

The Waiting Room

Copyright © 2021 Kate Choi

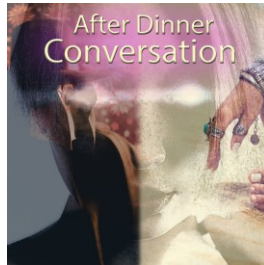
All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, organizations, places, events and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Book design, cover design, and discussion questions by After Dinner Conversation

First Edition: January 2021

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



Monthly Magazine

Sign up to receive our [monthly magazine](#) with exclusive short stories!

Podcasts

Listen to our lively short story [podcast](#) discussions!

The Waiting Room

After Dinner Conversation Series

* * *

Overhead the lights hummed. They were bright and fluorescent, and they reflected off the clean white walls of the waiting room to produce the unsettling effect of being folded away inside a sheet of paper. Cross-legged on the floor by the door, the boy squinted against the glare and tapped his fingers together—one, two, three, one, two, three. Across from him, a man sat on a long low bench, his knees pointed at awkward angles. As the boy watched, the man put a pen to a sheet of paper, scribbled slowly, and looked at what he'd written. Then suddenly, violently, he crossed it out. He started over. The cycle repeated itself twice before the writer flung down his pen and put his head in his hands, the pen rolling away beneath him. Across the room, the boy watched. His fingers tapped—one, two, three, two, two, three.

Finally the silence became too much. "So, I'm waiting,

you're waiting," the boy said. "What are you here for?" For a moment the writer didn't move, and the boy thought he may not have heard. But then the man shifted his hands and spoke through them.

"What are *you* here for?" he grunted by way of response.

"I'm here to get a new Dream," the boy said. The writer nodded. He looked down and picked up his pen, but made no move to write.

The boy waited, but when nothing more came he prompted, "And you're here to..."

The writer jerked. He had forgotten that the boy was there. After a moment, he said, "I'm here to get back an old one."

The boy nodded slowly, though he had to fight the urge to raise his eyebrows. "Why'd you give it up?"

"Sorry?"

"Your old Dream. Why'd you give it up?"

"Why are you giving *yours* up?" the writer retorted, irritated.

But the boy just looked down at his fingers—tap, tap, tap—and said, "I ran out of chances."

The writer didn't scowl at that, but nodded. He, too, had run out of chances. He looked at his crumpled paper, tried to smooth it out on his knee, and scribbled again. He stared at what he'd written.

"You didn't answer me," the boy said, cutting into his thoughts. He shifted; the hard floor was painful to sit on. "Why'd you give it up?"

For a moment the writer looked as though he was debating whether to answer. At last he said, tersely, "It was foolish."

"But it isn't foolish now?"

"No. It's still foolish." The writer stared at his page, mouthed a sentence, then abruptly struck out the words again, drawing a furious scrawl of lines over the writing. "But all I have left now is foolish."

As the boy opened his mouth to reply (though he wasn't sure what he meant to say), a sudden commotion outside the room made both of them look up at the closed door. A few muffled shouts, one or two alarming thuds, and the door was abruptly wrenched open and a woman thrust inside, her hair a wild flurry of bright red and her body long and too tall. She turned back with a cry, but the door had shut as quickly as it had opened, and everyone in the room knew without trying that it was already locked. The newcomer pulled at the handle anyway, and when that failed, she pounded on the door and yelled. "Get me out of here! Come back! I'm not meant to be here. Come back!"

"It's no use," said the boy, still sitting by the wall, and the woman started and looked at him, only just noticing that she wasn't alone. "They won't come until they call for you."

"But they have to—come back. I'm not meant to be here," she said again, this time to him, but he only shook his head.

"If you're here, you're meant to be here," he said.

"But I don't *need* a new Dream."

"If you're here, you must." He added, his face soft and his fingers still lightly tapping, "It's okay if you don't realize it yet. You'll

see, soon enough. We're lucky that they're taking care of us—they always know what's best."

