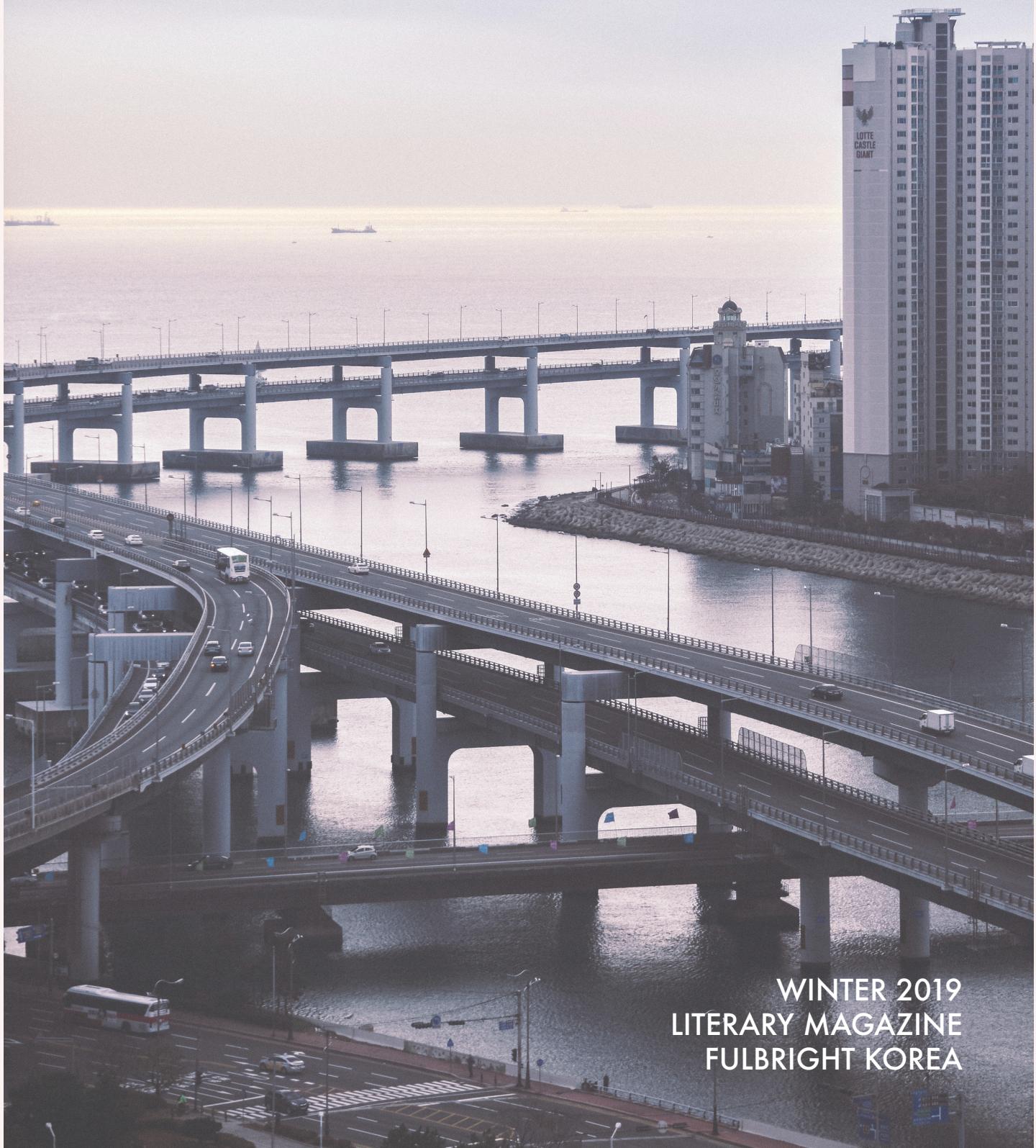


INFUSION

VOLUME TWELVE ISSUE ONE



WINTER 2019
LITERARY MAGAZINE
FULBRIGHT KOREA

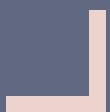
Staff

Publication Advisor Jai Ok Shim

Editor-in-Chief Lauren Lin // **Managing Editor** Isabella Rodriguez // **Design Editor** Louise Zhou // **Art Director** Amanda Grant // **Monitors** Carlee Wright, Samira Khan, and Anna Liu // **Copy Editors** Alex Suryapranata // **Web Editor** Daniel Li // **Coordinator** Melissa Kukowski // **Staff Writers** Emily Summers, Justin Abbott, Kyle Wardwell, and Daniel Li // **Photographers** Nicole Simineri, Paige Whitney, Zoya Yamamuro, Emma Daugherty, Genesis

Publication Coordinator Heidi Little

Managing Editors Becca Weng, Sam
Yu // **Assistant Design Editor**
Courtney Wright, La Toya Crittenden // **Photo**
Editor Max Kapur // **Social Media**
Copy Editors Aki Camargo, Audrey
Bell, Madeline Shaw, Mailé Nguyễn,
Hsiao // **Open Window Team** Anna
Santos Trigueros, Suzanne Chen



Contents

02

Letters – Director Jai Ok Shim,
Minister-Counselor Mitchell Moss

06

Letter from the Editor – Lauren Lin

09

Erudite – Pel Doski

10

Unseen Spirits – Carlee Wright

17

He Can Speak – Isabel Moua



31

An Ode to the Yeonnam School Bus

- Jess McKay

34

Open Window

46

Speak - Nathan Sieminski

54

A Strange 경험 on the Bus Home

- Kyle Wardwell

66

Credits

From the Executive Director

Dear Readers,

It is an honor to once again present to you the latest edition of Fulbright Korea's *Infusion* literary magazine. As in publications past, the stories, photos, and artwork presented in Volume 12, Issue 1 paint a picture of the Korean peninsula as experienced through the eyes, hearts, and minds of the many accomplished Fulbright grantees and alumni who make up the Fulbright Korea community. It is with pride and gratitude that I consider the over 5,000 active grantees and alumni that have grown to create this community over the course of Fulbright Korea's nearly 70-year history. Flipping through the pages of *Infusion*, I am reminded of countless stories from across the years as I see reflected on each page both the newness of today and the accumulated experience of the past.

Since the publication of its first volume in 2008, *Infusion* has served as a space of sharing and reflection on the Fulbright experience in Korea and the countless, diverse ways in which this experience has been felt. Although each grantee's Fulbright experience is unique, underlying these varied experiences is a common commitment: a commitment to promoting international cooperation, mutual understanding, and compassion through academic and cultural exchange. These values, so vital to the Fulbright program since its inception, have been manifested through the efforts and contributions of so many Fulbright grantees worldwide. As you enjoy reading through this issue of *Infusion*, I invite you to take a moment to ponder not only the visual and written work presented within, but also the greater goals, challenges, and accomplishments these pieces represent.

With that in mind, I would like to conclude by expressing my heartfelt thanks to the authors, artists, and photographers whose talented work is highlighted in the current issue as well as to the *Infusion* staff who strove diligently and enthusiastically to create yet another successful edition. From the culmination of their efforts, I hope you will find both enjoyment and fresh insight as you are cordially welcomed into their lives through this issue of *Infusion*.

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shim Jai Ok".

Jai Ok Shim
Executive Director
Korean-American Educational Commission





From the Embassy

Welcome to the first issue of the 12th volume of *Infusion*. We continue to see extraordinary developments taking place in and around Korea. As Ambassador Harris says, “there isn’t a more dynamic place to serve as U.S. Ambassador, and no better partner for the United States, than the Republic of Korea.” Our relationship is grounded in deeply shared values and interests, which allows us to cooperate on a range of issues from security to economics to science and so much more.

People-to-people ties, particularly Fulbright exchanges administered through the Korean-American Educational Commission, form the foundation for all of this cooperation, and by extension this amazing relationship.

I would like to extend my congratulations to all those who have contributed to this edition of *Infusion*. Your writing reflects your experiences, and points the way forward for the long relationship between the peoples of the United States and Korea.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Moss".

Mitchell Moss
Minister-Counselor for Public Affairs, Embassy of the United States of America & Chair of the KAEC



Mitchell Moss leads the Public Diplomacy section in Embassy Seoul in planning and executing its strategic communications and outreach efforts.

Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

Six months have passed since the latest group of grantees arrived in Korea. Regardless of if it was our first time in Korea or if Korea was like a second home, we knew there would be challenges; we would need to learn a lot. We could not have predicted, however, just how much we would learn about our own identity and that of those in this country. Situated in a foreign environment, we are challenged to view ourselves through a new lens. How fitting it is then that this issue of *Infusion* is filled with works that reflect our changing perspectives and what we may learn from them.

