Mother tongue
2018
mOt热水器
VOLUME 23: SPRING 2018

mOt热水器 was founded in 1994 in the Comparative Literature Program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. The journal is published annually, and submissions are accepted early during the spring semester. The editors consider submissions from the Five College undergraduate and graduate student community.

428 Herter Hall
Comparative Literature Program
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003

Copyright 2018 mOt热水器. No part of this journal may be used or reproduced in any manners or by any means – with the exception of copying in accordance with Sections 107 and 108 of the United States Copyright Law – without written permission.

Publication is made possible with the support from the Comparative Literature Program, the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, the Translation Center, and a generous grant from the University of Massachusetts Arts Council.

Cover Art by Nell Franchek
dear reader,

mOthertongue is a multilingual and multicultural journal of the arts that has been at UMass for the past 23 years. Made up of poetry, short stories, and visual art, the magazine brings together students from all majors, languages, ages, and artistic styles. This year, we have been fortunate to receive fifteen submissions. We are excited about the variety of languages that we are able to present to you in this 23rd issue of mOthertongue. The majority of our submissions are non-romantic languages. We are pleased to see the student population pull away from eurocentric art and represent languages from Africa, Central America, and Asia.

With a decrease in funding for language programs at universities and high schools across the country, it is more important than ever to celebrate the diversity of language and culture. Furthermore, with the political and social state of the country, it is evident that the United States could benefit from more acceptance and a broader point of view. We hope to create both of these with the help of poetry, literature, and art.

Lastly, the editorial board extends many thanks to Professor Jessica Barr, our faculty advisor as well as the graduate students that aided in translations of the poems and short stories.

Thank you!!
The Editors
CONTENTS

Let’s Take a Drive                                 Faith Gregory       6
(Composite Photograph, edited in Photoshop)

Amores Peces                                    Roy Watson-Badell   7
(Spanish, *Bubbles of Love/Loves of Fish*)

Contemplating the VOID/Veri Meri                Mariel Vahar        10
(Estonian, *Contemplating the VOID/Very Meri*)

Lethologica                                     Michaela Oster      14
(Italian, *Lethologica*)

“Et le jour pour moi sera comme la nuit...”       Alison Deckers      16
(French, “And the day, for me, will become like the night...”)

Sacré Coeur                                     Lillian Sickler     18
(Photograph)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teman Sejati (Malay, <em>Friend</em>)</td>
<td>Zach Imran</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tent in the Palisades (Photograph)</td>
<td>Alexander Libenson</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>مسکرائب بارش کی (Urdu, <em>Smiling Rain</em>)</td>
<td>Sana Gilani</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steep the Stump (Ceramic)</td>
<td>Owen Nash</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ispod Povrsine (Croatian, <em>Going Under</em>)</td>
<td>Sylvie Gallagher</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangla Kobita (Bengali, <em>Bangla Kobita</em>)</td>
<td>Fabeeha Khan</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De la Mort (French &amp; Arabic, <em>From Death to Life</em>)</td>
<td>Linden Bittenson</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glacier Lake at Swiftcurrent (Photograph)</td>
<td>Alexander Libenson</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like Father Like Son (Chinese, <em>Like Father Like Son</em>)</td>
<td>Jason Zhuo</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Let’s Take A Drive” Faith Gregory 2018
Amores Peces//Bubbles of Love//Loves of Fish
By Roy Watson-Badell

En Espanol:

Empieza en el fondo
En la cima del salto, en el fuente del rio,
En el punto mas hondo,
En los pozos de sus ojos,
Dos peces mirando, amando el otro

Hacen el nido,
Ambos se mueren, y nacen los hijos

Asi de repente
Con solo un recuerdo de carino,
Se los lleva la corriente

Llegan al mar
Armado con aletas, sin saber nadar,
Huyendo tiburones,
Vagan cada ola, buscando direcciones,

Como una burbuja que sube y crece,
Dos peces nadan juntos, un amor nuevo florece,

Que alegria no ser vagabundo,
Con solo un recuerdo de carino, crucen el mundo,
Contra la corriente,

