



FULBRIGHT KOREA

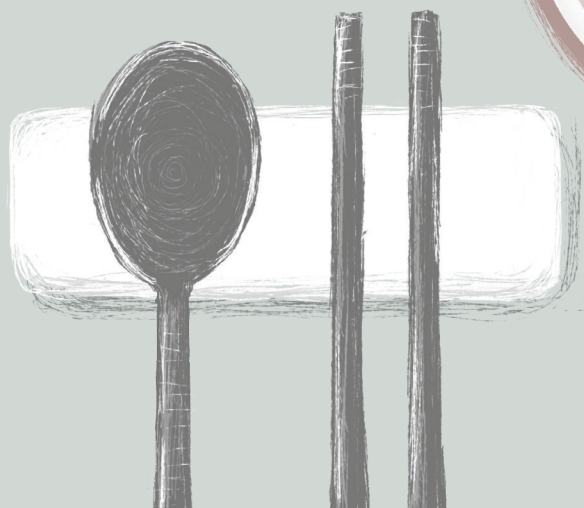
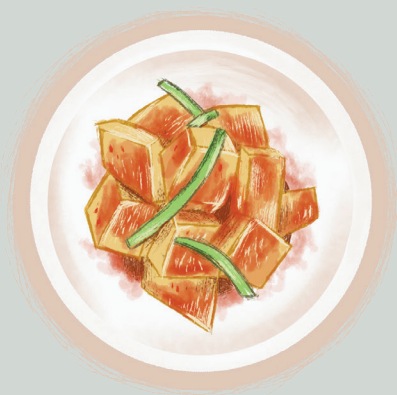
INFUSION

VOLUME 11.1

INFUSION

Volume 11, Issue 1

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.



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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Jai Ok Shim, Executive Director of Fulbright Korea

Dear Readers,

I am honored to present Volume 11, Issue 1 of The Fulbright Korea *Infusion*. Since its founding in 2008, *Infusion* has represented the diverse voices and experiences of American Fulbright grantees, blazoning to an audience the depths of perspective which otherwise would only be appreciated by the authors, artists and photographers featured in each publication. Fulbright Korea's rich history exists within the pages of *Infusion*, and I will always be grateful that the stories within will live on.

I would like to thank this year's editorial staff for their hard work, as well as their dedication to ensure two issues of Volume 11 see the light of day. Due to budget constraints, the Korean-American Educational Commission was only able to support the printing of one publication in Program Year 2017. However, because of the fundraising efforts initiated by *Infusion* leadership, Fulbright grantees will have another opportunity to bring their

experiences to literary fruition.

Lastly, I extend my immense gratitude to the Fulbright Korea community for their continued support throughout the years. From parents to faculty professors, co-teachers, host families and students, you all shape the experiences of those who proudly don the title of Fulbright. The Fulbright Korea network boasts over 5,000 Korean and American alumni, and the Commission is proud of all of their accomplishments, the impacts of which can be felt in both countries.

Without further ado, I hope you enjoy this year's *Infusion* and its glimpse into the Fulbright Korea experience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shim Jai Ok". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jai Ok Shim
Executive Director
Korean-American Educational Commission

LETTER FROM THE MINISTER COUNSELOR FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY



Aleisha Woodward, Minister Counselor for Public Diplomacy

Welcome to the spring issue of the 11th volume of *Infusion*. Spring is a time when so much of nature reawakens after the long, cold winter, a season of new beginnings. And that is exactly what Fulbright Korea is about—awakening people to the world around them and beginning connections between citizens of the United States and Republic of Korea.

I hope you will enjoy reading about the talents and creativity of Fulbrighters in this magazine, how they are experiencing new beginnings of their own and inspiring new adventures in others. Perhaps it will inspire you to embark on a something new yourself.

Each of these new beginnings, while important and valuable in and of itself, is another strand in the ever-thickening

rope that is the U.S.-ROK Alliance. I truly appreciate the work you do strengthening our people-to-people ties as you explain your culture to others and represent the best of our two countries.

With confidence and optimism,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A Woodward". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Aleisha Woodward
Minister Counselor for Public Diplomacy
Embassy of the United States of America
Chair of the KAEC

FOREWORD

Rachel Youngeun Rostad

To the Fulbright community—

The first half of the year has passed. Regardless of our grant type or amount of time spent in Korea, I'm sure we've all been adjusting to something new this latest grant year laid at our doorstep. For those of us who've come to Korea for the first time, pretty much everything is new. Our job, our living situation, the language we use on a daily basis. For those of us returning, we're taking on new roles, new placements, new proficiency in Korean—becoming more comfortable than we dreamed we'd be at this time last year, as well as discovering new uncertainties.

Most of all, we have new relationships. Even our oldest relationships have become new, stretched as they are across thousands of miles. *Infusion* Volume 11.1 is about those relationships.

In Caleb Y. Lee's "Homecoming" and Mara Guevarra's "Nuance," the authors explore what Koreanness means through the lens of their relationships with their families. Robyn Kincaide lets us peek into her classroom in "A Knock On The Door" and see the silly and touching moments

we share with students. Lisa Chang and Rachel E. Brooks show us the difficulty and rewards of making relationships across linguistic and cultural barriers in "A Different Kind of Conversation" and "Peanut Butter," respectively. Rachel K. Fauth contemplates two people's different ideas about beauty in "Picking Flowers," and closes the issue with "Returning," a bittersweet meditation on transit, the places and people we go to and leave.

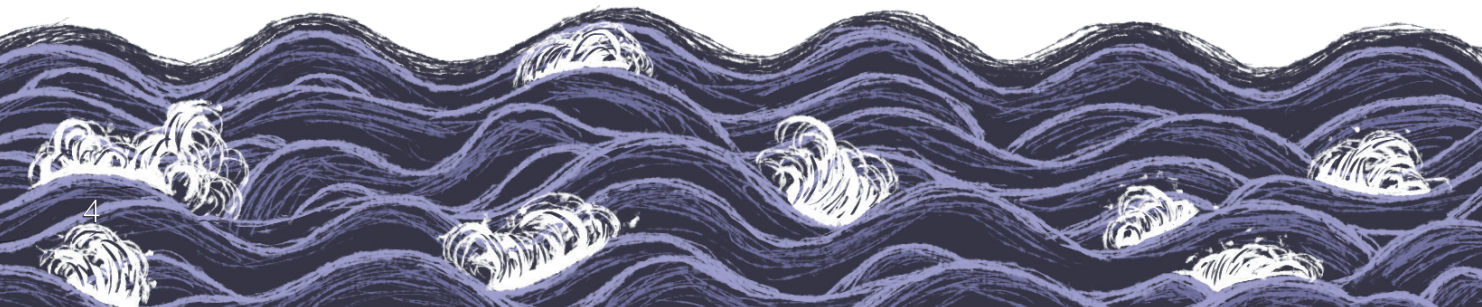
To those of you reading who are friends, parents, siblings, prospective grantees—I trust these words and images will illuminate a little of what it means to be a Fulbright grantee in Korea. To alumni, I hope it brings back fond memories of your time here.

Lastly, to my fellow current grantees:

By the time you read this, winter will have passed, and we'll all be on to a set of new challenges and changing relationships. I hope these pieces, like they have for me, remind you that you're going into all this newness with a community of brave, brilliant, thoughtful Fulbrighters at your side.



The Bridge to the Outside World, Walle Brown, outside Sejong City.





Homestay, Sweet, Homestay, Erin Hutchinson, Jeonju.



Sunset in Sky Park, Amy Hourcade, Sky Park, Seoul.



Synchronized Stretching, Rebecca Brower, Uiseong Elementary School, Uiseong.

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR

Robyn Kincaide

Almost all foreign English teachers teaching at the secondary level in Korea are responsible for administering some kind of biannual speaking test. Almost all of us have mixed feelings about it. The tests really cannot provide an accurate measure of students' speaking abilities but do afford us the rare opportunity to interact with the students on a one-on-one basis and learn more about them as individuals. In addition, test time can give us a much-needed break from, say, trying to keep a room of 25 middle school boys entertained for 45 minutes...

Jihyung

There is a knock on the door.

"Yes? Come in," I say, finishing up my notes from the last student.

In walks Jihyung, a bright third-year student quite skilled with English but often overshadowed by the class clowns due to his more humble personality.

"Teacher, give me five seconds, please," he says, starting to pace nervously in front of the desk where the test questions are laid out to be randomly chosen.

"It's okay; breathe." I inhale and exhale in an exaggerated manner, followed by a light chuckle and a smile to try and make him feel more comfortable.

"Okay. Ready." He sits down and answers my first question without any mistakes.

