

Jawbone
by Allison Lee

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The absence of the palpebral fold produces a passive expression which seems to epitomize the stoical and unemotional manner of the Oriental.

This is indeed a plastic surgeon's paradise.

- *Oriental Peregrinations*, November 1955
Dr. David Ralph Millard
Chief Plastic Surgeon for the U.S. Marine Corps

EXT. STREET - DAY

The morning commute. The herd mows down the boulevard, darts underground, and emerges from exits.

In the crowd, a face stands out. The skin around her eyes is swollen and red, lids glistening with ointment. Medical tape holds her eyes open. She proceeds calmly. No one pays her any attention.

A few more steps into the masses and there's one more. In the center of her face, where her nose should be, lies a mound of bandages. A white bulge surrounded by blotches of color - purple, blue, green, yellow.

We move past her when yet another woman with dressings emerges from the group. Her jawline is taped up. Her entire face is encircled with an ace bandage. She's all tied up with a bow on top.

Just another day on the streets of Gangnam, Seoul, the plastic surgery capital of the world.

And from the deafening din of the mad city, we cut to...

INT. CUBICLE - DAY

Sterilized quiet. The buzz of fluorescent lights, muffled voices on the phone, the clacking of the keyboard.

The epitome of industriousness, SARAH, stares at a computer screen, typing furiously.

Heavy and homely, Sarah has a melancholy way about her.

An intercom buzzes, interrupts her intense gaze. She starts.

INTERCOM

Miss Kim, will you bring in the resumes? I need to look at the new candidates.

Sarah scrambles to log out and jumps up to gather the materials.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Sarah enters. She bows respectfully to the BOSSMAN.

BOSSMAN

Put them here, Miss Kim.

She nods and brings them to him. He reaches for the stack of resumes and takes a look at the first one.

The Bossman flips through the pages until he gets to the end. A glossy headshot is attached to the resume.

BOSSMAN (CONT'D)

This one's nose is just too broad.

He grabs for another candidate's application. Once again, he ignores the qualifications and heads right for the visual.

BOSSMAN (CONT'D)

Oh, hey. A full-frontal. Pear-shaped, eh?

Sarah clears her throat shyly.

SARAH

Sir, if you don't mind, I was hoping that you might be able to advise me on my chances for this position.

The Bossman finally tears his eyes away from another headshot and looks up at Sarah. He studies her before speaking.

BOSSMAN

Have a seat, Miss Kim.

Sarah moves swiftly to the chair facing the Bossman.

BOSSMAN (CONT'D)

How old are you, Miss Kim?

SARAH

Twenty-nine. I'll be thirty in August.

BOSSMAN

And do you have a boyfriend?

SARAH

No, sir.

He nods.

BOSSMAN

I see. Indeed, you have done good work here, Miss Kim. But it is also advantageous for us to take a look at what is out there. I cannot just give you a promotion out of loyalty's sake. What kind of supervisor would I be? We must make sacrifices for the good of the company. Am I right?

Off Sarah. She takes a beat before she bows.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Sarah shyly knocks on the door of an office. The cell is occupied by a slightly above AVERAGE JOE.

PETER
Can I help you?

SARAH
Peter...

She blushes.

SARAH (CONT'D)
I mean, Mr. Park, it's me, Miss
Kim.

Peter looks up, nods quizzically. He has no idea who she is.

SARAH (CONT'D)
I've processed all the reports for
the meeting tomorrow.

Sarah hands Peter a banker's box of binders.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Here are the hard copies and I've
also just emailed you them.

An incredulous Peter gawks at Sarah.

PETER
You did all this?

She nods. Peter lets out a low whistle.

PETER (CONT'D)
You saved me, thanks. I owe you
one. Drinks on me, next time?

On Sarah, a small smile but full of promise.

INT. STATION - NIGHT

On the platform, Sarah waits for her train.

She stares blankly at an electronic billboard positioned on the wall above the tracks. It flashes an ad featuring nubile and doe-eyed women from a K-pop group.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

A gilded baroque frame takes up the entire wall above the sofa in the living room. In it, a somber family portrait.

Sarah's PARENTS center the image. HALMUNI, Sarah's grandmother, has her hands draped over her son's shoulders. Sarah's hands are likewise posed and placed on her mother.

Sarah arrives home. She gives her grandmother a perfunctory peck on the cheek. Halmuni barely reacts. She is glued to the flat screen.

HALMUNI

Oh, Sarah. How was today?

SARAH

Just the usual. Work stuff.

Halmuni finally faces Sarah. Her sunken eyes bore into her.

HALMUNI

Anything else?

Sarah shrugs like a little child.

SARAH

No.

HALMUNI

I see.

Halmuni shifts her attention back to a blaring Korean drama.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sarah and her parents sit at a dining table.

SARAH

I have some news.

Sarah's father looks up. He raises his eyebrows.

SARAH'S FATHER

You're going on a date?

Sarah blushes. She stammers out a reply.

SARAH

Uh, no. I'm going to try to get a promotion at work.

Though deflated, Sarah's mother attempts a bright smile.

SARAH'S MOTHER
That's wonderful. Such an
independent woman. Isn't that
right, honey?

She elbows her husband. He grunts out a reply.

The family resumes eating dinner in silence. The only sound is made by chopsticks clinking against ceramic.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The only light in the room emanates from the bluish glow of a computer.

Sarah sits in her darkened bedroom. She slurps up a cup of ramen while watching a K-drama on her laptop.

On screen, a couple walks morosely through a winter wonderland.

Sarah puts down her cup, closes up the computer.

She goes to a window and looks out at the city. Banks, stores, restaurants, bars, cafes, apartments are piled high atop each other.

INT. STATION - DAY

A SUBWAY RIDER checks herself out in front of one of the many full-length mirrors installed in the station.

She fluffs out her hair and rubs the lipstick stains out of her teeth. The rider turns around and pulls her dress down over her ass.

She smiles at herself. She's a looker and she knows it.

Suddenly, the rider glances up. She catches Sarah's gaze and locks eyes with her. Sarah looks away.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Sarah walks down the halls of her office. From the other end of the hallway, a male co-worker turns the corner and heads straight towards her. Sarah recognizes Peter immediately.

As they near each other, Sarah raises her hand in greeting.

SARAH
Peter...

He brushes past Sarah without acknowledgment.

INT. BREAK ROOM - DAY

Sarah stands alone at the counter and makes herself a cup of coffee. Her CO-WORKERS have congregated at a table.

PYT
Guess what? I got my eye liner and
lip liner tattoos!

The gaggle of women ooh and ahh.

PYT 2
Show us, Miss Lee!

Pretty Young Thing looks around furtively, decides to humor them.

She wipes off her lipstick to reveal a thin red outline tattooed on both her upper and lower lips. She uses a tissue to remove the rest of her makeup, unveiling the black tattoos on her eyelids.

MISS LEE
See? It's permanent! It's all there
in the morning when I wake up.

One of the girls pipes up, skeptical.

PYT 3
But didn't it hurt, Miss Lee?

Miss Lee takes out her purse and re-applies her make-up.

She shrugs casually.

MISS LEE
It was worth it, though. Peter, I
mean, Mr. Park, has just asked me
out on a date.

The women squeal.

Off Sarah, as she takes in the information.

Miss Lee prances out of the break room. Sarah can only stare as she does.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Miss Lee makes her way to the elevator. Sarah follows close behind.

Just as the doors are about to close, Sarah enters the elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Sarah gives the oblivious and perky Miss Lee the once over. Her face, dark, perhaps giving into murderous thought.

Sarah studies Miss Lee head to toe.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

The two of them exit the building and enter the hustle and bustle of Seoul.

Miss Lee looks around, finds the street that she has been looking for. A busy and vibrant night market takes up the entire city block.

She hustles over to an outdoor street food stall and enters the tent set up for its patrons.

Sarah walks quickly and stealthily behind her.

INT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

Her line of vision obscured by steam rising off the grill, Sarah searches for a sighting of Miss Lee.

VENDOR

You going to order anything?

A surly VENDOR gives Sarah a dubious look.

SARAH

Uh, yes. A plate of rice cakes.

The vendor spoons out doughy cakes and sauce onto a paper plate, hands it to Sarah.

She takes a seat at the bar when she spots Peter and Miss Lee in a corner of the tent.

Peter pours Miss Lee a shot of soju. She makes an attempt at modesty by turning her head away from him as she downs the shot.

From across the space, Peter looks over at Sarah. Sarah panics and starts slurping up a rice cake, praying that he doesn't recognize her.

Peter whispers something to Miss Lee. She turns around before bursting into giggles.

Sarah can't take it any more. She darts up and stumbles out of the tent.

EXT. BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Sarah moves briskly down the street towards Mapo Bridge.

After a few paces, she slows down and stops. She wipes away the tears from her face and takes in her surroundings.

Her movement activates the floodlights. Sarah glances up at the CCTV cameras which monitor would-be jumpers.

Lest others be tempted to surrender instead of fulfilling societal obligation by continuing on in the pressure cooker, heartwarming photos of families and uplifting messages have been posted here by the government.

One ad reads - Your family needs you. Another - The pain isn't worth it. Lastly - Don't jump.

Sarah contemplates the churning murky water. Her hands grip the railing.

Death is instantaneous after plunging into the Han River.

SARAH

It's okay. The best revenge is
living well.

She takes a deep breath, drinking in the cool nighttime air before continuing on her way.

INT. CUBICLE - DAY

Sarah works furiously, putting together a spreadsheet. The intercom buzzes.

INTERCOM

Miss Kim, could you come in here?
And bring in two cups of coffee,
please. I have some good news to
discuss with you.

Sarah stands. She hugs herself, bites her lip in anticipation.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Sarah brings the coffee in on a tray. She enters through the door and stops abruptly.

An impossibly attractive FEMALE sits across from the Bossman.

BOSSMAN

Ahhh, thank you, Miss Kim.

He stands to retrieve the coffee and presents a cup to the woman.

BOSSMAN (CONT'D)

Miss Kim, I'm pleased to introduce you to the latest member of our team, Miss Shim.

Miss Shim uncrosses her long and shapely legs and gets out of her chair.

Her eyes round and luminous like an anime character, Miss Shim has lined them in brown. She's also brushed on straight full eyebrows to emphasize her puppy dog gaze. Her hair is of a chestnut shade, dyed to an unnatural yet becoming and perfect hue.

She bows politely to Sarah. In shock, Sarah remains upright.

BOSSMAN (CONT'D)

Miss Shim, Miss Kim has been a prized employee here for how many years now, Miss Kim?

Sarah answers flatly.

SARAH

Five years.

The Bossman chortles.

BOSSMAN

Oh, ho, that long? Well, be sure to learn everything from her, Miss Shim. Sarah's the best.

Crushed, Sarah stares back blankly at Miss Shim.

INT. STATION - NIGHT

The platform is packed with commuters heading home.

Blinking back her tears, Sarah tries to make her way past a PASSENGER who is preening before a mirror.

SARAH

Excuse me.

The woman doesn't hear her. She closely examines every feature, engrossed in her own image like Narcissus.

Sarah tries again.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I'm trying to get to my train.

Oblivious to Sarah, the woman pulls out a compact and begins applying powder to her face.

Sarah decides to move past her, accidentally jostling the woman.

NARCISSUS

Hey! Watch it, piglet.

Infuriated, Sarah turns around and gives the woman a hard nudge. Narcissus drops her compact and it shatters. She stumbles forward and lands just a foot away from the tracks.

The woman's eyes go wide as the lights of the train draw near. Sarah watches her scramble as the cars roar into the station, barely missing her.

Sarah ignores her gasps and marches on.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sarah enters the space. Her mother has the television on, is absorbed in yet another Korean drama.

On screen, another mother chastises her daughter for being unmarried.

Sarah's mother barely glances up.

SARAH'S MOTHER

Did you have a good day?

Sarah rushes for her room.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

At the table, Sarah's mother studies her daughter.

She elbows her husband, prompting him to speak. He rolls his eyes before clearing his throat. Reluctantly, he asks.

SARAH'S FATHER

So, Sarah, any new developments at your work?

Sarah speaks flatly.

SARAH

I didn't get the promotion if that's what you mean. It went to this real beauty of a woman.

She shovels more food into her mouth, so that she doesn't have to speak.

Sarah's parents exchange looks.

The meal continues on in silence.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sarah's in the middle of slurping up a cup of ramen when a reflection in the window catches her eye.

She puts down the ramen and moves in for a better look at herself.

Sarah examines every feature carefully. She grabs a red and then, a black pencil; she lines her lips and her eyes. The result is clownish rather than becoming. She sighs.

Sarah picks up her ramen again.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

On Sarah as she stares resentfully across the room.

A cavalier Peter engages with Miss Shim.

INT. BREAK ROOM - DAY

A harried Bossman marches up to Sarah.

BOSSMAN

Miss Kim, did you put together these monthly reports? They're a complete mess.

SARAH

No, Miss Shim did.

BOSSMAN

Miss Shim?

The Bossman follows Sarah's gaze to where Miss Shim sits. She's at a table, holding court over male CO-WORKERS vying for her attention.

BOSSMAN (CONT'D)

Well, I asked you to supervise her, Miss Kim.

SARAH

Supervise her? But she's my supervisor, sir.

The Bossman harrumphs.

BOSSMAN
Just fix these reports.

He throws a stack of papers at Sarah.

INT. CUBICLE - DAY

A morose Sarah sits at her desk, chewing a pen, watching a music video.

Five pert derrieres shake before each ENTERTAINER pivots to face us. The first has luminous eyes, poses coquettishly. The second woman turns, looks just like the first. As each pirouettes, we realize that they are five carbon copies, a set of identical K-pop quintuplets.

Sarah uses her pen to trace their faces, all heart-shaped.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Sarah exits the high-rise office building and tries to enter the exodus home. She's slow to merge and ends up colliding with a COMMUTER.

Sarah stumbles. Her handbag goes flying and papers and belongings spill out onto the sidewalk.

Sarah glances up at the commuter, expecting him to help her. Instead, he takes one look at Sarah and scoffs at her appearance.

COMMUTER
You need to lose some weight from your calves, turnip legs. It will make you a little faster on your feet.

SARAH
What did you say to me?

He takes off. Sarah shouts at him as he strides away.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Come back here and help me, you asshole!

The commuter disappears into the crowd.

INT. STATION - NIGHT

Across the tracks, advertisements for plastic surgery clinics pepper the walls.

Each highlights a before and after photo of the beast and the beauty. In every photo, the beast is a wallflower, dour and dull, but the beauty is the prom queen, radiating confidence and appeal.

Sarah examines each poster. One ad reads - You won't even need makeup. Another - Look like a celebrity on a non-celebrity budget. Lastly - Everyone's doing it, why shouldn't you.

The train arrives, stirring everything up on the platform.

Sarah braces herself. Her hair and clothes fly up in the wind.

Though Sarah steps onto the train, her eyes never leave the ads.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Sarah walks along a bustling street.

