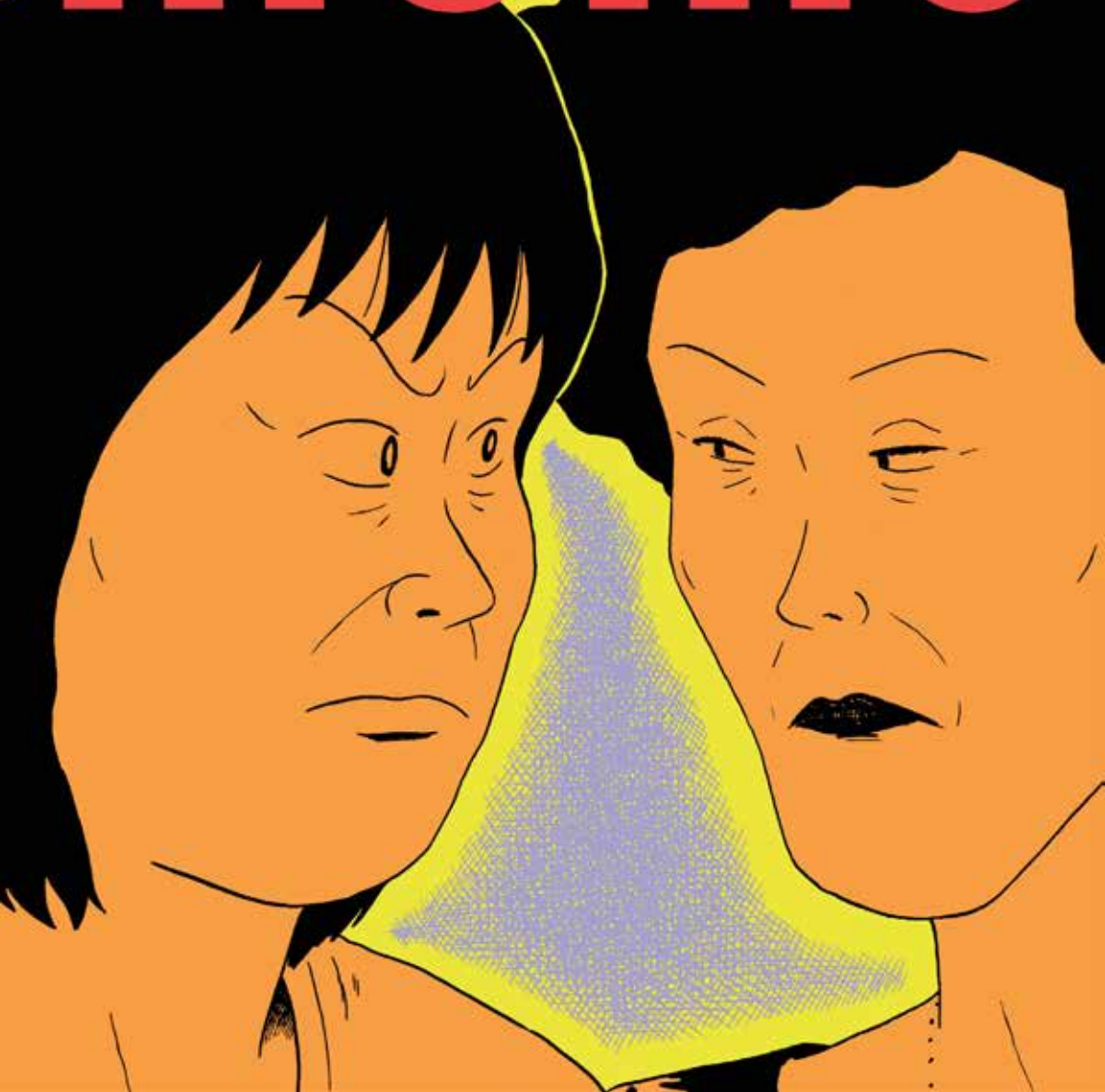


yeong-shin ma

moms





Moms © 2020 Yeong-shin Ma. All rights reserved. Translation © 2020 Janet Hong. Font and sound effects lettering copyright © 2020 Jillian Tamaki. No part of this book (except small portions for review purposes) may be reproduced in any form without written permission from Yeong-shin Ma or Drawn & Quarterly. First published in 2015 by Humanist Books, Korea.

drawnandquarterly.com

ISBN 978-1-77046-519-0 (ebook)

