

**Yan Li**  
**Poems and a story**

SPINNING POLYHEDRAL MIRROR  
(Collection of Poems 1990--2000)

1.

Walking along  
If you don't kick something, you start to look effete  
He has the word "door" embroidered on his trouser leg  
The door to a nation

2.

Tomorrow I will rest in a museum by fixing up a few hours of war  
Tomorrow  
Smuggling peace to other planets I will not accept U.S. dollars

3.

Wish my towel could get out of this washwater  
Wish you'd give me a good wringing out  
Maybe this towel of mine is worn a bit thin  
But it's a perfect match for your wrinkles

4.

If the winter were a little colder  
It could freeze artillery shells to death  
And then, in depths of a convalescent ward  
Sunlight wearing a slip-off gown  
Would sip afternoon tea by mankind's stove

5.

A series of repulsions  
Relates to a poet's saliva  
Like the shimmer of a streetlight in rain  
And spattering of mud underfoot

6.

Every cell suffused with juice of love  
I take the position of candy, so you can package me  
When the sale is made, please be careful

If the price is wrong  
I may deteriorate into poison

7.  
For poetry's sake keep standing at a century's graveside  
Still no end to the elegies in my hand

8.  
In places where my countrymen have wept for a long time  
They begin to make salt

9.  
The piece of candy called love  
Has now become my teeth

10.  
The flame of love will be kindled once again  
Dreams that have faded away  
Aren't worth sleeping one more night for

11.  
Every dark twig of winter  
Is loaded with bullets of green  
Just waiting for Spring to pull the trigger

12.  
Lie down with an easy mind  
Your grave is the uterus of God

13.  
Quietly folding the wind under its wings  
A lazy beetle at the tip of a blade  
Is seesawing with bright green

14.  
Over the spot where the stove was moved away  
My saucepan is still poised at a rolling boil

15.  
Blank paper has thickness without limit  
Start delving and there is no end to it

16.  
Birds on a withered branch  
Drift off like falling leaves

Bygone springtime is mounted on the wall  
I am the paste, not yet dry

17.

In the courtroom of the senses people sentence the mirror  
Forever to cast politeness in a flattering light

18.

Sunlight is dazzling  
Winter fills the trees  
December and January, hand in hand  
In sweet infatuation  
Are up North on a skiing trip

19.

Even though she is a peeled orange  
She is still trying hard  
To sew buttons on the peel

20.

A transplanted tree does musical notation with falling leaves  
And in deep autumn stirs up a homeward wind  
Though I am the only person in this house  
I go back to my mind to sleep

21.

Not wearing a bra  
Just as mountaintops are unclothed

22.

Carelessly you strike a match  
And light up a treeful of blossoms  
Then call me over to warm my nose

23.

That is a forest  
Where furniture easily grows  
In it lives my house

24.

As a world language for settling disputes  
Bombs do not need translation  
Though one may extend justice by stepping over borders  
Returning home is the Peace Army's finest battle cry

25.

He's like a lock that has lost its key  
He has locked himself up  
And is holding out for a burglar's visit  
Preferably female

27.

They went ahead and reeled in the whole lake  
And to let a fish believe itself still free  
They devour the sense of freedom from the fish's bones

28.

A peak only peaks at its rightful position  
If hell were to stand on a mountaintop  
It could not keep from plunging down

29.

Under the ancient wall  
Descendents of the cricket king still guard the imperial palace

30.

Since they are birds  
They will find a grove  
Build themselves a nest  
Call a place without hunters home

31.

Wind brings fish-songs to the city  
I smell a salt tang from beyond the net

32.

The living glance sees you and me in its heart  
Brilliant light that we gladly opened the door to  
The candy of each other  
Sweetness of being unwrapped

33.

I wonder when the saliva I quietly swallow  
Will turn under pressure of your kisses  
Into a geyser of petroleum

34.

The hunger that gnaws at the starved ones  
Leaves them no strength for self-expression  
And so upon the world's stage  
Only the full-bellied ones  
Can act out hunger after meals

35.

He hides in a corner  
His breath aimed at the window  
The fresh air closes in on his lungs like bullets

36.

All their lives people try to recover  
The burst bubble of their childhood  
And so all their lives they use soap

37.

From an unconventional refusal to wear a high hat  
This unfamiliar ache has located itself in my shoulders

38.

History leaves dirty toothbrushes of tradition in great number  
We have to use our teeth to brush them a little cleaner

39.

He does not agree  
That savings are always defined by addition  
In the past five years he saved up three chances for marriage  
Now he can't withdraw a single one

41.

Humans heroically raise their swords and hack away  
But then with perfect tenderness  
Sew fallen leaves onto the tree in their house

42.

My body swims inside its clothes  
Buttons are fastened all along the bank

43.

Precocious Spring in March has flashes of magic  
You feel a big flame blaze in your chest  
Gently the other shore kisses the prow of your boat

44.

Not only in the present era  
Later freedoms will also be recorded in shoes of historical eras  
That is to say  
No matter how liberated the toes  
They rely on the microphone of shoes to sing the road

45.

You are a flower I met on my way to the hive

After gathering my fill of nectar

46.

Often you suddenly discover  
Your pair of scissors  
Has been taken by your rose  
To give to your rival in love

47.

Dreams can balance the whole night's darkness  
Like a pinch of salt sprinkled in soup

48.

I used to argue with the home that was holding me back  
Because Springtime beckoned to me into the wilderness  
This year  
I gave up this old preoccupation  
Because Spring keeps provoking potted plants as always

49.

Crematory chimneys give life an elevation from which to vanish  
But over them rests a great blue expanse

50.

In the 1970s  
AIDS first climbed onto the world stage  
Causing impotent America  
To pull out of Vietnam's vagina

51.

Autumn wind takes autumn leaves to pay a call on winter  
Wind returns alone and tells the tree  
Fallen leaves have boarded the subway of Spring  
And won't be back for several months

52.

One person is the millstone  
To another's milling wheel  
Unless some grain is thrown in  
There's no point rolling their life together

53.

Reader, if you happen to be a doctor  
How will you face a writer using onset of mania  
To write the human body

54.

My body is also the orchestra of a garden  
Insects in and out of mating time  
Are parts within my musical instrument  
And they can renew themselves

55.

With Chinese shoes not yet broken in, we stepped into Western New Year  
Just the feeling in our feet occupied us for two months

56.

Forgive me  
When I lift up my ideals  
I trample the Earth a little lower

57.

Within the flower's chamber  
I drink toasts with the honeybee  
Afterwards  
We vomit together in the honeycomb

58.

Night-time  
I leap up like a volleyball player  
To spike the lamp's light within bounds of hell  
And win for heaven the dream of man's survival

59.

I've gotten to the age of wandering in literature  
At any certain page I never remain too long  
In every story I pass through as a minor character

60.

How can you bear two kinds of loneliness in one room?  
Your poems can't bear "sleeping with one who dreams of another"  
But the unbearable is what we have to bear  
People who don't write poetry instruct us on how to write poems

61.

When humans change their residence to other planets  
We hope to have a few neighbors to say goodbye to

62.

Life no longer has innocent pleasures  
All roads are joining hands to girdle the earth  
Beside the sorrowful city is a bridge of happiness  
When you break down on the bridge

Highway patrol radios the city for a tow truck  
Such thoughtful service!  
Get back on the road

63.  
Lifting the foot leaves a print like opening a dictionary  
Shoes must find the annotations of feet

64.  
I want to operate recklessly  
I'm not a genius  
I'm a Twentieth Century machine  
And I like playing with electricity

65.  
War reaches its steel hook  
Into mankind's uterus  
And people who were born already  
Have to get aborted once again

66.  
Like a tungsten filament ready to break within the bulb  
There's no telling how much longer  
My timorous love can stay lit up

67.  
If you want to borrow more sorrow from humanity you have to stand in  
line  
But to whom have the world's saddest sorrows been lent to?  
Only the evader of debt knows for sure

68.  
A nocturne played on strands of white hair  
Makes us feel  
The composer was seeking inspiration on loosened strings

69.  
On the shore I pluck spray from breaking waves  
And roast a meal of ocean to tide my belly over

70.  
Even if rust claims all metals outside of us  
In this world  
God will still create guns and cannons in our hearts

71.  
Just before you declare love for the first time  
Your whole mouth starts feeling sweaty

72.

The boats of each particular nation  
Don't hesitate to cast their languages wide  
After all, fish needs no translation  
To understand any human net

73.

In the territory of wine I've applied for political asylum  
I've also applied for status as a drunk  
A heap of cups will be my witnesses  
And a wine jug will be my lawyer  
On the lawyer's table  
Grapes from all over the world are piled as evidence

74.

After half a month of constant gloomy skies  
When sunbeams come down again  
The little dog yelps to see such strangers  
Just as when I'd gotten used to all that loneliness  
Your sudden pleas for love hit me like gunshots  
They felt like bullets that didn't know the road  
Having traffic accidents in my body

75.

Between eternity and death  
The trophy I bagged was a single sentence:  
I still don't want to die

76.

The barbershop chases after my head  
Large trees hurry out of the way  
Radiance, having descended  
Is washed away slowly with soap

77.

In darkness my shadow found its bed to sleep on  
I walk toward the darkness  
Like a child entering nursery school

78.

Before my eyes dripping with quicksilver tears  
The mirror shows glass grown puffy from crying

79.

I don't care if the chips are pretty or not  
I care how high a pile they make on the gambling table

80.

Two pieces of cloth cut from a flag  
Patch my shirt worn at the elbows  
The breeze in my sleeves has a carefree-beggar feeling

81.  
When the tiptoeing rooster stretches my neck  
Into a clarinet sunbeam  
You don't even have to blow  
Already the flock of birds is a dance of notes in air

82.  
Since you want to make a prolific author of me  
Why make me cap my pen and write a life?

83.  
Every time I move house  
It is like leaving the womb

84.  
Between God and a dictator mankind finds  
One foothold nearby and one foothold far away  
Between them is a cradle  
In which the baby preaches devotion to crying

85.  
Gasping fish are wriggling together in a pond  
Which bears jewelry holders of water-lily green  
Raindrops on them pretend to be pearls  
Nearby frogs croak out an endless sales pitch

86.  
Saltiness of sweat running down  
Wrinkles cooked up by life like noodles on the forehead  
Will be savored by no one

87.  
Two unrhymed lines are finally set down  
On paper that must be cut in half  
You and a knife and I

88.  
An undersea whirlpool is a bath house for fish  
A soapy sponge turns in the vortex

89.

That's pretty impressive  
The Earth lives under billions of feet  
But never feels like a slave

90.  
Those little eyes were too big  
With eyes closed you darted stitchlike kisses  
We were once a pair of love-to-love missiles  
The song in our hearts got blasted all through our bodies

91.  
The cry of a bird that is pinched by the neck  
Can be a special-sounding song in the forest  
Record it and you'll have a best-selling tape

92.  
When inspiration in someone's gaze becomes divine  
Only love can be its worshipper

93.  
The sky on every side is soaring  
I hold an eagle tight against my chest  
In the eagle's claws is a fish  
And the waves in the fish's belly  
Engulf a seaside village in my house

94.  
Sharp edges of ice are my feathers  
As long as Spring doesn't come  
I can fly with ease back to my grave

95.  
Facing the evening sun  
Regretting I can't embrace the world behind me

96.  
Anyplace I go, I do the simplest manual work  
Tearing apart bird cages  
In front of any mirror I repeat the most primitive motions  
Preening my feathers

97.  
Once again you charge into Cupid's arena  
Ready to give lost love a beating

98.

Each time the chill of winter gives me a beating  
I take comfort from listening  
To the far-off wail of Spring's ambulance, driving in this direction

99.

Our hope lies in one fact  
When nearly everything is left behind  
Through the curtains we discover  
The sun's steering wheel is near the window sill

100.

Poems are a timely planting of the written word  
In the body's compost places

101.

We have such love  
In each other's gaze our very hearts' shadows  
Are cast outside our bodies

102.

Bones get weary of this suit of fleshly clothes  
Guts and organs in the pockets are an encumbrance

103.

Civilization lies in the unfathomed cave beneath the coat  
Each person is a candle that has to be extinguished

104.

God stays in church, he doesn't flaunt his presence elsewhere  
But the reason is not just to save transportation costs

105.

The true wealth of a poet  
Is pain that can't be given away

106.

An airplane carrying light of truth fled toward the border  
And plunged earthward to become Spring

107.

An event that makes the collective face turn red  
Only happens in back alleys of a nation's consciousness

108.

If the soil temperature of the land I love would rise half a degree  
Go ahead and bury me alive

109.

Cold

So cold that sound freezes in air  
 I raise a torch  
 And warm a passage of Tchaichovsky  
 Perhaps because of over-eagerness  
 From the fire-warmed music  
 Four swans without feathers fall into my lap

110.

Many people say if your thoughts see through the world's dust  
 You can travel without looking at the road  
 But I still get tripped up by my shoes

111.

After scrubbing itself on a washboard of soil-strata  
 Water re-emerges from an artesian well  
 Earth is always answering the call to action for environmental cleanup

112.

A dried-up tree composes melodies in wood  
 While fire sings the lyrics

113.

As for love  
 All I have is an uphill road  
 To which I've grown accustomed, and so  
 When going downward I tend to be top-heavy

114.

Wild wind steers Spring rain headlong into parched earth  
 A noiseless hit-and-run flings green-plant relief into the air

115.

Don't crack open that walnut  
 Let inwardness be forever inward  
 Don't split the maturity of joined halves  
 The kernel sleeps in the coffin of its life  
 Quiet but not dying

116.

No matter what sort of flower you put in  
 Water is finally left to the vase  
 As for the ultimate meaning of feelings  
 A container is all I need

117.

In my hand you are like a flower  
 With this flower I give myself to you

118.

The scope of human life is quite small  
No farther than obstetric ward to crematorium

119.

His coffin was attractive and fine in workmanship  
When buried it stirred up a wave of grief

120.

You and I  
A pair of dice that turned up one and two  
Which adds up to three

121.

Humanity is the aftermath of humanity

122.

I have the pleasure of getting my heart ripped out  
But still having it inside me-at least so far

123.

Springwater washes itself  
And sees the tissue of itself regather out of springwater

124.

He is rational to the extreme  
And has put his weeping behind him  
If only there were a place there for tears

125.

In literature, this place of low fertility,  
Most pregnant women have their bellies stuffed with pillows

126.

You say these days of drowning in sunlight have gone on too long  
You propose to live in the manner of underground water  
But I know  
Every second of every minute someone turns on a faucet

127.

After being wounded many times  
It occurs to him that he's no hero  
Hence, fantasizing a distant future,  
On the strength of bunions excavated from his feet  
He squeezes into a museum

128.

Perhaps being away so long from the floor of my home

Is what makes me feel my feet  
So even now no home stands on this floor

129.  
Beloved,  
Don't let someone else's frosting  
Lay across your cake

130.  
Leaves are musical notation for birds  
Just now one of them sang a wrong note  
Because two beetles were lying on one leaf

131.  
My rain-splashed shoes are now drenched in sunlight  
The road has nothing ahead but victory  
I don't want to take the choicest bites too soon  
So along the road I dally with the road  
Maybe I'll poke along for another ten years

132.  
Rows of curses on both sides of the street  
Are like the trees that greenify our city

133.  
The audience is holding rice bowls up to their mouths  
Competing promises try to sound like menus  
Whether or not they have ingredients

134.  
Use a backhoe on the horizon to dig the sun up early

135.  
The little dog runs happily into the garden  
And waters the butterflies' rendezvous spot

136.  
We cannot measure how far the sun is  
From the earth's surface within our brain

137.  
You ask about pets?  
In the Twenty-Second Century  
I'm going to keep a cageful of fighter planes

138.

A world map is a pattern sheet for sewing clothes  
 In order for mankind to wear them  
 We have to sew the pieces together

139.  
 If I could love everyone as I love my wife  
 I'd be a theoretical adulterer

140.  
 Our reach will forever exceed our grasp  
 Words are not written beyond paper

141.  
 My blood cries to your blood  
 Let's not circulate in a battlefield

142.  
 The piano has an eternal theme  
 Discussing the relationship of white and black

142  
 In this world  
 There are many who tarnish the happiness  
 That others cannot win until tomorrow

143.  
 When teeth and fingernails can be produced  
 By the foundry that casts parts for machines  
 Then moths in perfect formation  
 Will fly through wires toward an electric bulb

144.  
 I keep on writing to solidify the meaning of my desk  
 To toughen the sinews of words  
 And guarantee that brute desire will keep staining white paper

145.  
 I bought toothpaste containing diplomatic phrases  
 And a toothbrush that trains the hand in subtle manipulations  
 Three days later  
 I caught an infection of the heart

146.  
 Deep in my heart  
 I put my feet in God's shoes  
 And discovered they were lined with grass

147.  
 Between her neck and her waist

My glances got wound into two balls of yarn

148.

The basin is aimed at the leaky roof  
A unwashed face is turned all night toward the sky  
A bird in the cage in the corner  
Replaces fallen feathers and combs them again  
My heartbeat drips like a water clock  
I sit in a lazy pose and perfect my insomnia

149.

