

INFUSION

VOLUME TWELVE ISSUE TWO



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FULBRIGHT KOREA

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Credits



From the Executive Director

Dear Readers,

I am delighted to introduce to you Volume 12, Issue 2 of Fulbright Korea's *Infusion* literary magazine. In tandem with Volume 12, Issue 1, this second issue of *Infusion* represents the sincere expressions of Fulbright grantees, both past and present, as they explore opportunities, overcome challenges, and engage in honest, open reflection concerning both themselves and their surroundings. With the program year coming to an end, this second issue of *Infusion* also fittingly provides an occasion for us to stop and ponder once again all that has been achieved and all that is yet to be achieved whether in the U.S., Korea, or elsewhere.

The literary and artistic achievements represented in this issue are just one facet of all that Fulbright grantees have accomplished during the past year. Whether lecturing, teaching English, conducting research, or completing graduate studies, Fulbright grantees worldwide have been making an impact in their own communities and around the globe for

over 70 years now. The Fulbright Program in Korea will reach its own 70th anniversary shortly. As we draw nearer to the closing of one decade, and the opening of another, let us draw strength from how far we have come while recommitting to the pursuit of a future in which mutual understanding and cooperation will ever grow in strength.

Important to this future are the voices of students, and I am pleased to have among the excellent work highlighted in this issue pieces by not only Fulbright grantees but also their students. Established in 2014, Open Window displays the creative talents and English skills of Korean students taught by grantees in the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program. As I consider the student work showcased in this issue, I am doubly proud of both the students for their hard work and dedication, and of the teachers for their encouragement and belief in their students.

Giving a voice to the gifted students and grantees featured in this issue are the dedicated *Infusion* staff, who put much thought, time, and energy into producing such an insightful and enjoyable issue. To them, and the many authors, artists, and photographers who gave of their talents, I extend my sincere thanks and congratulations. May we all find new inspiration for the future as we contemplate the stories and images shared within these pages of *Infusion*.

Warmest Regards,



Jai Ok Shim
Executive Director
Korean-American Educational Commission



From the Embassy

Welcome to the second issue of the 12th volume of *Infusion*.

Since its inception in the late 1940s, the Fulbright Program has been an integral part of U.S. foreign relations. Even in our networked digital world where Korea leads the way on 5G, there is no substitute for personal interaction, what 20th-century journalist Edward R. Murrow called “the last three feet” of communication.

It is individuals like each of you, not data streams, not AI, who ultimately build the connections that in turn create lasting international partnerships. I am proud to know that the legacy Fulbright program participants are creating now will be the source of even closer ties between the United States and Republic of Korea. As Fulbright celebrates its 70th Anniversary, it becomes increasingly clear that our most important resource is all of you.

We have said so in this space before, but I would be remiss not to express the Board’s thanks to Mrs. Shim Jai Ok for her extended service to Korea-U.S. relations at the Korean-American Educational Commission (KAEC). She sets a high bar for us to meet in Fulbright. Fortunately, we believe we have found someone who can build on that legacy in Professor Kwon Byung-ok, who will be the next Executive Director of the KAEC starting later this summer. Dr. Kwon’s extensive experience in academic and business fields will help shape and implement an array of Fulbright programs in line with our vision to promote mutual understanding between our two nations through cultural exchange. I am truly excited to see what new developments are in store for the future of Fulbright in Korea.



Mitchell Moss
Minister-Counselor for Public Diplomacy
Embassy of the United States of America
Chairman, Korean-American Educational Commission



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,

As the grant year draws to a close, it's hard to believe that those first days that seem like yesterday were actually 12 months ago. We have encountered varying challenges, made choices and changes that have come to define our year, and had rewarding experiences that made it all worth it. Here we stand on the other side of a year, more confident in our abilities as teachers and people. Jess McKay and Pel Doski both write of what they've learned and gained from students in their poems "Dust" and "Jewels", respectively.

Somehow we have transitioned from the days of uncertainty to a new perhaps equally daunting stage: saying goodbye. These goodbyes make it clear that the memories we made in Korea will stay with us long after we leave, as Robert Cavaluzzi alludes to in his two poems "Chewing" and "Bamboo". We are also proud to include the work of a former grantee and Editor-in-Chief of *Infusion*, Paddy Shea. Through his piece titled "Oman Won", Paddy shows us the power that people have on our lives and the long-lasting impact of family—however we come to define it.

This issue offers us a space to reflect on our year, from the feelings of sadness that may overcome us as Pel Doski touches upon in another poem titled "S.A.D." to the moments of joy that radiate from the love we create with others as seen through Mailé Nguyễn's "Spring Rolls". We hope this issue creates an opportunity for you to honor the relationships that have come to define your time here in Korea.

It has been a true honor serving as the Editor-in-Chief of this magazine, and I have this amazing staff to thank for its success. Their diligence and consistent efforts are what made this issue possible, including Open Window's workshop that guided talented high school students through selecting and editing the student pieces presented in this issue. I am also grateful for KAEC Executive Director Jai Ok Shim and Executive Assistant Heidi Little's steady support in our efforts. Lastly, I would like to thank this year's cohort. Wherever you may be off to next, please go with the knowledge that the people you have befriended here and the experiences you have had will carry you through your next adventures.

I hope you all enjoy Volume 12, Issue 2 of *Infusion*.

Sincerely,



Lauren Lin
Editor-in-Chief



Spring Rolls

When wetting a brittle sheet of rice paper for a spring roll, it doesn't need to be soaked until it gets soft. The sheet can be taken out of the water while it's still damp because it will get soft with time, as the fillings are added. No one taught me this, I figured it out on my own.

