

By Sang Young Park (translated from the Korean by Anton Hur)

Hello Durham Book Festival. My name is Sang Young Park and I am the author of *Love in the Big City* (Tilted Axis Press).

I am writing you from Korea where I sit, a little bereft and melancholy, as I await the publication of my third novel *On Faith*. Writers refer to this as “post-publication syndrome,” a form of burnout that has inevitably descended upon me once more. It’s the seventh year of having called myself a writer, and this is my fifth book, but it’s almost amusing that every time I hand over a final manuscript, I still get this sentimental.

I watch a lot of television these days, as well as dramas and talk shows and the news. On the news just now they had a story about the human body beginning to age irreversibly and rapidly from the thirty-fourth year onwards. Whether this means the “Korean age” of 35 or the international age of 34, I am clearly on the cusp. Maybe this is why—or maybe it’s the heat—that’s taken away my appetite. I keep drinking water, forget to draw the curtains, and find myself waking up in the harsh morning light. Or nodding off in the middle of the day for lack of sleep, or oversleeping until the afternoon, making my body feel heavy—the cycle repeats itself.

I think this year will be remembered as a very busy year. In March, I was longlisted for the International Booker Prize, an incredible career milestone. After which were many days of doing interviews and reading the reviews and feedback from readers and critics from around the world. British readers especially made me believe that literature transcends language, a timeless truth. Would it be so clichéd to invoke the power of literature here? It was an experience I shall feel grateful as a writer for the rest of my life.

I took a look at my January 1st new year’s resolutions to see how I’m doing, and there was one particular thing that caught my eye. “Be happy on your own.” A simple goal, but perhaps one too difficult to achieve beyond any other. I hope for you that this festival where my and countless others’ books from around the world have gathered, will be a time for you to take one step closer to happiness.