

Into a Pinyin Sunrise

Anthony DeMarco

Xiaoling would sit staring at the problem which had become hers. Some special congruence could not have assumed such overwhelming challenge if not for the misconception which had presented just as she passed hurriedly through the front garden adorningly of her family home. Some giving way onto the canvass which had forever become her own 48th Street. Some thinking occasionally back to those days of transcontinental retreat and vessels reeking with day-old waste bringing about some more ancestral satisfaction and more so of a time when this very block had first been procured. As some special congruence would be befitting of one more figure upon the next, then upsettingly so, as corner upon corner could not possibly coincide and why should she not begin to draw upon those concepts which had been so afforded in the first place? Some still reflecting back upon events past and striving to unearth those postulates which did lend some finer meaning to the tales which her mother and grandmother had recounted over and over when she was a mere child.. Some confidence built up over many lifetimes of achievement and who might have also ventured forward to this newer existence should they have had the opportunity. Wonderingly so, some consideration given to those discoveries which had so formulated the basis of to which all Xiaoling might ever hope to aspire. Some lemmas proceeding concurrently, some contemplating the now seemlier result looking over and once more upon Xiaoling. Some oh yes within this momentary contemplation did characterize some present figure which now went strugglingly and still poorly understood–but why? Some givens and lesser-known hypotheses had done little to reinforce some tenacity which she and her family had always maintained for never giving in. Some thinking incessantly as to whether she could ever go back and ne'er pretending that it would ever prove to be so impossible. Her father had returned at an advanced age, some tenderer mind rendition sustaining him through the harder times which had led up to their emigration from Fujian. Some ne'er taking nothing for granted had provided the motivation for such rigor, lemmas accordingly expressed and then some cleverer replacement. Some affording of one's more proper manner for deciding upon this or that comprehensibly. Some more complementary nature should not have had to protagonize here, and she bristled gently at the thought that this was all she could conjure. Nor rear itself upon the thoughts of Xiaoling and she hastily disregarded some remainder which had so unknowingly appeared. Some ninety-degree revelation which having had caused some more empowering sensation deeply within those younger students could only serve as some distraction to her here. Some variable protagonism in the textbooks she had been given to cherish like no other, some stiller unknown and how could that possibly be of any use to her now – but why? Some givens and lesser-known hypotheses running throughout and testing intricately some more finely-woven fabric beneath which she had always been able to find some easier repose.

– *jDěng dài dì!* cried her mother from a second story window.

– *jWǒ bì děi bēn!*

Xiaoling replied angrily to her mother's request to wait for her younger brother. She needed to get to class as quickly as possible today, some already overextended time at the breakfast table having prolonged too much as it were. Today she would sit for the examination which had been so long in the offing. Mr. Hernandez had been adamant as to the time when all examinees were to arrive and she knew it would have been well warranted, it being he who assumed. Some more important matter had always been to the liking of Xiaoling and the sort who would make themselves sought after by those older boys had

never been held too highly in esteem by either her or the Huan family. Some glancing down quickly into one darkened alley did place sufficiently she who had formerly been her closest friend into doubt – *¿Dong Er shén nǐ bàn?* Then some crumpled figure bending lowly into what would have been the love of Dong Er had only perplexed Xiaoling and wonderingly as to whether any lasting satisfaction could be gained from such carnal insignificance. Some moving more swiftly could only now reinforce the notion of what was to be gained and she hurried past the vegetable market which had always marked some virtual beginning of her matinal journey. Come now, come lowly and humbly be thy crown to wit Xiaoling had always admired those sweetest refrains in a language which had seemed so foreign on those first of days. Some thirst for seeking out that which might eventually become her greatest salvation but more so. Some intellectual yearning calming her once churning breast as she waited patiently within the rest of hers and Fujian province, some fading graying embankment recessing slowly and providing all the encouragement she would ever need. Some insatiable thirst for going off and wondering had always been the source of some familiar contention as if not knowing had been peculiar to her alone. Her mother had certainly been blessed with some finer notion about when and how one's own opportunity should be approached but never seemed too keen on inoculating Xiaoling with those principles which had always been thought of as being tendered upon some more inferior notion of self preservation. Now crossing the intersection along some more diagonal path did call to mind her mother's advice about being too injudicious which in measured dose might even gratify. Some more physically telling circumstance had always required some more measured frame of thought and this she knew from the outset of her deed. Some scarcity of motion along this still slumbered avenue and would have startled even that most vigilant of pedestrian. Some urgency for arriving on time had provoked her into filtering her mother's heeding along some more sheltered agenda, some vehicle moving more swiftly than she might have originally perceived.