All of my poems  
Derive from the one that killed itself  
Before it was completed

150.

Another weak point of humankind  
Is failure to overcome its strong points

151.

Look at the teeth lined up in your mouth  
Each of them an individual  
They make up a collective  
You are the one who feels their strength

152.

A poet is skilled at reading the daily news as poetry  
But ashamed to read poetry as the daily news

153.

Pain is mankind's eternal fuel  
And when petroleum dries up  
Pain as energy source will keep our lives burning

154.

Suppose gloomy weather is when the sun in a tub of dark clouds  
Is taking a bath  
In that case  
Living things get many chances to grow  
From the sun's bad habit of slopping out water

155.

When facing the world  
Your only right is to press the shutter  
But you don't have to plant your feet before an ugly scene

156.

Silence is solid

157.

There are always writers who defy physical laws  
Moving their lamps close to the bedstead of the sun

158.

Humanity is capable of touching itself deeply  
Humanity cannot do any worse than humanity  
Humanity is just a tool for manufacturing science  
Humanity can't help making sounds  
As it walks on past humanity

159.

This thing called life  
From beginning to end of the ride  
Is only the worm of history  
Rapidly crawling past you

160.

Their feeling are sharp-edged  
There is no sheath to contain them  
This urge to wear underwear over street clothes  
Takes a generation's self-respect beyond human self-respect

161.

Abundantly the world goes by  
Up to now the rolls of film behind his eyes  
Are still unexposed

162.

Poems on paper keep peering  
At what the naked person is wearing inside

163.

Artists often lean their bodies  
Over the edge of two extremes  
From their mouths come finely crafted shouts for help

164.

Breaking up is a misery replete with vitamins

165.

If born in a nation that has two suns  
You must first make sure which shadow to use

166.

I like freedom  
But I feel that a cage is too bulky to wear

167.

The high heels that clicked in synch with his heartbeat  
Have dwindled outside his window  
He loosens his grip on two dinner rolls

168.

Think how many couples every night  
Cross the boundaries of clothes and flesh  
The world's territorial problems are nothing to this

169.

You jumped out of your pants  
And into the grave  
Your wish to rape death was not yet forty  
I feel you could have waited a few years

170.

Before it closes the zipper of its purse  
Life always pulls out a few worn-out stories

171.

She often opens the drawer  
And checks whether her thinking has a change of underwear

172.

I have always believed that fire lives in wood  
And it will only open the door to fire's knock

173.

By making a poker-face as hard as iron, he earned a huge fortune  
Now his iron face has golden plating

174.

Maybe when aliens see snapshots of human beings  
They will think these are actual creatures, run through an extruder

175.

Young people know the face is the "little black book" of youth  
With their own hands they squeeze the addresses of unwanted pimples

176.

If many joys are crowded in one place  
A careless move will bump against other joys

So it is each New Years Eve  
 Humanity dances the globe a little flatter

177.

His anonymity  
 Will be unearthed after hundreds of years as a relic  
 Only then will he make a little news  
 And so  
 He waits beneath the road we often walk on

178.

A swan rests like a record needle on the lake's rippling surface  
 I hear the steady measures of this music

179.

Barrenness in its fanatic way also shoots forth  
 Flowers of incomparable beauty

180.

In this world  
 Only birds' nests in scenic photographs are left with a sense of  
 security  
 I go farther and hide within unexposed film

181.

The dirt on his body has been transmitted to every province  
 Causing a quick rise in the price of patriotic cologne  
 It was not easy for him to become a housefly  
 First he had to sacrifice his country as tainted meat

182.

We send down deep roots and work to charge our leaves with electricity  
 We also turn on light bulbs of fruit on every limb  
 Because of this  
 Please bury us in the circuitry of earth

{Note: The Chinese word for "leaves" sounds like

"pages."}

183.

Whichever instruments you and I travel on  
 We always arrive on each other's sheet music

184.

The opposition of nationality to rationality  
 Is the prolonged struggle of ignorance among human beings  
 Both sides have their own gods  
 And in the confrontation of god with god  
 Humans can only serve as weapons

185.

Though love is a stale topic  
Still it has to be written  
The consummate stage of staleness  
Is a good time to run away  
Which becomes the newest kind of elopement

186.

Dear one  
Let us open a can of poetry  
On the long road of life, a bit of fine food is important  
Especially today as the 21st Century begins  
Everyone says people of the Far East will live a new life now  
This calls for something special, like birthday needles  
Let's cook up some musical tapes!

187.

Dear wind  
The blue sky vaulting above my hilltop  
Stretches farther than eye can see  
No going home sleepily for me  
To fold up that blanket of clouds

188.

Music stirs the dancing crowd  
Like a spoon stirring sugar in coffee  
To take care of my inner dance floor  
I gulp the spoon straight down

189.

You have to grow into a weapon  
To lie in the grass and not be bitten by bugs

190.

On vacation away from the city  
A rhino ducked into the Africa of my heart  
But rifles of conventionality reminded me  
How keenly they smell the value of aphrodisiac horns

191.

There are always a few poets who bid up the price  
Of stock in the Twentieth Century Chinese language  
With increased investments of loneliness and testosterone  
I even hear them cheering for "Un-re- Qui-ted love."  
Do you think the this "Henri" fellow will be Chairman in the 90s?

192.

Among many dependencies

In the end none are left to depend on  
Except the idea of depending on no one

193.

The sense of being betrayed  
Proves that what you feel good about giving  
Hasn't struck a responsive chord  
So find a different instrument to perform on!

194.

Why do I sing a perfect song into fragments?  
Because struggling life needs symmetry  
And why do I insist on this symmetry?  
Between myself and my fate there must be equality

195.

When the switch is turned off, even more darkness shines from the  
lampshade  
All the shadows from an earlier time now stand erect  
His thinking offers the world new bounty of meaning

196.

Your breath is within caressable bounds  
A shared undulation swells beneath our boat

197.

After two hours at the word processor  
Writing with hardly a pause for breath  
A key is pressed in error  
Obliterating the words in an instant  
Like ejaculation without feeling a climax

198.

For half a lifetime I've been hustling for action in my inner mind  
I still have not hustled up a girl

199.

Within the mind are plenty of bars that have no drinking limit  
When your head starts spinning, you want to crawl outside to vomit  
But the mind has clear regulations about dumping refuse:  
No persons containing liquor may be taken off the premises

200.

The present gets hauled in bit by bit  
The Twenty First Century must think I'm a prize catch  
I don't care what value others assign  
But it makes me as happy as can be

You and I get to die in the same net

201.

Flashes of brilliance may not need a passport  
But like the awn-spurs of wheat, they need fertile ground

202.

I have backbone enough to take no notice of skin color  
I'm not going home to let a dull surname squeeze me for bloodline  
bribes  
Besides, anything smaller than the Earth doesn't count as home  
Which is why  
I don't need the cash value of living at home

203.

This era chooses me as a relic for the future  
But first on the whole sheet of stamps  
I have to become  
The only misprinted one

204.

I am thrown like a quilt on the bed  
Wine is underneath it sleeping

205.

Birds have not passed on their egg-hatching technology to airplanes  
Because airplanes still need humans to feed them

206.

The foot that lets fly with a downwind punt  
Sends a smile on its way with a favorable wind  
Since you kicked me away the weather has been so fine  
I can't begin to feel hatred

207.

Like a light bulb in a socket that has a loose connection  
Getting tightened and loosened again and again  
While standing alone at the meeting place you let yourself feel  
A mindless sense of abandonment

208.

Every morning I discover in my shoes  
The footprint made by beautiful dreams that came to collect rent

209.

Combing with vigorous strokes  
Until she has combed each hair into a thought

210.

Those who invent and study toothbrushes  
Have no more teeth than anyone else

211.

How could I be content to keep on sleeping and never awake?  
As always have to get up and check if I've had  
A nocturnal emission toward this world

212.

What is a sure way to keep a rein on wine?  
To pull the glass past my lips and quickly away?  
When bottle and poem-filled head both show their empty bottoms  
Harvest has once more overcome my rambunctious field of crops

213.

For two hours an anti-social wind was hitting me head on  
Blowing my brilliant flashes toward a private corner of the night  
But it did not happen in time  
The card under my waistband showing a reproductive scene  
Was forced back onto the table of the crowd

214.

He went through a second birth  
And called the woman farthest from him Mother  
Now he rests on a wooden post that fell near the door  
Like a cicada holding its mouth against a rafter from long ago

215.

A true poet goes to various tanks of society  
And when he catches words in his net  
Releases them like fish to a river

216.

Looking skyward you let out a sigh  
I hope the kind-hearted storm cloud  
Can translate your breath into snow  
Winter needs advertisements that drift down everywhere  
To promote its far-reaching power of language

217.

To obey reality is more exhausting than to create reality

218.

After eating the meal  
He carefully puts fishbones in the aquarium  
And claims the gleam in his eyes

Can see the unharmed souls of fish

219.

No matter how rough the road  
A person in bed can press out all the ups and downs  
Using the iron of sleep

220.

Over the holidays  
May I be led like a balloon in your hand  
A balloon filled with hope blown in by your mouth

221.

Conscience is a murderer  
That buries violent tendencies right here in my body  
Which by now is bristling with gravestones  
Occasionally I think it might be tomb-sweeping time  
But sad to say, the thought merely occurs to me

222.

In a drawer within my body  
A gun was set off by a careless rat  
But only the cockroach stealing a look at my papers get blown away

223.

Winter beats the bushes for lingering protein  
Giving us a Spring-like interest in nutrition

224.

The broken bridge in the scenic painting on the wall  
Proves that history since then had to swim across the water

225.

Today is not a good time to have sex  
Because tomorrow Spring and I  
Will sleep together in the bed of the North

226.

Life in the end is a piece of carved wood  
That once was grown by green leaves

227.

If I were a rat  
I would undermine the world's walls  
And sing how underground life goes in all directions

228.

Suddenly a nation's birds

Turn into yellow ribbons  
 And are tied around its trees  
 Whether the mission is invasion or aid  
 Going home is the peace army's clearest battle cry

229.

Every day I want to catch a springtime by its tether  
 And ride on it to every scenic spot in my body  
 Every day I wake up very early  
 To pull my bed away from the sidetrack of dreams

230.

In the future  
 They will demand to be dug up and buried all over again  
 Because the measurements of the coffin are not right  
 Their claim will be based on the validity of human rights  
 Eventually they will see to it  
 That anything worn on the body has to be the right size

231.

Whether in victory or defeat  
 The color of blood is always red  
 Something has to be sliced away in any case  
 Blood can win peace, but it is not peace

232.

Your father's sperm is so very idealistic, so well-brought-up  
 Its swimming becomes the sorrow and romance of your poetic thought  
 The ovaries\*\* of Twentieth Century commerce are very far away  
 But you ride poems toward a further place to get yourself conceived  
 {"Ovaries of commerce" sounds like "trend of commerce" in  
 Chinese.}

233.

Insomnia is a kind of labor  
 I must earn enough to support the night with it

234.

Fanatic believers, even in silence  
 Often shoot out a tooth or two

235.

Though our breakup made me swallow fifty sleeping pills  
 She gives me fifty-one reasons to have insomnia

236.

I have discovered that held-back tears  
 Gleam in the heart like foxfire

Letting me see who weeps in my heart  
 Letting me get half a meter away from myself

237.

In the magnetic field of envy, iron filings cannot help themselves  
 One person's affections cannot temper iron into plastic  
 Do you pepper other people's bread with your own mold spots?  
 I urge the crowd of hunger-striking compadres to taste cosmic fireworks

238.

She has given up makeup  
 To work her enticement from within  
 Her tricks of capture are crueller than a hunter's  
 She makes the hopeless, trapped one listen to songs of victory

239.

The autumn wind is wonderful  
 If you own a sun that plays on a swing through the trees

240.

Cotton casts a shadow that has more warmth than cotton  
 Giving warmth a definition that penetrates the body

241.

Since you have already crossed the river  
 Why tire yourself out  
 By turning to dismantle the bridge?  
 This variety of human exertion  
 Makes my physique feel bored

242.

Someday I will be able  
 To fold my legs up and put them away like trousers  
 So I don't want the sun  
 To step on my shadow and not let go

243.

Each time I turn my head  
 I stretch my collar out of shape  
 Because my home and I ran away from home together

244.

When selling shoes we don't set the price  
 According to how far they can walk  
 Just as we don't think a woman is more feminine  
 For having ten children

245.

Thick fog muffles my window in early morning  
Not to conceal the starlet I slept with  
As she slips away into the sky  
But to let her feel she is in the Heavens already

246.

The carrying pole on the fathers' shoulder  
Sags with all the hours before nightfall  
From him I have bought more yesterdays  
Than I can use in ten years

247.

Mother  
In order to give birth to my spirit  
Let your large grave be pregnant with my small grave

248.

Whenever you get on the bus, it's O.K.  
Anyway I have bought two tickets for life's journey  
In case you don't show up until the last stop  
This ticket includes the next lifetime

249.

The paring knife  
Can go ahead and rest now  
Adam and Eve have already chomped the apple, peel and all  
But they are underage, and so  
They chew breath mints before they go home

251.

Suddenly we see each other  
Already we are on the same road

252.

Dinosaurs were a tribe that committed mass suicide  
They left empty the whole dictionary of space  
For mankind to expound the meaning of existence

253.

Parents want to nurture every brick in the house  
Into a memorial plaque

254.

Dear one  
I have begun to revolve  
Like a fan enticed by summer days  
Since you want to see a fan sweat

255.

You are required to live with abundant commodities  
The metropolis does not permit emptiness

256.

Due to regret  
That man and the sun cannot change places  
I owe my birth

257.

Many great artists who get along without women are thought to be  
homosexual  
I envy their creative success at a distance from women

258.

When you discover that eternity is only a concept  
Only then does the desk in front of you have length

259.

Love between man and women  
Is the classic example of fighting fire with fire

260.

Dear one  
My kisses have nested on your face  
Yesterday I did not come back because  
Tonight I will return to the nest two times

261.

The silent one digests his own words in his belly  
When he runs into an exclamation point  
He takes a swig of wine

262.

Intellect gets a charge out of tinkering with secret plots  
Giving certain people the courage to commit crimes

263.

The only vistas left for me are places I want to return to  
On the back of the world map is a whole sheet of blankness  
Where I dreamed God painted his dwelling place  
But before I woke up he erased it  
That's pretty stingy of you, God

264.

The supermarket where the blood of material objects circulates  
Is a hospital for thought

265.

Don't feel bad Eve  
About what happened with the apple  
The apple was bitten by Spring while still inside the branch  
But for beauty's sake it refused to grow a bite-mark on its skin

266.

Your words are like bullets inside of bullets  
I have to lay down twice  
To feel how sexy their meaning is

267.

Lowly things are too far from you  
Your song does not carry there  
You agonize in greatness  
Plucking your silence upon the string of a nation

268.

My gaze gets tied in a knot  
On his daughter's body  
Then turns to him  
His shirt button is undone

269.

In the newspaper the power of words makes me collide with the whole  
world

270.

Fists grow up in stormy weather  
To open their petals in peace

271.

Many times you and I caught the tether of Spring  
And went riding to look at scenery all over our bodies

272.

The glue within sunlight  
Seals Spring against my chest  
It is a letter everyone can receive  
And my heart is the stamp, lent by the sun

273.

Bird reporters in the grove  
Forgot to input their dispatches into a wavelength  
Luckily they remembered to write news on the ground with birdshit  
Letting the grass puzzle out a passage of green nutrition

274.

Language has space to be infected with viruses of any intellectual kind

275.

The bones of two arms  
The obstacles of flesh and sleeves  
Are not among the things we get beyond  
So humanity gets to be embraced

276.

The sun emits its own light  
Why should I require the moon's companionship  
To think fondly of my hometown

277.

Green spans of time grow from the Earth  
Spring gets right up close to them, walking out its days  
I am behind Winter  
Keeping a steady pace, matching my steps to April's

278.

When the wine bottle holds out its neck to sing like a bird  
My cup at least will at fall into a willow tree  
That sways its scintillations to a here-and-now breeze

279.

Ah!  
My woodpecker has caught up to me  
While my coffin is still above ground  
To eat the bugs that have sunk in like nails  
Come out, you adorable beauties  
Are you still after romantic news?

280.

Salt leaps up with the crashing wave  
Sweat on the scrotum works hard for swimming sperm  
On a deck that measures 98.6 degrees  
Progeny are the last will and testament

281.

Many women remove themselves from their bodies  
Disdainfully watching the men who attempt  
To write intimacy into their "corpses" \*\*  
\*\*(The word 'corpses' sounds like 'verses' in Chinese.)

282.

The people who walk past the edge of my bowl  
But do not salivate  
Can get their fill by looking from afar

These walking towers  
Have also learned to go fishing by antenna

283.

"Who winds the Earth's mainspring?" I wonder each day  
As I turn the doorknob

284.

