



PEN for Freedom

A Quarterly Journal of Literary Translations

No. 2

Independent Chinese PEN Centre
Summer 2010

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This issue is edited in cooperation with Sydney PEN Center

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From Me in Rain and Others

By LIU Xiaobo and LIU Xia

LIU Xiaobo's Poetry

From Me in Rain

- To Xia

It rains
 A drop passes through the sun
 I was pushed to the edge of the world
 I have to be in shock incessantly
 And in obedience reluctantly
 The raindrop is not cruel
 But its gentleness is full of danger

Alone in nudity
 I am the only one naked in the rain
 The tints in rain are puzzling
 All the umbrellas seem to weakly scream
 Disappearing in the rain-soaked time

What I hope for
 Is to collapse in rain
 And that my thin body
 Will leave before the rising sun
 I am afraid of every kind of quiet change
 And even less capable of bearing
 Any feat as a hero
 Trying to arouse God's attention
 Is self-maltreatment through wishful thinking
 I who have no wisdom to commit blasphemy
 Can only light a cigarette

1991.7.30

Aloneness in Winter

- To Xia

Aloneness during a winter night
 Like the blue background on the screen



Simple as everything at a glance but nothing at all
You may consider me as a cigarette, then,
To light and put out at any time
Smoking and smoking, but never ending

A pair of bare feet is stepping on the snow
Like a piece of ice falling into a wine bowl
Drunkenness and madness
Are the drooping wings of a crow
Beneath the endless shroud of earth
Black flame cries out involuntarily

The pen in my hand has suddenly snapped
Sharp wind is piercing the sky
Stars are fragmented into an adventure, my dream
The incantation drips blood into verse
The tenderness of skin still remains
A kind of brightness returns to you

Aloneness, clear
Is standing, weeping on a cold night
And touching the marrow of snow
While I
Am not a cigarette nor wine nor pen
But an old book
Similar to
"Wuthering Heights" where poisoned teeth grow

1995.1.1

Night and Dawn

- To Little Xia

When falling asleep alone the night
Is extremely cold
The lonely star before dawn looks even more ruthless
Despite the orange bedside light
The cold darkness still
Mercilessly
Swallows all of you

Facing the lamp, you are talking to yourself
And shedding tears while stroking shadows on the wall

At this moment, you should light a cigarette
Or pour yourself a glass of wine
To drunkenly pursue that
Missing person whose whereabouts are unknown
Or who may have been engulfed by deeper darkness

Put out the lamp
Let only the cigarette burn the night's coldness
Spill the wine out the window to the night
Let the darkness get drunk
To vomit out another dawn
A daybreak when perhaps there will be news

1996.11.11

The Cliff

- To my wife

I was forced to mount a cliff somewhere
While a sharp rock embedded into my skin
An order commanding me to stand and shout
And issue an ultimatum to the world

I could stand but not shout
Or I could shout but not stand
My straight body could only be rigid
While my crazy shout could only be bent

The steepness and sharpness of the abyss
Did not allow straightness to challenge them
The limits of the body could only choose between two ways
But the absolute order demanded both

To choose is a hopeless struggle
Either to stand straight shouting and being crushed to pieces
Or to bend my knees to the abyss
While the huge sky has pressed down

1996.12.15

To My Wife

As if the cold and indifferent moon

Is hanging high over my head
 The flashing arrogance is looking down
 To suffocate me
 Its background is as deep and mysterious
 As ghosts vomited from a grave

I am presenting holiness and purity
 In exchange for being close to you in a dream
 Not seeking for burning skin
 But dyeing my eyes with a layer of cold ice
 To see the sky-fire dying in its paleness

The sky's grief is too vast and bare
 For the eyes of my soul to see through
 Give me a drop of rain
 To polish the concrete floor
 Give me a ray of light
 To show the lightning's question

One word from you
 Can open this door
 To let the night go home

1997.1.31

LIU Xia's Poem

Untitled

- To Xiaobo

You speak you speak you speak the truth
 You are talking day and night as long as you are awake
 You talk and talk
 You are in a closed room while your voice breaks out to spread
 The death from twenty years ago has come back again
 Come and gone as the time
 You are short of many things but with you are the souls of the dead
 You have lost daily life to join the outcry of the dead
 There is no response and none

You speak you speak you speak the truth
 You are talking day and night as long as you are awake

You talk and talk

You are in a closed room while your voice breaks out to spread

The wound from twenty years ago has been bleeding

Fresh and red as the life

You are fond of many things but more passionate accompanying the souls of the dead

You have made a promise to seek the truth with them

On the way there is no light and none

You speak you speak you speak the truth

You are talking day and night as long as you are awake

You talk and talk

You are in a closed room while your voice breaks out to spread

The gunfire of twenty years ago has decided your life

Always living in death

You are in love with your wife but more proud of the dark time with her you spent

You let her be but are more insistent that she continues to write you poems after her death

In the verses there is no sound and none

2009.9.4

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Dr. LIU Xiaobo, literary critic, politic commentator and human rights activist, Honorary President of Independent Chinese PEN Centre and its President in 2003-2007, was held under residential surveillance by Beijing Public Security Bureau since 8 December 2008 and then formally arrested on 23 June 2009, sentenced to 11 years imprisonment on "inciting subversion of the state power" for his participation in drafting Charter 08 and publishing 6 articles on December 25, 2009. He is also honorary member of German, American, Czech and Sydney PEN Centres.

LIU Xia, the wife of Liu Xiaobo, is an artist and poet.

(Translated by Yu ZHANG)

Once There Was An Idol

By Ah Zhong

1966 was the year when the Cultural Revolution started, and in the same year I started my primary school.



That was a world covered overwhelmingly by redness. Every morning when I woke up, I saw such a world of redness. In that world there was no such a thing called privacy. All activities were carried out in the name of revolution. Family talks were going on in an extremely cautious way so as to avoid being labelled as reactionary, since it was common for family members to "expose" each other during that period of time.

Grim battles were constantly moving from person to person. Those in distress were treated with contempt or even got thrashed when necessary. The sadists experienced gratification from it, along with all the glory of punishing the bad guys.

The heroes who had been respected before suddenly became targets. Ironically, the two fighting parties upheld the same idol. The same abstract slogans were repeated every day with hollow and tedious tongues. The loudspeakers in the streets kept warning people in a loud and harsh tone:

"To guard against a handful of ..."

We were told to be happy, because we were born in a new society and raised under the red flag, while two thirds of the world's labouring people were still living in extreme misery.

We were happy, because we were the children of Mao Zedong.

1.

I reached school age, and was about to start the first semester. Our class teacher, whom I had not met yet, came to my home in a flurry and gave me the new textbooks. She told me that the Red Guards were burning books in school, so she had to deliver the books to all the students by herself. She acted like a warrior, but I thought nothing of it. I was fascinated by the actions of the Red Guards. I wished to join them, so that I could escape from studying and take part into their brave course. How proud would that be!

Very soon, many people were captured, including one female teacher in our school, who was revealed as an agent for No. 76, the street number of Jessfield Road (now No. 435 Wanhangdu Road) in west Shanghai where had located the intelligence headquarter of the Wang Ching-wei's puppet central government under Japanese occupation during World War II. The accused teacher, with the half of her hair shaved and a large blackboard hung on her neck, was held on the stage for the criticism and denouncement against her. She was about thirty years old

or so at that time, so she must have been just a teenager when Japan surrendered in 1945, if we work it out. It should have been very little chance but too hard to convince people that she could be an agent working for Wang's government. However, no one would like to do the calculations for her at that time. After the denouncement rally, she had a duty of toilet cleaning together with other "devils". She used to be a math teacher much experienced in teaching, but suddenly became so grotesque in wearing shabby clothes and over-large sleeves to clean the toilets that got us feel funny and amused. And she always lowered her eyes but never looked at us, appearing very obedient.

Within our neighbourhood, many people were also caught for criticisms and denouncements against them. Once, a group of "devils" were exposed by the Red Guards, and made to wear high paper hats as a sign of humiliation. I followed them and listened to their slogans, feeling nothing more amusing. Sometimes I followed those revolutionary masses and yelled out slogans. Nowadays, I recall my image of holding a book of quotations from Chairman Mao and crying out slogans, which must have been very ridiculous. However, those "devils" must have got the world's most pathetic expression on their faces, exactly representing the "old society".

An old woman lived by herself at the end of our lane was caught up by the Red Guards as a former landlady who had hidden her identity for a long time. Her hair was cut to a mess when she was dragged to the denouncement rally. After the rally, she was exposed to the streets with a high paper hat, on which it was written a slogan of "Down with the Landlady". She was also shouting the same slogan while striking a gong in her hand. Her shouting sounded so passionate. After the denouncement, she was allocated to clean the roads. I plotted together with an older boy to paste a seal her window and put on it "Down with the Landlady", which were the words we had just learned. The seal was found torn the next day, but we kept on sealing and found it was really a stimulating game. We felt angry at her dishonesty, so we made her window into a complete mess.

2.

We had no fairytales told in our childhood, only class warfare preaching. Our reading books were always made up with the stories by following the same pattern – some class enemy was trying to undermine our socialism, and one child with a high degree of political awareness discovered this enemy and so our proletariat dictatorship gained another victory. All the books and radio programs were telling the same jargon solemnly and earnestly: "To guard against..."

We learned how to write "Long Live Chairman Mao" in the first lesson. Although we could not recognize all the characters or understand the full meaning, we were already able to recite Mao's "Three Constantly-Read Essays". Mao's kind, smiling image was everywhere. He was like an everlasting star, a savoir of all human beings, while all the Chinese people were big fans of him. Every morning, there were several members of Little Red Guards in front of the school gate to check whether we had brought our Mao's quotation books. Those who had forgotten to bring it would not be allowed to enter the gate. All of us would be privileged to have a bowl of birthday noodles on our great leader's birthday. Well, what a splendid festival that was, since not every family could afford to have noodles in their daily lives!

We were like sheets of blank white paper, on which the newest and most gorgeous pictures could be painted. The pictures were actually the teachings of the great leader Chairman Mao.

3.

As I grew older, I was able to read novels. The first novel I read was a story about a child's growing up during the Anti-Japanese War. I can only recall the name of the book was *Three Generations*, but cannot remember who the author is. Besides this novel, I also read the book of *The Thousand and One Nights*, of which many pages were ripped out including the cover and the back page. I was so afraid of being discovered by others, that I only secretly read this book in the attic because it was an "evil" book belonging to the "Four Olds"(the old ideas, old cultures, old customs and old habits), which should be eliminated.

Unexpectedly, people began to shout the slogans of Down with Lin Biao, Mao's close companion, because he was accused of trying to murder Mao. This guy was hiding at Mao's side, and plotting to kill him. Isn't that a suicidal action? In fact, people all over the nation had long since found out his true colours according to his foxy face. Naturally, another movement went on across the country. However, it seemed not that exciting. The slogan was not as inspiring as before, as if people were feeling tired of it. That year's National Day was especially cheerless.

We learned to sing another childish song: "Traitor Lin Biao and Confucius, both are bad guys. Mercy on their faces, tricks in their tummies." Ironically, the author of the song became an avant-courier poet later on.

We took part in the movement of mass criticism against the Confucian school. However, what we criticized was just some classmate's out-of-step behaviour, which represented the poisonous influence of Lin Biao's idea of the uselessness of study. This kind of idea should be rooted out.

At this stage, I was keen on copying some secretly acquired hand-written novels, including *Green Corpse*, *The Heart of a Maiden*, and *The Second Handshake*. I obtained great joy from prying into these novels. Oh, dear me, there were so many secrets in the world I did not know!

I hid in a classmate's home, and listened to her sister singing some "educated youth's songs". She learned these songs from the countryside where she was sent down. These reactionary songs triggered my nerve of prying.

4.

A stencil printed book called *A Memoir of Mao Zedong* told a story of a rebel. His juvenile life gave me the intention to imitate him. I began to fantasize that I would treat my father as he had treated his father, leave home, paint an egg and a line to shape the sunrise for my painting work, stop learning English, drop out of school, read Proudhon and Fourier's works in the library, read poems like "blowing open the petals of ten thousand pear-trees", run rural surveys, get armed to fight against the Nationalist Party and launch autumn harvest rebellions, and read the

Communist Manifesto.

I was so amazed! It dawned on me that Mao did not have a super body as I read a story telling how he was almost killed during the peasant movement by the “home-going legion” of the National Party. Mao was a human being the same as us! He had his shoes stolen in the train and had to walk barefooted because he had no money. That thief must be scared out of his wits if he knew to whom the pair of shoes belonged. I kept wondering whether he was still alive when Mao got to live in the Forbidden City.

Chairman Mao was a big hero. He was also a great lecturer, and the only scholar in China.

Before I grew up, I already admired Chairman Mao deeply from my heart.

5.

Those boring ideological preaching and stereotyped doctrines were infused into our brains with an annoying frequency. However, nobody was aware that it was annoying, because nobody knew there were other enjoyable things in the world. Moreover, who would possibly demonstrate their boredom with it? The idea itself was dreadful that it must be eliminated even before it came out.

Our sky was without clouds. We had already stepped into the adults' world before we grew up. We were like a group of little geezers, old before their time. We were made on the production line of ideology. There was no self-directed spirit; we were a bunch of “sham human beings” who looked alike, even dressed in the same style of clothes.

We were produced to be the successor of revolutionary work, which was to liberate two thirds of the world's people from extreme miseries. Our history of thousands of years was of suffering and oppression of common people, whereas in Mao's era, children finally could live their lives as sweet as honey.

Did anyone still need poetry or art? They were developed from the theory of bourgeois human nature, which could only break our spirits. Although none of us had ever seen what exactly bourgeois literature or art was, we launched a war of words towards it to condemn its evil nature. We were reminded that we should guard against the enemy's evil plots, because the enemy wanted us to suffer once more.

We must combat and prevent revisionism. We should keep our eyes on people like Khrushchev, who might have accompanied Chairman Mao for a long time. Class conflicts should be mentioned every day, every month and every year. Chairman Mao always taught us: "You should pay attention to state affairs ..."

