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Immersed in Summer



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K-Book Trends

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The Coolest Summer Spent at the Library

A Foreign Visitor's Guide to Beating the Heat at the Library

Written by

Junran Choi

Junran Choi | Adjunct Professor/Editor

The author is an editor and holds a Ph.D. in Cultural Contents, conducting research and writing while bridging the gap between academia and the field. She currently serves as an adjunct professor at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. Through her book, *Book Culture Spaces and Urban Regeneration*, she highlighted the value of book culture spaces and presented models for the sustainability of publishing, for which the book was selected as a Sejong Book in 2017. Currently, she focuses her research and writing on the in-depth connection between regional placeness and the publishing ecosystem.

What kind of scenery usually comes to mind when you think of spending a summer retreat at a library? Most people probably imagine reading a book inside a closed-off, modern building while soaking in the cool air from an air conditioner. This time, however, I would like to introduce a “cool library summer retreat in harmony with nature,” which goes a step further than that, selected from the places I have personally visited.

Cheongun Literature Library: Walking Through the Past and Present of Korean Literature at the Foot of Inwangsan Mountain

First, Cheongun Literature Library, nestled at the foot of Inwangsan Mountain in Seoul, is a literature-specialized library where visitors can fully immerse themselves in the lyricism of modern and contemporary Korean literature. After borrowing a book from the basement library and stepping up to the Hanok reading room on the ground floor, visitors are welcomed by a lush green forest and a refreshingly cascading artificial waterfall. Sitting on the cool wooden floor of the pavilion while reading to the sound of the waterfall offers a taste of the refined cultural lifestyle enjoyed by Joseon Dynasty scholars. Although its collection of 12,000 volumes is relatively small compared to general libraries, it is an unparalleled haven for book lovers as a specialized library focusing heavily on poetry, novels, and essays.

Above all, the decisive reason to recommend this place is that the Yun Dong-ju Literature House, where you can encounter South Korea's most beloved poet, is located right next to the library. Savoring the translated versions of his representative poetry collection, *Sky, Wind, Stars, and Poems*, brings a deep resonance to international visitors. In particular, the surrounding Seochon Alley area is a sacred ground that pieces together

the past and present of Korean literature. It features not only House of Yi Sang, which preserves the life of the genius poet Yi Sang who fiercely contemplated life during a similar era to Yun Dong-ju, but also Onul Bookshop, a bookstore previously run by author Han Kang, who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2024. All of these are within walking distance, allowing visitors to enjoy a refreshing reading session and a literary alley tour at the same time.



Cheongun Literature Library (Provided by the author) / Yun Dong-ju Literature House (Source: Jongno Foundation for Arts and Culture)

Yeonhwajeong Library: Finding K-Culture Atop a Lake of Blooming Lotuses

Yeonhwajeong Library, located right in the center of Deokjin Park in Jeonju, is a specialized traditional culture library housed in an elegant Hanok structure that appears to float upon the lake. It is richly stocked with Korea's traditional culture, arts, and local content. In particular, Yeonhwajeong Library during July and August showcases the absolute pinnacle of a summer retreat. This is because tens of thousands of red lotuses, filling Deokjin Lake to the brim, come into full bloom right past the

pleasant, panoramic windows through which a cool air-conditioned breeze flows. Reading a book while gazing out at the sea of crimson lotuses stretching in every direction offers a fantastical sense of visual fulfillment, making you feel as though you have stepped right into an Eastern ink-and-wash painting.

Even international visitors who are not yet fluent in reading Korean need not worry. This is thanks to the abundance of high-quality photobooks and illustrated books available here, which allow for an intuitive understanding of traditional Korean aesthetics, including Hanbok, traditional architecture, Korean food, and crafts. As you flip through local storybooks about the history of Jeonju or Pansori, using the gentle sounds of traditional Korean music flowing through the library as your background music, you will naturally absorb the very essence of Korean culture. Above all, it is highly recommended for anyone who wishes to delve deeper into the culture, as it allows visitors to browse a diverse array of books on K-culture at a single glance.



Yeonhwajeong Library / Inside Yeonhwajeong Library (Provided by the author)

The “Beach Reading Room” at Jukdo Sanghwawon: Turning Pages with the Sound of the Waves

Jukdo Sanghwawon in Boryeong, Chungcheongnam-do, which I happened to visit by chance a short while ago, is not a library in the traditional sense, but the entire island itself is one massive, grand garden. Hidden within this island is a truly extraordinary reading space. It is the “Beach Reading Room,” nestled inside the Seokyang (Sunset) Garden section that faces the western sea. Thanks to a 2-kilometer-long roofed corridor that blocks out the scorching summer sun, Sanghwawon is a place where visitors can stroll in the cool shade while catching the breeze from the West Sea. The Beach Reading Room, encountered at the end of this corridor, is a space for pure healing and meditation. Listening to the cool sound of crashing waves while slowly reading through Kim Yeon-su’s novel, *If the Waves Were the Ocean’s Work*, it feels as though there could be no study or library grander than this.



The Beach Reading Room / On the hills of Sanghwawon (Provided by the author)

Book Recommendations for the Summer Vacation by Critics across Generations

Written by

Sollim Lee, Junhyuk Maeng, Mihyang Kim, Dongseok Jang

Lee Sollim | Publishing Editor

As an editor, she contemplates books that will stand the test of time, while as a critic, she keeps a keen eye on new releases that demand to be read in the here and now. She is also a reader who dreams of a day where she can step aside from professional concerns to simply read to her heart's content, secretly hoping to one day find herself accidentally locked inside a library.

Junhyuk Maeng | Book Editor

Rather than aiming to craft a polished review or a perfect introduction, my true hope is to accurately convey the 'code' shared by myself and the 'us' out there somewhere. As a South Korean reader in my thirties who loves literature, I seek to carefully give voice to a part of that sensibility.

Mihyang Kim | Book Critic·Essayist, IT Service Planner

She worked as a publishing editor for thirteen years, spending three years on books and ten years planning and editing magazines. She is the author of the essay *Mother Said She Was Not Happy*, and co-authored *Key Words of the Korean Publishing Industry 2010-2019*, *What is Film?*, and *Goods Caution*. Having served as a Creative Director at a tech company, she is currently designing, interpreting, and recording the world as a service planner and storyteller.

Dongseok Jang | Literary Critic, Secretary General of the Pajubookcity Center

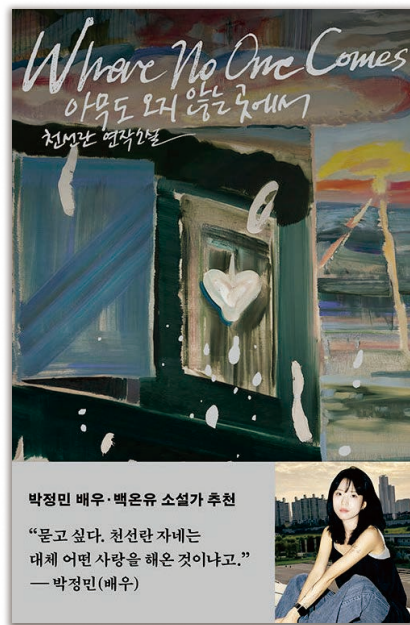
He is a dedicated reader and writer. Captivated by the vast and profound world of literature, he spends every spare moment reading and contemplating how books resonate with our society. He is currently striving to transform books, the infinite source of all content, into diverse cultural formats. His published works include *The Living Library*, *The Rebirth of Forbidden Books*, *The Birth of Different Thoughts*, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms: A Story Renewed After a Thousand Years*, and *Meeting World Classics for the First Time: A Guide for Teens*.

For our July issue’s Special Project, we would like to recommend Korean books that are perfect to read during the upcoming holiday season, handpicked by critics representing different generations. We have selected books that will allow you to spend your vacation immersed in distinctly unique themes, ranging from deep contemplations on life, mystery and horror, to the absolute absorption found in theater and plays. We hope your vacation with these books will be a cool, chilling, or deeply captivating retreat.

The 20s Perspective

Lee Sollim, Cultural Critic

“If You Want to Read the Most Tender Apocalypse This Summer”



Where No One Comes

When thinking of “summer vacation,” one cannot help but recall cool science fiction, and when it comes to “Korean SF,” the name Cheon Seon-ran naturally springs to mind. Author Cheon Seon-ran, who has built a solid domestic and international fandom with brilliant novels such as *A Thousand Blues* and *The*

Mower, has returned with a zombie story.

Launching with a playful recommendation from actor Park Jung-min, who asked, “Cheon Seon-ran, just what kind of love have you been practicing?”, *Where No One Comes* is Cheon Seon-ran’s second linked novel collection. This book boasts a rather unique history. It is a trilogy completed on the foundation of her early-career short stories “Can You Hear My Voice” (2019) and “Do You Remember My Breathing” (2020), along with the novella “Do You Know Us” (2025), which expanded that very universe. In essence, a world the author harbored for a long time has crystallized into a single cohesive masterpiece over the span of six years.

