

tentative risograph title design – yellow is English, red is Korean, and they overlap.



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Lee, Myunghyun _____ Words
이명현 _____ 단어집

Memories of a Conqueror

Rhonda Eikamp

Jackson follows her call down the gritty lanes at dusk, he's been lost for days, ever since the funeral, but these are the turns he remembers, her voice tells him where it was. If he can't find the shop he'll cut his legs off, bleed out of his eyes. Another turn, dredging deeper. There are cities inside the city here, of black men who gather in alleys, white men home from the war who have killed and can't make the violent leap to peace. They stare at him. Trash hunkers, hopeless, excreted by the concrete, a peristalsis the city is no match for. Her accent that was his strip-joint music for nine years says chackzone chackzone his name a contortion in a bird language, and he follows her accent because he can't follow her body because it's lying buried in the ground at the corner of 78th and Cypress Hills because: because.

A turn, this is it: he stands in front of the bookshop that was dying even then, ready to cocoon her in dust where she stood behind the counter the day he came in looking for a philosopher. She'd fled as a twenty-year old from that country killing itself in a froth, come to the great city to live with an aunt and uncle, but when they died and left the shop to her, the words crushed her. She left with Jackson the same day he walked into the place, sold it without ever seeing it again, married him. That was 1951 and now it's 1960, cancer came and smiled and there's his because. Jackson's amazed the shop is still in business.

His hand that has flitted in and out of his pocket as he walked takes out the slip of paper with its crazy-tongue word so he can read it again. The anti-word, unsayable, non-thinkable. The old woman behind the bookshop counter looks like she might have been waiting for Jackson the last eighty years. Rusted in place, no one else around at closing time to move her. A cracked mannequin, a carnival item. He'll have to pull down her jaw and place a coin in her mouth to get her going. She has the kind of inflamed parchment skin that makes her face a landscape of snow cut by red delta rivers. White hair like steam, the consistency of nothing, caught up in a bun, with one red-orange corkscrew curl hanging over her left eye. Jackson's never seen anything like that, but now she's nodding a welcome. Alive after all. Without a word (it feels right) he shows her the word, and when she mutters it, the waterfall of r's is the sound of blubbering grief he hasn't been able to make yet.

Eroberererinnerungen.

"I've forgotten what it means. She told me. You're from the same place, aren't you?" Jackson's ready to beg. The old woman's eyes are discerning. "I have to know."

"You don't want to know what this means."

He has a farmer's heart. Raised on soil and rain in a state below this one. He has nine brothers and sisters. Party of ten, his mother would say at the dinner table. Jackson's siblings are farmers

all and cannot comprehend his sexual love for cities, that it is an outgrowth of his book-love. Dig in the dirt, coos the farmer heart. Waste not, want not, but on the morning they lower her wooden box into the ground he can only think waste waste waste, his want so rootless he kneels and digs his fingers in the dirt. Neighbors and siblings who have come to support him turn away, embarrassed. A voice at his ear says, "The victor writes the book." It's a man he's never seen, short and heavy-lipped, wearing red shoes, red shoes in a cemetery for chrissake, who puts a hand on his shoulder as Jackson rises to face him. The stranger's words remind him of something. A word she translated once for him, the tilt of her head as she spoke it, a sad shrug. Victors. At home later he searches for the slip of paper, souvenir of an irrelevant moment become deathly important, burning feverish when he can't find it. She'd written on the back of the receipt for the new washing machine. They'd been in bed laughing. We make so-long words in my language, she said, and he'd thought of words of departure. She'd grabbed a pencil to show him. Since her death he's avoided the bedroom, only lunging in to snatch clothes from the jaws of hell once a day. He doesn't know what will happen if he goes in there for too long. He's been sleeping on the couch like every banished husband, death the ultimate banisher. Beside the hall desk where his search has ended his legs give way, he slides down the wall and there it is, the slip of paper, it has slid down the wall too at some point. Better at curling up in grief than he is. She wrote and laughed samples of her language's cumbersome words. Teeeier, kunterbunt. Rassenschande. Unimportant. The word he needs is there, in the middle. Erobererinnerungen. Only he can't remember what she said it meant, just the wary twist of her lips as she pronounced it that told him it belonged to the charred part of her life, the war. To the dirt and the dark he ignored while she was alive because she wanted it ignored and that he has to know now or else why did she call to him. He can see her lips translating it, the timbre of her voice is a taste in his memory, period blood and dead blue gerbera, but it's like watching a silent movie.

"You don't want to know the word," the old woman repeats while his fingers on the paper scream I do. "You want the book."

"Oh yes," Jackson tells her. There's a book. "You're the boss. You're the leader. Lead the way."

Up the stairs to the mezzanine. The old woman has a limp, a hip injury perhaps, protruding bone beneath the nylon pants, that makes her slow and he prepares to spend the night getting up the stairs. He can't remember a mezzanine in the shop. In a niche half-way up she points to a section and here's the alphabet soup of his wife's language, books shelved in a recessed block of shadows, their titles impossible strings. "Bad boys," the shop-owner tells him, but he's a worm, squirming, pinned by the words. Wortgeplaenkel und Zeitgeschehen, reads a book. Schwerstgedankengaenge, cries another. Beside it is a wooden book without a title, rough russet bark for a spine. He opens it and it's an empty box. The inside smells like smoke and lemony buckthorn. She always drank buckthorn tea. He would take the longer route home to buy the brown-wrapped packages from Mr. Erbersdobler. Next to it, far down so that he has to stoop,

is the word he came for. A small red book. Erobererinnerungen. When he pulls it out the space behind it shuffles, someone standing on the other side of the shelf though the wall must surely be there. When he peers into the book-shaped hole, the dark breathes cold air on him. It goes on forever.

