

Adjusting Back to Home

Canada to Korea to Canada

by Justin J. Jang

Trigger Warning: Substance Abuse, Generational Trauma
“What it feels like to be Special/Talking to Myself/It’s Not Alright”

Everyone is your enemy
when your mum is your greatest—
when your parents have no memory—
conversations prior or history shared
you’ve over twenty-two years,
they say the most offensive things.

They don’t know the first thing about me. Every ache in my body,
every spoonful I don’t eat, it’s a... critique? *It’s nagging.*

They don’t remember. They don’t remember. *Right?*
I’m not someone who has a big appetite.
So, what impression did I give that it would be different?

Each time they ask, what about “how inflexible I am.”
Why’s it look in your eye that I’m throwing my life away.

You think I’m an ill person
just because I won’t go to the chiropractor
like you fucking told me to.

The worst part, when
they treat you like that.
Like when they talk to people,
in the same template they talk to everyone else.

‘cause sometimes, when you have a conversation with someone,
you learn them, you learn their history,
what hurt them, what makes them feel good,
so why is it that you use template talk with me?

“Do you know nothing about me?
Are you trying to kill me?
Are you saying I have no self
like the empty person you are?”

Just admit it. A single word will do.

I could feel myself becoming *emptier and emptier*

living with you

I can't stop it.

I've cried in the bath.

I've cried on the carpet.

All nights you haven't seen before.

The reason I smoke is you.

Thank god dad wasn't around.

No father is better than two parents who don't bother.

Stop promising me things you don't know how to do.

You didn't take my life away from me.

You took away my humanity, my love.

The day I broke down in front of you,

for another fucking comment.

When I balled my eyes out, and

cried years worth of pain out.

You looked hurt.

The amount of pain you give me.

Nights I went out with brutes.

Nights I went out at 3 AM.

The amounts of joints smoked.

Happy coke-faced smile in the mirror.

Leave me alone.

When you're not watching,

when I can escape your gripping gaze at night.

I sneak out.

I leave home so I can love

however twisted it may be.

I can't believe what I do at night.

Imposter Syndrome

Why was I born a stick bug? Why couldn't I have been a stick?
My home forest, beady eyes look from branch to branch.
All dusty brown shells, granular and bumpy, like me.
But inside—my blood, thick amber. *I just know it.*

Still and analogous. Motion of the ocean, I am the best stick.
I go and visit other trees; I am the best stick!

A circular odyssey, my mind only keeps as boastful stories.
“I’ve seen oak, birch, mahogany, and even rosewood!”

...

I could've seen a mango tree but what was the point if I couldn't be the mango.
That was until an aphid bit into my chitinous rump.
Lack of articulation, cutting circulation. *Spit it out!*

Maybe I was a stick, unable to speak and motionless.
Where is the glory when you are unrecognized.
Does a stick speak for itself?

As tonewood, most beautiful sounds leak out my ears.
Sounds only heard inside.

Shooting Space

The air, warm and toasty,
a wall of sun greets me as I leave the shade.
Concrete green, worn, and patchy,
sizzles in the summer heat.

Baskets stand crooked, ten feet tall,
the backboard opaque and milky.
Lines peel like whiteout;
Colgate nets echo end to end.

Earbuds in—eyes know where to go.
voices go for a walk,
a glance worth more than words.
Sneakers and ball translate,
swishes quiet our lonesome.

Shared rhythm speaks silently.
We orbit one another, unspoken rules.
Shots and passes build something unseen.

The vast void, teeming with love,
crumble down, we are all young,
as space becomes a bond.

Letting Go

I respect you, my chest crushed.
Your words, water-heavy,
flood spaces in my head.

Silence—your sharpest scalpel,
cuts clean through
the room air.
Shift in my seat,
eyes down.

What is, protects you,
Dior and Bape husk crunches.
If I weighed this moment,
balanced us,
would you float away?

String taut, grip loose.
Red glow sinking into the sky.

Seasonal Depression

\ | /
Corona's and the beach
Basketball with friends
Trips and vacation
/ | \

Sea salt breeze

Warm words glow with weight,
in the hush of summer dusk
Well-worn novels dusted
finally find their voice.

World is my kitchen
Feeding me through *good vibes*
I don't need to stop

/ / / / / / / / / / / /

I am a settler this winter dealing with harsh weather. Stood in my kitchen, a blizzard raging
inside my icebox brain. Words, numbers, facts hailed down stacking: arrest my heart.
Personal thoughts, like cars on the street, lay buried four feet deep; no traffic to be found.
Too much. I give up. I need to breathe. A second of air, that's all I ask. //
Smell of Onions on the counter, Cajun spice from the pantry, and Strawberries from the fridge.
Infectiously soft, warm Bread spread with PB&J.

Emerald Eyes

Stinky little baby. Little Mi-. Mitchy. Young Prince. Little man. Baby-boo, Mi-ya. Totoro. Mr. little black ball. Mi-sa. Bae-bo-sa. Mitch. Young man. Killing machine. Young Man-o-thy. Little sock. Ferocious little killing machine. Black lion. Jaguar. Handsome Young man. "Attack-mode." Stinky baby. Baby ball. Loaf. Bae-so. Love ya Little man. Hermit. Boo-so. Dress cat. Curious Cat. Spooky's Grandson. Halloween Kitty. Bunty-boo. Adorable Baby. Stretchy Man. Cuddly Man. Warm. Thank you. You understand me! I understand, baby.

