

***The Crowd***

By Nick Rongjun YU

“A motley crew may come together lightly, but with time, repulsion is inevitable –cordial but  
never close.”

Guan Zhong, *Guanzi***Time**

Several decades in the past and the present

***Locations***

Hong Kong, Chongqing, Beijing, Shanghai and the Internet

***Characters***

**Man 1** Wang Guoqing (from his 20s to 60s), crowd, armory worker, dancer in a public square

**Man 2** Crow, Ding Jianguo (young armory worker, from his 20s to 70s), a father who is killed during armed struggles in Chongqing, Ding Liming (son of Ding Jianguo from his 30s to 40s), plain-clothes police in Beijing, dancer in a public square, netizen

**Man 3** Crow, neem tree, Wang Yiqing (armory manager, father of Wang Guoqing), Wang Guojian (elder brother of Wang Guoqing in his 40s), Beijing police, dancer in a public square, security guard, netizen

**Woman 1** Mother (mother of Wang Guoqing), armory militant (male), wife of Wang Guoqing, wife of Ding Liming, Beijing street cleaner, dancer in a public square, netizen, rain, hotel staff

**Woman 2** Boy (Wang Guoqing age 13), Wang Guoqing’s chauffeur, dancer in a public square, girl, prostitute, netizen, clouds, Hong Kong street cleaner

**Woman 3** Crow, weed, armory worker, son who is killed during armed struggles in Chongqing, nurse, waitress, mistress of Ding Liming, dancer in a square, netizen

Note: All actors are also narrators.

**Prologue**

**Character: Man 2 – Crow**

*Location: Theatre*

*Time: Now*

*Lights up.*

**Man 2** stands center stage, dressed in black. He glances at his watch.

**Man 2** (looks up)        Seven-thirty. Evening. Theatre. Audience arrives. Performance begins.<sup>1</sup> A crow. It's thirsty. Looking all over for water. Sees a bottle. Water inside, but not much. The bottle's neck's small. Can't get to the water. What to do? I see lots of pebbles nearby. I have an idea. I'll put the pebbles into the bottle one by one. The water level rises. Ha. I can drink. Actually, I can put other things in. Twigs, egg shells, baby crows. I can dig a hole in the ground to tilt the bottle. I'll be able to reach the water too. I can even find a stalk from the wheat fields and suck the water up. Or I can simply push the bottle over, and water will come out... (*Stares at the audience.*) I've drunk enough. I fly away.

*Blackout.*

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<sup>1</sup> Adjust according to start time of the performance.

**Scene One***Characters:***Man 1 – Wang Guoqing, around 60 years old****Man 3***Location: A hotel in Hong Kong**Time: 2014**Darkness. Anxious, rapid gasping interspersed with talking in sleep.**Rain. Thunder. Lightning.***Man 3** *stands quietly.*

**Man 3** 2014. July. Midnight. Hong Kong. Hotel. Outside. It's pouring. Splattering hard. Lightning cuts through the window into the room; the white sheets look ominous. Wrapped in these sheets, Wang Guoqing twists and squirms. The bed is squeaking and groaning, about to fall apart. Thunder rumbles. Splatter. Squeak. Rumble. Splatter... squeak... rumble...

*The clatter from the downpour fades. Thunder vanishes. Lightning disappears.***Man 3** Splatter... squeak...*He quiets down gradually.***Man 1** *twists and turns on the bed, punctuated by anxious gasps and pants. Chewing and moving his lips, he is mumbling unintelligibly in his sleep.**Suddenly, he makes a piercing scream.***Man 1** Crow? Crow. Crow! Ma? Ma! Crow! Ma, ma! (*Screams.*) Ma!**Man 3** Wang Guoqing yanks the covers off and leaps up, gasping for air.

**Man 1** I stand on the bare floor. Gasping. The clock on the wall says 1:00a.m. In the mirror stands a man. Can't see him clearly. Naked. Not in great shape – gaunt, wiry. Like a worn out dog. I need some food. Right, instant noodles. Food. Walk past the bathroom. Barefoot. The floor is cold. I shudder. Fuck.

