

The Eyeball Person

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Whenever grown-ups saw me when I was a young girl,
they told me how “innocent and adorable” I was.
I was always at the end of their loving gaze.

On the train to my violin lesson,
a filthy, ugly man sitting across from me was staring at me.
So I slowly spread my legs under my skirt and stared back at him.
His eyes were glued to my crotch.
He yearned for the “thing” between my legs.
It’s my evil eyeballs in heat.
Eyeballs oozing with vile water.
The man’s vile gaze intertwined with my evil gaze
and I felt a cold dampness on my underwear.

After a while when the train arrived at my station,
I disembarked as if nothing had happened.
I nonchalantly headed to my violin teacher’s house
as my imagination ran wild about doing it
with that man in the station’s public restroom.
My eyeballs were ready to burst.

On the bicycle saddle
In the corner of the stairwell
With all sorts of methods,
I pleased myself when I was young.
During such acts, what were my hollow eyeballs watching?

And now, after a real physical intercourse,
I lie in bed naked
feeling deeply ashamed of myself.

I'm mortified of getting pregnant with two children
through countless moments of ecstasy.
Many portraits of me are displayed in the room with the bed
where many faces of me stare silently at me.
In the darkness, staring at me are me, me, and me.
Sometimes she says, "You're beautiful"
and sometimes she says, "You filthy devil" or "Drop dead."
One of the portraits was drawn by Nemu (first daughter),
which softly calls out, "Mom, Mom."
When a line is drawn down the center of my face,
half is the face of a kind mother
and the other half is a face of evil.
When Nemu sees my evil face,
will she still believe in my face of a mother?

May 31, 2021.

Nemu announced that she's going to leave us sooner or later.
"Mom, Dad, why are you making me suffer like this?"
I see Nemu in my mind wail loudly with red tears streaming down her face.
A part of her probably wants to flee from me
who suffers in the room enmeshed in gazes
of the mother, in other words, me.
She can flee and if she were to end up in an empty space,
we wouldn't be there anymore.
She would be free.

I get jealous of Nemu's youth.
And unexpectedly, I get rattled
by the thought of Nemu leaving me
not so far in the future.

Nemu, who's so kind, still makes shaved ice
with the shaved-ice machine for the family.
She pours red syrup over it and smiles shyly.
"Here you go."

The ice melts, and the red tepid syrup sways.
The sharp blades of the shaved-ice machine gleam
and I hesitate to touch them.
When we're not around,
will somebody warn Nemu?
"Don't cut your hand on the sharp blades of the machine."
When we're not around,
she might cut and hurt herself.
She might bleed red blood.
Who's going to treat her wound?

The other day, a sunflower bloomed from a seed
that Nemu planted on her 16th birthday.
The sunflower stalk grew taller than me
and in no time at all, it even grew taller than Nonoho (husband).

The sunflower bloomed, seeking sunlight in the continuing cloudy weather.
A big, dry eyeball with yellow eyelashes.
A strong gaze that bravely tries to survive.

I remember the day when I first made eye contact with Nemu.
The newly-born Nemu
wrapped in white swaddling clothes
was in the incubator, silently watching me.
It was definitely me, a mother, at the end of Nemu's gaze
as she toddled around, calling out for her mommy.

Back then, it was Nemu who was always at the end of my gaze.

Now that I'm older, if I crush the two evil eyeballs
idling in my hand all these years,
a pure, transparent jelly will ooze out.

I look up at the sunflower
and try to convince myself
that I don't have to be ashamed.
Nemu taught me
what a beautiful desperate flower that a sunflower is.

Translation : Annie Iwasaki