6.

Chairman Mao was the greatest artist ever in history. He directed a show for a whole decade, in which all the Chinese people were actors. As a poet, Mao possessed the largest audience ever,

as probably all the people in China had read his poetry. Nobody could ever challenge him about it.

Chairman Mao's new society had brought an enormous hope to the generation of our parents, which was a sharp contrast to their disappointment brought by the Nationalist Party. Unprecedented dynamism swept across the ancient land after Chairman Mao revealed his ambition to set up a brand new China.

All the trust was given to Chairman Mao, while no individual was needed. Chairman Mao's brilliance was like the mighty sun, and its sunlight was shining upon us thoroughly.

Every word from Chairman Mao was worth its weight by thousands of times. We should fight against whatever Chairman Mao pointed to. We should move forward wherever Mao had waved his hand.

Chinese people did not need a second brain other than Chairman Mao's. As long as Mao's big brain was still working, what did we need our brains for?

Chairman Mao created an unprecedented "hollow man" era, during which all the people relied on him. Without him, our happiness could in no way be secured.

However, Mao Zedong could not escape the death.

All of a sudden, Chinese people were like children without a father, scared and hopeless. The whole nation was immersed in grief. People were asking: "What should we do? What should we do?"

When Mao's wife was proclaimed a bad woman, the truth was further proved:

"As Chairman Mao died, we would inevitably suffer once more."

7.

Chairman Mao's era came to an end, and we grew up.

Original texts in Chinese can be found at http://www.boxun.com/hero/azhong/41_1.shtml

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Ah Zhong, writer, poet, and member of ICPC. His works are banned in China, especially in Shanghai where he is from.

(Translated by Angela HU)

Ninety Kilometres in Distance

By DU Daobin



Between my child and me, there is just ninety kilometres. This mere ninety kilometres, however, appears to us to be insurmountable, like a natural moat.

1

The most uncomfortable part about jail was loneliness. To get rid of it, the inmates in the same cell often chatted. We talked about everything. Once talking about my behaviour when I was a newcomer, they said, “It was all right on the first two days, when you fell down snoring. After the third night, you slept much less. You went to bed late, turned over and over constantly, but also woke up early.”

What they told had been true! On the first two days, I had felt no weakness in myself, and my mind had been very strong. On the third day, remembering my child, I had suddenly realized a huge loophole in my presumption. What I had thought about before did not take him into account. The trial had proceeded to a sentence around ten years in prison: for inciting subversion of the State power, it would be five years; for a ringleader, over five years; for conspiracy with those abroad, more severe; for stealing the state secrets for a foreign institution, organization or element, an additional five years. All of these crimes, of course, are non-existent. However, I am aware that our Party has been well known as being capable to create any miracle. To make injustice, therefore, is a piece of cake. Since 1949, too many miscarriages of justice have been created, as small as the misfortune of my whole family during the Cultural Revolution, and as great as the aggrieved death of “President of the State”. When the night's chill hit me through the iron window, I seemed to see a row of iron bars between us – the father and son, weeping toward each other; I seemed to see my boy who had lost his father's guidance turning evil under gangsters' control and fooling around on the streets all days...

About the sixth day of my detention, when the interrogation was to end, my opponent asked: “Any thought in your mind?” “Missing my kid!” Before my detention, I had studied the interrogation psychology and thought that I could easily face the persecution. But at that time I could no longer suppress my yearning for my boy, so that the three words jumped out of my mouth before the secret policemen.

In my memory, there had never been so long a separation between my boy and me as a week. Every day when the wheeling sound of the food cart was heard from the corridor outside my cell, it was at the time in the past when I had waited for my boy to return home safely. The food had been ready on the table waiting for him. The sound of every step from the staircase, even on the first floor, would have automatically been identified for a while. “Thump, thump, thump!” – the sound of his rushing 2-3 stairs at a time. If there had been no such sound over half an hour, I would have put on my shoes, and gone to the courtyard gate to look around eagerly. If he had not appeared as expected, I would have to look for him along his way home. The return journey

from his primary school is one kilometre through four streets in a way of "W", three of which were main trunk roads with heavy traffic.

The boy became my weak spot, my frailty. When I found my frailty, my opponent certainly realized it. The fellow suspects in my call were changed and replaced with juvenile offenders, aged 14 or 15, just similar to my kid, after my old inmates were sent away. It was said that I could look after them to avoid them getting injured in other cells. Getting along with these juvenile offenders day and night enhanced my worry for my own boy. One day, a guard took me out and in a friendly way handed me a rectangular paper packet.

"Knowing about your longing to see the kid," he said, "I specially let your wife bring two photos. This is violating the regulation! So take good care of them, we don't want to be found out."

When I opened the packet, there were two photographs of my boy. In a flash, the tear glands did not follow my command but let tears break through the line of defence.

The photographs became a spring of tears. Each time they were uncovered, the tears would pour out. Eventually I realized that everything must have been arranged on purpose. Otherwise, nobody would have broken the regulation to give me the photos. After waking up, I tried hard not to look at them. The photos were inserted into a book placed on the floor in the corner, about a step away after getting down from our big common bed. When missing my boy, I tried not to get down from the bed but to cast a glance at that pile of books. Without my looking at a photograph, the boy could still emerge lively before my eyes. When he was born, the boy had looked very ugly, a clot of red flesh with a wrinkled face. Because an extractor had been used for his birth, his head had been particularly long. In the beginning, he had been almost a rubbish producer, into which the soups of carp or chicken had been fed at one end and soon the faeces or urine had come out at another. During the day, he had been all right as there had been someone to help with the care. The night had been hard on me. While sleeping well, I had suddenly got a kick on my waist. "Hurry up, hurry up, get him pissing!" After this, just closing my eyes, "wah...wah...wah..." His crying had again awakened me.

I do not know when that clot of flesh that knew nothing suddenly got my fondness. For something or nothing, we were going around together. First, he was held to my chest, and then riding on my shoulders, afterwards holding big hands with small hands, and finally walking shoulder to shoulder. First when wilfully crossing the street, he had been stopped by me. Then sometimes I would like to make a short cut but was pulled back, "Walk across the zebra lines! A good kid is always across the zebra lines!" I had become a no-good kid.

After June 4th, 1989, I could not see this world clearly and so simply concentrated my energies on my boy. The investment may naturally give its return. Unlike the relationship between my father and me who hardly spoke, my boy and I had a lot to talk about. The boy got good grades, and was pleasant looking. In his fourth grade, one early morning on our way to his school, we walked side by side, talking as usual.

"There is a girl classmate," said the child to me. "She asked me through another, 'whether or not are you fond of someone or so?' Dad, tell me how can I answer her? "

"Do you like her?"

"Yes, I do. She looks very pretty, and her grades are also good."

"Is it not enough? Simply tell her that you like her!"

"It is ... rather embarrassing."

"Liking her, and telling her about it, and she will surely be pleased. Something to make someone pleased, why not do it? Only if you do not like her, then do not tell her because she will be displeased. Something to make someone displeased, one should not do."

The boy nodded and agreed with me. A few days later he told me, "I told her as you had said."

"Good boy! You are brave! You both are the classmates, but just classmates. Between the classmates, whether boys or girls, mutual fondness is a good thing. This is capability to learn how to get along with people. At your age, a boy student feels for the girls, or a girl student for the boys, this mutual curiosity is normal. It shows that your psychological and physiological developments are sound. Generating no curiosity would not be normal. Your father has been your age, and experienced it. However, your major focus now is to study. Do you understand?"
"Yes!"

The more the boy chatted to me, the more pleased I was. My boy was influenced by my spiritual power, and so was automatically drawn away from people and things that might mislead him.

2

My opponents have taken my weakness as my weak spot. On one hand, they have tried to persuade me: "Already so grown up. What is the point to keep worrying? The future will not be so bad if only the boy has been brought up." On the other hand, they have propagated to other people: "Only minding his wife and kid, what big deal can be made? If really a big fish, how come can be let out? "

When one has been fallen into the hands of a group of professional kidnappers and cheaters, one cannot get out unless you promise what they request. Particularly, those professional kidnappers have nothing to fear, and do not have to worry about any consequences. It is impossible to get away without paying a price. No matter what price it is, or how valuable the payment can be, one has to pay, by oneself. When the payment is very precious, there is naturally a great pain in one's heart. Thinking about his healthy growth, I am clear that the boy is most important to me. To be a "Big Fish" is no part of my duty but a matter of fate, while taking the responsibility for the boy is a duty of mine as a father. For time being, what I have done are actually my duties, writing, criticizing the reality and "being the first to show concerns" are only what a citizen should do, but also are my duties. For our children will be no longer subjected to the hardship of our generation, and for the freedom, these things need to be done, while some others may have to be given up temporarily. "Refrain from doing something

to be able for other things” – only if temporarily give up certain things, some of more essential things can be upheld. In a short, I came out.

I returned home after being away for seven and a half months. After a little cleaning up, it was nearly the time to be home from school. I hid behind the door and quietly waited for “thump, thump, thump...” the sound of rushing 2-3 stairs at a time from the first floor to the third. Time passed second by second, minute by minute. Finally, the sound came, straight to the third floor! At the door opened, he asked: "Has Daddy returned?" Father and son hugged tightly.

During childhood, one should not be left alone without a thoughtful guidance from a father. In the teenage years, a strongly spiritual support from one's father is also indispensable. I told my boy: your father is different from your father's father; your father's decision is solid like a piece of steel bar to reinforce your waist straight and keep your chin up and chest out to face anyone beyond our home. Soon after I got out from the detention centre, the boy entered a middle school. For three years, at noon and at the time to come home from school in the afternoon, I went to the courtyard gate to look around, just as when the boy had been at his primary school. Sometimes waiting is a kind of anxiety, but what I have experienced more has been happiness. In my view, the goodness between us, the father and son, is not my grace by raising him but his warmth and happiness offered to me!

The boy has not disappointed me. After middle school, he was admitted to one of the model high schools in Hubei Province. Although it was not so good as to get him into an ace class in his school, the result was enough to make me happy. A decade's association between a father and his son appears to have not wasted. I am so pleased to have seen that some of what I have valued has taken the root in his internal world. Of course, whether the boy will grow up to become a successful man, it will be up to him to go forward on the path of life. I, as a father, was just his pathfinder in the beginning of his life. I have taken my responsibilities.

3

The provincial model high school is in Wuhan City, 90 km away from our home city of Yingcheng, and it has a system of full boarding. Since beginning of school term, I do not have to worry about his fussy taste, nor to look around at the courtyard gate, which has spared me a lot. For a few days, however, not seeing the movement of this fellow's figure at home has always made me feel empty. I would like to go and see him, but it is not up to me whether or not I am able to go to Wuhan. The “State” has taken a dissident like me as a potential enemy. The “State”, like the Monkey King in fiction, has drawn a circle around me so that the range of my movement has been strictly limited within an area of a little more than 1000 square kilometres, or a radius about 20 km. My friends outside cannot get in, and I cannot get out, even to see my own child.

Between my boy and me, there is just ninety kilometres. These mere ninety kilometres, however, appears to us to be insurmountable, like a natural moat.

Fortunately, there is the telephone. “Don't worry about me. I am here, happy, joyful,” from

another end of the line came the cheerful optimism, just the gene of our Du family! Du's Yes, I am optimistic. Although I am living in a miscarriage of justice, although my body is held under the control of power, although my freedom is limited within a tiny area drawn by the "State" with its Monkey King Bar, there is no fundamental damage to this optimism. We, the father and son, agreed that I would be responsible for giving him a happy childhood, and that he would have to return me as a responsible teenager and a capable youth. The boy has gone away to have an independent life. In the beginning, there was a bit worry. Would this kid who had done little housework leave a pile of dirty socks? Unexpectedly, a message was brought back that his white T-shirts, white socks and white shoes are washed even cleaner than at home. I relaxed a little bit.

Following the message that relaxed me, there comes also some news to make me worry. According to the class teacher, the boy's spirit in the class has not been so good; sometimes he has even fallen asleep. It was also said that the boy got only a grade of 50+ out of 100 on his midterm examination for his English course. There must be something that has become an obstacle in the boy's study or his life. What is it? The problems of which a child has not become aware cannot be realized through telephone. Only the experiences of an adult to feel, to perceive and analyse can reach the crux. I should go and see him to learn more about what are the problems he has encountered. I would like to see him, my boy who has encountered the problems! The "State" does not let me go! Because it is said that if I would see my boy, the national security would be likely endangered.

(November 2007, in Yingcheng)

*Original texts in Chinese can be found at
http://www.boxun.com/hero/2007/dudaobin/63_1.shtml*

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DU Daobin, an ICPC member based in Yingcheng, China, was arrested on 28 October 2003 and convicted on 11 June 2004 of "inciting subversion of the State power" for his online publications of his critical articles, including a thesis entitled as *On the Legality to Subverting A Government to challenge the very offence that has eventually be used for his imprisonment*. International PEN was very much concerned with his case and Sydney PEN adopted him as its Honorary Member. His defence at the court was very controversial as a defence lawyer hired by him made an innocent plea while another lawyer, accepted by him according to the court recommendation, made a guilty plea for a lenient sentence. Du's own statement of defence did not clarify the disagreement between his two lawyers but admitted that he had made some mistakes and errors in his writings which he did not consider as a crime. For his "good attitude toward guilty plea" as claimed in his court verdict, he got a "lenient" sentence of 3 years imprisonment with 4 years suspension and 2 years deprivation of political rights. As a result he was released pending trial on his appeal. His appeal for innocence against the court conviction was rejected on 4 August 2004 when his 4 years suspension of his imprisonment sentence started on counting under a regulation to restrict his freedom of movement and other civil rights. This paper describes his situation during this period as well as his explanation on his "good

attitude". As well, he continued to appeal for his innocence and published his theoretic and historic studies on the illegality of "inciting subversion of the State power". On 21 July 2008, 13 days before expiry of his 4 years suspension, and 18 days before the Beijing Olympics' opening ceremony, Du was imprisoned to serve his remaining sentence for allegation of his violating the regulation during suspension period. On 10 November 2008, ICPC honoured him with its annual Writers in Prison Award for his courage to challenge the Literary Inquisition in China. He is now held in Hanxi Prison, about 20 km away from his son at school in the same city of Wuhan, and due to release on 8 December 2010 on expiry of his sentence.

