



The Reverse Side of Life

Lee Seung-U

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An extraordinary, highly acclaimed novel from Korea, revealing how the conflict of the secular and the divine manifests in the real world.

Bak Bugil's father is a genius. Everyone in the village expects him to pass the civil service examination and become a judge, but he hasn't been seen since he left to study in Seoul. Bak lives with his mother and his father's relations. At the end of a path that leads to the rear of their house is a persimmon tree and an old ramshackle hut. Children are forbidden by grownups to go near the tree, but Bak makes repeated incursions to collect the forbidden fruit. Finally, an encounter with the inhabitant of the hut changes his life forever. Decades later, a journalist (the narrator) is asked to write an article about one of South Korea's most unique writers, Bak Bugil. Initially reluctant, the journalist begins to develop a curiosity about Bak's past. Upon meeting Bak, it becomes clear that he finds childhood recollection painful and difficult, but the journalist knows that that if he is to write a single word about Bak it will be impossible without unearthing that history. Dealing with childhood shame, abandonment, rebellion, first love, and religious experimentation, this extraordinary novel cemented its author's reputation as one of the stars of South Korea's literary scene.

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