual grab-bag of construction, waste management and dirty money being laundered through shiny venture capital funds. Sonny can spend the morning dealing with Wall Street and Silicon Valley and spend the evening breaking kneecaps in a dingy dive-bar basement. He does it all with equal skill, finesse and attention to detail.

He's a shark and there's something disarmingly beautiful about watching him slice through the water to devour his opposition. He's been rewarded, living in a penthouse apartment and having a museum-worthy car collection. He has the finest of everything, and a staff to ensure his every creature comfort is met. But to continue to enjoy that life of luxury, he needs to walk a tightrope through a dangerous world, where enemies abound.

Sonny Undercover

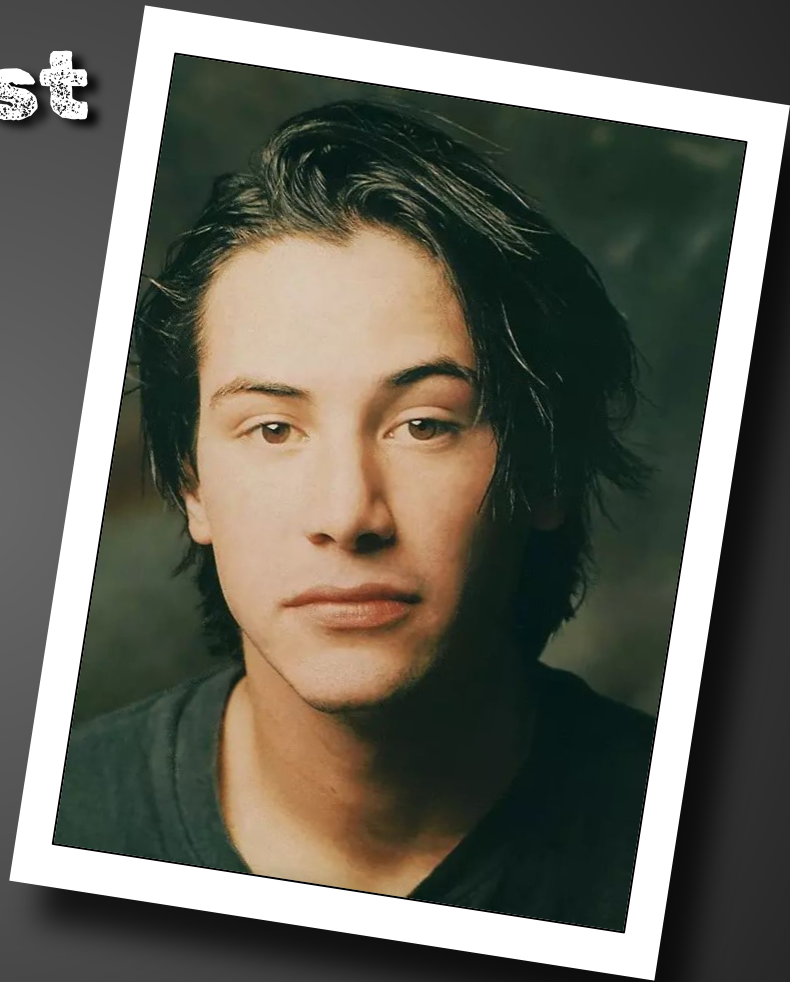
The inciting incident of this story will cause him to take on a new persona, in pursuit of revenge. He must pose as a simple, down-on-his-luck day laborer, renting a room in a "weekly rate" motel, in order to get close to a woman who might bring him into contact with a man he has sworn to kill.

But first, he must charm his way into her life, requiring him to act like the polar opposite of his real identity – caring, thoughtful selfless, kind, gentle and, ultimately, vulnerable.

Sonny's Hidden Past

This persona will awaken a third version of himself, one that he buried a long time ago – one that we will meet in flashbacks and in troubling eruptions in the present that will knock Sonny off his game. We'll discover that, like the "character" he is using to seduce his new neighbor, he actually was once desperately poor:

He dropped out of school to do low-level work for his criminal organization at the age of twelve, beginning his long financial ascent and moral fall from grace. Originally, however, he was doing it for a noble cause. His sister, bright and beautiful, but fragile, was the most important person to him. With no father and an erratic mother, Sonny knew that the money he made illicitly could mean a future for her. He paid the rent, he paid for her clothes and paid for the best private schools, then college, sacrificing himself so his sister could thrive.



