

GIVE & TAKE:
THE TRIBE AGAINST THE GODS

EPISODE 1: The BARGAIN

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1 EXT. MANISAN - TEMPLE OF THE GODS - DAWN

Morning mist hangs below the summit. The Temple is modern stone and glass built around something much older: a weathered altar stone no architect has dared to move.

Mortals wait in a quiet line with offerings.

Premium fruit. Rice. Flowers. Gift boxes. Envelopes tucked beneath ceremonial cloth.

As mortals bow, the gods briefly become more than human.

Across Chun-deung's face, a rigid silver storm mask flickers into being.

Kang-dae's face darkens beneath something wet, ancient, sea-worn.

Leaves and living gold pass across Aera's features.

Then the masks are gone.

A CONTRACTOR bows deeply before CHUN-DEUNG. An AIDE holds a folder beside him.

CONTRACTOR

Chairman, we're back on Tuesday's agenda.

CHUN-DEUNG

Good.

The Aide sends one message. Almost immediately, his phone vibrates. He reads the reply and gives Chun-deung the smallest nod.

At the next station, a FISHERMEN'S REPRESENTATIVE sets down a lacquered box of first-catch seafood before KANG-DAE.

FISHERMEN'S REPRESENTATIVE

Coast Guard says weather. They won't clear us.

KANG-DAE

Noon.

Outside the glass, flags that had been snapping hard in the wind begin to settle.

AERA receives an elderly FARM WOMAN carrying a cloth pouch of seed. Aera pours a few dry grains into her palm.

FARM WOMAN

Twice. Nothing came up.

Aera closes her fingers around the seed, then opens them. One pale green shoot curls between the grains.

The Farm Woman lowers her head, overwhelmed. Aera touches her shoulder and lifts her gently before the bow can deepen.

Behind the gods, women staff record names, carry trays, refill tea, remove offerings, settle children, clean spilled wax. The ritual moves because they never stop moving.

One place among the gods remains empty: Min-jun's.

2 INT. MANISAN - TEMPLE RECEPTION ROOM - MORNING

The public ritual is over. The private business continues.

Chun-deung sits at the head of a low table. Kang-dae eats from the fishermen's offering. Aera removes the ceremonial pin from her hair and sets it beside her tea.

A DEVELOPMENT EXECUTIVE waits across from Chun-deung. His smile is careful. An expensive bottle of whisky sits unopened between them.

DEVELOPMENT EXECUTIVE

The environmental review's been pushed another month.

CHUN-DEUNG

Why?

DEVELOPMENT EXECUTIVE

Deputy Director Park wants another groundwater study.

Chun-deung considers that for perhaps half a second.

CHUN-DEUNG

He won't be there next month.

The Executive isn't sure he heard correctly.

DEVELOPMENT EXECUTIVE

Chairman?

Chun-deung looks to his Aide.

CHUN-DEUNG

Find Park somewhere else to work.

The Aide sends a message.

A beat.

His phone vibrates.

He reads the reply.

AIDE

Yes, Chairman.

The Development Executive lowers his eyes. Problem solved.

The Executive bows, relieved. A woman staff member steps in before he has fully risen. She takes the folder, replaces Chun-deung's cold tea, and quietly reminds the Aide of his next call without interrupting anyone.

Aera watches her do three jobs in the space of ten seconds.

KANG-DAE

You've been staring at her for five minutes.

AERA

She's doing four people's jobs.

KANG-DAE

Then we're paying too many people.

He laughs at his own joke. Aera does not.

Chun-deung's phone lights with a message. He reads it.

CHUN-DEUNG

Min-jun's here.

Aera looks toward the empty place at the table.

AERA

Before noon?

CHUN-DEUNG

He brought Bong-cha.

That gets her attention.

3 INT. MIN-JUN'S CAR - MORNING - MOVING

A black sedan climbs the Manisan road. Another car follows at a discreet distance.

In the back seat, BONG-CHA has a cardboard drawing tube wedged between her shoes and a portfolio open across her knees.

She is still a university student, studying landscape architecture, but she also works part-time at one of the design firms regularly hired by her father's foundation. It is a very good job for someone her age. She knows exactly why she got it.

What she doesn't know is whether she's any good.

The plans between them are hers: planting schedules, elevations, handwritten corrections, coffee on one corner. A small public courtyard she's been working on for the firm.

MIN-JUN has commandeered one sheet and is actually reading it.

That is unusual enough that Bong-cha keeps glancing at him.

BONG-CHA

You know there are words under the pictures.

MIN-JUN

I noticed.

He keeps reading.

BONG-CHA

Most people don't.

MIN-JUN

You did this part?

He points to a planted terrace.

BONG-CHA

Mostly. My supervisor changed the trees.

MIN-JUN

Change them back.

She looks at him.

BONG-CHA

It's not your project.

MIN-JUN

No.

He pulls out his phone, brings up an image of the roof of his new mixed-use building.

MIN-JUN

This one is.

BONG-CHA

You want my firm to do this?

MIN-JUN

I want you.

A beat.

She looks at him.

MIN-JUN

For the roof.

That lands. Bong-cha looks back at the plan, pleased despite herself.

Min-jun's phone buzzes. Dong-wook on the screen. He answers.

MIN-JUN

Yeah.

DONG-WOOK (PHONE)

Han signed. We can get the keys at three.

MIN-JUN

Tomorrow.

He hangs up before Dong-wook can answer and turns back to Bong-cha.

MIN-JUN

Family lunch. I have to behave for an hour.

