

Faintly Here

Moto Takahashi

I. The One Who Heard

(KIITAMONO)

From far away,
they arrive —

shadows of memory,
things once lost.

Softly,
they come closer,
until they are taken in
without knowing.

Then again,
they drift
somewhere else.

No freshness here,
only gray,
a quiet sadness.

And yet,
when someone is near,
a small warmth stays.

That's all
this place is.

I drifted —

not searching for anything,
not waiting, either.

Why am I here?
The thought came,
but there was nothing to be done.

As if I had always been here,
I simply floated.

*

A sound entered,

from the softest place,
quietly,
coldly,
without breaking through.

That was what it meant to hear.

No reply,
no response,

only a slight opening
somewhere inside.

The borders I touched
folded inward,

soaked,
circulated,
shifted,

until,
within me,
everything slowly aligned.

And then,
something moved ahead,
slipping forward.

I followed.

Then,
I came upon a mass,
not something I found,
but something
that had simply been there.

A surface that defies description,
dense,
with an uncertain tone.

At times
it quivered,
just slightly.

I reached out
and held back.
It wasn't the time yet.

So I only watched.

And in that stillness,
a face,
or something like one,
slowly turned upward.

I thought
our eyes had met.

Everything only felt,
nothing was certain.

And yet,
in that instant,
something was born.

I never knew
what it was, or why.
Afterwards,
only a sound remained.

Familiar,
and not.

A faint sound,
thin as air,
that echoed once
and disappeared.

II. The One Who Crouched

(UZUKUMATTEITAMONO)

There was no sense
of having arrived.

It was simply there,
as something that existed.

Nothing came to mind
to be remembered.

And yet,
a trace of warmth
called "once"
still lingered.

It passed as a tremor,
now and then traveling
across the surface,
and a single ripple rose,
then drifted away.

I didn't notice
that something
was drawing near.

Through a scent,
its presence
softly wove itself in.

It hadn't touched me,
and yet,
my outline loosened,
just a little.

I turned
what might have been
a face
toward it.

There was a direction —
something like a gaze,
something like the act of seeing.

The other, it seemed,
thought our eyes had met.

Whether it truly happened,
I couldn't tell.

And yet,
in that moment,
something was born.

Before I knew it,
I was touching it.

It felt like a lukewarm stain,
hard to describe,

slowly spreading
across the surface.

If a stain keeps spreading,
can it still be called
a stain?

That thought
came to me,
for a brief while.

III. The One Who Watched

(MITEITAMONO)

To see —
it should have been
something more distant
than touch.

But was it,
really?

Not to see —
that was impossible.

Even if I turned away,
what was there
did not disappear.

It was not a landscape,
nor a sign,
but something that breathed.

Neither present,
nor absent.

Before I knew it,
I had been watching
all along —

that side,

this side,

everything in between.

The thickness of light
in the space around
began to crumble,
flake by flake.

It seeped through
and reached me.

I, who should have been far away,
had somehow
drawn close.

What I thought
I had been watching
was now
watching me.

Being seen.

Being seen.

I felt both comfort and fear
in the gaze that held me.

And within
that unspeakable feeling,
I knew —
there would be
an end.

IV. Becoming a Whirlpool

(UZU NI NARU)

The One Who Watched appeared.

It must have been there already,
and yet it came again,
as if anew.

The One Who Crouched saw.
The One Who Heard saw too.

At that moment,
to see —
only that act
warped the space.

Who was seeing whom?

Boundaries twisted,
curling,
turning round and round.

The whirl began to draw them in,
gently,
inevitably.

The seeing of the seer
rubbed,
scraped,
peeled away.

Not seeing,
but being made to see?

I — as myself —
was slowly
becoming something else.

Zrr.

Zrr.

Zrr.

The sound before meaning,
a shape before form —
they gathered,
and became something
neither sound nor memory,
but a wavering.

Deeper,
deeper,
into the spiral.

The One Who Crouched —
before I knew it —

suuuu.....

was gone.

What had overlapped
began to part,
slowly,
as if unwinding itself.

V. The One Who Never Came

(KONAI MONO)

I was not here.

Or rather,
I was here
in the shape of not being.

Not unseen,
but unlooked for.

