I join movement to fightin me yeoman lineage . . .
Listen to achim song . . . woodcut fists lignified
de crowd . . . I fight mine legacy, mine curse
dat pulsed en me aorta to say no . . .

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ENGLISH

Mine gor-belly fadder a mout-ratling but somatime
he plant poily bromide in me cranial: pep gems dat echo
me mind chamber time y time—ahar, ahar,
him saith,

my hut was trampled by American troops,
who turned over barrel wads of cabbages, sticky
red pepper puddles, they spilled everything out

Big booted potato finga'd giants cockim guns
en him ear cos tink he Commie spy. Big error
but all he kaim say? Sehju yuseyo!
Gibberish to dim ears! Ahar, him saith,

But then I recognized their translator,
an old school chum. I begged him,
"You know me, why are they doing this?"
He recognized me and took the Officer aside,

and whispered to him in English.
Like a miracle, they rested their guns and walked out the door.

Me fadder sees dis y decide to learn English righteo dere.
Become a Jees cucking stool fo means o survival
me lineage biggum on survival.
'E tell me dis pep gem:

Note from the Historian
The guide's grandfather was one of the better known chinsa or pro-Japanese
collaborators during Japan's colonization of Korea (1910–1945). He was
trained as one of the "butchers," amateur guards who rooted out and murdered
underground Korean nationalists. But he had a weak stomach and fainted
whenever he was near a gutted corpse. So then he made his living selling tips
to Japanese officials on the whereabouts of "governments in exile."
You can be the best talker but no point if you can't speak the other man's tongue. You can't chisel, con, plead, seduce, beg for your life, you can't do anything, because you know not their language. So learn them all.

EXCERPT FROM THE HISTORIAN'S MEMOIR

When I was ten, my father traveled halfway across the globe to help me move in to boarding school. During layover, we sat together in the silent cavity of the airport food court. He swallowed his medication, rasped a sip of his coffee, and then he sighed. He had something important to tell me. I leaned in and he began. When he was young, he could not afford the proper hygiene to care for his teeth. His teeth were so rotten, he had them capped. But he knew that beneath the white enamel sheath, his real teeth hibernated, crooked and stained. He sighed. He feels the deepest shame because of this. He waited for me to respond and when I didn’t, he continued. Now that he wasn’t around, he coughed and began again. Now that he wasn’t around, it is vital that I am responsible for my teeth. He told me of a device called a Water Pik. It has a spigot that squirts a thin pressurized stream of water against your teeth. It acts as a floss but it is more thorough than the (he struggled here for the right word) string floss. He will order me one and have it sent to me immediately. Use it at least three times a day. He gently gripped my arm and added, please.