

An Ode to Motherhood

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An Ode to Motherhood

by [orphan_account](#)

Summary

Hae Soo's thoughts as she comes across the various mothers she's met in her life and when she experiences motherhood herself.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

An Ode to Motherhood

Go Ha Jin had always known the love of her mother. The unconditional love that her mother held for her. Even when her father had died, her mother took care of her first before mourning his death.

'A mother's love is the only thing in the world that is unconditional' She had heard someone say and Ha Jin could not help but agree. Her mother, Dr.Oh Jin Ri had always placed her first. Even when she fought with some girl at school and her mom was called by the principal. Sure she got scolded but later on, it was the same mother that scolded her, who held Ha Jin close to her heart and advised her never to do a thing like that again.

Almost 10 years later and Go Ha Jin had landed herself in a different time period altogether, it was then that she had learned about King Taejo's 3rd wife, Queen Consort Sinmyeongsunseong. Ha Jin found it hard to believe that the woman had cast away her own son, how could she, a mother, ever do that?

It was the 4th Prince, she had heard. She could not imagine how a woman could castaway the child she bore in her womb for 9 months. It did not make sense at all. In fact, she had refused to believe it. After all, a mother's love was the only thing in the world that was unconditional.

At least, that was what she thought until she heard the Queen Consort insult her son so harshly. It wasn't the rebukes and scolding her mother used to give her. It sounded as though a Queen insulting a beggar on the street.

She had initially assumed it to be a different form of motherly love, but then she had seen and heard the Queen fawn over the 14th Prince, praising him no matter what he did. She could not understand the Queen

Perhaps it was this confusion, confusion on how Queen Consort Sinmyeongsunseong could be so harsh and cold to one son but so kind and gentle to another, that led to Hae Soo disliking the Queen Yoo.

Things never are stagnant and soon Hae Soo met Court Lady Oh, who reminded her of Go Ha Jin's mother, a woman whose face she had forgotten. While Court Lady Oh did remind her of her actual mother but she was quite different from her at the same time. Dr.Oh was kind and gentle, but at the same time, she was energetic and playful. Court Lady Oh was stern and strict but at the same time, she was caring too.

She was like a mother to her, Court Lady Oh.

Even though she had not given birth to Hae Soo, even though she had not seen Hae Soo grow up to become the woman she is today, Court Lady Oh loved her all the same. She dotted upon her the way a mother would on her darling daughter.

'A mother's love will protect her child from anything in the world' She had heard someone say once, and it was what constantly went through her mind when she saw Court Lady Oh outside Damiwon Palace, dressed in white. Before she could even think, Soo dragged the Senior Court Lady to the secret cave in the Damiwon. Soo could barely walk with how much pain she was in because of her broken knees, but she did not let that hinder her.

"Let's go away to your hometown, just like you wanted," Soo begs, because she cannot let Court Lady Oh die for a crime she did not commit. A crime Hae Soo was framed for. A crime Oh Soon Yeon took on her shoulders, to protect her daughter.

And when Court Lady Oh takes Soo in her arms and embraces her tightly, she cannot help but repeatedly sob the word *"Eomma"* because that is who Court Lady Oh is to her. In this world that she was thrust into, Oh Soon Yeon cared for her and cherished her like she was her own. She was Hae Soo's mother. Maybe not by blood, but by bond, she was.

"Live happily, live the life I never got to live." Court Lady Oh tells her as she holds Soo close to her heart.

It is for this mother that Soo kneels in front of Cheondeokjeon for 3 days. Her body was already weak from the torture she had gone through, but she tortures it more because she must save Court Lady Oh.

She kneels, and kneels, and kneels until she hears the gong ringing. Soo thrashes in the 4th Prince's arms as she cries in agony for the mother she could not save, for the mother who had given her life for her.

"I am sorry eomma" are the last words on her mind as she loses consciousness, in the safe embrace of the 4th Prince, with the punishing rain hitting her body.

A year later and she finds out that King Taejo is dying and she returns to the palace to serve tea to the man who killed her mother, the man who was dying because he could not bear that he killed her mother, her mother who was the king's lover.