I read his second prompt out loud, "Tell me a lie."

Jihyung hesitates, which surprises me. I know he understands these words and am sure that he must have had a response prepared on his exam practice worksheet. He takes a deep breath, and then quietly mutters: "I hate you."

I laugh as I record his response on my grading sheet, and he follows up with a panicked, "It's a lie, okay?"

Chanhun

The knock on the door this time is very deliberate, almost rhythmic. Without waiting for a response, Chanhun slides the door partway open, pops his head around the corner, and with his unique but convincingly fluid intonation and cadence

asks, "Do you want to build a snowman?"

It's June. It's 32° Celsius outside.

"Um, now?"

Jimin

After about 20 of his classmates have gone, Jimin steps into the room. His English skills rank in the bottom half of his homeroom, but this fact never seems to stop him from chatting in English all class. Rather than being obnoxious, I find it strangely endearing, and it makes 3-1 class a livelier environment.

Ironically, on the day of the speaking exam he is almost dead silent. We make it through the first question with only a few errors, but the second question stumps him:

"What is hard for you to do?"

He fiddles around a bit and taps his foot up and down, trying to remember what the question means and how to respond.

"Hard... like difficult." I pull a stressed face and muss up my hair with my hands, trying to get the concept across without using any hints in Korean. "What is hard"—I pull the stressed face—"for you?" I gesture at him with an open palm.

He starts shaking his head back and forth. I can tell he has convinced himself he doesn't know his answer, even though it is likely still in his mind, buried beneath layers of panic. I remember the answer he had written on his test prep worksheet with the help of my co-teacher, because its accuracy had made me burst out laughing:

"It is hard for me to be quiet in class."

But now, shaking his head and staring at the floor, he utters only a single muttered word: “Skip.”

Two days later, Jimin sees me 20 meters down the hallway and bellows with a big grin, “Hello, teacher!”

I breathe an internal sigh of relief. I didn’t break him.

Youngsun

“I broke my arm. What should I make sure I don’t do?”

“Make sure you don’t study.”

Last year, Youngsun had given the best English Speaking Contest presentation out of all Uiseong Middle School’s students. I know he recognizes the illogic of his answer.

“Ah, my arm!” I say, clutching it with my face contorted in affected pain. “I can’t study!” Then I give him one of my well-practiced, resigned *What are you doing, boys?* looks: one eyebrow raised, a sideways grimace-smile hybrid, elbow bent and palm flipped upward.

“Yes, exactly.”

I roll my eyes and write “A” on his paper. His grammar had been perfect.

Byungwoo

The door is already partway open, but Byungwoo raps on the door and says, “Excuse me?” as though he is acting in a play.

“Yes? Would you like to take an English test now?” I ask, trying to keep up the skit-like atmosphere he has created. However, when I do this, he pauses mid-stride and a look of slight confusion flickers across his

face. As one of the top English students in his class, I know Byungwoo has the knowledge base to understand what I just said, but it seems as though he didn’t process it. I then realize he may be more nervous about the English test than his confident tone of voice may suggest. Okay, then. Just the test questions; let’s not push him beyond that.

He answers the first question without a problem, but also without his usual swagger. With the second prompt, though, Byungwoo rediscovers his groove.

“Tell me a lie.”

“I have a friend Youngsun and he is very handsome.”

Woochang

The door slides open and I look up, having just finished writing my notes. “Hello!” I say cheerily as Woochang walks into the room.

He sits down at the desk, looks at me, and makes the observation: “Gold head.”

When I first began teaching, I would not have known how to respond to such a statement, but these days the apparent oddness does not faze me.

“Gold head.” I repeat Woochang’s words, nodding in acknowledgement of this fact before launching into an explanation of the test. “Choose one blue question, one yellow question, one orange question...”

Junhwan

Usually his voice is several decibels louder than necessary, but after the initial “HELLO TEACHER!” as he enters the room, Junhwan quiets down to something more like the speaking volume of an average human being. I ask him the first question, and he responds easily. With the second prompt he draws, however, he gets to turn the tables around on me.

I barely glance up as I make a note of the selected prompt and read it to him: “Ask me a question.”

“What do you think about love?”

My pen pauses. Most students ask me, “How old are you?” or “How tall are you?” Those questions I can answer in a heartbeat, but this one is far deeper than I had anticipated.

“Um... I think... It is hard to find... Yes, hard to find.”

He nods sagely.

“Okay... and last, choose one orange question...”

Minhyung

“What will you teach at Jungwon University?”

As one of the top students in the second year, I had been expecting Minhyung to ask something a little more inventive than “How old are you?” in response to the ask-me-a-question prompt.

Looking up as I finish scribbling down the word “university” on my grading sheet, I reply, “I will teach English there—surprise!”

He laughs. When I had first started teaching—and by teaching I mean bumbling my way through 45-minute time blocks—at Uiseong Middle School, Minhyung had thought of my classes as a waste of time. Looking back, I really can’t blame him. These days, however, he’s much more involved during speaking class time and almost seems disappointed that I will leave his school to teach university students in another month.

“Okay, last question: What do you hope that you will be when you grow up?”

“I hope that I will be a prosecutor, because I like solving riddles.”

I smile and say, “Good dream,” but my heart sinks as I think of the hours, days, *years* of private tutoring and *hagwon* classes ahead of him as he pursues that goal. I don’t see how even the brightest of students can make it through this education system without being broken.

Namjoon

As I’m finishing laying out the question cards, the first student for 2-1 class walks into the room. The second-year students haven’t been taking their tests in alphabetical order, and seem to be operating more on a volunteer/peer-pressure basis as to who goes first. To my surprise, student #1 turns out to be the more introverted of my twin host brothers (although they both certainly fall into that category). At home, Namjoon avoids speaking English—or interacting with me—as much as possible. Within the structured environment of class, however, he is a willing enough participant and sometimes looks suspiciously as though he is in fact enjoying himself.

I ask him three questions. He answers them flawlessly.

“Very good job!” I tell him enthusiastically as he gets up to leave.

“Goodbye, teacher,” he says in a deep near-monotone.

“Bye-bye.”

Although we live in the same home, these are the last words we will exchange today.

Dangchan

“Hello, teacher!” The slightly more cheerful of my host brothers enters the room.

“Hello! Could you write your name here, please? Just in Korean.” I hand Dangchan my clipboard and pen, although I know how to spell his name both in Hangeul and in English.

“Great, thank you! And here, choose one blue, one yellow, one orange.” After conducting well over 100 of these tests so far, these words, uttered in a cheery tone as I point my pen at the slips of paper in a bouncing motion, are getting old.

He does as I ask, and I look at the randomly selected questions in disappointment. English class is the only time I really feel that I can bond with my host brothers, perhaps because here at school they are more distant from the pressure put on them by their well-meaning mother. However, the questions he drew are quite frankly the most boring of the bunch, and will not lend themselves to any more bonding. I’d really been hoping for: “What do you think of English class?” The week before, as we prepared answers for the speaking test, most students had just copied down one of the example answers: “I like it. It’s very interesting.” or “I don’t like it. It’s boring.” However, Dangchan’s response was more personalized:

“I like it because we play many fun games.”

My heart had melted as I read that over his shoulder. Perhaps it’s a sign of narcissism, but I really wanted to hear those words uttered out loud.

Eunsung

“Teacher, I want number three,” Eunsung says instantly as he steps across the threshold.

“Um... Maybe you will choose number three?” To be fair to the other students, I have to have him choose questions at random, but secretly I hope Eunsung manages to select number three from among the ten paper slips. I’m sure he has an interesting answer prepared.

No such luck. I ask Eunsung the three questions he has drawn, and he responds without any problems.

“Great j—”

“Teacher, one more!”

I blink in surprise. Usually students are itching to escape the testing room. Nobody has ever requested that I ask more questions.

“One more?”

“Number three!”

“Um, okay...?” The two of us flip over all the paper slips to see where it had been hiding. It was the last one.

“What do you hope that you will be when you grow up?”

Grin plastered on his face, Eunsung starts his answer. As he speaks, he gestures in the air with his index finger, a habit of his when he wants to make sure he is putting all the words in the right order and not skipping tricky grammatical pieces like articles.

“I hope that I will be a national curling team player.”

I smile and look him straight in the eye.

“I hope that you will be, too.”

Robyn Kincaide is a 2016-2018 ETA at Jungwon University in Goesan, Chungcheongbuk-do. In her first grant year, she was placed at Uiseong Boys' Middle School and Oksan Middle School in Uiseong, Gyeongsangbuk-do.

Circle-Up, Rebecca Brower, Danchon Elementary School, Danchon.