The overarching subject matter binding the book is the “zombie.” A world ravaged by a zombie virus, a humanity on the brink of extinction, and desperate choices made for survival. At first glance, it may seem like a familiar apocalypse, but Cheon Seon-ran’s focus does not rest on the disaster itself. What she has long written about is the way existence beyond the borders understands and cares for one another. The author, who has explored the possibilities of coexistence by navigating between robots and humans, humans and animals, and this world and the next, summons zombies this time around.

Cheon notes that she has frequently introduced entities akin to zombies in her past fiction, stating, “Now, I am finally ready to write my own zombie story.” The resulting outcome is a zombie narrative far more tender and unfamiliar than expected. The three pieces are set against entirely different coordinates of time and space: a disaster initiating inside a space migration vessel, people living and caring for one another on an Earth post-extinction, and a world where memories and emotions linger even after humanity has

vanished. Each narrative is knit together by loose connections, questioning just how far the desire to save someone can lead us. Cheon's zombies are never cleanly defined as mere "objects of terror." Rather than frightening, they are heartbreaking; rather than alien, they are sorrowful. These entities, who were once human, remember and recognize those they love, and thus sometimes struggle desperately not to cause them harm.

In Cheon's fiction, the critical point has always been the possibility of coexistence rather than survival itself. *If A Thousand Blues* explored the meaning of care through the relationship between human and robot, *Where No One Comes* borrows the genre of the zombie apocalypse to speak on the matters of love and mourning. Therefore, the disaster in this novel is nothing more than a backdrop. What the author displays to the very end is the heart that remains even after ruin, and the existences that simply refuse to give up on one another.

Above all, Cheon Seon-ran is an exceptional author when it comes to crafting scenes. Ruined cities, the corridors of spaceships, and the landscapes of unfamiliar planets are so vivid that they paint themselves right before the reader's eyes. This is precisely why the book reads at a brisk pace while each scene leaves a long-lasting residue in the heart. Vacation reading is often compared to a journey to an unfamiliar world, and if so, *Where No One Comes* serves as a magnificent destination for that journey. It is a perfect novel to unfold when you wish to step away from reality for a moment, yet ultimately refuse to let go of your faith in humanity.

The 30s Perspective

Junhyuk Maeng, Publishing Editor

“A Chilling Awakening”



I Said Goodbye

It was when I read *Run, Daddy, Run* that I first came to love Kim Ae-ran's short stories. The reason I cherished every single story in that book was likely because my own youth in my twenties overlapped with them. The stories were sad yet funny; the characters never explained their lives at length as a tragedy, yet once I finished reading, it was a hilarious tragedy. I loved that emotional texture, and I felt she expressed chilly themes with an unhideable, burning heart. Those stories did not comfort life, but they seemed to demonstrate an alternative posture for enduring it.

The characters in *I Said Goodbye* have aged since then. Rather than youth who have just stepped into society, they are people who have become slightly stained while creating and defending their own places in the world. They think about houses and money, nursing their parents, retirement, and

their positions within the workplace. In their youth, they wanted to protect “people,” but now they believe that they must protect their “property” in order to protect people. They sometimes view others’ desires as greed while labeling their own desires as survival. They know that such a mindset is shameful, yet they cannot give up on those desires either.

In the short story titled “A Good Neighbor,” the following passage appears:

“In my youth, I wanted to protect ‘people,’ but these days I find myself constantly wanting to protect ‘property.’ It is because of an anxiety that this is the only way I can protect myself and my family. (...) Not long ago, my husband said to me, ‘Once we become well-off, let’s live helping others.’ But darling, once we become well-off, won’t we just want to become ‘more’ well-off?”

After reading the book, I attended a book club meeting, and we discussed this particular passage for a long time. We talked about how, before we knew it, our lives seemed to be divided into just two kinds: a “good life” and a “well-off life.” Consequently, it feels as though people are split into only two archetypes: those who agonize over “what constitutes a good life” and those who stress over “how to achieve success.” Because these two types of people possess completely different worldviews, one seems to view the world through the lens of “values” alone, while the other views it solely through “interests.” It feels as if the two are gradually becoming worlds that can never meet.

Amid this chilly realization, the author Kim Ae-ran still offers neither comfort, nor right answers, nor anything of the sort. She merely shows that

this is how people are living right now, gazing upon them with a slightly compassionate eye.

The 40s Perspective

Mihyang Kim, Publishing Critic



No More Nightmare

Summer is the perfect season for reading mystery and horror. Unfamiliar spaces, unpredictable events, and a narrative tension held tight until the very end offer a special pleasure unique to holiday reading. In this sense, Lee Do-hae's *No More Nightmare* is a noteworthy piece of Korean YA literature to look out for this summer.

The novel begins as Aki, a seventeen-year-old apprentice copyist working at “No More Nightmare”—a suspicious shop that purchases haunted objects and cursed artifacts—sets out to find four missing high school students. The place where the children vanished is a defunct escape room cafe. However, this is no mere recreational space; it is an unknown domain

constructed by supernatural aberrations to lure humans. In each room, mysterious rules exist, and violating them causes one to lose memories or become unable to see the exit. Should they fail in the final room, a continuous infinite loop awaits, dragging them back to the very beginning.

The greatest charm of this work lies in its exquisite combination of the familiar and the unfamiliar. Escape rooms are a globally recognized play culture. The structure of searching for clues, decoding rules, and attempting an escape within a restricted space is effortlessly understood across borders. *No More Nightmare* adds the unique tension of “rule creepypasta” on top of this universal game structure. Rather than fighting monsters, readers must interpret rules and find hidden meanings, experiencing a high level of immersion in the process.

Yet, this work does not merely stop at being a simple horror novel. While the monsters within the story manipulate human memories and stimulate fear, the novel ultimately shines its spotlight on the human heart rather than the monsters themselves. The friends featured in the book believe they know each other well, but they remain unaware of the wounds and anxieties their peers keep hidden. Someone conceals their poverty, while another cannot voice their struggles. The silence they believed to be a consideration for the other person instead breeds misunderstanding and prejudice, eventually turning into yet another rule that traps them inside the room.

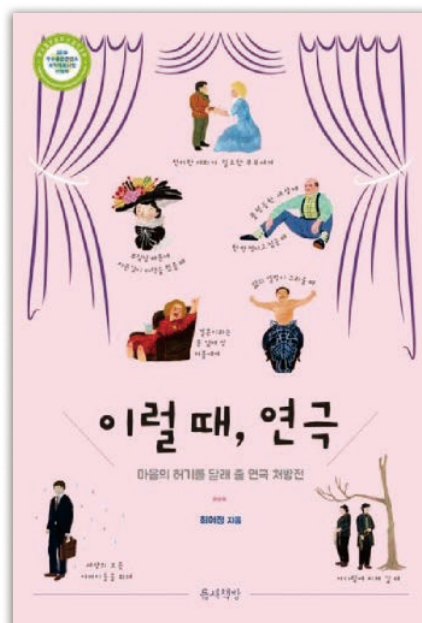
Consequently, the domain created by monsters is not the only thing the characters must escape. Breaking free from the assumptions and misunderstandings about others—things they firmly believed they knew—also becomes a crucial task. While this theme stems from the reality of

Korean youth, it is simultaneously a universal story that can resonate anywhere in the world. This is because friendship, a sense of belonging, prejudice, and the understanding of others are experiences of growth shared beyond cultures and languages.

Recently, Korean content has been connecting with global readers and viewers through occult, thriller, and survival genres. *No More Nightmare* is a noteworthy work positioned squarely within that trajectory. By combining the familiar format of an escape room game, the suspense of having to survive by decoding rules, and a coming-of-age narrative centered on relationships and empathy, it beautifully demonstrates how Korean young adult literature reinterprets the issues of growth through genre imagination.

The 50s Perspective

Dongseok Jang, Literary Critic



This Is Theater in Times Like These

The summer heat has arrived without fail. Some choose to fight fire with fire, while others constantly seek out ice-cold things to defeat the sweltering weather. Yet, when all is said and done, perhaps the absolute best way to beat the heat is through “immersion.” If you pour your heart and soul into something, whatever it may be, you can escape the midsummer heat, if only for a brief moment. This summer, I have chosen “theater” as my method of immersive escape. When I tightly press every single line and every single gesture of the actors on stage into my heart—actions meant to make the production shine—the summer heat suddenly becomes nothing at all. Reading this book before heading to the theater would be the ultimate icing on the cake: *This Is Theater in Times Like These* by performance critic and author Choi Yeo-jung.

With smartphones held in the hands of everyone across the globe, broadcasting all kinds of sensational and violent content, theater might seem on the verge of disappearing soon. However, the author notes: “While advancements in technology often predict the demise of theater, others declare that this ancient art form, invented by humanity, is the very fortress that will survive until the final moment of the world’s end.” The author’s emphasis, of course, is firmly placed on being that fortress surviving until the final moment. The first piece chosen by such an author is Arthur Miller’s “Death of a Salesman.” Beginning with “Father,” a Korean adaptation starring the veteran actor Lee Soon-jae who passed away late year, and moving through the 1985 CBS television adaptation as well as the production by the Royal Shakespeare Company, the author travels far and wide to explain why this work remains a classic of our time. Willy, who became a shabby salesman unable to sell a single item after the Great Depression, might just be the embodiment of the lives of fathers across all generations.