A Complex Character

Our story, in a way that would be a delicious challenge for any marquee actor, is for Sonny to navigate these three levels of of his own psyche and try to emerge, by the end of the piece, with a clear self-definition that leaves him open to the possibility of love.

Which is the real Sonny and which is the mask? Which part of him is the erudite, but vicious crime boss and which is a vulnerable and caring lover? Sonny will leave the audience guessing, constantly building up hope for a change and then dashing that hope as he returns to his more sinister purpose. But we aren't teasing the audience, he's acting this way because he can't figure out his own heart. Every time he gets close to a breakthrough he self-sabotages or is confronted with pushback from a larger, harsher world.



Sonny's Motivation



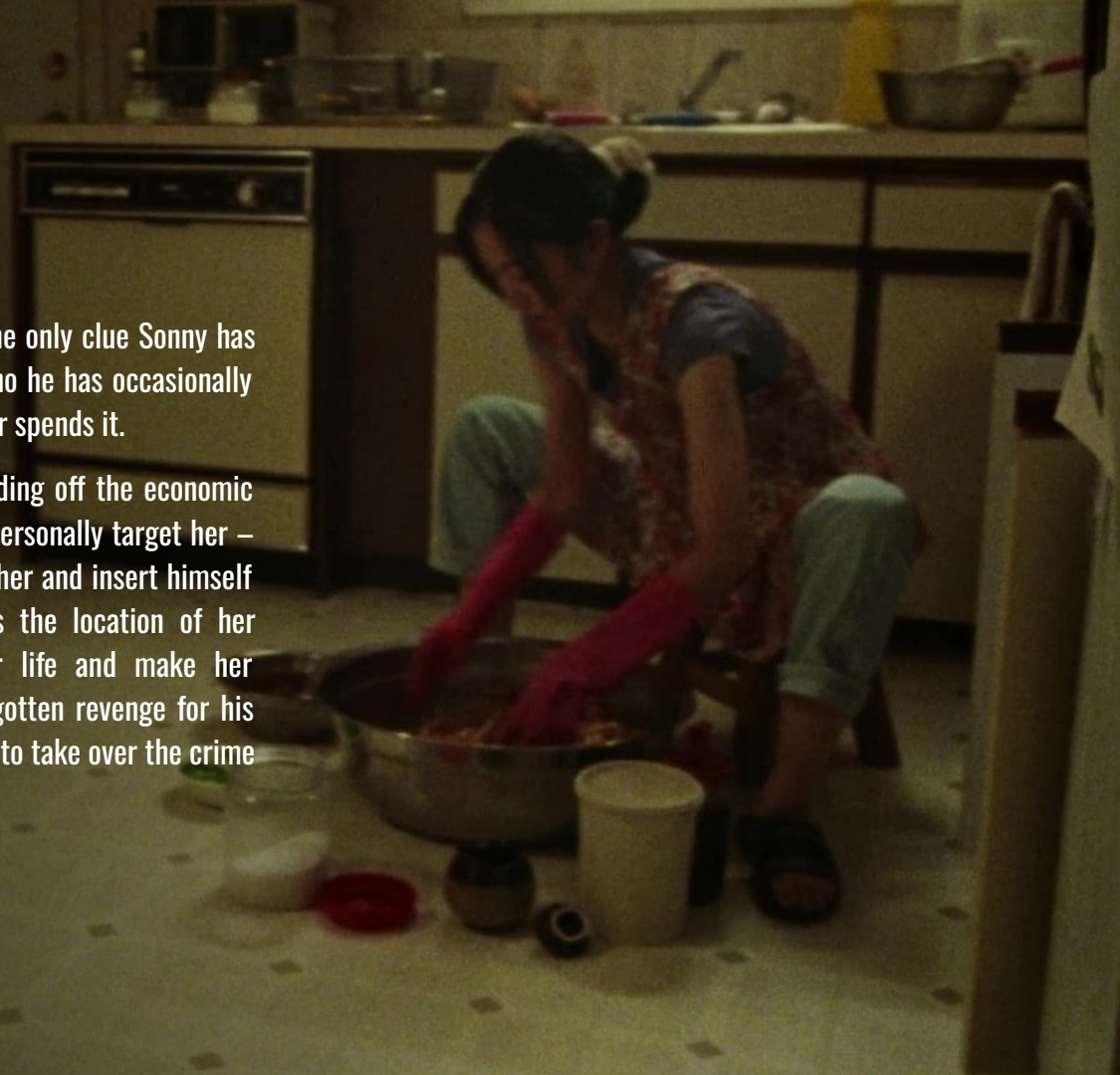
Sonny's sister grew up in chaos. Tragically, Sonny's self-sacrifice couldn't fill her primal wound. She fell victim to a lonely hearts scam artist, a handsome young man who seemed too good to be true – because he was. By the time she realized her mistake, he had emptied her bank accounts and disappeared, leaving her broke, pregnant and full of shame. She reaches out to her now-estranged brother, who, thinking he is protecting her from his dark and dangerous path, doesn't answer. Feeling alone, she commits suicide. Only too late does he realize he should've answered the call. But self-reflection isn't part of Sonny's world (yet) – he prefers the path of revenge.