"No, they don't," she said, her hands clenched at her sides. Her hair formed a harsh red halo under the fluorescent lights. "I don't need a new Dream. I don't *want* a new Dream." She smelled like flowers, like petunias. The writer hated the smell of petunias; he had once known it too well, before he became tired and lost all of his chances—before he had been foolish, he had been like her, like this woman and her petunias. His mother had smelled of petunias, too. Her Dream, like that of many before her, had been to invent a medicine to cure cancer... but she had worked too hard, failed like all the others, and when she died, even at the funeral where there were only lilies, the air had reeked of petunias.

For the first time since the woman had entered, the writer spoke. "It doesn't work that way." His voice was toneless, though, recitative.

That made the woman angry, not placated. "It doesn't work that way! Of course it doesn't. That's not how *they* operate. That's not how they do it."

After a moment, the boy said, "What do you mean?"

Instead of answering, she looked around—at the white, white space, at the bench, at the poster on the wall with the words, "Dreams drive us!" in bright, big letters. "They're giving me a new Dream. I can't believe this. They're giving me a new Dream."

"You mustn't have been successful," said the writer. "What could you expect, if you weren't successful?"

She sighed. "I've always been successful."

“Always?” said the boy disbelievingly.

“I needed the Benefits, the Reductions. I had to be successful.”

“You speak like it’s been more than once.”

“Five times.” She looked at her fingers, counted them as she counted her Dreams. “I’ve been reassigned five times.”

“Then you must not have been successful,” said the boy.

“I was successful. I was always successful.”

“Then what?”

She was quiet for a moment. “I reapplied. I changed them.”

“But if you were successful—”

“I didn’t want them,” she snapped, and ran her hands through her hair, making the ends stick up and the smell of petunias stronger. “I wanted this one. The other ones... I was an accountant once. A successful one. But I was overworking myself, I was too successful. So I started going on walks. I went walking around the city. They reassigned me then, kept reassigning me. Do you go on walks?” She looked at the boy, the writer, but neither replied. “They’re beautiful. Or they should be, but they’re all mixed up. Hardly anyone who should care cares enough to make the places beautiful—only *they* really Dream, see, it’s all theirs in the first place, not ours. So the places are ugly but the spaces are beautiful. It should be the other way around at least.”

Neither of the others understood. The boy asked, finally, if only to interrupt the silence that had followed, what her Dream was now.

“I’m a florist,” she told them. “I sell flowers.”

“You must not be successful,” said the writer again.

“I was happy,” she said. “The flowers were mine, and they were beautiful. No one else could interfere with them being beautiful.”

“Were you successful?” asked the boy, confused.

She almost tried again, but only shook her head—not in answer to the question, but to say it did not matter. “I sell flowers,” she repeated, softly, to herself.

“Sold,” the boy corrected. “You won’t be a florist for much longer.”

“No,” she said, her voice dangerously quiet and angry. “No, I will be. It’s my Dream. They can’t take it away from me!”

“Of course they can,” the writer said tiredly. “They gave it to you, didn’t they?”

“But they can’t take it away! I was happy! I was happy!”

“If you were happy but you weren’t successful, then it must not have been the right Dream,” the boy reminded her gently. “Mine wasn’t. I ran out of chances. So I’m here to be reassigned.”

She wheeled on him. “But were you happy?”

Across the room the writer was writing, almost without realizing it, “I was happy... I was happy” on his sheet of paper. When he saw what he was writing he stared at the page in consternation.

The boy said, “I had to be successful to be happy.”

The writer interrupted. He recited the poster above him, without really meaning to: “Dreams drive us.”

“Drive us *where*?” cried the woman, exasperated. “Drive us

where?”

“Towards a better future,” said the boy, as if it were obvious. It was.

“And what’s that?” she asked, as if she genuinely did not know, but she did. She knew what it should be, but not what it really would. Neither of the others bothered to answer.

After a pause she spoke again—she seemed unable to stay silent, or still, her fingers twitching, her whole body stiff and expression still disbelieving, as if she were in a trance. “You know what I think? I don’t think it’s ours, any of ours.” Before either of her companions could register her words, she turned to the boy again. “What’s *your* Dream?” she demanded.