BONG-CHA

For my mother?

MIN-JUN

Mostly for your mother.

Bong-cha takes his hand and settles closer to him.

MIN-JUN

Did you tell her yet?

BONG-CHA

About you? She has eyes.

A beat.

MIN-JUN

About the baby.

BONG-CHA

No. I was going to do it today.

For the first time, Bong-cha looks nervous.

4 INT. MANISAN - PRIVATE FAMILY ROOM - LATE MORNING

A family meal after the ritual. Expensive, restrained, almost ordinary.

Aera sits beside Bong-cha. Chun-deung faces them. Kang-dae pours whisky.

Min-jun takes the remaining place at the table as if it has always belonged to him.

A platter of raw seafood is set down. Bong-cha reaches for it.

Min-jun moves the platter away from her before she can touch it.

MIN-JUN

Don't eat that.

BONG-CHA

I was literally picking it up.

MIN-JUN

Eat this one.

He replaces it with cooked fish. Bong-cha gives him an irritated look, then smiles in spite of herself.

Aera has gone still.

AERA

Bong-cha...

Bong-cha looks at her mother. No escape now.

BONG-CHA

I know. I was going to tell you.

Aera waits.

BONG-CHA

I'm pregnant.

Silence.

Aera takes Bong-cha's hand and searches her face. Bong-cha holds her gaze and nods.

AERA

How long?

BONG-CHA

Eight weeks.

MIN-JUN

Eight weeks, five days.

Bong-cha glances at him and smiles.

Aera does not.

KANG-DAE

Well. I need something stronger than tea.

He raises his glass. Min-jun does too.

Chun-deung and Min-jun exchange one brief look. Familiar. Prepared.

Aera sees it.

CHUN-DEUNG

Then we should talk about the gala.

AERA

What about it?

Chun-deung folds his napkin with maddening care.

CHUN-DEUNG

Min-jun and I settled the west harbor.

BONG-CHA

Why are you telling me?

CHUN-DEUNG

He takes waste and logistics. The foundation
backs the financing. The harbor stays quiet.

AERA

And Bong-cha?

Chun-deung looks at his daughter as though the answer is obvious.

CHUN-DEUNG

She and Min-jun marry. It's time.

BONG-CHA

Excuse me?

CHUN-DEUNG

You'll marry Min-jun.

Bong-cha looks at Min-jun. Not frightened. Hurt.

BONG-CHA

You knew about this?

MIN-JUN

Your father brought it up.

BONG-CHA

And what did you say?

MIN-JUN

I said we would talk.

BONG-CHA

You talked to him.

She looks at her father now.

BONG-CHA

Before you talked to me.

CHUN-DEUNG

You were already with him.

BONG-CHA

I know. So why did you have to decide the rest?

The room goes still around her. Aera does not take her eyes off Chun-deung.

5 INT. MANISAN - INNER FAMILY CHAMBER - MOMENTS LATER

The meal has broken apart. Plates remain half-finished. A staff member starts to clear them, senses the room, and quietly backs out.

CHUN-DEUNG

We announce it at the foundation gala. Registry later. Keep it small.

BONG-CHA

You already planned the registry?

CHUN-DEUNG

You're pregnant. People will talk.

BONG-CHA

Then let them talk.

CHUN-DEUNG

It affects both families.

AERA

She's standing right here.

CHUN-DEUNG

Aera.

AERA

Ask her.

CHUN-DEUNG

We've already discussed the practicalities.

BONG-CHA

You discussed me.

Kang-dae looks down into his whisky, amused by the family discomfort.

KANG-DAE

You want him, don't you?

BONG-CHA

That is not the point.

KANG-DAE

It seems like the point.

BONG-CHA

I might have said yes if somebody had asked me.

She turns to Min-jun.

BONG-CHA

Now I don't even know what my yes is supposed to mean.

Min-jun has no quick answer. Chun-deung does.

CHUN-DEUNG

You know what you want.

BONG-CHA

Then why did none of you wait to hear it?

She stands. Min-jun stands with her.

BONG-CHA

Don't follow me.

He stops.

Bong-cha leaves. Aera rises immediately.

CHUN-DEUNG

Leave her. She'll settle down.

AERA

She's angry with you, Chun-deung.

Aera follows her daughter out.

CUT TO:

6 EXT. MANISAN - STONE TERRACE - DAY

Bong-cha stands at the rail above a drop of pine and mist. She hears Min-jun behind her before she sees him.

BONG-CHA

I said don't follow me.

MIN-JUN

I waited.

BONG-CHA

Not very long.

He stays several steps away.

MIN-JUN

I thought this was what you wanted.

BONG-CHA

I wanted you.

That reaches him.

BONG-CHA

I didn't say I wanted this.

MIN-JUN

I didn't ask him to arrange it.

BONG-CHA

But you took the deal.

MIN-JUN

Because you were already with me.

BONG-CHA

You're still not hearing it.

Min-jun looks away toward the mountain road.

MIN-JUN

Say no and I'll cancel the announcement.

BONG-CHA

And the harbor?

A beat too long.

BONG-CHA

Yeah.

MIN-JUN

The harbor stays.

BONG-CHA

Then what are you giving up?

MIN-JUN

Bong-cha...

BONG-CHA

No. Tell me.

She walks away. Min-jun lets her.

A wind passes across the terrace. Prayer ribbons tied near the old stone altar move toward Bong-cha, against the direction of the trees.

For an instant, Bong-cha's reflection in the terrace glass wears a luminous porcelain face — flower-pale, divided by shadow.