– *¡Biǎo hé chǔ nǐ kāi chē!*

Xiaoling howled her wrath at the driver who had rushed behind her. Too close, she thought – *tài jīē jìn* – too close. There had been far too many like that since the *taxistas* had begun surfacing along Fifth Avenue. Some *te llevo baratito* would always prove to be too omnipotent when set against the welfare of the likes of Xiaoling and she quickly learned that the best she could do was forget it and keep on in that vane from which all of this had originally been borne. Some sitting and waiting patiently as the throng would be about to depart and wondering as to whether any good would be about to descend upon this imminent emancipation from strife and inopportunity. Some day school which she could recall barely projecting its sharpest rebuke inside her head and still counting in back-turned integers – earliest survival for the homeland but still they had been encouraged to look towards afar and relishing some horizon calling, some hastened entreaty to the vast fields of virgin volition which were to become theirs. Then some elderly gentleman searching for the key which were to open some portal beneath one cloudier day, some greener pastures sheltering those hidden lives against the temptation to remain and forswear the open sea in remuneration for so little. Someone's calling forth toward some *taxistas* edging nearer to the precipice which might ever define some more curious determination – *te llevo allí* or *te llevo* what could be the difference it was all just some other manner of speaking some other idiom pricking at us all *te llevo baratito* some language from another part of some other place and it was all so close some incessant chatter with *te llevo* and *te llevo allí* or *aquí* with here or there and they drive like they speak like they oh why should they not enjoy the same opportunities as the rest of us? Some going all about from one place to the next in search of

those who might require those who might need oh they drive and dance like they speak *te llevo* or *te llevo allí* . Some bringing from here to there and having arrived to this newer place of business ne'er gone awry, some business soaring and moving faster and faster until one could only recall and wonder as to the utility of counting upon this 8th Ave. looking over some sunrise in this borough by the sea but are they not all by the sea? Some having journeyed from afar and so far in search of all this which might still show some promise. Some promise overlooking this newer frontier, some newer sunrise day and did sufficiently place Xiaoling squarely within the throes of those who might be lumbering toward success. Why should she have had to atone for the lack of initiative which her parents had nurtured back in Fujian? Then some sheathe for protecting herself from the barbs which might follow, some sheathe with which to mask her just tendered loins from that generational outburst which had forever been underlying some slightest hint or remark and could have been offered completely out- of-hand. *Chóng fǎn Fujian* her parents were to hear from those who had come over years before from across the strait and being completely at odds with all that Xiaoling had ever come to expect from such a place so otherwise accommodating. That some cycle of generational rejection could have spawned this great community might only further her determination to see through toward some final conquest, some coming upon equally or even surpassing those *mexicanos* for whom 48th St. had provided some easier means for reward.

– *Nǐ jiāng huì lù nǐ zì jǐ!* shouted someone from across the street.

– *Wú zhī xī,* replied Xiaoling.

Nick was always waiting on the corner of 8th Ave. and 48th St. at this time of the morning. Now seeing how close Xiaoling had come to getting struck by some speeding taxi caused him to express some consternation at both but particularly at her. Some concern for those in his own locale would have never been his alone, as if procrastination did ever present him some other reward. It did not. *Hóng Fán Wāng* had come to detest his given name – *Hóng* for big or eastern bean goose, *Fán* for cage and *Wāng* for expanse of water. What's that? he would beam at Miss McGrath upon being told of the meaning of his name within some cultural pride foray. What the hell is that, man? Big bean goose in cage – and no water for me. *Bú kě yǒng.* Can't swim, man! The Chinese teachers would always find some cleverer way to avoid having to address him by his newly acquired vulgar denomination. Nick. It appeared to them as some affront to the mission to which they had been dedicated since arriving to these shores. Pleasingly and with sufficient relief had they welcomed the notion that *Hóng Fán* was to be transferred out of their charge as bilinguals, for it was commonly felt that the boy could begin to flourish in his own right. Nick had certainly been more to his own liking and he brandished it with delight, even though many in his circle would at times casually refer to him only obliquely as Nick and coupled with some carefully chosen profanity either in jest or otherwise. The name would along with his demeanor usually invite certain liberties among his friends and some kinder encounter would always be welcoming.

– Get killed, stupid girl!

– Shut up. I have important test today.

– Not worth it -- life too short.

Xiaoling had listened passively to such a remark before.

– *Xīn xīng fà* ...everyday new hair! noted Xiaoling.

– Not everyday. What *you* mean?

– Almost every...oh... can I touch?

– *Zhōng zhǐ!* Don't touch *nothing* ...work all morning to fix it this way! scolded Nick.

– Why so early for that? mocked Xiaoling.

– *Early bird catches worm!*

– What's that? she laughed.

– Miss McGrath tell me that. Don't you know? She say my English good now. Don't you know?

– She tells everyone that... *she* nice lady.

– Does not. She say I ain't gonna be in no bilingual class next term. English too good for all ...Science, Maths ...all subjects. What *you* think 'bout that? Huh?

(silence)

– Huh? she finally replied.

Nick was by now counting on some later commentary by Xiaoling and seemed bitterly disappointed by the meager remark she had had to offer. His eyes beamed sharply into the face of Xiaoling and what was she determined to be some delicately raised forehead, she still glancing down the avenue as if searching for some *taxista* which had caused her to react so anxiously. Some newer coiffure would frame Nick's face quite menacingly although expressing of some more likely caricature of himself or pattern of comic relief and Xiaoling almost suggesting what she thought to be some final invocation.

– Oh, I'll be late ...have to go.

– No wait, urged Nick.

Some customary softest coda to her breathy exuberance went severely shattered by Nick's sudden remark. Still, she rebounded swiftly.

– Why? ...have important test, she replied.

– Why *you come* this way every morning? Why *you cross* street here and not over there?

She glanced quickly as Nick's forehead darted sharply toward the 49th St. corner.