Yooхва

The lonely hearts scammer has disappeared into the wind. The only clue Sonny has to pursue is the whereabouts of his step sister, YOOHWA, who he has occasionally visited in the past and wires money to... even though she never spends it.

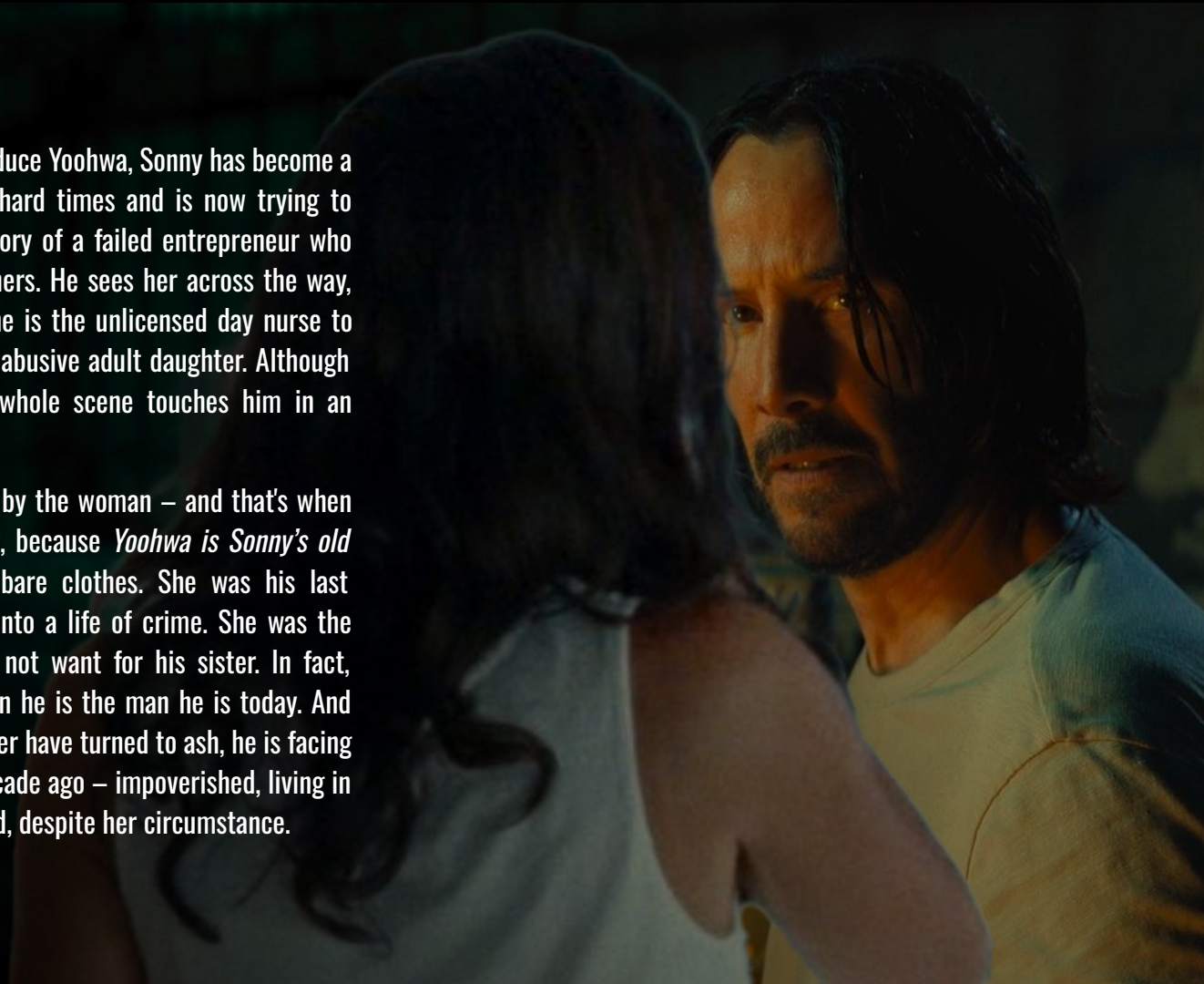
Instead, Yooхва lives hand to mouth in a slummy motel, sliding off the economic face of the world. Obsessed with revenge, Sonny decides to personally target her – move in next to her, under an assumed identity, get to know her and insert himself into her world, emotionally manipulating her until he has the location of her step-brother, at which point he will disappear from her life and make her step-brother disappear from the face of the earth! Having gotten revenge for his own sister, he will then move on with life as before, preparing to take over the crime syndicate as his father-figure steps down.

