

Fruit of My Woman Summary

Writer: Han Kang | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

The story begins in late May. One morning, the husband notices some bluish marks on his wife's body. Sunlight fills the room; everything is calm. They are reading the newspaper together. Suddenly, the wife says the bruises are not fading.

Part 1 - The Discovery of Bruises: The story begins in late May. One morning, the husband notices some bluish marks on his wife's body. Sunlight fills the room; everything is calm. They are reading the newspaper together. Suddenly, the wife says the bruises are not fading. The husband ignores her words at first. But when he looks at her body, he is shocked. Her back and stomach are covered with dark bruises, as if struck by someone. The wife says she has no idea how they appeared. There is no pain; the spots feel numb. The husband assumes she might have bumped into something. Her face looks tired. Once cheerful and youthful, she now seems dull and weak. Her cheeks have hollowed, wrinkles have formed around her eyes, and her waist and stomach have turned thin and frail. The husband cannot even recall the last time he truly looked at her. Their marriage no longer holds its earlier warmth and closeness.

The husband tells his wife to remove her clothes. She hesitates and is embarrassed. She fears someone might see her. But there is no way anyone can look into their apartment, so he insists. When she undresses, he sees bruises everywhere, on her back, legs, stomach, and thighs. The marks are greenish-blue. At first, he is filled with anger, then with deep sadness. He wonders if she had fallen or hit herself unconsciously. The wife, looking helpless, asks softly if she should go to the hospital. There is a strange smile on her lips, one that makes the husband feel even more sorrowful. He senses how silence and distance have crept into their life. Her body and soul now feel like an unknown world to him. At last, he embraces her frail, exhausted body, unsure whether the act comes from love or from a loneliness that has quietly consumed him.

Part 2 - The Worsening Condition: In this part, the husband believes everything will soon be fine. He hugs his wife's thin body and comforts her. He thinks the bruises will fade away. A few weeks later, at the beginning of summer, one night, the wife again asks him to look at her bruises. This time, they have grown larger. What were once small bluish marks have spread wide, like big leaves. The color has deepened, a dark greenish-blue, like the shade of tree branches. The husband touches her shoulder and feels as though he is touching a stranger's

body. He notices that her face, too, has turned pale blue. Her eyes are tinted with indigo, her hair is breaking, and her whole body is weak.

The wife says something strange is happening to her. Whenever she sees sunlight, she feels the urge to take off her clothes as if her body itself wants to be free. One day, she stood naked on the balcony, not caring if anyone could see her, drawn unconsciously toward nature. She has lost her appetite. Even if she eats, she cannot digest and keeps vomiting. She throws up several times a day. Her head aches, her shoulders stiffen, her whole body trembles. Weak and trembling, she kneels before her husband, tears flowing down her face. The husband sees her hollow eyes, her bruised body, her lifeless smile. He tells her to go to the hospital the next morning. He strokes her brittle hair, forcing a smile to hide his worry. But inside, he feels fear and sorrow rising together. The wife gives a faint smile. A tear hanging on her lips slowly falls, a silent sign of their growing distance and quiet despair.

Part 3 - Memories and Lost Freedom: In this part, the husband recalls his wife's past. He wonders whether she had always been so tearful. No, once she had been cheerful, lively, and full of spirit. The first time she cried was when she said that living in a high-rise building made her feel suffocated. The identical rooms, bathrooms, balconies, shops, and everything felt monotonous and lifeless to her. She said that even among so many people, she felt completely alone. Earlier, she had loved living in busy areas of the city, surrounded by cars, music, noise, and light. She had been afraid of loneliness. But now, on the thirteenth floor, she felt imprisoned.

Before marriage, the wife had worked in a small publishing house. Though the salary was low, she had her freedom. But soon, her health began to decline, and she became exhausted. Eventually, she quit her job. On the day she resigned, she told her husband she wanted a new life to replace her old "blood" with new energy. She wanted to go abroad, to travel to the ends of the earth. But that dream never came true. She spent all her savings on their wedding and the new apartment, saying simply, She can't leave without him.

The husband believes her dream had been a mere fantasy. Yet deep inside, he feels proud that she gave it up for him. But after marriage, the wife changes. She becomes silent and physically weak. At night, she wakes up suddenly, saying that it feels like the roads themselves are speeding, not the cars. The husband begins to fear for her. He often finds her standing by the window, her face pale as death, as though invisible chains are holding her back. One night, half-asleep, she murmurs, "Where does everything come from, and where does it all go?" These words reveal her inner restlessness and emptiness, perhaps the beginning of her disappearance from human life.