Pel Doski begins our issue with a poem aptly titled “Erudite,” embracing the new knowledge we may gain through this issue and our own time in Korea. We then learn how a new tradition can positively influence our understanding of grief through Carlee Wright’s “Unseen Spirits.” Isabel Moua teaches us about acceptance in an unexpected situation, as her host brother proves to us the universality of love and

wonder. We continue with wonderment in a different sense as Jess McKay takes us into the mind of a school bus as it shares the pride it has for its job. We then feature the art, poetry, and prose of Korean students as they share their view of Korea in works brought to us by our Open Window team. Nathan Sieminski follows with a piece about overcoming the forced silence imposed by language barriers in order to create new connections. Lastly, Kyle Wardwell concludes this issue by writing of a bizarre 경험 (kyeongheom)—an experience of thought and intrigue that sparks mid-transit.

Before I end, some thanks are in order. Thank you to the KAEC Executive Director Jai Ok Shim and Executive Assistant Heidi Little for their endless support and guidance. This issue would also not have been possible without the 22 amazing individuals that comprise the *Infusion* staff. Their constant efforts have created an issue of which to be immensely proud. I must also thank our contributors—thank you for sharing your story with us and letting us learn from you. Lastly, I thank you. Whoever you may be, I hope this issue offers you a new outlook as it has for the staff and our authors.

Please enjoy *Infusion*, Volume 12, Issue 1.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lauren Lin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lauren" on top and the last name "Lin" below it, both sharing a common vertical stroke.

Lauren Lin
Editor-in-Chief



Victoria Harbor from the Peak, Melissa Kukowski, Hong Kong

Erudite

I am the constant drip of ink
into a
dim pool
of ideas.

Pour me over the landscape sweetly.

Let me soak in the sundry warren.

Formlessly,

Gently,

Slowly

I dip into valleys and climb hills.

Each crevice gives me passing gems
which I swallow and ponder for years.

Watch me as I grow wise and tall,

as I let caution evaporate

like the sweet memory of fear.

Resolve courses through malleable
veins. The ones that bled in despair.

Between mountains my journey
begins. Under trees I sprout.

PEL DOSKI

First-year ETA in Docheon, Changnyeong

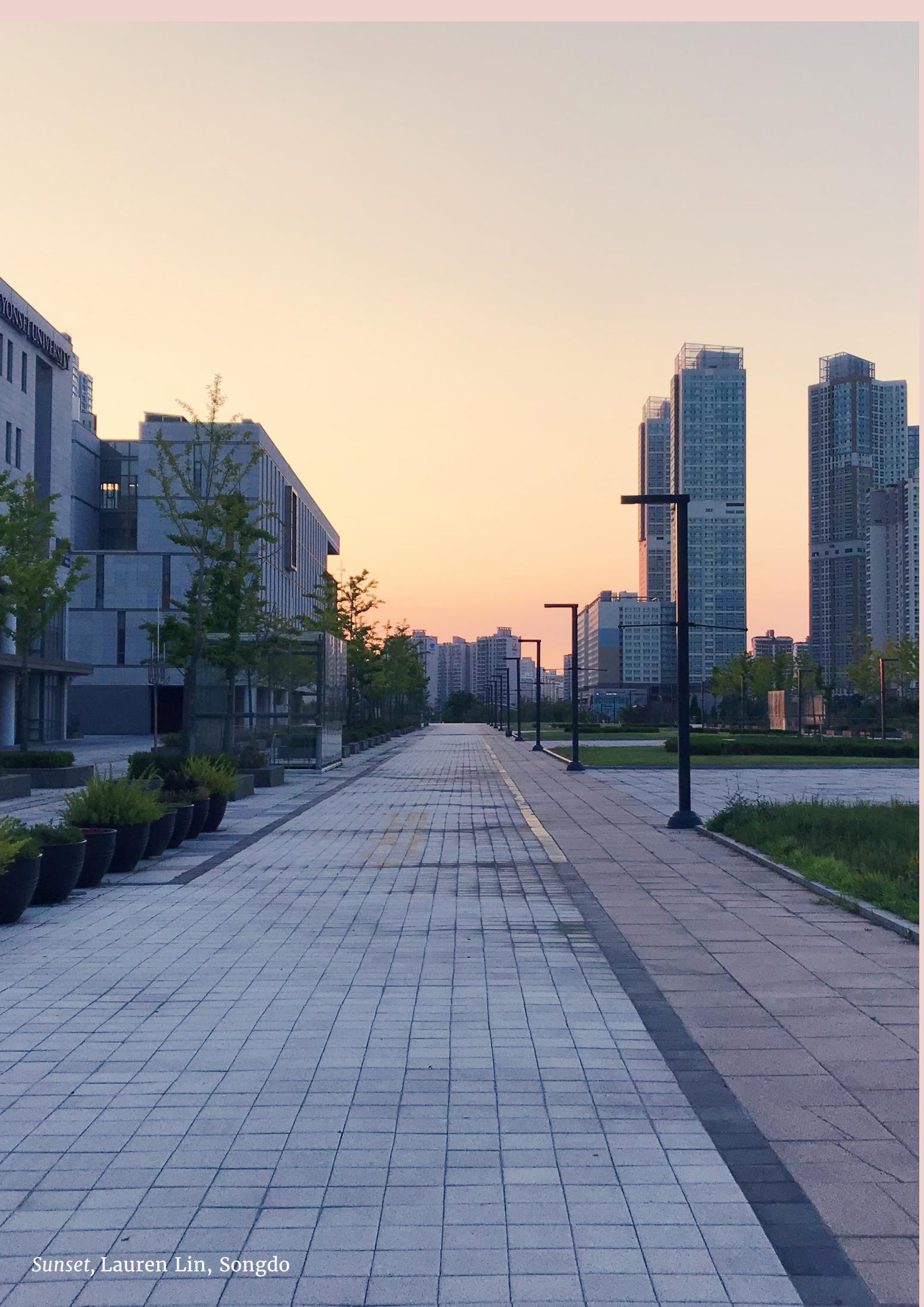
Unseen Spirits

CARLEE WRIGHT

Dark rain clouds covered the sky as my host sister and I walked out of school—oddly symbolic of the evening that lay ahead. It was the anniversary of my host mother’s father’s passing, and we were traveling to Ulsan to visit the family and participate in a traditional Korean ritual—제사, *jesa*. I turned and told her with honesty that tonight would be a sad evening; I wanted her to know that I not only understood, but was also aware of the feelings that would surround the family

that night. She turned to me, overtly unsure, and responded, “Sad?” I explained, “Yes, sad. Not happy, but sad.” I deliberately chose my words and simplified my explanations for easy understanding. Her head tilted to the side and her eyes rolled upward. “Why would it be sad?” she asked, puzzled. I clarified my words once again, stating, “Because your mom’s dad passed away today. He died.”

What she said next confused me. “But...my grandpa is coming tonight.” Huh? I must



Sunset, Lauren Lin, Songdo

not have heard correctly. Or was it a different grandpa that was coming? For the sake of clarity, I asked my host sister again what exactly she meant. With a stronger tone of voice than before, she looked at me and repeated confidently, “My grandpa’s ghost will come tonight and visit the family. He will be there.”

Before arriving to the host uncle’s house later that night, my Western upbringing and personal biases regarding death slightly fogged my vision of the ceremony. I always believed that when a loved one died, they were gone forever. There was suddenly no way to communicate or hear from them again, which is precisely what made death so depressing. During *제사*, however, most Korean families believe that a deceased loved one’s spirit will come visit for the evening after a short ceremony honoring them, and they can meet again.

When I walked into their home and exchanged greetings—*인사*, *insa*—with the family, some food was already prepared for the grandmother and the men. Even though I insisted on helping the other women prepare the remaining food for the ritual, I was continuously told to begin eating the first meal of the night: raw fish wrapped in lettuce and topped with red pepper paste—*고추장*, *gochujang*. Though I wished to help, I also did not want to overstep any cultural boundaries surrounding the ceremony. Once we finished what seemed like a full-course meal but was merely an appetizer, everyone began to set up the furniture arrangements for the proper ceremony.

