VISIONS

Envisioning and Building a Stronger Asian/Asian American Community

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Mission Statement

VISIONS is a publication that highlights and celebrates the diversity of Brown's Asian/Asian American community. We are committed to being an open literary and artistic forum for Asian/Asian Americans, as well as other members of the university community, to freely express and address issues relating both to Asia and the Asian American experience. VISIONS further serves as a forum for issues that cannot find a voice in other campus publications. As a collaborative initiative, VISIONS attempts to strengthen and actively engage Brown's vibrant community of students, faculty, staff, and alumni, as well as the larger Providence community.

LETTER *from* THE EDITORS

Fall 2006
Volume viii, Issue 1

If you strolled by Starbucks one chilly Saturday morning, you might have spotted three dark-haired cuties sitting at a table. "Who are these cuties?" you might have wondered, and the answer is, they were us—Karynn, Soyoung, and Erin—sipping warm beverages while composing our Letter from the Editors for the Fall 2006 issue of VISIONS.

"We definitely have to mention we're Category III now," Karynn was saying. After all, that's probably the most important thing we've accomplished so far. Last month, VISIONS was granted equal student group status to the other major publications at Brown. We now have access to greater resources, which means we can print more copies and continue to upgrade our look. (And we can stop having anxiety attacks over our financial situation! Yay!)

But earning Category III status wasn't the only fun thing we'd done recently: or, as Soyoung put it, "Don't forget to talk about fundraising!" This semester, we've held a very successful bake sale (mmm!), followed by an Asian Candy Sale (double mmm!), and we thank everyone who helped support VISIONS.

But most of all, we thank everyone on the VISIONS staff—especially our newest members. Your hard work this semester is the reason this is our best issue yet, and we dedicate this issue to you for showing us such amazing enthusiasm and passion.

"Wait!" Erin said. "Before we end this letter, we need to introduce our E-Board!" So, say a very happy "Hi!" to our new Webmaster, Robin Davis; our new Publicity Managers, Geolani Dy and Irene Chen; and our new Freshmen Representative, Clayton Kim.

And now, we welcome you to enjoy the beautiful prose, poetry, artwork, and photography of VISIONS, Fall 2006!

Love,

Soyoung Park Erin Frauenhofer

Karynn Ikeda

Soyoung Park '09 Karynn Ikeda '09 Erin Frauenhofer '09

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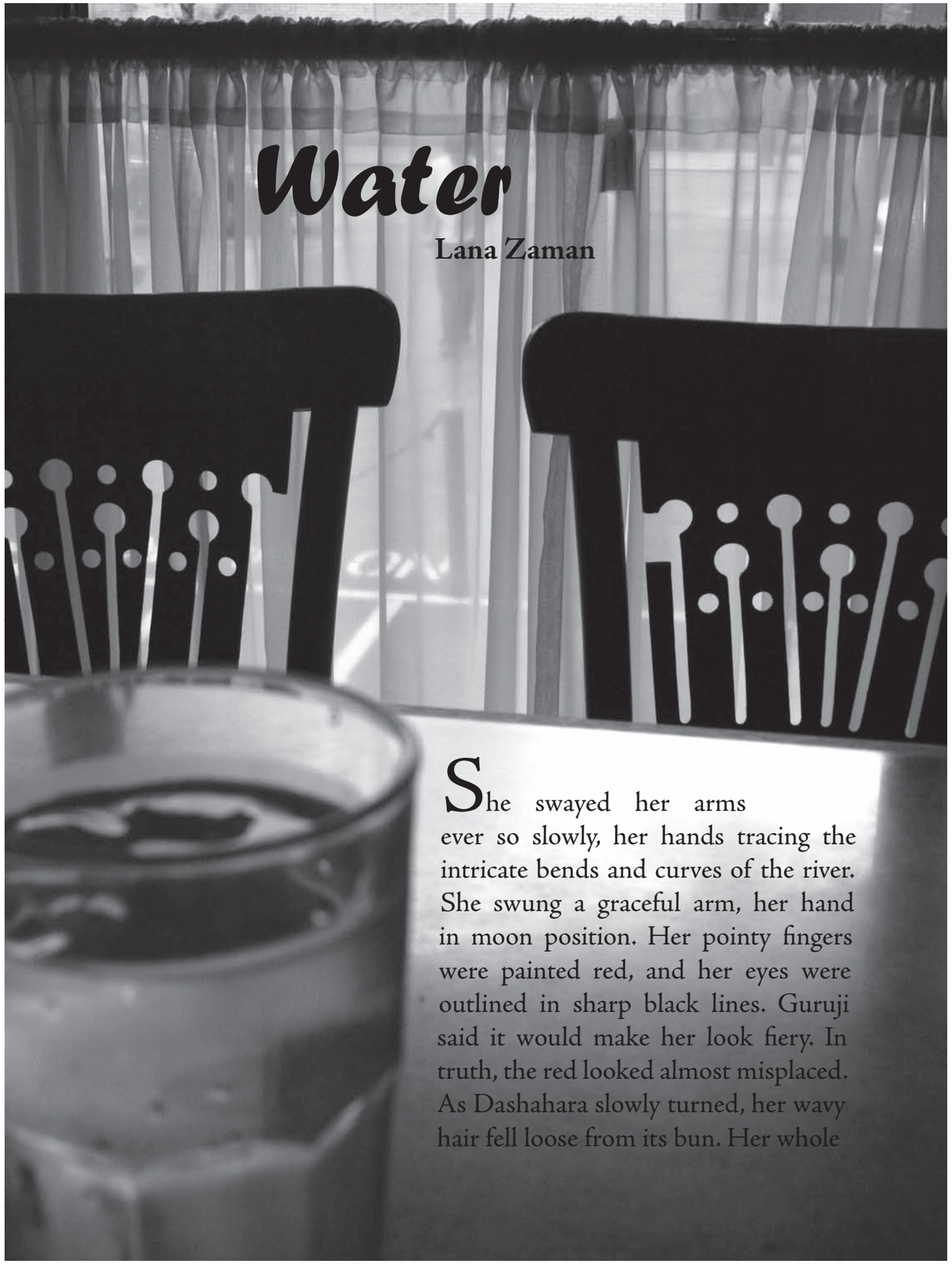


Water

Lana Zaman

She swayed her arms ever so slowly, her hands tracing the intricate bends and curves of the river. She swung a graceful arm, her hand in moon position. Her pointy fingers were painted red, and her eyes were outlined in sharp black lines. Guruji said it would make her look fiery. In truth, the red looked almost misplaced. As Dashahara slowly turned, her wavy hair fell loose from its bun. Her whole body resembled a river; the black waves of hair, the roundness of hips the arches of feet.

At the end of her dance, Ammu and Papa would clap. Guruji would scold the girl for her lack of solidity. Dashahara would laugh. No matter how she tried, she could not make her movements sharp. Her body flowed like liquid, spilling from form to form. She could never resemble the anger of Kali or vengeance of Shiva. So she danced the movements of Ganga, playfully bending and winding in the smoothness of curves.

When Ganga transcended from the heavens she landed in Shiva's hair. Her playful intention had been to overwhelm him with the force of her waves. So knowing, Shiva affectionately trapped her in his hair before she had any chance for mischief. There she stayed for thousands of years, ruffling her fingers through his hairs and whispering secrets into his ears. Shiva would tell her to be still, feigning anger. He would threaten her with serpents and his wide, angry eyes. She would clap her hands and laugh and swim among the strands, cooling his thoughts.

At night when he slept she would bless him with good dreams, and he would wake up to the sound of her sweeping song. The two of them danced in this playful paradise, they knew could not last. And after one hundred divine years, she shot from his head like a spring. She flowed down to the earth, forever leaving the crescent moon glowing upon his head in her place.

Dashahara would walk along the pebbly bank of Ganga, her tough feet scraping against the rocks. Occasionally, when no one was looking, she would unwrap her blue cotton sari. Leaving it in a heap on the rocks, she would plunge into the river in just a petticoat and blouse. She would swim in the cool waters, her curves blending into the ripples. Sometimes Harilal, the shepherd's son, would watch her in secret. Though she never said so, Dashahara knew he was there. At the beginning she was merely indifferent to his presence, but now she had made it her secret mission to torture the boy. But Ganga had a secret too, and it was this; they had both been there once before, Dashahara as a catfish, and Harilal as a monkey.

When she came up from the water Dashahara's petticoat stuck to her thick legs. Harilal would hide in the trees as she wrung the water from her hair. She would find a sunny spot far enough from her path so no one would find her and dance by the river until her clothes dried.

Once in a while Ammu would catch her coming home with wet hair. Slapping her, she would say, "What would I do if someone saw you? You will put your father and me to shame, standing outside in nothing but your undergarments." She would threaten to get Dashahara married immediately. This always scared the girl, but never enough to keep her from swimming in the river.

Ganga found her place on earth, expelled from the heavens. She shamelessly stretched out her body and watched the villagers around her. Ammu, they called her, and treated her as their mother. They worshipped her and drank of her blood to purify their souls, believing it redeemed them of all sins. Mothers would bring their laundry, and wading into her waters, they would let Ganga wash it clean. At night the Nagin slithered upon the banks and transformed into beautiful and mysterious women, their long limbs gliding with a serpent's charm, wrapping around the bodies of men in circle after circle.

Ganga saw it all; generation after generation of priests and children and poets and whores. She loved best the dancers. The girls and women came to her jingling with ghunroo and mandiras. They would count out rhythms and steps to the steady pace of the river. Sometimes they leapt in and danced with Ganga. She would teach them the waves of heaven. Even the fish would stop to watch the dancers. On one such day Harilal crept up in the trees to watch the girls swimming. This was before he ever knew Dashahara, and before he had lost his tail. He watched with impenetrable focus. A girl was flapping and flailing in the current. Clearly she could not swim. She flung her arms about in search of something to hang onto, and suddenly Harilal saw her glide unto the shore. Wondering what had pulled her and he swung down from the tree. The branch snapped and he fell with a thud on the sandy shore before a silvery blue catfish. The fish was now struggling in the girl's hand. Harilal lifted her by the tail and tossed her back into the river. The fish shot a happy glance at the girl she'd rescued and the monkey who'd rescued her, and she wiggled delightedly back into the waves.

Dashahara strolled along the sandy beach

toward the city. Ammu had sent her into town to get groceries. She trudged slowly and watched the river get filthier and filthier the further she walked. In the crystal blue, she began to see old newspapers, bags of potato chips, and suds of laundry detergent. Occasionally an uncremated body would float by, along the surface of Ganga's skin. This always upset the girl, but there was nothing to be done. A group of city women walked down the steps of the temple. Tikkas on their foreheads and alta on their feet, they waded into Ganga waste deep in water. They clung tightly to their saris to keep them from unraveling and drizzled water over their heads, worshipping the mother and praying for sons.

"How much," Dashahara asked the vegetable vendor, pointing to the okra.

"Twenty rupees for the bundle," he replied, tipping the ashes of his cigarette onto the ground.

"Ten," she said.

"Fifteen," he replied.

"Done."

The man pulled out a blue book of receipts. Taking pen hand, he threw his cigarette stub into the river. Dashahara put down the okra and walked away without a word.

The woman swaddled her baby in layer after layer of fabric. Ganga watched silently. It was a scene she'd witnessed all too many times. The baby girl began to cry. The woman stuffed a wad of fabric in her mouth, and she was silent. Ganga watched the woman's black shawl fall away from her face. She was crying more than the baby. Ganga recognized her, as a dancer; one whom she had danced with before. Guruji knelt down at the edge of the ravine. Laying the baby across her forearms, she whispered a prayer and let go. Ganga caught her. Even in babyhood, she could see it was the body of a dancer. She danced with the baby softly at first, and watched the mother pull her shawl over her head in silent mourning. "I promise", Ganga whispered. "I will bring this baby back to you." And with those words she swallowed the child in the waves and curves of her body.