And it is because of the fact her mother spent her entire life for this man that she does everything she can to complete the king's last wish. He asked her to bring the Crown Prince back to Songak and she relays this information to the 4th Prince. She takes the 8th Prince's betrayal in stride because she saw it coming the moment, he turned his back on her in the rain, when the 4th Prince had chosen to throw away everything and stand by her.

Crown Prince Moo becomes King Hyejong and she watches as the Dowager Queen Yoo go berserk at the death of her 2nd son. The Dowager Queen who permanently scarred her third son in a moment of madness at her first son's death. The Dowager Queen who threw her son to the wolves because in her eyes he was imperfect. The Dowager Queen who pushed her second son to become king and go against his father. The Dowager Queen who watched her first son die and was the reason why her second son died.

Not even her youngest son could soothe her ache. Soo could not help but wonder if the Dowager Queen would cry this much if it was her third son instead of her second.

The Dowager Queen soon became Queen Mother when the 3rd Prince returns from the dead. King Jeonjong takes the throne by force and become 3rd King of Goryeo, King Jeonjong. The Dowager Queen glows in happiness and pride and she prances around in jewels and fine silk as her son begins his rule of tyranny.

The son who gave her the title Queen Mother soon goes insane from killing his own brothers and the Queen Mother tries to get her second son to give the throne to her fourth son.

"I was scared she would throw me away like she did So," King Jeonjong says with tears in his eyes when he is at death's door. The reason why the Dowager Queen's second son died three years ago remains the same.

It is Hae Soo who watches on in pride as the 4th Prince ascends the throne as King Gwangjong. And it is Hae Soo who comfortingly holds the new king's hand when the Queen Mother yells, *"I do not want to be Queen Mother because it is you on the throne."*

Choi Ji Mong all but slaps Soo in the face when he tells her that she is not the King's match and Princess Hwangbo Yeon Hwa steps all over her heart when she tells Soo that she is going to be the King's wife.

To protect him, she lets him go. Two months after his coronation, King Gwangjong marries his half-sister and makes her Queen.

Hae Soo spends the day her beloved gets married at the prayer stones in the gardens near Lake Dongji. *"I am fine, I am fine, I am fine."* She repeats to Dr. Oh, to Lady Hae Myung Hee, to Court Lady Oh, but she isn't, not really. She wishes they were here, to hold her tight and reassure her that everything will be fine. But they aren't so Soo suffers silently. Perhaps this is her punishment for trying to covet a dying woman's husband.

"I am sorry unnie." She whispers as she continues to pray.

She does not return to her chamber until it is late at night and she is sure that everyone is asleep, after the consummation of the King and Queen's marriage. A week later Woo Hee checks her pulse and Soo finds out she is with child. She cannot help but find it ironic that a week after the King and Queen's marriage, it is the King's mistress falls with a child.

The Queen Mother ignored her third son for almost all her life and adored her fourth son all her life. It is this that is the reason for her death. The 14th Prince is exiled, and the Queen Mother falls ill. She helplessly watches on as King Gwangjong does not allow anyone at his mother's deathbed, even her youngest son.

"A mother's love is the only thing in the world that is unconditional" She had once heard someone say and Soo cannot help but think that it is because of this that the dying Queen's two sons died before her, it is because of this that her youngest son waits outside the Queen's Quarters and her third son is next to her. The Queen Mother put conditions on something that is meant to be unconditional and that is her downfall.

Despite everything, she is a mother, and the guilt she felt at throwing her third son away finally sparks at her final moments in the realm of the living because she caresses her son's

face before taking her final breath. The son she threw away.

Queen Mother Sinmyeongsunseong never meets her youngest son again.

“In all my 25 years of life, I have never had my mother to myself, not even once.” Soo’s beloved pushes her away. She does not understand him, no matter how much she tries to, she cannot understand his thinking at this. How could he not let the 14th Prince meet his mother at her final moments?

Hae Soo is sick and tired, but she bears everything, because she has to, because she has to protect this child growing in her womb.

Her health goes to ruin when she finds out that the man she loves killed her little sister. The little sister who has been committing treason all this while, who is the reason why the man she considered her elder brother is not alive anymore.