Taken aback, the boy stammered, “To—to be a pianist.”

“You had to be a successful pianist?” she said, and her tone—it was almost a scoff—made the boy flare up defensively.

“What’s wrong with that?” he demanded harshly. She only laughed, but it was a brittle sound.

“Yes, indeed. *What’s wrong with that?* Ask them. They’re the ones who made you come to be reassigned, aren’t they?”

“No, I came myself,” the boy said staunchly, coldly. “I ran out of chances. I know when it’s time to move on.”

“Do you, now? And I wonder why. Tell me, who gives you those chances? What was it—failed competitions, lost prizes, empty auditoriums? The lack of applause from all of the rest of us standing around with our own empty, *driving* Dreams?” Her voice was full of scorn and the boy said nothing, his expression frozen stonily on his face. His fingers had stopped tapping. “Sweetie, *they*

give you the chances and when they don't like you they take them from you. They don't need another pianist. They need doctors or builders. Artists... flowers... they've had *enough*."

The boy's face had hardened as much as it possibly could, and from behind that stony exterior he unfroze long enough to say, stubbornly, "It's for the greater good."

"But it's not. It's *not*! They get the success, the money—"

"So do we!" cried the boy. "We just have to find the right Dream—be successful."

"The right Dream! And have it stolen away from us when they don't like it anymore? No more flowers—no more pianists—when we work ourselves to death for the stupid Dreams that aren't even *ours*—"

The writer froze, stopped writing. The boy cried, "You don't know what you're saying. Stop it, it's not right!"

Before she could reply, the writer spoke from the other side of the room, addressing the woman. "Don't say things like that. Don't go around saying mad things like that."

"And *you*!" she exclaimed, turning now on him. "What are *you*, again? What's *your* failed Dream?"

He said nothing, but his pen twitched in his fingers, and she saw. "A writer, then," she said. "What kind of writer? A screenwriter? A poet? I bet you're a poet."

"I was, once," he said, in a voice as stubborn as the boy's. The boy looked up and asked, with interest, "Is that the Dream you want back?"

He said nothing, but that was only confirmation for the

woman, who laughed again. “Another failed artist! And you want it back? That’s foolish. They’ll never give it back. Not for a poet.”

“All I have left now is foolish,” the writer said again. For the first time the woman seemed to understand; her face softened.

“That’s right: all we have left now is foolish. Foolish for leaving behind our foolish dreams for foolish following to foolish ends. My God! How I’d love not to be a follower for a day!” The silence was broken by a loud, sharp buzz in the ceiling that made them all jump and look at the door. “Number 52130, please exit for resignation. Number 52130, please exit for resignation. Remember, Dreams drive us!” A click from the door told them it had been unlocked, and it opened, revealing two stony-faced impassive men in black standing in a stretching corridor of white, white, white. The woman looked at them, no longer fighting but exhausted. “My God,” she said softly, and left. When the door shut behind her with the same buzz and click the boy and the writer looked at each other but said nothing. The writer looked down at the paper in his hands and saw the words he had written. *I was happy... I was happy.*

He stared at them in the silence of the humming white fluorescent lights and then he tore them up, dropping tiny fluttering pieces of inky paper to the floor, like a rain of soot and ash. Across the room, the boy tapped his fingers—one, two, three, one, two, three. The silence regrew. Finally, the boy spoke.

“So,” the boy said. “I’m waiting. You’re waiting. What are you here for?”

* * *

Discussion Questions

1. Is it important that you be successful in your dream, in order for your dream to be a success? Or, can you be successful in a dream that you will never be particularly good at?
2. Many of the characters in the story are emotionally attached to their current dreams and don't want to give them up, why do you think that is? If they had been given a different dream would they be emotionally attached to that other one instead?
3. The poster in the waiting room says, "Dreams drive us!" Do you agree with this statement? Where do you think dreams that drive us come from?
4. What is your dream? If you could change it to a dream you would be more successful in pursuing, would you?
5. Is it selfish to follow a failed dream if following a dream you would be successful at would be more helpful to society? For example, is it selfish for a talented (*but unhappy*) surgeon to quit medicine and take up (*mediocre*) painting?

