

Moon Bo young

poems

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translated by Hedgie Choi and Soje

DOWN JACKET GOD

God wears a massive down jacket. Humans are the countless duck feathers trapped inside, the poet writes. Sometimes a feather pokes out. God plucks it carelessly. That's what people call death. A feather gets plucked. That person dies. A feather gets plucked. That person expires. A feather gets plucked. That person breathes their last breath. A feather gets plucked. That person disappears.

After death there's no heaven or hell, no angels or devils, the poet writes. There's only a feather. It swings in the air. Gently, the feather settles on the ground.

ENTRANCE BLASPHEMY

Instead of wages, God ordered his minions to give those who entered the world Costco bread. People were born. Those of us who didn't get bread were baffled. We gathered for a deep think. *Why didn't we get bread?*

- 1) We had only one outfit. Wearing undershirts with stretched-out necks, we joined the world pantless.
- 2) Wishing for a soul shaped like an English pipe, we blasphemed.
- 3) We thought that the woman who sat on the pews of the Catholic church looked like a scab growing over a wound.
- 4) All our dreams were exciting. We wanted to swap reality for dreams.
- 5) We watched God and wondered, Does God have a digestive issue?
- 6) *A solid person*, what does that even mean?
- 7) We didn't go to school much.
- 8) We hoped we wouldn't want to be the kind of people who wanted to save books if the libraries of the world burned.
- 10) We read too many books.
- 11) So we became afraid of hope.
- 12) So a crazy dog kept chasing us.
- 13) So we kept running, running, running.

We're waiting for bread.

Winterized trees

You see, there's no concept of insulation in the world I'm inventing right now.

Do you want me to turn on the heat?

No one says stuff like that. Humans instead rely on winterized trees that generate a lot of heat on their own. These trees have to live on the streets no matter what. If you bring them indoors, they *will* kill themselves. Humans line up to hug them for warmth. The trees grow taller until they die but otherwise stay in place. Humans hug trees on their way to work, on their way to see loved ones, on their way to the airport, on their way home from work, on their way to a break up. Even someone on their way to die gets out of the car and hugs a winterized tree to muster up the strength to die. Because trees can stop humans cold in their tracks. On the coldest days of the year humans do nothing but embrace trees. What do they think about all day? Utility bills, wet laundry, dinner plans, tire pressure, debt payments, clogged toilets. Also: *Given how I've been nonexistent longer than existent in this universe, aren't I more myself when I don't exist?* Thoughts like dust.

What winterized trees embraced by humans think about :

If Earth suddenly stops spinning
everything will bounce off the ground
and shoot into the air
Trees call that rain falling
upside down

What it means to adjust

The average human takes 0.4 seconds to blink. *“Isn’t that too fast?”* Olivia thinks humans need to live a little more slowly. **Slow living** includes lingering in the bathroom, not exercising, and blinking slowly. Whenever someone blinks during a conversation, Olivia feels like they die for 0.4 seconds and come back to life. Or transform into someone else. In which case, humans would transform 15,000 times a day. This is probably why I can’t ever get used to myself. According to Olivia, humans should blink less but keep their eyes closed longer. She invents a world where humans take three seconds to blink. *“I really think we should keep our eyes closed a little longer. It’ll be good for our health!”* In the world she invents, humans blink significantly slower as they age, so you can guess someone’s age from their blinking. For example, 80-year-olds take 10 seconds to blink. Old men talk to each other and take turns closing their eyes for 10 seconds. It takes a really long time to finish a game of janggi or chess.

People like to point to any old man with closed eyes and say,
“He’s adjusting.”

Olivia’s daughter
asks,

“Mom, why does Grandpa close his eyes for so long?”

“Grandpa’s adjusting.”

“To what?”

No one answers.

Ready to burst anytime now

I saw an old man at the post office. He was handing over a thick envelope riddled with teeny-tiny bumps. *What are you sending?* the employee asked. *Seeds.* The envelope was lumpy like the belly of a pregnant fish. *Sir, you can't send seeds in the mail.* The old man sulked. *Can't I just mail them? It's important.* The envelope looked ready to burst anytime now. All he wanted was for it to rip and the seeds to pour out somewhere random. The seeds would be blown away like a dandelion puff. The old man wanted to plant them somewhere but couldn't decide where. So he wanted the envelope to burst anywhere. I flashed my take-a-number ticket and placed on the scale my package for a friend. *What are you sending?* the employee asked. How would I know that? And why ask? If I can lie anyway.