A couple of construction workers walked up to the edge of the ravine with a wheelbarrow full of filth. They threw the industrial waste into Ganga's womb. Dashahara watched from a distance in

disgust. She knew Ammu would be angry when she came home without the okra, but she couldn't bring herself to reenter the city. She looked at the sun. Guruji would be coming soon. Today she would teach her another shlok of Ganga. The girl straightened her sari and began to walk home.

When she arrived Guruji was waiting on the verandah. Dashahara tied ghungroo around her ankles and began stepping as Guruji counted rhythms with her mandiras.

"So, I saw that boy on my way here. He was hiding in the trees as if he were waiting for someone," Guruji said with a grin.

"Who are you talking about?" Dashahara replied, blushing.

"Oh, you don't know?" she raised her eyebrows. "The shepherd's son, Harilal."

"Oh," Dashahara said, tipping her head so that her hair fell down and covered her smile. Guruji pretended not to notice. She watched Dashahara's fluid arms flow from gesture to gesture. She stood in tribhangi, one hand making a lotus, the other pointing to her navel. Never had she attained such perfect harmony in her motions.

The girl wrung out her hair and bathed in the sun's glow. She closed her eyes and spread out her arms to take in the warmth. She did not see him coming, stealthily hiding behind rocks and trees. He circled around her like a beast pursuing its prey. It was not until his shadow polluted her shower of sun that she opened her eyes. It was too late. He grabbed a handful of her hair and threw her down. When she scrambled to her feet, he struck her in the temple, and she fell. As she lay on the ground he stepped up to Ganga. She saw his eyes were soft, unlike those of most men who returned from the brothels. He knelt down suddenly. Taking a gulp of her water, he sat cowering on the bank. That was when Ganga realized that he was not a wealthy or filthy or power-hungry man. He was just a common sweeper. He took another gulp of Ganga's water, doubting that anything could purify his soul of what he was about to do. He threw the girl over his shoulder and carried her off to the brothel where he would sell her for his own daughter's dowry.

Dashara wrung out her hair and bathed in the sun's glow. She closed her eyes and spread out her arms to take in the warmth. She promised herself this would be the last time she swam with Ganga in her undergarments. Wishing not to be disturbed, she told Ammu she was going into town for the carnival. The city would be so crowded no one would ever realize that she was not there.

Ever since Dashahara's last lesson with Guruji, the dance had claimed her soul. Finally recognizing the curves of her body, she gained a new understanding of Ganga. Yet with it she realized she could not depend so heavily on her. She remembered a day long ago when her Guruji had mentioned that she danced more beautifully when she thought of her husband. Dashahara gazed into the trees expectantly thinking she'd heard something. She tipped her head to let the sun dry her black river of hair. She felt a shadow fall across her back. Her eyes shot open. It was too late. She was lying on her back in the sand, the filthy construction worker's hand clutching a fistful of her hair. Unlike the sweeper, his eyes possessed no softness.

"Harilal!" she screamed. But this time he was not there to save her. She screamed again, knowing it was useless. She had taken extra measure to ensure that no one knew where she was. Pinned to the ground, her eyes widened in horror.

He drank of Ganga's water afterwards; Brimming with shit and decaying flesh and the industrial waste he had cast upon her but a day before.

Once upon a time, before she had taken on her current form, and before she ever set foot on the earth, Ganga had been engaged. Not by choice. She had been kidnapped by the gods and forced into an engagement with Lord Shiva. Despite her love for him, she did not like being forced into such circumstances. So on her wedding day, mischievous as she was, she hid herself in a glass bottle. The gods looked in every corner of every room in search of her. When they found her curled up in the bottle her playful games were not well received. Bhagiratha set a curse upon her to turn her into water. He banished her from the heavens and sent her down to earth. Yet his intentions were not entirely malicious. The truth was that he needed her. He needed her to fill the voids of the earth. So when Shiva released her, Ganga flowed into every riverbed, every waterless stream, every empty sea, and every hollow ocean. Mother of all waters she sustained life, and with her playful nature, soothed the earth.

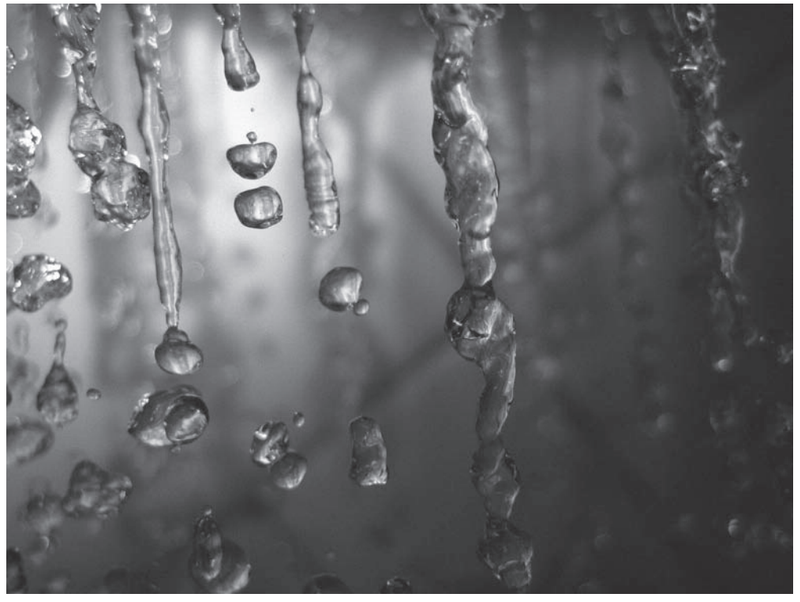
"I never told you this, but I had a daughter once," Guruji whispered as Dashahara cried into her arms.

"When?" Dashahara asked, her eyes widening. Guruji stared into the blank sky.

"It was about a year before you were born." They held each other silently for a minute. "She had this beautiful, wavy hair." Guruji whispered so as not to wake up her husband inside. "We couldn't afford to raise a girl. He would never have forgiven me for it, so I gave her to the river. I never had another child after that." Guruji stroked Dashahara's wavy hair and pulled her close. "What life is this, where we worship the mother, and throw our daughters into the river like ashes."

Dashahara walked upto the ravine. It was raining. She could hardly feel the cold. She watched the raindrops slam their tiny bodies into Ganga's glassy surface. The sun was just beginning to rise. Her parents must have been worried. It was

better they never knew. Her body ached with filth. She looked into Ganga's womb with all the pain and power and secrets it held. She thought fondly of Harilal, with his longing eyes and monkey-like smile…Another day. Another dream. She took a deep breath and leapt in. Dancing in immense waves, Ganga embraced her and sucked the breath from her lips. When Dashahara had but one breath left, Ganga promised to bring her back in a better place. And as she plunged beneath the layers of soap scum and paper and cigarette stubs, she could see Ganga's playful arms beckoning her to a memory of heaven.



LANA ZAMAN '08 loves making flower garlands

Choice

Andrew Ahn

My mother still pats me on the butt
(a maneuver that requires effort on her part,
a specific angle of the wrist).

Those three deft pats
send me back;
I am suddenly five-years-old again.
My libido is out the window
and any thought of you
is still fifteen years premature.

I haven't yet quite figured out
what situation my mother believes
warrants a patting; they come like static.

And perhaps she doesn't know, either.
She pats and smiles lovingly,
a mother's touch
that is familiar to me.
But my mother doesn't know about your
hands as they move over my body.

My mother's hands and your hands
grab onto me and pull me into
safe corners.
But I will never be five and twenty.
Her hands and your hands are
too strong.

ANDREW AHN '08 writes in his sleep.

Untitled

tony myint

My kindergarten teacher, an evil woman who had little to no patience with small children, delighted in making my day as horrible as possible… as did the rest of my class. This treatment was not unwarranted, however, as I, in my glory days, was one fucked-up kid on asthma meds.

On one particular occasion, during a fieldtrip to the Los Angeles Natural History Museum, a classmate of mine named Allison found that her lunch of Cheese-Its and mayonnaise had not settled well in her stomach, and, thinking herself stealthy, let one rip in the corner of the room. To her dismay, the acoustics of the Egyptian Exhibit turned out to be better than she had thought, and the sound of her flatulence reverberated across the hall. Heads around the room turned to the direction from which the sound had originated, and it was apparent that no one but Allison could have produced such a blaring bomb. So Allison did the only thing she could do: she pointed at me.

"Tony is quite adept at picking his nose."

In spite of my exceptional disposition, my teacher chose to measure me with the same ethical ruler by which all other children were judged, and her conclusion, though not directly stated, was that my character was immeasurable. This was not in the good sense of "unplumbed—so profound as to be unfathomable" or "too priceless to appraise". Rather, her true intent was to show my parents that no instrument existed to measure the length of my attention span: zero.

"Tony is quite adept at picking his nose," my report card read. Below it, a row of F's sat staring at me, like a thousand glaring eyes searing a hole into my conscience…that is, they would have if I had had a conscience, which I thankfully didn't, and this was in no small part due to my asthma meds.

So day after day, she would find something else to yell at me about. If days were particularly quiet, one of my colleagues would find something to get her to yell at me about, and to this day I hold the belief that my whole class secretly contrived a plan to allow me to bear the brunt of this woman's wrath, sort of like Jesus but not on the same caliber.

To the outside observer, this reaction might seem ridiculous, almost farcical, considering that little Allison happened to be standing fifty feet from me. Nevertheless, every kid in the room burst into laughter and pointed to me, hurling such brilliantly conceived invectives as, "Bony Tony is so phony." My kindergarten teacher, who was burning with embarrassment, seized me by the wrist, dragged me outside, and forced me to spend the remainder of the day in a shitty Durham schoolbus. Damn you, Allison. Damn you.

So I stepped on my teacher's foot once, and damn did it feel good. Once I actually bit her, but she wasn't quite as tasty as I'd imaagnied.

TONY MYINT '09 is playing his paper piano.

Affection

Corrie Tan

I.

It is night, or perhaps twilight. Events segue into each other; where one ends another begins, part of the same evolving whole. It could be achingly real or quietly imagined, this walk we are taking, the scuff of our feet on concrete. We are young again, maybe we are in kindergarten, where we have to line up 'two-by-two' and we secretly avoid the cracks in the pavement. It is one of those muffled games where we desperately dispel laughter for fear of an embarrassing discovery of childhood courtship, fingers to our lips in mandatory obsequiousness.

I am trying to be—of all things—coy, but failing miserably, and your lopsided grin erases any hint of adult confidence you are trying to gain. I cannot remember how long we stand at the brink of the road, gauging the stream of erratic traffic and dissolving briefly into giggles, committing the most banal of illegalities as we size up the jaywalking scene. Errant schoolchildren on a field trip of sorts, down memory lane.

II.

Sometimes we stage vehement denial.

III.

I suppose the closest analogy for this would be a game of frisbee. A confused name in itself, involving no bees and no frisking (that, perhaps, is subject to change), whirling and sought after, out of reach. A trial of stamina and teamwork, this multi-player chase of one of the strangest flying objects, its trajectory carving out the shape of the concentric circles we find each other in. Hide and seek, peering between fingers and glistening eyes.

We are always sprinting, and we barely make contact through our hurried sidelong glances, begging for a sliver of that luminous slice of plastic, yelling ourselves hoarse as we dodge opponents—your quick silhouette brands itself into my mind. Mid-air, hands stretching skyward and you tumble back, someone's tackled you, and you are smothered in laughter and bruises, brandishing your neon circle of a trophy. Game over, we win.

IV.

No one loses, to be exact. The disappointments and heartaches fade to blips on our radar, tiny hiccups that leave only the faintest squiggles. And remnants of that whiff of fondness, a familiarity of speech and touch.