My voice was not unheard,
there were simply
no ears
placed in the place
it could reach.

A scent, a seeping, a faint foretelling.

If someone, somewhere,
had been waiting,
then perhaps
I was something close to that.

To not be,
and to be —
they overlapped
in the same way,
the same fold of breath.

It disturbed
just one rhythm of the place,
and tugged
the light's direction
by a single thread.

And still,
I do not come.

For this place,
that not-coming
was the strongest
way of being.

VI. As Sound

(OTO TOSHITE)

Not a voice,
not a word.

Only a resonance,
floating here.

Their being there,
and my being here.

Drawing close,
then parting,
without blending,
simply existing.

Between sound and sound,
a fine membrane
of sensing threads
is stretched.

It presses lightly,
then rebounds,
becoming a brief pause,
a single beat
that births new breath.

And so,
I keep sounding,
even now,
here,
with them.

For now,
that is all I do.

VII. As If Nothing Had Been Lost

(NOKOSARETA WAKE DEWA NAKU)

Before we knew, the whirl had vanished.

Whatever had happened
was already nowhere to be found.

It had surely been there —
or so we felt.

But when we tried to recall it,
it became as if it had never been.

The One Who Heard and The One Who Watched
kept flowing in the same direction,
unchanged.

It was not by will.
Each time they stepped forward,
another moment arrived.

Now,
not quite the same as before,
and yet,
not different either.

Together,
they would go on piling up such moments,
again and again.

VIII. To Gather Close

(YORU)

The air there was clear.

The One Who Never Came was already there,
drifting softly within the space.

The One Who Crouched lifted its face.

Had it been watching?
Or waiting?

The One Who Never Came moved closer.

A single drop fell —
a ripple swelled,
round and round,
then slid away.

Two presences,
side by side.

Inside The One Who Crouched,
a colorless depth began to stir.

Yet somehow,
it felt like something long, long known.

suu...

suu...

suu...

suu...

IX. From the Rift

(SAKEME YORI)

Within the layers of stillness,
the two leaned close,
their softness
held in place.

From the corner,
something
was coming this way.

There were no footsteps,
yet the air
slightly bent.

The One Who Watched,
or perhaps something
that had come
from another angle,
could not see The One Who Never Came.

That fact,
so clear,
so certain,

that it brought no sadness.
And so,
the place divided
once again.

*

"That's strange....."

At that moment,
the sound was no longer only sound.
It had taken on a voice.
Someone.

Before the thought
that it was wrong could form,
it was already there.

"Hey!"

First.

Second.

Third.

Gan.

Gasha.

Pongi.

Fourth.

Dry beats —
not behind,
not beside,
but dripping
from somewhere beyond the ceiling.

Before the question could form,
the body had already replied.

"Hey,,, this.....

it's not scary,

but it's scary, isn't it?"

Pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu
pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu
pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu
pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu pu

Just before the ear,
deep inside the ear,
behind the bone,
beneath the skin —

it slipped in,
into places
that were no longer mine.

Like a voice calling out,
like words rising and bubbling,
like the trace
of someone's hand
that once brushed past t t t...

The voice swallowed them both.

Gara

Kasha

Poon

Gii

Gacha

Pichi

Haa...

Then, sliding softly,
the One Who Heard arrived.

Following it
came the One That Moved.

And then,
it stopped.

The One Who Heard
felt it —
as if something long lost
had quietly returned.

The One That Moved
became part of
The One Who Heard.

And The One Who Heard
became
The One Who Had Heard.

Behind them,
footsteps pressed —
shadows multiplied.
There was no weight,
only air
trembling softly.

Two and One,
together, Three.

And still,
never One.

"Hey,,, this.....
it's not scary,
but it's scary, isn't it?"

A tingle runs through me.

What is "scary"?

What is it —
to be afraid,
and yet not afraid??

Kashari.

Gara.

Gii.....

A crack spread,
a line formed,
and the fissures multiplied.

From below,
something swelled,
soft and uneven,
melting without breaking.

Sound turned to voice,
voice to presence,
presence to a faint shimmer.

"This, this one...

it's been here all along.

Here, but not here.

Not here, but here.

You know...

those things

they happen."

X. Falling to the Bottom

(SOKO NI OCHITE)

Not sinking —

The sense that
heaven and earth
had simply lost their meaning.

