I was born in 1997 in the countryside of Korea. I was raised at my grandmother’s home because my parents could not afford to rent their own place. However, this was a common story for everyone.

In 1997, the Korean economy collapsed and countless people lost jobs as companies declared bankruptcy. The government was unable to control the damage and turned to the IMF for financial aids. Hence, it was coined as the “IMF Crisis” in Korea. Lives and dreams were destroyed. In 1998, a year after the initial shock, the suicide rate skyrocketed by 42% compared to the previous year. My father was studying abroad in Queens, NY. The money he was receiving from Korea was worthless as the exchange rate plummeted. He immediately headed to the local laundromat for a job. My mother relied on tutoring English at home.

When my father returned from America, he found a job at an insurance company. He always left to work before I would wake up, and return home when I was asleep. After several years, we moved to Seoul. Within the town we lived in, we moved almost annually. At the time, I did not realize that we were moving because the landlord raised rent, which we could not afford to pay.