

"Roots"

By Jessica Yun

The tears stored in my eyes were destined to fall; all hopes of my father returning, just five years later, were falling too. The absence of my father brought endless difficulties. The first year he went missing, my life changed little. The second year, and the years following it, we lived with an overwhelming debt. His absence gave me the painful, stinging tears that I live with today; it gave me the heavy burdens I must live with on my shoulders.

"Where is he, Auntie Sumi?", I'd ask in my younger years.

Her cold, bitter response was, "A smart girl would lose hope. Just forget about the man."

Maybe, I should, I thought. For five years, he was missing. If he truly loved our family, he'd have come back to us. Why is he not returning? I've been waiting for five years, Dad! Gazing at a faded Polaroid photo of him, memories started to come alive. You would like to picture him as a perfect TV father, smiling and embracing his dear family-but, he was none of the sort. So, who was this father of mine? I don't know his name, and when I ask, my mother doesn't say. But I remember, he was a solitary man who stayed outdoors, purposely away from us. He frequently drank, smoked, cursed—a man who had bad habits. The fact that he was a poor example of a father or a TV father, did not matter to me. The fact that I didn't have a father anymore left me empty and void. I was walking around without one shoe. It felt uncomfortable to walk with this void. It seemed that he left my family for sure; my youth was incomplete.

During my youth, my name was Yejin, but many times had I tried to forget that childish name given to me by my parents. I lived this youth of mine in the coastal city of Sokcho in the province, Kangwon-do. Shabby and frail, our house stood. It was a ramshackle house amongst a hundred ramshackle others. All houses stood proudly unique, despite their condition. Each home faithfully hosted its owner, taking age alongside its resident. Even the families were the same families that had been living there for generations. This place, Sokcho, was home. A good home or a bad home? I don't know.

Just as how we were the same families, everyday was the same day. You could say it got quite boring at times. Before the sun had reached its pinnacle, the arctic nipping air would make its way through town. We'd creep out of bed reluctantly and open up our family restaurant. Students rose to go to school. The books opened in the morning, then closed midday. After being dismissed, elementary school children could be heard talking in couples and three-somes, making their way back home. Later in the day, high school and middle school students in their neat uniforms would bicycle home, shouting and cursing at each other. Ahh, fun times. I used to be one of those teens, bicycling home with my best friend, Yaena. She was my sister at heart who was there from the beginning. Her adorable smile would always be there, until she moved last year, to the city. I bicycled alone from then on.

After all the students reached home, you'd hear a long, eerie silence. The fiery sun would start to set behind the dark horizon. Everything quieted to the point of extreme silence, where the rustle of a newspaper could be heard. The warm air would whirl its way through town in forms of spirits of the dead. Doors would mysteriously open and shut by themselves. The wooden planks would creak by on their own. Then all would quiet and then, high tide. The large, white moon would rise into its black theatre. It was time for the show. At night, drunk men would be heard rambling through the streets crashing their bottles of soju and yelling nonsense. This was the familiar cycle that my senses experienced everyday in the town of Sokcho. However, every year, this sound cycle became quieter.

It was obvious that people were disappearing from that small town. Each house lost someone to "the move". They were all heading to the major cities in West Korea-"where all hopes lay". My mother neither encouraged or discouraged me to move into the city. I desperately wanted to move into the urban parts and live like how they all did in all the Korean dramas and soap operas. Despite the temptation, I felt it was a burden to stay with my aging mother to help support her. I was in the last year of high school and my decisions were becoming heavier with these boulder burdens. I was angry, still. It was not my responsibility to take care of my ol' mother. Everyone else has a father for this job. She was such a burden I

want to let her go and just run freely with my own life. Sigh.

That morning in the 12th grade, I woke up at 5 in the morning to help my mother string out the kalguksu*. The room where we performed such tasks was called the 'white room'. In fact, it was a dark room, where only a single low-wattage light bulb hung. I'd cough from all this flour being powdered upon me. However, my skin would always be whiter when I came out-which is, indeed, a "pretty" trait in Korean aesthetics. My mother, with her sinewy hands would beat, roll, squeeze, and shape all this dough into the noodles. I worked beside her imitating her work. My skin would be rough, but it would be white-that's all that mattered. Whilst my mother toiled at this side-by-side, I never felt that mother and daughter bond. We were somewhat distant too, just like my father and I. I wasn't always distant from her. We used to be extremely close. Was it because I had become old? We were so very close when I was a child. I remember, as a child, she'd hold me by her warm hand and take me to the beach while we laughed on the short journey there. I remember she piggy-backed me and sang me Korean lullabies, patting my back, and lulling me to sleep with her motherly ways. I remember she had used to hug me tight when we were climbing to high heights. I've always hated heights. I remembered she'd hug me before that "good night". What happened, mother? You're cold and distant; I don't like it. As mother finished making the noodles, I'd go to school. When I came back, the restaurant, more like a diner, opened and I took orders while I tried to finish homework and catch up on studying. I have hardly been a disobedient child in my life. I always did my chores, cleaned my room, and studied well. My friend, Yaena, my "sister at heart" in Seoul, called.

"Yejin! I got accepted to a univeristy in Seoul! I'm so excited. I never thought this would happen to me!"
"Are you serious?! That's great!", I said.
"Yeah! I saw an actress at an autograph signing", she exclaimed.
"Really? Do you really just run into celebrities there?", I asked.
"Sure! Yejin, c'mon and move. This is where the party's at. We had absolutely no life where we lived. Move to the city!"

"Uhh, you know what? I have to go. The restaurant is really busy right now.", I pretended to take orders and side-talked over our conversation.

Who was I kidding? There was no one in this restaurant. It only received up to five customers a day-my mother, Auntie Areum, perhaps two strangers, and I. This diner had no hope whatsoever. Why was I pretending it did? I just wanted to leave this wretched place. I packed up my entire bedroom into a couple suitcases, quietly called a taxi, and left, leaving a note saying that I'd be okay. It was rebellious-I know. But this is what I saw in all the American movies-people running away from their lives to better, more exciting places. If it works for them, it ought to work for me. For 3 or 4 hours I took a bus to Seoul. All this light-all this exhilarating city! As opposed to shabby houses, there were skyscrapers. Instead of tiny alleys, Seoul had major roads with traffic lights. Taxis and luxury vehicles zoomed past my slow, countryside eyes. Never had I experienced something like this. Several times, my sad mother called me on my cellphone. I didn't pick her phone calls for six months, even after I had started attending my university. When I felt I was being too harsh on my mother, I finally picked up.

"Hello? "

"Yejin! Where have you gone? I've been calling you for sixth months! Everyday, I went bezerk, I asked neighbors-:"

"Mom...I know what I did was wrong. But you can't do anything now. I'm not coming back. I can't-I'd be missing my university classes."

She fell silent for awhile.

"Not coming back? Fine, Yejin. You run away and you say you're grown up? You're a grown-up girl, eh? You're a city girl that knows all? Hmmm...ok. If you're all you say you are, why not find your missing father? I'm sure if you can handle that task, you could live on your own in Seoul."

At the end of this phone conversation, I was fuming. I was nineteen, so very close to twenty. I was in college at this point. I did have some spare time on my hands. Perhaps, this is the time I should look for my father. I called the police and my father's entire family tree. I called up the city and provincial offices outside of Gangwondo if they had a resident that had matched the picture of my father. They all shook their heads.

Endless hours on the phone-I despised it. I decided it would be best to carry my investigation in Gangwondo-my old home. It felt distressful to have to come back to my memories. Eventually, I knew, I had to talk to my mother to find out. I went to the ol' kalguksu-jeep, and to my surprise, it still stood. It stood just like how I left it, and I could see my mother standing inside. How was I to greet her? She's going to be just another stranger, I thought.

I flattened out the creases in my dress suit and walked with the clickety-click of my freshly-bought Ferragamo high heels. I raised an eyebrow at her like I was some kind of private investigator. Of course it looked stupid, but I thought it would show how I've progressed since I last saw her. She did not smile, she did not show emotion in her face. Her face was stone. She just started to talk, "Yejin, you've came the right way. Your father is very near. Do you have your cellphone? Keep it on. Walk outside and I'll tell you his whereabouts." My heart was beating rapidly expressing my anxiety.

I stepped outside and she called me.

"Walk down the street."

Down the street I walked. I could see the reddish sun about to set onto the dark horizon.

"Turn at the beach"

In the summer's heat, I turned at the beach. Sand sifted into my Ferragamo's as I trudged across the beach.

"Climb up the hill."

This grassy, rocky hill I climbed. It was not an easy climb with these heels.

"Do you see something?"

"Uh, no, how long do I climb, mom? It's a cliff."

"Keep walking."

"Uhh, mom, I'm walking toward the edge. You know I don't like heights."

"Keep walking..."

"Mom, I'm at the edge. Don't think I'm going to be a fool and jump. What do you want me to do?!"

She hung up at this point. Run freely now? All my life, I had hated heights and I stood at the highest peak in the entire town. As I started to become dizzy, I took off my dressy high-heels, which added to this treacherous height, and knelt on the ground. I held tightly to the weeds and roots in the dirt on the

bluff, in fear of my fall. Then, I remembered this moment, five years ago. Was the last time I fell from this cliff in a dream or in life? Had I actually fallen from this cliff? Tears started rushing down and I screamed in horror. Do you see? I fell from this cliff five years ago. My dad had tried to rescue me, and died in the attempt. The sun was on the brink of setting, and the spirit of my father seemed to spot me in trouble. I felt like a child holding onto these weeds, while the wind was trying to blow me into the biting and monstrous ocean. I was crying for help, desperately holding onto these weeds and roots.

Eventually, my mother came to my rescue. As I was enveloped by her arms, my father's spirit seemed to embrace me too. She held me tight in her arms, singing that ol' lullaby of mine. She held me tighter, "It's hard to let go of your roots, eh?"

komo*: in Korean, means aunt
kalguksu-jeeb*: flour noodle house, similar to a diner,
Gangwon-do*: a South Korean province East of Seoul
gyobokes*: school uniform
soju*: an alcoholic beverage composed mostly of rice,
and also wheat, barley

"The Perfect Shot"

By Mallory

The Perfect Shot?

This unimaginable beauty surrounds me, not only the breathtaking scenery, but the rich character of my friends. I inhale, savoring the fresh, mountainous air. It is as if I have just emerged from a smoke filled room. This is my sanctuary, my home. The dirt and mixture of pebbles, wood and pine-needles crack softly beneath my determined feet as I continue on this endless trail. I look ahead and track in the oversized footprints my cousin leaves in the dusty dirt. He is the leader of us all, so bold and admirable. Now, my mind is not consumed with unimportant affairs, yet anticipating the trip ahead. I stop for a second, peering through a break in the thick forest. My eyes soak up the jagged cliffs and the tops of the trees, artistically cutting into the sky. It reigns over everything with its array of colors. The clouds are perfectly placed, giving balance to this scene. I am amazed.

When we arrive, my first action is to un-strap my backpack which seemingly weighs as much as a lead anvil. Then I skip over to where my friend, Suzanne is resting on an old, slowly-deteriorating tree trunk. Its masculine branches are jutting out of the old, chipping bark. When you examine this tree, you can see the tiny bugs crawling through the fine cracks in the bark. They are making it their new home, or maybe just a new path to collect the crumbs we leave behind. Suzanne's long, dark brown, now curly, hair blankets her face as she reaches in her bag for her cell phone.

"Hey, how's the hike up?" I asked her.

"Good. I'm glad to finally be here. I just love it up here, you know? It's so... nice."

"Yeah. Just getting away from everything..."

"Ahh!" She cries in frustration. "I don't have any service up here!"

"I figured that, I didn't even bring mine." I replied.

