



# **PEN for Freedom**

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## **A Scream in Grave and Others**

*By ZHANG Lin*

### **A Scream in Grave**

It was dark and moist in the grave pit,  
Where no bit of light could enter.  
One billion people lied inside,  
Complaining again and again to wait for the death.  
I could not bear to suffocate,  
And raised my head to hit the grave wall.  
Only a scream came out,  
While my brains were sprayed.

*1986-08-06*

### **A Real Human**

The tsunami-like shouting is reverberated in the Divine Land:  
A real human is standing up among the goats!  
As the love is so magnificent as the rosy clouds,  
Fight for the freedom and dignity!  
Belong neither to any leadership,  
Nor to any doctrine.  
I proudly stand alone on the campaign,  
Being calm, firm and persistent in my heart.

*1988-10*

### **Sacrificial Offering**

We calmly step onto the sacrificial altar,  
Lie down and close our eyes  
For we are the voluntarily sacrificial victims.  
The brightest brains and straightest bodies  
Pile up in layer upon layer,  
To construct a mansion of democracy reaching to the sky!

*1991-08*



### **New Inscription of Humble Chamber**

Brambles spread over the indistinct journey  
Making both of my feet bloody,  
But dream of freedom gives me inexhaustible courage!

Noisy singing has been silenced already  
But I am still dropping tears,  
and blowing that willow flute with melody.

My throat has become hoarse already,  
But only the melody is making souls tremble,  
And reaching to heaven through dark layers of sky cloudy!

*1991*

### **I Stand at the End of Darkness**

I stand at the end of darkness,  
And stand between Bloody Lake and Trash Hill,  
Chewing in my mouth the astringency and bitterness,  
And experiencing the hardness.

Behind the pitch-dark iron curtain,  
Through the confused space and time tunnel,  
I was seeking the dawn of freedom,  
And exploring the truth.

The foul odor poisoned me into unconsciousness,  
While the storm continued to strike me down,  
And I got wounded all over my body, with tears stained all over my face  
And staggered along with a narrow escape from death.

God's call has been delivered from the sky,  
Exhorting me to be strong and unbending,  
That justice will defeat evil after all,  
And there must be a light at the end of darkness!

*2004-08-22*

*(Translated by Yu ZHANG)*

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**ZHANG Lin**, born in 1963, freelancer, member of Independent Chinese PEN and recipient of its 2007 Writer in Prison Award, was detained on 29 Jan, 2005 for “inciting subversion of the state power”, and sentenced to 5 years in prison, and released earlier on 12 August 2009 due to a reduction of half-year imprisonment.

## **Say No to Tombs**

*By Jin Yi*

1

Lijiang looked a bit coquettish in early autumn. The trees clustered in red or purple, the sky was transparently blue, and the snow mountain was shining white. It was a fine dusk, which put some golden make-up on the white top of the mountain. Tong Xin was amazed into absent-mindedness by the scenery, which then became a photo in the album of her memory. She tasted the flavor of Zen in it, but could hardly tell what exactly it was.

Before coming to the Lijiang, Ma Jun told her, “You can ask my friend for help if you’re going there. He has been there for two years.”

“Is he good looking? Or I refuse to meet him.” She said in a way of humour.

“Well, you’ll see.” Jun smiled.

“Certainly not,” she thought. However, she still went to meet Lin Xidu soon as arrived. It was good to have someone catering when being away from home. Moreover, she didn’t really think about when to go back. At their first meeting, Xidu had his back toward her while watching the salmons in the water, and then said, “They should be yummy.”

He wasn’t good looking indeed, but just a fit middle-aged guy. Ma Jun already talked to him over the phone, so they didn’t really need to introduce each other. “The name sounds elegant, while the person doesn’t seem to be matching.” Xin smirked.

“My pleasure. I may look rough, but my heart is gentle,” responded he.

He was showing her around to find a lodge in the ancient city resort when she had a glance at the snow mountain over the bridge. They kept talking about Lijiang, which made them quickly dispelled the unfamiliarity.

“How long are you going to stay?” asked he. “I could give you suggestions for your itinerary.”

“I’m not here for travelling though. Just stay and see.”

“So you’re coming for healing? Lots of people wrongly take this Lijiang as miraculous cure after browsing online.”

She smiled without responding, as that might be the truth. She was about to see how Xidu was going to react, but he suddenly said, “Look at the boy! He looks like a monkey.”

The boy was just beside them playing with a toy car on the ground. “Don’t say that,” said she, “He’ll feel humiliated.”

“He doesn’t understand, and children wouldn’t get humiliated anyway,” he squatted and said to the boy with a big smile, “Don’t you think so, monkey?”

She burst into laughter.

At night, she came back to the lodge and called Jun, “Didn’t you always regard yourself as virtuous? How could you know such a mean person as an acquaintance?”

“He’s kind in fact,” he said, “just with a bad temper. Nobody but his wife can control him. You’re there for fun any way. Come back if getting tired of it, okay? Don’t think too much. Nothing needs to be carried on.”

Ma Jun was like an angel, who answered every single prayer of her, while she normally would not think of him unless she had trouble, from when they were in primary school until present. The angel kept giving his advice, “I heard that Lijiang is a good place for affairs. Get a one-night-stand for yourself. Balance your mind. Men can have affairs, so do women...”

“Shut up! How could an angel support love affairs? I have signed the divorce paper anyway, whatever I do is not called affair, all right? I am single.” She shouted over the phone, feeling much better. In the daytime, Xidu once asked her if she would like to go to the bars, but she refused, saying she would feel embarrassed if drunk. Now she considered again about going to the bars. On 28 September 2007, she put only five words in the diary, “It’s better to be rebellious!”

However, she didn’t really go to the bars, but started seeking for herself a place or a store. She told her parents that she was planning to stay in Lijiang and open a hat store, asking her sister to import the hats from Zhejiang Province. Her parents slightly signed over the phone that nothing could be any surprise for them. Since Xin could even have got married recklessly, who could say anything about opening a store? After the business started, she invited Xidu for

dinner. He had helped her a lot in finding places, renovation and getting the licence. Xidu was a photographer who sent photos to magazines every week after travelling around. He spent most of his spare time on helping her. After all these, she had to admit to Ma Jun that Xidu was a kind-hearted man, so she started calling him respectfully, “Big boss!” He would normally say “Yo” as a response, feeling himself as a big boss indeed.

Xidu took one of his friends to dinner. His name was Sun Yue, said to do paintings in the city. His hair was long, which she considered as a symbol of dodgy people. Xin understood when he said “do paintings”, he could mean himself painting, selling or just cheating around, which didn’t give her any impression. The two men had a few drinks during dinner, and started talking about the people living in the city. The handsome guy was a cheater specifically cheating female tourists. The loafer always took the tourists to the expensive shops. The well dressed up foreigner actually lost his job overseas, but was here to show off. She meant to accompany her guests but had not found chance to make comment. At this point, she couldn’t help to ask, “Is there’s no good person in Lijiang except me?”

Xidu answered the question with a despise, “If I would leave here, there would hardly be any.”

She burst into laughter again. Then two men started talking about families. Sun Yue’s wife was left in Changchun taking care of the children, as saying that the schools in Lijiang weren’t good enough. Xidu said he was waiting at most a year for his wife to get an immigration visa in UK. By then he would go to UK for his degree and have lots of kids. She looked at their faces full of happiness. Suddenly she felt pathetic herself. It cost her 165 yuan for the dinner. She took it down as catering cost.

Initially, Xin was planning to rent a traditional Naxi courtyard as other tourists, to experience the so-called feature of Lijiang. However, she felt a bit shocked the moment when seeing the wooden gates. It reminded her about the countless nights when her husband had not been at home, she had needed a well-locked heavy iron door to secure her sleeping. She told Xidu that she didn’t like old stuff, and rent an apartment in the new city with a bedroom facing the east. Sunlights shed into the room every morning, while she slept like a cat beside the stove. If not hungry, she would not even bother turning over. Normally she went to the store after getting up. The business was neither good nor bad. She didn’t mean to earn money from it anyway, as the alimony was far enough for her to spend. Lijiang was Lijiang, while Zhejiang was Zhejiang.

Xidu came to her store every first or second week. He said he just passed by, as he was one of those who stayed in Lijiang without doing anything particular. The lane he lived was quite far.



He said it was because he had stayed here for too long to live in the center. He could feel a difference every time coming to the city. He didn't like sitting in a chair, but only squatting down. He said it was to watch the women's legs.

"The most beautiful thing in Lijiang is not the scenery," He commented, "but all kinds of women. Quite a few women have good shape legs, but you just can't look upwards. Few of them still look good for their tummies. Look at that one! Like a lifebuoy on the waist!" Xin started laughing. She already got used to his harsh comments. He could joke about anyone for anything. It seemed none of them was good.

"Human being is helpless. We always have shortages," he said in an innocent way.

"How fussy you are. I'm wondering how you comment about your wife then?"

"She? She's my lady," he answered seriously. "I wouldn't pick on her by any chance. How bad she is equals to how bad taste I have. Don't you think so? Also, I never say I am good enough for a perfect lady."

"Ha-ha. So you two are like hammer on turtle?"

"Hey! Who is the turtle did you say?"

Xin knew that she had said something insulting, feeling a bit embarrassed. Xidu suddenly changed the topic, "Ma Jun said he would come to visit us next May, but now it is going to be New Year."

"I know that. Occasionally we chat online."

"I know that as well. Anyway, I've been in Lijiang for two years. He never said coming to visit me. It seems this good friend of mine is not that generous, Ah?" He raised his head, had a glance at her and then turned back to continue staring at her thighs. The sunlight shone on his head, leaving the shadow from the neck downwards. Xin couldn't help imagining the edge of the shadow as a blade, as if it could cut his head, so she could play with it as a rubber ball. The scene again became another photo in her memory album.

"The friendship is not the same, of course." She gave a snort, "We were deskmates in class since grade three."

“Exactly. He called me a few times, but kept talking about you.”

“Why did you guys talk about me? Men can be so bitchy!” She stared at him, after realizing they did talk about her. In fact, she didn’t want to bring her past into this place. No!

“He wanted to talk. What can I do about it? He wasn’t badmouthing anyway. What are you caring about? There is no bad person in Jun’s eye.” He shrugged his shoulders, “My sister, don’t play fool with me. I know you are smart. I just want to ask for him. Does that brother of mine have a chance?”

She lowered her head, and answered the question softly after a while, “We were deskmates since grade three.”

“I see. He had already got no chance since grade three. Poor thing. He has been waiting until you’ve already divorced but he hasn’t got married yet.” He nodded his head, and never mentioned Ma Jun ever since.

2

It didn’t take long for Xin to make new friends, like Lan Shaohong, Zhang Xin, Laolang and Luoluo. They all travelled and stayed here from other places. Initially Luoluo went to Xin’s store asking if she could rent a single-room in a courtyard. Xin helped her with that. Luoluo then introduced her to other friends living in the same yard. These friends, together with Xidu and Yue, formed a group. They ate out and rode bikes together, enjoying the excitement. She noticed people here were too polite, as it was only superficial relationships. Or it was herself who was too polite in the beginning, making others polite to her as well. Or it was because everybody was just a guest here.

The situation changed as the New Year came. Xin, Laolang, Shaohong and Xidu did not go back to their hometown for the New Year. As Laolang could only use the communal kitchen, and Xin’s kitchen was too small, they decided to spend the New Year in Xidu’s place. Each lady brought ingredients for two dishes and cook there. The two men brought wine and soft drinks, respectively.