When a single brick is pulled away  
The surrounding ones remain  
Through the brick-shaped space  
The world, at mankind's back  
Joins the thrill of peeking into a bathroom

285.

Hearing the cough of bread that has grown moldy  
Wheatlings slow down the pace of their growing

286.

While rain is falling  
He takes it on himself to hold an umbrella for the sun  
In clear weather he devotes himself  
To wearing a hat of idleness

287.

The Earth meshes into the gears of sunlight  
Moonlight meshes with the Earth  
Technology of human breath meshes with air  
Such unstoppable mechanical principles  
Make life grow old

288.

Flight that cuts keenly through the air  
Does its cutting day by day  
Slices out a distant view  
The Buddha and Jesus reluctantly concede  
This is the accomplishment of birds

289.

Hundreds of horses wait in the locomotive  
Using their strength to hold down a nation with rails  
The pride of the government makes me buy a ticket

290.

Dreams unspool my bedsheet from a cotton field  
My bed is a raised planting bed  
The sensation of being pressed against a bed by sunlight

Is one humans don't get used to, unless they are ill

291.

With maximum lust for melody  
The poet goes to bed with a minimum of words

292.

Surrounded by members of the green leaf party  
Flowers are elected to the highest positions  
Spring sunlight casts a shrewd vote  
For the riotous land

293.

Just as a moonbeam steps into the well  
She raises up the bucket in her heart  
Aiming itself at thirst contrived by love  
Water loosens a moonlit cascade

294.

A tennis ball in the nest keeps the mother duck expectant

295.

Spread open a map where ocean waves are stored  
Abstract experience surges over concrete words  
The world sits facing them  
In a chair that distrusts its own shoulders

296.

The two strings of business and love  
Are set to the singing of others  
With the Earth as a concert hall, no sense being picky

297.

Cannonballs have shaken the conscience of many writers  
They still pull book after book from their bandages  
Some books are on I.V.s, dripped through advertisements

298.

Assembling a world takes many roles  
The beautician, turning from wounds of a nation's people  
Coaxes forth the jowls of publishing tycoons

299.

Pillowing his head on the news, he sleeps  
Having read a pile of newspapers before bedtime  
His body is feverish with deals made in nightmares  
And he kicks off the pages that covered him

300.

Perfume from flowers kidnaps the world's nose  
In an airplane that will never land

301.  
Clouds float beneath the feet  
Song is of even lighter substance

302.  
Advertisements are weapons too  
Soldiers watch as shelves full of voluptuous stock  
Obliterate their enemies peacefully

303.  
A bleary day, and nearsighted on top of it  
Farsightedness doesn't get reproduced  
He loves women like he loves his creations  
By peeling away, they nurture fruits of effort

304.  
For five years in a row, the days have not been free of tears  
Eyes have not been free of dampness  
Give your body to the mattress of a valley  
In the sixth year the springtimes are still bouncy

305.  
Preserve the animals!  
Preserve the stock market's herd of industrial horses  
That often dash riders to the ground

306.  
Fog so thick it builds a wall around lamplight  
A good time to mix love-cement at your window

307.  
From the corolla of a sunflower dig out seeds of light  
After growing to full height may they illumine the sun

308.  
Before a 90s backdrop, thinking back on dinosaurs  
Hoping to embrace them into a brand new enemy

309.  
The mistiness of a whole poetry book  
Disappears in the writer's name  
The writer disappears in the crowds of people  
And the determined readers

Having gotten a prescription for a critic's glasses  
Puzzle out line after line of their own vision

310.

The nation is outside  
The tribe is outside; the city is outside  
Sun and lamp are outside  
On the inside only myself  
Going inward only myself

311.

Book after book soars by up above  
The sky that has leafed through countless wings  
After reading the joy of a nest  
Hatches pure blue expanses in people's eyes

312.

No matter what kind of explosive you are  
Language can serve as the fuse

313.

Mountains and rivers also hit emotional lows  
Submitting earthquake and volcano manuscripts to anywhere  
And even versifying us into corpses  
For which they may wipe a few crazy storms from their eyes  
Just as I, by using a few extra exclamation marks  
Make friends fall out of love with my poems for years at a time

314.

Two names that once were used to sharpen each others teeth  
Are finally driven by hunger into the same kitchen  
After this twist of fate, the question is who will wash dishes?

315.

The years are like a soap opera, washing away the intensity of love  
But how can I bear to drain the intoxication in the bath water?

316.

While I lie beneath my cover in an alien land  
Honey bees get insomnia from the native- language embroidery

317.

Since reality sold me out to poetry, it has become superfluous

318.

What a hard time people have

Besides nurturing a child, they try to nurture ideals  
But what works for a child doesn't work with ideals  
In the 20th Century, the more you nurture ideals, the smaller they grow

319.

The snowstorm must forever delve at the cracks of a warm door  
Because mankind will never give the key to winter

320.

With utmost musicality of lust  
The poet goes to bed with the fewest possible words

321.

I open the door to my home  
Poetry greets me in my inner heart  
Poetry in its rightful place  
Is not displaced by any deconstruction

322.

His hands were blackened from groping in darkness  
Since then the color black has not left his pen

323.

The poet's profession is life  
Life is always part-time

324.

After all these years of being written down,  
Words are not going to become paper  
After all these incarnations, inspiration won't be reborn anywhere  
But in the body of a romantic  
And wouldn't you know it  
Wine cannot become a bottle cork

325.

Literature outside of literature  
Famous brand names have no content  
The cover of advertising is the whole plot

326.

Watching sweat lick the salt of its livelihood  
Adds to my isolated labor as a creative person

327.

A poet constantly seeks out ailments in the body of society  
To prove he is a doctor put out of work by the cosmetic industry

328.

In units of length fit for myself and philosophy  
I could back up ten more steps at least  
But life only has five steps

329.

Members of the audience are holding rice bowls up to their lips  
Whether you have something of substance or not  
Your campaign promises have to sound like a menu

330.

It has nothing to do with spiritual faith  
For the sake of temporary aims  
Many people use incense smoke to kidnap the Buddha

331.

In crowd environments, people temper each other into steel  
But too much steel causes steel prices to fall

332.

Time and again God is raped by the language of cults  
But that's all right  
At least once a month, poets receive new eggs of inspiration

333.

Many people crowd along the mass-production line of life  
Because repetition is the nest of the weak

334.

The sun was postmarked overhead  
And is being stuffed into the mailbox of the west  
But mankind still cannot read the meaning of this love letter to the  
world

335.

Since the Cultural Revolution  
There are still mouths that haven't brushed their teeth

336.

A wristwatch is the cruelest device for torturing time

337.

The whole world strikes a harmonica-playing pose  
As it consumes the American music within a hamburger

338.

In this stage in life's road, we must accept the road's limitations  
What we can do is change shoes often

339.

When born in a country that has two suns  
The first thing is to make sure which shadow you'll use

340.

It is more trying to obey reality than to create reality

341.

Any kind of society can be the workout room for my inspiration  
Until I buff myself into an exercise machine

342.

Driving along with festive Latin music playing on the radio  
Makes me feel that a group of Mexicans are washing my car

343.

People marvel at songs the bird takes into its cage  
They do not notice its song lacks the melody of flight

344.

No matter how young you are  
In your mind you have to care for the old man named "thought"

345.

Heaven as edifice  
Heaven as something wearable  
Heaven as a message to be sent  
Heaven might resemble a monument, an outfit or a letter  
But evidence there is none

346.

There is a question I've thought about for years  
When I close the window, the wind stands still in my room  
Is wind that stands still called wind  
Now at last I realize that this is the wind's question to mankind  
If I stand still am I still myself?

347.

The place you want to be is called the weekend  
The place you don't want to be is a nine-to-five job  
Modern people use vehicles to shuttle between  
Where they want to be and where they don't want to be

348.

Many people hide beneath free-flowing language  
Like a gob of phlegm caught in the throat

349.

Whatever the distance whatever the height  
He who flies should first make sure  
Whether or not he has wings inside that can fly toward himself

350.

Introspection is a sign that the person is going to his own inner  
restroom

351.

Owing to what someone told me  
I use jealousy to reminisce about you  
Standing on a footbridge erected by a tattletale  
I keep adding poison to my own water

352.

In the forest of New York, I chase a beast called loneliness  
I don't believe that being lonely makes this beast any less warm

353.

To live like a stone, many conditions must be met  
Besides texture, color, temperature, and shape  
You have to know more of the earth's historical secrets  
Than mankind does, yet not speak of them

354.

Mankind is mankind's pandemic illness, no need for a doctor  
Eternity is the other shore of eternity, no need for a bridge

355.

Winnings gained by good-heartedness  
Continue to serve as my daily necessities  
And in all the lungs and kidneys  
And other essential parts  
God's industry still operates

356.

My pillow is suspended over a bedless height  
Riding a dream-nest above a chopped-down tree

357.

In this universe  
Only the little brain of planet earth still worries itself  
Large brains don't bother using thought to show they exist  
And so  
In the mode of thought we can't find aliens who don't use thought

358.

Some people's hearts are so dark

They can't sleep unless  
They turn their neighbors' lights out

359.

It's not that the pond is too small  
It's the overlarge net of politics  
That makes me swim back into my bodily size

360.

Short or tall, we compare our endowments with our own kind  
In this way we continue to make the world small

361.

We often sense the heart chasing out from its atrium  
For years it runs in the direction of loss, never tiring

362.

Each time the road in a novel  
Flashes the image of a country girl  
I always feel myself shoulder a hoe

363.

Can a deal be made, Once and for all  
To sell the infinite blue of the sky?  
The pigment merchant has never dared to consider  
The ultimate meaning of wealth

364.

Please tie the shoelaces of the world securely  
Loosen the throat of your footsteps and sing your way down the road

365.

Dreams are the only forest that mankind cannot clearcut

366.

In the bed of my coffin my insomnia will continue

367.

People who once reaped a good harvest  
Now sit brooding on a heap of straw  
Hoping it will sprout wings

368.

With my face toward the sunset I feel regret  
I cannot open my bosom to the world

369.

A poem peeks from its sheet of paper  
At what the naked person is wearing inside

370.

I count myself lucky  
Literary writing and athletics are both  
Exertions of mind and body  
But there is no drug screening for the former

371.

At a road-crossing with no future, I count the words in my bag  
Are there enough to make a poem that can capture desolation?

372.

Across paper made of water  
Scales of inspiration  
Write undulating flashes of a fish's body

373.

Other genres can move out from my body like furniture  
Only poetry is one with the room

374.

My imagination is drawn to the thought of "each other"  
Two bottles that drink from each other  
Can never be drunk dry

375.

Again I forget the lines I have not written  
Because I haven't gotten over being the poet I was

376.

Regulated verse belongs to the literary footbinding period

377.

Although he is still single  
He has done a good job as a gardener  
Every "she" he has been with  
Has bloomed into someone else's rose

378.

A poem is like a bright-colored butterfly  
I chase after it  
And whether I catch it or not  
At least I follow it to springtime's garden

379.

Each time I reach for my medical almanac I am reminded  
Since your stories performed their surgery on me  
I've never been off the I. V. of written words

380.

How many words does it take to impregnate a poem?  
Professional childbirth is a drag, just like nine-to-five  
Tragedies of stillbirth have made me a graveyard  
But years ago I took up the hobby of grave robbing

381.

Culture is a kind of plant absorbing nature's nutrients  
At the root are clean simple poems  
Would chemical fertilizer work  
The forest's answer is always No!

382.

A poet needs to have the knack  
To kick a dewdrop from a blade of grass  
Like a soccer ball onto the tip of his pen

383.

The drinker within poetry will someday drain  
The last drop of alcohol from my body

384.

People like to use a hero's image  
To prop up their homeland  
This is like filling a swimming pool  
With water that fish have swum through  
To make people's swimming nice and smooth

385.

It won't dull your sickle to wait a few years, he says  
Saying this he curves his arm around my shoulders  
I pillow my head on his blade

386.

Some people's hearts are so dark  
They can't sleep unless they turn their neighbor's light out

387.

Would you believe that space aliens have five sexes?  
It takes five of them to fall in love  
Five to have a child together  
Damn! An alien's love life sure is tough

388.

It's the current style of married life  
Two sunflowers with lowered heads  
Each nibbling on their own seeds

389.

You mobilize every drop of sweat from your feet  
Soaking into my road like a spring shower

390.

Clean land is dozens of kilometers away from us  
On top of that, the mode of transportation we have invented  
Cannot drive us there

391.

History thinks in terms of locomotives  
It seems to have no use for any passenger car

392.

Garbage creeps to toward the city's outskirts  
With big gulps it pushes back the edge of grass  
The lyric, pastoral poems of my time  
Cannot help filling up with howls

393.

Not just China and America  
The distance between countries is only  
From one glass to another  
And this distance can disappear in the sound  
Of glasses touching

394.

I don't want to ride a sickbed into the 21st Century  
But the 21st Century is riding into my body on a sickbed of its own

395.

With all the dark clouds of the world as my witness  
I was born to hold my own umbrella

396.

The whip of helplessness often lashes a person to success  
Out of the loneliness of separation, he makes a child of his calling,  
The child he never had

397.

The road is rough as it is  
Let's not have a fight between feet and shoes

398.

When unemployment reduces life to ashes  
At last the spirit finds employment  
399.

Children are growing teeth  
So they can grit their teeth and face life  
Gritting teeth is healthier than brushing them

400.

Suicide is the only door  
That gets locked from the other side  
Using the human body as a key

401.

My nearsightedness must wear tears to see life clearly

402.

If it can't be rewritten it's not history  
What can be rewritten  
Has probably been rewritten many times

403.

Another name for pollution is lack of personality  
People who lack personality cause pollution

404.

Compared to Western medicine  
Chinese herbs taste bitter  
Which proves that Chinese people have  
A healthier understanding of bitterness

405.

On the busy streets I use my car to go strolling  
Right foot--accelerate; left foot-brake

406.

I asked you to help me with a project  
But you have been so slow  
Even the tears I shed over this  
Trickle down with unusual slowness

407.

If I dig a tunnel in time where I can think fondly of you  
Would you put a mousetrap at the end?

408.

Old age saves a lot of effort  
Saliva drools just as fluidly as language

409.

In this world filled with degraded encounters  
You stay clean-cut by learning to live without encounters

410.

In babies the mainspring of time is fully wound  
We are miserable, having no way to rewind it

411.

Life lines up at the furnace grate  
Waiting to buy its own ashes

412.

I come in the guise of a woodpecker  
To suck out worms that look like coffin nails  
Come out, my beautiful one  
What more romantic news do you need?

413.

In a wintry field she is a flower inside a tree-limb  
She waits in vain for an elevator to the branch-tip  
And presses her body into the wood  
Wood in this season has a hidden fragrance  
Perfect for making my furniture

414.

She has left me and gone to a deeper place in my heart  
So deep a place even I have not gone there

415.

May you taste the joy of water from two glasses  
That pour into one glass and overflow together

416.

Suddenly I see you  
Already we are on the same road

417.

Go ahead and intermarry  
Now that appliances have no national boundary  
Why should the sexes have one?  
Wherever you go, electricity proliferates in the human plug and socket

418.

Your smile turns up its wings  
My face would make a good nesting place

419.

We are a bolt of cloth that was woven along the road

And in the fabric of our marriage  
The distance grows less between cotton field and clothes

420.

We are fond of each other but do not monopolize  
We are a scenic destination for each other  
It's alright to go there a few times a month  
Not going for a few years is alright too

421.

Where do tears come from  
If not from love that is put through the wringer

422.

We can only meet  
We cannot choose the way we meet

423.

With gasping breaths I lean against the book cover of marriage  
Your urgent love skimmed through me and quickly  
Turned me into memoirs

424.

For many men a love affair is just a game of  
Changing bodily size

425.

God issued me a man's passport  
Which means a woman is needed  
To approve my entry and exit visas

426.

She and I are a poem that must be read  
Using each others' bodies

427.

A hole was blasted in the sky with fireworks  
And down fell many stories of big drinkers  
Causing a drop in our reading ability

428.

If you put aside endless discussion about what and whom it's for  
Sweat always gives an unerring direction to labor

429.

After plunging into themselves  
Many people find they cannot swim

430.

When crossing a riverbed in weather insufficiently cold  
Thin ice cannot keep its collectivity intact  
Ladies and gentlemen  
Look out for yourselves

431.

Comrades  
When sharing a bed with capitalism  
Do not forget your condoms

432.

Pain has its origin in the individual  
Collective pain is a field of acquired knowledge

433.

In the dynastic succession of necessities for daily life  
Common folk always vote to be common

434.

How many strong ones have bashed themselves senseless  
Against the prison wall of huddled weaklings  
Then awoken to become one of the bricks

435.

How he wished to be a god  
But in the end, only half a step from divinity  
He got paralyzed into a stub of burnt incense

436.

Many people say an outlook that sees through the world's red dust  
Will allow you to walk down the road with eyes closed  
But I still get tripped up by my shoes

437.

Love that has not provided a temporary residence for tears  
Will never get a visa to drift away from the body

438.