"Well, I thought maybe..."

"Yeah" I lightheartedly say.

We stare into the fire as my cousin, Mat, feeds it with more wood. Its raging flames dance across the night's sky and mesmerize all on-lookers. The smell of smoke fills my lungs and burns my dried out eyes. I squint and eventually close them, then enjoy the much needed

moisture. More of my friends slowly trickle in the secluded area, one by one setting up tents and gathering around the campfire.

The temperature is decreasing, which calls for an early night. Suzanne and I drift away from the group and walk 300 meters away to the "big boulder". It towers over us in its glory. We walk around back to climb up the easy way. Once on top, we ease onto the cold surface. It feels like ice, shocking our backs and legs. I look up into the vast sky; my eyes meet the most incomprehensible sight. Millions upon millions of stars sprinkled over a blanket of darkness. Each one is perfectly placed, with contrast to the lesser or more bright ones. The stress of school, and the expectations others have of me now fade away like a dim star in the sky. All of my problems disappear and I can now, for the first time, think clearly. There is something in raw nature that helps you realize what really matters. Then I close my eyes and savor every second.

As the night goes on, we talk for hours then head back to our tent. Sleep comes easily and soon it is morning again. Rested, I awake to banging pots and the soft voices of my friends. I inhale and ease my eyes open, feeling new and refreshed. As I adjust to the day, I begin filling a backpack with ropes, a sweatshirt, my camera, and other miscellaneous items for bouldering. Our adventure begins and we hike up to the area we will be conquering. We squeeze between colossal rocks impeding our path. Leaping and scaling over these rocks bring life to my stagnant soul.

Countless hours pass and we are on our way back down when something catches my eye. I am between half a dozen huge boulders, surrounding me and closing off the sunlight like a room. I passed through this area on the way up, but it was not the same then. In one section, the sun shines through a gap and illuminates a ladybug resting upon on a single leaf. I think it is an amazing sight. My friends pass by as I move a bit to the left to obtain the perfect angle. I take out my camera and capture the beauty in its unrefined state. Every aspect of the photograph is flawless. I continue on and soon we return to our camp.

My first action back is to show Suzanne my shot. I run over to her with prideful posture and a grin that overwhelms my face.

"Hey! Look at this shot I took!"

"Uh, cool... It's a ladybug right?"

My heart sunk a bit.

"Yeah! It is, but don't you see it? Don't you see how the light illuminates the tiny bug? Can't you see how it makes the ladybug the center of it all? It's just a little bug, that nobody cares about, but in this shot, it's alone, yet beautiful. Without it this picture would be.... "

My sentence trails off, like explaining calculus to a kindergartener. Suzanne tried to care and understand what I saw in it, but she could not.

Then next morning, we hiked out of the calming mountains, and entered back into reality. The drive home was quiet, kids crammed in corners of the car hopelessly catching up on their missed sleep from the previous night. The scent of dirty, polluted air fills my lungs as I sit next to the window. I have twenty shots left on my camera, and decide to use them up on this long ride back. I capture signs, buildings, gas stations, and the occasional bike rider. I pause for a minute and notice the hum of the engine. This incessant, maddening drone overpowers and ultimately kills the soft music. Just like what Littleton has done to beauty. Everywhere I look; there is a new building going up; another unneeded shopping mall being built. Bit by bit, they are taking away my love; nature.

I arrive back home, saddened and overwhelmed by reality. The second I walk inside, I am greeted with my fathers yelling. I endure what seems like an eternity of words being thrown at me until his complaints run dry. I apologize again and escape upstairs to my room. I throw my backpack on the littered floor and plunge into the sea of covers on my bed. I close my eyes and bury my head in my pillow as I place myself back at Goose Creek. I imagine my friends, laughing and talking around the campfire. I remember staring into the bright, night's sky. I see myself climbing ... then I remember, My camera!

I throw my comforter off and jump out of my bed. I pick up my backpack; start rummaging through it. Finally, I come across my camera. I gently take it out and sit on the edge of my bed. I turn it on and begin to look through my pictures. My eyes study each photograph. With each picture, I miss the mountains more. Oh, if only there was beauty of this degree here! Frustrated,

I throw my camera back on my bed. I lie back down and stare at my ceiling. Rage and fury run through my veins.

The cool air is now being blown through my window. Annoyed, I got to close it. As I place my hand on the crank, I discover a new visitor. It is a lady bug, but now on my window's ledge. Determined to return it to its home, I attempt to brush it into the palm of my hand. Its legs retract into his hard shell and it remains stationary under the crank. Forgetting the current circumstance and focus all of my attention on this. Eventually, I get it into my hand. I bring it near my eyes and study it closely, imagining what it is thinking. It reacts to me like a scared child to a bully. Feeling bad, I walk downstairs and through my front door to free this hopeless, little guy. The first step onto the cold concrete sends shivers through my body; luckily, I do not trip as I walk to the bushes, captivated by this little bug. I place it on a leaf, lost in the mass of bushes. Déjà vu. My picture is recreated, only this time, much more beautiful. I now understand this bug and do not only see it as the focal point of a photograph. Instead, I recognize it has meaning, life, and will climb through an eternal forest of leaves and branches. What determination. I realize how ignorant I have been. Putting limits on beauty? Did I even know what beauty was? I walk back to my house with questions that consume my mind. I take a glance back at the ladybug, which has by now disappeared. At this moment, I promise myself to always seek out beauty... in everything and everywhere.

"Picking Away At Your Troubles"

By Blaine

A magazine. Who would have thought that it would change Kenny's life forever? You see, one day, he's in his sister's store to pick up her paycheck. A new issue of Sports Illustrated catches his eye. It has his favorite baseball team on the cover, The New York Yankees. "Can the Yankees make another title run?" is the headline. Kenny desires it so badly. Even though it should come in the mail in a couple days, he needs to read it. Kenny jams his hand into his pocket, and grabs some money. Then, Kenny thinks to himself, wouldn't it be thrilling to steal the thing? I mean, what an adrenaline rush. Nobody's looking, right? So, he turns his head from side to side, over and over again, making sure there's no one watching, snatches the magazine and tucks it under his shirt. Kenny shuffles towards the door, his heart beating a mile a minute. Sweat pours down his neck, down his spine. I really hope I don't get caught, Kenny thinks to himself. If my parents find out I stole something, they will skin me alive. Aw man, I really regret taking this stupid thing.

Kenny is a few steps away from the door, about to reach freedom. Man, I can't believe I'm going to get away with this, Kenny thinks to himself, maybe I should do this more often. It would save me a ton of money. Suddenly, a large hand seizes Kenny's shoulder and says, "Hey kid, come with me." Oh Oh. Busted, Kenny says to himself, I got caught by a security guard. I was so freaking close. I must be the most unlucky boy in the world. What are the odds that he pulls me over right before I exit the store? The security guard takes him into a tiny room, and asks, "Did you take anything from here?"

Kenny decides to lie. "Uh... no sir, I didn't take anything."

The security guard knew Kenny was lying. "Well then, I guess you wouldn't mind if I check under your clothes, then."

"Okay, I'm sorry, I took this magazine."

The man in black ponders for a moment, and says, "Well, since you're Carrie's brother, I won't call the

police. But, you do have to pay for the magazine. I'm also going to tell your parents."

As soon as Kenny's parents hear the news, they explode. They are so furious, that they decide to send him off to the Big Island to help his Uncle Kealoha out in the coffee fields for three days.

Kenny arrives in the Big Island, searching for his uncle. When he first set his eyes on him Kenny is stunned. He is a humongous Hawaiian man. How can I be related to him?! Kenny thinks to himself, my family is full of short, scrawny Asians, and this man is at least six feet, 250 pounds! Uncle Kealoha has a tattoo that runs down his face. Kenny really hopes that he never will get this guy angry, because he could probably snap every bone in Kenny's body in half.

"OK, Kenny. Wat you goin' do is pick da coffee beans off da trees. You have to pick each bean, one by one. Only take da red ones. No take da green ones. No stay ripe yet, das why. It's real humbug (hard). Bumbai (Then) you learn wat hard work is. O yeah, no call me Kealoha, call me Kea. Kealoha is too long. OK, I see you in about five hours to feed you dinner. Work hard, ah?" Kea's pidgin accent is very difficult to understand, Kenny thinks to himself. It is almost as if we spoke two different languages.

Kenny sets his eyes on the field. His jaw drops and he's in shock. The coffee trees seem to extend for miles. Kenny says, "There is no way I'll get halfway done after three days picking the beans by hand! Oh well, I might as well get started.

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"Ho, Kenny, it's 5 o'clock, you done for da day. Wat you like eat?" Kenny's body is in so much pain. Kea didn't tell him to wear a hat. He really didn't know the sun was going to be that hot. He's burnt to a crisp. Kenny is so red, that if you put him on a dinner plate with a bowl of butter, he looks like a lobster dinner fit for a king. But Kenny's not only in pain because of the sunburn, but today was probably the hardest he has worked in his whole life. Kenny didn't realize how hard being a plantation worker really is until he had to do it. Each step Kenny takes makes him

wish his legs would fall off because of walking and standing the whole, tormenting day.

"That's okay Kea, I'm not really hungry. I think I'm just going to go sleep," Kenny replies.

"Ok den. I give you one good breakfast tomorrow den. Whoa, braddah. You look like one cherry. I better give you one hat tomorrow. And wear some sunscreen too."

As soon as he lies down on his bed, Kenny feels like a thousand wasps landed on his body and stung him over and over again. The sunburn hurts so badly, he just wants to die.

"Maybe if I get a good night sleep, I will feel better in the morning." Kenny murmurs to himself.

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"Brah, Kenny, wake up! It stay so late already. Wat, you on Hawaiian time or something li'dat?"

Wow, Kenny thinks to himself. It seems like I was asleep for a few hours. Kenny glances at the clock, and yells, "Kea, it's five o'clock, lemme sleep."

"No can, Braddah." Kea replies, "It late already. If ya work hard in early day, you can rest later. Get ya work done first, and then you can play, as I always say. And before you get dressed, wash your eyes. You have so much makapiapia (eye gunk), one keiki can go and build one sandcastle. Hurry up; I get some Portuguese sausage on the stove wit eggs and rice. It's goin' be real onolicious (good)."

As Kenny drags his body into the coffee fields, he says, "Hey, why do I have to wake up so early? Can't I just do the work later today? I don't understand why Uncle Kea . . ."

Kenny is spending too much time grumbling, and doesn't see an enormous stick on the ground. Kenny flops to the ground, and the stick tears his skin into pieces. As Kenny stands up, he feels blood gushing down his leg into his shoe. The cut is on Kenny's calf. All right, Kenny thinks to himself, maybe if this cut is deep enough, then I won't have to work the last two days."

"I have to admit, that is one MEAN scrape, brah." Kea says, while analyzing the cut, "But, it's nothing one band-aid no fix. Be careful next time, yeah Kenny? No can see nothing in da fields when it stay dark."

Bummer, Kenny thinks to himself, I still have to work. And the pain is killing me. Well, I better get started.

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"Ho Kenny, wat I tell you. If ya start early, den you get to end early. Now you can do wateva you like. It stay only one o'clock, get in here, before you burn like yesterday."

Kenny is in pain! Do you know how arduous it is to pick coffee beans for eight hours straight, with no breaks, while suffering from sunburn from the previous day and a gash in your leg? He decides to go straight to sleep and hope he will feel better tomorrow. Kenny limps into the house. If you look at him, he looks so appalling. It's as if he hasn't slept in ages.

"Wat, you goin' sleep again. Fine. I make some spam tomorrow for breakfast. Why you lookin' so gimpy? Ya leg, das why? I give you some painkillas den."