* * *

Listen to these and other questions discussed on the "After Dinner Conversation" [podcast](#).

Additional Information

More Stories!

For \$1.95/month, receive our [monthly magazine](#), complete with all our newest short stories! Or, join our [newsletter list](#) and receive periodic links to free short stories from After Dinner Conversation.

Reviews

If you enjoyed reading this story, please considering doing an online Amazon review. It's only a few seconds of your time, but it is very important in continuing the series. Good reviews mean higher rankings. Higher rankings mean more sales. More sales mean a greater ability to release stories. It really is that simple, and it starts with you.

Podcasts

Listen to our podcast discussion of After Dinner short stories wherever [podcasts](#) are played. Or, if you prefer, watch the podcasts on our [YouTube](#) channel or download the .mp3 file from our [website](#).

Patreon

Get exclusive early access to short stories and ad-free podcasts, as well as the ability to vote on what stories are selected for podcast discussions, by supporting us on [Patreon](#) for \$5/month.

Book Clubs

Check out our short stories curated by genre, free for “[book clubs](#)” to download and discuss, complete with discussion questions. Or join our bi-weekly “virtual book club” discussions in our closed [Facebook Group](#).

Social

Find us on [Facebook](#), [Youtube](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

From the Publisher

After Dinner Conversation believes humanity is improved by *ethics* and *morals* grounded in philosophical truth. Philosophical truth is discovered through intentional reflection and respectful debate. In order to facilitate that process, we have a growing series of [short story](#), [magazine](#), and [podcast](#) discussions, across genres, as accessible examples of abstract ethical and philosophical ideas intended to draw out deeper discussions with students, friends, and family.

* * *

Enjoy this short story? Download our anthologies, After Dinner Conversation "[Season One](#)," "[Season Two](#)," or "[Season Three](#)." They are both collections of our best short stories published in the After Dinner Conversation series complete with discussion questions.

* * *

Subscribe to this monthly magazine for [\\$1.95/month](#) or [\\$19.95/year](#) and have it delivered straight to your inbox the first of each month!

Additional “After Dinner” Titles

1. [Patchouli Lost](#) (Free): Patchouli calls a friend for help getting out of an abusive relationship. ([Podcast](#))
2. [My Fellow \(Immortal\) Americans](#) (Free): The President gives a speech about a proposed raise in the minimum “time wage” and its effect on those who plan to live forever. ([Podcast](#))
3. [The Shadow Of The Thing](#) (Free): Maeve calls on her friend to help her take a new street drug that (she thinks) will forever open her see the true meanings that hide behind the curtain. ([Podcast](#))
4. [This I Do For You](#) (Free): A spoiled child is raised in the lap of luxury until he is finally called on to serve others. ([Podcast](#))
5. [As You Wish](#) (Free): An elderly woman finds a trunk of tattered stuffed animals and makes a promise to fix them all. (All-Ages) ([Podcast](#))
6. [Pretty Pragmatism](#) (Free): A US Senator introduces a bill that borrows public policy ideas from the Nazi party. ([Podcast](#))
7. [Alpha-Dye Shirt Factory](#) (Free): A fire breaks out at the garment factory and one worker has to make a life or death choice. ([Podcast](#))
8. [Are You Him?](#) (Free): A family man on his way to work stops to talk to a young woman in need of a friend. ([Podcast](#))
9. [Lay On](#) (Free): Three outcast witches visit the hippy era to tempt a street musician. ([Podcast](#))
10. [Bunny Racing](#) (Free): Two bunnies race, but one of them has been eating a special carrot from the forbidden forest to help him run faster. (All-Ages)
11. [After Dinner Conversation Magazine](#): A monthly fiction magazine of exclusive *philosophy* and *ethics* short stories across genres to draw out deeper discussions with friends and family, delivered straight to your inbox! (\$1.95/month)
12. [The Truth About Thurman](#) (Free): Two Americans are captured by a terrorist group who give the government a choice, pick one for us to let go free, or we kill them both. ([Podcast](#))