- ¿*Shén nǐ yuē?* I have test, she insisted.
- Test, test, test is all you think about! What's that?
- Maths test ... and *you* too.
- Not me. Miss McGrath's test tomorrow. I do *good* tomorrow.
- And how about test today?
- Too hard.
- Not too hard. You just lazy...like stupid friends.
- *Fú měng*. Not stupid!
- Oh...
- (thinking)
- Oh..., some day you get in big trouble. You'll see.
- (silence)
- Doesn't your father tell you about Fujian? ...*left* for that, she went on meekly.
- For what? Nick asked pointedly.
- Do Maths and learn so you can ...
- ...what? ...have restaurant? ...marinade whole life?
- Don't need Maths to have restaurant, she insisted.
- What then?
- I don't know ...be engineer, like Mr. Hernandez say.
- What he know? ...just *tell* me to shut up in class and I don't do *Nothing*. What *he* think?
- *You* just lazy like stupid friends. ...wait here on corner every morning for them. Why? ...just to get in trouble.
- You *know* I stay here every morning. So...why *you* cross in front of me all the time? Huh?
- ¿*Yú mò!* I don't! ...sometimes cross over there, she finished shyly.

– ...never over there!

Nick would be continually hard-pressed to convey some more congenial manner which he almost always found to be an elusive commodity. His teachers had always thought it odd that he should have at all found those with whom to alight, for his abrasive nature was completely foreign to any such show of camaraderie. Still, he felt pleased that he had finally confronted Xiaoling and forced her to assume some sudden realization toward this transition so heartfelt regarding himself, and as if feeling lost and unwelcome should have had to be his alone.

– I'll be late ...have to go, she insisted.

Nick watched as Xiaoling walked hurriedly up 49th Street towards the high school. Some standing and waiting patiently for the arrival of his mates could have only taken on some more sinister appearance, as at times it had. Some assuming the worst had too often resulted in Nick and his cadres being taken to the precinct house as truants. Only to be at last reclaimed by the attendance dean in charge of such day-to-day intrusions into his own personal pleasure. Some dozing off in the back room or more sordid entertainment, some closet activity whose interruption could have only annoyed as he pretended to collect his monthly pay while attending to some more civil duty finely tendered. Some worthless but amenable man having earned the post of dean quite dishonorably. Nick thought forward to the prospect of having to spend still another morning in feeble explanation of why he had been languishing at that time of the morning and on that particular day. Some overworked testimonial which had never been to the attendance dean's satisfaction, in any case. Some cowering inescapably beneath one's own bitterer stare, some glaring over narrowed spectacles attempting to shame Nick for the indiscretions which would have commonly arisen. But then his friends were never on time and so he watched Xiaoling move even further, some form swaying barely as leaving some blackened tar pavement background propping up the girl, some pushing upwards into one flattening silhouette now certainly too far to actually be perceived. Still Nick had always wondered what might have become of her if she had never been brought over. Or he for that matter. Might he have found her quite by chance pedaling along the banks of the Xi Jiang in some desperate urge to arrive on time? Some thrusting more furiously against the cast iron which would have been providing of her only engagement with some long lost own eternal suffering? One which her parents had forsworn for the young girl, for all times and by any means possible would have hurried them along on that morning as they converged upon the fading grey embankment, some façade which were to eventually emerge as one more relic engrained within a memory too tired to bespeak even that slightest of tones and in an language now too distant to be appreciated for what it once was? Some prouder discourse now smothered within the pinyin muck? Somewhere along this tiring length of timeless monotony had given birth to this ne'er receding need for merciless intercourse. Some more oddly sounding verbal intention and would seem to tease into the notion that they were indeed inoculated within some grander sense of alliteration. Some words jarring about without any such eloquence forthcoming, only pointing and imploringly of the need for paying homage to the pinyin. Some calling out and beckoning to the pinyin sunrise which were to bring those who might bathe in its incandescence one gentler notion of who we might be destined to become. Some dialect receding and giving in to that pinyin romance which were to become theirs and sadly. Nick for his part could find only reward in the notion that one distant idiom had become so bastardized. Some now almost useless tool being left out along the side of the road for the waste collectors which were to become and providing of some further assurance that some