Tents have set up shop for the night, hoping to entice homeward bound commuters with food and drink, clothing, fortune telling.

Sarah's drawn to one of the gleaming tents at the end of the road. Through its clear vinyl curtains, Sarah spots a middle-aged man hunched over a small table. Signs advertise the FORTUNE TELLER's services - palm reading, astrology, tarot cards, face reading.

EXT./INT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

Sarah pulls aside the curtain and enters the tent. The fortune teller rises and bows politely.

FORTUNE TELLER
Please. Have a seat.

Sarah sits on the opposite side of the table facing him.

FORTUNE TELLER (CONT'D)
You would like to have your face
read.

Sarah nods. The fortune teller leans forward and studies Sarah before delivering a verdict.

FORTUNE TELLER (CONT'D)
Your short forehead could point to a stalled career, and the size of your eyes also may reflect a small but significant romantic interest in your life. But what's really weighing you down is your heavy jawbone. The anchor of your face is dragging you back.

SARAH
Is that what's wrong with me?

FORTUNE TELLER
Nothing's wrong. Because what is wrong can always be repaired and made better.

Confused, Sarah looks at the fortune teller quizzically.

FORTUNE TELLER (CONT'D)
I see that everything that you've ever wanted will soon be yours. But you must make the right choice.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sarah enters the space with her usual midnight snack, ramen. She takes a moment to view the city before turning on the light.

The light exposes Sarah's reflection in the mirror. She puts down the cup. Sarah stares at herself.

SARAH
What a piece of work you are.

On Sarah, an idea dawning.

Suddenly, she runs to her desk and finds a tape dispenser. She rips off pieces of Scotch tape and grabs a pair of scissors. Sarah deftly cuts the tape into thin strips.

Sarah moves back to the mirror and holds open her eyelid with one hand. She positions the tape with her other hand so that a crease forms across the lid. She does the same for the other eye. It, too, folds, giving her eyes a wider appearance.

Sarah steps back and surveys her handiwork.

Still unsatisfied, she goes to a chest of drawers, searching for an item. She pulls out a stiff corset. There's a gift tag still attached to it - Happy Birthday! Love, Mom.

Sarah rips off the tag and squeezes her thick middle into the corset. Once she has fastened the last clasp, she steps in front of the mirror again.

A beat before Sarah steps away. Her gaze still trained on her own image, she throws out the cup of ramen.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sarah walks down a boulevard in Gangnam. The cement sidewalk has been imprinted with a pre-cast mold. Imitation cobblestone.

The city block is occupied by concrete buildings, boxy and rectangular, all resembling each other, full of monotonous efficacy, devoid of charm or character.

Vertical signs jut from the side of the structures. Each advertisement offers up a promise from its respective clinic - Duchess Nose, Le Petit Face, Beauty and the Beast, My Fair Lady, Ugly Duckling.

This is the Improvement Quarter of Seoul.

Sarah stops before the tallest clinic and looks up. It's sixteen stories tall.

The sign reads - Welcome to the Touch-Up Shop.

Sarah takes a deep breath and steps through the glass doors.

INT. CLINIC - DAY

The waiting room is all sleekness and sterility, white and chrome. Sarah sits on the edge of an immaculate white leather sofa.

She takes in the space.

Two RECEPTIONISTS wait behind a Lucite counter, the transparency of the material allows for an unadulterated look at their long legs.

The counter is flanked by floor-to-ceiling pillars made of an unknown but gleaming white material, something akin to marble.

The receptionists wear tight shirts, short skirts and high heels, uniforms that look like they belong more on Korean Air flight attendants than to physicians' assistants. Their skin is of an impeccable alabaster, their bodies, irreproachable, too. Both are slender as bamboo, and their faces are crafted carefully into perfection.

Intimidated, Sarah stares down at her paperwork.

She looks over the first question - What is the reason you want plastic surgery? 1) a job interview, 2) a pending engagement or marriage, 3) this is a gift from a family member, 4) to boost my self-confidence.

Next, the questionnaire asks - What is the level of transformation that you want to achieve? 1) natural and hardly noticeable, 2) a different look but an absolute improvement, 3) that no one will recognize me.

The next section is a fill-in-the-blank - Name the entertainer that you find most desirable. _____

Sarah continues filling out the form. The fourth question reads - Post-surgery, what are your intentions? 1) find a significant other, 2) make progress professionally, 3) upload selfies online, 4) enter a beauty pageant.

And, lastly - Do you know anyone else who has had plastic surgery? 1) my mother, 2) the female members in my family, 3) one or two friends, 4) I know others who are considering it.

One of the receptionists comes over with a tray of drinks.

RECEPTIONIST

Champagne?

The receptionist offers up a glass to Sarah.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

To the new you.

She smiles at Sarah. Her teeth gleam.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The doors to the elevator open, revealing a pretty and slim CONSULTANT. She motions for Sarah to step out first.

CONSULTANT

All sixteen floors of our clinic are dedicated to the art of beauty enhancement. Not only are we the largest clinic in the Improvement Quarter of Gangnam, but we are also the best.

The consultant escorts Sarah down a spotless hallway.

CONSULTANT (CONT'D)

You will be meeting with Dr. Lee.
He is very much in demand here at
the Touch-Up Shop. Dr. Lee is world-
renowned for his facial contouring.
Once he's done with you, your jaw
will be in the shape of perfection.
The letter V.

She makes a victory sign.

A self-conscious Sarah touches the sides of her face.

CONSULTANT (CONT'D)

After your complimentary initial
consult with Dr. Lee, I'll come to
meet with you and we can discuss
payment options.

The consultant smiles brightly as she opens the door for
Sarah to enter.

INT. EXAM ROOM - DAY

The door opens. Feeling vulnerable, Sarah adjusts her paper
gown, holds on to it tightly. A nonchalant DR. LEE takes one
look at Sarah.

DR. LEE

Oof.

He speaks without any hesitation. He has no fear of offending
her, assuming that she already knows, that she is well aware
of her own deficiencies.

Dr. Lee goes to the cabinet and pulls out a Sharpie from a
drawer.

DR. LEE (CONT'D)

Shall we begin?

He brings out a skull and places it on a stainless steel
cart. It clangs heavily against the metal like a bowling
ball.

DR. LEE (CONT'D)

Have you ever taken a group photo
and realized that your head is
bigger than the others? Even those
of the men?

Dr. Lee points out the thick and large jawbone.

DR. LEE (CONT'D)
With the Small Face Special, gone
are the days of standing in the
back. It's simple. We shave and
break off the offensive part of the
mandible using oscillating saws and
hammers. Then, we realign the top
and bottom.

Off Sarah, wide-eyed.

SARAH
Is the procedure safe?

DR. LEE
This operation has been performed a
countless number of times. It first
originated as a way to treat severe
congenital deformities.

He takes the cap off the marker and draws two black lines
that connect in the middle of Sarah's chin.

DR. LEE (CONT'D)
But now you, too, can have the
perfect V shape.

INT. EXAM ROOM - LATER

Close on Sarah's face. Dr. Lee has used the black felt-tip
marker to draw thick lines on her eyes, nose, cheeks, chin.

SARAH
Is there anything else that you
might recommend?

Sarah's paper gown slips off a little, revealing more black
lines on her abdomen, arms and legs.

He has marked up her entire body.

DR. LEE
Looks like everything.

Sarah covers herself up with the gown.

SARAH
It's a bit overwhelming. I hope
that I can survive it all.

DR. LEE
There's always a risk, but that's
what makes anything worthwhile,
right?

INT. ESPRESSO BAR - DAY

Sarah and the consultant are engaged in a tête-à-tête at an espresso bar.

SARAH

And just exactly how much is this
going to cost me?

The consultant passes an invoice across the table to Sarah. Sarah's face falls, but the consultant's remains in its cheer of perpetuity.

CONSULTANT

Do not worry, once you procure the
down, we offer an amazing low
interest payment plan for our pre-
qualified customers. No interest
for the first twenty-four months.

A BARISTA serves them their drinks. The consultant hands Sarah a cappuccino. Sarah gazes into her cup. The barista has created a rosette design out of the foam.

Sarah looks up at the consultant. Without missing a beat, she smiles buoyantly at Sarah.

CONSULTANT (CONT'D)

Like I said, our business is to
make the world a more beautiful
place.

We move out to reveal that the polished and minimalist espresso bar is actually a part of the clinic.

INT. BANK - DAY

A surly BANK TELLER stares at Sarah.

TELLER

Are you sure that you want to
withdraw this amount, Miss Kim?

SARAH

I'm positive.

TELLER

But is there anything I can do to
convince you to bank with us? I can
offer you a CD with a five percent
return. You'll get results that you
will be pleased with considering
the heft of this amount.

SARAH
No. Thank you.

TELLER
I don't mean to pry, Miss Kim, but
this must be your life savings up
until this point?

SARAH
You're right. It is.

She grabs the deposit bag and stands. Reluctantly, the teller
does, too.

Sarah exits through the glass doors of the bank, her figure
silhouetted against the light outside.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

The cafe is positioned as a footnote beneath a metallic high-
rise. One of thousands in the city.

INT. CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Sarah gazes into her cup of coffee. More latte art. This
time, a fern.

Sarah looks across the table and surveys her parents before
she speaks.

SARAH
Mom, Dad, I've made a decision. I
going to have surgery.

Off her parents' concern.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Nothing's wrong with me. I am
having the surgery in order to
enhance my looks.

Her parents exchange glances before turning back to their
daughter.

SARAH (CONT'D)
I've hit a plateau in many
different ways. At work, I've been
in the same position for the last
five years. I didn't get that
promotion. Nothing has happened to
me...

She colors.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Romantically.

Sarah's father nods.

SARAH'S FATHER
It's all right, Sarah. There comes
a time in every woman's life when
she must go through this.

Sarah's mother looks around nervously. She whispers.

SARAH'S MOTHER
Just exactly what kind of work will
you have done?

SARAH
Everything.

Her mother's voice squeaks.

SARAH'S MOTHER
Everything?

Shaken, Sarah's mother starts digging for imaginary treasure
in her Louis Vuitton purse.

SARAH'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
This is all my fault. It's because
you inherited my thick jawbone.

Sarah's hand flies up. She touches her jawline.

SARAH'S FATHER
No, it's my fault. You have my
eyes. I remember when I used to
walk past the base after school,
waiting for the GIs to toss me some
treats. Nothing was as delicious as
Wrigley's Gum or Hershey's
Chocolate. But they always asked if
I could see out of these slits.

He sighs sheepishly, almost chuckling at the memory.

SARAH'S FATHER (CONT'D)
I should have gifted you the
surgery when you graduated from
high school like the other girls.
But I wasn't doing so well at the
firm and I didn't know if we could
afford it. I should have helped you
become more beautiful. I'm sorry,
Sarah.

SARAH
It's okay, Dad.

Sarah's mother looks woefully at her.

SARAH'S MOTHER
But to totally alter her
appearance? It's not natural.
Doesn't seem right.

Sarah falters.

SARAH
All I want to do is make the world
a more beautiful place.

SARAH'S FATHER
Of course it's right.

Though usually stoic, Sarah's father suddenly gets emotional.

SARAH'S FATHER
We should never give up on the
betterment of ourselves. How do you
think we Koreans rebuilt ourselves
into the fourteenth richest country
in the world after all the
invasions, occupations and the war?
We believed that we could fix or
correct any obstacle in order to
get ahead. And we did it. Like our
country, I want you to succeed.

Sarah takes a sip of her coffee.

SARAH'S FATHER
It will be a painful and difficult
journey ahead, but worth it. I am
very proud of you, Sarah, for
deciding to become beautiful.

SARAH
Thanks, Dad.

She puts down the cup. The latte art has been ruined. The
fern is gone.

INT. ANTECHAMBER - DAY

Garbed in a hospital cap and gown, Sarah walks into an
antechamber. Ceiling, walls and floor are covered with
stainless steel nozzles.

The glass doors seal shut behind her, activating the fan and vacuum mechanisms. The process of decontamination begins.

Sarah spreads her arms and legs as the air shower prepares her for surgery.

As the velocity of the air stream increases, she closes her eyes, waits for the sterilization to be completed.

INT. OPERATION ROOM - DAY

Above, the blinding lights of an operating room.

Below, Sarah lies unconscious on the surgical table.

The masked SURGEON holds a scalpel to Sarah's face. He cuts deeply into one of the many black lines drawn on her visage.

Blood pours out from the incision and is quickly wiped away, exposing the sinewy and fatty layers under the skin.

A squelch as the surgeon pries away the tissue until the jawbone is exposed. Flesh is propped open with shiny forceps.

There's the whirring of an instrument, an oscillating saw, the crunch as it grinds into bone, and then, black.

INT. RECOVERY ROOM - DAY

The room, an odd mix between the clinical sterility of a hospital room and the bland decor of a Hilton.

Close on a face. Everything is bandaged except for the eyes, nostrils and mouth. The white dressings give her, at a first glance, the look of a skeleton.

We move out to reveal the body to which the masked face belongs. Breasts are held together with medical tape. Dressings bind up an abdomen. This is now Sarah.

Sarah stares at her bandaged reflection in the mirror.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Tentatively, Sarah makes her way out into a hallway. Every step hurts.

The moans and groans of recovering patients can be heard from the other rooms.

INT. COMMON ROOM - DAY

Sarah waddles into a shared area where the WOMEN pass their time.

The upper arms of one PATIENT are bandaged. ANOTHER has tubes pumping blood in and out from a taped and stapled chest. One WOMAN rolls around slowly in a wheelchair, her now stick thin thighs and calves are covered with bandages. Their wounds are dressed with rust-colored iodine.

It is a ghastly scene. The women are the walking wounded. They move at the pace of zombies, and look like them, too, with their bloodstained and disassembled bodies.

Sarah shuffles over to a sofa where two other patients are lounging. ONE has her chin bound up; the OTHER's nose is taped up. Both women are bruised and bloody. They look like they've been in a bar brawl.

Sarah struggles to seat herself but her bindings make it too painful. Nose Job leaps up.

NOSE JOB
Here. Let me help.

She positions Sarah so that she can lie against the back of the sofa.

Sarah notices that Nose Job's nails are painted a perfect shade of red even though the rest of her body has been dismantled.

NOSE JOB (CONT'D)
There. Much better.

SARAH
Thank you. I'm Sarah.

NOSE JOB
Kelly.

Sarah smiles at her. Or tries to.

INT. RECOVERY ROOM - NIGHT

Sarah wakes up in the middle of the night. The room is dark except for the muted fluorescent light emanating from the bathroom.

She tries hard to prop herself up but falls back with a shriek. It hurts too much. She has no choice but to roll out of bed.

Exhausted, Sarah leans against the mattress until she garners the strength to push herself up.

She winces as she walks towards the bathroom. Each shuffling of the feet is painful but she exerts maximum effort.

It's not enough. Just as she reaches the light, she wets herself.

Sarah looks down at her soaked clothes. She starts to cry.

