

HEEUM

# THE USE OF A WINDOW

*Translated from Korean by Jack Saebyok Jung*

I greet an ancient refrigerator,  
once my father, now reduced to bare bones, yet  
it remains unbearably heavy.

I roamed, blabbering that I was in love,  
but in dreams, my dead father's ankles swam into focus.

Guided by an unfamiliar hand, my hand wanted  
to trace the Big Dipper,

venturing into the forest known to my beloved.

Sunlight and wind were kept barred outside,  
plants on the window railing abandoned. Still,  
my lover's face did not return.

I sought my talkative lover, chasing  
a voice vibrant with vigor.

The window may have always been ajar,  
which doesn't mean one can leave through its frame.  
My father mumbled, knees clutched close.

Should I pass on this refrigerator to another,  
to receive their greeting in exchange?  
Daily, I lay beside it.

One day, in the white noise, I felt a bone's presence,  
comforting to lean on, leading me to  
stand atop the railing, peering down twice, thrice,  
until I was dizzy.

# A MAN WHO BECAME A BACKPACK

The man always carried a large backpack, nearly half his height, filled with books. His upper body leaned forward slightly to balance the weight. Carrying the backpack, he wandered restlessly from one café to another, drawn to their lights. Occasionally, he made plans to meet someone, and sometimes, almost by mistake, he found someone to love. For the sake of his beloved, he lessened the number of books in his backpack, and it hung loosely, though everyone knew it was something like an uncommon outing.

The man slung his heavy backpack over his slanted back. Over time, his back grew more and more bent, until the backpack seemed to rest naturally, almost as if it were part of him. The man grew thinner, little by little, and the backpack began to feel like another man, looming over him like a master. He briefly leaned his body against a café's spacious sofa, but soon felt the urge to move on, leaving the café behind. With his frail backbone, he carried another man, flipping endlessly through pages filled with beautiful sentences. He walked toward the next café, its lights still on. The man and the man, as a single, undivided shadow, slowly made their way through the alleyway of night, like spaces between lines.

# STORY OF CHAIR

A person mounts a chair.  
Of course.  
No one says anything.  
It is loud with talk about tomorrow's weather.

A person stands on the top of the chair.  
What?  
No words.  
Because everything is where it should be.

A person suddenly kicks the chair.  
What is this?  
They go where they were going.  
They go where they were going.

Only the chair rolls endlessly down the road.  
  
Because nothing had happened.