But that isn't what's going to happen.



But reality starts to blur around Sonny. To seduce Yoohwa, Sonny has become a bashful but sweet day laborer who fell on hard times and is now trying to rebuild his life. He gives himself the backstory of a failed entrepreneur who lost everything. He rents the room next to hers. He sees her across the way, tending to an elderly woman. He realizes she is the unlicensed day nurse to this woman, being exploited by the woman's abusive adult daughter. Although his mind is still focused on revenge, the whole scene touches him in an unexpected way.

He approaches her after she's been cheated by the woman – and that's when the third face of Sonny comes roaring back, because *Yoohwa is Sonny's old classmate* who was bullied for her threadbare clothes. She was his last memory of normality before he drifted off into a life of crime. She was the pitied and bullied example of what he did not want for his sister. In fact, avoiding this girl's fate was the whole reason he is the man he is today. And now that his efforts to make a life for his sister have turned to ash, he is facing Yoohwa again. She is as he left her over a decade ago – impoverished, living in degradation, but still resilient, pure and proud, despite her circumstance.



Love or Death?

The next arc is that tantalizing dance for the audience, in which Sonny is attempting to manipulate Yoohwa (in pursuit of his revenge plan) in one minute, then finding himself earnestly falling for her charms the next. She is resistant to any help, generosity or act of kindness (even if that generosity is, in fact, a manipulation), so he is (ironically) forced to ask her for favors to get her to engage with him. It is her innately giving nature that proves to be his way in.

There, he learns more about her past, her relationship with her step brother and the reason the reason she is the way she is (as well as the challenges she faces). All of this tugs on his heartstrings, although it doesn't fully dissuade him from his mission – especially when her step brother surfaces.