V.

The curtain falls, and while we step across the road you are looking away, glaring into the twist of streetlights and headlamps, your fingers forming a protective shell over mine. Sacred in its brevity, you stride across the jam of metal-clad transportation with me in tow; no need to see where my hand is, by instinct I sense that reassuring clasp before you let go, and drift away into a space of shadow where I cannot follow. So I think every semblance of fiction is actually a careful, loving subversion of the truth.

CORRIE TAN '10 is raining.

The Miseducation of Eric Lee

Eric Lee

He lived on Sixty-Fourth Street between Fifteenth and Sixteenth Avenue. It was something that his parents made sure that he had memorized. In the event that he was ever lost or kidnapped, that information would prove vital to his survival. Perhaps that is why they also made sure he memorized his phone number and the multiplication tables up to twelve (he only knew up to nine) even before he went to kindergarten. There were many mornings when he just wanted to watch Batman outwit the Joker on television instead. In those days, it was still the retro Batman who danced at discos and had his punches and kicks accompanied by flashes of the words WHAM! and KAPOW! across the screen. However, Eric's father found it of the utmost importance to make sure that his son had committed various numerical sequences to memory.

The fact that all the streets Eric had ever seen so far were numbered made directions much easier for him to understand, yet it raised potentially disturbing issues. What exactly was beyond First Avenue? How high did the street numbers go? Does the count continue in China where it left off in America or does it start all over again where the ocean begins? These sort of questions plagued Eric because no one could ever offer him satisfactory answers.

However, he found solace in Sesame Street, one of the few streets he knew by a distinct name, not a number. Every morning, he turned on the television and was amazed by the characters' extensive knowledge of the alphabet and numbers. He grew more convinced every day that Big Bird or even Oscar would be able to explain to him the nuances of the street numbers. He even conceived escaping to Sesame Street. However, the apparent paradox was ironic and cruel. Because Sesame Street was a name and not a number, he had no idea how to get there or even where to look. He carefully watched the show every day for any kind of clue he could obtain, but Big Bird and Elmo were always very careful never to divulge the secret of their true whereabouts.

The only other place Eric knew that had streets with names rather than numbers was Chinatown. His grandmother often took him along to shop for groceries. He searched endlessly for Sesame Street on those trips; yet, all he could ever find was Mott Street, Elizabeth Street, or Canal Street. Never Sesame Street.

"Grandma, is Sesame Street close to here?" Eric finally asked his grandmother one day.

"What's that?"

"Sesame Street," Eric tried again, giving the literal translation in Chinese.

"Sesame? Isn't that the stuff they put on bread? I don't like it."

■

"Don't forget to wear green tomorrow," Ms. Dorothy waved goodbye to Eric as his mother picked him up from his kindergarten classroom.

"What did your teacher say?" his mother asked him as they walked down the steps.

"She just said not to forget to wear green tomorrow," Eric provided the Chinese translation.

"Why do you have to wear green tomorrow?"

"I don't know."

"Well, is it some sort of homework assignment? You should always do your homework."

"I don't know."

"Ok, we'll see what you have at home. You should have something green, I suppose."

He did not. His mother searched the entire closet when they got home. There was not a single article of green clothing to be found. They did uncover a wristwatch with a green band. However, both of them ultimately decided that that would be cheating or at the very least a poor attempt at the homework assignment. Left without any other options, his mother then immediately went to a local department store and purchased a pair of unassuming green pants, which Eric wore to school the very next day.

Ms. Dorothy wore a green vest. Most of the other kids wore green shirts. Some girls had green headbands. Others wore completely green outfits. By snack time, no one had yet raised the issue of why everyone was dressed in green. Ms. Dorothy had yet to explain it. Eric wondered whether this was a topic that was up for discussion. He recalled the time his friend asked Ms. Dorothy how exactly sex worked. Eventually, though, Eric summoned the courage to find out, and he raised his hand high in the air.

"Yes, Eric?" Ms. Dorothy smiled at him.

"Ms. Dorothy. Why is everyone wearing green?"

"Oh. Well…it's St. Patrick's Day."

"Oh. I see." Eric sighed after receiving another unsatisfying answer. He then raised his hand again.

"Yes, Eric?"

"What's St. Patrick's Day?"

■

"I'll see you tomorrow, Kevin. Bye," Eric waved goodbye to his best friend at the end of the school day.

"Where is he going?" Eric's mother asked him as she picked him up.

"He has to go to ESL."

"What's that?"

"It's just this class where they teach you English."

"How come you're not in it then?"

"Ms. Dorothy says it's for the kids who might need a little more help with English. She says my English is good enough."

"Wait…you mean this is a FREE class where you can learn MORE stuff for FREE?"

"No…it's just an extra class after school where they teach you some better English, but it's only if you need it. Ms. Dorothy says I'm fine—," Eric tried to explain to his mother who had already made a decision.

Eric's mother spoke to Ms. Dorothy the next day and promptly had her son placed in an English as a Second Language class for the rest of the year.

■

Eric dreaded the weekend. He hated Chinese School. He couldn't stand sitting in Mrs. Chen's classroom. Mrs. Chen was a bitter, old woman. She always frowned as if she were still angry about some heinous offense that the world had committed against her long ago. Eric firmly believed that she had chosen to be a teacher at Chinese School solely to torment children. Her manner was cruel. Every Saturday, she ended class by having all the students copy homework assignments that spanned three blackboards. Eric never could manage to copy it all. Even when his mother asked her if she could possibly give them a little more time to copy the assignments, she simply hissed that he was "just too slow." He had no desire to learn Chinese anymore. He was sure that Mrs. Chen had already ruined Chinese for him. He had to believe that. Otherwise, he really might have to believe that he was just too stupid to learn Chinese.

During tests, Mrs. Chen would walk around the classroom and look over the shoulders of her students. Sometimes, after glancing over the stu-

dents' answers, she would call them stupid even before giving them the failing grade. Eric would try to cover up his paper so that Mrs. Chen could not criticize his potentially wrong answers. One day, though, she pushed his hands off the table to see the test in front of him.

"Stop covering your paper! No one is going to copy off of you! Especially if they want to pass," she cried at Eric. Some children in the class chuckled. Children will do that.

The days when she handed back the tests were by far the worst. She would announce everyone's grades in front of the entire class. That was how they did it in Chinese School. Or perhaps that was just how they did it in Mrs. Chen's class. Eric always dreaded the moment when his name would come up.

"And look who got the egg again. Come up and bring your zero home to your mother, Eric," Mrs. Chen declared loudly in front of the class. Again, some children chuckled. Children will do that.

Eric shamefully rose up and slowly walked up to the front of the room. He snatched the paper from her hand without ever looking at her. He quickly went back to his seat and stuffed the failed Chinese test into the same folder that he kept his perfect English tests from school in.

"Stupid Chinese…" Eric muttered quietly to himself.

■

"Ten percent Asian. That's so little," Eric's mother commented as she read through the brochure.

"Not every school can be fifty-one percent Asian like Stuy, mom. Besides, ten percent of like two thousand is still two hundred," Eric replied calmly.

"I know. But…Brown University. Most Chinese people have never even heard of that. Are you sure you want to go there?"

"Mom, I was accepted early decision. I'm going there," Eric confirmed once again that night.

"Ok. But I'm just afraid…I mean…you won't even have anyone to talk to out there. How will you remember Chinese?"

"Mom, most of my friends right now are Chinese. We still just talk to each other in English. Besides, my Chinese is already much better than a lot of my peers. I can read and write and everything."

It was true. It had been many years since Eric dropped out of Mrs. Chen's Chinese class. When Eric was twelve, though, he returned to the formal study of the Chinese language in a different school with a new teacher. It was the same summer that he and his friends were involved in a scuffle with some other guys who had accidentally labeled him with the wrong racial slur during a handball game in the park. He had often tried to think of justifications for the other gangs' mistake. Maybe he was awfully tanned that summer. Maybe he was wearing the wrong clothes. Maybe he didn't quite speak the right way. Maybe they were just incredibly stupid. Or worst of all, maybe he just didn't seem that Chinese.

"It'll be alright, mom," Eric assured his mother.

"I know. But I still just worry…there won't be a lot of people like you up there."

"Mom, don't you ever think there might be far great distinctions between myself and others up there than just the simple slant of my eyes?"

■

"Welcome to Brown University…" the admission director went on with her welcoming speech at the New York acceptance party. Eric sat towards the back of the room. He was surrounded by other admitted students, their parents, and Brown alumni who resided or worked in New York City. At the conclusion of the admission director's speech, everyone dispersed into smaller groups. Eric ended up with a crowd of his future classmates in the middle of the room. There was nothing special about the conversation. It was the usual introductions and banter. However, one question persisted in Eric's mind throughout the entire evening. How long would it take for him to stop feeling out of place?

"So the both of you go to Deerfield Academy?" Eric asked the two girls across from him in the large circle that the students had formed.

"Yeah. It's ok. So…where do you go?"

"Stuyvesant in Manhattan."

"Oh, that sounds familiar. Sorry, I'm from Suffolk County, so I don't really come out to the City that much. Is that a private school too? I think I've heard of it," a tall guy next to Eric commented.

"No. It's a public school. It's definitely the nicest one I've ever been in though."

"Do you live close by to the school?"

"Uh, no. I live in Brooklyn. I just go to school in Manhattan. It's not a bad commute though—"

"Oh my god! I went to public school too! So how are your financial aid packages? Because mine totally sucks," a short, but overly hyper girl on the other side of Eric interjected.

Her spirited outburst began a general round of consensus about the circle.

"I mean, I love Brown, but they're giving me like no financial aid at all."

"I know! I have to pay like everything. How about you?"

The question was directed towards Eric, who had become silent for this portion of the conversation. He debated whether or not to be completely honest. He could have given some vague answer. It would totally have been fine. Yet, he didn't want to feel like he had anything to hide about himself.

ERIC LEE '10 believes in a better tomorrow. He's also mad cool. Sorry, I don't get to talk about myself in the third person a lot.

How long would it take for him to stop feeling out of place?

"Um, actually they offered me the Sidney Frank Scholarship," Eric quietly replied.

"Oh. Uh, congratulations," the hyper girl stuttered.

"Well, thank you," Eric responded blandly. It was a strange exchange, but it was all the two of them could think of. After all, the Sidney Frank Scholarship was not exactly something that one earned in a way. The Sidney Frank Scholarship was awarded to the neediest students attending Brown University.

Then, suddenly, Eric also realized that he was the only Asian person in the entire room.

"Hey, you seen Eric? Ms. Guan is looking for him."

"Who? Oh, you mean the brown guy?"

"What? Dude, Eric is Chinese…"

"Huh? Oh. Yeah, I know that. I mean the guy who is going to Brown next year. Of course I can tell Eric is Chinese."

Pineapple

Sheila Pakir

My mother sent me a box of pineapple tarts, to help me through another long semester without home-styled treats. It looked beautiful, neat in its Bengawan Solo wrapping, although the innards were nearly crushed beyond recognition from UPS's dodgy handling, a tornado-ruin of pineapple pulp and butter crumbs in a jar. I lift one out to my lips and I am in the midst of Chinese New Year celebrations back home, in a scratchy, poofy pink lace dress which my father has picked out for me to match my older sister's red one. (The next year my sister decides that her newly double-digit age is sufficient to start demanding clothing rights, and we never let him bind us into such monstrosities again. We appreciate the gesture, Pa, but organza and ribbons in this heat borders on abuse.) The buttery powder dusts onto my scuffed dorm room floor and I can hear my aunt's displeased clucking right behind me, a prelude to her bustling up with napkins in an attempt to save the new living room carpet bought just for the festival. Aiyah girl, go eat with your cousins on the verandah next time! I duck out through the curtains into the blinding sunlight where the rest are playing blackjack—it's the only time of the year when gambling is a sanctioned family activity—and push forward a ten-cent coin as my wager. My cousins cluster around, would-be saboteurs, chanting Ah pek, ah pek, ah pek! as our oldest cousin—in the esteemed role of banker—slowly slides her cards out to be revealed. Even the basket of oranges quivers in suspense. It doesn't work; she has an easy twenty, and rakes in the coins. A collective sigh—aiiii!—and people reach again into their red packets, fishing out lucky money to dare-devil with. I turn my tiny nose up at this gamblers' den (a sore loser) and go off to seek almond cookies or slices of barbecued pork for comfort—but end up only on my lumpy twin-XL mattress, lying on my back staring at the burn-marked ceiling a previous freshman must have left behind.