She does not see it.

Min-jun notices. His expression changes, just slightly.

MAIN TITLES.

7 INT. AERA'S MANISAN QUARTERS - DAY

Aera finds Bong-cha shoving rolled plans into a canvas portfolio. Her movements are angry, imprecise.

AERA

Come with me.

BONG-CHA

Where?

AERA

Anywhere you want.

BONG-CHA

You hear yourself?

Aera stops.

AERA

Your father just used your marriage to close a business deal.

BONG-CHA

I was sitting there, Omma.

AERA

Then say no.

BONG-CHA

You too?

AERA

What?

BONG-CHA

Appa decides I'm getting married, so you decide I'm leaving. Can either of you just stop?

Aera absorbs the blow.

BONG-CHA

I love him.

AERA

I know.

BONG-CHA

No, you don't. You make that face every time I say it.

Aera reaches for her. Bong-cha steps back, then hates herself for doing it.

BONG-CHA

And don't use me to prove you're right about him.

AERA

I'm scared for you.

BONG-CHA

Okay. Be scared. Just don't start deciding things for me.

Bong-cha picks up her portfolio and leaves. Aera is alone with the sentence.

8 INT. CHUN-DEUNG'S PRIVATE STUDY - AFTERNOON

Chun-deung signs correspondence. TAE-SEOK, younger, immaculate, waits beside him with a tablet. Aera enters without being announced.

AERA

Undo it.

CHUN-DEUNG

What exactly do you want me to undo?

AERA

The marriage plan.

CHUN-DEUNG

No one handed her anywhere. She was already with him.

AERA

That does not make it yours to arrange.

CHUN-DEUNG

This family works because everybody does their part. You know that.

AERA

Not with somebody else's life.

CHUN-DEUNG

That is exactly how families work.

Tae-seok gives a discreet cough. Chun-deung turns to him.

TAE-SEOK

Deputy Director Park is still asking for a second groundwater study.

CHUN-DEUNG

Move him.

TAE-SEOK

Where?

CHUN-DEUNG

Busan. Jeju. I do not care.

Tae-seok makes one note. No drama. The machinery of consequence has already started.

AERA

You make it sound so reasonable.

CHUN-DEUNG

She's angry. She'll settle down.

AERA

Maybe she should stay angry.

CHUN-DEUNG

We all give something up for family.

Aera looks at Tae-seok, at the permits on the desk, at the phone that turns one sentence into a transfer.

AERA

You mean she does.

CHUN-DEUNG

Is that a threat?

AERA

No.

She turns for the door.

AERA

I'm telling you I'm done.

9 INT. MANISAN - BROTHERS' ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

No staff. No ceremony. Premium whisky, maps, contracts, shipping schedules. Chun-deung sits with Min-jun and Kang-dae. DONG-WOOK stands near a screen showing company holdings and redevelopment parcels.

CHUN-DEUNG

Min-jun handles the west harbor. Kang-dae has the union. I keep Seoul out of it.

KANG-DAE

You make us sound respectable.

CHUN-DEUNG

I am trying.

MIN-JUN

The foundation's name goes on the financing. That's all I need.

CHUN-DEUNG

And the marriage keeps it in the family.

KANG-DAE

Everybody wins.

Min-jun looks at him. Kang-dae smiles into his drink.

KANG-DAE

What? She likes you.

MIN-JUN

She's furious with me.

KANG-DAE

She'll get over it.

MIN-JUN

You don't know her.

DONG-WOOK

The twenty-somethings are back on the message boards.

CHUN-DEUNG

About what now?

DONG-WOOK

Same thing. Women get the jobs, women get the housing, men do military service and get screwed. Half of it is nonsense. They're still angry.

KANG-DAE

Can you use it?

DONG-WOOK

Yes.

Min-jun closes the screen with one touch.

MIN-JUN

Not today.

DONG-WOOK

I wasn't planning to.

Dong-wook steps back. He does not look offended. He looks interested.

CHUN-DEUNG

Give it a month. Everybody remembers who controls what.

MIN-JUN

And if they don't?

CHUN-DEUNG

Then we make it clear.

10 INT. MANISAN - CEREMONIAL DINING HALL - NIGHT

A formal dinner begins beneath a row of bronze lamps. Local donors and senior foundation figures sit with the family.

Aera's chair beside Chun-deung is empty.

Women staff pour soup, replace napkins, carry hot stone bowls, guide an elderly guest to her place. The meal functions without pause.

DONOR

Chairwoman Aera isn't joining us?

CHUN-DEUNG

Migraine.

Across the table, Bong-cha hears the lie. Min-jun watches her hear it.

KANG-DAE

She looked fine this afternoon.

Chun-deung raises his glass. The others follow.

CHUN-DEUNG

To family.

Bong-cha does not raise hers.

One bronze lamp above Aera's empty chair gutters. A staff member reaches up to relight it. The flame refuses the match once, twice - then catches.

Chun-deung sees. He looks away first.

11 INT. AERA'S MANISAN QUARTERS - NIGHT

Aera packs one small case: plain clothes, medicine, papers, work shoes. None of the ceremonial wardrobe.

Aera opens another drawer.

An old photograph: Aera and Chun-deung, decades younger in their clothes if not their faces, laughing at something outside the frame.

She touches Chun-deung's face with one finger.

Almost takes it.

Doesn't.

Closes the drawer.

BITNA stands in the doorway holding two takeaway coffees and a coil of heavy rope.

AERA

Why do you have rope?