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"Ho, Kenny, ready for breakfast. It's ya last day. Make it one good one."

Kenny is astonished. He feels completely rejuvenated. He's not tired at all and is ready to work. He believes he's finally getting the hang of life on a plantation. Kenny figured out that he starts work so early because it gets so hot later in the day. You have to consistently work hard, or else the work will never get done. He saunters out to the fields, ready to take on his final day of punishment for the bad deed he committed.

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"Seven thousand, five hundred, twelve beans, Seven thousand, five hundred, thirteen beans . . ." Wow, Kenny says to himself, I must be extremely bored. I'm actually counting how many beans I've collected in the past eight hours. Well, the reason why he is bored is because he isn't thinking about how tired he is.

Believe it or not, Kenny isn't tired at all. These past three days really have made him so brawny that he could tear a phonebook in half. He couldn't even survive five hours when he first came here. Now, he just went eight hours of picking coffee beans without getting tired. "Seven thousand, five hundred, and seventeen beans, Seven thousand, five hundred, and eighteen beans . . ."

"Eh, Kenny, git in here already. You've done ya work for da day. Tonight, I make you one treat fo dinner. I make hamburger steak. I swear, it's gonna break your mouth fo sure (taste good)."

Amazing, Kenny thinks, I've picked Seven thousand, five hundred, and eighteen beans in one day. That means I picked almost twenty thousands coffee beans in the time I was here. I wonder how many cups of coffee that is.

As Kenny chomps into the hamburger steak, his taste buds go on a ride of their lives. It's the best hamburger steak he's ever tasted; maybe even the best food he's ever tasted. Every bite has so much flavor in it. It has the perfect texture. So soft, tasty and delicious.

Uncle Kea is an excellent chef, Kenny thinks, I probably missed out on a couple extravagant dinners because I was busy sleeping like a baby.

Uncle Kea brings up a question after dinner. "Eh Kenny. You had a great time here, right. You like come back next year den?"

Kenny thinks for a while, and replies, "I'm sorry Uncle, but I think I'm gonna have to pass on that. I had a memorable experience, but certainly something I don't want to do ever again." He really likes his uncle and the environment of the Big Island. Every morning as the sun rises, Kenny thinks this is such a beautiful place. He can't believe that he will be leaving here in a couple of hours. Whenever he's down in the dumps, he can think of the sunrises on the Big Island, and remember how lucky he was to see such a beautiful sight. It will always be the remedy when he's feeling depressed. Kenny will especially miss his uncle's cooking. But Kenny knows all of these positives is not worth coming back and re-living the hell that he went through. Waking up at five everyday and working

while the beaming rays of sun burn your skin is not exactly how Kenny wants to spend the rest of his life.

"I can see wat ya mean." Uncle Kea says, a little disappointed, "Workin on one plantation is one man's job. No wahines (women) or keiki (kids) allowed. You need real hard workers that like doing the job."

Kenny goes into his room, puts his head down on his pillow, and says an oath to himself, "Now, whenever I am tempted to steal something again, I will remember what happened during this experience. No matter how badly I want it, I will never steal again. Because next time, instead of sending me off for three days, my parents might send me here for the rest of my life!"

"The Broken"

By Lynn Hong

Hailey stumbles to the window. Her eyes meet the unwelcoming murky sky, the gray streets, and the lifeless playground—all monochromatic. Her crest-fallen face gleams in the dark, and reflects against the cold glass. It blankly stares back, with eyes screaming lost hope and deep pain. Lips shut, hair disheveled, and hands streaked with tears, looking down is what causes Hailey pain the most—down at the hard ground, down at herself.

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Doctor: "Hmm."

Translation: I feel sorry for you.

Hailey: "So?"

Translation: Spit it out, doc.

Doctor: "There's no complete cure for it. The most you can do is to take care of it, meaning that you can only relieve the symptoms."

Translation: Too bad.

Hailey: "Oh."

Translation: What?

Doctor: "You're actually one of the mild cases. Some people cry in their sleep because their skin is too itchy."

Translation: Be thankful, kiddo.

Hailey: "Oh."

Translation: Is that all you are going to say?

'Conclusion: take care, but give up,' Hailey thought. 'That's all you want to say, doc.' From the moment she held the prescription for ointments, she knew she wasn't going to get much out of her doctor.

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The teary-eyed reflection of Hailey idly stares back. Gazing down at the smooth benches, the shiny slides, and the polished swings, back and forth, Hailey shifts her view from her rough, blotchy skin to those impeccable objects. 'Ironic,' she thinks.

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To Hailey's parents, ointments, apparently, weren't a trust-worthy source.

"She says it's good for it."

"How much is it?"

"20 man-won* for a month's worth."

"Eat it, Hailey. It's vegetable powder. Tastes like vanilla ice-cream."

It tasted like anything but vanilla ice-cream.

"Acupuncture is effective, you know."

The next day, she'd find a therapist mumbling as she stuck pins into Hailey's skin. Looking at the pins sticking out from the tip of her fingers to the side of her eyebrows, nausea was all Hailey could feel.

*

"It's not so hard. Slide it open, and jump."

Startled from the voice, Hailey looks around. No one is there.

'I'm home alone,' she thinks, 'no one could have said that.'

She turns her head back to the murky window. She finds her reflection smiling.

*

Despite the endless efforts, Hailey's skin remained the same. It got better, then worse, and then in between.

"It's not that bad," her friends would tell her. "It actually got better over the years." Hailey only rolled her eyes.

And then came the year in America, a special year to Hailey. She thought that, maybe, her skin would miraculously be cured and become that of Snow White's ('did Snow White have perfect skin?' she wondered) because she was going to be in Ohio, where it was less polluted than Seoul. Surprise, surprise: it even got worse.

*

Hailey feels her face with her fingers. Eyes swollen, lips turned down. It definitely isn't a happy face.

"Idiot, of course you aren't smiling."

Hailey's eyes grow wide.

"Why are you so surprised? I'm just part of you, after all."

'You're not supposed to speak,' Hailey thinks furiously, 'You're a mere reflection. Like a shadow on a window.'

"AM I? Really? I don't think I'm much of a "mere" reflection."

'Then what are you?'

"You, of course. I'm part of you, like I said before."

*

Hailey's new American friends intentionally avoided talking about her skin. Nevertheless, there were times that Hailey casually brought the subject up.

"I think my skin got even worse."

"Um, did it?"

"See, it wasn't like this last week, but it's just getting redder by the day."

"Oh, really? Hey, what was today's homework again?"

"Do you seriously not care about me?"

"No, it's just that it's personal. I didn't want to hurt your feelings."

"Oh."

Translation: Oh!

Despite how desert-dry Hailey's skin had become, the year in America was a true bliss: she-and others-pretended not to see her skin at all. People kept their distance from her "problem," especially her fellow students. Whether people were being sensitive or careless did not matter; the fact that they never mentioned her skin was enough to make Hailey grateful.

*

Dribbles of rain fall from the gloomy sky, breaking as they tap the window. The window quivers, and Hailey shudders.

'You're not me.' Hailey thinks.

"Yes, I am. Look, there's no point of arguing about this here. Now remember why you're standing here, facing me."

'I don't know. Why am I?'

"You moron, you've been tortured for the whole summer."

'Was I? I thought they were just being nice.'

"You call that nice?"

'Yeah, maybe in their own way.'

"But it still hurt you, didn't it? Didn't that push you to this edge?"

'Maybe. Or not. I don't know. All I know is I'm about to crack. I'm not sure what to do now.'

"Maybe you just need help thinking?"

*

"Hey, I'm back!"

"Aww.. How nice to-"

Her aunt stopped in mid-sentence. Her eyes grew red.

"What happened to you?"

Was this her way of greeting?

"I don't know. I really don't."

Hailey toyed with the edge of her new shirt with her fingers, twisting the fabric, as if she was searching for an answer. She was not quite sure how to reply.

*

The reflection cackles, but its voice no longer sounds like Hailey. The high-pitched, bitter, and cold tone penetrates Hailey's already-bursting head. Its diabolic laughter echoes in the room, mixed with the noise of the rain. The rain pounds against the window, thrusting its water drops against the hard window. The window shakes harder. The echo stops.

"Here's my help."

The reflection bares its teeth. With a screech, the reflection drowns the booming rain and the whirring wind. The window shudders, as if it were startled by the shriek. The screech continues, and the window is no longer able to withstand its force; the glass rumbles, cracks, and bursts into a million pieces. The rain penetrates the window and hits Hailey's face, as she sees her reflection-and herself-break apart.

*

"You know, my nephew was like that too. And then we found this amazing remedy. All the other things were crap compared to this one. Try it."

"You'll get better. Don't worry."

"I'll pray for you to get better. See, this is the right time to visit God, and grow close to him.

Discover the meaning of your existence."

Countless speeches to Hailey, explaining "how she just might get better," and numerous accounts of their "nephew's curing of atopy," -often told with a glow of pride-were given to Hailey on a daily basis. Hailey could even recite few of the lines from the classic "God is near you" lecture that she was forced to listen every week or so. It was impossible to resist

the strangers who had found Hailey easy enough to lecture-Hailey didn't dare to be impolite. The speeches however, rose a new question in her mind: "Am I really that ugly?"

*

A distorted figure appears on the window. Half of its eye is on the edge of the window, its nose above it, and the ear below it. In the center is an enormous lip, speaking with a dry and raspy voice.

"Open," the reflection croaks.

Hailey slides open the ugly window. The rail comes up to her chest.

"Climb."

Hailey obediently grabs the rail, and feels the metal cool the sweat in her palms. The black sky rumbles as the late-summer rain pours onto her, soaking her face, soaking her body, soaking her soul. A crack of thunder causes an earthquake of horror in Hailey's mind.

*

"What's wrong with your skin?"

"Um..I have atopy."

"Oh. You would have looked so much prettier without it."

"...."

"Class, be nice to this girl, okay?"

"...."

What a talk to have in front of the whole class. The teacher had meant no harm; Hailey understood that she had meant to show that she cared for her. Hailey stumbled out of her seat, and ran-to the classroom door, through the empty halls, across the streets, and to the city bus stop. Tears silently dripping from her eyes, she caught her breath, wiped her eyes, and walked into the bus. She sat by the window.

*

The reflection no longer speaks. It merely encourages Hailey to climb the rail with its emotionless eyes. Hailey's grip tightens, as she claws her way through the needles of rain and hoists herself onto the slippery rail. Suddenly, a bolt of light strikes the broken reflection. Shattered bits of glass fly everywhere, as the fragments drift through the violent wind and pierce Hailey's skin. Drops of blood cover Hailey's rough hands, as the particles tear them open, inch by inch.

*

On the bus, a wrinkly old lady with gray hair and another lady with an inch of make-up conversed as Hailey gloomily gawked at the dirty window. The old lady noticed Hailey, and shook her head.

"How hard it must be for that girl."

The lady with caked-up make-up agreed.

"I know. How old are you?"

"Who, me? 15."

"This company I work at has nice remedies for atopy. Here's my number."

Her smile, her pitying eyes, her hollow words—did she really care for Hailey?

"Come see me sometime with your mom. I'll give you free samples."

Hailey pushed her away as she burst into a full-blown break-down. Enough was enough—how did these people not realize that such simple comments could hurt her? How did they not realize that caring could break her heart?

*

Hailey holds onto the window rail. She stands above many roofs, many people, and many tears. In the chaos of the raging wind, the heavy rain, the flying particles of glass, she stares down at her bleeding hand to only find broken pieces of herself. She lets go of the rail, lifts her foot, and loses her balance. Her broken reflection is no longer there.

Fin.