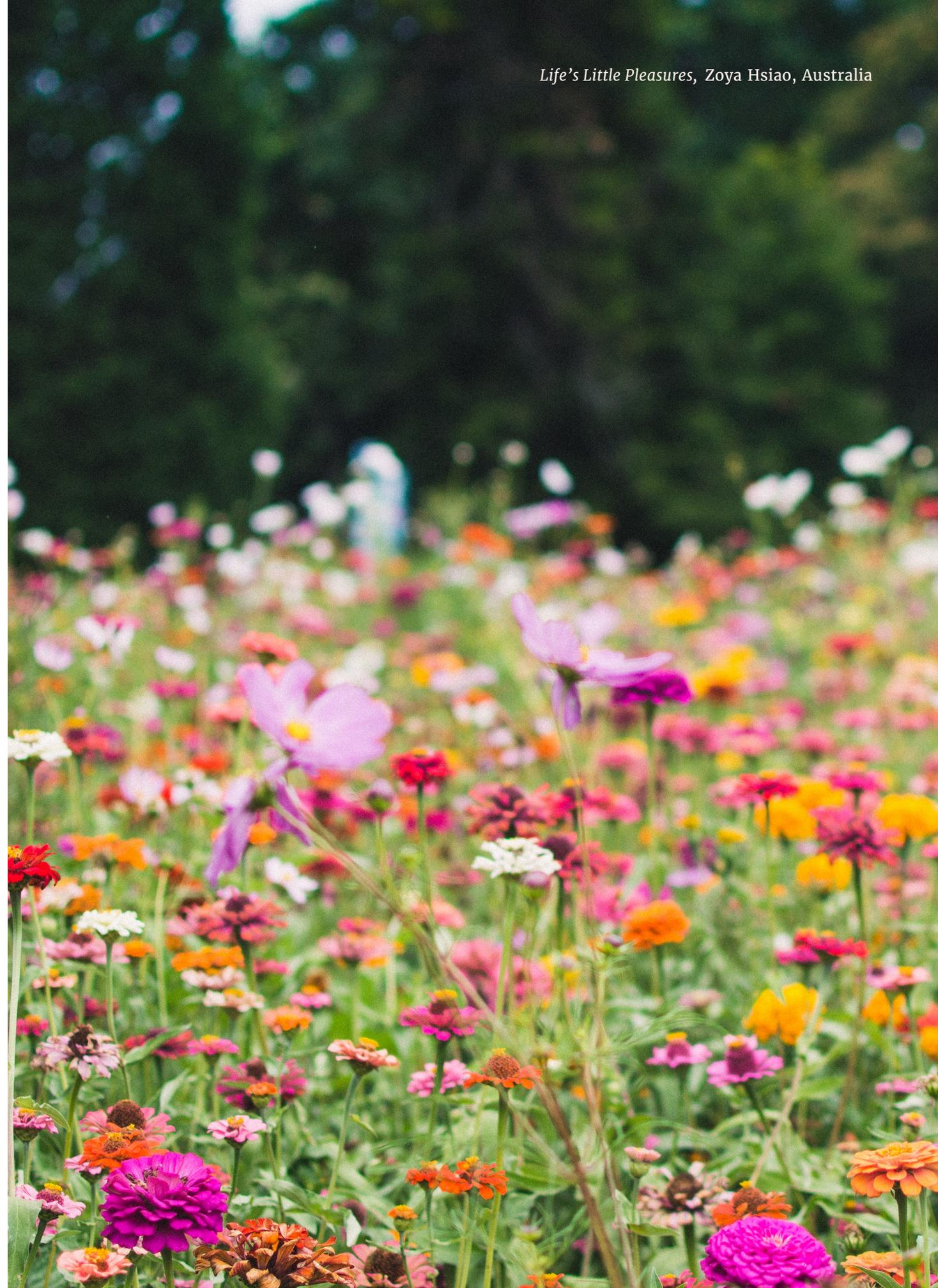
It's easier to get soft with time.

The first time I made spring rolls was when I was a junior in college. Despite being born in Vietnam, where *gỏi cuốn* can be found in any restaurant or on any kitchen table, I had never learned how to make them. Being adopted at a young age transplanted me into a foreign country where I grew apart from my culture. My mother and father, the most kind-hearted people in my life, were more accustomed to traditional American fares. Thus, I had to do a lot of research about what ingredients to include in my spring

rolls, how to wrap them, and the best sauce combinations. My heritage has always been something I've learned on my own.

After I perfected my technique, I invited my parents to my apartment to make spring rolls with me. Cooking together was a way we connected with my Vietnamese heritage as a family, even though my parents were still pretty bad at it.

"This one looks a little like something you'd smoke!" my mom laughed. Her first attempt at rolling the rice paper turned out more



like a cigar, too thin and long. My dad was having the opposite problem; he made his too thick, making it impossible to keep all the vegetables in.

“Dad, you’re not making a burrito!” I joked. Before I left for Korea, my parents and I made spring rolls together as our way of saying goodbye.

It was autumn. Novelty was becoming a daily routine. I had been in Korea for over four months and my family in the States was feeling further and further away. In

my homestay, I had finally reached a point where I was comfortable cooking in the kitchen—confident in my ability to find all the tools I needed and not disturb my host mom.

As many times as I’ve traveled, I had never felt homesickness before. I used to boast that my quiet Midwestern town would never change, so there was no point in missing it. I realized I took familiarity for granted. One night, my sadness was so heavy that my hands didn’t feel like mine. My



Hat on the Ground, Alex Suryapranata, Seogwipo

I needed to bring a piece of my old home into my new home. I resolved that during the weekend I was going to make spring rolls.

mind was separating from my body, and I needed to bring it back to Earth. I needed to bring a piece of my old home into my new home. I resolved that during the weekend I was going to make spring rolls.