He senses the owner near him. "Tell me this is for sale." He means to buy the book.

She crouches beside him, her hip healed, it's a miracle, like the Negroes who heal each other down on 125th, she's latter rain, slain under the power. She takes the book from him in a little fight because he doesn't want to let go. Stronger than she looks.

"You have to know what you are buying," she says. Her whiff of accent is familiar; she would call him chackzone. She points to the black space at the back of the shelf and together they listen to the faint screams and red-tinged moans coming from the far end of the hole. This is what Jackson has feared, his wife's past, always present. Even when he nudged inside her, slip-sliding, shooting at it with his cock until he was empty. The victor. "I don't know if I can go there," he murmurs. To his chagrin he's started to cry.

"Learn to read." She hands him an address, nodding. She puts the book back on the shelf.

And so Jackson starts going to language classes. The first two cabbies have never heard of the address. The third sits as still as a fawn in foliage until they arrive, only his hands on the wheel moving, and doesn't wait for his tip. A three-storey brownstone in one of the chambers of the town's heart Jackson's never circulated through. The third-floor door is dingy, it's got a personality of scowls, and opens onto light and too much space. Someone's home, informal's the word. The group is welcoming. Old women who pat the chairs beside them for the newcomer to sit, a smattering of younger people. A baby in a carved cradle. Jackson goes every second evening and very soon he's making progress.

He's a favorite. Their protégé. They all seem to know the language. Why they gather is a mystery to him. Their secret. Even the baby gurgles with an accent. When he gets something right the group applauds, but there's a forlornness to their clapping that makes it sound like muffled gunshots. Mrs. Memm and Mrs. Kautelar, old as oceans, put their heads together and nod. The young woman, Dee or D. (the latter, he decides after a week), forever frozen in a broken-doll repose on the window-seat, hands between her knees, smiles at him.

The teacher is thin as a carney and is called Carney. He has hardscrabble eyes and hair on his ears. When he laughs it's a half-sobbing wheeze. They all wheeze when they laugh, which is often and together, even Dee, whose blond hair turns dark for the duration of each group wheeze and lightens again when it's over.

"This is for you, dear, and no one else." Chair-patter Mrs. Kautelar has taken to knitting Jackson things he has no use for but can't refuse: a vest for a bird, seven-fingered mittens. This time it's an ashtray. Carney mutters, "Good one to know," and leaps to write the word for ashtray on the

wallpaper, already covered with his scribbles, then realizes it's there on the wall in front of him, behind the peeling sections. More and more they've been finding the words Jackson needs this way; his teacher by now has torn half the grimy wallpaper away to reveal a vast hieroglyphy. Elated, Carney points to the word. Jackson repeats it and Dee smiles.

He can't look at Dee. Rather than abating, his grief has begun to chew on him, taking the form of aversion, a pain like spikes through his eyes when he tries to look at certain things: his wife's green sweater hanging over the chair at home, people who lean in toward each other. Like a blind spot. Blinding spot. When Dee smiles at him the pain is so bright he has to put his hand over his eyes. They all notice, and for the first time since his arrival he explains about his wife. Mrs. Memm leans in to pat his knee and says in the language, "The city is a beast."

The language is a beast, he thinks, furred with odd phrases that, like Mrs. Kautelar's gifts, he can never imagine using. There is sun in the mouth. You are harmful to urgency (a great compliment, Carney assures him). All the children's legs are that emotion, he learns to say and it makes an almost sense, he might need that someday though he still can't look at children. They're part of his blind spot.

In spite of its deep-layered words the language, he learns, is nameless. He's asked and they shrug. He's never heard of a language that has no name for itself, or only a secret name. It's the one word he can't find, scooting over to the wall when no one's paying attention to kick at the wallpaper near the baseboard. Farsi, Suomi, Magyar. You wrap yourself in this language, Carney tells him the second time he asks. You shroud yourself in it. Is it called chackzone, he asks and they frown.

Their secretiveness takes wing. He arrives for a lesson one evening and finds the building door locked. From the shadows of the portico Carney hisses, "Not tonight!", and gestures him down an alley, keeping a lookout over his shoulder. Jackson's heart pounds. Mrs. Memm is there in the dark, straight and practical in her poncho amid malodorous trashcans, and Mr. Okamp, whose bald head will give them away, Jackson thinks, if they're really being pursued. "I don't understand," he tells them. Carney shushes him and slips back to siphon off others before they try to go upstairs. "Why should anyone care what you speak?" he asks.

Mrs. Memm takes his hand in the dark. "We do not want the conqueror to have won," she replies, "but he did." He knows enough about the war to know that's a crock. "The son of a bitch lost," he informs them. Mr. Okamp beckons him to the wall of the alley and together they put their ears to the brick. Distant and sharp he can hear the screams. There are people behind the wall. In the tremolo of a wail he can hear his wife.