First print edition: July 2020

This book is published with the support of the Literature Translation Institute of Korea (LTI Korea)

moms

yeong-shin ma

translated by janet hong



Drawn & Quarterly

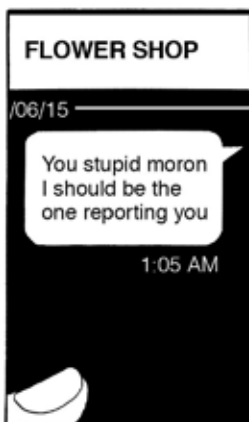
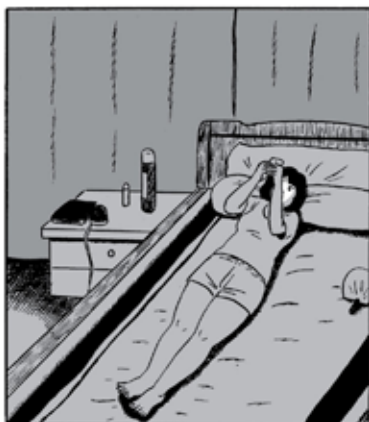


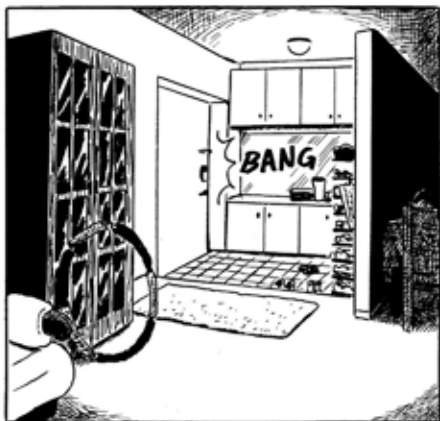
for my mom

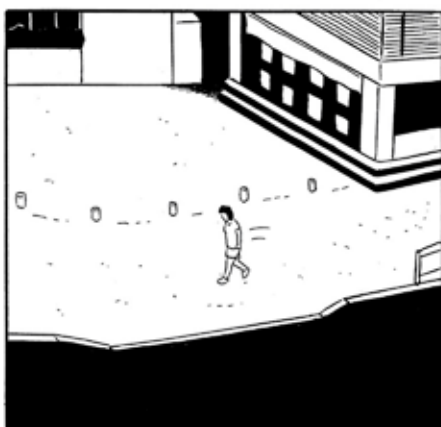




1. MY NAME IS SOYEON









GRAB





YOU
FUCKER!

...How did my life turn out this way?



My real name is Lee Sunshim. It was my late father who'd named me.

주민등록증

이순심(李順心)

1002 3611

수동



I never liked it though, so after my youngest was born, I started going by a different name: Lee Soyeon.



But I suppose it all began before that. I got married too young. Ever since, I've had a string of bad luck.



When I was twenty, my mom set me up with someone from Seoul.

I don't want to.



Shut up and do as I say.



Nice to meet you.

Mom adored him from the beginning.

I thought he was handsome, but I told my mom I wasn't interested.



He looks like a playboy. He's gonna be trouble.

Quit whinin'.

Then one day, he came all the way to Mokpo to see me.



I couldn't eat more than a bite of my noodles. I was too nervous to make a sound.



When we finished the movie, it was almost midnight.



He suggested that we stay together that night, since our parents knew about us.



I trembled all night long. I was so naive.



*Originally imposed at the end of World War II, the nationwide midnight-to-4 a.m. curfew was lifted in 1982.

Three days later, we got engaged and moved into a tiny studio apartment in Seoul.



Everything went downhill from there.



Three months later, I was pregnant with my first daughter. And on my fourth month in Seoul, my mother-in-law came to visit.



I've got a daughter-in-law now. It's finally my turn to take it easy.



I really didn't want to go.



She got what she wanted anyway. I looked after my in-laws for almost a year, living apart from my husband.



It was a horrible time.



We didn't even have a TV. Whenever I heard the train, I couldn't help but cry.



When I was eight months pregnant, my father-in-law went to Seoul.



I heard him and his wife talking.



The secretary?



A month after my daughter was born, we held a small marriage ceremony and I moved back to Seoul.



Since we didn't have enough money, we borrowed 700,000 won from his parents to rent a room.



We lived on his monthly salary of 90,000 won.



We moved five times before we could afford to buy a 1,000-square-foot house with three rooms.