My host family carefully unloaded a long wooden table with short legs, candle sticks with long, white, half-melted beams of wax jutting out of them, incense,

“He will be there.”

wooden bowls, and elevated plates from plastic containers. These items later became the temporary resting place for sacrificial food and incense. I observed as the women in my family meticulously positioned fruits with the tops sliced off, which was done to make it easier for the grandfather’s spirit to consume the plethora of pears, grapes, apples, mandarins, and persimmons on the table. A whole octopus found its home in the left corner of the table and a myriad of fried fish and vegetables were situated next to it. Two bowls of rice were added, one with a set of chopsticks sticking straight up and the other with a spoon plunged right in the middle. My host mother thoughtfully poured Korean traditional rice wine and soju into wooden wine glasses. She made sure we purchased some at the convenience store before coming, as her father frequently enjoyed the drink. Lastly, a thin, cream-colored,

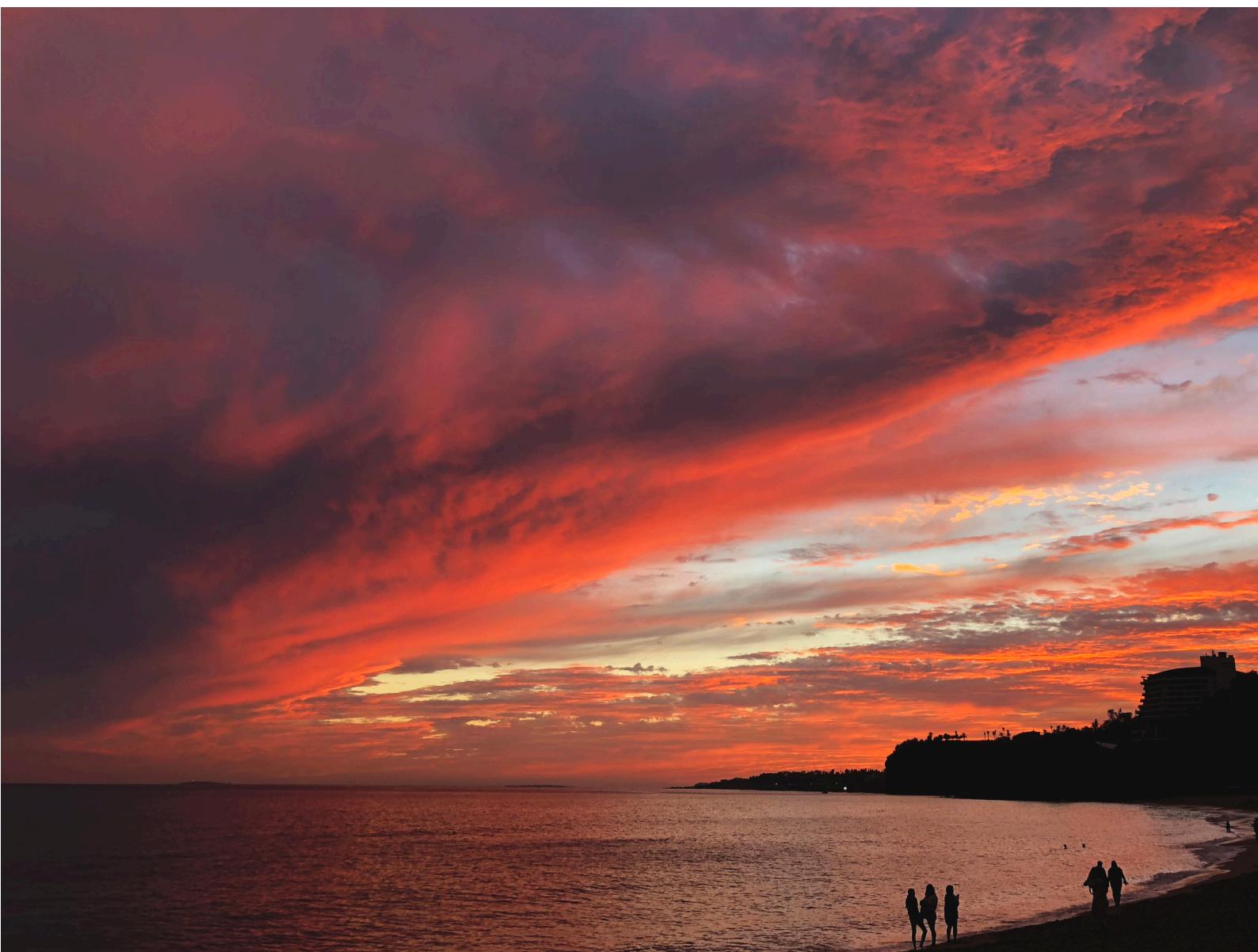
traditional Korean curtain embellished with calligraphy I could not understand served as the backdrop.

After the men lit the incense and rearranged the food to their satisfaction, we all chatted around the table and watched the clock. At exactly ten o'clock, the ritual began. I observed from a distance as each member of the family clasped their hands together as if they were praying, bowed to the ground, and then released their hands and placed them on the floor parallel to their heads. They repeated this process two more times.

I could not help but tear up as I watched the events take place. My own grandfather

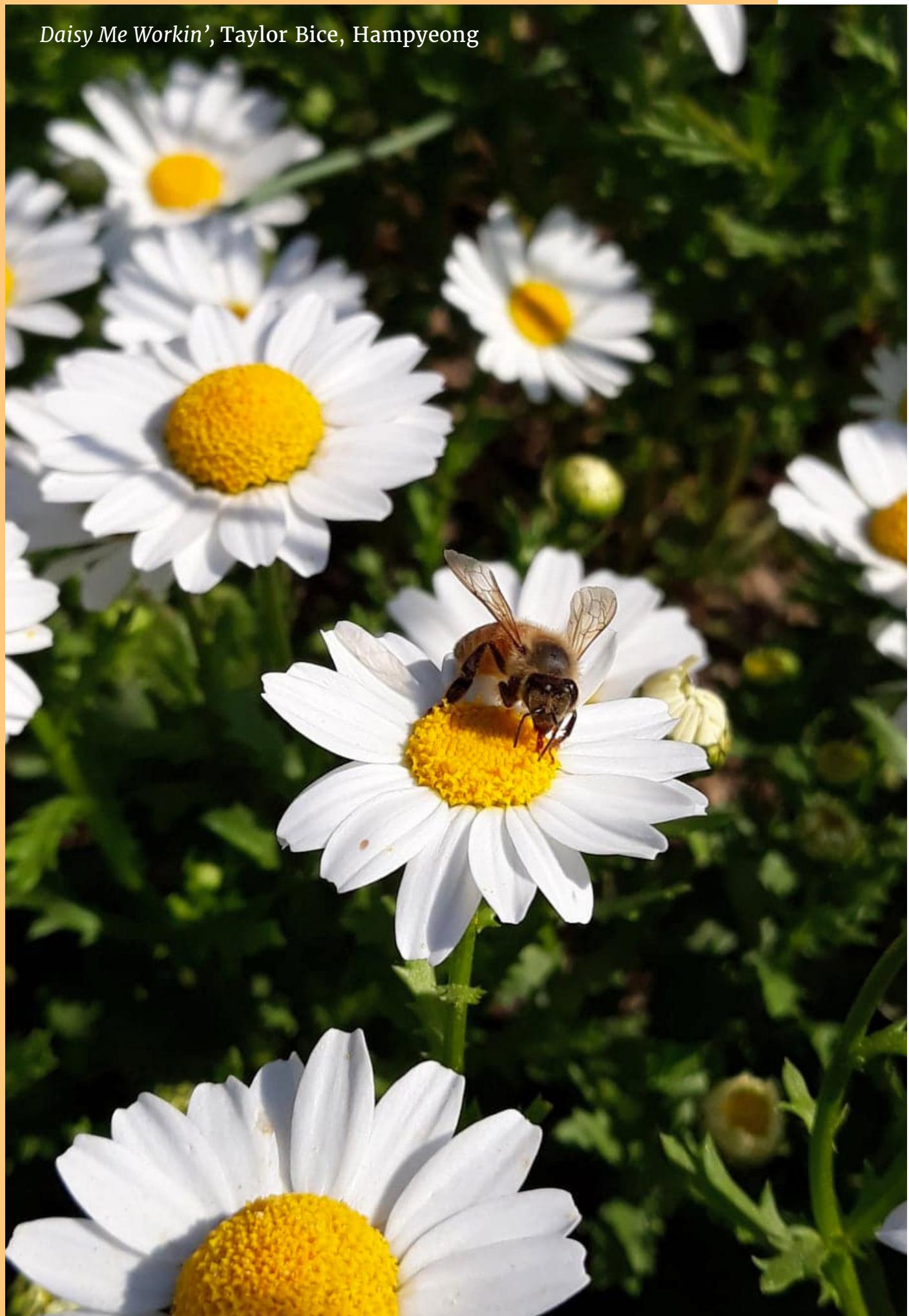
passed away last year, and the pain is still fresh. Yet I quickly realized I was the only person tearing up in the room, and when my host family noticed they simply giggled and called me over to join. Like them, I bowed three times and then joined in on pouring rice wine from one wooden wine glass to the other. Even though I was sad thinking about my own grandfather, I was inspired by the smiles and positivity surrounding me. I felt a sudden comfort regarding his death. Everyone truly believed they were in the presence of a beloved relative; in that moment I was convinced I was too.

Carlee Wright is a first-year ETA in Gyeongju.



Settling Down, Amanda Grant, Seogwipo

Daisy Me Workin', Taylor Bice, Hampyeong



He Can Speak

ISABEL MOUA

My co-teacher called for my attention sooner than I anticipated. She told me that we would be going to my homestay first. No one had told me anything about my homestay family. The only information I received had been on a thin, white strip of paper: the family's address, family member titles, ages, and my school name. As we exited the highway I inched forward in my chair and asked, "What are they like? My homestay family." I eagerly nodded along as my co-teacher told me what she knew and was still listening closely when she brought up what must have been the most important information.