Before marriage, she lived as her father's doll; after marriage, she lived as her husband's doll. Introducing Henrik Ibsen's "A Doll's House," which captures Nora's anguish, the author brings up Na Hye-sok. As South Korea's first female Western-style painter, Na Hye-sok was an "eternal modern woman who denied what was forbidden" and the "Nora of Korea who refused to be a doll." In the early 20th century, Na cried out for the invalidity of marriage and the rationality of cohabitation, while criticizing a society that debated a woman's chastity. Coincidentally, the book Na Hye-sok loved most was indeed "A Doll's House." First introduced to local audiences through a performance by the Joseon Actor School in 1925, this work has been cherished by domestic theatergoers for a long time. However, Henrik Ibsen looked beyond women's liberation to focus more on the discovery of humanity. On his 70th birthday celebration, he is said to have stated: "I have not coded for the women's liberation movement. I am a poet, not a social philosopher. My duty as a playwright is the broad description of humanity."

In addition to these masterpieces, the author offers an intimate look inside and outside works that will forever remain in theater history, such as Anton Chekhov's "The Seagull," George Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion," Euripides' "Medea," Peter Shaffer's "Equus," and Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot." If you have no proper way to escape the summer heat, you should head straight to a theater right now. My heart earnestly hopes that theater, which has been experiencing a prolonged downturn, will vividly come back to life this summer.

Summary

Lee Sollim: Cheon Seon-ran's Tale of Love and Mourning Cloaked in a Zombie Apocalypse

Maeng Junhyuk: A Novel That Brings a Chilling Awakening

Kim Mihyang: The Power of Understanding Discovered at the End of a Nightmare

Jang Dong Seok: To Beat the Midsummer Heat, There Is Nothing Quite Like Theater!

Export Case: One Day a Cat Came to Me

Interest in K-Culture: Expanding Beyond Pop Culture and into Spiritual Culture

Written by

Yang Minho

Yang Minho | Editor, Bulkwang Publishing

An ordinary office worker who embraces religious teachings as a source of life wisdom, and thus uniquely holds both a Buddhist dharma name and a Christian baptismal name. He has been working as an editor at Bulkwang Publishing for over a decade.

This book shares the wisdom of life learned from “Nyangi,” a cat encountered by chance at a mountain hermitage where the author settled after wrapping up ten years of life in Seoul. It captures the cat’s philosophy of living “earnestly yet casually” to the absolute fullest. From late 2025 through the first half of 2026, publishing rights for Bokyeong Sunim (Venerable Bokyeong)’s cat essay series comprising *One Day a Cat Came to Me*, *Time to Read a Cat*, and *Happiness Brought by a Cat: Joyfully and Cheerfully* were successfully contracted for export across 11 different linguistic regions worldwide, including the UK, Germany, Spain, and France. Although Bokyeong Sunim had already built a strong fandom as an essayist in the domestic Korean market, this marked his very first overseas publishing contract. Furthermore, securing contracts simultaneously across multiple language regions is an extremely rare phenomenon, leaving the author, the publisher, and external publishing professionals utterly astonished. The export of Bokyeong Sunim’s books holds profound significance, as it offers a glimpse into the potential for expanding Korean Buddhism, and more broadly, religious and spiritual content in general. It serves as a powerful demonstration that religious teachings can readily secure mainstream appeal if they are interpreted and reframed to meet the needs and demands of the current era.



One Day a Cat Came to Me, Time to Read a Cat, and Happiness Brought by a Cat: Joyfully and Cheerfully

Specificity and Universality: In the End, Content Is the Answer!

Recently, Buddhism has established itself as a major trend in Korean society. From temple stays, temple food, and meditation programs to exhibitions, merchandise, and cultural events, content imbued with Buddhist elements is being consumed in a wide variety of ways. This trend has synchronized with the global expansion of K-culture, reaching far beyond domestic borders. In fact, the number of international tourists visiting temples or participating in ascetic practice programs during their stay in South Korea has been steadily increasing. Today, global citizens are no longer satisfied with merely skimming the surface of Korean culture; they are paying close attention to the attitudes toward life and the spiritual values embedded within Korea's traditions and spiritual culture.

This shifting landscape explains why the global community has turned its attention to the books of Bokyeong Sunim. The perspective of Korean Buddhism, which can be considered the very essence of Korean spiritual

culture, is naturally dissolved into his writing. The essays of Bokyeong Sunim are by no means lightweight or superficial. They are packed with the contemplation and insight accumulated through a lifetime spent as a practitioner of monastic contemplation. Furthermore, they are infused with a universal wisdom about life that resonates with anyone, anywhere. It is commonly said that for content to succeed on a global scale, it must harmonize cultural specificity with human universality, and Bokyeong Sunim's books do exactly that. Though deeply rooted in the Korean context, his narratives remain profoundly accessible. The stories of life drawn from a practitioner's unique gaze possess more than enough power to evoke deep empathy across borders and languages. (And of course, the presence of the adorable cat, "Nyangi," undoubtedly played a massive role as well!)



Together apart, apart together. (Bokyeong Sunim and "Nyangi") © Bulkwang Publishing

"I endeavored to capture my own contemplations and insights regarding the issues that directly impact modern lives—the very challenges that people living today grapple with. In a sense, this book

should not be viewed merely as ‘a book on Buddhism written by a monk,’ but rather as ‘a book about life written by a practitioner of contemplation.’”

– Bokyeong Sunim

A Shared Literary Destiny: Agency and Publisher

No matter how beautiful the colors of a flower may be, it is difficult to appreciate its true value if it blossoms all alone. If an author’s writing is a flower, then the publisher and the agency are like the wind and the butterfly that spread its fragrance across the world. For a single book to catch the eyes of many and further expand its reach globally, these three elements must harmonize perfectly.

In the process of exporting the publishing rights for Bokyeong Sunim’s recent book, the role played by the Danny Hong Agency was monumental. While there had been occasional overseas interest in the Venerable’s books in the past, it had never actually culminated in a contract. This time, however, was different. The Danny Hong Agency recognized the book’s value first and proactively proposed international marketing, and thanks to their genuine dedication, remarkable results were achieved. While I am incredibly grateful for their success in securing contracts across numerous linguistic regions, I was, above all, deeply moved by the partnership they demonstrated throughout the entire journey. They thoughtfully considered the position of our publisher, which lacked extensive experience, and always responded with utmost sincerity even to minor inquiries. Thanks to them, we were able to learn so much about the rights management business. I

would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to the Danny Hong Agency for walking alongside us in this beautiful journey that has been wonderful in the beginning, wonderful in the middle, and wonderful in the end.

Light, Even in Darkness

Written by

Yun Ko-eun

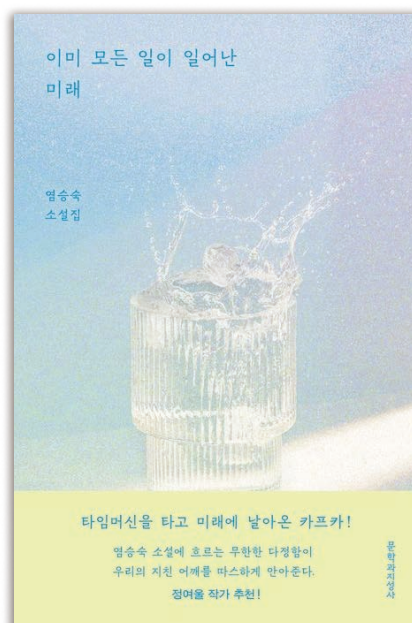
Yun Ko-eun | Novelist

The author has published nine novels. She is the first East Asian writer to receive the CWA Dagger Award. Her notable works include 〈The Disaster Tourist〉, which explores disaster tourism, and 〈Art on Fire〉, which revolves around an artist sponsored by a wealthy dog. Currently, she hosts the daily radio program [EBS Book Cafe].



The Anxiety of “Securing a Safe Home of One’s Own”

I have a long-standing habit. Upon finally reaching the very last sentence of a novel, I flip the pages backward with a rustle to return to the first sentence once again, a method I call the Möbius strip reading technique. When the end and the beginning of a novel are stitched together inside the mind, the story grows even more intense, leaving no exit. Everything, absolutely everything, becomes amplified.



The first sentence of “Leap of Faith,” a short story included in Yeom Seung-sook’s short story collection *The Future Where Everything Has Already Happened*, reads as follows:

“Cheol and Yeong were a married couple, and their child was five years old.”

While this seems to convey utterly plain information, one comes to realize throughout the reading that this sentence is by no means that simple. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Cheol and Yeong go around looking for a house. Although it is a pandemic era when simply stepping into an indoor space or venturing anywhere outside feels burdensome, they must still visit other people’s homes while uttering the phrase, “We are sorry to trouble you during these times.” Due to the landlord’s sudden notification, they have been thrust into a situation where they must engage in a real estate transaction, yet their budget is insufficient and time is tight. Caught between the regret of “if only we had bought last year” and the misery of “during these times,” securing a home of their own becomes an urgent task.