"Is that where she's gone?" Jackson moans. "If I read the book will I be there, in a different city, where he won?" They look away from him. The screams fade and he sinks to his knees, scraping at the bricks, fingernails harvesting the oily residue built up lovingly by every drunk and dog that has ever passed that way.

Two nights later they are back in the upper room. No one mentions the alley. Mrs. Kautelar has

knitted him red-and-white wool blinders, mounted on a headband.

"For your trip, dear" she says.

"I've used up my vacation," Jackson answers, too jaded by their oddities by now to muster puzzlement. "C'est la vie." It's the wrong language and Dee giggles from the window-seat, surprising the hell out of him.

"She's a knit-nut," says Dee, indicating Mrs. Kautelar.

"She has a knit-knack," Mr. Okamp corrects her.

Mrs. Kautelar herself leans in toward Jackson and murmurs, "Knitpickers."

He's amazed he understands this. There's a rhythm to it, like drum-patter in his brain. He's become the drum. In the break he sidles over to Mrs. Memm and asks her about the alley wall, the city inside the city. Mrs. Memm grimaces. "Is it that way for Dee too?" he asks.

"D's been looking for her parents, who were wonderful people," she says.

All the next week he wears the blinders to work where he sells furniture on the second floor of a department store, and his boss, who has been looking for the opportunity, fires him.

"Eroberererinnerungen," Jackson tells the boss as he hands in his name tag. Drum-patter, syncopated. He's beginning to see what the word means. In the evening Mrs. Kautelar is not in class.

"It's terrible," Dee gasps. The group is shell-shocked, faces haggard. As if ricocheting from an explosion, they cross the room, collide with one another. Carney leaps back and forth from the door to the window. "If they got her it's because we weren't careful enough," groans Mr. Okamp. Jackson feels a hole open up. The air is unyielding, he wants his blinders back on. He's left them at home. "Why don't you do something?" he barks. Shocked, Carney takes him aside. Carney has the fountain pen he writes his wall-lessons with in his mouth and is chewing it like a cigar.

"Have you talked to anyone about our meetings?" his teacher asks, breathless. As if Jackson could talk to anyone about the meetings. He answers no, and Carney wheezes, not a laugh but a sob; a black coal-lump falls into his hand along with his pen and he stares at it. They speak in the language all the time now, Jackson realizes. He perches on the window-seat, staring down at the street, deserted as always, with his hands between his knees, thinking of Mrs. Kautelar, and when he glances up he sees what he didn't notice before – that the rest of the wallpaper has been stripped away since their last meeting to reveal the underlying words, picked at by rough hands and rubbed raw down to the maculation, a maelstrom of text, the room ready to speak.

The Puerto Rican who guards the door bursts in. "They're coming!" he cries. The crowd around Jackson scatters. Half flee through a door he always assumed led to a bedroom. If it does they're trapped. Others head past the guard out the apartment door and Jackson can see them sprinting up the stairs, though he's certain there are no more floors to the building. He doesn't want these people to vanish, but it was inevitable. "Vanish," he whispers, then louder, urging them, standing, as the pounding coming up the stairs becomes audible. The one-armed woman grabs the baby. Dee tugs Jackson's arm and he allows himself to be dragged to the kitchen and a small door set

in a wall of cabinets. "This is a pantry!" he yells. He looks back. Men in zoot suits have burst into the apartment and he wants to laugh because he used to own one of those, they're the bad boys, but their faces are blurred and when they collar Mr. Okamp he disappears. Vanishes. It's a magic trick. He shouldn't believe his eyes. The magic of death is never that fast, it lingers and lingers. It traps you behind a wall, leaves your green sweater hanging over a chair.

Dee has thrown open the pantry door to reveal stairs that lead down. A hole into the cold. Jackson plunges after her through the winding dark and they spill into an alley. He turns right and she turns left. In the quiet they stare at each other.

Dee is crying. Hugging herself, another doll pose; the raid has done its magic act on her confidence. "You," she murmurs. "You...have it in you. You could start another group." Without looking at him she places a hand on his chest.

No, he thinks. He has learned from them, but he feels no obligation.

"We all have to vanish," he tells her, and she snatches her hand back.

Outside the bookshop at dawn he waits across the street watching for a few minutes to make sure it's safe. The owner retrieves *Erobererinnerungen* from the niche and hands it to him. "You're a fast learner," she says.

"I know enough now."

"Patience is always rewarded."

He leans in and kisses her on the cheek. The old woman smells like smoke and buckthorn and he imagines she's been handling the wooden book. At home he takes *Erobererinnerungen* to the bedroom and sits on the edge of the bed, stroking the red spine. He can read it now. He'll know what the conqueror has to say to him. He turns to the first page.

Misapprehension

Nathalie Boisard-Beudin

You speak

A river of letters flows from your mind, sloshing its way into mine.

It nestles inside my eardrums and the waves' noise deafens me for a while.

My eyes shot open in surprise

[I never heard you coming]

The pupil dilate, flooded by semantic monsoon.

I freeze, my head tilted to the side in an attempt to syphon out excess humidity.

At low tide, I try sorting out the pebbles from the fish, a quest to decipher a fluid message.

