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Circles

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CIRCLES

1.

My mother has a mole above her left eye. It circles like a dark, mysterious planet yet to be discovered. When I stare at her, which I often do when she washes her face in the morning, I imagine that her mole is pulling me in like a magnet.

2.

Beauty as defined by imperfection was an appealing concept for me. According to Teen, I had many. In the fourth grade, I tried to recreate Cindy Crawford's signature mole. I stole my mother's eyeliner and sat atop the bathroom counter with a picture of Cindy taped to the mirror. She was on the cover of People's "50 Most Beautiful People in the World" and by the age of 9, I knew the world had billions and billions of people.

3.

Between the ages of 4 and 5, I only drew circles. My teachers tried to make me trace the bottoms of coffee cans and yogurt lids, but I wouldn't have it. I prided myself on my ability to draw circles in free form. Circles both empty and full, circles with the grace of a lake expanding during a flood, the clumsy trees drawn inextricably toward the center.

4.

Mao Zedong's "heavenly mole" is located in the center of his chin and follows a strict belief in the struggle against imperialism and capitalism. His mole represents determination, resilience, and the promise of growth.

5.

I got greedy. I kept circling the spot by my lip like some lost ship circling an unlit lighthouse. My fake Cindy mole grew to the size of a curled up mouse. When my mother found me, she thought a pen had exploded on my face and proceeded to remove all the pens from the house.

6.

In “Circles,” Emerson writes: “The eye is the first circle; the horizon which it forms is the second; and throughout nature this primary figure is repeated without end.” The compound eye of a fly perched on my dinner plate repeats.

7.

In 1991, Donald Rumsfeld created Whack-a-Mao, an arcade game. Whack-A-Mao featured Mao’s head popping in and out of gopher holes. When Whack-a-Mao was upgraded, the game replaced Mao’s head with his iconic mole. As if the mole had a life of its own. As if the mole could incite revolution, swim the Yangtze River, starve millions of people during the Great Leap Forward and remain just a mole.

8.

If a mole changes color, shape, or grows, you should be concerned.

9.

To be “repeated without end.” When I return home to visit for the holidays, it always snows in the middle of the night and someone always beckons their cat inside. This scene repeats again and again:

my return, the snow, the cat, the caring of the cat.

10.

In 2009, at 43, Cindy Crawford spoke out about cancer concerns related to her mole. Now protruding from her face, she makes sure to get her mole checked. She reports to the Daily Mail: “It’s not something I really like to talk about.”

11.

My grandfather has a liver spot on his chin. This is one of many, but this spot is my favorite. A long whisker juts out from it and sometimes he strokes it when he reads the newspaper in the evening. Sometimes it falls into his tea when he reaches to take a sip. The last time I saw him, he was wearing a flannel hunting cap and was curled up on his left side like a fallen deer. Above his bed at the hospital, there was a laminated sign with 15 phonetic spellings of Cantonese words in English, one of which was the word “sorry”: *deui mh jyuh*.

12.

I dreamt once that all my beauty marks, moles, and freckles gathered together to form a large, black cloud floating above the center of my chest. The black cloud shook at its edges like an egg frying. The cloud gathered everything around me –my water glass, my glasses, bee pollen, the light underneath my bedroom door. You should have paid more attention to physics in school, the cloud says to me. You have no idea how the world works.