(Translated by Yu ZHANG)

Going Home

By LIU Shui



Homecoming has always been very painful to me, and this time is even worse. The family relationship is warm when there is geographical distance. However, when family members meet face-to-face and geographical distance suddenly disappears, the psychological distance is suffocating. In addition to refreshing the dialect and enjoying hometown cuisines, the familiar air, scenery and people revive my feeling of novelty and they are enough to make me maintain a state of euphoria. Yet, everything else makes me feel so unhappy.

I always keep a distance from my hometown. Just like in this country, I'm always in the state of exile.

When I knew that my father was ill, it was already two days late. My father is 85 years old. My family became accustomed to my father suffering headache and fever due to his age, in particular because he was only discharged from the hospital a few days ago. My family didn't tell me about that this time. They got used to it. During this time, it was like I got a premonition about my father's illness. I had tried to call my father for three days but there was no answer. I thought that he was at his old home, but in fact he was hospitalized again. I realized that my father's house was being pulled down at that time. The thugs hired by the government to bulldoze the houses cut all the telephone lines in my family's area.

My hometown is Qingyang, Gansu Province. It's a city in Western China encompassed by power and violence, which was also the reason I escaped from there. The local government had sent various levels of officials from the city and the district to persuade my father to move. They said that my father, as an old revolutionary who took part in the battles in the 1940s, should take the lead in cooperating with the government's urbanization project. They even made anonymous phone calls to my father, threatening him that if he didn't move before the deadline they would stop giving him his pension. They avoided talking about how to solve his housing problem after the demolition.

This time, my father suddenly felt ill and was hospitalised because gangs and gangs of government officials and officers from the demolition office repeatedly threatened him with hard and soft measures. In order to help to save the government's face, my father never told my family that his old illness recurred due to the tremendous psychological stress. My father couldn't eat or drink. He vomited a lot of his dark green stomach fluid and survived on a dozen bottles of nutrition fluid every day. The Qingyang City No. 1 Hospital couldn't find out the reason for his illness. My family informed relatives from other places to return to pay their last respects to my father and prepared for my father's death.

At twilight on 1 August, I was full of dust due to long journey and holding a box of long'an when I entered my father's ward. It was the sixth day my father was receiving the nutrition fluid. It was a special day for my father who was struggling between life and death. The military flag was soaked with his blood and also the blood of those who were thought to be enemies. My father was persecuted by the Qingyang city government and he was dying. The government and the party, which he had defended and to which he was loyal for his whole life, had long since forgotten him.

Like many other medium and small sized cities in central and western China, Qingyang fully relied on the political economy of "public money consumption" to maintain so-called prosperity. The property price was only about 1500 yuan per square meter in 2007 but it surged to more than 3000 yuan this year – more than double in two years. My father's monthly salary increased to about 4000 yuan nearly two years before his retirement, but he still could not afford to buy a house. For most citizens in Qingyang with an average salary about 1000 yuan, this meant that they simply could not afford to buy a house.

The past eight months could be said to be the hardest moment in my life. I was persecuted by the police in southern China and was forced to move my home three times. In my hometown, my father was repeatedly harassed by the Qingyang city government in Gansu. He was hospitalised due to sudden illness and he was in a critical condition, near to death.

I was not on a pleasure trip. I returned home with the feeling that it would be the last time for me to see my father. From Guangzhou to Xi'an is only 1500 km and takes only a bit more than two hours to fly. However, from my home in Guangzhou it took me 13 hours to see my father in the hospital. I left my Guangzhou home in the wet and humid early morning. When I arrived in the Tangdu Hospital in the eastern suburb of Xi'an, all the streetlights were already turned on. I took almost every kind of modern transport, including buses, underground trains, airport coaches, cabs, airplanes, motorcycles and three-wheeled cabs. What I wanted to do was to keep my life-long promise to my father: holding hands with him.

I knew that my father was calling my name. Although I was lived far from my hometown for more than ten years, my father had never asked me to come home to visit him. My father was as strong as iron when he was in the battle. He never surrendered to death. He had used his life to defend his party. But he suffered in the bed during his last days.

I didn't need to read the modern Chinese history or read anything boasting about the "great achievements" of the last sixty years. I learned about China's contemporary history from my father's generation. I thank my father, who not only gave me my life, but also served as a negative example to me. It was not entirely about blood relationship or family love. It transcended the values and doctrines of life.

If the Chinese could get rid of patriarchy, we would be able to walk away from the traditional ideology of "emperor and servant" and enjoy the real freedom. Patriarchy required children to have absolute obedience. For a person's adolescence, patriarchy is the sky. Patriarchy

completely twisted and alienated the humanistic relationship between father and son. Love and human relations were pawned. Because there were too many children, my parents couldn't manage to take care all of us. My brothers and sisters and I were brought up separately. I couldn't help to say that it's very lucky.

Xi'an is not my hometown. It's only where my father was transferred to a hospital to receive medical treatments. My hometown is 268 km away from Xi'an. Wherever my father was, there was my home. My mother passed away 15 years ago. I was in Haikou at that time. I wasn't able to go home for my mother's funeral as I was imprisoned for the second time because of my words. It's an eternal pain. Nobody can ever understand it.

On my way, there was nothing else to calm me down other than taking pictures randomly with my camera. I suddenly felt how helpless an individual was in the icy process of changing the whole society. It was like authoritarianism covering everyone with iron curtains. Fear clutched people's soul and body. We could never even make our choices independently. Very powerless, but it absolutely means giving up.

Everybody is a bystander, and also a participant. Only life is real, no matter what will be left behind. Chinese people have never had homeland – either physically or mentally.

August 2009

P.S.: My father didn't eat and drink for 13 days, but he was later rescued. The problem of the demolition of his house has not yet been solved.

Original texts in Chinese can be found at http://boxun.com/hero/200911/liushui/2_1.shtml

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LIU Shui, a journalist, an editor and a poet, a member of the Independent Chinese PEN Centre. Between May and June 1989, he organized and participated in the students' movement in Lanzhou and he later took part in the Beijing democratic movement. He was later on the wanted list. He was sentenced to one year and three months of Re-education through Labour for "organizing anti-revolutionary propaganda" in 1989. After he was released from that administrative punishment of Re-education through Labour, he has also been detained for five times.

(Translated by Patrick Poon)

Grief and Other Poems

By SHI Tao



Grief

I forget all languages
to start with a simplest word

memory is like a lamp in a slave's hands
I am kneeing down before it to beg it everlasting

the dark night is approaching inch by inch
I have to make a living before daybreak

no message about ships anchored at piers
only a type of sea breeze blowing to my face

its taste is called
grief

Poetry

I, with my senile hand,
write down the sufferings:

gun in ears
salt in spit
and
gold upon hair

Afternoon, My Afternoon

afternoon, my afternoon
my own afternoon alone

I was smoking, and drinking tea
hands were dancing
the whole face was
an empty
stage
with blood colour

Song of the World

the fat head
of a strawberry is filled with
dreams of colourful clouds

(men stuffed in
a dreaming scene of Salvador Dali)

a book about Egyptian deceased souls
characters in the book
still have warmth on their skins

(I stretched out one withered finger
to touch my iced face)

oh, this world
it is full of enemies of the dead
and Song of the World chanted by enemies

Bad News

wheels torn to shreds
were parking
at the silent night
bad news
like cold spell, carelessly
kept away from body warmth

from cancer wards to
my ears
so many eyes
were making the same hint
what's been spoken, is merely
"speaking", a shell in mirror

To stay alive, is a true miracle

Evening's Coming

eyes are the guests of evening.

food left dining table
to participate in a walking game

thoughts of snow-geese
lost in a spacious stomach somewhere else
dark night was reproducing dark lives

Reading

whose sights
cast farther
than bats in dark night?
whose life
is more broad and straight
than a ladybug covered with stains?
whose sufferings
are more hopeless
than a lonely pine tree at hill top?

crows at the altar are driven out of cemetery of the night

Freedom

that voice is right in my mouth
in my stomach
among the food undigested last night
between the fingers
putting into throat to cause vomits
in the sink
disgusting with mouth cleaning
in the abyss of a pipe stretching to
far away, in a pond by accident
leaked out
in the cruel palms of hungry
wild geese, in the whirls flying up the sky
but encounter cold current
in hard stone-crevices colliding with cliffs
in a warm nest somewhere else
with moisture of saliva, once again
slide into smooth stomach
in a clot of bird droppings flying over fields and villages
flying over cross-country cars on freeway
in the square, air-dried, bringing protestors in
along with rolling traffic
within the speech, plugged with power, shocked and
amplified---

its name is freedom

--from "Letters to the Dead Souls"

April 8-11, 2004, Taiyuan

Original texts in Chinese can be found at http://www.boxun.com/hero/shitao/76_1.shtml

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SHI Tao, a journalist, writer and poet, is a member of Independent Chinese PEN Centre and the honorary member of Sydney, German, Canada, New Zealand, Swiss Italian, Swiss German, American, English, San Miguel, Scottish and USA PEN centres. He was arrested in November 2004 Party to an overseas Chinese democracy site after Yahoo! China provided his personal details to the Chinese government.

(Translated by CHEN Biao)

The Man Chased by Nightmares

By WANG Ju

It is unfortunate for a man with a desire to leave the land of his people with a long history.

---Milan Kundera



All dreams originated from a sudden enlightenment under a spider web.

That spider web, huge beyond description, was hanging from the eaves of a low level family house, and covered the whole window. An overbearing red spider was taking slow but triumphant strolls on the web. It was covered by burr-like hair all over. Very scary. Nobody knew for sure exactly when this spider web was set up there. It seemed to have always been there. Sometimes the big red spider was lying on its belly in the middle of the web, showing off its authority and power; sometimes it went into hiding, waiting for prey to come into the web.

One free-flying butterfly bumped into the spider web by accident. Its big and beautiful wings were tightly stuck by the spider web. As it tried to break free, it was tied and held more tightly by the web. The wings that were stuck on the web could not flap any more. It struggled several times but failed, and finally had to give up without any strength left to fight. At this moment, that red spider would come out at a slow pace, roll over the butterfly on the web, and wrapped up the butterfly over and over again with the silk web it produced until that beautiful butterfly turned into a mummy.

Right at that time, you were sitting under the spider web and witnessing that dismal happening.

The next day, that butterfly disappeared completely while the spider web was still hanging over there without any damage.

You were just a child then, with ragged clothes, skinny and bony, but with a pair of dreamy big eyes. You were stunned, looking in horror at the spider web. As a breeze came over, the spider web, moving gently over your head, covered the whole sky. The sun was floating in the middle of the web and making the spider web crystal clear, half reality and half illusion, and piercing lights were running along the radiating web silk.

This spider web, as if through the decades of time, had always been hanging over your head and making you feel uneasy. Each time when the inconspicuous but pervasive floating silk touched your face, you would feel its existence. When you wanted to get rid of the web stuck on you but could not find it, it seemed not to exist. But you could truly feel it was sticking on you and there was one tiny spider moving here and there on your back. That made you worried and angry. Finally, one day you could not endure it. You were waving sticks in the air. Ever since then, a series of nightmares started to sneak into your sleep. In dreams, that red spider was chasing you. You were running in a desert like an ant, but the huge red spider was like a tank raising dust; you tried to escape by hiding but no sooner had you hid under a giant rock, without even time to take a breath, than that red spider popped its head out from the top of the rock. You continued to try to escape and hid into an old but resplendent and magnificent palace where spider webs were hanging everywhere. Wherever you tried to hide, that red spider could

eventually find you. Though exhausted, you still had to run to escape. While running, you felt that a huge shadow was cast over you. You looked back, finding the horrible red spider rushing at you. You shouted in horror...woke up from the nightmare, you were drenched with sweat.

“What’s wrong with you?”

Your wife was awakened by your screams. She turned on the table lamp, brought herself up on her elbow, and looked down at you with concern.

“I had a nightmare.”

You sat up, and wiped the cold sweat on your forehead.

“What did you dream of?”

“One giant red spider...”

You described the dream scenes to your wife.

“You must have offended something.”

“These days, I always feel like a spider web is hanging over my head. So I stirred the air with a stick...”

“Why did you do that? You were being meddlesome by doing so.”

“I was feeling uneasy.”

“Everyone feels uneasy, but everyone can tolerate it.”

“I have tolerated it for years, and I cannot tolerate it any more.”

“This is why you have a difficult time.”

You lay down again without any words.

Your wife jumped out of bed and brought a kitchen knife.

“What are you doing with that?”

“Putting it under your pillow to drive away evil spirits.”

However, nightmares woke you up over and over again from your sleep.

“No. It’s impossible to escape our doom.” Your wife murmured, tightly grabbing your arm with fears, and leaning her pale cold face to your shoulder.

Childhood memories always flashed before your eyes. Like a collector, you would like to pick up the broken pieces of the old days from the time past to keep in the museum of your memory, and take it out now and then to caress and enjoy.

Not knowing why, you always remembered that poor frog. Stripped of its skin, it was jumping in the street like a naked blood-red heart. That skin, however, had been stuck on your neighbour to cure his boils. That was a poor and foolish time, and a crazy time as well. The loudspeaker was shouting all the time. The frog was jumping in the street. The landlord of the village with a high paper hat was suffering public criticism in the street. Just as you showed sympathy to the frog, your young mind also cast sympathetic eyes on the landlord. The aged landlord, unable to endure the endless tortures, hanged himself on the dried big tree in the middle of the village. Passing by the big tree on your way to school the next morning, you saw the skeleton-like body hanging there like a dried eggplant dangling in the wind. The landlord’s action “against the people” caused the loudspeaker to shout for several days.

