

To Live

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PROLOGUE

VOID

The world is full of mysteries.
The passion in uncovering the
mechanics of reality can lead to
grim nihilism.
Did the abyss only exist once light
manifests? Or did vacuum assume its
role as the abyss?
Given that alone, life can be
considered an incomplete thesis of
purpose.
A gripping montage of changes.
Some things never change no matter
what actions you take.
Others can dictate the path of
destiny like a flap of a butterfly
wing.

In a grim period of humanity
degenerate power structures,
illegitimate morality and conflict
plagued everyone.
The cause was pointed at the
actions that occurred 20 years ago
in which the world witnessed a
anomaly in collective suffering.
Modern butchering equipment aligned
with dehumanized tactics pinned 40
million individuals under the soil.
Around the same time in a nation
not thought about, a young to-be
generalissimo was gaining traction
in the party apparatus of a new
republic.
Criminal Syndicates in Shanghai
were now shaking hands with the
rowdy youthful future leaders of
the party.
A young disillusioned soldier had
also fallen into the gripping hands
of religious dogma, as I-Kuan-Tao
courted him as their next
patriarch.
An unnerved Marxist grieving over
his father had now inhaled the
attraction and honor of a workers'
revolution. Fitting the role of
leader for himself.
Lastly, an immovable president of
Peking university culturally
advanced China into a state of
modernity which would ripple mes

CHAPTER 1

EXT-VOID DREAM-VOID-NIGHT

In a dark environment in a dream. Resembles a melancholic Edward Munch theme. The figure is abstract - smoke-like in some parts, razor like black ice in other areas.

Calligram of fading in sentences to represent the abstract consciousness.

VOID

Fang.

NARRATOR

It whispered.

Quietly in an ominous tone.

ZOOM INTO THE VOID'S HAND FAST AND INTENSE. (MAKE READER FEEL NO CONTROL). VIGNETTE DEEPER.

Hand resembles an amalgamation of a starving hand and monkey's paw (bandaged and bruised) almost liquid with black ice fingers.

Sound of eerie blowing wind

VOID

(Beckons out the hand)

The actions of one alone does
curtail in big changes.

ZOOM OUT FROM THE VOID'S HAND.

NARRATOR

The coldness of the hand seemed to
absorb my heat.

Greedily so.

It left me hungered and neglected.

VOID

Let me guide you, Fang.

FADE IN IMAGE

Void entity gives a malignant smile.

VOID (CONT'D)
 There is a lot that you can do.
 Even more for me to observe.

FADE IN IMAGE, CLOUDY TRANSITION

SHOW THE GROUND WITH FANG'S HAND PALM WHOLE ON IT. VEINS
 BULGING OR OBVIOUS. FLOOR RESEMBLES BLACK SOIL WITH OBSIDIAN
 ROCKS - LIFELESS.

NARRATOR
 This dream comes up often.
 It asks the same question.
 Monotonously. Repeatedly.
 What will I choose this time?

FADE IN IMAGE

BOTTOM TO TOP SHOT OF VOID ENTITY.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
 Will I accept the guidance of this
 "thing"?

Call Void's Hand Choice

EXT-VOID' S HAND CHOICE-VOID-NIGHT

HAND GRABS THE VOID HAND

VOID
 Never bite the hand that feeds you.
 Nonetheless, I will watch your
 choices with great interest.

HAND IS LEFT HANGING. VOID FISTS.

VOID (CONT'D)
 Your fear drives me away.
 Yet I will never go away...
 Lest, you will challenge my domain
 in your mind.

EYES/ESSENCE FLARE UP, SCENE BECOMES INTENSE

VOID (CONT'D)

My Presence is unchallenged.
My domain is preserved.

WISPY SCENE OF BLACK SMOKE

SCREEN SHAKE

Choice-branch aftermath

NARRATOR

I lay there in the darkness.
It wasn't obsolete like a
demoralizing void of space and
time.
Everything was there at once.
Hopes, dreams, ambitions,
weaknesses failures... - Seemingly
with no exemptions.
The only illusion being that the
darkness acts like a drape over the
"everything".
You could sense "everything" in
your bones and your guts.
These dreams became a domestic
opponent in my body and mind. A
harsh reality I was made to face.
Like the countless times I
encountered this reflection of my
consciousness, I had to make up my
mind and leave.

FANG

It's time to wake up.

INT-MORNING INTERVIEW-KU'S HOUSE-MORNING

BLINK OPEN INTO SCENE 2

UNKNOWN

Fang are you awake?

VISION BLURRED. SILHOUETTE STANDING ACROSS THE ROOM.

NARRATOR

I felt a slight tugging at my
shoulders.

BLINKS BACK TO DARKNESS.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

My lethargy overpowered this as my tired body still exuded weakness while regulating my meager motivation.

