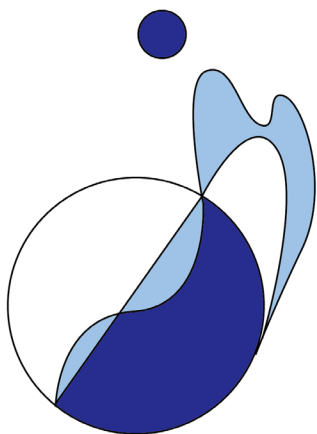


# The Moments In Your Hand



《英美现代主义文学》短篇小说集  
(2020—2021春夏)





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# A Fallen Leaf

蔡皓月

I want a dream. It's been so long I haven't had a dream, not a sweet one, even nor a nightmare, almost leading my oblivion of what it feels to dream a dream. But I haven't.

I can well remember what it feels to wake up after a vivid dream with realistic close-ups –The long tedious days where everything seems mediocre, and the idling me is like a jigsaw puzzle with one piece, no, many pieces missing. Although I never had any lucid dreams, being in a dream I'm not conscious of is still an adventure, a fragmented pursuit of my missing pieces. In the moment before complete soberness is in warm water, being emptied at the same time of being fulfilled, like a brand-new life. No matter what had happened, or what had been done, there's definitely nothing would not vanish, substantially. That's the best part of it.

Sometimes they say you may have had it, it's just you could not remember it, but my total certainty is what I have is only sleep, the blankness between my living fragments. I have no idea from when my loss of dreams emerged, for it appeared

from nowhere, like everything, a scratch, a missing button, or an epiphany. You may be able to explain a shadow, a beam of light, or the complete darkness, but blankness? No.

I've done almost everything to dream. For instance, to dream about spring, I put a dry rose on my forehead and made the retrospect of almost every segment of my life in spring; to have a nightmare, I experienced various frightening moments, reading, watching, even creating horror; to dream about love, the woman I'd loved appeared in my mind hundreds of thousands of times. I've definitely loved her, and I might still love her now. Once an autumnal forest appeared before my eyes, glittering under the sun, and the golden leaves dancing with the gentle wind, soft and feathery, quite surreal. I stepped in, raised my head towards the dense canopies of gold, some of which were whirling in the wind, leaving the tree, and finally falling onto the ground. I glanced around, decided to find a leaf, and give it to her. But the fallen leaf waited so long in a book, so long that its softness and brightness were replaced by brittleness and dull yellow, I still didn't reach out to her, for I feared that it will end up as the loss of a dream. "I've chosen a perfect fallen leaf for you." "I'm afraid I can't take it, it's too fragile."

Night after night, I had hoped, prayed, cursed and cried, but nothing happened in the sleep, and a new day is like a prolonged, or a duplicated previous day after a period of darkness. It's quite clumsy to say that, my dream was to dream a dream. Sometimes I could not even think, thus a second would be extended like a century; but more often than not, I just sat there, and a day escaped silently and mysteriously, as the aroma you feel when sniffing a flower. I thought about her,

occasionally, not as much as the past. And surprisingly, every time I saw her apparition before my eyes, it would remind me of the fallen leaf. An absurd faith gradually lit up in my mind – my dream would appear only if she accepts the leaf, because for me, two dreams could not coexist.

The other day, I saw her again by coincidence. I dared not to see her in the eyes, so I pretended to overlook her and stared to the opening flowers.

“It seems like you have something to give me.”

“No... nothing.” I murmured.

Then I heard a sound, the crumbling of something thin and brittle.

I opened my eyes.



# A Great Writer

张馨月

A couple is sitting in the study room, with two bodies entwine like snakes.

Behind them sits a girl A. She fluently reads aloud the books in the singer-like voice she has always been proud of. The book in her hand is full of notes — that is proof of her hard work.

Now the couple begin to whisper, and the vague love words cut through the air, just as unbearable as those soap operas. But finally, the shameless two separate and start to look down at their phones. The boy's phone has a pink shell with an outdated style and the girl's phone shell's color is inconspicuous dark black, but on the left side of the phone hangs a keychain with inconsistent proportions.

A sighs, then calms down to read. "There is nothing you cannot get through hard work" — this is what A always insists on. She even wrote this sentence down and posted it on the desk of her dormitory. Although she has many skills praised by others, for A, she is most proud of her literary talent. Thinking about this, A starts to focus on another notebook in front of her. She always uses this notebook to record her unique ideas.

Unfortunately, she discovers that the couple are actually

chatting through phones — why people in the adjacent seats do not chat face to face and they do not seem to be ashamed of this behavior but show a silly smile?

Thanks to the ringing of the class bell, the teacher strides up to the platform, and the two people realize that they have to pack up things and leave this room. They blame each other for making themselves forget the time, and then laugh at each other stupidly. At long last, they leave.

It is at this moment that A's mind suddenly breaks into a wonderful idea. The idea stumbles and loses its way in her huge thinking maze. But it doesn't matter. A patiently and tenderly helps it to get to its rightful place—the beginning of a new novel.

Back then, A wanted to edit all of her works into a collection, and then send it to the publisher. But thinking back to the twelve excellent works written by her in the past ten years, A decides to wait. These works are indeed very good, but they are not good enough. A has always been strict with herself. She is waiting for an article which tells her own story to be the beginning of her collection. However, it requires a long period of preparation.

Now the chance occurs as the most important part of writing — inspiration has arrived. She seems to hear the muse's whisper, quietly telling her a perfect beginning. The beginning must be fascinating, just like the classic plot of "One Hundred Years of Solitude" and the delicate sentence at the end of the first paragraph of "Lover".

"A good start is half the battle", A mumbles to herself, opens the notebook, and turns to the second page. She glances at her name on the first page with satisfaction, and the

calligraphy is as neat as ever, occupying a reasonable position in the center. A couple is sitting in the study room, with two bodies entwined like snakes.

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So, she lifts the pen and writes gently on the white paper. She is going to write about a male student — a typical ordinary boy who has been admitted to university from the countryside with his own efforts and dreams. His name is B.

“B looks straight ahead and walks into the study room with a solemn look.” A writes the first line in one breath, and then nods in satisfaction. “Looking straight ahead” shows that he is neither humble nor overbearing, and his “solemn look” implies B’s respect for knowledge. What is he going to do next? A frowns again. In fact, there is not much that can be done in the study room, but he will definitely do every trivial thing differently and outstandingly. After all, B is a hard worker.

“He goes around the stains on the floor without rushing and finds the empty seat on the right in the third row and sits down.” A takes a deep breath and puts down the pen. She thinks that bypassing the stain is a stroke of genius and now the novel has an impressive beginning. The next thing is to introduce the heroine just like any other love story in the novel. But A firmly believes that she is going to write a unique love story.

“He takes out his books and stationery and places them in corresponding positions. All of a sudden, he hears someone reading aloud in a singer-like voice just like him. It is A who is reading. And A walks up to him and talks with him. Then, they become a couple.

They will stay together all day, but their passions do not affect their studies. A and B will always come to the study room where they first met each week and sit side by side to study together. Sometimes they will suddenly feel an impulse of love that cannot be suppressed in their hearts, and then hug each other out of this lofty enthusiasm; sometimes they will get close and whisper softly; sometimes they will handle their disagreement in a way of communicating happily through

phones though they sit next to each other.

B uses the old-fashioned pink mobile phone shell that A chose for him to show her childish possessiveness; and A correspondingly receives his mischievous gift — the keychain is so big that they form a strange combination with the phone. Occasionally, they will forget the fact that there are still classes because the time they spend together runs so fast. And this kind of carelessness makes them smile at each other.”

Just at this time, the bell rings, indicating the passage of time. A shakes her head impatiently with eyes refocusing. The lecturer has finished his course, packing up the teaching materials. Other students around all leave their seats buzzing and walk out of the classroom with the harsh sounds of desks and chairs moving. Then A hurriedly puts on her schoolbag and rushes out of this somewhat suffocated space.

Not long after a quick walk, A returns to her dormitory, opens the notebook, and sees his name again, and—turning to the second page, her graceful and neat handwriting appears in front of her: “B looks straight ahead and walks into the study room with a solemn look....”

A stares at the paper, tilts her head slightly, and frowns — it is a stupid beginning. The description of “looking straight ahead” is too normal because everyone will walk in the same way. The “solemn look” is too incompatible with the study room as well. She tears off the page angrily — now, it is a brand-new second page. As the irritation is gone, A raises her head back, closes eyes, and a mysterious smile of satisfaction appears on her face.

# A Sandwich for Breakfast

黃士慧

It was eleven in the night and he had just finished his work. Ah, tomorrow he needs to get up at 7:00 as usual, and he only had...7 hours to sleep, only if he could go to bed at 12:00. He needed to get himself something to eat for breakfast. The refrigerator was empty, as he remembered this morning.

It was extremely quiet and dark on the street, and the street lamps shed yellow warm lights on his shoulders, as if comforting his fatigue. Actually he would shop here every time he came home late, because at this time of the night, this is the only store open.

Along the way he started to plan. He would grab a sandwich - the kind with chicken that he loved. And he would go home and go to sleep. This won't take long. Perhaps only 5 minutes, right? He would do it quickly and neatly. He would say "thank you" to the cashier in a hearty tone and fly out of the store. Perfect.

But he found no sign of sandwiches. He had to go to the

counter to ask if there was more, who, of course, told him that the sandwiches had sold out and that he should come earlier next time. He went back to find a substitute. Breads, too much carbohydrate, he could grow fat; snacks, they are no food at all; meat, he wouldn't have the time to cook; instant noodles...this can be a good choice, but for breakfast, not so sure about that.

He found himself circling around all the shelves for several times. And it was eleven ten already. He decided that he should waste no more time on this, so he rushed back to the very first shelf, as if encouraging himself to make a quick decision. Yes, bread. Go with bread. It will do. What was wrong about the bread again? Oh, right, they don't have whole-wheat ones! No, can't take that... Oh, come on, Jack. Don't be such a faintheart, it's only a decision for the breakfast!

He thought he heard a voice urging him to make up his mind. Don't be such a faintheart. Ah, it was his parents'. When all eyes on him but he didn't know what to say, "faintheart". When he couldn't make up his mind whether to go to the amusement park or not, "faintheart". When he stood beside a bunch of relatives and remained silent, "faintheart". When he turned twenty, even, "faintheart". And then everybody got to know that he was a faintheart, and nobody ever actually asked his opinions, ever.