Suben el rio, buscando el fuente,
Huyendo ozos,
Saltan el salto, bucean al fondo
De los pozos de sus ojos
Dos peces mirando, amando el otro

Rhyming Translation:

Bees buzz, birds sing.
At the top of the waterfall, in the bottom of the spring
In the deepest place
In the wells of their eyes,
Two fish face to face, Their love is alive

They nest in the sand,
Both of them die, and with their last breath,
Give life to their fry

That very same day,
With just a memory of tenderness, the current sweeps them away

Without a compass or a clue
The river spits them out, into the blue
Escaping the belly of the shark
Searching each wave, looking for a spark
A new love begins,
Two fish swim together, holding each others’ fins,
Joy to be one with you, and so much more than two,
Time to start again, back across the blue,

Swimming upriver,
Fin becomes wing,
Leaping the waterfall,
Back in the spring
Finally there,
Safe from the bear
In the wells of their eyes,
Two fish face to face, their love is alive.

Literal Translation:
It starts at the bottom,
At the peak of the waterfall, at the source of the river,
In the deepest point,
In the wells of their eyes,
Two fish look at each other, loving the other,
They make the nest,
Both of them die, and their fry are born,
Just like that
With just a memory of tenderness, the current takes them away
They arrive at the sea
Armed with fins, not knowing how to swim,

Evading sharks,
They wander every wave, searching for direction,
Like a bubble that rises and grows,
Two fish swim together, a new love blooms,
What a joy not to be a vagabond,
With just a memory of tenderness, they cross the world,
Against the current,
They go up the river, looking for the spring,
Evading bears,
They jump the waterfall, they dive to the bottom,
Of the wells of their eyes,
Two fish look at each other, loving the other
Contemplating the VOID
By Mariel Vhar

Mu pea on alati sassis.
Ma pean alati mötlema mu mõtete peale,
aga mis abi sellest on?
See ei abista,
    see häbistab.
See pole hämmastav.
Ma hammustan oma näppe;
see on kuidas ma näpistan ennast
tagasi unenäole.

VERI MERI

[very merry!]

Asi pole lihtne:
seal on mitu kihete,
punased lippe,
mu sees elab titte.
Ta karjub
Ta on kuri
Ta nutab
Tal on ebamugav
Ta naerab
Tal on vabadus.
Vabandust, laps, et ma vaidlen sinuga...

~ YOU CANNOT GET EVERYTHING YOU WANT ~

Elus on tähtsamaid asju kui tahtmine...

~ i want to not want ~

miks sa ei saa sellest aru?
Ära kontrolli mind.
Sa oled pind.
Seda rohkem ma proovin sind välja võta,
seda sügavamale sa lähed.
Sa lähed mu pähe,
sa oled juba seal,
aga ma ikka mötlen sinu peal.
Contemplating the VOID

My head is often in a mess.
I often have to think about my thoughts,
but what good is that?
It doesn't help,
it harms.
It isn't great.
I bite my fingers;
this is how I pinch myself
back into the dream.

BLOOD SEA

[very merry!]

It isn’t easy:
there are many layers,
red flags,
inside me a child dwells.
It screams
It is angry
It cries
It is uncomfortable
It laughs
It is free.
I’m sorry, child, for arguing with you...

~ YOU CANNOT GET EVERYTHING YOU WANT ~

There are more important things in life than wanting...

~ i want to not want ~

why don’t you understand this?
Stop controlling me.
You’re a splinter.
The more I try to take you out,
the deeper in you go.
You get to my head,
you’re already there,
but I still think of you.
e mi rendo conto di quanto sia facile; capire perché le curve delle nostre labbra cambino forma sotto pressione e vorrei che ce ne fossero più di ventisei ecco perché respiro altre lingue perché stiamo tutti solo cercando di ingoiare il mondo intero
and I realize how easy this is;  
understanding why the curves of our lips change shape  
derunder pressure  
and  
I wish there were more than twenty-six  
which is why I breathe other tongues  
because  
we are all just trying to swallow the world whole
“Et le jour pour moi sera comme la nuit...”
By Alison Deckers

Il était une fois une fille qui réussit à capturer le soleil. Le soleil était un homme et la fille ne l’avait jamais vraiment, mais il était très brillant et ils eussent été très proche que les détails n’importent pas à elle. Ses sourires auraient pu brûler ses joues et causer elle se sent faible. Il aurait pu éclaircir ses jours quand il se tint debout dans la même place avec elle. Mais juste comme le soleil n’aime pas les humaines dans la Terre, l’homme n’a pas aimer la fille.