I scoured the aisles of Homeplus, desperate to find every ingredient. I prefer my spring rolls fresh, as opposed to fried, so crisp vegetables and herbs are critical. Luckily, most of the ingredients were easy to find. But, devastated, I couldn’t find cilantro. The refreshing kick of cilantro is what separates fresh spring rolls from the frozen

spring rolls commonly found in college dorm refrigerators. I was disappointed to discover that many Korean people don’t like the pungent taste.

“Do you want me to send you some dried cilantro?” my mother asked me over the phone. During a video call with my parents, I had shared my grocery store defeat. I said sure, even though I knew it wouldn’t be the same. I can’t sprinkle dried cilantro into my fresh spring rolls.

No. Cilantro was not something I would sacrifice. Still slightly uncomfortable asking my

**“It’s spring roll night!”
I danced into my bedroom to
grab the rice paper.**

host mom for favors, I asked her if she knew any place that sold cilantro in our town.

“Cilantro?” she looked at me confused. The online translator was not helping. I tried to search for the word “cilantro” and “coriander,” but only got Konglish translations. I tried googling a picture.

“Ah!” My host mom raised her hands in recognition. “Go soo.” “Perfect!” I exclaimed. A new piece of the puzzle had been solved. “I think it will be difficult to find,” my host mom said. I couldn’t catch a break.

I came home one afternoon two weeks later and my host mom appeared from our kitchen.

“I found cilantro!” she smiled, pulling two packs from the

fridge. I was ecstatic. “Where did you find these?” I opened them up, thinking I could smell the potent flavors I knew and loved, but remembered that they only smelled like cold leaves.

“I found them at Homeplus, but I really had to look,” she said. My host mom is the best, no contest. I felt like a child who insisted they couldn’t find their favorite toy, and believed their mom to be a witch when she emerged from their messy room having unearthed the lost object.

“It’s spring roll night!” I danced into my bedroom to grab the rice paper. I had stored them there when I had returned from my unsuccessful quest to find cilantro.

My host mom watched with

amusement as I flitted around the kitchen, chopping the vegetables, preparing the noodles, frying the tofu, and assembling my sauce station, just like I had done back in the States.

“*Seonsaengnim mwo he?* What is teacher doing?” my host brother asked his mother. She explained that I was making Vietnamese food from back home. Cooking for me is a type of meditation. I prefer to do it when I’m alone, thus they had never seen me so active in the kitchen. They both watched as I dipped my first rice paper into the pot of warm water I set out on our kitchen table. I explained to them that I used to soak the rice paper, forcing it to softness, until I learned that the rice paper will get malleable as the fillings are added. I rolled the vegetables, tofu, and cilantro into a tight cylinder, as I had done many times back in my old home.

“Wow!” my host brother looked on in amazement. He’s easily amused and not very good with his

hands, always dropping silverware when we eat dinner together. Like most elementary school boys, he’s not the biggest fan of vegetables, but he wants to visit Vietnam because one of his friends from school visited last summer. When his mom told me this, I laughed, imagining my host brother asking his mom to buy *tonkatsu*—his favorite food—while surrounded by all of my favorite Vietnamese dishes. He’s a particularly picky eater, preferring chicken nuggets to anything green. I knew he wouldn’t like the taste of cilantro, but I was touched that he was curious about my culture.

On the other hand, my host mom is good at absolutely everything she tries. “I don’t actually cook much,” she admitted to me during my first month of living with her. “My mom does most of the cooking,” she said, referring to my host grandma that would visit our apartment a couple times during the week. But she was being humble. During one of our dinnertime conversations about

how hard it is being a vegetarian in Korea, I had mentioned offhand that I missed veggie burgers from back home more than anything. A couple weeks later, she surprised me by serving veggie burgers she had fashioned out of mock *bulgogi*.

Everything my host mom does, she does with a close attention to detail and with grace. She is selfless and kind, and I'm so happy to have a new home with her and my host brother. She went out of her way to find cilantro for me, and my heart is always softened by her continued generosity.

As I wrapped my spring rolls, I looked over to her and asked,

“Would you like some?”

MAILÉ NGUYỄN

First-year ETA in Gumi



Bamboo

Bamboo in mirrors, reflects:

Vibrant

Greens

Envyng colorblindness

In hopes of growing taller

ROBERT CAVALUZZI

First-year ETA in Jeonju

Chewing

You are sunken treasure
Riddled with teeth marks
In the shape of the small pieces
That you give of yourself
To everyone else



Chaos Central, Zoya Hsiao, Gimhae

Jewels

I've got gems
Sparkling in pairs before me,
With bright brilliancy.

They follow me in groups,
Always calling out my name,
Shimmering even in rain.

They twinkle like stars,
Reflect the brightest of rainbows,
Even when it snows.

They shine like the sun,
And illuminate shadows far away,
Especially whenever they say,

Good morning Teacher

PEL DOSKI

First-year ETA in Docheon, Changnyeong



Open Window

Open Window is a creative publication showcasing the English and artistic work of Korean students. We accept submissions on a rolling basis for publication on our webpage. For more information, please visit openwindow.fulbright.or.kr or contact the team at fulbright.openwindow@gmail.com