BITNA

Because you never pack like a normal person.

AERA

I'm leaving Chun-deung.

BITNA

For how long?

AERA

I'm not coming back.

BITNA

Okay. Where are you going?

AERA

I don't know yet.

BITNA

Of course you do not.

Aera stops packing.

AERA

I need somewhere women can stay.

BITNA

Tonight?

AERA

Yes.

BITNA

Then I'm coming.

She hands Aera a coffee.

BITNA

Before you plan anything, I want a toilet that works and a door that locks.

Aera almost smiles.

AERA

Anything else?

BITNA

And hot water.

12 EXT. MANISAN - TEMPLE GATE - NIGHT

Aera and Bitna walk down the long stone approach carrying their own bags.

No entourage. No staff. No car waiting at the gate.

High above, behind glass, Chun-deung watches from the dining hall. Tae-seok stands behind him.

TAE-SEOK

Cancel the car?

CHUN-DEUNG

No.

TAE-SEOK

Security?

CHUN-DEUNG

No.

Aera pauses beside the weathered altar stone built into the modern temple wall.

They look at the stone. Nothing moves.

Aera's leaf-and-gold mask flickers across her face.

A hairline crack runs through it.

Behind her, cultivated plants along the Temple wall begin to brown.

Below the wall, weeds push green through broken stone.

High above, Chun-deung's storm mask forms — whole, bright, unquestioned.

A faint metallic CHIME sounds from inside the stone.

Bitna hears it too.

BITNA

Thunder?

AERA

Just thunder.

Aera continues down the mountain.

From the glass above, Chun-deung turns away.

CHUN-DEUNG

Thursday. Friday if Bitna is feeding her.

13 EXT. GANGHWA - BUS STOP / COMMERCIAL STREET - NIGHT

Aera and Bitna stand at a bus stop with their luggage. The indignity is new to Aera. Bitna has already opened a transit app.

AERA

If a woman walks out tonight, where does she sleep?

BITNA

Exactly.

AERA

Beds. Food. Childcare. Somewhere safe to get in
and out--

BITNA

Locks.

Aera stops.

BITNA

Tonight. Not next month. Tonight.

On the bench down from them, a woman in a hospital uniform waits with a
sleeping child against her shoulder and two grocery bags at her feet. She is
too tired to scroll her phone.

Aera looks at her.

AERA

The Tower.

BITNA

Which Tower?

AERA

The foundation's old residential block by the
market. Half of it is empty because of the defect
case.

BITNA

Does it have water?

AERA

It has pipes.

BITNA

That is not the same thing.

AERA

We can look.

The bus arrives. Aera stares at the card reader until Bitna taps her own card
twice.

BITNA

And you can pay for the bus.

14 EXT./INT. THE TOWER - NIGHT

The Tower is not abandoned. It is worse: partly occupied, partly failed, and nobody important has cared enough to finish deciding what it is.

One wing is closed and dark. Plastic sheets cover cracked lobby glass. A faded foundation plaque lists a senior housing project that never opened. A SECURITY CARETAKER recognizes Aera and straightens immediately.

CARETAKER

Chairwoman? Nobody told us you were coming.

AERA

Nobody told me much either.

The elevator opens, shudders, then closes again without anyone pressing a button.

BITNA

Show us what works.

CARETAKER

Use the second lift.

BITNA

Is that advice or a warning?

They take the stairs.

15 INT. THE TOWER - VARIOUS FLOORS - NIGHT

Aera and Bitna walk the building with the Caretaker.

SECOND FLOOR: An ELDER WOMAN wedges a chair beneath her doorknob. The lock plate has been repaired with mismatched screws.

FOURTH FLOOR: JI-YEON, late thirties, hospital ID still on her neck, tries to carry a sleeping child and a bag of laundry while answering a call from work.

JI-YEON

I can cover Sunday. Not both shifts. I already gave them Saturday.

She hangs up, sees Aera, and is too tired to be impressed.

JI-YEON

If you're with the foundation, 407 hasn't had hot water in six days.

AERA

Show me.

SIXTH FLOOR: An apartment door is taped around the frame from the inside.
A YOUNG WOMAN checks the peephole twice before opening it for the Caretaker.

YOUNG WOMAN

Camera's dead again.

BITNA

How long?

YOUNG WOMAN

Three weeks.

ROOFTOP STAIR: a handwritten note warns that the fire door sticks.
Aera reaches for it. Bitna stops her.

BITNA

Don't touch it until Airiseu sees it.

AERA

I know how to open a door.

BITNA

I know. Do not.

16 EXT. THE TOWER - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Ganghwa spreads below them: low buildings, dark water, the distant line of Manisan.

Aera sees space. Bitna sees failures.

AERA

Shared rooms on the lower floors. Childcare on three. Clinic on four. We could use the roof for--

BITNA

The roof is full of water.

AERA

We drain it.

BITNA

First we find where it is coming from.

AIRISEU emerges from the rooftop utility shed, flashlight between her teeth, carrying a dead backup battery like an insult.

AIRISEU

Lift two says it works. It does not.

BITNA

And lift one?

AIRISEU

Dead.

AERA

Can you fix either one?

AIRISEU

Not tonight.

AERA

How long?

AIRISEU

I need to see what parts I can get.

Aera looks at the ruined roof, then at the lit windows where people still live.

AERA

Fine. Tonight.

BITNA

Locks. Fire exits. Hall lights. Water.

AIRISEU

And money.

AERA

I have money.

BITNA

How much?