Dress cat. Curious Cat. Spooky's Grandson.
Warm. Thank you. You understand me! I understand, baby.
Cuddly Man. Stretchy Man. Adorable Baby. Halloween Kitty. Bunty-boo. Boo-so. Little man. Baby-boo, Mi-ya. Totoro. Mr. little black ball. Mi-sa. Bae-bo-sa. Mitch. Young man. Killing machine. Young Man-o-thy. Little sock. Ferocious little killing machine. Black lion. Jaguar. Handsome Young man. "Attack-mode." Stinky baby. Baby ball. Loaf. Bae-so. Love ya Little man. Hermit. Boo-so. Dress cat. Curious Cat. Spooky's Grandson.

Treading Waters: Thunderbird Woman

Random calls in the middle of the night, my blood shot eyes. “Hey I miss you.” A thin-wire echo, but it’s real; it’s heavier than real. Rain rattled my windows; craters and uneven pavement filled, levels rising. Eyes watch as the lawn is slowly enveloped. Each level of clapboard consumed. Splashes against jagged rocks and bushes, and murky waters filled with poignant circles radiating outward on the surface, some from droplets, other fish. Warm in the safety of my town house. Echoes draw my being to the dark exposed root flare of the trees. The thunderbird’s figure thickened in the primordial pool. It killed all thought. Trip into the nestlings of my heart, the dark shadows of your flight follows. Eyes zig zagged—all angles of the dark edge. Room now outdoors, feet trying to run, firmly rooted by the dry earth’s crust. Turgid, gnarled vines grew out the hollow constricting bark skin. Musk of sweet elk cinnamon seeping in kindlings. Weight is suffocating. Weight is a gift.

Whispers from the Wall

The latex forms a thick coral of rouge around my handle.
In the pale, the brush searches in thirst of paint.
Soffits sticker pale, pink chips
crumble like bleached eggshells.

The poor home breathes shallowly—
too many layers, cooking it alive.
Cut the weight, fur shedding down,
hairs as thick as crackers.

Scratching the back, a mist of sawdust dewes the grass.
The house lets out a damp, thirty-year sigh.
Painting west to east, the shadows giggle at the sun.
Astronauts chasing the dark side of the moon.

The sky changes from marigold to violet.
The breeze carries whispers from the wall.
Blowing up and down, the wind inspects our work.
A short moment where all the tenants evaluate our day.

Lynn Canyon-Pipeline Trail

Cool rain droplets all around me. Pat pat
pat. sitting on this beach at the lowest
crevice of the Capilano valley

Blue smoke against this grey day burns
between my fingers.

Gnarled skinny and knobbed skeleton fingers curling
around in their corporeal smoke, form
overlapping and interfering with one another.

Sometimes into each other collapsing
and disappearing into transparency of the background.

My mum next to me. Listening to a
melancholic tune in her walking gear. Blue
Waterproof boots and a knapsack
The tune more beautiful, an aural hug, as
the atmosphere of the valley held the song in its arms.

We both share a small chocolate pie
enjoying the delectable weather.
A heavy atmosphere, lamp like grey clouds,
dimming reality down a shade, and the
exciting cool rain,

playing its music evenly around is. Each
drop, a different size, a different volume, a
different weight. Each had their note.

The stone filled beach lightly wetted in the
soft rain. From a deep moss infused Grey to
glistening white like the belly of a sea otter
on its backs.

Trigger warning: War, Abuse, hate speech.

Writing about Politics

Mom was raised in the aftermath of Japanese Imperialism.
She was beat, abused by the war-torn minds of these conservative animals.
She gave me a “liberal” life, to-do as I pleased — to-do my best.
To never beat down on someone for something they couldn’t control.

“개새끼, 뭐라고 했어? 이리와이놈.”

I have experienced my grandfathers blood in me,
the people I hang around, the people I am most comfortable with
are conservatives.
I play a lot of basketball, a lot of video games with these racist, bigoted animals.

“우냐? 애들아, 이리 와서 이거 봐봐. 새끼 때리니까 우네. 개쪽파리 내.”
“멍해봐. 야옹은 어떠니?”

I too am guilty.

My mom still has a seedling inside, beneath everything that I am.
Lies that seedling of my mother — to be better.

“시발년, 눈 까라.”

As Peter Caws once did for his son,
“to arm him with multiple perspectives to view the world from”
I wonder if, I too can ever be that liberal — if this seed will sprout,
or will I be doomed to live this colorless conservative life.

“자닌 하다. 이런 ____ 하고 어떻게 대와 하니?”

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1. Japanese Imperialism: [Born in Seoul, 1973, she is the last in a family of five. My mum seldom speaks about our family and her upbringing.]
 2. Caws, Peter. “The Culture of Curiosity.” <https://www.petercaws.com/teaching.html>.
[Father to musician, Matthew Caws of Nada Surf.]