



# VOICES

FROM THE  
**WRITING CENTER**  
SPRING 2012

A CELEBRATION OF WRITING DONE IN AND  
AROUND THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA  
WRITING CENTER

EDITED BY CASSANDRA BAUSMAN, DAREK BENESH,  
& JACOB HORN



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>The Wild Things</i> (Artist's Statement), Megan Silvey .....	4
<i>Only One</i> (Essay), Soyeon Kang .....	5
<i>Midwestern College</i> (Fiction), Erin Marshall .....	6
<i>Echando La Culpa a los Pobres</i> (Ficción), Carol Severino.....	9
<i>Mother</i> (Creative Nonfiction), Jooweon Park.....	12
<i>Best Job Ever</i> (Essay), Jack Connors .....	15
<i>Beckett's Play in the Light of a Fourth Character</i> (Essay), Fiona Wong .....	16
<i>The Knife</i> (Fiction), Devin Van Dyke .....	20
<i>Una Perspectiva Nueva</i> (Ficción), Angela Stamler .....	23

## THE WILD THINGS

MEGAN SILVEY



Art and literature have always been my two passions. Being an Art Education major and an Honors Writing Fellow has inspired me to look deeper as to why I love these two seemingly different disciplines. I've come to discover that there is a link between art and literature in my creative thinking process. In my most recent artwork I explore the connection between literature and art: how words can influence a visual experience and in return a visual experience can influence the meaning of words. In my work this results in a visual narrative, art that tells a story. The story is different for me as the artist, and changes for each individual viewer as they make up their own story behind the art. My interest in education inspired me to explore children's narrative in the literal sense and in children's complex imagination. Children may be trapped by their developing communicative skills, but can express themselves to their fullest potential in their imaginary world. I observed my youngest sister in an attempt to gain a greater understanding of this imaginary world.

For me, writing inspires my art and art inspires my writing. They are forever linked. Art is my outlet of expressing my interests, passions, and curiosities. But it is also a way for me to inspire others to explore their interests, passions, and curiosities as well. This is one of the main reasons I want to teach art. I hope to inspire the audience that enters this gallery to reflect on the imaginary worlds of their childhood and how it links to their creative processes today.

## ONLY ONE

SOYEON KANG

On May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1989, I can't recall the moment, but my life begins . . .

Everything is perfectly prepared for me. God names my parents as Soyeon's parents and sends me as their third gift. Effortlessly, with birth, I get a big brother and big sister; they are ten years and eight years older than me. They all welcome me and love me for no purpose but for one reason. We are not only genetically linked, but also selected among many possibilities. The word "family" connects us as one; its meaning is beautiful. I receive my family as the first present. They cannot be replaced.

I am seven years old. It's a really cold winter day. My town is covered with white snow. I ask my dad to hang out with me outside. We go out and make two big snow balls. My arms can barely wrap around them, but my dad easily puts these together and makes a snowman. My dad looks so strong, like superman who can do everything and who protects people from dangerous situations. We put twigs for the snowman's eyes and mouth. Afterwards, my dad and I have a snow fight. However, my hands turn red because I lost my gloves while we made our big snowman. My dad sees and comes to hold my hands in his. I will never forget his warm hands. It warms not only my cold hands but also my heart. Even now, I think of his hands whenever I am having a hard time

On March 22<sup>nd</sup> at 7:30 p.m., dark comes to outside, and I can't see anything except light from the television. My two roommates have gone to dinner with their boyfriends, so my house is empty. I feel chilly because the temperature drops to 7 Celsius. My body is covered with a pink and white blanket, and I am having special K with skim milk for dinner. I see different light flashing in the dark. "One, two, three." I count lightning, and listen to the sound of rain and thunderstorm. I hate scary

atmospheres, especially when I am alone. I need someone to stay with me now. My internet phone rings; the timing is good.

"Hello?" I answer.

"Hi, Soyeon. This is mom. I am wondering how you have been."

"I am doing good, mom. I was just about to call you."

Surprisingly, my mom always calls me when I feel gloomy. I think an invisible antenna and telepathy exist between us. I tell stories like a little girl, and she is happy to listen. We laugh so hard that my fear disappears. Our conversation ends at 9:30 p.m. My mom has remarkable power. I feel like I am healed from fear and stress; she is my everlasting doctor.

Now, I am not with my family, I live alone in Iowa City. They live in South Korea, 7,219 miles away from here. Although I am away from them, my soul is always with them. I am blessed, I am loved, and I am theirs. The time is 1:27 a.m., and I miss my family again . . . anyway, I am going to bed after I finish the last sentence of writing . . .

## MIDWESTERN COLLEGE

ERIN MARSHALL

It was the first Friday night after the much-needed Christmas break. “How was your break?” had seemed to echo through the halls of all the buildings on campus throughout the entire week. But now people had gotten the hang of things. They were back in the groove. And I wasn’t.

It had been my first official week at this college, my new college. I’d completed my first semester at a community college near my house, but now here I was, ready to begin my life at a big university. I couldn’t believe it – life was so much different here. It was surreal.

And now I had already completed a week. So here I was on the first Friday after break. The snow was falling quickly and heavily outside my dorm room window. It was already pitch black and it was only seven o’clock. My dorm room was certainly too cold, just like the temperature outside. 29 degrees in January was quite warm, though. I shivered in my turtleneck and jeans and gazed out the window. I caught glimpses of the falling snow as it drifted under the glow of the streetlamps. It was gorgeous and even slightly artistic. But cold. The Midwest never ceased to provide enough snow during the four- or five-month winter.

Suddenly my door burst open. My roommate Marcy stormed in, her nose pink from the winter cold. She ripped off her tassel hat and black mittens and beamed up at me lying on my bed. She was gleaming.

“Hey!” she said.

“Hey...” I awkwardly smiled down at her. I was clearly hesitant.

Apparently Marcy’s roommate last semester had been a “weird girl from Oklahoma who only knew about farming.” I guess she was happy to have a Midwesterner like herself as a roommate. “I’m so happy I finally have a roommate who understands city life,” she’d told me enthusiastically. I didn’t

exactly consider myself to be a city girl – I was more of a suburban girl – and I didn’t really consider our college town to be part of a metropolitan area, but whatever. Marcy was peppy enough...I wondered if she had been a cheerleader in high school. She wasn’t exactly the quiet, bookish type I had hoped for, but oh well. Marcy always wanted to talk to me, but my artistic side made me want to be left alone every once in a while. And it had only been a week. I was a theatre major and she was some kind of math major. Shouldn’t our personalities have been opposite?

“What’s up?” she asked, pulling off her heavy black winter coat.

“The sky,” I replied, providing a joke from my third grade days.

Marcy giggled like a maniac. “You’re so goofy!”

I smiled awkwardly again and rolled off my stomach onto my back. Just who was this girl?

“How was your first official week as a college girl?” she questioned.