Homecoming

Caleb Y. Lee

“There’s not many families left that do this,” he said. “We are one of the last.”

If we were indeed among the few remaining, then 혁희 삼촌, Uncle Hyeokhee, is the last of the last.

As the current elected representative head of the family, Uncle Hyeokhee carried the torch for the tasks at hand, directing others where to go, which burial mounds to see and how to navigate through the thick pine branches. In the moment, I imagine it’s the suit jacket he’s wearing that signals this position, the chestnut seedlings and thorns from the morning hike stuck like insignias to his back. He used to be a Korean Army colonel, or so I’ve heard, and his aura befits this rank.

“So you see, all the relatives that gathered today are 50 or 60,” he called out to me over his shoulder. “There are few young people that come these days.”

He’s 63, eight years older than the guess I gave him as we weaved our way down the southern side of the mountain. Luckily for me, he spoke English with relative ease, having worked at an American company in the past. At 22, I was not the youngest present that day—my second cousin Eunseo had that honor as a middle schooler—but Uncle Hyeokhee was right; after us 젊은 사람, or younger people, there was a conspicuous age gap of almost 25 years.

We were to trek through the woods of 추화산, or Chuhwa Mountain—sometimes up, sometimes down and never in a straight line. This was the backyard of three brothers that grew up together: my grandfather, his brother two years his elder and the youngest by seven years. I couldn’t help but note how similar the gaps were to that of me and my own brothers.

It was 243 meters to the peak of Chuhwa, which overlooked the small village of 밀양, Miryang, the family hometown. A distant relative I had met that morning handed me a pack filled with the ceremonial provisions for the day. We were to set these at the foot

of the family burial mounds—but first, we had to set out an offering and bow to the spirits thought to be protecting these parts.

Kowtowing to ghosts would have been a laughable proposition a few months ago. But when you find out that you are a part of the 31st official generation of a family branch whose history can easily be traced back over a thousand years, and you ask yourself whether this supposed mountain spirit has done its job... You’d probably bow too.

While we ascended the mountain early in the morning, persimmon trees and squash patches gave way to pine trees and a thick needle underfoot that gave a satisfying scrunch under the weight each step. Save for one main route, these were not oft-traveled paths through the mountainside, and safe footing was hard to come by.

We had already passed a handful of nondescript mounds lining the path that could have passed for abandoned dirt piles. But these three in the clearing were different—neatly lined up, half-buried stone markers at their feet. Almost two centuries separated us and the ancestors buried here, Uncle Hyeokhee explained, as the others began to set up the first offering at the furthest mound.

We opened the plastic carton, unwrapping the 떡, Korean rice cakes, and laid out the dried fish and squid on a rectangular Styrofoam plate, waving at the flies that had immediately descended. Apples, chestnuts, persimmons and tangerines were left in the plastic and set on the stone along with the other dishes, accompanied by a small paper cup that would soon be filled with plum wine. An incense stick stuck out of the grass.

We were ready.

Uncle Hyeokhee was the first to bow. Two hands placed on his forehead, he knelt and bent his face to the ground in supplication, briefly pausing before rising to his feet for another split second. Then he repeated the same action, but this second time he remained on his knees after the bow. One bow for someone alive, two to honor those who have passed, and four to a king, one of my second uncles whispered in Korean for my benefit.

Another relative knelt on the ground directly to Uncle Hyeokhee's right and poured the plum wine with both hands into the paper cup Uncle Hyeokhee gingerly held with two hands. Hovering the half-full cup above the gravestone, he silently drew four circles in the air with his libation before dousing the front side of the stone with the liquid.

Next, he filled the cup again, this time to the brim, and then placed the libation at the head of the tombstone marker before reading from a piece of parchment produced from his jacket pocket. This grave belonged to the mother of a male ancestor who had lived eight generations earlier and came from Gyeonggi, a region not far from modern-day Seoul. Each paper contained identifiers specific to the occupant of each burial mound, but the words printed in the second half of the message were always the same:

계절이 바뀌어 서리와 찬 이슬이
내렸나이다. 묘역을 성소하오니 추모의
마음 간절하와 삼가 정결한 찬수로
시사를 드리오니 잡수시옵소서.

*As the seasons change and the forest frost
descends, we clean this burial site, recording
your name in remembrance of your passing
and leaving food behind for you to eat. Please
accept our sincere offering.*

The last syllable echoed through the trees as we remained kneeling, pausing for the ancestor to spiritually consume the meal. I imagined the fall breeze to be her voice of approval.

At last, Hyeokhee reached for the cup of wine and drank half of it before dousing the rest on the front side of the stone once again. He stood up, but we weren't finished—a few of the other men repeated the same process, following Hyeokhee once he rose.

“일동 재배,” everyone bow twice, he said firmly, and we followed his lead. Thus ended the first of the day's many ritual ceremonies.

To me, the spiritual legacy of the November air felt particularly strong that day, and Uncle Hyeokhee asked me how much I knew of Korea's religious history

as we navigated underbrush to our next gravesite. Thanks to East Asian Studies courses I took in college, I was able to respond adequately: the dominant Korean religion transitioned from Buddhism to Confucianism with the advent of the Joseon dynasty in the late 14th century.

Six hundred years later, the tendrils of the state religion still weaved their way through this mountain like roots beneath the earth. Except for Eunseo, all 20 of us going up the mountain were male descendants of the same Lee family patriarch born some centuries prior. The women had joined us for the early morning meal—an 8:30a.m. combination of 갈치, spicy cutlass fish, with boiled radish and spicy soft tofu, shellfish and vegetable stew and 반찬—an array of colorful side dishes.

From what I could gather, the women born into the Lee family were not present for these annual rites either—it seemed to be the male duty to march up the mountain. There was a lack of questioning of roles that seemed to be conspicuous only to me; the women seemed to know their expected place—there was no question of right or wrong, of discrimination or prejudice. There was simply a grounded acceptance of what is and what has always been.



But it is difficult to fully convey the ephemeral, almost spiritual experience of kneeling in front of a few mounds of dirt to a generation that deliberately eschews the past in favor of pursuing an independent future.

The logic of this Confucian-grounded tradition stretched beyond gendered roles, however. Uncle Hyeokhee, age 63, was the first to bow at our first gravesite of the day despite the presence of my grandfather's younger brother, age 79.

Having noticed my confused expression, Hyeokhee had explained that he was the elder son of a firstborn ancestor, thus bestowing the highest bowing position upon him despite the presence of older relatives. His tone was matter-of-fact; there was no doubt or hesitation as to the correct order.

Such is the result of tradition neatly passed down by generations. What was once a relatively gender-equal and largely Buddhist region transitioned to the new patriarchal Confucian society, which then rooted itself deeply over the next six-plus centuries. New ideas were expressed as doctrine, doctrine developed into rituals and these rituals crystallized the spiritual doctrine into facts of life.

Over the years, my frustration of the many aspects of Korea that Westerners might call "backwardness"—such as persistent gender inequality, gendered roles and age hierarchy—has migrated

towards a begrudging understanding of their source. Certainly not acceptance, but not a complete rejection either.

To invalidate the old way of life would be to deny the validity of six centuries of ancestors. To attack it with only a modern lens would be to forfeit a key piece of knowledge and understanding of the family history. And so I bowed to ancestors that day, pushing aside conflicting thoughts and exchanging them for an open mind. This was not the time for looking back, I thought to myself, even as we connected with the past.

Simultaneously avoiding thorn brambles and low-hanging branches, I pulled bits and pieces of our history from Uncle Hyeokhee, using both English and Korean to frame my questions as precisely as I could to overcome the language barrier.

"Even five or ten years ago when we did this, many more people would attend," Uncle Hyeokhee reflected, wiping the sweat from his brow with a handkerchief. "But now there are fewer and fewer of them."

Many in the family had become extremely successful—a former MBC

television chief executive here, head of a design firm here, executive of one of the largest Korean banks there. But even for them, the ones still in Korea, the past in Miryang is fading as quickly as the ink calligraphy hanging over the threshold of the family's ancestral home.

"These days, young people don't feel like they owe their ancestors debt—debt is the right word, isn't it?" Uncle Hyeokhee sighed. "They are so busy—even Uncle Sanghee had to drive here all night after work as a reporter. 많이 고생했네요—He went through a lot just to get here."

Time is a commodity, running dry like a weak stream that was once a pulsing river. Families, jobs and other life obligations of the now push the past further from memory. Even the burial mounds become tougher to find with each passing year; one was completely obstructed by a farmer's field and another took a 30-minute hike to find. Eventually, they will all fade into the mountainside, grassy mounds dotting a forested mountain, remembered by few and visited by fewer.

