Dear Kirsten Dika , 9/30/2020

From what I follow, Your Story “Kippumjo” Mother and Child, with the mother telling the sotry of how she met her wife in North Korea and circumstances that happened to them. As they met in class, the two bonded and one day Hyo-sonn was invited to go over to Jeup Mi-kyong’s house. The next Sunday, they and a picnic and secretly watched a Chinese TV program, after which Jeup Mi-kyong kissed Hyo-sonn. Soon they were selected to be part of the Kippumjo so both families decided to run away to China. The story then ends with the child going to sleep and we are introduced to an older Mi-kyong.

What worked well in the story’s was the characters emotions. We are walked through, guided through the MC’s feelings and thoughts throughout the story on various topics (foreigners, the country and North Korea as a whole). They were described well and was very realistic. Another thing that worked well was the stories’ format. As we are told the main story throughout a flashback, we are similar to the child, wanting to hear more and learn more and experience the same feeling she feels(similar to the previous point). It was an interesting take on switchback time that was executed perfectly. What also was present in the story was your knowledge/research of DPRK. From the names to cities to dishes and lifestyle, it felt very authentic. Perhaps this was your research transmutation (unknown as there was not a bibliography)? Finally, the tone and its unexpected shift was done really well(albeit a bit too sudden for my liking, more below).

As for what I felt was rather weak in the story, were some of the description used. One part that stood out was moon-faced. This felt rather strange to describe beauty or a face as a whole and was very difficult to imagine. I understand the need to not use clichés or trying a new description but some, especially moon-face felt very dissonant. One part of the story format that didn’t work was the end, revealing the two girls were married. Maybe because you accidently revealed with the little girl’s interjection mid-way but it made it easier to figure out the ending ( I still felt the need to continue turning the page but the ending didn’t feel as satisfying as it should have). Personally, while I see why you choose to do so, maybe do not reveal the main person in the flashback was the mother just to make it feel more suspenseful. Also, while the tone shift was done masterfully, I mention above that it was sudden. Maybe try hint more about this shift in different parts of the story, especially the happier parts. Some dialogue felt weird, wording wise which can be solved through a second pair of eyes.

Overall, this was a nice story Kirsten. It had a lot of light-hearted moments as well. It was an interesting choice of format so I really appreciated that! Nice work for your first story!

Sanad Masannat