Xin went shopping with Xidu. They bought the ingredients for them both. He bargained in poor Naxi dialect. She just followed him. It was so cold that the water on the market floor was frozen. Xin had not woken up so early before. She did not even wear the gloves. Xidu said, “Little sister, put your hands in the pockets. Only take your delicate hands out when paying the money. Step on my footsteps to be safe.” She was wearing a trendy coat without pockets,

so he just grabbed her hands and put into him pocket. Xin felt a bit awkward and embarrassed at the beginning, but then she thought in a rebelling way that she didn't really need to care about her image here.

During her stay in Lijiang, Xin's skin became more and more close to the locals, because of the sunlight she always had to expose to. She started to speak a bit dialect, received wild flowers from her retail assistant in Valentines' Day, buried an apple core in Arbor Day, and danced with other Naxi women in Women's Day. They were women, having the rights of a carnival on that day.

The next time Xidu turned up was six hours before Ma Jun came. He knocked Xin's door, saying he just came from Zhongdian. As it was about the time for picking Jun up, he didn't want to waste half an hour going back to his place. He asked to stay over for half night. She agreed.

As Jun came, Xin felt like needing to explain fully about her happiness and the correctness of her initial decision. She kept talking about the Culture of Donba and the beauty of the sceneries. However, she stopped that after a while, as she noticed Xidu's younger sister Rong'er and brother-in-law, who came together with Jun, knew far more about Lijiang than her. They knew about "fat golden sister" in Naxi culture, and "fat golden brother" was actually fabricated as if telling a full story. Xidu was used to the visit of his sister's family, like his responsibility to show them around. Rong'er was responsible for cleaning the house. She started cleaning Xin's house after having cleaned Xidu's, as if it was her mission here. Xidu said to Xin, "Look, is my sister virtuous? Before marriage, she just stayed at home doing nothing, which I consider as the correct interpretation for virtuousness."

"Well, your brother-in-law is too much handsome, which is really the correct interpretation for virtuousness."

"Just because of handsomeness it is too much. Do you say it easy to keep a riotous heart? If so, women would be the goddesses. Women can become so virtuous for love. Well, how incredible it is."

Rong'er asked Xin for a drink at a Cafe in the city. Rong'er ordered beer, and Xin ordered oolong tea.

"I met my husband in a Café like this," said Rong'er. "We asked the manager about the name of the same music at the same time. That was when we first got crossed."

“A story can be written from it,” Xin smiled.

“Not enough to compare to my brother and my sister-in-law. They started to know each other in a fight in primary school. At that time, boys and girls were still drawing lines on the desk to divide the border.”

“I guess your brother wasn’t a good student,” said Xin.

“My brother is the worst to be a husband, but the best to be a friend.” Rong’er sipped her beer. Her lipstick left on the glass. If a waitress collected all the lipstick marks on the glass, they must look like all kinds of flying seagulls. Each seagull implied a code of life. What Rong’er just said was obviously pointing to something. Xin wasn’t stupid. She could smell that.

*(To be continued)*

*(Translated by Angela HU)*

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**Jin Yi**, a member of ICPC, is a writer and poet who is currently living in Shenzhen, Guangdong.

## **Birthday Present**

*By SHENG Hui*



1

Dad came home later than usual today. His vest was full of holes, like a spider web. As soon as the sun set down, I watered the cement courtyard as usual, set up a square bench and two crab-like chairs, cooked water-boiled rice, got bathing water ready, and waited for him to be back. Ever after Mum passed away, I lived in lengthy waiting. Waiting made me fearful. I feared that Dad might not come back home someday.

After coming home, Dad took off his straw hat, held up a pot of cool tea from the bench and started to drink. I hated his way of drinking water as if he hadn't touched water for one hundred years, making loud noises in his throat and even smacking his lips with loud notorious sounds. He wiped sweat off with a towel, scooped a bowl of wine, and sat down to the crab-like chair. Just for his sitting down, the chair fell apart with a loud noise.

Dad got up, patting dust off, and said: Little Hai, bring me pliers and wire. Looking at the pile of bamboo falling apart on the ground, I shook my head and said, such an antique should be admitted into museum long before. Dad ignored me. I brought him the tools, and Dad fixed the chair up in no time. He said, doesn't it look as new now? Before he finished his words, the crab-like chair fell into pieces again. He leaned back and fell on the ground, like a beetle not able to turn over its body. Dad got up again, pat dust off, and wanted to start over again.

I said, forget it, leave it till tomorrow to fix.

Dad smiled and said slowly: tomorrow's got its own things to do.

I said, anything to do?

Dad patted his shirt pocket and said with pride: finally I've borrowed money.

Just then, one mosquito came close to me. I caught it with my hand and smashed it in my palm, and said dismissively: how much?

Dad put up one finger.

I asked: one hundred?

Dad shook his head and said: one thousand.

Upon then, Dad had finished one bowl of wine. He said to me: scoop half a bowl more for me.

I asked with doubt: what about in case they wouldn't like to do us a favour?

Dad didn't expect I would ask like that, shocked for a while and said: I just ask them to do one favour in my whole life, and they should agree.

2

Dad came to my room to call me up. He walked loudly as if each step might detonate a mine. I opened my eyes, finding it was not clear enough outdoors, and said unhappily: getting up so early to be a thief? Dad said, breakfast is ready, and you should have more as we may have lunch very late. Then he walked out to shave. I felt my eyelids like clips, very hard to open. I changed a posture and continued to sleep. Finishing his shavings, Dad found me still in bed and came over again to call me up.

I moved my mouth and said: another five minutes to sleep, just five minutes.

Say nothing more, Dad sat beside me and started to smoke. After finishing his smoke, he said: already past five minutes, get up in a hurry.

I got up reluctantly. Just like dream walking, I washed my face with eyes closed, and finished my breakfast. When we started off, I found my feet quite weak. It was still dark as we arrived at the bus station. I said with a yawn: it's too early to see a ghost. Dad said, don't worry to wait for a while more. I squat against the wall, held up my face and resumed to sleep. I fell into sleep in no time, and even had a dream, dreaming myself of wearing business suit and walking to work with a briefcase under arm; on the way, I met a former classmate; he asked me where I went to work for; I replied, Power Supply Bureau; his eyes were filled with admiration; and then I took them to dine at Yi Yuan Canteen, the top restaurant in the county town. Then all of a sudden, Dad woke me up with a pat.

After getting on the bus, Dad said: you should have a guard for your mouth when we are at Auntie's, don't have a loose mouth as you are at home.

I replied impatiently: you have repeated this so many times already.

One hour later, we arrived at the county town. Dad rushed to the seafood market. As soon as entering, I smelled a gust of stench which made my stomach nausea. I quickly covered my nose.

Dad stopped at a stand and asked: how much per half a kilo?

With a cigarette in his mouth, the boss replied carelessly: what do you want?

Dad said: crabs.

Dad said in a low and soft voice and the boss didn't hear clearly. The boss asked again: what again?

Dad raised his voice: how much half a kilo are the crabs?

The boss said: one hundred and fifty Yuan.

Upon hearing that, Dad was shocked as if being slapped on his face. He recovered from panic after quite a while. He said: how could it be so expensive! I was told that it is one hundred Yuan only.

The boss said: crabs have different prices every day.

Dad shook his head and moved on.

At another stand, Dad asked again: how much are the crabs?

The boss asked: how many kilos do you want?

Dad said: how much for half a kilo?

The boss replied: if you take more, I can make it cheaper.

Dad said: you have to tell me a price first.

The boss said: one hundred and fifty Yuan.

Dad said: can you make it cheaper?

The boss said: this is the cheapest price I have made.

Dad said: other stands sell at one hundred and twenty.

The boss sneered: one hundred and twenty? You can sell crabs to me at this price. I can take all you have.

Standing aside Dad, I could feel mocks from the boss' remarks, and my face got to blush as red a cock's crest.

Dad asked: you really can't make it cheaper?

The boss began to ignore him.

Dad asked: can you sell cheaper?

The boss started to greet other customers.

I talked to Dad, let's go to others and have a look.

I heard the boss murmured behind us: country bumpkin, just don't eat if you can't afford. Although his voice was very low, yet it was drilling into my heart like an electric drill. I thought Dad might pick up a quarrel with him, but he didn't. He smiled and pretended hearing nothing at all. Feeling Dad was hopelessly stupid, I walked in a deliberately slow pace and kept a distance away from him.

Dad came to another stand. This time the boss was very polite and offered Dad a cigarette. Dad was putting it behind one of his ears, but it dropped onto the ground. Dad rushed to pick it up. The cigarette was already half wet, however Dad did not hesitate to pick it up and rub it on his trousers.

Dad asked: how much are your crabs?

The boss answered: one hundred and forty.



Dad said: could you please make it cheaper?

The boss replied: we are working hard with early mornings and late nights, and you might let us earn some as well.

Dad said: I know that, one hundred and thirty-five, OK?

The boss said: I find you are sincere, let's make it a deal, one hundred and thirty-eight.

Dad said: let's make it one hundred and thirty-five.

The boss said: you don't know that lots of people are looking for jobs recently and demands for crabs are far beyond supplies.

Dad said: we are offering to someone else. For oneself, who will eat things as expensive as this, as if eating own lives.

The boss asked: how many do you want?

Dad replied: I want ten.

The boss said: all right, one hundred and thirty-five for you, but I have to choose for you.

Do as you like please. Dad's voice was filled with a sense of accomplishment

Checking on the scale, the boss said: exactly two and half kilos, six hundred and seventy-five Yuan.

Dad approached to check the scale.

The boss said: don't worry, one less will attract ten more as penalty.

Dad asked again: can we make it six hundred and seventy?

The boss said with a sigh: all right, all right, don't like to argue with you anymore.

Dad bent over his dry-seahorse-like body, took out the money from his Liberation shoes,

counted seven pieces out of it and handed over.

I felt Dad's each gesture face-losing, and turned myself away.

3

As soon as boarding on a long-distance bus to Hu Zhou, Dad placed the case with crabs under his seat, clamped it with his feet and held a rope in his hand. He quickly fell into sleep, and his harsh snoring was going up and down like mountains. I saw a sarcastic-looking woman sitting behind us. Her angry eyes came very close to us, just like two crickets ready to fight. Telling the truth, it was really hard for people to accept Dad's snoring. For many evenings, I took it as thundering. I turned my head away to look out of the window, pretending knowing nothing at all. The bus was going very slowly, playing inside one of Teresa Deng's old songs: "if taking big roads, there will be only one; if taking small roads, there will be ten thousand....."

The bus took a stop in front of East Wind Restaurant beside Tai Hu Lake. Soon after, a young girl with a miniskirt and a pair of slippers came out to greet. The bus driver put on his sun glasses and got off, making a heavy touch on the girl's bottom.

Dad opened his eyes, looked out of the window and asked: why stopping half way? Seeing nobody make a move, the driver shouted: get off and have lunch. Everybody got off the bus except Dad and me. I was starved into a sheet of thin paper. Dad asked: are you hungry? I nodded. Dad said: you can go and eat. I asked: why don't you go? Dad replied: I am not hungry. And he took out ten Yuan and handed over to me. I suggested: is it OK to bring you some biscuits? Dad said: don't worry, I am not hungry.