SHEILA PAKIR '09 secretly likes her flannel pyjamas.

Freshmen Year

Owen David

I.

Friday

My hip aches. What the fuck…
I shot myself in the foot.
Bullets like screws into bone.

II.

Later that night.

You're strapped to a wall you're strapped to a wall you're strapped to a wall!
With your eyes to the television, your back bent over the computer.
Scanning binary matrices converging on existence. *whoa*

…Let's light some incense

Today at dinner Sara, my iridescent scientist, told me
If your body were converted into energy
It would be enough to blow up the entire universe.

That's like all the fucking universe man
she smiled beguilingly.

Vast expanses of space and time exploded by the energy of my being
In every being
Mine, yours, the person sitting nexts'ts'
Each with the potential to explode the universe.

So I was thinking…

Every piece of carbon in my body once was something else.
Everything that is was once something else
And yet I have never been.
I am original.
I am subjectivity.

It's like Martha Graham said.
It's like energy, or rather
being a channel to the energy.
That which has never been, before me-
It's infinity, a bright glowing light-
An inner truth.
Mine, yours, the person sitting next

next's

next's'ts…

It is that which can blow up the entire fucking universe man

Keep the channel open,
A light piercing the black of endless space
Stars in the night
A peephole through the dark velvet sky.
Christmas lights in the cold air.

shit man
what are you doing speaking revealing
thoughts pouring out like words out like fingers.
In my mind's eye
I
am
chasing supernovas
and surfing on solar flares,
diving into the fires of
a burning inner heart.

I close my eyes.

Images
Bodies
Images
Bodies
Movement….

He smiles beguilingly.

Images, lights, colors, colors, feelings, images, media, images, feelings, music, feelings,
colors, colors, music, movement, bodies, lights, movement, shapes, wavelengths, minds,

Like a nebula

And he listened
to Andrew and Amelia needing good rhythms to move
Drunk at a party?
Needing good rhythms to move

…Alcohol is a disinhibitor

and she said,

"…But first I poured my vodka in it."

I laugh inside my chest
And a breath is escaped as I smile.

Eyes, laughter, eyes, light, movement.
Like electricity
tearing through the darkness of space
to the bright blue of clear morning sky.
blazing movement
infinity in a moment.

…I wonder if they can smell the incense.

III.

I hope the ache in my hip isn't anything serious…

Can my body survive to sing,
Or will it break in the tuning?
Snapping like the tender wood of a violin
crack
Or the stretched out fibers of a horse's tail
rip
Sinew bones and muscles

(Blue) "Cool."
(Red) *bloody cool*

OWEN DAVID '08 thinks this is heady rubbis.

De temps en temps

Irene Chen

My hands never seem to be warm once winter starts. I run them under the hot water, the stinging of the water brings back a numb prickling in my fingers. It is the numbness of listening to the same song, watching the play count rise into the hundreds, the numbness of my foot when it falls asleep before I am forced to grit through the pain to reawaken it. It is the numbness of winter.

And then there is that wildfire summer romance that began with one kiss beneath the lit windows that culminated with your date with another girl; these two thunderstorms spanned the entire spectrum of our relationship. You fidgeted in bed, but you accused me of taking more room than my 5'2" body should take up. And every time you left, i felt as though i could sprawl out with my limbs everywhere, but i didn't, i curled up into a little ball and stared at the white expanse of sheets you left behind.

There's this pond, a mile-long stretch of murky green-gray water, surrounded by trees and a circular paved path for Sunday strollers and gaggles of geese. When I was younger, I would feed pieces of bread to the geese that lived on the pond. They are slowly becoming acclimatized to humans, becoming accustomed to waiting for this bread now. These geese used to leave the pond during the winter. Now I see them still living there in January. I wonder why they are still there—out of familiarity, a fear of the unknown?

Then I realize that their wings have been clipped.

I tried to run around the pond today. People say you can lose yourself in the beating of your heart, steadily pumping out oxygen to your muscles. They say there is peace in the solidarity of your feet, one in front of the other. I couldn't find the rhythm. Not in the hollow steps of my sneakers hitting the pavement, and not in the desperate beating of my heart. I must be out of shape.

I stop; my breath uneven and heaving, coming out in billowing white clouds.

The geese make their nests when it becomes warm. It is now spring and the first rays of sunlight are creeping across the sky again, and seeping into the ground. The baby geese always totter around at the beginning of the summer like small fuzzy, dazed looking children. They travel the cycle of life so quickly—from small child to awkward adolescent and finally to adulthood all within the brief months of summer.

Summer is transient, measured in the transformation of a goose from a child to an adult.

It started and ended with a thunderstorm.

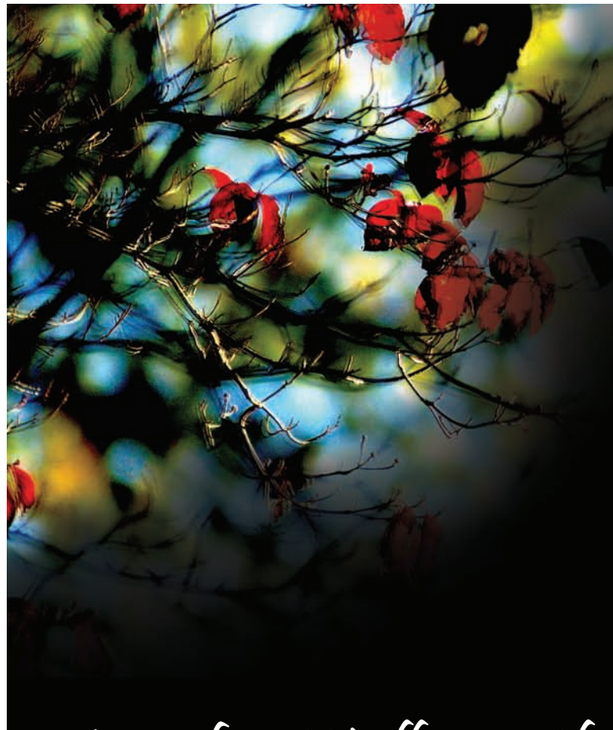
I went through old letters yesterday, the ones you sent me, the ones I never sent you, and I think of how useless it all was. I had read every word over and over; too busy trying to figure out what you meant to notice that you never meant anything at all.

I would open my eyes sometimes while we were kissing to just watch your eyes shut and your hair in your face and that tiny dimple in the corner of your mouth. I can still see you staring intently at the crossword puzzles you finished in seven minutes.

You told me that you wished you could hold me until the sun rose, but I could only laugh at your clichéd earnestness, because in the end, this is all you gave me: images of geese and the sound of thunderstorms which I confuse with the beating of my heart.

I breathe the harsh winter air—inhale, exhale.

IRENE CHEN '09 is learning to breathe underwater.



Su Shi Dingfengpi

蘇軾
定風疲 (改編)
宋朝

莫聽穿林打葉聲
何妨吟嘯且獨行
竹仗芒鞋輕勝馬
歸去也無風雨也無晴

Song for Walking Alone (Su Shi Dingfengpi)

Translated by Joshua Bocher & Larson DiFiori

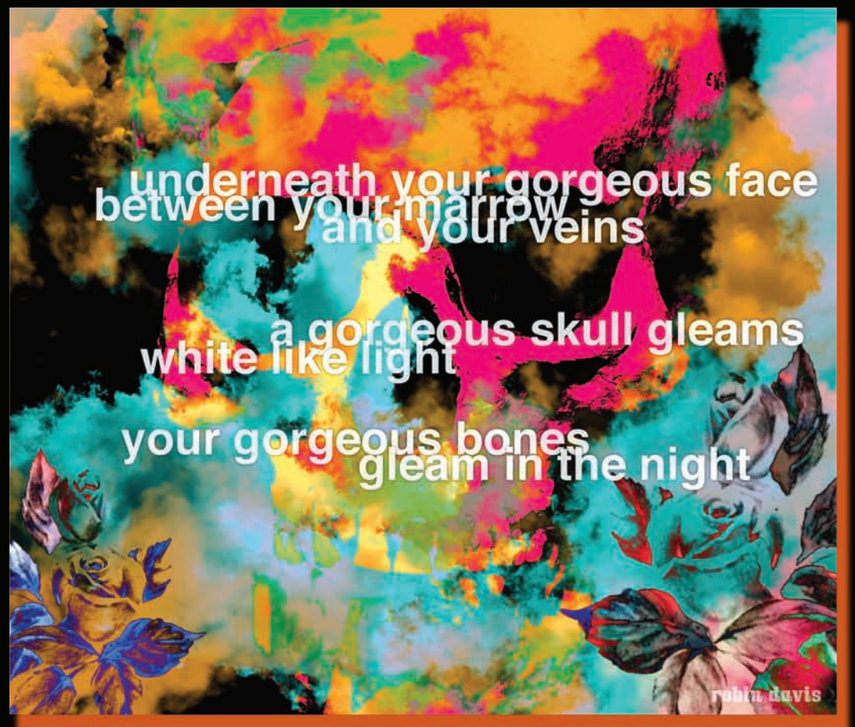
Clothed in the woods,
Not noticing the refrains of drifting leaves,

Why not have a song whispered
As I walk alone?

A bamboo staff and sandals
Would surpass any horse
In lightness,

And they have never neighed
Spotting a terrible storm
Or a cloudless sky.

JOSHUA BOCHER '08 embraces the moon whenever possible. LARSON DIFIORI '08 is busy walking to the water's edge, sitting and watching the clouds rise.



An Attempt to Describe the Past

Masumi Hayashi-Smith

Dear Friends,

My experiences these past days surpass my ability to articulate them. All I can do is briefly share a few passing thoughts, a story or two, some memories, and wishes to return:

Driving across plateaus and through bamboo forests, hills, terraces, and towns that looked like they were from oil paintings, I developed a love for this area yet to be touched by modern commercialism. It seemed that the further I came from the city, the closer I came to real life.

After about 25 hours of driving, we arrived at the monastery situated 14,000 miles above sea level. It was on a hillside and surrounded by flower-covered hills.

I was probably the least vain I have ever been on this trip; I rarely looked into mirrors and wore the same outfit several days in a row (more than once).

Daily, I climbed an orchid covered hill to practice Schubert and Barber and to watch the yaks, sheep, and horses mill about. Sometimes I would see a monk or two in the valley listening.

Every now and then, I had to the opportunity to help teach English to some of the people at the monastery. Our class had four giggly men who were amused to speak in a foreign tongue but nonetheless tried very hard.

Kilung Rimpoche, the head of the monastery, had a way of smiling at people as if they were his own children. He looked at them with pride and love.

The monastery started a school a few months ago for the local children. The children are extremely tough but simultaneously polite and sweet. In their class they would chant their lessons at the top of their lungs; it seemed like a game. There was one girl I especially liked who made sure to chant louder than all the boys.

When I sang on the hillside, I often heard a beautiful falsetto accompany me. At first, I was self conscious, but I grew to enjoy my accompaniment. On my last day at the monastery, the identity of my secret accompanist was revealed. My partner was one of the young monks.

