

Han-Mee

by Shawna Anderson

is where we raised our Dixie cups in windy indecision, experimented with chopsticks on a collection plate of rice and reached our resting point at a Korean church in Ithaca with waist-high kimchi vats lined up in the kitchen entrance, the vague scent of rubber and a backed-up toilet in the distance, and an altogether aura of uncertainty of what our futures would hold.

Which is how we came to consider getting married in Han-Mee.

Which is why a few of us of took the plunge into becoming full-fledged Asians: Saturday school, fan dance class, humming "Ariang" while showering, the works.

Which is why we had basic problems at the ratty apartment down on Montrose, discovered Walter and Liz kissing under a blanket, upturned manly-man Tim's N'Sync collection, and drove poor Owen to drown himself in the lake because of a simple lisp and flick of the wrist.

Black waves, white foam, hot green air. Is he gay or just Asian???

And all that sand! Small grains under lycra spandex, squeezed beneath toenails. These things really got to us.

Which is why we stopped at the 7-11 on Lawrence, crammed 7 of us in that dingy unisex bathroom at once, and purchased strawberry Pocky for the ride back to Han-Mee in the 15-passenger van.

And also why Jason drove like a maniac.

Which is why we considered getting married in the back of the van.

Because we might not have lived to get married in a more appropriate sanctuary.

But we didn't quite make it back. Not even to the Bulgogi House, not even to meet Charse-Yun, not even to that smoky karaoke joint with the shady looking Asian men spilling from its doors like yellow skittles.

Which was frustrating to us, with our innate fondness of order. This failure of schedule was to be attributed not to Jason (with his defiant blond spikes) taking curbs gleefully, not to Walter and Liz rounding the bases in the back of the van, not even to the clear green bottles of Korean vodka jingling merrily in the trunk.

It was because of Sanrio, Inc.

And also the freshman girls who suddenly decided to embrace a certain cosmetic Asian-ness, while the rest of us strove to ignore their moans and persuade Jason to drive us to somewhere where there was no fat white cat who said “Hello”.

Which was ridiculous.

And Hello Kitty told us so.

You can't even eat with chopsticks, she says. Can't even sing the second verse of Ariang, or finish that shot of soju without getting shitfaced.

Which is why we considered getting married in the store, with Badtz-Maru as the best man, and Chococat tossing the rice.

Which is precisely when the shop closed up, the traffic thickened like grease-clogged veins, and the sky became noticeably more yellow and harried by all the action beneath it.

By then the sky had stopped thickening her gaze upon us, and had closed her eyes into a hot thundery purple, Walter and Liz had finally managed to pry their mouths apart, and the white 15-passenger van was almost back to Han-Mee.

White cat, chocolate cat, Korea yellow sky. Obsessive-compulsive or just Asian???

And all that rain!

The small bullets hid out in the ditches, tucked under the necks of our shirts

Which is why we sprinted through gaping puddles through the parking lot of Han-Mee with our backpacks resting on our heads like awnings, anticipated the waist-high vats of kimchi just inside the foyer, and held our breath awaiting the perfume of rubber and a backed up toilet in the distance.

I almost married you right there and then.