INT. COMMON ROOM - DAY

Settled into a seat, Sarah takes a look around at the space.

Instead of street clothes, most of the women wear various forms of nude shapewear over their blood-soaked bandages and wounds. The body shapers are tight and binding, so as to hold them together during their fragile physical state.

Kelly has on nude tights, a nude cardigan and a nude bra. Despite the dressings on her nose, she is garrulous. She nods at Sarah.

KELLY

So. What are you in for?

Sarah looks around furtively before she whispers.

SARAH

My calves and thighs, tummy, nose, eyes, and jaw.

Kelly laughs.

KELLY

No, silly. Don't play so coy. What's the real reason behind your surgery? Me, I was denied tenure three times. It's about time that the university gives me a raise.

She indicates her friend.

KELLY (CONT'D)

Gina here is hoping that her boyfriend will finally propose.

Gina nods, conceding. She mumbles something. Sarah looks over at Kelly, not comprehending. Kelly translates for her.

KELLY (CONT'D)

She said that it's true. And she can't talk. Her lips hurt when she moves them.

Kelly focuses again on Sarah.

KELLY (CONT'D)

So, what about you?

Sarah thinks for a beat before answering.

SARAH

I just don't want to be so lonely
any more.

The whole room seems to fall silent.

Off Kelly and Gina, both taken aback by her honesty.

Kelly is the first to recover. She pats Sarah on the back.

KELLY

Come on. I'll show you around.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Kelly leads Sarah into a sparse cafeteria. The women carefully carry their trays to the tables, eat gingerly.

Sarah follows Kelly to a table. She takes a seat and looks down at her stainless steel tray. The portions are carved out; all of the foods are soft or liquid. There's a porridge and a broth, colorless vegetables and mushy rice cakes. Everything has been boiled, steamed or poached beyond recognition.

An OLDER WOMAN and her two likewise invalid DAUGHTERS hobble their way towards Kelly.

MRS. YOON

Kelly!

Kelly waves her manicured fingers at them.

KELLY

Let me introduce you to my friend.
Sarah, this is Mrs. Yoon and her
two daughters, Rosanna and Carrie.

They exchange pleasantries, barely managing their bows before Mrs. Yoon, Rosanna and Carrie struggle into their seats.

KELLY (CONT'D)

Sarah just had all of her
procedures done.

MRS. YOON

Congratulations. Won't it be
exciting to see how we will all
look after our recovery?

Sarah nods.

SARAH

It must be nice to be in here with your family.

CARRIE

Oh, definitely. When Ohmaa decided to go under the knife, Rosanna and I knew we had to do it at the same time. We can't have anyone thinking that we don't look alike anymore.

Mrs. Yoon laughs.

MRS. YOON

They're my daughters for Chrissake!

The quiet one in the group, Rosanna interjects shyly.

ROSANNA

I still worry about that a little bit. What if people no longer realize that we are a unit? A family?

No one knows how to respond. Mrs. Yoon does her best to break up the awkward moment with a joke.

MRS. YOON

All I know is that this better work in marrying off these two.

Her daughters titter nervously at their mother's remark, adjusting bandages and tubes.

KELLY

Of course they'll find husbands, Mrs. Yoon.

MRS. YOON

Who knows? Maybe I will get remarried, too.

She giggles at the thought.

MRS. YOON (CONT'D)

I know I'm not young anymore but on the dramas, the women my age seem to do it all the time.

Kelly chortles loudly.

KELLY

Frankly, I wouldn't mind meeting a man myself after going through this. It will all be worth it in the end.

Everyone nods emphatically so as to reassure themselves.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Mrs. Yoon struggles to rise from the table. Immediately, Carrie pushes the chair away and offers her mother her arm. Rosanna picks up Mrs. Yoon's tray.

The sisters are the picture of filial piety.

Sarah watches as Mrs. Yoon and her daughters limp away together.

INT. RECOVERY ROOM - NIGHT

Sarah and Kelly lounge in her room. Kelly is glued to the television, Sarah, to her laptop.

Both screens are the only means by which they can have contact with the outside world.

Sarah looks up, muses over the day.

SARAH

It must have been expensive for the Yoon family to have financed all of their surgeries at the same time.

KELLY

Well, the Yoons sold their apartment in the Seocho neighborhood to pay for everything. All of their belongings, too. If Rosanna and Carrie don't find husbands, they really won't have anything left in the bank.

Suddenly, Kelly bursts into tears. Blood and ink start to run, smearing across the dressings as tears stream down her face.

KELLY (CONT'D)

Oh, no! My sutures.

Sarah leaps up and grabs a box of Kleenex. She hands them off to Kelly who uses the tissues to dab carefully at her eyes.

KELLY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. It's not just the Yoons.
It's me. If I don't get that
promotion, my salary at the
university won't be enough to pay
off these procedures. Honestly, I
just don't know if I can handle the
pressure.

She continues to sob.

SARAH

Hey, don't worry, Kelly. We're
doing the right thing. At the very
least, we went for it. We are the
ones that have improved upon
ourselves. That's the most
important thing.

Concerned, Sarah makes her way over to her side.

SARAH (CONT'D)

This is just the means to an end.

She puts her arm around Kelly. Kelly dries her tears.

KELLY

You're right, Sarah. Thank you.

They hug, resting their bandaged heads against each other.

INT. RECOVERY ROOM - NIGHT

Sarah enters the darkened room and turns on the light. She
steps to the window and stares at the scenes outside.

WORKERS stumble home from a day's hard work and a night's
hard play. Their voices echo up to the building.

Cars race down the boulevard.

Lights from the high-rises seem to dance and beckon to her.

Even at night, the pollution causes the sky to have a
yellowish glow.

Sarah takes in her reflection in the window. The nipples of
her breasts are taped together. Ace bandages circle her upper
arms and thighs. Her jaw appears to be held to her face with
tape and dressings. Her nose is hidden under white cloth. All
Sarah really has on is her underwear.

She can't help but shake her head. But still, Sarah hopes while looking at herself juxtaposed against the Seoul skyline.

INT. RECOVERY ROOM - NIGHT

The door cracks open. A sliver of light falls into the room from the hallway.

Sarah sits up, looks at the silhouette in the doorway.

SARAH
Who is it?

KELLY
It's me. I couldn't sleep.

Sarah moves over, makes room for Kelly in her bed. A grateful Kelly scoots in.

They make themselves comfortable and settle into the linens.

KELLY (CONT'D)
I keep thinking about what it will be like afterwards.

SARAH
Me, too.

As they ponder what awaits them, the sounds of the city float up to the room.

KELLY
What do you think will be the best part about being out there again?

SARAH
To be claimed.

The women drift off to sleep.

INT. RECOVERY HOTEL - DAY

The sounds of exclamation and sharp intakes of breath punctuate the space.

There's a palpable energy in the air as each of the women lines up in front of her vanity for an inspection.

Dr. Lee is followed by a PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT into room after room.

He carefully examines each patient before undoing the dressings.

On the women's bodies are the signs of healing, splashes of purple, blue, green, the bruises highlighted in iodine or sickly yellow, the centers of the wounds still red.

Lastly, it's Sarah's turn. Dr. Lee unwraps the bandages that hold her together. But before we can see the final product, the assistant closes the door to her room.

INT. SPA - NIGHT

A naked woman makes her way through a Korean spa.

Totally nude WOMEN are being scrubbed down by MASSEUSES while OTHERS undergo facials.

The woman walks past the baths, steam rooms, saunas and massage tables to the vanity table where her friend waits while tapping her immaculate red nails against the surface.

KELLY

You ready?

The woman wipes away the condensation from the mirror to reveal her beautiful visage.

We move out to reveal her body. Her limbs are long and lean. Her breasts are full but her abdomen is flat. There's not an extra ounce anywhere.

She checks out her face in the mirror, examining her eyes, nose and lips. Finally, she touches the sides of her face.

Everything's perfect.

SARAH

Yes.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Sarah looks across the table and surveys her parents before she speaks.

Sarah's mother dabs at her eyes.

SARAH

Don't cry, Mom. It does take some getting used to.

SARAH'S MOTHER

No, no. It's all right. These are tears of joy.

Sarah shifts her gaze over to her father. He nods continuously without end.

SARAH'S FATHER
It's perfection, Sarah.

Off Sarah, as she processes their total acceptance of her transformation.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sarah turns on her laptop and clicks on a folder. She scrolls through its content, opens up all of the files.

On screen, pops up photo after photo of the old Sarah.

Inadvertently, Sarah touches her face. She stares intently at the images, the representations of self that she has kept hidden away.

She takes a beat before she begins deleting the photographs.

In the midst of the task, Sarah gets up, remembering something.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah studies the massive family portrait. Then, she grabs the frame.

Sarah pulls it off the wall. She studies the blank space underneath, its stark whiteness outlined by dingy gray.

A voice breaks up the quiet, startling Sarah.

HALMUNI (O.S.)
It's an insult to your ancestors to
alter your looks.

Halmuni emerges from the darkness.

Her eyes gleam as she takes in the new Sarah.

HALMUNI (CONT'D)
So. No longer the old maid?

On Sarah, as Halmuni shuffles away.

EXT. PARK - DAY

A self-conscious Sarah holds up her smart phone, squints at the screen. She shifts her weight and poses awkwardly.

She looks around, makes sure that no one's paying any attention to her. Sarah digs through her handbag and takes out a selfie stick.

She positions the stick at an angle and moves here and there to switch up the backgrounds.

The shutter clicks incessantly as Sarah takes photo after photo of herself.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Sarah uploads all of her newly minted portraits to various social media sites.

Her perfected visage beckons to us from her computer.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sarah gazes at the ornate frame once more. Upon shifting to her point of view, we see that in it is a brand new portrait of the Kim family. Same pose, different Sarah.

Halmuni, too, stands in front of the photograph. She stares blankly at the depiction, mumbling bits and pieces of incoherent thought.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sarah sits at her vanity, taking in her flawless image before pulling open a drawer. It is filled with every type of product imaginable, lotions, salves, creams, masks, balms.

She takes out the containers. Sarah rubs each elixir meticulously into the parts of her body still covered with faint but visible scars.

Finally, Sarah covers up her face with a treatment mask. With holes cut out for eyes, nose and mouth, the white mask gives her an otherworldly appearance. A ghost.

INT. CUBICLE - DAY

Sarah is back at her desk, in the thick of it. Her phone vibrates. The computer pings. An intercom buzzes.

INTERCOM

Miss Kim, do you have the reports ready? Mr. Park and I are waiting.

Sarah stammers.

SARAH

Not yet, sir. It's my first day back on the job.

The Bossman lets out a noisy sigh.

INTERCOM

Just bring in what you have, Miss Kim.

Click. Sarah wipes the perspiration from her face.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A tentative Sarah makes her way to the office. Both the Bossman and Peter drop their jaws at the sight of the new Sarah.

They stand up abruptly and bow awkwardly. Peter motions for her to take a seat.

Out of habit, Sarah lowers her head and avoids their gaze.

The Bossman clears his throat, breaks the silence.

BOSSMAN

Your vacation. It was time off well spent, I take it.

SARAH.

Yes, sir.

BOSSMAN

Good, good. I can tell.

He exchanges looks with Peter, nods at him to do the dirty work.

PETER

Now about the assessments, Miss Kim.

SARAH

I'm sorry, Mr. Park. I just got back to the desk and I'm catching up.

PETER

Well, we still need them right now.

BOSSMAN

Now, wait a minute, Mr. Park. Miss Kim does have a point here.

PETER

But you said...

The Bossman shushes Peter.

BOSSMAN

I forgot that Miss Kim only returned today. I'm sure it must be quite an adjustment after your leave. Miss Kim, why don't you handle what you can and leave the rest to Mr. Park, here. He's gotten lazy, this one.

SARAH

That sounds great. Thank you, sir.

She bows gratefully before tentatively addressing Peter. With a newfound confidence, she's now able to look him in the eye.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Mr. Park, I would appreciate it if I could take off early today. Would you mind handling the reports for me?

Peter can only nod, dazed by her immaculate appearance.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Sarah exits the office and walks back to the bullpen.

She stops to lean against the wall and breathes a sigh of relief.

Sarah bites her lip, flawless teeth hiding her glee.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Sarah exits the high-rise office building and tries to enter the exodus home. She's slow to merge and ends up colliding with a COMMUTER.

Sarah stumbles. Her handbag goes flying and papers and belongings spill out onto the sidewalk.

Sarah glances up at the commuter, expecting a diatribe. Instead, he takes one look at Sarah and bends over backwards to set things right.

COMMUTER

Please forgive me. It's my mistake.

INT. STATION - NIGHT

The platform is packed with commuters heading home.

But this time, the waves of humanity part for Sarah as she makes her way across the station, as if she's a goddess.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Through the window of a cafe, we observe Sarah and Kelly as they drink their coffee.

INT. CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Sarah recounts her story.

SARAH

Peter had to spend the night in the office. He looked awful. He told me that he hadn't pulled an all-nighter since high school. And here I was doing those practically every night before the...

Though Sarah's voice trails off, Kelly does the talking for her.

KELLY

I don't know why I ever had doubts about whether or not it would all be worth it. Of course it was.

Sarah lifts up her latte.

SARAH

And here's to you, Kelly. To finally earning your tenure.

They clink cups and saucers, take sips. Kelly pushes her plate towards Sarah.

KELLY

You finish it.

Sarah accepts the dessert. Her fork is mid-air when Kelly makes a comment.

KELLY (CONT'D)

(lightly)

I've got an appearance to keep up.

Sarah looks over at Kelly before she slowly finishes chewing.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Sarah and Kelly rise and exit the cafe. Sarah pulls out a clear umbrella and opens it. Kelly laughs, she forgot hers, and decides to link arms with Sarah.

They amble along the tree-lined street; the raindrops refracting against the clear material, the strings of lights twinkling.

The women take their time walking, relishing the scenery.

SARAH

This is my favorite time of the year. I love summer rain.

Kelly nods. They make their way to a subway station.

KELLY

Text me when you get home, okay?

They hug their good-byes.

But as Kelly leaves, Sarah studies her parting silhouette. Kelly looks impeccable as she steps down the stairs and disappears into the station.

Sarah glances down at her own body before smoothing out her waistline and her legs. A small frown.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Sarah and her cohorts are seated, in the final throes of a meeting. From the head of the room, the Bossman and Peter supervise the goings-on.

BOSSMAN

And to finish up, we'd now like to make an announcement about one of our most diligent workers. She has yet to be recognized for her many contributions to our company. Mr. Park, could you do the honors?

Peter clears his throat.

PETER

Thank you. Here at the company we believe in rewarding results that not only increase the profit index, but also inspire the rest of us to excel. That is why I'd like to announce the creation of a new position, manager of enhancement and profitability. The employee who will receive this promotion is our very own Miss Kim.

He chuckles.

PETER (CONT'D)

Basically, she's here to make us
all look good. Miss Kim, if you
could please rise.