Several years later, one summer noon, you were alone, reading in a country office. Cicadas were singing endlessly in trees, and sunbeams were flowing lazily outside the window. Suddenly, you heard gentle jumps in the quiet corridor. Looking back to the door, you found a frog crouching at the door, staring at you attentively with eyes blinking. You felt surprised. You

could not figure it out how it had come along the long corridor to find your door and jump in. You wondered it was not an ordinary frog, but an elf that was full of wisdom and could communicate with human beings. Both of you looked into each other's eyes. From its eyes, you felt a cry for help. With your soul, you started a dialogue with it.

"What can I do for you?"

"I've lost my way home. My kids are waiting for me to go back."

"Where is your home?"

"Near the pond."

There was a pond not far away behind your office, which was a paradise for frogs.

"All right. I'll take you back home."

You picked up that frog and took it back to the pond. Some kids were playing in the pond, with mud covering their bodies. Your six-year-old daughter was chasing after butterflies among the flowers.

For no reason, you could not settle down after you went back to office. Once again, you recalled the skinned frog and web-stuck butterfly from your childhood. You still felt sad about their miserable lives.

Noises came in from the kids at the pond. You were listening closely and did not know what happened. Soon the kids' shouts faded away and disappeared at the corner of the streets far away. Everything was quiet at the pond. Your daughter came back to you out of breath. She was crying "Papa, Papa" while running. She held something in her hands when she appeared at the door.

"What are you holding?"

Your daughter rushed to you, and slowly opened her tender fingers. There was a tiny frog crouching in her palm!

"Where did you get it? Take it back quickly!"

"Papa, it's an orphan. I want to adopt it."

"How do you know it's an orphan?"

"Just now that group of kids beat its mum to death."

"Where?"

"Near the pond."

Your daughter took you to the pond. The frog, which you took home in your own hands, was lying on its back in the sandy soil, with red ants climbing all over its white belly.

Motionless and wordless, you stood there. After a long while, you started to talk to your daughter with a sad and weak tone:

"Please send the baby frog back to the pond, where it has its father and brothers and sisters."

As she was told, your daughter opened the palm of her hand again and the baby frog made a leap, which created a beautiful arc in the air, and gracefully dived into the water.

"Come on. Let's bury the mother frog."

You squatted down and dug a hole together with your daughter. Mother Frog was buried, a tomb was made with the sandy soil, and a wordless monument was set up with a slate. Your daughter picked up some flowers to place before it.

A burst of croaks came up from the pond at that moment. Your daughter held your hand in fear.

“Papa, what’s wrong with them?”

“They are crying for their mother!”

The earth laid waste and the pond was left in cries. You looked up at the sky. The sky was grey. No flying birds, no colourful clouds, no winds, nothing at all. Only a pale sun was hanging high up there, like a pupil from a blind man staring at the deserted land...

You started thinking: everybody has a very warm, loving and attached feeling to their own bed. When we feel tired after a whole day of hustling and bustling, when sleepiness comes and our eyes feel heavy, we can go back home and lie down in a quiet and comfortable bed. What a pleasure it is! Every bed is a paradise for each person. However, to you, your bed was not dear and warm to you any more. It turned into a very horrible hell. It was a brown wooden bed. It had been with you for years, looked very shabby now and even made creaky noises. What was more horrible, the bed was now filled with red nightmares, which were like countless hungry bedbugs rushing everywhere to hunt for you. At sight of it, you would tremble with fear. The bed was placed in your old, small bedroom, and your bedroom was within a shabby, small building sandwiched between several new skyscrapers and rows of shabby, crowded old flats. Like a swarm of ugly but obedient animals crushing into each other, they ringed in by the surrounding high buildings.

When night came, people went to bed to sleep after a whole day of hard work. But you would get uneasy and restless. You were more and more afraid of the coming of the night, and of getting close to the bed. As if it were a trap, the bed would hook you into terrifying and bottomless red nightmares. At the very beginning, you would try to sleep when you felt sleepy. You would approach the bed quietly, slip on to it gently, and lightly sleep on your side. However, as soon as your eyelids closed, you would violently jump out of the bed and stand on the floor with panic. You would open your eyes wide with fear and stare at the bed. You were alone in the bedroom, as your wife could not endure the unrest and had already moved to your daughter’s room to sleep. You could not go to sleep, and went out after wandering about for a while. You went out of the building and got to the street after going down the narrow, dirty stairs in dark. Ever since that, late every night you would run away from the bedroom to escape from that terrifying bed full of nightmares and get to the street, wandering about like a ghost. You would linger in the dim light, stroll in night rains, trot in freezing winter winds and walk among the sleeping buildings. You would recite poems by Qu Yuan while walking:

People are all asleep, I am awake alone.

People are all polluted, I am purified alone...

The streets, all in dim lights, were extremely empty and quiet without any people about. The buildings were standing along the streets in cold. Nearly all apartments were turned into prisons with iron bars protecting the windows. The streets were asleep, so were the buildings and even the whole city. However, you were the only one who could not go to sleep. In dark nights, you wandered aimlessly among all streets and lanes of the city.

By accident, you came to a heap of ruins. On the broken walls, the word ”demolish” could still be seen in remarkable red colour. This site of ruins looked like a deserted cemetery. You were thinking: this was previously a home for many people to live and keep away from rain. When you stopped to look, all of a sudden a shadow jumped out of the ruins, held your collar and shouted:

“Give my house back! Give my house back!”

You were taken aback and stunned. After a while, you saw clearly that it was an old woman with uncombed hair and a dirty face. She let you go after shouting to you for a while, and then stood on the ruins to start a Yangko dance. She was singing while dancing:

The sky in the liberated area is bright and clear,

People in the liberated area love to...

You were looking at her dancing on the ruins. You knew she was a loony.

After dancing a while, she recalled something suddenly and crouched on the ruins crying with sadness.

“My house...”

“Is this your house, Auntie?” you asked with concern.

She looked back at you. Suddenly, she stood up and came to you. She mysteriously put her mouth close to your ear and whispered: “This was my house. I have lived here my whole life. They demolished my house by force, put me in jail and made me homeless...” She looked over your shoulders with fear, saying: “No, they are back again.”

You looked behind but saw nothing. The old woman began to curse at the dark night: “You bandits, you made me lose home and family. What are you doing here? Go away! Go away!” With this, the old woman thrashed about for a while, kicking, scratching and cursing against the night sky. She picked up a piece of brick coating and threw it. It flew past your ear, and hit the darkness. The stars in the sky were dropping off like dust and fell down behind you.

The old woman heard the brick coating hitting the ground, and quickly crouched down to hide behind the ruins, and popped up now and then to peep.

You looked at her with pity, shaking your head and leaving with frustration.

While walking, you were thinking about that poor old woman. Her house was demolished by force and she herself was driven mad! She was homeless like a wild cat, hiding in ruins day and night... what kind of society is this! A hell on earth?

You were walking in endless darkness and wandering with a heavy heart, not knowing where to go.

Nights came and went. But you, a tortured soul, were hanging around like a ghost from hell.

“Ouch!”

A scream came up under your feet. You stepped back quickly. Deep in thinking and paying no attention to the road, you found yourself walking to the edge of the city, an open dump. In dark there was something moving on the dump under your feet. A homeless dog? A wild cat? No, nothing at all. That dark shadow sat up slowly. It was a human being. As you could see his face clearly, you found it was a middle-aged man with a black face and a worn-out dark colour working uniform, just like a giant black bug.

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s all right.”

“Why are you sleeping here?”

“I am not sure about it either,” he looked around. “I drank too much yesterday...”

“Don’t get cold.”

“It’s all right. It happens quite often. I am used to it.”

“Do you have your own home?”

“Yes. But I don’t want to go back.”

“Why?”

“I dare not face my aged parents, my wife and our child.”

“Why?”

“I got laid off,” he said. “I was a worker at a large-size factory for over twenty years. I loved the factory like my own home, and was awarded several times as a model worker. But such a good factory was brought about to collapse by those corrupt officials, and was sold for a small price to a private buyer, keeping the workers in the dark. We were told we would be laid off with each worker getting ten thousand Yuan. They will not look after us any more...son of a bitch!”

“Didn’t you report it to the supervising authority?”

“We reported many years and sent petitions several times. But nobody cared about it. Finally, workers brought it to the municipal government, and even stuck slogans on its gate: ‘Punish corrupt officials!’ and ‘We need to eat!’ At the end, the corrupt officials were not punished but the leading workers were sent to prisons...those son-of-bitches!”

“How’s your life now?”

“Look. I am staying at this rubbish dump and waiting for daybreak to pick up junk...”

His voice was full of sadness and grief.

I was silent for a while.

He lowered his head in silence for a moment, and stopped talking. He then crouched back down onto the rubbish dump.

You did not want to disturb him and left quietly.

You looked back after walking away.

He was still there, with a celestial quilt embroidered with stars. Without knowing why, you felt by intuition that he was a giant bug. He reminded you of a scene you saw in your childhood of a dung beetle rolling a dung ball back home. You saw him holding up his collar as if fearing cold. However, as if you were seeing he was pulling that celestial quilt fully embroidered with stars, the quilt was dragged towards to him. Perhaps due to his pulling, there appeared half a dozen kids at the other end of the quilt. Like a nest of piglets, they crushed each other and slept in a shabby corner. The cold shadow of the city was hanging over their heads.

Standing there, you were looking at the waifs with sympathy.

Something was moving nearby, making fearful noises. Far away, there came up a sad and sharp cry of a wild cat, like a baby crying.

They woke up from dreams and opened their black eyes, looking at you. Those piles of black eyes were fearful first, then staring and finally they swarmed to you. Like small ghosts sneaking from the hell, they were thin and skinny with pale dirty faces and dishevelled hair. Their shadows reminded you of your own childhood. You got tangled up with them, some holding your legs, some dragging your hands and some pulling your clothes. Every one of them came up and held high their heads to you.

“Please show mercy on us!”

“Where are you from? Why leading a vagrant life?”

“We are from the South. Our hometown suffered from floods. Our houses were washed away, and so were our parents. All of us are orphans now...”

You could not bear to listen any more, and handed them all the money you had with you in

no hesitation.

The kids dispersed with joy into the night.

Within the darkness of the night, how many more people were groaning, weeping, crying and shouting for their sufferings?

With no reason, your eyes were full of tears. You really wanted to have a big cry.

The night was getting darker and everything turned silent. Only bats were flying, like black shooting stars darting through the sky. Their shadows wove a huge black net in the night sky and tightly covered the earth.

“Stop!”

A voice ordered.

You stopped, looked back and found four or five policemen coming up to surround you.

“What are you doing here?”

“Nothing. Just walking around.”

“Not sleeping at midnight and wandering about everywhere. You must not be a good man.”

“I could not get into sleep.”

“We have been watching you for a long time. You stay at home during the daytime and come out at night. You are very suspicious. Come with us.”

“What law did I go against? Don’t I have the freedom to walk at night?”

“You are going everywhere and intend to do something evil. Take him away!”

You were protesting, but they dragged you by force onto a police car parked nearby.

Half a month later, when you came out of the iron gate of the detention centre, you were not yourself any more. You changed completely. During the days thereafter, like a mute, you did not talk to anybody. You did not walk outside any longer. You locked yourself in at home, lying in bed with your arms folded under your head and looking at the ceiling with still and motionless eyes. You did not even eat or drink for several days. Nobody dared to disturb you. One day, all of a sudden, you put all your things into a travel bag, and said to your wife who was standing at door and looking at you for a long time:

“I am leaving.”

“Where are you going?” Fear filled the eyes of your wife.

“I don’t know,” your voice was sad, “I just want to leave this place, and go – the further the better.”

Your wife was leaning against the door with no strength.

“All right. You go. It’s more horrible for you to live here than to die,” your wife said sadly, “maybe you will feel better somewhere else.”

You picked up the travel bag and passed before your wife who was motionless with her head lowered. From her dry eyes, only one tear came out.

You did not dare to look at that drop of grief-soaked tear.

You walked out the door and did not look back.

A few months later, when you made the first phone call to your wife, you were overseas in the new land on the other side of the earth. It is a free land. Here, you can breathe freely, go to sleep peacefully and have no more fears or nightmares. When you told your wife all of these excitedly, she was not cheered up.

“What’s wrong?” you asked with concern.

“I started to have nightmares after you left.”

You felt a shock in your heart and asked:

“What type of nightmare? Are you chased as well?”

“No,” your wife replied.

“What is it then?”

“I dreamed you disappeared. I was looking for you everywhere, but could not find you...”

You heard your wife start to weep over the phone.

“I went to your parents and friends, and asked each of them: ‘Did you see my husband?’

Where did he go?” They all shook their heads and replied with no. They knew clearly where you were, but kept it away from me and did not tell me...”

“But now, you know where I am?”

“I am so eager to see you now!”

“There will be a day for our reunion.”

“That will be many years from now. I am missing you every day, and I am crazy thinking of you.”

“You will be seeing me in dreams for sure,” you tried to make it reassuring.

“What do you mean?” your wife stopped weeping.

“As one saying tells, you will be dreaming at night of what you are thinking about in the daytime...”

“I hope to see you in dreams.”

“Definitely,” you tried to comfort her.

“Please call every day, eh? Though I am not seeing you in person, it makes me comfortable to hear your voice.”

“All right. One phone call a day.”

Since then, you made a call to your wife every night, as at that time it would be the next morning for your wife who had just woken up from her dreams.

“Hi, darling, how’s your sleep?”

“I had a dream again.”

“What did you dream of?”

“You.”

“See, the saying is correct. You dreamed of me. What was I doing then?”

“When I found you, you were already living with another woman...I pulled you and dragged you, trying to take you home, but you did not want to go...”

“No! No! That’s impossible. Please do not think of such nonsense.”

“Impossible? As you could leave me, you could possibly find another woman.”

“You have been with me for many years, and suffered a lot. How could I have the heart to desert you and find a new love? Only if...”

“Only if what?”

“Only if you don’t want to stay with me.”