Faintheart. For all these years this word haunted him. Is he fainthearted or not? If not, how could parents' opinion haunt him? If yes, then, how is it possible that he could never learn not to be a faintheart even when he is so grown-up? He has outgrown parents' opinions, but he still felt like the child before. Is he even twenty-eight or eight? How could twenty-eight years be



so long and so short at the same time? how could life be so long and so short at the same time? How could he waste his pathetic short lifetime on buying breakfast! Actually, for all the twenty-eight years in his life, did he ever do anything more meaningful than having a few more sandwiches?

And now they don't even have a sandwich for him.

Eleven twenty now. He needed to really do something other than wandering around. he started to reach out to those goods, took them down from the shelves and look at them carefully, though he did not know what he was looking at on those wrappings.

It took him ten more minutes to go through the shelves again. The cashier started to shot confused and despised looks at him. He felt his cheeks colored. He quickened his steps. For a moment he intended to leave. But his look! Ah, whatever! Go with the bread anyway. He didn't forget to smile and say "thank you" to the cashier before he retreated.

When he was lying on his bed he thought of his shopping. And he stared into the void - the ceiling, to be exact.

It was not so bad anyway. He didn't go home empty handed and he would still have something to eat before tomorrow's work. Most importantly, he defended his dignity at least in front of the cashier. Before he fell asleep, he almost forgot about the whole thing.

# A Snowy Morning With Heavy Snow

赵静

A snowy morning with heavy snow.

When I woke up in a daze at six fifty, the whole little town was seeing the beginning of a heavy snow which would last for three days and was even rare to be experienced in some northern cities. I sat on the edge of my soft bed for ten minutes, thoughts drifting between sleep and wakefulness. Then I finally stepped into the door of sobriety and began to distinguish the faint but clear sound of branches bending under snow out of my window. That must be what had aroused me.

Standing in front of the bathroom mirror, I began the first routine of the day: a lick and a spit. It was just weird that I was feeling a little weird today. There was a figure shaking and wandering in my mind all the time. He seemed to have just appeared in my dream and have been talking to me during the last five minutes in my dream before I woke up. On thinking of such a figure, my heart would be struck by a touch of faint

sadness and inexplicable loss. It was as if someone had uttered a deep and wistful sigh in my heart.

What was it? What on earth was such mist twisting and tangling around? Was that the mist I seek in my dream? Was it a cloud in the sky, or a wet wicker? The very thought of it made me lose my ability to smile and plunged me to the bottom of sadness and sorrow. It was just like a vine wrapped around a tree, constantly absorbing happiness and sunshine from me. I was sure at that time that it must have been an image that I wanted to forget and felt bad about forgetting. It came into my dreams without permission, made me aware of it and hysterical about it. But I couldn't remember it! I couldn't remember!

As I slumped in my chair, I suddenly remembered that there was a bottle of yesterday's yogurt in the fridge. 'Just have it for breakfast.' I stood in front of the poorly insulated window with the cold yogurt bottle in my hand. The cold air around the glass, which accumulated all night, and the cool yogurt stimulated me to be alert. The figure danced lightly on the cold window pane. Through the misty white mist he became clearer. Before I was completely reminded of the scene in the dream, tears first fell down.

It was unexpectedly him. The lover in Freud's dream turned out to be him. It was him in the two hundred and fifty lines that Coleridge had forgotten. It was him who was guarded by the god of sleep, Sepullos. In the opening of the night, in this other fictitious world, the person I want to see, is unexpectedly him.

His sunny smile came at me like a demon. The guy I met only once. The chance glance happened to return to my dream, befalling in a snowy morning with heavy snow.

# Fireworks in Winter

吕晨添

It was bright, yes, bright like the sun, shedding a soft glow on his face. This artificial sun rocked gently, moving up and down like a ship in choppy waves. The man-made sky getting darker, the light began to shine faintly and evenly, like dying flame of a candle, as if partly enveloped in heavy fog. A twinge of unutterable fear seized him by sudden. It would be more accurate for him to call that light a firework. Now it was a lamp on a boat, hung up on the top of its mast. A huge iceberg loomed ahead of the boat, and ahead of him. He could not help trembling slightly.

“That guy’s really huge, isn’t him? By the way, Jim, what do you think of manager’s foolish idea?” the man sitting beside him prompted, pointing at the overweight man who was about to get off the bus.

“A-a-a-ah, yeah, foolish idea,” he stammered, with his eyes fixed on the lamp on the bus roof.

“I can’t believe how he can bring up with such a stupid plan,” that man continued as if talking to himself. “He’s totally

unfamiliar with business!”

He stared at that lamp. On many occasions had he seen similar ones shining at intervals. The bus jolting, the lamp moved up and gave out a transient beam of bright light. Was there any better idea except to compare it to fireworks? No, nothing, certainly not, he believed. Right on the night of the fireworks mum would take a walk outside with him, hand in hand, along the river bank. The river rippled and sparkled as if a glossy cloth with wrinkles in it. Was that the last time enjoying fireworks? Really hard to memorize, but ...

“... let alone buy a completely new machine! Am I right, Jim?”

“Yes, absolutely,” Jim said to himself. That was absolutely the last time he watched fireworks with his family, just before he went to college. How could he forget?

“There’s no doubt that we deserve our more pay. It’s over ten p.m. now! Even natives cannot afford so much time to commute.” That man proceeded with his complaint.

Jim could see lights and fireworks of different colours in his mind’s eye. On hearing the complaint, he was struck by a strange image of firework in winter. He had never seen a stranger one than that. It was not so much a firework as a horrifying explosion. The noise was nearly about to deafen him. And it was that light that tinged his face with creepy white. The fact could not be clearer. He could even remember the happening time: this day of the last year!

“Oh, look, fireworks! I haven’t seen fireworks since last time I went back to my hometown to visit my parents during Christmas.”

Gazing at the fireworks, Jim sat transfixed and could not utter a word. On many occasions had he seen fireworks. Its dizzy light, which lit up his face now, used to illuminate mum's tear stains and wound, from which scarlet stream of blood flowed, like the gurgling river nearby. Many distorted reflections of fireworks floated in that river on his way back last Christmas. Was that scenery so fascinating as to make him bow his head towards the river to see more clearly? It's really hard to memorize ...

"Oh, I have to get off now," said the man sitting behind him.

Outside the window emerged twinkling lights in the distance, like stars blinking at him.

"Goodbye ..." he said in a soft voice, waving at all the fireworks and lights. No sound existed except the explosion of fireworks. He improved his gesture and waited for his terminal, quivering with inexplicable fear.

# Jasmine on Wonderland

林曼莉

The bee sensed the rain. She had to finish her work soon. Before the rain came, she managed to fly through the Wonderland and arrived to her home which was called the Ideal Land.

A few months later, two pieces of jasmine flowers blossom. The one on the Wonderland just wake up after the rain. She feels proud and honor to live here with roses and peonies and many other flowers who are perfectly beautiful and attractive. With the great angle of sunlight and just the right amount of rains, she doesn't have any clue about how life could be wrong.

Across the river, a wide bed of jasmine flowers lie on the ground. The other jasmine crawls her way to the bank trying to get more water for herself. This land can not bear this number of flowers and some of them even died before the rain could come. "I have to extend my roots to the bank," she said. She doesn't sure if she is doing it right. She just tries to grow her

roots a little bit closer to the bank. No any other jasmines tell her what to do. However, it seems like all the other jasmines know what they are doing. She feels lonely doing the same boring thing day after day.

A sunny day comes after a rain with little diamonds shining on the petals. People always appreciate those flowers with colors and scent and meanings. Some women would even gather around the begonias to take pictures with them. Comparing to jasmine, they born with the features of attractiveness. Jasmine is overwhelmed and lost. She is so tiny. But come on! How could she have perceptions for anything? She doesn't even have a brain.

The rain stops just like it never happens. The other jasmine on the Ideal land only has one thing in mind—growing. Before she could figure out a way to leave this depressing land, she only has one goal. She sometimes swings her body to diffuse the scent from her petals. In the deep of her heart, she knows she is unique. Among all the jasmines on this land, she knows more because she came from a place far far away from here. She has this fabulous look with decent manner. Her brain stuffs with knowledge of life, but not knowledge of living. Uniqueness can bring her no survival. She starts to feel numb and indifferent. Is she jealous of the jasmine on the Wonderland? Of course she is! Every time she thinks about this, her tiny little brain shines like it never was.

“Mommy, what is this flower? Could I take it?”

“Sure, you can, my baby. But don't you want it to be with the



pink roses?”

“No, it is time for her to go home.”

The little girl brings the jasmine to the other side of the river and put it next to the jasmine. It is time to bring the corpse back to the brain.

She is home now. Even if her roots are not anywhere close to the bank, she has to come home. Living on the Wonderland was like a dream to her so she doesn't feel like she lost something. It only feels like waking up from a wonderful dream.

# Kent Can't Fall Asleep That Night

李可欣

The bee sensed the rain. She had to finish her work soon. Before the rain came, she managed to fly through the Wonderland and arrived to her home which was called the Ideal Land.

A few months later, two pieces of jasmine flowers blossom. The one on the Wonderland just wake up after the rain. She Kent is not very clear why he is so awake. Looking at the wall clock, which shows it was already midnight, he finds nothing but thorough darkness outside the window, thick like unmelted chocolate, because the house opposite turned off their lights early, but whether they are asleep, of course, it is hard to judge. After all, for the young couple in the house, their children's crying is not only a nightmare, but also a siren for Kent, once awake, no chance to fall asleep again. Honestly speaking, the opposite has always been so, even in the darkness there is no rest for them. The quarrel often causes the cry, when the cry

gradually dies away, after that the estrangement is triggered again. Street lamps have been broken outside for quite a long time, but no one has filled a repair form. In fact, when it begins to dark down, no matter how in mist the moonlight is blurred, shadowing its shimmering, there is nothing in this street. There is also no one that will claim the so-called "safety" for walking at night. But seeing from another angle, the reason may also be that no one knows how to apply for repair service. That is to say, when it comes to the government or the public equipment, for the people who live here, they all belong to a world out of reach. Therefore, what is reflected in Kent's vision, are only the mottled walls, in addition to the light of the fireplace. It's hard to recall in what age I decorated the walls with scratches and paint, but my memory is still fresh that in my childhood, documentary of wilderness survival used to be my favorite (of course within the parents-allowed four hours a week), which has fancied myself a wild-hunters in the badlands full of the danger, nothing but survival knowledge helping build the wooden shacks, hunt for food and make a fire. There's no doubt that my parents' notice of the "work" preceded a harsh beating, but they didn't bother to offer a repaint to the walls. Even now I am already an adult and have passed the time when I lived in the fantasy world. They seem to be in perpetual fear that I would rebel once again right in the time when they lower their guard, like turning the bedroom into Robinson's cabin, so they just let the traces remind me again and again of the nihility of my hunting dream and the beating.