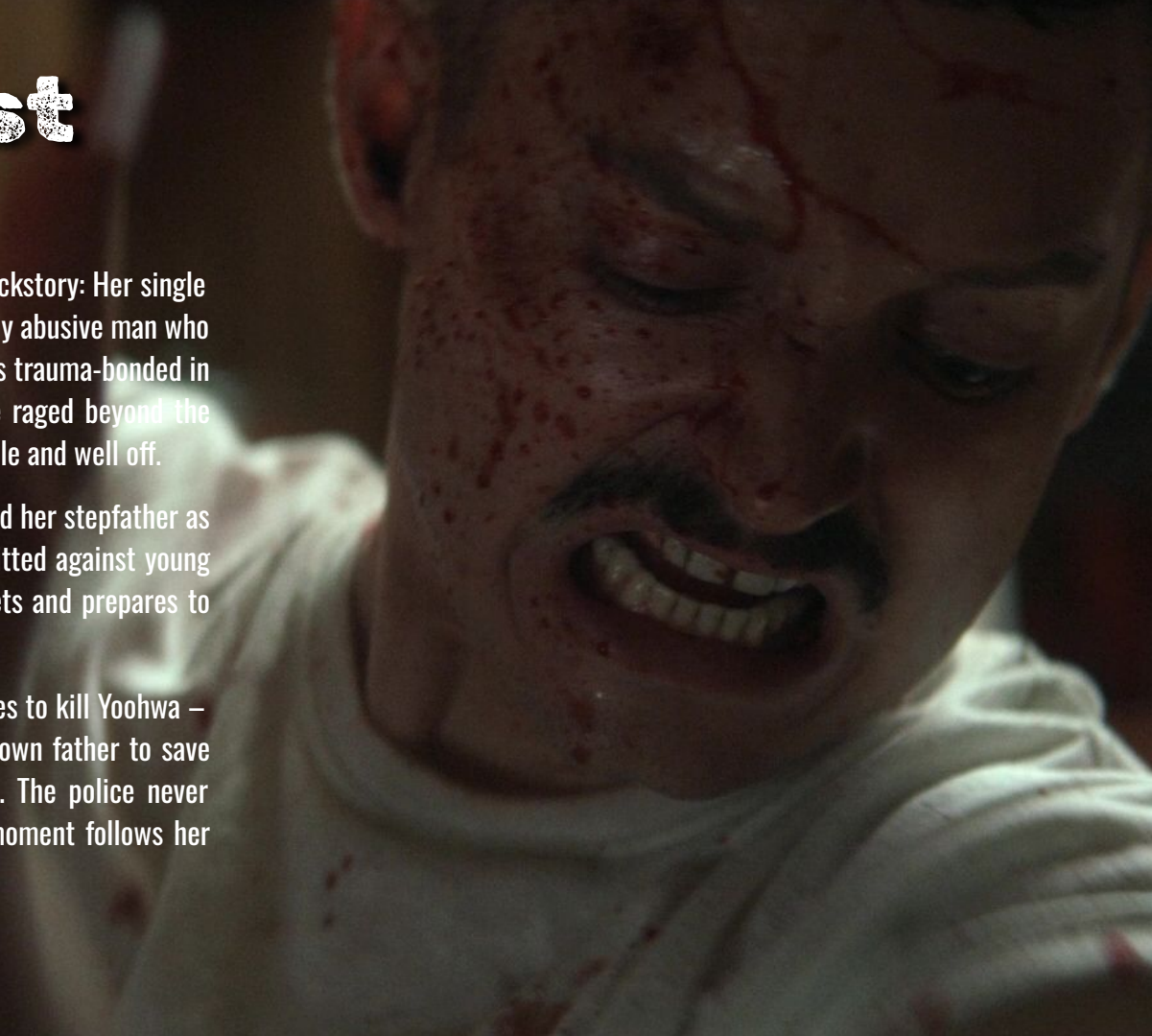


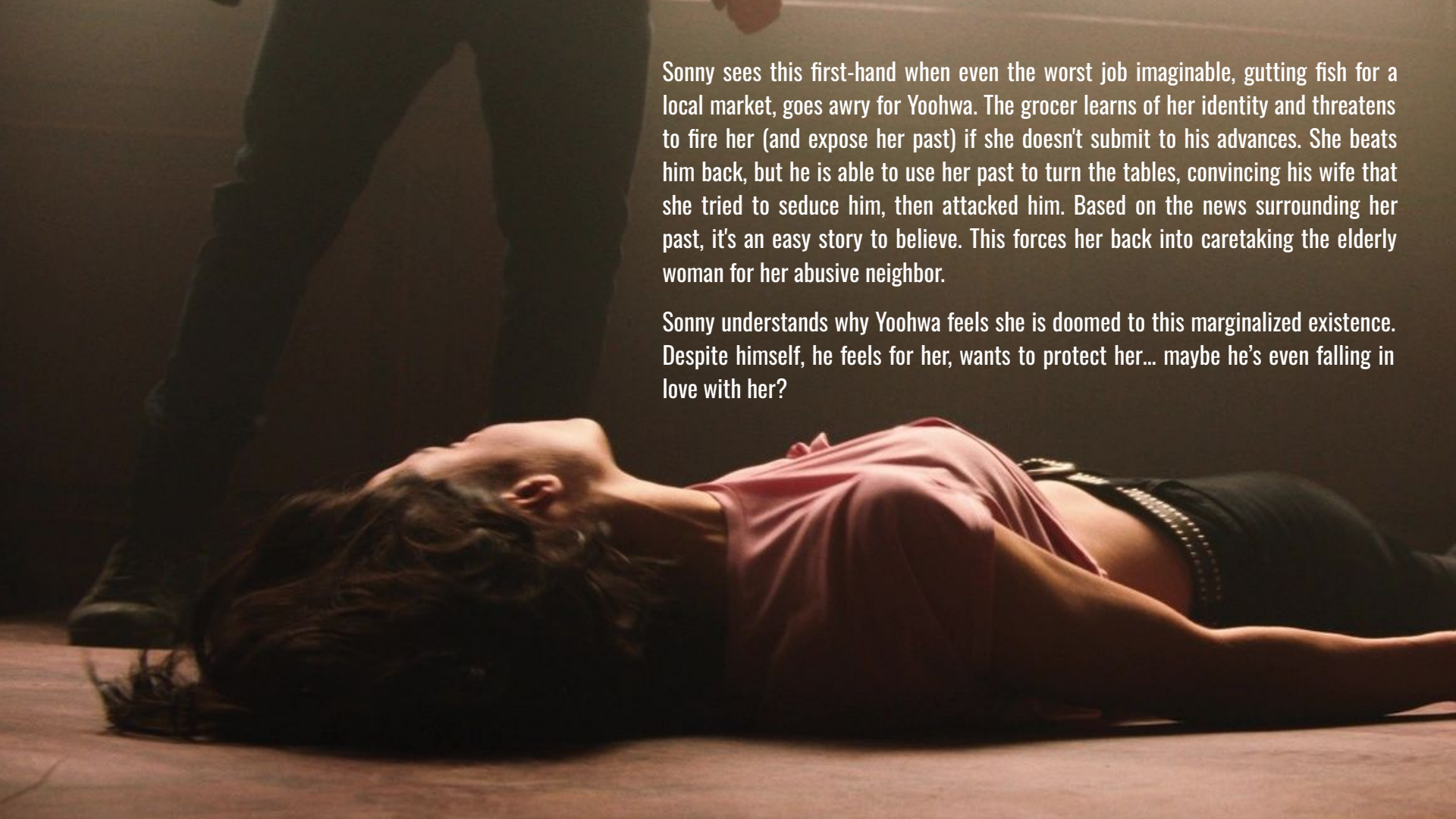
Yoohwa's Past

To understand her character, we must peel away her backstory: Her single mother, seeking stability, married a boring and physically abusive man who already had a son roughly her age. The two step-siblings trauma-bonded in this chaotic house, hiding in the closet while violence raged beyond the door. But to the outside world, the family was respectable and well off.

All of that changed one night when the police announced her stepfather as a person of interest in a string of serial killings committed against young women. In a panic, her stepfather liquidates their assets and prepares to flee.

In a final act of violence, he kills Yoohwa's mom and tries to kill Yoohwa – only her step brother steps between them, killing his own father to save his step sister. He flees. She stays, covered in blood. The police never pursue the case, but the shame and scandal of this moment follows her forever, poisoning her future.



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a pink t-shirt and a black skirt with a studded belt, lies on her back on a wooden floor. Her head is tilted back, and her eyes are closed. A large, dark shadow of a person's legs and feet looms over her from the left, suggesting a man standing over her. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

Sonny sees this first-hand when even the worst job imaginable, gutting fish for a local market, goes awry for Yoohwa. The grocer learns of her identity and threatens to fire her (and expose her past) if she doesn't submit to his advances. She beats him back, but he is able to use her past to turn the tables, convincing his wife that she tried to seduce him, then attacked him. Based on the news surrounding her past, it's an easy story to believe. This forces her back into caretaking the elderly woman for her abusive neighbor.

