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To all whose lives have been upended by calamity,
know darkness too well, and welcome the arrival of light.

“To be fully alive, fully human, and completely awake is to be continually thrown out of the nest.”

—Pema Chödrön

Prologue

I biked to her house. Something was up. She wasn't returning my calls and my husband was increasingly irritated with me, complaining about trivialities like crumbs left on the kitchen counter, a parking spot not taken, a hair in the sink. These signs and a dull ache in my belly pointed to something more than a friendship between them. She greeted me on her front porch without her usual warm hug. I refused to sit down or accept her offer of a cup of tea. I stood. I wanted answers. Soon enough, she confessed to their affair. I got back on my bike. It was dusk. There were probably cars on the roads, children playing in their yards, a bus stopping at the corner, but my stilled heart muted any nearby sounds. Someone's legs pressed the pedals through the streets. Someone's arms carried her bicycle up the front steps into the house. Someone climbed the stairs to interrupt his reading and ask him the same question: Were they having an affair? He put the book down and offered a denial similar to the one from a few weeks earlier when I asked the same question. No, he said. Only friends. How I exaggerate, am overly sensitive.

That was an end of a marriage. My marriage. He who had been my closest friend for fifteen years closed the door to our affection and to the sun to moon details of two individuals who chose to twine their lives. No more shared meals, walks through the park; no more movies together, concerned phone calls, looking over the shoulder at the other's book, watching the arrival of dusk from the back porch, curling up together in bed. He moved out a few months later, the door shutting to the remnants of a comfortable life. The house filled by a we emptied into a me. The familiar rhythm of the day altered radically.

I lost my husband, but refused to lose my home. With a mortgage and bills for which I was now solely responsible, I had to find a better paying job. Change, I know from my years of Buddhist practice, is inevitable, but some changes deliver a harsher blow and are more unwelcome than others. I had a choice. I could plunge into bitterness or turn my demolished life into an opportunity. I chose the latter and vowed to accept the first job offer that came along. I hadn't anticipated traveling 11,000 miles away from my home in Richmond, Virginia to a university previously unknown to me in a city in S. Korea. Accepting an offer as Visiting Lecturer, I moved to Daegu, S. Korea, a move marking

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the first time in my life that finances, not my usual motives of love or art guided an important decision.

Though hired to teach English, American culture, and, eventually, dance, I knew much time would be devoted to attempting to fill in huge gaps in my knowledge of this Asian peninsula the size of Indiana. I knew its location on a map, that my television and stereo carried Korean brand names, that American soldiers fought against communism there in the 50's, but that's about as far as my knowledge went. I had no images of its landscape and architecture, no familiarity with its language, people, history, or culture. All of this changed in the year of living in an apartment nestled against a mountain near the Nakdong River.