Yeong works a part-time job running open runs for luxury goods, while Cheol feeds and cares for the child. Had it not been for the pandemic, Cheol would have also continued his side job as a designated driver. The desperation that they must not lose their health as well keeps increasing the number of nutritional supplements they take, yet the couple is ultimately diagnosed with leaky gut syndrome. Does this imply that the nutrients they so faithfully ingested have all leaked out? If so, where to? The circumstances surrounding Cheol and Yeong grow progressively harsh, eventually bringing us right face-to-face with this particular sentence:

“Only then did they realize what the déjà vu had been when they first entered this building and when they had looked up at it from the outside,

and they had to strive to soften their hearts, which were suddenly on the verge of turning harsh and fierce in front of the child.”

Upon returning to the introduction of the novel after encountering this final sentence, the first sentence resonates with a different level of sensitivity than before. It reads almost like a quest.

“Cheol and Yeong were a married couple, and their child was five years old.”

When we face the water tank that bursts as if hit by a bombardment at the climax, we too feel like crying our eyes out, but Cheol and Yeong cannot even weep. There is no time to hesitate. There is no time to break down either. They must summon their strength, even if it means doing so while clapping for self-hypnosis. The struggle for survival of Cheol and Yeong in the novel is a present-progressive fear that remains entirely valid even after the pandemic has ended. For people who live embracing their own variations of hardship, the story of Cheol and Yeong can never truly belong to someone else.

This short story collection begins with the phrase “the future cannot be seen” and folds closed with “it was a novelty, something never once experienced in a lifetime.” Between these sentences, which are parts of two different stories, we encounter the genuine anxieties of people living in the present, the weight of daily life that cannot be summarized by mere numbers. As we read on, it feels even more sorrowful that reality is not specifically targeting them to inflict pain. Because the world is filled with entirely indifferent and innocent faces, it is lonely to have to swallow the desire to protest to anyone, anywhere.

Nevertheless, the reason we return to read this book again and again is

because of the strange beauty we happen to pick up at unexpected points. It is the “plump and soft” thing that sustains us even in a “tough and harsh” life, to borrow the expressions from the novel. Because that very thing allows us to live on again, and enables us to endure. Knowing this, it is impossible to stop reading the stories of Yeom Seung-sook.

The Evolution and Growing Pains of the Seoul International Book Fair

Written by

Park Junghyeok

Park Junghyeok | Publishing Marketer

When Breath Becomes Air, *Dopamine Nation*, and *Life of Pi* are among the titles he has marketed. He lectures widely on the subject, with courses such as “Publishing Marketing A-Z for the Modern Era” at CLASS101, “Practical Publishing Marketing” at Hankyoreh Education, “Marketing Strategies for Small and Medium Publishers” at the Publication Industry Promotion Agency of Korea (KPIPA), and the “Preparatory Publishing Marketer Course” at the Seoul Book Institute (SBI). He is also the co-author of *Publishing Marketing Trends*. (<https://www.instagram.com/parkdaerii>)

We live in an era where depressing indicators of an ongoing publishing recession and a declining reading population have become all too familiar. Paradoxically, however, the scene at the Seoul International Book Fair (SIBF) held every June, where people gather through books, is more vibrant and dynamic than ever. Even in the midsummer heat, the long lines of readers and the lively energy within the publishers' booths never cease. It demonstrates that the inherent power of books as a medium remains entirely valid.

The success of the SIBF in recent years has been nothing short of peerless. Since 2023, the book fair has gradually shed its traditional character as a mere market for selling books and promoting new releases. For the 2025 fair, an unprecedented 150,000 early-bird tickets were completely sold out during the pre-sale phase. The 2026 fair saw tens of thousands of people flock to the five-day early-bird sale two weeks before the event, resulting in a total sell-out for all days. Among the younger generation, the act of consuming text is now perceived as a noble taste and a form of unique individuality, a phenomenon known as the "Text Hip" trend. This cultural movement is manifesting itself tangibly through the massive offline platform of the SIBF. This year as well, under the striking theme of "Homo duduri," countless readers are continuing to carry that fiery enthusiasm forward.

Behind this massive wave of interest lies a distinct cultural current, along with structural challenges and future outlooks that the publishing industry must confront. This article aims to closely examine the evolution and the growing pains of this grand festival.

The Battleground of Publisher Universes: Innovative Branding by Publishers

One of the leading contributors to the mass success of the SIBF lies in the “concepts” and “universe settings” presented by publishers. In the past, book fair booths functioned as one-dimensional markets that simply arranged new releases by genre and highlighted discount rates. Today, however, they have transformed into popup stores and independent branding content that distill and display each publisher’s identity and aesthetics. When publishers and readers, who previously communicated only through smartphone screens, share a shared universe within a physical, offline space, readers evolve from mere “buyers” into an enthusiastic “fandom” for the publisher.



Source: Official Instagram accounts of Gimmyoung, Sakyejul, Eunhengnamu, Prunsoop, and Hankyoreh Publishing

Most publishers introduced uniquely distinctive concepts, such as Gimmyoung’s “GYM-myong,” Sakyejul Publishing’s “Ssam Market,” Eunhengnamu’s “Reading Weather Forecast,” Prunsoop’s “Prunsoop Computer Cleaning,” Hankyoreh Publishing’s “Bookworm Expedition,” Changbi’s “Between Creation and Criticism, Toward a Better World,” Sigongsa’s “Sigongsa: The Book Dealer,” Offenhaus’s “Play the Book,” and Field (Deulnyeok)’s “Ggoburi’s Genre Mine.” This style of branding grants readers the narrative pleasure of physically stepping into a publisher’s

universe in an offline setting.

The sophisticated universes constructed by these publishers precisely align with the needs of young visitors who simultaneously seek visual amusement and intellectual satisfaction. These young readers voluntarily take photos, share them on social media, and continue the narrative. Instead of stopping at the mere act of purchasing a book, they share the stories of the people who make those books, thereby expanding the experience across both online and offline realms..

Encounters and Connection: A Forum for Humanistic Discourse Created by Authors and Readers

Another irreplaceable value of the SIBF lies in its “uniquely distinct stories.” The SIBF is the very space where authors, who had been hidden behind printed types, emotionally encounter their readers. Throughout the fair, each booth transforms into a massive plaza where literary masters and distinctive rookie authors breathe together in one place. Every year at the fair, leading domestic publishers invite poets, novelists, essayists, and critics to hold signing events, mini book talks, and conversations on an hourly basis.

Readers listen directly to the voices of the authors who wrote the sentences they love, make eye contact, and receive autographs on book covers still lingering with warmth. Through this experience, the static act of reading is substituted with one of the most dynamic memories of their lives. It provides unforgettable memories for the readers, and offers powerful consolation for authors and publishers to steadily continue their creation and production.



Source: Official Website of the Seoul International Book Fair (SIBF)

The official programs curated by the organizers further elevate the qualitative standards of this festival. Every year, dozens of official conferences, seminars, and keynote lectures bring together domestic and international scholars and artists to pose the defining questions of our time. This is precisely why the book fair does not merely stop at being a consumable festival that caters only to popular entertainment, but instead functions as a venue where intellectual exploration and serious reflection coexist.

The Shadow of Brilliant Growth: Opaque Systems and the Rise of Alternative Book Fairs

While the SIBF bulks up, breaking box office records every year, voices expressing concern over its sustainability consistently echo from behind the scenes. The most urgently raised issue is the “marginalization of small and medium-sized publishers” driven by spatial limitations. Only four years ago, the number of participating companies hovered around 195, but due to an explosion in booth applications in recent years, that number is now nearing an average of 500. Within the restricted exhibition space, instances of

being rejected from participating in the book fair are inevitably on the rise. In particular, the room left for small and medium-sized publishers or one-person publishing houses, which look to participate modestly with just one or two basic prefabricated booths, has become extremely narrow. In fact, a situation occurred where numerous small-scale publishers were rejected en masse following screening criteria centered on vague qualitative evaluations.



Source: Official Instagram accounts of the respective book fairs

It is an exceptional phenomenon that movements seeking alternative public forums have emerged in defiance of such festival enlargement and commercialization. Timed to coincide with the main book fair, the appearance of independent events—such as Turtleneck Press’s solo exhibition “Geobukmok (Turtle Neck) Book Fair” held at Saisiot, “Seoul Proper Book Fair” held at the Nodeul Lounge on Nodeul Island, and Busan-based independent publisher Balcony’s solo exhibition “Seoul One-Pyeong Book Fair”—presents another venue for connection. This demonstrates the determination of publishers who either could not cross the threshold of the SIBF or did not agree with its commercial operation methods to still come

together and meet readers. These alternative book fairs represent a healthy current that showcases the diversity and individuality of the publishing ecosystem that the SIBF failed to encompass. Furthermore, they present new questions regarding how the 2027 fair should be conducted.