Finalement, elle tombait dans l’amour avec un autre. Il était ami avec l’homme qu’il était comme le soleil, mais c’homme était plus comme glace. Avec lui, elle n’a pas brûlé, mais elle commençait geler. Elle se sentait chaleur seule quand elle est passée un petit temps avec son soleil. Mais, l’autre homme, l’homme plus froid, remarquait et essayait garder elle à l’intérieur, s’éloigner de la lumière. La fille connaissait elle a dû partir lui, mais si elle est partie alors elle aura dû abandonner son soleil aussi.

Le jour elle est partie, la fille pleurait. Elle sentait comme elle n’aurait jamais vu son soleil encore. Elle n’aurait jamais vu la lumière aveuglante que répandait d’homme sans effort. La fille s’était plongée dans une nuit sombre donc elle se serait évadé d’homme de glace et elle était effrayé maintenant qu’elle n’aurait pas vu tous rayonner lui. Mais, ses yeux auront ajusté à la nuit finalement. Plus tard, elle aura eu les rêves de se prélasser dans la lumière du soleil ; les rêves la donnent espoir d’un jour elle aura réuni avec l’homme elle a aimé. Elle sera y arrivé cette nuit et elle aura appris devenir son propre soleil.

* Citation du poème « Demain dès l’aubes » par Victor Hugo
“And the day, for me, will become like the night”*

Once upon a time a girl had managed to capture the sun. The sun was a boy and the girl never really had him, but he was so bright and they were so close that it didn’t matter to her. His smiles could burn her cheeks and make her feel faint. He could brighten her days just being in the same room as her. But just as the sun doesn’t love the humans on earth, the boy didn’t love the girl.

Eventually, she fell in love with someone else. Even though he was friends with the boy who was like the sun, this boy was more like ice. With him, she didn’t burn, but began to freeze. She only felt warmth when she could spend a little time near her sun. But the other boy, the colder one, had noticed and tried to keep her inside, away from the light. The girl knew she had to leave him, but to leave him meant to give up her sun as well.

On the day she finally left, the girl cried. She felt like she might never see her sun again. She might never again see that dazzling light that radiated out of him so effortlessly. The girl had plunged herself into a dark night so she could escape the boy of ice and was scared that now she couldn’t see anything around her. But eventually her eyes would adjust to the dark. Later, she would even have dreams of basking in sunlight; dreams that gave her hope of one day being able to reunite with the one she loved. She would make it through this night and perhaps even learn to become her own sun.

* Quote from “Demain dès l’aubes” by Victor Hugo
“Sacré Coeur” Lillian Sickler
TEMAN SEJATI

By Zach Imran

Wahai sahabatku
Bermula dengan perkenalan singkat akhirnya kita menjadi rapat
Ikatan persahabatan kita simpulkan, seperti tiada apa yang perlu difikirkan
Pabila bersama, kita ketawa, kita menangis, kita meneroka dunia yang tiada penghujungnya
Apabila bersama kau, aku menjadi aku
Jauh di sudut hatiku, kuharapkan persahabatan ini tiada penghujungnya

Wahai temanku
Kau menceriakanku pabila ku bersedih
Kau sentiasa bersamaku pabila dunia melawanku
Kau ukirkan senyuman di wajahku di saat aku kusut
Kau sentiasa ada di waktu aku senang dan susah
Bagiku, kewujudan kau di sisi ku adalah satu keajaiban