Just because I went to a community college last semester didn’t mean I wasn’t a college girl back then. “It was great,” I said, ignoring her marginal and rather insulting error. I tried to sound as happy and ebullient as possible. “The campus here is so beautiful, even in the snow. I’m sure it looks even prettier in the spring.”

“Oh yeah, I guess,” Marcy mentioned absentmindedly. “I mean, I’ve never really been here in the spring, but I’m assuming it’s pretty then.”

I sighed. I guess I should have known that Marcy hadn’t been on campus in the spring before. Everything was futile.

“Hey, listen,” she commanded, looking up from her cluttered desk which she seemed to be arranging into an even bigger disaster. “I’m hitting up a party tonight with Joelle and Carolee. Whaddya say? Wanna come? It’ll be your first real college party!” She seemed more excited over the prospect of me going to the party than she did about the actual party itself.

“Uh...I don’t know...” I muttered, looking up at the ceiling. “I mean, I won’t really know anyone there...it might be awkward...”

“Oh, come on! Have some fun! You can’t stay in on a Friday night! Besides, you know Joelle and Carolee...and me!”

I had actually only spoken with Joelle and Carolee a grand total of one time. Frankly, they seemed rather icy. They already had their perfect little college circle of friends with Marcy. They didn’t want me budging in. I did know Marcy, but I also knew the kind of person she was. She would end up forgetting about me and I’d be left alone in a corner with a random creepy guy. No thanks.

“I really don’t think so...and besides...” I desperately searched for my best excuse. I glanced around. “It’s...uh...it’s snowing! It’s *really* crappy weather. Not that great to go out in!”

“Awh, don’t be such a party pooper!” Marcy insisted.

It’s not that I’d never been to a party before. I went to my fair share of crazy parties in high school; I just didn’t care. Why would I want to see a bunch of insane people that I didn’t know get completely hammered?

But my roommate was a persistent girl. “You really need to come! It’ll be fun!” she practically screeched. So I caved.

“Alright, I’ll go.”

“Great! Oh, I know you’ll have a blast!” Marcy jumped up and down and clapped her hands together.

Twenty minutes later I already knew I’d gotten myself into something wretched. Joelle and Carolee, gleeful as schoolgirls, had both come skipping into the room.

“What are you wearing, Marcy?” Carolee asked.

“I can’t decide,” Marcy declared with her hands on her hips and her lower lip decisively stuck out. She continued to be transfixed by her closet. “What do you think?” she asked, turning to me.

“Oh, I...”

“You always look good in pink, Marce,” Joelle suggested, trying to get in on the conversation.

“Yeah, but I want to know the opinion of our newest party goer!” She grinned and winked at me.

“*You’re* going to the party?” Joelle cried as if it were the end of the world.

“I am.” I tried to sound both stoic and nonchalant.

“Joelle, calm down. We’ll have tons of fun, right Carolee?”

“What? Oh yeah, of course.” She quietly put down the necklace she had found on Marcy’s desk.

“Exactly. Now to find an outfit...” I rolled onto my stomach, put my face in my pillow, and groaned.

While Marcy, Joelle, and Carolee debated over Marcy’s wardrobe choices, I fell into a state of perpetual consciousness. I was dreading the party, but I was nervous as well. College parties had to be maniacal compared to the high school ones I’d frequented. There had to be more of everything: alcohol, dancing, and crazy people. What was I to expect? My mind seemed to fly everywhere and I slowly came in and out of the dreamy clouds of sleep.

When I opened my eyes and grogginess ensued, the girls had moved on from Marcy’s outfit to Carolee’s. Had they already found something for Joelle? Who’s to say?

I rubbed my tired eyes and climbed down from my bunk bed. I slipped my feet into my old slippers, opened the door, and shuffled down the hall like an old woman. I slurped some water from the drinking fountain and sloppily dragged the back of my hand across my mouth. I was still sleepy and wondering what to think of the party.

When I threw the door to my room open, Marcy looked up from the huge pile of discarded clothes that she, Joelle, and Carolee were sitting around. “Just about ready? We’re going to Alan’s apartment before the party, you know.”

Damn! I wasn't even close to being ready. I kept calm. "Yeah, uh, in a bit." I couldn't give Joelle and Carolee any more reason to hate me.

Trying to stay composed, I walked over to the sink and pulled out my makeup. I applied a thin layer of blush and some eyeliner, mascara, and eye shadow. I wasn't going to look like a slut, but I didn't want to appear as homely as I felt in comparison to the other three. My long hair would have to do. I yanked a brush through it and glanced at my reflection. Halfway decent.

The next task was more of a challenge. What to wear? What did people wear to parties here? I wasn't about to ask Marcy. I continued to look halfheartedly at my closet when an epiphany came from Marcy. "Oh, don't find too fancy of an outfit...it's an ugly Christmas sweater party!"

"Really?" I feigned disgusted surprise. Inwardly I felt relieved. The idiotic irony in having an ugly Christmas sweater party in January was strangely somewhat comforting.

"Yeah, I'm wearing this old pink one." She held up a neon pink sweater complete with snowmen prancing around a Charlie Brown-looking Christmas tree.

"Nice." I smiled and chuckled to myself. Only Marcy.

Turning back to my closet, I found a pair of jeans and a huge green sweater that wasn't Christmasy but was ugly enough. I put on the jeans and pulled the sweater over my head.

My mouth suddenly felt as cottony as the sweater and I was starving. "I think we're leaving in five minutes," Marcy mentioned as she glanced up from her glowing computer screen, which was, no doubt, on Facebook.

Damn! Again! This was just getting worse by the minute. I walked over to my small food cupboard and pulled out a container of Easy Mac. Not exactly appetizing, but it would have to do.

After I added water and heated it up, I ripped open the package of cheese. It spilled all over my sweater. Great. Oh well...I guess could masquerade as a Packers fan now. I dumped the remains of the cheese into the Easy Mac container and mixed

it around. Four and a half of the five minutes I had to get ready had surely passed by now, but Marcy wasn't budging.

Nevertheless, I shoveled the starchy mac 'n' cheese into my mouth. It burned my tongue, but I knew I had to eat something. I couldn't go to a party on an empty stomach – it was never a good idea.

By the time I'd gulped down the last of the Easy Mac, Marcy reached for her coat and Joelle and Carolee, who had been huddled around Marcy's computer, did the same. "Let's go!" Marcy exclaimed. I gulped. Carolee and Joelle linked arms and practically danced out the door and down the hall. Marcy and I trailed behind.

"Are you ready?" she asked me.

"I guess."

"Don't be nervous. You'll have fun. I'm sure of it."