other means of communication larger in scope and possibility could bring together all those courageous enough to have had sought out this pending chance at a better life. Some long-awaited tone melting down into the pinyin muck which were to become, some foreign-looking characters looked down upon by the lords but inevitably. Some wading more deeply into the pinyin muck which were to become all of theirs as well. Some creeping backwards toward one more fitting appreciation of who they were and what they might be accomplishing here. Some succeeding within one larger discourse as Nick stared fixedly at Xiaoling's disappearing form, wandering further away into what might very well have been his own best refuge. Nick to be sure, some larger expanse of water showering him or was it just that which he beamed forth at Miss McGrath and her smile went placingly upon him in some halo-filled delight? Some warmer encouragement which all his teachers seemed to render yet nevertheless ne'er kind enough, for Nick would continue loitering at the corner of his errant befalling until graduation and probably beyond. Even Dong Er would stride quickly down 48th Street on that day, some slightest reflection upon those filtered rays which had descended so steadily upon the province of Fujian. Some final merit to having been set so ungraciously into the cauldron which were to become hers and the rest. Some confused explanation hurriedly as to why they were to arrive had not been well received, and the notion that it were to all make sense in the long run only added to some primal deformation in her mind. Nick too could have been answering high above the call, some cleverer nature never having seemed to acquiesce and would continue to draw heavily upon Xiaoling in attempting to bring forth that inspiration which did unceasingly pervade his own daily meanderings. It was indeed all he could do to continue steadfastly in the eatery which his father had been attempting to carry over from the old country, let alone pretend to occupy some ranking similar to that of those more intelligent pupils. Some earlier morning convocation would have probably had its origin in his obligations toward seeing to it that the family business kept on with some day-to-day regularity. Nick would always defrost the chickens in the evening in preparation for some next day's sojourn although this had never been his habit before beginning at the high school. His had always been some morning too hectic for the formalities which were to have imposed. Some Chinese roasted chicken had always been his family specialty and such would enable his father to begin the arduous labor to which he had become indebted at some more decent hour. Some roasted fowl delicacy had been theirs to rely upon since arriving here some years ago, and it was to their good fortune that the locale over which they presently presided had gone for the asking. *Shí xīng cān guǎn* and yes it did turn out to have been a popular spot amongst the neighbors. Some roasted delicacy enabling those who would beseech it some otherwise befitting substitute for the sloth which might have overtaken even that kindest of entrepreneur. Some later afternoon hour had always been the busiest time and for reasons which could have hardly ever been properly understood. Some earlier supping had always been the rule amongst those most newly brought over, and some modern Sunset Park environs must have pushed it along even more so. Some likelier boredom gazing across from some tiresome café and why should some heartier repast ne'er be in the offing? Some sun laying down and over, some sixty-degree coming from out of a shadow definingly of roof-top structures across and shading one's eyes accordingly. Some *egg foo yong* staring upwards and was it not *y-o-ng*? Some mexicano-mixed pronunciation – *y-u-ng* – as in some irrepressible throwback toward tendered youth singingly. There had arrived far too many of those who might never have left the homeland if not for some family member or friend to whom they would have been permanently mortgaged in one way or another. Some life passing through at a snail's pace and always ne'er reading in some ghostlier fashion. Some ne'er ending penchant for agreeing without bounds with she who would have provoked some *gna* some means for remunerating properly their occasional feast – *jì xū chū qián cǐ kè!* –

but Nick's angry rebuke towards timely payment would almost always become consumed within some gentler gesture accorded by his father. They had come after all to seek the fortune which had gone so fleetingly in Fujian, or most of them in any case. Some going fleetingly, some fortune written on paper tenuously and under some threat of becoming moot as per the consequence of certain actions taken (or not) by those bent on an existence wrought with self-congratulatory adulation. Some temporal endurance marked by cowardice and stupidity did call to mind those more intellectually challenged cretins who but for the ficklest of fortunes confounded did materialize at all. Some occasional preference toward undermining that of others in becoming more fleetingly still. Some fortune being commandeered by the lowest order of filth which would handily refuse to ease the suffering of just one more of their very own (or so one would have thought). *Yīn dào!* Consider the wrath of fortune which they must have lusted after and lost. Some roasted chickens guiding the way up and out of their mostly hopeless state must have rested fervently upon the thoughts of those who had first studied the culinary merits of Chinese roasting. Some roasted fowl enabling Nick to cling to those few norms having survived and languishing from their harrowing journey, and in doing so savor the possibility of bestowing some greater good upon himself and his family. Now some setting them in line for preparation with the final marinade would have him reflecting back to some previous week's class. Some straight line being shorn up into odd numbered divisions and odder still when in consideration of the fact that it could be accomplished longingly. Or could it? Some numbered line going off into number lines with afternoon light setting upon. Some numbered line set down within some more passive structure then numbed or numbered along some line with afternoon light and coming down onto some vaguer recollection did appeal to Nick. The fowl would have been marinated accordingly and he could have never imagined that here too he might be well within his own. Some better attempt at escape from this tattered existence. Some upward motion through the ranks of those newly arrived and into this societal array placed forth so invitingly. Whereupon being obligated to render some quickest decision regarding one's final destination did put all in Fujian to the test, some giving his own grandparents certain cause for concern and determined that Nick and all their progeny should taste the fervent fruit of some newer world. Now setting down one, two, three more and applying that final essence, some *voix dernière* which had never failed to draw forward even that most disinterested of gastronomical devotee, some more succulent trying into the sweeter bastion which did ever presently shield us from some most unwanted procreation. Some sweeter coming into the numbered cleavage which would have only parted but for some sheerest of desperation, some bending more lowly into what had surely been the love of Dong Er and now unsure of why or how this parade were ever to continue. Some numbered inclination would have earlier confounded Nick with imaginary concepts putting forward, some circular function surely befitting of one's own better understanding.

– *¿Tā tuǒ dàng dàn?*

– *Shàng wèi.*

– *¿Gǎn máng, huǒ hè!*

Who cares fire hot? he would think. So many chickens, anyway. He would have been working to prepare the meat as quickly as possible and could not resist the temptation to answer within his own persuasion.