Not even a bachelor escapes the fate of being hunted  
Love is the summation of all the world's traps

439.

To save yourself requires no license  
The question is, what to do once you are saved?

440.

Business dealings between capitalism and socialism  
Prove that both sides, for the sake of monetary offspring,  
Can overcome the repulsion of sleeping together

441.

When you discover that eternity is only an idea  
The desk in front of you will finally have length

442.

A cage with a bird hopping inside  
Hangs in the forest  
A tribe with a man hopping inside  
Hangs in the state  
The cosmos with an earth hopping inside  
Hangs in the boundless unknown

443.

Modern beasts also wear shoes  
Which makes hunting more and more difficult

444.

On history's staircase we slipped on a gob of capitalist phlegm  
Slogans of world harmony got gulped back into our lungs

445.

There are situations in life that require you to slow down  
For instance, when the road is going slower than you are

446.

All missed appointments that belong to the past are on time

447.

When money raises its wall in the face of life  
You have to pocket a few bricks in order to dig through

448.

Her glances are sprinkled all over my brand-name overcoat  
Even after I hang it up, they stay with it on the coat rack

449.

Don't think money does everything  
To get the full use out of life, you must put your body into it

450.

There are new scientific inventions every day

But the most popular mode of transportation is still shoes

451.

One feature of city life: you see more advertisements than familiar faces

452.

Pick up the receiver of literary ideals  
For money's sake the whole world's line is busy

453.

When silverware and chopsticks meet on the same table  
Japanese people are first to prove  
Who is better at using the other side's resources

454.

Mankind constantly adds to the number of material nouns  
So verbs are getting overtaxed  
After the daily rush to wait upon human consumption  
Verbs don't have strength wait upon spiritual nouns

455.

If you manage to sell out everything  
Instead of the name on your tombstone  
You can carve a sum of money

456.

Diseases of modern communication are getting more frequent  
One is often on the telephone line to oneself

457.

Confronted with the mania of material want  
Only self-restraint can stop a body from occupying several beds  
But self-restraint keeps withdrawing  
Leaving personality in the hands of name-brand clothes

458.

To most people, the peak of success is finding a job to resign yourself  
to  
You count out days like dollar bills  
Then count out the bills you earn in return

459.

Any one person in this world is superfluous  
But according to the laws of economics  
Only surplus money can be invested

460.

My footprints melt together with the snow  
They enter roots of a tree, then climb to its flowers  
A bee lands on one of my footprints  
And translates the road I traveled into honey

461.

Autumn is the season for paying salaries  
Fallen leaves are wages of the soil

462.

The sunflower gathers a thousand wishes into one circle

463.

When a whole treeful of leaves makes way for new growth  
The spirit of sacrifice lying all over the ground  
Makes the vault of sky higher

464.

A nest is life that birds impose upon a tree

465.

A head-on wind is combing my hair  
For beauty's sake  
I do not look back

466.

White clouds like bandages stripped from my body  
Float blessedly into the distance

467.

Many people, after the lock of life closes upon them  
Are presented with the key of ideals----a key bigger than the lock  
itself

468.

Campaign expenses of democracy are getting higher  
The outstretched hand of a politician  
Cannot make a fist unless it is full of bills

469.

A native language must release the nation full of people imprisoned by  
its weight  
Before it becomes a language that can understand humanity

470.

If not for ostentatious emperors  
How many tourist spots would there be in China?

471.

He suffered a lot of injustice  
Even now if he sits in the past for half an hour  
He catches cold and runs a fever

472.

Looking for the perforated ulcer of corruption  
The pain-racked government attempts to make thirteen stitches  
Before its last supper

473.

A great robber lives to steal other people's hearts  
He won't give up until he is president

474.

Having an affair with a country is too much trouble  
Just the finger of a country is as thick as a province  
Who can afford an engagement ring like that?

475.

Underground literature comes from roots adrift within the soil

476.

Inter-party conflict must elevate the reason for a gang fight  
To national or racial status  
Because that is where convalescents get the best treatment

477.

After an exchange of halitosis  
Diplomats confirm their countries' love for each other  
Hypocrisy is the eighth wonder of the world

478.

In the opposition between East and West  
Human rights are the newest weapon  
As the fight rages, people dive into trenches on the playing field of  
the market

479.

It's good to come home  
You can put on the slippers of weariness and tread them underfoot

480.

Lovely germs spread across your face  
Waiting to multiply into a smile

Ah, my daughter  
Such eternal germs  
Guarantee that my son-in-law will be a outstanding patient

481.  
The cruelty of a festival  
Emotions often flare without our knowing why

482.  
Dear child  
All the trouble your father encountered  
Before you were born  
Has been waiting for your infant sobs

483.  
Babies are no more idle than adults  
Their work is to grow  
The aim of their work is far away  
As far away as death

484.  
Can you hear my footsteps coming toward you from this card?  
Guess if I'm wearing shoes or slippers  
Or not wearing anything?

485.  
Some people stay carefree, whatever the state of their wallet  
A mere glass of water, savored slowly,  
For them is the 100-proof beverage of life

486.  
How to live more naturally?  
I think of the earth's distance from the sun  
If it had been 100,000 kilometers more or less, homo sapiens wouldn't  
exist  
So being random is the natural way to live

487.  
The safest way to walk is pressed against a wall  
Until you become part of the wall  
But the difficulty of choosing still exists  
Either the inside wall or the outside wall?

488.  
Modern people greatly admire the bloodline of Coca Cola

Many even hope their children will be born in cans  
To slake their thirst for illustrious offspring

489.

With each sigh the book of sighs gets thicker  
Many people are reading "repetition"

490.

Plunging into the ocean of applause, she glided through the waves for  
over ten years  
Though the water is now dry  
She makes the moves of a swimmer while walking s to the vegetable  
market

491.

Silence has too many implications  
So for simplicity's sake, we speak

492.

In most works of literary criticism  
I read one of two different styles  
The critic has either caught the country's best or worst cold

493.

An elegy of blood issues forth from heart muscle  
The human body is the most enduring church

494.

To spit up a flower instead of phlegm  
Takes smoke from a certain number of cigarettes  
To start the throat thinking

495.

I was close to saying something, but it escaped me  
I wish I knew how far the thing I forgot is  
That way I'd know whether to walk or drive there

496.

To bite into the cake of the future  
Use tomorrow's toothbrush to understand the inner strength of teeth  
And make sure your incisors maintain 20/20 vision

497.

Mankind is planet earth's prime commodity  
Unfortunately, the chances for export are exceedingly small

498.

As soon as we are born, we face a language

That has been around for quite a while  
And likes to use our thoughts for playthings  
If we don't think, language will have nothing to play with  
So we must think until language can play so well  
That it will turn old playthings into new ones

499.

Because there are no roots under your feet  
Let your wardrobe pass for flower petals  
My countrymen who go overseas!

500.

Plants all go from flower to fruit  
Only humans can stop at the flower

501.

Please be cautious  
If any of you, with your 21st Century flesh,  
Wish to cling to and nurse a 5000-year-old skeleton  
Avoid too much strenuous exercise

502.

Now that life has planted sunlight in my body  
On the tips of these rays, I want to form gloomy fruits  
I refuse to repeat sunlight on top of sunlight

503.

He brings out everything to receive me  
As if his refrigerator had broken down  
Or maybe I am his refrigerator  
And he thinks he is storing edibles for the future

504.

The patient's pet-loving complex is beyond treatment  
He has the capacity to accept the running dogs of all dictators

505.

As a robber he is a big talker  
He claims he will steal the stars from a five-star hotel  
And leave only the night sky behind

506.

After the flesh takes a dinner tray to the brain  
It pulls the ladder away, so thought cannot climb down

507.

Every day, plant seeds of antagonism for exercise  
A sure way to keep off excess weight

508.

Envy the rat pack's ability to think with their tails  
The television grew an antenna

509.

Propagandists for birth control  
Have come up with the final slogan  
The sun itself is an only child

510.

So much filth is on the road of life  
And I must take my shadow along with me  
So I ask you, sunlight  
Don't squeeze my shadow under your foot

511.

People who drink jasmine tea  
Fail to notice how even jasmine flowers swirling in their brew  
Wait expectantly for scuba-diving honeybees

512.

Imagine what it's like to be an unfertilized egg  
Like being a person but not alive

513.

It could only have happened at a moment of great surprise  
I raised my head so suddenly I broke a housefly's wing

514.

On the back side of the world map is a blank space  
This is the inheritance that God left to artists

515.

Lying on a tatami, I slept with a bevy of South

516.

Seize this time while history repairs its cages  
To be as free as a bird

517.

A person who commits suicide has gone to another world  
If he then commits suicide a second time, he can come back again  
Until now, we haven't seen anyone come back

Which proves that problems in the other world can be solved without suicide

518.

Each raindrop comes down with a posture all its own  
I can't keep track how many styles of falling people have

519.

Silence is also a way to protect the environment  
Swallowed saliva helps the circulation of salt

520.

The wall of Western languages  
Stands on all sides of my writings  
At best, my writings can be translated into bricks

521.

A scenic trip within the human body was interrupted  
Because a car outside the body was not on time  
But missing dinner  
Lets a landscape of hunger form inside the body

522.

To rescue someone is a course in the banquet of life  
There are many kinds of food he has not tasted  
The dish he has become still waits for a rescuer's chopsticks

523.

Chewing courage to pieces in the mouth is also a dietary habit

524.

A fan who was crazy about soccer  
Dreamed that his wife gave birth  
To a soccer ball who called him Daddy

525.

Vegetarianism means forcing your meat-body not to eat meat

526.

The humor of an obscene remark  
Implies that a blackbird's flight pollutes the sky

527.

Why does he lay such heavy sighs upon ordinary things?  
Even his shit objects to a narrow toilet pipe

528.

After human beings made sweet things

To be their standard of happiness  
The ocean was wept by salt

529.  
Tedium of language leads the way to all kinds of tedium  
Life refuels it continually

530.  
When love no longer penetrates to the bone  
The meat of your body starts eating meat for meat's sake

531.  
You and I have feelings for each other  
Like an egg white and an egg yolk  
The problem is  
Where is the shell?

532.  
Truth is the adjective for truth  
As for the noun, the search must continue

533.  
Only war, by continuing the slaughter of people by people  
Maintains the church's function of praying for peace

534.  
Just because you spring someone out of jail  
That doesn't mean you can release the prisoners  
Imprisoned by a nation inside their mother tongue

535.  
Remember my appetite  
In this era when money seems omnipotent  
There is still a loving tongue  
That has never tasted poverty

536.  
Only sorrow brings you back to yourself  
Which proves that happiness must turn a corner in our hearts

537.  
When the noun that I am becomes a verb  
The ravishing encounter between you and me  
Forces adjectives to get involved  
As the verb I am makes love to its noun

538.

Happiness, like candy, is helpless  
It has no choice but to be sweet

539.

The mother tongue is an organ of the body  
More than that, it is spokesman for all other organs

540.

Dreams have finally infected his daylight hours  
They have caused a pillow to grow from his shoulders  
With the help of this pillow he muses in the office  
His American dream uses office hours instead of sleep

541.

A song about chrysanthemums  
Does not prove you understand the footsteps  
Of autumn's advent into our lives  
Knowing how to cook bamboo shoots  
Does not prove you will rise in life  
With proportion like the joints of a bamboo plant

542.

Something unprecedented happened to war  
A convoy of trucks broke down within its body  
The breath of war has conked out  
But a squad of terrorists has bundles of explosives  
Which they strap onto their bodies like extra lungs

543.

There are all kinds of realities  
Racial, sexual, familial, national, global  
Even lies aren't as deceitful as the truth of reality

544.

Medicine is a philosophy of the body  
Doctors learn to think in terms of the body  
So the patient's body can recover painless thinking

545.

A casino lets itself be played with like a whore  
And with similar readiness dissipates a gambler's desire

546.

I constantly need to remodel my inner prison  
Because politics and government have set up offices there

547.

I direct the blueprint of cancer to remodel my body's tomorrow

While the 21st century uses rust to remodel outdated machines

548.

You have entered into my bones  
Like solidified fire at the center of a reinforcing rod

549.

As the colony fades away, the colonization of language has just begun

550.

Since you like my poems  
Don't bypass them to talk business with me  
Poems should get the commission they have earned

551.

Everyone has secrets other people don't want to share  
So that part is what truly belongs to you

552.

If you and your ideals go on the road together  
Many places you pass will be called Weariness

553.

How fine it would be to land on sunlit branches  
But the sadness of being perchless lands upon me in flight

554.

Morality is a collective composed of assembled mirrors  
With its power, humans force themselves to put on makeup

555.

Two names that once were used to sharpen  
each others teeth  
Are finally driven by hunger into the same kitchen  
After this twist of fate, the question is who will  
wash dishes?

556.

The years are like a soap opera, washing away the  
intensity of love  
But how can I bear to drain the intoxication in  
the bath water?

557.

While I lie beneath my cover in an alien land  
Honey bees get insomnia from the native- language  
embroidery

558.

Since reality sold me out to poetry, it has become  
superfluous

559.

What a hard time people have  
Besides nurturing a child, they try to nurture ideals  
But what works for a child doesn't work with ideals  
In the 20th Century, the more you nurture ideals,  
the smaller they grow

560.

The snowstorm must forever delve at the cracks of  
a warm door  
Because mankind will never give the key to winter

561.

With utmost musicality of lust  
The poet goes to bed with the fewest possible  
words

562.

I open the door to my home  
Poetry greets me in my inner heart  
Poetry in its rightful place  
Is not displaced by any deconstruction

563.

His hands were blackened from groping in darkness  
Since then the color black has not left his pen

564.

The poet's profession is life  
Life is always part-time

565.

After all these years of being written down,  
Words are not going to become paper  
After all these incarnations, inspiration won't be  
reborn anywhere  
But in the body of a romantic  
And wouldn't you know it  
Wine cannot become a bottle cork

566.

Literature outside of literature  
Famous brand names have no content  
The cover of advertising is the whole plot

567.

Watching sweat lick the salt of its livelihood  
Adds to my isolated labor as a creative person

568.

A poet constantly seeks out ailments in the body  
of society  
To prove he is a doctor put out of work by the  
cosmetic industry

569.

In units of length fit for myself and philosophy  
I could back up ten more steps at least  
But life only has five steps

570.

Members of the audience are holding rice bowls up  
To their lips  
Whether you have something of substance or not  
Your campaign promises have to sound like a menu

571.

It has nothing to do with spiritual faith  
For the sake of temporary aims  
Many people use incense smoke to kidnap the Buddha

572.

In crowded environments, people temper each other  
into steel  
But too much steel causes steel prices to fall

573.

Time and again God is raped by the language of  
cults  
But that's all right  
At least once a month, poets receive new eggs of  
inspiration

574.

Many people crowd along the mass-production line  
of life  
Because repetition is the nest of the weak

575.

The sun was postmarked overhead  
And is being stuffed into the mailbox of the west  
But mankind still cannot read the meaning of this

love letter to the world

576.

Since the Cultural Revolution

There are still mouths that haven't brushed their  
teeth

577.

A wristwatch is the cruelest device for torturing  
time

578.

The whole world strikes a harmonica-playing pose  
As it consumes the American music within a  
hamburger

579.

In this stage in life's road, we must accept the  
road's limitations  
What we can do is change shoes often

580.

When born in a country that has two suns  
The first thing is to make sure which shadow  
you'll use

581.

It is more trying to obey reality than to create  
reality

582.

Any kind of society can be the workout room for my  
inspiration  
Until I buff myself into an exercise machine

583.

Driving along with festive Latin music playing on  
the radio  
Makes me feel that a group of Mexicans are washing  
my car

584.

People marvel at songs the bird takes into its  
cage  
They do not notice its song lacks the melody of  
flight

585.

No matter how young you are  
 In your mind you have to care for the old man  
 Named "thought"

586.

Heaven as edifice  
 Heaven as something wearable  
 Heaven as a message to be sent  
 Heaven might resemble a monument, an outfit or a letter  
 But evidence there is none

\*\*

*Give It Back to Me*

Please give me back the door without a lock  
 even without a room still I want it back please!  
 Please give me back the rooster that awakens me  
 in the morning  
 even if you have finished eating it still I want the  
 bones back please!  
 Please give me back the shepherd's song  
 from the side of the hill  
 even if it is on tape still I want it  
 back please!  
 Please give me back a relationship to my  
 brothers and sisters  
 even if it lasts no more than a year, still I want it  
 back please!  
 Please give me back the space of love  
 even if you've worn it out, still I want it  
 back please!  
 Please give me back the whole of the globe  
 even divided into thousands of nations  
 hundreds of thousands of villages  
 still I want it back please!