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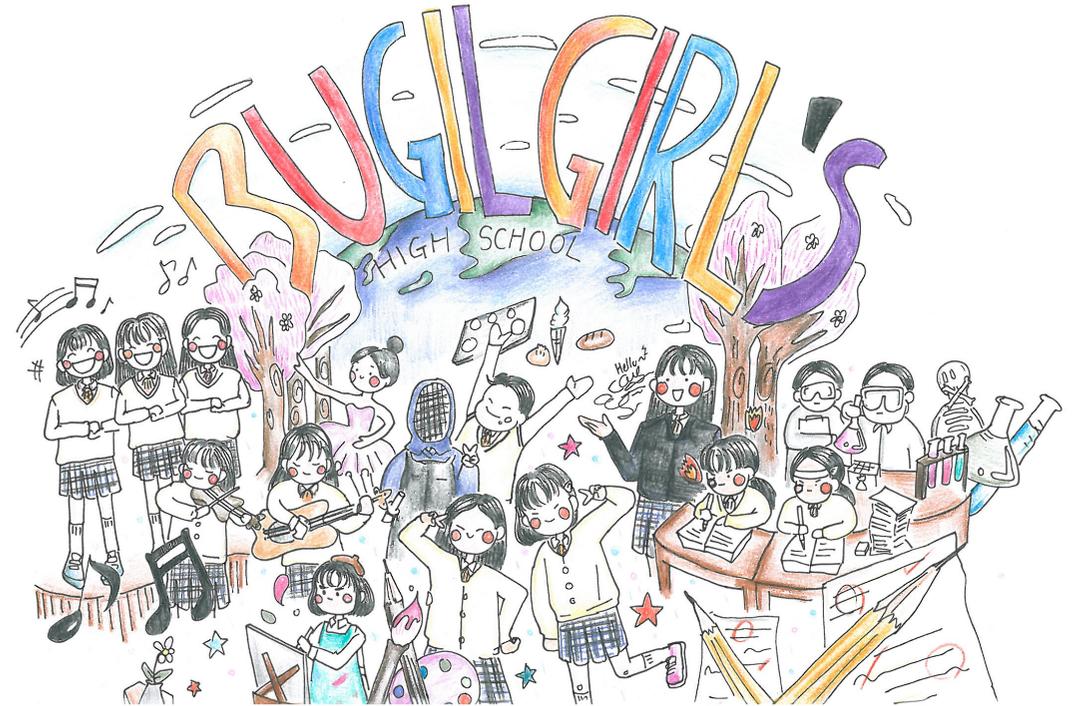
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Daedong Taxation High School, Seoul

WOO GABIN

Bugil Girls' High School, Cheonan



They Are Talent, Kim Gaeun, Cheonan



The Landscape of My School, Kim Gaeul, Jeju City



Son

Dear mom, I thank you.
Your life has been harsh as Velcro
Now I appreciate you, sorry

You've once been passionate
You've once been beautiful
You've once been young
But you threw away all those things
Your priority was me, your endorphin¹

Remember the day you disapproved of me entering the ICU²
I consider the day regretful
Hadn't noticed it was water putting out the fire
Didn't know it would come so soon like lightning

1 a group of hormones which activates the body's feeling of happiness

2 Intensive Care Unit

RYU HYOSEOK

Jeonju



Top: 홍콩의 봄날 *Spring Day of Hong Kong*, Shin Yoona, Cheonan

Bottom: *Symphony of Lights, Taiwan*, Shin Yoona, Cheonan



The Society

HONG DAEJIN

Jeonju

The Strange Dream

A strange dream kept coming to my mind. I was surrounded by gray walls, and I was floating in the air. I tried my best to escape but my body didn't seem to move. "Clink...Clank...Clock..." I was hanging from the ceiling. More precisely I was hanging upside down. All I could see were ropes surrounding me and a dim light in a distant. At first, I thought this was some kind of dream or hallucination because of the stress I was having these days. There wasn't much time before Selection Day, and I have to finish my graduation project before that day to be arranged in a better job. I've been waiting for this day for 16 years and not a single mistake should be accepted. On Selection Day, every student is given their job based on the 16 years he or she has spent. The graduation project

also works as an important factor in deciding the job. The job varies from boring jobs like customer center or a plumber to some of the meaningful jobs such as architect or programmer. Once the job is given to each person, they have to execute the same task until they get old enough to retire. In short, there wasn't much time before the next 50 years of my life would be decided. Although I was almost done with my project, the strange dream kept making me uncomfortable. The dream felt too real to simply ignore it as some kind of daydream. But still there was nothing I could do about the strange, unclear dream that seemed to disturb me.

Selection Day

Today is the day. Every student wore their finest clothes and went directly to the school. Selection Day is the biggest event students wait for. It

is a graduation ceremony for the past 16 years of hard work and a ceremony for a new start at a new job at the same time. As time passed, the bell rang and everyone was listening carefully to the announcement. It started, "Class 1, Amy Jessica to the Farming Department, Donale Som to product designer..." The announcement continued and I was waiting for my name to be called. "Class 3... Jonathan Pierce to the Sales Department..." After a few minutes my name was finally called!

I was arranged to the Sales Department and it was quite an interesting job. I could be assigned to other cities. Most people don't have the chance to travel to other states, it is an uncommon chance. After all the students were selected, I returned home. I would spend the next week preparing for the job. And there was a letter from the Sales Department:

Dear Jonathan,

From now on, you are one of the staffs of the Sales Department. You will be arranged to City H. Next Monday is your first day on the new job and you shall be moved to City H that day. Before you come to the new job, you have to memorize a few things.

First, City H is a totally different society from where you are living. Second, do not have a private conversation with your customers. Third, do not go anywhere other than your workplace.

As long as you follow these simple rules, you will have a wonderful time working at the Sales Department. There will be a bus going to City H at City Hall next Monday. We look forward to meeting you.

—From the Sales Department, City H



First Day of Work

Time passed and it was my first day in the Sales Department. I went to City Hall to take the bus. I slowly went inside. It was different from the buses I used to ride. The lights were dim and there were no windows. An enclosed space with wheels may be the most appropriate description for the bus. The bus departed and all the newcomers looked at each other with nervous eyes. I opened the letter I received on the day I was selected. Although the rules seemed simple, those rules made me more nervous. The words “totally different society” were the main cause of my anxiety.

Clank...the door opened as all the newcomers got out of the bus. Outside was a familiar scene. Although it seemed like the bus arrived to City H, there weren't that many differences from the city I grew up in. We had a short city tour with a guide while moving to the workplace. At the end of the tour the guide arranged each of us with a specific task. I was in charge of customer service.