Aera takes that in.

17 INT. YUN-HEE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

YUN-HEE opens the door in socks and a cardigan, holding a rubber plunger like a ceremonial staff.

YUN-HEE

If you're here about the hot water, come in. If this is a meeting, I'm in my pajamas.

Aera blinks. Bitna looks away to hide a smile.

AERA

You know who I am?

YUN-HEE

Everybody knows. You're on the foundation calendar. Shoes off.

She shoves a pair of rubber slippers toward Aera with her foot.

YUN-HEE

The tap shrieks, the toilet runs all night, and every time I take a bath I mop the bedroom.

BITNA

She's a goddess.

YUN-HEE

Then she can hold the pipe.

Aera takes the bucket.

YUN-HEE

I've called maintenance six times.

AERA

And?

YUN-HEE

You're the first person who came upstairs.

For the first time all day, Aera laughs.

18 INT. MANISAN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION - SMALL BOARDROOM - MORNING

A dormant-property file lies open: photographs of the Tower, unresolved contractor claims, fire inspection notices, occupancy limits.

Aera sits across from Chun-deung and Tae-seok. A FOUNDATION LAWYER joins by video.

AERA

The title is clean. The defect case is still open, but we can use the inspected units while it drags on.

FOUNDATION LAWYER

With a temporary welfare-use resolution. Restricted floors, fire compliance, insurance, named operator.

CHUN-DEUNG

You've been going through those files?

AERA

I chair the welfare foundation. I do read the files.

TAE-SEOK

Public-relations case works. Seniors, working families, short-term services. Cheaper than another year of security on an empty building.

CHUN-DEUNG

And when they hate it in a week?

AERA

Then they'll tell us.

CHUN-DEUNG

They usually do.

He signs the temporary board consent and slides it across.

CHUN-DEUNG

Twelve months. Inspected units only. No political theater.

AERA

Fine.

Tae-seok lowers his eyes. The Lawyer suddenly finds the documents fascinating.

CHUN-DEUNG

When you're finished, come home.

AERA

Sign the second page.

He does.

19 INT. THE TOWER - GROUND-FLOOR COMMUNITY ROOM - DAY

Folding tables. Extension cords. Paper labels. No banners. No uniforms. Just work.

Bitna stands before a whiteboard divided into columns: ROOMS. LOCKS. MEDICINE. FOOD. CHILDCARE. WORK. CASH. DOCUMENTS.

Twelve women sit or stand around the room. Airiseu inventories keys. Yun-hee has found the only chair that does not wobble.

BITNA

Name, room, what you can do. And what you can't. Don't lie about that part.

JI-YEON

I'm a nurse. I'm not quitting the hospital.

A few women look toward Aera, waiting for the revolutionary answer.

JI-YEON

If I leave, somebody else gets stuck with my patients. I'm not doing that.

Aera starts to speak, then changes course.

AERA

What do you need from us?

JI-YEON

Somebody to get my son when I'm stuck late. And sleep. Four hours would be nice.

YUN-HEE

Hot water first. Then sleep.

A small laugh. Ji-yeon smiles for the first time.

ELDER WOMAN

I can get him. I do not drive after dark, but I can walk.

YOUNG WOMAN

I work mornings. I can do two afternoons.
Bitna records the offers beside CHILDCARE.

AIRISEU

Forty-six keys. Fifty-three doors.

YUN-HEE

So we are missing seven keys.

AIRISEU

I know.

AERA

I can pay for the repairs.

BITNA

For now. We need a real budget.
Aera sits with that too.

20 INT. MIN-JUN'S RESIDENCE - DESIGN ROOM - DAY

A bright room has been cleared for Bong-cha. Samples of stone, soil, irrigation tubing and lighting sit beside her landscape plans.
Bong-cha cannot help being pleased.

BONG-CHA

You did all this overnight?

MIN-JUN

Dong-wook did most of it.

BONG-CHA

I knew it.

He hands her a tablet showing the roof of his new mixed-use building.

MIN-JUN

Your budget.

BONG-CHA

This has too many zeroes.

MIN-JUN

Trees are expensive.

BONG-CHA

You remembered the trees.

MIN-JUN

You said you wanted enough of them to hide the road.

BONG-CHA

I said that once.

MIN-JUN

Three times.

She smiles despite herself. He moves behind her, arms around her, looking at the plan over her shoulder.

MIN-JUN

After the gala, this room is yours whenever you want it.

BONG-CHA

Everything is 'after the gala' now.

MIN-JUN

People stop asking questions after the gala.

BONG-CHA

No, they'll ask different ones.

MIN-JUN

Let them.

He kisses her temple. It is affectionate. It is also an answer that assumes he can separate her from everyone else.

21 INT. MIN-JUN'S RESIDENCE - DESIGN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BONG-CHA

Okay. My terms.

MIN-JUN

Of course.

BONG-CHA

My university program stays.

MIN-JUN

Yes.

BONG-CHA

Friends stay. Even Jisu.

MIN-JUN

Even Jisu.

BONG-CHA

I see Omma when I want.

MIN-JUN

I'm not stopping you from seeing your mother.

BONG-CHA

And I keep working.

MIN-JUN

Yes.

BONG-CHA

My work. Not just your roof.

MIN-JUN

Your work.

BONG-CHA

And I leave the house when I want.

Min-jun answers too quickly.

MIN-JUN

Yes.

BONG-CHA

No assigned driver. No guard following me. No tracking my phone.

MIN-JUN

I'm not letting you take taxis alone.