*Translated by John Chow*

***ETERNAL LOVE SONG---VENUS DE MILO***

She was pushed down into the water  
 Pressed upon the aged water plants  
 The fish swam about baffled, just like punctuation marks  
 She and her story  
 Were scooped up after silently sleeping for centuries

Today  
 I have sat for hours reflecting by the dining table  
 A small appetite groans inside a large plate  
 I clearly recall here  
 I once forcefully pushed off her embrace  
 She left her broken arms around my neck  
 There is still no way to put them back

*Translated by Glenn Steinem*

\*

***Warm Inspiration***

In my body there are kefuls of Chinese beer sloshing  
 Words like pretty goldfish stir up ripples of affection  
 For the moment I can't bear to cast a poet's net  
 And so  
 I knock back a few before the fishing starts  
 By the time the doctor uses an X-ray to tell me  
 The goldfish in my body  
 Have paired off into romantic lines  
 It's all I can do to lift my eyelids,  
 and imagine the doctor's mask is tomorrow's net  
 Because I am drunk on the operating table

Dear doctor

Please remove the beer from my body  
 Export it to everywhere in the world  
 Or simply pack me up in a crate and ship me off  
 However  
 Dear doctor  
 What I send back will not be foreign exchange, it will be poems  
 It will be infinitely appreciating stocks of feeling in  
 poems  
 The future value of bonds from the Love Reserve Bank  
 Ah  
 Dear doctor  
 How many poets are on your operating table  
 How many poems is your salary each month?

*Translated by Denis Mair*

\*

### ***THOSE GODDAMN SPACEMEN***

The ones who plant snow on the clouds  
 And sift it down to protect the winter wheat  
 Are spacemen  
 Before the snow sifts down  
 It is already covered with their footprints  
 This exciting discovery  
 Is passed down only in our dreams  
 It's terrible how our earth  
 Is often regarded as an anthill  
 As the spacemen travel by it in dreams

The real reason they plant snow in the clouds  
 Is to fatten the eaters of winter wheat on earth---that's us  
 And then harvest our spirits after death  
 That must be their medicinal tonic  
 And so  
 Being a nutrient for them  
 It is not important if we know it or not

Just like the winter wheat toward us  
 Gosh  
 Those goddamn spacemen are just too much!

\*

***EXTRA-MUNDANE***

Set the folds of my dress swinging  
 Swing off the print and the color  
 Swing it into a plain piece of cloth  
 Swing the cloth into cotton  
 And return the cloth to you  
 My beloved land

Set my head swinging  
 Swing off cancerous philosophy  
 Swing out a big empty space  
 Swing it above the clouds  
 Return the clouds to you  
 My beloved sky

*Translation. Denis Mair*

\*

***A DOG POEM FOR TOMORROW***

Tomorrow  
 A dog that only goes wild after death  
 Clamps the world in its jaws and won't let go  
 Poems of tomorrow have no answer either  
 Clamping their own crimes in their jaws

Tomorrow  
 Those dogs who lived long enough in the city  
 Taking along apartment buildings softened by furniture  
 Will charge into the pregnancy of an orchard

And clamp jaws on an unborn infant's original face

Tomorrow

Dog teeth will have become piano keys

Only bone-crunching music will rate popularity in this world

Tomorrow

Suffering will still be re-published sheet music

So machines in printing plants will still be best at singing

Ah, tomorrow

The home-guarding talents of tomorrow's dogs will be snipped out at the hospital

A homeless world with dogs vacationing everywhere

Puffs of clouds like dogs will often float by in the sky

Some airplane flying artists

Will paint young women clouds in the sky

Tomorrow's dogs tracking June mornings and December afternoons

Will still expose their bored tongues

But swallow even dirtier things to cut down reproduction

Tomorrow's dogs make a science of freakishly prolonged life

Tomorrow's doghouses can be hung any old place like a shirt

But tomorrow's dogskins will be shed by dogs

Tomorrow a dog of an orbital satellite

Having shaken off its tail wagged to cinders

Will go off into space to be human

Ah, tomorrow

I too will have such a tomorrow

So take advantage of today

Before the sky, as wide as the solar system, is chained

like a dog

Holding my shadow in my mouth

From where sunlight is

From out of lamplight

And even from enchanting moonlight

I have come out

I have come out forever.

*Translation Denis Mair*

\*

*Central Park Suite*

Along with her baby carriage, a mother pushes spring  
into Central Park.

I regret the aging of my windpipe  
When, as if laughing, the baby starts crying for me.

Apparently fish would rather sample the baits of men  
Than to rest still under layers of ice.  
When boats sweep their oars like wings  
Stirring up waves of spring in an expanse of water,  
Then I count myself a principal character.

A camera takes a picture of another, as a signal of  
spring.  
It is mesmerizing, this season when cameras bloom  
like flowers.  
Yet behind the eyes of unlucky friends  
No film is placed as yet.

The trees open all their palms of green.  
The superimposed sun, more professional than a  
palm-reader, says to the leaves:  
“In spring, birds no longer stay in their nests;  
With them, you are going to fly off the branches.”

The dog walkers, as happy as if walking spring,  
With their dogs are looking down life's tracks of  
history.  
I am walking myself.  
This friendship between the two selves reminds me  
Of what long ago happened between sun and earth,  
What happened between Adam and Eve.  
Now  
That Earth is preoccupied with reproducing,  
Too narrow I find my bed in the city.  
So I lay my pillow on the park's meadow.  
The transient feeling of abandon  
Like poplar floss tries hard to leap  
Into the dirty water beyond the park.  
Oh! When spring possesses us,  
When we do not possess spring,

Spring is a tyrant!

By my sighs, I am translating the breaths of those  
before me.

On the soil where flowers bloom in memoria  
With words of stone I am translating the existence of  
those before me.

In this central park of the world there must be a  
cemetery.

At least,  
With the bells of April, I am translating the soul of a  
crushed squirrel.

The civilization of the Twentieth Century has its pants  
pulled down by AIDS.

This all evolves out of

The collision we have, as soon as we step out, with  
the embrace of spring.

That naked feeling extends from the pelvis to the  
larynx.

Drowsily we say to spring: "Spring has come!"

Even as we speak,

Our minds are filled with inspiration colored green

In which fluttering birds, like flying punctuation,

Imbue the same words with meanings of different  
shades.

When we comprehend

We go into narrow alleys of spring

Where happen too many stories of collision.

Spring is sprinkling various germs on the street  
numbers of love.

Oh! Hospitals!

Please give the Twentieth Century a few more  
sterilizing kisses.

Footsteps of lizards are waking up boulders.

Clouds display the softness of spring.

Squirrels extend the ground to the tips of tree branches.

Earth takes off its coat of autumnal leaves.

After the debate between sun and the north wind,  
 The warm breath that lingers in the air  
 And  
 The cold face of a park attendant  
 Are chasing me from what was claimed to be  
     protected turf.  
 But  
 He lets stay on the grass flocks of flirting birds.

Spring.  
 Carrying out the order of the sun  
 Spring lets glimpse the dream  
 That can make mothers of all girls.  
 Spring.  
 Spring is prepared to occupy all the basements  
 Of the city and the world.  
 Among them,  
 Those in our bodies.  
 Oh! Spring!  
 Spring says sunshine must support  
 The interiors of this earth,  
 The interiors of men  
 And the perimeter of bee-hives.  
 Spring.  
 Spring cannot be fathomed.  
 In spring, Earth  
 Brilliantly illuminates the sun and the universe.

*Translated by John Chow*

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***EPIC***

When we wash we aren't washed clean  
 (Holy water or no holy water)  
 Who cares about pollution?  
 Today's weather is not bad

The season knows how to dress itself up  
Naturally it is skilled at disrobing!  
New streets promenade past old buildings  
Their mouths full of lovers' meetings  
Chewing gum is popular in both East and West  
(leave out the time for kissing)

I see another kind of human  
Only for a morsel of food do their mouths open wide  
Yet many children are told that truth keeps silent  
They grew up with checkered backgrounds of all kinds  
But the glory of one certain nation is fleeting  
(leave out several pages on invasion)

Laziness can kill  
A potted plant left unwatered  
Topped in a position that wants to be remembered  
It is because the world is too large  
That ignorant restlessness  
Seeks everywhere the position of that indoor flower  
(leave out those years studying at school)

Mama  
Papa  
Goodbye!  
(leave out a few exchanges by letter and phone)

However  
Being a parent is harder than being a poet  
These love poems  
No longer seem about love with a certain person  
(leave out a weekend of reading)

In those large cities  
Birds crowd on the streets and preen themselves,  
but the mirror has gone away  
The mirror is more confident of its own appearance!  
(leave out reflection of its own rights in business!)

We have worries wrapped in candy wrappers

But a decayed tooth crammed into a toothpaste tube  
Is surely no definition of hygiene  
From cotton wool we draw our own warmth  
Winter is as cold as five hundred years ago  
But the experience of first love  
Certainly hasn't helped us find an ideal job  
And so  
We can say to any lover  
The light of truth has to be more important than you  
Unless I go blind  
(leave out all the nights when the lights were off)

In our dreams we read our no-longer-sleepless  
appearances  
A row of bullet holes that stared disdainfully at war  
Are now wearing glasses  
Oh this world!  
The framework of peace shrinks to the space of a  
house  
Before it can scratch the itch at the spine  
I am now organizing a picnic  
And will share rights to the ground with pigeons  
(leave out intervals of belching to get a breath of freedom)

Our obedience is to models of bent rules  
Under the bridge table, feet covered in socks and  
shoes  
Are perspiring in secrecy  
Unlike the rules of a casino  
The high stakes of human life, not using money,  
have no limit  
(leave out a few lost lifetimes)

Loneliness suddenly becomes rare in the news  
Not even on New Years Eve is it announced  
A hole was blasted in the sky with fireworks  
And down fell many stories of hard drinkers  
Causing a drop in our reading ability!  
(leave out the floodmark of brain sap in the cranium)

Due to being loaded with many modern wares  
 Sinking ideals try to go on a diet  
 But the warehousemen are finally on strike  
 Nobody knows the best landfill for the world's  
     garbage  
 Yet I always get misty-eyed at holiday hype  
 And raise a toast to sleep and dreams  
     as they part company!  
 (leave out a few ways of thinking about nationality)

As I stumble in the stream of marathon runners  
 And am swept along in the crowd  
 At last I find my broken leg can run  
 Oh life!  
 In such peculiar ways you make the destination recede  
 Like a flag flapping in the far distance  
 Though the flag waver is not in sight  
     (leave out the chance for the flag waver to be an unsung hero)  
     (leave out the effects of colonization on the world)

A river bursts its dikes  
 Because happiness on the other bank is getting farther  
     away  
 Though I  
 In all of this am not just a fair-weather sailor  
 No matter whether I am here or not, the oars  
 Will row the garden into your eyes  
 The world has the duty to treat the planet as a park  
 Where all the gods in the universe must buy tickets to  
     enter  
 (leave out yesterday's weather report  
     clear turning cloudy  
     temperature not to exceed zero  
     humidity 99.9 percent, preventing  
     winds of less than one knot from arising)

*translated by Leonard Schwartz & Li Mingxia*

\*

*POETIC LIFE*

On a far mountain a herd of deer leaps into farther  
 mountains  
 Lines of poems leap into even deeper meaning  
 My vision roams in a field far from my face  
 Within eyeglass frames, lines of poems go before the  
 herd of deer

Hoof-prints stray everywhere  
 On white paper you don't find "No Hunting" signs

Each word has a right to preen in the mirror of  
 business  
 Brands of perfume smell better than perfume  
 Where the flap of a wound is often opened, buttons  
 have been sewn

Poems like herds of deer have their highway-crossing  
 thoughts interrupted by honking horns  
 But I rely on the experience of ink heredity  
 To seek out the obstetric ward of books  
 While deer that compile forests leave skins  
 on barbed-wire fences  
 Unrevised life gets farther from published clothing

Once again I take measurements of my genitals  
 From here to publishers' row is still three beds away  
 And so  
 A deer in rut is blocked from view by cool distant  
 mountains  
 Before the telescope is focused, I catch sight of poetic  
 life

*translated by Denis Mair*

\*

***PILE DRIVER***

All the slander  
 The jealousy  
 All varieties of praise or contempt  
 All the things that people do to each other  
 Are setting a pile driver in motion  
 Pounding piles for the edifice of happiness  
 Yesterday I was pounded into bedrock  
 Another ten feet or so  
 More weight-bearing strength got driven into me  
 So the house that will rise on this foundation  
 Can be a few more stories high  
 I've thought of a use for the extra floors I build  
 They can be a museum for pile-driver heads  
 The biggest of them will be sculpted out of language  
 Because it has strength  
 No mechanical device can ever match

*translation by Denis Mair*

\*

***UNTITLED***

Coca Cola and I had our picture taken recently  
 But friends don't see much compatibility  
 They say he's old, dark, and crazy materialistically

Though we all know he has sold well for a century  
 Friends say that for the sake of heredity  
 I should not rate a spouse economically  
 With body and soul I brew up affection repeatedly  
 Till I start measuring advantages erratically  
 Till my youthful advantage starts deserting me  
 Till the chill of a lonely world settles inwardly  
 Till my repentant cries echo piercingly  
 Till like an ice-cube, I float in cola bobbingly  
 Now consuming is all, ideals don't appeal to me

\*

### **ADDICTED TO EACH OTHER**

A

If only love could be refined into a drug  
 To get people hooked on each other  
 And give them even greater contempt for hatred

I often remind myself when going out in the  
     morning  
 To cancel out all the dreams  
 That can cancel each other out  
 To save me from spinning circles in this world

I have been looking for the route  
 That goes by way of myself to reach others  
 Just as I've maintained all these years  
 I may take off umpteen times  
 Only to land on mankind's runway

B

Nobody can take away my freedom to fly toward you  
 Though I can only fly by inventing

A posture that disdains tradition  
 But I have set forth on the path  
 That goes by way of you to reach myself

So now that I've run into you  
 I won't go away to catch rays in some darker place  
 I have no doubts we two are getting addicted  
 Maybe the Lord's prescription came a few seasons  
     late  
 But for us this is only the onset

\*

### ***NEW YORK***

If you haven't been to New York you haven't been to  
     America,  
 But Americans keep up their guard about New York.

Being in New York is equal to lengthening your  
     lifespan.  
 The experience you get in a year takes ten years in  
     other places.  
 He who combines the experience of all human races  
 Is a person named New York.

In New York you make a sobering discovery:  
 Your own callousness can twist you into a spring  
 Many of the world's most famous springs  
 Were sprung from the pressures of New York.

Each moment the journalistic rhythm of stock market  
     and crime  
 Flashing lights of Broadway and screaming sirens,

Impromptu performances on street corners  
Of this huge musical installation called New York  
Makes the flesh dance under your skin in spite of  
yourself.

And the cabbies of New York  
Are ready to take new trends through all red lights of  
tradition,  
But when they do, don't forget the tip.

Students in this social university of New York all  
know  
Plenty of teachers here are versed in the lore of crime,  
And many who mingle among the students  
Will become new faculty members overnight.

All the while,  
Loopholes are bulls-eyes to prove a lawyer's  
marksmanship.  
And would you believe,  
The honeybees of New York have their ways  
Of extracting nectar from plastic flowers.

New York is nicknamed the "Big Apple,"  
But this apple is not just passed from Adam to Eve.  
Eve has also passed it to Eve,  
And Adam to another Adam.  
The right to munch stirs up a heat without offspring.

New York at nightfall,  
Before swallowing the last rays of hectic day,  
Is frantic to twist the buttons of lamplight.  
Unabashed desires always put on lipstick  
Just like all the advertisements.  
Prostitutes are one of New York's illegal drugs,  
And often the prescription that life writes  
Is "one whore, to be taken at midnight."

The hum of commerce is New York's prize intoxicant.  
Roll up your sleeve and get a fix of prosperity.

Murder is a pretty big thrill,  
But New York doesn't bat an eye.

New York, New York  
This place where freedom is woven into wings  
And winners hire people to fly for them.  
The cars of so many lifestyles cruise down N.Y.'s  
avenues,  
No matter what make or model you invent,  
Now matter how great the historical span of your tires,  
New York's merchants have set up a gas station on your future road.

New York, New York  
New York filters the world's blood through its heart;  
It filters blood to make Coca Cola, then sends it flowing to everywhere in the world.