After handling the dissatisfied customers for a day, I could see that my task was more like a sponge absorbing the sound of customers

yelling over the phone. Though it wasn't the best task I could dream of while working here, going to another city made it better.

Leaving Work

After a week I was quite accustomed to taking care of the customers. I always started my job waiting for the phone to ring today.

Ring ring ring ring!! The phone rang loudly and I answered it immediately.

“I have a problem with the TV I.....ZZZ...ZZZZ...”

The woman's voice suddenly stopped and strange sounds continued. There was even smoke coming out of the phone. I could easily see that my phone was broken. I tried to ask for help but the director was nowhere. I got out of the room and looked down both hallways. Remembering the direction the director first came from when he greeted newcomers, I went to check if there is his office. Walking down the hall, I could see the buildings of City H through the window. There were apartments and other large buildings. Then one dark gray building came into

my eyes. It seemed like there was nothing special about the building but the building was familiar. Suddenly I had a severe headache. The strange dream I had before Selection Day came to my head again. This time the memory was clearer. The strange sounds and images felt much more real. I hurried back to the room I was working in.

But without hesitation I just passed the room and headed to the exit. I was running like a mad man. Within a few minutes I was out of the Sales Department building and was running toward the gray building. Although I knew that my actions were out of mind, I couldn't stop my legs. As I arrived in front of the building, I opened the door and went inside. There were a few guards and people were going through a metal detector. My mind was back but I was so curious about what made me come here. So, I decided to go inside deeper.

I followed the people waiting to go through the metal detector. The line shortened and it was my turn. As soon as I stepped in, the detector rang loudly. I knew

something was wrong; I didn't have any metal items. Before the guards tried to catch me, I just ran fast into the nearest room. But as I entered the room, my body froze in place. There were a lot of humans hanging on a conveyor belt. It was the very moment I kept remembering. Then two men suddenly grabbed me from behind. There was a small remote in one of the men's hands. I could see him pushing the button. My body was weakening and I...

Behind the Curtain

Two men walked out of the room with a robot on their shoulder.

“This is why defective ones should be sorted out,” one of the men said.

The other one answered, “What do you mean by defective?”

“There are often robots that are activated during manufacturing. They usually have a slight memory of what they have seen for a few seconds. And later when there are factors reminding them of the memory such as the manufacturing plants, those robots tend to malfunction like this.”

“Then why do we keep maintaining this complex and risky system? Can’t we just use them as a worker without the first 16 years?”

“You see... When we first made a perfect AI robot, we found out that the robot kept doubting their existence. So, the robots refused to work and we had to terminate the program.”

“Then how about now?”

“We found a way out. We decided to make a new society. The doubt that AIs had was all about the difference between themselves and humans. By separating them from humans, we could solve it.”

“But isn’t the 16 years of time spent to make them believe that they

are human overinvestment?”

“Think about it. 16 years is a low cost to make a human intelligence work for the next 50 years for free.

Besides, some of the robots are arranged to work for their own society. There isn’t much money spent to make one workable AI.”

“Then what are we going to do with this robot?”

“Reset it and send it to The Society again. But this time we will have to send it far away from here.”

“Yes... Starting again...”

As they walked through the gate, the metal detector rang even louder than before...

the cigarettes in their straight-lined mouths and the electronic-eyed
snake winding down into the layer upon layer of night and stone and
stagnant spring water, and he wanted to call out to her, how many
have you taken, **TONIGHT!** the capsules! how many will you take later
and not know, and so on, every hour! or maybe not tonight, tomorrow
night! And me not **sleep** tonight or tomorrow night or any night for
long while, now that this has started. And he thought of her lying **on**
the bed with the two technicians standing straight over her, not bent
with concern, but only standing straight, arms folded. **And** he
remembered thinking then that if she died, he was certain he would
cry. For it would be the dying of an unknown, a street face, a
newspaper image, and it was suddenly so very wrong that he had
begun to cry, not at death but at the thought of not crying at death, a
silly empty man near a silly empty woman, while the hungry snake
made her still more empty.
How do you get so empty? he wondered. Who takes it out of you?
And that awful flower the other day, the mandarin! It had summed up
everything, hadn't it? **What** a shame. **You** are not in **love** with anyone!
And why not?
Well, wasn't there a wall between him and Mildred **when you**
came down to it? Literally not inside the wall but, so far, there! And
expensive, for all the aunts, the uncles, the cousins, the aunts, the
nephews, that **live** in those walls, the gibbering pack of tree-apes that
said nothing, nothing, nothing **and** said it loud, loud, loud. He had
taken to calling them relatives from the very first. **How** Uncle Louis
today? "Who?" And Aunt Maude? The most significant memory he
had of Mildred, really, was of a little girl in a forest without trees (how
odd, or rather a little girl lost on a plateau where there used to be trees
you could **feel** the memory of their shapes all about) sitting in the
center of

LEE SEOYOUNG

Ochang

No Flower is Forever Red

LEE HYUNHOON

Jeonju

The flower you gave me silently wilted,
when the sky was filled with autumn.
Moon, the only light in the night sky, tilted.
Finally broke up, in the precise meaning of a term.

A petal is falling off as if it's dancing,
because winter stays in my mind.
And yet I am still here, longing.
Lady luck doesn't seem to be on my side.

In the abyss of tragedy
I found out that you are the only reason why I am sick.

It was great luck to think of you for an hour,
whose smile looks like a flower.
It is such an ordinary routine that I'm waiting,
like one of the stars greeting.

The flower you gave me silently wilted,
I feel like I am alone in the universe; isolated.



Season of Blooming Love

KIM GYUMIN

Busan

When I think of the word “summer,” I picture a cool atmosphere with the sun blazing over me, but with an occasional wind blowing and the blue sea stretched out in front of me. When I think of the word “winter,” I picture a darker blue color (the color of the sky at dawn) with bare branches and tall trees looming in the countryside. As you listen to my descriptions it will seem as though winter is far from my liking, though actually, I love winter far more than summer. To answer the question why, though, I need to ponder deeper on the subject.