What had been
a moment ago
no longer mattered.

Inside me,
something simmered,
a warmth
rising from nowhere.

The sound there
was murky,
folded in on itself,

as if both my ears
were covered
by unseen hands.

No, no...
that's not it.
It was more like...
truly...

I don't know
how long I stayed like that.

Then
I became aware.

I was not alone here.

Part of me
was already touching something,
an edge of warmth,
neither hot
nor cold,

a warmth
that almost felt like longing...

Yes —
I knew it.

What could never have been,
a memory,
a future,

moved without pause
deep inside me,
where thought and body
blur together.

Something I stopped.

Something I continued.

Something I never told.

Time
shifted its layers
too swiftly to hold.

And yet, it stayed beside me.
I had to let it.
Whatever became of me, so be it.

The waves of sound
spread, bent, refracted.

I mixed with it —
and didn't.

There was nothing left
in that world to forget.

So for a while,
I let myself
belong here.



XI. Almost Together

(DAITAI ISSHO)

Maybe the light had changed.
Not something seen,
but the air,
the feeling of it,
shifted a little.

Huh?
Was I imagining it?
I wondered,
but the atmosphere just kept going,
as if it didn't know how to stop.

Beside me
was what once had been The One Who Crouched.
It was no longer crouching.
Now it was there —
upright, alive somehow.

The One Who Had Heard
was neither hearing
nor not hearing.

The sound came first,
pushing inward,
slow and heavy.

Maybe it was inside
the bones
of the one beside me.

Or maybe
it was inside me.
Hard to tell.

I think I'm hungry.....

Suddenly,

I thought —
wait, who am I now?

The question spread,
thinned,
and flew off
before I could catch it.

"Does it really matter if you don't know?"

a voice said,
from somewhere.

Beneath my skin,
a tingle —

the kind that rises
when presence draws near.

Maybe past the sixth sense,
somewhere around
the seventh or eighth.

I thought,
this makes no sense,
and still,
I was slowly melting
into it.

An edge,
a seam,
split open.

From there,
a scattered presence
began to rise.

It wasn't coming,
but the quiet knowing
of what
had already been here.

We must have been waiting for that.

XIII. A Song Between Times

(Hitotoki no Uta)

One footstep,
then another —
no one turns,
no one looks back.
That's how
it becomes a song.
Zuh ka-ka, zuh ton, ka-ka.

The first step falls,
the second slips
somewhere away,
the third drifts off —
and something quiet
follows behind.

I have nothing,
I brought nothing.
Because I have nothing,
I can give.
That moment
when you lost something —
remember it.

Zuh ka-ka, zuh ton, ka-ka.

A single grain
of illusion
is made from
two grains
of warmth.
It is made, it is made.

A-shiyuto hichi ku-misori
Furimunchinga ineyiraga
Na-to-ra-sa uta nayun-yau
Zu kaka zu ton kaka

Ippin fumiticha ashi-nushira
Tachichime kanindo nukirassa
Michichime nukiraba ushikara
Shikuwa-nu chuinga morudan-u

Wanya nanmun mochine-an
Nanmun motchii chanakattan
Motchiine kara ashi-yurun
Amahnu nasurita tukinuktu

Zu kaka zu ton kaka

Hichitubunya mabuhha
Tachitubunya nukumirumo
Natii-chun natii-chun

Zuh ka-ka, zuh ton, ka-ka.
Zuh ka-ka, zuh ton.

Outside,
there's still a sound.
Inside,
nothing changes.
Touch it,
and forget it soon.

But still —
remember
that you forgot.
If you remember,
that's enough.
That's enough.
That's enough.

Ton, zu-zu, ka, ton-ka.

When the song fades,
nothing remains —
and yet,
it feels as if
something does.
As if it does,
as if it doesn't.

Zun, ton, ton.

Are you still here,
or not?
Are you still here,
or not?