*20 man won= about 200 U.S dollars

"I'll Get Around To Changing"

By Herena

I bid a farewell to my lost last week of summer vacation as I stormed into the bus, stomping exaggeratedly on each stair. It wasn't a typical yellow school bus that sealed away my last 7 days of freedom, but a white church van; and the heavy weight on my shoulders was not due to a backpack crammed with textbooks and binders, but a duffle bag packed to the point of bursting with a week's worth of clothes and my other necessities. If you haven't figured it out, I'm going to camp. No, not camp, I'm going to a Korean Christian Youth Retreat to "spiritually bond" with about 50 bible thumper spawn ranging from ages 9-17 from my church. The cherry that topped off this ruined week would be that most, if not all the kids there spoke Korean as did the chaperones and pastors while I couldn't say "hello" (ahn yung ha sa yo) without someone thinking I had said "my sister did it" (un ni [ga] ha suh yo).

The loud screeching of the brakes woke me from my inner unenthusiastic rants on this retreat. To my utter delight, I found we were at the retreat location. Note the sarcasm. I gave one last inward groan before following the rest of the kids to the building. At a glance I already deemed the grounds barely livable, even if it was for just a week. There was a recreation room, while large enough to hold the 50 kids and chaperones, was an open air space, meaning there were no walls to prevent bugs and other parasites from getting 'in', it was basically a giant patio with dirty carpeting. Below the recreation room were two bathrooms, one for the boys and one for the girls, containing a total of two sinks, three toilets, and three shower stalls. Mad morning rushes were to be expected. Next to the bathroom was a room for sermons and while this time it was a closed room, it could probably just barely fit us all. Outside in the back were 10 or so small tents set up side by side to form a complicated tent labyrinth of doom. Cabins were available, but not for use as tents were supposed to "bring us closer together". Maybe literally in the tiny tents, but our 'spirits' might be a little cramped in the 6" by 6" enclosure.

I let out an exasperated groan and crumpled to the dingy olive carpeted floor (I guessed it was probably a

deep green at some point...) and glared up at the vivacious brightly colored banners badly taped to and barely hanging from the ceiling, reading "The Change" in rainbow colored letters. They had to be kidding. For the first time since getting there I cracked a smile. I almost laughed out loud at the cliché theme. "The Change. Real cute." A sarcastic voice echoed my thoughts and voiced my silent snickers. I glanced toward the voice and saw a long haired girl, about my age, 13, smirking up at the banners much like I was, but with a confidence and boldness I dared not display.

She caught me staring and turned to me. With a mischievous grin she introduced herself with a simple, "Hey, I'm Nina." I discovered, like myself, Nina was forced to be here by her parents and was not enjoying the trip so far. Unlike myself, Nina did understand and speak Korean fluently.

"My parents only speak Korean. Gotta know their language if I want to ask for a ride to the mall."

We spent the next few days of the retreat complaining, whining, and generally, to my chagrin, acting like brats. Complaining about the living conditions and food, which were all Korean soups and stuff, was just for starters. We refused to sing the overly peppy praise songs and instead mouthed them reluctantly. And the sermons? They were ignored entirely. Nina even went as far to doze off in the middle of one, snoring loudly I add. Needless to say, she received quite a few disapproving frowns from the chaperones. We mocked and barely participated in the lame activities. We talked back to chaperones, though that was more Nina than I. But our favorite activity by far was making fun of the "dorks that were actually having fun here".

The adults there seemed to expect Nina's sass but were pretty surprised with me. I was surprised myself. Nina's dauntless air was infectious. She did what she wanted to and when she wanted to, regardless of the amount of lectures or glares she got. She had the guts to speak her mind and express what she thought. I wasn't exactly joyous about the retreat, but I knew without Nina, I would have probably followed along quietly participating as little as possible, but still following everyone else for the most part, being just a touch irate. Though outwardly stating I didn't want to be here was a bit demeaning, the language barrier

shrouded my guilt. I had a right to do as I pleased seeing as I couldn't understand a word anyone was saying and no one seemed to bother to translate anything for me.

The night that marked the halfway point of the week finally came. "Four more days to go!" Nina chirped cheerily, stretching out on her sleeping bag with a contented sigh.

The three other girls in our tent glared at her and, by association, glared at me as well. It was strange though. They usually criticized our actions, preaching about how we should try to learn something, or at the least, pretend like we were. Tonight, for a change of pace, they seemed to be giving us the silent treatment. Not their irascibility was any less blatant.

"Here's hoping those days go by quickly. G'night." I replied, ignoring the glowers of death from our oh-so-amiable tentmates. I swore I could feel their revulsion throughout the night.

The next morning a chaperone pulled us from the food line and asked to speak with us for a minute. From her tone we could tell she was about to lecture us and it looked like it would take much more than a minute. To my misfortune, she spoke English and I couldn't block her out. Apparently, last night we were supposed to stay silent to ponder about the sermon. Our beloved tentmates had informed her we had spent the night chatting away.

"Blabbermouths..." Nina muttered. It was an understatement to say I was mad. I had already mentioned at the start of this retreat how I couldn't speak or understand Korean. Exactly how was I supposed to understand instructions or the sermon with them being only in Korean? I kept silent knowing that she wouldn't understand now if she couldn't understand then. Arguing, while it would have defiantly made me feel better, would only irritate her, possibly to the point we would get more than a sizable lecture. She went on for another 15 minutes essentially repeating the same things over and over, then threatened to send us home. She sent us to separate tents to decide whether we wanted to "take up a better attitude" or go home.

I sulked in my tent. I never asked to be here; I never wanted to be here. Was it too hard to understand I had

no interest in being 'devoted to God' or 'growing closer' to him? I did have a shred of 'faith in the Lord', I kept the possibility God existed in the back of my mind, but that didn't mean I wanted to spend a week in a camp based solely around Christianity, especially during the week that should have been spent relaxing and enjoying a few more homeworkless days before the start of school. It wasn't even an option to concentrate on taking in anything; I could barely understand bits and pieces of the sermons and shadowed meanings of the activities. Even the environment was a questionable place to be 'learning about God'. It was a bit hard to be growing closer to the Lord when you couldn't breathe, much less 'grow' when stuffed into tiny tents and rooms.

Besides, in what way did being a Christian merit for me? Not only did I see no upsides, I also had previously experienced and participated in the mockery that were the 'fanatics' and the 'fundies' (slang for Fundamentalist Christians). Reputations of 'extreme' Christians, a.k.a. the bible thumper spawn, as they'd been so benevolently nicknamed, had always been associated with the lower rung of the social ladder. Religion was a heavy topic and to talk about something like that at school was just weird. Their attempts to "spread the good word" were rejected and met with constant bullying. When they walked away from the persecution, comments such as "It's cutting into their bible-reading" or "Why doesn't God make us stop?" arose.

I was interrupted by the chaperone as she let Nina and I out for our answers. We both answered that we'd stay and behave, mainly because being sent home early would not rest well with our parents. We did still continue to mock the retreat, but only to each other in low whispers. I pushed my tent ruminations to the back of my mind.

The last night of the retreat was here and it seemed like nothing could quench our happy glows. Unless you counted the creepily dark night that shrouded the retreat grounds. We were led by the chaperones to the dark recreation room one last time. Coming upon the room I saw it was lit solely by candles. By their soft light I could make out two long rows of chairs facing each other so endlessly long, the last chair seemed to disappear into the shadows. The flames bent and subdued

to the wind, distorting the room's details in wild flickers. Nina and I sat across from each other, I, a little apprehensive at whatever was about to happen in this dark, slightly cultish room.

"Ugh, please. No." Nina muttered, her voice slightly muffled from her head being under her chair. Her dark hair flipped up as she sat up straight with an annoyed look on her face. She gave a long weary sigh and gestured for me to look. I bent over and saw under our chairs was a small tub of water along with a towel. I looked back up at her, confused. Fixing me with a slightly cold condescending look she motioned washing her feet. I groaned, partially due to the fact I didn't understand straight off but more due to the realization we were going to re-enact the feet washing ritual Jesus had performed for his disciples. Add gross last day activity to my growing list of "Reasons Youth Retreats Should Be Banned."

The directions were in Korean, but the one of the chaperones, the one that had threatened to send me home, translated foiling my plans to daydream during this bizarre activity. Even without the translation, I knew the story well enough to understand what we were doing. The act showed how close we had become to each other, how we had grown to love, respect, and accept each other to the point that we could wash each others feet to show how much we had bonded. While Nina was fun to hang out with and all, washing her feet seemed a bit extreme. "Just lean over and pretend you're doing it. It's dark, no one will notice." Nina hissed. And this would be why she was fun to hang out with.

After we 'washed' each other's feet the pastor had us stand. The chair arrangements were made so that we formed a giant chain. "Hug the person across from you and move down the chain until you've connected with every person in the chain." The annoying chaperone had reappeared and translated these obvious instructions. I was linguistically challenged, not stupid. The pastor was even demonstrating 'how to hug'. Apparently the chaperones thought we were all idiots.

"I can do it!" The pastor shouted enthusiastically in horribly broken English.
"God is with me!" The kids replied, just as loud.
It was the running call-and-answer thing for this retreat.

"God help me..." Nina replied as always following with the usual smack to the forehead.

The parting ceremony was sappy, fairly pointless, and involved people invading my personal bubble, but it was a bit touching. Even the kids who didn't particularly like Nina and I still openly embraced us, not showing any sign of reluctance or refusal, even when Nina and I did. It was like all was forgotten, all was forgiven. Some girls started to cry being so moved by the events of the night. It was a bit over the top in my opinion, one of the things the kids at my school would label with the 'bible thumper spawn' title, as would I, but at the moment, it was alright. A bit unorthodox, but I could understand this was something that released a lot of emotions and with it, tears.

"Some girls are so emotional." Nina whispered, and in the process smashing my image of a sappy but acceptably touching moment of emotional display. Her trademark smirk broke across her face and she rolled her eyes expectantly.

Now I wasn't about to defend the girls. Like I said, it was a little weird, so not unlike whenever religion came up at school and my friends scoffed at the over-expressive Christians, I agreed muttering a halfhearted, "Yeah." Was conformity a sin?

The next morning we drove back to the church where we were being picked up. Shouting goodbyes, chattering about the retreat, and exchanging last hugs, the kids departed. One by one, the giant mass that was our retreat group diminished and I have to admit, I kinda felt like I lost something, I felt a bit lonely without the hundreds of bodies surrounding me. Nina's car pulled up and she tossed her bags into the trunk. She waved bye and left with a few eloquent parting words.

"Hanging out with you made the retreat almost bearable. See you around!" She said this with the same cheeky grin and boldness she displayed our first meeting.

I heard Nina's parents ask her how the retreat was and Nina answered with a heartfelt description on how the retreat "really changed her and how she viewed the world." The fakeness of her hollow words rang in my ears as her car pulled away from the church. I admired

Nina before for her ability to express herself and do the daring things she did. I still did. But she wasn't as great as I made her out to be that first day. She was out-going and expressive, but she was also arrogant, haughty even.

My parents came soon after and I, like Nina, tossed my duffle into the trunk and go into the car. My parents asked me how the retreat was. I thought about the trip. How I spent it fooling around and how I could have made it a better experience. True, there were a few complications, but I could see what the chaperone meant when she was lecturing us before. With a little effort, I could have overcome little complications. The sermons did have English translations that Nina and I were too lazy to read; the praise songs didn't have to be sung exactly right for me to be able to 'praise God'; and if I had to guts to, I could have asked for translations from Nina for the instructions. I could have made it better, just like I could have adopted reading the bible daily, paying attention to the sermons at my church, and praying... But some things weren't easy to do, and for now, I decided to take to easier way, the way I was accustomed to. It didn't mean I wouldn't try later, but for now, I'd prefer fewer complications.

