



★ **Lemon**

Kwon Yeo-sun

Janet Hong, Translator

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In Kwon Yeo-sun's novel *Lemon*, the unsolved murder of a high school student reverberates through the years.

Hae-on was killed on a summer night in 2002. But for those left behind, this was just the beginning. After the initial shock wears off, Hae-on's loved ones come to realize that even a new normal is impossible to achieve. The memory of her cold beauty and of her violent death drive her family and friends to desperate measures in search of a peace they will never find.

There was always something ethereal about Hae-on: her beauty was intimidating, her mind half in this world and half in another. Her younger sister, Da-on, was friendlier but ordinary. After her sister's death, Da-on, egged on by her mother, falls into obsession. She wears clothes that resemble the outfit Hae-on died in and even gets plastic surgery to look more like her. Later, her obsessions take more sinister form, with life-shattering consequences.

Da-on's narrative is interspersed with those of other people who knew Hae-on. Taerim, the girlfriend of a former suspect, uses Christianity to cope with traumatic events and her own dark past. Sanghui, one of Da-on's school friends, only sees her twice after the murder, each time gleaning unsettling clues about how badly Hae-on's family has coped with the loss.

Through skillful, emotional prose, the novel offers tantalizing hints about the truth without giving away all of its secrets. The real horror lies in what remains unsaid, including the real possibility that both Da-on and Taerim possess information that could bring peace to the other—and they will take that information to the grave.

Lemon is a haunting novel about women trapped in an endless cycle of trauma and grief.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (September / October 2021)

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