

“I need your help. It’s for Adam.”

“Good son,” he says. “You help your *hyung*, and he help us.”

I bury my face in my hand. “That’s what I’m trying to do.”

I reach for Adam’s essay. In the glow of this green day, my brother’s words ring sincere. Of the two of us, he should have been the one writing an elegiac novel. He doesn’t belong in his corporate cell.

Around me life slows to a crawl. Office workers saunter through the puddles of shadows as their starched shirts waver from white to deep navy. Schoolchildren swarm together, their light jackets flapping like fins. Hands trembling, I call Adam’s office. I can hardly believe what I’m about to do.

“I’m calling from the Kennedy School of Government. We need to verify employment information with Mr. Chang’s direct supervisor.”

The manager is curt but courteous. He thanks me for my call and says that he’s sensed that Mr. Chang wasn’t happy with his current position. He regrets that Mr. Chang seems to have misrepresented himself in his application: he’s not in line to be promoted. In fact, another round of layoffs has been announced. Of course, he adds, all this is in confidence. But his cold voice leaves no doubt what he’ll do.

When dusk falls I make my way home and lie on the floor. He is not my rival, he is my brother. And he is someone I can hurt because he is—say it, Chang—because he is someone I love.

How do you cry like a real man?

When the morning sun filters through the window, I rewrite Adam’s essay and add a truthful story—about our fishing trip, about an immigrant and his heir, both fighting to stay afloat. I cut out all the minor characters. But Adam will know that I am with him. It’s the best piece of fiction my brother and I will write together.

**Chaney Kwak**’s first story appeared in *Zyzzyyva*, earning a special mention from the Pushcart Prize. He works as a travel writer and contributes to *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *National Geographic* books, and other publications. He lives in San Francisco.

## SHARON HORVATH

*The Spiral (For My Mother)*, 2009–2014  
pigment, ink, and polymer on paper on canvas, 73 x 52 in.



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