

Maria S. Picone

KOREAN GIRL GHOST

Placeholder Press

Maria S. Picone
KOREAN GIRL GHOST

Placeholder Press

This project was conceived as a free resource to make writing accessible and reach underserved populations. If you are reading this chapbook, thank you for doing your part. When you are ready to let it go, please pass it to a writer friend or an organization or school that you know could use it or benefit from its content.

Additional resources and digital/multimedia formats are available at <https://www.koreangirlghost.com>.

© 2023 Placeholder Press

Maria S. Picone
Korean Girl Ghost

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency.

Published by: Placeholder Press

Text Design by: Maria S. Picone

Cover Design by: Maria S. Picone

Printed and bound in North Charleston, SC by Placeholder Press

Korean Girl Ghost

MARIA S. PICONE

girl grown overseas

descends skyscraper past
work | runs fingers on
stone wall | crosses street
bridge to home
bus | rides hope on small
cabbage | tends garden
stew on stove

Korea, of memory.
memory, of Korea.

could they be her family

ghostgirl brings snacks

to school in case

cafeteria serves 된장찌개

she likes 찌개 but kimchi

crunchy

substitute

the floor is hot

speaking

is attack

is another failure

is a hard labor

loneliness

gwisin habitat

dorm singles kids pass by & stare

bed of no visitors grave of no attention

garden level hideouts activate night
& cat footsteps trace the frolic of roaches

tall grass waving arthritic house goodbye

plastic bottle achieved liftoff

bustling porch of pictured family

roadsides with broken down fuel
stations pity none & no one's care

city studios where life is art

a place arrived to anyone can sit

PC bang at night

speak easy of smoke
& starcraft & skypeing

proud faces in ghostly
time zones is it day

no it's evening
upon this rainbow horizon

a cup of noodles descends
like a steamy goddess

rules of restriction

get cash all the time
no American credit cards

don't one-hand
receipts on take or give

make proper altitude
bows from head or waist

summon traumatizing
○ lifestory

just so some bored
child can learn why that

Korean is 외국인
too much to explain

persist with cheery
half smile stay silent

gwisin 맥주 hang out

their cigarettes loll
newspapers rustle
eyebrows speak
& in stone worn voices
they pause the proprietor
to clear their long table
of sizzled out beef
& soju shots pop
up like fruiting mushrooms
spreading sporous joy

no VPN no socials

books live in Gangnam
 & Gwanghwamun | mac
 & cheese & couscous
 in Itaewon | videogames
 on DVDs & Yongsan rips
 & smartphones are sci-fi
 dreams about to be born
 too late to save her

confrontation

-even if you don't like something you just eat it, that's what
 adults do

& ghostgirl is a child | a ghost
 shame brushes her | chest
 cold with grey lung | speckle
 food in flagrante delicto=delinquent
 plucks limp id chopsticks | aimed at cold sea
 food seafared to samga=refrain
 & brain loops skitter in reframed | rebuke
 contra request italicized | forever
 counters dip of forehead | control
 encounters & regrows this ghost of
 contrast faced with=

that little GPS thread

ghostgirl's payday buys
companions

she winds from 66-4 bus
to street food stand

the grocer loosens jars
(pasta sauce and kimchi)

at the clothing store
they communicate in claps

& headshakes
holding Chanel ring

to insubstantial finger
& walking in the park

& elsewhere she tries
to hide when spoken to

even when she sparkles

found family

grateful to be both &

now with survival skills
developed to cope

ring a translation friend
memorize directions
bring snacks

she navigates fear
-ing the spiteful
judge inside her
chiding her poor
Korean skills

talk is cheap

plus she now knows
heart is enough

girl departs overseas
films empty 아파트 | stays
with best K friend | lugs
memories to bus
rides | converts 인천
back to Incheon | kind
rivers take her | home

memory, of Korea.
Korea, of memory.

old haunts

careful hands | loving
hearts | sharp eyes
of Susanna,
Jessica & Reina

publication | thanks to
Poetry Online | Eye
to the Telescope | &
Unstamatic.

this project is funded in
part by the South Carolina
Arts Commission which
receives support from
the National Endowment
for the Arts.