*The flush of a toilet.***Man 3** No light in the bathroom.**Man 1** Fuck.**Man 3** Pause.

**Man 1** Two mice scamper across the floor. Onto my foot. Not scared at all, as if I am one of them. Fuck.

**Man 3** Squeak... squeak...**Man 1** I dig out two snack sausages from my backpack. And a pen knife.

**Man 3** Wang Guoqing goes to the sofa with his treats. He turns on the table lamp and examines them. He cuts them open carefully.

**Wang Guoqing** *chews pieces of snack sausage with his eyes closed.*

**Man 3** Wang Guoqing chews on the snack sausage. (*Chews.*)

**Man 1** I'll chop him into eight pieces, then bit by bit carve out little chunks of flesh. Tiny chunks – bite size. Put one into my mouth. Chew slowly. (*Chews.*) A bit sweet. A bit chewy. Chilled. Like munching on raw flesh. (*Chews.*) Tissues, tendons, the stench of blood...

**Man 3** Chewing on the snack sausage, Wang Guoqing goes to the window. He pulls up the blinds. Hong Kong under the cloak of night is drifting in the downpour. Like a woman who just climaxed, lying there moaning in post-coital bliss.

**Man 1** Chewing on the snack sausage, I look out the window and see my reflection in it... it looks like the city's sky scrapers are slicing my emaciated body up and down.

*Lightning. Thunder.*

**Man 3** Wang Guoqing gazes at his reflection in the window. That blurry, gnarled, warped body. It becomes sharp and sinister in the lightning. Like countless glittering needles, the threads of rain pierce his body

**Man 1** As if I've vanished. Only the black night remains.

**Man 3** Outside, twenty floors down is the ground. The ground is cement. The gleaming wet maze of cement connects the city. So many metal barriers down there on the ground. A dark, dense crowd sits fenced in by the barriers. The crowd extends into the distance, farther than the eye can see. It wraps the city in silence in the night.

**Man 1** Silence.

**Man 3** Rain knocks on their heads, faces, bodies. Runs down their hair, cheeks, necks, soaking them. They hold their heads high, looking ahead. Silence.