Moving forward, what challenges must be addressed to turn the overwhelming interest in the SIBF into a priming water for the publishing industry? Securing diversity is the top priority. Fortunately, the Korean Publishers Association also collected various opinions this year and announced a plan to significantly secure additional exhibition space within COEX starting from the 2026 fair, expanding the physical area by more than 30%. If this proceeds as planned, it will become a space where the glamor of large publishers and the individuality of small and medium-sized publishers can coexist. In this scenario, alternative book fairs will also shift from “confrontation” to “harmony.” Su-jin Cho, the representative of Eoheung Daejakjeon who participated in the Seoul Proper Book Fair, also remarked, “I hope the SIBF reclaims its public nature next year, so that the Seoul Proper Book Fair can conclude with this year’s edition.” What publishers truly desire is not confrontation, but an “SIBF” that everyone can enjoy together.

Believing in the Power of Print That Unites Us Through Books

The SIBF is like a living organism, constantly evolving according to the demands of the times. Amidst the complex and multifaceted process of a massive festival that draws crowds of hundreds of thousands, a miraculous formula that can perfectly satisfy every participating entity, publishing worker, and reader might not even exist.

However, the reason we ultimately cannot withdraw our gaze of optimism, even while criticizing this festival, lies in the inherent value of the space itself. Even under the logic of capital and the pressure of efficiency, the SIBF remains a unique, one-of-a-kind space where people who love books and people who make those books can confirm each other's existence once a year and pat one another on the back. Escaping the algorithms within social media to feel the coarse texture of paper and share one another's sentences is an experience that is noble in its own right.

Amidst the crisis of the publishing market, the book fair will surely evolve toward a healthier and more mature direction, using criticism and reflection as its nourishment. Just as books have transformed our lives in that exact manner. For that reason, we must steadily speak, write, and read. Once again, we look forward to a miraculous book fair that everyone can enjoy with perfect satisfaction.

Sail and Anchor: A Publisher of Depth and Sensuous Books

Interview by

The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

Younge Keem | Artist, Publisher

The author studied European literature and art. With an interest in weaving familiar stories into new forms, she has been active across various media, including documentary, installation art, publishing, and translation. Currently living in Seoul with three cats, the author has been running the one-person publishing house Sail and Anchor since 2019.

The independent publisher “Sail and Anchor” is a house that publishes books as deeply memorable as its own name. The books from Sail and Anchor instantly capture the eye, containing writings that are both beautiful and profound. From books with keen insights into easily overlooked everyday subjects to titles introduced for the very first time in Korea, they publish works that leave a lasting impression on the reader’s heart—including *The Chronicles of Monami 153*, *The Unknown Grandmother*, *The Book of Zero*, and *Captive Stones*. In this issue, we aim to examine the unique book philosophy and vision that only Sail and Anchor can showcase.

Q. The name immediately catches the eye. Why “Sail and Anchor”? Please explain the origin and meaning behind the name.

Around the time I was preparing to launch the publishing house, I spent two years living on Jeju Island. Back then, the imagery of the sea was deeply permeated into my daily life, which naturally led me to view publishing through the perspective of a voyage. Since I started publishing as an expanded platform for my art practice, the question of “How far can these creations actually reach?” was personally a very important theme for me.

A book is a medium that takes us to distant places we could never otherwise visit, while simultaneously helping us closely examine the reality where our feet are currently planted. I believe that only when we maintain both directions and find a balance can the act of creating and distributing stories possess true vitality within society. Ultimately, I believe the path of art is quite similar. “Sail and Anchor” is a name chosen with the thought that this pair of metaphors—the “sail” and the “anchor,” both absolute necessities for a ship’s voyage—perfectly expresses this artistic worldview.



The logo of Sail and Anchor (since 2019)

Q. While all books are naturally precious, if you had to recommend a book that overseas subscribers must read, which of Sail and Anchor's books do you consider to be your flagship title?

Lake Journal is a record by artist Mon Sujin, who stayed in a lakeside village one winter and piled up snow with a shovel every day on the frozen surface of the lake. Although the snowdrifts that formed small mountains melt away bit by bit as temperatures rise, the artist continues to build this temporary island that will vanish once spring arrives, all while keeping a journal. Witnessing this futile yet beautiful act, which could simply be termed “shoveling,” prompts us to take a step back from the lake pictured before our eyes and once again ponder the existential meaning of art.



Editorial Thinking, Choi Hye-Jin

If I were to recommend one more, I would like to introduce my own humble work, *Captive Stones*. Artist Keem Youngle, who has focused on the relationship between image and text based on an interest in objects, has been collecting images of stones since 2018. Among them, the artist paid close attention to artworks dealing with stones and compiled writings about them into a book. Exploring the human gaze and desire directed toward stones, these writings possess a genre-blurring nature on the boundary between criticism, essay, and fiction. Since they also reflect Korean culture and the zeitgeist of the times, I believe they could be highly intriguing to overseas readers.



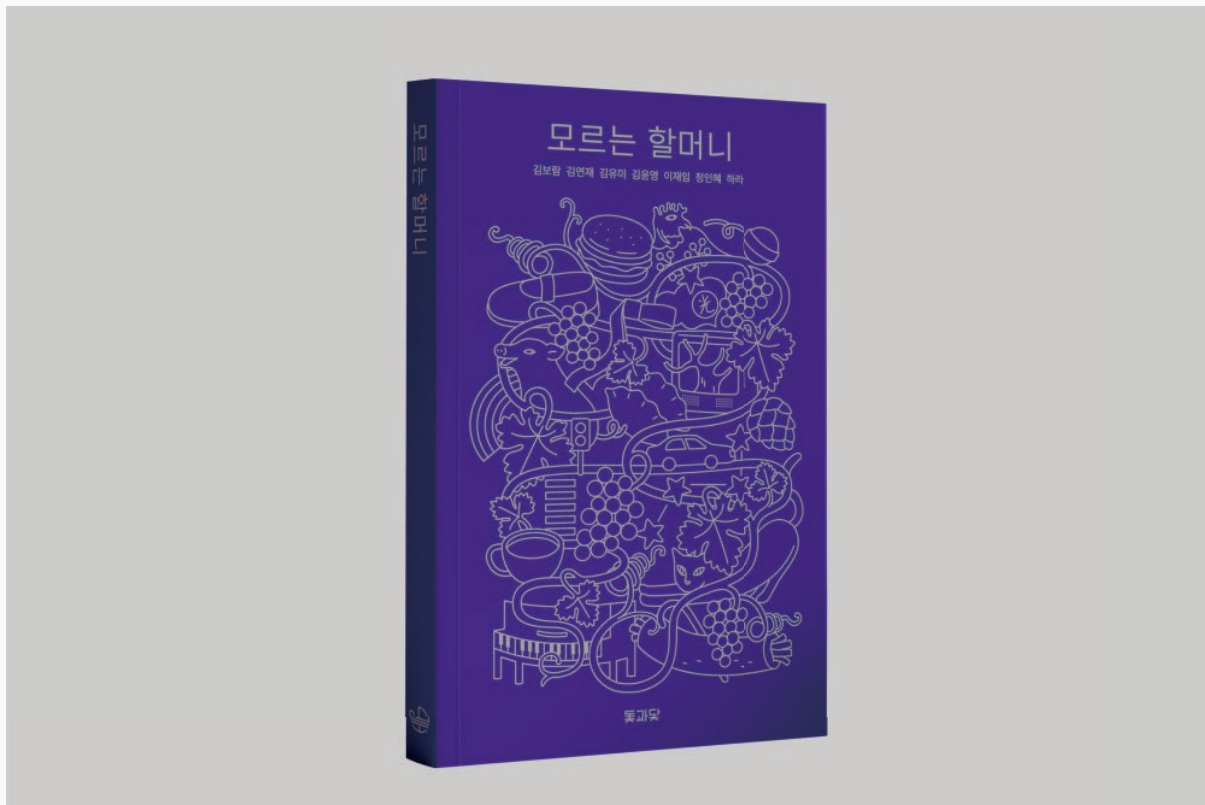
Captive Stones, Keem Youngle, 2024

Q. The book covers of *Sail* and *Anchor* seem to possess a power that captures the eye while allowing each title's unique individuality to shine through. While the books from *Sail* and *Anchor* are also highly popular as individual objects, do you have any specific principles you consider regarding the covers when working on a publication?

A book is a vessel that contains content, but it is also the content itself. I believe the most important aspect of book design is weaving meaning and form together closely so that the exterior and interior do not become separated. To successfully realize such a design, I engage in deep conversations and discussions with the designer, focusing not only on the book's outward appearance but also on its textual content. In the case of the essay collection *Grandmothers We Didn't Know*, published this year, drawings that hint at specific episodes within the book intertwine to form a single map, offering something to read and decode right on the cover itself. (Design: aloudlab) *Sail* and *Anchor*'s bestseller *Cat Country* is a 1930s Chinese novel, but thanks to its meticulous design—including a modernly reinterpreted cover, as well as the fore-edge painting and illustration

layouts that metaphorically reflect the novel's theme—it has been cherished by domestic readers for a long time. (Design: Lee Jaemin)

When making a book, I frequently imagine it placed not just on a store display stand, but on someone's bookshelf or table. I always try not to forget the fact that before a book is content, it is a tangible object. Even as so many things are shifting toward electronic media, I believe people still purchase, collect, and cherish books precisely because of their charm as physical objects that can be opened, closed, and touched.