Tapi kini
Kita sudah berpisah
Kau jauh di utara, meninggalkan aku di selatan
Kau sedang memburu impian kau, begitu juga dengan diriku
Ikatan persahabatan kita tidak lagi seperti dahulu
Namun kuharapkan tiada apa akan mengubahnya

Wahai rakanku
Aku hanya ingin kau tahu
Aku akan sentiasa di sini tanpa meninggalkan kau
Kuharapkan aku masih dalam ingatanmu meskipun kau menemui pengganti diriku
Kumohon, jangan pernah kau ungkapkan ucapan selamat tinggal untukku Kerana bagiku, ia bermaksud kau pergi meninggalkan aku...seorang diri.
FRIEND

Dear buddy
Starting from stranger and turn up to be closer
Built up a friendship, without thinking about others
Together we would laugh, together we would cry
Together we would treasure the never-ending sky
In front of you, I'd never shy
Forever, the friendship will never die

Dear companion
You lift me up when I feel down
You stand with me when millions against me
You put a smile on my face when I wear a frown
You're always there through thick and thin
It is so miracle to have you beside me

Now
We are already far apart
You're in the north and I'm in the south
You're on your way to hunt your dream, so do I
The friendship is no longer as warm as the first time we met
But I hope our friendship will never expire

Dear friend
I just want you to know
I'll always be here for you and never leave you
And I hope that you will not forget me, if you have find a new 'me'
Please, don't you ever say goodbye to me
To me, it means you want to leave me... alone.
“Tent in the Palisades” Alexander Libenson
Smiling Rain
By Sana Gilani

Whenever it rains
I look up to see the drops fall
Down
Down
Down
Lighting up my smiling face
These drops
Ispod Površine
By Sylvie Gallagher

Pod kontrolom—
Zaključana i ne zaboravljena,
Ispod površine i
Horizonta, osjeti treperenje sunca,
Osjeti kako se boji da izlazi.

Pod kontrolom—
A ispod kože nešto gmiže—
Pod nebom,
Kiša i vjetar bez vezanje—

Pod kontrolom—
Gubim zrak, gubim vid
Pod vodom—
Samo padam dalje, sve ide crno,
Potonula sam, više se ne vraćam.

Kontrola je ispod svega—
Utopljena pod površinu
U mraku, izvan vida
Izvan uma—
izvan sebe—

Dok ne naučim disati.
Dok ne otvorim oči.
Going Under

Under control—
Locked down, accounted for,
under the surface and
horizon, feel the shivering sun,
Feel its fear of rising.

Under control—
A crawling beneath the skin,
Under the weather,
Rain and wind without tether—

Under control—
Losing air, losing sight,
Under water—
Falling deeper, going black,
Sinking down, not going back.

The control is under—
Drowned beneath the surface
In the dark, out of sight,
Out of mind—
Out of my mind—

Until I learn to breathe.
Until I open my eyes.
“Steep the Stump” Owen Nash
### Bangla Kobita

By Fabeeha Khan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bengali</th>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>তার চোখের জল কেউ জানেনা</td>
<td>Tar chokher jol, keo janena</td>
<td>(Her tears, no one knows)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>তার কাহনা কেউ শুনতে পারেনা</td>
<td>Tar kahna, keo shunte parena</td>
<td>(Her cries, no one can hear)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>তার বাথা কাউকে দেখতে দেয় না</td>
<td>Tar batha, kaoke dekta daina</td>
<td>(Her pain, she lets no one see)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>তারখাওয়াও সে আর খায়না</td>
<td>Tar khawah she ar khaina</td>
<td>(Her food, she no longer eats)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>সারাদিনে সে করে আর করে</td>
<td>Sharadeen she kore ar kor</td>
<td>(The whole day, she works and works)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>বাতায় সে জড়ায় ধরে</td>
<td>Bathai she jorai dhore</td>
<td>(From pain, she holds on dearly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>তার চোখের পানি পরে আর পরে</td>
<td>Tar choker pani, pore ar pore</td>
<td>(Her tears keep falling and falling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>এইটি তার জীবনে সে মরে আর মরে</td>
<td>Eitai jeebon, she mohre ar mohre</td>
<td>(This is her life, she dies and dies)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27 mOthertongue
a multilingual
journal
De La Mort
By Linden Bittenson

Toujours je vous vois en dansant,
dans le désert
sous le soleil
loin de la lune.
Où est-ce que vous me voyez?