**Man 1** Silence.

**Man 3** One, two, three...

**Man 1** A crowd, the whole square filled with people.

**Man 3** They're bathing in the rain. A powerful force flows with the rain.

**Man 1** The force spreads.

**Man 3** Hong Kong is soggy, the whole island is floating up and down in the downpour.

*Bang! WANG GUOQING jumps.*

**Man 1** A crow hits the window. It frightens me.

**Man 3** Following the glass and in synch with the rain, the crow falls and falls... falling into the dark dense crowd.

**Man 1** I close the blinds.

**Man 3** Wang Guoqing closes the blinds.

**Man 1** I chew on the snack sausage, listening to the sound of my own chewing.

**Man 3** Wang Guoqing chews on the snack sausage, he can hear the sound of his own chewing. (*Chews.*)

**Man 1 and Man 3** chew with their eyes closed.

*Lights fade to blackout.*

**Scene Two***Characters:***Man 1 – Crow, arsenal worker****Man 2 – Crow, Ding Jianguo (secretary of the arsenal, age 23)****Man 3 – Crow, neem tree, Wang Yiqing (father of Wang Guoqing, in his 40s)****Woman 3 – Crow, weed, male armory worker****Woman 1 – mother of Wang Guoqing, in her 40s****Woman 2 – Wang Guoqing, a 13-year-old boy***Location: The clearing between the two armories, Chongqing**Time: 1967**Darkness. A crow caws, lonely and sad.**A flock of crows caw cacophonously.***Man 3** A crow on the tree.**Man 2** Caw!**Woman 3** Two crows on the tree.**Man 1, Man 2** Caw!**Man 3** Three crows on the tree.**Man 1, Man 2, Woman 3** Caw!**Man 2** Lots of crows on the tree.*Silence.***Man 3** Pause.**Woman 3** Silence.**Man 2** The sun's voice is clear.**Man 1** Tsi-tsi-tsi...<sup>2</sup>**Man 3** Sizzling on the body.**Woman 3** The crow pauses on the branch. He caws with all his might, but not a sound comes out.**Man 2** *opens his mouth with all his might, cawing silently.***Man 1** Tsi-tsi-tsi...**Man 3** The leaves are all shriveled, lifeless, withered.**Woman 3** Branches reach over the armory wall – proud, extremely so. It's a grey-white cement brick wall. Bullet marks all over. Bullets scraped the cement, exposing red bricks underneath. Like a body covered with wounds, teeth bearing in a snarling mouth. The wall stands tall, separating two worlds. Posters and signs all over, recently posted. Ravaged by the sun, wind and bullets, they're faded and worn. A gaping hole in the wall, recently torn. A

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<sup>2</sup> Sizzling sound

broken brick is half poking out of this hole. Like a dog's tongue, blood red, nakedly lolling right there.

**Man 3** The tree grows in the courtyard. The trunk is broad, full of cracks blasted open by bullets – pale and pallid, howling continuously. Sap oozing out from these cracks has curdled, and hangs there like falling teardrops.

**Woman 3** Weeds grow under the tree. No one has tended to them for a long time. They grow furiously, panting desperately under the sun.

**Man 3** One weed, leaves, stem, roots, life, full to the brim, crystal clear.

**Woman 3** *is a weed.*

**Woman 3** My leaves are covered with soft dense hair. I can feel the movement of the air, the caress of the wind. Ah! (*Moans.*) ... My stem is wrapped in a thin coat. It straps me tight. Ah! (*Moans.*) ... My roots reach into the soil, down there it is moist and cool, I can draw water to my heart's content. Ah! (*Moans.*) ...

**Man 3** The sun! The savage sun.

**Man 2** *opens his mouth with all his might, cawing silently.*

**Man 1** Tsi-tsi-tsi...

**Man 3** Weeds, weeds, so many weeds.

**Woman 3** I can't see each leaf clearly, or the stems, or the roots. It's just weeds, more and more weeds, a sea of weeds, blurry and vast.

**Man 3** The crowd on the streets, pushing and shoving, making a racket. Chongqing, Shanghai, Beijing, Hong Kong.

**Woman 3** They're talking, they're shouting, I can't hear well.

**Man 3** A person, a young man, a young man in military uniform. He stands under the tree...

**Woman 3** A tree. Leaves, branches, roots, full of life.

**Man 3** *is a tree.*

**Man 3** I'm gulping and gulping big mouthfuls of underground water. Sweet. (*Moans in pleasure, savouring the moment, then startles.*) ... I can't breathe the moisture in the air. My leaves shrivel, it hurts. (*Spasms.*) ... My skin cracks, that damned sun...

**Man 2** *opens his mouth with all his might, cawing silently.*

**Man 1** Tsi-tsi-tsi...

**Man 3** I reach my shoulders beyond the wall. Wind ruffles my leaves, my shrivelled leaves. The sun is everywhere, that damned sun...

**Man 2** *opens his mouth with all his might, cawing silently.*

**Man 1** Tsi-tsi-tsi...

**Woman 3** So many crows perching on the branches.

**Man 3** So many crows perching on my shoulders. I shrug my shoulders, the crows take flight.

**Man 2** Caw, caw, caw!

**Woman 3** The crows return to the branches.

**Man 3** The crows return to my shoulders.

**Man 2** *opens his mouth with all his might, cawing silently.*

**Man 3** I can see that clearing. The sun scorching the ground, steamy with vapor. The ground contorts in the vapor, looks like two people...