Everything was so expensive in that restaurant that ten Yuan could only buy one bowl of fried rice with egg. I ate very fast, as if pouring the rice down into my stomach. Finishing the rice, I went back to the bus. When Dad saw me, he quickly put a small piece of home-made pancake into his mouth. I asked: let me buy you a bottle of water. Dad said: please come to look after the crabs; I need to release myself. He handed over the rope to me from his hand. Dad got off the bus, stood at the side of the highway, turned himself around and began to piss. His hips were popping up back, which seemed quite ugly. He finished his pissing, went to the tap at the gate of the Eats Wind Restaurant washing his hands and swallowed a full stomach of cold water. On the way back to the bus, he carelessly stepped on a piece of watermelon rind. He slipped a little and nearly fell over. All the people in the bus laughed, and I followed them laughing as well.

After all passengers waited for over ten minutes, the driver came out of the restaurant slowly. His upper part of the body was naked; one of his hands was holding a stainless tea mug, and the other picking his teeth. His two strokes of beards were shining with oil. The bus started again. Hot winds outside the bus windows blew against my face, which made my floating with self-pride. Just before graduation, all of my classmates admired me a lot because my second aunt's husband was the mayor of Hu Zhou City; I could easily find a good job as long as he would pick up a phone and call. Once I get a good job...but three months already passed after graduation, and I still had nothing to do.

The bus suddenly broke down when it came to Changxing. The driver tried several times but nothing happened. Curses began to fill in the whole bus. The driver said, stop cursing, I don't like it happen either, please get off all to push and may possibly make it started. Though reluctant yet no other way to choose, all passengers got off and pushed. But unfortunately, it still didn't work. The driver had no other way to do but put a wet towel over his head to get off fixing the bus. Under the scorching sunlight, the bus was like a piece of roasted sausage; my head was dizzy, as if it was completely filled with glue. About one hour later the bus was fixed up, and fresh mountain winds started to blow on my face and made me comfortable again. I began to be dreaming again.

All of a sudden, the bus came to a sudden halt which plunged all passengers forwards. The bus was filled with curses once again. In the middle of the road, there was a little boy with naked bottoms, standing rooted over there as if being scared into an idiot. I got up to see what happened. Just then, a fat woman with a towel over her head rushed out of the road-side grocery store, and snatched the boy away. The little boy recovered from panic, and began to cry loudly and continuously. Back to my seat, I found something wrong with Dad. Blood was coming out from his mouth corner. I asked, Dad, what's wrong? He shook his head and said nothing. But soon after, he spit out one tooth with blood, and another one after that. Dad handed over the rope tying to the crab box to me, stood up and staggered to the bus driver. I thought he would approach and punch the driver. But Dad went to the driver and said in a low voice, is it possible to stop, I need to go to toilet. The driver didn't reply but gave back a cold stare instead. Dad didn't say anything more and went back to his seat.

It was already two o'clock in the afternoon when we arrived at Hu Zhou. My throat was like a just-exploded firework, dry and painful; my lips went cracked. I wanted to buy a bottle of spring water, but didn't want to ask Dad for it. Dad hated to pay for a taxi. He was holding the crab box and zigzagging amid the lanes. Speechless, I followed Dad. It was so hot that my sandals got roasted to be soft, as soft as maltose, and pea-like drops of sweat came down from forehead, fell on the ground and sent out loud noises. After a while, I got a gust of burn smell,

as if my hair and eye-lash were set on fire.

I asked, are we there yet?

Dad replied, nearly there, nearly there.

I complained, you are keeping on saying “nearly there”, but we are still not there after half-hour walking.

Dad said, be patient for another while, Aunt has air-conditioning at home that will be cool enough.

While walking, I smelled a strong stink odour when a gust of wind came, the same smell as it was at the seafood market this morning

I asked, what’s that smell?

Dad stopped, and opened the crab box. When the box was opened, the stink odour got much stronger. His face became white in a sudden, as white as lime wash.

I asked, what’s wrong?

Dad ignored me.

He took the crabs out one after another. The crabs were lying on the ground, like a pile of mud, motionless.

Dad murmured, dead, dead, all dead.

Dad’s voice seemed sad and old, as if his own son, not the crabs, died.

My heart sank, saying in a low voice, what shall we do now?

Dad said nothing and began to smoke. He finished three cigarettes continuously.

A few minutes after, we finally found ourselves in front of a light yellow foreign-style house. The fence, made of red bricks, was covered with green ivy. From the gap of the black iron-gate, you can see the yard overgrown with vines which were hanging with strings of

crystal-like grapes. Against sunlight, the grapes seemed more attractive and I tried hard to swallow down my own saliva. Under the shade of a tree, two cats were lying on their backs with legs up in the air, holding together and sleeping fast.

I asked, is this Aunt's house?

Dad nodded.

Dad went to the doorbell. He reached out his hand, but stopped in the air as if being shocked by electricity and held back. He took out one cigarette but upon finishing half of it he threw it on the ground and stepped on it to get it distinguished as if he was going to make a big and important decision. He reached out his hand again. But when his finger touched the door bell, he didn't press it.

Dad said in an aging and harsh voice: let's go home.

Dad's remarks made my heart frozen into ice in a second. I asked without outstanding: why going home? We have spent half a day on a bus and not easy to be here. How can we simply go home? If going home, what about my job?

Dad ignored me. He turned round and walked ahead holding a bag of dead crabs. I followed him, purposely walking very slowly. Dad's hair had fallen to nearly nothing left. He kept last few hair long and going round upon his head, which made his whole head like a simple nest. There was a lump in the middle of his bald and oily head, just like half an egg, shining over there. While walking, his body flagged between left and right, like a funny duck. I felt great disappointment in Dad.

*(To be continued)*

*(Translated by CHEN Biao)*

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**SHENG Hui**, born in Jiangsu Province in 1978, a member of ICPC, has published novels, short stories, proses and poems for over one million words. He is currently serving as a professional writer at Foshan Arts Institute, Guangdong, China.

## **Prison Break**

*By Liu Di*



We had been locked up in a house - he and I.

The architectural style of this house was minimalist, with no decoration at all. Walls, ceilings and furniture were all white.

From time to time there was always a set of dinner dishes sent out from the kitchen, grilled steak, braised pork, ice cream, and anything else. It seemed that we had no risk of starvation for the moment.

Forgot to tell, no window could be found anywhere in this house.

I was determined to break this prison. I said: "We should try to leave this damned place."

He made no objection but said, "Since we've been shut in here, I'm afraid not so easy to escape."

I said: "Anyway, we will have to try, not to mention there is even no guard here."

Then we opened the door of the living room and got into the dining room; opened the door at another end into the kitchen; opened the kitchen door at other end, and then we found ourselves back to the living room.

"We must have done something wrong. Look, there are stairs. We will go down to find the door out."

So we ran down the stairs into a bedroom; opened the door at another end into other bedroom; opened the bedroom door at other end, and found ourselves back again to the living room.

This could be a bit wrong. Like madmen, we were running around in the house, and rushing out of any door wherever seeing it. No matter how running, we always returned to the same place finally.

In the end, we gasped and collapsed on the sofa in the living room. He said: "We must have ignored something, perhaps a secret door or the like somewhere..." he struggled to his feet,

and opened every closet door, and knocked on the walls.

"It is not right," I said, "if we just opened the doors, went through the several rooms, and then found ourselves back to the original, there is nothing strange. But we cannot have gone down the stairs, and, through two rooms, returned to the original place. It is impossible. There must be something wrong. "

He said: "Perhaps, this house is just like the Earth. No matter to which direction you go all the way, you'll be back to the original."

"Well," I said, "some computer games are like this. If keeping to the right, you will return to the left finally. Some people say that the universe is also in this way to curl into a shape of cylinder, sphere or donut... But how can a house become like this? Could it be like what was written in a science fiction that the space-time curled up in higher dimensions...?"

He stood by a closet to think for a while, and said: "Maybe we made a mistake. We departed from the living room, went down the stairs, ran through two bedrooms and found ourselves back in the living room. But this one may be another living room, not the original one. After all, the rooms here looked similar. "

I was excited: "This is the way how they have confused us. If we will keep running ahead, sooner or later we will be able to find the gate!"

Then, we put all of our efforts at running: down the stairs, through the bedrooms ... But this time we were not only getting through the bedrooms and living rooms, but also through the parlors, studies, recreation rooms – where there even stands a billiard table, attics, bathrooms and even the cellars. I felt that we had run down countless stairways, through countless bedrooms, living room, parlors, studies, recreation rooms, attics, bathrooms and cellars. However, we were always returning to the living room looking exactly like the same finally.

In the end, we could run no longer, and had to lie down again on the sofa looking exactly like the same.

"It is impossible!" I said, "Even if the house was the Empire State Building, we should also have run to the bottom. This house is like the Big Bang, ever expanding!"

"Anyway, we can run no longer today," he said, breathing heavily.

We collapsed on the sofa, and, after a while, restored our smooth breathing. Then I asked him: "Who are you?"

He did not answer but said: "or to talk about yourself."

"How should I say? I am a so-called dissident, or a person criticizing the Government, thus being shut in here. I think so. And you? Who are you? A guard?"

He smiled and said: "I'm whoever you think I am."

We faced each other without a word any more. Silent for a while, he said: "How to construct a prison from which a prisoner can never escape?"

"It is very simple," I replied, "as long as the prison is built sufficiently large. After all, the speed of light is limited. A sufficiently large prison can let people unable to walk out in their lives." - I must have got a hallucination from excess fatigue, and so I felt that the house where we are staying is so large as no end in sight.

Again, he smiled and said: "you have forgotten that, according to the theory of relativity, time flows slower as the speed of a moving object is approaching the speed of light. In other words, as seen by a stander-by, the prison breaker at a speed approaching that of light will take several hundred years to escape from prison, but to the breaker, it is just a matter of a flash."

I said: "then building the prison in a black hole would even make light unable to escape." I seemed to feel a tidal force as if it would pull me in half.

He said: "You know, there is a sort of black holes leading to another universe."

"Oh, Yes. The Einstein - Rosen Bridge ... that is to have the universe curl into a shape of cylinder, sphere or donut, so that people always finally return to the origin no matter how to go; or let the universe continue to expand at a speed even surpassing that of light ... or simply take the Brane Universe itself as a prison, where all particles are bound to the membrane, except for the gravity to pass through it..." I felt the room flatten into a wall of a larger room. "But the wormhole can tear the Brane Universe, anyhow. Let us to escape into another universe ... In this house there must be a secret door to let us out, which we must be able to find..." I sat up.

He did not jump again to look for a secret door, but sat up, turning around and looking at me,



with his bright and piercing eyes. He said: "There is another possibility ..."

I said: "What do you mean?"

"Imagine, whether were you and all your memory created a second ago?"

"You mean we are shut in a Matrix? We are merely a program, the world around us is an illusion ..." I began to feel the mosaics appearing on the walls around us.

"Well, as a matter of fact, this is not so extraordinary as it sounds. Bishop Berkeley believed that God had made creation in spirit. Hindu mythology also believes that the universe is a Brahma's dream which will end at the moment when Brahma will wake up. Therefore, all of us may possibly be a dream that God is dreaming, or the characters in a fiction written by God. From this prison, how can we escape? "

The world around us seemed to start falling apart...

I pulled myself together and said: "I am not feeling right, as if there appears an illusion."

He said: "Sit still. I am going to the dining room and trying to find something for you to drink."