– *¿Jī! ¿Jī!*

Still his father was adamant as to the manner in which Nick sometimes went about his business. It is not that he felt the boy to be unhelpful. Quite the contrary, he knew Nick to be diligent in matters of the home and could only add to his chagrin regarding the way in which he conducted his affairs of study. Some hanging about with the likes of those schoolyard boys on 8th Avenue had caused him to lose some most basic acquisition of self-discipline which had been tryingly instilled in his earliest years at the day school. Some growing up leaning heavily upon epistles dating back some five or six generations in the land of his ancestors had hardly affected the boy and this his father knew to be true despite the fact that he himself had had little time to spend with the child here in their new home.

– *¿Zěn me yùn zhuǎn rèn xú xú zhè tiān?*

(What he means work slow today?)

– *¡Tiáo wèi zhī tài duō nián nián!* Nick replied.

(Marinade too sticky today, keep my fingers together.)

– *¡Nián, nián!*

Then sounding distantly through the paint-peeled walls two or three deep.

– *Tóng yī rú tong měi tiān.*

Not same as everyday, he thought

– *¡Nián nián!* he would reply.

Now trying to set the chickens in some other sense would only bring about some pleasanter rumination about doing harder work in the back of the class, some seeing to it that both Dong Er and her cousin were properly attended to. Some rectangular exercise uncompleted, some now-too-easy thoughts, lengths and widths befitting of this current bird feast and no need for some spatial calculation within one's larger space, some space now pleasingly to Nick as he might slide the birds from the tray and into some more proper recipient. This too would prove to be futile as the viscous dressing once more would begin to test Nick.

– *¡Nián nián! ¡ Nián nián!*

But the marinade might not give in to the rants of those who refused to accept happily their daily lot and Nick would continue to draw upon his thoughts of Xiaoling and some passage into which both had begun to delve during that morning. Some scene which might have ensued with the attendance dean could not have been properly foresworn, and as such some more lasting rumination perhaps being touched upon. Some imaginings of she and he in subtler repose which might one day endear and bear fruit, some ne'er extinguishing romance could properly comprehend and stoop lowly upon the lace which would more warm-heartedly placate those whose lives had become so irretrievably consumed Thereupon some more affectionate cheek inclined or some softest telling – oh! Some inability to

bespeak and she relinquishing those misjudgments to those who had been previously guarded as her own. Never over there! Some never over there but Nick knew all too well that her morning went motionless until he appeared, some ever-so-soothing advance through such delicate morning fare. Some painted fancy and one more making over of some prettier deed rarely looked upon. For he had long gathered Xiaoling's desire for him and ne'er once sought to dispel the notion of her perfuming herself in simmering anticipation, some searing restlessness within and seeping downwards into her still innocuous womb. Some thirst for the warmed relaxation which her mother had always told her about, and would continue to plunge her forward into some perpetual incarnation of the fruit she would be called upon to bear.

-II-

When Xiaoling finally arrived to the schoolyard she gave quick notice to that usual cadre of handball devotees who had not yet begun their morning match. Nor did she see the Vietnamese girls, and which gave her some certain cause for concern.

– Have you seen Kanh Boi or Phuong? she asked.

No one answered her question and then finally occurring to her that she had not asked anyone in particular. Some younger boys leaning against the chain link fence and Renhan Lin eyeing a circle of ninth-grade girls across the yard did cause Xiaoling to angrily direct herself.

– Looking at girls all you do!

– *Bù zàn yī cí*, replied Renhan Lin.

– *ǐ Nǐ jiāng huì bù jí gé gāo zhōng!*

– *Uhgary bitch!*

– *ǐ Zhōng zhǐ!*

– Bitchbitchbitchbitch...ha ha ...

Xiaoling was always trying to care for those who seemed to be too incapable. Then looking aloft at some earlier twentieth-century structure just as the sun was beginning to offer some more obtuse reflection across the darkened brick façade did seem wholly at odds with the taunts of Renhan Lin though tolerantly. Renhan Lin had always listened to some more distant chatter of those who were to become his mates and too often with little fortune, some daily transformation into a caricature of himself for others to ogre or despise. Now some drifting towards the main entrance somewhat saw Renhan Lin and his friends becoming unduly protagonistic, some golden zone shifting in kaleidoscopic fashion as Xiaoling held fast and preferring to remain alone for the briefest of moments. Locked within herself as some sleeker satin entwined and begging some tenderer escape, some wanting to exhibit but usually holding back for the shame of appearing too denuded for the tastes of her