Sonny understands why Yoohwa feels she is doomed to this marginalized existence. Despite himself, he feels for her, wants to protect her... maybe he's even falling in love with her?

A man with dark hair is shown in profile, looking towards the right. He is wearing a dark jacket. The background is a blurred interior with warm, yellowish light sources.

Yooхва's Brother

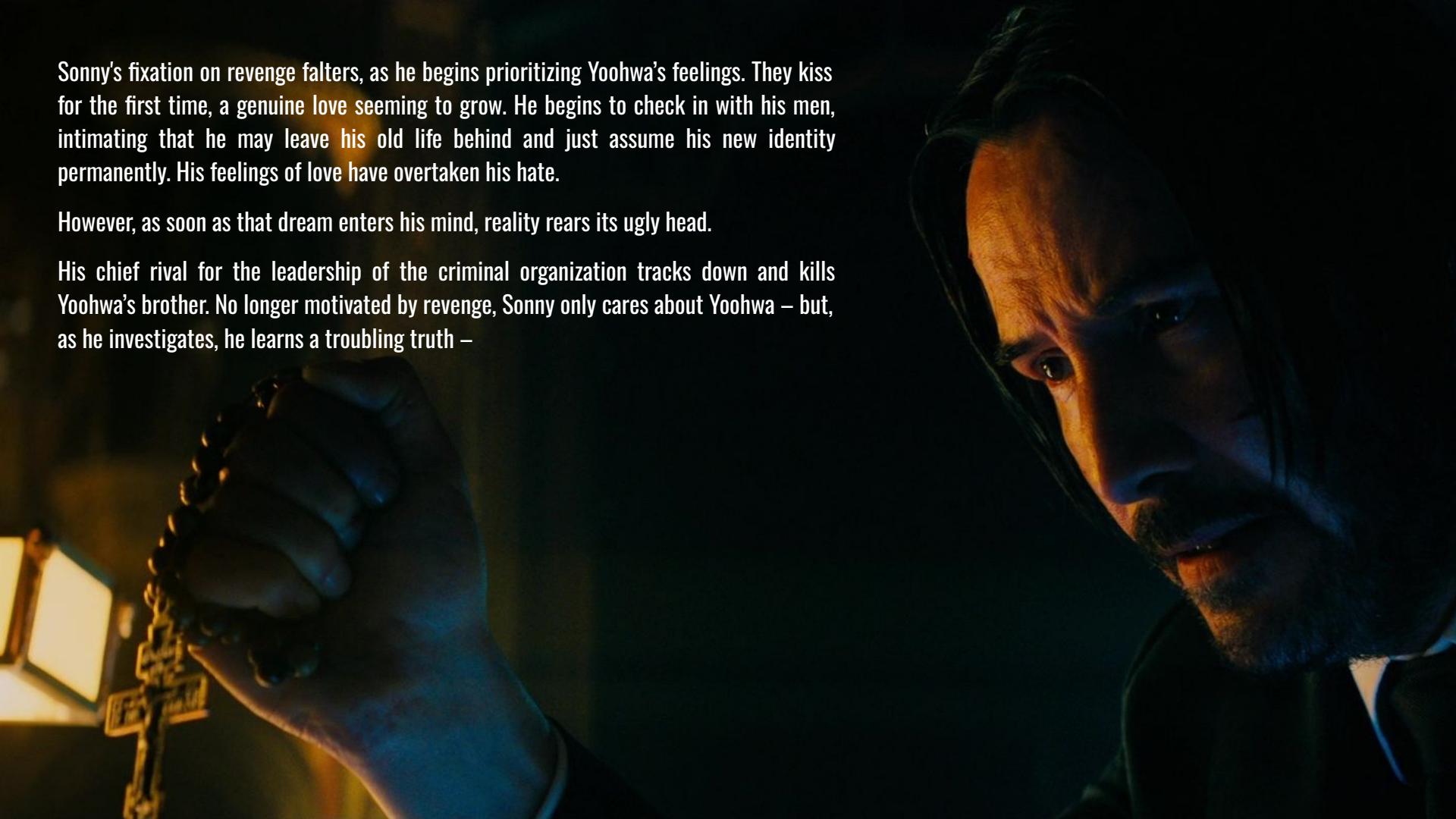
As Sonny's relationship with her becomes deeper and more enmeshed, he finally learns the secret around her current relationship with her troublesome brother, as well. All of that time hiding in the closet warped him. He became obsessed with his step sister, believing Yooхва to be the perfect woman. She, of course, was horrified by his romantic yearnings and turned him away. But no other woman could measure up for him, no matter who he dated. So he decided to get revenge on all women, while punishing her at the same time.