After a while, he came back with took a glass of azure blue drink, and said: "there is only this. In the dining room" I took the glass and saw two words "drink me" written on it.

I drank the glass in a gulp. Afterwards, the illusion did not disappear but become more serious. I saw his body become transparent, and, through his skin and muscle, a tiny man in it, operating a number of levers and buttons. Then I heard the tiny man shouting: "he's not a person! But a device!

"Then who are you?" I asked the tiny man.

The tiny man continued shouting: "I don't understand your language! I can talk with you through these machinery devices, but neither these devices nor I can understand your language!"

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I woke up. The walls falling apart and the tiny man in the transparent body were gone. He looked at me and said: "Do not worry. This was just a thinking experiment."

I said: "What... thinking experiment?"

"A thinking experiment is a story. God's creation is a thinking experiment."

"So, we are still trapped in this experiment...this story?" I recalled the earlier dialogue and felt very discouraged.

"Detention of thinking can only be broken by thinking!" His tone was very serious, staring at me.

"I do not understand."

"Do you remember the Copenhagen Interpretation?"

"Are you talking about quantum mechanics? Of course, Schrödinger's cat under circumstance with no observer exists in the superposition of states, dead and alive, until there appears an observer, that is, when the wave function collapses, the cat is either dead or alive. But what does this... "

"Apart from Copenhagen Interpretation, there are other interpretations, do you also know?"

"Well, there is Parallel Universes Interpretation... The universe is constantly splitting, the cats survive in some universes, while those in other universes are dead; the observer's consciousness enters one of the universes ... does this have any meaning?"

"You mean, the observers can choose to enter which parallel universe? Well, it will almost mean that they are able to create the world ... The observers do not only find the laws of the world, they create the laws of the world ..."

"Right," he looked very pleased, "You know, the observation is always the one under theoretical concerns, and the observer's view determines the observation result. The function of human consciousness is to open and create the parallel universes. The world was originally only chaotic. It was the consciousness that created the land and sky, and created the earth, sun, moon and stars; it's the consciousness that has created gravity, so that the earth has been rotating around the sun; it's the consciousness that has created molecules and atoms, protons

and neutrons, electrons and quarks...”

"So it means that, in some parallel universe, I have already left this prison. If I wish, I can enter that universe, to leave this prison of consciousness..." I suddenly come to realize it, gazing him for a long time: "Who are you after all?"

He smiled: "I have already told you, I'm whoever you think I am. I am you."

Then he vanished. And I began to focus on thinking...

*(Translated by Yu ZHANG)*

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**LIU Di**, graduated from Psychology Department of Beijing Normal University, is a member of ICPC. Since 2001, she began to write online reviews on current Chinese affairs. She was detained as a criminal by Beijing Public Security Bureau, and released on bail after one year and 21 days' detention. She is currently working as a translator and freelance writer.

## **One Day for Liang Xin and His Workmates**

*By ZHANG Mingshan*



Twenty years has passed since June 4<sup>th</sup> Massacre and over ten years passed since being released from Beishu Prison. Each day was laden with torments of both hopes and despairs. During each day of the past twenty years, Liang Xin's exciting expectations were often castrated by fatigue and frustrations of everyday life.

One winter morning in 2009, Dajia'ao Town, located in the top northern part of Weifang City, Shandong Province, was shivering in the raging cold winds. Sand-like snowflakes, carried by razing northern winds, was sometimes like fog flying and dancing in the sky and sometimes like crawling snakes moving on the ground along the winds. The snow was not heavy at all, but after one night of snow fall, all ditches on the ground and the lees of the houses had uneven accumulations of a layer of fine snow. Although only five o'clock in the morning, with the reflections of snow on the ground and morning clouds in the sky, the darkish morning had some light. Though thick darkness still appeared in distance, people could distinguish the outlines of scenes and objects in near sight.

The northern winds, same as last night, were sharp, hard and cutting into bones. The northern winds, carrying sand-like snowflakes, were whipping people's faces, cold and painful as injections. Even the teeth in the coldly clutched mouth were frozen to numb, cold and painful as well. When people went out of house occasionally, they had to wrap their heads and shrank their hands in sleeves, only exposing their eyes with snow and frost stuck on their eyebrows. The thin warmth on the body disappeared swiftly with a single blow of the winds. Even wearing cotton gloves, hands were still as painful as being bitten by cats.

In such a miserable weather, even the small traders who used to get up early to earn pennies for living would not like to leave their warm quilts to chase after the small profits, and even the angry greedy women who used to drive their husbands out early for work would exceptionally curl up in the arms of their husbands. In such weather like this, it was a reasonable holiday for the peasants and small traders at the bottom of the society to sleep in and enjoy the warmth of family life, if there was no big course to drive them out.

In the southern part of Dajia'ao Town, there were rows of working sheds made of composite board materials. Though having been strengthened for many times before, they were shaking in strong winds sending an impression to people that they would collapse at any time. Close

to North Sea, Dajia'ao Town, built on shoals due to the rise of ocean chemical industry, was always the "wind-gap" of Weifang City. There was a saying like this: "nine out of ten days would be windy, and wind would continue to blow for nine days". It was quite common to have such weather like this in Dajia'ao, though the winds and snow were as sharp as cutting razes.

Liang Xin was still curling up in bed within one working shed. He went to bed early as usual last night, but he would not like to get out of his warm quilt though he used to get up early. Even since yesterday morning, he felt pains in his waist as if breaking up. In the past when this happened, it would be soon recovered after lying on electric quilt to warm up his waist. However, though the electric quilt was turned on the whole night, he could still feel pains in waist. If not because of tight schedule, he would have asked for leave long before. Recently, Mr. Zhu, the team leader, was driven by the tight schedule into a mad dog, and started to curse everybody. Liang Xin knew quite clearly that, in such a circumstance, if getting a reluctant permission for a sick leave, Mr. Zhu would have a different view on him and possibly pay out in future work.

Someone already got up. Liang Xin reluctantly struggled to rise to get water for morning clean-up. Liang Xin still kept the health habits as he was in factory. He always washed up carefully before breakfast. After working with the construction team, he reduced his twice teeth brushings for both morning and night to once in the morning only. For dressing, Liang Xin didn't allow himself to be the same as his workmates who wore dirty clothes like beggars. He always tried to keep tidy and clean, and considered it as a need for the most basic dignity as a human being. After being released upon a full term of imprisonment in 1997, Liang Xin still kept these habits which had been laughed over by his workmates, though he mixed himself up in construction or installation teams all the time.

After taking efforts to have a breakfast with some steamed buns, salted vegetables and corn gooey, Liang Xin still felt waves of pains in his stomach. What should he do? It was impossible to ask for one day absence. The only way was to ask for a short leave to the clinic. Luckily the clinic in the nearby village was not far away. It would take only ten minutes to go there and come back. Luckily Mr. Gou, the team leader, who was always cursing people and was named by workmates at his back as "King of Hell", was not back yet from his leave. Therefore it was not so hard to ask for a leave.

Liang Xin came out of the Team Leader Office after asking for a leave, putting up with the unhappiness due to the distrustful look from Mr. Zhu, the other team leader, when he asked for a leave, and went to the management office to borrow a bicycle to go to the clinic. On the

way, Liang Xin was riding the bicycle with pains while thinking about himself: because of his imprisonment he could not make ends meet for his family finance; before his wife lost her job, though her salary was not big enough, however it was a steady income, and now she was out of job and could not do any heavy jobs due to long-term labour work. There was no income for his wife, but he had to pay six thousand yuan each year for her social insurance and medical insurance. After paying these six thousand yuan and daily expenses for himself and the family, Liang Xin's annual income had little left. When there was less work, he had to be stuck in debt for thousands of yuan. What made Liang Xin angry was that his wife's company purposely missed paying social and medical insurances for three years without acknowledging the workers. Three years were exactly the difference for a minimum of 15 years for his wife not to contribute for the insurances. After working a whole life for the communist enterprises, the factories went bankrupted with the leaders taking everything for themselves but made the workers to pay for it.

Liang Xin had always felt sorry for his wife as he had not fulfilled his family responsibilities. After the Chinese Communist Party made a bloody suppression over the students' movement in 1989, Liang Xin posted a letter in righteous indignation to expose the CCP's atrocities and was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment. That made him lose his good job and his wife had to support the family by herself and to fear a lot for him in prison. When Liang Xin was released from prison, he was still young and full of energy. The very following year he worked hard for the establishment of the Preparatory Committee of the Chinese Democratic Party in Shandong Province. As the Chinese Communist Party had been reducing step by step the living space of the ordinary people, the "internally-controlled people" like Liang Xin, who was always remembered by the Party, felt hard to breathe. What made Liang Xin even angrier was that the blood of the June 4<sup>th</sup> victims and the imprisonment of the heroes for pro-democracy movement got in return the society stepping toward darkness and social morals degenerating.

Thinking of his kid made Liang Xin to feel breathless. When Liang Xin was imprisoned, his son was less than one year old, just able to call him Dad. Upon his release from prison, his son was already Year Three in the primary school. Liang Xin, after release, cared about not only democratic movement and the direction of country's situations, but also worked very hard for living as well. He cared nearly nothing about education and growth of his son, and neither did his wife because of busy work. Therefore, their son failed the college entrance examinations and spent three years studying in a profession-training school. And as it was very hard to get a job with that education, their son had to idle away his time by the way "fishing three days and drying nets two days". Thinking about all these, Liang Xin felt out of breath. In two or three years, their son will reach the age to marry. What should they do upon

then? Furthermore, his wife and he would be getting old. The life was just OK with struggles. But what about if there will be illness or accidents? Thinking all these made Liang Xin feel serious headache.

Just after his release from jail, Liang Xin once organized installation team. He was thinking of making some money by getting some project installation contracts to feed the family, support the pro-democratic friends who were in poverty, and find a way for those friends to make a living. However, Liang Xin's operations had been always disturbed by an invisible hand. After he understood the reason, Liang Xin dismissed the team and went out to find a job. Even like this, the Public Security department still came to the working unit of Liang Xin. The working unit tried several times to persuade Liang Xin to quit due to being afraid of the Public Security department. Liang Xin had argued quite a few times with the Public Security department for that. And now they came directly to Liang Xin if anything concerned. This made Liang Xin to settle in the construction team quite well.

Liang Xin reached the village clinic and began to knock on the village doctor's door. As his sleep was interrupted by Liang Xin, the village doctor, with an unhappy face, began his check and inquiry. Liang Xin was diagnosed as having sickness in his stomach. Going out of the clinic and back to the construction site, Liang Xin felt better after taking medicine and drinking some warm water. Just then, the team leader began to blow his whistle for work arrangement. Liang Xin and two workmates were charged to install stents in cable work-wells.

The two workmates assigned to Liang Xin were both from Shan County, Heze City. Xin Fu, short and fat, and Fu Hai, black and thin, were experienced workers. As they had worked there for over five years, they were familiar with everything here. They didn't need someone else to tell them to work with proper tools. As soon as the team leader finished allocation of workloads, Xin Fu came to help Liang Xin to drag the welding machine out of the storage and went back to find welding sticks, welding mask and all other tools including electric hammer and sledges to load them into a concrete dumper. Meanwhile, Fu Hai was also busy with filling hot water into the water tank of the dumper, and started the dumper. After Liang Xin and Xin Fu jumped onto the dumper, Fu Hai drove the bumping dumper to the construction site.

