

# CLOSET CO

## Joyce Song

Crippled, cowering, cornered.

That was the state of his heart when he found it.

Unnerved, unsure, unfriendly.

He felt these things as he walked through the broken door of the closet to sit by his heart in the comfortable dark.

He knew this heart-to-heart had to happen one of these days. Or, heart-to-no-heart? His heart wasn't where it was supposed to be, recently. Living in disconnect with it had driven him to this edge, and now here he was: in the dark of the closet with the broken door, sitting beside that pitiful thing, thinking back to the moment he first noticed its absence.

He had thought it was his heart eluding him, refusing to comply with his standard of happiness. He studied at his dream school, loved his coworkers at his part-time job, had an amazing group

of friends. And yet he was left wondering why happiness still seemed so distant.

But as he had opened the squealing door of the closet and laid eyes on the shrivelled skin of his heart, there was a swift realization that it was quite the opposite.

He had gone to school, to work; hung out with friends day after day to ignore that heart. To meet the eyes of anyone and anything but Truth who lived in it, and the horrible, horrible, things she had to say.

As he mulled over this recent revelation, he was brought back to the moment when he heard sniffing beside him. With an awkward glance, he tried to make out what his heart was feeling. It seemed terrified to be in this space with him. Or was it hurt? He couldn't read its expressions, and began to share its terror as well - when had he become a stranger to his

# CONFESIONS

own heart?

He was afraid of what had to happen to coax it out of the closet and into its proper place, in his chest. He didn't want to dig into himself and bring to the surface all those things that led him to this point. Because its roots were gnarly and went deep. Because if he brought *that* up, he'd probably have to go way back from when *that* started and talk about all those other instances *that* happened... No, no. That would be unbearable. Besides, he was a busy guy - he still had a paper to finish and a job to attend to.

Thinking about this, he began to feel something akin to panic crawl up his chest and started for the door. He recognized this as a familiar sensation - the heavy, prickly shadow that rose up in his body whenever he fancied the idea of reconciliation.

His heart let out a small gasp. It must have sensed the slight hesitation because it seized the opportunity to sputter:

*why are you so afraid of me?*

As it said these words, it began to break down and wail. Red blood rising to the surface, veins popping, beating fast, fast; it was a toddler having a tantrum. It shook him, but there it was - the truth.

He sat down again. More out of surprise than anything.

So. He was afraid of his heart. Not the other way around.

This tiny, snivelling mess with the voice of a child. It was an ugly-looking thing, really. It both embarrassed him and filled him with guilt. He wondered, if he hadn't so neglected his heart, would he be sitting next to a heart with the voice of a man? A heart that speaks in coherent sentences instead of

sobs he couldn't decipher? The same helplessness enveloped him now as when he was left alone with his baby nephew during family gatherings.

At least he was here. Sitting with it, the truth of his unhappiness. Wasn't that something? Yes, he had yet to look it in the eye fully. But he was close, sitting only inches away - he could feel out the edges of that tangled mass of emotion and unspoken words. He closed his eyes and decided then. There really was only one option if he wanted to leave

the closet with this organ. He would embrace the pain, take in this knot of dark, damp mess. This dirty, ugly thing. This that made him human. Grit his teeth through it. Savour it. Dig his nails into his palms, cry, scream, groan, laugh.

The closet was empty when he finally emerged. The slouch of his shoulders didn't suggest a clear victory, but there was a lucidity in his eyes.

He walked out hurt, haggard, human.

I bit off more  
than I can chew.