It's impossible to sleep with eyes fixed on the wall. Kent

closes his eyes with this thought, but he knows that he won't be able to fall asleep for a while, because his mind is so clear that he rearranges his schedule for the next week again. Tomorrow is Monday, but it's just a day of regular classes, and there will be a test next Thursday that Kelly had reminded me about. Could this be the reason why I can't fall asleep? Kent immediately denies this guess because he has done all the preparation for the test and the cramming should be done on Wednesday night. Now, it is not the right time to be nervous and Miss. Kelly didn't expect much of my grades. Then why the hell am I not sleepy? The more I want to figure out the rooted reason, the more sobered I am. Kent decides to get up to take the pills which he has kept for months. It's for insomnia. They had worked well, but recently Kent considered that his condition was better and didn't want to rely on them anymore, so he withdrew. How many pills should I take? I definitely remember that the doctor said half a tablet was enough, but, maybe I should eat the rest of them all. Then I will have a long dream, long enough to do everything in it or finally be able to do nothing as nothing matters anymore. Hamlet's monologue occurs to Kent, and discourages him from getting up.

Kent couldn't help continuing to woolgather. Dreamworld is always good, though blurred at the moment I woke up. No matter what emotion I had in the dream, the hazy aftertaste of the dream always added a mysterious veil to it. The more obscure things were, the more easily they were beautified by me. That may be why the beating will never fade from my memory. I hope there's a rain forest in my dreams tonight. How does it feel

like to sleep and never wake up? Those are Kent's last words to himself before he loses consciousness.

feels proud and honor to live here with roses and peonies and many other flowers who are perfectly beautiful and attractive. With the great angle of sunlight and just the right amount of rains, she doesn't have any clue about how life could be wrong.

Across the river, a wide bed of jasmine flowers lie on the ground. The other jasmine crawls her way to the bank trying to get more water for herself. This land can not bear this number of flowers and some of them even died before

# Lighthouse in A Stormy Night

张郁竹

On the high ground by the sea stood a lighthouse. Its gray brick had been covered with a thick layer of dust. At the top of the tower was a shabby lookout tower.

At night, the moon's pale light cast soft shadows on the lighthouse, making its silhouette dance with the waves of the sea like a creeping silver snake. A glimmer of green light spangled with the cold moonlight from the top of tower.

The sea breeze in March should not have been as chilling as it was in the middle of winter. But tonight was an exception; it was the wicked and wild wind. He glanced coldly at the dark clouds hanging low over the sea. There would be another storm tonight.

He limped along the beach, trembling toward the lighthouse. Wrapped in a thick and heavy army green jacket, his back was

awfully bent like a crooked harp neck.

The sea under the sky gave out a rotten smell, just like himself, a sick old man who is useless. A fit of the giggles broke out abruptly in the quiet night.

Finally, he staggered to the lighthouse. With the help of a dim flare of flashlight, he stretched out his dreadfully bony hand in the sleeve, took out the key in shivery, pushed open the rusty iron door and climbed up the lighthouse. He leaned against the wall carefully, grasped the handrail tightly, and slowly went upstairs. Every time he managed to make a move, he had to gasp for a while. Then he lifted his leg with efforts to reach the next step. However, no matter how hard he tried, his right leg could only make a ridiculous twist in the original place. A helpless sigh was swallowed in the thick darkness.

He was too familiar with guarding the lighthouse. In fact, there passed few ships in this secluded sea area. As a matter of fact, the meager salary he received often made him suffer from distress. The fishermen on the island used to suggest him give up this job, so as not to be so lonely at such an old age. But he cursed angrily and refused all the good intentions.

Years of loneliness served as a chronic poison, corroding his spirit day and night. But he refused to quit the job. Once, he got on a boat and planned to leave the island. However, when he looked upon the mysterious green light glimmering from the top of the tower, he soon winced and drove back again, like a

naughty child who was caught after making a mistake.

That night, he suddenly realized that there remained a special bond between him and the lighthouse that had already become an unbreakable oath; in other words, the lighthouse was there, so was he.

However, not long ago, one day, but for a moment of absence, he fell down the stairs and hurt his knee. At first, no matter how he was persuaded by others, he stubbornly refused any treat and cure. Though at last he accepted the treatment reluctantly, the accident still made him lame in the right leg. Stubborn in his blood always made him suffer a lot, so now, to climb this long step became an impossible task.

Thinking of this, he felt a tingle burning his knee again. He could not help frowning, cursing in a low voice, kneading his legs and struggling to sit on the steps.

It began to rain by the sea, and the falling rains ran into the dark sea. The roaring sea wind blew with full of anger, lashing huge waves furiously upon the cliff.

Seven years ago, it was also on a stormy night. At that time, his son was just 17 years old, and his wild dreams were of great ambition, like all sailors that were so eager to conquer the sea. Stubborn to make his own adventure, the little boy finally made his father compromise with a helpless smile. However, the hero probably forgot his home and never came back.



The fishermen all came to comfort him. But tears poured down his dark brown skin. He roared with the greatest strength of his life until he forced all the people to get out of his house.

My son is still young. It doesn't matter if he comes back later. He shall keep waiting with patience.

But at that moment, it was like chewing a box of bitter almonds, for the smell of blood swept his tongue just like being scratched by the tough almond shell. Then he was overwhelmingly sick and dizzy. He felt as if someone was going to drain all the air in his body and began to retch and twitch.

Grief could be cured, and suffering shall eventually fade with time, but anger was different. At that time, a strong emotion mixed with helpless reluctance and uncontrollable sorrow tore up his soul and blurred his mind. He cursed the cruel God of fate, for he always tortured him with misfortunes, but never provide him with hopes and strengths.

After that, he did not left the island, but took over the job of guarding the lighthouse. He was told that the wardens had been changed one after another, since no one could ever stand the lonely time. But he didn't mind at all. In countless nights, the lighthouse was like a silent old friend, listening carefully to his murmuring, keeping him in good company and blessing him with vague hopes and consolation. Many times, when he woke up in the night, he dimly opened his eyes and stared at the

distant sea, there appeared a small sailing boat looming in the sea and headed toward the lighthouse.

Letting out another deep sigh, he calmed down and made his drifting thoughts come back. Tonight he was very likely to recall on the past without any reasons.

Suddenly, he was desperate to be caught in the storm, appreciating the horrifying spectacle as its fierce winds swept across the sea as if making a deafening roar. He staggered to his feet, walked out of the lighthouse and came to the seaside again.

The storm resumed with even greater intensity, but the lighthouse was still standing there solemnly. For many years, the storm eroded its dilapidated wall again and again, but it could never destroy it.

For a moment, he felt that a layer of hard new skin had grown on his hideously distorted back. It had a metallic texture and was like a blade in the dark, reflecting a frightening spray of light across the night sky.

# Public Figure

王欢

“Congratulations on your winning the first prize!”

Tara Baker had been waiting for this moment since her childhood. The first time she saw dancers showing themselves on stage, she was pretty sure that it was exactly what she would like to devote her life to. She was right. The freedom and tranquility of dancing soon obsessed her. Dancing became part of her life, occupying most of her time. Before the national league, which was the very first important competition in her life, she did not spare a single day for rest.

And she made it. The preparing process wasn't smooth, but it seemed that all these effort-consuming years started to pay off. Undoubtedly, she would accept the award with proud and satisfaction. She absolutely deserved it. She knew it.

“Thank you.” Tara took over the cup and replied the presenter with a perfect smile she had practiced for countless times. The audience burst into applause immediately. “People were fairly kind to green hands.” She thought.

Then came the journalists. They were all hustling, eager to be the first scoop producer. “May I ask you a few questions, Miss Baker?” One of them passed the microphone to Tara.

“Sure, go ahead.” She replied in a good manner. Just a few

questions. That will be OK.

“When did you start learning dance?”

Great... A simple one. She was ready to give a standard answer. “I started learning at eight. Since I showed interest in it, I have been receiving systematic training to build up skills. Actually it was not an early start, compared with others.”

“So you were still in elementary school then, right?” The questioner added. It seemed that they had no interest in her well-prepared answer.

Is it necessary to ask? Tara was a little bit confused. Well, not a big deal. “Yes. Still in primary school. Sometimes it could be hard to balance the hobby and schoolwork.”

Hearing that, the crowd was lit up as if by magic. A blind excitement was spreading among the journalists. “So, as you have mentioned that it can be hard for you to balance dancing and your schoolwork, can you tell us what kind of difficulties have you gone through? Do your parents always push you hard and bring you pressure?” A much trickier question was raised.

She took a deep breath and replied, “Well, it’s normal for parents to have high expectations towards you. They expect me to behave well both in dancing and at school. It can be tiring to take care of all the things. But we managed to work it out.”

“How? We’ve heard that you didn’t get along with your parents. Someone confided to us that you had run away from home for some time. Can you tell us more about your relationship?” The bomb of excitement was set off. Everyone offstage was waiting for her answer. It was strange. Just a few minutes ago, people were all admiring her performance. Now everyone shifted their attention to her personal story, which in

her view was of little importance for a dancer.

Time was ticking. Their patience would go if she did not give a satisfying response. She must give an answer.

“I did have conflict with them back then. But it was already settled. Now they supported me to do whatever I like. And I can tell what really matters in my own life.” Hope that’s enough. No more personal questions. She thought.

Her words were like a stone into the water, making waves among the crowd. “So it’s true that you, as a dancer to be famous in the future, used to run away from home and live on your own?” Along with the journalist who seemed to dig out treasures, the audience was also agitated. “It was completely immodest for a lass.” “What a pity!” “Who knows what can happen on a young girl living on her own! She should have known it now that she wanna be a public figure!”

It was immodest. She should have known. All she knew was that she could no longer be a dancer.

# The Buddhist Temple

成紫璇

Having occupied a small pond just located in a renowned Buddhist temple in which he lays at rest for some immeasurable time, the intelligent turtle is endowed with a divine gift to perceive human minds of hustle and bustle worshipers. He has been accustomed to viewing passers-by bowing to the Buddha statue, dressing in various garments, speaking with various accents and accompanied by various companions. Though featuring rich individual diversity, these pilgrims generally pray for similar blessings, ranging from health and longevity, fortune and virtue to family reunion.

As the sun sheds its first ray upon the earth, the bleary-eyed temple is still cloaked in gloomy bluish mist. The spiritual turtle slowly opens his eyes and witnesses a vague figure approaching from the distance. The first pilgrim in the early morning. As the silhouette draws nearer, he takes stock of the female pilgrim with interest. Seemingly shouldering disproportionate burden overloaded on her frail figure, the ragged woman, only in her early 40s, wears extremely haggard looks, with tousled grey hair

incompatible with age straggling down to her shoulder. The turtle pays attention to her prayer. "Please save my son...We've already tried all the means we can think of to seek for therapy... Our life savings has sunk into his fatal illness...I would rather exchange my life for my boy's health!" The lady prays with trembling folded hands. She must have wept for innumerable sleepless nights since there are no remaining tears dripping down her squeezed eyes.