SAVING THE WORLD SLOWLY

You know how the main character in an anime like *Sailor Moon*, *Wedding Peach*, or *Saint Tail* transforms by chanting a spell? What do you call that? A power-up? An awakening?

I came up with a character like that. She has to shower to transform, or “awaken.” Problem is, she hates showering. Kind of like me. I hate showering so much that I never learned how to swim.

Therefore, the number of showers she takes is the number of times she saves the world.

Shower 0 times a day = Save the world 0 times a day

Shower 3 times a day = Save the world 3 times a day

But no one can convince Kkiril (our hero) to shower, much less save the world. She fucking hates showers. Showers just don’t feel right—take her word for it. The bathroom gets all fogged up, the floor’s slippery, the water turns cold all of a sudden, she’s covered in goosebumps as soon as she turns the water off. Kkiril also has bacne (she doesn’t lower her head while washing her hair . . . in case a ghost pops out). Plus, she transforms in the shower! Sprouting wings and claws on top of an outfit change? No wonder she hates showers.

Say she takes a shower for the first time in a while before work (Kkiril is a high-rise window cleaner, FYI) but then the world falls into crisis. She would have to shower twice, right? How would she shower while hanging on the side of a skyscraper? Kkiril runs to a nearby gym, buys a one-day pass, and tries to transform under the stream of a gym shower head.

“Saving the world wasn’t cumbersome. Showering was.”

Our hero said that once. But no matter how much she hated showers, she couldn’t not shower for the rest of her life, you know? So Kkiril changed her mind; she doesn’t shower to save the world anymore. She thinks

she might as well save the world whenever she showers. Not that it’d change anything. It’s just that I’ve changed my mind about writing this story.

INSOMNIA

Lying down, I look at my face profile.

2AM lays next to me. It wraps itself up in the gray throw and
falls asleep before I do.

If my feet that poke a bit outside the blanket
were somebody else's feet, that'd be cool.

My lover is real healthy
even in the face of my death, but

I lean on my face profile and try to sleep.
Using my face profile as a pillow, I sleep.
Even in my dream I catch a cold.
The cold lasts several years
but I'm still standing on the floors of my feet.
Bearing down firmly on the floors of my feet
I bend over the ground like a street lamp.

Morning brightens tenaciously
even if you hide inside a blanket.

My face profile inhales other face profiles
like butane, and still

someone dies
neatly, like an apple.
Well-peeled.

" _____ *"

1

In Kafka's *The Trial* there's actually a sentence that goes " _____ *" The only person who's seen that sentence is me. I looked in the back of the book for what the asterisk refers to, but there was no explanation. So is " _____ *" Kafka's sentence? Or is Kafka citing a friend? Or is Kafka quoting me? The sentence " _____ *" only exists in my eyes. Who besides me can help Kafka?

2

In Kafka's childhood in my head
I found the answer to " _____ *"
When Kafka was a child
he thought people on the phone couldn't see.
When Kafka's mom was on the phone
she didn't scold little Kafka
who climbed on top of the refrigerator
and sat like a cobra.
She didn't even pay attention to him.
It was as if she thought he wasn't a person.
This was because a person
can only perceive one space
at a time. That's the beginning
of all suffering.

3

The cobra on the refrigerator looks down at a faraway branch.

4

" _____*" is repeated later in Kafka's life.

When Kafka complained, *I couldn't sleep*, Kafka's lover replied, *No*. When Kafka claimed, *Someone is trying to kill me*, those who were not Kafka replied in chorus, *No*. When Kafka opined that *Today is either spring, summer, fall, or winter*, all the readers of the future said, *No*.

5

Finally, the account of how Kafka wrote " _____*" is as follows.

6

I'm sitting on a refrigerator in Kafka's head.

When something scary

like a quiet Kafka appears beneath my feet

I repeat the following sentence:

If Earth looks like a period from far away, quick-write the next sentence.

The cobra that lives on top of the refrigerator is silent.