Sarah barely manages to stand in front of the company,
shocked that she is being singled out and moreover, that it
is for a positive reason.

She bows before the sea of mediocrity.

As she straightens up, she catches Miss Shim rolling her
eyes, and because Sarah's standing right next to him, Peter's
fiancée, of tattooed eye and lip, glaring at her.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Flashing lights and pounding bass.

Sarah sits in a booth. A bevy of BEAUTIES, including Kelly,
have accompanied her.

Kelly scopes out the scene, looks over a DANCER with disdain.

KELLY

What I call lazy, really. One
should at least make the effort to
fix herself up.

The women swerve their heads to her point of view. Sure
enough, a clubgoer with legs that are more elephantine than
gazelle-like stomps away on the dance floor.

Before she realizes what she's saying, Sarah quips.

SARAH

Turnip legs.

Peals of laughter. A smile breaks slowly over Sarah's face.
Though their movements are more free, their manners have been
marred by affectation, their airs, studied. These women are
guarded and calculating. With an edge.

They continue to titter and whisper but Sarah narrows her
eyes.

She stares across the room at the most handsome man that
she's ever seen. Her heart starts pumping as ALLEN makes his
way over to her.

He takes her by the hand. They move to the music.

Sarah doesn't know where to look, but Allen cups her chin.
Immediately, Sarah's hand flies up to her jawline.

Instead, Allen brings up her gaze to meet his. She relaxes, and their eyes remain fixed on each other, the attraction between them, palpable.

Allen leans in for Sarah's very first kiss.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

Sarah and Kelly share a shaved ice, conduct a debriefing on the evening's events.

KELLY

So, what did you think of Allen?

Sarah flushes, her eyes light up with excitement, her cheeks turn scarlet.

SARAH

He's amazing. Do you really think he could be interested in me?

She looks around the crowded room before whispering.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I have no idea what I'm doing. I have no experience in this department.

Kelly pauses before responding.

KELLY

Me neither.

They giggle.

KELLY (CONT'D)

You just need to devise a plan to see him again.

SARAH

Then I'm going to message him right now.

Kelly slaps her knee.

KELLY

Not right now, silly. It's too soon. Men love it when women play hard to get.

SARAH

Look who's the expert all of a sudden.

KELLY

Who am I kidding. Up until this point in my life, I've only read about and studied things like this.

They share looks, their laughter conveying mutual understanding.

Sarah's phone interrupts. She checks it; her face lights up.

SARAH

It's him.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Sarah and Allen walk a frenzied street lit by vertical neon signs featuring every color possible.

Sarah's eyes briefly skirt the masses. Salient to her point of view are those who walk, peruse, and eat alone.

She moves closer to Allen. Immediately, he takes her by the hand. Though the path is crowded, they remain entrenched in a world that only contains the other.

Sarah smiles at his action. Allen notices.

ALLEN

What? What is it?

She shakes her head shyly.

SARAH

Nothing.

ALLEN

Tell me.

She pauses, thinks about what she wants to convey.

SARAH

Six months together and it's like something in a drama. I feel like I belong.

Allen looks into Sarah's eyes.

ALLEN

I'll always want you.

Sarah pushes him away, continues forward.

SARAH

No, you'll get tired of me. When I
lose my temper or grow old. Or when
I...

She stops short.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Lose my looks.

He catches up, walks backwards to hold her in his gaze.

ALLEN

Impossible.

(recites)

She walks in beauty, like the night
of cloudless climes and starry
skies, and all that's best of dark
and bright. Meet in her aspect and
her eyes, thus mellowed to that
tender light which heave to gaudy
day denies.

Arms outstretched, Allen takes a bow, proud of himself.

ALLEN (CONT'D)

See? Keats.

Sarah shakes her head.

SARAH

Byron. It's Lord Byron.

ALLEN

No, it can't be. Can it? Oh, ho.
She's smart, too.

He pulls her in. She confesses.

SARAH

This is something that I've only
dreamed about.

Allen laughs.

ALLEN

Me, too.

Off Sarah, her eyes wide, if he only knew.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sarah massages potions into the marks on her body, applying
pressure, hoping to curb the growth of tissue.

A knock on the door and Sarah's mother enters. She sits down, watches Sarah wordlessly.

Sarah's mother takes in the many accoutrements and her daughter's painstaking application of them.

SARAH'S MOTHER
Are you going to tell him?

On Sarah, as she pauses in her routine. Together, they survey the vast array of cosmetics.

SARAH
How can I not?

Sarah's mother tries to make light of the situation.

SARAH'S MOTHER
I wouldn't. Men can't even tell the difference.

SARAH
But that would be...fraudulent.

They sit in silence for a moment. Sarah's mother rises.

SARAH'S MOTHER
Well. I'll leave you to it.

Only when she exits does Sarah continue with her ritual.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Holding hands, Sarah and Allen walk through a hubbub of activity. A school is at the commons on a field trip. STUDENTS run amok everywhere.

One lone CHILD standing apart from the crowd catches Sarah's eye. Braces on both of his legs, the boy leans on crutches for support.

Excluded from participating, the boy's eyes darken before his tears spill over. He stares at Sarah. Sarah looks away.

But as she moves past the child, Sarah turns around for one last glimpse. He's gone.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darkness. The sounds of quickened breath, bodies moving, rustling cloth are heard.

SARAH (O.S.)
Allen, wait.

Sarah turns on the light. Allen shades his eyes from the brightness, squinting at her standing figure.

ALLEN

What is it? Did you want to wait
till we are married?

SARAH

No. It's just...

Sarah thinks it over before letting the slip that she's holding to her body fall away.

Allen gets up. He moves closer to Sarah and takes a careful look at her.

His hands reach for her, fingers following gingerly the faint traces of scar tissue along her neck, chest, abdomen, limbs.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I had work done to myself. I did
it...

(faltering)

I did it to find someone like you.

Ashamed, she drops her head.

ALLEN

Hey.

He lifts her chin up.

ALLEN (CONT'D)

It's okay. I get it. The only thing
that matters in this world is to be
excellent. Seems like there's no
other way to survive these days
besides being the best.

Off Sarah, as she embraces Allen with utter relief and joy.

INT. STATION - NIGHT

The only passengers on the platform are the drunk WORKERS staggering home, high school STUDENTS who still have the night ahead of them to study, and Sarah.

An elated Sarah bites her lip, remembering, but gives into a full-on grin.

A flock of bleary-eyed TEENAGE GIRLS can't help but notice her. Their navy blazers, white shirts and gray skirts indicate that they are still in school.

They sigh, openly admire Sarah.

STUDENT
It must be so nice to look like
you.

STUDENT 2
Were you on a date, miss?

SARAH
Yes. I was.

They whoop it up, delighted. Sarah laughs along with them.

STUDENT
I can't wait to go on a date.

STUDENT 2
It must have gone well.

SARAH
Are you girls heading home?

STUDENT 3
No. To study hall.

One of the girls checks her watch.

STUDENT 1
It's only midnight. We can still
get in two more hours of studying.

Sarah nods sympathetically. She went through that, too. She speaks kindly.

SARAH
Hang in there. This is just the
means to an end.

STUDENT 2
And then we'll get to be like you!

The train arrives. The girls wave to her as they board.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Sarah accompanies the Bossman and Peter to the conference room. On the way, they pass by a heavyset and unattractive WORKER BEE lingering in the hallway.

The Bossman leans over and whispers loudly to Peter and Sarah.

BOSSMAN

That one had the audacity to ask me
for a raise last week.

Peter guffaws.

PETER

What did you say?

BOSSMAN

I told her that when she loses
about twenty kilos, I would up her
salary.

They chuckle loudly without regard for the woman.

Sarah looks back. Their co-worker's cheeks are flushed, her
eyes start to water. Clearly, she's heard their insults.

Sarah remains fixated on her, knowing that at one time she
was just like the woman.

EXT. STREET - DAY

On Sarah, as she walks with the mob during rush hour.

The crowds jostle her. It's every man or woman for himself or
herself, shoving the other aside in the struggle to get
ahead.

Though she is embedded with the masses, she stands apart from
them.

Sarah carries herself differently now. She doesn't feel the
antagonism any more. Finally, she has been claimed.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

Allen looks up at Sarah; he holds a sparkler in his hands.

ALLEN

I want to get started on our life
together.

From Sarah, a sharp intake of breath. She basks in the moment
before she throws her arms around him.

Then, the actuality of his proposal washes over her. She
pulls back.

SARAH

But isn't it too early? What about
our families.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

You haven't even met my parents. I haven't even met yours. What if they don't like me?

ALLEN

How could anyone hate you? You're perfect.

A brash Allen pulls her to him, reassures her with another embrace. He believes firmly in what is yet to come.

ALLEN (CONT'D)

I'm ready. Aren't you?

On Sarah, as a feeling of uncertainty creeps in. Her eyes are now dark and murky pools.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sarah's mother sits with her in the living room. A tray of fruit has been placed on the coffee table.

Sarah carefully practices peeling a pear with the paring knife. Once finished, she cuts up the fruit and places it in the middle of plate. The slices are arranged in an exquisite display.

Sarah's mother claps her approval.

SARAH'S MOTHER

Surely, Allen's mother will not find any fault with your skill.

Sarah nods, her brow furrowed in concentration. Her mother prattles on and on.

SARAH'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

We are no longer foisted on each other with an engagement and a wedding to plan for. You have turned out to be an accomplished and beautiful woman. I am very proud of you, Sarah.

Sarah looks askance at the left-handed compliment.

SARAH

Are you only proud of me now, Mom?

Sarah's mother looks taken aback.

SARAH'S MOTHER

That's not what I mean. I have always been proud of you.

(MORE)

SARAH'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

In fact, I was the one who had
second thoughts about your surgery,
but I will admit that I was wrong.
Now the whole world sees you as I
do.

Her mother's hand reaches out. She tucks a stray strand of
Sarah's hair behind her ear, smoothing down the flyaways.

SARAH'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Some day you will understand. When
you become a mother.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Allen and his MOTHER sit across from Sarah and her family.

Sarah cuts and peels fruit. She arranges it on a silver
platter in the center of the coffee table.

Allen's mother is the first to speak. A dragon lady of a
woman with impressive looks, she is used to commanding
attention.

ALLEN'S MOTHER

Well, she certainly is beautiful,
isn't she.

Allen smiles at Sarah encouragingly.

Sarah's father clears his throat.

SARAH'S FATHER

And Allen's father?

ALLEN'S MOTHER

He is not feeling well. We will
host Sarah when appropriate, of
course.

Sarah's parents nod with deference, grateful that another
family will be taking on their daughter.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

A nervous Sarah sits in a pristine apartment. The place is
furnished with only the finest of things. Allen lounges
casually in a leather chair.

Sarah stands at attention as Allen's mother steps into the
room. Allen's FATHER also shuffles out. Unlike Sarah, Allen
is slow to get to his feet.

Sarah bows deeply. Allen's father waves her off. He limps to his chair.

ALLEN'S FATHER
Just make yourself comfortable.

Once seated, Sarah has a chance to look over Allen's father. Though once handsome, one side of his face now droops, the skin slack, the jaw loose.

Allen's mother refuses to meet Sarah's gaze. Instead, she maintains her airs. She holds her head up high, her manner still haughty.

ALLEN'S FATHER (CONT'D)
Oh, ho. So, you're the one who's
going to take on this loser by two
points.

Allen flinches at the remark. His mother turns her head sharply at her husband.

ALLEN'S FATHER (CONT'D)
Even though his face and body are
still whole, he'll never measure up
to me.

Sarah gulps.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Afterwards, Sarah and Allen make their way down the street. Allen explains.

ALLEN
He hasn't been the same since the
stroke. His work was his whole
life, but they fired him and
replaced him with a couple of
younger employees. Two for the
price of one.

Sarah speaks softly.

SARAH
And the two points?

Allen doesn't respond at first. But when he does, there's a bitter tone to his voice.

ALLEN
The old man is still talking about
my college exam.
(MORE)

ALLEN (CONT'D)
I missed out on the best
universities by two points.

Sarah gives Allen a sympathetic look, puts her head on his shoulder.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

The evening commute. Sarah separates from the crowd and has to pass a structure now deserted. She is just about to turn away from the bridge when she notices a FIGURE enveloped in the darkness.

A woman is standing on the railing of the bridge.

Sarah recognizes her intention. She yells out.

SARAH
Don't!

The figure steps off the railing.

Sarah screams. Frantically, she rushes to the place where the woman once stood. Sarah stares down into the water, searching. Her actions trigger the floodlights.

Blinded, Sarah gazes up at the CCTV cameras. It suddenly dawns on her that they were only activated by her alone and no one else.

She retreats from the edge. Sarah leaves the bridge as fast as she can.

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

The lights go up on an elaborate stage set up in the middle of the ballroom.

Chandeliers hang over an immaculate runway that cuts through the center of the space.

As a string quartet begins to play a march, a spotlight focuses on the center of the stage.

Georgette curtains pull away and smoke begins to pour into the room from machines hidden away in strategical spots.

The guests look up. They ooh and ahh as Allen and Sarah make their way down the runway. Allen is dressed to the nines in a tuxedo. Sarah floats down the catwalk in a gorgeous wedding gown.

As is the custom, Sarah doesn't crack a smile. Nothing to jeopardize her good fortune by tempting the gods.

INT. BALLROOM - LATER

Sarah and Allen make their rounds among the guests.

Sarah cranes her neck, searching for a glimpse of her parents. When she finally spots them, she realizes why it took so long.

Her family, dowdy and unattractive in the midst of all the splendor, have relegated themselves to the back of the room.

Sarah waves, trying to get their attention, but Allen swoops in. He leads her in the opposite direction.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sarah lies in Allen's bed. She covers herself up with the linens. He enters, lies next to her.

Allen kisses her, desire building. She looks up at him.

ALLEN

Are you okay?

She nods. He lowers himself down on her, begins to murmur as he moves.

ALLEN (CONT'D)

Sarah. I love you. Sarah. I love you. Sarah.

Sarah closes her eyes, holds on to Allen for dear life.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Sarah turns on the shower and steps into the spray. She lets the water run over her face, then down her body.

The stream turns red with blood as she washes herself.

On Sarah, a look of incredulity, then tears of joy. It suddenly dawns her that everything that she's ever wanted is hers.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Sarah tours her new digs, an immaculate apartment that's more bachelor pad than newlywed nest.

Her fingers brush over Allen's belongings. Like his parents, everything that Allen owns is sleek, chic and expensive.

ALLEN (O.S.)

What are you doing?

Sarah whirls around. Allen has been watching her.

SARAH
(teasing)
Everything in our place is so high-end, Allen.

ALLEN
What can I say, I have it all.
Designer job, designer apartment,
designer clothing, designer shoes,
designer car, designer wife. Just
need that designer child.

He grabs Sarah and throws her over his shoulder. She giggles.

SARAH
Put me down, Allen.

He laughs and moves them out of the space.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sarah and Allen lie together in bed.