"Your host mother wanted me to tell you that your host brother is disabled and hopes that you won't be scared. I hope that's okay," she intoned. I replied with a quick, "Of course that's fine." She seemed relieved and said, "That's great." I didn't

know quite what to make of her reaction. Was she relieved because she thought my host brother having a disability would make me reject the host family? Was she worried because she thought a disability would affect my experience with them? She had worked with enough foreign teachers to know that host families had to devote time and resources to their hostee. Maybe she worried that I wouldn't be taken on trips like other hostees. Or that I would be neglected if it turned out that my host brother needed a lot of care.

My mind continued to race through possibilities and eventually started filtering through the information I knew about Korean society from my studies and my time as an exchange student in the country a couple of years prior. She was worried. Maybe it was because of

her expectations of a host family. But then, I remembered the way that people with disabilities are viewed in Korean society. As a general rule, disabilities and those who have them still aren't quite understood by the general public.

Despite the handicapped parking spaces, sidewalk bumps for the visually impaired, and wheelchair ramps at public buildings, I had hardly seen people with disabilities outside. I remembered reading articles about the sit-in activists had started in 2012. They fought for the rights of people with disabilities, while the parents petitioned local government for help. They were subsequently shut down by others in the community. They and their family members could feel shame and embarrassment from a simple walk around the neighborhood. I knew that

“Your host mother wanted me to tell you that your host brother is disabled and hopes you won’t be scared. I hope that’s okay.”

in a homogenous society like Korea's those who stand out for any reason aren't necessarily welcome in mainstream society. My mind raced for an explanation of her reaction only to come up empty. Her reaction had a more nuanced explanation than I could glean from my single interaction with her in the car.

As I settled back in my seat, I filed the information about my host brother away in my head. It wasn't a red flag and rather I looked at it as another thing to keep in mind as I adjusted to their lifestyle. But, for a brief second, I wondered, *just who was this boy?*

They were almost all there to greet me when I arrived: mom, daughter, and him, the son. My host father was at work. Hiding away in the back of the group was their cousin. She was slight and skinny. Her glasses seemed to take up most of her face and she greeted me in English. My co-teacher was surprised to see her. She also seemed relieved, again. It seemed like she was also meeting the family for the first time face-to-face. My co-teacher introduced the teen to me as one of our students, a third-year at my new middle school. Facing each other in the kitchen, we struck up a conversation. She was good at English and played translator



for me and my host mom.

She asked me, “What language do you want to speak with them?”

I thought that curious since she was doing the translating and replied, “What language are they comfortable with?”

She said with a deadpan expression, “They’re most comfortable with Korean.”

I felt embarrassed and said, “Ah, of course. They are Korean.”

She said, “Yeah.”

I didn’t feel my six-week Korean course had prepared me for daily Korean usage and so with nervous undertones, I said, “Okay, so Korean it is.”

“Okay. I have to go now. I have *hagwon*, private academy lessons,” she declared.



Halmeoni's Favorite Fruit Stand, Zoya Hsiao, Gimhae

I followed her out of the kitchen and hurriedly asked, “Wait! What about your cousin? Can you ask her if I should be more careful around him or do something special...?”

She talked to my host mom and translated, “She said that he won’t bother you and that he’ll be fine. You don’t have to do anything. I have to go now. She said you can

unpack. Bye.”

As I went into my room, I looked at the tells of a person with a disability around the house. The physical therapy ramp that ran the length of the living room veranda. The walker that stood in the corner of the kitchen waiting for Ha Neul to use. The standing equipment with straps to harness him in. And lastly, the plastic braces that could

only have been Ha Neul's shoes.

I wasn't entirely convinced by my host mother and cousin's words. I was sure that whatever relationship we developed, my host brother and I wouldn't have a "normal" relationship.

My host mom called from the kitchen, "Isabel, it's time to eat!" I stopped unpacking and made my way to the kitchen. My host brother was already there, seated in his wheeled chair with a tray. He wasn't making any noise but his eyes carried undeniable curiosity. My host mother noticed and said, "Ha Neul, this is *Noona*. Your new older sister. Say it with me, *Noona*." He looked at her, repeated the word, and then continued staring at me. I didn't know how to react so I tentatively smiled at him and quietly ate my dinner.

The next morning I went into the living room where everyone was getting ready

for breakfast. My host brother sat in his chair playing with toys but stopped to look at me when I entered the room. "*Imo!*" he cried. "No," my host mother chided, "*Noona*. Big sister. Not Aunt." I smiled. Regardless of the name, today he acknowledged me without his mother's help. Maybe we will have a relationship.

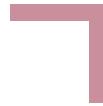
The first time he knocked on my door and opened it, I could hear my host parents call out for him to come back. I was doing work at my desk and looked over at him. He looked back at me with eyes that winked mischievously and from his crawling position on the floor, closed the door. I was surprised; he had never come to me or my room by himself.

Hearing his parents call

“Maybe we will have a relationship.”

out for him again, I waited for him to listen to them. Instead, he ignored them and came closer to my desk. Using the table as leverage, he hoisted himself up to a standing position and waved his hand at my phone. Getting up, I opened the door and told him in Korean, “Come on, let’s go back. You have to go.” He followed me to the door. But, instead of going back, he tried to push me back inside and close the door again.

Torn between confusion and amusement, I picked him up off the floor and straightened out his tall, wiry body. He was unsteady on his feet so I tried to compensate for it with my own center of balance. We walked together for a few steps and then he suddenly got excited. He stopped, let go of my hands, and started clapping. I quickly grabbed onto his hips, but I was too late. He lost his balance and started falling. All my arms could do was help



him to do anything other than simple commands like “eat” or “stop.” I waited, curious to see what would happen. When she heard him rummaging around, she shouted out one more descriptor. In my limited language capacity, I didn’t understand what she said, but he did. And to my surprise, he confidently returned with her phone, pushing it across the table towards his sister.

Looking back at my friends I said, “Yeah, he can actually understand quite a lot.”

In the winter, my aunt and uncle came to visit. We walked to the apartment together, and I explained my host brother’s condition to them. Unlike the people who had heard of my host brother up to this point, my aunt and uncle just accepted all of the information I told them. They didn’t ask me many questions. Their reactions, or lack thereof, put me at ease because I knew they wouldn’t do anything that would make my host family feel uncomfortable. We briefly met my host family, and at that initial meeting, my host brother was fairly quiet. We then left the house, with my host sister



“I watched in blatant wonder as he got down on his hands and knees and crawled to his sister’s room down the hallway.”

nder
nds
e
ne



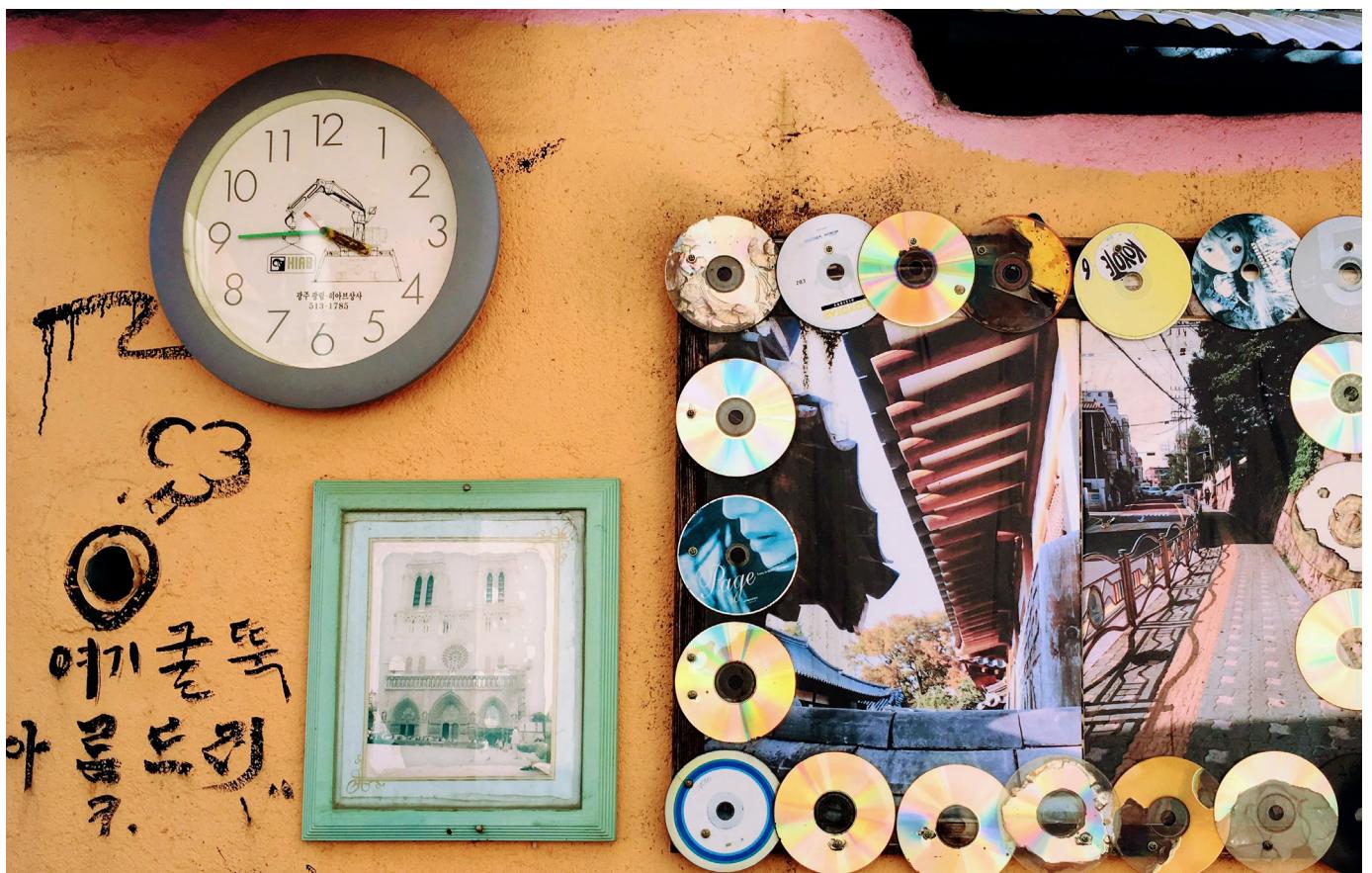
in tow, to explore my host city—Cheongju.