Je vois en vous un feu doré,
brillant dans vos yeux,
brûlant dans vos sourires,
dansant dans vos rires.
Que voyez-vous en moi?

أنا ذهبية كالشمس،
أما أنت، فتكون كالقمر:
Quand je vous vois, je me sens...
attirée, mais repoussée
terrifiée, mais confortée
désirée, mais détestée.
Que sentez-vous à me voir?

Nous sommes si différentes,
opposées,
complémentaires,
dissidentes;
comment pourrions-nous nous entendre?

نحن مختلفات جدًا؛

أشعر بوحدة وحزن كبيرة
لأن موسيقاك جميلة
لكن على الرغم من محاولاتي،
لا أستطيع أن أغنيها معك.
30 mOthertongue
a multilingual journal

Vous dansez autour de moi
Dans la nuit, sous la lune
La danse de la vie...

Je ne joue que pour vous.

Est-ce que vous m'aimez?

Toujours.

لا أعرف إذا كان من الممكن
أن أفهم ما هي حياة الموت.
ولكن أفهمك، تفهميني، نفهمنا.

تعزفين بجانب اليوني
في اليوم، تحت الشمس
موسيقى الموت...
لا أرقص الا لك.

هل تحبيني؟

نعم.
From Death to Life

I see you always dancing,
in the desert,
under the sun,
far from the moon.
Where do you see me?

I find you playing your violin,
throughout the world, throughout the day.
All hear your song,
and travel to you as dancers.

I see in you a golden flame,
shining in your eyes,
burning in your smile,
dancing in your laughter.
What do you see in me?

I am golden as the sun,
while you are as the moon:
bright in the dark night.
But I see blood-red in your eyes.

When I see you, I feel...
pulled, but pushed
scared, but safe
desired, but detested.
What do you feel when you see me?

I feel a great loneliness and sadness,
for your music is beautiful, 
but no matter how I try,  
I cannot sing it with you.

We are so different, 
opposite, 
complementary, 
dissent.
How could we ever understand each other?

We are very different;  
I do not know if it is possible  
for me to understand the life of death.
But I understand you, you understand me, we understand us.

You dance around me

You play beside me 
in the day, under the sun.

At night, under the moon.
The dance of life...

The music of death...  
I only dance for you.

Do you love me? Do you love me?

Yes.
Always.
"Glacier Lake at Swiftcurrent" Alexander Libenson
有其父必有其子
By Jason Zhuo

天空有明朗的橙色，使云彩背叛了他们的真面目。黑鸟看起来像阴影，对比晚上在高空翱翔时的颜色。停着的汽车闪闪发光，反射出太阳昏暗的光线，而棕榈树正在等待夜晚的黑夜融合他们的颜色。一群萤火虫正在移动，在学校操场上以一种谐波模式点亮。随着足球向风的方向滚动，男孩的头发随着微风跳舞。他追逐它，得到它，并开始回家。

在远处，男孩听到他的朋友大喊，“老兄，明天让我们复赛。” 男孩挥手告别，并用他的胖乎乎的手作出和平标志。他继续走路回家，直到他突然停下来看到一只狗。 “呃哦，”他自言自语道。在被一只狗疯狂追逐后，他不想与街头赌博，并查明该狗是否友善。 “他妈的，我要绕着这条街走另一条路，”他闷闷不乐地喃喃道。他走路走路，突然间，他突然停下来看到另一只动物。这是一只猫。 “操我，”他自言自语道。 “首先是一只狗，现在是一只猫？”在被一只猫疯狂追逐后，他不想与街头赌博，并查明该猫是否友善。他又一次嘟嘟，着：“干这个，我要绕着这条街走另一条路。”当他到达家门口时，夜晚已经占据了天空。