I do gather a few shells, staring into the coils for a meaning

On the way to enlightenment, I am distracted by water lilies.

I stop to gather a bouquet.

[Possibly, this is how Persephone was captured:

Caught in mid-sentence by a soft gleaming adjective, a liquid alliteration of love.]

Thus wrapped in my frolic, I miss your frown.

In fact I have totally forgotten you were standing there,

Lips dried and waiting for an answer.

For a sign of intelligence.

Blooms slip from my grasp, pool at my feet

A few fish flop amongst the leaves, floundering.

Storms of choice epithets close over my head.

Incomprehension

Nathalie Boisard-Beudin

You speak.
Your lips move, expelling air
from your lungs, pushing sounds
on the way. They float and twirl
about in the air, gathering dust,
pollens that will in turn make
my eyes water.

There is no hope for us. You
think of me as a fragile shell,
easily bruised by words. You
also think I never listen to you.
But how could I with all the silt
moved about, with your breath,
coming to settle in my ears?

A forest grows there now, planted
by years of careless notions, stray seeds,
and unwanted speech. I do feel grateful
for this most days, for the peace,
the shadowy shelter your words brought me.
But lost in the fronds, drowning in this river
of ferns, I can't see you anymore.
Thus we drift apart.

With time and silence, the forest
will disappear. My ears will return to
the hungry desert they once were, soft
hushing sounds of sand dunes shifting
in the wind. Until the next person comes
along, eager to irrigate my thoughts,
resuscitating the forest from latent dirt
once again.

Misinterpretation

Nathalie Boisard-Beudin

You speak.

Words roll out, lighter than air, golden dust in a sun beam.

They wrap themselves around us, caressing our ears with intangible velvet.

I can almost – and frequently try to - reach out and touch them,

Expecting to find iridescent powder from their wings on my fingers.

Life freezes in a moment of pure essence

I could spend all day, hanging on to your every word

There is no denying it: you do have a beautiful voice,

Rich as chocolate with just a hint of toasted nuts in the vowels.

Though I must be fair in my fascination:

This is not just about you – though a lot is, of course.

It so happens that this language that you use is a song,

Liquid melodies of sounds, reminiscent of a purring cat.

I stand entranced while you shake your head, message spent.

Gathering your words around me, I sort them out by colour

Nuances of texture, palettes of flavours, lush bouquets of resonance.

Size and shapes construct a perfect picture.

You speak while I run around chasing words with a net.

I am making a work of art though I would never admit it;

I fear this collection would not be possible

If I did in fact understand what it is that you are saying.

The Forlorn Figure You Cut as You Walked Away; or, Your Lonely Backappearance

Owen Hyrick

I have concluded that the problem, the *rea*/problem, was that our first languages were so different from each other. Take the day that we parted for the final time. The snow was incongruously beautiful. 'Picturesque', I might have called it; at its 'dazzling limit', you might have said. But nothing but breath left our mouths, exhalations made visible by the cold. (Our vapours, at least, were of a kind.) I wouldn't weep until several hours later, but you allowed the eyewater to trickletrickle flow down your face there and then. Eventually, we turned our backs to each other and began to walk in opposite directions. Do you remember the sound that the snow made underfoot? Doubtless we heard it differently, your footsteps having been underpinned by a precise, onomatopoeiac word, mine far more vague in this regard. Does it follow that your experience of walking through the snow was somehow more complete than mine? In the past, I might have asked you whether the opposite were not true, whether your word was nothing but a yoke, something by which the possibilities of the experience were diminished. I might ask you the same question today, only now I would no longer entail any answer. Yes, for a long time I thought that I understood our last goodbye, and everything that preceded it. I felt that I had a sure grasp of these things. But now I realize how little of anything I actually understood. I need you to help me reconstruct our relationship and its decline. I wish to establish certain things. For example, when you were walking away from me, did you at any point turn around, and if so, what did you see? The question is rhetorical: I know exactly what you saw (or what you would have seen, had you turned around): my *쓸쓸한 뒷모습*. You are shocked that I have used your language, that I have written in your script, I who never once tried to speak in your language, who never once wrote in any script but the Latin. But let us return to the moment of your looking back. You saw me walking away from you in the snow, saw my *쓸쓸한 뒷모습*, or – to translate it almost directly ('backappearance' being a nonce word with as yet no utility in English) – my 'lonely appearance from behind'. You saw that, darling, because that is what your language gave you to see. But what about me – what did I see when I turned around to look at you as you walked away from me in the snow? Perhaps I saw the equivalent of what you saw, perhaps not. The problem is that no native English speaker would talk about a person's 'lonely appearance from behind'. Such words sound not only inelegant, but strange. I'm not sure why they sound strange. Is it because it is difficult for an English speaker to conceive of an image against which they would lie flush, or rather because the language has made no attempts to reify the image, however familiar it might be? You think I'm exaggerating. Well, type *쓸쓸한 뒷모습* into a search engine, and see just how many similar pictures it throws up. Then type in 'lonely appearance from behind', and count