As we live through different phases of our lives, we pass through hard phases where the difficulties rise to meet us, and happy phases, where we have ample supplies (whether it is food or maybe friendship) around us. There are some people who give up on those hard phases, cowards who cannot rise to meet expectations, and also others who battle against those hardships and at last win themselves a pathway to success.

I believe that winter shows us those people who have met the hardships and battled with them, even though the people are weak and

vulnerable. Winter is a season which strips the blossoming life out of every living creature and instead presents them coldness and bareness. In order to survive this bitter winter, you need to give up on your pleasures and instead focus on maintaining yourself. Winter kills those who lack the endurance to survive and gives a source for survival for those who are desperate to live. Summer, in contrast, is a happy phase of a person’s life, as it is vibrant with life and supplies. Winter urges us to endure hardships, and even though from the outside, winter seems bare, you can always find a way to shelter yourself from the bitterness. Picture those bare winter trees, standing firm in the cold however much the wind blows, however cold the weather is. I think that we have a lot to learn from the season winter, from the life that remains while humans shed it, from the ability and potential to stay strong even when others are weak.

Winter contains an inner

beauty, if you have the time and wit to inspect it closely. Even though all seems taken from the bitter cold season, there is warmth inside the bitterness. I always remember the warmth of being close to family, huddled around the heater and exchanging memories with each other. Winter is a season where beautiful memories bloom in the heart of friendship and love. I can picture a dad in the 1980s, buying a hot fish-shaped bun, taking care to keep it warm and putting it in his coat pocket, and arriving home at last, to present it gleefully to his fellow family members. They would laugh and huddle in a tight group, body warmth keeping them snug, and exchange stories of what happened in the day.

Winter is such a beautiful season, with so many things to contemplate and so many things to inspect. It is a season we can learn so much from, and a season of blooming love.

Where I'm From

Students from a middle school in Mokpo wrote poems in class inspired by the poem "Where I'm From" by George Ella Lyon.

I am from *ddakji*,
from Adidas and Casio.
I am from Mokpo,
from two bathrooms.
I am from forsythia from the mountain—yellow.
I am from pizza and chicken,
from saying “hello” when we go out and humor.
I am from “what a cute girl” and being hurt,
from taking pictures with my family at my house.

KIM HYEONGJU



I am from card games,
from BT21 and Peripera.
I am from Mokpo,
from a small, little house.
I am from cherry blossoms near my house—pink petals and beautiful.
I am from chicken and ramen,
from watching TV while eating dinner and humor.
I am from “small eyes” and always smiling,
from going on trips with my family.

CHOI REONGYEON

I am from playing with blocks,
from Puma and Coca-Cola.
I am from Mokpo,
from in front of a mountain.
I am from azaleas from my family's garden—pink petals and a beautiful smell.
I am from *kimchi jjigae* and *jjajangmyeon*,
from breakfasts with my family and humor.
I am from “응아니야”¹ and playing the piano,
from traveling to Saipan.

1 *eung aniya* (yes but no)

LEE SOYEON

Dust

My students know *dust* before *air*
dust before *wind*
and *dust* before *breath*.

In our classroom, we translate the world around us;
they point and pry for words to be known.

“How’s the weather?” I ask.
“*Misemeonji* is bad,” they say.
“*Dust*. In English, it is *dust*,” I reply.
The dust is bad.

My students know *dust* before *clarity*.
They string words together
hoping their speech prompts
a positive response.
“Dust is good,” they say.
Implying that we should go outside.

My students know *mask* before grin
Mask before laugh
And *mask* before breath.

My students wear masks
as they speak.
“The dust is bad,” I say.
“No, teacher. No, it’s okay.”
Their small brows scrunch on their face
as they search for justifications.



They can do this before
explaining the sensation
of a laugh as it rises
from the root of the belly.

They can do this before
explaining how rich the
air tastes
after a long swim.

They can do this before
explaining
the breath before a cannonball
the breath before a song.

My students know *dust*.

JESS MCKAY
First-year ETA in Sejong

S.A.D.*

PEL DOSKI

First-year ETA in Docheon, Changnyeong

Seasons change,
and I with them.
Gently folding old skin
and entering the new.

When ginko leaves fell,
so did my heart.
When days became cold
I followed suit.

I imitate nature like
when fish gather
below their thick
icy protection.

When cherries blossom,
I allow my skin to melt
and water my feet
as sunshine feeds my brain.



When heat dries soil
into a cracked terrain, I
hide in a cicada song. Too
afraid to fall in the cracks.

When you ask me,
How do you do?
Look to the forecast
for your answer.

Or so I say,
because it's on days like these,
when dark clouds
wash the streets

I wonder why I'm so...
sad.

**Seasonal Affective Disorder (S.A.D.)*



Oman Won

I left Korea with less than *oman won* in my pocket.

At Incheon Airport, I dragged my two bags inside toward the baggage counter's whirring bustle. I muttered what I thought could be my last, "*Annyeonghaseyo*,"¹ to the lady behind the Korean Air counter and flung the bags onto her scale.

She read from her screen-translation of weight to currency and said, "*Oman won juseyo*."² I reached in my wallet, and while God only knows the true amount of Korean currency I found inside, it was less than *oman won*. I had already closed my Korean bank accounts and wired money home, so at that moment I was broke. I had no phone. Remaining in Korea was not an option: I counted on my next meal coming aboard the plane or not at all.

So, I said, "*Sillyehamnida*,"³ and dragged my luggage away to a rubbish bin, where I opened the cheaper of my two suitcases and separated keepers

1 Hello

2 Fifty thousand won please

3 Pardon me

from trash. First, I dumped everything that didn't bring me joy: old t-shirts, socks, and Korean study guides. So too the empty bottle of North Korean plum brandy I bought at the Korean Demilitarized Zone.