Grandmothers We Didn't Know, Keam Boram et al., 2026



Cat Country, Lao She, Hong Myungkyo (translator), Woo Jeongsu (illustrator), 2021

Q. What lies ahead for the tomorrow that Sail and Anchor is heading toward? Briefly introduce what kind of vision Sail and Anchor is painting for Korean publishing culture.

The publishing market and cultural contents are heavily influenced by technological shifts and new trends, including artificial intelligence. However, I do not believe that the temporal and spatial stage of “tomorrow” must necessarily be intertwined with change. Rereading contemporary meaning within more essential values that shape human beings, which include things that do not change and things that endure for a long time, might perhaps be a more critical task for us. True to our catchphrase, “Further, Deeper,” Sail and Anchor aims to steadily create books that do not merely drift in a single direction but instead dissolve the boundaries of genres to explore the deeper recesses of humanity.

The Convergence of AI and Stocks: An Author Who Reads the Trends

Interview by

The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

Cho Sung-ho | Professor

The author is currently a professor in the Department of AI and Software at Hanshin University, where he has been conducting research and delivering lectures in the field of computer science for many years. He has authored numerous books, including *Easy Learning Operating System*, *Introduction to C Programming*, *Miracle JAVA Programming*, *Miracle Web Programming*, *Data Communications and Networking*, and *Introduction to Computer Science*.

Stocks and artificial intelligence are captivating South Korea in 2026. Amidst this phenomenon, there is an author who published a book this past April on stock investment secrets using the generative AI “Gemini.” We would like to listen to the story of author Cho Sung-ho, who wrote about Korea’s stock fever and how to establish an investment headquarters by using AI as a personal secretary.

Q. The combination of Gemini and stocks seems to epitomize South Korea’s trends in 2026. Could you please introduce yourself and share what inspired you to write this book?

I am currently serving as a professor in the Department of AI and Software at Hanshin University. I have spent many years researching and teaching computer science and software, and personally, I also hold a deep interest in economics, psychology, and journalism and mass communication. While these may seem like entirely different fields at first glance, I believe they are profoundly connected in that they ultimately study human choice and judgment

The era when I first learned computer science is a completely different world from today. In particular, I feel that the emergence of generative artificial intelligence represents a shift on par with the birth of the internet. The shock I experienced when I first used ChatGPT remains vivid to this day. I saw immense potential in it, recognizing that it was not merely a tool for answering questions, but a new form of instrument that helps organize thoughts, expand ideas, and assist in decision-making.

On a personal note, I have been investing in stocks for several years. In the beginning, I invested based on just a few news articles and experienced

significant losses. Since then, I studied by looking into books, lectures, corporate reports, and investment videos, but I realized that studying extensively did not necessarily guarantee better investment performance.

What I learned through investing is that the stock market is not simply a game of finding good stocks. It simultaneously requires the patience to wait long enough, the self-control to regulate greed, and the judgment to sell at the appropriate moment. This is why the saying “Buying is a technique, but selling is an art” seems to circulate among investors.

In reality, the investment process is more complex than one might think. You have to analyze economic trends, discover promising industries, investigate relevant companies, check financial statements and public disclosures, and analyze charts. It is by no means easy for office workers or students to carry out this entire process consistently.

Amidst this, I tried utilizing Google’s Gemini, which is connected to vast amounts of information, and the results were astonishing. Data research and information organization that used to take several hours in the past were accomplished much faster. While the final judgment ultimately rests with the investor, the process of collecting and organizing information could be drastically reduced.

Currently, many books on utilizing Gemini in the market focus primarily on introducing its features, while investment books explain the investment techniques themselves. However, there were not many books connecting these two domains. Gemini Stock Investing was born precisely to fill that gap. Through this book, I wanted to introduce readers to methods for collecting investment information more quickly and accurately using Gemini, thereby enabling them to make rational decisions.



Gemini Stock Investing

Q. We are curious to know whether you also utilize artificial intelligence for various tasks in your daily life.

Artificial intelligence has now become a part of my daily routine. In the past, when I had a question, I would open a Naver or Google search window. Today, I toss my questions to Gemini or ChatGPT first. While searching was a process of finding information, conversing with AI is closer to a process of understanding and organizing information.

I also receive immense help when preparing for my lectures. There are many times when I deliberate over how to explain difficult concepts to students. In those moments, I ask the AI for various metaphors and examples. Sometimes, I request it to explain the exact same content customized respectively to the eye levels of an elementary school student, a college student, and an office worker. When I do this, I often discover perspectives that I had not managed to think of myself.

I gain a lot of assistance in the process of writing as well. I utilize it when

reviewing a book's table of contents or checking for any lacking aspects from a reader's standpoint. Although I write the final manuscript myself, it plays the role of an excellent assistant in the process of organizing ideas and reviewing diverse viewpoints.

The same applies to stock investing. Previously, in order to analyze a single company, I had to move back and forth between multiple websites to gather data. Now, because artificial intelligence helps with data collection and summarization, I can focus more on the critical judgments. I believe that in the future, people who utilize artificial intelligence effectively will come to possess a greater competitive edge than those who do not.

Q. Could you please introduce your book, *Gemini Stock Investing*, and share what kind of value you hope to deliver to your readers?

I believe that a book must be beneficial and, above all, do no harm to its readers.

These days, it is easy to come across provocative phrases like “stocks that will rise tenfold,” “life-changing stocks,” or “investment methods that guarantee money.” Of course, I understand that this is an effort to draw readers' attention amidst a flood of content. However, if it instills excessive expectations and ultimately inflicts losses on someone, I do not believe it qualifies as good information.

For that reason, *Gemini Stock Investing* contains no talk of “stocks skyrocketing by 1000%” or “the next SK Hynix.” Instead, it focuses entirely on helping beginners and everyday investors make more rational decisions.

Every individual has a different way of investing. Some people analyze

charts, some look into financial statements, and others study the future of industries. This book does not force a specific investment style upon you. Instead, it explains how you can utilize Gemini regardless of the methodology you choose to invest by.

To ensure that readers can put it to use immediately, the book includes more than 200 practical, real-world prompts. I have organized questions that can be applied to actual investment processes, covering corporate analysis, industry outlooks, understanding financial statements, analyzing public disclosures, interpreting news, chart analysis, fund and bond trading, and tax-saving strategies.

This book does not intend to change your investment philosophy. It is a guide on how to utilize artificial intelligence when you want to double-check before investing based solely on someone else's recommendation, when making a judgment becomes difficult due to losses, or when you want to comprehend complex corporate information.

However, I would like to make one thing absolutely clear. The ultimate responsibility for any investment lies with the investor themselves. While artificial intelligence is an excellent assistant, it is not an entity that prophesies the future. Therefore, the book addresses not only the methods of utilization but also its limitations and precautions.

Q. Do you have any plans for writing more books in the future? Please briefly introduce your upcoming plans.

I still find great joy in lecturing and writing books. In particular, I feel a deep sense of reward in the process of explaining complex content so that anyone can easily understand it. For that reason, I have put a lot of thought

into ensuring that students can easily comprehend the books I have authored so far, such as *Easy Learning Operating System*, *Data Communications and Networking*, *Introduction to Computer Science*, *Miracle JAVA Programming*, and *Miracle Web Programming*. I plan to steadily continue writing specialized books in the field of computer science in the future as well.



While authoring more than ten computer science textbooks over the years, I have always wished to one day write a book that communicates with general readers. The first fruit of that desire was *Why Did Steve Jobs Kill Squid Game?*, and *Gemini Stock Investing* is my second general education book. In the future, I would like to continue writing books that allow me to connect with the general public.

As an extension of that effort, I have recently completed the manuscript for *Gemini Wealth Management*, which connects generative artificial intelligence with overall personal finance, including real estate, ETFs, pensions, and taxes, moving beyond just stocks. Moving forward, I intend to steadily write books that easily and practically convey how artificial intelligence is changing our lives and how ordinary people can utilize it.