Down the hill from the monastery, there was a spring. It was believed that when the founder of the monastery first came to this site, he struck a three-sided dagger into the ground, and out came water. This spring is the sole source of water for the monastery. Although it is small, it always provides enough, even when they have thousands of guests.

There was no language barrier. Everyone there spoke the language of Dzachuka—we spoke English, but that did not matter. A smile in any language is comprehensible, as are jokes.

Everyone sang without being self-conscious. Most noticeable was a shy boy my age who was moved to dance every time he sang.

There were two women who daily circumambulated a wall in the monastery. It was a Mani wall made of stones all engraved with the mantra, "Om Mani Pedmi Hum," whose meaning is more complex than I can describe. With their hands on their prayer beads, they would say the mantra as they circulated the wall. One of the women had her hair completely done in braids, while the other had no hair.

The Milky Way was very bright and very milky.

At gatherings, playful young musicians revealed themselves to be passionate philosophical scholars.

There was a monk named Gompo who taught me to communicate in Dzachuket. He helped make our dinners, sang beautifully, and looked like my grandfather when he wore his hat. He had an amazing sense of humor and was the first person to make me feel at home.

I went to a very touching birthday celebration where there was singing, dancing, cake, wine, and flowers. At one point all the monks in the room chanted for the birthday man's health and longevity. It was so beautiful, I was brought to tears. The whole room resonated with everyone's chanting.

Miracles happened in the monastery.

At the top of the most auspicious hill, there were purple orchids that were strongly fragrant.

Soshi, was tall, silent, and striking. He had the long hair of a Khampa. We didn't need to know that he was the brother of an incarnated Lhama to know that he was someone special. He and his brother took care of us and we flew away into the Tibetan countryside that was filled with eagles, hail storms, auspicious birds, and a double rainbow.

Everyone still thinks I am Chinese (although I am half-Japanese). When I tell them that I am

American, they look at me as if I am joking, then they continue to speak to me in Chinese.

At a Tibetan restaurant in Kanding, the waiter said to me, "I know you."

"What?"

"I know you."

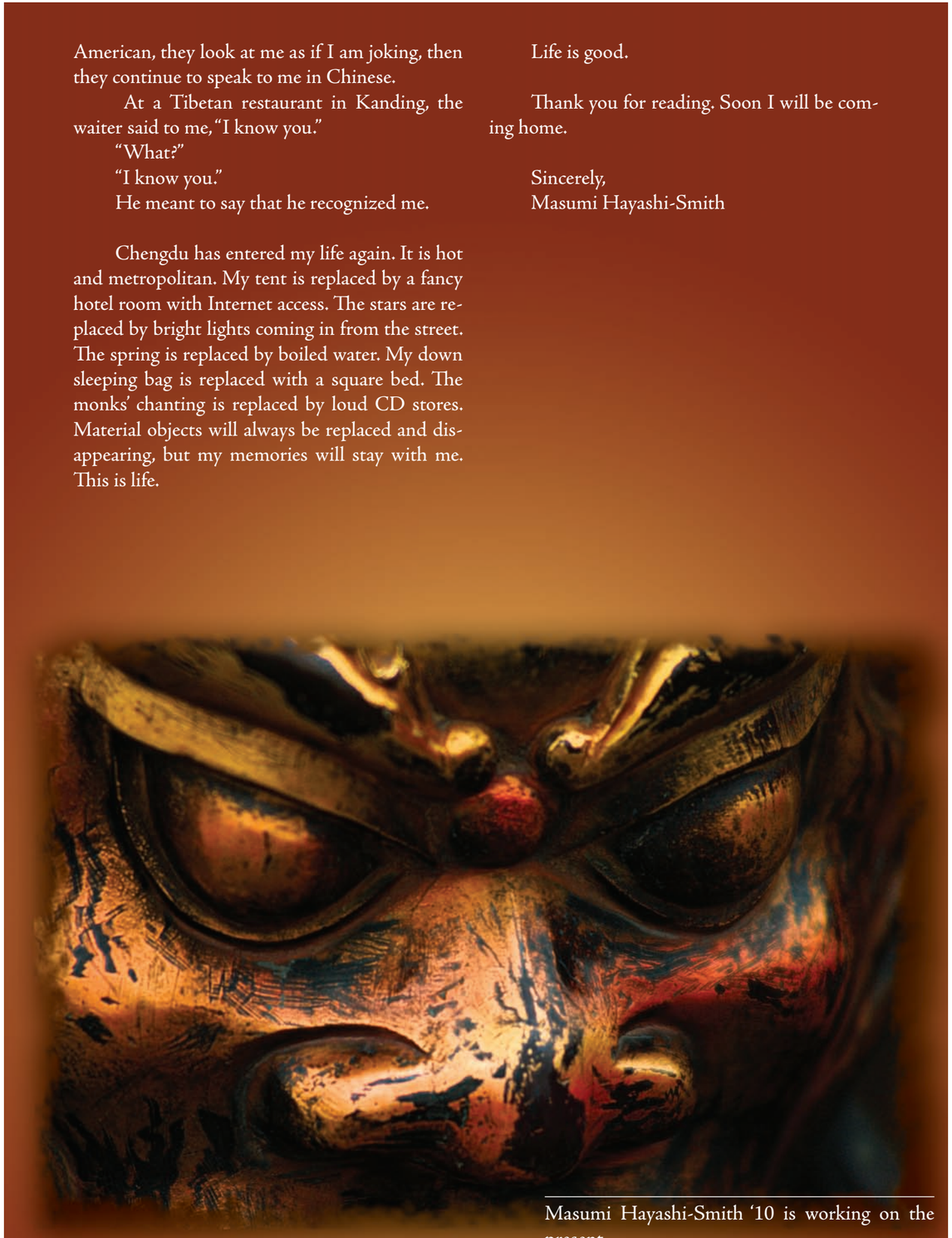
He meant to say that he recognized me.

Chengdu has entered my life again. It is hot and metropolitan. My tent is replaced by a fancy hotel room with Internet access. The stars are replaced by bright lights coming in from the street. The spring is replaced by boiled water. My down sleeping bag is replaced with a square bed. The monks' chanting is replaced by loud CD stores. Material objects will always be replaced and disappearing, but my memories will stay with me. This is life.

Life is good.

Thank you for reading. Soon I will be coming home.

Sincerely,
Masumi Hayashi-Smith



Masumi Hayashi-Smith '10 is working on the present.

Happy in Korea

Marie Lee

"God," said Paul, saying it like gaaaawd. "Korean guys are a bunch of homos!"

I was about to tell him to pipe down, then decided it wasn't worth the trouble. Your average Korean probably wouldn't know what he was talking about any more than we knew what they were talking about.

It was true, however, that in the disco we were in (some glassed-in thing that was supposed to look like the inside of an aquarium) guys were dancing together. Not just dancing, each in their own little world, but dancing. Slow dancing together. Arms around each other. Touching.

I tried to look disgusted as I knew Paul expected me to, but to tell you the truth, I was fascinated. See, the thing was, the men didn't act gay; they weren't all swishy or limp-wristed or whatever. Most of them were dressed in conservative suits, and during the fast numbers, they danced the same way as any drunk guys would do in the States.

But no way would guys in the States clinch like that, like those two were doing to the strains of "Beseme Mucho."

The bigger guy had curly hair, whether permed or natural, I don't know. His face was beet red and he was clutching a smaller guy whose glasses were sitting lopsidedly on his nose. They were both smiling. Around them, the salmon-colored lights beeped on and off, big plastic blades of "seaweed" shimmied.

To say I'm surprised that Korea would be like this is the understatement of the year. I think Paul gets a lot of his attitude toward gays from our father, who has always represented Korea to me. With him, it's always "I'm like this because I'm Korean." Or "Korean people are like this." Or "It's the Korean way." Mom isn't like that. She tells us to eat our kimchi, take our shoes off in the house, and study hard not because being Korean makes her do that, but because she's Mom.

Back to Dad, he is otherwise a kind man, the kind of rescues stray kittens, even wayward ladybugs. But he has no mercy when it comes to gays. I mean, I think he thinks stray kittens and bugs are these entirely innocent little beings, where gays are purposefully evil. He's said things that have really shocked me, and I can only think it comes from being Korean because I can't imagine where else it would be coming from. People in Five Oaks never say things like that, I mean, it doesn't mean they don't think it, but they would never say them out loud, that's for sure.

One example: when he and I were watching the news, a report on AIDS came on, and how it was spreading fast among gay men. Dad snorted at the TV.

"What good is it to have a man who cannot reproduce?" he said. "Useless. An abomination to God and nature. Such freaks would normally be wiped out by Darwinian processes.

Maybe it was the word "freaks." I couldn't help sticking my neck out on this one, and perhaps because I was pretty sure he wouldn't be able to figure out where I was coming from.

"Okay, Dad, what about people who are infertile or choose not to have children? Are you saying they should die out, too?"

"They're not unnatural," he said. "Men are not meant to be with other men. You see, even now God and nature are punishing the gays—through AIDS. Nature abhors a vacuum."

I always wondered what that meant, nature abhors a vacuum. Dad loves to read, everything from Newsweek to Smithsonian to Popular Mechanics, so he always has these phrases to toss out, such as "a calibrated cable tonometer is the best link to use when splicing stereoptic cables."

What I don't get is that Dad was the one who forced me and Paul to go to church school. Dad himself hardly misses a week of service. So if

he's so into church, what ever happened to all men are created equal? Love your neighbor? Judge not so that you yourself won't be judged?—all stuff we learned in church school.

I wasn't done, either. I wanted to ask about lesbians. They haven't been cut down by God or nature. Some of them even have kids, right? But then I decided not to. I realized that to keep it up was to trip closer and closer to home. I can't imagine what would happen if my father ever found out.

Paul is fifteen, I'm sixteen, the hyung, the older one. But Paul has always seemed bigger than me, even when we were kids. Now, he won't go to bed at night without first doing fifty pushups and a hundred situps. In grade school he always got picked first for teams, even though his own teammates referred to him as "the chink." He was always good at turning things around and laughing at himself, so in the end you thought of him as a cool guy. I always got picked last.

Ironically, Mom and Dad are always telling him to be more like me, the wallflower. I like to sit in the house and read. I also play the violin, and I don't have a girlfriend.

Paul has had a number of girlfriends—it's only natural—but Mom and Dad don't know about them. High school is for studying, they told us, not to waste time on girls, especially since there aren't any Korean girls at our school (there's one black girl, one Hispanic girl, two Japanese from Japan—we're talking the burbs here). They want us to go to either Harvard or MIT so we can meet plenty of suitable girls, get married, and start producing cute Korean grandchildren.

"When it comes down to it, we probably spend less time together than divorced families do."

Although he has never said it, sometimes I think Paul is disappointed in me as a big brother, that I have been derelict in my duties. He learned to play catch from a friend's older brother, not me. I've never played touch football, soccer, or even frisbee with him. I didn't back him up when he wanted a backboard put in the driveway, but instead seconded our parents' opinion that it would look ugly.

Nowadays in warm weather, after dinner he heads down the street to shoot hoops with his friends, leaving me with my books. After school he has football or hockey or baseball. I have violin lessons. When it comes down to it, we probably spend less time together than divorced families do.

So maybe this Korean trip is good because it forces us to spend time together—and talk.

Our cousin, Mee Jung, comes over and pantomimes drinking something. Paul nods and yells, "I want a Coke!" as if the yelling will make the words easier to understand.

"God" he mutters. The pulse in his temple seems to match the throbbing beat of the music. "I can't get over these guys! A bunch of lousy fruits! Where are our male role models?"

I am heartened slightly by his use of our male role models," which means my secret is for sure still safely contained inside me, which is something I worry about constantly. That's the hard thing about secrets; they keep you from leading a normal life. It's like playing an endless game of hide and seek. Eventually you get sloppy and think you're hidden while your entire ass is hanging out somewhere.