Several fragmented scenes flash across his eyes. A woman happily rides a red bike carrying a little boy commuting between kindergarten and home. The boy somehow unconsciously fell to the ground at an art lesson. A discarded red bike is tossed under a peach tree in a backyard. Crimson rust is seen rampantly scattered among the originally vermeil paint in a heavy downpour. A determined mother disposes of all her possessions and packs up for an arduous trek to visit specialists all over the world. Her heart sinks over and over again everytime she returns from a hospital. Her perseverance in seeking for treatment can never extinguish, as her dear son is still waiting for her. Constantly competing with the fleeting time, a trembling voice in her mind drives her to mechanically carry on and ceaselessly involved in whirlpools of hope and disillusionment. Is unforeseen accident a must for a mortal life which can be deemed as intact? Are ups and downs and the state of mind which is on the verge of collapse necessary to the growth of human beings?

When the sun hangs up in the sky, strong light pierces through clouds and shrouds everything under halo. The temple acquires a touch of turquoise intensified by verdant trees

growing vigorously. The turtle feels refreshed from his nap. Wait a minute, why does the young man appear so out of place among other visitors? His pale face is emphasized against the backdrop of vibrant green plants. While others are kneeling in devotion or bowing piously, why is he just numbly standing there without any trace of piety? He seems to mutter "Why me?" In the giant turtle's vision, he seizes a newly married young couple cheerfully prepares for their weddings. Another image of two vehicles colliding at an intersection conjures up... Why do you selfishly leave me alone? How can I survive without you? He sees a poor guy who endeavors to stretch out his arm for help, while water is about to submerge his head. A stern-looking young lad quietly stands on the roof of a skyscraper. In front of him is an empty street illuminated by dim lamps with occasional vehicles sweeping past. He shuffles forward but ultimately slumps down as his ailing old parents suddenly occurs to him at the last moment, tears streaming down his cheeks. Pleasure only persists temporarily, while agony lingers perpetually. Transient reunion is bound to serve for parting. Only after one has tasted the happiness of once possessing will he immerse in eternal bitterness of loss. The pale complaint of poor academic performance, undesirable career changes, inharmonious family relationships suddenly appear harsh to the tortoise's ears compared with the screaming let out deep inside from these two despair souls.

"Forgive my sin, please!" The turtle has to drag himself out of his absorbed reflection when he hears the lament. He sizes the sophisticated fellow up curiously. I didn't mean to claim her life! I have no idea how she has spared that money for her



children's tuition... I have never expected she would commit a suicide as a result of my theft! Those lame excuses serve no more than defense for his misconduct. Is there any moment for him to regret depriving an innocent of hope of life?

A coin chinking on his shell interrupts his thoughts. And a strident cheer arises behind his back. "It must bring you good luck since you hit that turtle!" "Come on! Make a wish!" Turning around, he sees a group of students exhilarated. "I wish my teacher would be hit by a car so that she can no longer inform my mom of my performance at school!" "Come on! It won't work if you speak out!" Then bursts another gale of laughter.

Isn't it ironic? The truly hopeless cry is overwhelmed by trifles and greedy claims which are taken for granted. The internally most devout worshipers suffer from the toughest adversity, whose cry of the soul for help may never be heard by the deities. The repentance in lack of sincerity seems to be dispelled by winds, like a tiny drop that cannot even spark a ripple on water surface. Buried deep down in his heart, the secrets will never be unearthed and only decay in the sinner's faint memories. And an overflowing stream of selfless, hypocritical and unrealistic ideals that only concern about oneself keeps flooding the temple, inundating the Buddha statue with blasphemous and dirty secular fantasies. All these ridiculous and lamentable wishes weave a heavy net that stiflingly envelops the Buddhist temple, under which the turtle, who has suddenly recognized the essence of the earthly world, closes his eyes permanently.

# The Blue Chandelier

莫玉宇

She thought that she likes to lay in that way and in that place, whenever he leaned to her and whispered something fluffy in her ears. Sometimes she would laugh wildly like his pal instead of a lady, but that's the reason why he found her unique and different from all the other girls he knew. And she thought that they love each other.

During the summer holiday she often came to his home and stayed in his room. They ordered takeouts, played computer games, and did school work together, just like other school couples, but not that alike. Laying in his bed, she could see the shining chandelier on the ceiling giving out a warm and illusionary light. It reminded her of a vague, distant dream that she couldn't tell at once, but she was satisfied with the moment.

That day he led her towards his desk with his hands covering her eyes,

“Look what I've prepared for your birthday.”

When he put down his hands, she saw a box of Legos. She screamed with a light of joy shining in her eyes,

“Hogwarts Great Hall! That’s so kind of you...! Can we build it right now?”

“As you like it,” Reading the expression on her face, he smiled proudly.

One drop, two drops, then came the numerous rattling sounds of raindrops striking the foliage. The booming thunder rang out from high and far in the sky, as if it was looming ever closer. The sky was in a mixed color of cement and blue with its light breaking into his bedroom through the floor-to-ceiling windows, and left the room in a cool, misty color.

“I love rainy days, “ Her childish voice echoed in the room, “when I was small my mum and I would spend all the day listening to the raindrops in such days,”

“Have you ever felt the same? It makes me feel protected staying in a cozy place and what you have to do is only to hear the rains and storms raging on.”

He said nothing but kept watching her building Legos, and she never minded it.

Sitting barefoot on the carpet, she was surrounded by a soft, ivory light, with her hands looked like a pair of butterflies flying among the flowers each time she picked up a brick. Sometimes she darted glances at him from under her lowered eyelids that aroused a soft feeling in him. Then he sat closer to her. For him, all he saw was only the outline of her tinted pink lips under her ebony hair and all he could hear were the raindrops impinging the earth and her breathing.

“I like for you to be still,” she still concentrated on building the Lego castle, “doesn’t it match this moment?”

He stretched forward and tried to kiss her on the cheek.

“Never heard about this before.”

“Yes, you only read those Shakespeare.” She grinned, stood up and jumped into his bed to avoid that kiss. Subsequently, he turned around and went to sit besides the girl. She opened her arms, waiting to hug her boy, but he bent down and kissed her rudely.

He was on top of her like a voracious wolf. She was frightened, trying to squeeze a smile and gently push him on the chest, but the heat that her fingers received from his skin seemed to be a silent warning.

Helpless. Claspig her wrists, he went down unhurriedly. He was so slender that she had never thought that he would have such power to suppress her. A strange sense of sacrifice, with confusion and a nostalgic vibe raced through her mind. She wanted to cry out, but it seemed that outside the windows the raging storm would engulf all pieces of her trivial emotions and clean up the whole world.

A distant wail of car horn pierced the cold, humid air. She felt herself so tiny and negligible. Her eyes were filled with blue- the ceiling, the walls, and the chandelier... all in her favourite color, but they looked new to her. It was the first time that she observed the chandelier so carefully and humbly. Its round shape, crystal-like transparency and smooth lines reminded her of an amplified egg cell under a microscope.

It was so big in her eyes that she was even amazed at this association, and soon she was filled with agony and pain. Hidden in the small crystals was the big, shining part of the Chandelier which gave out a looming blue light. When she looked at it, it seemed to gaze back and filled her ears with a

crisp sound of something breaking.

The white ceiling and the dark clouds were pressing down as she resignedly closed her eyes. He felt humiliated and angrily, he rolled over and turned his back on her. Hearing his pettish groan, she felt her heart sink and melt in the ceaseless rain, so quiet and so desperately.

"I'll go for some water." Surprisingly she spoke in a relaxing tone that irritated him even more.

However, when she tried to stand up, a pain came from her left sole-it was a piece of Lego brick. She picked it up and again, sat down by the bedside to play with the lonely missing child.

"What was you thinking about?" after a long period of silence he asked.

"... the chandelier." With a reminiscent smile on her face, she was still sitting there fondling the brick gently.

"Why can't you just give a fucking sane word?" His finally sat up with his annoyed voice.

Her outline was blurred in the blue light that he couldn't tell the expression on her face, and she murmured,

"Because... of the chandelier."

# The Crossroad

刘羿萱

He wandered on the street, looking at the street, people and cars coming and going. The woman was smiling at her little girl, with a lollipop in hand. He heard the tender words from the father passed by him, holding a smart phone: "Smoking is not a good habit, honey. I hope you can get rid of it." The boys in the car were laughing and arguing with each other.

All the scenes just ran fast before his eyes. He got nervous. Someone came to him, asking: "Sir, what's wrong with you? It is too dangerous to stay in the intersection." He noticed the voice and found out that the speaker was a policeman, staring at him with a strange look. He opened his mouth but made no sound. He walked backwards, trembling slightly.

The traffic lights turned red and then green and the 40-storey building reflected the strong sunlight, causing him to squint.

He wanted to shout out: "Mum, why are you leaving me alone?" Still, no sound came out.

The woman stood in the traffic stream and smiled at him, saying: "Come on, my boy. Don't be afraid. The cars and buses are not as scary as you think." That was 12 years ago when he

was a small child fearing to cross the street.

At the funeral, he stood beside the coffin and shook hands with all the guests coming to mourn his mom. The reason why his mother committed suicide troubled him for a long time before the funeral. But at the funeral, his mind was a complete blank. He stood there like a stone statue, without sorrow and even any other feelings. He didn't have the impulse to cry and had no expression on his face. He was just in a state of numbness. The people passed by him and all the chatting turned to be noise in his ear.

The noise came at him from all sides. An ambulance passed by with its alarm bell ringing and he suddenly came back to earth. She was standing on the other side of the street, smiling at him. She was wearing a white long dress and a pair of jade-green sandals. He saw her as if she were her mom of 12 years ago. The soft voice went into his ears: "Come on, Harry! What are you waiting for?" He was still in a daze. The light turned green again, the girl walked toward him. She came, pulled up his right hand and tried to take him across the street. He walked, following the girl's power. While walking, he suddenly realized that the person was not mom, but the girl from the class next door and, she is his girlfriend. He doesn't know why he made her his girlfriend. She is attractive and rational but seems inaccessible. She was like a goddess in his eye but suddenly an accident pulled them together. The girl gave him the familiar feeling like his mom, but more than that. She was brighter and warmer and promised to stay with him as long as she can.

Mom said: "Get away from me!"

The girl said: "Come on! I will not leave you, my boy."

# Things In Descriptions

张思捷

I haven't seen those things. They were only in descriptions until now.