I nodded as we walked out of our dorm. I really wasn't in the mood to go, but it was too late now. The snow was still falling heavily and the snowflakes were big. The night was oddly silent and still and I wondered where all the other parties were. But it was beautiful. My blue knit hat slowly became speckled with white polka dots as we walked across campus. As I gazed out at the night, I couldn't remember the last time I'd felt so afraid. I had no need to be nervous, yet I couldn't refrain from worrying about the party. It was my first weekend at a university. The snowfall was impeccably fitting, as if were signifying the beginning of my new experience, my new life. The night grew darker as we got closer to Alan's apartment, but the snow helped me see.



## ECHANDO LA CULPA A LOS POBRES

CAROL SEVERINO

Diana buscaba el número de la casa del próximo cliente que tenía que visitar-- la familia Ramirez. Caminaba rápido por la acera llena de basura, pasando sin encontrar sus ojos un grupo de jóvenes peligrosos probablemente de la pandilla, Los Reyes Latinos. El cielo gris de invierno se había puesto negro con el humo de la fábrica de acero que dominaba el barrio. Un viento fuerte y frío llevaba unos copos de nieve. Ella se puso su bufanda más cerca de su cara. “No hay otra razón para vivir aquí,” pensó ella, “sino trabajar en la Inland Steel, y ahora está despidiendo a la gente.”

Al fin encontró el número correcto—una casa ruinoso como todas las del barrio—necesitaba pintura y la escalera de madera de afuera estaba astillada con huecos que ella necesitaba evitar cuando la subía cuidadosamente. Con ansiedad, ella abrió la puerta metal de afuera cubierta de grafiti y la corona—símbolo de los Reyes. En el pasillo vio tres buzones con los nombres de los residentes escritos en mala letra. Los Ramirez estaban en el tercer piso. Ella subió, oliendo algo rico que parecía frijoles con cilantro y salsa. Se dio cuenta de que tenía hambre. Esa era su quinta visita ese día; ya eran las tres y no había almorzado.

Cuando la señora Ramirez abrió la puerta, Diana se sorprendió que era joven, solamente unos cinco y pico años más que ella que acababa de graduarse de la universidad. Diana estaba trabajando su primer año como trabajadora social—un puesto que estaba abriendo sus ojos a una realidad que no existió ni en el campus, ni en los suburbios de la Ciudad de Nueva York donde había vivido toda su juventud.

“Siéntate por favor, pero mejor aquí en la cocina,” dijo la señora. “Yo tomaría tu abrigo pero hace mucho frío aquí adentro.” Ella siguió explicando y Diana se preparó porque los cuentos de los clientes siempre rompieron su corazón. “Tenemos la calefacción eléctrica pero el cheque de welfare no

me alcanza y no podía pagar la cuenta y la compañía nos quitó. Y nos abandonó el papá de mis niños”—ella indicaba una chica de cuatro jugando con un niño de un año sentados en el sofá—los dos muy abrigados y el chico y sus peluches con cobija. Diana los saludó con su mano y una sonrisa. “El perdió su trabajo en la fabrica y tenía demasiado vergüenza de quedarse con nosotros.”

Ellas entraron a la cocina donde hubo la calefacción de la estufa—las cuatro hornillas y el horno puestos, y se sentaban en la mesa. “Dios mio,” pensó Diana. “La miseria de mis clientes aquí en este barrio esta sin fin.”

“La compañía eléctrica no tiene el derecho de quitar su luz cuando hay niños en casa,” dijo Diana en su mal español con acento americano. “Voy a ver si hago un pleito en la corte y conseguimos dinero para pagar la cuenta.” Había una pausa. “Por favor, dónde está su esposo?”

Ella no quería preguntar eso porque era una invasión de la vida privada, pero sabía que su jefa fisgona iba a preguntarle eso mas tarde cuando volviera a la oficina. Una madre no podía recibir bienestar público mientras estaba viviendo con un hombre.

“Se fue a Tejas buscando trabajo, cosechando uvas. Si lo consigue, mandará para nosotros,” dijo un poco de duda en su voz. “Te gustaría un café y un poco de arroz y frijoles?”

Su estómago se quejó de hambre. Esta señora era amable—como todos los clientes que ella conocía. “Sí, gracias, pero, solamente si tienes suficiente para ti y los niños.”

“Si, todavía me quedan estampillas de comida. Además, tenemos que comer pronto lo que preparo porque sin electricidad, la nevera no sirve y la comida se pudre.

El café azucarado y la comida picante le calentaron a Diana en el apartamento frío y con el tiempo de afuera tan malo. Los chicos, Maria y Omar, vinieron a comer también. Estaban felices y hablaban un español infantil que Diana trató de entender pero no pudo. Apenas podía entender a los adultos mexicanos, cubanos, y puertorriqueños.

Mientras conversaban, Diana miró alrededor del apartamento—a la Virgen en un altar, fotos en la pared de unos

viejos—los padres de la señora que vivían en un rancho en México, la señora explicó, y en la cocina—unos chiles secos rojos y verdes colgando en la pared—una casa hogareña y cómoda aun sin calefacción. Diana buscó las señales de hombre porque sabía que eso sería otro tema de la inquisición mas tarde pero no hubo ninguno.

Se despidieron, con Diana prometiendo hablar con La Ayuda Legal sobre la falta de luz, y con algunas organizaciones de caridad del pueblo y de la iglesia—para tratar de obtener dinero para pagar la cuenta.

Cuando regresó al departamento de bienestar público, Susan, la jefa, le estaba esperando. Le “invito” a su oficina y preguntó de las condiciones de los clientes visitados.

“Tenemos que ayudar a la señora Ramirez porque no tiene luz ni calefacción y...” empezó Diana.

“Cómo puede ser? Que hizo ella con su cheque?” interrumpió Susan.

Susan creía que los clientes eran gente mentirosa que se estaban aprovechando del sistema. Como si el dinero para sostener a la señora Ramirez, Maria, y Omar viniera de su propio bolsillo. Susan siempre echaba la culpa a los pobres por ser pobres. No era la economía la que era mala, eran los clientes los que eran malos.

“Pero, Susan, tú sabes muy bien que \$145 no está suficiente para dar de comer a tres personas, comprar las cosas personales como papel higiénico, y pagar el alquiler, el agua, el gas, y la luz.”

“Y su esposo?” preguntó previsiblemente. “Estaba debajo de la cama?”

“No, la Inland le despidió y se fue a buscar trabajo de finca en Tejas.”

Ella movió sus ojos y cabeza para arriba. “Si, seguro,” dijo con sarcasmo.

“No había ningunas indicaciones de la presencia de él—ni zapatos, ropa de hombre, etcétera.

“Sin calefacción, los niños van a enfermarse,” notó Susan aunque Diana sabía que no tenía ningún interés genuino en su bienestar.

“Tiene la estufa puesta. Voy a ver si consigo dinero de las Caridades Católicas para pagar la cuenta. Y hablaré con La Ayuda Legal porque no es legal quitar la luz cuando hay niños en casa.”

