

**APENDIX I**  
**SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL**  
***PLEASE LOOK AFTER MOM***

Please Look After Mom (*엄마를 부탁해*) is a novel by South Korean author Kyung Sook Shin. It sold a million copies within 10 months of release in 2009 in South Korea, is critically acclaimed internationally and the English translation by Chi Young Kim, won the 2011 Man Asian Literary Prize. The story of the novel is set in South Korea. As shown through ancestral rites, there is a sense throughout the narrative that the tradition is playing a fundamentally important role in everyday lives of the people who live here. Seoul is the capital of South Korea. It is a busy and crowded city in which the atmosphere and energy provide an affective backdrop against the contemplations the characters play out. While Chongup is a small rural community where Mom and Father made their home and where all the children grew up before leaving to Seoul. The house in which they lived in serves as an important presence in the lives of all the characters. The house serves to be as familiar to Mom, in which ensure that the lives lived were fulfilled, as complete, and as nurturing. Like when Chi Hon discovers on one visit, the house does not feel as secure and safe as an adult as it did when she was younger.

Traveling from their home in the Korean countryside to visit their now-grown children in Seoul, an aging couple find themselves separated from each other

in a busy subway station: “Mom and Father rushed toward the subway that had just arrived. Father got on, and when he looked behind him, Mom wasn’t there. Mom was pulled away from Father in the crowd, and the subway left as she tried to get her bearings.” A search ensues an entire family mobilized to find the missing matriarch, Park Sonyo. Fliers are posted and distributed by hand. The children follow up on sightings throughout the city, but leads fall flat. Mom went missing a week ago. One moment she was following Father at Seoul a Station, the next he was on a train and she wasn’t. He went back as fast as he could, but she was nowhere to be seen – vanished. Where had she gone? The family gathered at eldest son Hyongchol’s house to plan the next move. Flyers were voted as the best thing to do. Whilst this did seem rather old fashioned, it was still the best way to target the area. A missing person report had been lodged with the police so continuing to search the area and handing out flyers were the only other things left to do. Perhaps searching in the places Mom might go was the next move but where would she go? Everyone knew that Mom could not go anywhere by herself in the city.

There was general agreement that as recent a picture of Mom as possible should be used for the flyer thing that hadn’t changed was her eyes. People would recognise her from her eyes. But no one had, a recent picture of her. No one had consciously noticed when Mom had started to hate having her picture taken and would sneak out the side of pictures. The most recent one anyone could lay their hands on bore little resemblance to Mom on the fateful day in Seoul Station, but what

other option was there? The one, wouldn't they? Whatever Chi Hon wrote on the flyer, her eldest brother Hyongchol did not like. She was a professional writer, for goodness sake! Yet everything she did was wrong, it was too plain, or too formal, or too childish. She knew it was not what she was writing that was upsetting Hyongchol really, but still. Then there was the discussion about how much of a reward to offer. They settled on five million won as being an appropriate amount, then argued about how to phrase it on the flyer. When the flyer was finally finished, Chi Hon agreed to have copies made, whilst her younger brother would pick them up and distribute them around the family. They could all hand them out in free moments during the week and at the weekend. It had been like this since Mom disappeared. They would all gather to decide on their next move, but the conversation would soon become combative. It seemed that everyone had an instance of someone else letting Mom down in the past, the evenings all ended in shouts and banging doors. When Chi Hon had discovered that Mom was missing, she'd angrily asked why no one had gone to meet Mom and Father from the station. The retort 'Where were you?' had shut her up. She had not found out Mom was missing for four days, what sort of a daughter did that make her? And so the search continued, where could Mom be? There were reports of sightings from all over the city. Most were clearly not her, but some could have been. A theme of sorts began to appear. Was she searching for them in the places they had once lived? As time passed, and they seemed no nearer to finding her, a picture of their Mom emerged from their recollections. Had she really disappeared

due to one missed train in Seoul Station, or had Mom been gradually disappearing for years? All children put on a desperate search they distribute flyers, seek out clues, turn to the police and to passersby, but Mom is nowhere to be found.

[https://everipedia.org/wiki/Shin\\_Kyung-sook/](https://everipedia.org/wiki/Shin_Kyung-sook/)

## APENDIX II

### KYUNG SOOK SHIN'S BIOGRAPHY

Kyung Sook Shin was born in 1963 in a village near Jeongeup in Jeolla Province in Southern Korea. She was the fourth child and oldest daughter of six. She is the first South Korean and first woman to win the Man Asian Literary Prize in 2012 for *Please Look After Mom*. Her parents were farmers who could not afford to send her to high school, so at sixteen she moved to Seoul, where her older brother lived. She worked in an electronics plant while attending night school. She made her literary debut in 1985 with the novella *Winter's Fable* after graduating from the Seoul Institute of the Arts as a creative writing major.

Kyung Sook Shin as the new voice of her generation with the publication of her second collection, *Where the Harmonium Once Stood*, in 1993, which won wide recognition for the elegant lyricism and psychological depth of the stories. The book marked a major turning point in Korean fiction, which had been dominated for decades by political novels faithful to the aesthetics of social realism. Shin won the prestigious Munye Joongang New Author Prize for her novella, *Winter Fables*. Her other works, which include *Where the Organ Lays*, *Deep Sorrow*, *A Lone Room* and others have been recognized as vital parts of Korean literature, vaulting Shin to literary stardom. Her rise in popularity was so quick and complete that this kind of rapid ascent has been named, "Shin Kyung Sook Syndrome."

Shin currently splits her time between Seoul and New York city, where she currently teaches at Columbia University as a visiting scholar. Shin has published seven novels, six short story collections and several non-fiction books as well. Listed below:

**All Works:**

Novels:

Deep Sorrow, 1994

A Lone Room, 1995

The Train Departs at 7, 1999

Violet, 2001

Yi Jin, 2007

Please Look After Mom, 2009

Somewhere A Phone Is Ringing For Me, 2010

Short Story:

Until It Turns into River, 1990

Where the Harmonium Once Stood, 1992

Potato Eaters, 1997

Strawberry Fields, 2000

The Sound of Bells, 2003

Non-Fiction:

Beautiful Shade, 1995

Sleep, Sorrow, 2003

Works translation into other language:

Somewhere A Phone Is Ringing For Me (2010)

\* Translation rights: China (People's Literature Publishing House)

Please Look After Mom (2008)

\* Translation rights: USA (Knopf, April 2011), UK (Weidenfeld& Nicolson, March 2011), France, Dutch, Spain, Japan, Vietnam, Germany, China, Taiwan, Israel,

Portugal, Brazil, Italy, Turkey, Poland, Norway, Arabic

A million and six hundred thousand copy best seller in Korea Yi Jin (2007)

\* Translation rights: China, France (Philippe Picquier, February 2010)

Violet (2001)

• Translation rights: China (People's Literature Publishing House)

The Train Departs at 7 (1999)

\* Translation rights: Germany, Japan, China, France

<http://www.ktlit.com/authors/shin-kyoung-sook/>