男孩走出门廊向下看。关键通常隐藏在地毯上，说：“说不要地毯”。他打开门，翻开它。他的下巴看到他父亲的背影。
“爸爸？”孩子说。
“是我。儿子，今天学校怎么样？”，他的爸爸回答。
“你没事吧？你没注意到吗？
“是的，一切都很好，我正要做饭，有什么不对吗？
“呃，是吗？你的背上到底是什么东西？”

他的父亲起身走到浴室非常缓慢。他的背部sl，不动，他的啤酒肚从他的衬衫上溢出来。他的父亲试图进入浴室照镜子，但他不能。他的灵活性几乎全部消失了。他甚至不能扭动身体看镜子里的背部。小孩脸上掌了一下，拍了一张父亲的背影。他向他的父亲展示了这幅画。
父亲尖叫，“这到底是什么？
“打我，”孩子回答。
“为什么背上有一个石背包？
男孩叹了口气，“这就是我想问你的事情，它是如何粘在你身上的？
“我不知道，今天早上我离开工作之前，我确信我的背部没有这个东西，我觉得它太轻了，我甚至都没有注意到它在我的背上。”

父亲慢慢地回到厨房。他坐下。他打破了椅子。他和背包的重量对于椅子来说太重了。
“哎呀，”他喃喃道。

背包甚至没有绑带。它似乎是从他父亲的背上冒出来的，正在压制他。他的父亲足够坚强，可以缓慢移动，背部额外的重量。
男孩立即上电脑，搜索“背部石背包”。只有一个结果出现。他点击该网站，电脑屏幕变成蓝色。然后在屏幕上弹出白色打印的电话号码。

男孩拿出家里的电话，拨打由网站给他的“999”开头的电话号码。一位老太太在第一句后接了起来。
“你好，你知道什么关于石背包？”，男孩紧张地问。
“你的父亲想变得更快，”她回答。

她挂断电话，让男孩挠着头试图弄清楚她的意思。男孩下楼去检查他的父亲。

父亲看到男孩说：“我忘了提到我今天早上上班迟到时从一位老太太那里递了一个水果，她给了我一个紫色的蜻蜓，并告诉我我可以跑得更快，如果我吃了它，工作。“

这个男孩在互联网上读到神奇的水果。据说他们会授予吃它的人超级力量。据说这种神奇的树只生长在海洋深处。它每千年只有两个水果。它们看起来像外面的龙涎香，但像里面的猕猴桃。

“你吃的水果不是你的，它有什么味道？”男孩问。

“它尝起来像鸡，”父亲说。

“我一定在做梦，这太奇怪了，不能成为现实，我要去睡觉，”男孩惊叹道。

第二天早上，这个男孩比他平时上学的时间晚。穿好衣服后，他直接冲出房子。他跑得全速，准时上学。他的朋友与他进行了目光接触，
并大声说：“该死的，你准时赶到了你，幸运的人，你准备好了以后再复赛吗？”男孩气喘吁吁地说：“是的，我今天又要踢足球了。”

这个男孩和他的朋友在同一个学校操场上复赛。他们在整个操场上下跑动，强烈地踢足球比赛。他们都在对方打进多个进球，但这位朋友此次赢得了两场额外的进球。这个男孩在他的呼吸下喘，着，“只要我能变得更快”，他擦掉脸上的汗水。然后从他的眼角，他看到一位老太太手里拿着一个紫色的物体向他走来。
Like Father Like Son

The sky is bright orange, making the clouds betray their true colors. The black birds look like shadows, contrasting the colors of the evening as they soar high up in the sky. The parked cars are glistening and reflecting the last of the sun's dim light while the palm trees are waiting to merge their colors with the dark of the night. Swarms of fireflies are on the move, lighting up in a harmonic pattern in the school playground. The boy's hair dances with the breeze as the soccer ball rolls away in the direction of the wind. He chases after it, gets it, and starts to head home.