Zu kaka zu ton kaka
Zu kaka zu ton

Sotu na-fen otugas
Na-fen nanmu kawarin
Kawarimamma furitiichu
Furitii sakumi wasuriti-ne

Sagandu
Wasuricharuktu oboketi-ne
Oboketireba soa iino
Soa iino
Soa iino

Ton zuzu ka tonka

Utaya kiiraba nanmunna
Nakunaishiriga arugutuya
Arugutuya
Naigutuya

Zun ton ton

Rada kukuru irya neya
Rada kukuru irya neya

XIV. To You, Azure One

(Sa-aonarukimi e)

Little by little,
the dying light
began to glow.

Thank you.
I'm sorry.
See you.
Or perhaps,
goodbye.

*

Simple words —
ordinary,
and yet the only ones
that could hold what I felt —
overflowed softly.

You were here.
Truly here.
And now,
no longer.

Did I call you?
Did you come?
Did we touch?
Or did we only
pass for a moment?
I don't know.

But that time we shared —
that
was real.
I want to believe it was.

Only those
who were together
know.

If you do not try to feel,
or to see,
or to listen,
then it is not there.

Silence.

Softly, softly,
after all has stilled,

faintly, faintly,
the glow spreads,
filling the space
between all things.

And then,
once more,
it drifts
somewhere else —

to a place
where being with someone
is a little warm,
just enough.

Fin.

- Afterword -

I wanted to share a little about how this work came to be, so I decided to leave an afterword. It all began when I was invited by Karatsu-san of Dance Base Yokohama to take part in a new project — the starting point for creating this piece. While I was thinking about what kind of work I wanted to make, the idea of combining ghost stories (Kwaidan) and hip-hop came to mind. It sounded like an unusual and intriguing direction to explore.

I've always been drawn to horror and ghost stories. I often read and watch them, but bringing that world into my own form of expression had always felt difficult. Until now, I simply enjoyed them as entertainment. What I especially love about horror stories is uncovering their background — why a spirit appears, where a curse or grudge begins. Once I understand that background, the fear itself somehow fades away. Instead, I begin to sympathize, to side with the ghost, even to feel affection for it.

Every story has its origin — its root — and in the end, I always come to the same realization: the living are far more frightening and cruel. What attracts me most is not the fear itself, but the sadness, the lingering melancholy, and the quiet sense of love that reside within it. Many people dislike horror, but if you take a step closer, you may begin to see it differently.

Returning to the main thread — I wanted to capture those qualities, the quietness and transience that dwell within ghost stories, and shape them into my own work. At first, I searched for an existing story to use as a foundation. I was influenced by the works of Koizumi Yakumo and, though slightly outside the realm of ghost tales, Ogawa Mimei. As I read more deeply, I realized that many stories revolved around love and resentment between men and women. I wanted something different, so I read widely across genres, but nothing ever felt right.

The idea of writing an original story had lingered in the back of my mind, but I kept hoping I'd find the perfect source. Around that time, in a conversation with Chieko Ito — who has supported my work since last year — she said to me, “Why don't you just write your own?” That gave me the final push, and I decided to try.

Even so, it was my first time writing a complete story. I had written a few pseudo-scripts before, but never a full narrative. I struggled from the start. I had a clear vision of the atmosphere and feeling I wanted to convey, but translating that into words proved difficult. If I added too many characters, lines, or roles, it became harder to bring it back into dance. I wrote, deleted, rewrote — again and again.

The first spark came from the sound of a wind chime — that image of its tone stretching through the air, connecting this world and the next. Then came the image of a gray sea: cold, lonely, and quiet, yet somehow fierce beneath the surface. When I tried to describe it in conventional prose, it didn't feel right, so I shifted to a more poetic and abstract form.

Although I initially included hip-hop in the concept, I didn't cling to that idea in the end. Still, I realized that ghost stories and hip-hop share something fundamental — a sense of rhythm, of timing, of the spaces in between. In that way, perhaps they were connected all along.

There are things I understand clearly within myself, but that may not fully come across through words alone. Still, if each reader can wander through their own imagination while reading this piece, that would make me happy. I've hidden many small details and personal touches throughout the text.

I'm deeply curious to see how this story will resonate when experienced alongside the dance performance itself. Whether someone reads it before or after seeing the piece, I'm sure their perception will shift — and that shift, too, is part of the work.

This has become a long afterword, but truly, without this opportunity, this story would never have been born. I am sincerely grateful to Karatsu-san, who gave me the chance to begin it.

Thank you very much for reading to the end.

Moto Takahashi