

Pyromaniac

There is something ridiculously strong about the voice of cat in heat. I never bothered with cat so much but my mother had five cats, all at different times. There was something deeply emotionally provocative about cat's purr while they are in heat. If I was in a bad mood there was nothing that made me more angrily annoyed than the long scratchy noise, like the sound of a chalkboard being scratched by fingernails. If I was in a good mood, there was nothing more pleasant than to hear than the high pitched seduction of a cat.

Some of them, maybe instinctively knowing that I am the only male of the family, used to rub its body on me when they are on heat, like this women is right now. She doesn't look young enough to be working as a *Noraebang* (Korean, Karaoke) helper. I love how they are called the helper. Like they are supposed to help us to have a good time, among the people who obviously couldn't connect by themselves. *Noraebang* is supposedly the place of bonding. Like the public sauna of ancient Rome, it is where bunch of old hacks like me come with equally old, bold, and often fat man and bond with each other by talking about some matters that are just as boring as themselves. So when a bunch of these old folks come, we want someone who is nothing like us, someone who will never remind us the things we hate about ourselves. That's why that job exists, *Noraebang* helpers. Young vibrant women often very attractive, there is something sexual about that too, of course, but honestly, all I was looking for was someone who has silky, firm skin unlike my saggy cold body.

So when I came here, alone, and asked for *Noraebang* helper, and got someone who is purring like a cat in heat, with the ambiguous seduction that keeps a distance from me as she comes close, but that she was someone almost as old as my wife was a surprise. Her age made her much more suited for the wooden chair in a good old kitchen, or even a plastic chair in the office, than the soft sofa in the middle of the stuffy room with no unblocked windows on any side, next to the helplessly feeble, thin body of mine.

She must have seen somehow that all of this was going on inside my head. She took my hand, the one that was closer to her, and placed it on her cheek. She looked up right into my eyes, and I saw in one way how she was, perhaps, more fitting in this sofa than any other place where she could be. In her eyes was something I haven't seen in my wife's eyes for a very long time. The white part of her eyes was clear, like those you would see from a young child, not someone around my age or my wife or her. Instead of pupils that are blocked with some milky things that comes with age, I could clearly see that all the lights came straight into her eye, the reflection of me, looking back at me, which tickled me in the stomach for a second. It was a brief second that was stretched for a much longer time period. After that brief second, she shied away her eyes into the thick big book of the song list. She asked me what song I want to put in, and I asked her to put in whatever song she wanted to.

“How many?” She turned and asked.

“However many songs it takes to fill the one hour that I paid for,” I answered.

She turned to me with a stern face, like I'm doing something clearly immoral by making her do that. I ignored the look, so she turned back. Without even flipping the book once, she put in the digit for the songs, and about twenty songs were up there in the reservation list. She got up with the tambourine in one hand, and when she stood up I noticed her long straight legs, exposed clearly because of the short dress. And that was it. She was standing there singing the whole time, at times shaking the tambourine, or handing me over the mike, to indicate if I wanted to sing too, but I sat there. I just looked at her singing. She wasn't annoyed. She didn't even look tired, while she was singing a song for an hour straight, standing up, on those cheap looking heels where all of her toes were screaming squeezed all together in such a small room down there. One thing she did was to come back to sofa when the one hour was up and massaged her tights a little bit. I just said thank you, and sluggishly walked out of the room. Feeling the weight of my own shoes, my own feet, my own leg, I walked out of there like that. And I started to wait.

Just wait for hours for her. Outside of the door, right next there, just sat and waited there, right next there where she could easily see me on the way to get to her home. And I imagined as I fell asleep outside there, I imagined how she would be done with her work around early in the morning and the stars would still be there, but the sign of the sun coming up would be obvious because the sky would be a little bit brighter, and it will get brighter as each minute passes, and how she will wake me up and say, “You can’t fall asleep here” with gentle and caring voice, and with her silky hand brushing up against my hair gently. I thought how that would be infinitely better than going back to my house, sleeping at night, waking up in the morning, and seeing my wife over Skype, with my kids who needed to study abroad for their brighter future. And left me just here.

I thought about how she would tell me how she was a pyromaniac and she ended up in juvenile prison, and how her life hasn’t been working out since. And how she wants to have Tuna Kimchi Soup in an all-night diner next to her house, and how after all that, we will have sex. Not well-familiarized making love, like me and my wife do, but with a passion, we will make love like just two people who wants to exhaust each other. I thought about how the way our lips will meet will make me think about how I use to kiss as a teenager. I thought about how we would buy a fruit, a small one, maybe a strawberry, and feed each other, but mostly throw them at each other. Like two children. I thought about how we would do things that I tell my children not to do. I thought about how all this will be infinitely better than alternative. But she didn’t wake me up. I was woken up, early morning. Around seven, when the sun was up high there, and everything was bright enough to shine the shames, and hangovers. But the asphalt floor was hard and cold. I felt that cool creeping up on me from my boney bottom. Woken up by the clearing janitors sweeping sounds. And she already went home, without waking me up though she clearly must have seen me.