At first, Allen's fingers follow the outline of Sarah's figure. Then, he touches other parts of her body.

Sarah notices that Allen traces her scars over and over. He presses into her flesh. The scars disappear temporarily before resurfacing.

Gently, Sarah removes his hands from her person.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

The obstetrics and gynecology clinic is awash in dull beige and sea green. The furniture is also dated and nondescript. There is no espresso bar. Asceticism rules here. One must do penance for indulging in carnal pleasure.

The STAFF is likewise brusque and detached. The RECEPTIONIST doesn't even glance up at Sarah as she checks her in.

RECEPTIONIST
And what STDs have you had?

SARAH
None.

RECEPTIONIST
Are you sure about that? You can
look at this checklist and request
the appropriate tests.

SARAH

No, I don't need them. I think I
may be pregnant.

Sarah whispers, hoping that the woman will take a hint, but
her loud voice continues to reverberate throughout the space.

RECEPTIONIST

You are married, correct?

Sarah nods.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Dr. Min will see you.

The receptionist hands Sarah a clipboard with paperwork and
pen. Sarah finds a seat, looks up at a monitor.

An LCD screen flashes not only the PATIENTS' names in order
of their turns, but also the reasons for their visits. Next
to Sarah's are the words - possible pregnancy. There's no
such thing as privacy here.

In accordance, the women avoid each other's gazes.

INT. EXAM ROOM - DAY

Her body shrouded in a paper gown and her feet in the
stirrups, Sarah stares up at the ceiling tiles. DR. MIN
readies the equipment, switches it on.

DR. MIN

Let's see what we have here.

He inserts the instruments without warning. Sarah gasps a
little. Dr. Min studies the screen. He pulls the devices out
with the same lack of ceremony.

DR. MIN (CONT'D)

So, you're pregnant. Seems likely
that you're due around the holiday.

He checks his laptop.

DR. MIN (CONT'D)

I'll schedule you for a C-section.
We'll time it so that you don't
have to miss a thing.

SARAH

Actually, I was thinking about
having a natural childbirth.

Dr. Min cuts her off, his tone dismissive.

DR. MIN

Since you have had some work done on yourself, there are more chances for things to go wrong. And because of the scar tissue and layers of muscle, it'll take longer for me to get in there if there's an emergency. A C-section is the best way by which I can control the circumstances.

Sarah's face falls.

DR. MIN (CONT'D)

Besides, men prefer the C-section anyway.

He winks at Sarah.

DR. MIN (CONT'D)

Don't worry about the details. Leave that up to me. After you have your child, you will realize that you were nothing but a vessel anyway.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Sarah checks out her face in a mirror on the wall. She examines her eyes, nose and lips. Everything's perfect.

We move out to reveal Sarah's body. Her limbs are long and lean. Her breasts are full but it's her belly that's as round as a beach ball.

Sarah admires her pregnant reflection in the mirror.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Sarah stands in the middle of an atrium where gold cylindrical columns hold up the nine floors dedicated to shopping.

Each level is in the shape of an oval lit by likewise rotund tubes of neon light. Escalators crisscross their way up to heaven, otherwise known as a massive oval skylight, framed with diagonal beams powder-coated in white.

Every label imaginable can be found here in this leviathan. The basement level houses a spa, the fourth floor, an ice rink.

With awe, shoppers look up at the light shining down on them from above. Sarah does, too, paying tribute to this shrine of consumerism.

The Shinsegae Department Store holds the world record for being the largest department store on Earth.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - CONTINUOUS

Sarah walks through the baby and children's section. She's enthralled by the tiny and soft offerings.

She strokes the cotton and muslin blankets, coos over the onesies, shakes a silver rattle.

Her countenance shining with promise and anticipation, Sarah caresses her abdomen lovingly.

INT. DELIVERY ROOM - DAY

A bloody placenta and pulsing umbilical cord are dropped into a metal surgical tray.

The screams of a NEWBORN are heard.

A squirming baby is placed in Sarah's arms. Sarah tries to soothe the agitated infant by bouncing her gently.

Note: the audience never sees the face of Sarah's daughter.

Allen looks over her shoulder. He takes a step back.

ALLEN

All babies look like aliens, right?

Sarah snaps at him.

SARAH

She's been in my uterus for 39 weeks, Allen.

He nods, attempts a coo.

Sarah holds on to her daughter tightly.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A NURSE wheels a stainless steel cart into the room. Placed atop the cart is a molded plastic bassinet. She nods at Sarah and leaves the room without saying a word.

Sarah and her parents eagerly surround the bassinet. They stare down at the baby.

Sarah's mother and father exchange looks, their gazes, expressionless and unreadable.

Already in love with her child, Sarah is oblivious to their glances.

Ever the stoic, Sarah's father clears his throat.

SARAH'S FATHER

Well, we'll leave you now. This is the time to get your rest.

As they leave, Sarah's mother approaches her side. She lightly places her hand on Sarah's arm.

SARAH'S MOTHER

Good job.

Sarah smiles and picks up the infant.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Allen's mother swoops into the room.

She marches straight for Sarah and takes the baby from her arms. The dragon lady takes a long look at her granddaughter.

Off her mother-in-law's reaction, or lack thereof, Sarah speaks.

SARAH

We've decided to name her Minjin.

Allen's mother glances over at Sarah.

ALLEN'S MOTHER

She looks nothing like you.

Sarah tries to laugh it off.

SARAH

It's too soon to tell who she'll resemble.

But Allen's mother doesn't laugh.

ALLEN'S MOTHER

Don't worry about it. Hopefully, the next one will be a boy.

She gives Minjin back.

ALLEN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
He'll be the one to carry on our
family name anyway.

Allen's mother stalks out of the room.

On Sarah, as her mother-in-law's words sink in. She shakes.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Sarah pushes a Silver Cross pram through the green.

Along the path, three WOMEN walk towards Sarah and her baby.

One woman carries a parasol. The other two sport visors that hide their faces, calling to mind the helmets that the Daft Punk duo wears. Despite the heat, they all have on pants, turtlenecks and white gloves. Uniforms to fight the sun and combat aging.

They peer into the buggy. Silence. Finally, one emits a tsk-tsk.

PARASOL
Your daughter really is poorly
formed.

DAFT PUNK 1
The baby must look like her father.

DAFT PUNK 2
It's a shame that she doesn't take
after you. You could have been Miss
Korea.

PARASOL
Make sure to cover up that pretty
face of yours. You don't want the
complexion of a laborer.

They stride away, dismissing Sarah and her child.

Sarah covers Minjin up with a blanket, gazes out into the park.

In the playground, a beautiful TODDLER with slicked back hair, diamond earrings and dope kicks climbs up the jungle gym. An adorable hapa BOY plays with his white FATHER.

Blinking back tears, Sarah looks down at her own daughter.

She picks Minjin up and holds her in a fierce embrace.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Sarah and Minjin are seated on a play mat on the floor. Both look up as they hear the front door open and close. Allen enters.

Mother and daughter watch as Allen loosens his tie. He takes off his jacket and throws it on the sofa.

ALLEN
You're up late again.

SARAH
Just waiting for you.

ALLEN
Minjin, too?

SARAH
She usually feeds at this time.

Allen nods. He strides over to Minjin and crouches down to her level. He makes a half-hearted effort to tickle her belly.

ALLEN
Did you miss Daddy?

She giggles. Allen moves in for a closer look.

ALLEN (CONT'D)
Who do you look like? Mommy or
Daddy? Must be Daddy, huh?

He turns sharply, gazes at Sarah.

ALLEN (CONT'D)
No one ever says that she looks
like you.

Though her heart pounds, Sarah feigns nonchalance. She shrugs.

She moves past Allen and picks Minjin up.

SARAH
Night night time.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

The beach is packed. But unlike other seaside attractions, hardly any sand is visible. Instead, thousands of colorful umbrellas are lined up next to each other, forming one giant canopy.

Haeundae Beach holds the world record for the largest number of beach umbrellas.

EXT. PATH - DAY

Green AstroTurf walkways are built over the sand so that fashionable women can wear high heels on the beach. They strut along the coastline without stumbling, using the paths as their own personal runways.

Sarah follows as Allen carries Minjin from a walkway to their spot underneath an umbrella.

A group of female BEACHGOERS walks past the family. All of them wear masks over their heads and heels on their feet. The masks are made to match their swimsuits, fashioned out of bright, stretchy material with holes for the eyes, nose and mouth.

The unintended effect of arming themselves against the rays of the sun is that they also look like a gang of psychedelic thugs ready to do some damage.

Upon seeing them, Minjin screams, becomes inconsolable.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Allen sleeps in a lounge chair while Sarah and Minjin play underneath an umbrella. Sarah sets a wobbly Minjin a few feet away from her in the sand.

SARAH
Come on, Minjin.

Minjin finds her balance and begins to waddle towards her mother.

SARAH (CONT'D)
You can do it.

Sarah claps with excitement as Minjin takes her first steps.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Allen! She's walking.

She turns around to wave at Allen, but stops short.

Allen glares at them, a sullen expression on his face.

ALLEN
What is it? I told you that I
needed to rest, Sarah. This is my
vacation, too.

Deflated, Sarah turns away from him.

SARAH
Nothing. Go back to sleep.

EXT. PIER - DAY

A put-off Sarah walks Minjin towards the end of a small and dilapidated pier.

They watch as a group of middle-aged and elderly WOMEN make their way out of small boats and on to the wooden ramp. Unlike the beachgoers, these women talk loudly and laugh freely in the sun.

They are tanned, complexions ruddy and peppered with freckles and wrinkles. Their hair is coarse and unruly.

The women wear black wet-suits that are punctuated with color - an orange dive mask, blue gloves, a green rashguard, a red scarf, yellow flippers. They carry nets, spears and baskets filled with seafood. These are the famed fisherwomen known as Haenyeo.

Minjin runs towards them, arms outstretched. The Haenyeo stop to smile.

HAENYEO
Such a happy girl, this one.

HAENYEO 1
Do you want to swim like a fish
someday?

The women move past Sarah and Minjin. A mesmerized Minjin can't help but follow them.

Sarah, too, looks after the women longingly.

EXT. MUSEUM - DAY

The silhouette of this particular museum juts out against the skyline but the gray and white modern structure looks peculiar.

The whole building appears to be in the shape of a handbag.

Indeed, it is. This is the Simone Handbag Museum, a veritable shrine dedicated to the accessory.

INT. MUSEUM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah peruses the exhibitions. Gleaming shelf after shelf displays purses in every style, shape and color, from every era.

Minjin, now a five-year-old, hugs Sarah's leg and won't let go.

MINJIN

I want to go outside, Mommy.

SARAH

Just a second, Minjin. Let me finish the tour.

Minjin stomps away. She returns in a nanosecond. Her voice rises.

MINJIN

I want to leave. This is boring.

SARAH

I'm almost done, Minjin. We can leave then.

MINJIN

But this is dumb, Mommy.

Minjin lets loose. She screams.

MINJIN (CONT'D)

I want to play outside!

Sarah looks around, sees the disapproving glare of DOCENTS and PATRONS.

She hustles Minjin out of the building.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Sarah and Minjin walk along a tree-lined path. A light summer rain begins to fall.

Sarah pulls out a transparent umbrella and holds it over them. The raindrops and light sparkle against the material.

Minjin runs ahead. She exclaims gleefully.

MINJIN

Mommy, this is my favorite!

Sarah smiles. She gives in to Minjin's enthusiasm.

SARAH
Favorite what, honey?

MINJIN
My favorite outside.

SARAH
Me, too.

A beat as Minjin laughs. She claps with joy and jumps into a puddle.

Minjin notices the ripples and looks down at the water. She points at her reflection.

MINJIN
Mommy, am I like you?

SARAH
Like me?

MINJIN
Yes, I'm like you? I like to be
outside. Do you like to be outside?

Sarah can't help but reach down and hug Minjin.

SARAH
You are just like me.

They hold hands as they continue down the street.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Allen escorts Sarah into a posh venue. Both are dressed to the nines.

Upon spotting a group of revelers, Allen raises his hand in greeting.

He leans over to Sarah, gives her the lowdown about the well-heeled and well-fed CENTER OF ATTENTION presiding over the function.

ALLEN
That roly-poly guy right there is
my boss, Mr. Roh. I need to work
him tonight if I want to take over
the franchise departments.

He indicates the beautiful COMPANION seated next to him.

ALLEN (CONT'D)
His wife, Mrs. Roh. Now go work
your magic on her.

They part ways. Sarah takes a seat near the queen bee. Mrs. Roh smiles magnanimously at Sarah.

MRS. ROH
Allen's wife, right? Sarah?

Sarah nods demurely.

MRS. ROH (CONT'D)
Such a good-looking couple. Any
children yet?

SARAH
One. A daughter.

MRS. ROH
She must be exquisite. Like you.

One of the other SYCOPHANTS, annoyed by the face time that Sarah has received, jockeys for position.

SYCOPHANT
But you were telling us about your
trip to Europe, Mrs. Roh.

Mrs. Roh lights up at the opportunity. Sarah waits to hear about the sights and sounds. Instead, Mrs. Roh lays out her laundry list of acquisitions.

MRS. ROH
Ah, yes. We picked up these scarves
at Hermès, dresses at Prada, shoes
at Lanvin, handbags at Céline,
loafers at Gucci and jewelry at
Cartier. Mr. Roh just loves to
treat me.

SYCOPHANT 2
Did you take photos? I can't wait
to see them.

MRS. ROH
Of course. Mr. Roh is an amazing
photographer. That man hauls his
Canon 5D everywhere.

The women ooh and ahh, but Sarah tunes out, focusing instead on the conversation happening on the men's end of the room.

MR. ROH
You can't top the Honma Golf Five
Star Set. Makes your swing golden,
let me tell you.

Sarah looks over at Allen.

He's hanging on to Mr. Roh's every word.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Allen's had a lot to drink. Sarah props him up as they hobble home together.

ALLEN
What'd you think of the Rohs?

Sarah shrugs.

SARAH
They're a bit much.

Allen shakes off his drunken stupor, stands up straight. He points an indignant finger at Sarah.

ALLEN
Don't you dare insult them, Sarah.
Do you know how much that man pulls
in?

Sarah shakes her head.

ALLEN (CONT'D)
Mr. Roh has plenty. Unlike my dad.
You know what they did to my father
when he was that age? They kicked
him out and replaced him with two
young kids.

He continues down the sidewalk with his tirade.

ALLEN (CONT'D)
If only I hadn't missed out on
going to the best colleges, we
could be right where the Rohs are.

SARAH
It was only two points, Allen.

ALLEN
Don't you get it? Even two points
can fuck up Minjin's future!

Allen stumbles ahead, leaving Sarah behind.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Sarah watches as Minjin maneuvers a push cart around the playground. Curious, an OLDER BOY follows her, interested in the toy.

Minjin notices and tries hard to share her cart with the little boy. She ends up chasing the reluctant child.

Finally, he stops. But instead of accepting her gift, he pushes his nose up with a finger and snorts.