Susan se puso roja con rabia y empezó a gritar. “Es peligroso respirar los gases de la estufa! Tendremos que quitar a esos niños de la casa y ponerlos en otra casa mas sana.”

“Pero, Susan, nada más necesitamos conseguir más dinero para pagar la cuenta.”

“Basta con eso, Diana. Tú siempre quieres hacer para los clientes las cosas que ellas necesitan hacer por si mismas. Los trabajadores sociales existen para ayudar a los clientes a ser independientes.”

“Es verdad, pero como va a ser independientes si no hay trabajo en esta región? Esos trabajos en las fábricas de acero están desapareciendo.”

“Diana, ahora mismo voy a hablar con la gente de Bienestar del Niño para que haga el papeleo en la corte juvenil y saque a los niños de esa casa peligrosa”

“Pero esa solución no tiene sentido. Las familias adoptivas a veces no aceptan a los dos niños. Maria y Omar tendrían que estar separados—no solo de su mamá pero uno de otro hermano.”

“Mi decisión es definitiva, y tu tendrás que aceptarla. Exijo tu cooperación.”

Diana le dijo que sí, pero salió de la oficina decidiendo resolver el problema de la luz de una manera lógica. Nunca cooperaría a crear más desastre para sus clientes.

El próximo día, cuando Susan estaba en una reunión, Diana hizo unas llamadas secretas a la gente simpática que ella conocía en las agencias sociales, y los Ramirez tenían luz otra vez.

Cuando Susan se enteró, Diana estaba en las mismas condiciones del señor Ramirez—despedida, sin trabajo. “Qué jefa mas cruel que persigue no solamente a los clientes pero a mí--a los trabajadores sociales--también,” pensó Diana. “Parece que Susan viene directamente de los tiempos de Charles Dickens en su deseo de hacer más miserable a la gente ya miserable. Ahora he perdido mi sueldo, mi trabajo, mi propósito de vida de ayudar a los pobres. Qué malo que ya no puedo defender más a mis clientes—para mí y para ellas. Pero qué suerte que tengo dinero ahorrado porque sin niños, no estoy elegible para recibir welfare!”

# MOTHER

JOOWEON PARK

In the funeral hall in the basement of the hospital, people come to the altar with a long-stemmed white chrysanthemum. On the altar, Mom is smiling in the photo in the black frame behind the hazy smoke of the burning incense sticks. The mourners put the white flower on the altar, light up another incense stick to add to the burner, and bow to my mother with their hands and knees on the floor. A tiny lady as old as my mother slowly walks into the room with the help of a white-haired but younger man on her left, and when she finishes bowing, she gives my brother her condolences. After squeezing his hands a few times, she looks at me standing next to him.

“Ah, Hee-sue. I finally see you again. I am so sorry about your mother. I should have come before your mother died,” she says.

Do I know her? She has a small red birthmark on the right of her neck. The mark is wrinkly on her dry skin, but I recognize its diamond shape from my memory. The old lady is Mrs. Lee who was my mother’s friend. I remember she visited our house quite frequently when I was in high school. She has become so skinny that she looks buried in her gray Hanbok.

I take her and her son to the room where my family serves food to the mourners, and when I bring some rice cake and Jeon to their table, the old lady pulls me by my hand and makes me sit by her.

Father had abandoned Mom for an ugly-nosed mistress twelve years before I was born. My relatives called me a thunder baby because I was conceived on a spring day when my father suddenly visited his hometown and spent the night with my mother for the first time after those dozen years. She was a very obedient wife, but it was the last time that they shared their marriage bed, skin to skin.

Mother raised us, my sister and brother and me, by herself by farming and peddling, and Father never gave her a penny for us. Growing up, I saw my mother talking to herself about Father in her insults to him.

“Bastard, a dirty bastard. Blinded by the lecherous whore, he deserted his own children and wife. That bastard! He never comes to see how his children are. Not even once.”

My sister, who is fourteen years older than I and the eldest, once told me that, when she and my brother were in grade school, before I was born, mother used to lock herself up in her bedroom and not come out for hours whenever she was upset about something.

“Then, I didn’t know why Mom felt so mad. I just assumed your brother and I probably did something wrong and made her feel bad. But now, I see that she had plenty of reasons to feel angry. She’d married Father at sixteen and lost him when she was only twenty. Why wouldn’t she be upset? Mother was in her twenties with a wealthy husband living with his mistress.”

Until Father died when he was eighty, my mother had never considered divorcing him because divorce was an unbearable disgrace for any woman in Korea during the old days. But my mother was a beautiful woman with a delicate nose and soft, white skin. She was able to turn men’s heads on the street. After I’d gotten married and had my own children, I once wondered if she might have had any secret romance after Father left her. Of course, I know she was always faithful with an iron face in front of a man. But she was lonely and too young to repress all her emotions just because of the man, as old as she, whom she met for the first time on her wedding day. Was it too odd for her to feel attracted to someone other than my father, if only in her mind? But when I indirectly asked mother about this, she made a very stern face.

“I was not that kind of woman. Never.” Mom said. “Nobody could say that I was ever unfaithful.”

Her eyes and voice had some haughtiness in themselves.

“There was a man who hid in my town to avoid the Japanese draft for the war. He was handsome in his white dress shirt and black western pants. People said he had a modern education from a city.”

It was probably the early 1940s. She was in her twenties, and she had only two kids then.

“One day, someone reported him to the police for corrupting widowed women in my town and the neighboring towns. The police summoned all the women who’d slept with him for their investigation, and I was the only woman who’d had nothing to do with that lustful man. It wasn’t rape, but all the widows or quasi-widows fell for him and gave themselves to him,” mother said. “The whole town knew how faithful I was. I’ve never stained my honor, never even in my mind.”

But I felt differently. I was proud of my mother and what she did in this case, but she seemed to scorn all other widows who fell in love with other men in any circumstances. She spent all her life hating my father and guarding herself from other men, and that was perfectly right in those days. But was that really okay for her? I couldn’t help feeling that my mother might have been naturally cold so that she didn’t have trouble controlling her romantic emotions.

When she was still young and beautiful, she’d never go anywhere alone, and after her forties, she devoted herself to Buddhism. Most of her friends were other faithful widows or quasi-ones, and Mrs. Lee was one of them.

Mrs. Lee’s little hands lightly tremble, but her eyes catch the florescent light from the ceiling.

“You are her thunder child. Because your mother was different. She wasn’t like me, and I have regretted a little that I wasn’t like her,” She says. “My husband was like your father and lived with his mistress. He sometimes came back to sleep with me, but I never allowed him to do it. I was angry at him and was determined to never let him do it. Whenever he came to me, I’d

pinch my baby son sleeping beside me and make him cry so that he couldn’t touch me anymore.”

Mrs. Lee looks at her son sitting across the table and smiles, and the son smiles back at her.