In the distance the boy hears his friend shout, "Dude, let's have a rematch tomorrow." The boy waves goodbye and makes a peace sign with his chubby hands. He continues to walk home, until he gets abruptly stopped by the sight of a dog. "Uh oh," he thinks to himself. After being furiously chased by a dog once, he doesn't want to gamble with the streets and find out whether that dog is friendly or not. "Fuck this, I'm going to take another route around this street," he mumbles under his breath. He walks and walks until, suddenly, he gets abruptly stopped by the sight of another animal. This time it was a cat. "Fuck me," he thinks to himself. "First a dog, and now a cat?" After being furiously chased by a cat once, he doesn't want to gamble with the streets and find out whether that cat is friendly or not. Once again, he mumbles, "Fuck this, I'm going to take another route around this street." By the time he reaches his doorstep, the night has already taken over the sky.
The boy walks up the porch and looks down. The key is usually hidden under the rug that says, "Say No To Rugs". He unlocks the door and flips it open. His jaw drops at the sight of his father's back.
"Pops?" says the kid.
"Yeah son, how was school today?", replies his father.
"Are you ok? Do you not notice it?"
"Yeah, everything is ok. I'm about to cook dinner. Is anything wrong?"
"Uhm, yes? What the hell is that on your back?"

His father gets up and walks very slowly to the bathroom. His back is slouched, his beer belly is spilling out of his dress shirt. His father tries to go into the bathroom to look in the mirror but he can't. His flexibility is almost all gone. He can't even twist his body to look at his back in the mirror. The kid face-palms himself and takes a picture of his father's back. He shows the picture to his father. The father screams, "What the hell is this?"
"Beats me," the kid replies.
"Why is there a stone backpack attached to my back?"
The boy sighs, "That's what I want to ask you! How is it sticking onto you?"
"I don't know, I'm sure I didn't have this on my back before I left for work this morning. I feel like it is so light that I don't even notice it on my back."

The father slowly moves back to the kitchen. He sits down. He breaks the chair. The weight of him and the backpack together is too heavy for the chair.
"Oops," he mumbles.

The backpack doesn't even have straps. It seems like it grew out of his father's back and is weighing him down. His father is somehow strong enough to move around slowly with the extra weight on his back.

The boy immediately goes on his computer and searches "Stone backpack on back." Only one result comes up. He clicks on the website and the computer screen turns blue. Then a phone number in white print pops up on the screen. The boy takes out the house phone and dials the phone number starting with "999" given to him by the website. An old lady picks up after the first ring.

"Hello, do you know anything about stone backpacks?," the boy asks nervously.

"Your father wanted to become faster," she responds.

She hangs up and leaves the boy scratching his head trying to figure out what she had meant. The boy goes downstairs to check up on his father.

The father sees the boy and says, "I forgot to mention that I was handed a fruit from an old lady this morning when I was running late for work. She gave me a purple dragonfruit and told me I would be able to run faster to work if I ate it."

The boy reads about the magical fruit on the internet. They are said to grant the person who eats it a super power. The magical tree is said to only grow in the deepest pits of the ocean. It only bears two fruits every thousand years. They look like dragonfruit on the outside, but like kiwi on the inside.
"You ate the fruit didn't you. What did it taste like?" the boy asks. "It tasted like chicken," says the father. "I must be dreaming, this is too weird to be reality. I'm going to sleep," the boy exclaims.

The next morning, the boy wakes up later than he normally does for school. He rushes straight out of the house after getting dressed. He runs at full speed and makes it to school just on time. His friend makes eye contact with him and yells, "Damn, you made it just on time you lucky guy. Are you ready for our rematch later?" Panting and gasping for air, the boy replies, "Yeah, and I am going to kick your ass again in soccer today."

The boy and his friend have the rematch in the same school playground. They run up and down the whole playground, intensely playing their game of soccer. They both score multiple goals on each other, but the friend wins the game this time with two extra goals. The boy mumbles under his breath, "If only I could become faster," as he wipes the sweat off of his face. Then from the corner of his eyes, he sees an old lady approaching him with a purple object in her hand.