family and closest acquaintances. Some longstanding familiarity with those propensities of Renhan Lin as he and his mates would go spiraling into one vaster entrance, then some overly imposing portal from one century past, some historical narrative of a Brooklyn once mistook for the outpost it was inevitably meant to become. Some settling and descendants of some faraway inconvenience, across to some shores and then more. Some persecutorial mistelling in a land begot with rivers and canals winding through and some bitterer taste of this uncyclopedic misnomer, some ale or other religion gone repressed. He wondered in some other language as to the way he could justify his presence here, on that first day and some being fearful of newer faces and customs which he might never know or fully understand. The first day of registration had always been marked by some more peculiar mix of peoples and language, some newer wave of immigrant mothers mostly seeking to at once comply but also fulfill. Some unsustainable mix of Spanish and Chinese drowning out, some drowning out within mixes of words ne'er told for the love of Renhan Lin, for some arriving unconsorted was Renhan Lin and little did he know then of some asymmetric camaraderie which were to become his very own so soon thereafter. Some others standing and almost expecting Renhan Lin to appear and he then accepted kindly into their own. Some newer mix of languages now seeming almost unbearable, some 19th century portal looming over these foreign gestures lurching forward and crying, let us into your land of milk and honey and bestow upon your tired masses. Some looking up now and over the multitude mobbing a front patio with familiar sounds, some thirst for learning, some hunger ne'er satisfied from lands afar. Some crying out to the wind — *jfēng bào!* — and then some sea salt pounding down upon and Renhan Lin looking about through some more determined torrent sheet of rain until feeling alone and without. Some withering through the very heart of Renhan Lin as his mother fading through the gray confused more and more, some younger adolescent remorse just beginning to hold onto and torment. Some innocence lost — forever. Some heartbreak which would only begin, some grief which were to endure throughout the better part of three generations (or more) and only to arrive at some finality bespeaking of some longer running failure to rise above. Some more devastating journey across oceans, and the mother of Renhan Lin vanished within one moment's surge swell — *jfēng bào!* — and then some sea salt pounding down upon. Some southwesterly current carrying one's tattered soul to its eternal resting peace. Some burning need for ne'er leaving behind one's own blemished carcass, some used-up piece of pathetic waste which could merely repulse after all. Only many years afterwards would Renhan Lin have come to realize, some genuflecting before the memory of his own mother's demise and wishing to abide as closely as he could. Renhan Lin had long been nurtured more by his mother's mother than his own, still notwithstanding and his own keeping some closer eye on him through his years as a young boy and little more. Some sadness had overcome the mother of Renhan Lin and some scrutiny which were to test the patience of all those who would have chosen to pass over into this more admired currency. Some years and decades seeping through as some honeyed afterthought made bitter by one incestuous resolve to self-recriminate. Some self-indulgence made even more unconquerable by this perpetuating myth, some lingering notion that this entire span were to fall within their own eminent domain as some inalienable right. Some God-given concession to the virility of all those who might think themselves so foolish as to seek some possession which should forever go so unsought. Only had an uncle of Renhan Lin once dared to look toward the wisdom of seeking some more eternal dream sleep so unencumbered, some drifting out beyond the reef and into some more expressive compounded state of fluid passage. Some shunning the notion of this mortal flesh being so tardy to arrive, some more embarrassment defiling of one's very moment for which they had planned so long. Then one more swimming stroke upon stroke, some gliding past the first buoy within this cold frightenedly and one more practiced daily over the course of some sorely misspent youth.

Some being ne'er admired nor appreciated, some ridicule heaped finely upon throughout all those years in Fujian province and as a younger boy — *tóng xìng* — in not wishing to bring dishonor to the name of this or any other family so besieged by the more frightening prospect of a life without end. Then some furthest gale would plunge the helpless sea vessel around and out incapably into some more heaving westward oblivion. Some tempest which were to slowly eclipse the mother of Renhan Lin from her cherished offspring — *jǐng bào!* — and some ne'er turning back which were to doom the actions of Renhan Lin and most of the others for generations to come. He would arrive finally to these shores but too tired, too confused and all unknowing of the task which his life were to press down upon him. Unrecognizable as some briny feast for the wretched creature from the deep which had become his alone. Some washing up of remains to which he could never again replenish with his own, some shell now exchanging niceties within this newer world absurdity. Hiding away upon some sunset park reminder and some pinyin muck seeping through, some acrid remnant into which they had themselves become transformed — Renhan Lin had made his presence known, some unconsorted entrance into some less-than-unforgiving land. Some inner resolve to ignore such barbs thus directed would impel Xiaoling to shrink from these and so many others with whom she had always thought she shared some more intimate camaraderie. She would choose the rear entrance as she so often had. Then moving up one more step toward some staid metal doors newly painted, some gray inquiringly of whether or not one's suddenly acquired entrance had been more of an exit and hoping it were not to be so. Some setting further upon one graying embankment peering deftly away from the village of her grandparents and trying to remember whether anyone could have really fathomed the anxiety her mother had had to brave for so long. *Mǒu wù jiào hǎo*. Something better she had always said. Some scurrying down more quickly toward the mooring which had ne'er gone too unnoticed by the authorities and still unbeknownst of the trial onto which they were about to endure. Xiaoling had become petrified at the sight of the captain awash, straddling and crying furiously as he clung more tightly to the boom. Then some further magnification in sound cutting through those slates of torment which had been raining down on the decrepit vessel since they had turned eastward toward the bluff — *bēng xiàn* — man overboard and some final glimpse she had caught of the stricken sailor were to remain with Xiaoling as some averse reminiscence throughout.

— Kanh Boi! Kanh Boi! she cried but then oh, over there she murmured to herself in relief, her voice trailing off to ne'er a whisper.

— *¿Nǎ er shì nǐ?* replied Kanh Boi in mock impatience and Xiaoling was at a loss to explain how she could have entered through the 48th Street entrance knowing it was delivery day.

— Oh, I forget it's Monday. How long did you wait there? asked Xiaoling.

— I have been waiting for ten minutes...have been ..have been...

— *Měi hǎo, měi hǎo*. You have been waiting ...

— You must learn to speak correctly or Miss McGrath will come to your house, joked Kanh Boi.

— No, she won't! laughed Xiaoling.

- Come on or we’ll be late.
- ...and Phuong?
- Upstairs already, replied Kanh Boi.