The dumper stopped at the cable work-well two kilometers away their working sheds. They jumped off the dumper and tried to shrink themselves, stomping on the ground and rubbing their hands to keep warm for a while. That was just a habit only. The cold northern winds were blowing harder and harder so that the last warmth remained in the curled bodies in the

dumper was blown away completely. The team leader had a peace of mind working under such a bad weather. He usually remained in his office where he had an electric heater to warm himself. He knew clearly that workers had to work hard to make them warm. He was right. Liang Xin and his workmates were busy with unloading and moving the tools and materials into the work-wells. Though the work-wells were cold too, yet it was not an open field and could shield from winds and snow.

They got such a heavy workload today that they had to finish installing stents in four work-wells by early tomorrow morning. Right early tomorrow morning when they were back to work, another cable-installation team would come to lay cables. All of these had been arranged as project schedule, and nothing could be postponed. The project management in electricity company was somewhat militarized. They had very strict requirement for time. The progress of all construction teams were inter-related with no spare time left. One construction team delayed their work, and all constructions by other teams would be delayed accordingly. And this was absolutely not allowed. Once that construction team delayed the progress of a project, it would be very difficult to get a project later in the future.

This morning, Mr. Zhu, the Team Leader, told Liang Xin with his teeth clutched: “Four work-wells must be completed today. You can’t ruin my job and eventually the boss’ business!” As a matter of fact, Liang Xin and all team leaders knew quite well that as it should be three-day workload for three experienced workers and the cable installation team would start their job from eight o’clock the next morning, it was very difficult to finish the job without eating or drinking during those twenty-seven hours. This was why, after unloading tools and materials, Liang Xin and Fu Hai started to lay wires and sockets to connect the welding machine and electric hammer, and Xin Fu was busy with draining the water in the work-well with a bucket. Yesterday while digging for cable trenches, the digging machine cut off a water pipe, which made water coming into the work-well along the cable pipe. There was still 10 centimeter high water over there after draining with submersible pumps.

When Xin Fu finished draining the water, Liang Xin and Fu Hai got electricity connected. Liang Xin marked with a chalk the position for the stent while Fu Hai and Xin Fu moved all materials and tools down into the work-well. Xin Fu was busy with drilling holes on the work-well walls to hold the stent, Fu Hai held a timber to support the frame to be installed onto the ceiling of the work-well, and Liang Xin dragged in the welding line to weld the frame. They were quite familiar with the job and nobody would be allowed to rest if the job couldn’t be finished by the end of the day. This made all of the three to get into their position quickly. However working in this work-well was not quite smooth. There was sticky mud everywhere as water was freshly drained. The military-imitated cotton shoes they wore were



all wet and their feet were bloody cold.

This work-well was too deep. As several pre-laid welding steel boards could not be found, they had to drill with electric driller to fasten. Xin Fu stood on the ladder holding the driller, but he drilled onto the steel fixture and bounced off the ladder. Luckily just one of his arms was hurt. Fu Hai didn't want to work overtime tonight. About dismissal time this afternoon, Fu Hai didn't fix the fixing frame tight and the frame fell down hitting his big toe, which caused a big bloody bulla and his walking crippled. It was nothing serious to have these small damages while working on the construction site. It was quite normal to have one injury here or one bleeding there, as long as it didn't affect the work. There was a first-aid case in the office of the construction site. However, it was just a decoration for inspection and most of the workers didn't know the existence of it at all. If the workers had a slight damage, they simply wiped with toilet paper; if the toilet paper could not stop the bleeding, they would go to the small clinic nearby. Only when major damages happened, they would go to hospital for treatment.

Liang Xin also experienced two near-missing accidents. Once, Liang Xin was conducting street lights installation. As it was urgent to finish the work the next day, Liang had to operate with violating construction regulations. Though they were installing insulators on the electricity posts, he was risking doing wirings at the junction box. Accidentally one insulator was falling off from the electricity post. Luckily the insulator was first landing on the junction box and then had a slight rub on his safety helmet. Even just with that, Liang Xin's safety helmet was smashed to bear two cracks and the pains in his temples were over after one month or so. His workmates said that Liang Xin's ancestors accumulated virtues and he burned high-quality incense. In another accident, when Liang Xin used a level instrument to observe, he took off his safety helmet due to inconvenience. Just after he took it off, one iron bar dropped down from a place over ten meters high. Luckily again, the iron bar changed direction after it hit a fixture below and Liang Xin only got his head scratched. It was quite normal to have such accidents on a construction site. However, what made Liang Xin unhappy was that during the several days Liang Xin stayed away from work for recovery from the injury, the bossed treated it as absence and didn't pay.

*(To be continued)*

*(Translated by CHEN Biao)*

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**ZHANG Mingshan**, born in Shandong Province in 1963, is a member of ICPC, who was arrested and sentenced two years imprisonment due to his support to the 1989 pro-democratic movement.

## **Fuyang River, A Creek of My Hometown**

*By ZHAO Dagong*



In my childhood, I often played games with my little friends along the banksides of Fuyang River. I have vaguely remembered that, on the riversides, the grasses were green, woods thriving, birds chirping, and butterflies dancing. That was during the late 1950s to early 1960s. Although undergoing the flaming Great Leap Forward, the Big Steelmaking has left no traces on the banks of Fuyang River but the biggest memory of starvation. In addition to hunger, it is that of playing along the riversides.

Fuyang River, a creek, narrow just in a few meters, wide in the ultra-ten meters, is a natural stream flowing so many years as nobody knows. Although it is not well-known as those major rivers, one can still hear Fuyang River quietly telling the distant stories from its rippling blue waves because of its flowing from Handan, the ancient capital of Zhao State.

The birthplace of Fuyang River is in the Fengfeng mining area of Handan City at the foot of Taihang Mountains, and its source is referred to as Black Dragon Cave. The banks of Fuyang River in Handan had been a place of military and strategic importance since ancient times. At the southern tip of Gu Hill, the valley, formed by Fu Creek's separating it from Shenmi Hill to face each other, the fourth of the eight passes westward to Taihang Mountains, named as Fu Mouth Pass. In the Warring States Period, Fu Mouth Pass was the rear logistics road of Zhao State and the entrance of Qin State for eastward invasion. In the late Eastern Han Dynasty, General Cao Cao led his army to strike Yuan Shang on the banks of Fu Creek. In the Eastern Jin Dynasty, General Zhang Shen of Later Zhao State maintained his army in Fu Mouth for aspiration in Ye City. Emperor Murong Chui of Later Yan State commanded his troops from Fuyang City westward to destroy West Yan State. In the late Northern Wei Dynasty, General Erzhu Rong battled Ge Rong's rebels in the east to Fu Mouth, and General Gao Huan departed from Jinyang City toward Fu Mouth to revolt against Erzhu Zhao. In the late Sui Dynasty, Du Jiande defeated Du Zong at Gu Hill. After the An-Shi Rebellion, the late Tang Dynasty set up "Zhao Pass" at Fu Mouth. The Northern Song Dynasty built an ancient tunnel to resist the Jin troops, later known as "The Treasure Hole". In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, it was a strategic location, often for stationing the troops...

At the old site of Congtai, a platform for King Wuling of Zhao State to command officers before marching, there is stone engraved by an ancient with the words "Fu stream approaches

to the east, while the Purple Cloud comes from the west”, praising Handan once benefited from the stream.

At primary school, a campus song was so unforgettable that I have vaguely remembered some of its words: "...Fuyang River is gently flowing in the eastern. We are standing on Congtai and overlooking the southern. Nanguan Primary School is a beautiful garden." Nanguan Primary school is also historic, named as Huaiyou Primary School in the era of Republic of China and founded in 1913, originally as a private school. In 1938, it was reformed by a charitable organization into the Southern School of Orphans, and after 1949, renamed as Nanguan Primary School.

Bai Juyi, a great poet in Tang Dynasty had been in Handan. He had come from Taiyuan, Shanxi Province, now seeming to be a neighbor nearby. In Tang Dynasty, however, China's conditions of communication could, of course, not be compared to those today, so that it had been a long journey from Taiyuan to Handan. Thinking about Lin Chong sent to exile in Changzhou, just going from the east capital Bianliang (Kaifeng) in Henan province to the Central Hebei Province. The exile sentence at that time is just a short trip now. Bai Juyi had composed a poem "Homesick in Handan at the Night of Winter Solstice":

*At Handan Hostel comes the winter solstice,  
Holding knees before a lamp with a shadow to my body,  
And waning to sit at home late at night,  
I should be talking about a long-journeyer*

If Bai was living now, his journey to Handan would be by either plane or train, not to talk about making a long trek. If he was going from a place in Guangdong and Hong Kong to Handan in Hebei Province, Bai Juyi would not need to travel by boat and carriage for a few months! Up to now, I have left my hometown Handan for 23 years, but may take a flight there in a few hours (needing to take off from Guangzhou); or take a train from Guangzhou in less than 20 hours.

Bai Juyi was homesick in Handan, talking about himself as a "long-journey", and feeling so lonely as "holding knees before a lamp with a shadow to my body". I am far away in the southern border, and often missing the old parents whose health has been getting poorer than they used to be after all. There is a saying "while one's parents are alive, one should not make a long journey." It means that, due to the underdevelopment of the ancient communication, a long journeyer is difficult to deliver a message, naturally often to make others missing. Now it is not so since telephone and Internet can deliver a message to the family at any time.

Although separated in thousands of miles, people are so close as being at hand. However easy the communication is, it cannot be compared to the family happiness felt when face to face.

I have left Handan for as long as 23 years, and returned home to visit my parents on Spring Festival every year. In recent years, because my parents have been too old to be healthy, the number of my journey to hometown has been increasing. Returning from Shenzhen, an emerging coastal metropolis, to the inland Handan, the contrast is so great and distinct to often make me filled with various emotions.

Since 1950s, my parents' residence has been changed four times. Ten years ago, they moved again, now living by the Fuyang River.

The unforgettable hometown, and the unforgettable Fuyang River, are still torching my feelings, but making me filled with sentiments. The stream of Fuyang River is still quietly flowing to the northeast, but on the riversides there is nothing left from my childhood, no little woods thriving, nor green grasses exuding the soil odor, nor bird chirping, nor cicada singing, nor butterfly dancing. Instead, there are the buildings lining-up, the factorial motors roaring, and the polluted stream exuding the foul smell. The industrial pollutions have stifled the lives in the creek. On both of riversides, the people are in a great bustle, while the animals are carrying the bacteria contaminated. They appear to have made efforts to adapt to the environment, and their immunity against pollution has also been enhanced. Otherwise, how come is the security of Chinese products, which has been threatening foreigners, is still endurable to the Chinese people in silence?

Since ancient times, Hebei has been rich in the personalities of generous and vehement sentiments. Today, Handan has indeed produced a few characters. Yang Zili, one of "Four Young Gentlemen", was born in Daming County; Cai Lujun, a dissident who has been exiled overseas, from Feixiang County; Tian Qizhuang, a commentary writer who has bravely spoken out the fact of "switching seven mayors of Handan in a decade", in Fengfeng mining area... Then let us talk about Teresa Deng, a renowned singer at home and abroad. Her ancestral home was at Deng Tai Village, Daming County, Handan City, where she had two aunts who had raised her before. When they were alive, Teresa had asked the mainland reporters to deliver to them some Hong Kong dollars, medicines and letters. In 1985, a number of newspapers in Hong Kong reported that Teresa was to have her solo concerts in mainland. Chinese authorities took into account their policy of unification campaign, and appointed one of Teresa's relatives at her hometown as a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultation Conference. Shanghai TV and Hebei Centre of Arts jointly shoot in her village a two-volume TV play, Teresa Deng's Tour to Her Home Village. The county

government was also planning to build an asphalt road from her village to the county town. Unfortunately, this side was busy, while another had no move. Teresa finally died overseas. The people at home had been an empty pleasure while the authorities lost an object to their propaganda of political campaign.