"How was the retreat?" My parents repeated the questions breaking me from my thoughts. "Did you learn anything?"

I smiled and answered with a simple, "Yeah." It was an honest answer. Ironically, I gave the same answer to Nina last night. It was also an honest answer. I did learn that I had options; that Christianity had some interesting prospects, but they were prospects I wasn't ready to explore just yet. For now, I'll go along with the crowd, making fun of the kids I just 'bonded' with. It doesn't mean I'll do it forever. I'll get around to changing. Eventually.

I can do it.
God is with me.

"Shred"

By Brian

Far off, in a world of it's own, lies a mountain town called Steamboat. Here, the small but ever growing town is filled with many regulars that eat, breathe, and sleep skiing and some tourists that have come to experience the Rocky Mountain wonders. Every morning the once sleeping town awakens to huge cliffs with snow cats patrolling around to make sure that every last spec of snow is groomed and slippery. Owners of the many town shops turn their closed signs to "open" and all at once the town is stampeded with citizens from all over, California, Oregon, Florida, Centennial and Lakewood. Overnight the town was a ghost town, and in the morning it is a city. The pizzeria starts twirling dough and making fresh pepporonis, the burger joint prepares warm freshly grilled burgers with toasty fries that have just come out of the frier. Here the sun shines on many people's rosy cheeks as they cut an "S" shape pattern while flying down a steep hill. This mountain consists of runs to meet everybody's needs, for people who take many spills and are just beginning a blue or green will suit them, however for an expert only a black or a double black will be able to tame them. At Steamboat, the best snow awaits for riders to blast through the knee deep fluff and spray their friends.

On this day, a cold and frostbitten January morning the crisp and icy flakes come down in numbers. Blizzary conditions are the reason that the sun is no where to be found. The blanket of dark gray clouds engulf the mountain like mother wrapping her baby with blankets. However on this occasion, Brad has never been more ready to ski in his life. As he peers out the window of his three bedroom cabin located in Mira Village a sea of white appears infront of him. Chilled air fills his lungs as he rolls out of his bed and creeps into the kitchen to scarf down some breakfast. The smell of brown cinnamon sugar oatmeal that comes out of the brown packets, meets him as he lays foot into the kitchen. He scarf's down the first bowl and has to go back for another.

"Good morning my skier boy," his mom says as she fixes her curlers.

"Hey mom thanks for the oatmeal," Brad replies.

"Your welcome, but remember, you have to make your bed, pick up the dirty clothes in your room, and do the dishes before you can ski today," responds Brad's mom.

"But mom there is only a few days left before the season is over."

"No excuses, you will listen to your mother young man."

The steamy concoction fills his tummy with warm tastiness. After breakfast, Brad suits up and is ready to test his luck with the conditions.

It doesn't take long for Brad to get ready. His thin, mopy hair flies all over the place and is infested with some sort of creatures because he hasn't showered in days. He takes no time in combing it at all, then puts on his white long underwear with his flaming red ski pants over the underwear, and pulls his black Under Armor heat gear over his skinny frame. His puffy black coat covers everything up and Brad is ready to go! He steps out of his mountainside cabin and the cool crisp air immediately fills his lungs making his mouth feel dry. His ski boots clunk down on the snow as he puts one foot in front of the other wandering down to the lift where he straps his skis in and joins the lift line. To his surprise the place is deserted and he would be lucky to find any one on this day. Brad listens to the slight hum and purr of the chair lift as he heads toward the top, and watches someone catch an edge and lose a ski. Finally, he is off the lift and making a run down a quick cruiser. He fly's as he passes people like a cheetah hunting down an elk. Brad's skis are pointed straight and there's nothing that will stand in his way. From a distance you are only able to see the snow that fly's behind him and he is no where to be seen, but from close you can see the technique and how graceful he skis. For Brad, the run itself takes much less time than riding up the chair lift.

Brad decides to ride up the "Poma" lift, which takes him to the very top of the mountain. From there, Brad is able to explore the backside of the mountain. He stands like a king on his throne as he waits for the opportune moment to drop down into the backcountry. "Pika," his usually favorite run is closed today because of the hazardous conditions. As he edges up to it he reads the sign, "Don't attempt, passes will be taken if you do so." However, Brad decides to do it anyway knowing that he won't be caught. Today, the powder is waist deep and Brad is very carefully planning his plan of attack. He eyes the 30-foot cliffs, and then the glades that are off in the distance, these are just two obstacles you will have to

maneuver about to make it down safely. He starts forward and leans back on his skis so he can be on top of the powder and not sink down low beneath it. He gains speed as he eyes the cliff ahead, Brad leaps off and soars into the air as if he was in eagle, he can't be seen in the foggy condition, Brad comes down perfectly in the powder and continues on with his mystical adventure. He hears a siren off in the distance and wonders if someone is on to him. He realizes it was nothing to be worried about. However, he suddenly hits an unexpected bump and tumbles down the second cliff losing both of his skis. His red K2 Public Enemy's are lost beneath the fluff. Brad hears his right arm split in two places and knows it's broken right away. The throbbing pain enters through his whole body and he grimaces. Tears pour down his face as he just lays there knowing that nobody will be going down a run on this day. "Awwwwww!" Brad lets out a shriek of pain. Struggling for breath because of the shock, Brad manages to crawl back up to try find his two skis that are buried within the white. He frantically digs through the snow like a dog digging for his prize possession, the bone. Losing hope Brad finally caught a glimpse of his skis and snatched them with his paws. After a long up hill battle he was ready to ski down, supporting his right arm with his left. He stomped with his right foot and then his left, gave a little shake, and knew he was in his bindings. It took all of his might to stand up and coast down. Brad finally breathes a sigh of relief when he sees all of the condos and restaurants the town has to offer. As for the arm, it's not good and Brad knows he won't be skiing for a while, however he is still looking forward to the next time he will be able to strap on his skis and go flying. The life of a skier!

"The Fairy And The Woodcutter"
By Pola Shim

Geunchun mountain-with its crisp mountain air, mist settling in between the hills, and trees abundant-harbored a wondrous tale. A long time ago, there lived a very warm-hearted and kind woodcutter in Geunchunsan village. On a bright summer day, the woodcutter journeyed to the local tavern and drank heavily. His sipped his drink along with his mixed emotions of happiness and sadness.

The owner of the tavern was curious why the woodcutter was happy, but also sad, so she walked up and questioned the kind-hearted woodcutter,

"Woodcutter! Why do you seem so happy but sad on this lovely summer day?"

"Oh no! I am not sad at all. I am very happy!" the woodcutter said moodily.

"That is good then. But why are you happy? Are you not suppose to be cutting wood in the forest right now?" questioning again.

"Yes, but today I want to drink. Sit next to me. I will tell you what happened."

The tavern owner sat and the woodcutter began his story.

"Everyday, I go up to the mountain and cut wood. Anytime I relax because I am tired, the birds fly over to me, chirp, and ask me, 'Wood cutter, how are you? Isn't it hard to work everyday? We'll gladly sing you a song.'

Work was great. I was never lonely when I did my job; the birds and animals would always talk to me.

So one day, I was working hard as usual, cutting down trees. Because I was tired I was going to rest, but suddenly the forest leaves rustled and from the bushes a deer tumbled in, barely breathing.

"Help me woodcutter! I am being chased by a hunter," the deer panted.

Because the deer appeared desperate and weak, I hid it behind my pile of wood. The hunter and walked towards me. Like a madman, the hunter moved his head side to side searching for the deer.

"Have you seen a deer running this way?" the hunter asked me.

"It ran that way," I answered with a straight face. The hunter ran in the direction I told him. As the hunter disappeared, I called for the deer, "Deer! The hunter is gone, it is safe for you to come out now."

"Thank you for saving my life, dear wood cutter." The deer bowed in gratitude and said,

"Wood cutter, on the top of the mountain there is a pond that nobody knows of. Every time the full moon is in the sky, the fairies from the sky kingdom come down and take a bath in that pond. While they are taking a bath, you should take one of the fairy's clothes. Then the fairy that lost her clothes will not be able to go up to her kingdom and will live with you."

After hearing what the deer said, I was awed.

"But there is one thing that you must be careful of. You should not let the fairy find her clothes until you have had three babies, whatever happens," The deer said in a very serious tone.

After the deer was done with its speech, it sprinted into the forest. As the full moon came up after a few days, I went to that pond. There, there was a clear and beautiful pond. On the outside of the pond were beautiful flowers with attracting scents that made me dizzy. The fairies came down to the pond riding a seven-colored rainbow. The gorgeous fairies illuminated the pond. The fairies took their clothes off and put it on the branches of the trees. Then I hid one of the fairies clothes as the deer advised me to.. Soon the fairies were done bathing; they found their clothes and went up back to their kingdom.

"Oh, dear! My fairy clothes vanished! What shall I do?" One of the fairies said.

Still she couldn't find her clothes. Everybody left her and went up into the heavens. The fairy was weeping and crying.

"Dear fairy, you must have lost your clothes? You must be cold, at least put these clothes on." I said.

I gave the fairy the clothes I have got ready in advance. The fairy followed me and started living with

me. After, the fairy became my wife and I worked even harder. The fairy forgot all the happenings of the kingdom of the sky and got all the love from me. One year, then two years, while the time was going by the fairy had two babies.

One day, while I and the fairy were having a discussion, I accidentally talked about hiding the fairies' clothes. The fairy was so anxious to wear her clothes.

'Dear husband! You hid my clothes? Ah! I wish I could see them...'

Because I had a warm and weak heart I showed the fairy clothes to the fairy.

'Ah! My clothes!" the fairy said in such a happy tone.'

The fairy was so happy that she even wore the clothes on. But what a surprise? In the time there was even no time to blink the fairy grabbed the two babies in each arm and flew to the kingdom of the sky.

'My dear! My dear! Where are you going? Come back!' I shouted to the direction the fairy disappeared.

Although I followed crying out loud to come back, it was no use. The fairy and the two children disappeared into the sky and were never seen again. The woodcutter regretted that he should have listened to what the deer told him.

After the fairy, my wife had run away from me I collapsed and I lost my desire of doing my job, cutting wood. I would not wake up every morning and work as usual, but just stay at my house and regretting that I should have listened to the deer.

As time past I gradually started to forget about what has happened. So I decided that I should start doing my work if I wanted to live. I went into the forest and cut wood down. But I was just cutting the wood with unconsciousness mind that I must forget totally about the fairy and deer, so I didn't know where I was going. When I came back to my conscious mind I was at the pond where I saw all the fairies taking bathes. Also, it was dark, but bright by the full moon. So I thought that

the fairies would come down again, but they did not. I guessed they stopped coming down because of what I have done to one fairy.

At that moment that I had to turn back and go home, I heard a weak sobbing sound. I followed that sound and there was a fairy, my wife that had run away from me with two children in her arm.

'Oh fairy, that was once my wife, what has happened to you?'

'Oh my husband, I have done something largely prohibited that I have got kicked out of my sky kingdom with the two children I took from you.' The fairy was full with tears as she was talking to me.'

'Tell me what you've done that was so prohibited that the sky kingdom has kicked you out.'

From there the fairy started her story after she went up to the sky kingdom, running away from the woodcutter.

'After I went up to my home, sky kingdom, with the two children. My family, friends, and others were happy that I was back, but not happy that I had children between a human. I did not care, I was happy enough that I had came back to my home and next to my friend which is also a fairy. I called her "Iry."

Iry, was beautiful, same with all the other fairies, but she had blue eyes and she was my friend since we were born. After I came back from the middle world, Iry listened to me closely of what happened and hugged me warmly and said,

"You must have had a hard time, my friend. Do not worry, nothing like that will happen again." She said in a very comforting voice.