LITTLE BOY

Hey, piglet.

Sarah rises and marches over to them. The boy shrinks back upon seeing her approach. Sarah towers over him, gives him an icy glare. She thinks about ripping his head off.

The tormentor runs to the safety of his MOTHER. Sarah follows him and addresses the woman.

SARAH

Your son may be pretty on the
outside, but he's ugly on the
inside.

Sarah takes her daughter's hand and leads her away.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Come away with me, Minjin. Don't
waste your time on boys like that.

The mother sputters out a retort.

MOTHER

Your daughter may be pretty on the
inside, but she is ugly on the
outside.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Minjin lies in her bed, fast asleep.

Sarah reaches out and touches her daughter's face. Her fingers trace the entirety of its shape, from the crown to the chin.

They linger over Minjin's jawline.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Sarah thumbs through a catalogue. Each page displays a before and after of the ugly duckling and the swan.

She looks up as a grim woman marches out of the room, dragging her two year-old, also a GIRL, behind her. Sarah stands up, recognizing her.

SARAH

Kelly?

Kelly turns towards Sarah, a deer in headlights. Her face tightens up, drains of color.

KELLY

What are you doing here?

SARAH

I wanted to get the doctor's opinion.

KELLY

What do you need done now?

Sarah flushes. She confesses.

SARAH

(a whisper)

Not for me. For my daughter.

Kelly relaxes a bit. She lets go of her grip on her daughter.

KELLY

That's what we're here for, too. Her father has been complaining. This place is supposed to be the best for children.

SARAH

But is this right? I don't want her to think that I don't love her.

Kelly hisses.

KELLY

So what? This world is so competitive. You remember what life was like for us before. I'm just giving my girl an edge. She will thank me later on.

Sarah nods.

SARAH

That's what I think, too. Maybe we could get together and talk?

Kelly shakes her head.

KELLY

I can't. And I don't want to. I've
moved on. I don't want to be
reminded of the past.

She gathers up her belongings and her child, and rushes out
of the space.

Stunned, Sarah remains in her seat and gazes at the gleaming
white pillars in the waiting room. They appear to be made out
of marble.

She stands and makes her way towards one.

Sarah's fingers brush against the pillars.

CONSULTANT (O.S.)

Isn't it beautiful?

Sarah whirls around only to find the consultant transfixed on
the totems. On her face, something akin to worship.

SARAH

What is it exactly?

CONSULTANT

Dr. Lee had these built as shrines
to his artistry. It's a mosaic, if
you will, built of pieces from his
former patients.

She makes a victory sign.

Confused, Sarah moves in for a better look at the cairn.

She shrinks back as she realizes that the towers are composed
of thousands of jawbone fragments. Each has been labeled with
a name.

Sarah stumbles away.

INT. SUBWAY - NIGHT

From the platform, Sarah steps onto an empty train. At the
end of the car sits another WOMAN.

Sarah pays no heed to her presence. She flops onto a seat and
pulls out her smart phone.

But out of the corner of her eye, Sarah realizes the woman
has taken a seat closer to her.

Sarah looks over and notices that the woman's face is
bandaged like a mummy's.

She breathes a sigh of relief at the familiar sight and goes back to her phone, but movement once again forces her to glance up.

Upon a closer look, Sarah clocks the shabby and dirty clothes, the dilapidated shoes and bag. Then, she realizes that the woman's grimy bandages are coming undone.

Just as she processes what is happening, the woman suddenly looks over. Startled, Sarah flinches.

She tries to gauge the woman's intention, but she can't see what is happening underneath the bandages.

Terrified, Sarah sees that the white gauze is unraveling slowly. Soon, skin is exposed.

A piece of bloody flesh separates from the woman's visage. Still attached to her face, it flaps freely. The woman doesn't appear to notice.

The train screeches to a stop.

Sarah grabs her things and scrambles for the exit.

INT. PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah runs out of the car, but turns around for one last look.

The woman stares at Sarah, never breaking eye contact as the train pulls away.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Sarah enters the playground, spots Minjin cavorting with her mother. Sarah's mother is the first to spot her. She nudges Minjin to look up.

Excited for the reunion, Minjin runs straight towards Sarah.

MINJIN
I love you, Mommy.

Sarah melts. She sweeps Minjin up in her arms.

SARAH
I love you, Minjin.

They hug, twirling around and around, in their own world.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Another swanky affair at a five-star hotel.

Decked out in black-tie, the Rohs strut around. They navigate the crowd in order to welcome Allen, Sarah and Minjin.

MR. ROH

Thank you for coming to our son's first birthday. Some might say we are spoiling our child, but I say let's go all out. We only live once.

He chortles loudly as does the entourage tailing him.

Mrs. Roh kneels down and stares at Minjin.

MRS. ROH

And who is this?

As Mrs. Roh gazes upon Minjin, her eyebrows knit together in bewilderment.

MRS. ROH (CONT'D)

This is your daughter?

Allen's colleagues crowd the family, peering in for a better glimpse of the child.

Unaware that they're ogling her, Minjin twirls around for them, showing off her party dress.

SARAH

Yes. This is Minjin.

MRS. ROH

Ah.

She gives Sarah a knowing look.

A red-faced Allen heads straight for the bar, and leaves Sarah holding Minjin's hand.

INT. BALLROOM - LATER

The acolytes cheer as an impossibly ornate cake with fiery sparklers and fondant icing is placed in front of the Rohs' TODDLER.

Frightened by the spectacle, he bursts into tears.

Sarah smiles at the sight and takes a step back.

In doing so, she can't help but overhear the gossip of the sycophants.

SYCOPHANT

She should really take her in to the clinic. My friend had her daughter's face done and no one can tell.

SYCOPHANT 2

When it's that obvious, don't you want to cover up your tracks?

On Sarah, stricken by their insults.

She stumbles away from them and searches for Minjin. Suddenly, a commotion erupts as Mrs. Roh screams.

MRS. ROH

Get the little freak out of here!

Sarah runs to the scene. She clocks the ruined cake, the spilled punch, the bawling Roh toddler.

She spots Allen hiding in the crowd, his face drained of color.

Minjin scurries towards Sarah. Red is smeared all over her face and body.

Sarah grabs Minjin and drags her out of the space.

EXT. HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Sarah pulls Minjin outside. She shakes her daughter.

SARAH

What have you done, Minjin?

Minjin flails about, becomes hysterical.

MINJIN

It's not my fault. He started it by throwing it at me.

SARAH

That doesn't matter, Minjin! You can't act like this.

Minjin lets out a primal scream, runs off into the darkness.

Sarah chases after her.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sarah and Allen lie in bed. Both stare up at the ceiling.

ALLEN

Well, I didn't get the position.

SARAH

It doesn't matter. The best revenge
is living well.

ALLEN

Right. And just call me Two Points
Allen.

A lull in the conversation. Allen uses the silence to press
his fingers into Sarah's scars.

ALLEN (CONT'D)

These just don't go away, do they?

Sarah turns away from him. She gathers up her arms and legs
into a fetal position.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The only sounds are chopsticks clinking against ceramic and
Minjin's constant babbling.

Sarah and Allen sit in silence as they eat. Though she has
her gaze trained on him, Allen refuses to look up at Sarah.
He studies his smart phone instead.

ALLEN

What are all these charges? The
Touch-Up Shop?

Sarah balks a little.

SARAH

Those are my treatments.

ALLEN

Treatments?

SARAH

Post-op.

ALLEN

Huh. They're expensive.

SARAH

Yes.

Sarah puts down her utensils. She doesn't have the appetite
for this.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sarah lies in the darkness.

A door slams and a light turns on. Allen tries to skulk into the room.

Sarah's eyes open.

INT. CAR/EXT. CLUB - NIGHT

Sparkling lights dance across a dashboard. Sarah waits in her car and scours the horizon. Minjin sleeps in the backseat.

A boozy Allen turns the corner, his arm around a SUPERMODEL-TYPE.

Sarah gets out of the car.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Sarah opens the passenger door. Minjin is now awake and fussing, but Sarah grabs her anyway.

She hoists Minjin onto her shoulders and races down the sidewalk, bumping into revelers

Finally, Sarah breaks free from the nighttime crowd. She cranes her neck for a glimpse of Allen.

Sarah watches as Allen escorts his date into a love hotel.

Devastated, Sarah stands there, still clutching Minjin.

INT. CAR - LATER

Sarah crawls into the backseat. She cradles her daughter in her arms. She sings her a lullaby.

SARAH

Hush-a-bye, don't you cry. Go to
sleep, my little baby. When you
wake, you shall have, all the
pretty little horses.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sarah turns on the shower and steps into the spray. She lets the water run over her face, then down her body.

Sarah sinks to the ground and begins to sob.

Her tears mingle with the stream.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Allen is sprawled across the sofa, watching television.

Behind him, Sarah paces while cradling Minjin, trying to rock her to sleep.

Sarah gazes at the broadcast. It's of a beauty pageant. CONTESTANT after CONTESTANT parades around on stage. Each has round eyes, alabaster skin, slim limbs, an impossibly small waist and a V-shaped chin.

Sarah doesn't respond to any of the women, zoning out quickly. She realizes that they all look alike, that she can't tell one apart from the other.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sarah puts a slumbering Minjin down in her bed. Across the room, Allen is already snoring loudly.

Sarah leaves the room.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Sarah rummages around in the kitchen. She reaches into a cabinet and feels around for something. Finally, she finds the object and gets it out. It's a cup of instant ramen.

Sarah thinks about unwrapping the snack. Instead, she leaves it on the table and makes her way over to the windows of the apartment.

She stares out at the Seoul skyline. Pollution, lights and fog make for murky darkness, obscuring the hills that surround the city.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Sarah and Minjin step into the Kims' space. Halmuni appears. A glint in her eye, Halmuni makes a beeline for Minjin.

HALMUNI

There you are, Sarah. Come here, to my room.

She ushers "Sarah" into her bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Curious, Sarah follows them into a dimly lit room.

On Halmuni's bureau are various keepsakes, a jewelry box and photo frames. Halmuni pulls a frame off the chest and presents it to Minjin.

HALMUNI

Right there. That's you.

Sarah and Minjin take a closer look at the photo frame. It's a version of the family portrait that used to hang in the living room, the photograph with the former Sarah.

Minjin smiles. She points.

MINJIN

Mommy, look. There I am.

Halmuni grins, her smirk, toothless and gummy; the overhead lights accentuate her dark spots and deep wrinkles.

Sarah pales.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sarah mans the kitchen while Minjin tinkers around in the living room. Allen enters, throwing off tie and jacket, phone and briefcase, the paraphernalia of the day.

ALLEN

What you got there, Minjin?

MINJIN

Look, Daddy.

She hands him the photo frame that Halmuni gifted her.

ALLEN

Oh, hey. It's your family.

He takes a closer look at the portrait, his nose wrinkling slightly.

ALLEN (CONT'D)

Who's that?

MINJIN

(gleefully)

That's me.

ALLEN

I know that those are your grandparents...but who is that?

He physically draws back from the frame.

MINJIN

Me, silly!

Out of the corner of her eye, Sarah notices Allen scrutinizing her. Before he can say anything, she leaves.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sarah receives a call on her smart phone. She looks down at the screen, but doesn't recognize the number. Though unsure, she decides to answer.

SARAH

Hello.

CONSULTANT (V.O.)

Is this Miss Kim?

SARAH

Yes.

CONSULTANT (V.O.)

Oh, hi, Miss Kim. This is your good old consultation manager from the Touch-Up Shop. We trust that you are doing well?

On Sarah, taken off guard by this voice from the past.

SARAH

I'm fine.

CONSULTANT (V.O.)

That's good to hear, Miss Kim. I'm calling because we at the Touch-Up Shop are always on the cutting edge...

From the consultant, a rehearsed giggle.

CONSULTANT (V.O.)

Forgive the pun, Miss Kim, but we want to offer our clients the latest products and services so I am proud to announce our foray into improving the lives of our nation's most precious asset, our children. The doctors here have put together an exciting new comprehensive procedure. Though it is experimental, the process lives up to the high safety standards of the Touch-Up Shop. Do you have children now, Miss Kim?

SARAH
I do. A daughter.

The consultant exclaims.

CONSULTANT (V.O.)
Ah. I just knew you would! Your end results were among the best that the Touch-Up Shop has ever had.

Sarah involuntarily touches her face.

CONSULTANT (V.O.)
Now, due to the very high demand and repeated requests from our clients, the Touch-Up Shop will conduct a lottery to choose our lucky nine recipients. Will you allow us to pave your child's way in the world, to guarantee his or her happiness? Would you like us to sign you up for the lottery?

Sarah takes a moment to answer. She looks over at Minjin pattering around happily in the apartment. Her daughter seems perfect in her own skin.

SARAH
No. Thank you.

She hangs up.

Eyes never leaving the flat screen, Allen nurses a cold one. He slurs his words as he asks her.

ALLEN
Who was that?

SARAH
Just a cold call.

ALLEN
For what?

Sarah tries to make her tone light.

SARAH
They're trying out procedures for kids now. Gives them a head start.

ALLEN
You're kidding, right? Children shouldn't be tethered to their looks.

SARAH
Children become adults soon enough.

She gauges his reaction. Allen shrugs casually, takes a large swig of his drink.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Sarah realizes that it's too quiet. She moves through the apartment.

SARAH
Minjin?

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah opens the door, gasps at the sight of Minjin. Her daughter has ravaged the place. All of Sarah's products have been opened and strewn across the room, the tubes squeezed, the bottles emptied, the cosmetics smeared.

Minjin's face is hidden underneath the garish make-up that she has painted on herself. The child beams.

MINJIN
Mommy, now I look like you.

Sarah seizes Minjin by her shoulders and begins to shake her.

SARAH
You look nothing like me.

Minjin starts to cry.

MINJIN
But you said I'm just like you.

Sarah screams.

SARAH
No. I was wrong. You are nothing like me.

Minjin stares up at Sarah for a moment. Then, she runs from the room.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Close on Allen.

ALLEN
Absolutely not.

A look of disgust on his face, Allen pushes his chair away from the table.

SARAH

I don't understand how you can deny her this opportunity. She's one of only nine that's been chosen.

He gets up and moves away from her.

SARAH (CONT'D)

You're one of them. You think she's ugly. I can tell.

ALLEN

This surgery would wipe us out.

SARAH

So, it's the money, then? You don't make enough money to provide for your family.

ALLEN

I'm warning you, Sarah.

SARAH

It's because you spend it all on your girlfriends.

Allen blanches at her remark but tries to keep his cool. He throws a barb right back at her.

ALLEN

You can't even look at her, Sarah.

SARAH

What are you talking about?

She chokes up.

ALLEN

You think she's ugly. You're the one who wants to spend all our money on this crazy surgery. You're the one who doesn't think she's good enough.

SARAH

Don't you want what's best for our daughter? Do you want others to look at her the way that you do?

ALLEN

All I know is that I don't want her to turn into a sung gui like you. You're a monster. I don't even know what you really look like. Who you really are.