Hae Soo thought she could protect the child growing within her. She thought she could stay by King Gwangjong’s side and protect this child at the same time. But it is Chae Ryung’s death that makes her realize that she is helpless in this palace filled with blood and betrayal.

The Royal Physician later comes to inform her that she has less than 3-4 years left to live and subconsciously her hand moves her to belly. How will this child survive in this place once she is no longer alive. The King who is busy from dawn to dusk most certainly will not be able to protect her child from the schemes of his wife, or any person who wishes to harm him by killing his child. It is this that forces her hand.

“I want it,” Soo tells Baek ah, *“Hae Soo desperately wants it.”* She repeats and she means it when she says it. Go Ha Jin never thought of becoming a mother, but now she is going to become one, she will make sure she will do everything she can to protect this child. She throws away the love of her life to protect *his* child, his child that is growing in *her* womb.

Wang So tries to comfort her, tries to hold her close but she pushes him away, again and again and again. She watches with pain as his heart silently breaks every time she pushes him away. But she has to do this, for their child she has to do this, even if it means he will hate her, she has to.

The 14th Prince listens to her pleas and breaks his exile to free her from the palace. It is when the father of her child rushes into Damiwon Palace frantically, claiming that the 14th Prince brought a decree of marriage and that he claimed that she wanted it that Soo understands that Wang Jung’s way out of the palace is marriage. Ironically, it is something his elder brother once proposed, long time ago when she had been a water maid.

Where Soo had rejected So, she accepts Jung.

“I want it, I want the marriage” she forces herself to say and forces the tears back when she sees the king’s world crumble. She says the harshest things she can so that the King will give her up and watches on silently as he leaves.

“I am sorry So-nim” She whispers once he is gone, knowing he cannot hear her.

The 8th Prince kneels in front of the throne, begging for the life that the king has sentenced to death, just like she had knelt many years ago. King Gwangjong does not listen to the 8th Prince the way King Taejo did not listen to her. The 8th Prince had abandoned her but she cannot find herself doing the same, especially when she realizes how in the long run, the death of the 8th Prince will scar King Gwangjong, how he will be portrayed as a man who killed his own brother in the future. She will not let the title of *Bloody Tyrant* be bestowed upon Wang So and so she kneels, she kneels for the 8th Prince's life, just like she kneeled for Court Lady Oh's life. Only this time her efforts are not in vain.

"You can get up now," She tells the 8th Prince and stares at her shock, realizing that she had pleaded for his life when his sister had left him to die. They both know that she would have done the same had it been any other prince in his place. He asks for her forgiveness and she tells him that she will give it to him, but on a condition. Her heart aches as she tells him what he must do.

The next day, the King barges into the Damiwon and, *"Lie to me instead, tell me it is all a lie."* He begs, her eyes sting with unshed tears as she repeats the words he had broken her heart with, *"We promised not to lie to each other"* His disbelieving sadness turns to blazing anger and rage as he promises, *"I will never see you again."* And when he leaves, the gravity of what she has done hits her and forces her to the ground. The tears flow and Soo does not bother to wipe them away. Her hand goes to her belly and she slowly pats it, reminding herself why she is doing this.

And as the carriage that is carrying her to the 14th Prince's residence in Chungju leaves the palace, Hae Soo breaks down. Her hand goes to her belly as she repeatedly tells her child, *"Eomma will protect you, eomma will protect you, eomma will protect you."* Her heart aching in agony as she gets farther away from Songak, farther away from the palace, farther away from *him*. The love of her life whose heart she broke.

"A mother's love is the only thing in the world that is unconditional" She had once heard someone say and Hae Soo cannot help but agree. She could never hate this child growing in her womb, this child who is half her and half him. She will forever love this child, no matter what happens.

The 14th Prince finds out that she is with child and at first, is upset with the fact that she is risking her life by keeping this child, but soon, he grows concerned for the health of the baby alongside her health. She watches on with a soft smile as the 14th Prince adorably takes care of her and makes sure all of her needs are met, not that she needs much. He worries when her heartaches, cries when she cries because of the baby, and laughs in excitement when the baby kicks.