For the Mid-Autumn Festival this year, I returned my hometown to visit my relatives once more, and also met my old classmates and colleagues. It was the time when the Sanlu Milk Powder Incident broke out. We all reflected on the Chinese culture and China's political system. The tainted milk is by no means an isolated accident as making fraud has become a part of Chinese culture. Food security involves people's lives and health, I think that different from making fraud of "famous brand" violating intellectual property, food poisoning is an evil act destroying Chinese nation. However, this evil has existed everywhere in China, from the officials to civilians, from rural to urban areas. Fraud is not only in the tainted milk powers, but also possible in any food, grains, meats, vegetables, fruits, pastries and more. Any food you can point to, it may be potentially toxic.

Beijing Olympics showed China's prosperity. During that period, Beijing had a blue sky, and its rivers were also clear bright. However, far away from Beijing, Fuyang River has not been benefited by the Beijing Olympics, and so is muddy black, still exuding the foul smell, without a sign of reform.

All of people talk about the goodness of their hometown, but I have never done so. Although I hope so, I have no alternative. I have a deep feeling for Fuyang River, the mother river of mine, but I am ashamed to see her.

*Revised on October 3, 2008*

*(Translated by Yu ZHANG)*

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## **Commemorating Mr Wang Ruowang**

*By JIANG Danwen*

I usually passed through Gao'an Road (Route Andre Cohen) in particular when walking from Hengshan Road (Rensaelu) southward to Xujiahui (Zikawe), so as to pass No. 50 Gao'an Road, where Mr Wang Ruowang used to live before leaving China.



Gao'an Road is a small north-south lane in the former French concession area, and adjacent to the government office in Kangping Road (Route Magniny Marcel), the political hub of contemporary Shanghai. Therefore, the lane has no reason to be quiet, as a passage that could only exist in one's memory. Although its one end leads to the noisy, commercial Xujiahui and another end joins to Hengshan Road well-known as a street of bars nowadays, the lane still seems lonely desolated, where at nights the gloomy street lamps project the trees and walls along both sides with scattered lights and shadows. It can be said that Gao'an Road has always been like this in my impression over the past 20 years.

In reality, most of us are not able to go through every road in the city with the countless, differently named roads, even after dozens of years living in it. I was born and have grown up in Shanghai, but I am still often unaware of the orientation of an unfamiliar road name, or occasionally arriving at some place that I never been to nor heard of. These places are totally beyond my past experiences, yet unable to be prolonged in my future memory. I come to realize that people come to get familiar with a certain road usually because they had certain experiences on the road. It can be even said that the familiarity to a road is linked to the memory of its load of the past.

Since composing "My Life in Last Century", I noticed my articles were always surprisingly related to the road names, like Beijing West Road (Avenue Road), Shaanxi South Road (Avenue du Roi Albert), South Matou (Wharf) Road, Tianshan Branch Road, Shaoxing Road, Changle Road (Rue Bourgeat). They represent my youth and arousal, reading and writing, chance and choice, almost covering the entire growth experience of my adolescence. My aesthetic appreciation, personal maturation and the beginning of destiny can be traced back to those road names. Consequently, I should write about Gao'an Road in order to commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mr. Wang Ruowang's death.

I should have written this article long time ago, as a junior who learnt a lot from Mr Wang when I was young. I came to know him in the year of 1986, involved in his case of writing

report to newspapers in Hong Kong on the student movement in the end of that year, and was summoned for interrogation by the police. This was the first time in my life to experience the political risk. In many cases, this kind of risk has been caused only by speaking truth.

I have been saying that the middle 1980s when I started to learn about the world was a rear “golden age” of people’s spiritual life. There came all the sorts of new ideological trends and theories, new social requirements and new artistic forms. It seemed that everything had a sign ready to be transformed possibly. Although the suppressive movements as the “Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign” and the “Struggle against Bourgeois Liberalization” could sound the alarms, the voices of anti-traditionalism and anti-orthodox within and without the system could not be suppressed. Even most people were still used to, or to say, preferably tended to judge the trend of CCP authority by assuming the struggles between “left” and “right”, and to design the prospect and future of China by the so-called competitions between the reformists and the conservatives. Even the media overseas, including Hong Kong, often preferred to use imaginative words like “cold wave” or “early spring” for China’s political status. Such wishful conjectures of Game Theory had not clasped until the gunshots of June Fourth Incident in 1989. Before that, most people had believed that the open-minded forces within the Communist Party would be leading a kind of transformation we had expected for. For this reason, as a senior Party official, Mr. Wang Ruowang’s straightforward opinions had been widely welcomed by the youth.

I met Mr. Wang when he was giving a speech in “weekly literature tea salon” at Beijing West Road where lots of literature lovers used to gather. I went there almost every Sunday, and listened to Mr. Wang’s speech a few times. After the speech, we had a talk. After knowing that my ancestral home was actually in the same place as he had come from, he became a bit more close to me, and happily gave me his address. Since then I had also become one of his students.

The most memorable experience on my close relationship with Mr. Wang was the students’ strike in 1986. At that time, I often went to Mr. Wang’s home, telling him what was happening out there from what I knew. Particularly after the strike started, I went to his home every day because I knew he had been paying high attention to this issue. On the morning of 19<sup>th</sup> December, Shanghai government sent the police force violently cleared away the students in the Bund. In the following morning I told Mr. Wang what happened as a witness, and he accordingly wrote two articles entitled “12-19 Eyewitness Account” “Analysis of the Truth and Backgrounds of Shanghai Students Strike” and “12-19 Eyewitness Account”, published on Hong Kong Economic Journal by the pen-name Wang Jielun and Qiu Pingpang respectively. A sculptor based in Hong Kong took out the articles, and brought back the

published newspaper a few days later when coming back to Shanghai. At the moment, the strike was at the end due to political pressure. Mr. Wang asked me and another friend in Shanghai Communication University to bring the newspaper copies to campus, and put them in the students' pigeonholes at night.

Such an action that we thought able to cover in the night could certainly not escape the eyes of government follows. Not to mention, soon after the student strike had finished, Mr. Wang was expelled from the Party, as one of the three iconic targets with Mr. Fang Lizhi and Mr. Liu Binyan in the movement of the "Struggle against Bourgeois Liberalization". He had already been tightly monitored under secret surveillance, and so we were consequently taken into the interrogation room with no one to escape.

The experiences on my arrest and interrogation are the stories taking place on another road, which I will describe in other articles. In today's article on Mr. Wang, I focus only on my memory about Gao'an Road. It can be said that, the year of 1987 was relatively relaxed, comparing with the terrible atmosphere in the recent years propagated by the authorities to suppress speech and detain people at every turn in the name of "stabilization". Years ago, when reading the articles of commemorating Mr. Liu Binyan, that many people had been freely visiting his home to extend their caring after he had been expelled from the Party, I recalled that it had been the same with Mr. Wang as well. On the one hand, more and more critical opinions towards him were published on the newspapers; on the other hand, more and more people became his admirers and came to Gao'an Road to see him after Deng Xiaoping publically pointed him as the "forefather of bourgeois liberalization".

However, I estranged myself from Mr. Wang since then. I had to admit that the police summon, detention and threatening gave me massive fear in my heart. At first, I was feared of losing my freedom. For a young man below 20 years old, freedom means one's study and future, ideal and plan, and fascinating love. I thought I would have been out of air if I had to let all of these go. Moreover, I was deeply fascinated with literature. Writing was the most important thing in my life. The pleasures in romancing the texts and chasing the words gave me extreme happiness almost over anything else, which I couldn't simply give up. Since a choice had to be made, I would naturally rather to retreat to my world of literature with obsession in writing to resist the risks in real life.

Since the year 1987, I went to Gao'an Road apparently much less, but Mr. Wang still cared the same of me as always. He took my fiction to "Shanghai Literature" for which he had worked, and introduced me to a critic, who helped me a lot in my future writing career. As seen, Mr. Wang had got a leading role in my youth years.



I'm not saying Mr. Wang lead my writing, but was to say that his leading role helped me get rid earlier of the credulity in the official ideology, but learn to think independently and how to face the era in which a writer was living. Moreover, from what happened to Mr. Wang , I realized how the authoritarian regime could erode step by step the dignity, conscience and faith.

I was lucky to read part of Mr. Wang's script of his memoir "Feeling Good about Myself", and helped him transcribing a few chapters. This memoir was different from those by other senior Party officials which I had read before. In other memoirs, what I could see were the naked power struggles covered by a variety of ideals. In Mr. Wang 's book, however, I did not see the power destructing human nature, but how a group of individuals like Mr. Wang who had took part with their ideals in communist revolution hade been crashed in political movements from time to time, only because they had not gave up themselves to become the machine of "revolution".

It is true that Mr. Wang's life demonstrated that refusing to become the machine of "revolution" would end up as the enemy of "revolution". Once he had been put in jail of the Nationalist Party, and again was of the Communist Party. He was expelled from the Communist Party three times. His unique and legendary life experience determined his inevitable transformation from a survivor of the autocracy to its traitor and rebel. This may explain why he signed the appeals under the name of "an old guard" before the 4<sup>th</sup> June and why he went into exile after 70 years old.

There are two other stories about Mr. Wang who had deeply impressed me. One was in May 1989 when Shanghai Writers' Association organized the parade to support the students' strike. People gathered at the People's Square. I thought Mr. Wang must have been there. Indeed, the writers' team was led by him, and he, Xu Zhongyu, Bai Hua and Huang Zongying were walking in the front. The four senior supporters became a symbol of our team for their white hairs. When the team reached the Bund, they gave a speech together on the stage. Their white hairs were swinging in the wind blew from Huangpu River, forming a most appealing picture that day. The other story was after 4<sup>th</sup> June when Mr. Wang had been locked up for a while. I went to visit him in Gao'an Road after he had been released. He took a while porcelain bottle from the bookcase. The bottle was filled with wine, and covered by the writing in red ink as "last wine", which had been a gift from the author Xu Xingye of "Broken Golden Bowl", which won the Mao Dun Literary Prize, when Mr. Wang had been in jail. Mr. Xu had said that he would wait for Mr. Wang to be free to drink together with him. Unfortunately Mr. Xu could not wait until the day. Mr. Wang looked sad when talking about this, from which I could see his deep loneliness and anger.

I think that Mr. Wang had finally left Gao'an Road and China in such a mood. Later on, we have lost the contact with each other. I feel sorry that I only acknowledged his later life experience and death from the Internet. I could only reserve his impact on my youth in my memory forever.

*November 24, 2011 in Shanghai*

*(Translated by Angela HU)*

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## **My Diary**

*By JIANG Weiping*



Wednesday, March 10, 2010, Toronto, sunny

At 10:00 a.m., I took the subway to reach Blood Station for the library nearby, where I met my teacher Susan. As usual, she taught me English for two hours. Near the end, she mentioned a Canadian award for human rights and democracy, and said that Mr. Diubo could make nomination as it must have three nominators involved. She said to send him an email at once for his participation. I said that this award had prize money that would be very good! If one could get it, the money could be used for the public welfare, or for the tuition to study Canadian history at university. She said that the prize was 30,000 CDN, rather considerable. The awardee would also be invited to travel and give lectures over the country. I said, however, that there many people had made more significant achievements than I had, and I was afraid not to get it. She said to give it a try!