Likewise, my eyes mutinied against my mind as they defiantly refused to open.

I pushed my knuckles in and rubbed my face slowly, like the kneading of dough.

I could only feel the one sensation of my thoughts darting around in my head.

Perhaps that dream itself was a cruel projection of this fatigue and weakness.

Eyes open to show Professor Po, sucking in a cigarette.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

He was one of the few that began to inhale tobacco.

A trend in response to increasing acidity in chewing tobacco.

What a classy fellow.

Then again, anyone raised in Shanghai would eventually end up that classy.

Professor Po sat down in front of me.

One leg resting on his other knee. Slumped back. Old man cool.

PROFESSOR PO

Good to see you are awake. Fang.

NARRATOR

I rubbed my eyes and looked around.

I had fallen asleep in this chair while waiting for Professor Po to come interview me.

PROFESSOR PO

How was your sleep?

Call Choice Scene 2 dreams

PROFESSOR PO (CONT'D)
Dreams aren't meant to make sense.
They're meant to simulate solutions
to tangible problems using
intangible means.

Takes one last deep inhale of tobacco.

PROFESSOR PO (CONT'D)
You get what I mean?

Stumps out cigarette. Po picks up a small ink brush. Holds a
piece of paper.

PROFESSOR PO (CONT'D)
You sound weakened already.
I hope you take care of your
health.

FANG
Don't worry. I can handle myself.

NARRATOR
I flash a smile to Professor Po.

Professor Po smiles back.

PAN TO UNCLE KU WITH "HIDE THE PAIN" FACE. ZOOM OUT SLOWLY TO
THE FULL BG AS THE NEXT FEW DIALOGUES OF NARRATOR GO THROUGH.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Uncle Ku gives a face of slight
worry.
Considering this was happening in
his house, he considered it bad
luck despite the near perfect
Fengshui of the building.
A timid, superstitious man in fact,
yet egoistic and stingy.
An amalgamation of traditionalism
and conservatism.
It was easy to describe him when
you got to know him.
Professor Po gripped the inked pen
and looked at me head on.

PROFESSOR PO
Keep yourself strong.

Professor Po lightly tapped the brush on the brim of the
inkwell to shake off excess ink.

PROFESSOR PO (CONT'D)
DO you know why you are here?

RHETORIC
It seems he is trying to jog your
memory.
Roll with it and contribute to the
discussion.

FOCUS
The memory is there in your head.
Buried under the debris of schema
and knowledge you have accumulated.
Reach into it. Slowly with pacing.

If focus:

FANG
I am here to follow up on the
results of the university protests.

PROFESSOR PO
Not "results" per say.
It's close, I can give you that.
More so as it is a consequence.

NARRATOR
Uncle Ku's face strained as if he
had eaten a lemon.

Else:

FANG
I am not so sure.

NARRATOR
Professor Po looked up briefly to
observe me.

PROFESSOR PO
Is your health worsening?
I really hope it isn't affecting
your short term memory.

NARRATOR
Professor Po rested his face on his
knuckles for a second as he
pondered.

CG art, Professor Po's protective gaze.

VISUAL COMPREHENSION

What a pose!
 It resembles the product of a
 inspired artist.
 The pinnacle of authoritarian
 beauty! Voila!

PROFESSOR PO

We're here to discuss the
 consequences of the university
 protests.

NARRATOR

I ruffle through my hair as I
 remind myself of my situation.
 It's pretty intense.

PROFESSOR PO

Get some rest after this interview.

Professor Po waves his hand lightly.

PROFESSOR PO (CONT'D)

You seem... "over-troubled".

NARRATOR

I gave a slight nod to Professor
 Po.

End Focus

PROFESSOR PO

I take it that you attended some
 protests organised by students of
 Peking university.
 These protests were of a
 contentious nature in the sense
 that they were criticizing the
 central government.
 Several arrests made by Kuomintang
 officers have been unpopular among
 students but necessary for order.
 Per instruction of the
 administrative department I have to
 take your thumb print and take down
 some questions.

NARRATOR

Uncle Ku was rubbing his hands in
 agitation.
 I could sense the pressure of their
 clasping to be immense by sight
 alone.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

It tipped some unnecessary guilt in me.

PROFESSOR PO

Questions first. I will take your thumb print down last.

If logic:

LOGIC

The ink on the thumb would dry up and be harder to wash off if he made you ask questions.

End logic

PROFESSOR PO

Please inform me that the following details are correct.

Your name is: Fang Jie

Your date of birth is: 11th June 1920

Your current residence is with your guardian Ku-Hong Meng.

FANG

These are all correct.

PROFESSOR PO

Good to hear.

Are you a enrolled student in Peking university?

Yes

FANG

Yes, I am an enrolled student.