As time past I, also, started to forget about what happened to the woodcutter and me, but as I did I started to rely on Iry more and more. One day, I became attracted to her and I had the feelings about her that I usually didn't have. I would want to get more close to Iry as much as I can and I wanted to know everything about her, even what she did everyday. But at that moment, Iry started to feel that I was acting weird towards her.

"What is wrong with you? Are you still in shock of what happened with the human? Why do you want to always be with me and know everything I do? I will say this from my heart, but it is starting to bother me." Iry said in a quiet voice, concerning that I am still in shock.

"I don't know. My mind and body is totally relying on you, Iry." I said.

I told Iry all the feelings that I was feeling about her and that I didn't know what kind of feelings they are. I looked up and I thought Iry would be looking at me as if I were weird creature, but she was looking at me as usual but a little surprised.

"Really? Well, I haven't been telling you this because you were going to look at me weird, but I had similar feelings too." Iry said in a little voice looking at me and smiling.

"I also thought you were going to look at me weird."

But, because I was happy having the time to talk about my feelings to Iry, I did not know that black dark eyes were looking straight toward us.

The next day, I was called by the king of the sky kingdom. I walked toward the large palace made of wood also full with small wooden statues on the corners of the roof that is triangular shape. The palace's area seems endless. After, I entered the palace I saw fairies that work in the palace move busily back and forth. Then I entered the hall where the king usually is during the day. The hall was long and the thin red carpet made it even look longer. As I walk I could see the people looking at me with the eye looking at a human as I pass each and every one of them.

"Have you called me the king of sky kingdom?" I asked carefully and quietly.

"Yes, I have. I called you because I have a question for you. Did you have a conversation that is totally prohibited with Iry last night?" He asked looking straight into my eyes.

"Conversation? Prohibited? What do you mean my king?"

"Have you not said that you were in love with Iry!"

He shouted in such a loud voice that I became dizzy and became unconscious.

"How dare you do and say such thing! Do you not know that it is prohibited, something that low, should not

happen in my kingdom. This is your second time that you have done a largely prohibited thing and now I cannot close my eyes and just say it did not happen. You have had a child with a human! I suppose you are not in the right place to live." The king said.

After hearing what the king of the sky kingdom has said I fell to the ground and could not say anything. Right after I got kicked out of sky kingdom and I cannot go back anymore.'

The fairy's story ended. The fairy still cried with such sorrow.

I took her home and first gave the fairy warm water. After hearing her story I thought she was pity that she couldn't even say anything about herself and Iry to the king of the sky kingdom and people of the sky kingdom. It was hard for me to fold my mind towards the fairy but it was more painful to leave her in this world while she is always thinking of someone faraway. So I decided to help her, but I didn't know how because I didn't have anything like the fairy's clothes and any other way to go up to the sky kingdom.

One day, while I was cutting wood I saw the deer that I taught me about the fairy's and their clothes. I then thought of an idea.

"Deer! Deer! Wait! I am the woodcutter!" I shouted so I could stop the deer.

"Woodcutter? Why do you want something more from me?" The deer said towards the me looking at me suspiciously.

"Yes! Do you have any other way that you could go up to the sky kingdom?"

I told the deer everything that happened and he thought very seriously and decided to help me find a way. I followed the deer into the deep forest and the deer said,

"Wait here."

After a few minutes the deer brought a fairy clothes that looked ancient and worn.

"Here. Take it and never look or call me." The deer turned and walked away.

"Wait deer! How come you have this old fairy clothes? Where did you get this?" I was very curious of where the deer could have got this.

If the deer had done something same with me, the deer was suppose to have a fairy next, but since the deer didn't it was more mysterious.

"I told you not to call me again! You have no right and do not need to listen to such thing. Now go." The deer kept walking into the dark forest and disappeared.

I ran toward my house and gave the fairy the old clothes and she did the same thing she did when I gave her the fairy clothes that I hid from her."

So the fairy wore the clothes and flew back up to the sky kingdom to go find Iry. I heard a very short message from a bird that is a friend of mine that the fairy did find Iry and they started running as far away from the sky kingdom, going in and out of the sky. They were happy to be together, but sadly they got captured by the king's men and are still in judgement of what they have done. Most of the fairies say that they have a mental problem so they should be sended to doctors to be cured. It was such a sad message.

The woodcutter's story ended.

"That is why you looked sad, but I don't know why you looked happy?" The tavern owner asked curiously.

"I was sad because I had sent once someone who was my wife. I am happy because I think I have done something that is good enough that I can know forget what has happened between me and the fairy." The woodcutter said happily in the end of his speech and stood up.

The woodcutter walked away from the tavern and the owner still watched him as if she were still curious about the whole thing.

"A Boyhood Among Juveniles"

By Terry Wenger

Even when I was a young boy at the tender age of 14, I was already getting into trouble. Big trouble. The kind you wouldn't think a 14 year old boy and his 18 year old brother would get into. Well maybe you would expect something like this from a bunch of high school graduates and their brothers, but thats beside the point. It was a day like any other, except for the fact that it was a once in a lifetime day. My brother and his friends were all graduating soon, and a lot of them would be going off to college in separate parts of the world. We decided to celebrate the successful journey through their high school lives without getting arrested or seriously injured. Ironically our celebration plan risked both unfavorable elements. It was nearing the glorious American holiday celebrated on the 4th day of July, and fireworks were on all of our youthful minds. Young, ambitious, and full of hormones making us all ten times dumber than the average person, we set our plan in motion. Aquiring a healthy stock of bottle rockets and other fun fireworks, we made our way to a park that is often empty. Being that it was July 1st, it was a little early for the people of Honolulu to hear the graceful shriek of an aerial being shot off 100 feet from their home, and our celebration was cut short by the infamous sound of sirens in the distance. Our happy moment of shooting bottle rockets and anything that caught our fancy was short lived indeed, and the running began in every direction. We split up, heading towards every escape point possible.

As a group we moved slow, but as a bunch of adrenaline pumped teens running from the cops, we would have given the national sprinting team a run for their money. We ran through small back alleys between houses and away from the park in general. Once we deemed we were a safe distance from the park, we slowed to a walk and contacted the rest of the group via cellphone. No one had gotten caught or arrested, I was surprised to say the least. Unfortunately, one of us had forgotten their backpack at the park and we needed to go back for it. The joy of heading back towards the park in our friend's car and seeing a pair of policemen going through the bag was indescribeable. It was as if Santa had just shown you the toy you had wanted since forever, and then showed you your name on the naughty list. We were in for one hell of a day.

"Yo officer, what are you doing going through my bag?" said Jon as he slowly jogged over to the policeman going through his backpack, putting on his most confused face, the one he uses only when he is in for a lot of lying.

"This bag is yours kid? I need to ask you a few questions. First of all, why does it smell like smoke and why did you leave it here unattended?"

"Well, it smells like smoke cause my chronic uncle that I live with is always smoking cigars around the house, everything that goes in that place comes out smelling like smoke, and I left it here cause a bunch of kids with fireworks shot some bottle rockets at me while I was walking and I dropped it when I tried to runaway." Sometimes I idolized Jon's ability to think up lies and excuses on a moments notice.

"Can you describe these kids with fireworks," he said while eyeballing the rest of our little group as we stood about 20 feet behind Jon. "Because honestly I think it was all of you who were shooting off those bottle rockets and you were just dumb enough to forget your stuff when you ran, like most teenagers are apparantly."

"Good sir, I resent that statement because I find it prejudice against young people and am planning to take it up with your boss if you do not return my bag post haste!" By this point the rest of us were doing our best to keep a straight face, but when Jon started talking like an over-civilized political figure, it was hard not to crack up with laughter. The policeman looked as his partner as if silently asking permission to beat up this punk kid right now. The 2nd policeman shook his head and the first turned back to Jon and the rest of us.

"Fine, just take your dumb bag and scram, I'm not wasting any more time on something as small as this. I want some donuts."

"Sounds good to me" his partner said as they began to walk away toward their patrol car. I noticed an unfired bottle rocket on the ground and picked it up. I casually strolled over to Ole and said,

"Hey Ole, I'll give you 20 bucks if you shoot this bottle rocket at the fat cop right now" (the fat cop being the one who questioned Jon).

"HA! SHOOTS THEN BRAH!" Ole shouted as he grabbed the bottle rocket, whipped out a lighter and aimed it towards the fat cop. "TIME FOR A LITTLE PEW PEW!" he yelled loudly as the bottle rocket shot towards the cop.

"YOUR PRETTY DUMB HUH OLE!?" I yelled as we all started running as fast as we could. Ole never was smart, although he looked like a smart kid with his averaged sized blonde afro and tall white guy complexion. As for me, I'm only 5' 10 with black and brown hair that hung down slightly over the tops of my eyes. I always wore a look of confusion and stupidity, but in reality I was probably the smartest one there. We all ran, the fat cop making an earnest attempt to catch us, luckily his athletic looking partner just laughed as the fat cop ran out of breath after 50 feet and had to sit down. We all made it to the car parked a block or two away and drove off, making sure not to drive past the park.

"Hey uhh guys, you will never guess what happened!" Ole said as we drove toward somewhere safe.

"What Ole? Did you realise your feelings for that fat cop and want to go apologize?" Jon said sarcastically.

"Uhm, I forgot my bag at the park."

"Well, in that case, BUY ANTOHER ONE! No ways are we going back for that thing, what did you even have in there?" Dave said, laughing about this since Ole always seemed to do the dumbest thing possible at the worst time possible.

"Actually I had your house keys in there, smart idea asking me to hold onto them haha."

"Ole, I hate you so much you don't even know. FINE!... Let's go back. Hopefully the cops left without seeing it, because if they did and I get killed in my sleep by an angry overweight police officer who had the keys to my house, I'm going to have my ghost haunt you Kung-Fu style for a billion years." Dave said, sounding completely serious, which only made it funnier for the rest of us. As the car turned around and made its way back to the park, we decided to make a quick stop at Burger King for some energy food. We definately needed our energy. After all, if the cops were there, I dared Ole to shoot another bottle rocket at them.

Slowly pulling around the corner of the park, we all leaned towards the car's windows to see if the cops were still there. Nothing.

"Well look who lucked out this time," Dave said as he opened his door to jog over the get Ole's bag, not entirely trusting Ole with such a simple task like getting his own bag at this point. When he got back and climbed in the car, we drove off. Jon was looking slightly dissapointed that the cops still weren't there. Jon was the type of guy who always pushed his

luck in life, and always took risks for the simple reason of improving the fun level of his life. The most recent example was asking an extremely popular girl to prom, she said yes. I wasn't there, but my brother who was watching with some other guys from a distance, said he turned around, smiled at them, and then turned back around and asked the popular girls best friend standing right next to her to prom as well. After laughing off a pair of slaps, he strolled casually over to the next group of unsuspecting girls.

"Hey I'm getting pretty hungry, we should go get some Taco Bell or something," I said, but being four years younger than everyone in the group, decision making was far from my responsibility. I was quickly put back in my place by Jon,

"We just had Burger King dude, how can you possibly be hungry still. Anyways, if you want something to eat I think I saw an old shoe in the back of the car." Jon said as he turned around in his seat in search of a shoe on the floor.

"Whatever," I said tiredly, "where are we going and what are we gonna' do anyways?"

"We, my young friend, are going to ward theatres for a bit of fun." responded Jon with a hint of inspiration in his voice. "However you are a bit young for the fun I have in mind so we are gonna' drop you off at the movies so you can meet up with your friends 'kay brah? Shoots!" he added, not even allowing me a moment to disagree. Not that I would have disagreed anyway, when my brother and his friends went to ward, they either were meeting girls that I would have no chance with anyway, or they were going to go have some old fashioned fun messing around with and annoying random people and theatre workers. The time Dave payed his ticket cost of \$8 is all dimes and nickels was especially memorable, the look on the ticket vendor was priceless. Mostly though, when they headed to ward I split off to do my own thing.