I am one of the fortunate ones able to experience the dwindling legacy of the mountain overlooking Miryang. But it is difficult to fully convey the ephemeral, almost spiritual experience of kneeling

in front of a few mounds of dirt to a generation that deliberately eschews the past in favor of pursuing an independent future. Even tougher still when what was once our home is but a small dot that appears on fewer and fewer maps each passing year.

Yet the small hill overlooking our insignificant town keeps my outlook rooted in a deeper past. It is a reminder for humility, for my life is but one on a chain of dozens that will someday stretch as far into the future as it now does into the past.

Before trekking up the mountain that morning, I had thought I was visiting Miryang as a part of a filial duty to my extended family. But as I craned my neck over the backseat of the car to catch a glimpse of the short peak one last time, I knew that I could not be separated from the history permeating this place any more than I could remove the Korean-ness from my blood.

I am one of them, from the others visiting the village that morning to the ancestors buried on the hill, and no citizenship document, language barrier or ocean between us will change that fact.

Caleb Y. Lee is a 2017-2018 ETA at Youngsaeng High School in Jeonju, Jeollabuk-do.



picking flowers

Rachel K. Fauth

what I know about the old lady is
maybe three things:
first that she is pious,
second she is harsh,
third that sometimes she wears white and
only white, matching linen shirt and pants.

that,
and she once stopped
to lift my wrist, flip it, graze
its pale, translucent underside,
cooing oh *예쁘다*, beautiful!

*
in the field she picks only white ones,
while I search for
the mutations: blushing, emotive
pink blooms, some hot
red peeling from the petal's
edge.

she says of my selection,
귀엽다,
this is very cute.

there's my dad's comment about
how flowers happen, and
though it be another
species altogether,
*the bluest hydrangeas are
because of the acidity in the ground.*

that
I can't tell her,
joyous woman, bounty of only
the whitest wild, cut
and compliant.
we don't share
a language or
perhaps its definitions.

*
driving back at dusk
I recognize one word on the radio.
it's her son's name,
the Korean word for hymnal.
the sky burns
borderless
beautifully
the same color as my fistful
of derelict buds. and I
wonder,
does this woman prefer the daytime
for its purity?

Rachel K. Fauth was a 2016-2017 ETA at Changpyeong High School
in Damyang, Jeollanam-do. She now lives in Knoxville, Tennessee.



A Different Kind of Conversation

Lisa Chang

I punched in the key code to my door and pushed down the knob. Dragging my sweaty body, I clumsily slipped out of my shoes. The lights in the house were on, which meant that someone was back, but instead of the usual accented calling of my name, there was no response to my entrance.

“엄마?” I quietly called out for my host mom.

“어. 리사.” *Oh, Lisa.* There was a weariness to her voice, probably from another long day of work. I walked towards the dining table, where she was eating dinner alone. A few simple 반찬, side dishes, laid out as well as a small porcelain bottle and a narrow shot glass in front of her. “밥 먹었어?” *Did you eat dinner?* she asked.

“네. 먹었어요.” *Yes, I ate.* After living with her for ten months, this exchange had become a daily routine. She asked me about what I was going to do tomorrow with my day off, and what time I was leaving and returning to the house. With our language barrier, it seemed that the only thing we could confidently talk about was my daily plans. Whether I would stay at the house to eat lunch, what time I would return to be back for dinner, etc.

I was about to turn away to take a shower, when she mumbled. “오늘... 슬퍼.” *Today... I'm sad.*

This was different. She frequently told me how tired she felt after work, but she rarely blurted out her other emotions. Caught off guard, I managed to respond, “왜요?” *Why?*

“친구... 죽었어요.” *My friend... died.* Before I could say a word, she added, “자살.”



Mother and Child, Rebecca Brower, Taejongdae, Busan.

I didn't know the word, so I awkwardly shuffled to my room to grab my phone and look up the translation. 엄마 turned back to her food and waited patiently for me to figure out her words. I tapped my phone a few times, then: *Suicide*.

I looked up, as she heaved a sigh. I wanted to say that I was sorry, but I knew that the Korean wouldn't translate what it would otherwise convey in English. Instead, I walked to the other side of the dining table and took a seat opposite from her. “괜찮아요. 엄마?” *Are you okay?*

“네. 괜찮아요. 초등학교 중학교 친구.” *Yes, I'm okay. She was my elementary and middle school friend.* She simplified her language for my comprehension.

“친하셨어요?” *Were you close?*

She nodded as she poured out a clear liquid from the porcelain bottle into the shot glass.

“친구... 가족 있었어요?” *Did your friend have a family?*

She went on to explain. I grasped a few words. 남편. 아이들. *Husband. Children.*

“어...” I nodded and pretended to understand everything she said, but by now she could read my expression to tell whether I truly comprehended everything. There was no need to pretend. Regardless, she went on.

“*In Korea, suicide happens often.*”

“*Yes, I've heard.*”

“*Three, four of my friends have died.*” She spoke more than usual, the alcohol swirling in her body.

“*All of them... suicide?*”

“*No, two of them committed suicide. One of them died in a car accident. One of them had 암.*”



Another word I didn't understand. I mumbled the word as I typed it in my translation app. *Cancer*.

“*A lot of Koreans have 울증. Some days I also feel the same way.*”

Again, I typed in the new vocabulary. Three small green squares appeared and disappeared on the phone screen as I waited for the translation. *Melancholia, hypochondria, depression.*

I thought back to the first week of school, when I attempted to wake up a sleeping student in class. My co-teacher in that class came over to gently stop me. She explained that the student often sleeps in class, and that he probably has depression, so I shouldn't disturb him. I wasn't sure what I was taken aback by more: the depression, or her nonchalance when she explained this in front of the very student she was talking about.

“*Recently, one of the teachers at school told me that a third-grade student tried to commit suicide. But he didn't die.*”

“*At our school?*” I nodded. I expected a gasp from 엄마, but she merely blinked and nodded.

I remember hearing the news a week ago, when the teacher told me with a hushed tone. “I tell them all the time that grades are not everything, but to them grades are everything.” The teacher explained. As the school counselor, she had seen too many similar cases of self-harm, depression and self-loathing. But words seem to carry little significance to students, I thought. It's difficult to comprehend what else matters when you're studying for most of the day and striving for the best grades. What could I do, besides smile and say 화이팅 (“fighting,” cheer up) as much as I could? What could I say, when the students shrank when I approached them with English?

“*Lisa, you must also feel it too, right?*” 엄마 asked.



“What could I do,
besides smile
and say *화이팅* as
much as I could?”

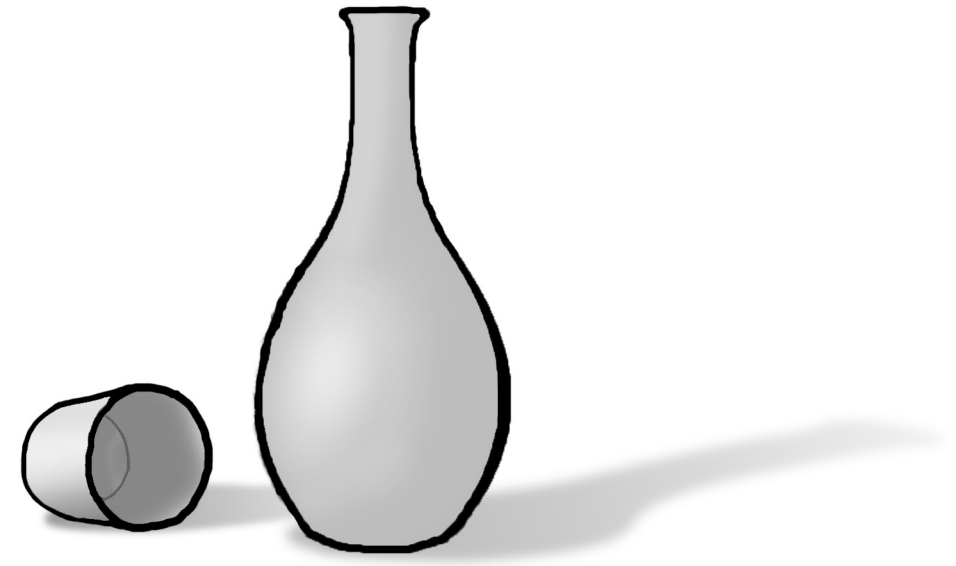
“Me?”