PROFESSOR PO

Peking university seems to pool up with young idealists.

It was the home of the new culture movement and development of political pluralism.

Protests at anything doesn't surprise me anymore when it concerns Peking university.

NARRATOR

Professor Po scratched his chin as he pondered.

PROFESSOR PO
 I'm assuming you're a smart lad for
 landing yourself in such a
 prestigious institution.
 I personally envy you.

No

PROFESSOR PO (CONT'D)
 I wonder what you were doing there?
 A holy mission perhaps?
 A fiery ambition that compelled you
 to make big choices for a 17 year
 old?

NARRATOR
 I kept my mouth shut, out of fear
 of a backlash.
 Professor Po was a hawk, he could
 read you like a book akin to how a
 hawk knows its prey.
 He subtly adjusted his glasses and
 looked back down.

END Question

PROFESSOR PO
 A major issue is your associate we
 have detained with other radicals
 in Tientsin.
 Shigeru Toshiyuki is detained with
 other political activists.
 The reason for the disparity of
 treatment for you and him is that
 he is Japanese. - His actions
 signify his wishes to undermine our
 republic.
 You can get thrown in the slammer
 for one night or spend two nights
 on house arrest with me as the
 supervising officer.

NARRATOR
 Professor Po glances sideways at
 Uncle Ku who had his hands joined.
 Uncle Ku had let his ego drop so
 low for this.

PROFESSOR PO
 Your Uncle has begged for the
 latter.

NARRATOR

Professor Po scanned his surroundings.
A faint smile manifested across his face.

PROFESSOR PO

By the way I wouldn't mind living in this Siheyuan for two nights.

NARRATOR

Uncle Ku gripped my shoulder tightly as he beamed a joyful face at Professor Po.
Professor Po leaned back and relaxed as he put himself at ease.

PROFESSOR PO

I guess that adjourns our interview.

NARRATOR

He promptly folded up the thin crinkling paper and placed it inside a book.

Sfx: THUD!

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

He had vehemently closed the book and placed it to the counter beside him.
The professor placed his foot on his knees and dangled his head back.

LOGIC

He's let his hair down.
Business is considered over.
Its plausible to assume he will remain a friendly guest during house arrest.

EMPATHY

He takes his work seriously as opposed to his personal life.
A two faced man.

PROFESSOR PO

Its a good thing I know your Uncle since our academic days in Manchuria.

NARRATOR

Professor Po glanced at Uncle Ku who had now eased from his anxiety.

PROFESSOR PO

If another officer had offered this they would have either thrown you in the slammer or violated the sovereignty of your pantry and food stock.
It would have been an awkward mess.

NARRATOR

Professor Po gave a hearty life and let his chest deflate slowly.

PROFESSOR PO

Hong! Have you got any Maotai stored away?

NARRATOR

Uncle Ku scratched his exposed balding head outside of the coverage of the hat.

UNCLE KU

I sure can, Poppy.

NARRATOR

Uncle Ku gave a smug smile and smirked at Professor Po who likewise raised his eyebrow and grinned at the "clever" remark.

If rhetoric

RHETORIC

Must be an inside joke.
Perhaps we can find out more about this if we pry a bit into the buried past.

"Where are you from"

FANG

Where did you get the name poppy?

NARRATOR

Professor Po looked at me momentarily and closed his eyes.
Uncle Ku quietly placed a cup of Maotai on the adjacent table next to Professor Po's chair.

PROFESSOR PO

Back when the Kwantung army took over Manchuria and set up Manchukuo, the League of Nations set up a Lytton Committee to investigate the validity of Japanese justification for their invasion.

SCHEMA

The Kwantung army was the name given to the Japanese military that acted independent of the civilian government. Its operations mainly consisted in Manchuria. The League of Nations sent a 5 man investigation into the matter through the Lytton committee. In a year they concluded the obvious, that Japan was the aggressor. This was the first nail in the coffin for the death of the League of Nations.

PROFESSOR PO

I was an assistant for one the translators who co-operated with them. Since all of them were European...

NARRATOR

Professor Po paused momentarily to sip from his cup. He smacked his lips from the strong concentrated batch of Maotai.

PROFESSOR PO

They couldn't pronounce my name. Based on my family name "Po", my superior decided they should refer to me as Poppy. The poppy is a symbol of peace. It represents the legacy of grueling warfare and flipped soil which nurtures the seeds to grow. I've heard it's mostly used as a girls name but I didn't mind because only a few people knew that name anyway.

(MORE)

PROFESSOR PO (CONT'D)

Anyway the report didn't so much
because when it was shown before
the international community Japan
metaphorically slapped their face
by walking out.

'Never mind,"

NARRATOR

I should let them keep their little
inside joke.
No need to pry.