We rented out two of the rooms while our family of five lived in the master bedroom.



We scrimped and saved until we didn't have to rent out the rooms anymore. The kids finally had their own space.



Life was hard, but we were happy.



Then, after the youngest was born, my husband started gambling.



Back then, I was still attending mass. If my husband didn't come home before midnight...



I cried and prayed, waiting up for him.

But it wasn't long before he got hooked on pachinko and ended up gambling away the piano.



It only got worse after that.



Just when we managed to pay off one debt, there'd be another...and another... We paid off his debts twenty times.



Every time he racked up a new debt, I felt like I was losing my mind.



That's when I developed insomnia.



I was young and didn't know any better. I just wanted to get back at him.



Then one night, he lost thirty million won to poker. The day after that, he lost another thirty million.



I felt hopeless. When we were paying off the pachinko debt, I'd held it together for the kids' sake.



But now there was this poker debt, and we'd already cleaned out the kids' savings.



I wanted to die.



I didn't have the strength to fight him. I had no idea how we were going to survive.



If we lost the house, the five of us would have to live in a one-room again...



That night I racked my brain.



Meanwhile, my husband dumped everything on me and snored the night away.



I wanted to strangle him.



For the next five years, unless it was to pay off his debt, I saved everything he brought home.

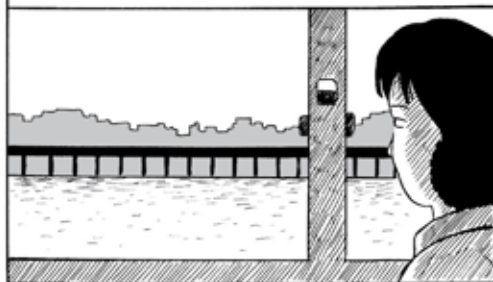


Then one day, I got a call from a friend who ran a karaoke bar.

Can you help out in the kitchen?



Every evening on my way to work, I would look out at the Han River and wonder when this would all be over so I could stop working nights.



It hurt my pride to cook and clean for all the girls there.

It's a bit salty.



But I put up with it for the kids.



It's doesn't matter if they're college profs. When they're drunk, they're all pricks.



When I'd finally finish work early in the morning, my husband would pick me up in his company car to save on fare.



Why am I putting up with this?



And wanting to get back at my husband...



There, I met someone.



I regret it all now.
I felt as if I'd
betrayed my kids.



A self-respecting
woman would have
put her family first...



Then maybe I'd still be
married and my life
wouldn't have turned
out this way.



The thing is,
I couldn't forgive
my husband.



If I'd stayed with
him, I probably
would have gotten
sick and died.



My dance partner made me
feel a little better, but I was so
burdened by all the debts.
I eventually got tired of him.



By the time I decided to devote myself
to my family again, my husband was
seeing someone else.



So we got a divorce.



2. THE SUCKER PUNCH







Now he works as a waiter at a night-club, but when he was younger...

I've got lots of friends who are lawyers and prosecutors, but I'm not embarrassed about what I do.



he was the manager of the Plaza Club and even a presidential secretary at the Blue House.*

I did pretty well back then.

There's no way to tell if any of this is true, but he is smart...



But I married the wrong woman. She ruined my life.



I let all the decent girls from college go and settled for her...



She'd been following me around for two years.



I got drunk and made the mistake of sleeping with her. She got pregnant, so I married her.



I wanted to meet a smart, interesting woman and spend the rest of my days with her...



I guess his wife isn't smart or interesting...



*The Blue House is the official residence and workplace of the president of South Korea.

He still lives with his wife, but they act like they're divorced.



Before we met, his wife got sucked into a pyramid scheme and racked up eighty million won in debt.



He also found out she'd slept with an old friend of hers.



That's when he started hitting the bottle.



The past five years with him have been happy.



We're honest with each other. There's no pressure. It's comfortable.



But sometimes he's too honest.

You call yourself a mom?

What have you ever done for your kids?

SLAP

And though he's frugal and thoughtful...

It isn't much, but put this toward your hospital bill.

...he ultimately only cares about himself and his kids.

Sorry. I'm going shopping with my kids tomorrow.

And sometimes there were other women...

I slept with a Chinese-Korean woman the other day.

I tried to end it a few times...



But because of love...

I'm here.

Okay.

I'm still with him.

Did you change your door code?

Shh. My son's home.