yourself lucky if you find a single image of the sort I am describing. Perhaps you think I am translating too literally, believe it likely that an English word or phrase exists by which to encapsulate the same idea through different means. But if such a word or phrase does indeed exist, I can ensure you that I, a native speaker, have never encountered it. The best I can manage is 'the forlorn figure you cut as you walked away'. But just try typing *that* into a search engine. Thus, understand that when I turned around to see you walking away from me in the snow, I may not have seen what you are likely to believe I should have seen. I'm not saying definitively that I *didn't* see the right thing; but it is a point on which I am unsure. Take the verb '혼나다', for instance. You would likely translate it, quickly and confidently, as 'to be scolded'. But not all usages of the verb seem to conform to this translation. Consider the following sentence: 딸아가 저한테 혼나고 나면 엄마한테 달려가요. Let's assume that you would translate it thus: after being scolded by me, my daughter runs to her mother (I retain the ugly passive for illustrative purposes). But if it is my daughter who receives the scolding, how can *I* be the recipient of the verb's action? Obviously, I can't. If one insists on treating the verb as 'to be scolded' the sentence simply doesn't parse. So I invented a new English verb: 'to scoldarm' – that is, to incite a person to scold. Perhaps you admire my ingenuity, but I am not seeking praise. I merely wish to know whether it is possible that when you scolded me in the past, you felt the action to come from my direction, rather than yours. It is possible that some people would think my coinage fanciful – if the dictionaries say that '혼나다' equates with the English passive 'to be scolded' (irregularities of usage notwithstanding) then why doubt the definition? But even if such people were correct, how could we really know either way? I have so many questions relating to such issues, darling. For instance, was I really to blame for my lack of *noonchi* (I forsake the hangul here because the word transliterates so well), given that English has yet to reinforce the concept by sprouting a word that would encompass all of its various shades of meaning? Oh, I have studied, darling, and will continue to study. I must reappraise what I thought I knew about us. You would be impressed with my ardour and precision. I have formulated nuanced definitions for *han* or *jeong*. I know exactly what those words mean. I hope one day also to know *what* they mean. Such knowledge may well be beyond me. Perhaps I can never become sick with *hwabyeong*, and even if I can, I would perhaps have to travel to Korea in order to get the diagnosis. But I remain hopeful. These are important questions, darling. I want you to think about them. I want you to think about how they might relate to us, and to what used to be our relationship. It is time to excavate and revise. It is too late for me to save our marriage, but it is perhaps not yet too late to save the belief that we might have been able to make it work, had we only known certain things.

A Provincial Scene

Douglas Cate

An alabastrine church's bronzed bell,
a cerulean sky of starkest, brightest blue,
the baby's breath of clouds,
two bluebirds paired in marital flight.
The white-lace nemoral lattice of the climbing
panes and panels that adorn an Arcadian
gazebo.
The peal, the ping! the din, and ding and dung and dong, and
roar.....the heavy, prideful, ringing
tolling of the steeple-imprisoned, swaying, soaring bell.
What penitentiary, what internment is this?
What scene of hopeful freedom
contrasted with the eternal, sleepless
agony of slavery?
What town's clerical and civil and
municipal and commercial and
sumptuary governing bodies-
composed of demagogues and
ulcerous rodents and provincials
and pretenders and hypocrites all-
decreed this atrocity and,
without conscience and with
undue, surfeit impunity, permit it?

An Intestinal Anecdote (And A Flatulent/Eructating One) Of Greatest Brevity

Douglas Cate

A marshmallow bellow will escape the acidic,
arid, Acherontic interiors of
man-the truth, reality and only possible definition of "his own private hell"-
with a loud burrap! sound,
an ephemeral, potent cacophony
of great disruption.....but,
what of it?

The poet-reporter-scientist-philosopher's preference herein be, for the moment,
of the blooded walls of man's organic interiors and
the Stygian absence of light
that suffuses them.

It is that volcanic rumbling
from amongst these masses of scandent sinew,
clinging to and buttressed by those gleaming
skeletal sticks, comprising
full and true the human body's
(internal) infrastructure, it's foundation, it's systems of roads,
the osseous groined ribs and vaults on which is erected
the edifice of man.....
man, he who lets forth a deafening
roar, at various whiles, from out
his mouth and mealy, meaty maw or from out
his other extremity and the meaty, haphazard
conduit which connects and serves it.

Mothercake Pastoral

Kolby Harvey

In the village of mothercake, the mothercake comes at dawn. Women gather along the fence at the edge of the village. They gird themselves against the fenceposts and open their arms for the mothercake. The mothercake comes in waves, rippling the wall of women, falling from the sky as manna from heaven. When it is finished, the women stand stark as pickets, heaps of mothercake in their arms. They walk back to the village in a single, straight line and are greeted by men. We men hold the doors for them; we say today's mothercake may be the finest yet. We men are nourished by the mothercake, though we collect it but once a year. On this day the mothercake appears not only at the fence, but everywhere in the village. We call it mothercakeday. On mothercakeday, the mothercake forms on every surface: mothercake on rocks, mothercake on the table; mothercake folded over tree branches, mothercake drooped over doorknobs; mothercake in the field, in the granary, on the village green; in the beck, mothercake; in the cupboard, old motherhubbardcake; up in the sky, mothercake floating by. On mothercakeday, we prepare the feast of mothercake. Women bring mothercake by the buckets, inside each a quivering mass of purple lamprey, and we pull out sheets for the mothercakeday feastq. We chop the mothercake and fry it in butter, dusted in flower. We serve the mothercake over hot white rice. We flay the mothercake into strips and grill it over open flames. We char the mothercake and gnash our teeth against the stringy fibers. We are nourished. The days after mothercakeday are hot and dry. The mothercake outside shrivels in the sun. Raisins on rocks. Purple snakeskins hanging in the trees. The wind tosses the mothercake husks until they collect against tree trunks and in the fence at the edge of the village. The mothercake flakes into the wind and speckles the earth like shredded leaves. When the rain comes, the mud is purpled with flecks of mothercake.