"Alrite little buddy, here we are," Jon said as we pulled up to Koko Marina Theatres, taking another stab at my age. These theatres were less crowded as ward and a lot closer to my house. I climbed out of the car, waved them off, and watched them drive away. Uninterested in calling up friends my own age, I walked home enjoying the cool breeze and quiet neighborhood scene as I thought about the days adventures. The end to a day I would not soon forget.

I awoke the next morning to the sound of my cell phone on the desk near my bed. I drowsily climbed out of bed and made my way over to the desk to see who would need to be punished for waking me up before noon on a saturday. To my surprise no one had called, it was a text message from Jon saying the 5 word phrase I had come to associate with a fun day, "On our way, you ready?" A grin crossed my face as I raced to get dressed for yet another day.

"Swing High, Swing Low"

By Sharon Choi

The misfortunes of the Park family began years ago. Mrs. Park got sick and passed away, leaving a young baby and Mr. Park. For years, Mr. Park could not accept his wife's death. He was always drunk and didn't take care of his son very well, so his son learned to take care of himself and matured at an early age.

Last year, after what happened at the playground, Mr. Park promised himself to move on.

As a rare treat, Mr. Park had taken his son to the park that day. On a nearby bench, he sat, and let his son play. About 30 minutes later, he heard a loud cry. Mr. Park hurried to the playground. When he arrived, a group was gathering around his son and a little girl who was crying.

"What did he do, sweetie?, asked one ahjumma* who seemed like the girl's mother.

"I wanted to ride the swing, but he wouldn't move so I asked him to move, and then he pushed me," said the young girl.

"What? He pushed you?! Are you okay?" said the ahjumma. Turning to the boy, she yelled. "What were you thinking of? Did your parents teach you to push someone who wants to take a turn riding the swing?" Gazing at her with big innocent eyes, the boy didn't answer her; the ahjumma got furious and began to slap his face. When Mr. Park stepped forward to protect his son, the lady sneered, "Look who's here! Hello, Mr. Park. Do you remember me? I used to be your neighbor. This rude boy here is your son? Wow! What a surprise! I guess any child who grows up without a parent is always rude and not raised properly, so, it's not surprising that your son acted this way. Having no mother to teach him what is right and wrong..." Mr. Park was angry with the ahjumma for criticizing him in public. But he felt ashamed to hear that his son hadn't been raised properly without a mother.

Mr. Park changed after that day. He became a strict father who set goals: find a job, give his son the best education possible, and fill both mother's and father's place for his son.

It took one year. Mr. Park, having obtained a job at one of the biggest companies in Korea, earned a satisfying salary. Though Mr. Park could now provide everything for his son, he couldn't do anything about his son being lonely. Whenever the boy returned home from kindergarten, the house was dark and empty. Tired of waiting, he would fall asleep before seeing his dad come home. One day, Mr. Park came home past midnight. Exhausted, he got into the bed without even changing his clothes. Suddenly, he felt hot water all over the bed. It was a bowl of instant noodles. Mr. Park knew that his son had made this mess; he went to his son's room and punished him by beating his legs with a thick rod. The boy didn't cry or say anything. Mr. Park was furious. All his effort to teach his son about what was right and wrong had come to nothing. His son's action that day disappointed and surprised him. Ever since what happened at the playground, the boy had never done anything wrong. He was obedient and quiet.

A few days later, Mr. Park got a call from his son's kindergarten teacher who told him that his son had not come to school that day. Mr. Park immediately grabbed his jacket and ran out of the building to look for his son. He wondered what was going on; his son loved kindergarten so much that he never wanted to miss it. After several hours of hunting all around the neighborhood, stopping strangers to ask if they had seen his son, he finally found his son at the playground, sitting on the swing. Unable to control his temper, he found himself hitting his son again. Like the last time, the boy didn't cry or say a word. All he said was, "Sorry, appa*."

Several months passed and it was already the end of the year. Mr. Park had so much work to finish before the new year that he spent less time than ever to take care of his son. Then one day, he got a call from the post office.

The man on the other end was sputtering, "That son of yours put 300 letters in the mailbox with no receiving address or stamps! We have more than enough mails to deliver and we don't have time to fool around. Just picking out those 300 letters took us more than six hours! Do you think we have time to waste? What were you doing when your son was creating this chaos? Take

care and teach your son to know better! And come get these letters right now!"

He rushed to the post office where they gave him all the letters that his son had written. Humiliated once again, Mr. Park could not do anything but apologize. Curious to see what his son had written, he opened one and began reading:

Umma*~

Hi! Today, I went to the playground with appa. I finally got on the swing after waiting for a long time. But then, this girl came and asked me to move because she wanted to swing. Why couldn't she wait? Ignoring her, I kept swinging, but she came and stood right in front of me. I was afraid she was going to get hit, so I pushed her away. Then she started to wail so hard that all the adults rushed over. This ahjumma went to the girl and asked if she was okay. Then, she glared and began to scold me. I didn't know what to say, so I stayed quiet. But she slapped my face. I felt like my face was burning. She asked me if my parents had taught me to push people. I felt like crying because I only had appa. Sad and embarrassed, appa came and stood in front of me, but I was very glad to see him. The ahjumma knew you and appa. She said I was rude because I didn't have a mom to guide me what is right and wrong. Umma, it's okay. I don't blame you. I was the one who was rude. But I kind of don't like you because you left me and appa and went somewhere. Where are you? Please come back to us.

Mr. Park had never known that his son had felt this way that day at the playground. He thought his son was too young to understand, but now he knew: his son had understood everything. He opened the second letter. Hi Umma,

I miss you. Today appa came home late, knowing that he would be hungry, I cooked a cup of noodles. I waited for him, but he came home so late that I was afraid the food would get cold, so I placed it under the blanket to keep it warm. Appa didn't know food was there and he spilled it. He hit me, but I didn't cry. I knew that if I cried appa would cry too. Ever since you left, I have heard him cry every night. I didn't want him to cry because of me. When Mr. Park had finished reading the letter, he couldn't stop his tears. He had not known that his son cared about him this much. He was also proud of his son for being mature enough to understand his dad. He opened the next letter: Hello,

Today I didn't go to school because it was parents' day. We were supposed to go to school with our parents and have a fun party. I didn't want to go with just appa; I knew everyone else would come with both parents. Seeing that, appa would have cried and felt bad for me. So I didn't even give him the invitation and instead, I decided to skip kindergarten that day. Appa came looking for me at the playground. He hit me again, but I didn't cry. I knew I shouldn't cry. He is working hard for me, I don't want to disappoint him. Umma, I miss you so much, but I don't remember your voice. Appa said your voice was like his morning cup of coffee. Will you speak to me in my dreams so I can remember you? Appa always sleeps holding your picture in his hand. Do you visit him? I will sleep with your picture in my hand, so will you please visit me? Mr. Park went home early that day and hugged his son hard. He said he was sorry and told him how much he loved him. Hugging each other, father and son cried and cried. After hours of crying, they sat on the bed and talked and laughed. Mr. Park suddenly got curious and asked his son, "Why did you put in all 300 letters to your mother this year? What made you collect them and finally put them in the mailbox?" The son said, "Appa, I was too short before to reach the mailbox, so I couldn't put in the letters. But this year, I was grown tall enough, so I put in all the letters I wrote until now." Mr. Park was happy to hear that his son had grown and felt proud of his son for being so grown-up. That day, they laughed and had fun together for the first time since Mrs. Park had died. They promised not to keep secrets from each other, and would try hard to live the best lives possible to show mom that they can be happy now. They were one step closer to each other and one big step closer to a happy life. They slept in the boy's small bed, Mr. Park hugging his son, who held his umma's picture tightly. That night, father and son slept with the happiest smiles on their faces. Mrs. Park was visiting them in their dreams.

*appa: father in Korean

*ahjumma: woman/married woman in Korean

*umma: mother in Korean

"My Natural High"

By Jenna Young

"Are you sure this is safe?" I murmured to no one in particular for the third time in the last 45 seconds. I glimpsed around uncertainly at my surroundings. It was eight o' clock in the morning. The summer heat was beginning its mission to establish a coat of sticky sweat on our backs, pestering us into buying over-priced popsicles; but the crisp air was combating successfully with its chilly, breezy winds blowing about. I was gasping in utter awe and fear at a huge, jagged, rocky peak sitting atop a titanic mountain with water rapids encircling it. The peak was in the shape of a grizzly bear; the mist from rushing gushing waters surrounding the air everywhere. Damp clung to my skin like sticky trap; featuring myself as the bug.

"You've going to love this, Jenna. You won't regret it. Aren't you excited? I love going on amusement park rides!" my best friend Alex spit out, her words blasted at me with her machine gun of a mouth; a huge smile plastered on her face as we stood in line for the ride. Even my mother was animatedly excited for the first ride of the day in the Disney Theme Park. From this horrifying moment on, I knew that even though my gut was obviously instructing me to immediately get out of the line and scamper away quickly in the opposite direction of gut-wrenching-human-killer-of-a-raft-ride; I knew I was going on that raft ride and there was nothing I could do about it. Unless... Unless I didn't meet the safety requirements to go on the ride! My eyes quickly scanned the perimeters for the bright neon sign containing what I hoped would be my salvation. I wanted out this mess and I wanted out now. Unfortunately, I didn't weigh more than 300 pounds, I wasn't pregnant, and I was taller than 4' 6" ... That was when my brain officially gave up on coming up with frivolous reasons as to not go on this ride.

"Yeah, Alex, I guess it'll be fun." I muttered with a sigh. Why do Americans love amusement park rides that go at speeds and heights so unnatural? We love them so much that we made Disney the successful man he was. What is so great about people dropping from great heights? Spinning upside down? Being thrust up into the air 100 feet and feeling like barfing your brains out? Our culture is so obscure. What is so great about this? Why am I doing this? As I was thinking these bleak

thoughts, the sun was just kicking off its long trek across the aqua blue tint of a sky, by peaking out from a cloud. How ironic, aqua blue. But in comparison to my pessimistic thoughts, everything seemed to be reassuring me; Alex and my mother, the sky, the somewhat soothing sound of man-made water rapids gushing about. "Everything was going to be alright. Just Relax," I thought to myself. And I did.

As a rule, I absolutely did not move when people asked me to go on amusement park rides with them. I was like a solid rock set into the earth, something no man could budge. But somehow, man had figured out how to use machines to move the rock, making the solid rock unstable. This was the driving line that my best friend that drove home. "You'll regret this if you don't go." So, against my mind, logic and reasoning that I am doing this crazy, out-of-my-mind act...

"GRRRRRING" the sound of motors working in a fluid motion, round and round, again, as our raft flew to the top of the track, I was immediately thrust into reality and I was going to die from the shock. In just glancing this steep incline my limited experience had already told me that I was going to have to drop, and far. I looked down again, the equivalent to pinching myself to make sure it was real. Oh my God. From that breakneck height, I would have to fly down at the speed of sound. Time for some Hail Mary's and Our Fathers, a final prayer before I head to heaven, or hell. I squeezed my eyes shut and gave the handlebars on the raft a death grip, holding on for dear life. How could I let my mother and best friend persuade me to go on a raft ride, in the early morning! I must be out of my senses! And there were screams that could be heard from just about anywhere in the park coming from that ride. Oh boy. The raft was turning, sloshing around in the roaring waters. It wasn't that bad. It was actually quite fun. I relaxed my shoulders and loosened my grip. I smiled. Everyone in the raft was gleeful too. This was really enjoyable.