**Woman 3** Two people. A middle-aged woman holding a boy's hand, tight. They're walking fast.

**Woman 1 and Woman 2** *enter.*

**Woman 1** I'm holding your hand. Guoqing, quick.

**Woman 2** I can't move anymore, ma.

**Woman 1** C'mon.

**Woman 2** Ma, I really can't move anymore.

**Woman 3** The woman and the boy are both wearing white. Snow white. So others can tell that they don't belong to any faction.

**Woman 2** Ma, I want to take this off. I'm hot.

**Woman 1** No. Guoqing, just hang on a little longer. They don't hurt anyone in white.

**Woman 3** The woman's carrying a bamboo basket. It has some clothes and a few buns, and a bottle of water. It's a hospital drip bottle. With the label still on it. But it holds boiled water now. A few pieces of rice cake bob in the water.

**Man 3** To give the water some flavor.

**Woman 2** Ma, I can't move. I really can't move.

**Woman 1** Guoqing, you're being naughty. What did say I just now at home?

**Woman 2** We'll rest in the afternoon when we get to Grandma's. Listen to Mama on the way.

**Woman 1** That's right. Let's go.

**Man 3** Sand everywhere. Very wide, stretching into the distance, no end in sight. This is the clearing between two armories. Normally, they share this land. On this end of the sand, they make cannons. On the other end, in the distance, they make tanks. This place used to be full of tanks and cannons. Tanks leaning on cannons. Cannons resting on tanks. From afar, it's impossible to separate tanks from cannons. Lots and lots of them, blurry, undefined. Three days ago, the tanks were dragged back into the factory. Only the cannons remained. Two days ago, the cannons were dragged back into the factory too. Nothing's left. This stretch of land is deserted. Except for patches of weeds that have grown because of the rain, there's nothing. Last night, bang, bang! Gunshots from the armory that makes tanks. It went on all night. Didn't stop until dawn.

**Man 2** The sun is venomous. The sand is scorching.

**Man 1** Tsi-tsi-tsi...



**Woman 3** The boy walks barefoot. The scalding sand makes him dance, back and forth, onto a patch of grass in the middle of the clearing.

**Woman 2** Ma, I can't walk. Hot.

**Woman 1** Oh, you haven't got shoes on. Come, ma will blow on it.

**Woman 2** No, ma. I'm fine.

**Woman 1** I'll carry you on my back later.

**Woman 2** Ma, I'm thirsty.

*The Woman gives the Boy the water bottle. He gobbles it down.*

**Woman 1** Don't drink it all. We'll still need...

**Woman 3** The woman turns the bottle upside down. A few drops fall onto the grass. They disappear in no time.

**Woman 1** You've drunk it all. We've still got a long way to go, but we won't have any water. We forgot your shoes. Slipped my mind in the rush. I'm so useless.

**Woman 2** Ma, I like not wearing shoes... Ma, look. Words on the wall.

**Woman 1** All the same.

**Woman 2** (*recognizing the characters*) ... the gun fires, to the battlefield...! A tree, ma!

**Woman 1** (*Glances quickly*) Neem. Bitter.

**Woman 2** Ma, I don't want to go to the countryside.

**Woman 1** Son, listen, the city's dangerous.

**Woman 2** Why isn't Brother going?

**Woman 1** He has to go to school.

**Woman 2** He's not going to school. He's fighting. Him and Papa are fighting in brawls. They're beating people up.

**Woman 1** They're not beating people up

**Woman 2** They are. I saw them. Papa does it. Brother does too. Papa beats up Brother's guys. Brother beats up Papa's guys. They're not on the same side.

**Woman 1** Nonsense... (*Beat.*) That's why we're going to the countryside.

**Woman 2** I don't wanna go.

**Woman 1** Guoqing, ma relies on you. Be good.

**Woman 2** A tree, ma!

**Woman 3** The woman looks at the tree, and doesn't say a word.

**Man 3** The sunshine is oppressive.

**Man 2** Tsi-tsi-tsi...

**Woman 3** Leaves are shriveled.

**Man 3** My shoulders hurt.

**Woman 3** He stands beneath the tree. A young man.

**Man 1** The young man stands under me. Leaning on me. A gun in his hand. A brand new gun.

**Man 2** *plays around with the gun. Takes aim.*

**Man 1** Jianguo, you bastard, don't point that at me. Hey, that gun isn't bad.

**Man 3** They came this morning. We swapped them with Factory 857.

**Man 1** Swapped?

**Man 3** One cannon for a hundred automatics. We exchanged sixty odd cannons. They know their math. They're fighting too. On our side. They're four thousand plus, we've got more than six. Together, we're like ten thousand.