But the way he snorts and says "lousy fruits" makes me cringe. It's like the entire Oakdale High football team has come to Korea and is staring me down. I once overheard a group of them—Paul not among them—discussing "fag bashing." I think the only reason they haven't gone out and done it yet is because they haven't found any.

Woodmere Johnson was the closest they ever got, so far. He lasted two months at our school. He was the kind of guy who liked numbers, Dungeons and Dragons, and didn't have the sense to resist his mother's attempts to dress him in plaid pants and cardigans. He wasn't gay, I don't think, but he was such a nerd that no girl would get within a hundred feet of him. So of course someone, and then others, started calling him fag pretty quick.

"He was the kind of guy who liked numbers, Dungeons and Dragons, and didn't have the sense to resist his mother's attempts to dress him in plaid pants and cardigans."

I'm not sure exactly what gratification a hundred seventy-five-pound football player gets kicking around PeeWee Herman, but there must have been something, because they sure put a lot of effort into it.

Mornings, it often looked like it had snowed in the halls, with Woody's books and papers scattered everywhere. Grafitti (WOODMIRE=fagg) started appearing near the urinals. Woody himself took on that tense anxious posture of a lab rat on whom too many painful experiments had been performed. There were rumors that he'd gotten jumped after school.

I actually tried to help Woody. Once. Of course I didn't have the guts to do it in public, but one day I encountered him alone in the bathroom.

"The guys don't mean it," I said. The WOODMIRE=fagg graffiti sat between us as we stood at the urinals. "They do it to all the new kids." This wasn't true, exactly, but I wanted him to feel less alone.

Woodmere just stood there, staring at the graffiti. He wasn't relieving himself, nor was he making a move to unbutton his brown poly pants. He made a funny noise, like a cow does before it charges. I glanced over at him. I now understand the expression "gathering a head of steam": I could almost see the perforations circumventing his head as the top blew off.

"Get the hell away from me you goddam faggot!"

All the anger he didn't dare vent otherwise came out and splattered all over me. That was the first, and so far only, time anyone had ever called me a faggot.

The next time I saw him, his glasses were broken and he had a bandaid on his chin. I wasn't mean enough to be happy—I'm not the vengeful type. But I wasn't going to pat him on the back and tell him to just hang on, nope. He was gone from our school soon after.

I think Mee Jung had a crush on Peter and she was probably disappointed that he was her cousin. Everywhere we went I noticed girls checking him out. Part of it was that he always wore shorts, which isn't too common on the streets of Seoul, even in this sticky humid August weather. There was something else, though. Something almost John Wayne-ish about him that was new and different and utterly lacking in Korean guys. Maybe it was the way he held his head up, looking people straight in the eye. Maybe it was the way his arms seemed to jut from his sides, not just hang there, attached. Maybe it was the way he walked, a bow-legged strut when other guys seemed to shuffle. I don't know, but the girls seemed to notice it.

We got back to the hotel a little before midnight, with the music from the disco still pounding our heads with little hammers, like they do on headache commercials. Our parents weren't back. Every night they went out to dinner about six or seven and then stayed out late, like kids whose parents are away. Dad never drinks at home, but here he was coming in every night, bubbling, almost giggly like we've never seen him.

Our parents brought us on this trip because they wanted Paul and me to see Korea. Normally, they make these once-a-year trips to visit relatives and collect rent from some properties. Paul has been grumbling the whole time because this trip's making him miss two weeks of summer football practice.

Paul is on the floor doing his nightly pushups and situps. The floor is immaculately clean—you could eat off it—like our floor at home. People in Five Oaks are really into keeping their houses clean, but they never take off their shoes, like we do.

I get up to partially close the rice paper screen that separates our beds from Mom and Dad's. After I do that, our space totally shrinks, and it's like Paul and I are back in our tiny room in the first house, the one we had before the stores started making money and we could move out to the burbs.

"That was the first, and so far, only time anyone had ever called me a faggot."

Paul and I were maybe seven and eight then. Dad ran a grocery and two laundromats. He used to carry huge bags, like a Santa's sack, over to the laundry with him to do during slow times. He liked the laundromats because, unlike the grocery, they "manage themselves." People stole us blind at the other store, but it became one of those things where it was almost not worth it to run after a guy who'd stolen a beer, because when and if you caught him, he probably would have already popped it open and didn't have any money but a whole lot of mean attitude on him.

Mom ran a floral store right in our town. It was in a tiny strip mall. She was good at growing things like orchids, and she even ran an ikebana class, Japanese flower arranging, something she had learned from one of our neighbors. Once I was helping her at the store and I watched the class furtively, as I stacked the green foam blocks that we used as bases for the bouquets. I remember being fascinated, watching as the flower stems bent and sometimes broke under her strong fingers as she pushed the stalks into place.

"The only way you will achieve the final arrangement is if you trust yourself and make the stems bend to your will. Nothing this perfect looking will occur in nature." Thsis is what she told her students in her perfectly confident, Confucius-like voice.

Her students, ladies whose grayish/blond hair reminded me of aging yellow labrador dogs,

tried to follow her advice by pushing, pulling, yanking, and breaking. Some of the ladies' arrangements ended up looking half decent: gentle, delicate, symmetrical. I was tempted to try myself; for some reason I thought I'd be good at it. Instead, I kept stacking the foam blocks, dusting the vases. After class, Mom took me out for an ice cream at Carberry's.

Paul didn't care about what he called ickybanana or laundromats. He was heavily into comics, a passion I shared with him. Mom and Dad were shocked that we wasted our precocious reading abilities that way, but we didn't care; all our allowances went straight to the drugstore.

When we weren't reading comics, we had endless philosophical discussions about them. We both agreed female superheroes were stupid. We often argued about what would happen if Marvel and DC comic book characters got together; who would win in a battle, say, between Spiderman and Superman? (I said Spidey. He was more agile and he was also a nerd—if need be he could synthesize kryptonite in his lab. Paul always thought Superman could crush Spiderman like a bug.)

Both Marvel and DC had busty female superheroes. Paul relished drawing in nipples on the mutant boobs barely strapped itno their skin-tight costumes. I personally enjoyed doing my own sketches of the men, how each of their muscles stood out, almost 3-D, on the page. I especially liked the Silver Surfer, with his mercury-smooth lines. It took some skill to do a precise shading of the pecs and abdominals or even the huge banana-like quad muscle on top of the thigh. When Dad saw me doing these drawings, he bought me some anatomy books that had similar drawing of muscles, except that the guys in the pictures were all in different stages of autopsy.

I suppose Dad thought I might be heading towards medicine, with my close attention to musculature. But no, that's not where I was going at all. I felt faint at the sight of blood, even my own.

"Paul, do you remember how we used to have those arguments over who would win in a fight, Superman or Spiderman?"

Paul flipped himself on his back in took in long gasping breaths. His fingers played on the top of his abdomen, as if he were strumming a harpsichord.

"Superman, definitely," he said. "Spiderman was a wimp."

We heard the key in the lock. Mom and Dad walked into the room, talking in Korean. Dad immediately took off his socks, let them drip to the floor. Mom retreated to the bathroom.

"Did you have fun with your cousins?" Dad asked, remembering to switch to English.

"We went to a noodle house and then to a disco," I said.

"The disco was full of gays," Paul added. The pipes hissed slightly from water for mom's ablutions.

"Gays?" Dad's eyebrows arched.

"Yeah, guys slow dancing with each other." Paul made a face, like he was eating tripe with earthworm jelly.

"That's not gay," Dad said.

"Then what was it? Guys holding hands?"

Dad laughed. "That's just the Korean way. When I was in the army, I sometimes had to share a bed with my friends. In the winter, we would huddle together for warmth."

Paul made another tripe face.

"Oh, ooky," he said.

"No, no," Dad said. "We were just close, as men. There are no gays in Korea, that's why we felt okay being that way."

There are no gays in Korea. I rolled that phrase around in my head. I didn't believe it. It was like saying there were no cripples in Korea. No hermaphrodites. No people with tattoos. I'm sure there were some, they were just hidden away.

"Korean people can't be gay," Dad said, chuckling, as if the entire notion were absurd. "In Korean families it is the duty of the son to carry on the family name."

"They sure acted like a bunch of fags," snorted Paul. In the background, we could hear Mom splashing in the bathroom. The sound of water running down pipes.

"Don't use that kind of language," Dad said sternly, even though his nose was red as a clown's. "That's the kind of language uneducated people use."

"Yeah." Paul slumped down onto one of the cushions on the floor. To me he said, "Well put mah Hyundai up on blocks and call me yella trash!"

There are no gays in Korea. Dad had said it the way he'd say Seoul is the capital of South Korea.

But he was wrong. I knew there were gays in Korea, just as I knew I had a gall bladder, even though I didn't see it. There were gays everywhere.

"Go to sleep," Dad ordered. "We have to get up early for our tour of Panmunjom."

Panmunjom. The Demilitarized zone. Paul and I had read the pamphlet on it; it was the border, the thirty-eighth parallel, the hair-thin line separating us with the commies in North Korea.

"There are no gays in Korea. I rolled that phrase around in my head. I didn't believe it."

But the line separated what? We were all Korean, weren't we?

The pamphlet had contained all these rules about how to act, how to dress for the tour. No jeans, no slobby clothing like tank tops or shorts. Women had to wear dresses or nice pants, men had to wear pants and a respectable shirt. It was because the North Koreans were going to see us through their high-powered telescopes or whatever it was they used to spy with, and we were supposed to present some kind of a front, like everything in the south was all neatness and propriety, no mungy Levis with hole in the knees. What I was wondering: why did they care? We were just tourists.

"Remember—you can't wear shorts tomorrow," Dad reminded us, as he started taking off his clothes, letting them drip to the floor, where Mom would pick them up. "But the bus will be air conditioned."

"Tomorrow, I'm going to defect," Paul declared sleepily. I crawled into the other bed. "Once I'm across that line, it'll be hello Kim Il Sung."

"It's not Kim Il Sung, he's dead," I informed him. "Kim Jong Il, his son, is the Dear Leader."

"Kim Il Jung, whatever," he said. "It's all the same to me."

And it would be, for Paul. But I was thinking about borders. About the lines between things, lines that once you cross, you can't return. One of the warnings in the pamphlet was that a few years ago a tourist had been killed trying to cross the line. I can't remember if he was going from north to south or vice versa, but the border guards shot him. The lesson was, I suppose, be a good tourist and stay on the right side of the line and everything will be okay.

But I understood what Paul was talking about, even if he was joking. Like when you look down from a balcony that's up so high that the people below look like ants. Up there, everything is dizzying possibility. The idea of a brief minute of freedom, suspended in space, even if it causes a lifetime of death and destruction, seems like it might be worth it at that particular moment.

Tomorrow, Paul would be his same self. If there was some line we weren't supposed to cross, I knew for a fact he'd try to stealth his foot over it, just to be a wiseguy, just because he always had to push things to the limit, just the way in football when he went for the hit, he went for the kill.

Me, I always played it safe. Mom and Dad could count on me. Good grades, quiet, an expert on keeping everything ugly hidden, letting the orderly rule. I might get near the line, but never too near. I was our resident expert at playing it safe.

MARIE MYUNG-OK LEE is the author of Somebody's Daughter: a Novel. She is a writer-in-residence at the Center for the Study for Race & Ethnicity.

Adoption (A. History)

Lam Phan

Given to you
like a gesture, I was
a bundle of manufactured inscriptions,
a simulacrum of a vaguer concept.
Mapping your
lexicon, your iconography, your
esteemed methodologies, I have learned
to be one of, not one who. But I know
your name
was strewn onto bloody fabrics, half
white-washed, and partly filled with false celestial
bodies.
Though, I gladly called it. Still I call you.
I am calling from the dirty spaces between the under
and
the over of
years spent racing and erasing. You saw me,
even through unchecked boxes and dirty clothes.
Wearing your name, wearing you:
at first heavy but becomes lighter
each moment you give me.