The cobra is blind.

BRAIN AND ME

My lover forgot their brain when they left. I could blend it and drink it, I guess. I examine and feel this human brain. I put a blonde wig on it, close its eyes, dunk it in warm water. I give it a poke.

The brain feels no pain. While receiving open-head surgery a patient could listen to *Beethoven's Symphony No. 9* or *Rachmaninoff's Prelude Op 23 No. 5*. The patient could discuss the level of blood loss or the likelihood of failure with the surgeon. The brain allows for very human activities.

The brain relaxes on a leather couch in the living room. It's the first time the brain has sat on something soft. The brain looks out the window with its cauliflower face.

*

The brain tends to loop its last memory.

The amusement park carousel spins.

People wave to a girl.

The girl waves from outside the fence.

Even to the girl staring at her.

They're all holding a weird thing.

Cylindrical clear sticks

with hands attached to the ends.

Toys.

Cylindrical filled with rainbow gobstoppers.

People with hands

go out of their way to buy more hands and

wave them. The girl also

waves her hand at the girl waving her hand.

The girl thinks about the pointless wrinkle

that appears on the girl's forehead

when the girl's bangs are swept in the wind.

Is it really true that the brain feels no pain?

*

The brain has one defect. It remembers more than it sees. A considerable amount of DNA gets damaged as a result. What mechanism does the brain use to make memories? This is a very difficult question, but since the etymology of the word for the brain's nerve cell, *neuron*, comes from rope, we can guess that a rope is used.

*

The brain is still sitting on the sofa. I open the window and the wind cools off the brain. Miyashita Yasushi sticks electrodes on monkeys' brains and observes the reactions of their temporal lobes. It rains outside the window. Someone hangs outside the window. The window has a tendency to exaggerate smiles. Miyashita Yasushi plugs electrodes to the monkey's brain.

(He shows the monkey a circle, a square, a star.)

The monkey's reaction: no reaction.

(He shows the monkey a person.)

The monkey's reaction: a small reaction, then nothing.

(He shows the monkey a monkey.)

The monkeys' reaction: sustained reaction.

Miyashita studies the attention disparity. Why do monkeys only pay sustained attention to other monkeys? Some people might be saddened by this fact. Why does the hanging person outside the window grin on a rainy day? How did he get to the 21st floor without a rope? Since the word neuron comes from rope, when you have a memory you want to forget, just tie it up.

*

I'm laying thoughts to sleep
like spraying down the lawn with water
during a hot summer.
The flat cloud that can't cover the sky
covers the person who covers
their ears with hair.
Someone hangs from the window.
I pinch the end of the hose to increase the pressure.
Flowers beaten by
blue blue water.
Someone hangs from the window without a rope.

I hold my pencil upside down
and smush the little eraser
into the brain's side. The brain
won't break and
underneath a tree that fell asleep without hugging anything
the soft spores the brain blows look like the milky way and
the brain sleeps like an old mushroom head.
Soft, but hard.
When I poke the brain
its body shrivels.
Blood pools black-red between wrinkles.
When I lift the pressure
the brain swells.
The blood pooled between wrinkles is reabsorbed.

*

When I chew a biscuit
the chewing sounds loud to me
but you can barely hear it.
Let's use the rope.

I'll throw the rope and you tie it to your wrist.
Then my chewing will sound loud to you too.
Tie a rope to the handles
of two doors that face each other.
Let the wind in. Out.

*

Sticky green strings with sections cut,
neurons spill to the floor.

It's like you spilled an almost empty tub of green paint.

Kleist tightly grips his pencil to map the cerebral cortex's functions.

He gets out an electron microscope.

*The desire to see what's hard to see by zooming in 5 billion times springs from an
I mind. evi*

Changing the way neurons are connected creates a memory, another old rope
about-to-snap.

*

I put on rubber glove and
raise the brain with both hands.
I observe the wide and flabby brain.

I don't have to chew it to know it's tough.

The brain doesn't rub its eye or drool.

It doesn't get cold sweats.

You can't lock eyes with the brain.

Any way you look

you only see the brain from its side.

When it gets stressed blood pools in the wrinkles of the brain.

The wrinkles are thick and clearly defined.

*

This is the story of someone hanging from window alone.