**Man 1** Damn, ten thousand?

**Man 3** They've got lots too.

**Woman 3** Everyone gets a gun. Plenty of bullets. Shoot away.

**Man 3** Bunch of assholes wanna attack us? We'll teach them a lesson so they know what we are.

**Man 1** No problem.

**Man 3** Who doesn't know how to shoot a gun? When I was in Triangle Hill... Fuck... they came after us all night.

**Woman 3** Command says boys like to play with guns, it's good to get some practice. No big deal.

**Man 1** Chairman Mao has taught us: Revolution is not a dinner party. It's violent when one class overthrows another.

**Man 2** This is the people's war. We have to win.

**Man 3** Jianguo's right. This is the people's war.

**Woman 3** Ding Jianguo walks over to the wall. I move an old chair over. Jianguo, come.

**Man 2** When I stand on this, I can reach that hole in the wall.

**Man 1** That's risky. Watch out for their attack.

**Man 3** Lunchtime, they're all napping.

**Woman 3** Jianguo, what can you see?

**Man 2** Nothing? No, someone's out there!

**Man 1** (*nervously*) What? Ding Jianguo. Get back down. It's too dangerous.

**Woman 3** What can you see?

**Man 2** A woman, a child.

**Woman 3** Woman? Child?

**Man 3** The woman is standing. The child is sitting.

**Woman 3** What are they doing? That's strange.

**Woman 2** Ma, what's there over the wall?

**Woman 1** That's your pa's factory.

**Woman 2** Papa? He's fighting.

**Woman 1** Let's go.

**Woman 2** Ma, I want to stop a little longer. The sand's hot, my feet hurt.

**Woman 1** Lazy bones. Come, I'll carry you.

**Woman 3** The woman bends down, getting ready to carry the boy.

**Man 1** The sky's frightfully blue. Not a single cloud.

**Woman 3** The woman puts the bottle back into the basket.

**Man 1** Breeze – a hint of breeze – ruffles the woman's hair, lifting it.

**Woman 3** The fine hairs on my leaves are swaying.

**Man 3** My shoulders shake, painfully, with difficulty.

**Man 1** Lots of people are walking over.

**Woman 3** There are actually people on the clearing out there.

**Man 1** Who? Who's there?

**Man 3** Who cares? Asking for trouble.

**Man 1** A whole morning. No movement at all. They're probably going to attack.

**Man 3** We've got to get ready.

**Woman 3** All the shifts have been cancelled. Everyone's armed.

**Man 1** A few bastards ran away.

**Man 3** Bastards, fuck.

**Man 2** This is a good gun.

**Man 3** Try it.

**Man 2** Try it?

**Man 3** How'd you know without trying?

**Man 1** You've been a soldier.

**Man 3** I've shot them yank devils in North Korea. Let me tell you, you need to kill to know how good the gun is. Aim, cock, fire. Done.

**Man 1** It's that simple.

**Woman 3** You've to train the factory. We've never fired guns before. We don't even know how to cock a gun.

**Man 2** It's that simple?

**Woman 1** What hit me in the chest? I heard a sound. What is it? It burrows into my body. What's happening? Guoqing, let's go. We can't stay here. What's that sound? Gunshot? Guoqing, run...