I thought back to a few months ago, when after a long day of work I had confided in my host mother with my even more limited Korean. 오늘 우울했어요. *Today I was depressed.* I didn't mean to say that I was depressed, but merely sad from a stressful day. But somehow I learned the Korean word for “depressed” before I learned the word for “sad.” My host mother responded with much concern, and seeing that I couldn't understand, much less respond to all her questions, she later called my co-teacher to check in with me.

“*I don't get depressed. I get sad sometimes, but not depressed,*” I responded again in broken Korean.

“*Really? Lisa's so healthy.*”

A few moments of silence as she resumed to picking at her food. I tried piecing together a response. 하나님 is “God” in Korean. 도와주세요. *He helps me.* But I couldn't quite piece together and say my thoughts quickly before she tried offering me some soju from the porcelain glass, which I had just noticed had delicate and elegant carvings on it. I politely declined. *It was a present for me,* she explained. *But it doesn't taste good.* She quickly made a sucking noise with her tongue as she grimaced and moved the bottle away from me.



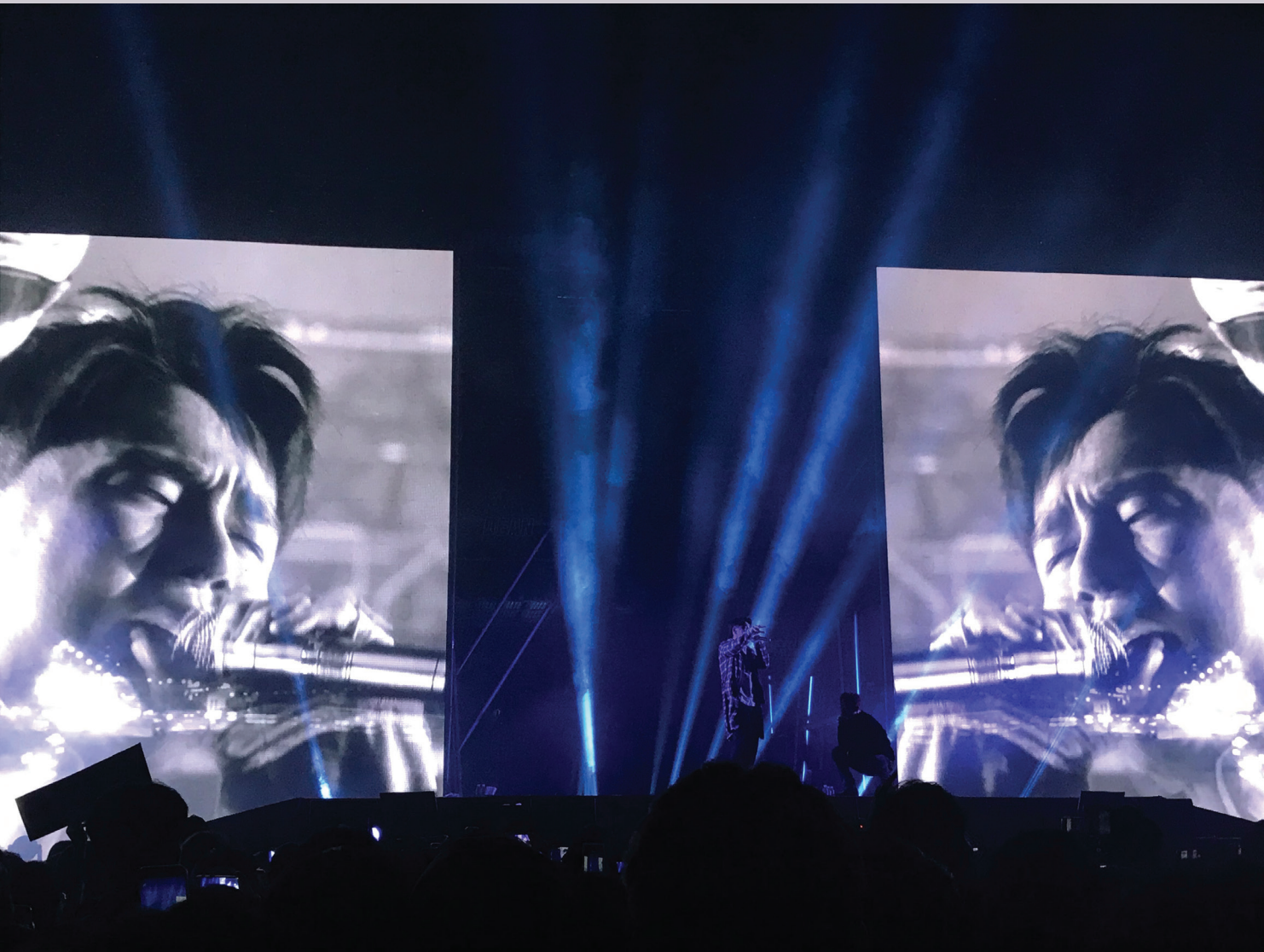
A few minutes of silence. I picked up one of our host dogs as the other host dog had already leaped onto her lap and started licking the edge of the table. She reprimanded it, and the host dog stopped. We changed the subject to the dogs, and how expensive their medical bills were. Eventually though, we ran out of things to say.

“*Go shower and rest,*” she told me.

I nodded and slowly got up from my chair, unsure whether I should stay longer to keep her company, or if she wanted some alone time.

I emerged from the bathroom 15 minutes later. The lights were all turned off and there was a silence emptier than usual.

*Lisa Chang is a 2016-2018 ETA at Chungbuk National University
High School in Cheongju, Chungcheongbuk-do.*



Performance by Dean, Jenn Kwon, Daegu.



Celebratory Mood, Eunice Yu, Sinchon, Seoul.

누앙스, nuance, nuance

Mara Guevarra

한비

“If you don’t mind me asking, why are you studying Korean?”

To be fair to my friend, I know the answer.

I spent half a summer in Seoul when I was seventeen. Primarily taken care of by my host grandparents, I tried to communicate with them with my broken elementary Korean, while they spoke to me in a mix of Jeolla-do and Seoul-mal accents. Our time together was short but my memories are still strong. The shy smile of my host grandmother when she told me to start calling her *엄마*, *mom*. The blue, textured wallpaper of their old apartment. Walking post-dinner laps together in the nearby subway station plaza.

Telling my friend of that summer is its own answer, and my tongue trips over itself trying to inject the power of memory into my words. I tell her how seriously I took my summer language program. I send her a link to my outdated travel blog and I mention my freshman drawing final, which included a chalk portrait of my host nephew. I tell my friend that *아빠*, *father*, still introduced me to their neighbors as *우리 미국에*

왔던 딸, *our daughter from America*, without hesitation. It had been six years since we’d last seen each other.

But telling is not showing, and my impassioned answer still lacks. It’s not enough to share facts about my old host family or of a month and a half in 2011; instead, I want to cut out the nostalgia from inside me and present to her, this years-old affection delicately wrapped and maintained. If she saw the depths of my affection, maybe she’d get her answer.

“Wow,” my friend says offhandedly, her eyes wide in surprise. “You really acted like their daughter.”

I smile. That’s good enough.

Mama

A week before my paternal grandmother moves back to the Philippines—a month before I leave for what would be almost two years in Korea—I nest myself into my grandmother’s embrace as she prays her daily novenas and try to commit the scent of her perfume to memory. When she finishes praying, we talk and joke, and then finally settle on a game: she says a phrase in English, I give it back to her in Tagalog, and then I translate it



Hangul, Erin Hutchinson, King Sejong Great Memorial Hall.

into Korean. It starts off gentle: I switch my grandmother’s “Have you eaten?” into “Kumain ka na ba?” which morphs into “밥 먹었어?”

My grandmother basically guffaws, and I grin brightly at her delight.

“Ano ba yan,” she laughs. “You sound so Korean.”

A few months later, I confess to my grandmother over text that I’m losing my Tagalog without the constant immersion that is living with family.

You’ve been learning too much Korean, she messages me. *Dapat mong matutunan ang wika natin. You need to learn our wika.*

My face burns with shame. I’m both a heritage speaker with no real grammatical command of Tagalog and an on-and-off Korean learner whose speaking skills still haven’t gotten over the plateau of a high-intermediate level. Even so, the weight of Korean on my tongue is a heavy one, and the weight of knowing my brain seeks out Korean first rather than Tagalog is a burden.

As my heart fills with spite, I type the words *then why did no one teach me Tagalog?* only to back out and text her back a deflection instead: *What does wika mean?*



Her response is immediate. *Wika means language.*

I do not respond, and I let the text get buried.

언니

On my first day of my Korean language summer program, 언니, older sister, personally delivers me to school by bus. After some light conversation, she stares at my face searchingly, smiling slightly, and she says kind of wonderingly in English, “You really look like a Korean.”