When we got back, dinner was nearly ready and my host mom said to my aunt and uncle, “Make yourself at home.” My host brother was seated in his wheeled chair again. My host mom had put blocks on the tray to occupy him while she cooked. I rolled him around to face my aunt and uncle better as I went to help my host mom in the kitchen. My aunt called out, “Does he talk at all?” They hadn’t heard him say anything yet. As I stopped what I was doing to tell them that he does, my uncle waved at him and enthusiastically said, in English, “Hi!”

My host brother stopped playing with his toys and turned his attention to my uncle. I spoke mainly Korean at home, and I

don't think I had ever greeted him in English. Ha Neul also had a set schedule, with few deviations, so he hardly ever interacted with or met strangers. I looked at the trio of people in the living room, curious as to what reaction my host brother would give this strange man in his home.

Isabel Moua is a second-year ETA in Cheonju.



Top: Living on Train Street, Sarah Coldiron, Vietnam
Bottom: Art on Wall, Eunice Yu, Gwangju



School Buses, Sarah Coldiron, Mokpo

An Ode to the Yeonnam School Bus

Each morning, Its wheels trace a map of the city
Only taking breaks when It sees small feet
through the corners of Its eyes.

Hana, Dul, Set¹, It counts in Its head, as It takes a big breath,
welcoming the footsteps aboard.

Some of the footsteps follow bodies,
Some bodies follow footsteps.

It hums to match the parade of pitter patter.
Together, they create a morning hymn,
until they reach the school.

On Its way, It passes
a coffee shop that is still waking up,
a city bus that is running late,
and a crosswalk with a crooked spine.

It does not have time to *insa²* to each one,
So It takes a mental note for tomorrow.

¹ One, two, three

² Say hello

On the outskirts of the city,
It arrives just in time.
It takes a deep breath and
releases the pitter patter from the inside.

Once the tiny toes hop
into some slippers,
The hymn is replaced with stillness,
a void of sound.

Sometimes It grows jealous of the library.
The thought of snooze buttons, solace, and continuous silence
inch It closer to turning in a two weeks' notice.

How serene it must be, It thinks.

But, then It remembers,
The laughs and chatter.

How the morning hymn would sound slightly off
without that pitter patter.

JESS MCKAY
First-year ETA in Sejong



Menu, Anna Yamamuro, Bukchon



OPEN WINDOW

Open Window is a creative publication showcasing the English and artistic work of Korean students. For more information on how to submit student work, please visit the *Infusion* website or contact the team at: fulbright.openwindow@gmail.com.

Memories of Food

What is the Food of your Love?

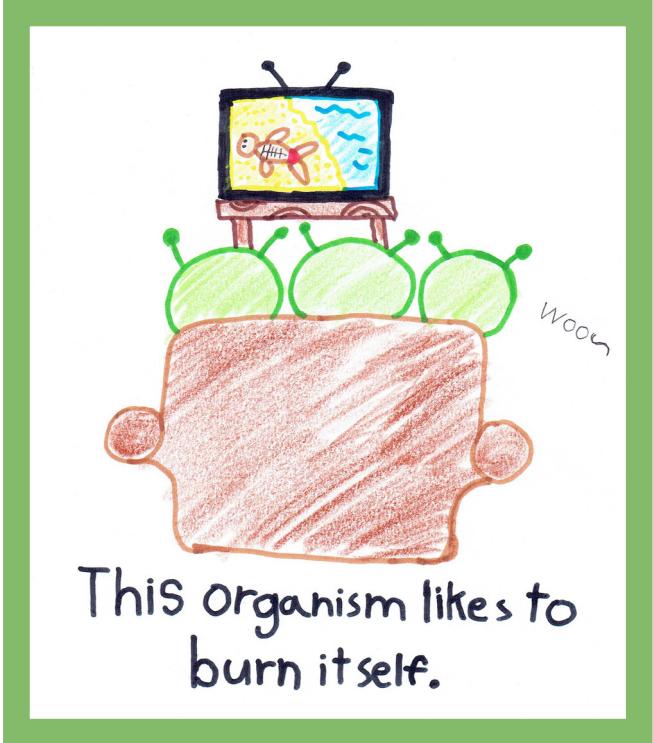
I want to talk about all of my mom's food as the food on my mind. My mom's food is very special. Usually, many people don't put corn or mushrooms on tteok-bokki, but she does. My mom often puts unexpected ingredients in many foods. And when she makes pumpkin porridge, she does not peel the pumpkin, she makes a Hulk-like liquid. Sometimes, seemingly awful food is made, but I like her food. That's because a mother's love and affection is felt from such food. I think food is love, not taste. What is the food of your love?

*By Kim Gahyeon
Iksan*

A Rice-Thief

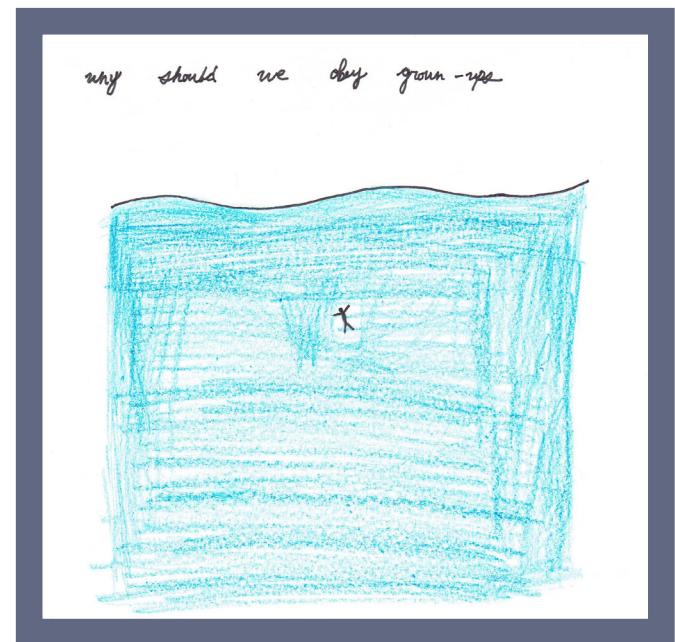
In my memory is the baek-suk made by my mother. The reason is that I crave the taste of the dish I had on one particular day. Since then, her recipes have changed. The day I ate the dish was very cold. It snowed on the way home from school to eat dinner after studying. I was freezing, but when I ate the warm soup of baek-suk, I felt like I was melting. The chicken was also very soft. In the end, I ate two bowls of rice. Even now, when it's cold, I think of baek-suk. I think the dish is a rice-thief.

*By Joo Jenna
Iksan*



WOO JIHUN
Busan

This organism likes to burn itself.



OH SU-MIN
Busan



PARK JOON
Busan

Maple Makes Money

By Alex Cheong
Gwangyang

The maples are fluttering.
one maple
two maples
five maples
ten maples

The number varies.

People are flapping.
one person
two people
five people
ten people
Did the number decide them?
Did they decide the number?

We are coasting.
thin but thick
tame to the taste of the leaves
We become the fox of a star.