*A loud gunshot. The Woman falls. The Boy is paralysed with fear.*

**Man 2** Good aim.

**Man 3** Great.

**Man 1** You fired?

**Woman 3** How's that?

**Man 2** Nothing.

**Man 1** You really fired, Ding Jianguo?

**Man 3** He jumps down from the chair.

**Man 2** I jump down from the chair.

**Woman 3** You did it, Jianguo. Let me see.

**Man 2** Nothing to see.

**Man 1** He pushes the chair over.

**Man 2** I push the chair over.

**Woman 3** The chair falls on my body. My leaves crushed, my stem snapped. Hurts.

**Man 3** The shot made me shudder.

**Man 2** Caw, caw, caw!

**Man 3** The crows flew from my body. My leaves fall, drifting and spinning onto the sand. Scorching. It hurts.

**Woman 2** (*Bawling*) Ma! Ma! Ma!

**Man 1** The woman's body falls to the ground. Blood gushes out from her chest.

**Woman 2** Ma, what's happening to you? What's happening? Ma, you're bleeding. I can't stop it, ma! Ma!

**Woman 3** 1967. A day in July. Midday. Chongqing. A clearing between two armories.

**Man 1** Sky, intensely blue.

**Man 3** No wind.

**Woman 3** The sun's brutal.

**Man 3** Crows circling in the sky.

**Man 2** I drink a mouthful of water. My hands won't stop shaking. Fuck, what an aim.

**Man 1** I think I can hear crying.

**Man 2** No.

**Man 1** (*listening intently*) Right, no.

**Woman 3** It's the crow.

**Man 3** It's the crow.

**Man 2** Such peace and quiet.

*The Boy sits on the ground, looking at the Woman, crying and shouting.*

**Woman 2** Ma, what's happening? Ma! Wake up. I'm scared. Scared!

**Man 1** The woman's face. White as a sheet.

**Man 2** Blood gushes from her chest, relentless, onto the patch of grass.

**Woman 3** Grass, intensely green. I'm jealous. When can I be like that? Nourished by water under the midday sun, even if it's blood.

**Man 3** My leaf that's fallen, shriveled on the ground, wilted, like a dead man's face, lifeless.

**Man 1** The woman's face. Not a sign of life.

**Man 2** The boy pushes the woman. Her body rolls, a lump of lifeless flesh.

**Woman 2** Ma, say something! Ma, say something!

**Man 3** A crow swoops down next to the woman, waiting silently.

**Man 1** Another crow swoops down next to the woman, waiting silently.

**Woman 3** A handful of crows swoop down next to the woman, waiting silently.

**Man 2** A murder of crows swoop down next to the woman, waiting silently.

**Woman 2 (shouts)** Ma!

**Man 2** The woman's body lies on the ground.

**Man 1** The boy sits next to her.

**Man 3** A murder of crows swoop down next to them.

**Woman 3** They make no noise, just waiting silently.

*A gunshot. A round of firing.*

*Numbness spreads in the air.*

*Light fades, but the beam on the Woman is getting brighter.*

*Blackout.*

**Scene Three**

*Characters:*

**Woman 1 – mother of Wang Guoqing, in her 40s**

**Woman 2 – Wang Guoqing, a 13-year-old boy**

**Man 3**

**Woman 3**

*Location: The clearing between the armories, Chongqing*

*Time: 1967*

*Music starts abruptly. Cacophonous.*

*The lighting grows brighter following Man 3's narration. The Boy kneels in front of the Woman, motionless.*

**Man 3** The whole afternoon, emotions are boiling over at the factory.

**Woman 3** The whole afternoon, the boy sits by the woman.

**Man 3** The men have shaved their heads, the women bobbed their hair. **Woman 3**  
He stays catatonic, not a single tear in his eyes.

**Man 3** Thousands gather in the factory's courtyard, each with a gun in their hand.  
Their faces are painted red with excitement.

**Woman 3** He turns his head. The hole in the wall is still poking out its blood-red tongue.

**Man 3** They hurry past the wall's corner, alert and ready for the upcoming battle.  
Nobody stops to glance at the hole in the wall.

**Woman 3** The sun cools down gradually, setting over the other side of the hills. The moon rises. The woman's face hovers in the color of the night, like the blurry moon shrouded in layers of cloud.