Kanh Boi and her cousin had arrived in Brooklyn not two years earlier, some strife having seemed to pass quietly throughout two generations in their native land and had now been supplanted squarely within the reins of such youthful eternal. Kanh Boi Ha was always fond of telling those who exerted pretensions of being her mentors that she missed the musings and finer humilities of that city not far from the delta. Some thinking upon furtherest resources in a time of post-war upheaval and did anyone really call it Ho Chi Minh? Some character placed peculiarly would have surely imposed and quite uncharacteristically – Minh – as in her own. Some indecipherable thread brought over to this newer world and wonderingly of a time when fruit went ripened and breezes languished more milkily upon the thoughts and schemes of but a few higher-minded individuals. Some pretension wrought toward social equality and incorruptible mores did lead on to this newer world which had ne’er seemed to afford its own lack of higher-minded sorcery. There abiding some ruffled figure sitting stodgily in face of some more geopolitical design overlooking some city not far from the delta and would have cried out to Kanh Boi in anguished refrain. That she had been able to communicate at all with her friends of Chinese descent would have continued to baffle, if not for some ancestral miscue on the part of her great grandparents. For while she in fact came into this world through that portal toward which the city of Saigon would have eventually succumbed, her grandfather was born in the province of Yunan, some momentary meandering northward toward one more economic opportunity having had defined the course of her great grandparent’s later years. Whereupon some eventual return southward would have left permanently engraved that tongue to which Kanh Boi’s grandfather had continued to see fit and endure throughout future generations. Some common banter between the two girls went off to distant reaches at times, but always at the amazement of those other Vietnamese girls who were hard pressed to comprehend such an unexpected interchange. Then some larger hand trucks carting dried goods and cartons of milk seemed to impose upon, some eerily metallic structure gliding on as it were and attesting barely to the presence of one outstretched cry from just beyond the stairwell. Some figure half-ensconced in grayish veil peering ahead and wondering as to what might have been the cause for this utterly unexpected intrusion.

- Why ’re you girls entering through this door?
- Oh we sorry, Miss Perry, but no time to go back. Exam starts at nine.
- It’s only half-past-eight.
- ...but Mr. Hernandez said to be upstairs now.

Xiaoling’s voice again tended to trail off to just under that which could have been properly understood even in the best of circumstances. Some larger-than-life sound again imposing upon and further upsetting that which had already become some ill-intentioned

proposition in her mind, some steely reminder to all who would listen regarding the haste which might inevitably have its way with each and every one of them.

– Well go ahead, but try to remember girls. It's every Monday.

– So sorry, Miss Perry.

The two girls hurried up the stairs and intending upon pre-empting any second thought which the dean might have entertained. In such case, the notion that some earlier-than-expected arrival through this hitherto non-permitted entrance could have only caused some seething, some uncalled-for attempt at a vindictiveness at times experienced by the entire student body. Still, Miss Perry had always been one of those more dispassionate deans in the school and no such event was seriously considered. Miss Perry would make the long walk to the fifth floor just as gracefully as when she first started at this upper school on 48th Street. Some dancing out loud and sound turning back on its own would have continued to foster within her, now thinking back to some lonelier evening within someone's tidier embrace or standing for hours outside some lesser-than-enlivening nightclub hoping against hope that she too might be chosen. And why should she not? Some preening near and far had always met with some certain reward, none-so-much revered as on that day when she once more went united with some meandering artiste on station's front. One by one they entered and left some straddled platform as stage for she and he who might forever lay claim to her innermost thought and desire. Some receding passion longing for one more pressing onwards and why should it not? Some sleeker alighting across one more bent gently and in search of some more fleeting glimpse of carnal embrace would have to sustain her forth toward yet one more of life's disappointments and asking if he loved her – do you love me? then gently mingling within some mass of misappropriation which would have defined inevitably this very element within which she had habitually taken upon, for the day had come and gone when she might be called upon to command her very own. Some more soothing refrain set down by the artiste who now seemed to lean more heavily against her faltering breast and languishing from behind in hope of reaping his ill-beset harvest. Some be mine be thou art fairer had been studied and re-studied but unknowingly of how any such rendition could be delivered within our own present circumstance and would forever lead her onto some more lingering cadence, some greeting those most gilded of voices to which would have become some post-universal exercise gone awry. Some intending to guide her along and she unresponsive as the next train succumbed meekly to this next darkened pathway. Some wading along the tracks and hoping and thinking do you love me at all well one would think. Some mingling and darkness again pushing through this one darkened tunnel and the artiste in less- than-hastening invigoration and standing more closely on station's front did lead onto some more musing over one's fairer headed fragrance rising swiftly, some such perfumed and so peculiarly to one's own keener awareness now closer and closer and languishing still from behind then nearer and nearer until thinking do you love me? Now entering her fifth floor office and unlamenting of the fact that no-one could really pretend to deny her the spoils for which she had so long toiled, some reaching over for one more dose of beauty encased. Some circular portal through which she might continue to penetrate and partake of that mirrored magic which did forever place emphasis upon her supplest of features. Some silkened forty-five degree light lifting a wanton grace from the dank grey wall structure which deftly defined her windowless office. Some pat went one more last stroke intended to redeem upon and she would be done with it but that last one felt just right and pat pat why not it would be five more minutes before they made it up here. Some temporary preening most always interrupted by those Mexican girls why she