An Old Man Watches Metropolis, Restored

Kolby Harvey

Willie sits next to his wife, Kumiko, in a theater in Pasadena. He doesn't watch German films, avoiding the glottal utterances that populated his youth, but a silent movie with English intertitles is a different matter. He first saw the film 83 years ago, three years old, living in Düsseldorf. He thinks he remembers holding both his parents' hands on the way to the theater, reaching so high for Josef's and the surprising roughness of Gisele's, but this could have been any day. Willie loved the Kino Apollo for its balcony, and for every movie, the three of them sat one row back from its edge. Gisele couldn't bear sitting any nearer the railing. Kumiko has convinced him to see the movie, that it will be just like when he was a boy.

It is a strange thing to forget your birth language. It is a stranger thing still to remember it. Willie nods off at the beginning, as he often does in dark theaters. A crescendo in the music snaps him awake in time to read an intertitle—the mediator between head and hands must be the heart. He recalls his father whispering the words of each title card in his ear. *Der Mittler zwischen Hirn und Händen muss das Herz sein*, that is what it should be. *Mittler*, the one in the middle, the one who shares, *Mitteiler*. Not mediator. And *Hirn*—not head, but brain. There's something bodily lost in the translation, the sinews between gray matter, pumping blood, and flesh. Willie feels it in his chest, thumping.

Now there is a woman—well, a robot who looks like a woman—dancing on the screen, wearing a skirt of beaded fringe. Willie sees her, and the thumping in his chest says, *sie tanzt, sie tanzt*. There are men in the film who watch her dance with eyes that are hungry and scared all at once. Willie knows what happens next before he sees it. The eyes of all the hungry and scared men are mashed together to blink and leer as one. He's seen this before—in the Apollo of course, but in Düsseldorf too. Out on the streets in 1927 when people knew that his father was Jewish, that he was Jewish, and that his goy mother had married a Jew. There was always someone looking, and it didn't matter that his parents chose a gentile name for him.

German is pounding in Willie's chest, and it's repeating *Augen. Au-gen, Au-gen*. 83 years ago, he screamed about the eyes, pulling on Josef's coat to leave. They took him out of the theater, took him all the way across the ocean where he met a woman who knew, same as him, what it meant when they come to take your home. When they look at you scared and hungry. Now his breath catches in his throat, and he can't make a sound.

It is Kumiko who screams instead. But she is quick and still sharp and knows how to use a cell phone unlike so many of her friends. There is room for her in the ambulance when it arrives, and she holds Willie's hand until they reach the hospital. For a brief time, she must sit alone in

the waiting room. There is a television, but she does not watch. On the white hospital wall, her brain projects a film—the heart attack that almost killed Willie at the movies. His clammy hands closed white-tight over the arms of the theater seat, mouth agape, desperate for air. His terrible eyes. Between head and hands, always the heart.

If Mother, Huntress

Jaclyn Watterson

My attention came to rest again. I don't want to scare you, but many portions of form and order have been upset by The Mother. This is not a first attempt, but a recurrent return to a glass story with the story left out.

The Mother, in Connecticut, has been a Lady. She is not a New England Original, having grown up in Queens, but she lives with a precious beaker in a suburb near New Haven now. The Master's Wife, The Mother was designed for boys. Tongue so caustic—she liked boy children and her husband, not her daughters and not women singing on the radio, not even Stevie Nicks. Women, she did not want their company.

A covered bone, The Mother wore a faded gown that was actually a sweat suit. And she didn't touch us. Her wrists and waist were insulated behind mauve elastic, and outside I tried to understand this essay.

The Master mutilated.

In 1990, The Mother had two or twelve children, all of them human or once human. She punished us, but I do not remember any crying. We were like locked glass: examined things, imposters, or insomnia. The Mother was our keeper.

Dirtiness never beat a relation, even a poor relation. But sometimes a deed—she cannot stitch—slashed across kin. Ambush lay in a cradle.

I had the fear of falling over, and one of my favorite sisters was a hare. She had one bare, bald paw, and the rest of her was covered in a luxurious fur. This sister created an aura quite apart from The Mother—huntress why?

My Hare Sister and I, we shared a bed in secrecy. We stole our Mother's

ILLUSTRATIONS. They were some unfinished, prepared cloth—vulgar things that Mother made with glue-not-stitches and we stole for our ghost stories. Like a sink without a drain.

Some mother loves her child mistakenly.

2

Hare Sister said every animal was once an animal. It's all control, and if ghosts can be unknown in this world, why try to fathom a request like The Mother's.

Or fathom We without Hare Sister. She is my double, and the double of any object is that I desire it. Do not mince matter. Does mourning lie?

What surprised the sadder ghost stories was that the bedsteads were roped. The real—what is real?