BONG-CHA

Then he doesn't report back to you.

MIN-JUN

You're pregnant. And I have enemies.

BONG-CHA

You're still deciding when I can leave.

MIN-JUN

That's not what I'm doing.

She laughs. He thinks the matter is settled.

22 INT. MIN-JUN'S RESIDENCE - SECURITY LOBBY - LATER

Bong-cha walks toward the front doors with her portfolio and a small shoulder bag.

A SECURITY MANAGER steps forward, courteous and anxious.

SECURITY MANAGER

Ms. Bong-cha. One moment.

BONG-CHA

What?

SECURITY MANAGER

Your departure has not been cleared.

BONG-CHA

My what?

SECURITY MANAGER

Your destination, please.

BONG-CHA

I didn't tell you where I'm going.

The Manager bows slightly, miserable.

SECURITY MANAGER

Director Min-jun asked us to confirm all off-site travel while you are under his protection.

BONG-CHA

Call him.

The Manager does. Bong-cha waits in a beautiful lobby designed to make waiting feel like privilege.

His phone rings back almost immediately.

SECURITY MANAGER

You're free to go. A vehicle is waiting.

BONG-CHA

I have my own car.

SECURITY MANAGER

This one is waiting.

Bong-cha turns around instead of leaving.

23 INT. MIN-JUN'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Min-jun is reviewing a debt portfolio when Bong-cha enters. He dismisses Dong-wook with a glance.

BONG-CHA

We had terms.

MIN-JUN

We do.

BONG-CHA

Then why did security call you before they let me leave?

MIN-JUN

They didn't need permission.

BONG-CHA

They called you.

MIN-JUN

They confirmed. That is their job.

BONG-CHA

It felt like permission.

MIN-JUN

It is security.

BONG-CHA

It felt like a checkpoint.

MIN-JUN

I need to know where you are.

BONG-CHA

Then ask me.

MIN-JUN

And if you don't answer?

BONG-CHA

Call me again. Don't stop me at the door.

That concept genuinely irritates him.

MIN-JUN

You know what happens around me.

BONG-CHA

Yes. I do.

24 INT. MIN-JUN'S OFFICE / PRIVATE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

MIN-JUN

It's not just you now.

BONG-CHA

Don't use the baby.

MIN-JUN

I am thinking about the baby.

BONG-CHA

So am I.

MIN-JUN

My child-- our child--

BONG-CHA

Then stop saying 'my child' every time I disagree with you.

Min-jun realizes he has stepped somewhere she will not follow.

MIN-JUN

Go see your mother.

BONG-CHA

I was trying to.

MIN-JUN

No escort.

BONG-CHA

Thank you.

She leaves.

Dong-wook appears from the side office, careful not to smile.

DONG-WOOK

Want me to keep an eye on her?

MIN-JUN

No.

Dong-wook waits.

MIN-JUN

Just tell me when she gets to the Tower.

DONG-WOOK

That's still tracking her.

MIN-JUN

Dong-wook.

DONG-WOOK

Fine.

Dong-wook leaves. Min-jun looks at the closed door, angry at a distinction he cannot control.

25 INT. THE TOWER - LOBBY - EVENING

Bong-cha enters to find Aera in work gloves, one shoulder braced against a stubborn supply-room door while Ji-yeon pulls from the other side.

AERA

Again.

They pull. The door opens suddenly. Aera nearly lands on the floor.
Bong-cha laughs before she can stop herself.

BONG-CHA

You're losing.

AERA

I'm not losing.

BONG-CHA

You've been on the same screw for a minute.

AERA

It moved.

They look at each other. For a brief second, they are simply mother and daughter again.

Then Aera sees the strain in her face.

AERA

What happened?

BONG-CHA

I tried to go out. Security called him. That's it.
Nobody yelled at me. Nobody threatened me.
They all acted like it was completely normal.

AERA

Bong-cha...

BONG-CHA

Please don't start packing for me.

26 INT. THE TOWER - EMPTY APARTMENT - EVENING

A clean but nearly bare unit. One floor mat. One lamp. A window that does not quite close.

Aera pushes the window shut and turns to Bong-cha.

AERA

Stay tonight.

BONG-CHA

For dinner?

AERA

For the night.

BONG-CHA

No.

AERA

He's already deciding where you can go.

BONG-CHA

And you had a room ready before I took my shoes off.

AERA

I'm not him.

BONG-CHA

I know. But you're doing it too. At his place I can't get out without security calling him. I come here and five minutes later you want me to move in. I need both of you to stop.

Aera looks wounded because it is true enough to hurt.

BONG-CHA

I came to see you. That is all.

AERA

I don't want you caught in the middle.

BONG-CHA

Then do not make me pick a side.

Bong-cha moves toward the door, then turns back.

BONG-CHA

Can you just be my mother for five minutes?

No plan. No advice.

She leaves Aera alone in the nearly empty room.

27 INT. THE TOWER - STAIRWELL - EVENING

Bitna waits one landing down, not pretending she did not hear the raised voices.

BONG-CHA

How much did you hear?

BITNA

More than I meant to. Sorry.

She gives Bong-cha an ordinary brass key on a red cord.

BONG-CHA

What's this?

BITNA

Side door. Second-floor passage. Two-fourteen
if you need a room.

BONG-CHA

What do I owe?

BITNA

Wash your mug.

BONG-CHA

That's it?

BITNA

Bad lock, tell Airiseu. Someone follows you, tell
me. Spill ramen, clean it up.