“How could I not want to stay with you? I want to be you for a whole life.”

“That would be good.”

“Please don’t approach other women. Please wait for me...”

“All right. I will be waiting for you.”

“I feel relieved with that.”

“What happened in your dream after that?”

“I woke up from crying. It was two in the early morning then. I sat up and held a quilt thinking only of the dream. The more I thought, the more I was feeling sad. At the end, I was exhausted from crying, and lay down. In a while, I had another dream.”

“Dreaming of me again?”

“Yes. I was still looking for you everywhere in the streets. All of a sudden, when I looked back, I saw a man with uncombed hair and dirty face begging in the street. I felt it was so familiar to me, and walked slowly towards to him, thinking that could not be my husband. When I got close I found it was really you!”

“Really? I became a beggar, did I?” and began to laugh.

“Nothing funny at all. Please tell me the truth; are you having a good life there?”

“Yes, very good. I work in the daytime and write at night, with a strong health and a happy mind...nothing better than this.”

“I am happy to hear that you are fine.”

“As I am here, please don’t worry about me. Just look after yourself well.”

A few days after that were spent in peace. One day, your wife’s voice suddenly turned extremely terrified.

“I dreamed of that red spider!”

“Did it chase after you as well?”

“No. I was walking in the street when I found a circle of shadow covering me. I looked up and found a giant red spider was dropping down from the sky... I was scared to wake up.”

“Tell me, what happened to you?”

“I...dare not tell you.”

“Don’t be afraid, please tell me.”

“The national security policemen came to our home...and interrogated me for two hours...and took away some of your manuscripts...”

“Did they harm you?”

“What have you done over there?”

“I just wrote several articles and spoke out some truth...”

“Please do not write any more! I am begging you! Please have some concerns over me...”

“All right. I promise.”

However, your wife still could not get away from that nightmare. She was just like that beautiful butterfly stuck on the spider web. The more it struggled, the more tightly it would be stuck. You were frustrated and deeply worried about your wife. But you had no way out. As you were far away overseas, how could you find a way to rescue her?

One day you finally heard your wife’s voice with no more fear but extreme tranquillity.

“I have no more nightmares.”

“That’s good,” you were relieved, “I am really happy for you.”

“From now on, I don’t need to have you call any more.”

A type of heart-piercing coldness came out of your wife’s voice.

“Why?”

You were shouting to phone.

“I have taken refugee in Buddhism and entered the door of emptiness.”

“Are you kidding, my sweetheart?”

“Dear almsgiver, the monks do not lie. As we were once husband and wife, I am informing you of it. Please take good care of yourself. Amitabha!”

You were shocked into stillness, standing there with dull eyes.

The phone was hung up at the other end, leaving only buzzing in your ears.

After you came back from shock, you tried to redial the number but it could not be connected.

One familiar world, a world you once lived for over half of your life, a world full of miseries but with some warmth for you to miss, closed its door to you so cruelly!

One drop of tear came out of your eye. Within the teardrop, there was a reflection of a barren hill, upon which an ancient temple was there. A lonely lamp was lit in the temple. A woman was sitting beside it, with a giant spider web hanging over her head. The spider web was expanding gradually without her realization, getting thicker and thicker, and finally wrapped up the woman and the whole ancient temple...

The tear fell down and broke on the ground into a big water flower. The eyes without tear were getting empty and dull.

Right at that time, you heard a sound of something sliding. That sound was almost too delicate to notice. However, you still heard it. It was like as far as blowing from the faraway edge of the sky, and also like as near as just before the eyes. That sound seemed so familiar that you had heard it somewhere before. While you were thinking, you were surprised to find that a thread was hanging down before your face. Upon the thread, there was a tiny spider that was climbing up and going down now and then...

Original texts in Chinese can be found at <http://www.penchinese.com/zxyz/54/054lwj.htm>

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WANG Ju, writer, member of ICPC. His works got published since 1986, including short stories: *Black Sparrows*, *the Faraway Mountain*, and *Accompanied by Beasts*. In 1997, he wrote a novel: *the Dancing of Devil Beasts*, but it was not published until 2000 and soon was banned in China. He is living in USA at present.

(Translated by CHEN Biao)

To A Friend and Other Poems

By LI Hong



To A Friend

We drank the same water in Yong River
 And became crazy youth on campus, one after another.
 We will meet as firmly as a rock standing in wind and rain
 Despite nowhere to seek each other after overcoming disaster!

2005-08

The Fall Time

This fall time is longer than expected in recollection
 But shorter than a drop of rain.

By old house a calabash from last year is hanging from a stand of cane,
 And has always kept silent to the stories in reality or fiction.

Into the sliver of a stone wall, seeping in with the water of rain
 There is also a small lizard in green.
 It is standing on my keyboard, and its protruding eyes are rotating,
 Appearing to hint that I should go out for something.

As my whole hometown under a lazy Fall sun has been falling,
 I cast aside the book in my hand, and start packing.

2005-10

Mother Earth

One must get strength from mother earth! Bend down
 And put the cheek close to the ground, at the same point as the insects, fallen leaves and dried grasses.

Feel the breath of soil,
 And listen to the whizzing from the deep earth, which indicates the spring swiftly and violently approaching.

Due to sunlight, the eyes that have long been shut indoors are flowing tears;
 Due to the mountain wind after morning fog, the sad vegetation becomes joyful!

A maritime area is cut open from a slit in rock,
And her sky blue and vastness are just the nature of Mother Earth.

A kind of voice walked out of the mainland -
Whitman, Neruda and my friends have already started singing!

Mother Earth! No one can betray her,
Nor even strangle the fact that Mother Earth is rejuvenating.

One who gets strength from Mother Earth is the one to whom God grants happiness.
An ant has climbed up the bridge of my nose, gently yelling: Mother Earth!

2006-04

Who Weeps for You, Aegean Sea

In my hands, Aegean Sea, the huge sky, blue like myth,
Is suddenly stifled. Who are weeping?
The beautiful princess in Phoenicia, your Zeus,
Your Crete, and your goddess of love Aphrodite.

Aegean Sea, sliding from my hands,
Has stopped breathing. A drop of blood has flowed
From ancient Greece to the Spring of 2006. Who are weeping?
Your children who spread in another corner of the world,
The people who cannot fall asleep at night, and every
Noble soul who yearns for freedom.

I remembered that night, when crossing the Greek Peninsula and
Asia Minor, with Europe's fragrance, you, Aegean Sea,
Arrived in my dream.
At that moment, even sleep-talk became distinct:
Stealing the Western fire, to boil the Eastern tripod.
Even the palpitation was not so timid as it had been in the past.
The lies and truth, the evil and justice, the dark and light
Have gradually become clear under your blue waves.

Who are weeping? Just this afternoon
The singing of Aegean Sea was cut at your throat.
On the screen
Between my powerless fingers
Your pale body, losing blood, fell down like a marble statue.
From the dreaming blue sky the blood dripped at once.
Oh, Aegean Sea, with a bow and arrows on your shoulder and a pair of wings on your back,

Who are weeping?

A drop of blood has flowed from ancient Greece to the Spring of 2006.
The cold wave came as a surprise, raining and snowing simultaneously.
Innumerable times, I have started your domain name, Aegean Sea
But your beautiful looks cannot be searched anywhere.
In the Spring, when being silenced and when hesitating to go,
Aegean Sea, who are still weeping for you?

2006-03-13. Before dawn.

**Aegean Sea was a website on humanities, of which the author was the chief editor, and it was shut down under the government order.*

The Imperial Nightmare under Tank Tracks

- The 17th Anniversary of June Fourth in China

17 years ago, a summer night.

The tank tracks were the lines of a steel torrent
Running over the remains of Hu Yaobang
And over the heart of Zhao Ziyang,
Rolling over the chests of Beijing residents
And over a pair of twitching slender arms, a Tsinghua girl...

The tanks came around! From Muxidi
They thundered and advanced toward the Square:
Where their tracks passed over,
There was left the longest brooding road in human memory.

The engines were roaring! The tracks were clanging!
This night, the Flowers of Evil growing from the bloody Wall of the Paris Commune were in full bloom at last.
Why had a spectre,
Which the world had seen to be wicked,
Gone from bleeding, to cruellest bloodshed?

For 150 years, what price mankind has paid!
From Auschwitz to the Gulag
From Prague Spring to the decade-long catastrophe of the Cultural Revolution,
This night, the play of the "Communist Manifesto"
Staged a final madness at last!

The engines were roaring! The tracks were clanging!
Starting from Poland, the Berlin Wall and the Eastern Bloc,
Collapsing in the noises of the tanks, this night,
Together with the red walls of the Kremlin
The bloody banner of Soviet empire in the rumbling echoes,
Had no choice but to drop...

But in the scene of massacre, after the army marched away
Business went on as usual.
Kill two hundred thousand to be stable for 2 decades, said an old voice.
After me, the deluge! Said another voice, trembling.

It was a night of complete suicide -
Lies committed suicide before the truth
The People's Army committed suicide before their folks
The rulers committed suicide before the trial of legitimacy
A fake Republic committed suicide.

When the tanks rolled, the one who had not committed suicide was Taiwan:
Wiping off the blood and dusting off the past
In 1996 Taiwan launched universal suffrage.
A most powerful vote
Had been cast in the Square that night.

The other side of the Strait has fallen into the boundless fear
The deceased have been freed from fear
The surviving have seen through the fear
Only an executioner, in his life
Cannot ever escape the nightmare of fear
In fact, the most deadly is the fear of fear
Which is the fate that God arranged for him.

On 4th of June 1989, I died
But survived behind bars after the smoke was gone -
As a witness
I have yet to present my testimony to the Final Judgment
As a poet, after the end of the imperial nightmare,
I would like to write for a lifetime
A poem about compassion and affection!

2006.5.28. Ningbo

Translator's note: this poem was listed among 8 pieces of author's writings as criminal evidences against him in the court verdict that sentenced him to six years imprisonment

on "inciting subversion of the State power".

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LI Hong, pseudonym of ZHANG Jianhong, is poet, playwright, freelance writer and a member of *Independent Chinese PEN* as well as the honorary member of *Melbourne and American PEN centres*. On 6th September 2006, he was taken from his home by the police into custody in Ningbo City, Zhejiang Province, China and later sentenced to six years imprisonment and one year deprivation of political rights on "inciting subversion of state power". On 5th June 2010, he was released on medical parole for he could not survive without life support under very critical conditions after having served more than 3 years and 9 months of his 6-year sentence.

(Translated by Yu ZHANG)

198964 (Excerpts)

By WANG Jianhui



It was not raining, so I could go back home on foot again.

The lights on the street were pretty bright. But no pedestrians could be seen on the road.

Silence.

I had been used to this kind of silence, and already took it as an enjoyment long before: walking on the street with my hands and legs getting exercise. Passing by Coral Sea Spa Entertainment Centre where a dozen cars were parked, I knew this was a place to have fun with girls. It was so late; however some rich people still could not go to sleep and came out to look for fun. They were simply burning money. But I had to go back home so late after work for making a living and supporting the family.

“What a comparison in this world!” Just after a sigh in mind, I already passed the spa club with huge placard lights...and with the change of space, along with the “out of sight, out of mind” cultural tradition inherited from our ancestors and implanted deep in our blood, I threw behind me the unpleasant comparison which flashed in my mind just now and could possibly cause psychological unbalance...

Turning right, going straight to East Winds Bridge, turning left and crossing another bridge, I entered into a street with dense trees. Coming through thick leaves, the lights above my head became dim casting upon the street. As if the lights were lost. However, it did not make any difficulty for me to see the road under my feet...to go home without a hitch.

At a crossing, I just passed half of it when a bicycle rushed at me all of a sudden. I dodged a bit. With my quick reaction and if the rider could control a little bit, a crash could be definitely avoided. However, it seemed the rider did not intend to make any effort. He fell over when he was riding by and brushing me slightly.

In gloomy shadows, he was lying on the ground and looked as if in great pain.

I asked: Are you all right?

He replied: All right? I can feel something wrong, and seriously wrong.

Before I had time to speak again, another man riding a bicycle came over. He had a pair of thin-rimmed glasses and looked quite weak. He took a look at the ground and asked: What's wrong with you?

Pointing at me, the man on the ground replied: He knocked me down.

I challenged: I knocked you down? I even did not say you bumped into me!

The other man asked the man lying on the ground: How are you feeling?

With hearing this, I came to understand these two knew each other. Right on cue, that man said to me: We'd better go to the teahouse near us to make everything clear, to see who should be responsible.

I said: How could any tea house still open for business?

That man replied: Just a few yards ahead.

True as he said, a SOHO a little bit over Power Design Academy still had lights on. “Maybe it's still open,” I was thinking while having a glimpse of the light sign with the word

“hotel” on it. Then, I started to go in front of them. They were following me all the time, neither too close nor too far away, as if they were confident enough that I would not run away. After a turning and before getting into a lift to go upstairs, they got close to me. I was thinking: trouble comes. But another thought came up. It was too late to run away. Luckily I did not have much money with me. They could take all of it. It was all right to me. This is a typical mentality of “if you want money, I have none; if you want life, I have one”. People would care about nothing if they were in such a situation. In a money-oriented era like this, having no money means having no lives.

They sandwiched me between them before they pressed the button in the lift. Level 13. What an unlucky number! I knew clearly that no teahouse would be up so high as at Level 13. It’s clear that I have come across bandits tonight. But I stayed pretty calm. I was even thinking: my calmness might have something to do with carrying not so much money with me.

I made no resistance, not even a bit. They might have never come up with such an altitude. I even could see from their faces some unease and panic. If at that moment I told them I was an undercover police, they would definitely believe me. But I did not make such a risk. The reason was I did not have much money with me. If...in case...they were cornered and pulled out a knife...as it happened not long ago that there came out a ”folk hero”, Yang Jia, who killed only police. I knew there were so many people nowadays hating the police. Better not to voluntarily put myself upon the knife. What’s more, I also hate the police. I will never take such a name to discredit myself.