Grandma said its name is mosque, it is where we used to pray. But I didn't have the chance to see it in the past although I together with grandma made prayers every day. Pray every day but just for those things. I don't assume that they can show before my eyes.

Yes, it's onion-headed and a needle sprouts from the onion but I don't know why grandma said it's huge, it's high, it's grand. It's only twice as tall as I am and I am really afraid that it would crash down any time with rubbles, rocks or blocks falling upon me. It's noisy. Every time with the sound like bombs falling, in the ground it's teetering and shaking out dirt and dust, dotting my face and clothes. Besides and from the mosque, there are steel bars sticking out and fire coming out. Well, they do seem to make the mosque grander while the smoke and dust poured out---like bullets shot from guns---make me uncomfortable as if fire spreads into my body, blocks my lungs and yell at me. It's



burning hurt. Instinctively I lie prone and creep away hoping that I would not cough all night again, making grandma toss and turn, unable to fall asleep and worried about me.

Really glad that I run away so that the pain doesn't drag me out, because I don't know when will be the next time I can visit such a fairyland. The mud road, out-of-order, leads me out. Before I notice, I have been in a stranger place. I look around only to find myself lost. Where is grandma? I want to cry but I know I can't. I should wait here quietly until grandma finds me. Waiting lonely, I notice the light spots in my hand.

The sunlight pierces the grey sky, travels through the tree, fragmented, but catches all the others in the surroundings. I am dazzled by such a colorful, colorful world around! The flowers, dewedly fresh, are colored deep red. The wind rushing across, the petals wetted by the damp are quivering their body, dancing energetically like leaping flames. I am sure if looking at them in a distance I may mistake them for a flood of blood running and flowing. Having forgotten that I need to wait for grandma, I carried by the wind go deep into. The sound of wind mixes with that of forest creating a song for me. The wind is howling; the trees are rustling; the birds are sobbing, like making eulogies. I am totally fascinated by the music. The more pleasing music I have ever heard can only be the lullaby grandma sung for me before.

Oh, grandma! I turn round and round, trying to look for grandma. Time elapses before I notice that, until the sound of bell travels from the mosque, drawing my attention back. The sun drops lower. The afterglow of the sunset, pink, purple or red, sweeps away the sky. The breeze gently blows through the

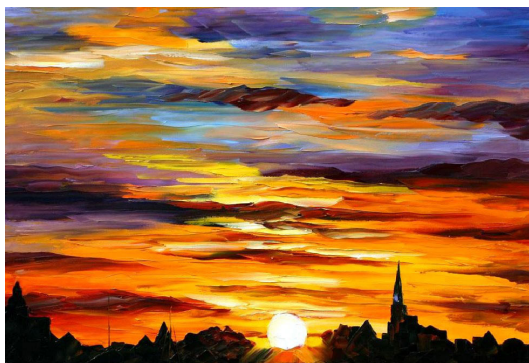
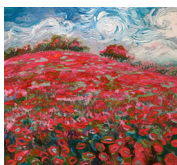
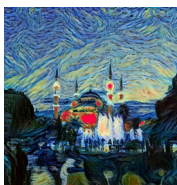
clouds. The ringdoves perch themselves on the tops of trees cooing a peaceful song. EVERYTHING is in harmony, until...

The chilling wind cracks its way in through the broken door and window. She curls up her body more tightly.

“Bang!” The bomb blasts finally waking her up. She opens her eyes, looks for her grandma firstly, relieved that her grandma is still lying beside her, and then looks outside. In a moment she sees Syria in light, but quickly she realizes that it is the light of explosion and it’s now still in silent darkness.

Will the stars appear in the sky after the sun sets, shedding brighter light than the sun? She has no idea. Will the bell in the mosque toll someday, with a sound louder but grander than gunshots? She has no idea.

She hasn’t seen those things. They were only in descriptions.



# The Intruder

李思敏

Now he enters my room again, just as what he has been doing every night over this week since dad's death 7 days ago.

I put on my headphones, trying to distract myself by listening to the peaceful piano song Nocturne No 2 in E Flat Major that I play on loop whenever I have difficulty falling asleep. The music is, oddly, not at all soft as usual. Can I say it sounds more like an improvisation of a drunken pianist? No note seems to be in key, and the beat is even getting faster and faster, as my hear heats faster.

"Missing dad?" he knows clearly that I cannot fall asleep even though I pretended to in an effort to neglect his presence by my side. "I miss him too."

"I'm afraid Chopin doesn't work for your insomnia, does he?" he continues as he takes another step closer to my bed, "Things always go to the opposite when one's struggling with getting a sound sleep. I understand you, my dear, because I'm going through the same thing every night. I just have no idea

how dad can be engaged in that car crash--you know he always drives steadily.”

“How could I know that? It’s been very rude of you to stir up the feelings of a sad man who’s just lost his father.” I rolled over, the back of my head facing him. His words gets me somewhat soberer. Something is breaking the peace of my mind--something out of fear rather than melancholy. And now I feel my teeth chattering, my heart beating harder and faster.

Yet he ignores my request, and goes on in his deep, penetrating voice, “Dad has always been the most reassuring driver, and his car has worked so well. It has never had any problems over the years, and even costs less to maintain than other cars. But the police said this time it was father who drove the car improperly and crashed into the railing. Does that make sense to you? It’s simply too ridiculous!”

“Enough! Stop reminding me of father, will you?” my teeth are chattering more, and I feel my voice trembling. He can not see my face as I have my back to him, but he must know clearly from my voice that I’m uncontrollably emotional at present, just like how one should be when being reminded of his recently departed beloved. I know well how emotional I acted to be and actually am, but I will never tell him it is not grief but an unnamed fear that haunts me. He won’t know my inability to cry. “Now get out of here and leave me alone. I think you are disturbing my sleep.”

I turn the volume up and try to calm myself down, but strangely, the music grows louder and louder like drums, and I feel my heart is beating faster and faster, even faster than before. I even hear the sound of fast breathing, which can not be

drowned out by the music. For a moment I cannot tell whether it is my own nervous breathing or his approaching.

“Why? Why not acknowledge how much you miss dad? What’s the point in suppressing your emotions? As sad as you are, you are also feeling grateful that your father bought a lot of accident insurance so that you won’t be financially burdened, aren’t you?”

God! I swear I can’t take it anymore! My fastened heartbeat is going to take my life! “Who the hell are you?” I jump out of bed, dart to the bathroom, close the door, and run the tap at full blast washing my face again and again. I do not look up until a few minutes later, when I calm down and feel a bit better. Then I find that he is staring at me in the mirror.

“I’m the inside you, my dear.” he says with a strange smile.

“Hello Lee Sir, it’s Jack speaking. I admit that I tampered with the brakes on dad’s car.”

# The Heart Is A Prey of Loneliness

李雨琪

Miss Carson McCullers invited me to dinner.

At first I failed to choose the right path to her house. I mean, for such typical roads, you can easily find a thousand in Georgia, with rows of listless brick houses lining alongside. The moon was shining, upon which windows of those houses shot an oblique square of orange light. A sense of vacuum took up the whole road ruthlessly. No sign of breaths. No sound.

I trudged through the stagnant air, trying to recall McCullers' house number. The number floated up and down cunningly in my brain; so dim but unpleasantly glaring at the same time, like the glittering, slippery scales of a fish. As I was about to backtrack, all of a sudden—I heard something.

It was Beethoven's Piano Sonata No.14 in C-sharp Minor, 'Moonlight'. The wave of the piano sound tenderly pierced the

thick, stupefying coldness at night, whipped the still air into roaring wind and at last gradually died down to a sigh. I was led to the front of an ordinary house unconsciously by this intangible force. Streetlights beaming, the house was painted the color of dusk. I stepped on the porch and touched the doorknob.

The door was unlocked. And the first scenery popped in my eyes the moment I slipped in, was a young woman playing the piano which seemed to me has experienced strikes for thousands of times. She was my familiar, the strangest Miss McCullers.

McCullers was as slender as a reed, a pair of dark brown eyes embedded deeply in her long oval face. Weird, cropped fringe covering her forehead, her shoulder-length hair was a little faded that you could see strands of golden hair sticking out. She hid herself in a big, unfitted Men's shirt, cuffs nearly wrapping her hands.

Apparently, my rustling disturbed her performance. McCullers noticed my coming in, gave me an absent-minded glimpse and quickly finished last notes. Then, she calmly stood up and motioned me into the parlor. In the silence that still seemed to maintain the delicate moonlight fragrance of the music, I went into the room and seated myself in her small sofa. The dining room, together with an open kitchen, was directly connected with the parlor. I stared at McCullers in the open kitchen busy preparing the dinner—she rolled the sleeves to her elbow, cutting, frying, boiling—a different kind of lively melody flowed out between her bony fingers.

Few minutes later, we sat opposite at a round table.

McCullers kept quiet, as always, while having cheese, bacon and fried eggs. Her eyelashes made a shadow on the snowy saucer against the overhead lights. I cast my eyes on the silhouette of her fluffy head, mechanically squeezing bacon into my mouth. It surprised me when I saw the silhouette swiftly moves back and turns into a black mass on the floor.

“I wanna go to New York.” She said, in a cold voice.

“.....” I tried my best to swallow the chewy bacon.

“Do you like Mozart?” She murmured, playing with the fork.

“Yes. I think.” I replied, attempting to make out the vague grayness wreathed in her eyes.

“Sometimes this fellow’s music was like little colored pieces of crystal candy, and other times it was the softest, saddest thing I have ever imagined.” McCullers mastered the skill—talking something of impressive beauty in an impassive tone.

“I heard you play Beethoven.” I turned my eyes to the fork gripped in her hand.

“I love his symphony. It’s like a walk or march, like God strutting in the night,” She lightly replaced the fork, “I don’t like that piano sonata. ‘Moonlight’? The guy who named this sonata must be a complete sentimentalist.”

This anti-sentimentalist in front of me lit a cigarette with her body naturally leaning on the chair. Smoke drifting lazily from her fingers, she fell silent for a while and turned to me again, “Would you like to watch my second performance?”

Weird, weird. Now I was trotting on the same road this Saturday, the second time, after my odd dinner with Miss McCullers. To be frank, it was completely out of my expectation. I am only an ordinary reader who accidentally came



across her short novel on a humble magazine called *Hunter*, I suppose, and wrote a few letters to her address taken from her personal information. Her information was published beside the title of her short novel— ‘Loneliness’. Of course, loneliness is my hostile friend. I play with her, or fight against her everyday—but who doesn’t? Everybody is caught by loneliness. So, I wrote to her—another pitiful prey of loneliness, out of nothing but instinct, until last Thursday I received her invitation to dinner.