I squirm under the pin of her smile. I think of my American-ness and my fastidiousness to interrupt and say I am Filipina before anyone can assign an ethnicity otherwise. I think of the parental side of my family, quick to say they are part Spanish (from Papa) or part Chinese (from Mama’s Tatay), but I know nothing about Spain nor China; my only inheritance from those

two cultures is the blood in my veins. After everything that has passed, out of all possible identities, I have clung to diaspora as my label.

The bus ride is long, so I give 언니 a pained smile and attempt to close the conversation. “Well, my parents immigrated from the Philippines,” I say slowly, “so I’m Filipina.”

“I know,” 언니 says, smile serene. “But if I didn’t know, I would see your face and think Korean.”

Tatay

I spend my first proper 설날, *Lunar New Year*, not alone and kind of lonely in Seoul, but in the Philippines instead, with extended family and a different kind of loneliness.

Manila couldn’t feel more like the opposite of Seoul. The Philippines’ January humidity covers me in a thin sheet of sweat as I copy and paste a 새해

복 많이 받으세요!!! *Happy New Year!!!* across multiple 카톡 chat rooms. Instead of the rice cakes I’ve come to associate with 설날, the Philippines is celebrating the Chinese New Year in every mall, mooncakes and tikoy advertised on hard-to-miss bright red kiosks with signs in gold lettering. And—because Tatay was half-Chinese—we are also having tikoy for breakfast.

As my aunt and my grandmother bring up anecdotes of my great-grandfather, I chew our breakfast tikoy thoughtfully. Tikoy tastes like oil and fried eggs and sugar, chewy and sticky and sweet, greasy and decadent at ten in the morning.

I wonder about my great-grandfather, a man I know my grandmother loved fiercely, and therefore, by extension, a man that I wonder about from time to time because love and memory are my family’s only heirlooms. This was a man who abandoned his Chinese father to stay

with his Filipina mother, whose Chinese surname was cast away to take up his stepfather’s. My great-grandfather didn’t come to know his Chinese heritage, and the only thing passed down from him to my grandmother to me is a single street name somewhere in Fujian, supposedly the location of their family compound.

Tatay is part smoke and part imagination in my mind, and I imagine him weaving through a vision of Manila’s Chinatown that I only know from television programs, the streets bursting in red in time for the Lunar New Year. In this daydream, my great-grandfather gently squints at wrapped tikoy, deciding on which bundle to bring home to prepare for his children. I wonder if he felt the paradoxical comfort of dissonance: surrounded maybe by Cantonese or Hokkien he didn’t understand, but holding on dearly to the last vestiges of a culture he couldn’t remember. I wonder if my great-grandfather felt the same longing within him that flares up in me: the rise and tide of neither here nor there, the white background noise that is diaspora. An identity forged from being lost; an identity created from hybridity.

Or he might be nothing like me at all. Maybe he just bought tikoy at Chinese New Year because there is comfort in the routine of tradition.

(Either way, the tikoy is good.)

이모

As I shove more of the 보쌈 into my mouth, 이모, aunt, gives me a pleased frown. “야~ 마라는 한식 잘 먹네. 너 진짜 한국 사람이야,” *hey, Mara eats Korean food well, you're really Korean*, she proclaims, as I load raw garlic onto my 쌈.

I laugh it off and object as vehemently as I can without seeming offended. When I itch to assert that I am Filipina—my accent and taste for kimchi be damned—I fill my mouth with food and chase my words with spicy pork instead.

But my host aunt continues in Korean with a frown, “You know, my daughter doesn't really eat kimchi well. She can't eat anything spicy.”

I look over to my host sister, her love of squid snacks, gum, jellies and most junk food well known even to me, who sees her once every few months at best. At the mention of kimchi, her nose wrinkles.

“나 한국인 아니야?” *I'm not Korean?* She pouts, her mouth settling in an unamused line.

“아니야,” her mother parrots teasingly, *nope*, rolling her eyes.

I squirm when my host sister's frown deepens. I gulp the rest of my mouthful nervously, and both food and discomfort coat my esophagus. My host sister only stares determinedly at her plate.

“당연하지,” I tell my sister softly, once I've swallowed my silence too. “너 한국 사람이야.”

Of course you're Korean.

Papa

At 87, my Mama is literally history in the flesh, and my week in the Philippines turns into informal interviews with my grandmother. Every morning at breakfast, I prompt her to reminisce and I hungrily clutch onto her many stories, the cherry-picked scraps of our family history almost forgotten or left behind.

I look at our pandesal, that morning's breakfast. Pandesal, pan de sal, *bread of salt*; a Filipino breakfast staple with a Spanish name, and my grandmother's favorite. The pandesal is hot, its butter melting, and the heat burns my fingertips when I try to take a bite. Giving up on eating for now, I steal a glance at my grandmother and renew my hunger for a story instead.

“Mama,” I say slowly, as I think about what exactly I want to ask. “Daddy said he had always wanted to learn Spanish from Papa. Why didn't Papa teach him?”

I gently recall my grandfather: weathered hands and a vibrant wanderlust spirit in his youth, but senile and physically weak in his last few months. His niece, whom I had never met before, flew in from the big city mysteriousness of Chicago to our little town in North Carolina. I don't remember her legal name, but I do remember her kneeling by his seat on our couch, their hands clasped together as their soft Spanish filled the room. I remember their Spanish as musical almost, all pretty accents and hushed words. I looked at

my grandfather, hunched and vulnerable in his sickness and his age—Spanish falling from his mouth like pearls—and I thought, *I wonder what you're saying and I don't really know you at all.*

In the present, my grandmother regards me quietly, her eyes locked onto my face while she hesitates to answer.

Finally, she says to me, “Masakit loob niya,” so soft and reluctant that I regret the question.

She pauses again. “I don't how to say that in English. How would you say ‘masakit sa loob’ in English?” she asks me.

It only takes me half a second to think, “마음이 아프다.”

I look at my grandmother's expectant face, and I wince trying to think of a way to convey that in English. There is nothing like loob in English, just like there is nothing like 마음 in English. A transliteration could be heart, mind, soul, or even the word inside, but even that feels too superficial, just barely an explanation for the weight of the emotion the word tries to encapsulate. Context determines nuance, after all.

I want to tell my grandmother that masakit sa loob can mean emptiness in your soul so deep that there is a resounding echo; it is a pain so far within you that English has no word for it. In my Papa, it was bitterness within him for the Spanish half of his family—enough to ensure that his own children never learned Spanish from him, that that language was not one to be learned, at least not taught by his mouth. Within me, my pain is more of an anxiety: a swirling mass of feeling unanchored, the siren call of belonging nowhere.

Heart, loob, 마음. English in this instance is the limitation and not the advantage.

I shrug at her, reaching across the table to pour myself another glass of mango juice. The condensation wets my fingertips and I welcome its coolness against my hot skin.

“It's okay,” I say instead. “I understood. You can't really say it in English anyway.”

Korean is not a language meant to be mine.

마음이 아프다
masakit sa loob
☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒



Coex Bookstore, Eugene Lee, Seoul.

At least with Tagalog, Bisaya, Cantonese or Hokkien, there is a buried connection destined to be recovered and a reclamation of culture lost. Yet for some reason, out of all the languages I've learned, Korean has become precious, a language buried deep in my ribcage, spindly bone curved around the ambiguity of my desire. My family and friends chorus this question of my desire on unending repeat: Why are you interested in Korean? Why are you learning Korean? Why Korean?

The simple answer is that I am learning Korean because of them. After that first summer, there were other people who followed who have surprisingly treated me just as kindly as my first homestay: pseudo-families, professors, strangers, new friends. I've been called daughter; I've been told I was loved. I've been fed, asked after and cared for. Trying to articulate that affection, though, is difficult. It's hard to articulate that I'm learning Korean because of a plural, collective You that encompasses a whole group of people I've come to view with a familial sense of affection.

I come from a place that's ambiguously neither here nor there, and Korea is

comforting in knowing I do not belong here—not really—but feeling welcomed. Korean is not a language meant to be mine, but it's somehow become a part of me instead.

다운

“Can I ask you why you are learning Korean?”

It's the beginning of my second year—my third semester—in Seoul now, and a friend of a former language partner would like to become my next English-Korean language exchange partner. As expected, her first question for me remains unchanged. Unlike the question, though, I'm unsure if my answer is still the same.

I'm still learning Korean because of an abstract concept of them. But somehow, there's something more now. Within a few moments of reflection, I know that learning Korean will be never-ending: there's now something limitless in that same nestled desire.

I laugh then, because I have no idea how to speak *that* out loud.