Part 4 - The Silence and the Withering: When the husband returns from work one evening, he finds his wife standing at the door. Her feet are bare, and her hair is messy. He asks what the doctor said, but she gives no answer, only looks at him silently. Seeing her face reminds him of their early days, their first meeting, their first silence, and the loneliness he sensed in her even then. At that time, too, her face carried a mysterious solitude that had strangely attracted him. Now she says quietly that the doctor found nothing wrong. Her voice is flat and lifeless. The melodious tone that once captivated her husband has disappeared. He remembers their first conversation, when she told him she wanted to live without settling anywhere, that she longed for a free life.

After marriage, they had planted some small greens, lettuce, perilla, and other plants on the balcony. But none of them survived. No matter how much they watered or cared for them, the plants withered away. Some people said the flat was too high, too far from the earth's energy. Others claimed they lacked the faith or spirit needed to keep things alive. But the wife cared deeply for them. When one plant showed signs of life, she would hum a tune happily; when one died, she would sit silently for hours. Eventually, all the plants died, leaving behind only dry soil. The husband feels that his wife's spirit, like the plants, is also drying up.

One day, the wife says, "Let's go somewhere far away." She says it's impossible to live in this suffocating city, the air is dirty, the rain is black, and life feels choked. She longs to merge with nature. The husband loses his temper. He asks angrily what she means by suffocating. In anger, he splashes rainwater on her shoulders. Startled, she steps back and cuts her foot on a broken flowerpot. She bites her lip to endure the pain, an old habit whenever she feels hurt, frightened, or humiliated. But this time she says nothing. After that day, they stopped arguing altogether. The husband now feels tired, lonely, and emotionally drained. The wife says again that the doctor found nothing wrong, but her turned face, her silent eyes, and her lifeless expression tell another story. Inside her, life is slowly fading away.

Part 5 - Silence, Distance, and Decline: The wife has now almost stopped speaking. She only responds by nodding or shaking her head. When the husband asks her anything, she looks away, her eyes distant and empty. Her face has grown pale and lifeless. The doctor has said there is no physical illness in her body. So the husband thinks it must be something mental or spiritual. Yet he cannot understand what his wife truly wants, or what she is searching for. He reflects on his own life, the past three years have been the most peaceful time he has ever known. His job is stable, their home is secure, the debts are nearly paid off, and his wife has always been calm and domestic. Yet, despite all this, he feels an inexplicable emptiness inside.

He wonders why this wife, who seems to have everything, is so unhappy. Why this silent suffering? Why is she distancing herself from him? These thoughts fill him with anger, disgust, and a deep loneliness. On Sunday morning, the day before he is to leave on a business trip abroad, he sees his wife shaking out the laundry on the balcony. Bruises now cover her arms and legs. Between the patches of pale skin, dark blue stains stand out frighteningly. He stops her and demands that she remove her clothes. She resists, but he insists, pulling her shirt away. Her shoulders are marked with dark blue bruises. Her body no longer looks the same. The hair under her arms has fallen out, and her breasts have lost their color.

Terrified, the husband says, "This can't go on. I'm calling your mother." But the wife hastily replies, "No, I'll call her." Her speech is slurred, as if her tongue is stuck. The husband tells her to go to the hospital, to a dermatologist, or to a general hospital. She nods silently but says nothing. The husband keeps talking, but it seems his words do not reach her ears. It feels as though his words fall to the floor, breaking apart like dry biscuits into crumbs. In this scene, the wife's silence and the husband's helplessness make the quiet death of their relationship painfully clear.

Part 6 - Transformation (Metamorphosis and Wonder): The husband returns home after a week-long business trip abroad. He rings the doorbell, but his wife does not respond. He rings it several more times, but there is still no answer. Finally, he unlocks the door and enters the flat. A strange, foul smell fills the air. The food in the fridge has spoiled, the rice has dried out, and the dishes remain unwashed. The room is a mess, with piles of clothes, spilled milk stains, and scattered objects everywhere. He cannot find his wife, not in the bedroom, not in the bathroom, not in any other room. Hungry, exhausted, and utterly alone, the husband feels a rising anger born of loneliness. The silence of the house and its emptiness seem to erase his very existence.

Just then, he hears a faint voice, a weak, almost inaudible sound coming from the balcony. He rushes there and opens the door. What he sees freezes him in shock. His wife is kneeling naked on the floor. Her entire body has turned green, like the leaves of a plant. Her face gleams strangely, her eyes are pale, and her lips are bluish. She cannot stand. Her body trembles; her tongue is dry, and her teeth are gone. Only one word escapes her lips: "Water." The husband runs to the sink, fills a basin with water, and pours it over her. Her body quivers like a living leaf, responding to the touch of water. He pours more. Her hair rises, her green skin glistens with a strange light. The entire body seems to glow with life. The husband watches in awe as she seems to revive like a flower blooming again. He is overwhelmed with astonishment and realizes that he has never seen his wife so beautiful. Yet, this beauty no longer belongs to the human world. It is a beauty of nature, the living, breathing beauty of a tree, a new form of life.