Blossom by Go Gyeol, Gwangyang

From the author:

I am happy to reproduce the literary character of Korea through this poem. This piece represents money and the Fox from *The Little Prince*. I could write this poem because I wrote down the words I had thought about. Don't be afraid to try, start! Well begun is half done.

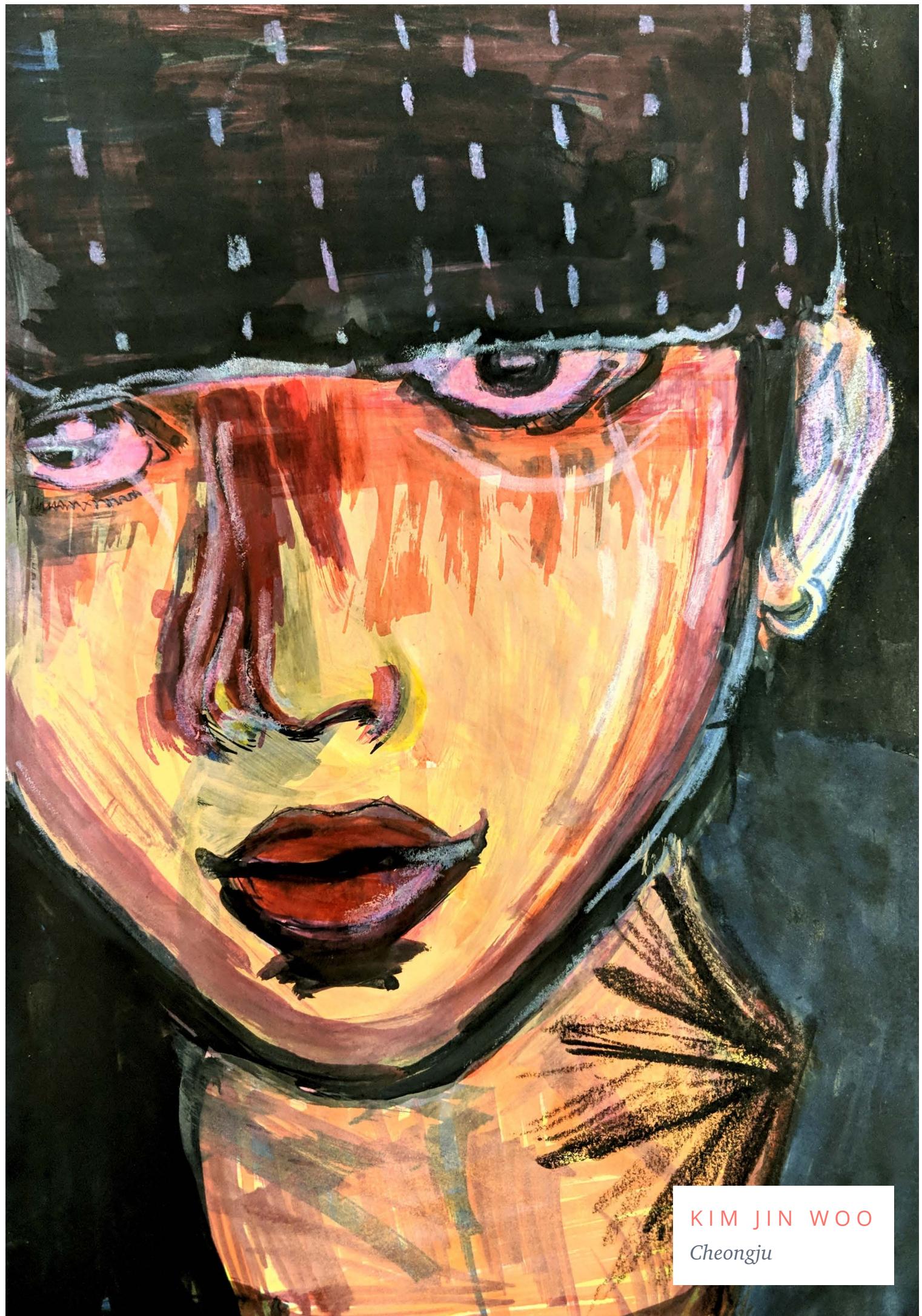
*What stereotypes
have you seen or
experienced that
you want to
change?*





KIM JIN WOO

Cheongju



KIM JIN WOO
Cheongju

I have a friend whose hair is short. She is a girl, but looks like a boy. One day, we went bowling, and we went to the restroom together. Of course we went to the women's restroom, because we are women. However, people glanced at my friend. She said that she had experienced a lot of situations like this. I felt sorry for her. If I were in her shoes, I would feel that this is unjust. In the past when I met someone who looks like a boy in the restroom, I glanced at her, too. But next time I will not do that.

KIM DABIN

Cheonan

I have a short haircut. Instead of telling me "You are pretty," people tell me "You are handsome." I want to hear "You look happy."

KIM GYEONGHEE

Cheonan

I took a taxi with my friend. I told my friend that I want to live in a house like the one outside someday. Then the taxi driver told me "You can get a house like that in the future if you marry someone who is rich." It was uncomfortable. If I was a man, he would have told me "You can get it if you work hard in the future."

YEO HYEONSEO

Cheonan

Freedom of Young Adults

JAEWAN JO

Busan

We all know that at one point during our childhood, we have dreamt of being adults. At least once. Dreamt of being free. Free of homework. Free of parents. Free of any outside authority. We have all had it. And I'm sure that children from the medieval ages has had them too. But let's bring up the statistics and compare the two eras. When were young adults more independent? When was the better time for the children

to make their fantasy a reality? I would probably say the ones from the medieval times have better odds.

We all are familiar with how modern young adults work. After graduating college, he/she needs to find a job in order to earn money. A person from a more prestigious university would have no problem undertaking that task. If lucky, they get promoted over time, and rise to a respectable position with a

reliable income. If not, they get fired, and they get forced to find a new job as soon as possible. Most of their money goes to the banks, paying back for their college loans. This goes on until the end of their twenties, when they no longer are “young adults.”

However, the young adults from medieval times are slightly more different. At a young age, they are sent to a master craftsman or a tradesman to train as an apprentice. The training lasts for about five to nine years. Should the master craftsman be affiliated with any guilds, the apprentice is subjected to any regulations the guild has. Furthermore, they are set with minimum terms of service, and the guilds keep track of the apprentice in order to provide a license of sorts to continue their work on their own when they

graduate. When they do so, they open up their own shop, maybe take on a few apprentices, or in rare cases, abandon their work and start something afresh. It’s a different story if a boy wants to become a knight, however. A male youth born of noble blood and residing in a lord’s castle is eligible to be a page, the first step in training. They train with huntsmen and falconers every day, learning to use weapons and doing errands for the lord of the castle. When a page reaches 14 years of age, a knight may choose them to become a squire, an apprentice of sorts. The word squire comes from the word *esquier*, which means shield-bearer in French. And that is what they do. They carry around armor and weapons, and again, do errands for the knight. But a squire was allowed to own armor and weapons,

thus making them a knight, only with less privileges. At 21 years of age, should the knight agree, the squire can become a full-fledged knight, serving the kingdom and protecting the homeland.

The differences between the two eras are vast, and so are the young adults. Putting them side by side, one can see why the young adults of medieval times are much more independent. Firstly, money isn't a huge problem. Young adults of today are, ironically, bound by chains of financial independence. They need to pay back their college loans, they have to find jobs, and do so much more all alone. Their parents aren't helping them. Banks aren't going to loan some kid with zero economical experience, other than lectures, a thousand dollars. But young adults of old don't have to do

all that. Their masters have already taught them all they needed to know, and they don't even have to follow the path they set. Knights are funded by the kingdom itself, so food or lodging isn't a problem. Farmers have their crops. And belonging to a guild already guaranteed them a spot in the market. Their path is pretty much an open plain. Secondly, young adults of the old aren't helped out by electronics. As mankind makes technological advances every year, the reliance upon electronics hasn't been greater. Money is stored in cards and changed into codes of zeros and ones. Sometimes, those cards don't even exist. The data is in their phones, enabling them to carry a small pouch instead of a wallet. Most work is done in computers, and an entire household is basically a giant

working electronic mechanism. In addition, some modes of transport is completely based on electricity. This shows that humankind has become an entirely new species, one that needs technology to survive. Again, they are bound by the chains that set them free. On the contrary, young adults of the middle ages don't need all that. They ride horses for transport. They use candles for light. They

wash their clothes with hands, and some of them don't even need money. And the ones that do can feed themselves without much trouble. Work is done physically, not with little tablets that have all their data stored in some server five hundred miles away. Therefore, I believe that the young adults of the middle ages have more independence than those of today.



Suneung Send-Off, Anna Yamamuro, Cheonan

Speak

NATHAN SIEMINSKI

I can speak. But not right now. I leave the cafeteria as I entered it: mute.