“It just felt right when I first started learning it,” I grin. “I just like it.”

She smiles in confusion, tilting her head a little to the left. “That’s it?”

It’s not. I truly love how Korean physically feels in my mouth, how my tongue bends around certain sounds and consonants. I feel unbridled elation when I truly understand the nuance of words that are difficult to translate into English. I feel lightness when I make my **엄마** smile, and I grin when

I use ridiculous slang just to make my Korean friends laugh. I can tamper down the annoyance, the frustration and the sadness that comes with me learning Korean, if it means I can one day properly thank my host families and my friends for their love.

But I don’t know how to articulate any of that, so instead I smile wider at her, laugh and say: “That’s it.”

Mara Guevarra was a 2016-2017 graduate student at Yonsei University in Seoul and currently resides in Raleigh, NC.



Noisy and Quiet, Eunice Yu, Masan.



Man's Best Friend, Eunice Yu, Haeundae Beach, Busan.



Candidates, Rebecca Brower, Gamcheon Culture Village, Busan.

Peanut Butter

Rachel E. Brooks

On my first Saturday with my homestay family, my host mom, Heeyang, and I visited the grocery store. Too overwhelmed by the options and too timid to request anything from the woman kind enough to take in a foreigner with the Korean language ability equal to that of her toddler niece, I just tagged along for bonding time. Heeyang was careful to watch my reaction to each item put in the cart. I doled out dozens of toothy grins to confirm I was having as much fun as one can have at a grocery store. She spotted me reading a carton of grapefruit juice, which she then threw into our cart before swiftly adding a second one. Grapefruit juice became a staple of our meals together. Now satisfying 300 percent of my daily intake of vitamin C, I didn't yet have the heart to confess I enjoy other beverages, too.

To pair with the juice, my host mom prepared an impressive array of side dishes, rice, and fishy soup for my host sister, Hyunsol, and me. It all looked mouth-watering for dinner but less enticing for breakfast. For over two decades, my stomach had been trained to eat small breakfasts of an apple or a piece of toast before rushing out the door. After sipping my juice, I picked up my chopsticks and threw on a grin. Two options presented themselves: I had to ask my host mom for a smaller and more familiar morning meal or adapt. I chose to adapt, but Heeyang seemed to pick up on my discomfort as I hesitantly spooned seaweed soup into my smile.

Starting to miss certain foods from home, I gathered the courage to ask Heeyang if she could pick up a small jar of peanut

butter next time she visited the store. Elated by my request, she asked what kind I like best. Before coming to South Korea, I didn't understand the fuss about peanut butter. When I moved to Jeju, however, peanut butter became a heartening reminder of home and my host mom's unrelenting kindness.



April, spring semester. Around 7:15 a.m., I entered the kitchen to get water out of the fridge and found a pack of individually wrapped cheese slices.

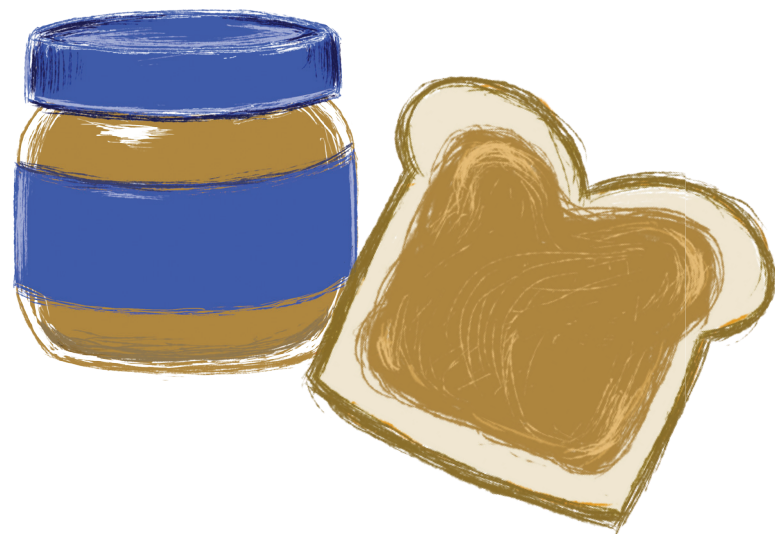
Unlike peanut butter, I didn't actually ask for cheese. Rather, two friends and I indulged at a pizza restaurant a few nights prior and split a giant, classic-style Chicago pizza. When I returned home, I raved about both the pizza and cheese in general to Heeyang. Based on my monologue, she must have picked up on my affection for the dairy product.

In the car on the way to school, I removed the sandwich Heeyang made me from its plastic bag and took a bite to find the contents: peanut butter and cheese. Heeyang, knowing two food items I adore, combined them into one sandwich. I looked over to Hyunsol to share a laugh. Instead I saw her happily chewing her own combination of hazelnut spread and cheese between two buttery bread slices. I smiled to myself.

The car pulled to the side of the road, and Hyunsol and I hopped out. We dreamed about what we'll do when she visits the U.S. one day as we made our way up the hill past some newly planted daisies. We headed to the second grade classrooms where I would teach Hyunsol first period. In the classroom, I peeled off the slice of cheese from my sandwich and thought about how much I enjoyed cheese, peanut butter and these morning car rides. But not all together.

March, one year later. At 7:45 a.m., I scurried down the stairs and out of the house to plop into my usual spot behind the driver's seat. The car was already racing forward as I clicked the seat belt into place. We were running late. A hand from the front seat passed back a peanut butter and hazelnut spread sandwich followed by a cup of homemade strawberry milk mixed with honey. This was a treat since Hyunsol had an exam soon. Next to me, Hyunsol nibbled on her sandwich filled with the same contents. The hectic race to the car contrasted the calm of the backseat.

Third grade of high school in South Korea is chaos, and our morning routine mirrored Hyunsol's school life. When I first moved in with my homestay family and met Hyunsol, she was a freshman



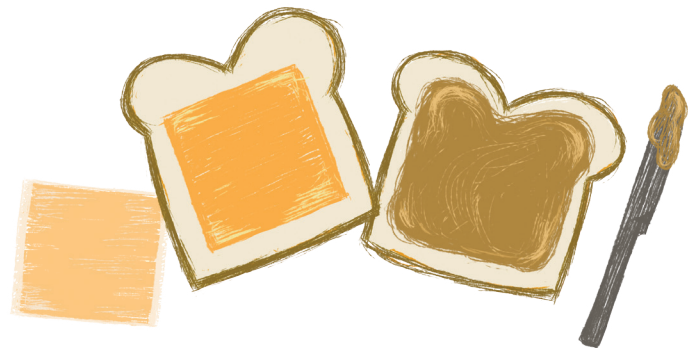
I peeled off the slice of cheese from my sandwich and thought about how much I enjoyed cheese, peanut butter, and these morning car rides. But not all together.

in my English conversation class. Now she was a third grader in her final year of high school, preparing for the college entrance exam, the *suneung*. Sadly, I didn't teach third grade.

Hyunsol and I talked briefly about the upcoming sports festival, a treasured break from studying, and chewed away at our breakfasts. Despite the mayhem of mornings, I adored the sleepy car rides together. We hardly got to see each other outside of the backseat that year since she and all of her classmates were consumed with studies in preparation for the test to determine their futures. For them, success was directly proportional to the absence of free time. Hyunsol was rarely home. When she was, it was to get a few well-deserved hours of rest or some quick nutrition between math and English academies.

The day was just beginning, but Hyunsol already looked drowsy. She lifted her glasses and vigorously rubbed her eyes as if test answers hid under those heavy eyelids. Her eyes were glued to the worn chemistry notebook on her lap. These daily moments in the car were precious time to cram. Good grades rewarded hard work at the expense of happiness and health. Thankfully for happiness more so than health, Heeyang never let a jar of Hyunsol's beloved hazelnut spread go empty without having another in the cabinet next to the peanut butter.

The car pulled to the side of the road, and Hyunsol and I hopped out. We speed-walked past the daisies and quickly climbed up the hill to school. At the top, we said our goodbyes and parted ways. Though it was Friday morning, I wondered if Hyunsol and I would see each other before sharing Heeyang's hazelnut spread and peanut butter sandwiches on Monday morning's commute.



Rachel E. Brooks was a 2014-2016 ETA at Shinseong Girls' High School in Jeju-si, Jeju-do.

