

Lifelong Friend, 평생 친구
by Elani Spencer

Art lives within the fibers of our cities,
Wonju and Roanoke,
connecting us like spider silk.

In Roanoke, giant puppets march down
Campbell and Jefferson.
Bluegrass music bubbles up
from coffeehouses.
Spices waft from the kitchens
of family-owned restaurants.
Artists spill from galleries
onto moonlit sidewalk mosaics.

In Wonju, painted cats leap off
walls of art markets.
Glowing rainbow lanterns swing
from the trellises of bridges.
Dancers in red hanboks glide
across outdoor amphitheaters.
Visitors wander through stone
and sculpture gardens blooming
with mulberry trees.

Imagine what we can create together
when our palms remain open,
celebrating one another atop mirrored
mountain peaks 7,000 miles away.

Our stories merged in 1964,
this lifelong friendship
like the most precious Hanji paper,
hand-crafted from fresh straw
and smoky sesame, inked in black.
Our children's dreams and hopes: new chapters,

new layers to be brushed on and preserved.

Our cities' stories dry in the sun,
sealing our bond for the next generation.