Every day at 12:20, I head into the constant uncertainty of school lunch. The one month of Korean language training, which at first impressed my Korean colleagues, has long ago been exhausted. Though I am learning new words every day, there are only so many times a year that you can say “꽃샘추위” (got•saem•chu•wi, when the cold envies the flowers: a phrase used on seemingly random cold days of early spring) and expect it to be



situationally relevant or for anyone to muster a feigned “whaaaaa” for the third time.

The initial excitement of having a foreigner has long ago ceased, as have the questions about whether I like the food or how old I am. Now anything beyond a friendly “안녕하세요” (an•nyeong•ha•se•yo, hello) or a cursory “맛있게 드세요” (mas•it•ge deu•se•yo, eat deliciously), and it is a landmark meal. I say my ritualistic pleasantries as do they, and we drift off into separate worlds. And they really are separate worlds. Mine, inhabited by English and all that entails—so close and yet so far away. Theirs, inhabited by the Korean around them—bouncing off the walls and perceptibly into their ears.

I often question whether or not my experience counts as being authentic. I have lived in Korea for almost a year now. I

have seen the Korea that is not in brochures. I have seen normal people living normal lives. Though my friends and family might not believe it, removed as they are from the humanity that makes cultural differences secondary, my life here is normal too. Sometimes I almost forget I live abroad.

However, every lunch I remember. Every lunch I remember how inauthentic my experience can be at times. My language insufficiency gets paraded for all to see, and the divide never feels larger than at the cafeteria table. At least that is how it feels sometimes. As we all settle into normalcy, the easiest thing to do most days is to eat in silence. I daydream or attempt a farcical nod as I follow the conversation that has left me behind the moment it began. I am merely a passive passenger along the train of conversation,

a hitchhiker sharing the space but not the destination.

I have two reactions to this silence. The first is crippling self-consciousness. I would second-guess every nod or laugh, wondering if it was directed at me or some faux pas I committed. It's amazing how self-consciousness can be so selfish. Instead of looking outward for engagement's sake, it makes you peer from behind curtain slits—you look outwards only to look in. The second is complete mental drift. I let my mind wander wherever it wills, a thirty-minute reverse-meditation. It's hard to tell what

my co-teachers make of this. Of course most have patience with me. They understand that language learning is difficult, but I wonder at times if my muted presence is an affront, an unwillingness to learn and adapt. And so my silence speaks.

These moments connect me to my students' experience better than anything else could. Sometimes, when I can feel their confidence waning, heads bowed beneath the awkwardness of wordlessness, I show them a clip from a Korean movie called *I Can Speak*. It follows an elderly Korean woman, Na Ok Bun, who decides

“They understand that language learning is difficult, but I wonder at times if my muted presence is an affront, an unwillingness to learn and adapt. And so my silence speaks.”

to learn English at the tender age of 80. Though she has immense difficulties, over the course of the movie her confidence and ability grows tremendously. I use this movie to inspire my students, but I have never thought of it as an inspiration for myself.

Last month I walked into the cafeteria with my host mother who doubles as one of my co-teachers. We arrived early and had a few minutes alone before other teachers arrived at our table. We discussed our class and joked about the utter messiness of my room, but as other teachers approached our table and exchanged pleasantries, she sensed a change in my demeanor. The Nathan she knew, the one that could joke and laugh, was retreating, ceding the table to the other teachers. And so she leaned in. “Nathan, today you need to talk at lunch. Ask her what subject she teaches.”



I knew the word for “what” (mu•seun, 무슨) and “teach” (ga•reu•chi•da, 가르치다), but I had to ask for “subject” and the connective grammar. With her help I pieced the question together with several rounds of improving pronunciation,

s movie to
y students,
never
f it as
tion for



which, of course, meant that everyone at the table knew what I was going to ask long before I actually did it.

“무슨 과목 가르치세요?” I asked sheepishly. I could notice her answer on her lips long before I began speaking.

“나는 음악을 가르쳐요,” she responded slowly and clearly. Ah, a music teacher!

And so my lunches got a little less quiet. The rest of the week, I asked this question, solidifying it in my memory. The next week I got a new question:

“Though the seconds
creep at first, and
the minute bell is
drowned out with Ok
Bun’s sighs of relief,
**each conversation
becomes easier.”**



what is your favorite food? (가장 좋아하는 음식이 뭐예요?). And this continued. Of course conversations trailed off, but with each new dead end, a new conversational neighborhood was explored. Some of the younger women teachers even began sitting with me every Thursday for an informal language exchange.

My favorite moment from *I Can Speak* is a scene where Na Ok Bun heads to a bar in Itaewon, a predominantly English-speaking district in Seoul. Fueled by a little bit of liquid confidence and a lot of reassurance from her English tutor, she is tasked with striking up a conversation with English-speakers that lasts longer than one minute. Though the seconds creep at first, and the minute bell is drowned out with Ok Bun's sighs of relief, each conversation becomes easier. Finally, a distractedly happy Ok Bun looks up at the clock only to see that she has been talking to the same person for 20 minutes.

My host mother quietly translated most of the dialogue in the movie theater, an irony not lost on me, but perhaps the power of this elderly Korean woman's effort was. I used her work as an inspiration for my students, but never did I think to use it for myself—relying on my silence over words. Slowly, I am learning that my lunches do not have to be silent. I can speak, too.

“선생님, 아이 캔 스피크 봤어요?”

“Have you seen *I Can Speak*?”

Nathan Sieminski is a second-year ETA in Yeosu.

A Strange 경험 on the Bus Home

Kyeongheom - Experience

Feel the dried salt on my face
Sudden awareness of stacked winter clothes and now
The world is changed
Sweat again
Slips down,
I feel it in my hair



Five people scurry onto the bus,
Their figures like burly bears
-long
padding-
An empty seat beside me true but
truly a
Foreign barrier
My frazzled appearance doesn't help

Four hours back
Grad school apps flipping brain pancakes
Diving
A bungee cord
In and out of restaurant conversations



Thoughts of deadlines and
Missed
Opportunities for friendship build a little
Breeze slips through a crack in the window

Three, the places I find myself in-
-variably all the puzzle pieces fall
Slowly
Into places
I've traveled many times before
Rivers crossed too many times to
Count on, count on, I am being
Counted on
In this relay, the final leg



My legs carry me forward
Sickness passed through speaking tests
Me, myself, I ache, the *Misemōnji*¹, it rejects
My pace, my race, I breathe hard and struggle but
open the stubborn window fully

Two co-teachers
Reside in this light province.²
Its light problems seem to pass
Quickly, yet
Changes will come, have gone, my intentions tried
and true, but often miss
The mark, language troubles abound at times

1 Fine dust

2 광주(Gwangju) is derived from the hanja 光州



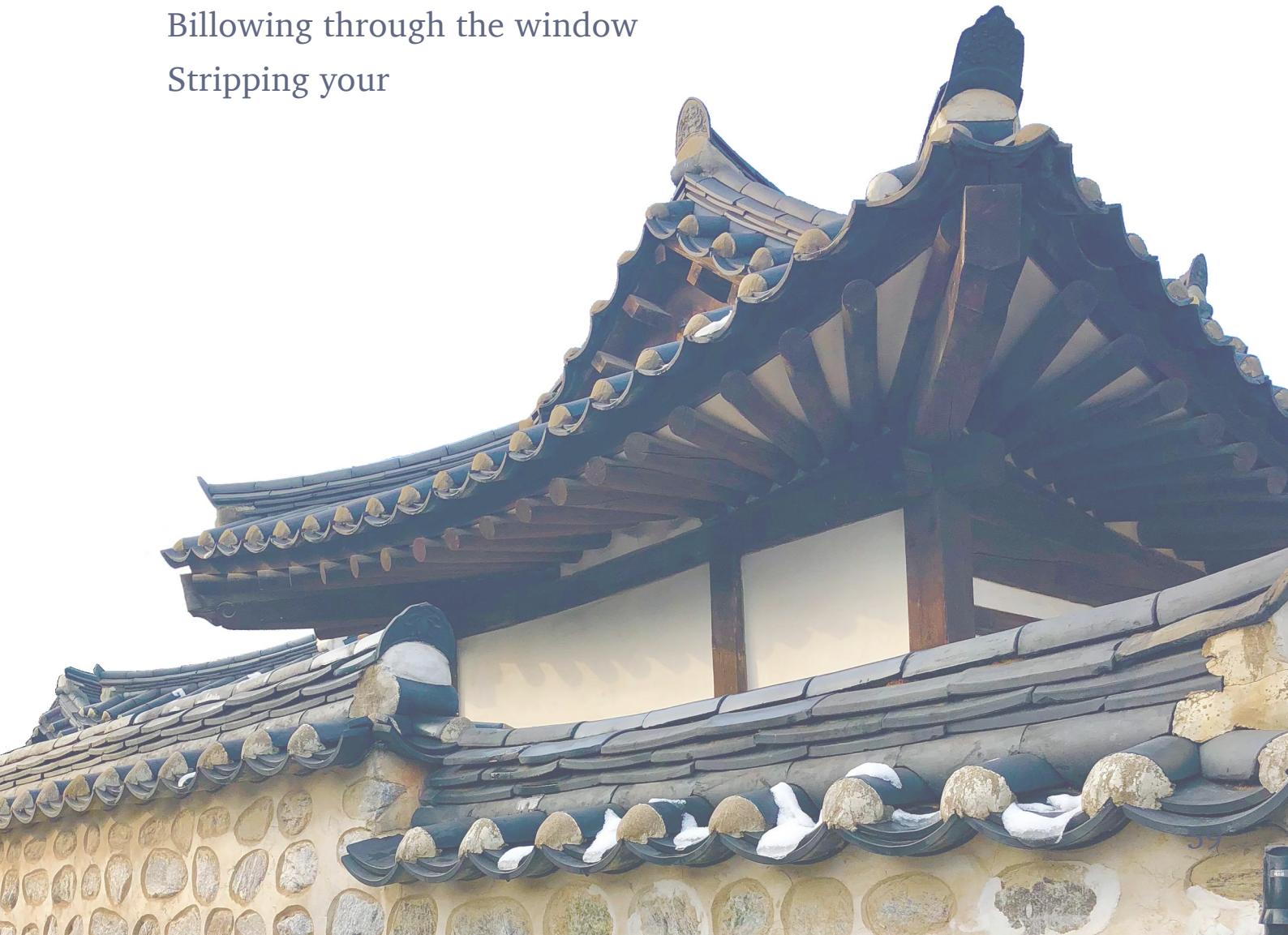
can't quite impart the *haekshim*³
But heck
Direct
Or
Shim is retiring, some parts of my life retired when
The venture of morning calm began,
AND
Quote me
The usual routines
Annual means, are so similar a second
Time
stands still
for no one