13. [Rainbow People of the Glittering Glade](#) (Free): Three kingdom wards are sent to investigate the reclusive “Rainbow People” of the shifting desert. ([Podcast](#))
14. [Believing in Ghosts](#) (Free): A security expert hired to find flaws in a Presidential candidate’s campaign system finds more than she bargained for. ([Podcast](#))
15. [Monsters](#) (Free): There are monsters roaming the neighborhood, but sometimes you need to go outside for ice cream.
16. [Father Dale’s Drive-Thru Exorcisms](#) (Free): A semi-retired couple living out of their RV decides to follow a traveling tent revival and offer drive-thru exorcisms for extra cash.
17. [Patreon Support](#): As a Patreon Supporter you will enjoy early, ad-free, access to short stories and podcasts. You will also get access to our live, weekly, [virtual book](#) club discussions and [behind-the-scene](#) videos!
18. [A Community of Peers](#) (Free): A foreigner wanders into a remote village just before a convicted criminal is about to be punished and is asked to throw the first stone. ([Podcast](#))
19. [Survival Kit](#) (Free): A wife in an unhappy marriage gets caught in a freak snowstorm with her husband and sees the opportunity to end her “suffering.”
20. [Give The Robot The Impossible Job!](#) (Free): An AI tutor faces deactivation if she cannot prove her worth by saving a teenage pupil with an “unsolvable” problem - she’s a budding serial killer. ([Podcast](#))
21. [All Harriet’s Pieces](#) (Free): A young girl faces the death of her mother and the loss of her closest companion.
22. [Ruddy Apes And Cannibals](#) (Free): An expanding empire bumps into a remote island of civilized cannibals. ([Podcast](#))
23. [Abrama’s End Game](#) (Free): Abrama learns the gods created her dimension as their play-space to visit and is forced to fight across realities when she discovers their plan to shut it down. ([Podcast](#))
24. [A Change Of Verbs](#) (Free): A middle-aged professor changes his life by changing his verbs. ([Podcast](#))
25. [I Do So, Like Durian](#) (Free): A sheltered teen on a quest through Chinatown

finds a new world to explore.

26. [After Dinner Conversation Magazine](#): A monthly fiction magazine of exclusive *philosophy* and *ethics* short stories across genres to draw out deeper discussions with friends and family, delivered straight to your inbox! (\$1.95/month)
27. [In Love And War](#) (Free): A midnight knock on the door and a request to “hide me.” Is there more you would need to know?
28. [Cast Out](#) (Free): An isolated community in colonial-era America deals with fleeing refugees and the plague of fear that comes with them.
29. [The Book Of Approved Words](#) (Free): A government approved “author” is tempted to show the world the words they are missing. ([Podcast](#))
30. [The Dividual](#) (Free): A human medical student is selected for placement and home-stay in Splint, a Dividual city with residents who display different faces for different aspects of their personality.
31. [The Orphan’s Dilemma](#) (Free): A teenage orphan must decide if he wants to start his new life without the memories of his difficult past. ([Podcast](#))
32. [How The Cockroach Lost Its Voice](#) (Free): A talking cockroach takes his nephew to the top of the refrigerator to survey the world, and discuss the unhappy humans with three eyes. (All-Ages)
33. [Patreon Support](#): As a Patreon Supporter you will enjoy early, ad-free, access to short stories and podcasts. You will also get access to our live, weekly, [virtual book](#) club discussions and [behind-the-scene](#) videos!
34. [Prohibition](#) (Free): A wealthy addict heads to a seedy part of town for his fix and gets more than he bargained for. ([Podcast](#))
35. [Three Parables](#) (Free): A tin man with a cursed axe; a woman dedicated to making the perfect omelet, and a daughter coming to term with her mother’s last will and testament.
36. [An Infinite Game](#) (Free): Game theory goes out the window when a sociopath executioner lines up four men to see how far his blade will go. ([Podcast](#))
37. [Everything But The Kitchen Sink](#) (Free): Mary wakes to find the kitchen sink has moved overnight. What else about her life has changed?
38. [In Defense Of The Harvest](#) (Free): A little girl gets replacement eyes that

were “harvested” from the criminal who cut hers out.