BONG-CHA

I don't have to join anything?

BITNA

No. Take it. Give it back if you never use it.

Bong-cha studies the key, then closes her fingers around it.

28 INT. THE TOWER - COMMUNITY ROOM - NIGHT

The first real meeting. Eighteen women sit in a rough circle. A hand-painted board shows the consensus signals: agreement, clarification, objection, block, twinkles, uncertainty, process point, support with concern.

Aera stands with her neat agenda folders. Yun-hee holds a wooden rice paddle as the talking piece. Everyone else sits.

AERA

We need some structure before more people
arrive. Rooms by need, kitchen rota, childcare--

Yun-hee yawns. Not theatrically. A real elderly yawn that becomes impossible
to ignore.

AERA

Am I going too fast?

YUN-HEE

We're still on Thursday.

A few women laugh. Aera looks at her folders.

JI-YEON

Who has my son Thursday?

ELDER WOMAN

And who's paying the gas bill?

YOUNG WOMAN

My lease is still in my ex-husband's name. Can
he come in here?

ANOTHER WOMAN

Sixth-floor fire door still sticks.

AIRISEU

Fixed.

ANOTHER WOMAN

Good. The hall light's out.

AIRISEU

Not fixed.

Questions stack faster than Aera can answer.

AERA

Right. Ji-yeon, we'll--

BITNA

Ask her.

Aera looks at Bitna.

BITNA

You don't get to assign people.

Aera looks around the circle. Everyone is waiting to see which Aera they are getting.

29 INT. THE TOWER - COMMUNITY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Aera sits down. Not at the center. In the circle.

AERA

Right.

She looks at Ji-yeon.

AERA

Ji-yeon. Thursday. What do you need?

JI-YEON

Four to ten. Homework. He lies about homework.

ELDER WOMAN

They all do.

YOUNG WOMAN

I can do math after six.

Yun-hee makes a note.

YUN-HEE

Good. Thursday's covered.

Bitna takes the rice paddle.

BITNA

After ten, nobody walks up from the bus stop alone. Two at a time, rotating.

Thumbs rise in agreement. Twinkles follow -- raised, fluttering fingers for strong agreement. One woman crosses her arms over her chest: a block. A newcomer notices, then looks around to understand.

YUN-HEE

A block?

WOMAN WITH CROSSED ARMS

If you call it volunteering, the same women will
end up doing it every night.

Bitna considers that without defensiveness.

BITNA

Then we rotate. Twice a week max unless
someone asks for more.

WOMAN WITH CROSSED ARMS

Childcare counts.

BITNA

Yes.

The block lowers. Twinkles ripple around the circle.

NEWCOMER

Sorry. What exactly does a block mean?

YUN-HEE

A real objection. Something you can't live with.
Not just something you don't like.

The newcomer tentatively copies the fluttering fingers. Another small laugh.

YUN-HEE

Before we stop. Who is the Tower for?

JI-YEON

Women and children who need somewhere
safe.

YOUNG WOMAN

Who owns it?

AERA

On paper, the foundation.

BITNA

That is not what she asked.

Aera looks around the circle. She understands.

AERA

No one here. We hold it together. No one person decides who stays or how anyone lives.

YUN-HEE

Can everyone live with that?

Thumbs rise. Twinkles. No objection. No block. Consensus.

30 INT. THE TOWER - COMMUNITY ROOM - LATER

The whiteboard now carries actual commitments instead of slogans.

CHILDCARE: names and hours. FOOD: three cooks, four shoppers, two delivery contacts. REPAIRS: Airiseu plus anyone who owns real tools. SAFETY: paired rotations.

AERA

We'll open five next week--

She stops herself.

AERA

Can we open five next week?

Airiseu raises an open palm.

AIRISEU

Do you want electricity on five?

AERA

Yes.

AIRISEU

Then not next week.

YUN-HEE

There you go.

Aera smiles.

AERA

Two weeks?

AIRISEU

If nobody plugs a rice cooker, hair dryer and floor heater into one extension cord again.

YUN-HEE

Put that on the wall.

Ji-yeon points to the top of the board where nothing is written.

JI-YEON

I have one thing.

AERA

Go ahead.

JI-YEON

One thing. Don't let the same women get stuck cooking, cleaning and watching everybody's kids. Rotate it.

Thumbs rise in agreement. Twinkles spread around the circle.

YUN-HEE

Any objection? Any block?

BITNA

For our common good.

YUN-HEE

Put it up where people can see it.

No hands. The rotation is consensus.

Airiseu writes: FOR OUR COMMON GOOD.

31 INT. THE TOWER - BASEMENT SERVICE ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Concrete walls sweat. Pipes are wrapped in old tape and newer hope. Aera, sleeves rolled high, grips a rusted valve with both hands. Bitna crouches nearby with a wrench. Airiseu listens to the pipe through a homemade metal tube.

BITNA

Never thought I'd see Ganghwa's chairwoman fighting a valve.

AERA

I should've learned plumbing.

AIRISEU

Quiet.

They both go quiet.

AIRISEU

When I say now, turn. If it sounds really bad,
stop. If it just sounds bad, keep going.

AERA

And if it explodes?

AIRISEU

Then you're the goddess. I'm just the
technician.

AERA

Very reassuring.

Yun-hee enters carrying an empty blue bucket.

YUN-HEE

I brought towels.

Airiseu taps the pipe once.

AIRISEU

Now.

Aera heaves the valve. Metal shrieks. She freezes.

AIRISEU

Keep going. That noise is fine.