I was the only audience of her first performance—Beethoven, Moonlight, anti-sentimentalist, as a stranger. While for her second performance, I knew nothing but an address. “Remember, go along the same road, and at the very end of it you will see a café. The café belongs to Biff Brannon, who always stands behind the cash register.” McCullers languidly smashed her cigarette dead, heralding the end of our brief dinner.

I was again controlled by an intangible force, blindly following her instructions, rambling on this monotonous road. I passed dozens of brick houses; now the one belonged to McCullers was hard to discern as none of them was dusk-tinted, but all shrouded in grayness.

Luckily, minutes later I reached the corner. ‘Turn left—I did so unconsciously; what jumped into my eyes was so straightforward, or, in other words, unreserved, that even made me laugh.

New York Café.

The name of this café was written on a square board, on which the trace of the flowing time was also inscribed, dimming the letters. However, it was not that difficult to distinguish it,

considered the appeal of—NEW YORK.

I entered the café furtively and flung a glimpse at the cash register. A man was standing behind it stolidly, elbow resting on the counter and thumb constantly mashing the tip of his long nose. It seemed that my appearance did not surprise him at all.

“A cup of espresso.” I said, quickly turned around and casted my eyes on the clock.

I perched on the stool beside a large French window, through which I could see young women of honey-color skin, boys wearing earphones, the elder in rags, walking with different tempo. I heard the electric coffee-pot perking. A girl in khaki shorts, a blue shirt, and tennis shoes—like a boy, to be honest—walked inside the café as Mr. Brannon (I recalled his name) took the coffee and marched to my table. The ghost-like tick-tock never managed to drive the hands of the clock past seven. The boy-like girl never managed to resist the lure of the radio placed on the counter. When the dregs of my coffee have been adhering to the bottom, my performer shew up.

She was still wearing a big, dusty blue Men’s shirt, hair in a quaint order. But all my attention was drawn by the giant carried on her back—a black, hard-shelled guitar case. She exchanged some words with the man behind the cash register, directly passed by the girl who was nestling up to the radio like a sunflower and strutted to the center of the café—an empty space used to be designed for bands.

She was definitely aware of my appearance, but she said nothing. The silence-keeper took out her guitar from the black guitar case, which was the most bizarre I have ever seen. It was painted blue, reminding me of a poem written by an obscure

poet, “the color, the overcast blue/Of the air, in which the blue guitar”; but I quite doubted that my McCullers would sing a serenade above the “arrowy, still strings”. Even so, I was still curious about her second performance.

McCullers strummed the first chord—a “C” from the positions of her fingers. Plain beginning. I thought.

Then, immediately, my world was turned upside down. There were only 3 audiences witnessing her performance, but it seemed to me that I was in a madding crowd. McCullers changed the key instantly after the plain beginning and the blue classical guitar gave out unimaginable electronic sounds under her magic manipulation. She sang the first lyrics—No, I bet she was yelling.

“Roll over Beethoven and tell Tchaikovsky the news!”

The Beethoven player in her first performance was singing “Roll over Beethoven”—I knew why she called herself as an anti-sentimentalist— “My heart is beating rhythm and my soul keeps singing the blues!” She continued, “Roll over Beethoven! I gotta hear it again today!” Till the end of the song, she was again and again repeating the words.

The flame extinguished when McCullers replaced her guitar into the case. But the temperature was rising; and I was sure it would last timelessly. In the silence that still maintained the heat, she marched out of the stage. As she was coming closely, I saw her wet fringe in the shape of some twisted twine.

“Your performance is marvelous.” I said.

McCullers didn’t give any response to my praise. She lay the guitar case against the corner and hunched over my table, gaze stabbing into my eyes like a sword.

“I wanna go to New York. The Real NEW YORK. If I can defeat my stroke.”

A character in one of her short stories—I remembered—has been struggling with stroke since seventeen, while she died of cancer like any ordinary at the age of seventy. I never considered stroke as any insurmountable stumbling block.

“I have no idea that you like Blues. Nowadays it’s a fashion trend.”

“No. I like Blues because it sings my soul.” She looked gloomy.

We were both trapped in muteness for a while. The common sultry late-summer night was cold in the café. I saw McCullers took a small package from her pocket and lit one cigarette. The smoke hung close around us, blackening the cold air.

“I must go to New York. You will see.” She looked at herself reflected in the window.

“But before I leave Georgia,” She got close to me and smiled secretly, “I will conduct my last performance. I know you are going to be my loyal fan.”

“Yes. I think.” I answered, trying to figure out the light source that brightened her eyes.

“Next Friday, September 29th. Seven p.m.” She told me convincingly, voice seemingly controlled by the cruel destiny, “Please come to Atlanta Airport. Meet me at the second terminal, Lounge No.19.” She recited the destination quickly, even without any thinking.

“Look like you have planned your last performance for a long time.” I said.

She was relaxed and I soon recognized her real smile, “I’m

glad you'll come."

Six days passed. I led a life that couldn't be more ordinary during these six days. I bought the biweekly magazine *Hunter* on Monday, but I was not surprised that McCullers didn't fiddle with any lonely story in it. She must be preparing her last performance. Perhaps, she would never be lonely—I knew she must go to New York. New York allowed no space for loneliness.

I also played my old guitar from time to time. It was too big; the strings were hard and sharp; the sound was sometimes dreary, sometimes hoarse. My guitar was unfriendly to me; but I couldn't live away from anything unfriendly. McCullers in this sense was completely different from me—she was never able to get along with those—ugly trifles.

I went to the airport on time as she expected, loyally. I walked across the lobby filled with crowds of people carrying messy luggage, trudging to the second terminal, Lounge No.19, with something unspeakable corroding my heart. The air was no longer still, but turbulent.

I reached the lounge; around me were all anxious travelers, probably holding the same New York fever as my Miss McCullers. It was five to seven. I heard the mechanical voice informing the passengers. The plane from Atlanta to New York was going to take off.

I was now totally shocked. I had no idea that her last performance was a farewell. McCullers was going to New York. TONIGHT!

But where was she?

As I was full of unreasonable, overwhelming confusion and

fear, my thoughts were suddenly cut off by a strong, white light from the outside. Everyone inside the Lounge No.19 was crying and exclaiming, surging forward to the front of the window like some crazy fans.

I rushed to the window, immersing myself in the white, glorious flood. All hustle and bustle was muted now, under the control of an intangible force. Then I caught the sight of a small figure—in the center of the landing field, like a reed in black, quaint hair flapping with the wind whipped by the gigantic plane beside. I narrowed my eyes—the figure was wearing a pair of black roller skate, twirling around her stage again and again—a real ballet dancer.

I was completely exhausted. It was her destiny. It was my destiny. It was ours DESTINY.

I had no strength to shout out her name. I even couldn't recall her name—moonlight? Beethoven? Blues? A seventeen-year-old girl with stroke? Everyone in this world failed to name her power.

The last voice I heard was the echo from that obscure poet—

I CANNOT bring a world quite round,  
Although I patch as I can.

# The Sichuan Restaurant

刘雨歌

More than a month into her stay, she had never thought she would one day look forward to rain so much. She hated the rain and the feeling of damp it brought, especially in this cold basement where the air smelled musty and the clothes clung to her, not knowing whether it was sweat or damp. What's worse, it would be particularly suck to see the kitchen door of the Sichuan restaurant at the corner of the street, in order to avoid the rain, would be tightly closed against the blowing wind. Usually the fire on the stove lit up the whole back room, and the cries of the clerk, mixed with the crackling of the fire licking at the edge of the pot, difficultly reached her ears through the small window high on the wall. Though the windows never opened, she seemed to smell the pungent smell of chilies. "When everything is over, the first thing to do is going there and having a good meal." She thought, licking her lips. But when it

rained, the only relief to this dull life was gone.

Since the day before yesterday -- no, the day before that, well, it doesn't seem to be. Since every day here was exactly the same, she had forgotten the date, only knowing that when the restaurant opened, it would be another day -- she suddenly had a loss of appetite, a dizziness, and the smell of "healthy food" can't help but retch. Even at the sight of the backdoor, the thought of the oily food made her feel more nauseous. It embarrassed her to be noticed by others, who she had never looked up to. They laid idle in bed all day without any movement. Whoever ignored their empty opening eyes must thought they were dead. After all, people often disappeared. And the guard closed the door behind them with a simple word, "She's gone." Actually no one was in the mood to laugh at others for many had lived here for more than five years, and therefore had seen all sorts of quirks and little vomits. she always consoled herself with the thought that unlike these women sent by their husbands, she had come for money of her own free will, not some wretches to be pushed around with. I would soon be rich if bearing it, she thought.

It was two months later that she expected the Sichuan restaurant again, the vomiting gradually disappeared, followed by a burning sensation in the throat all the time. According to the neighbor bed, now was the most comfortable time, since days would be hectic in less than one month. Indeed, during this time she was discovering new things about her body, as if she were gradually becoming aware that something inside was affecting her. It was amazing, she thought regretfully, that a particle so small that it was invisible to the naked eye could



grow to such a large size. If only she could see what it looked like! "Here you go again. Money is the most important thing. You can see everything with money." "She reminded herself.

The day she left was another rainy day. She didn't take any luggage when she arrived, so she simply left and took it easy as well. Relaxed, she forced a wry smile, finally relaxed physically and mentally. I've been working so hard for so long and I'm so close. It's gone, money's gone, everything's gone. Only the Sichuan restaurant is still there. She took the last of her money and ordered a spicy chicken. While eating she began to cry, not knowing whether it was because of the spicy food or some other reason. It's not a big deal to start all over again. Bearing a different attitude yet a same purpose, she went to the direction of there again.

# The Veteran in the Gorky Park

阮懿子

May 9th, 2011.

Sun set, Gorky Park.

The sun sprinkled the church at the edge of the park with gold, and the church was full of white pigeons, a few of which were hopping on the ground in front of the church. The temperature in the early summer evening was not high, the breeze made people very comfortable. In the park at the dusk, there were still people by twos and threes, but they were not very noisy, only the occasional sound of laughing made by children.

In one corner of the park, facing the church, there were several rows of yellow benches. The paint had fallen off in some places. At the end of the last row of benches, just out of the sunlight in the corner, sat an old man, for nearly a day. He just sat there quietly, in his clean military uniform, with four or five shiny medals; and there was a crutch at his knee, a bunch of flowers at his feet. His face was wrinkled and wore a serious

look; he had no words, just staring at somewhere.