But despite it all, she cannot help but think how happy her prince would have been if she had told him that she was pregnant with their child, how excited her prince would be when he felt their first child's kicks. She pictures it in her mind when she's all alone, Wang So smiling brightly at her, Wang So holding a baby in his arms and slowly rocking her, Wang So playing catch with a little girl, Wang So teaching the stars to a little girl.

“This child is going to be a girl.” She tells the 14th Prince a couple of weeks later and does not listen to anything else he says.

Before going to her death, Court Lady Oh had told her *“Live happily, live the life I never got to live”* Hae Soo whispers the same words to her unborn daughter. One of her trusted court ladies, who she had brought with her from Damiwon asks her one day, *“How are you sure that the baby is going to be a girl?”*

It is this question that makes Hae Soo smile as she replies back, *“Court Lady Oh sacrificed her life to protect her daughter. I am simply following the footsteps of my mother. It is how I know this child is going to be a girl. She will live the life Court Lady Oh and I never got to live.”*

She hated King Taejo once. She did not understand how the king threw away his love for his child. It is only now, now that she has thrown away *her* love for *her* child that she understands why he did what he did.

Hae Soo writes 22 letters, every one of them for her daughter. She wishes her daughter a happy birthday and sends her a message in each one of those letters. In the last letter, she bids her daughter farewell, because Hae Soo is 22 and she knows she will never turn 23. She asks the 14th Prince to deliver the letters to her daughter on her birthday every year. In addition to the letters, she writes journals, 22 journals about anything and everything. What are Hae Soo’s likes and dislikes, what are Wang So’s likes and dislikes, what are the names of the stars and constellations, what kind of ideals she must believe in, how she should not discriminate between people. She writes them so her daughter knows who her mother was, so that her daughter can say that she knows her mother so that Soo does not remain as the stranger who gave birth to her but as a mother who loved her daughter. She gives them to the 14th Prince to give them to her daughter on her birthdays.

Hae Soo laughs when her daughter kicks every time she mentions the name *‘Wang So’* as though the child *knows* that he is her father. Hae Soo laughs when she cannot stop eating Oil and Honey pastries because she *knows* it is Wang So’s favorite and it seems his daughter takes after him.

Months later, she gives birth to a beautiful baby girl and knows she was right when she thought that Wang So’s daughter takes after him. Her baby girl has her father’s eyes and her mother’s snow-white skin. She has her father’s nose but her mother’s dark brown hair.

4 weeks later when her baby first laughs, Soo realizes that her daughter has her father’s laugh too.

Hae Soo looks at her daughter and remembers something that she once heard from her friends when she was Go Ha Jin, *“If you look at the first snow with someone, it means that person is your soulmate”* Her memories go to the time when she had watched the first snow with the 4th Prince at the 8th Prince’s residence.

“Seol” she names her daughter, she names her daughter after the first snow, the purest form of snow, because that is who her daughter is, the purest form of her parents’ love.

Soo holds her daughter in her arms, and when she does, all her tiredness fades away. Her beautiful Seol. She wants to live. She wants to live for this baby. But her ailing body brings her closer to death every day, until she cannot get up anymore. She silently sobs knowing that her daughter will never truly know both her parents. Her heart aches knowing that her 4th Prince will never know their daughter.

Months ago, her beloved had promised her, *"I will never see you again,"* Hae Soo lies on her death bed and prays that he does not keep that promise. She begins to write him letters when she is 8 months pregnant. She writes him a letter once every three days, which becomes once every two days, and that eventually becomes every day. She writes and writes and writes but her 4th Prince does not come to see her.

"Do not let her go to the palace" She pleads to the 14th Prince and promises that he will not let her daughter go there against her wishes and Soo is finally at peace at that, knowing her daughter will be happy and safe. She has accepted her death, but her eyes still desperately look at the courtyard, hoping she will be able to see her 4th Prince one last time.

But he keeps his promise and does not come and leaves Hae Soo to take her last breath without him. She dies without having seen him again, with only his name on her lips, *"So-ya"*

End Notes

Maybe I should have written this on mother's day. I ended up listening to a sad song about motherhood and it reminded me of Hae Soo and Queen Yoo and the next thing I knew, I was writing.

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