“But your mother let your father come to her, and that’s why you are here. She built the Great Wall of China<sup>1</sup> in one night. When I was young, I thought my choice was right, but as I got older, I wished I had let him spend the nights with me so that my son could have had a sibling. I now think your mother was right. She had you because of that,” Mrs. Lee tells me.

Listening to her, I have a strange feeling. I’ve never thought about how other women dealt with their unfaithful husbands. I just assumed Korean wives of Mom’s generation were too obedient to refuse their husbands’ requests as my mother was, but in truth, I have no knowledge about why Mother accepted Father that night. They had been separated for twelve years, and Father already had four kids with his mistress at that time. Didn’t she feel disgusted by him? If so, why didn’t she reject him like Mrs. Lee? A wife could say no to her husband, even in those days. And I suddenly realize that she might have waited for him until that day for twelve years. She waited for the man who abandoned her and his own kids with no money. Why? For lust? For love? I can only remember Mom calling him names, but then I think she never cursed him, she never said he should die.

Mrs. Lee asks me about my family, and I respond to her. She gives me more questions, and I answer them briefly. My mind is far away. To continue our conversation, I have to stop myself from falling into the slow whirlpool created in my mind. My mother’s face floats in it.

After my mother’s body turned into ashes in a white-jade urn, my siblings and I started to go through mother’s possessions.

---

<sup>1</sup> A Korean expression—the expression refers to achieving a great result (making a baby) in one try (sex on one night).

Books of Buddhist sutra, and many Buddhist rosaries. When I looked into her black closet decorated with mother-of-pearl, I found a small, worn-out notebook under her silk Hanbok skirts carefully folded in the bottom drawer. The black pocketbook was so old that its edges were crumbling. I'd seen her keeping her notebooks for her study of Buddhism and for phone numbers, but none of them was that small, that old. I opened its paper cover, and the first page, badly browned, was blank with no lines. I flipped a few more pages, and when I reached the fifth page, I found some short notes written in pencil. On the next page, a few sentences were recorded in the same handwriting, and that was followed by lines on more pages. The skewed, old-fashioned penmanship looked familiar. It was Mom's.

He left again, and it will be another six months until I see him again. But he never comes to our house...because of her. When he comes to town, he is always with the woman. I wish he came without her. I want to see him without her.

\* \* \*

April 18th. He came without the woman for the first time after we were separated. He spent the night in our house—in our bedroom. I don't know what this will be for me, but he came. He really did.

\* \* \*

I found I am pregnant. The shaman said he would come back to me if this baby was a boy, and I prayed that this baby be a boy. I hope it is a boy.

\* \* \*

The baby was born in winter. It is a girl. I heard the woman had a baby a few months after me, and it is a boy.

\* \* \*

He has never visited our town since that day, April 18th. Even with the woman. Why doesn't he come?

\* \* \*

The shaman said his door closed forever when my baby girl was born.

\* \* \*

Why doesn't he come? ... Why doesn't he come?

\* \* \*

Why doesn't he come?

## BEST JOB EVER

JACK CONNORS

A lot of people have jobs that ask a lot out of them. I, on the other hand, have a job that when I tell people what my job is, they think I have a hard job; this is so far from the truth. I have the best job in the world. I'm a manager at Meadows Swim Club, in Naperville, Illinois. I started working there when I was fifteen as a lifeguard, and actually, that's when I did the most work. I would go to work and be told by my old manager to take out the garbage, clean the bathroom, scrub the gutters of the pool, and clean the court yard. But, three years later, today, I'm proud to say that I am one of the managers at the pool.

I now have the best but worst job at the pool. I say worst job because my pool is from the 1950s and our filtration system is not like that of normal pools today. We have a large pit that is 7' X 3', and goes down about 10'. I have to drain it, which is not an easy task. The entire ordeal takes about two and a half hours. I have to wash the pit, raise the water a bit, put in DE, and run for dear life. The funny thing about my job is the DE we use. It is very dangerous, and we don't have any gas masks. So, after I pour the DE into the pit, my employees and I have to leave the office for thirty minutes. I just feel bad for those people who walk into the office to sign in. We don't have a window at our front desk, so the fumes go out into the entryway.

We also have the most ghetto vacuum cleaner for the pool. I would say it's almost as old as the pool. It's gas powered and has a long 30' metal stick that is broken in parts -- but don't be worried -- it is held together by Gorilla duct tape (THE BEST!!). Then I try to start the vacuum, and it starts, but let me tell you, making the vacuum actually suck things up is the hardest task, which is weird because it's a VACUUM! After that's all said and done, I then go check the chlorine and PH levels in the pool and have to deal with the members of the pool.

It may come as a surprise, but my favorite members are the little kids. Yes, they can be a pain at times, but they are so funny and respect me and my employees. I almost like all of the older members, but we have a review board, and some of these people I'm not a fan of. They always come to me and complain, and it's about things that if they would just cough up some money, then the problem would go away. But they expect me to fix it, and it's usually something that can be fixed for three days; then it all goes down from there, and I just get more complaints.

What I think needs to be done is we need to get more money in circulation, so we can get some much-needed renovations done. All in all, I love my job because I get to be outside all day and get tan, and the people I work with I wouldn't change for the world.

## BECKETT'S *PLAY* IN THE LIGHT OF A FOURTH CHARACTER

FIONA WONG

Written by Samuel Beckett in English in December 1963, *Play* tells the story of a man and two women at the vertices of a love triangle. At first glance, *Play* seems to consist only of three characters, all on stage, recounting their bitter past to the audience. Like most plays, *Play* utilizes a spotlight to direct the audience's attention and focus throughout the performance. However, the spotlight in *Play* has a more important role than merely illuminating the characters and the stage. Right at the beginning of Beckett's work, the stage directions indicate, "Their speech is provoked by a spotlight projected on faces alone," hence giving the spotlight a sense of agency, or a more active role in the play (307). Beckett, in his meticulous description of the stage settings, also writes: "The source of light is single and must not be situated outside the ideal space (stage) occupied by its *victims*" (318, emphasis mine). Here, Beckett personifies the spotlight, and thus raises the question: could it be that the spotlight is in fact the fourth character in *Play*?

Conventionally, a character in a play is portrayed by a person, as a human is the most obvious means to convey human behavior. In *Play*, however, Beckett employs a spotlight to bring to light some of the most universal human characteristics. (As this paper will discuss the role of the spotlight as a character in *Play*, for convenience, the spotlight will be referred to as 'the Spot' henceforth). For instance, the way the Spot switches its focus from one face to the next is extremely anthropomorphic; its behavior is similar to an impatient "inquisitor" (318) looking for, or even demanding, answers from its subjects, turning back and forth between them when it does not receive a satisfying response. Such behavior is clearly exhibited after the fourth blackout in *Play*, where the Spot begins to switch its focus in mid-sentence, not giving the talking character a chance to finish

properly (312-315). The frequency of such occurrences increases with rapidity after that, and the impatience of the Spot evokes a sense of urgency in the audience. The tempo of the play escalates to the point that each character is not able to say more than a sentence at a time; then suddenly, the Spot goes off: "Spot off w2. Blackout. Three seconds" (315). This pause is so timely with the audience's own yearning for a break in the overlapping monologues that one could reasonably interpret it as a processing break the Spot needs as well.

