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## *I am a Child of the Sun* by Fukushi Kōjirō

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Joshua Solomon  
I Am a Child of the Sun

Fukushi Kōjirō  
自分は太陽の子である

I am a child of the Sun,  
a child of the Sun who has not yet begun to burn.

Now a little spark has caught  
and soon I will start to smolder.

Ah, and the smoke turns into a flame!  
I am caught up in this brilliant daydream and cannot escape.

The dream is a field of bright white light,  
it is the center of a city brimming with light,  
it is a mountain range where pure white snow sheepishly glows at the peaks.

I am pursued by this daydream:  
now I smolder stronger and stronger,  
belching more and more thick, black, choking smoke.

O, dear world of light!  
O, skies of light!

O, dear men of light!  
O, you who open your whole bodies up to the world!  
O, you whose whole bodies are as if carved in ivory!  
O, you who are so clever and healthy and strong!

I raised my first infant cry from a place damp, watery, and dark, but  
I am a child of the Sun,  
a child of the Sun forever yearning to burn.

Fukushi Kōjirō (1889–1946) was a pioneer of free verse in Japan, publishing his first collection, *Child of the Sun* (*taiyō no ko*), in 1914 and his second, *Prospects* (*tenbō*), in 1920. His poetry employs modern spoken-style language rather than rarified classical written Japanese, and was unrestricted by the metrical limitations of the popular contemporary *shintaiishi* form. “I Am a Child of the Sun” (“*jibun ha taiyō no ko dearu*”) is one of Fukushi’s most well-known works of poetry and is representative of the best of his free-verse experimentations. It was published in *Child of the Sun* along with several pieces exploring similar themes, including “Sun Worship” (“*taiyō sūhai*”) and “Children of the Sun” (“*hi no ko*”).

“I Am a Child of the Sun” has appeared in a number of slight variations. In one instance, the word *jibun* (“self”) is changed to *watashi* (“I”) (*Fukushi Kōjirō chosakushū*). Difficult kanji were also replaced with simpler characters when it was published in middle school textbooks in 1947 as part of Japan’s expanding compulsory education initiative. However, none of these changes significantly alters the poem’s reading.

There were a few considerations concerning diction in the translation. Fukushi employs the *dearu* copula and vocative final particle *yo*, both of which lend a bit of formality to the entire piece, inviting a slightly scriptural tone to accompany the deific personification of the sun. Fukushi also uses the interjection “cry/sigh” *aa* three times in this short poem to emphasize the depth of the speaker’s emotion. The repetition is aesthetically effective in Japanese, but a static repetition of “ah” or “oh” in translation is unsatisfying and difficult to combine with the translation of the more prominent function of *yo* in the latter two instances. I tried to express the sunny feeling of *aa* in conjunction with the hailing *yo* through the addition of the word “dear” in “O, dear world of light!” and “O, dear men of light!” My boldest interpretation is of the line that literally reads, “O, you whose entire bodies are like eyes” (*sōshin me no gotoki hito yo*) as “O, you who open your whole bodies up to the world!” The speaker is describing a human figure whose beauty and strength are derived from a fundamental integration with the universe; the eye-like body is not merely perceptive, but receptive. The more interpretive reading seemed to better capture the nuanced meaning of “eye” in the original.