

## I swallowed a hurricane/Home is where the heart is

*Minam Bell*

My left eyelid is twitching barely visibly. I'm frustrated with myself for riding the past's carousel again. I jib at accepting that I was not able to prevent my mother's death years ago. Instead of developing vertigo, I decide to leave my scrapbook behind to hop off and leave the house. Close by, a familiar stretch of land promises to peacefully reboot my system. Walking through the late autumn countryside on a Sunday, wearing my favorite green beanie, could not be more trivial yet fitting the scene. If this day were a page in a picture book, the reader would not be able to find anything unusual in the drawing. Scattered rays of sunlight make their way through the remaining golden leaves of the trees. At the bifurcation still faraway, a majestic chestnut tree has lost its treasures but for a few jewels. It reminds me of the chestnut trees in front of my bedroom window. However, *this page* is bursting with color.

The sky is ice-blue, the air already wintry cool. Small clouds are created by my warm breath but vanish within seconds. A squirrel scurries effortlessly along the branches of the last tree right before the small bridge I'm about to cross. I can hear every step crunching under my shoes as they touch the slightly frozen soil. With my

eyes closed, I turn my face towards the sun and exhale deeply. I can feel my face starting to relax as the lines of worry between my eyebrows soften. My hands, seeking warmth in my coat's pockets, slowly dissolve the pent-up anger having once again resulted in tight fists. I hope to let my thoughts resemble the clouds moving across the picture-perfect sky. While my legs carry me further, body and mind agree to rest for a few minutes. Concentrating on being present, I attempt to enjoy the breezes of calmness rushing through me. Although unfamiliar, I have let go of all tension for a moment.

Suddenly, I realize that my guards have left their post. The surroundings continue to promise peacefulness when I notice a gentle gust entering the stage. It knows its lines by heart as it begins to whisper into my ears: *Will I get sick as well? Will I suddenly lose even more loved ones?* Gradually, the strange lightness turns into discomfort. My own mortality and of the people around me has become my constant companion. The few present clouds have vanished, enabling sunrays to turn the little creek on the left into a sea of glitter. Still, worries gather. I don't know how to control the massive storm that is about to build up within me. Breezes of calmness transform into whirlwinds that trap the air I breathe. Spreading from my heart, I notice the eye of the hurricane turning inside out. The tumult is invisible for the other people passing by who seem to enjoy their Sunday walks albeit I'm internally running on the spot.



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The pent-up weather phenomenon doesn't find a way to escape the invisible duct tape on my mouth that has me choking. My built-in alert system goes off. Fear of losing control transmutes into an electrifying drink that I down slickly to ward off the anticipated deluge of emotions. *Isn't it ironic that hurricanes are known to cause power outages?*, I think and chuckle at my own ability to distract myself from the underlying issue. I feel like 1,500 volts are running through me as I find my shoulders practically glued to my earlobes. It's the power source for a never-ending session of Pinball, the demo version of an old 90s computer game on every Windows computer. It's my task to not drop the ball. Images from the past and future are bouncing chaotically through my mind. I can picture myself fading away like she did. Although not sealed, a certain darkness seems to constantly hover over me.

Since I have become a professional player over the years, I don't even notice the high energy consumption it takes to be part of the game anymore. I tell myself that tension is what keeps people upright. As I use every lever vigilantly to keep the ball from falling into the abyss, my sole thought is *game-on*. I have successfully escaped reality and my idyllic surroundings. I have stopped sensing that I'm hard of breathing. I know my hurricane wants to tell me something, but I don't listen and just collect rent. My redirected mind is occupied with playing a game that leads to nowhere.

Miriam Bell