Aera pushes harder. For one instant, gold light flickers beneath the skin of
her hands.

Bitna sees it.

Aera sees Bitna see it. She loosens her grip. The light disappears.

AERA

I can do it.

BITNA

You were glowing.

Aera braces again. Human effort this time.

The pipe coughs brown water into the floor drain. Then clearer. Clearer.

Finally cold, clean water rushes out.

Yun-hee shoves the bucket under the stream.

YUN-HEE

Wait. Let it run clear.

They wait.

Ten seconds feels sacred enough.

Aera grabs the full bucket too soon, surprised by the weight. It drops an inch and splashes her shoes.

BITNA

Use your legs.

AERA

You can stop enjoying this.

YUN-HEE

After the water's upstairs.

Aera does. Bitna takes the other handle without asking.

32 INT. MIN-JUN'S PRIVATE CLUB - LATE NIGHT

A back room away from the gambling floor. Premium whisky. Low music.

Min-jun sits with Dong-wook and two senior men over ledgers.

The door opens. SEO HANEUL enters in a plain dark jacket, carrying an envelope and the ease of someone welcome in every room.

MIN-JUN

Haneul.

They clasp hands. Genuine warmth.

HANEUL

You look tired.

MIN-JUN

You came all this way to tell me that?

HANEUL

Chun-deung sent this. Apparently texts are too modern.

He drops the envelope beside Min-jun's glass.

HANEUL

Gala schedule, harbor numbers, photo call. And two paragraphs about family harmony.

MIN-JUN

He sent you for that?

HANEUL

He sent me because you ignore everybody else.

Min-jun opens the envelope, barely reads it.

MIN-JUN

Do you think she will come around?

HANEUL

Who?

MIN-JUN

Bong-cha.

HANEUL

You could have said that.

Dong-wook watches Haneul carefully. Haneul notices and includes him with a polite nod that reveals nothing.

MIN-JUN

She came back this morning.

HANEUL

Did she say she was back?

MIN-JUN

She came home.

HANEUL

You hear yourself, right?

Min-jun pours him whisky.

MIN-JUN

You still owe me at darts.

HANEUL

You still cheat.

They clink glasses. Dong-wook smiles, but his eyes move between the two men, measuring access.

33 EXT. PRIVATE CLUB ROOFTOP / INT. MIN-JUN'S RESIDENCE / INT.

MANISAN - NIGHT - INTERCUT

Haneul steps onto the club rooftop alone. The air is cold. From here he can see the low lights of the port, the darker shoulder of Manisan, and the Tower with only a few occupied floors glowing.

A sudden wind moves uphill from the water. Haneul turns toward Manisan. The silver ring on his hand warms. He removes it, surprised. Far away on the mountain, one light in the Temple of the Gods goes out. Then, almost imperceptibly, a light comes on in the Tower. Haneul looks from one to the other. No explanation.

INTERCUT - MIN-JUN'S RESIDENCE: Bong-cha enters carrying her portfolio. Min-jun is waiting in the main room.

MIN-JUN

You came back.

BONG-CHA

I came back. That is all.

His shoulders release. He takes that as more than she offered.

MIN-JUN

I didn't say anything.

He hands her a cream invitation card embossed with the family foundation seal.

MIN-JUN

The gala. We can change anything you hate except the date.

Bong-cha opens it. Her name is already printed beside his. Her hand slips into her coat pocket and closes around Bitna's brass key.

BONG-CHA

Tomorrow.

MIN-JUN

We're here now.

BONG-CHA

And I'm tired now.

She walks past him toward the guest room. Min-jun lets her go, but watches until the door closes.

INTERCUT - MANISAN: Chun-deung stands with Tae-seok beside Aera's empty chair in the private dining room.

TAE-SEOK

The welfare-use resolution is filed. I can still trigger an early inspection.

CHUN-DEUNG

No.

TAE-SEOK

Why not?

CHUN-DEUNG

Do not touch it. The lifts barely work, the water's cold, and they'll start fighting about money soon enough.

TAE-SEOK

How long?

CHUN-DEUNG

Give it a week.

He looks at Aera's empty chair.

CHUN-DEUNG

Leave it alone.

34 INT. THE TOWER - NIGHT

The Tower is quieter now, but not asleep.

Women carry mattresses into cleared rooms. Bags of rice are stacked beside medicine. A child sleeps across two dining chairs while his mother fills out a work schedule.

Aera stands in the lobby with a clipboard.

AERA

Mattresses on four. Food goes--

She stops.

Bitna looks at her, waiting.

Aera lowers the clipboard.

A WOMAN stands just inside the entrance with one suitcase and a boy of about eight. She is still wearing an office ID card. She looks as though she has spent the entire trip deciding whether to turn around.

BITNA

What do you need tonight?

WOMAN

A lock.

She looks down at the boy.

WOMAN

And somewhere he can sleep where he doesn't
hear the hallway.

Aera starts forward. Stops herself.

The Elder Woman picks up a box of new locksets.

ELDER WOMAN

I've got a lockset.

JI-YEON

Three-twelve's clean. Mostly.

YUN-HEE

There's soup downstairs. Not good soup, but it's
hot.

The newcomer almost cries. She does not. She follows them upstairs.

Aera watches the answer form without her.

Another KNOCK at the outer door.

Bitna opens it.

Another woman stands there.

Behind her, another waits on the steps.

Somewhere deep inside the old building, a single metallic CHIME sounds.

Aera turns toward it.

The women keep moving.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF EPISODE 1.