"Now, Jenna, this isn't bad, eh?" my mother said. This was the closest she got to gloat with an "I told you so", before...

SPLASH. I guess it isn't bad. My smile had turned into a thin line with a furrowed brow. I have just gotten my whole shirt-sopping wet from a wall of water crashing

into the raft, soaking the rest of its occupants, and flooding the bottom with water, which was looking like a wading pool. On top of my fear, I was freezing cold, and the windy morning was not helping. I would have laughed at my mother whose face was stony silent. But an urgent issue occupied my mind. There was a big drop coming up. The big finish, KABOOM; that was going to finish me too, as far as I was concerned. I looked ahead and saw the water at the bottom, gushing around, seemingly evilly frolicking, and beckoning us closer to get us wet. No! I couldn't grasp the idea of accepting my doomed fate. I wanted to turn the raft around desperately and back into the direction it came from. Too late now, gravity had taken its toll.

"OHOOHHH SHEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEET!" I screamed, summoning up my special 5 year old tantrum voice. I could hear my mother and my best friend yelling and screaming their lungs off too. My mother's scream was exactly the one that she gave me when I snuck up behind her and said, "BOO!" which was always followed by some major stink-eye. Alex's scream sounded like mine, except she still had the sense not to swear in front of my mother.

For those few seconds I was falling, it felt as though my body was suspended in midair, time was in slow motion. This was a great feeling; release, relax, enjoy. Screaming just made the sense of complete freedom complete. And then we crashed into the water, spraying everywhere. The moment was over. Everyone was soaking wet, but I was ecstatic from that. Now I knew why Americans loved amusement park rides so much. It was the natural high, the adrenaline you got from it.

"Can I go again?"

"The Summer Of 1950"
By Lindsay Lee

As the rooster cackles,
The blistery gusts of wind in the spring are replaced
by gentle breezes.
As the breeze spews the spirit of dreams and illusions
through my room, my room thrives with mystical
sensations.
As the light dims out, the wind gently wraps around my
body and takes me—to god knows where.

And I woke up.

It was the spring of 1950, which also happened to be
when Korea was divided along the 38th parallel line. I
was the oldest daughter in a family of five: my father,
my mother, my brother, and my sister. We were poverty-
stricken but could sustain our livelihoods in a shack
in *Kyeong-ju. I was fifteen years old and my parents
were approaching their mid 40's: both had wrinkles on
their face and callus on their hand due to overworking
themselves. Well, not my father. It just so happened to
be that he was a habitual drinker that never came home
early. He would occasionally beat us, and even worse,
never contribute a single penny for our livelihood. He
was the ultimate shame of our family.

Enough said about my dad. My mother, on the other hand,
was a diligent, respectable worker in a *ko-mu-shin
(rubber shoe) factory. She was the backbone and the
single source of income of our family. So, she, too,
never came home early, and my father just could not
tolerate this: "Ya! Had fun hanging out? Eh?" Again,
he would violently yell at my mother—while haughtily
holding onto the cigarette in his mouth and a bottle of
*Soju (alcohol) in his right hand.

"The kids are watching. Let's talk tomorrow when your
mind is straight."
This kind of a response from my mom was always directed
toward soothing my father and turning our attention
away from their conflict. I could often see myself
cowering away with my brother and sister under the
blanket with a lamp, only to grab five stones and play
a game of *Kong-gi.
"Hey! You just moved that stone!"
My brother often argued with either one of us, and I
never thought to fight back.

"Alright, alright. I'll let you have it this time."
If losing a game of *Kong-gi could make my brother and sister happy, then I would gladly do so. As family peace was restored in our house, the sunset looked more than ever beautiful in the year of 1950: the crimson color of the sun faded away as darkness and the moon's glow prevailed the night sky.

The sultry heat waves of June occupied the atmosphere as the buzzing radio predicted a phenomenal 39 degrees in Celsius tomorrow. What the radio failed to predict, however, was a catastrophe, so great and powerful that it changed the lives of millions of Koreans. On June 9th, 1950, when it was just another day when my siblings and I were playing *dang-da-muk-gi (hop-scotch) and my father was nowhere to be seen, I heard the clinging and clanging of guns and swords afar. I also heard the radio transmitter screeching, "Jun-jeng! Book-han kun!" War? North Koreans? There was no way, but apparently, my mom took this seriously as she yelled, "Su-yeon, Su-ji, In-june! Come, come, under the *maru. You have to hide here till I say 'seek!' Staying silent is the absolute rule of the game. OK? Sh..." No one except I saw through her intention to hide the fact that we are facing the North Korean soldiers. It was a hide-and-seek to my brother and sister, but I intuitively read my mother's look on her face: "Please protect them for me, Su-yeon! I trust you."

We were under the dark *maru: full of dust and hard to breathe, but we were used to this place because it was our main hideout when we played 'hide and seek.' The fact that we couldn't see anything meant that we could trip over the objects under the *maru, but it also meant that we could hide behind them. Then, we heard the footsteps of people coming in and out of the house, accompanied by desperate screams and terrifying gun shots: "*Buk-han-kun, *Man-sae! Man-sae!" Surely, I was terrified, and so were my brother and sister.

"Let's play hide and seek in here, OK? You can't make any noise, or else you don't get any candies."
"OK! I'm good at that!" "No, I am the Queen of the hider!" Argued my siblings.
"Good, good. Now then, show me who's the best- I'll be counting over here! Hide and seek! 100, 99, 98, 97,....."

While Injune and Suji were hiding, I attempted to eavesdrop on what was happening outside the maru. To my surprise, I heard a heated argument between my mom, and a few of the soldiers... I was afraid to the bottom of my wits that Injune and Su-ji might hear it, so I told them to plug their ears with their fingers (also saying that it's a part of the rules). As for myself, I did the same, since I thought I would be better off without hearing the argument. Yet, I could still quaintly hear voices outside the *maru. To my dismay, I had no choice but to listen to the conversation outside, although I didn't want to hear it. Right then, the dust went up through my nose and made me sneeze loudly. My sneeze was definitely audible: there was a moment of silence for a few seconds... I could not breathe. What if they heard me? Are they going to come down to get me?

"Did you hear that?"

"Yeah, I did hear some kind of noise down there. Is there something going on?"

"Hey look, there's handle over there on the floor!"
Conversed a pair of soldiers.

They found the door for the *maru. Instinctively, I quickly darted to Injune and Suji to protect them.
"Shh....." I whispered.

One man came down-my heart palpitated louder and faster as the soldiers drew closer to us-it reached to a point where I was concerned the soldiers might hear my heart beat. One of them told the others to stay outside to keep an eye on the woman (apparently my mother). The man lurked around the *maru to see any signs of human trace, as I repeatedly prayed to let him go back outside without finding us. We were hiding under the table, and I could hear the man getting closer and closer. I screwed up all my courage and grasped my fist and my knuckles. Suddenly, he stopped- right in front of the table. I winced, fortunately.

This was exactly when my acute hearing senses were useful-at that moment (in a matter of just a few seconds)-they were stimulated by tensions and small noises. I felt as if my heart would rip up, as anxiety and terror gained full control of my mind and body. I did not move a single bit, and I barely managed to breathe. Yet, I held on to my siblings' hands tightly-without motion, cautiously listening for the soldier to make another move. Just then, I heard a painful, unpleasant scream from outside. A thousand questions

ran inside my mind: Is it my mom? Is she in trouble? Is she okay?

The soldier that was no more than an inch away from our hiding spot went back up as he heard the scream. I was relieved for a second when he left, until the unforgiving anxiety seized me once again. My heart pounded quicker and louder as each second elapsed as I prayed, tightly holding onto Injune and Su-ji's hand: "God, Help us, Please!!"

After what seemed like hours, the site outside the maru seemed to be at peace once again, and the three of us decided to venture out. Our house was miserably torn down and was stripped of everything, leaving loneliness, emptiness, and despair. Then, from a distance, I heard my dad call out, "Ye-jie!" That was my mom's name. "Come here and change my clothes!" But his habitual bellow was met by silence. I, too, wondered where my mom was at this point. "Is everything OK? Can we come out?" Injune asked me while breathing heavily, as he peeked his head out the *maru. Soon, all four of us were searching for our mother, only to meet failure. She was...gone. I thought of my mom's whereabouts, and the only logical answer seemed to be with the North Koreans. I thought frantically, while my brother and sister started crying helplessly. "Where's mom? Umma!" "I don't know, Su-ji, Injune. I don't know. She will be back, so please stop crying..." I could only attempt to soothe their sorrow and tears, as doing so myself would only draw more tears from them.

My father was, surprisingly, in deep shock. "Where did she go? Is this a joke? I promise I will change. Please, just bring her back!" "I don't know what to say, dad. It's just as you see! This is not a joke, you understand?!" I erupted into a violent moment of anger as dad seemed not to comprehend the situation well enough.

Our family now had to confront a loss, an irrecoverable one indeed: a loss of the means to survive and maintain our livelihood. Not only that-because the means to survive and maintain livelihood can be acquired by money-but the morale and hope to live on and achieve the smallest portions of our dreams in life. The hot spell of heat quickly turned into cold, bleak gusts of wind as all of us could not grasp the very true reality of this situation. By God, this just had to be a dream,

as my father thought moments ago. Amidst a whirlwind of thoughts, I recollected a piece of advice from my mom, "Care for others and always keep faith and integrity, because what you sow is what you reap..."

As the boggy released the spirit and the light breezed through the darkness, a trifling puff of wind tickled the tip toe... and,

I heard a very friendly voice. "Are you OK, Ye-jie? What are you doing on the floor? And why are you hugging the radio? Wake up! I'm not going to see you miss the school bus!" Yelled my mom. "Huh? Where am I? Where's mom?" I asked, still half-living in my dream. My mom had enough of it. "Go and brush your teeth!" She dragged me by the ears to the bathroom. I finally put my thoughts together. I didn't have the energy to take a shower, so I headed straight to the living room, limping across half way.

First and foremost, I checked where my dad was. And yes, he was sitting on the couch, reading '*Chosun Il-bo' (equivalent to 'The New York Times' in Korea) like any father would typically do on a Monday morning. And my mom? "Ye-jie, breakfast!" Yes, she, too, was an ordinary mother, at least from what I thought, for she was cooking breakfast right now, and of course, yelling at me.

"Mom, dad, I'll see you later!" I shouted as I put my shoes on. "OK, don't be late, and don't sleep in class!" The two almost said it in unison. While on the way to the bus stop, I thought about my dream. How my dad was like: smoking a cheap cigarette till dawn, having the foul odor of *soju, abusing my mother, and never being there when we need him as a father and the leader of our family. My mother was one to tolerate such circumstances, and in reverse, replace my father as the leader of the family. At this point, I was slightly grieved and felt sentimental. The reality of my father in truth as a respectable leader and my mother being a *hyunmo-yang-chu (a wise mother and a good wife), was indeed very comforting. I gratified the opportunity to learn a genuine lesson of the value of relationships through such a dramatic, but rewarding dream. Acknowledging the importance of relationships within a family, especially of my mom and dad, I was ready to tackle another great day in my life.

It was then when I saw my yellow school bus drive by at such an agonizingly slow speed. And I just realized that I had missed the school bus.

*Kyeong-ju: a city in Korea, located in Kyungsang-nam-do (in south east of Korea)

*Ko-mu-shin: Shoes made of rubber

*Soju: Korean Alcohol

*Kong-gi: game you play with five stones: jackstone or pebbles

*Dang-da-muk-gi: hop-scotch

*maru: Korean traditional floor

*Buk-han-kun: North Koreans

*Man-sae: Hurray

*Chosun-Il-bo: equivalent to 'The New York Times' in Korea: Newspaper

*Hyun-mo-yang-chu: wise mother and a good wife