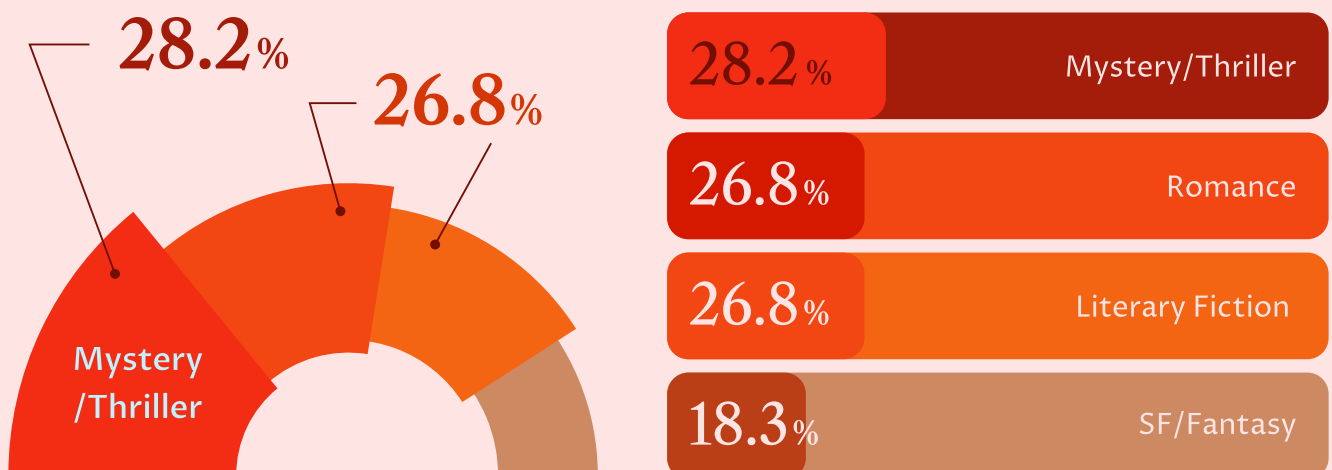
I believe that a good book possesses the power to change a reader's life for the better, even if only by a fraction, rather than simply transferring knowledge. I wish to continue communicating with readers for a long time through books of such caliber.

K-Thrillers So Chilling, Even the Midsummer Heat Runs Away

Edited by

The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

Q. Which genre of Korean literature do you want to read during the vacation season?





Jeong You-jeong, *Perfect Happiness*, Eunhengnamu, 2021.

The question for this issue was, “Which genre of Korean literature do you want to read during the vacation season?” The most popular choice was ‘Mystery/Thriller,’ selected by 29% of respondents. It was the ultimate choice for many subscribers looking to forget the summer heat with a spine-chilling thriller. Korean mystery and thriller novels have been garnering immense love, built on a foundation of solid plots and gripping storytelling.

The same is true for author Jeong You-jeong’s novel, *Perfect Happiness*. Yuna, the protagonist of the novel, practices a “subtraction of happiness,” systematically eliminating any possibility of unhappiness to achieve a perfect family and flawless happiness. Within the boundaries of the family she envisions, she seeks to eradicate everything she didn’t personally sketch into the picture. Whether it is the child’s biological father or her current husband’s son, or even whether it is a human being or something else entirely, it simply does not matter to Yuna.

As you pick up a novel for your vacation, what does “perfect happiness” truly mean to you? Can perfection ever truly approach a life spent solely on elimination? This novel tosses numerous reasons to stay awake to readers already struggling to fall asleep on tropical nights. Atop a heart pounding with fear, it layers complex reflections on what perfect happiness in life really entails.

Which K-thriller novel do you want to read this vacation season? Aside from Perfect Happiness, there is no shortage of excellent Korean thriller novels. This means there are plenty of mystery or thriller books to fill the many days of your break. We hope you have a chilling summer, reflecting on what your own perfect happiness might be, perhaps at the pace of one book a day during your vacation. By the way, Yuna, who ultimately failed to achieve her perfect happiness, says this:

“I am just so unlucky.”

The Early Summer Sea, and I Read Absolutely Nothing

Edited by

The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

Welcome to *Book Grocery*, a monthly K-Book Trends feature that recommends books based on readers' real stories. If you would like to receive a book recommendation tailored to your concerns or situation, please submit your story through the form below.

[Submit your story](#)

A Story from a Worker in Their 30s from Samseong-dong, Seoul

Every summer, I make it a point to book a seaside lodging all by myself.

This year, I requested an early vacation. And as always, I packed one or two books in my bag. This year was no different from the last. One half-read novel and another essay collection that had been sitting on my shelf for ages. This time, I told myself, I would definitely finish them.

Yet, the moment I actually sat under the parasol and opened a book, the sound of the waves would reach my ears. The distant laughter of children playing echoed from afar. As the sun began to dip, the horizon would be dyed in shades of orange. Over and over, I found myself lifting my eyes from the pages.

“I need to read.”

I would mutter to myself, returning to the very first line. And then, I would look out at the waves again.

In the end, I kept the exact same page open for all three days. I managed to read absolutely nothing. Paradoxically, however, on the bus ride back home, I felt a deep sense of complete rest that I hadn't experienced in a very long time. Only then did I begin to wonder.

Doing nothing at all, simply staring blankly at the ocean—could that, in fact, have been what I needed most of all?

Recommended Book for This Story



Weekdays are Part of Life, Too, Kim Shin-ji, RH Korea, 2020

Weekdays are Part of Life, Too is an essay collection that gently reminds those enduring the workweek while waiting only for the weekend that this very moment is also a fully valid part of life. Instead of 100% perfection, author Kim Shin-ji suggests that a loose 80% is more than enough, sharing how to live through each day at one's own pace without urgency. This book warmly comforts the mind trapped in the idea that one has only “rested properly” after finishing a whole book, or the pressure to “achieve” something even while on vacation.

During those moments spent just staring blankly out at the ocean, you might, in fact, have already been resting beautifully. Perhaps the sea is not a

place to be read, but a place to be emptied. Breaking free from the pressure to constantly do something and choosing to simply do nothing is also a beautiful piece of life. Just as crucial as the time we spend gripping onto our passing lives is the time we spend letting go, simply allowing it to flow.

Contradictions and Hopes of Life, Unfolded Through Intimate Conversations

Written by

Jung-Ah Shin

Jung-Ah Shin | Culture Critic, Adjunct Professor, Division of Performing Arts, Baekseok Arts University

A TV documentary writer who has scripted over 400 episodes, the author is deeply interested in the intersection of cultural content and humanistic imagination. With a love for the stories of people and the world embedded in media, she believes in the power of good content to change the world. Major publications include *Elderly in Media*, *Elderly outside Media*, *Living with AI*, *New Media and Story-doing*, *Cultural Content and Transmedia*, and *Media Literacy Education for Digital Literacy*, etc.



Kim Hye-ri, *The Books We Loved*, Boogie Woogie, 2026.

The Books We Loved by Kim Hye-ri, is a reflection on the truths and shadows of life examined from various angles. As a veteran film journalist, Kim has long communicated with the public through reviews and columns. She has been praised by fellow critics as a model of film criticism, delivering the sincerity, fiction, tragedy, and hope embedded in cinema through her deep and thoughtful perspective. While moving within film circles, her experience introducing movies on the radio led her to launch the specialized film podcast 〈Kim Hye-ri’s Film Club〉 in 2016, alongside producer Choi Da-eun and actress Im Soo-jung.

As Kim grew accustomed to discussing cinema through spoken words rather than written text, she began producing 〈Kim Hye-ri’s Quiet Life〉 in February 2021. Positioned as “a month’s worth of curation for those who walk, study, and work alone,” this comprehensive audio magazine expanded her spectrum even further as she encountered experts from various genres to share stories of the world outside of cinema.

This book is the culmination of compiled conversations with eight selected

guests among those she interviewed on the show. At the end of each conversation, a 'Playlist' is included to share the lists of books, movies, and TV series introduced during the broadcast. Whenever drawings or music are occasionally included in these lists, they feel like an unexpected, welcome gift. The guest list featured in the book includes literary critic Shin Hyeong-cheol, documentary director Kim Hyun-woo, actor and bookstore owner Park Jeong-min, picture book author Suzy Lee, literary critic Oh Hye-jin, anthropologist Seo Bo-kyeong, current affairs journalist Jang Il-ho, and ethnologist Lee Won-young.

While their conversations examine the world through topics as diverse as their respective fields, host Kim Hye-ri's questions remain comfortable and flexible despite the challenges and unfamiliarity of crossing genres. It is also fascinating to note that this book was produced through crowdfunding, with the support of 539 backers. The depth and breadth of these dialogues are simply too profound to be published quietly. As you follow the charm of Kim Hye-ri as a character navigating this space with absolute freedom and read through the pages as if enjoying a quiet cup of tea, you will soon find yourself fully immersed in the life of someone you never knew before.

It is a book that resembles a warm, friendly shopping basket packed with accessible yet thoughtful books, movies, music, and drawings. Transcending the geographical specificity of Korea, it gazes into the tragedies, despairs, and pains of ordinary people living similar yet entirely different lives all around the globe. Ultimately, it captures a heartfelt, desperate effort to stand in solidarity with one another.

The Beginning of Summer: June's Integrated Bestseller List

Edited by

The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

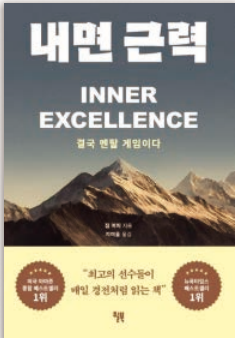
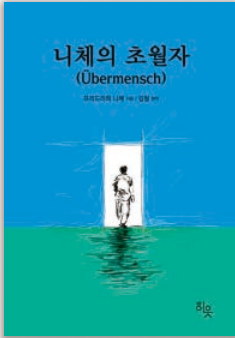
Since the March issue, this column has analyzed the bestseller lists of four major bookstore franchises in South Korea: Kyobo Book Centre, Youngpoong Bookstore, Jongno Books, and Arc N Book. While previous analyses focused strictly on brick-and-mortar sales, the charts of online bookstores, which now represent a major pillar of book distribution, are arguably just as important as their offline counterparts. Because all four of these franchises operate online storefronts alongside their physical locations, the upcoming features from the July through October issues will examine comprehensive charts that combine both online and offline data. To kick off this series, we look at the integrated bestseller chart compiled by Kyobo Book Centre, the largest and most influential of the four franchises.

