

*“I have to go to the bathroom,”* you answer. You are embarrassed for both of you.

Your father’s face contorts. *“Speak English!”*

You scurry to the bathroom, then duck back to your room. You glance at the kitchen table as you pass. Your father is reading the medical textbook again. The English workbook has disappeared.

Neither of you bring up the fight ever again. You do not mention your best friend inside the house, and you do not bring him over. You slip away to his house, and if your best friend notices anything, he doesn’t say anything. You become a host at the restaurant. His mother heaps spaghetti onto your plate and his father asks for your help on his sudoku puzzles. When you figure out a particularly difficult square, his father sighs heavily. *“Why couldn’t you have been my son, eh?”* he says.



You are five years old, and your mother is packing your bag. She tells you that you are going somewhere, a long trip, and you are excited. We are going to fly in an airplane over the largest ocean in the world, she tells you. She is afraid. Let’s pray that it does not crash, she says.

You watch as your mother packs your bag, then your little sister’s, then your father’s, then her own. Your grandmother prepares dinner as your grandfather smokes his pipe. Your mother does not pack their bags. What about grandmother and grandfather’s bags? Your mother shakes her head. They are not coming on the trip, she tells you. They are going to stay here.

You cannot imagine going anywhere without your grandparents. Who will stay in our room while we are gone? Who will keep them company? Your mother does not answer you. It was your father’s decision, is all she says. We will have a better life where we are going.

You share a final meal with your grandparents. Your father sits to the side of his father, who always gets the head of the table. Your grandmother heaps food onto your plate. Eat, she says. They will not have food like this