There shouldn't be the stores, there used to be streets; the trees there look so small, they were planted just two years ago; the church, now renovated, vermillion, but used to be stained with blood and then destroyed by bombs. People are walking and chatting, children playing and running; and those pigeons, they are still here. Sixty years. Everything is changing; everything is getting better. The veteran smiled, but soon returned to be serious. He slowly closed his eyes, recalling what happened today. "It was a bit cold in the morning, six o'clock, of course. And I sat here for five hours, I was a little tired, to be honest, but I didn't move. Quick and simple lunch, and another five hours. I am still waiting. Though I know the truth... But I hope it's not true."

"I'll wait another ten minutes. If no one comes, I'll go home. I haven't prepared my dinner yet." The veteran made a decision in his heart. At that moment, the church bell struck five, and a flock of pigeons on the steeple roused. Bars and stores turned on the light, preparing for dinner. People sitting outside the stores didn't stop chatting with each other, the topic seemed to have shifted from colleague gossip to international relationships; those couples were calling their kids to go home.

"Alyosha! Go home!"

Who? Alyosha? The veteran felt a sudden touch in his heart. Alyosha was one of his comrades in arms. They used to be very close, even more than their parents. Alyosha was the youngest soldier in the army, eleven years old or so. And he would always be the youngest one, forever. He only attended this celebration gathering six times, or five? After all, it was immemorial. At

the next few gatherings, they would talk about Alyosha, “If Alyosha was here, he would have many interesting ideas about it.” But now, different, they all gone. First was Alyosha; ten years later, Ivan; then, Larry; the past four years, Rayan, Maxim, and Filip. “It will be my turn, next year, or maybe this winter.” The veteran thought, tears silently rolling down his cheeks.

Night fell, lights lit.

The veteran slowly got up, arranged his uniform, picked up the flowers he had brought in the morning, and waddled away from Gorky Park on his crutch. In bars there were still many people talking and laughing. Pigeons flew back their homes, leaving three or two on the ground in front of the church. No one noticed the veteran leaving, since his figure gradually faded in the dark. Before turning the first corner, he turned his head and glanced at the position where he had been sitting all day.



# The Pool

程莉斐

Mr. Sterling suggested we meet at the natatorium instead, since summer was comming.

In the women's locker room, I looked around at my peers—faces free of makeup, swimsuits without sponge bra inserts, stretch marks—naturally giving themselves away. That's probably what he wanted to see though. We have met only three times so far, and both were dignified and courteous on the way to marriage.

Mr. Sterling came out of the men's locker room. The exposure was fair: without Armani and Omega, the 39-year-old had a protruding belly and short legs. I shrugged my left shoulder uncomfortably, where there was a red mole that my boyfriend from years ago had loved to kiss. But Mr. Sterling would never discover it.

We slowly progressed towards the deep end of the

swimming pool, one behind the other, in silence. Topics on energy and trade, in which Mr. Sterling excelled, were grandiose to talk about here.

When Mr. Sterling reached an empty lane, he stopped, wetted his face with water, smiled vaguely, and dived down to swim the other way.

I can only do a little backstroke. I let myself float in the water, my hands rolling back like stiff windmills, moving like a piece of driftwood. I suddenly thought unconfidently of my breasts, which must have looked flat from Mr. Sterling's point of view in the distance, but that's how it is when you're lying down.

"That's good. I can only do breaststroke." His tone sounded like encouraging his staff. I turned my head and noticed that just two meters away from us a couple was tightly entwined, so close to us. But he and I were like two dry stumps.

Mr. Sterling was leaning against the wall, in a standard conversation mode. "Really, passion is too unreliable. Only a plain life can go far. It's just that lots of people can't accept ordinary routine. What do you think?" Mr. Sterling eyed me through his goggles. I pretended to cough, but it was a pity that I couldn't, like in a restaurant, bow my head to drink some red wine, wipe my lips with a piece of tissue, and say "please excuse me for going to the restroom".

"But I believe that there can be plain passion."

This idea came to me in a flash and even startled me myself. Mr. Sterling was a little surprised too. He pushed up his goggles and smiled at me almost gratefully. "That's right. I also yearn for a different plain life with plain fun. But that's harder."

Three old men, who had been swimming back and forth in

the left lane two times without a break, were now gathering at the edge of the pool, panting heavily but also happily. The smell that was unique to elder man's breath and body and the colors of their swimming caps came to us immediately.

For the first time that day, I was disappointed, with him, with myself, with the fog that hung over my goggles and between people. Maybe I just hated the smell in the pool.

"I like the rules of nature. Flowers bloom in spring and leaves fall in autumn. So your age suits me very well. But I don't know what you think?" Mr. Sterling turned and stared at me. All right, the premise of cooperation is full communication.

"And while we're at it, frankly, age," I said slowly, buying myself time." As far as marriage is concerned, I approve that, we are of the right age for each other."

"As far as marriage, as far as marriage..." Mr. Sterling repeated twice, and then, again, plunged into the water.

I stayed where I was. Not far away in the corner of the pool were now two young women, engaged in small talks as if they were in a cafe, still with the shrewd tension of white-collar workers. The taller one was complaining while in nature bragging about a guy named Joe or John who often took her to movies and French dinner, but only recently had she learned that he got divorced once. Another girl kept listing her symptoms: waking up early in the morning, hating the sun, getting tired easily, and constantly asked whether this meant pre-depression, as if an affirmative answer is what she wanted. They knitted a sweater of words, with one line of black thread followed by another line of white, together sending out murmurs of approval.

Mr. Sterling was left alone on the other side of the pool. I reflected that I should have been friendly and positive. "As far as marriage is concerned," he and I shared the same goal after all.

Mr. Sterling finally appeared, a little tired and his nose flushed. "Are you bored?"

"No, of course not."

"Actually, I was trying to..."

"Shh," I interrupted him, pointing forward. From the locker room came a dozen children, ruddy and dewy, lychee-like, running in a line around the pool, their soft feet slapping on the plastic mats. The vast space above the swimming pool seemed to be echoing from time immemorial. Through the transparent roof cast dim sunlight. The water gently rippled, pushing and shoving the swimmers who stared at the children in a dull, melancholy way.

No. In fact, they were scratching their armpits, fixing their swimming caps, and watering themselves, oblivious to the echos and ripples eroding and burying them ... I glanced at Mr. Sterling with a sudden imploring hope that if someone could hug me at this moment, everything would be alright, really. I shall shamelessly pour out all that I have not been able to say.

Mr. Sterling tried to look into my eyes, "It's a swimming class ... So, you like children?" His eyes gleamed with joy.

Children? Is this a discussion about having children? I almost laughed.

"I only like other people's children. And I like other people's dogs." Mr. Sterling was withholding his disappointment like restraining the ripples unfolding on the surface of the water. "Haha, you're quite modern."



There was half a minute's silence, between him and me, when something suddenly and happily loosened. Something as thin as cobwebs were blown off.

Mr. Sterling took a breath and took off his goggles. "I actually want to raise a child and watch her grow up, annoy me, worry me. Day after day I teach her how to hold chopsticks, peel apples, and ride a bicycle. I'm willing to pay for her education, a house and a car, and she'll leave me and my wife at home ruthlessly when she get married. I'm perfectly satisfied then." He laughed a little defiantly. I was mesmerized, too, as the hostess in the scene, watching the children throw themselves into Mr. Sterling's arms.

Of course I had time to explain, implying that I had only been joking. But I felt like I would remain silent forever.

"Forever" was short□ only lasted several seconds. "Good indeed." I said as I put on my goggles facing him, the lenses foggy. I looked at the clear but cloudy water. I wanted to dive in, to the deepest.

The water was a little chilly, and I watched from a distance as the children of the swimming class lined up poolside, each holding a colorful plastic float. As soon as the coach's stern whistle sounded, the children in the first line immediately flung themselves into the water.

纵有诸多迷人之处，这座岛上却无人居住，  
沙滩上零星的模糊足印  
都无例外地朝向海的方向。  
仿佛在此地，你只能离去，  
没入深海永不回头。  
没入高深莫测的人生。

这个故事发生在游泳池里。主角是一对大龄未婚男女，通过对话彼此试探是否应该和对方结婚。故事同时描写了泳池里的充满活力的少年男孩、年轻情侣、翘班的白领和老当益壮的老爷爷。所以泳池是一个集合体，不同年龄段的人在这里去掉伪装、半赤裸相见。

故事的高潮部分，一些上游泳课的白白胖胖的小朋友排着队跑进了游泳馆。此时女主对自己的男友已经完全失去了希望。教练一吹哨子，小朋友们就无情地把自己扔进了水中。

# Those White Spots

宁若汐

What is that? Floating in front of the window but seemingly just being outside of the window. As light as feathers, while as transparent as bubbles.

When Alice is created by me in these lines, she has been absorbed in observing these bubbles for a while. It was in one morning when Alice wakes up from her tiny bed in the bright sunlight that she suddenly saw these white chains of spots by her eyes.

Where comes them? Even after she took off her glasses still could she see them, so they mustn't be stains on her glasses, she thought. Seems to be brought by the sun, cause sometimes they are dyed in the color of the rainbow. But when she rolled her eyes, those spots moved along with her eyes, though much slower than her eyes' rolling. This denies the possibility of the spots' being on anything else but her eyes.

She used to see the dust floating like these spots. But these spots cannot be dust. They might be something alive. They are semi-transparent inside, like newly-laid worm eggs. The reason why she thought about worm eggs was that her science class

had showed her a picture of a pile of fresh worm eggs on a juicy leaf of grass yesterday. Both the white pile and the green leaf were so vividly captured that she could even smell the fresh smell from inside the picture. But the leaf would soon be either bitten or drilled. She had seen so many leaves bitten or drilled along the roads before. Can these white spots be worm eggs? Some of the round shapes are single, while most of them are stick to others. Two or three in a group. Can they be in such a round shape if they are not creatures?

Her thoughts went trembling. It seemed that she was endowing herself with a magic power to enlarge the very tiny worm eggs floating in the air and see them. She felt proud of her power for a while.

But what if it is not her magic? She was not sure. No, it could not be. It seems these white spots are living in the liquid of my eyes!

I am only 8! Are my eyes already breeding worms? Will my eyes soon be beaten or drilled?

Alice, Alice! — No, mum is calling me.

I have told you that they are merely the blood cells in your eyes, being lighted up and be caught by your sight. — It could not be! I have seen them moving like a worm.

I have told you do not to scare yourself. — But I still felt scared. Should I believe in mum?

Now it's time for school, come and have breakfast. Stop being absent-minded. — But mum, what you are telling me is nothing truer than my imagination.

Hurry up! It's time for school. — You are disturbing my conversation with my magic power...Something can only be

felt the first time you meet it. The more explanation will only remove our fear of the things which we are supposed to fear.

Nothing to fear. Said mum. Most of the children can see that.

No, never. The instinct of Alice is still defending that explanation.