At noon, I bade her farewell and went out of the library, waiting at the gate for Miss Gersie. She had made an appointment by e-mail through my wife Stella to meet me at 12:00 today, and continued to teach me English dialogue. She took the initiative three times before, but I had politely declined each time. I could not bear to cost her valuable time. She is a presenter at CPC radio. It was my first time to wait for her, but I did not know why she was late over 10 minutes. Later in a distance, she came with a red suitcase, and initiatively embraced me. Of course, I seemed a bit unnatural as this action is something hard to imagine between a man and a woman in China... I followed her mechanically to the market street, and grabbed her suitcase but found it very light, almost nothing. We stopped at a restaurant of western food. Before getting out, my wife had given me 50 CDN, and said that I should take the initiative to pay the bill. I agreed but hesitated a little upon this luxurious restaurant. I was afraid if I had enough money. She walked into the restaurant, and said that the calligraphic works of mine as gifts to her and her boyfriend David were excellent and that they had really appreciated. However, they did not know where to get them mounted to hang on the wall of their study. My wife had promised her that we would take care of this matter for them without charging the costs. I had thought that it would be different here from the costs in China. The labor costs are too expensive. For mounting, just backing a picture costs 20 CDN, almost equal to the total costs on the whole set of work (backing and framing). We had given her my calligraphic works as free gifts, and would also take care of mounting issue for her to spend me 20 CDN. I felt a bit uncomfortable, but my wife was too generous for me to say anything.

In the restaurant, as soon as the order was made, Miss Gersie opened the suitcase, and took out a paper bag and then a folder from it. Inside the folder, I recognized my calligraphic works as gifts to her and her friend not long ago, two pieces of them. One of them was offered to Ms. Isabel Harry, a famous Canadian women writer. Two were the calligraphic pieces for the living room, "Tranquility Yields Transcendence" and "Harmony". As seeing the old friends in a reunion, I hurried to put them in my bag.

Then we started enjoying our food while chatting. However, our communication was very difficult as she could not speak Chinese while my English was too poor. She was listening to me very patiently, and from time to time making the notes on her notebook at first and then checking the book. Fortunately, I had brought with me an English-Chinese dictionary. Otherwise we would be in trouble! Slowly we could even happily be chatting, as if there was no barrier of languages. She said that she would return to Iran the following week as her mother and sister lived in Tehran. I asked her whether or not there would be some risk for her to go back since she had often written and published the articles. She said none because she only wrote commentaries on art and culture. However, one of her friends liked writing political commentaries, and criticized Ahmadi-Nejad, the most powerful leader, in his wok entitled as " Iran: the House of Devils", thus being sentenced and subjected to beatings and imprisonment. I was very surprised because I had only known that there was literary inquisition in one-party ruled China but not in Iran.

Oh! ... I said, if you will see him after his release from prison, please forward my greetings, as we have suffered the same fate!

She smiled and said: he has been released from prison!

Where? I asked.

She answered: in Canada!

Ah? I was surprised and said: what is he doing here?

She answered: Like you, writing and continuing to criticize the government!

I asked: can the royalties sustain the living?

She answered: very little! No!

How to do? I asked.

Her facial expression appeared particularly mysterious, with her glancing at the guests around a nearby table, and she said: he is in a cafe...

I did not understand what she meant, and asked her to write it down on the notebook. She did so, and handed it to me while glancing sideways at the guests by that table. I suddenly realized it and looked up. There were three gentlemen in Western suits and ties talking eagerly and flushed after drinking. Among them, a middle-aged man sitting diagonally toward me casted an elegant glance at me. He seemed well-maintained but pale with a pair of melancholy eyes. I said to Gersie, can you introduced me to him?

She smiled: Yes, but another day!

I realized that, what a coincidence, over here in Canada, there were so many literati in exile due to the incrimination for words expressed. We came from different countries, but had very much the same fate. Like me he had been insisting on writing and could not survive without working at this restaurant ... However, the elderly opposite to him appeared as the boss, who was speak boldly. Besides, there was a young man looking distinguished. It indicated that he had not been doing badly!

At that moment, she contacted Diubo by her cellphone. He was doing his writing at the library nearby. Really just in a moment, he rushed here excitedly. A few days earlier, he had invited my wife and me for an Italian dinner. Now at first, he was expressing his thanks for my calligraphic gift to him. He said that it had been hung up in his living room at home, and that he liked it very much. Then he was talking about the CPC broadcasting program that they had been running. I said that, every morning, I had listened to their news, but I had not understood much. Diubo had been in charge of a program of the tourism around the world, and given me several CDs last time. I had listened to some, about the scenery in Paris. I said that they were good, but I have not heard Gersie's, unfortunately. I asked the time of her broadcasting. She penned it down on my notebook. The time was from one to nine o'clock ... I said that I would listen soon after I got home. She said that it would be unfortunate for she was leaving for Iran the following week, and so it would take two weeks ... I said it to be not so late to listen after waiting for her to come back. She laughed. Anyway, she did not write the articles of criticizing Ahmadi-Nejad, and so she would be back.

Then, I talked about the officials in Chongqing and the primary school pupils in the villages.

In a school, a girl, named Wang Ya, had been running from her home to school every day. It had taken her two hours, also including climbing a mountain, very hard. At noon, however, she had got on food but cold water to fill her stomach. Most of the pupils in her class had been similar.

According to statistics, there were as many as 30,000 of such children in a poverty-stricken county... Just in such a bad place, its administrative head Bo Xilai was so rich as his fat flowing out. He had two sons studying abroad, one in UK, and another in USA. I told them that my articles of criticizing him had been published online at the RFA Chinese website, where there are also English translations. They carefully noted it down, and said to go back to check it.

Apparently, they had been touched by my words! I said that, as there was no restriction over the powers of the Chinese officials, such a polarization arose as a result from one-party rule. This situation of uneven distribution of wealth had already caused social unrests, but the rulers refused to listen to the criticism... Diubo said what I had talked was correct! He wrote down his views, but his handwritings were too unreadable for me to understand. Gersie asked him to drink something, but he said that he had something else to deal with and was leaving soon. When bidding him farewell, I remembered what Susan had mentioned in the morning and I should talk to him about the award. If he would propose it, the assurance would be big, even better for Susan to participate. However, I suddenly recalled also that Iranian prisoner of conscience. Therefore, the words on my lips were swallowed back! Yes! Canada has hosted so many people like me who had suffered from political persecutions! ... For what should I be counted? To whom this award shall be honored?

Ten minutes later, Gersie and I said goodbye to each other. She said that after she would return from Iran to Canada, she would come over to chat with me again on Wednesday. I was very happy, and then took the subway back home, about four o'clock in the afternoon. On my way, I still could not help but think about the Iranian writer working at a restaurant. Although not earning so many royalties monthly, I have been able to maintain adequate food and clothing after all. Whether or not am I lucky? Compared to the pupil Wang Ya in the mountains of Chongqing the, my child is quite lucky!

I went back to my warm home, and surfed online to read the news and wrote until the evening. However, my new paper sent to Chen Kuide, editor-in-chief of China Perspectives, did not appear for publication. I switched to a new mailbox, and sent it once more, with a letter saying that the manuscript was too timely to delay, and that, if not useful, please inform me in time to submit it somewhere else.

I received a phone call from Mr. Ma, advising me not to rush to set up a company. At first one should do some survey on the market situations until one would certain to have a business, so as to avoid loss. I was noncommittal. After dinner, my wife and I went to the store nearby and bought some food. I said thanks to God, who has offered us so much delicious food!

*(Translated by Yu ZHANG)*

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**JIANG Weiping**, journalist and a member of ICPC, was imprisoned over 5 years for revealing the official corruptions during Bo Xilai's rule in Liao Ning Province, China, and now is a freelance writer residing in Canada.

## **Blackbird Singing**

*By Xi Yang*

*Blackbird singing in the dead of night*

*Take these broken wings and learn to fly.*

*All your life*

*You were only waiting for this moment to arise.*



It is a song by Paul McCartney. I have been considering putting it in my mobile as the ringing tone, but don't know how to make it. Why do I choose this particular song? It is certainly because it sounds good, yet not as popular as others. I even don't know how to sing it, but just hum. I remember the lyrics at the start, but not the rest, except for "blackbird", the word flying here and there over the whole song.

I once rent a DVD of McCartney's concert at Red Square in Moscow dated 2003. Everything was presented in red, full of symbolism and joy. The elderly gentleman with baby face was dressed up in red suit, running all the way from the red carpet to the stage. He could see that the group of audience had covered all the Red Square, even spread to the streets around. As the concert went on, the camera gave close-up headshots of the audience who were fully indulged, as if it was the reappearance of the overwhelming Beatles. There were some familiar faces in the audience, including Anna Kournikova who was still having her moments, and some others who were apparently famous. I assume they were Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie or Michael Jordan of Russia. In the middle, there sat a group of officials and tycoons, among which Vladimir Putin was in the centre. As the enthusiasm of the masses ran high, everyone participated in the upsurge. The officials and tycoons couldn't help clapping and cheering. However, the Russian President was calm as usual. A smile was suppressed soon as it sneaked out; making his other smiles looks faking. I guess that Putin's presence was only a courtesy welcoming towards McCartney, or in the purpose of gaining young electors maybe? After all, Putin doesn't look like a fan of Beatles. However, he didn't realise that the concert he had attended wasn't a pure commercial show, nor a joint party of eastern and western cultures, but was treated by some people as a triumphant celebration for "Cold War heroes". As there was another clip in the DVD, before the commencement of the concert, saying:

"What Beatles had done to the collapse of the Soviet Union was far more than any western institute or group."



Kournikova certainly had no problem with this, but would Putin possibly attend the concert if he had known about it? Surely he wouldn't have known though, as these comments were put in later. This sort of exaggeration could be explained as the westerners' illusion, or massive self-indulging. However, when I rewound back to the clip, I noticed it was by a famous Russian sociologist and writer. It somewhat looked like acting from within and without because this is the voice from within the object, the truth other than self-saying illusion. Of course, It could be a way of promoting. From the Russian writer's perspective, however, since your illusion needed such a footnote, here you have, better than the outsiders' talking.

On that day, while some young people were there only to join the fun, more of the people around the Red Square were middle aged, as if it was a delayed homage to their youth. It reminded me of Beatles' influence on my youth. When my friend from childhood came back from the Britain after studying, I asked him to buy an English version *Ulysses*, but he brought back quite a few Beatles' cassettes instead. Since then, we listened to those cassettes again and again. Michael Jackson and Madonna were the top stars at that time, but we were so fascinated by Lennon and McCartney, which made us look special. In my university, while other mates were busy using Lo Ta-yu's songs as love letters, I was singing *Hey Jude* or *A Long and Winding Road* by myself. Many years later, when my friends together went to Shanghai Stadium for Lo's concert, and waved candles following Lo to sing in commemorating their youth, I felt a bit lost. I could only sing Beatles in Karaoke, with the allegedly "showing off English". This was not the worst. When I was overseas a few years later, people always gave me a pathetic look after I told them about my favourite songs. They told me in a polite way that those songs were not belonged to "their generation". This made me feel unattributable. I have broken off with the generation of Lo, but was just born when Lennon and McCartney were popular, whose generation lived their lives documented only in books to me.