In an earlier part of the play, the Spot also takes a similar break after patiently and continuously allowing each of the characters to narrate their side of the story in chronological order (312). This five-second pause marks the third blackout in *Play*. However, when the Spot comes back on, it is "half (the) previous strength simultaneously on three faces." The relatively long pause and reduction in brightness seem to indicate that the Spot is somewhat exhausted by the amount of information it has taken in, and the fact that all three faces are illuminated at the same time expresses that it is making an overview of the situation, the better to reflect upon and understand what is going on. Such instances convince the audience that the Spot possesses some faculty of thought. The Spot also shows that it is capable of judgment in its reaction to w1's mockery of M ("What a male!" 309). Immediately after this comment, the Spot turns to M, but only long enough for him to open his mouth; then it switches its focus to w2. Here, it seems as if the Spot is agreeing with w1's opinion of M – it too feels that M is not worthy as a male, and thus dismisses whatever he has to say.

The Spot's dismissal of M also hints to the audience that it has an authority over the three faces. In fact, throughout *Play*, Beckett gives various and multiple signals to the audience regarding the Spot's role – that of a tormentor or oppressor. The play starts out with all three faces saying "Yes, strange, darkness best, and the darker the worse, till all dark, then all well" (307). This paradoxical remark about darkness illustrates the ambivalent relationship the faces have with the Spot; they want darkness, for



it will mean repose from the tiresome recounts of the past, yet simultaneously, “the darker the worse,” they fear the means through which they have to obtain the end they crave. As with a person in pursuit of a goal, as he proceeds toward it, each advancement becomes more difficult; yet he perseveres with the belief that the attainment of his desire will justify the suffering endured. To a certain extent, this opening remark is a precursor to the rest of *Play*, where the three faces are enduring the constant torment of the Spot in hope that “someday somehow” they will be relieved from it all and be left in peace (313). Furthermore, Beckett himself appears to refer to the Spot as a tormentor; most of the monologues contrast the Spot with “peace” and “silence” on one hand, and describe it as a “hellish half-light” on the other. Towards the end of *Play*, w1 expresses her yearning for “silence and darkness,” regarding them as “being one” (316). However, she immediately admonishes herself for wanting more than what she has already been afforded, saying that “it is more wickedness to pray for more.” The sentiment expressed here seems to be one of guilt over being greedy, or shame for asking for more than what she deserves. Her bashfulness is somewhat similar to that of a coy child requesting more candy from her parent, knowing full well that she does not deserve it; it’s just that the figure of authority here is the Spot instead of the parent.

Throughout the play, it also seems as if the three heads are incessantly bemoaning the Spot’s presence; the discourse of the characters is scattered with double innuendos that could possibly be referring to the Spot. For example, after the fourth blackout, w2 says: “someday you will tire of me and go out ... for good.” Here, one may interpret “you” and “go out” as referring to M. However, this could also very well be a comment directed to the Spot, where “go out” would mean turning off the light. The deliberate ambiguity demonstrated here seems like w2’s attempt to subtly and politely ask the Spot to leave her alone. Shortly after that in the play, w1 makes a similar remark alluding to the Spot: “Someday somehow I may tell the truth at last and

then no more light at last” (313). Here, the Spot is regarded as an unsympathetic judge admonishing w1 for her short-comings, and w1 seems to think that if she were able to eventually figure out what the truth is, and tell it, then she will no longer be placed under the harsh light of its judgment. However, w1’s attempt at breaking away from the torment turns into exasperation when she feels like the Spot does not seem to be noticing her efforts; she seems in despair when she says “But I have said all I can. All you let me. All I-,” and her speech is then cut off by the Spot. The way the Spot brushes off w1’s justification of her inability to convey the “truth”, whatever that may be, corresponds with a sense that it is exploiting the power it has over her. The Spot’s behavior, were it to be set in the real world, is only acceptable from supervisor to subordinate, master to servant, or judge to the guilty.

We might perceive a more conspicuous manifestation of suppressed resentment toward authority in an overt, second-person reference to the Spot in w1’s later appearance: “Would that placate *you?*” (314, emphasis mine). W1’s earlier exasperation has now turned into bitterness and defiance, and this is especially apparent when she asks whether she should “Bite off my tongue and swallow it?” or “Spit it out?” (314). Henceforth in *Play*, the faces refer and talk to the Spot unabashedly, sometimes practically in conversation with it, as is the case in the monologues that come after w2’s “Peal of wild low laughter” (317). After this point, the faces are no longer narrating their pasts; instead, their discourse is directed at the Spot, referring to it as an eye “staring you in the face,” “just looking,” “looking for something,” and going “on and off.” This inquisitive “gaze” of the Spot seems to arouse much distress in the three characters on the stage, as they repeatedly express their displeasure towards it: “Get off me.”

The frequency and blatancy with which these last few lines refer to the Spot in *Play* are also indicative of Beckett’s intention to make it a character. Prior to this point in *Play*, although he has strongly hinted that the Spot is the fourth

character, Beckett ensures that his intentions are made explicit here. If he did not do so now, his audience might never figure it out; hence, the sudden influx of direct and indirect allusions to the Spot. He seems to have tired of obscuring his intentions any further. Beckett's behavior here rather contrasts with his approach at the beginning of *Play*, where he takes extra pains to employ double innuendoes and symbolic language – such as comparing the Spot to “the sun” (313) – to make the role of the Spot more obvious in the play. What's more, Beckett's stage directions at the beginning of the play state that the speech is to be “provoked by a spotlight,” indicating that the Spot is capable of instigation – a humanlike trait. This instruction corresponds with another that comes right after the third blackout, where Beckett specifies that the Spot should be “half previous strength” and the “voices proportionately lower.” That its dimness should hush the faces suggests that the Spot wields a certain power over them; they dare not outdo the Spot or compete with it in terms of intensity, perhaps for fear of repercussions.

It is also worthy to note that Beckett refers to the Spot with increasing directness as an agent as the play progresses. While he mentions the Spot in the passive form at the beginning (“speech is *provoked by* a spotlight,” 307), he grants it dominion at the end: “The source of light is single and must not be situated outside the ideal space (stage) occupied by *its victims*” (318, emphasis mine). There is also an insistence on the singularity of the Spot in his directions; Beckett is unequivocal when he states that “a single mobile spot should be used,” even when “exceptionally three spots are required to light the three faces simultaneously” (318). He then explains that doing otherwise would diminish the Spot's role as a “unique inquisitor” (318). To make the Spot more anthropomorphic, Beckett also specifies that the light be shone from the bottom, in contrast to the usual spotlight that shines down from above. Perhaps it is his intention that in the absence of a beam that gives away the source of the light, the audience would not perceive the Spot as mere apparatus, thus making it easier to be thought of as a character.