*Translated by Denis Mair*

\*

### **MEMORIAL**

On the 11th of September, 2001  
On the television screen I saw a video excerpt  
Of people jumping off the World Trade Center  
In the following days this scene  
Kept appearing in my mind's eye  
It kept appearing  
And I kept hoping that below them was water  
Was a swimming pool  
For doing high dives  
A few times  
I even felt splashes of water  
Not long ago  
Water actually splashed through the air  
And even got my shirt wet  
Because I suddenly realized

This was a way through my inner heart  
To let them go to Heaven

9.11.2002

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### Memorial

On the 11th of September, 2001  
On the television screen I saw images  
Of people jumping off the World Trade Towers  
In the following days this scene  
Kept appearing  
And I kept hoping that below them was water  
Was a swimming pool  
Set up for dives  
A few times  
I even felt splashes of water

Not long ago  
Water actually splashed through the air  
And even got my shirt wet  
Because I suddenly realized  
This was a way through my inner heart  
To let them go to Heaven

*translated from the Chinese by Dennis Mair*

**Yan Li****Blood Behavior**

Bamboo Li was labeled as a landlord at the end of 1966. When the rebel faction ransacked the house of a local landowner named Noble Fang, they found evidence that Bamboo Li's grandfather had sold a large property to the Fang family forty years ago, before the Li family turned poor. That is to say, before selling that piece of land, Bamboo Li's family had been landowners of a sort. The failure to discover this in the Fifties must have been an oversight, or perhaps there was a hidden reason. So investigating this hidden reason became a full-time job for several young men in the rebel faction. They locked Bamboo Li up in the local primary school, where no classes were being held. Bamboo Li knew that his family had been well-off forty years ago, but this did not justify making him a target of denunciation. So he defended himself firmly, maintaining that his family was now dirt-poor. How could something insubstantial like "class background" prove that he was an oppressor? Whether or not he could accept this reality, half a year of captivity took away his courage to defend himself. As an "exposed landlord," there were struggle sessions and labor reform in store for him. For the next five years he and his family suffered grueling treatment in the town. In 1972 Bamboo Li's distant cousin became a township cadre, and due to this connection he was finally classified as a reformed landlord; he became an ordinary citizen of the town. But the strain had traumatized him. He felt his landlord background made him vulnerable, and he could be denounced at any time. He still carried the pressure of his family background with him; he felt that landlord blood ran in his veins. This corresponded with two statements the rebel leader had drilled into him during his captivity in the school building: "You will never get rid of your grandfather's landlord blood." "We rebels will always possess the blood of lower peasants; we are completely different from people like you."

Precisely because of Bamboo Li's mental problems, his son Forward Li seized on a chance to become a barefoot doctor. With behind-the-scenes help from the same distant relative, his son took classes for two years in the city. Forward Li was an only son, and his two sisters married men in other towns, so he took responsibility for his father. Forward

Li's wife kept Bamboo Lee well-fed and clothed. Bamboo Lee's mental condition was tolerable most of the time, but at times it would flare up, and he would disappear from home for days. Sometimes his family had to look for him in the mountains and bring him back. After Forward Li became a barefoot doctor, he gave his father considerable help. Besides, demand for his medical skills helped the family's relations with the townspeople. As overall conditions improved, Bamboo Li's mental state changed for the better. On top of this a grandson was born, giving him someone to talk to. Although the grandson could not keep up a conversation, at least Bamboo Li could speak what was on his mind, and this was an outlet he needed.

In 1986 Bamboo Li's grandson Victor Li finished junior high, and was admitted to a high school in the neighboring city. Of course this was because Victor Li's father was by now assistant director of the town's only hospital. Forward Li hoped to send his son to study abroad someday, so he made sure the boy got into a good school. Bamboo Li could not accept the boy going away to school, and he had a few outbursts. Forward Li's tried to console him, but it did little good: Bamboo Li hardly touched his food for two weeks after the boy's departure. Finally, Forward Li persuaded the old man by mentioning his detention as a landlord. Forward Li said the boy could only break loose from his landlord ties by going abroad, and going abroad required study at a good school. But their town's high school had a poor lineup of teachers. This time Forward Li's urgings had the desired effect, which showed how traumatized Bamboo Li still was by his "landlord" label.

From then on, each time the boy came home on vacation, Forward Li would hear Bamboo Lee instructing the boy that study overseas would free him from any taint of landlord ties. Of course, everyone knew this was a sign of Bamboo Li's illness. Though it was pathological, it showed how badly the rebel faction had mistreated him years ago. His face grew livid whenever he spoke of being locked up for six months in the school building, and years of labor reform after that. Such agitation was bad for his health, and each time Forward Li noticed it, he would interrupt his father and change the subject. Forward Li understood his father's illness perfectly.

In 1992 Victor Li tested into a university in Shanghai. In his second year of college, his grandfather fell ill with blood poisoning--a disease treatable only by frequent blood replacements. Luckily, Forward Li was hospital director by now, so the treatment did not ruin them financially. As Bamboo Li lay on his sickbed, he told Forward Li this was finally a chance to purge his landlord blood and replace it with peasant blood. "Make sure you find peasant blood to replace it; don't overlook this." Forward Li came to supervise each blood replacement, not because the other doctors might make a mistake, but for fear his father would remind them to use peasant blood. Such a thing would not be seemly. So Forward Li was at his father's side during each blood replacement, saying "Don't worry, father, this is peasant's blood."

Soon Victor Li came home for summer vacation. Bamboo Li lay on his sickbed and revealed his reason for happiness to the boy: Finally all the landlord blood in his veins would be replaced. He also said that if he had known about blood replacements earlier, he would have gotten it done in 1966 and saved himself a great deal of suffering. He suggested that if Victor's application for foreign study did not work out, it would be best to have his blood replaced. Victor knew that his grandfather was raving, but he answered that the times were different now: if he could get a blood replacement he would get capitalist blood instead of peasant blood. The idea of getting capitalist blood brought a shout to Bamboo Li's lips: "Oh no! That won't do! You'll be making trouble for yourself. Don't do it. It has to be peasant blood!" Victor Li could only calm him by saying, "You're right, you're right. I

will insist on peasant blood.” When his grandson said this, Bamboo Li drew an easy breath. He went on to say, “I only need two more treatments for the replacement to be complete. Up to now I’ve had eighteen treatments, and your dad says it takes twenty times to replace all of my landlord blood.” Victor Li went along with him and tried to say things that would not agitate him. He and his father both knew that treatment was normally abandoned in such a cases, if this were not the director’s father. Even so, the outlook was not positive: Forward Li quietly told Victor that the old man had two more weeks to live.

As it turned out, Bamboo Li’s 75-year life ended five days later. Just before his death, as Forward Li performed the twentieth treatment, he contentedly told his son: “You ought to consider getting your blood replaced too. You are the director here: getting a blood replacement should be easy. But of course you have to avoid publicity. If everyone got blood replacements, there would be no differences of degree, and everybody could become a hospital director. So don’t give blood replacements to too many people. To keep your position secure, you shouldn’t give replacements to other people. I don’t have any regrets. I just hope little Victor has no trouble going abroad. Give him a replacement of peasant blood before he goes abroad: that way nothing can go wrong.” Forward Li could only nod in reply. His father was a sick man, a sick man on the point of leaving this world. Forward Li wept, remembering the years of humiliation he and his father had suffered under the Red Guards. His father’s sickness was an after-effect of that humiliation.

Victor Li was with his mother the last time he saw his grandfather alive, just before the twentieth transfusion. Bamboo Li took held his grandson’s hand and said, “Everyone has to die. If a wish can come true before death, then things don’t seem so unjust. My sufferings left a mark on me that can’t be erased. But now that I think of it, they helped me understand the importance of blood replacements. I feel good about going to the other world now, because I’ll go with the identity of a peasant. Of course I won’t act like the peasants who persecuted me years ago. I won’t persecute rich peasants and landlords. I am not interested in that. I think that bloodlines are important, but having a good bloodline doesn’t mean a person should persecute others. With a good bloodline, a person should do something good. You just wait to hear from me: when I get to the other world I’m going to do good things. In this world my bloodline kept me from doing good things, because they wouldn’t allow us. Only people of good background got the chance to be officials and do good things.” He looked Victor in the eye and said, “Your mother did some admirable things. She was born a peasant, but she was treated as a landlord along with our family. She did not resent us, and even helped us out of tight spots with her peasant background. I’ve told you all about that. Whatever happens, be good to your father and mother. If you have a chance to go abroad, take them to another country someday. I’ve heard that everything is fine overseas. But no matter what, I hope you all have peasant blood when you come to join me in the other world. Little Victor, once you get a blood replacement, your children will have a peasant background too. That will never change.” With these words he fainted away. The last time he awoke was for his twentieth transfusion.

Victor Li had been close to his grandfather, and he went through a moody period after returning to school. He knew there was no basis to the idea of blood replacements, but his grandfather had died in contentment because of the procedure. Victor did not remember any sufferings from the Cultural Revolution, because he was born in 1974. But his grandfather’s sickness gave him a taste of the terror of those times. He experienced the Cultural Revolution through his grandfather’s lingering illness. This was what made him different from other students. Sometimes he felt hollow inside, and he felt his grandfather’s

fate casting a shadow over him. At such times he lapsed into utter silence, and buried himself in his studies. In this state he plunged into his homework with great concentration. As time went by, when doing difficult homework, he would remember his grandfather without intending to, and then go back to his studious mode.

Victor graduated with honors in 1996, and received a passing TOEFL score. He was debating whether to enter an M.A. program in China or try for a scholarship abroad when a relative of a hospital patient offered to help Victor go overseas. The relative, who had just come from America, did this in gratitude to Victor's father. Before Victor went abroad, Forward Li said to him, "You should count yourself lucky not to have been thrown off course by the Cultural Revolution. People five or ten years older than you missed chances because of the Cultural Revolution. Do the best you can at your studies. Someday your mother and I would like to go overseas for a look. After you get a degree find a job overseas, and then find a wife. I am sure you will be happy. We'll be fine here, so don't worry. Computers are the wave of the future now, so if you keep working hard, there will be economic benefits for you. China will have places where you can use your ability too. The future should be pretty good to you, wherever you decide to make a career." Victor's mother added, "It's best to find a Chinese wife. I hear that foreign women are too fancy-free. They are not so stable." Forward Li cut in and said, "You don't have a girlfriend yet, do you. How about finding one before you leave. That would put our minds at ease." To this Victor said, "What's the point of finding one for a short time? Wouldn't that be more trouble than it's worth? It would be foolish to tie myself down when I'm about to leave." What he said made sense, so his parents did not bring up the subject again.

New York first appeared before Victor's eyes at nighttime, through the window of an airplane. The lights looked magnificent, but told himself he must be ready for tough times. He knew a somber life was about to begin for him, from all the things he had learned about New York while still in China. But he knew that the rules here were fairly straightforward. As long as one chose a sought-after field at a fairly famous university, one could find decent-paying work. After that, one went about "enjoying" a peaceful life day after day. Of course, this scenario did not include matters of the heart, for these could not be predicted. No matter how rich a person was, there were no guarantees against emotional suffering. Thinking of this, he laughed aloud. Still, without question money was the crucial thing. First, he wanted to get on his feet financially.

His life at school soon began. English did not give him any trouble. He felt he had a talent for language, and he could accomplish anything if he made an effort. Actually, things did not go as smoothly as he expected, because he got caught up in a relationship. The object of his affections was an American-born Chinese. Differences of culture and experience showed up from their first contact. This was his first love, but life had been smooth at college in China; now he was getting his first taste of frustration. Although this did not involve his coursework, it happened at school. The first time he made love with Jenny, he could tell she was an old hand at this. Both of them were 23 years old, but she taught him to make love. He was not her first lover, but this did not disappoint him. Instead, he rejoiced to himself, because he supposed that there would be no regrets later if he broke up with her. But when Jenny showed less concern about this than himself, he felt frustrated. Jenny went on dates with an American classmate, maintaining that "more than one flower blooms during youth." She meant she wanted to be involved with more than one man at a time; several flowers could bloom at once. No matter how modern Victor Li was, no matter how much he had learned about America, he could not accept this. So he began to take a stand. First he demanded several times that she save her affections for him

alone. Of course she did not take this seriously. Then he stopped going to see her, and he would not accept her invitations. Two months later she came to his room; he claimed he had an errand to do and quickly walked out. Jenny yelled at him from behind, "If you have any balls, let me see you get an American girl."

Sure enough, Victor found a pretty American classmate and took her to a party where Jenny happened to be. Looking pleased with himself, he chatted and guffawed with the new girl Nancy. Naturally Jenny knew what game he was playing. She walked up to him, put her hand on his shoulder, and said, "I agree to your demands." He gave her a blank look, not expecting this move, but he quickly realized she was getting revenge on him. This was a spur-of-the-moment thing, not something she really meant. So he lightly removed her hand from his shoulder and said, "I don't know what you're talking about, but I'd like to introduce you to my girlfriend Nancy." Jenny looked at Nancy's extended hand, saying: "I thought I was the only woman you could find. At last here is someone who will get me free of you! So let me show my gratitude." With this she gave Nancy a nod and walked away. Victor knew that he had won this round, and the satisfaction prompted him to take a few extra drinks. As a result, upon leaving the party he fell drunkenly onto a strip of grass. Nancy was a timid girl, and did not know how to handle someone keeled over beside the road. Deciding to leave him there to regain his senses, she went home and went to bed. After all, she had not known him long, and there had not been time for them to be involved sexually.

When he sobered up and went home, he found Jenny sitting on the steps at his dormitory. It was already past two o'clock; he felt a familiar stirring at the sight of her. "It looks like you used up all your energy on Nancy," she said. "Did you imagine me while you were making out with her? If you did, I forgive you." This time he did not refuse her entry. He went to the bathroom, and found she had poured him a glass of soda when he came out. As he gulped it down in silence, a strange thought came to him: What kind of blood ran in her veins? Could an American have peasant blood? Or was hers the blood of a purebred filly? No mistake, she exerted a powerful attraction. Regrettably, he had not been involved with other women, so there were no grounds for comparison.

They made ravishing love. He had never done it so well, he felt, and attributed it to the unusual passion she had shown. Afterwards she asked, "You stayed out pretty late with that American girl. Don't tell me you didn't do anything?" He said, "Do you think I could do it more than once?" She said, "Men have a physical limitation. You can't always do it when you want to. It looks like you couldn't get your hands on her." He said, "so you were my outlet of release, is that it?" She laughed and said, "Let's not talk in circles. We two care about each other. I can't say what it is about you that attracts me. Anyway, from now on I won't let another man ruin the feelings between us." He let out a belly laugh, then suddenly stopped and said, "When my grandpa was sick he had no idea of blood types, so he wanted a transfusion of peasant blood." Jenny could not make out his meaning and asked him to say that again. But instead he went on to a new thought and asked, "If you could get a blood replacement, what kind of blood would you want?" Without a pause she said she wanted the blood of Madonna, the pop star. She asked him what sort he would like. He said, "I want to have gasoline instead of blood." She asked, "What did you just say about your grandpa?" "Oh, it's nothing," he said. "It's just that my grandpa wanted to be someone without any wealth." She shook her head at the thought that anyone in this world would wish poverty on himself. He said, "You people in America don't know how the power of idealism, when it is twisted, can give human nature a pretext for doing many evil things. A poor person is someone with the freedom not to worry about what he might lose. Such freedom feels

contempt for all property, and this leads it to destroy property. It boils down to the natural joy of one animal in combat with another. This is something that existing civilization doesn't dare imagine." To her this was as clear as mud, but she knew it had to do with previous events in China. She was Chinese by blood, but her mother tongue was English. Her language and personal history were Western. The background she expressed in her speech was Western.

Victor Li's financial situation was no different from most Chinese students studying in America. He worked part-time in at a dry cleaners under an American boss. At the same time, he helped a professor of Chinese Studies do some translation into English. As for Jenny, she was attending school on loans, which she would pay back slowly after graduation. She earned spending money by working weekends in a department store.

Victor met an American named David who played the stock market, and under his influence bought some low-demand stocks, hoping to make a killing. Regrettably, within a few months he took a loss. Victor realized he must plunge into the market if he wanted to get a feel for its pulse. A classmate's father agreed to teach him, so Victor worked without pay for his mentor two afternoons a week. He wanted to learn the ropes, so he could open his own brokerage office and speculate with other people's money.

One day Jenny came by with some marijuana; they settled back and had a long talk as they smoked. This was the first time he smoked it, and Jenny watched his reaction closely. He ended up having long, sad recollections of his childhood. "You don't understand the first thing about China," he said. "Anyway you can't be considered a Chinese. Your native language is English, which makes you an Anglo, but you can't be considered an American either. Why is that? Because you have a Chinese environment at home. You're just a second generation immigrant: you're still on the way to becoming American. When I was small my grandpa said I had a landlord background. I was only five then. I said a landlord is someone who owns land. My grandpa said no, and do you know why? Because they were checking into people who had owned land in the past. It could have been 50 or 100 years ago, but such people were called landlords. Even if you didn't own land, you were accountable for the lives of your ancestors. I did not understand such things then. All I knew was that Grandpa wouldn't let me hit back when I got into scrapes with the neighbor kids. Our family had a landlord background, and the neighbors were peasants all the way back. People with peasant backgrounds were allowed to hit people with landlord backgrounds, which made me think peasants must be relatives of the emperor. On the other hand, they didn't look very special. One time the pent-up anger was too much for me. When the neighbor boy kept throwing garbage near our doorway, I gave him a beating. He was a few months older, but shorter than I was. After beating him up I felt pleased with myself, because he hadn't dared to make a noise. But, unbelievably, he held it back until his father came home from work. That is to say, four hours after I beat him up, he suddenly burst out crying in front of his father. My grandpa was called over to hear of my terrible crime. The plain truth was, the neighbor kids thought they could get away with throwing garbage at our doorway, because of our landlord background. But that was already 1979. My stupid grandpa turned around and gave me a beating. Of course I gritted my teeth and didn't make a sound. The more I refused to cry, the harder my grandpa beat me. As he walloped me he said, 'Listen, little fellow, go ahead and cry out loud. Just let the neighbors hear that I'm punishing you, alright?' But I wouldn't make a peep, and that touched off Grandpa's temper. He picked up a hardcover book of Chairman Mao's quotations and pounded it on my hand that was gripping the leg of the desk. I did not loosen my grip, and

he slammed it down again. My whole body shuddered, and I broke out in a sweat. My hand pressed itself against my chest. Still I would not cry. I fled out the door, feeling a sense of victory, because the neighbors didn't hear my grandpa punishing me! I ran to the house my friendly uncle, wanting to hide there for a while. That was when I noticed my hand was swelling, and my uncle knew grandpa had been beating me. He took me to the hospital; my father examined my hand and found a bone fracture. I had my hand wrapped in a cast, like a casualty of war. I could tell from my father's manner that he supported me. He felt it was wrong for the neighbor kids to throw garbage at our door. But he said to me, 'I am on your side, but you must not cry. Your grandpa's nerves are under a strain. Don't make him feel guilty. Most of all, don't call attention to your injury.' When Father and I got home, grandpa was still angry. I raised my plaster cast twice, and tears blurred my vision, but remembering my father's warning, I forced myself not to cry. Grandpa asked what had happened to my hand. Father said, 'You hit him a bit too hard, but it's no big thing. A child's bones grow quickly, so we'll remove that cast in a week.' I felt triumphant to see Grandpa's astonished look, because he knew he had done wrong. But the way he admitted guilt was excessive: he took my hand and knelt down in front of me. Mother had to pull him to his feet. At this point I was just like the neighbor kid: I couldn't hold back the sobs any longer."