might have even held Miss McGrath responsible for pat pat and why did my office need to be up here next to hers anyway? She is such a nice lady such a darling when her husband was ill all she could think about was her children her niñas and such but all those other students if you could call them that all day long moving by hello Miss Perry and why do they think pat that I am their friend anyway their amiga now just keep going to your next class girls pat patting then some try to speak correctly girls or Miss McGrath will come to your house (it was always a joke with her but she is one of those more intelligent oriental students so beautiful too with that long straight silkened hair). Some Spanish girls calling out to each other in the hall hola chica or Mexican or whatever what difference does it make they are all just ours and those Mexican girls pat deserve something prettier hoping to settle upon did often occur to her as she began to perceive some sound now beginning to grow out of the din and Miss Perry tucking the small rounded metal case into her drawer. Some rushing out toward the door of her office and meant to engage frontally those pupils arriving well into her own domain. Some glimpse of Chinese or Vietnamese or whatever it what was the difference they were all just ours. Some domain which having had forced itself upon her in a real way and relaxingly of some inner frustration which she had had to endure at some other place. Some tapping reluctantly upon keys all day and some cannot show this page or that for one reason or another with some reaching down for some temporal play, some unobtrusive tampering with before one other attempt at connecting to the place or whatever it was called. Some attempt at filling her coffers with this but never materializing to her own satisfaction, then pushing on and over again toward this present didactic situation if it could be called that she would usually intimate. Some previous professional foray resulting in just reaching down for it all day long and never really serving anyone's purpose or reason without proper remuneration. Some cannot show this page or that or reaching down for one more or some waste of one's time completely or some being unable to know exactly what to do just waiting and hoping to be chosen and not left to waste away or fade on into some middle-age looking back and wondering what might have been. Some why should I not be chosen this time around I look better than anyone and working harder toward some perfection some slimmer or shimmering lace falling more softly and some chillier evening ambient frosted suspiration teasingly tingling the next boy and he would have been a little too young in any case. That some artiste should have been so constant in my thoughts and pushing forward into this mass of hoping against hope some hoping against hope to be the one and when will it end why do I still feel some need for feeling some need to feel on some chillier evening frosted suspiration. Some continuing to please now he is glancing back over and maybe we could both be chosen over and then back again for one more day of didactic if you could call it that. Some hesitating nearer to the door leadingly onto some fifth floor hallway for some do you love me and the artiste just there not really doing much of anything and why are they always making so much noise just trying to savor some do you love me? And why should he not? Some standing and waiting on station's front and ne'er knowing whether some more suffering artiste might ever. Some ne'er reacting to or ne'er knowing if some suffering artiste and coming seemingly from behind some languishing or whatever he called it could ever readily suffice for one more, some mass misappropriated and standing more closely still until unknowing of when some next train were to approach and become newly absorbed. Some coming back and still coming back around until all those things which at some time seemed so important would have become moot. Now some more meaningful involvement with those children in her charge, some more quickly paced and eager to attend to those who would seem to be determined to arrive to their classroom at some proper hour. Some no time to go back had always been some proudest refrain of Xiaoling and the entire Huan family, now some marking off succinctly to the steps upon which her soles had been treading. Some approaching the third floor landing and exhausted

students leaning heavily against some freshly painted wall, grainier finish daring those who would once more scrawl their adolescent exuberance to refrain – a refrain ... oh the refrain (some changing parts of speech) now seeming to Xiaoling and bringing on some thought that last went swimmingly in her head. Some language examination would challenge tomorrow but still they climbed well accompanied up to this morning's task and at last stepping onto the landing.

– *Wǒ jīng pí lì jìn*, sighed one girl now occupying some intermittent space on the landing.

– Why so tired? chided Xiaoling.

– Too fat too fat too...as Kanh Boi's remark became consumed in some half-silenced visual laugh. Some face far too beautiful to be offset by the ringing outpour of comic grace which did presently shake Kanh Boi to the bone.

– Nothing comes out of that face!

– What? exclaimed Kanh Boi.

– It's empty face laugh!

Having said that, Xiaoling broke into one of her own.

– *Yě fēi pán* ... too fat! insisted Kanh Boi.

Some stark metal cage structure now being left behind as they turned toward the next set of stairs had always been irking to both. Neither in Fujian nor in Ho Chi Minh had either witnessed some flagrant rebuke to their dignity as trustworthy students. Might such a non-reliance on common thinking though youthfully be more telling of the academic non-insistence which forever seemed to frustrate some more proper intellectual nature and adherence to this newer place? They had always seemed daily determined to change all of that, and continued their climb to the next landing. Some noise began to filter in through the approaching doors, some nagging reminder that it was indeed delivery day and indicative of some one-hundred-and-eighty degree error in their own approach to the fifth floor.

– *¿Wèi shén me shì fǒu tā zhèr?* wondered Kanh Boi.

– Probably confused like us, sighed Xiaoling.

– I think the dean saw her and was too afraid to say anything ...so fat.

– That's not nice, replied Xiaoling. Why you say that?

– Fat girl coming in wrong door... *¿shéi cǎi?* laughed Kanh Boi.

Kanh Boi's last comment seemed not to be logical, although Xiaoling accepted it as yet some other gift or attempt at making light of what could have very

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