Part 7 - The Voice of the Wife (The Wife's Voice and Final Transformation): In this part, the story shifts to the wife's voice. She speaks to her mother. Her body is no longer human; she has become a living plant. She says she can no longer write letters or wear the orange wool sweater her mother left behind. She wore it the day after her husband went on his business trip. The sweater carried her mother's scent, mixed with the smell of old side dishes, a smell that comforted her. The next morning, feeling cold and thirsty, she went out onto the balcony, took off her clothes, and stood in the sunlight. The warmth of the sun reminded her of her mother's scent. That was when the transformation began, her body slowly merging with nature.

Now she says her husband has planted her in a large flowerpot. He fills it with fresh soil, waters her every day, and even climbs the mountain behind their building to fetch mineral water because she dislikes tap water. On Sundays, he sits for hours catching small insects from her leaves. He keeps the windows open to let in fresh air. She says she no longer sees or hears, but she feels everything. She can sense the sound of cars, the flow of wind, the smell of rain, and the blooming of flowers, all through her body. She feels herself as part of nature now, living on sunlight, air, and water. Her body is covered with buds and leaves. She feels peaceful, though her thoughts are slowly fading away.

Her childhood memories return. She recalls her mother's scent, the touch of soil, the seaside village where she was born. She remembers running to her mother, burying her face in her skirt that smelled of sesame oil. She remembers how she had run away from that place, seeking freedom in the city. But she never found happiness, neither at home nor in the outside world. She realizes she had always been running, from pain, from confinement, from her own existence. Yet, in the end, she could never truly escape.

She remembers the doctor saying that her body was "normal." But she knew that her organs were drying up and disappearing from within. Now, she has almost completely become a plant. Every night she dreams that she is growing tall like a tree, breaking through the balcony roof and reaching the sky, with white flowers blooming at the top of her branches.

In the end, she says the days are growing colder. Her roots ache; the flowerpot feels too small and hard. She knows that before winter comes, she will die. Her final words carry both fear and acceptance: "Mother, I don't think I will ever bloom again in this world." In this final part, the wife's voice becomes a symbol of nature, death, and ultimate liberation, a quiet transcendence beyond human suffering.

Part 8 - Death, Renewal, and the Symbol of the Fruit: It is late at night. The husband pours water over his wife three times. Suddenly, she vomits, a stream of yellow stomach acid

splashes out. Her lips quiver and then quickly seal together again, flesh joining flesh. In that instant, he hears her voice for the last time, a faint, unclear whisper. After that, there is no sound at all. Her body begins to change once more. From between her thighs sprout thick white roots. From her chest bloom deep red flowers. Yellowish stamens push out through her nipples. For a moment, her hands move as if trying to clasp her husband's neck. He leans closer and looks into her eyes, which gleam like ripe grapes, and a faint smile lingers on her lips.

As autumn deepens, an orange glow spreads across her body. When the wind blows through the open window, her outstretched arms sway gently, like leaves moving in the breeze. But as winter approaches, her leaves begin to fall, two or three at a time. Her body slowly turns from orange to a dry, opaque brown. The husband recalls the last time he had slept with her. Then, instead of the usual human scent, a faint, sweet fragrance had come from her body. He had thought it was a new soap or perfume. Now he understands, it was the scent of flowers.

Her body no longer holds any trace of humanity. Her eyes, once like grapes, are now buried in brown stems. She can no longer see or move. Yet when he stands on the balcony, he feels a subtle current, like a faint electric pulse flowing from her body into his, a mysterious connection between man and nature. When the leaves that were once her hair and hands have all fallen, her lips split open. From that opening, a handful of fruits emerge. And with that, the invisible thread of connection between them snaps. The husband gathers the fruits in his hands. They are small, yellowish-green, and hard, like seeds or unripe nuts. He puts one into his mouth and bites down. The smooth skin has no taste, but inside, the flavor is sharply sour, almost burning, and the juice leaves only bitterness behind.

The next day, he buys a dozen small flowerpots. He fills them with fresh, fertile soil and plants the fruits in them. He lines them up beside the pot where his wife's withered body remains. Then he opens the window, lights a cigarette, and leans against the railing. The fresh scent of grass, the smell of new life blooming from his wife's remains, fills the air. As the chill wind of late autumn ruffles his hair and smoke, he wonders silently: when spring comes, will his wife sprout again? Will her flowers bloom red once more? He does not know. The story ends with this haunting uncertainty, death transformed into the symbol of renewal.