39. [Prevention](#) (Free): A single mother finds out her drug addict son plans to shoot up his school and is forced to make a choice. ([Podcast](#))
40. [Selling To The Goyim](#) (Free): The son of a liquor store owner goes into advertising and finds out he’s just like his father.
41. [After Dinner Conversation Magazine](#): A monthly fiction magazine of exclusive *philosophy* and *ethics* short stories across genres to draw out deeper discussions with friends and family, delivered straight to your inbox! (\$1.95/month)
42. [Choose](#) (Free): A woman trapped in a sick experiment is continually forced to make decisions about who will die. ([Podcast](#))
43. [Seconds Last](#) (Free): A man enjoys an infinite number of perfect days in the park with his friend.
44. [Pneumadectomy](#) (Free): A young boy is ostracized by his friends because he has had his soul surgically removed. ([Podcast](#))
45. [Snitch](#) (Free): A New Orleans pastor does redevelopment work after a hurricane, but it forced to make more and more compromises to his vision. ([Podcast](#))
46. [Words Of The Ancients](#) (Free): An archaeology team finds a perfectly preserved crypt with a surprisingly intelligent farm animal.
47. [Two-Percenters](#) (Free): A new treatment may allow 98% of the people to be genetically enhanced, but at the expense of the 2% who already are. ([Podcast](#))
48. [Patreon Support](#): As a Patreon Supporter you will enjoy early, ad-free, access to short stories and podcasts. You will also get access to our live, weekly, [virtual book](#) club discussions and [behind-the-scene](#) videos!
49. [Venom In The Cloud Forest](#) (Free): A young man suspects someone has been changing past tribal records.
50. [The Seven Absent Sins](#) (Free): A Jesuit monk examines the *Encyclopedia of Sentient Species* to determine if there is anyone in the universe incapable of sin. ([Podcast](#))
51. [Bound](#) (Free): The “Lord Keeper” sets out to murder his successor in order to keep a community secret safe.

52. [On Good Authority](#) (Free): A doctor with a new vaccine for the “zombie virus” takes it to the next town and discovers two startling revelations.
53. [All My Tomorrows](#) (Free): A down on his luck man in his twilight comes into a “memory storage facility” to trade his remaining days for the chance to re-experience his “last good day.” ([Podcast](#))
54. [Mayonnaise](#) (Free): The inventor of million dollar “zero fat, zero calorie” food additive discovers her invention is killing her son.
55. [The One That Damned Me](#) (Free): A high school counselor’s life is ruined when he is wrongly accused by a cocaine snorting student.
56. [After Dinner Conversation Magazine](#): A monthly fiction magazine of exclusive *philosophy* and *ethics* short stories across genres to draw out deeper discussions with friends and family, delivered straight to your inbox! (\$1.95/month)
57. [In The Beginning](#) (Free): A retelling of Adam and Eve’s fall from grace, with a cosmic twist.
58. [Farewell, Odysseus](#) (Free): A genetically enhanced super-human has to make an important choice about the person he keeps as a pet. ([Podcast](#))
59. [Human Contact](#) (Free): A college student heads to a party, gets high and drunk, and ends up having a night that will forever change lives.
60. [Hiro’s Festival](#) (Free): A little boy who dreams of freedom has his wish fulfilled and is magically transformed.
61. [Idle Horns](#) (Free): A horned demon of hell born to eternally torture the damned walks off the job. ([Podcast](#))
62. [The Mind Reader](#) (Free): An outspoken bar patron runs an experiment to see if the world can be divided into the “weak” and the “strong” in attempt to prove he’s not an authoritarian fascist. ([Podcast](#))
63. [I, von Economo](#) (Free): A woman goes back to get revenge on the man who forced her soul into a new body.
64. [Love Sounds](#) (Free): A mother suffering from mental illness wants to help plan her daughter’s wedding. ([Podcast](#))
65. [Patreon Support](#): As a Patreon Supporter you will enjoy early, ad-free, access to short storie and podcasts. You will also get access to our live, weekly, [virtual book](#) club discussions and [behind-the-scene](#) videos!

