

次の文章を読み、あとの問いに答えよ。ただし、以下の問いでは、この小説の語り手を主人公、Lily のことはリリー、Emi のことはエミと表記する。解答でこれら人物に言及する必要がある場合も、このように解答するようにせよ。

I am in a room I do not recognize, though everything about it feels familiar — the low yellow light, the hum of conversation, the particular way the evening presses against the windows. It might be a restaurant or a hotel lobby or someone's living room stretched wide enough to hold a party. I am holding a glass of something I haven't tasted yet.

A woman is walking toward me. She moves through the crowd the way certain people do, not pushing but parting it, as though the space around her rearranges itself out of courtesy. I know her. I feel this before I see her face clearly — a knowledge that sits not in my mind but somewhere behind my ribs, in the place where old songs live.

Then she is close enough, and I see: it is Lily.

Lily, who sat next to me in a university lecture hall twenty years ago. Lily, who used to tuck her hair behind her left ear when she was thinking — always the left — and who laughed ⁽¹⁾in a way that made you feel you had said something more clever than you had. Lily, whom I had (X-1) with the desperate seriousness of twenty-one, and who had, with great kindness, let me understand that she did not (X-2) me back. There had been no cruelty in it. That was the worst part. Cruelty would have given me something to push against, a wall to blame. Instead, there was only the quiet ordinary fact that she did not feel what I felt, and I was left holding all that want with nowhere to put it down.

"(2)" she says, and her voice is exactly as I remember — low, unhurried, a voice that assumes it will be listened to.

"It has," I say, and I am surprised by how steady I sound.

What happens next surprises me more. My wife, Emi, is suddenly beside me — I cannot remember whether she has been here all along or has just arrived — and I find myself saying, with (3), "This is my wife." I watch myself place my hand on the small of Emi's back, a gesture I have made ten thousand times but which now feels rehearsed, deliberate, as though I am presenting evidence. Look, the gesture says. *Look at this life I have. Look at this woman who chose me.*

Emi smiles at Lily. Lily smiles at Emi. They exchange the pleasant, meaningless words that people exchange at parties, and I stand between them feeling peculiarly proud, the way a child holds up a drawing for approval — not from the person looking at it but from himself.

And it is this feeling, this strange and embarrassing pride, that makes me pause. Because ⁽⁴⁾why would I need to prove anything to Lily? Why would I need her, of all

people, to see that my life has turned out well? Something is wrong with the logic of this scene. The light is too even. The crowd has no edges. I look down at the glass in my hand and realize I still haven't tasted what's inside it, and that I never will, because none of this is real.

I wake in the dark of our bedroom. Emi is asleep beside me, her breathing slow and deep, one hand resting on the pillow near her face the way it always does. The digital clock on the nightstand reads 3:47. Outside, a truck passes on the road below, its engine fading into the particular silence of very early morning — not the absence of sound but a kind of hush, as though the world is being careful not to disturb itself.

I lie still. The dream clings to me like the smell of someone else's cigarette smoke on a coat. I feel — what? Not guilt, exactly, but something adjacent to it, a low unease. I think about Emi, who is right here, close enough to touch. Emi, who brings me coffee without being asked on mornings when I look tired. Emi, who once drove three hours in the rain to collect me from a work trip when my car broke down— that was the winter after we got married, and even seven years on she still laughs when I bring it up — and who, when I apologized for the trouble, looked at me as if I had said something very strange. I (X-3) this woman. There is nothing missing.

And yet the dream has revealed something I would rather not have seen: that somewhere inside me, after all these years, there is still a version of myself standing in front of Lily with his heart in his hands, waiting for ⁽⁵⁾a verdict that was delivered long ago. Not because I want Lily — I do not, I am certain of this — but because the rejection never quite finished its work. It lodged itself somewhere, a splinter too small to see but large enough to feel when pressed.

But what was I really doing in the dream? I was not trying to win Lily back. I was trying to show her — no, show myself — that the loss had not been a loss at all. That the path which began with her quiet refusal had led me, through years I could not have predicted, to Emi. ⁽⁶⁾That the door she closed had opened another.

And here is the thing I almost miss, lying in the dark at 3:47 in the morning: I do not need to convince myself of this. It is not an argument I must win. It is simply the truth. If Lily had (X-4) me back, I would have become a different man living a different life, and Emi would be someone else's wife, making someone else coffee on tired mornings, and the particular happiness I have — this specific, irreplaceable happiness — would not exist.

I have been carrying a wound that is not a wound. It is a door, and I walked through it long ago. I simply forgot to stop looking back.

Emi shifts in her sleep, murmurs something I cannot hear, and settles again. I reach

over and adjust the blanket where it has slipped off her shoulder. The gesture is small and automatic, and it is everything. I close my eyes. (7) This time, I do not dream.

(1) 下線部(1)をわかりやすく和訳せよ。

(2) 空所(2)を埋めるのに、最も適切な表現を次のうちから選び、その記号を記せ。

- ア How's it going?
- イ I didn't expect to come across you,
- ウ It's been so long,
- エ It's nice to see you,

(3) 空所(3)を埋めるのに、最も適切な表現を次のうちから選び、その記号を記せ。

- ア a brightness that borders on performance
- イ a hint of anxiety with a slight unease
- ウ a slightly awkward but serious look
- エ unconcealed joy and excitement

(4) 下線部(4)について、その理由を主人公自身は、何だと考えているか。50 字程度の日本語で説明せよ。

(5) 下線部(5)の具体的な内容として、最も適当なものを次のうちから選び、その記号を記せ。

- ア リリーは主人公の気持ちにこたえられない。
- イ リリーは主人公に好意を持っている。
- ウ リリーは主人公への思慕の念を見せることができない。
- エ リリーは主人公を友人としてしかみることができない。

(6) 下線部(6)は、どういうことか。35 字程度の日本語で説明せよ。

(7) 下線部(7)からは、主人公のどんな心情の変化が読み取れるか。最も適当なものを次のうちから選び、その記号を記せ。

ア かつての恋が実らなかったことを、ようやく受け入れることができた。

イ 妻への愛こそが本物であり、過去の恋は錯覚だったと気がついた。

ウ 今の幸福は自分に言い聞かせるまでもない事実だと悟った。

エ 過去を振り返ることは無意味であり、今後一切やめようと決意した。

(8) 空所(X-1)~(X-4)には同じ動詞が、それぞれ適当に活用された形で入る。その動詞を原形で答えよ。

(9) 本文の記述から、主人公がエミと結婚したのは何歳くらいだと考えられるか。最も適当なものを次のうちから一つ選び、その記号を記せ。

ア 25 歳

イ 28 歳

ウ 31 歳

エ 34 歳