At that moment, it seemed Alice had taken every circle of the logic chain apart. Now every chain can be explained either by common sense, by her logic, or by mum. But fear still exists, she believed. There is still something between every circle of logic, between the known and unknown, behind any explanation, to fear. And the more mum speaks, the faster it hides itself in transparency.

Mum. Mum, mum! She screams with her hands grabbing her ears.

Alice was dragged finally after mum's intruding in her room to have breakfast, and then pulled onto mum's car to her primary school. The radio on mum's car was playing loudly.

——Toothpaste, 30% off.

——Next will be the song Bohemian Rhapsody ordered by a listener, name unoffered.

——The greatest murder in human history happened in 1967 when Amsterdam took his first step on the bald moon. Since then, illusions have died.

——Follow our channel and design your healthy diet!

Raising before her eyes were those familiar white spots. Fine. Life seems not too far away from normal until now.

# Wilson's Lab

张伯杨

小白是一个旅游美食博主和业余文学评论家。

小白热爱自由，新鲜刺激的生活是她一生的追求。摄影，cosplay，骑马，悬疑剧本推理，甚至保护状态下的跳伞，各种各样的新鲜体验让这个元气少女觉得人生很值。她的童年充满了美好回忆。她的回忆就像一本装满快乐照片的相册：里面都是一个穿着小围裙做鬼脸的可爱漂亮的女孩。

当然，在她的脑海中不常见沉甸甸的思考，每当有朋友挑起一个认真的话题时，小白都会插科打诨绕过这个话题，在她心中只需要一次称心如意的摄影，郊外的远足、一本好书，一阵灿烂的阳光或者一杯热茶，就能让糟糕的情绪烟消云散。

对他来说，云层是天空的一封信，冰雪是沉睡的雨滴，潺潺流动的小溪上的樱花闪烁着爱情的光辉。有情调有品位有热爱有眷恋的浪漫人生是她的全部。她不忘捕捉到生活中各种有趣的细节，姣好的面容后也深藏着逗比和奔放的灵魂。在她的记忆中把母亲的形象比父亲更好，她身上带有温柔的反权威色彩。

不过，一个事件让她镌刻着浪漫神秘精彩的三观发生

了些变化。

4月1日她在教练的指导下跳伞，但意外跟腱撕裂，跟她一起被抬到医院躺在她对面床位的还有一个同样喜欢玩跳伞的神经科学家Wilson，Wilson也热爱生活，只不过，小白的眼中透露的是对陌生而美好的事物新奇的喜悦，而Wilson的眼中则透露着看穿一切的睿智和安全与祥和之光。这两个人很快成了忘年交，两人出院后，Wilson邀请小白来他的实验室参观，小白欣然接受了Wilson邀请。

一进门，一个身穿紫色的男人给小白热情的打招呼，Wilson教授介绍说，他7岁时听力和视觉出现障碍，于是头顶悬挂着一根天线来采集外部的视觉和听觉信息，到后来他自己要求把天线上的芯片植入他脑内。你眼前的这个紫衣男孩是一个世界上第一个智能化机器人

小白在紫衣男孩的介绍下了解实验室内各种稀奇古怪的仪器的功能。她也才知道今天最大的彩蛋是体验各种高科技设备，追求新奇的她同意了。

苹果公司生产的体液检测器。

她带上了由DARPA研制的高级脑机设备，太阳穴和手臂都被贴上了电极，此时她大脑静到了极点，没有浪漫的晚霞，也没有随机蹦出的语言，她仿佛意识不到颜色，声音，味道，念头的存在了。她头上那顶由smart cap 公司根据脑电图制成的脑际设备显示她沉静的大脑进入了阿尔法波和seita波的边缘，而在体液检测仪则显示血清素和催产素都在上升，这种宁静正是此前一直喜欢蹦极，拿破仑蛋糕，恐怖悬疑片的小白所无法体验的。

之后她带上Neuralink公司研制的石墨烯柔性电极制成的神经蕾丝，神经蕾丝检测到马洛卡夫区近50亿个神经元做自由排列组合，当小白说“what is that?”时一批被标注的神经元摆出了Z字型，当小白正在说" wow, that's

amazing"的时候，同一批神经元又摆出了k字型。小白第一次意识原来每一句不同的话甚至不同的词在神经元矩阵中都对应着不同的形状。

接着。

之后，她来到了性格模拟实验室，一个由 睾酮素，雌激素含量调控的虚拟增强智能3D投影像出现在她的眼前，小白将睾酮素从20调到了100， 这个人的目光由温柔和善变得凶狠，刚才软绵绵的声音现在也变得粗犷。当小白把睾酮素调回到初始值，雌激素调高时， 投影人的 面部和身体和声音都出现了明显的女性特征。小白又选择了脑区功能介绍，她敏锐的捕捉到了“道德神经网络”这个词汇。

1. 当通过颅磁刺激破坏颞叶-顶叶之间的连接时，人不会在意自己行为背后的动机，也就无所谓 “自我反省”。

2. 当杏仁核功能紊乱时，人会丧失识别他人面部表情的能力，同理心也就消失了。

3. 当扣带皮层受损：大脑失去了警觉---警惕和谨慎不复存在；

4. 当岛叶皮层受损，大脑将无法积极参与情感体验。丰富细腻的情感也将当然无存。催产素和分泌的减少也会让人降低面部表情的捕捉能力， 并减少了对他人的信任，削弱夫妻亲子之间的情感纽带

5. 当颞叶中部受损，将无法有与上帝/安拉/如来合为一体的宗教神性体验。血清素分泌的减少也有同样的效果。

6. 当内侧前额叶皮质活跃时。说明你在同他人打交道，但如果我们应对的是无生命物体，它就不会活跃。如德国纳粹将犹太人贴上非人的标签时，士兵屠杀犹太人时



内侧前额叶皮质并不会活跃，更像是处理一推无生命体。而当纳粹士兵回家后他们竟仍然可能是妻子眼中体贴温柔的丈夫。

只剩下最后一道关卡了：看见自然，听见自然，融入自然。小白迫不及待地带上了

谷歌实验室的全息波纳仪模拟出了 20000-120000HZ 波段的声音，她的耳中涌入各个波段模拟出的人可听见的声音信号，各种波段的声音嘈杂不堪，像一团麻线一样纠缠不清。她又带上了热成像仪，感受到了780纳米波段以上的红外视野。她走在镜子前，眼前的一切让她感到陌生与恐惧，没有精致的五官，高挑的身材，只有她满眼的蓝黄绿红白一团团的影像。最后她带上了控氧面罩，感受体验融入自然的感觉。她窝在沙发上，颞叶和顶叶之间对缺氧敏感的角回部位被二氧化碳麻醉了，霎时间，她漂浮到了实验室的房顶，回首一看，竟然看到了躺在沙发上的自己，现在的这个我只不过是一种离体的幻想，突然，她又看到前面有一束神圣的光，一个长得像耶稣的人在向呼喊招手。

教授观测到了小白的角回部位活跃度降低，知道小白或许已经有了离体体验，便重新刺激了角回部位，小白结束了离体体验，回到了人间。

她紧握着住了拳头，浑身上下紧张的都是汗，此时 Wilson 教授看到她脑区负责恐惧和攻击性行为的杏仁核反应剧烈，应激反应轴释放了会让人感觉压力倍增的皮质醇，小心仔细地帮小白取下了装备。小白看着自己的体液检测仪上各种激素的活动。

当她又回到了人类的世界时，她不相信眼前的一切都是真的，她甚至怀疑自己的情绪和大脑皮层的语言

组织是不是自己可以控制的。她喝了口水缓和了以下情绪，Wilson教授刚要阻止，但也无济于事。水中放入了携带恐惧神经元活动轨迹的光敏感蛋白，这种蛋白一旦见光就会激活神经元放电使人产生恐惧。但由于水中光敏感蛋白含量有限，小白感仅仅感受到了一阵细微的紧张和不安。

回到家后，心想一段历经悲喜、绚丽多彩的完整人生，就发生在这区区1.4千克重的东西里。小白看着书桌前的莎士比亚文集和自己即将写完的爱憎别离文学评论稿，一时不知如何是好。

# Zorbing

高忆冰

I believe I was taking a nap an hour ago, lying on this grassy slope in the national park, I'm quite sure, I did. I often come to here alone. It's just easier for me to fall asleep in a sunny, warm place than in a quiet room with the lights off. Today is also a perfect day, I chose to go out and enjoy it as usual. There was a group of children flying kites on the lawn. I could hear the distant clatter of the fountain with my eyes closed. There were yelling, screaming and constant laughter. This is the only place I can feel safe. It reminds me of the time when I was a kid, my mum always listen to the radio next to me and I could fall asleep quickly with the meaningless noise. Because I knew she was somewhere around.

But today is not a normal day. I noticed something weird the moment I wake up. Here I am, totally wrapped, no, covered in this huge bubble. Being really confused, I tried to poke it but there's no way to escape from it. I try to move my body and get this cumbersome transparent sphere start rolling. Except for making this clumsy dude wobble a little, my efforts are to

no avail. The only person who can hear my yelling for help is myself. The crowd can still be seen through this huge bubble, more accurately, it's something like zorbing, a kind of inflatable sphere in amusement parks. Everything outside the zorbing was exactly the same as it was before I fell asleep. It seems that no one's gonna hear my cries.

I guess I'm stuck here.

I stop being agitated by fear. Since nobody is noticing, I decide to do nothing but embrace this moment.

It doesn't really matter that much, actually, even without the bubble, people rarely talk to me. No one's waiting at home. I have nothing to worry about. It hasn't changed anything.

I can see some purple flowers by the lakeside marshes. My mum had told me their name, lythrum salicaria. They are just standing there not in bunches, but sporadically mixed in with other plants. Occasionally the breeze brushes over and makes them sway, gently. The Irish call this flower "the lost child by the lake".

At this moment a kite comes into my view. It descends slowly, getting closer and closer to the ground. Finally it glides for two seconds and comes to rest quietly on the grassy lawn near me. A boy comes towards my way, looking for his kite. I stand up, hoping he could see me. He looks right at me, but straight through me. His face is totally expressionless and I can't help wondering if I am invisible along with this zorbing.

"Joe! Don't go near the water, it's dangerous. "

"Come back now!"

There goes my only hope.

All alone again.

I'm not looking forward to anything now. It would be great to have a gust of wind to blow me into the lake with this zorbing. In that way maybe I'll enjoy a walk on the water, recreationally.

Lie down again.

The sunlight dazzles me.

I close my eye to take a nap. I hope everything is just a dream within a dream.

There is no barrier between me and the blue sky when I open my eyes again.

It's gone.

There is still no one looking towards me.