Although the play indicates that Beckett regards, or at least wants his audience to regard, the Spot as a character, things take an unexpected turn right before the closing repeat, at the juncture when M experiences some sort of revelation about his nature of being. His question, which marks the end of *Play*, goes: “Am I as much as ... being seen?” (317). His sudden and repeated use of the word “mere” when referring to the Spot (“mere eye”) as well as the use of more mechanical terms to describe its behavior (“on and off”, “opening and shutting”) reveal how he currently regards the Spot – as a thing with “no mind” (317). These instances imply that M has suddenly become doubtful about his own perception of self, and Beckett might be using this as a rhetorical prompt for the audience to reevaluate their own perception of the relationships between the characters in the play, or more precisely, the Spot's authority over the three faces.

In contrast to everything that came before this moment in the play, where the three faces seemed to be trapped by the Spot in a cycle of endless torture, here M is suggesting that the Spot is an inanimate object without any faculty of thought or emotion. Perhaps all the suffering the three heads thought they had been going through was precisely that – they had simply *believed* that they were being tortured. Now, the question M appears to be asking is whether that really had been the case. Would his circumstances change with this realization? Since it is possible that he might have been reacting as a victim simply because he was convinced that the Spot viewed him as one, could he have reacted differently if he thought he was perceived otherwise? Are our behaviors, emotions and thoughts always in accordance with the expectations and perceptions other people have of us? Am I as much as ... being seen?

M seems to be making some philosophical progress with that question at this point, yet his newfound self-awareness is short-lived as once again, he is silenced by the Spot (“Spot off M”). When the Spot comes on afterwards, the three heads are once more in the same state they were in at the beginning of *Play*.

The Spot, it seems, would rather not have its subjects attain enlightenment.

### **Bibliography**

Beckett, Samuel. *The Complete Dramatic Works*. London: Faber and Faber, 1990. Print.

## THE KNIFE

DEVIN VAN DYKE

The knife flew over the heads of the seven staff and nosily bounced off the wall, coming to rest on the floor in the hallway. The staff, led by its rigid-minded team leader, elbowed each other as they pushed through the doorway, eager to tie me to the bed. I had gone limp, and after throwing the two-inch-long bladed knife out the door was beginning to giggle as they maneuvered me onto the bed. Their arms held mine as if I were a thousand-pound polar bear struggling against capture.

The already well-worn knife was something I had found on my homeless wanderings, and since it was small, easy to carry—and when found I had so few objects—I kept it. The idea that the dull blade still retracted meant that even if I had nothing to cut and the blade served no immediate purpose, I could flip it in and out and convince myself that I had an object of value. It had a tail on it meant to attach to a key ring, so I had an object to finger in my pocket even when I had spent my last penny. I had found it again right where I left it in the seclusion room after having used its dull blade to cut a hole in the room's window before I escaped the first time.

The staff seemed to enjoy tying me up more than they usually did, and each one of them except Darlene appeared to have slightly upturned lips, the subtle smiles of those in power. I was prone, which means either you get your nose crushed after no longer being able to hold your head up or you turn your head and rest your cheek on the mattress. Craning my neck in the direction of the rigid charge nurse, I knew that when the decision was made to tie me up my individual team member's responsibility for me was superseded by hers. In between giggles I said, "Please let me take the medication orally. Please don't give me a shot."

I saw Darlene step into view of the charge nurse, who said sternly to the two of us, "Go get a shot."

I looked the charge in the eye and in a voice no longer giggly replied, "I'm serious, I'll take whatever you got."

The charge held eye contact with me and in a tone that would tolerate no argument crisply spat out, "We'd like to do that, but you really need to be quieted, and we have to be sure you get the medication."

I could tell by her abrupt tone that I had lost another battle, and at the same time I knew, regardless of this loss, I would be ready for the next. Five minutes later Darlene returned and I was securely fastened to the table-bench in the seclusion room. It's not really a bed except that it has a plastic-covered mattress and a sheet like a bed, but those are laying on top of a wide bench squarely centered in the room. The sides of the eighteen-inch tall bench had numerous fastening points for the straps that held me. I couldn't see the door unless I twisted my neck and my back a little because it was directly behind the bed-bench. The other staff had left, and when Darlene returned, it was her, the charge and me.

Darlene said to us both, "It's Darlene, Devin. I'm going to give you an injection. Your arm or your butt?"

Then the charge's voice from out-of-sight, in the firm authoritarian voice she always seemed to use with me, said, "In the butt."

Darlene kneeled on the bed, and her hand reached for my pants and pulled them down enough for her to alcohol-wipe the large muscle between the butt and the back. Then she said, "Slight stick."

I heard the door close and the sound of metal hitting metal as the lock slid home. I started to drift into the mindset of a person who has learned to tolerate alcohol and still appear okay—a state where you're still under the influence but you can function somewhat because you are psychologically prepared for a physiological war. A shot hits much faster than a liquid or pill. From experience I knew that I had about six or seven minutes of consciousness left. I was quickly drifting off to the groggy gray place where you can't quite sleep and you aren't all yourself. It's a

conscious purgatory where you're not coherent enough or have enough control to consider what you could have done differently—it's a place where meaningless time drifts past and the sun slowly moves and long shadows quietly form and you haven't moved for hours. Time passes as night darkens the edges of the window. The light above never goes out. Forced involuntary meditation.

The difference this time was better preparation. A decade is a long time, and I had put a lot of effort into being able to think clearly in spite of their drugs. I accepted that the shot would make me sleep, but I also knew that I would wake up and that there would be a limit as to how many shots they could give me over time. Moving my shoulders to and fro to try and get some degree of comfort, I also unclenched my wrists from having tensed them as they took control of me. As the drugs finally overcame my consciousness, I looked forward to the coming battles.

Sometime later in the night I regained consciousness. I knew it was late because the hospital was quiet. My wrists had been so tightly tensed that the staff had thought I was securely tied. Twisting around I could see the door and I discovered that the buckles were much looser than I had remembered from previous trips. The question of whether or not they were actually looser this time, or that I hadn't noticed in previous trips, never occurred to me.

Struggling against the buckle and beginning to perspire, I discovered that if I purposefully moved my wrist back and forth and simultaneously collapsed my hand, all while keeping a steady pull on my arms, my wrist was slowly coming out of the restraint. I felt like Einstein. This discovery leveled the playing field. I was getting to work on my legs when a motion in the small window in the door caught my attention.

I froze as the door swung open, and Chad, the nighttime charge, came through. He stood in front of me with his hands in pockets and looked down at me, feigning casualness, and said, "You weren't planning on going for another walk were you?"