I unloaded both suitcases and repacked the nicer one. Most of my belongings were strewn about three benches in the middle of Incheon Airport, with a whole suitcase in the rubbish. The toughest item to consider came from my host mother. It forced me to reconsider one of my final farewells in Korea.

She had sent me packing with a box wrapped in pristine green wrapping paper. She said, "Paddy, do not open until marriage." I laughed and said, "*Ne, gwaenchanayo.*"⁴ It occurred to me I had never seen Host Mom cry until then. "*Saranghaeyo, Paddy!*" she said. I said, "I love you, too, *Omma.*"

An hour later, I weighed the bulky box's significance. I did not know what was inside. Should I open it and see if it was worth it? Could I look any crazier if I started opening a present right now? No, I promised Host Mom I'd wait until marriage, so I did.

⁴ Yes, I will

My mom and dad picked me up from the airport and drove me home through the swampy humidity of western Massachusetts summer. Mom made salads, and Dad grilled steak, American-style. This was our first family dinner in a year and a tribute to halcyon suppers before Mom got sick.

She cut cucumbers into skin-on slices, a quarter-inch thick, and as a boy, I fiended for the stacks prepared for salads. On specious errands I criss-crossed the kitchen, swiping two at a time. "Paddy!" she warned after one too many thefts. "Leave some for the rest of us."

On this night, she threw open the windows and blasted Sam Cooke songs like when I was a kid. We danced the box-step to "Meet Me at Mary's Place." Things have changed since those days; Mom got sick when I was twelve years old. She was once a classic turn-of-the-century American housewife. She worked a job she hated at an insurance company. She critiqued my grammar and my baseball game with an expert's eye. She snuck downstairs to do



Graduation Performance, Pel Doski, Busan

laundry and smoke cigarettes until I threw her pack out. After putting my brother, sister, and me to bed, she studied to become a teacher, and when she came home she sliced the cucumbers just the way I liked them. Mom was always doing the most.

On the eve of her earning her Master's degree and teaching license, a blood vessel burst in her brain. I stayed at my best friend's house while she was in the hospital. We played ping-pong for hours in his basement before my dad arrived and called me upstairs: "Paddy!"

I knew it was bad because he didn't say anything to me when I appeared in the kitchen. He turned his back on me to lead me to the garage. A chill of loneliness and fear filled me from my

toes as I followed his broad, hunched shoulders past the refrigerator out of the kitchen.

The smell of gasoline pervaded my nostrils as we stepped into the garage, and my dad turned on his heel to face me. “Oh, Paddy,” he said and pulled me into a suffocating hug. His hugs always smelled smoky and sweaty like the firehouse in which he worked. “Mom is in the hospital,” he said. “She’s going to have surgery tonight.”

“Is she going to be OK?” I breathed into his shoulder. He squeezed harder, so I could feel my ribs and lungs individually.

“The doctors,” he said, and then he choked on a sob. He whispered: “She has a 50-50 chance.”

“What should I do?”

“Stay here, I’ll let you know.”

The surgeons saved her life, but she was changed. The acidity of our blood is enough to kill our brain cells, so each passing moment cost her dearly. The woman who came home from the hospital was not the same as the one I remember, who scolded me for cucumber-slice

thievery. She was slowed, mentally and physically.

Shortly after she came home, my friends and I had gone around bush-lofting, or leaping into the bushes and shrubbery in our neighbors’ yards for fun. When our neighbors saw us flying headlong into their greenery, they called our parents.

My best friend’s mom screamed in our faces, and the walk home was the longest of my life. I knew my parents knew what I had done, how I had embarrassed them. But my mom only had a vacant, anti-depressed look. “I am very disappointed in you,” she said, and my heart broke.

This was how I knew she was different, that she had been discharged from the hospital but not fixed. The English language lacks vocabulary for this problem. When a body dies, we have funerals and burials; for the dead we have odes, dirges, and elegies. But when part of a person disappears, and the corporeal body remains, we are left dumb.

Los desaparecidos—“the disappeared” in Spanish—comes to

His hugs always smelled smoky and sweaty like the firehouse in which he worked.

mind, but that typically refers to whole people who have been lost to unknown villains. When I learned the Korean word *han*, I thought of wishing my mom would scream at me. *Han* is a repressed despair buttressed by helplessness; one suffers *han* when one lacks agency to keep the cruel world at bay. It’s knowing that, in the end, the world will break your heart.

Han reflects spirit-loss, and it helps answer the question whether our body and soul are one, or if it is possible to lose one before the other. My mother lost part of her spirit that summer, and nobody seemed to know what to do about it.

I landed in Gwangju to another family of educators: Host

5 side dishes

Father, Host Mom, and Host Bro. At our first family dinner, we made stilted conversation. As she spoke, Host Mom watched my chopstick habits carefully: her eyes followed my chopsticks from plate to *banchan*⁵ without disapproval. I gobbled some rice and—out of politeness—at least one square of spicy, fermented cabbage at each sitting: morning, noon, and night.

Kimchi is another thing entirely at 6:30 a.m. Many Koreans, including my host-family, do not distinguish among breakfast, lunch, and dinner foods. Never have I ever craved cereal as when I lived in Korea, but I quickly warmed to the array of bean sprouts, desiccated fish, and marinated meats served by *Omma*. Hers was the healthiest diet I ever enjoyed.

My mother lost part of her spirit that summer, and no one knew what to do about it.

Meals were host family affairs. Like the Massachusetts Sheas, the Korean Parks always left a ballgame on the television: I quickly learned to cheer for the glory of the KIA Tigers as well as Choo Shinsoo of the Cleveland Indians. The ritual of sitting together at the table, of practicing formalities like “*Jeongmal masisseoyo!*,”⁶ and of making plans for the holidays brought us together.