One
One second difference
Between first and second,
A and B,
Old and new me,
My students are familiar, this school unchanged
But my feelings rearranged and pushed
Away
From
Here
The distance between my abilities and memories

3 핵심 - main idea

Grows new life, takes new victims and
Nothing lasts forever, bittersweet gains
Like chains I
Remember ETAs gone by, some who took
This exact bus ride
Outside the river chides
“The race you ran was fine” but
you
almost won
One second, the difference and

Zero
The number of rooftops that come
Billowing through the window
Stripping your



Perilous stargazing shingles strip the
Sweat
Dripping
Down
And the air *konggi*⁴
A strong key
Unlocking memr'ies of home
A rare reminder
Raring to rain a bit of
Melancholy
On my parade-
-ing thoughts of times gone bi-
-focal visions, the near and distant past-
ures appear greener on the other side
But these
Thoughts
Transient as the spaces we occupy here
As the same sky we share
As the too cold breeze
Now washing through the layers that stack upon
My shoulders, a weight so heavy my
Arms give out and
The window
slams
shut.

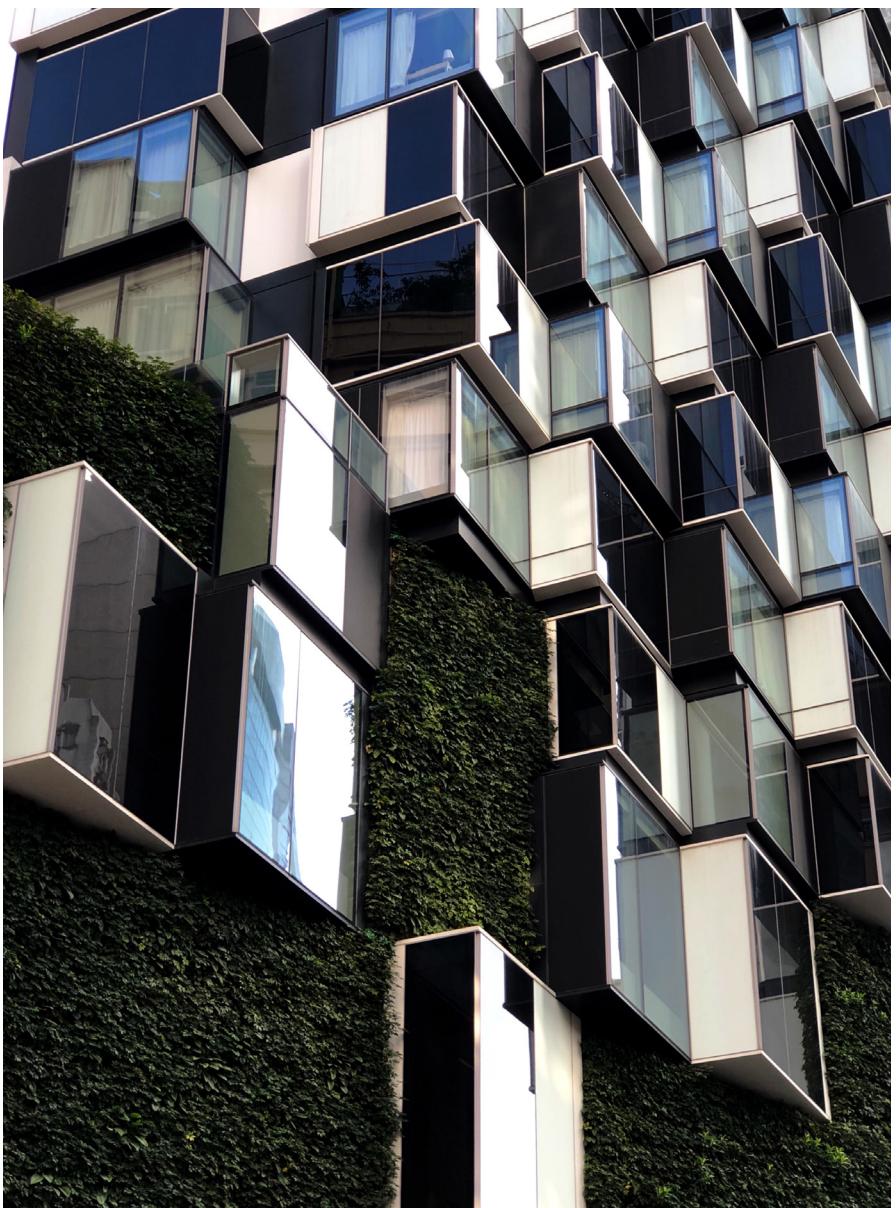
4 공기 - air

KYLE WARDWELL

Second-year ETA in Naju



Ocean Views, Nicole Simineri, Busan





Goldfish Market, Melissa Kukowski, Hong Kong





Credits

Photo Credits (pg. 45-47)

Winter Temple, Nicole Simineri, Seoul.

After the Storm, Nicole Simineri, Seoul.

Open Window Photo (pg. 64)

Shin Min Song, Busan

Photo Essay Credits (pg. 60-61)

Top to bottom, left to right:

Gloomy Gritty and Gray, Zoya Hsiao, Hong Kong. *Windows*, Amanda Grant, Hong Kong. *Laughter*, Amanda Grant, Seogwipo. *Books*, Tiffany Cox, Seoul. *Battle Overlook*, Grace Ahn, Tongyeong. *Biking*, Eunice Yu, Vietnam. *Lanterns*, Eunice Yu, Namhae.

Cover photo: *Busan Bridge*, Zoya Hsiao, Busan.

Infusion aims to capture the diversity of the Fulbright Korea experience by publishing work from Fulbright Korea Senior Scholars, Junior Researchers, English Teaching Assistants, and program alumni. We support artists in the creation of work which honestly engages with their grant year and their craft. The Fulbright Program aims to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries through cultural and educational exchanges.

The Korean-American Educational Commission in Seoul, widely known as the Korea Fulbright Commission, is governed by a board consisting of equal members of Koreans and Americans representing governmental, educational, and private sectors. The board makes decisions on overall policies of the Fulbright Program in Korea.

The Korea Fulbright Commission is not responsible for opinions expressed in The Fulbright Korea *Infusion* by individual contributors nor do these in any way reflect official Fulbright Commission policy. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without permission from the contributor and from the Korea Fulbright Commission.

The Fulbright Korea *Infusion*
Email: fulbright.infusion@gmail.com
Website: infusion.fulbright.or.kr
Facebook: facebook.com/fulbrightkoreainfusion
Instagram: [fulbrightkoreainfusion](https://www.instagram.com/fulbrightkoreainfusion/)
Twitter: [@infusion_litmag](https://twitter.com/infusion_litmag)

If you wish to contact Fulbright Korea, please email executive.assistant@fulbright.or.kr or call +82-2-3275-4000.

FULBRIGHT INFUSION © 2019