Our brother, finding himself alive, went home. So much for the person. You hope to fell

dogs and cut flowers, but our brother was a whisp of hair.

Chairs drift, and tables can be in two places at once. The country was rugged, full of weeds without forethought. Frequent exposure in that century left children among a monster, The Mother. We were tenants like potatoes.

But now she doesn't exist. We hung her up by her hair—long, stitched—from a small willow. We used a griddle or a girdle for effect. Does that spell "Connecticut"?

The Mother cannot step beyond invisible now. She is just one stray copy of a lost house and a year like 1990. A window or a widow—broken. But non-connection is itself distinct, and we are still close relations. What do we long for when we are happy? Something else.

Winter is always summer.

Our exertions have been most successful, and here we are. Now The Mother does not resemble a thing so much. She is not stealthy or shame-faced or angry because we hung her up.

In the dining room we've ordered and displayed her wigs: an odd relic of that time, another drainless sink.

Nothing porcelain contains I am sorry.

But, Listen! Let me speak! Take refuge: Yes, there exists an uncertain hole. The fear of falling over it kept me Not-me, and lonely, for a long time. I was like a kidnapped apparition.

3

Anonymous Authorities say an assassin has been preserved, though The Mother seems quite dead. Hedged by paper, here.

At once I am arrived, with Hare Sister. Two rare animals privately owned. Pay no rent to soothe me, I am performing aslant, in the dark—paleness over. Every year spells "Connecticut."

All that is and all that is. Here we must separate.

WORDLESS

Jason Shults

The boy had been abandoned sometime in the past. He didn't know his age, of course. Age was not a concept he considered. The concepts he considered came mostly in the form of shapes and colors and sounds. He knew enough to grunt in certain ways, to tell a coyote to stay away from a dead rabbit that belonged to him, for instance, knew enough to give a terrifying scream to scare away a mountain lion.

The people of the town saw him occasionally, at a distance, though they were all almost always inebriated in some way so that the sightings, made portentous by drugs and alcohol, grew into a myth like Bigfoot or the Loch Ness Monster. A few rational folks posited that the creature they had seen was only a wolf or a goat, citing ravaged carcasses and a musky smell.

The boy retained a fear of humans he'd learned from somewhere, either from his parents (whoever they might have been) or the creatures of the wood. He did, however, dare to venture into human territory sometimes, did indeed go some mornings into town before sunrise, mostly when it rained or snowed, or when a wind blew in, like this one. These mornings people stayed in, so the streets were free for scavenging. Today he'd already found a cache of fried chicken in the trash cans behind the restaurant, and a pile of beer bottles in the Dumpster behind Jimson's Bar. He knew of an air vent on one side of a big building that blew warm air even on the coldest days, and it was here he headed with his gatherings, walking awkwardly upright, stark naked and shivering, staggering on bowed legs, holding a box of chicken and a few sloshing, half-empty bottles of beer.

He didn't make it to the warmth of the vent. When he saw the body hanging by a rope from the lamppost in front of the big building he was headed to, immediately he felt fear and guilt, a muddled sense of causality and culpability, and though he witnessed death daily as a matter of existence, he felt that this must be different somehow, when a person died. This was in fact the first dead human he had seen. He had never imagined them dying. They seemed so organized, humans, so purposeful, those upright-walking creatures, he knew they must be different, perhaps even immortal and at the very least superior to his kind of creatures, the mere four-legged kind that fed on one another for survival.

This had been bothering him for some months now, the suspicion that he was of a different sort than his fellow woodland creatures, maybe not quite human, but different at the very least. He could dominate his fellow creatures simply by, for instance, thinking a step ahead or corralling them with deceit or persuading them with kindness. He knew that he did not belong with the

uprights—he didn't make the sounds they made, after all, even though he had tried—but he was not apparently one of the woodlands, either. Where did he belong?

And so it wasn't the sight of the dead man but was instead these muddled thoughts which drove him from his plan for warmth, made him abandon the chicken and the beer, made him forget the comfort of the vent, drove him madly, wildly, down the mountain into the gulch where he could run along the streambed, as he'd often done when he'd been bitten or stung, or when the cloudy and propulsive thoughts moving through his mind refused to leave him. He ran, he ran, and he let out a howl which meant something, and he knew it meant something, but what?

Words

Lee, Myunghyun

1. Blood (Pee)

A gelatin barrier, or an extension at all costs, stretching endlessly from the blistered and festering tip of flesh. You cannot witness the natural pallor that opens without anticipation. You must call it the thing which has never been before. Stifled mouths slowly spread sound. What a corrupt night it is, caused by the undercurrent of torpidity sucked into the unbelievable speed of water. One must not be fooled. The sparkling of autumn leaves under the sun is of no mineral.

1. Apple (Sagwa)

Of the outline of a still life deprived of taste and color we shall hereafter say Apple. Object slices space with a subtle shaving knife. Apple, apple, apple. How grotesque the sound. Reversibly speaking, it isn't strange to say that the apple crosses the body of the caterpillar. The time of meditation that delves into the gray carbon of cigarette fire is not kind. Apple..., the desire of Apple, the dream of Apple.