This motivates his career as a "lonely hearts" con man, sending her all of the gory details (and half of the proceeds), to make her feel culpable for his crimes and responsible to his victims.

Sonny's fixation on revenge falters, as he begins prioritizing Yoohwa's feelings. They kiss for the first time, a genuine love seeming to grow. He begins to check in with his men, intimating that he may leave his old life behind and just assume his new identity permanently. His feelings of love have overtaken his hate.

However, as soon as that dream enters his mind, reality rears its ugly head.

His chief rival for the leadership of the criminal organization tracks down and kills Yoohwa's brother. No longer motivated by revenge, Sonny only cares about Yoohwa – but, as he investigates, he learns a troubling truth –





A Reversal of Fortune

– Yoohwa's brother was working *FOR SONNY'S RIVAL*. His sister's death was orchestrated *BY HIS RIVAL*, who was keenly aware of Sonny's thirst for revenge, having seen it first-hand. He predicted this chain reaction of events would leave even the cold and calculating Sonny vulnerable, but even he couldn't dream that Sonny would've fallen in love with this criminal's sister! Now, he intends to kill Yoohwa, cripple Sonny and move on the Don, to take over the organization.

Sonny's care for Yoohwa and his fear for her safety drives him to his most uncharacteristically selfless act yet, but the action will destroy the burgeoning romance between them. Sonny admits to her that he is a liar. He lays out all of his actions and his motivations – including his initial manipulation and he eventual sincerity. Now, her brother is dead and they will both join him in death if they don't move fast. She needs to come live with him, under guard.

A woman's silhouette is seen from behind, looking out of a window at a bokeh city night scene. The lights are out of focus, creating a dreamy, atmospheric effect. The text 'The End...' is overlaid in the top right corner.

The End...

This wrecks Yoohwa, just as the power of love and trust were starting to re-enter her life. But to stay safe, she must enter HIS world... first, his bulletproof limo, then to live in the gilded cage of his penthouse, surrounded by armed thugs. She suddenly has everything in the world – except the love she felt only this morning. No challenge (in a lifetime full of them) has ever been more painful than to have this love exposed as a lie.

But it's not a lie. Sonny just doesn't know how to prove that to her. From this point forward, Sonny has to look in the mirror and decide who he really is, then he has to fight like hell for that version of himself. He will need to rally the gangster side of him and take out his rival and save the Don. He then needs to plead to the Don to exit the organization and do as he threatened to do before – start over as a legitimate person, having burned this life to the ground. It's his only hope to save his relationship... and even if it doesn't work, exiting this life is the only way to keep her safe.



You can read all the twisty (and action-packed) events of the climax in the comic... as well as the moment our "one true pair" commits to each other forever. The ending is earned, realistic, but hopeful.

By now, you can see the tremendous opportunity for dramatic exploration this title presents. Rich characters, complex motivations and the exciting unpeeling of suspenseful twists both in the past and present make this one of the most exciting, suspenseful and dangerously romantic story in the entire RIDI catalog.

In the hands of great actors and an assured filmmaker who can balance romance and suspense, this could be a massive hit.

...Or the Beginning



The background is a vibrant blue collage of various anime-style illustrations. It includes characters with long hair, a character with a flower in their hair, and other stylized figures. The illustrations are layered and partially obscured by the text and a diagonal line.

THANK YOU

Stories worth the binge **Manta**