

snaps. “He’s a boy.”

On the morning of his birthday, your father calls in from Korea. Your sister puts him on speakerphone. “*Say happy birthday, grandfather,*” she chides. Your father pauses, and when he speaks, you can almost hear a smile in his voice. “*Happy birthday,*” he says.

Your sister spends the morning preparing the meal. She goes through your fridge and frowns when she sees the store-bought kimchi you have double-wrapped in grocery bags, to mask the smell. She pulls dishwashing gloves up to her elbows and starts making her own. She sees you staring at the gloves. “It tastes the same,” she says. You feel bad for criticizing your sister, even if it was only in your head. She is the one who knows how to make her own kimchi, who can still speak to your parents in Korean, who lives nearby and sees them every month. She is a good daughter, a better daughter than you are a son.

Your wife helps her set the table. Your sister fills a steel bowl with noodles and places it next to a dollar bill and a pen. Whatever the baby chooses will predict who he becomes — well-fed, wealthy, or scholarly. You hold a camcorder and watch through the screen as your nephew reaches forward, your sister nudging the money towards him. He fists his chubby hand around it, and your sister laughs. “A rich man!” she says. Her husband kisses her cheek.

During your first birthday, your father put the pen right in front of your hand and the noodles and money a foot back. Your mother tells you that, after you grabbed the pen, he smiled. “*My son will be a doctor, like me,*” he said. “*He will make me proud.*” When your sister picked the money, your mother was pleased. Your father barely reacted. “*Better than the noodles,*” he said.

You watch your sister pick up her son, trailing his hanbok. She tries not to look too proud, and you know she’s thinking of six years ago, when your daughter chose the noodles. Your wife had laughed. Of course she chose