Sarah tries to slap Allen. He grabs her arm.

SARAH

That's too bad, Allen. You should have thought about that before you married me.

She shakes herself free.

Sarah grabs at her own face and points down at her body.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Because this is what you fell in love with. This is what you wanted. This empty shell and nothing more. This is what you created.

Silence. Allen takes a beat before he speaks.

ALLEN

You're right. I agree.

He picks up his things and makes his way to the door.

SARAH

If you treat me like this, think of what they will do to our Minjin.

Before Allen leaves, he takes one final parting shot.

ALLEN

It's not her fault that she looks the way that she does. It's yours.

He exits the space. The door slams shut.

Sarah's face crumples up. She sinks to the floor and starts to sob. A sleepy Minjin toddles out.

Her eyes widen as she spots Sarah on the ground. She makes a beeline for her mother.

MINJIN

Don't cry, Mommy. I want you to be happy. Just be happy.

Sarah pushes Minjin away.

SARAH

Just be quiet. Can't you leave me
alone for one time in your life?

She goes to the bedroom and slams the door shut.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Sarah moves through the office, spots someone huddled over in a corner. It's the Worker Bee that the Bossman and Peter insulted. She's crying.

Sarah tries hard to sneak past Worker Bee. She's almost at the other end of the corridor when the woman scampers after her and corners her.

WORKER BEE

Excuse me, Ms. Kim? May I ask you a
question?

Sarah has no choice but to stop.

SARAH

Yes?

WORKER BEE

They said that you were once like
me.

Sarah snaps.

SARAH

Who said that?

Worker Bee stammers.

WORKER BEE

Oh. The others.

SARAH

Just what is your question exactly?

WORKER BEE

I was just wondering what you would
do if you were me.

Sarah narrows her eyes. She takes in the plastered makeup, the dried traces of tears, the strands of hair gone awry, the glistening folds of skin.

SARAH

Try Mapo Bridge.

She stalks away.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Though the park is within sight, only Sarah moves forward.

Minjin is cranky, barely stirs. She inches along.

SARAH

Minjin-ah, what is the matter now?
You said the outside is your
favorite place.

MINJIN

I was thinking about something,
Mom.

SARAH

What is it? Tell Mommy.

MINJIN

Mommy, why do you cry?

SARAH

Oh.

She mulls over what to say.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Well, Mommy is sad.

MINJIN

But Mommy, I don't want you to be
sad. I don't like when you cry.

SARAH

I know, Minjin-ah. But some times
we cry. We have to experience the
bad to know the good.

She tries hard to be chipper about it.

SARAH (CONT'D)

No pain, no gain.

MINJIN

But I don't want you to be sad,
Mom.

SARAH

How about this, Minjin-ah? I
promise I'll try not to cry. But
that means you have to promise,
too. Will you be a big girl for
Mommy and try to stop when you are
crying?

MINJIN
Stop being sad?

SARAH
Yes.

MINJIN
I'll be a big girl for you?

Sarah nods.

MINJIN (CONT'D)
Okay. Pick me up, Mommy. Pick me
up.

Sarah lifts her up, buckles a bit under the weight.

SARAH
Oof. You really are my big girl.

Minjin beams. She points in the direction that she wants them to go.

Sarah and Minjin finally make it to the playground.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sarah pulls Minjin along, going at a brisk clip, ignoring the picturesque scene. But then she locks eyes with a familiar woman. She calls out.

SARAH
Kelly! How are you?

Kelly halts abruptly, barely deigning the interaction.

KELLY
I'm well. Is everything all right
with you?

Sarah tries hard to speak brightly.

SARAH
Allen's doing great at work. I got
promoted again. And this little
one...

She falters. Kelly's eyes flick over Minjin.

KELLY
I know. Children. They are works-in-
progress.

She turns to leave, but Sarah persists.

SARAH

I miss you.

Kelly stops. Briefly, she, too, appears wistful until her beautiful face hardens into its mask once more. Instead, she looks straight through Sarah.

KELLY

Take care of yourself, Sarah.

She moves quickly down the tree-lined street, leaving behind a forlorn Sarah and child.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Irritated, Sarah stalks through the cubicles, finds Peter and the Bossman huddled together by the break room.

SARAH

Why haven't the reports been processed yet? I'm waiting to submit them.

BOSSMAN

Oh, you haven't heard?

PETER

Our worker bee killed herself.
(whispers)
Mapo.

The Bossman shakes his head.

BOSSMAN

Hate to say it, but our company has been long overdue for one. Suicides and surgeries. That's what our country is known for.

SARAH

Excuse me.

A shaken Sarah pushes past the men.

INT. RESTROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gasping for air, Sarah runs into a stall. She slams the door shut and vomits into the toilet.

Sarah stumbles out to a sink and splashes her face with water. Still hunched over, she looks up only to find her reflection.

Though peaked, it remains beautiful, but something has changed. It's callous, inhuman.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Sarah steps into her apartment. Minjin runs into the space first, but something gives Sarah pause. There's a noise coming from somewhere inside the home.

Sarah pulls Minjin close and tip-toes to its source. She pushes the door to the bedroom open, only to find Allen's mother rummaging around the room.

Allen's mother straightens herself up, speaks nonchalantly.

ALLEN'S MOTHER

Allen asked me to pick up a few things for him.

Sarah speaks plainly.

SARAH

Your son doesn't love us. He's unfaithful to me and unavailable to his daughter.

ALLEN'S MOTHER

What did you expect? This relationship was doomed from the start. It all began with a lie. Everything about you is fraudulent.

She looks over at Minjin playing in the other room, smiles menacingly.

ALLEN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

I always had a feeling that you were one of those girls who had her face razed. And now I know.

Sarah shakes with fury.

SARAH

Get out of my home.

ALLEN'S MOTHER

You never fooled me, dear.

Sarah rushes at Allen's mother. She grabs her and shakes her violently before dragging her towards the door.

Allen's mother shrieks.

ALLEN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
Your true nature is coming out.

Sarah pushes her out the door but not before screaming.

SARAH
Get out!

EXT. OUTDOOR MARKET - NIGHT

Sarah and Minjin walk hand in hand, perusing the many stands and tents. Just as they are about to walk past the tents, mini malls and stands, a neon sign beckons to Sarah from the distance.

Sarah stops in her tracks, mesmerized by its flashing lights.

She pulls Minjin closer and heads in the direction of the sign.

SARAH
Come on.

INT. BOOTH - NIGHT

The booth occupies the bottom floor of the vertical mall. On its glass walls are painted the services and corresponding fees. Sarah slides one of the doors open.

Mother and daughter step into the compartment. A small table with a velvet cloth draped over it takes up the center. Two chairs have been positioned on opposing sides.

Behind one chair, magazine tear-outs of K-pop and K-drama are posted. A calendar hangs on the same wall. Beaded curtains, dream catchers and artificial flower beds complete the decor of the place.

The FORTUNE TELLER enters, motions for them to have a seat. He's a slight and balding middle-aged man who wears warm-ups. There's nothing extraordinary about his appearance.

Sarah takes a chair, pulls Minjin into her lap.

SARAH
I would like to have my daughter's
face read.

He nods.

FORTUNE TELLER
Yes.

On the fortune teller as he examines Minjin's face.

FORTUNE TELLER (CONT'D)
The good news is that fortunes are
no longer constant.

SARAH
What do you mean?

FORTUNE TELLER
We project into the world what we
want to reap from it.

SARAH
I'm sorry. I still don't
understand.

The fortune teller nods and pulls up his sleeves. He will do
a better job of explaining it all to her.

FORTUNE TELLER
Do you know who President Chun Doo
Hwan is?

SARAH
Of course.

FORTUNE TELLER
Many years ago, when Chun's mother
was trying to get pregnant, she
consulted with a monk about her
chances for having a child. The
monk examined the mother's face. He
told her that she could give birth
to an amazing man, but her
buckteeth were obstructing both
their destinies. Chun's mother
promptly picked up a rock and
knocked out her own teeth.

Sarah leans forward in anticipation.

FORTUNE TELLER (CONT'D)
As a parent, why subject your
daughter to a lifetime of ridicule
and hardship when you can design
her destiny now.

On Sarah, as she lets his words sink in.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Seated before her parents, Sarah's head remains lowered. Her
mother and father exchange looks.

SARAH'S FATHER
When is the surgery?

SARAH
On the National Exam Day. They want to get the patients in and out easily and swiftly. On the account that they are children.

He nods.

SARAH'S FATHER
On that day the students will determine their own futures. Our little Minjin's fate will be decided then, too.

Her father rises and heads for the windows. He sighs.

SARAH'S FATHER (CONT'D)
It used to be that you could see the mountains from here. You can barely see them now.

Sarah's father turns around to address his daughter.

SARAH'S FATHER (CONT'D)
The most important thing is to live well, Sarah.

She bows gratefully. Her eyes welling with tears.

SARAH
Thank you. Thank you, Mom and Dad.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Sarah dials a number from her smart phone.

CONSULTANT (O.S.)
Hello. You've reached the Touch-Up Shop. How may I help you?

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

On television, a news report. Images of an eerie and deserted Seoul are accompanied by the ANCHOR's narration.

ANCHOR (V.O.)
Over 800,000 of our nation's high school students will be taking the nine-hour college entrance exam in schools across the country today.
(MORE)

ANCHOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Stock markets, public offices,
banking institutions and corporate
businesses are all set to open an
hour late. In addition, flights
into and out of Incheon
International Airport have been
restricted.

Nary a person nor a vehicle are to be found in the abandoned
city.

ANCHOR (V.O.)
The police force, however, will be
out in full force to prevent
traffic jams and to ensure that all
of our students will get to the
examination on time. We go next to
a segment about a policeman who
went above the call of duty when a
young student forgot her admission
ticket at home.

STUDENT (V.O.)
I've prepared the last twelve years
of my life for this, so I couldn't
believe that I forgot my admission
ticket. I remembered to bring the
special lunch that my mother made
me, but the ticket? Without that, I
wouldn't even have a shot at making
it or breaking it. The police
officer saved my life by retrieving
the ticket for me.

Sarah hums, moves back and forth between the rooms of the
apartment.

Minjin sways with delight. It's been a while since she's seen
her mother in a good mood.

MINJIN
Mommy, what song are you singing?

SARAH
Minjin-ah, I used to sing this
lullaby to you when you were a
baby.

She nuzzles her daughter as she sings.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Hush-a-bye, don't you cry. Go to
sleep, my little baby.
(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)
When you wake, you shall have, all
the pretty little horses.

Minjin beams. Sarah rises. She finishes folding clothes and packing them into a suitcase before zipping it up.

MINJIN
Are we going somewhere?

SARAH
(brightly)
You are, Minjin. A place where they
will make you all better.

MINJIN
A hospital?

SARAH
It's like a hospital, but treats
something different.

MINJIN
I don't like hospitals.

Sarah carefully wraps bento boxes and places them into a market bag.

SARAH
Now the food there isn't the best.
Its main purpose is to help you
heal so you do have to eat it all.
But I'm going to sneak in a few
treats just for you to have.

MINJIN
But what's wrong with me?

Sarah ignores the question, continues her preparations.

ANCHOR (V.O.)
And now a montage of good luck
messages from our most popular
celebrities...

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sarah and Minjin exit their apartment building and step into the quiet and deserted street. Because all traffic and business is halted, Seoul is a veritable ghost town.

MINJIN
Where did everyone go?

Sarah looks up at the sky. It, too, is empty, devoid of the usual helicopter or airplane. Minjin becomes petulant.

MINJIN (CONT'D)

Where is everyone?

Sarah tries to coax her into moving.

SARAH

Isn't this amazing, Minjin? We have the whole place to ourselves. Let's get going.

MINJIN

I need more people.

A sullen Minjin drags her feet, lags behind Sarah who walks briskly forward.

SARAH

Hurry, Minjin-ah!

Minjin refuses to budge. Sarah turns around, retraces her steps to Minjin.

MINJIN

Pick me up, Mommy. Pick me up.

Sarah exhales noisily. She looks down at the baggage that she's carrying.

SARAH

I can't, Minjin. Mommy's arms are full. Besides you're much too big for me to carry.

Minjin bursts into tears.

MINJIN

I don't want to be big anymore.

From a distance, they hear the sounds of a marching band. Sarah thinks fast, goads Minjin along.

SARAH

Do you hear the music, Minjin?
Let's go check it out.

They make their way to the commotion in front of a high school. The BAND plays a rousing fight song. Police cars and taxis zoom up to the institution and deposit their charges at the front gate. OFFICERS help STUDENTS navigate their way past the PARENTS, NEWS CREWS, GAWKERS, and escort them into the facility.

As they enter through the gates, the younger STUDENTS pass out sweets, cheer, hold up signs, sing as they enter.

STUDENTS
Stick it! Fighting! Let's go!

When the last senior disappears into the building, those left outside the gates bow in reverence to those inside.

As they rise, their voices holler out one final salute.

STUDENTS (CONT'D)
Touch the sky!

Sarah shifts her gaze away from the chaos and notices Minjin standing apart from the crowd.

Minjin gazes upward. Her arms are in the air. She's trying hard to grab fistfuls of sky.

Sarah's heart swells.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Dr. Lee steps out of the exam room and approaches Sarah.

She bows before addressing him.

SARAH
Dr. Lee, I'm putting my daughter in your hands.

DR. LEE
We expect nothing but the best for Minjin. Like mother, like daughter.

On Sarah as she nods, her face filled with hope.

DR. LEE (CONT'D)
We've finished prepping Minjin for surgery. How about some words of encouragement before we take her away.

INT. EXAM ROOM/INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Dr. Lee motions to his team to bring Minjin's gurney forward.

Sarah looks over the railing, ready to cajole Minjin, but she stumbles a bit, caught off guard.

She can barely recognize Minjin as every inch of her face has been marked up with black Sharpie.

Minjin begins to cry.

MINJIN

I don't want to go, Mommy. I don't
want to. I don't want to go, Mommy.

For a moment, Sarah thinks about retrieving her daughter.

Then, SURGICAL TEAMS push the other EIGHT gurneys through the doors and into the operation room. With precision and purpose, they shoot past Sarah and Minjin, one after the other.

Sarah pries Minjin's arms off of her neck.

SARAH

I'll see you when you wake up,
Minjin-ah.

She nods at Dr. Lee to indicate that she's ready. The team steps forward.

Minjin shrieks.

MINJIN

Mommy. Mom. Mommy. Mom.

Though Sarah's heart breaks, she holds firm. She tries hard to be stoic, determined to watch until the doors close on Minjin.

But she can still hear her daughter scream out.

Sarah flinches. She can't take it any more. She shouts.

SARAH

Wait.

Sarah runs to the gurney. She leans over Minjin and wipes away her tears.

Minjin relaxes.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Minjin-ah, remember what Mommy said
about trying to be a big girl?

Minjin nods.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Will you stop crying for Mommy?
Stop being sad?