Kimbab Factory, Rebecca Brower, Jangdaehyun School, Busan.





returning

Rachel K. Fauth

When I wake up from a three-hour nap after a ten-hour night of sleep on my first day back in Korea, my sister Dana sends me this from NY: "Well, yeah. You're isolated somewhere in the world." She says it in response to my wish that she can feel this weird peace. This peace that seems particularly patient, having stayed put and waited for me in a distant country. I thought it'd stress me out beyond belief returning to New York—confronted not with the people or place I left behind, but with the fact of how easily I can meet with it again. That's the strange part. To jump from one hemisphere, one long 14-hour jump, into the next and back. It makes me think that, all this time, there've been no rules. Plane rides and how easy they are make me hyper-aware that each place I'm in is a place that I choose, and I could be anywhere at any time if only I propelled my body in that direction.

I could be there, at home, every night. I could be at the long dark-wood dinner table my dad built. Its glass top and 12 seats prepared well in advance for all five daughters and their eventual husbands. I could be driving a white Honda. I could be at the pediatrician, tetanus booster before Vietnam. I could be watching Dane do her best impression of her college roommate: she's taking up the whole space of the den, her long brown mane hilariously flipping to either side of her head as she sets up the scene, and I could be laughing a real laugh and thinking, *yeah Dane, tell that story with your whole body, that's how you do it*, proud. I could be in every place at once and I am. *Oh the couch is new, look at Lori, she's all limbs*. I could be on the LIRR every day like I was. I could be in Manhattan like I usually hate but not nearly as much as

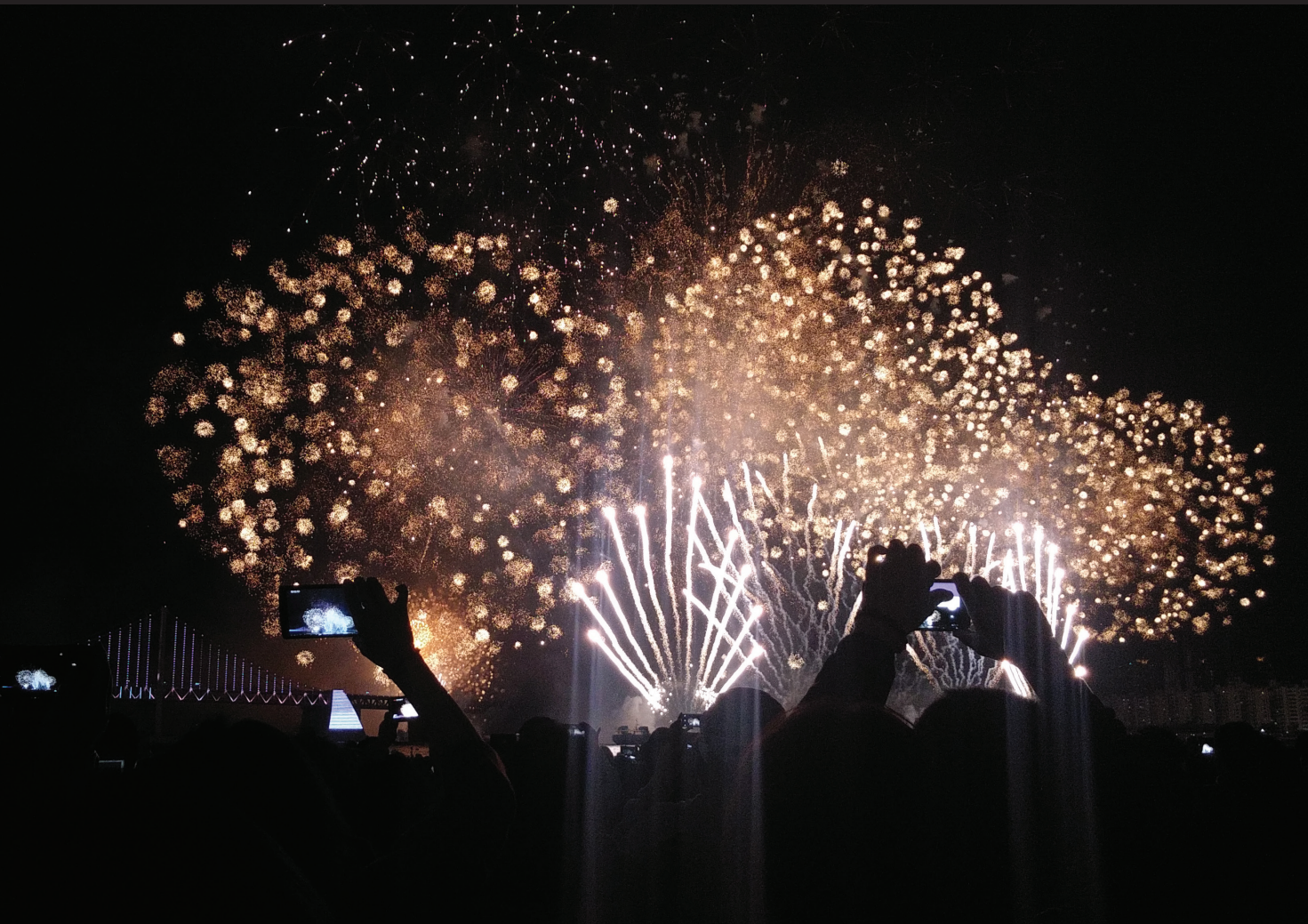


Hongdae. I could be walking back to Penn on 38th with my girl from Canada, listening to her tell me about the long strings of attachment she feels to the people she met in Dubai. I could go round and round with the boy who lives down the street from my parents house, who still goes round and round with me after seven years, who's not a boy at all anymore, who's very much a man, across from me at Candlelight Diner in Smithtown, telling me how his HR job's not so bad because it's temporary. "Never worry about me," he says.

All these images are like opening one door at a time in a house of a million doors and taking a peek in each. What's happening in here? What about in here? And each image is just as different as it is simultaneous. The door to the bus opens and I hobble my carry-on suitcase up three steps, look up to see twenty Koreans and take my seat among them. At the same time Chansong opens the passenger's side door and I get into his mother's car, tan interior, heated. He slides into the driver's seat and throws a fleece blanket on my lap, puts a coffee in my hand. The door to my apartment opens as usual and the

refrigerator hums in the corner, the fish tank filter trickles drops of water; there's no one in the room but me and my bags, diaphanous curtains, an unmade bed. At seven I'll open another, separate door to the Kim's apartment and it will jingle with a brass chime. Mr. Kim will be in front of the TV wearing neon socks. In the same room his wife will be at the stove, my guess is kimchi stew because it snowed. We'll pull out the little cherrywood table and take our places on the heated floor. Eunji will come out of her room and join us in the kitchen/den. Mr. Kim will feel inclined to ask about my real family while they're asleep in another time zone. His wife won't ask, but I truly don't mind. When I leave I'll shut the door behind me and go upstairs to another. I think about all these places opening and closing, none of them stopping just because I've left.

Rachel K. Fauth was a 2016-2017 ETA at Changpyeong High School in Damyang, Jeollanam-do. She now lives in Knoxville, Tennessee.



Gwangalli Fireworks, Angelica Guilbeaux, Gwangalli Beach, Busan.



Lost Connections, Eugene Lee, Namsan Tower, Seoul.

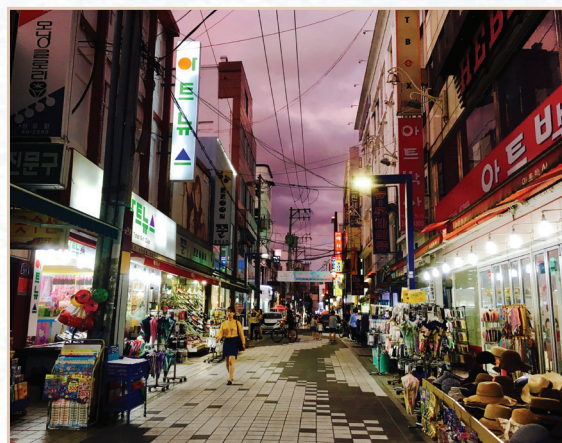
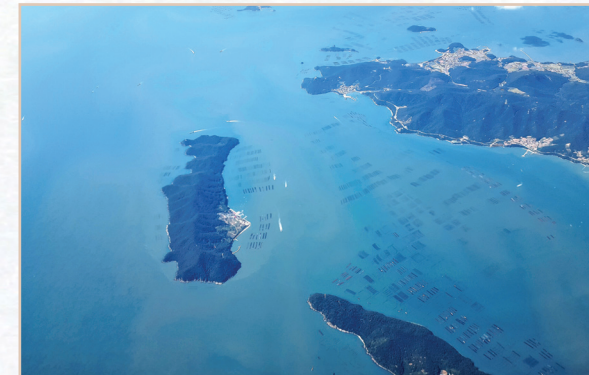


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