During the second week of June, the top spot on Kyobo's chart went to *A Knowledge Briefing for Elegant Conversation* by Kim Jin, a journalist and anchor for the comprehensive cable network Channel A. This reflects a growing desire among contemporary readers, who have become increasingly engaged in social phenomena and politics, to better understand current issues. A defining characteristic of the Kyobo chart is the strong performance of fiction. Along with *Project Hail Mary* in second place, a total of five novels made the top ten, including *Siddhartha*, *I Said Goodbye*, *Grapefruit Apricot Club*, and *Contradictions*, meaning fiction accounted for half of the list. Beyond these titles, personal development books such as *Inner Excellence* and *Kim Mi-kyung's Plus Human* secured stable spots on the list, finding success here despite failing to reach the bestseller charts at other franchises.

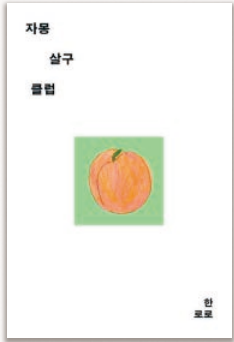
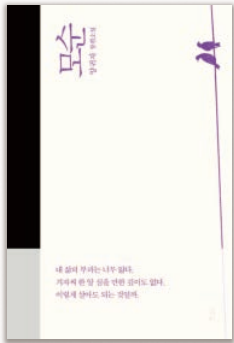
Kyobo Book Centre Bestseller List: Second Week of June 2026

Rank	Cover	Title / Author / Publisher / Genre
1		<i>A Knowledge Briefing for Elegant Conversation</i>
		Kim Jin
		Book Pleaser
		Humanities
2		<i>Project Hail Mary</i>
		Andy Weir / Kang Dong-Hyeok (translator)
		RH Korea
		Fiction

Kyobo Book Centre Bestseller List: Second Week of June 2026

Rank	Cover	Title / Author / Publisher / Genre
3		<i>Siddhartha</i>
		Hermann Hesse / Park Byung-deok (translator)
		Minumsa
		Fiction
4		<i>Mellow TV Team Nappa 1: Friends with a Screw Loose</i>
		Mellow TV (original) / Ahn Kyung-soon (author) / Three Four (illustrator)
		Haksan Kids
		Children's Books
5		<i>Inner Excellence</i>
		Jim Murphy / Ji Yeo-wool (translator)
		WillBook
		Personal Development
6		<i>Nietzsche's Transcendent One</i>
		Friedrich Nietzsche / Kim Chul (translator)
		Hieut
		Humanities
7		<i>I Said Goodbye</i>
		Kim Ae-ran
		Munhakdongne
		Fiction

Kyobo Book Centre Bestseller List: Second Week of June 2026

Rank	Cover	Title / Author / Publisher / Genre
8		<i>Grapefruit Apricot Club</i>
		Hanroro
		Authentic
		Fiction
9		<i>Contradictions</i>
		Yang Gui-ja
		Ssuda
		Fiction
10		<i>Plus Human</i>
		Kim Mi-kyung
		Awake
		Personal Development

Walking Along the Sentences of the Sea: The Pak Kyong-ni Memorial Hall in Tongyeong

Edited by

The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

In July, Tongyeong, a true city of the sea, welcomes its most vibrant and brilliant season. The landscape of Tongyeong, where islands, ports, alleys, and hills seamlessly intertwine, feels like a piece of literature in itself. This city is the birthplace of the literary giant Pak Kyong-ni and the profound source of inspiration for her creative world. Walking through Tongyeong alongside the summer sea, one naturally comes to realize where Pak's literature truly began.

Pak Kyong-ni Memorial Hall



Pak Kyong-ni Memorial Hall (Source: <https://www.utour.go.kr/>)

Located in Sanyang-eup, Tongyeong, the Pak Kyong-ni Memorial Hall is a space where visitors can engage deeply with the author's life and literary world. Pak, who left a monumental footprint in the history of Korean literature with her epic saga *Toji* (The Land), deeply etched the emotions of her hometown and the lives of its people into her work through novels like *The Daughters of Kim's Pharmacy*, which is set against the backdrop of Tongyeong. Inside the memorial hall, visitors can quietly retrace her life and career through personal photographs, handwritten manuscripts, beloved belongings, and video materials. After exploring the exhibitions, a gentle stroll through Pak Kyong-ni Park and around her gravesite allows one to reflect on both the profound weight of her literary legacy and the meaning of Tongyeong as her ancestral home.

After visiting the memorial hall, it is well worth expanding your itinerary to

take in more of Tongyeong's summer scenery. The Tongyeong Cable Car, which offers a panoramic view of the islands and waters of the Hallyeosudo Waterway, is the most refreshing way to experience the city's verdant summer. Looking down at the sea and islands from Mireuksan Mountain, the landscape subtly mirrors the dramatic ups and downs of human life that flow through Pak's literature. The sea is undeniably beautiful, yet it holds within its depths the lives, time, longings, and farewells of the people who call it home.

Dongpirang & Seopirang Wall Painting Village



Dongpirang Village (Source: <https://www.utour.go.kr/>)

To truly feel the charm of Tongyeong's alleys, a visit to Dongpirang Wall Painting Village and Seopirang Village is highly recommended. The hillside paths lined with colorful murals and the narrow alleys overlooking the harbor showcase a blend of Tongyeong's unique daily life and artistic

sensibility. A perfect itinerary for a July getaway involves wandering through the alleys of Dongpirang and Seopirang by day, and then heading to Dipirang in Nammangsan Park by night to immerse yourself in Tongyeong's evening through stunning media art.

Dara Park



Dara Park (Source: <https://www.utour.go.kr/>)

Concluding your day at Dara Park is another wonderful choice. As one of Tongyeong's premier sunset spots, it offers an unforgettable view of the twilight blending with the islands scattered across the sea. A journey that begins with discovering literary depth at the Pak Kyong-ni Memorial Hall and continues along Tongyeong's sea, alleys, and sunsets will linger in your mind for a long time, much like the slow, enduring impression of a great summer read.

In July, Tongyeong is far more than just a summer resort. It is a city that

embraces the sea, the ancestral home where a writer's literature flourished, and a place where life stories remain etched into the landscape. This summer, a literary stroll through Tongyeong starting at the Pak Kyong-ni Memorial Hall will offer a truly special experience, where books and the sea, travel and contemplation, all flow together beautifully.

Address

Pak Kyong-ni Memorial Hall: 173 Sanyangjungang-ro, Sanyang-eup, Tongyeong-si, Gyeongsangnam-do

Seopirang Park: 22 Chungryeol-ro, Tongyeong-si, Gyeongsangnam-do

Dongpirang Wall Painting Village: 6-18 Dongpirang 1-gil, Tongyeong-si, Gyeongsangnam-do

Dara Park: 1115 Sanyangilju-ro, Sanyang-eup, Tongyeong-si, Gyeongsangnam-do

2026 K-Book Market In Taipei

Edited by

The Contents Factory Co., Ltd.

K-Books are heading to Taiwan, one of their key export markets. The fair will bring together 20 Korean participating companies and around 50 to 60 local buyers for one-to-one export consultations. Export specialists will also represent 100 consignment titles in meetings with local buyers.

The program also includes a seminar on Taiwan's publishing market, discussions with related organizations, and a planned book donation to the King Sejong Institute in Tainan.

DATE: July 22(Wed)–23(Thu), 2026 | PLACE: Courtyard by Marriott Taipei |
Host: Publication Industry Promotion Agency of Korea (KPIPA)

We hope you'll show your continued interest and support for the 2026 K-Book Market In Taipei!



BUSINESS MATCHING

Korean Companies

20



Local Buyers

50-60



Consignment Titles

100



The fair will bring together 20 Korean participating companies and around 50 to 60 local buyers for one-to-one export consultations.

Export specialists will also represent 100 consignment titles in meetings with local buyers.



국내 참가사 20개사와 현지 바이어 약 50~60개사가
참여해 1:1 수출상담을 진행합니다.

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MORE PROGRAMS

Beyond Export Consultations



Publishing Market
Seminar



Institutional Discussions



Planned
Book Donation



The program will also include a seminar on Taiwan's publishing market, discussions with related organizations, and a planned book donation to the King Sejong Institute in Tainan.



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도서기증도 추진될 예정입니다.

EVENT INFO

2026 K-Book Market in Taipei

Dates

July 22-23, 2026

Venue

Courtyard by Marriott Taipei

코트야드 바이 메리어트 타이베이

Hosted by

Korea Publication Industry Promotion Agency

한국출판문화산업진흥원(KPIPA)

✿ See you in Taipei! ✿

Read the full story on our webzine.

K-Book Trends

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