LAM PHAN '07 thinks being in the spotlight is overrated; he would rather be the one shinning the light.

L'invitation à Bangkok

Tao Rugkhapan

Sliding the same old pair of black net stockings from her ankles up her fleshy, hairless legs towards her thighs, putting glossy leather shoes on her feet, she's ready to be fucked. Sitting with her friends on a bench outside one of the countless bars, dimly lit on the inside and brightly lit neon lights on the outside, she with the others stands by idly in the background. Well into the evening Bangkok's infamous nightlife fully awakes. Rushes of emotion and chemistry rise in constant pulse and anticipation. It is the nightlife of competition. A score of miniskirts and strapless tanks of vivid colours prattle and joke around in a big tipsy circle in a jolly, spirited manner. Once the shady shape of a prospective customer remotely appears on scene, the band would disperse and buzz its way into the same direction. Like fruit flies and vultures hurtling down the road to savour rancid leftover carcass whose merely distant, faint stench gives an almost complete physical shape of a recognised ritual, an accurate depiction of the all too familiar nightly arrival. Nocturnal animals and their voluntary preys, you say. 'The whiter, the better,' they say 'Farangs have buffer wallets than Thais.' Curtains are now up without delay, ballyhooing the high time to start the workaday, or better yet, workanight show as if it was preprogrammed, prechosen, but never promised and prepaid. Like the rest of them, she is one of your typical cheap Asian whores. Or, upscale professional sluts par excellence. Feigning glamour and sophistication through each grey, puffy ring after ring of smoke she smokes and the unmistakably fake Gucci in her green-veined wrinkled hand. Chipped dark crimson nail polish. Sitting legs crossed and waiting to seduce men by squinting that pair of mascara-thickened eyelashes to create a mystique suggestive of tonight's endless possibilities and promises of tantalising games she has to offer. She sits there, painstakingly forging an unsurpassed beauty yearning to be possessed. Smells of stale jasmine flowers, powdery body powder, and cheap perfume float all around.

■

She stood queenly and daring before him, mirroring in his anchor-fixed blue eyes a replicated image of a proud covergirl on her favourite pose that had come in all handy and natural. Leaning her back against the room's concrete wall with hands on her hips, lips slightly burst open and eyes ready to devour, here is your classic Marilyn Monroe with no spotlight or camera flash on. She is tonight's star with a different cast, but the same monologue script she has learnt so well by heart. Her stripped, bare-skinned tawny flesh simply dims in immediate comparison to his sweaty White torso which in turn radiates a pearly pinkish sheen under the orangey neon light in a sketchy two-star hotel room. A sepia portrait of one fat, bald, grotesque White male and his Lady of the Evening easily his daughter's age, seems a scene not uncommon, not unheard of, or maybe even expected by horny, flesh-hungry Western male visitors. Or, fuckers, literally. In the sleepless city that is Bangkok, the two engines inside are louder than multitude car motors on the streets outside. This is the time when she allows herself to momentarily forget her heavily accented, but nearly fluent English she has perfected over years of no-string-attached one-night stands. No verbal communication is now needed. The two bloody lovers are then left no longer with the earlier awkward language barrier, but instead with silenced dialogue, speechless impersonation, and resonant improvisation of gestures and sounds that grow with the night's rhythm to compose nonsensical syllables, yet come to connote fervour. Things take their own routine course and familiar bounce, making her wonder why her bodily articulation is more fluent than her verbal discourse although she had started learning both at the same time. She would sure win a Miss-Deaf-Yet-Good-Sport-Whore title without difficulty should there be any. The theatricals are now arousing, revving, accelerating, stablising, slackening, and quieting. And quiet. It is done. Game. This one-act play does not call for an intermission.

Once his business was done, he leaves and she is no longer his 'honey' in the serenade he was chanting during the brief prologue, the foreplay, to the night's even shorter journey. One forlorn one-hundred Baht banknote sitting on the bed bid her adieu on his part. A slave for hire for barely 25 US dollars per call, she could not help but slap her face so hard for once again romanticising her beauty. For deceiving herself that her wholesome physique could easily elicit from a White man an untiring poetry and she is his endearing Diva. It is this only line she can never memorise since it's nowhere to be found in the script or even between the lines. Repeated trials and errors have never been learnt, much less gone over. Lying haplessly helpless on the bed revealing her half-done nudity that contrasts the cream-coloured bed sheets wrapping about her bust, her breath is hardly audible, mingling bit by bit down into the room's dead air. Her eyes are frozen and fixed upon the ceiling. If there were a hole in the room above one could peek down through the same old translucent orangey neon light and see the same yellow skin of a now sickened Oriental sex slave. No longer shiny golden, but a rusty brass and rotten honey. A rolled-off condom without wrapper cannot beat his alluringly blonde-haired Barbie dolls.

My name is Suwanni. Mae said it's a Sanskrit word for gold. Gold as in Gold Necklaces and Bracelets rich people you see on TV have on their necks and wrists and carry with them when they take them off. Sometimes I wish I were one of them; rich and beautiful and walking tall. Their glossy hair and delicate hands must be so soft and silken to feel and cost so much to maintain. But we were farmers from Esan, the Northeast and by far the most impoverished of the country. Some decades ago, the region's seasonal drought would bring with it bone-dry pieces of land where the verdant, grassy rice fields on damp mud we had grown would in no time turn brown and frail on cracked dusty soil. My younger sister and I would have to rush to our tiny rice field every day after

school to do harvest work before the imminent drought could sweep it away altogether. The midday sun glared from the pastel grey sky down the stony, unpaved roads, causing heat waves to spiral from the ground up onto the heated dry air, as if a pot of water was boiling. Think the afternoon's teatime of Earl Grey and Biscuits. Poverty and hungry stomachs were looming and brimming so near that we did not have time to care about our sun-blazed, inflamed backs, let alone cultivating a pair of soft hands. The ruthless weather added fuel to the fire that was my wrecking family. A meek, subservient mother and a complete cow of an alcoholic father, and you can picture the rest. My father would get drunk every evening and come home and beat Mae. My baby sister and I would cry our eyes out telling him to stop. But whenever we did, he would yell back at us and go "if you two little ungrateful bitches don't shut up, I'll teach us a lesson like your Mae. Tell me who's got the upper hand in this bloody place again? You women better be like women. Like your Mae."

After nights of praying and sobbing myself to sleep, I decided to come to a more civilised Bangkok. Call me a sorry daydreamer, but I always dreamed of bumping into a rich, handsome gentleman who would later bring me home to his big big white house where he had four maids all dressed alike. Just like what I read in one of those cheap romance paperback novels when I was in primary school, you know. Maybe my dad was right; I just should want to be like every other woman. I shall marry a good-hearted man who will not beat me in front of our kids. I shall raise beautiful children who will come home after school to play with their cheerful dog, and whose dad will give them bear hugs when he is back from work. We won't have to worry over a hungry stomach. Bangkok people always have rice to eat and soft hands to love.

The tepid water in the small bathtub was soapy and bordering on the oval edge, unveiling a pair of light beige legs and a tear-drenched face that sticks out of the milky sea. Like a retiring chanteuse who once and for all seeks to entice her indifferent audience to pry into what lies behind those ivory sleek draperies for one last time. Bubbly like a beer-filled bath and deprived like a perishing rose all at once. The episode of her whoring career along with her Cinderella-like dreamy air castle must indeed come to a close and her heart sighs in resignation and recognition of the fate that may ensue. But could the world care less? Bangkok will be the oversexed tourists' splendour but forced-loose women's hell all the same. Do these lustful animals come here because cheap thrills are plenty or is it that the latter exists to serve the insatiable demand of the former in the first place? To be fair, it's mutually reinforcing. But to be accurate, calling Bangkok the world's Sex Capital City without qualification provides a half-sketched portrait, an unfinished sentence that awaits completion. Exhaling without inhaling does not bring about a legitimate, livable breath.

Tears are welling up and she slowly submerges her head down the murky water so now you cannot tell the soapy water and the otherwise crystalline pearls of her tears apart. She holds her breath for as long as she could, then rises to the surface to gasp for the last surge of breath. The air in that poorly ventilated bathroom is stuffy and humid, mists cloud the life-sized mirror that vaguely reflects the finale of a soap opera. An ideal place to breathe your last? She jerks herself down the tub again. Not six feet under but close.

■

Bangkok in December is not too bad,

weatherwise and otherwise. People give it a nice name of High Season. High in both the number of foreign visitors and the limitless encounters they are more than ready to fantasise. What an apt and honorary entitlement. When the sky dusks, diffusing the sun's fading orange glow, parent birds fly back home while whores fly out of home. There is no uniform required of this career, but the universal dress code voluntarily accepted is anything strapless and low. Tight and thin enough to delineate tonight's goodies underneath. Anything to stir up oohs and ahs from peers and patrons alike. Anything that is sensually minimal but yields lucrative, tangible returns. Somewhere down a dingy alley you can spot the same group of night-shift professionals jam together outside of an à go-go pub, a few of them holding in their bony arms a pink-faced Westerner who is suffering from early evening's hangover in ecstasy. They are rational actors, after all. Why would they stop making profits when there are profits to make? Why would they stop supplying when there is plenty of demand and the price is simply a strictly mutual agreement that she suggests and he either takes or leaves? Having a satiny, velvety tank top on, she, too, is dressed to kill. Taking a deep breath inward and simultaneously a step forward, she beams and forges a hearty smile, opening the redwine-rouged lips. "My name is Suwanni," she says to a European man she has approached, "how would you like your Bangkok tonight." The ambience swiftly smells like yesterday's unwashed clothes and the Show is encored. Cigarette smoke, sweat, and cash are cruising their way down on the same road into the lonely night.

TAO RUGKHAPAN '08 encourages you to call his hometown "Krung Thep".

scabs

Joanna Liu

Healing
slowly little dusty grains of
dirt get caught inside the scrapes
sometimes and stick but maggots bring
the cleansing
let the wriggles in the cut
the skirmish squirmy surges of
uncomfortable unpleasant
swarm and settle nestle in my body's
flesh I find myself
still frowning
sometimes smiling
with a headshake
both the corners of my
mouth are out of my control
you held the strings to tug at them

Scabbing
roughly toughly over
pink carnation
flesh and shiny saran wrap skin
thicker thicker every day
protected and defended
almost back to whole again
a simple wave
a smile and wink
and banter talk with you is
cheap
I'm getting used to casual

Picking
chipping poking prodding
peeling off my scales and walls
from all those weeks
their worth of work of
bleeding healing scabbing
and it's all beneath my nails tonight
this will sting will hurt I know
but I still try you anyway
can't bare the thought
of being
scabs

Bleeding
softly gently open
I was almost whole again

JOANNA LIU '07 eats a bowl of Pho every day.

So, I went to India and…

A Play by Sunisa Nardone

Scene: Empty stage. Lights down except for a spotlight shining in the middle of the stage. The shoes of a man are visible just on the edge of the light. The man speaks with an American accent.

Man:
So. It couldn't have gone any worse, really. I waited until I caught every form of flu and bacterial infection possible to get on that flight outta there. I ran a 103 fever, I couldn't eat anything solid, I spent half an hour waiting in line to eat my most expensive meal in the whole damn country. It was Pizza Hut. Just so I knew the food would be sanitary. Plates scrubbed with hot water and actual detergent, that sort of thing. My cousin dragged me through immigration and onto a plane. A plane. Do you know how much your ears hurt, I mean really ache, when you're sick on a plane? It's like if you dive—scuba dive—and don't equalize. You could pop an ear drum and all that water, it could rush it, it could fuck with your balance, it could really, I mean, fuck you up.