Walking to a room, I kept calm between them. From their stiff movement, I could see they were more nervous than me. Obviously, it took them more time than me to walk for such a short distance.

At long last, we entered a room and closed the door. They finally felt relieved. Their facial expressions were getting enriched.

In this room, there was another man. Apparently, it was well prepared and plotted.

“Make an offer for compensation!” They started the talk with money, quite fitting into the social trends of the times.

Pointing at the man who fell down from his bicycle, I replied: He got no injuries. He fell over by himself.

The bicycle man hit back: I did not get injured? My waist seems get broken.

The man, waiting in the room for us to come back, made a voice: “Don’t say too much nonsense.” From the way he was talking, I knew he was the boss to the other two. Well as expected, he turned to me and stared straight into my eyes, saying with no compromise: “Tell me the truth! How much money do you have with you?”

I replied: Only a little over sixty Yuan.

From my eyes, he already had his judgment that I did not tell a lie. He said to the other two: It’s really unlucky today.

The man with thin-rimmed glasses said: Brother Xu, we were not on a right street. Nobody would come out so late at midnight with a big fortune. If so, when could we reach our goal?

“Don’t talk too much. What’s most important now is safety. Safety first. Don’t let the Communist Party get us all in. Once in jail, it would be useless even with plenty of money.”

Hearing their conversation, I thought it was not as simple as a normal robbery to these guys. But I said nothing, just emptying my pockets of all the money to hand over: “Here you are. It’s

all here.”

“With such a small amount, not enough to get a hotel room for one night.”

“That’s all I have.” Seeing them say nothing, I added: “Then, I have to go now!”

“All right!”... “Oh, no, wait a minute. Hand over your bag for a search.” I took the bag over. The man with glasses put his hand in and got out a bankcard from the Construction Bank: Dragon Card. Smiles came to his face immediately. He waved the card and asked: “How much in the card?”

I answered: not much, seemingly over a hundred Yuan, believe me.

“What’s the PIN number? Quick!” He appeared very aggressive. I could understand it quite well. In their profession like this, being aggressive could intimidate people.

I had a clear idea of how much I had in that piece of plastic card. It was not worth to take a risk. So I gave them the PIN number: ”198964.”

“198964?”

“198964!” I confirmed.

“Why 198964?”

I told them: For not to forget.

“198964.”

”Yes, unforgettable and should not be forgotten.”

With these words, we retreated into silence. I had a feeling: we were combined by something common.

“Did you have something to do with June the 4th Movement too?”

“Yes,” I replied, ”that year, I was sentenced to forced labour camp for one year for a crime of Counter-revolutionary Propaganda and Incitement. ”

“Your punishment was not so heavy,” the boss said, “I was sentenced to six years in jail.” He turned to ask me: “What did you do?”

I explained: in 1989, I was in Beijing around the date of June the 4th. Actually I had done nothing, just following the marching parade and going to the Square to have a look. I had no clear idea of what to ask for. However, it was definitely sure that I was not satisfied with the Communist Party. But that dissatisfaction was not as strong as that of today. I was really lucky. I did not go there on the night when the Communist Party fired. This is because all streets in Beijing were blocked and there was no public transport at all the day before that. I had to walk from Tian’an Men Square to Bali Village in the eastern suburb. It took me five hours. I was totally exhausted. It was past ten o’clock the next morning when I got up. I was aching all over. So I did not go to the Square that day. As you know, right that day, the Community Party started to kill...

“It sounds like you should not get into trouble.”

I said: I should have no trouble. If I were arrested, nearly all people in Beijing should be arrested. So when I was really arrested and brought to a court, the first words I told them are “you are overrating me to get me in”.

“Then what were you arrested for?”

I continued: after June 4th, Beijing was very chaotic. Soldiers everywhere. I hate soldiers most. I said to the other two fellows---now that we cannot do anything, why not leave here to have fun outside for a while? They all agreed. So we went to a remote village in Anhui Province.

It was really remote. We had nowhere to visit, but staring blankly at the green wheat grass. One of us felt really bored and began to write a documentary on June 4th. To tell you a truth, I really did not know what he was writing. I can only remember that he started his writing with gunshots – “Gottcha! Gottcha!” I did not think too much of his writing style, and stopped to read on.

Just like this, we stayed at that remote village for about one week. One evening, when we were having our dinner, just starting to eat, we heard sounds of car engines coming closer to us. After less than ten seconds, three police cars stopped in front of the door; a dozen of policemen jumped out and rushed in. They quickly formed a circle around us. I watched this kind of scene in movies, but never experienced it. I was totally shocked. They claimed they were there to check ID, and asked us to take out our luggage to be searched. In a moment, they found that writing, just started with a few beginning lines about June 4th.

Just because of that, three of us were put into detention. One of us was released on bail after three months due to endeavours his family made to find superior connections. The one who wrote the article was jailed for two years, and later was released without trial. When he was released, the government did not make any compensation to him, on the contrary, he was asked pay the government two Yuan a day for meals. It was almost one thousand five hundred Yuan for two years. He told me after he was released that upon his release, the man in charge of his case said: “It was right to arrest you at that time; it is also right now not to sue but release you.” Just because he was not tried and therefore not registered, nobody would look after his meals. He had to pay for his meals when he was in prison.

“Haha, haha.” the three men who robbed me burst into laughter: “It’s writing again...exactly the same...What a coincidence!” It was really laughter with tears. I interrupted their laughing: “What about you?”

The boss said: Before June 4th, about the end of May, I was sent by my company to Beijing to collect money. Hey, at that time I was a deputy director at an Agricultural Bank branch, and had a bright future for my career. After I got to Beijing, I stayed in a hotel at Cuiwei Road. Everything was in chaos at that time, and I could not find the man to collect money. As I thought, now that I was in Beijing, why not look around? I suddenly became an idle man, free to go everywhere, however actually without any destination or purpose, just like an ant in a hot pan. At that time, there was one saying getting very popular among people: so as to have a good environment to support the students movement, even pick-pockets stopped their business. After hearing that, I got some comfort for myself: a debt collector like me should stop for a while.

To tell you the truth, when I was in Beijing at that time, I simply followed groups of people and did nothing, just like you. On June 2nd, my company called me to go back, saying that higher authorities requested all companies to call their people back from Beijing. So I went to the railway station to buy a ticket. It was for the afternoon of June 4th.

On the night of June 3rd, I was woken up by sounds of gunshots. I climbed to the windowsill and lifted the curtain to peep outside. Lots of soldiers; lots of tanks. I was thinking at that time: the Communist Party started to kill. Gunshots could be heard now and then. It sounded very close, just hundreds of meters away. I dared not turn on the light, but could not stop my curiosity. After about three in the early morning, large groups of students were walking in the direction of universities. When they passed the soldiers, they chanted “The Internationale”. My blood was boiling along with the singing. How seditious this song is! No

matter the Communist Party could hook so many people when they built up from nothing.

Not quite long after the singing started, the soldiers started to shoot. I saw several students fall down. The students scattered in all directions. Some brave students wanted to run over to rescue those covered in blood, however the gunshots came up again and another two students were down. Continuous cries were floating to the sky. I could hear so clearly at such a high building. Just like having a hand poke deep into my heart. So as to soothe my depression, I did not sleep and wrote down the scenes I saw in the Square. I often liked to do some writings, poems or essays. This time I did not write much. I wrote on normal letter sheets, three papers and less than two thousand words. After the writing, I felt better for sure.

The next day, on the way to railway station, I passed a copying shop. Perhaps I was doomed to be unlucky. I went into the shop and made thirty copies. While waiting for the train, I distributed some among the passengers and got unanimous praise. They praised me as a man of character. On the train, these people, just coming out of Beijing, were discussing as well what happened there. I distributed another dozen to the passengers. When I got off, I still had some copies in my hand. I got home thinking that my experience from this trip was over. However, the next day, as soon as I got to work, our supervisor called me to his office asking me what I did in Beijing. Not until years later did I learn that I was nailed at Beijing Railway Station by undercover police and was tailed right back to my house.

“So you were sentenced to six years in jail simply because of that?”

The boss said: Yes. This is what I said before – it's all because of literature. Literature has done deep harms to me! Some people, relying on literature – boasting and flattering – have climbed high; some people, because of literature – exposing the reality – have fallen to be prisoners.

Due to the common experience, our previous hostility disappeared instantly. More exactly, we instantly became friends. I asked them: how could they get to do this kind of business in current situation?

The boss said: To tell you the truth, we are planning to set up an organization.

Upon hearing that, I interrupted him immediately and said: better not to know about it. I don't need to know anything I am not allowed. The more I know, the more dangerous I will be.

“Actually, it's nothing at all if you know. Everything we do is following open, rational...”

Before he finished, I thought I understood and continued: ...non-violence?

“No. Just the opposite. We are advocating violence. However, what we are establishing is a revolution with violence at a minimum price.”

Seeing me fully puzzled, he explained: There emerged a figure called Yang Jia. Have you heard that?

As I nodded, he continued: It is just as what Yang Jia said---If you don't give me an explanation, I have to give you one. As you know, nowadays the government officials are getting much bolder to bully ordinary people. Some people could not endure it, and went to the government buildings to hang themselves to make a protest as their choice. But to me, dying in this way is dying in vain. Just add some more tragic colour to this era. Those officials would not feel a little bit sorry themselves. They will be even getting more aggressive. So, as I am thinking, if Chinese people cannot survive, and if they choose not to commit suicide but to fight to lives with their own lives, their situations might be totally different.

“If you don't let me live well, I won't let you live well either; if you don't let me live on, I

won't let you live on either. Right?"

The leader agreed: Yes, that's what they said. Being an official can earn the most in the society, but let's make the most dangerous profession too. If they can think about the consequence and have a shiver when they are doing something bad, I believe this world will be getting better.

"A single effort will not bring about overall social reactions."

"You are right," the leader apparently felt excited at our shared understanding: this is why we want to set up an organization. Its aim is to put all similar things together. For instance, once someone killed a government official or staff somewhere, we will immediately make an online announcement proclaiming that it is organized by our organization. And we will send over a big amount of money as financial support to the family of the killer. Don't let people die in vain. Make the dead be happy and unworried for the life of his family.

"It needs lots and lots of money!"

The man with glasses said in blush: because of that, we do what we did to you tonight.

I had a sudden understanding to what had happened to me tonight. What a pity, I said, I don't have much money. Otherwise, I would support you in secret. As for the way of your doings, I think it is reasonable and appropriate as far as the social structure is concerned. "Violent revolution at minimum cost..." I repeated and asked: What are you going to name your organization?

"World's End."

"World's End?" I asked.

"Yes. Make the government officials feel at every moment that they are on a cliff at world's end with no way back. Once they do something bad, they may possibly lose their lives. If their supervisors are not satisfied with them, they will lose their positions; however, if they make the masses dissatisfied, they may lose their lives. Which are more important, official positions or lives?"

"What is the slogan for World's End then?" I asked

The bicycle man was silent all the time, and I nearly forgot he was still sitting on a chair in a corner. He made a voice now: "Slogan? We haven't thought out a very suitable slogan yet. However, the main idea should be making the government officials the most dangerous profession in the society."

"But, have you thought about it or not, once government officials are killed, the Communist Party will make them heroes through the media they control? The results will not be what you expected. Maybe just the opposite."

The leader, deep in thinking, said: We have thought about what you mentioned. That is not what we can control. However, as I think, what we can do is that we also need to do our best to set up heroes in the civil society. Take Yang Jia as an example. We have written some poems online to praise him. I was even thinking to set up a monument or a temple for him in his hometown. We gave it up just because of not enough money.

According to our current situation, what we can only do is to spread by word of mouth the names and deeds of those people to whom government officials do not feel comfortable and finally non-governmental criteria will come into being to go against those established by the state-controlled media. Gradually, and bit by bit, word of mouth will change from invisibility to visibility...

Sweet discourse makes short nights. Time went by as fast as winds. It was already half past five. I said I had to go home. The leader said: we had to go as well. So we went downstairs together. Near crossing after getting into the street, I saw an ATM machine.

I went up to it, and took out my bankcard...the leader held up my hand and said: no...

I looked into his eyes and said: as I mentioned before, there is not much money in it. Take it as my donation to you please.

The leader let go of my hand. I insert the bank into the ATM machine and pinned in the six digits 198964. I took out all of the money from the card and handed it to him: Don't think it too little. This is all I can do for you...

"Thanks."

"I wish you success."

"Goodbye!"

"Bye!"

We disappeared from each others' view. When I walked to the crossing of Shui Nian and First Ring Roads, I looked up at the sky and found the east had already turned reddish---

Day is soon to break...

September 28, 2008

Original texts in Chinese can be found at <http://www.penchinese.com/zxzx/58/058wjh.htm>

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WANG Jianhui, a novelist and member of ICPC. He was partially involved in the pro-democracy movement in 1989 and then sentenced to one year "Reeducation Through Labour" for "counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement". His major novels include *Human Thinking*, *Human Path*, *Man with Complex*, and *The Map of China*. He received ICPC Freedom to Write Award in 2009.

(Translated by CHEN Biao)

A Fantastic Encounter

By LIU Lu



I. First Encounter

That early morning, when the lamps were still lit the streets in the small county town, I went to a road to catch the first bus for a trial in Qingdao City. There were just few people when I boarded the bus, which made no sign to start. I told the driver that he must arrive in Qingdao before 8:00 am; otherwise I could not take his bus. As we knew each other well, he said that there was no problem to be in time for the trial.

About half an hour later, the bus seats were almost full. Hurried by the passengers, the driver slowly started the bus. At that moment, a girl rushed to the bus and was pulled onto the board by the fat woman conductor. The girl sat down next to me, and asked: "Brother, is this bus going to Qingdao?"

"Sure," I said.

"When shall we get Qingdao, please?" The girl was tall and pretty in a light blue dress, showing the purity of a girl student. Her Mandarin, with an accent of the northeastern provinces, sounded gentle and sweet.

"Regardless of the time, you have no choice since this is the first bus," impatiently rebuffed the woman conductor.