"Well, I was hoping I could panhandle a few dollars and get a coffee and some smokes while I wait for the bus, actually."

"Now you should know better than to go AWOL on us, shouldn't you?"

"But I don't need to be here."

"Now you're gonna let me and Bob put you back in those restraints, right?"

"Of course. I get to go to court tomorrow right?" I said as I lay down on the bed and held my arms out.

"You mean in a few hours. And we'll probably keep you."

Chad and Bob finished tying me up and then left the room. Ten minutes after they left I had my right arm loose and was removing my left from the buckles. The hardware that held my wrist had a limited number of places where it could be set. When they came in to retie me, I had already figured that out and that was part of the reason I had been so amiable with them. When they retied me, I could tell by the look on Chad's face that he was concerned that the settings on the buckles might continue to allow me to escape. They would either be too loose or too tight. As I removed my left wrist I looked over my shoulder to discover Bob's face watching me from the other side of the door. Then it opened.

Chad had a towel over his shoulder and grabbed my right wrist and wrapped it in his towel, while Bob started on my left wrist. I looked from side to side and said, "How come you guys ain't friendly no more?" I had already guessed that they would look pretty stupid calling up the doctor at four-thirty in the morning because they couldn't keep me in restraints. And I also figured that they had maxed out on the drugs. The time would be too close to the six-hour-long interval they would most likely be using. They couldn't deliver me to court too sedated, especially since I planned to be rational. It wouldn't reflect well on them if they had to take me to court in restraints. In order to keep me past these initial 72 hours, they would have to present me to a judge, a procedure I knew quite well. I had them over a barrel of sorts.

The towels were not slowing me down a whole lot, and I felt as though they must be getting tired of the skirmishing. Sure enough, as soon as I got my right hand free, Chad and Bob came through the door. I looked up at him as I continued to free my left hand and said, “Hey Chad, could I bum a smoke? I could really use a smoke you know. Haven’t had one since before midnight.”

He stood there with his arms folded across his chest and said, “I don’t think so. How about you stop untying yourself and I’ll let you out and give you a smoke at five-thirty.”

“That seems like an awful long time.”

Bob had been standing behind him watching the conversation and added, “Its only forty-five minutes, man. And I’ll be right here to let you out on the dot. We just don’t need you up and about, disturbing the other folks who want to sleep.”

Then Chad looked me straight in the eye and said, “But you gotta stay tied up so we can report compliance, okay?” The clipboard came out from behind his crossed arms and he put a checkmark on its piece of paper.

“You’ll give me a smoke right?”

He put his hand on my shoulder and said, “I’ll give you a couple.”

## UNA PERSPECTIVA NUEVA

ANGELA STAMLER

El veredicto llegó. Adentro, Ana sabía lo que iba a ser, pero tenía pavor de oírlo. Ella respiró con aprobación cuando oyó la palabra, 'lentes'. Bueno, ahora es oficial. Ella no pudo decidir qué era peor, llevar lentes o el comentario del doctor de que era normal para alguien de su edad empezar a llevar lentes. ¿A su edad? ¿Que quiere decir eso? ¡No soy vieja, solo tengo treinta y nueve años! pensó ella. Sentía traicionada por su cuerpo. No sentía vieja pero ese comentario le hizo pensar y sentir vieja. Que pensamiento deprimente.

En la casa, ella miraba unos lentes en la mesa. Sus hijos los encontraron en la playa cuando buscaban por conchas y los llevaron a la casa. Los examinó. Eran un poco rectangulares con monturas de un metal oscuro no brillante, con muchos atractivos diseños. Estaban rayados de un lado, tal vez porque los encontraron en la playa. Se los puso y de repente podía ver las olas violentas chocando sobre las rocas del mar, escalando sobre la arena y regresando. Era como si estuviera mirando a una película proyectada en el aire delante de ella. No parpadeó. No movió. Tomó un respiro profundo. Entonces la escena desvaneció tan rápido como llegó. Bajó los lentes y los subió de nuevo, pero no regresó la imagen. Se preguntaba y miraba alrededor y a los lentes. Voy a guardar estos lentes, afirmó ella. No entendió lo que pasó, pero era increíble. Tal vez tener que llevar lentes no iba a ser tan mal. Se preguntó si debería decirlo a su familia, pero decidió no hacerlo. No quería que pensarán que era su imaginación.

Al día siguiente estaba en el centro comercial con su familia almozando. Hubo una pantalla TV con noticias. Miraba al periodista y vio a dos imágenes, como cuando uno toma una foto y sale una imagen normal y otra que parece fantasma. Ella bajo los lentes y vio solo una imagen. Subió otra vez los lentes y vio otra vez la otra imagen fantasmal. La imagen de fantasma era

el mismo periodista, pero con una cara, enojada, cansada, con desprecio y odio. ¡Que raro! Miraba a personas en el centro comercial y vio la misma cosa, bajando y subiendo los lentes. Vio a un hombre grande fumando y vio a una imagen fantasmal de él delgado, con el pelo gris, la piel curtida, y con tos. Vio a una mujer joven en una silla de ruedas sin piernas, sin cabello, y sin expresión en la cara, pero su imagen fantasmal era una mujer bella parada sus dos piernas y sonriendo. Otra mujer con pelo largo y ropa elegante estaba y riéndose con unas otras mujeres, y vio una imagen fantasmal de ella con la cara fría, cruel, y calculadora. Vio a un hombre vestido de traje con un laptop sentado solo y la imagen fantasmal de él tenía la cara triste, preocupado, y solitario. Un anciano sentado solo no muy lejos de él con pelo blanquísimo, lentes, y la espalda encorvada estaba leyendo, y la imagen fantasmal de él era de un hombre más joven con espalda recta, con unos ojos y una sonrisa muy linda mirando a la gente. Ana sonreía también pero no dijo nada a su familia. Se preguntaba ¿que más vería en otros lugares, como un partido de béisbol, un cementerio, o un parque?

Al día siguiente, fue a la playa con su familia. A ella le encanta la playa y era un día hermoso. Sacaron sus refrescos, bolsas, y toallas de playa, y su esposo corrió hacia el agua con sus hijos. Ella sonreía. En este momento, ella vio con sus lentes unas figuras poco transparentes. Era una escena de su pasado, de su juventud con su familia en la playa. Recuerdo ese día, pensó ella. Su papá tenía la camera tomando fotos, Eliana y Daniela, estaban en el agua, su hermano, Jordán, estaba construyendo un castillo de arena, Nikita y ella estaban subiendo a las rocas con el perro tratando de evadir las olas chocando. Y su madre dibujaba la escena en una hoja de papel, como siempre le gustaba hacerlo. Ana sonreía otra vez y miraba más profundamente a la imagen de su madre. Los lentes que llevaba su madre le parecían muy conocidos.