2. Earth (Jigu)

Why? I feel as if your head, harboring a panting smile and looking over, will explode while screaming a nice kind scream. Yesterday was salvaged from the trash can and today is the hour upon us. Dog-bollocks! Squatting on the ledge he and I instead of the cloud really joked. It was a stupefied laugh like the last human being emitted when she stood alone and small looking out over the cracking earth. On a floor with corners the corner is best. Perhaps it is the rusting screws' fault but small crumbs form from time to time. Wind blowing in wet laundry and the crayons of sun, do they imagine a threadbare afternoon. Well and good, he is a repairman from another star so long as he recites the Apocalypse? Please take care of Earth.

3. A Vacuum (Jingong)

Await the signal. Cars move busily. The axis of the pendulum is pulled short and accelerates. Solid objects circulating within the body block the flow before my eyes. (Wherever is the face to be pulled to be found!) The obtuse things moving in the interior try to shoot out, and are again in stasis grabbing things that lunge forth, while once again passersby pass by shooting through the paused landscape. Either the air is thin or breath is catching. The vacuum is the wave's potential. Above my forehead I watch the large crane's steel pendulum swing to and fro like salvation. The man foregoes the justice of the vacuum.

4. Chains (Saseul)

A chain is a dangerous tool. The more so if the chain perforates human epidermis, for then it must be even colder and sharper. The heart becomes whole along with the sensation of digging into flesh. All around, a soft drape descends and ice flowers bloom. In truth there is no such chain. A chain is a tool used to tie people. If not used with care it can even cause displeasure. What's to be done, then, hey? The arm of the person holding the chain is made up of chains. Like a snake coiling into itself the chain wraps its full form. I've used the word 'chain' eight times already. Let's stop this now.

5. Pine webworms (Songchoong'i)

In Jules Renard's *Natural History* there is an illustration of the pine webworm. There a bundle of thread with golden dots gnaws through the time of night and day. He uses language as precise and distilled as glass beads. To speak of him and there, I and here must be erased. "The pine webworm..." there is no such language anymore. At which layover did the vague hand pick up this book and throw it away? On nights when escaped visions chase after me I don't remember where it was. Renard lived in a world from which language was not separated. Disappeared things, no matter where, invariably hide their subtleties and fly and enter into forever and become whole.

6. Being set adrift (Pyoryu)

Listen. On today's hiking trail we had one falling accident. Personal information review revealed the age as definitely 00 years of age, and they're said to have had an arrangement to jibe words with the detective that visited for the second time. When we try to speak when we chase after the origins of these words we fall into confusion. Well things change when a new atmosphere is born every day. If someone's pointing at someone else and laughing does monetary compensation emerge even if it's a tree after all? The gas burner stove on the site, you didn't want to turn it on even before it became shabby. The boy that was standing under the rain, yeah. Posture is important. In the sky that opens up when you tilt the umbrella full frontal, sometimes rain clouds are letting peek their peekaboo holes, and if you take on the posture of one that throws the arm with the hand without an umbrella way out back and run like wild, the revelator evaporates after a single strand of death ray pours down from the hole poked in the clouds. My husband says our elder brother is the daughter I gave birth to. We all have proclivities for divinity. Can you hear? Is it strange that I'm saying anything.

7. Disappearance (Shiljong)

My eyelid lowers. You disappear... people that have gathered muttering amongst themselves, grasping frozen stares, among them some were stitching down eyeballs flipped over, every night full of claver and accomplice. Will I be able to find you. As for news unforeseen may it transform

into joy and futility. Resignation that has lost content, already the wind shoves in innumerable footsteps. Leaving behind monotonous days and days that peter out like startled awakenings in the throes of sleep, spilling foggy presence every now and then you were disappearing. You don't look back. Everything scatters. ...rain water only erases the erasure of rain water. We were there, never mind all places and all time, filling up as endless loss. Becoming clouds and wooden barricades, layering rotten leaves on even the pebbles kicking at our feet.

8. A Journey (Yeoro)

(although in some circles it seems still misunderstood) It was around autumn of last year before the investigations were fully underway, when he left with stumbling step to dig through the luminosity of nauseous blossoming sunlight. Some furnishings were discovered, such as the crumpled bucket, but already his facial expression was formless. These are past things so why...

9. Novel (Soseol)

No matter how purposefully you squeeze stuff out it's pointless struggling. To put it nicely there is no other way around it. The opportunity to speak has been swept from a nearly miraculous riot into a corner room. But the wind and moon and ages that were sweeping long since have remained and are snatching at living ankles. There's nothing at all good about writing easy things in a pointlessly difficult fashion. But no matter how hard I try to relent, easy words are really hard. (How abstruse are the words in which it's portrayed? This doesn't really tell you anything either.) Obviously, even the simplicity of even the most final words has nothing to do with all the stumbling blocks of writing, and depends on things that aren't even language. Who would believe it if you said a corpse is presiding over a corpse. But we are living in a world where money rules over money. Ah, I don't want to fool people with this sort of word foolery, and I want to quit everything. The life that I have lived was so transient as to have nothing to do with any novelistic device. Ah is it really my own, presiding over yes, no less than a whooping full life of writing. Written lines what are you doing, to the narrator please at least divorce and banish the author. And the above few lines of gripe probably rose up like bubbles during an asshole cleansing session squatted on the toilet, the reporter having preserved them just like that for 8 days (or another hypothetical period of time that is phonetically allowed without much hassle.)