The conductor looked fierce with much flesh on her face. The girl dared not to ask any more.

The bus reached the end of the town. Then it should go south – but suddenly it turned to the east. The passengers questioned one after another, but the driver said lazily, "There are a few more customers to be picked up, just a few minutes delay."

The bus went into a village to get several passengers. After several turns, it was delayed by half an hour. Amid angry condemnations from the passengers, the bus finally headed south in the direction of Qingdao.

I found the girl looking upset, more and more worried.

"Anything troubling you, girl" I asked.

"I'm going to catch the train leaving for Zhuhai at 7:30. Brother, how soon will the bus arrive there?"

“What? This bus would be there at 8:00 if on schedule, not counting. You will miss the train.” I was shocked.

The girl was so worried and cried, “I have already bought the ticket, what shall I do with it?”

I criticized the conductor: “How come you let her on board without clarification? Who will be responsible for her missing the train?

All of the passengers on the bus had suggestions for the girl. One said that she should take a plane at Liuting Airport. Another advised her to get off the bus and return to Weifang City to take train instead. Some suggested her to change her train ticket.

“Many of my companions will take this train. I have to take it because I have never been to the South. I am afraid of being lost.” The girl was drenched in tears.

“Why are you crying? We could not get there even if we could fly. What is the use of crying?” The conductor was impatient again.

I suddenly remembered a company for whom I was serving as its legal advisor. Perhaps they could send a car for me to take a lift.

I told the girl: “Don’t worry. I will make a phone call and try to find a car.”

I called to Mr. Jiang, a director of Huaqing Company, “Jiang, I need to urgently get Qingdao to catch the train at 7:30. Can you get a car for me?”

“The Benz was not at home but there is a Santana.” Jiang said readily.

“Don’t worry about which car as long as it can reach the train station within half an hour. You immediately get your car ready on the roadside. My bus will be there in 3 minutes.”

Hearing this, the driver drove the bus much faster while the girl smiled her tears away, “Thanks, thank you, brother.”

to the car at once.

When we got in the car, I took a look at my watch. It was 6:50.

The ticket showed the train departure time at 7:29. We had 39 minutes to reach the station and get her on the train!

“Where are you going on business so urgently? Why didn’t you plan it earlier?” grumbled Jiang.

I had to apologize: “It is this little sister who cannot catch the train on time.”

“I know that you, the grand lawyer, are acting again as a hero to rescue a damsel in distress. All right, drive fast; let us get Counsel Li a good name.”

The car was flying. We reached downtown in less than 20 minutes. The driver knew some detours to avoid a lot of traffic jams. When almost at the station, we were stopped by a red light. I looked at my watch; there was only one minute left. The girl was worried to tears again.

I shouted: “Go through it!”

The driver was hesitating, but Jiang also shouted: “GO!”

The car went through the red light leaving police swearing behind us, and then a police car coming after us. When the car arrived at the public square in front of the station, I took the girl while Jiang carried her luggage, running toward the barrier. As soon as we pushed her through the barrier, it closed. The time to check-in was over, not a second missed!

Watching her figure disappearing into the station entrance, we both felt a great sense of relief. At least she didn’t miss the train.

II. See You Again

We came out from the station hall, to see the driver with all of his grievances arguing with a policeman. The policeman, his face livid, was unbending and unforgiving, and going to take the driver into custody. I came over and said, “Comrade Policeman, it is proper to fine him. Is it just going through a red light? I will pay the penalty.”

“I have never seen such bold people as you. Was catching the train a good excuse?” said the policeman.

“Of course not,” I said. “We didn’t mean to break the rules but had to do boldly what is righteous to help others. If you insist on taking the driver into custody, we have no choice but go to court with your public security bureau. Anyhow, we would not have to pay anything to a counsel because I am a counsel myself.”

The policeman was so angry as to be amused: “Did you name it ‘to do boldly what is righteous’? You might not have had such an enthusiasm if it had been an old lady. All right, let it be a fine of 200 Yuan.”

Then we drove to the court. Jiang asked me: “What is the girl to you? Have you found a little lover?”

I jabbed him with my fist, “What nonsense. Just picked her up on the way; I do not even know her name.”

Two days later, I received a short message:

“Brother, I have arrived in Zhuhai. I will never forget you. Wang Chun.”

I remembered that, in the car, I had left her a business card so she could phone me if she did not catch the train.

Was her name Wang Chun?

III. See You Again

One year later, I went on business to a city in southern China. After supper, Mr. Song, a friend of mine invited us to sing songs. A huge crowd of us went to an extravagantly decorated karaoke club, known as World in Heaven. The friend told us that the minimal spend there should be 800 Yuan per customer. All of the waitresses were the college students who could perform in English. Mr. Du, well known as a Don Juan, was pleased and repeatedly inquired whether there were any “special services”. He boasted himself of having “taken countless girls”, but never “taken” a college girl with high taste. Hearing these words, everyone around the table roared with laughter. Mr. Song taunted him:

“Mr. Du has got too low a taste. If you wanted to do that kind of thing, what is a point to pay 800 Yuan? You could find any nightclub where you would pay 300 Yuan for so many girls for you. The World in Heaven is a particular place for taste, sentiment, verse and prose, song and music, dance and piano, English, gentleness and romantics, etc., not the right place for a Don Juan like you to go.”

Talking and laughing, we entered the room reserved for us. A tall, pretty head waitress in a fashionable dress brought a group of more than 30 girls crowding into the room. All of them were tall and charming, thus making those northern provincial bumpkins feel foolish to watch and too dazzled to choose. Mr. Du blurted out:

“Everyone is an absolute beauty here, worthy of the World in Heaven, so damnably true to its name.”

Du and Song selected their girls and let me do so. I suddenly found the head waitress looking familiar, somehow. When I was about to ask for her, Song laughed about my staring at her, “How does the Grand Lawyer not know the rules? The head waitress is not to entertain the guests”

The pretty head waitress smiled and nodded to me, and went out with the rest of the girls.

I asked the girl picked out by Du, “What is the name of your head waitress?”

The girl didn’t answer but smiled. Du shouted:

“Her name is Du Shi Niang. Grand Lawyer, you are so funny! How could a girl in a brothel give a real name? Do you want to rescue someone from the brothel?”

Du’s words reminded me at once. I told the girl: “Fetch me a bottle of dry red wine and let your head waitress bring it here herself.”

The girl went out happily. In a moment, the head waitress, with a cell phone hanging from her neck, came in with the red wine.

I took out my cell phone, searched out the number I had stored one year ago and dialled it. The head waitress’ phone was ringing cheerfully. I held my cell phone and stared into her eyes. Her smile disappeared.

“Are you Wang Chun?”

“Are you ...Brother?”

Coming across Wang Chun made my mind unsettled. I had thought she was a college student going to find a job in the southern China. If we should have had a chance to meet again, it should have been be in a fine office building or at a stylish management office of a foreign company. I had never thought that it would be in this evil place with such a foul atmosphere. I felt pain in my heart like seeing a pure narcissus thrown onto the ground and trampled underfoot by many brutish shoes.

Beside me, Song and Du began flirting with the girls, embracing the one on the left while hugging the one on the right, and even while yelling like wolves. These scenes of normally commonplace life looked now so perverse and ugly that I could not stand to watch any longer but felt waves of nausea. I excused myself with a headache and fled alone from the room to my hotel.

After washing my head in the washroom, I still felt hot all over. I stripped thoroughly and took a shower in cool water. The cold December weather made me blue over my body, as there was no heating system at the hotel in the south. I had to rub with towels to warm up my body, thus gradually calming down my mood.

Putting on clean clothing and throwing myself onto the bed, I begun laughing at myself. What was the matter with me? What did a girl I barely knew have anything to do with me?

The doorbell rang. I knew that there were some girls visiting the local hotels for their business at night, and so answered crossly: "There is no one in here!"

The bell kept ringing, ceaselessly. I sensed something was wrong with my answer. I angrily opened the door and shouted, "Everyone is dead. What are you ringing for?"

Standing outside the door was Wang Chun.

Wang Chun had removed her evening make-up. She wore the same light blue dress as when I sent her into the station, and the same ponytail hairstyle, appearing with the same purity of a girl student as a year before. It surprised me even more than the moment when I had seen her at the nightclub.

"You? Why do you come here?"

"I came here to see you, brother."

"Was it Song who told you? Where are they?" I reached out my head to look around.

"They are still enjoying themselves. Brother, may I come in for a while?"

"We'd better go to the cafe. The room is in a mess," I said. "You may wait for me at the hall. I shall get changed and be down there soon."

I turned around and entered the room. Wang Chun suddenly hugged my waist, holding me tightly with her face on my back, and weeping.

I could feel her chest rising and falling fiercely as she sobbed.

I was standing still. Wang Chun said nothing but desperately cried and cried, as if heartbroken, as if suffering

On the following day, when I was about to leave the city, she, with three of her waitresses, invited me to have tea in a teahouse. All of three girls were the students from the Art Department of Shenzhen University, each prettier and brighter than the other. Their gentle tones of southern Mandarin sounded charming in a different way.

"My brother is a lawyer. How can those pigs be compared to him?" Wang Chun said proudly.

IV. Separation by Death

I received a phone call from the criminal division of the High Court in the capital city of that southern province. A female judge in the fine tone of southern Mandarin told me: "A female inmate wants to see you. She said that you were her sole relative."

I was greatly surprised and promptly asked: “Is her name Wang Chun? What crime has she committed?”

“She has also another name, Wang Xiaofang. She committed an intentional homicide. We have approved her death sentence. She will be taken to the execution ground in three days.”

Sounding as thunderstruck as I was, I said, “I will be there soon. Judge, please make an arrangement for me to see her, anyhow.”

I flew to the city the same day. The female judge told me that the girl had no relatives because she was the illegitimate daughter of a pair in the last group of the Educated Youth who had been sent to the countryside from Shanghai. Nobody knew who her parents were. She was raised and supported for her college education by an old man in northeastern China. It was a pity that the old man had been killed in a road accident two years ago, when she had been about to graduate.

“Who is her defence counsel? She has committed a crime of murder. How come have I heard nothing?” I asked.

“She had refused to hire an attorney, and so the court appointed a legal aid lawyer for her defence according to the law. It was not until her appeal against the death sentence was lost that she said that you were her only relative, and asked to see you. What relation are you? Her fiancée?” she asked.

Tears streamed down my cheeks. Then I said: “I am her brother, a brother who only met her twice.”

Because of my career, I had been in countless detention centres all over the country. In every city I had been to, the most familiar place was a detention centre.

Every detention centre had three layers of security, but a lawyer could at best only get through the second set of doors.

But this time I was brought to enter the third. It was a special cell for one condemned to death. Besides Wang Chun, there were three other prisoners in the cell only for serving her as she had been locked so tightly that she could hardly even move her fingers freely anytime.

According to the prison rules for a prisoner condemned to death, Wang Chun was wearing handcuffs and leg irons and was locked onto a special bed that could be lift up vertically to keep holding her tightly when she had to stand up during the day. To meet with me, she was unlocked from the bed but neither from handcuffs nor leg irons.

A detention discipline officer told me that Wang Chun had obeyed the prison rules and behaved well. She had spent her days folding the paper into origami ducks. But recently she had gone on

a hunger strike because she could not fold the ducks any more due to her handcuffs locked onto the bed. The officer grumbled, “It is a rule, which we can’t change. She does not care about death and still very peaceful although sentenced to death. She never made any trouble like other prisoners. But because she is unable to fold a little piece of paper, she has gone on a hunger strike. Tell me why she is so strange? What on earth is she doing this for?”

Accompanied by the female judge, I met Wang Chun.

“Brother, have you come?”

“What happened to you? How has this happened?”

“Brother, let’s not talk about it, OK? I will be gone. Let me have a good look at you.”

“Why didn’t you tell me? I am your brother, and I am also a lawyer. I could have defended you and saved you.”

“It is my fate. I don’t want you to know those dirty things. I will take them with me when I go, but leave you a clean memory. Do you understand, brother?”

I choked silently with tears pouring.

“Brother, I have been here for 100 days. Every day, the only thing I do is to fold origami ducks for you. Up to today, I have folded a thousand ducks on each of which is the same phrase – YOU ARE MY UNIQUE ONE.”

I looked at these paper ducks, speechless. I remembered the discipline officer asking why she had gone on a hunger strike, and now my heart answered that she did it for love.

I recalled the fantastic encounter at the World in Heaven and asked her why she had not changed her cell phone in Southern China. Wang Chun said, “I always felt that you might call me sometime. Brother, my intuition was right.”

She smiled, like a spring flower blooming, so magnificent, and so bright.

Yes, that phone number was the only bond that let us meet again.

The judge began to look at her watch. I knew that the meeting would soon be over. Wang Chun asked me: “Brother, will the bullet hit me in the head when I am shot?”

I glanced at the judge and nodded.

“Can they shoot me from the front? In the forehead?”

“Why?”

“I don’t want to be shot from behind,” Wang Chun said calmly. “I would like to see the golden bullet hitting into my forehead and bursting into a peach flower. After my death, brother, I would like to become a peach flower, blooming before your window every year. Its blooming will mean I am smiling at you; the falling blossoms will mean my farewell to you.”

“I will be blooming for you, brother, because you are my unique one.”

A few days later, when I was leaving the sad city with Wang Chun’s ashes and her origami ducks, the female judge told me, “Your sister stabbed her boss, who had been harassing her, with a sharp knife – and she died a virgin.”

First draft on Christmas Eve, 2005

Final Amendment on Christmas Day, 2005

Author’s notes:

This true story happened before Christmas Eve in 1998. The story was reported on the media in Guangzhou City. I recalled it because I saw a piece of news that over 30 young girls’ corpses had been found at a place in my home province of Shandong. These young unidentified girls had been murdered and buried after being raped and robbed by a gang of criminals. This evil organization had been doing such dirty work for a long time.