So. There I was on this plane, right, in a hellova lot of pain, but so glad to leave the damn country. The problems of the developing world could be solved by teaching them about hygiene. Like, clean drinking water, you know? After that hell-hole Thailand was like a developed paradise. I mean, there were paved roads and electricity in the city. Not that their doctors speak too much English either. Who says globalization is changing the world? Not out there, let me tell you. Don't let the Starbucks and Pizza Huts fool you—those are the places that have bread, and cheese, where the natives go on New Years for a special treat. You even have to stand in line to get in.

Snorts with laughter

So. My doc, right, this small Chinese-looking guy, asks, "Do you have abdominal pain?"
"No," I goes, "but I got a whole lot of pain elsewhere."

Mimes retching

And he goes, "do you, do you have any abdominal pain?"
Then I get it. This guy, all the English he has is the phrase "abdominal pain." Like a bellyache is the best way he can describe my hurling, food poisoning bad water whatever was going on.
"Okay," says I. "Yes. Y-e-s. Would you do something about it?"
Well they got me hooked up to an IV, fixed up real nicely, for there. I'm in bed, lying there, staring at a wall with peeling paint and flies hovering around the light, for not even 24-hours when I'm like, no, no more of this.
People say you got to go out to these kinds of places, you know, and find yourself or whatever. Well whhooooooooo! Because let me tell you, that's just not the way it is. You find, well, you don't find yourself. You find how great America is! I mean, even basic things you expect, like hygiene, did I mention that? They just don't get it out there. People, there, they spit on streets and the stray dogs are all fuckin' rabid. Let me tell you. Trying to get someone to talk to you is such a damn production. The hand gestures. The broken English. Hindi is all 'guh' sounds, like trying to talk with your mouth full of peanut butter. And Thai. Who could tell the difference between all those po, poh, poh sounds?

So. I decide I got to get me on a plane home and get some French fries in me, with ketchup that isn't spicy for once. I am so tired of people pushing heritage and culture and country on me.

Steps into the middle of the spotlight. The man is South Asian.

Who says I need to know anything about India? What am I supposed to have in common with them? I'm not good at math—"maths" as they call it, damn British colonial whatever. I don't have an accent. I'm American. American.

Spotlight fades. Curtain.

SUNISA NARDONE '07 is a former editor and long-time contributor to VISIONS.

ON ASIANS, IMMIGRATION REFORM, AND THIRD WORLD SOLIDARITY

Juhyung Harold Lee

Last April, I received a forwarded e-mail from a Latina student describing her disappointment over the perceived lack of interest among non-Latinos at Brown in the growing national debate on immigration reform. "Aside from Latinos or people interested in Latino issues," she wrote, "I don't see anyone else on campus lifting a finger for this cause." She made a good point, especially with regard to our own community: among Brown students, where was the Asian/Asian American voice, outrage, or even mere presence? And why were many of us—including myself—so uneducated about an issue so critical to Asians and Asian Americans?

Oft portrayed in the media as a largely Latino concern, efforts to fix the broken U.S. immigration system are of great relevance for the Asian/Asian American community. Of the more than 10 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S., approximately 9%—or 1 million—are of Asian descent. An ethnic-specific examination of this figure reveals more striking statistics: nearly 1 out of every 5 Koreans and 1 out of every 8 Asian Indians currently living in the U.S. is undocumented. It is also possible that many of us or our family members are or have been undocumented; becoming undocumented is as simple as failing to renew a student visa in time.

Yet the call for immigration reform transcends undocumented immigration. For one thing, lengthy immigration backlogs prevent family reunification; Pilipino Americans—including many who served in the U.S. military during World War II—must wait up to 22 years to be reunited upon these shores with immediate family members still living in the Philippines. Thousands of committed—yet undocumented—high school students are denied their dreams of attending college because their immigration status disqualifies them from many federal and state financial aid opportunities.

In Providence, the Khmer (Cambodian) community is disproportionately affected by a piece of legislation introduced in 1996 that allows for the deportation of any non-U.S. citizen for crimes as minor as shoplifting—regardless of the individual's immigration status, length of time in the U.S., or family and community obligations. Even worse, this legislation was applied retroactively, meaning that someone could have committed a crime 20 years ago, served her or his sentence, and not even received a speeding ticket since that time—but would still be subject to deportation proceedings with virtually no chance of judicial review.

In light of recent campus events... it is crucial that students of color continue to stand and fight together, both on the issue of immigration reform and on any issue that concerns people of color in the U.S. and abroad.

Various pieces of "immigration reform" legislation recently introduced in Congress seem to do everything besides fix the broken U.S. immigration system. From criminalizing undocumented immigrants and those that provide any form of assistance or support to these individuals; to continuing to exploit immigrant labor through proposed guest worker programs; to allowing families to be torn apart by easing the flow of deportations; these bills—such as the particularly troubling H.R. 4437, which passed the House last December—are problematic for a number of reasons, not the least of which is because they ignore the economic and political factors that compel and in many cases force migration to the U.S. They also ignore the U.S.' own history of European immigration; the forceful seizure of Native/American Indian land; and the centuries of U.S. colonial, economic, and political exploitation of other sovereign nations that have left many of these nations' inhabitants with no other option but to pursue new opportunities elsewhere—no matter the risk or the cost.

Anti-immigrant pundits also turn a blind eye towards the numerous economic and cultural contributions that immigrants have made to the U.S. Many undocumented immigrants still pay taxes for government services which they are not privy to, and contribute approximately 6 to 7 billion dollars a year to Social Security and close to 1.5 billion dollars a year to Medicare. Lost amidst the misguided outcry that immigrants steal jobs from hardworking Americans is the fact that many undocumented immigrants work jobs that few U.S. citizens would consider taking themselves. And one need only explore the dining or entertainment options in any large town to observe the positive cultural impact of immigrants in the U.S.

Furthermore, no appropriate resolution has been proposed with regard to undocumented youth, many of whom often have no control over their migration to the U.S. yet are still held accountable for their undocumented status. And what of the U.S.-born children of undocumented immigrants who become orphaned by the deportation of their parents? Andrew Jung, a 16-year old high school student in Toledo, Ohio, is now in the care of a U.S. guardian after his parents agreed to voluntary deportation to Korea for a mix-up related to the application for continuation of Andrew's father's student visa.

Even for immigrants with green cards, the process of becoming a U.S. citizen has become increasingly difficult. The USCIS is considering adopting new changes to its already prohibitive naturalization process, including doubling the application fee from $400 to $800 (the fee was $95 in 1998), potentially making the citizenship test even more difficult (can you name all 13 original U.S. states? And perhaps more importantly, does it have any bearing on your worthiness as a U.S. citizen if you cannot?), and adding a 19-page pre-application that must be completed online. This is in addition to the regular application form, which was lengthened from 4 pages to 10 pages in 2002. These changes obviously discriminate against low-income immigrants with limited English ability and limited access to and/or limited proficiency with computers.

What the U.S. really needs is comprehensive, just, and humane immigration reform that allows for the timely reunification of families, a fair and equitable pathway to citizenship for both documented and undocumented immigrants alike, equal educational opportunities for all persons living in the U.S., and a cessation of deportations that rip families and communities apart. These changes—coupled with a significant

reexamination of U.S. foreign policy, such as my colleague's suggestion to "take a fraction of the money going into beefed-up border enforcement and militarization and redirect it to programs for commodity stabilization, rural credit, and alternative-crop development in countries from which many of the undocumented come"—are the keys to truly effective immigration reform and positive social change.

And what we need to do as Asians and Asian Americans at Brown is to recognize that the current attack on immigrant rights affects us all, regardless of our ethnicity or immigration status. For it is in fact an attack on the basic rights to live peaceably with one's family, to pursue greater educational opportunities, to see a doctor when one is sick or hurt, and to be treated with dignity and respect. During the pro-immigrant mass mobilizations last spring, thousands of Asians and Asian Americans from Los Angeles to New York joined other communities of color to advocate for these very rights.

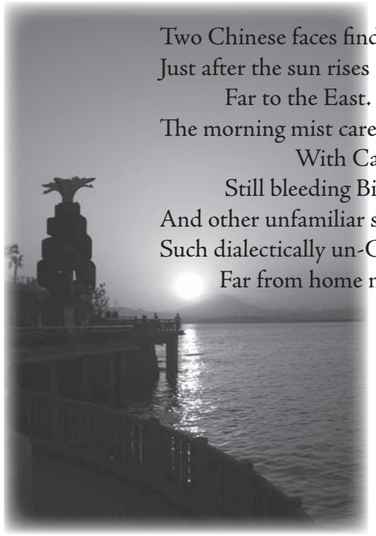
While the controversial nature of the immigration debate has the potential to divide the Third World community at Brown just as it has divided the U.S., it also has the potential to help us build stronger bridges with other communities of color. In light of recent campus events, such as the militarization of the Brown Department of Public Safety and yet another incident of violent racial profiling, coupled with increased hostility towards members of the Third World community, it is crucial that students of color continue to stand and fight together, both on the issue of immigration reform and on any issue that concerns people of color in the U.S. and abroad.

Across ethnicities, Asian Americans share relatively little in terms of history, culture, or religion. The very Asian American identity is at best a social construction birthed out of a political necessity to more collectively and effectively advocate on behalf of our distinct and dynamic ethnic communities. Similarly, when joining in solidarity with our Native/American Indian, Black, and Latino sisters and brothers, we acknowledge not only our different paths to this point in history but also our shared experiences with racial injustice. More importantly, we recognize the tremendous power of a truly unified community of color to collectively fight for basic civic rights, dignity, and respect for all people.

JUHYUNG HAROLD LEE '06 serves as Program Coordinator for the Civic Engagement Project at the National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC) and is the proud child of two strong and loving immigrants.

Like You

Johnny Lin



Two Chinese faces find each other on the streets of Buenos Aires.
Just after the sun rises
Far to the East.
The morning mist carelessly flavored
With Café freshly ground.
Still bleeding Bife, fleshly hung in shameless shameless amounts
And other unfamiliar smells (no doubt of the lactic character)
Such dialectically un-Chinese things.
Far from home no doubt, you and I.

So he asks the obvious.
"Che", with my smile, "China, my brother, like you"
He smiles and two eclectic rows of cig-yellowed teeth come at me.
--do his chew and utter the same stuff as mine?
"Che, my brother" he has one blue eye "I am from here"

His thick, perfect Spanish perfectly Argentinized
permeates his Chinese, my imperfect Chinese imperfectly Taiwanized carelessly flavors my Spanish.
Two roughened Chinese hands find each other midair on the streets of Buenos Aires.
And in a shake he tells me of his journeys through the dark streets and milonga bars in search of his other eye, where it comes from and why it sees double.
Of the journey of his grandmother Manila Jakarta Lima back-bent in the dark cargo clutching the tiny necklace guang yin the whole way.
Or his grandfather's small grocery joint central Sao Paolo where the sun rises far away and the night comes in dark and harsh
They might not call home anymore, but who is ever home these days, right?
We have always been a dysfunctional family, you and I.
Only occasionally at lucid moments after dawn,
We remember that a handshake requires no grammar
Between a band of brothers lost and found.
Maybe the hippies said it best, the war is over.
If you want it to.

Two faces find each on the streets of Buenos Aires.
Far from home no doubt you and I.
So I ask the obvious.
And softly, with his smile,
"Africa, my brother, like you".
Tell me then, my brother,
About your journey since Africa.

JOHNNY LIN '08 spent one cold and rainy summer in Argentina, and is not trying to live as close to the Equator as possible.

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The entire VISIONS Staff for its constant enthusiasm and devotion

If you are interested in joining the VISIONS staff or would like to submit any pieces of work, please contact:

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