At first I puzzled at *Omnia’s* ability to prepare breakfast—*bulgogi*, rice, *banchan* such as sprouts, cucumber *kimchi*, and others Host Bro couldn’t even identify. She kept ungodly hours to prepare for the day: I once woke at 4:15 a.m. for a Skype job interview in New York City, and of course, *Omnia* was already up banging pots and doing laundry. In summer, she sometimes slipped into my room to power off my oscillating fan, thus to save me from nocturnal fan death.

For five decades she lived this routine—a classic turn-of-the-century Korean housewife. She was a nurse by day. She was short, mainly from childhood malnourishment. She saw to it that her children and host-children were well-nourished. One night, *Omnia* discussed something important with Host Bro, and I intuited they were talking about me. Chang Hyeon turned to me and said:

⁶ Very delicious!

“Paddy, maybe you will get a flu shot?”

I said, “OK. Where?”

“Maybe here.”

“In Gwangju?”

“No, my mom has it.”

We transitioned to the living room, where Host Bro got flustered as he attempted to translate his mother’s directions: “Pull down your shorts so I can stick this flu-shot needle in your ass.”

She took special pleasure in spoiling me. I was her third son, her American son, another teacher son in a family of educators. Every effort I made to launder clothes or wash dishes was rebuffed by the whole family. “Paddy, maybe you don’t.” This was as close as my host brother ever came to telling me, “No.” “Maybe you come have a fruit?”

Imagine my surprise when I returned home from school and discovered my raggedy old Converse All-Stars had been scrubbed beyond recognition and within an inch of cleanliness. Host Mom appeared from her kitchen, her eyes betraying her satisfaction at having cleaned up my

7 Thank you so much, Mom!

dirty old shoes. I smiled and said,

“*Jeongmal kamsahamnida, Omma!*”⁷

“I like them dirty like that,” doesn’t translate well into Korean.

On Christmas, my mother’s family reserves one special gift, like the BB gun in *A Christmas Story*. It was a tradition we adored before Mom got sick, one that mostly disappeared thereafter. Christmas is harder to enjoy when the world has broken your heart.

My childhood home is in disrepair, neglected since Mom got sick. So we celebrated that holiday—our first since my wife and I married—in Worcester, a central Massachusetts city.

Surrounded by Christmas detritus, Mom said, “Oh, Paddy, I think there’s one more for you.”

“Yeah?” I said and smiled at her. The last one is always a good one, and I wondered at the last time I got that treat.

“Well, do you remember the gift your Korean family got you?”

“Yes?” I lied.

“Yeah! She told you to open it when you got married.”

“Oh lord.”

“Well, I found it in the basement. I thought you’d want it now that you can open it.”

A slight tear in the corner belied its incredible journey: saved from the trash heap in Incheon, stored in Springfield for years, saved for last by another mother on Christmas in Worcester.

Inside: a cardboard box with red *hangeul*⁸ characters. Inside that: two porcelain dolls in perfect nuptial *hanbok*,⁹ preserved under a glass case. When I reached out to my host brother, it took months to get a response. “Hello Paddy-ssi, I am happy for you. I am married too. Merry Christmas.”

I felt the sadness of missing out when he messaged the news,

8 the Korean alphabet

9 Korean traditional attire

I was her third son, her American son, another teacher son in a family of educators.

but his curt response evaded the subject of my message: his mother, my host mother. I felt strange nerves as the Facetime icon blinked its rings across the globe. I smiled to myself for courage.

“Chang Hyeon!”

“Hi Paddy, how are you?” He looked exactly the same as when I left, but I recognized he was not in his parents’ apartment.

“Great! Congratulations on your marriage, man.”

“Oh, thank you.”

“So, I finally opened the gift your mom sent me home with. I waited until I got married.”

“Oh, wow.” He did not seem wowed.

“Are you at home?”

“I am at my home in Naju with my wife.”

“Gotcha. I don’t recognize the



wallpaper. How are the pears?”

“Oh, very good. We eat them. Every day.”

“I bet. My buddy Jim lived and taught in Naju.”

“Yes, I remember him. He is a funny man.”

“I’ll say!” I thought again of Jim McFadden, who died in Washington, D.C. in 2013. I couldn’t speak of death on this day.

“How is your mom? Will you tell her I say ‘*Jeongmal kamsahamnida*’

for me?”

“Oh, Paddy,” he said. “*Om妈* died.”

I looked at myself in the video feed, dumbstruck. I put my head in my hands, in the way I did when I learned about Jim.

“Chang Hyeon, I’m so sorry.” The tears were burning the insides of my eyes. I closed my eyelids, and the tears fell down my cheek. Never watch yourself cry on video.

“Yes, thank you.” I felt some

anger that he hadn’t told me. Anger has a privilege, they say. The feeling subsided.

I thought about *han*, and whether our bodies and souls are permanent or permanently connected. It’s not for nothing the beautiful Korean bride on my mantle reminds me of *Om妈* every time I see it. She is nothing but memories now, as are we all.

I recalled the last thing *Om妈* said to me as I left her home forever: “Paddy, please do not forget us.”

PADDY SHEA

2011–2012 *ETA* placed in Gwangju
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**She is nothing but
memories now,
as are we all.**



Credits

Open Window Photo (pg. 20)
Shin Minsong, Busan

Photo Essay Credits (pg. 60–61)
Top to bottom, left to right:
Claire and the Vending Machine, Alex Suryapranata, Japan.
Zoom Zoom, Lauren Lin, Taiwan.
Watercolors, Melissa Kukowski, Seoul.
Woven Bags, Zoya Hsiao, Indonesia.
Empty Cars, Sarah Coldiron, Hong Kong.
Welcome, Pel Doski, Namji.
Crush Performs, Sarah Coldiron, Busan.

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