I once passed by the hall of a casino, hearing somebody singing there. The song was my familiar Beatles' *Nowhere Man*. The old man who sang the song was wearing a military cap. He looked like Asian, more like a Vietnamese veteran to me, certainly a gambler. After passing through the hall, I inadvertently took the melody of *Nowhere Man* to go on singing all the way. I did not know how, I turned a circle suddenly encountering that "Vietnamese Veteran" again. He was amazed and asked, "How come you're singing the song too? Ah, did you just hear me singing?" We both laughed, but did not have further exchange. Where had he learnt the song? In Sai Kung, or in Orange County, California where in the Vietnamese refugees were sheltered? It did not matter at all. We just kept singing," *Nowhere man, nowhere man, nowhere man...*" It is a man nowhere to go, unattributable. A song could be passed on, or gone with wind, because its meaning did not matter in many cases. Or one can

say, during its passing on, its meaning has been constantly diluted, and became unable to be thinner any more, but the speed of spreading remains the same. For instance, *Blackbird* was based on McCartney's opinion over racists, just as the lyrics are shown in the beginning of this article, "Blackbird singing in the dead of night / Take these broken wings and learn to fly / All your life / You were only waiting for this moment to arise." Anyway, maybe none of us still cares about the meaning of the lyrics any more.

Wai-lim Yip, the well-known poet, was my lecturer. He said, "The songs need to be sung, so the lyrics should not be too complicated. As the melody goes on, the listener does not have the time to think about the meaning of the lyrics, or the melody would be blocked and hindered." Later, however, I have thought that we listen to most of the songs more than just once. When listening to it over and over again, the lyrics are still semi-distinct, sometime this sentence, or another next time. So, I reckon the simpleness of the lyrics should not make them meaningless. One day I showed Mr Yip the collections of McCartney's poems. He pleasantly had a quick look through, and said, "Their songs are simple by using common rhyme, but if you look at the lyrics while listening, those simple sentences can have remarkable effects." It was a shame that we did not really analyse certain songs to find out where this "remarkable effects" comes from.

I happened to find the book *Blackbird Singing* in the discount area of Borders. The book was edited by Paul's friend Adrian Mitchell, who we reckon as less famous. Mitchell and Paul's wife Linda (now deceased) started editing this book to make it a birthday gift, but it was soon discovered by McCartney. The book was only priced for \$3, or even \$1 in some online sale. I'm not trying to cry for the cheap price anyway, as we can easily Google search Lennon or McCartney's lyrics from the websites built by their fans.

From the introduction of the book, we come to know that McCartney used to have a "poet complex". He tried to write poems with a deep meaning, but was constantly rejected by school magazine. It might be the reason that he kept writing these lyrics that would be rejected by school magazine. Mitchell put McCartney in the box of "popular poets", distinguished from "academic poets" or "modernist poets". Mitchell traced it back to Homer and William Blake, who were the poets before academism. Mitchell's interpretation of the lyrics was similar to Wai-lim Yip's. He wrote,

"There's often a difference between a poem and a song lyric. Lyrics tend to be less concentrated, partly because a song has to work instantly, and partly because the words must allow room for the music to breath, to allow time for the work of the music. In a good song the words and the music dance together, so they need dancing room."

However, Mitchell thought that McCartney's attempt to break through into the field of poetry was an adventure. He tried to write something "deep and meaningful". This reminds me of what Adorno once said about lyric poetry, "the descent into individuality raises the lyric poem to the realm of the general..." In Adorno's view, "for the meaning of a poem is not merely the expression of individual experiences and stirrings of emotion. Rather, these become artistic only when, precisely because of their defined aesthetic form, they participate in the generality of things."

Mitchell also mentioned, "Sometimes his poems are light as feathers... Sometimes he writes four lines as heavy as a double-decker bus..."

For the record, I finally put *Blackbird* in my mobile, but it is not ideal for ringing tone, because when calls come, I start to enjoy the old song, but forget to answer. So it is only stored in my mobile.

*11 November, 2008*

*Blackbird singing: poem and lyrics, 1965-1999/ by Paul McCartney, edited by Adrian Mitchell. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 2001*

*(Translated by Angela HU)*

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**Xi Yang**, pseudonym of Liu Xiangyang, a member of ICPC, has published many novelettes, short stories in Chinese. He is now residing in the USA.

## **That Year of 1989 (last part)**

*By ZHU Yufu*



4

On the fourth day of my detention, Zhang Baoyu came and fetched me for interrogation. To tell the truth, it was better to be called out for interrogation than being locked up in that cage every day. Going out of the long corridor one might bask in the sun. It was simply an enjoyment. The place for interrogation was a small room about six square meters. By the entrance there was a desk. Opposite to it, there was a cement block about 30 cm high at a corner of the back room. Partly sitting (not so much sitting but squatting) there had psychologically by itself a feeling of humiliation. The profound achievements of Chinese prisons had resulted from agglomerating the wisdom of so many generations. After brief opening remarks, Zhang Baoyu commandingly questioned:

"How many times have you listened to the Voice of America?"

I was amused in my heart, but could not help express:

"I've done it countless times."

The police have got a saying of their routine as "squeezing toothpaste." It would rather be straightforward than let him go ahead. As expected, Zhang's routine was disrupted by my answer. He had thought that I would be shivering to give a counting of several times, and so that he could ask for the content each time. Then, upon his pursuing, I would have obediently become his captive. Zhang was distracted a moment, and made another trap:

"When did you start to listen?"

I realized that such a person would count whatever he could bite.

"I have done so since Sino-US relationship was started to establish."

I thought to myself, whether or not he would be so stupid as to label me as "listening to an enemy radio". In China, how many people had got their lives ruined under such a label. Today, Communist Party's era of lion has ended, and so would not dare to keep mentioning "class struggle". But, in its era of fox, the Communist Party will be more cunning. All right, let you make a label. If you would dear to say that I had been "listening to an enemy radio", then you

would be the public enemy to the people; otherwise why having established a diplomatic relationship with the enemy? Worthy of being an senior policeman, he did not enter my trap but ask:

"Why do you want to listen to the Voice of America?"

"As one of the mankind, I have a right to know any information in this world."

He slowly repeated my words, but could chew nothing out of them but bitterly end this topic.

Then, he changed the subject: "Where has Chen Liqun gone?" Chen Liqun was a good friend of mine during the period of Democracy Wall in 1979. Some days ago, for her supporting the students, she was wanted by the police and so took refuge somewhere else. "Do you ask me? If you do not know at outside, how could I being inside here? If you release me now, I'll help you to do the seeking."

There were also more tiny issues asked. The air stirred in my chest was rising sharply, and finally I blurted out:

"You may just sentence me to ten or twenty years!"

"Oh, why?"

"Today, I am detained here for persecution, which even leaves no basis for a redress later. If simply sentenced, I will be certainly redressed later. In future, when my children and grandchildren will ask me 'what were you doing then?' I can proudly say: 'I was imprisoned for our suffering country!'"

"Do you even want a redress? This counter-revolutionary rebellion is impossible to redress!"

"Are you greater than Mao Zedong? His decision on the April Fifth Movement as a counter-revolutionary rebellion on Tiananmen Square has been redressed. Cannot your decision be redressed? It is impossible for you to make a life-long struggle for this cause. Do not think of your aging. You have still got children. Do not get them unable to lift their heads in the future! Of Communist Party's political movements you should have seen so many. In your heart it is actually clear, too! "

...

I did not know why, when I was to return to my cell, Zhang Baoyu fetched several of big apples to let me eat. I thanked him, and said that I would like to take them to my cell and share them with others. He also agreed.

I did not know why I was very wishful to contest with those "tools of dictatorship". I looked for every opportunity to argue with them, staring at their eyes, and watching them to tell lies insincerely. I tried hard to find the very little humanity that they are still remaining. The Communist propaganda that fooled people for decades had primarily harmed them. After being victimized, they acted as the paws of the tiger to harm more innocent people who still retain their humanity.

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After my release, I was dismissed of my position at my work unit. The head of Communist Party committee who had been demobilized from the army ordered me to leave the Housing Administration in a month and find my own way out. A colleague of mine at the Section for Labor and Salary was a senior cadre who participated in the Communist revolutionary since its early years and very sympathetic to my circumstance. He told me in private that the party head was not the boss of his self-owned entity, and so that he got no authority to do so since my profession had been based upon my early career starting from the apprenticeship with a wage of 15 yuan per month. He advised me not to take the initiative to resign. The medical doctor at my unit also suggested that, according to my own situation of poor health, I could take a sick leave for a rest at home in a certain period.

In those darkest days, I could not forget the quiet undercurrent of true feelings. At the Cardiovascular Division of No. 2 Hospital Affiliated to the Zhejiang Medical University 2, an elderly woman doctor named Wan, happened to know of my circumstance. While examining me, she gently said, "Deng Xiaoping has taken the people as pigs for whom it is enough to have a right to survive. The people are alive with a need to pursue spiritual freedom." More people constantly encouraged me, hoped that I would not lose my heart, and told me that this kind of days would not last long.

After my sick leave, Mao Qingxiang, a friend of mine offered his rented shop to me to open a studio. One day, Zhang Baoyu pretended to pass by and came to my studio to check my "tendency". He asked me:

"How are you doing now?"

"I'm waiting," said I.

He puzzled and asked: "Waiting for what?"

"For the democratic movement to come again!"

"What a personality!" He left quickly.

The June Fourth tragedy shocked the entire civilized world. Compared to a variety of "cleansing" during the existence of the Communist Party over a nearly hundred years, the massacre of this amount of people meant nothing. However, this incident occurred in a year near the end of 20 century when the democratization process around the world made a rapid development, and when the mankind attached more importance to the value of life and more to the political rights. The development of High-tech Information innovations got the bloody scenes thoroughly exposed to the world. It finally struck a fatal blow to many Communist countries that had been struggling hard for sustaining efforts to change their image, and deprived away their last chance to survive.

Whether or not are the dead of June Fourth incident waiting if they knew? Today, I learnt that Primer Zhu Rongji in the United States said, "Such an incident will never happen again." Whether or not do you sense the guilt in his sentence? Although he was not in Beijing where the incident has got nothing to do with him, and although he was unable to make the final decision on the incident, has he, who pursued democracy under the past totalitarian dictatorship, seen such a bloody massacre as May Fourth incident during the period from the northern warlords to the national Government?

We can only wait, only patiently wait. Also ask you to be patient. To be patient, tomorrow will certainly come.

The wound of mankind it still bleeding, and, after 10 years, it is still flowing. At the same time, flowing are also the tears from the parents, wives and children who eventually grow up.  
(End)

*(Translated by Yu ZHANG)*

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**ZHU Yufu**, a member of ICPC, was arrested four times in 1989, 1999, 2007 and 2011, and has been imprisoned over 10 years. Since March 2011, he has been detained on suspicion of "inciting subversion of state power" and likely to be tried in 2012.

## ***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 October, 2011, ICPC held its Fifth Internet Congress of the Membership Assembly to have elected 5 Board members and 2 alternates to fill its vacancies, and the President Tienchi MARTIN-LIAO (Germany). The past president Dr. LIU Xiaobo, who has been imprisoned since December 8, 2008, has been its Honorary President since October 2009, and he got Nobel Peace Prize in 2010.*