Jenny held Victor close to her, because this story coupled with the marijuana had cast a pall over them. Jenny said, "I don't know what truly happened in China, but from what I've heard, China and Russia were pushed over the brink by ideals that turned sour. But whatever happened, it seems to be over now." Victor drowsily pillowed his head on her chest and entered a half-awake state.

Smoking marijuana was something they often did together. One time they got into a discussion about the meaning of attending college. Jenny said it was a rule of the game in modern society: everyone has to learn a skill and use it to earn a living. Ultimately one exchanges skill, time, and physical effort for money. And then one uses money to buy commodities that have a price attached. "Is there anything that doesn't have a price?" she wondered. "I don't. There is no price attached to me," Victor burst out with his answer. "You're on your way to getting a price attached to you," she said. "As soon as you get a degree in America, you'll find a job that pays a salary. That salary is your price." "Well what about creative works and inventions?" asked Victor. "Those things always have a price put on them when they are completed," she said. To this Victor replied, "Suppose a college graduate gets a job that pays \$50,000 and he works at it for forty years. If his income jumps to \$60,000 the last twenty years, he will make a total of \$2,200,000. But people who deal in real estate or stocks make this much in two or three years. This is too big a difference." She said, "Only a tiny number of people can be that lucky." Victor said, "Well, since the purpose of going to college is to get a job, why don't we start a company for ourselves? Starting from now, there is no need to go to college." Jenny said, "If your own company goes out of business, you're left with nothing. That is the difference between being the boss and having a boss. Those big companies have built up plenty of capital, so they can weather a recession. Little companies are different: if a breeze of recession comes along, it might blow them over. A large company gives better job security in the long run." He said, "The way you put it, the world is always going to be under control of large corporations." "That's usually how things are: it's the way of the world," she said. "I don't want to go to college. I'm starting my own company tomorrow," he said. "It sounds exciting," said Jenny, "but where will you find money to start a company?" He said, "I don't need much money, because I'll pool investments. I'll use other people's money to play the market. I've learned a few ins and

outs. I'm serious. Since all roads point toward money, I don't think one method is more valid than another. I don't see any problem with quitting college." She said, "But you are in this country under a student visa. You don't have a work permit." He said, "What's so difficult about that? The company where I'm learning securities can get me an employment visa, or we two can file for a marriage certificate." She asked, "Do you really want to drop out?" He said, "I've been thinking about it for a long time. So what's it going to be? Will we file for a marriage certificate, or should I have the company file for my employment visa?" She said, "I'll have to think about it."

Failure. Within half a year Victor Li failed. After quitting school he worked hard and pooled some investment money. But the tricky currents of the market and the jumpiness of his investors defeated him. He hung on for a while, until he knew no upturn was in store for him. The only choice was to try a different line of work. He told Jenny what he had learned the past half year, and that prompted him to tell another story that happened in China. In 1992 there was a classmate of his named Lu, whose family had been capitalists before 1949. In 1992 the government returned all the family's confiscated wealth. Suddenly, Lu became a rich man. Many people envied him, but his family had suffered several attacks in the Cultural Revolution for its capitalist background. Three people in his family had died. Two of them committed suicide after being tortured, and one was beaten to death by Red Guards. This was the price they paid. Yet when those deaths happened, the family had no property, and there was no way of knowing the government would return their property in 1992. Past wealth was the only reason for those deaths. That was why his family felt that wealth was both a good thing and a terrible thing. From another angle, one could say that wealth always takes a toll. Jenny said, "That was in China, and it happened during an abnormal period. Now we are in America. What are you getting at?" "I'm not getting at anything," he said. "It's just that my idea of wealth is related somehow to my grandpa's landlord background. My grandpa's grandpa became poor after he sold his land. That's going a long way back, but my grandpa's class background was still landlord. Strangely enough, in 1980 my grandpa was reclassified as having a rich peasant background. It's because you can't change all at once from landlord to peasant. You have to be a rich peasant first. Rich peasants are somewhat better off than peasants. Actually, before 1949 my grandpa's circumstances were no different from a peasant's. So what I'm trying to say is, the most reliable way to stir up struggles between people is to use differences in wealth. You can even do it by pointing to a concept like class background. I have heard that some big corporations in America are not run very well, but based on their reputation they get infusions of capital that keep them alive. This sort of corporation has a 'background' as a large corporation, not as a small company. We're talking about the 'largeness' of a landlord and the 'smallness' of a peasant."

"Don't talk in circles," said Jenny. "What are you going to do from here on out?"

"Haven't I already begun?" said Victor. "I'm involved in a trading company that will do business with China. I am handling liaisons with businesses in China. I have found a college classmate whose business in China is doing well. I think the prospects are good."

"What is it you like about me?" Jenny had asked this question several times, but he had not given a definite answer. This time he was ready to answer carefully. He put his thoughts in order and said, "First I'll say that in America, no, in New York there are all these Chinese people. To me their features indicate a tie of blood or family. There is no question that the rules of the game among Americans include elements of their own culture, so there is a gulf. When I face an American girl, I'm facing a world of differences, from appearance

to habits. But put me face to face with someone from China, and there are scars that affect the way I see her. I'll think how it's impossible for her to get what she wants from me. Perhaps because we are both from China, we bring the same things, and we offer no solution to each other's problems. New York is like a farmers' market. We have brought the same goods, expecting to exchange them for U.S. dollars. There is no exchange to be made between us. Maybe I'm putting this too bluntly, but that's the only way to make it clear. I end up thinking a Chinese born in America is suitable for me. Appearance-wise, there is a sense of blood ties. Inwardly, there are none of those scars from having lived in China. Although you can't write Chinese well, you can speak it. English is your first language, and Chinese is your second. For me it's the other way around. This shows that our relationship is complementary in some ways. Also, you taught me to make love, and you've taught me a lot about English. For my part, I've taught you some things about the Chinese language. Of course, I find your good looks irresistible as well." Jenny nodded her head in satisfaction.

"Really, I don't like doing this kind of logical analysis," he said. "It sounds like a business deal. It lacks romance. Didn't it sound to you like I was reporting on company performance at a stockholders' meeting?"

"I understand you better from hearing your report," she said. "You have a talent for putting things in perspective. I've seen you do it in other areas, but now I am sure of it. Do you want to know what I like about you?"

"You like my bold ambition," he said.

"No, I like you because all the suffering in China did not make you feel inferior about who you are. I have seen many people from China who feel inferior about being Chinese. Some tell me they hardly associate with Chinese here, because Chinese people are unworthy. Some of these people consciously avoid speaking Chinese. They think that if nothing but English comes from their lips, they are released from their Chinese background. And some use almost any occasion to show disdain for Chinese people. They are simply too shallow for words. But you are different. You have shed that baggage, and that makes a non-Chinese Chinese person like me feel fairly treated."

"Is there anything else?" he asked.

"Of course," she said. "You have a style that makes American girls friendly toward you. I must say, normally they wouldn't consider a Chinese man, but they like you. This makes me jealous. Another thing, you never have me invest money in your business ventures. You say it's because I would lose faith in you if you lose the money. But I think you have other considerations. You don't want to play upon my feelings just to get this little bit of money. You're someone who thinks things through. Since you have been with me, you have considered your steps with two people's future in mind. Am I right?"

He nodded quietly and said, "If the company doesn't vouch for me to get a visa, would you marry me so I can get the papers to do business?"

"I think I would," she said. "Really, it wouldn't be any different from the way we're living now." Another year passed quickly. There was no upturn in Victor's business. He was cheated by his classmate back in China. Victor shipped a large batch of goods, but his classmate in China never made good on the unpaid half of the money. Victor found the phone was disconnected at his classmate's company in China. He said to Jenny, "That guy doesn't have much ambition. For \$100,000 he closed down his company. If he had waited half a year, I would have tied more money up in this, and he could have made off with it. I had to scrape together \$100,000 to make good on the unpaid half. Now I'm starting from zero again." "It's not that simple," said Jenny. "This has put a bad mark on your record at

that American company. Word will spread in your sector of business. Your reputation will suffer. And another thing, you put too high a value on honor. Business should not be lubricated by personal feelings: it's all about rules and contracts. Those things have to be made clear before a transaction. Anyway, you're not professional enough. Maybe it's because of your Chinese background. You've got to change your ways."

Yet he failed at the next project he tried.

Marijuana was not the solution. Though Jenny smoked it with him, she reminded him he had to pull himself together. He took another drag, held in the smoke with tightly closed lips, and let out a long breath from his belly. He said, "My grandpa got his blood replaced with peasant blood. I wonder if that has jinxed me." She said, "Your grandpa didn't really have all his blood replaced. That was just a wishful way of speaking." He said, "Grandpa wanted my blood to be replaced too. If I do get it replaced, I will insist on blood from a millionaire." She said, "You are a warm-hearted person. You can do something besides business." "But I quit school to do business," he said. "How can I stop now?" She said, "Well it won't do any good to replace your blood with alcohol. A person's behavior is determined by blood **and** personality." He stood up and poured whisky for himself and her. He rolled another fat joint, then sat silently, sipping and smoking. Jenny realized she was also depressed over his business failures of the past two years. But she could not help him because she was still a year from graduation. So she traded nonsensical remarks with him. She told him she was born in America because her father, while studying in England, had dreamt his future wife would be an American Chinese. The wife had appeared in the dream, saying that her blood background was made up of cheese and potatoes. Also, she confided that her fondest wish was to sleep with her arms around the Empire State Building. Victor interrupted, "That's a sexual delusion. She was hoping she could get pregnant with a skyscraper, so she could give birth and solve her housing problems in New York." He poured their glasses full again, then leaned against the wall unsteadily and said, "I've got to solve my blood replacement problem. My grandpa's subconscious wish must have been a command from higher realms. My grandpa said he'd wait for us in the other world, but we must get our blood replaced before we go, or else we'll be mistreated." She said, "Don't you think this marijuana is stronger than before?" "I don't feel anything," he said. "I just feel that I'm connected with information from a distant source. Most of all, I can have a conversation with my grandpa's inner mind. I always thought he was a crazy person, so I didn't pay heed to what he did or said. But now I am having a realization: there was really something there. In Chinese we have the phrase 'hard-won foolishness,' and maybe that's the condition we're talking about." She said, "Connecting with information like that won't help your business. You should access information selectively. Maybe those wealthy businessmen have some kind of paranormal power. But I don't seem to have it. When we smoke marijuana, you get into the mood better than I do." He said, "Not necessarily. Maybe the realizations that slip by now will appear in your mind two or three days later. I really feel good now. I can feel my grandpa breathing. I sense the meaning behind what he said when he covered me at night: 'A warm body keeps the nightmares away.' I can feel his wish that I get a replacement of peasant blood. But times are different now. I want a replacement with millionaire's blood, or a genius' blood, not peasant blood." She said, "Where are you going to find a millionaire's blood? When I was little I dreamed of living on Long Island, in a place with a storybook atmosphere. It was in a house standing by itself, with woods around it. Especially around Christmastime, that atmosphere stayed around me like a cloud." He said, "That was a dream of growing up, not about getting rich." She said, "With those possessions, doesn't that prove I would already be rich?" He said, "We want

the ability to get rich, because we want to enjoy the experience of getting rich!” She said, “Look at Bill Gates. Within a few years his company became the largest software company in the world. That didn’t happen through blind luck.” He said, “Well, Coca Cola used a one-page formula to become the largest company in the world. Almost everyone drinks Coca Cola. Everyone’s blood has Coca Cola in it. That’s it! To succeed as a businessman, Coca Cola has to flow in your veins like blood. Hardly any company can compare with Coca Cola! That’s right! My grandpa would approve of replacing my blood with Coca Cola, don’t you think?” No answer came from Jenny, and he knew she had fallen asleep. He talked to himself excitedly: “Coca Cola, I’ve finally found you. Once you are flowing in my veins, I’ll be able to do any kind of business. No more honor and ties of feeling. From now on I’ll have smooth sailing in my business.” He reeled to the refrigerator, opened it, and found a one-liter bottle of Coke. He let out a burst of loud laughter, but Jenny did not awake. He placed the Coke bottle against his chest and sat on the sofa, wondering how to get the Coke flowing through his veins. He remembered his father using needles for blood transfusions. But this was Coke; it should be poured in a glass. Then how could he get it into his veins. He laughed, because he heard his grandpa whisper in his ear, “Go ahead and use a needle.” He knew the pharmacy next door sold disposable needles. He ran out and bought two of them, one to draw blood and one to inject Coca Cola. He hesitated as he picked up the needle, then inserted it without feeling any pain. He happily realized that his grandpa was guiding his hand. He drew out three syringes full of blood, then smoothly injected three syringes of Coca Cola. He said to himself, “That will be enough for today. I want Jenny to be a part of this memorable moment.” He tried to rouse Jenny, who opened one eye halfway and said, “My head is dizzy. Let me sleep a little more.” He lay her back down and told himself not to be impatient. Doing the replacement over a week’s time would be fast enough. His grandpa’s blood replacement had taken twenty transfusions.

He was roused by Jenny, who yelled that there was something black in the sink. “That’s my blood,” he said. Blood turns black when it’s cold.” She said, “Why is your blood here?” He said, “Didn’t we talk about replacing my blood with Coca Cola? This way I’ll will be undefeated in the business world.” She screamed, “Did you really inject Coke into your veins?” He said, “Would I lie to you about this?” He rolled up his sleeve to show the needle marks. She was at a loss for words, because there was nothing unusual in his appearance, and he was in good spirits. But still she had to ask: “How much cola did you inject?” He said, “Three syringes full. If I inject several syringes a day, I estimate that two weeks will be enough. Then you’ll see how I ride the winds in the world of business. Your dream about Long Island won’t be any trouble.”

That evening, he said to her: “You don’t have to study. Spend the next two weeks with me; watch me until my blood is replaced.” He was cleaning the syringes as he spoke. She said, “Go buy a couple of new ones.” He said, “No need. If I wash them they’ll be fine. Besides, we don’t have very much money.” She said, “I’m really afraid. This is like being in a dream.” He said, “You are not in a dream, you are on the threshold of a new era. Don’t you realize, my grandpa has entered my soul to give me help. Don’t you worry. My grandpa did not enjoy blessings in his lifetime, and neither did my father. Now it’s my chance. Chinese people say ‘Blessings from past lifetimes come around in this one.’” As he did the injection, Jenny closed her eyes. He shouted, “I’m telling you, keep your eyes open!” She opened her eyes, and was convinced of the facts in front of her: she saw the blood drawn out, and then watched as the cola went into the vein.

When two weeks had passed Jenny said, “How do you intend to get your business started?” He said, “First I need some capital.” An impact had been made on her soul by

two weeks of watching him replace his blood. By now she was convinced Victor Li would succeed. Several days ago she had withdrawn her money from the bank—all \$1325 of it. Now she pushed the money into his hands. “I’m going to start with stocks,” he said. He picked up the phone and called the friends who had played the market with him earlier. “Would you tell me which two stocks on the Hong Kong market have the highest rate of fluctuation?” “Tell me which American stocks are going on the market today.” “What stocks from Chongqing City are ready to go on the market?” “I’ll call back soon about this.” When he phoned again, it was to invest all his money in B-stocks offered by Chongqing City Telephone Company. He told Jenny, “We won’t know what happens for a month or two. Now let’s go sell my old car. We can use the money to decorate the coffee shop your uncle opened downtown. That will be our investment.