MINJIN

Okay. I'll be a big girl for you?

SARAH

Yes, a big girl.

Sarah leans down and kisses her daughter's tear-stained face.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I'll see you when it is done. I
love you.

MINJIN

Okay, Mommy, love you, too. See you
soon.

The team starts to roll Minjin's gurney away.

INT. STATION - DAY

The train's wheels screech as the vehicle comes to a complete stop.

Sarah exits the subway and steps onto the spick-and-span underground platform.

She rides one of the never-ending escalators skyward, to the exit.

It could be a stop anywhere in the city.

EXT. STATION - CONTINUOUS

But when Sarah steps outside, we realize that she's in a mountainous area.

Hundreds of other women, mostly MOTHERS and GRANDMOTHERS, also pour out from the subway station.

Sarah joins the waves of humanity as they hike up the mountain and into the forest.

The trees are brilliant shades of red, orange and brown, signaling that it's the height of the fall season.

The terrain shifts from dirt paths through thick overgrowth to vertical climbs over sheer rock, but still the women press on.

EXT. TEMPLE - DAY

Breathing hard, the women arrive in front of a massive alabaster Buddha. It's carved from stone.

They each bow to the statue before passing through the gates of the Buddhist temple.

Blue ceramic tiles grace the roof and prayer flags flap overhead. The ornate and intricate decorations have been painted in bright colors, the Chinese characters are gilded in gold, and the doors and windows have been fashioned out of wood and rice paper.

In front of the structure lie thousands of white candles, each lit for someone's wish.

Presiding above it all is a gold Buddha, his face, the picture of absolute serenity.

EXT. TEMPLE - LATER

A MONK stops before Sarah and offers her a prayer book. He quietly informs her about the proceedings.

MONK

We will be lifting our prayers in
accordance with the schedule of the
exam.

He moves on to counsel the other visitors.

Those who have already lit candles lie prostrate in front of the temple. They rise up to a standing position before kneeling and putting their foreheads to the ground. The matriarchs have come prepared. Each has brought her own yoga mat or cushion and form of relic, be it a photograph of her child or a favorite toy.

They bow over and over again.

Sarah decides to join them. She finds a place before the shrine.

Sarah stands up and puts her hands together when she notices another collection of women. This group circles the entrance like the army marching around the walls of Jericho. They recite their prayers to whatever deity will ensure their children's success, be it Jesus or Buddha.

She, too, closes her eyes and begins to chant.

EXT. TEMPLE - DAY

Sarah leaves the temple and begins her trek down the mountain. She pauses on a plateau of rock.

She can see the city in the distance.

Eager to get back, she descends alone into the wilderness. All that Sarah can hear now are the sounds of leaves crackling and twigs snapping beneath her shoes.

Sarah stops when a bright object catches her eye. She leans down for a better look. It's a sparkling white rock in the shape of a perfect sphere.

Sarah reaches down and picks up the stone. She gazes at it with admiration.

SARAH
Minjin-ah, soon, you, too, will be
perfect.

Sarah puts the rock in her pocket. She continues downward.

We move past Sarah's retreating figure and upward to a view of Seoul.

We linger on its colossal sprawl, both vertical and horizontal, before cutting to black.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Sarah and the other PARENTS anxiously wait. Some pace, others remain still. Some twitch and jiggle nervously.

Finally, an ASSISTANT enters and begins to call out their names. One by one, the parents rise and leave for the exam rooms.

Sarah waits and waits for her turn, but the assistant, too, goes through the doors and disappears.

Sarah looks around.

She is the only one who remains in the space.

INT. CLINIC - DAY

On an ashen Dr. Lee as he delivers the outcome to Sarah.

DR. LEE
Minjin encountered some
complications...

Sarah pales. She screams.

SARAH
Where is she?

The room falls quiet. Dr. Lee continues on in a hushed tone.

DR. LEE

There were complications from the surgery. I regret to inform you that she did not make it...

His words and movements decelerate. Time seems to slow down for Sarah.

Everywhere around her, the effusive parents are reunited with their BELOVED. She alone stays still.

Gushing with gratitude, they hug, slap the backs of, and bow to the surgical team.

One babbling MOTHER brushes past Sarah. She pulls Dr. Lee away. She, too, has tears in her eyes, but they are of joy.

Her face drained of color, Sarah stumbles away from the scene.

INT. WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah can barely find her way out of the clinic. The solemn staff remain where they are, sorrowful and in shock. One of the receptionists brushes away tears.

Only the consultant has the audacity to chase after her. She calls out to Sarah, but Sarah ignores her.

CONSULTANT

Miss Kim, don't forget this copy of your waiver.

Her voice now shrill and stringent, the consultant is relentless in her pursuit.

CONSULTANT (CONT'D)

Excuse me, Miss Kim. Surely, we might be able to work out some type of monetary compensation. Or, if you'd prefer, we can even guarantee you a lifetime's worth of credit here at the Touch-Up Shop for you or your loved ones.

Her crassness makes her monstrous.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Sarah lurches out of the building, only to be swept up by a horde of STUDENTS. They are loud and effervescent, having just been released from the exam. Their raucousness, a way to express relief that their ordeal is now over.

The youth surround Sarah on all sides, pushing her along with them, until they finally move past her down the street.

Sarah starts gasping for air. She escapes from the main road and staggers into a deserted alley.

Sarah sinks to the ground, tries hard to catch her breath.

She blacks out.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Sarah comes to. She wakes up, disoriented by the surroundings, not knowing how much time has passed.

Sarah canvasses the littered and rank alley, then flinches upon seeing a mountainous and disfigured WOMAN sitting by a dumpster, staring blankly into nothingness.

Bulbous pouches like tumors occupy the forehead, cheeks and chin of the woman, forming mounds over her eyes, nose and mouth. Pocks and track marks have mangled her face.

Despite the woman's afflictions, Sarah peers in for a closer look, a realization dawning.

SARAH

Mrs. Yoon?

Mrs. Yoon shakes off her stupor, shocked by the voice, much less the recognition.

MRS. YOON

Yes?

SARAH

It's me, Sarah. Kelly's friend. We met in the recovery hotel long ago.

Mrs. Yoon becomes agitated, embarrassed that someone is there to witness her in this state.

MRS. YOON

Sarah? Is that you? I don't know how I got here. I suppose I am just taking a rest.

SARAH

Do you have anyone that I could call for you, Mrs. Yoon? Someone who could take care of you? What about your daughters?

MRS. YOON
Rosanna and Carrie?

She laughs bitterly.

MRS. YOON (CONT'D)
They abandoned me as soon as they
could spread their legs for their
new husbands.

Sarah thinks twice about asking, but does it anyway with as
much respect as she can muster up.

SARAH
Mrs. Yoon, what happened to your
face?

Mrs. Yoon starts to cry.

MRS. YOON
After my daughters left, I could no
longer afford the monthly
injections at the clinic. I beg
them every day to let me continue
with the treatments, but they
refuse.

Tears fall from the mounds of Mrs. Yoon's face and into its
crevices.

MRS. YOON (CONT'D)
So, I used vegetable oil.

She howls.

MRS. YOON (CONT'D)
What has become of me? I have
nothing, no money, no home, no
family.

Sarah mulls something over as the woman breaks down
completely.

She sees her chance at redemption.

SARAH
Mrs. Yoon, why don't you come home
with me?

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sarah pushes open the door to the master bedroom.

SARAH

Mrs. Yoon, I've brought you some fresh clothes. I have linens and towels, too.

Mrs. Yoon turns around from the vanity. Sarah stops short.

She clocks the syringe in Mrs. Yoon's hand, the bottle of vegetable oil on the dresser.

Sarah grabs the bottle. She gets in Mrs. Yoon's face.

SARAH (CONT'D)

What are you doing, Mrs. Yoon? This is no way to rehabilitate you or your appearance.

Mrs. Yoon becomes unhinged.

MRS. YOON

Please. I need it. Give it to me. I need my treatments.

She shakes as she reaches for the oil.

Sarah steps backwards. She stares at Mrs. Yoon. Reluctantly, she hands her the bottle of vegetable oil.

Eagerly, Mrs. Yoon takes it. She pulls out the syringe. She fills it up, relaxing only after she injects her forehead, cheeks and chin.

Sarah looks on as Mrs. Yoon closes her eyes, relief pouring over her features, a junkie getting her latest fix.

Sarah retreats. She drops the sundries that she brought in and closes the door.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sarah stands at the window, looking at the landscape, but not comprehending what she sees.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The sun rises over the city.

The light reveals that Sarah is still at the window. Even when the front door opens, she remains immobile.

Allen enters the home.

His face is gaunt, he's unshaven and eyes are hollow. He refuses to look at Sarah when he speaks.

ALLEN

I've only come to get the rest of my things.

SARAH

I'll leave. This is your home.

ALLEN

I can't. Everything here reminds me of...

He chokes up, but wipes away his tears.

Allen moves to the master and opens the door. He recoils at the sight of Mrs. Yoon sleeping on their bed. He shuts the door.

Allen whips around and grabs Sarah.

ALLEN (CONT'D)

Who the hell is that?

SARAH

A woman without a home.

Allen sputters.

ALLEN

What's wrong with her? With her face?

SARAH

What do you think? She had surgery.

Allen makes a disgusted noise.

ALLEN

You brought another sung gui into our house? At the very least, I'm grateful that Minjin never became one. How could anyone do this to herself?

SARAH

You lied to yourself about my beauty. You knew very well what you were getting into. Stop pretending.

Allen rushes at Sarah and grabs her by the throat.

ALLEN

Pretending? It's your pretense that did this. I should kill you for killing Minjin.

Sarah attacks him.

SARAH
You played along.

She tries hard to scratch his countenance.

SARAH (CONT'D)
You did this to her. You did this
to me. You did this to us.

Allen breaks free of her grip and slams a fist into the wall. He lets out an inhuman cry as he escapes to the door. He slams it shut, leaving Sarah behind.

Sarah sinks to the floor.

Her guttural wails, too, echo into the empty space.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Sarah stands before a mirror, examining her reflection.

She looks over the space when an object catches her eye.

Sarah stares at the bottle of oil. A moment passes before she begins ransacking the room.

She stops only when she finds what she's looking for. Sarah picks up a syringe. She dips it into the clear viscous liquid.

Once filled, she puts the needle to her face and plunges it into her jaw.

She closes her eyes, almost relieved, searching for penance in pain.

EXT. OUTDOOR MARKET - DAY

Sarah books it down the street, moving with purpose. She keeps her hands in the pockets of her coat.

She fidgets with something in one of the pockets until a familiar neon sign comes into sight.

Then, her fingers coil around the object that she carries.

INT. BOOTH - DAY

Sarah jerks open the glass door, startling the fortune teller inside.

He leaps up, bows awkwardly.

SARAH
You must remember me?

FORTUNE TELLER
Of course. Welcome back. Please
have a seat.

Sarah refuses the offer. She remains upright.

SARAH
What's my name?

He stammers.

FORTUNE TELLER
Having one foot in another world
and one in this one, it's difficult
to keep track. I see so many
clients. Your face is familiar,
though. And I keep detailed
records. Let me go check.

SARAH
(flatly)
That's all right. It might jog your
memory if I remind you that I came
here about my son.

FORTUNE TELLER
Yes, your child.

He proceeds tentatively.

FORTUNE TELLER (CONT'D)
Your son.

SARAH
Wrong.

The fortune teller looks bewildered.

FORTUNE TELLER
Pardon?

SARAH
I came here about my daughter. I
paid a visit to you with my
daughter.

He back tracks, tries hard to paddle out of the tide.

FORTUNE TELLER

Ahhh, now I remember. I believe
that the prediction was her luck
would be changing.

She cuts him off.

SARAH

Wrong.

FORTUNE TELLER

But I didn't say it was for the
good. It could have been for the
bad. In any case, the tarot
cards...

SARAH

Wrong again.

The fortune teller squeaks out a guess.

FORTUNE TELLER

Palm reading?

He begins to back away. Sarah's deranged look makes him
realize that she is no ordinary woman.

SARAH

Don't you remember what you said?

She screams.

SARAH (CONT'D)

You were wrong about everything.
But the worst thing you said was
that we project into the world what
we want to reap from it. My kind-
hearted and generous daughter never
had a chance. No one treated her
the way that she deserved to be
treated. Not even her own mother.

The fortune teller tries to escape from the booth.

Sarah takes out the rock that she picked up in the mountains.
Before he has a chance to run, she smashes it against the
fortune teller's skull. A stream of blood trickles out from
the wound.

FORTUNE TELLER

Please. I made a mistake.

Sarah screams at him.

SARAH

Many years ago, when Minjin's mother was trying to better her daughter's life she consulted with a fortune teller. The fortune teller examined the daughter's face. He told her that she could have an amazing life, but a man was obstructing both their destinies. Minjin's mother picked up a rock and knocked out the man.

She bludgeons him until he falls to the ground.

INT. SUBWAY/INT. STATION - DAY

Sarah rides a brightly lit train home. She stands in the middle of the crowd.

The seated PASSENGERS remain glued to their screens. Even those standing hold the rails and handles with one hand and their smart phones with the other.

She looks around the train and observes that not one person is interacting with another.

No one notices the blood stains on her person.

The train stops. Sarah exits.

Behind her, the posted advertisements and electronic billboards continue to beguile the mob, flashing the latest technological devices, promoting the most beautiful people, telling us that we can have it all.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sarah enters an empty apartment. She moves to another room, but we remain on the windows, looking out at the bleak urbanscape.

Sarah returns with a pair of chopsticks and a cup of instant ramen.

She slurps up her favorite snack, her figure silhouetted against the view of the behemoth that is Seoul.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sarah traverses the city.

Everywhere, there are women in bandages. Some travel in packs, others are alone;

no one heeds this as dystopia as all go about their daily business. They continue on with their commutes, transactions, tête-à-têtes, sightseeing.

But from behind the white masks of gauze and cotton, the changelings seem to stop and stare at her with ominous looks.

Sarah, alone, experiences the surreality.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

Sarah leans over the railing on Mapo Bridge. She contemplates the churning murky water.

Suddenly, she hoists herself up and stands on the concrete and metal structure. Alarms go off. There are frantic yells from a POLICE OFFICER and PASSERSBY.

Sarah takes a deep breath. She closes her eyes. Finally, darkness.

Over the sound of a body plunging into water, we cut as...

INT. OPERATION ROOM - DAY

A searing white light overwhelms infinite black void.

Sarah lies motionless on a stainless steel table, garbed in hospital cap and gown. She opens her eyes.

Above, the blinding lights of operating room.

SARAH

Make me look like her.

The masked SURGEON turns to a reference on the console. It's a photograph of Sarah's daughter. This is the only time that we see her face.

Close on Sarah. She looks straight into the camera and smiles as the anesthesia mask is placed over her face. She closes her eyes as she goes into the ether.

The surgeon holds a scalpel to Sarah's skin.

The electronic monitor continues to beep.

BLACK.