



# Hae-Jin Scott

## When I Saw Halmoni Folding Clothes

Her arms moving  
in the likeness of a factory  
screws rattling  
Exhaust whistling from her nostrils

She watched a woman on a glass screen  
speaking jumbled words  
moving more quickly  
than the arms of my grandmother

I heard a chuckle  
rumble from within her  
like a pot set onto a low boil  
lid closed shut

*When I Saw Halmoni Folding Clothes (cont'd)*

How can I compare her to  
a factory, to a pot?  
To the arms of a metal machine,  
to the whirring of an engine?

All I know is when I got  
my clothes back,  
they smelled like her.

Then, because I can't hide the  
nature of myself,  
I fail to restrain a smile.

## Dance

The driver, my mother, grasps the wheel in a cold iron grip. Her knuckles are white, protruding from her skin like jagged twigs. Her eyes are whizzing around as if a thousand lights flash are flashing on and off. She really does hate driving in the dark. The whims of nature bring about winter, the night draws on longer than the day, and then it falls.

The fog on the windshield doesn't help much either; it clouds her vision of the road from her eyes, hidden behind the frames of her glasses. This clouding earns a third aggravated knock on the steering wheel. This sends a nice whiff of factory freshener straight into my senses. Plastic, burning rubber, and something that smells like burning grapefruit.

"So," she starts, "how's dance class going?"

Instantly, I groan, wanting that subject to never come up. My intention is always to evade questions about dance during the ride. Mom ruins my plan, as always.

"It's going well."

She seemed satisfied with what is obviously a flat-out lie, and turns her attention back to the road. Reestablishing her strangling grip on the steering wheel, she turns it, letting out a long groan.

How I got here, I have no idea. All I know is that at one point my parents presented a question:

"Dance or drama?" I was ignorant then.

Suddenly, it seemed, I was in front of a dance studio. A great towering building; the lights burned my retinas. It stuck me like a sledgehammer to the stomach. It struck fear into me, like I was meeting the bogeyman.

Over time, my fear turned to loathing. I wouldn't call it depression, but once inside, I had a primal need to get out of there. Rip everyone's head off and run for my life. Yet I stayed like a fearful animal in a room of glistening mirrors. Each screamed back an exact image of me, torturing my features. I was a panel in a sadistic disco ball.

The people were nice and friendly—don't get me wrong—it wasn't that. I'm not sure what scared me about it.

When I get out of the car, the root of that feeling jerks and twists in me, like fear. I suppress that part of me again.