

Fracture

A Series of Prose Sequences written by Taeho Choi

This is an English translation of **Fracture**,
a sequence of prose pieces tracing the quiet cracks within ordinary life.

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On the day they moved into the new house, the four of them said nothing, yet each heard the faint sound of a small stone rolling loose inside their own mind.

The father sensed the weight of living in a house he had not earned.

The mother felt a quiet anxiety that the house's excessive cleanliness might expose too much of herself.

The son felt his thoughts scatter in the emptiness of his room.

The daughter felt an unspoken pressure—only by being brighter could she remain safe here.

That night, the father said, "I'm just tired," and told his first lie.

A thin crack opened in the space between those words.

Lately, the father spent a few minutes in the car before coming inside.

The silence from within the house felt as if it were pushing him away.

His wife spoke less. The children closed their doors.

He realized he had begun breathing from somewhere outside the home.

The mother woke every dawn.

The perfect stillness felt like a weight.

A single dish left on the sink, a faint water ring on the table—each appeared overwhelmingly large.

She told herself, "I'm being sensitive," yet could not release the tension.

The son found that when he stayed in his room, his thoughts echoed too loudly to focus on anything.

His journal became cryptic; he spoke less.

The family's voices reached him like distant, broken transmissions.

The daughter learned to become brighter.

The heavier the atmosphere grew, the more she believed she must smile.

But her brightness gradually hardened into a tired mask.

One afternoon, the father ran into an old classmate near his office.

Her voice was warm, and the warmth became a secret.

"It's a meeting with a client," he said more easily than he expected.

He refused to call it an affair—only a moment of borrowed breath.

The mother could no longer stop organizing.

Even when nothing needed arranging, her hands repeated the same motions.

Only when she unfolded and refolded the silk scarf hidden deep in a drawer—kept away so her husband wouldn't notice—did she feel briefly steady.

But when an unfamiliar scent brushed against her husband's collar, her fingertips trembled.

The son drifted off for a moment during English class, and the teacher grabbed his arm sharply.

The sensation stayed with him for hours.

He said nothing at home.

"It's nothing," he muttered, the words falling flat into the room.

The daughter discovered that a friend she trusted had stolen her favorite pencil case.

Even though anyone could see it was hers, the friend simply said, "I bought it."

The lie split through her like a thin, quiet blade.

She didn't mention it at home.

In this house, she felt her words would never reach the end of their path.

The father felt more comfortable outside than in.

Opening the front door stirred neither excitement nor discomfort.

The numbness was the more dangerous shift.

"This is fine," he told himself.

That sentence fixed the crack's direction.

For the mother, tidying and anxiety were no longer distinct.

The angle of a door, the ripple pattern on the table, the alignment of books—
everything brushed against her nerves.

When her son's shadow moved beneath his door, she wanted to knock but didn't.

Watching her daughter line up her colored pencils made her chest sink—she saw
herself.

Inside this perfect house, the mother was fading.

A rare dinner with all four of them at the table.

No one spoke.

Only the faint clinking of spoons circled the room.

When the meal ended, the four rose at the same moment and closed their doors.

The clicking doors were the conversation of the day.

That afternoon, the daughter wanted to talk to her mother.

But her mother's face showed no space for anyone's words.

She was organizing the cupboard again.

The daughter stepped carefully into the room.

Her fingers slipped. A white plate fell to the floor.

Clang—

A sound that seemed to stop the entire house.

The mother slowly lifted her head.

She approached the daughter and gripped her arm without speaking.

The hand was small, but the pressure was sharp.

"Why won't you listen... You're making the house a mess..."

The voice burst out from a fear even she could not hold down.

"Mom, that hurts... Stop..."

At that, the mother let go and collapsed where she stood.

Fragments lay scattered around her feet.

The daughter went to her room and shut the door.

The son heard the noise but didn't open his.

The father was looking at a photo of wine sent by someone else.

As night deepened, the four doors closed one by one.

When the father stepped inside the house later, he felt the temperature shift.

On the kitchen tiles, only a faint trace of powder remained.

The mother sat on the bed, staring at the hand she had used moments ago.

The son wrote a single line in his journal:

"The room feels like the safest place. But maybe also the most dangerous."

The daughter whispered into her blanket:

"Tomorrow I won't say anything."

The four of them remained alive,

but the house was no longer a place where a family lived.

Only four rooms remained—

and the long, deep fracture stretching between them.

End.

Draft for archival purposes.

A revised and expanded version will be prepared for publication.

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