

the noodles—she’s only a baby. You tried not to feel disappointed. Your father, standing to the side, had frowned. “When you have a son,” he said, “make sure to put the pen closer.”

That evening, after the table is cleared and the children are in bed, you rewatch the video with your sister. The dining room looks empty, with only your wife and daughter standing to the side. “I’ll call Dad when he wakes up,” your sister says. “He’ll be happy about the money.”

You shrug. You don’t say anything about the pen, but you don’t have to. Your sister rolls her eyes. “We can’t all be scholars,” she says. “Dad’s lived here long enough now. He knows it’s better to be rich.”

But your father only lives here half of the year. Before your sister even finished moving out, he had scheduled a recurring rotation at his old hospital in Seoul. You watch your sister smile at the grainy video, and you wonder what dreams she will pin on this little boy. Maybe he will become everything you failed to achieve, and he will make your father happy like you didn’t.

Your sister is a housewife now, like a good Korean girl. She seems happy, but you don’t talk about that sort of thing. When she leaves your house, she drags out all of your reused store-bought kimchi containers and fills them with the homemade version. A week later, you are looking for dishwashing gloves and realize she has taken your entire stock and left a note in Korean. You have to translate it with an old dictionary. *It’s not like you were using them.*

You never make the eight-hour drive to visit her over the summer, but she doesn’t remind you to. She sends pictures of her son, playing with his father’s stethoscope. You yell at your daughter for forgetting to clean her room, and you accidentally make her cry. When your barber cuts your hair, he whistles at the scar. “What happened there?” he asks, and you tell him, “I got stuck.”



You are twenty-two years old, and you have just graduated college. You