Jenny’s uncle had no confidence in his coffee shop, so it had been limping along half-alive for ten years. He uncle was moved when they went to him with \$2500 they got from selling the car. He said, “Are you really willing to make this coffee shop a going concern?” Victor said, “Of course. I know you named this place after your late wife. We want to make it work, so we feel it needs refurbishing. We are ready to buy materials, and we’ll do the remodeling ourselves. I will probably take a week or two. Our condition is that we get 20% of the profit.” Jenny’s uncle laughed, “If it makes a profit, I can give you 50%. For the past five years I’ve kept this place open, but the money is not worth it. I do it as a memorial to my deceased wife. I made a vow to keep this place running until I die. If you are willing to take over, I’m willing to come two days a week. You take care of it the rest of the time. As long as you don’t ask me for money, you can keep all you earn.” This was like manna from heaven to Jenny and Victor; they were overjoyed. “Alright,” they said. “We’ll start the remodeling tomorrow.”

They were struck by a realization: this chance had been there for the taking. Why hadn’t they thought of it? Why did they think of it after Victor did his “blood replacement.” It could only be explained by the effect of the cola. Jenny said to him, “I’m really afraid you’ll grow apart from your loved ones. You can grow apart from other people, but what is between us should not be just for profit, like cola.” Victor said, “Don’t worry about that. I thought about the possibility of such a side effect, so before the transfusions I drew up a plan for distribution of all assets. Half of them will be yours. There is a clause saying the document cannot be revised without your signature. You can ask Jimmy the lawyer about this. But so far, I feel plenty of confidence about us. It seems the cola’s effects are only in the business domain. I hope it will stay this way.”

The coffee shop was remodelled to look like a cafeteria in an American prison movies. Of course this idea grew out of Victor’s cola blood. And he thought of an advertising slogan: “If you’ve been in jail, relive old times; if you haven’t, get a taste of it.” He used large pots and ladles to serve simple food. Of course this was a publicity coup in the restaurant trade, especially for tourists. A week after the re-opening, they had to reserve tables, and before long they were booked solid for two months.

Within half a year, Chongqing Telephone stocks soared to thirty times their original price. The coffee shop absorbed the furniture store next door; it became one of the largest coffee shops in New York, with business of \$10,000 per day. Features and reports on it appeared in various newspapers and magazines; television stations did special segments on it. Ex-convicts were eager to bring their friends and reminisce about life on the inside. The ex-cons made suggestions that helped the coffee shop have a more authentic feel. People from various walks of life regarded the place highly, and restaurants in other cities asked to open under their name. Victor and Jenny made several million dollars on franchises, and

this was just the beginning, for soon a percentage of earnings would start rolling in. They signed contracts for use of their name in 60 cities: almost every state in America had one of their franchises. Small wonder that a *New York Times* reporter wrote in his article: "...It has the energetic hum of a fast food restaurant, but with much higher style and quality. It can be called a significant feature of *fin de siecle* American culture."

At this point someone came to them with a plan to write their success story. They refused, for a simple reason: they feared it would stir up a global craze for Coca Cola blood replacements. Jenny felt they should authorize the biography, but keep the blood replacements secret. But Victor disagreed, feeling it would offend his grandpa who had given them inspiration. Victor's grandpa had never concealed his wish for a blood replacement, so Victor should not conceal it. Right now it was best not to say anything.

One day Victor was invited to a ribbon-cutting at a new cultural center. Of course, the aim was to get a donation from him. With a flourish of his pen he wrote a check for \$50,000. Afterwards there was a program of literary entertainment. One poet read a piece that touched him deeply: it was a poem called "New York," and it included these two lines: "New York washes blood at the heart of the world, / Blood washed into Coca Cola flows around the globe." He imprinted these lines in his memory, and kept the poet's name in mind. He went home and recited the lines to Jenny, who thought he had composed them. When told they were someone else's, she said, "It seems that other people are coming to the same realization. This world needs something cold and neutral to keep functioning." He said, "I didn't write that \$50,000 check on an impulse today. I feel there are strange people in those cultural groups. Those people are not committed to money, but they are committed to uncovering themselves and others. There is no need for their views, except in the other world. Take that poet for example: he seemed pretty confident in himself, but he pointed out the power of money in this world. Since he knows that power, why does he go on writing poetry? It would be more sensible to go make money. Is he trying to criticize this phenomenon of money? Could this world ever get rid of the function of money? Money is the best standard for the circulation of value. I can't think of anything to take money's place for measuring value of labor. I want to print these two lines on our restaurant's flier. What do you think?" Jenny thought it over and said, "Maybe it's not a good idea, because it sounds like you're doing publicity for Coca Cola. Besides, what does it have to do with your restaurant?" Victor said, "The connection is simple: it's my personal wish. It has to do with the cola in my veins. Besides, the uncanny way I met him proves that somehow he is like me." She said, "You can use the lines he wrote, but first you need his permission." Victor said, "Of course. I'll have my secretary get in touch with him."

The poet's name was Will Chinn. At the moment he walked into Victor's office, Victor had a notion of playing a game with him. Victor said to him, "I'm thinking of printing your lines about washing blood on some advertisements, but I don't know how much to pay you." Will Chinn shrugged and said, "See how it goes. This has never happened to me; I don't know how it's done." Victor put on a straight face and said, "I can give you fifty dollars." With no change of expression Will Chinn said, "Alright. Anyway, poems are written to be read. It doesn't matter if you keep the \$50, because I never expected to make money off poems." Victor asked curiously: "How do you support yourself?" The poet said, "I work at a copy shop and write poetry in my spare time. I only do the job so I can keep writing. If I had money I would write poetry full time. I've been writing for over ten years." Victor asked, "Have you published a book of your poems?" The poet said, "I've put out two books." "Can you make money selling poetry books?" The poet replied, "Like I say, it's impossible to make money writing poetry. I do it to express my

view of the world and society.” “Well, can you explain what you meant by saying New York washes blood at the heart of the world?” With a gleam of excitement in his eyes, the poet said, “Business is not about feelings, it’s about products. Products are objects that have no feeling. If they do have feeling in them, it’s imputed to them by people. For instance, you might have feelings for a floor lamp at home, because you’ve had it for years and gotten used to it. A new one would be hard to get used to. In our world, more and more behavior revolves around business, and this affects how much behavior revolves around feelings. Blood produces feelings, but if we can replace it with Coca Cola, people would make less trouble for themselves.” The word *replace* gave Victor a jolt, and he said to himself, ‘So this poet thought of the same thing.’ He said to Will Chinn: “Well, tell me if it’s possible to replace blood with Coca Cola.” The poet laughed, “Do you think its doable?” Victor said, “I think it’s worth trying.” Still laughing, Will Chinn said, “You could be a poet!” Victor said, “I am a poet, a poet of action.” Changing the subject, he said, “You said I can use your lines without paying you money. Will you sign a contract to that effect?” Will Chinn shrugged and said “O.K.,” as he took a pen from his pocket. Victor went to the next room and told his secretary to draw up a contract. Coming back he said, “It’s unlike me not to pay. Tell you what, you can have ten percent of my company’s profits next month, just for a month, however much that is. My secretary will notify you to come and pick up a check. Besides that, I’m willing to be your friend. Every Friday evening I’ll be eating at my restaurant off Broadway. You can come any time to have a meal and chat with me.” The poet said, “If you don’t turn a profit next month, but lose money instead, do I have to pay ten percent of your loss?” Victor laughed out loud and said, “Don’t you know how good my business has been lately? Haven’t you seen the write-ups in the papers?” The poet shook his head and said, “I really didn’t know.” Victor sighed, “You really are a poet. Poetry lets people hold onto non-mainstream things. That’s why a poet can’t get popular.” Will Chinn said, “Aren’t you going to publicize two of my lines? I’m afraid they will affect your business.” Victor said, “I am a businessman, I don’t go in for losing propositions. Who says I can’t use a poem to help my business? The poet said, “Poetry is a hard thing for business to take advantage of. For the most part, art and literature are being used by business. I don’t think that is a bad thing. But businessmen are stymied when it comes to poetry, and so are the poets themselves. It isn’t that poets don’t like money, but for some reason, you can’t sell poems for money. Even so, many people insist that human beings can’t do without the poetic spirit. Look at the Nobel prizes for literature: over half of them have gone to poets.” Victor said, “I’m going to try. At least these two lines are going to be tied up with my business.” The secretary came in and gave him the contract. He read it, signed the duplicate, then handed them to the poet. The poet signed them without even looking at them. Victor gave one copy to Will Chinn, kept one for himself, then gave him a parting handshake.

Victor narrated this encounter to Jenny, who listened absorbedly. She said, “Poets are an obsessive breed. They treat writing poetry like raising a child. Any money they earn goes to ‘raising’ this child.” Victor said, “From what I can tell, poetry is a kind of literary religion. Otherwise, why would the Nobel Prize be given to something people don’t care about?” Jenny said, “Right, I wonder about that too. Is it a religion?” Vincent said, “Will Chinn was able to conceive of replacing blood with cola; this proves that something called to him from an unseen realm, just like my grandpa called to me. Do I qualify as a businessman? I simply used a method others don’t know about to unlock my mind. That lets me discover business openings. I’m not under emotional influence from my blood. I’m an innovator, not a businessman.” Jenny laughed, “You’re neither a businessman nor an

innovator. You're a poet!" He said, "But I can't write poetry." She said, "You can write it through your actions. The act of replacing your blood was like Will Chinn writing those lines of poetry. Your actions are poetry." He said, "That may be so, but poems don't earn money." She said, "But didn't you let Will Chinn earn at least \$80,000 from two lines of poetry? Last month our profits were close to \$800,000, but next month they will be more, maybe even \$1,000,000, because we'll have three new franchises. More royalties will be credited to us. Will Chinn may get \$100,000." He said, "So Will Chinn is going to become a full-time poet. He told me if he had money, he wouldn't do anything else: he would write poetry full time. I'll be glad to have a friend like him." She said, "You should make friends with him. Who else could imagine replacing blood with cola? You two must have a blood tie." He said, "If so, I think I should ask him to write our biography. He would make it come alive, because he conceives of things the way I do. What do you think?" She said, "It's worth considering. But after it's published, all kinds of people will try replacing their blood. The world will be a mess." He said, "What has already happened is bound to be exposed sometime. The question is, how soon? I have an urge to see how people react: it will be something to watch for sure. I can already imagine the media frenzy this will whip up." She said, "You'd better think it over awhile. You don't have to decide right away."

Two weeks later Victor decided to meet with Will Chinn. He asked the poet, "Are you interested in writing my biography?" Will Chinn said, "Not very much, because there are plenty of writers who specialize in biography. Why come to me?" Victor said, "You're right, there are professional writers, but I'm not sure they could do it well. There is a crucial reason. If I tell you something amazing, will you agree to write it?" The poet said, "That depends on how amazing it is. Does this world still have something to get amazed about?" Victor said, "Usually there wouldn't be anything to get amazed about. Everything that could happen has happened. But what happened to me is different. It is something that has never happened before, I can guarantee that." The poet said, "Well then, let me hear it." Victor said, "Sorry for beating around the bush. You see, I really want you to write it, and I believe only you can do this subject justice. Alright, I'll tell you. I am the first person ever to replace his blood with Coca Cola. I have Coca Cola flowing in my veins!" The poet shook his head dubiously. Victor led Will Chinn into a secret room. Before the poet's eyes, Victor drew from his arm a syringe-full of fluid, not exactly the color of blood, and injected the same amount of cola. Victor explained, "I still draw out a few hundred c.c. of blood every week and shoot in cola..." The poet broke in amazedly, "Are you saying you got the inspiration to do this from my poem?" Victor said, "I did this a long time before I heard your poem. But you are the first person who thought of this besides me. Now you know why I decided to have you write my story. Do you feel like writing it now?" The poet nodded and said, "Are you telling me that after the cola-change, everything you wished for in business came true?" Victor triumphantly said, "Within a short time I have made ten million dollars, and before long I'll have a hundred million."

Will Chinn spent two weeks writing a 200,000-word biography. After Victor and Jenny read it, they corrected only a few small errors, then had it published. It created a huge stir, but many reviewers were sceptical. Most upset of all were research directors from two medical schools and a social critic, who filed a joint suit against Victor Li and Will Chinn, claiming their sensationalism would cause young people who lacked independent judgement to replace their own blood, which would lead to deaths. Victor and Will Chinn defended themselves in a television interview: "We don't claim that everyone can replace their blood. Perhaps only a small proportion of people are physically capable of this. At least it was proved in Victor Li's case. It was not

rejected. At this point he is still replacing a few hundred c.c. per week. If necessary, he can do this openly, to be witnessed by the public. In addition, we'd like to read this paragraph from the book:

Victor Li's grandfather believed that blood type should not be a criterion in blood replacements. In 1992 he had to receive massive transfusions due to blood poisoning. During a long course of treatments and blood replacements, his consciousness was able to change the landlord blood in his veins into peasant blood. This was because he had faith in the power of consciousness to do so. This power, clearly, was then transmitted to his grandson Victor Li. Of course, it is possible that he helped his grandson from the other world, to further Victor's wish for an effective blood replacement.

"We are speaking of something that has already happened. Of course, research needs to be done on this, but Victor should not be confined in a hospital without his own approval. Otherwise, this would be a violation of human rights." Here Vincent Li interjected that he would not give approval, and that he intended to enjoy his own life.

At this point Victor Li was willing to do a blood replacement in front of television cameras. But this did not come about, due to fear of a copycat effect. Within a week after the book was published, dozens of people had to be rushed to the hospital after trying to replace their own blood. The court had no choice but to have a hospital analyze the composition of Victor Li's blood. A government investigation team determined that all findings should be kept out of the media. The book was to be suppressed for the time being, and sales would be stopped. Victor Li, Jenny, and Will Chinn were taken by the investigators to a secret clinic, where everyone awaited the results of the blood analysis with grave faces. Only Jenny and Victor chatted casually about company matters. Finally the lab technician handed the test results to the head investigator, shaking his head and saying: "The composition includes a significant amount of Coca Cola."

The government investigation made ruled as follows on the test results: An agreement would be drawn up with Victor Li and others privy to this case, to observe strict secrecy for five years. This would give the government time to do medical research on the Victor Li Anomaly. After five years, the agreement could be extended for a number of years. Meanwhile, the book could be promoted and sold only as science fiction.

But Victor Li hired a lawyer to defend himself. This agreement would make him look like a charlatan; it would do irreparable damage to his reputation. Newspapers and television had done major reports on this incident: suppressing it was not going to be all that easy. So how to handle this thorn in the government's side? Officials on the case racked their brains for a solution, but could not think of an ideal proposal. Finally, only one plan seemed feasible: the federal officials went to talk with Will Chinn alone.

The officials said, "There is no other way--you must take the outcome upon yourself. Here is what we will say: After writing those two lines of poetry, you had delusive hopes that they would turn into reality. You found Victor Li, a man who enjoyed sudden success in business, and used him to prove your delusions could come true. You played upon Victor's wish to stand out from the crowd and wrote a biography about him; you also persuaded him to accept the story you concocted, because this would make his biography different from any previous success story."

Will Chinn asked, "What will happen if I agree?" The official said, "You will give interviews to reporters, in which you will admit to this 'fact.' We can assure you that if

anyone presses charges against you, we will allow you to plead insanity and avoid any criminal penalties. As for your finances, a company will buy all the rights to your book.” Will Chinn said, “If it’s done that way, my reputation will be damaged.” The official said, “So what are you asking for?” Will Chinn said, “I want the government to lease a huge billboard on Times Square, and display my two lines about washing blood. I want the lease to last for a year.” The official said, “That won’t do. You don’t have that much money. It would cause speculation and complicate matters further.” The poet said, “If Victor Li comes up with the money, will the government interfere?” The official said, “Give us two more days: we’ll discuss this further then.”

Will Chinn told everything to Victor Li, who said, “It looks like there’s no other way. Since the government has stuck its hand into this, and is even considering our position, there’s nothing else we can do. What’s more, this whole incident has been uncanny. Common sense says the public will probably not believe us. Obviously, most people will be on the government’s side. As for the billboard rental, I can certainly pay it, but I don’t think the government will agree to it. So what can we do to keep from getting a raw deal?” The poet said, “The fact is the book influenced some teenagers to try replacing their blood, and they were taken to emergency rooms. I am responsible for that. So I might as well give in. As the saying goes, a poet is society’s conscience. On the other hand, what happened to you is true. Between telling the truth and saving people, my conscience tells me to save people. What is true will still be true after ten years.”

The government official said, “The billboard is unfeasible, because your lines of poetry may lead to a lawsuit by Coca Cola. They would think you are slandering their product with the words ‘New York washes blood at the heart of the world; Blood washed into Coca Cola flows around the globe.’ There is no telling who would win, but it would cause unnecessary trouble and financial burdens. Is there anything else you have in mind?” The poet was already fed up: “Just let me keep writing poetry. I don’t have anything else in mind.” The officials shook his hand delightedly, for they considered that this wrapped up the case.

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Translated by Dennis Mair