66. [Marble Lions](#) (Free): A conflicted employee must decide if she is willing to infect a remote tribal community to bring it generational developmental benefits.
67. [Holy Night](#) (Free): Three *Auschwitz* prisoners find a contraband bible and have to decide if they are willing to risk their lives to keep it.
68. [Performance](#) (Free): A sheepish brother is forced through an experimental program to take on the overbearing traits of his crime boss twin. ([Podcast](#))
69. [Sacrificing Mercy](#) (Free): A devout Christian refuses a heart transplant based on her religious convictions. ([Podcast](#))
70. [Everyone's Gay In Space](#) (Free): Douglas Junior goes to lunch with his successful, gay, astronaut clone. ([Podcast](#))
71. [After Dinner Conversation Magazine](#): A monthly fiction magazine of exclusive *philosophy* and *ethics* short stories across genres to draw out deeper discussions with friends and family, delivered straight to your inbox! (\$1.95/month)
72. [The Formula](#) (Free): A group of boys get into a car crash and an AI algorithm is forced to decide who lives and dies.
73. [Externalities](#) (Free): A traveling wise man gives each customer the service they need, and teaching his apprentice a valuable lesson about externality. ([Podcast](#))
74. [God Is Alive](#) (Free): A would-be atheist philosopher has a personal interaction with God and is given a physics defying miracle of proof.
75. [In Their Image](#) (Free): A Pastor is invited to open a church on another planet, but finds its furry inhabitants have a unique faith all their own. ([Podcast](#))
76. [Metaphors](#) (Free): A widowed white woman in a black community has a falling out with the neighbor.
77. [The Crate](#) (Free): Two women escape from a country that forces equal treatment to one that encourages differences, and find both have their issues. ([Podcast](#))
78. [And Joy Shall Overtake Us As A Flood](#) (Free): An elderly man goes back in time to speak to his childhood self and, just maybe, change his future.
79. [Boomchee](#) (Free): A law student sets her coworker up on a date, only to find out the guy has a mail order secret.

80. [His Neighbor's Wife](#) (*Free*): An unhappy husband kills his neighbor's wife so that his wife will be put to death under "law of vindication."
81. [The Waiting Room](#) (*Free*): A teenager strikes up a conversation in the government waiting rooms with those waiting to get new life dreams assigned to them. ([Podcast](#))
82. [After Dinner Conversation Magazine](#): A monthly fiction magazine of exclusive *philosophy* and *ethics* short stories across genres to draw out deeper discussions with friends and family, delivered straight to your inbox! (\$1.95/month)
83. [Teddy And Roosevelt](#): Two misfit boys strike up an unlikely friendship in the shadow of President Roosevelt. ([Podcast](#))
84. [People Used To Die Every Day](#): A young man is caught in a lie to his partner; he has been illegally "sleeping" at night. ([Podcast](#))
85. [Pandora's Dreams](#): A new technology allows the recording, playback, and sale of dreams.

A b o u t t h e A u t h o r

[Kate Choi](#) is a 15-year-old writer and student currently attending international school in Seoul, South Korea. Her writing has received national recognition from the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards and the Seoul International Women’s Association (SIWA).

Additionally, her stories, poems, and essays have appeared in *Stone Soup*, high school literary publication *The Magpie*, and SIWA’s magazine *Discovery*.

When not reading or writing, Kate can be found playing quiz bowl, listening to classic rock, or taking long walks around the neighborhood.

She is, by far, the youngest author “After Dinner Conversation” has ever published, and we foresee a very bright future for her.