These girls, who lived at the bottom of society and who could not be identified even after their deaths, have been discriminated against, humiliated and abandoned by the security system of this society. It is said that there are now about 3 million girls like them in the southern cities of our country. They are our sisters.

Wang Chun was just one of them. I could hear her persecuted spirit crying on this peaceful night of Christmas Eve, when it is supposed to a Harmonious and Gold Age in China.

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Liu Lu is the penname of Li Jianqiang, a freelance writer as well as ICPC member, who had been a human rights lawyer defending many of imprisoned writers, journalists and other prisoners of conscience in China, including Yang Tongyan, Li Yuanlong, Guo Qizhen, Yan Zhengxue, Zhang Jianhong, Chen Shuqing, etc. He suffered persecution by the Chinese authorities and his license to practice law was rejected for several years until he fled to USA in 2009 where he has taken political asylum.

(Translated by Taizhi LU & Yu ZHANG)

The First Morning in the Detention Centre

By SUN Baoqiang



Through the window lattice, a beam of the first dawn light silently seeped in. It was so little, so narrow, so thin and so weak. She was sheepishly staring at me, while I was looking at her with tears in my eyes, afraid of scaring her with a single blink.

Dawn Light, you have to be the natural enemy of the darkness, but at this moment you are a frightened soul. You ought to be the embodiment of the brightness, but at this time you are a remnant of a fleeing army. You should be the torch of Prometheus, but at this point you are just a dried lamp buried in oblivion.

The dawn light moved bit by bit, with its pace getting faster, more hurried but less patient. My dawn light, please don't go. You couldn't just leave me alone. Even if you can't help me, please don't run away from me. With you, my heart has been supported. Without you, my heart would be a desert of thousands of miles.

Ring-ring-ring! Ring-ring-ring! Suddenly, the bell rang harshly. The bell sounded shrill and sharp, as if a glass spear was striking a glass shield. The smashing strikes were snapping everyone's nerves.

At this very moment, all the people who were sleeping on the floor sprang up, as if a bomb had been thrown into a pool of carp. In a rush, groups of people headed to the toilet, the window, the water tap and the railing. Four long queues formed quickly at the toilet, the window, the water tap and the railing.

The jail ward was long, narrow and aisle-shaped, with underwear and towels hanging on a rope strung from north to south. Opposite an iron door was window with iron bars that was covered by a fibreglass shield on the outside. Beneath the window, there was a sink on the left side and packages of clothes were piled at the right side.

Aunty Lin was standing by the window with a devout and solemn face, constantly bowing with her hands clasped. When she was still murmuring to herself, people standing in the queue moved around her. Next to her was Sister Big. She repeatedly bowed her head and then made the sign of cross, so she could get the protection from both the Bodhisattva and Jesus. Then came Sister Qin who gave herself a facial massage and a waist exercise to maintain her angel-like face and devil-like body. Unfortunately, she was pushed away by Yugui when her exercise was only half done.

A middle-aged woman named Wai Laodong stood outside the railing. Everybody took their toothbrush from her, and gave it back after brushing their teeth. After that, each one ordered

their breakfast.

“How much do you want?” Wai Laodong turned to me.

“I don’t feel like eating,” I said.

“Eating nothing is not allowed,” she said.

“Then just 50 grams, please,” I said.

“I want... 250 grams!” a tiny voice broke in timorously.

“Who said 250 grams?”

“Me,” Bodkin Eyes answered with a blush on her cheeks.

“You have my word, if there’s a single one grain of rice left, you will be punished!” Wai Laodong said.

“I understand,” Bodkin Eyes replied hurriedly.

“I want 150 grams. I should get enough food and sleep for my court trial.” Lin Jia said, walking towards the toilet with an exciting expression. With a tall and graceful figure, a pretty face and fair skin, she was almost as beautiful as Venus – if she could just keep her mouth shut for a while.

“Little Sun, you know what, although Wai Laodong appears to be in disgrace now, she was once honoured a National Woman Pace-setter,” Lin Jia started talking with an apparent interest, “she was reported by the newspapers, but now she is serving four years’ jail because she accepted a 4000 Yuan bribe.”

“Why was she given such a heavy penalty?” I asked.

“Who lets her be a model? As a model, she was subjected to a public show trial, which meant a severe sentence as done by Strike Hard,” Aunty Lin answered, with a sympathetic sign.

“Strike Hard, Strike Hard, so many wronged spirits were buried there. Will you get a show trial?” Lady Glasses said, swiftly lifting her head.

“On what grounds?” I was shocked, but insisted “I did nothing bad.”

“According to my basic knowledge of Chinese politics, you will definitely be subjected to a show trial,” Lady Glasses said.

“That’s bullshit. A show trial for breaking fences?” Aunty Lin said discontentedly.

“I also gave a speech on the street as well as breaking fences,” I said with honesty.

“Freedom of speech is written in the constitution. Now, there’s no Cultural Revolution any more,” Aunty Lin said.

“The Cultural Revolution has past, but its ghost still exists,” Lady Glasses said with a sarcastic smile, “Get ready for imprisonment.”

“Based on what?” It was unacceptable but I felt frightened.

“Based on my knowledge of the Party’s history, it is a history of fights, negation of negation, purge of purges, censorship of...” Lady Glasses said.

“This is not about the Party’s history but the law,” I shouted at Lady Glasses, “after all, there are public opinions, there are global trends, and there are criminal laws.”

“Public opinion yields to the Party’s history, and criminal law serves the party’s history. As for global trends, as long as China keeps its door shut, there will be no response even though you cry out to the heavens,” Lady Glasses said.

“China has its legacy of 5000 years...” I tried to find an excuse.

“Because of its long historical standing, large amount of waste have accumulated. Because of its profound culture, vast national heritages have been passed down. In addition there is the concept of Descendants of the Dragon – neither Switzerland nor Sweden have been called Countries of the Dragon, but they have had no revolutions or wars. The USA does not have a 5000-year-old culture, but still is the paradise for stowaways from all over the world. No one should expect either that the ruling party could possibly be self-disciplined, or that the intelligentsia could raise a claim,” Lady Glasses said and snorted a laugh.

I have been pondering her words for the last 19 years. I am amazed by the predictability and accuracy and foresight of these words. Nineteen years have already passed, but the clock of history still stays at the very moment. I have no idea how long it will stay. Will it be another 20 years or 50 years, a century or forever?

Bang! Wai Laodong heavily dropped the streamer with a loud crash, accompanied by a puff of steam. The aluminium breakfast boxes were knocking with each other, making a lot of noise. Wai Laodong squatted in order to deliver the breakfast boxes through a hole underneath the door. A person inside the door was receiving the boxes in the same posture, and passed the boxes to the other people. Facing such a scene, I felt deeply sad. Until the court made a decision, we should be suspects instead of criminals. We deserve humane treatment as human being.

The heavy breakfast box put in my hand came with a sudden pain, because it was scalding hot. Then I noticed everyone else had a piece of folded toilet paper in their hands to protect them from the heat.

I used part of my coat to cushion the breakfast box. In the box, there was a lot of rice but just few vegetables. People around me were munching and crunching as they wolfed down their food. Some of them even put their noses into the box. I was confused to see them so hungry, since we were neither famine refugees nor flood victims.

“Hurry up!” Bodkin Eyes said, while eating a large mouthful.

Aunty Lin suddenly stopped eating and looked around nervously. Nobody was outside the iron door. She then wrapped the vegetables in a piece of plastic paper and squeezed it into the gap between the shakedown and the wall. Several other people did the same thing, as if on a production line in a silent film.

“Why haven’t you started eating?” Big Nose asked.

I looked around and realized I had been lagging behind. Many of them had already finished breakfast and were queuing for dish cleaning. Bodkin Eyes was smacking her lips as if she still tasted the food. Compared to her sad looking small face, her tummy was as round as a barrel.

Wai Laodong arrived. “Be quick!” Several voices were urging me. I hurriedly started to eat, but the more anxious I was, the quicker the time went. A pile of breakfast boxes had already been put silently beside Wai Laodong’s feet. She stared at me while I ate, which made me even more anxious and I had difficulty swallowing. What could I do? An idea came to me when I noticed the water ladle.

Rice was easier to chew with water, but having rice and water together in my mouth made it more difficult to swallow. “Hurry up!” voices around were pushing me. I took as much rice as possible in a mouthful, and swallowed it as hard as I could. I was nearly out of breath so I had to stand up and raise my head. Hold on! Hold on! I covered my mouth with my palm to control the nauseous feeling. Dear me! An imprisoned person not only suffered spiritually, but even when eating a meal.

“Take your time, and I’ll be back.” Wai Laodong finally said.

I sat on the ground with great relief. What happened then seemed like a century long. It reminded me a news story about an eating contest in which the fat contestants ate so hard, their faces got as red as turkey-wattles. I had not expected to find myself in the situation, making myself look like a crammed duck.

Suddenly, a bird started singing outside the window. Would it be a cute sparrow, a naughty oriole, a hard-working woodpecker or a bleeding cuckoo? I couldn’t see this little angel across

the iron bars, but the joyful singing couldn't be blocked.

The sound of the wings beating was getting closer. I could imagine its small and tender beak and fluffy body. My angel, I could feel your breath and your voice. We were so close, but yet so far away.

My angel, you own the blue sky, which wouldn't be covered by the dark clouds. You possess the sun, which would never be blocked by the sunspots. You have a beautiful voice, which is an expression of your heart rather than parrot talk. You have bright eyes, which are the mirror of your heart, but not a kaleidoscope. Your singing belongs to yourself, rather than a crow's hymn. Your wings are part of your body, so you just fly away when you need to move. Your spirit is wide and broad, and your body is totally free.

"What are you doing?" a rough voice suddenly interrupted my daydreaming. Wai Laodong was standing outside the iron door waiting for my breakfast box.

The dawn light had disappeared completely. Children's voice could be heard from far away. Could it be a toddler learning to walk or talking? Is it an expression of willingness or teasing? From nine months pregnancy to raising a student, the heavy loads are more than the weight of mountains and the capacity of oceans. A child is always the hope of a family. Who is not taken in the hearts of pitiful parents in the world?"

A hawker was peddling household articles outside the high wall. People need food to survive, and take living in peace as the primary importance. The common people wish to root out corrupt offenders, to live with pride and joy, and to have a strong country. The students want the knowledge. These demands are modest. They are not excessive but well deserved by all citizens.

An elegant waltz drifted over the high wall. It was by Strauss, who although dead, was kept alive in the hearts of all people. Some people are alive, but only on the television, in the newspaper, on the radio and in the overwhelming lies.

A burst of honking horns came over the high wall, accompanied by the screech of brakes. A car is like a country. People's ears could keep clear without horn, while people's lives could not be secured without a brake. A car without brake has neither respect for traffic lights, nor for human lives. This kind of car is no better than a meat grinder.

"White orchid! Jasmine! Smells nice..." A gentle voice with strong local accent came over the high wall, echoing my desire for nature. It was a vibrant morning with every creature waking, a hopeful morning with lives gestating. I looked at the window, although nothing could be seen. I knew that outside the window was Wusong Road, where the shuttle bus always goes.

I spent the 21 years between 1968 and 1989 in the Shanghai Oil Refinery. During these 21 years, I greeted the rosy dawns, fine rains, bleak winds and winter frosts. Wusong Road station was

friendly and familiar, and had become a piece of memory in my life. All in all rushed to my mind. They were trivial but intimate, simple but vivid, ready to come out at my fingertips. As the rosy dawn was rising bit by bit, the shuttle bus was coming. As the rosy dawn was rising bit by bit, we were getting close to the Refinery. When could I be released to home? When could I go to work? I kept wondering about. The persistence, the longing, the yearning was like a fish swimming in a sea, or like a tree rooting into the soil. Only those who have lost their freedom could understand this irremovable sentiment.

At that time I had no idea that after June 5th 1989, irreversible changes would occur for my destiny. That morning had torn my life apart with a dark fracture, which has not yet healed 19 years later.

Since then, the peace and warmth of life disappeared, to be replaced by the humiliation and pain coming into my life.

Original texts in Chinese can be found at

http://boxun.com/hero/200907/sunbaoqiang/3_1.shtml

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SUN Baoqiang, member of ICPC, was sentenced to three years imprisonment for “assembling a crowd to disturb traffic order” due to her involvement in the pro-democratic movement in 1989. She has still been harassed by the government for her free writings.

(Translated by Angela HU)

A Brief of Independent Chinese PEN Centre

Independent Chinese PEN Center (ICPC) is a nongovernmental, nonprofit and nonpartisan organization beyond borders based on free association of those who write, edit, translate, research and publish literature work in Chinese and dedicated to freedom of expression for the workers in Chinese language and literature, including writers, journalists, translators, scholars and publishers over the world. ICPC is a member organization of International PEN, the global association of writers dedicated to freedom of expression and the defence of writers suffering governmental repression. Through the worldwide PEN network and its own membership base in China and abroad, ICPC is able to mobilize international attention to the plight of writers and editors within China attempting to write and publish with a spirit of independence and integrity, regardless of their political views, ideological standpoint or religious beliefs.

ICPC was founded in 2001 by a group of Chinese writers in exile and in China, including its founding President LIU Binyan, a prominent author, journalist and activist who passed away in exile in USA on Dec. 5 2005, Vice-president and author ZHENG Yi, Executive Director and poet BEI Ling and Freedom to Write Committee Coordinator and poet MENG Lang, all of whom have been in exile in USA. In November of same year, ICPC was approved as a chapter of the International PEN at its annual congress in London. Since then, ICPC has made vigorous efforts to promote and defend the freedom of writing and publication and the free flow of information in China, and been deeply concerned about the state of civil society and open discourse there.

In September and October, 2009, ICPC held its Fourth Internet Congress of the Membership Assembly to have elected 5 Board members and 2 alternates to fill its vacancies, including the President Tienchi MARTIN-LIAO (Germany) and 2 Vice-presidents Patrick POON (Hong Kong) and QI Jiazhen (Australia). The past president Dr. LIU Xiaobo, who has been imprisoned since December 8, 2008, was elected Honorary President.