

有一个眼睛的学生

The One-Eyed Student (Translation)

Author's Note: This essay was written to explore the concept of "the outsider". Through vivid detail and description, I try to establish the main character as an outsider without explicitly saying so. This piece was inspired by 《手》 by 萧红.

Winter was quickly approaching, and the students were all beginning to think about winter vacation. Every day was shorter and colder than the previous, and by the time the students were done with school for the day, the sun had already set. The students all wore their thickest coats and walked home together in one large huddle. Their daily lives hardly saw much change. Their days were boring, but they didn't complain; they knew they would be punished if they complained.

One day, the students were in Algebra working on their own problems when the classroom's only door suddenly opened. Even the teacher stopped what he was doing to gaze over at the open doorway. The weather that day was dark, and the classroom was quite dim, so they could only make out the shape of two figures in the doorway. One figure was tall and thick through the middle, and the other was quite small. After only a glance, everyone recognized the larger figure as the school principal, but nobody could recognize the smaller figure next to the him.

"Students, I would like you to welcome your new classmate," said the principal.

The principal continued to introduce the new student to the class, but the students weren't listening to what he was saying. The students were eying their new classmate. The principal and the new student were now standing at the front of the classroom as if they were teaching class, so the students could now clearly see their new classmate for the first time. Every student's eyes were fixed on this new student, sizing him up, quickly trying to decide what type of person he was. The new student was trembling, clearly very aware of what his classmates were doing. He wasn't thinner than his classmates, but his build was smaller and more fragile. He wore a silk shirt and a pair of cotton trousers, which was very different than the other student's uniforms. His hair was jet black, eyebrows knitted closely together, giving his face the look of always being angry. But the most striking thing about the new student was his eye patch. It was grey, but

it looked like it used to be black. The edges were very worn, as if it had been well-worn. The eyepatch made the new student look even more grim.

From then on out, the students didn't find school quite so boring. Although the students took a lot of interest in their new classmate, nobody dared talk to him. Nobody knew what country he was from, but the clothes he wore to school every day made people think he came from a much warmer climate. He didn't say much; whenever the teacher called on him to answer a question, he would say at most one sentence. His spoke heavily accented Chinese, and every time he went to speak he blushed deeply, paused, and then muttered a few words in broken Chinese.

In Geography class, the teacher asked him, "What is the most developed country in the world?"

"Uh, it's Amurika." He answered.

"America, yes." The teacher emphasized the correct pronunciation of America.

The students' were most curious about the new students' eyepatch, though. Naturally, there were rumors.

"He's from Russia. He got in trouble once, so as punishmen, his parents took out his eye!" One student yelled.

Another student stood up quickly and said, "No, no! He is from Egypt, and because it's so hot there, one day his eye was just burned away!"

After hearing these absurdities, the oldest kid in the school stood up and candidly said, "These rumors are ridiculous. I know what really happened."

Everyone rushed over and huddled around the oldest student.

In a hushed tone, he continued to explain, "He is mentally unwell, actually a bit crazy, even in his hometown he didn't have any friends. One day, he just couldn't take it anymore, and took out his own eye and ate it!"

After hearing this, all the students were struck with shock and panic, and they started to fear the new student. Nobody knew where the oldest student heard this, but nobody questioned him. The students became very afraid, to the point that if the new student walked into the classroom, the other students would all find an excuse to leave. When the new student would go to the cafeteria to buy lunch, the other students would stop their conversations and a hush would fall over the cafeteria, seemingly urging the new student to quickly leave after buying his food.

Everyone needed to be together during class, but the other students wouldn't even look at the new student, because they thought that if they didn't even recognize the new student's presence, he would leave.

One day, the new student didn't come to school. The next day, he still wasn't there. On the third day that he didn't show up, the oldest student asked the teacher,

"Excuse me, why hasn't the new student been at school?"

The teacher put down the chalk he was holding, sighed, and began to speak.

"I assumed he already told you. Your new classmate is sick, that's the reason he wears an eyepatch. He's actually very sick and had to go to the hospital last weekend. His parents have let us know that he probably won't be able to come back. Really tragic..."

None of the students knew he was sick. They were all filled with regret.