

## Concerning My Daughter

**Kim Hye-jin**

**Jamie Chang, Translator**

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An elder care worker struggles with her daughter's choices in Kim Hye-jin's moving novel *Concerning My Daughter*.

A mother raises her child, instills good values, and models appropriate behavior: for the novel's unnamed narrator, this has always been the way. But when her daughter, Green, decided to move out, she threw it all back into her mother's face. Green became a university lecturer but kept asking for money and was always around that girl. Disappointed and in denial, her mother vowed she'd had enough.

Unable to refuse when her child asks for help, however, she offers to let Green move back in with her. When Green brings "that girl," Lane, with her, her mother is horrified. She escapes her home life to focus on work. At a facility for elderly people, she's assigned to care for a former activist with dementia. As tensions rise between the mother and daughter, so too do they rise at the facility and at Green's university. All the while, Lane is there, forcing Green's mother to confront unacknowledged truths.

The narrator is a silent force. Internally, she struggles with the way that she loves her daughter but does not understand her. In stark yet restrained prose, she circles around the fact that her daughter is gay. She refuses to let herself even think the word, much less acknowledge Lane, or Lane and Green's seven-year relationship. This deep dive into her thoughts and emotions is stifling. Parallel situations unfold that force the narrator to reckon with a culture of silence and deliberate ignorance and to recognize that neither is conducive to a caring, respectful society.

*Concerning My Daughter* is a poignant novel that pits established behaviors against potentially better ways of thinking.

DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (September / October 2022)

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