

Love, Loss, and What I Wore

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In my home country of South Korea, the so-called *Hanbok* is a traditional dress that is of such cultural importance that we start being exposed to it as toddlers: As Korean children turn one, parents, family, and friends come together to celebrate the *Doll* party where the baby is dressed in its first *Hanbok*. I was being held a *Doll* party as well but unfortunately not dressed in a *Hanbok* but a *Jeogori*, which is a kind of jumpsuit often used as an inexpensive alternative to the latter. The drawing below shows myself in my snow-white *Jeogori*.



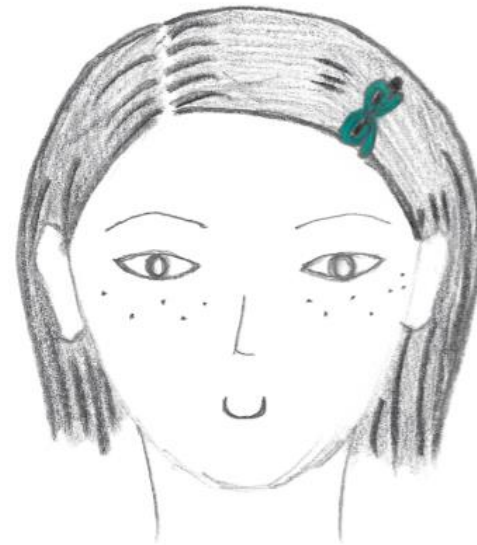
A Korean *Hanbok* is made of two parts, the *Jeogori*, the top part which is not to be confused with the jumpsuit *Jeogori* for toddlers introduced above, and the *Chima*, the bottom part. I finally received my first *Hanbok* at the age of seven on the occasion of Korean New Year also known as Moon New Year, a three-day holiday in January or February. Both, the *Jeogori* and *Chima* were made of brightly violet silk with turquoise collars and cuffs. Frequently, the *Chima* is ornamented with embroideries of flowers or butterflies.



When I was graduating from elementary school and supposed to be given an honorary present from the principal, I planned to wear one of my most favorite dresses; unfortunately, it was winter and my mother “convinced” me to wear a warm yet extremely ugly brown antique overall with a white long sleeve shirt and a black long padding jumper. I had a very hard time smiling when I was being handed my present.



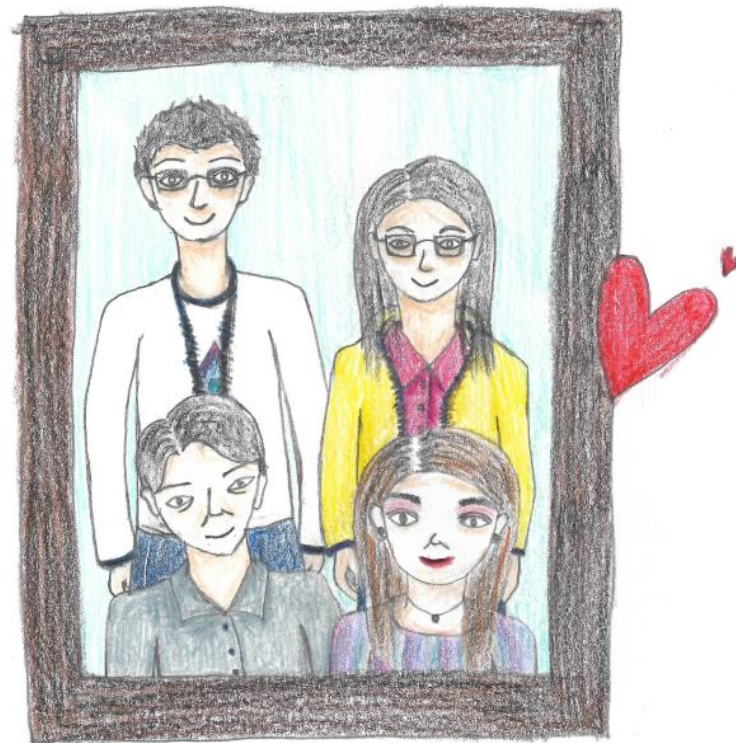
At the age of fifteen I was in my second year of middle school and struggled with the conservative educational system in South Korea. Most importantly, there was a requirement for girls to not dye their hair and not have it grow below the chin. Below, you can see myself with the black, bobbed hair I had at the time; however, I also wear a sky-blue ribbon hair pin, which was one of the small accessories that I confidently wore whenever I was not in school to demonstrate my discontent with the strict rules. More specifically, I remember wearing the ribbon during a family trip to one of the highest mountains in Korea.



Upon entering high school, I was excited to be getting to wear my school's uniform, which was known to be prettiest among all high schools in my hometown of Tong Yeong. It consisted of a white long-sleeve blouse, a dark navy-blue skirt, a dark-grey patterned vest, and a grey jacket. Also notice how my hair is longer now as it was in middle school as there were no restrictions with respect to its length in high school; still, I was content with my hairstyle at the time because my parents didn't allow me to straighten and dye my hair.



As I was finishing up high school, I remember a nice spring day during which my parents took my brother and I to a family photo shooting. It was the first time I wore make-up (lip gloss) and also the first time I was able to negotiate a tradeoff with my mother about what to wear for such a special occasion: We settled on a watermelon (deep and bright pink) blouse with neck collar and dark, khaki gold buttons, a bright indigo blue denim jeans, and a bright yellow hoody jumper that had navy blue zippers and cuffs. My brother was not able to negotiate as well and ended up with a white blouson with navy zippers, neckline, and cuffs that he utterly hated and indigo blue denim jeans. The family photo shoot was also the first occasion outside of school during which I wore my glasses as my eyesight started to get worse and worse.



One of the most stressful episodes of my life was right before starting college when I had to take the Korean version of the SAT. When I was done, I rewarded myself with a new hairstyle and finally dyed it black with orange highlights. Since I also had a blind date lining up at the time, I was able to test out the haircut in combination with an outfit.: I wore a dark-pink hoodie short padding and indigo-blue jeans. I must have made a good job with my hair and outfit as I'm still friends with that blind date today.





Soon after the blind date I entered university and went to the opening ceremony that included a dinner with fellow freshmen, seniors, and professor of my department. Obviously, I wanted to make a good first impression I spend a lot of time in front of the mirror and remember my outfit until this day. I opted for a thin, red long-sleeve sweater, a short, pleated wool skirt with transparent, black stockings, and black loafers. My make-up was discreet with lip-gloss, filled-in eyebrows as well as a little blusher and BB cream. What you can't see on the drawing below is that my outfit was actually way too cold for the day. It made me realize that although I was not always happy with my mother's ideas on outfits as a kid, she at least did a good job at keeping my feet warm; still, I prefer choosing my outfits independently.



All young South Korean males, excluding those that win gold medals during Olympic games or similar competitions, have to do universal compulsory military service for two years. When it was my brother's turn and he decided to enlist in the Navy, my family and I accompanied him to *Jinhae*, the city where the navy was located, for his first day. At that point, he already cut his hair to fit the Navy's standards. His haircut is stuck in my memory until today not because it was rather ugly but because I associate it with on one the rare occasions during which my parents, my brother, and I were crying together.



While my brother had to serve in the military, I enjoyed the perks of being a female and moved to Paris to study art (oil painting) and fashion. When I took on my new glasses, which resembled the ones that Harry Potter wears, and went for the airport I was extremely happy, just to realize a few moments later that this would be one more of the occasions where my whole family and I were going to cry.