**Man 3** Silence.

**Woman 3** Silence.

**Man 3** The silence before a battle.

**Woman 3** Deadly silence.

**Man 3** Lights dim.

*Lights fade to blackout.*

**Scene Four***Characters:***Woman 2 – Wang Guoqing, a 13-year-old boy****Man 2 – father, in his 40s****Woman 3 – son, age 15 or 16****Man 3 – Wang Yiqing, Guoqing's father, in his 40s****Man 1 – militant from the arsenal, in his 30s****Woman 1 – male militant from the armory, in his 20s***Location: A hillside outside Chongqing**Time: 1967**Suddenly, flurries of gunshots interspersed with the loud crack of cannons.***Woman 2 runs onto the stage. Running desperately.**

**Woman 2** I run with all my might. Bullets, cannons zoom past me. I so wish they'd hit me, so, so I'd be like ma. I run from the sandy ground, onto a path, to the foot of a hill, to the fields... The moon's always following me, ma's face drifts ahead of me... Gunshots farther and farther away. Can't hear them anymore. I pant, ma, ma, ma!

**Woman 2 falls over.***Armed and dressed in military uniform, Man 1, Man 3 and Woman 1 escort Woman 3 and Man 2 onto the stage.*

**Man 1** 9:00p.m. The moon's high, illuminating the land. In a hillside path, five men are walking. A middle-aged man leads two younger men with guns. They are escorting a father and his son – a middle-aged man and a lad about fifteen or sixteen. The father and son both wear a red armband. They're blindfolded with a cloth.

**Man 3 (points at the middle-aged man)** How many of you are there?**Man 2** Four thousand.**Man 3** Where did the gun come from?**Man 2** Factory 857.**Man 3** 857?**Woman 1** They're also...**Man 1** That can't be. They're on our side.**Woman 3** No, they're on our side.**Man 2** Enough.**Woman 3** Pa, what's there to fear? Yes, they're on our side. They gave us machine guns, but they gave them rifles.**Woman 1** Fuck. Boss, we've been short changed.**Man 3** Shut up, all of you assholes.**Man 1** Silence.

**Man 2** Pause.

**Woman 1** Only footsteps.

**Man 1** The middle-aged man turns around, he says:

**Man 2** Your son is on our side.

**Woman 1** Wang Yiqing stares at the middle-aged man.

**Man 3** He's not my son.

**Man 2** He's our unit leader. He fights bravely.

**Man 3** (*points his gun at the younger man and addresses the middle-aged man*) If you don't shut up, I'll kill him – your son.

**Woman 3** Pa, I'm not afraid.

**Man 1** Silence.

**Woman 1** There's a breeze. The leaves shuffle.

**Man 2** Yiqing.

**Man 1** Bastard, he's Chief Wang to you.

**Man 2** Chief Wang, blindfolded, I still know who you are. Yiqing, we know each other well. If not for this battle, we'd be seeing each other day in and day out. Why take this so seriously? Where are you taking us?

**Man 1** You think we're taking you out for dinner?

**Man 2** What do you do to captives?

**Man 3** Don't know.

**Man 2** Right now, just a few of us, we can work something out. When there are more people, it will be hard. Let's go, we'll pay you back.

**Woman 3** Pa!

**Man 2** When this is over, your factory still has to come to us for our tires. Next time, come to me.

**Woman 1** Silence.

**Woman 1** No one speaks.

**Man 1** A gust of wind cuts through the bamboo forest. Moaning. Like sobs.

**Man 3** (*aims his gun at the middle-aged man*) Shut your mouth. Move.  
*The five men walk into the distance. The Boy half runs half crawls.*

**Woman 2** (*shouts*) Pa!

**Man 3** Who's there?

**Woman 1** (*aims at the Boy*) Stop there.

**Woman 2** Pa.

**Man 3** How come you're here?

**Woman 2** Pa, Ma is dead.

**Man 1** Guoqing, that's no joke.



**Woman 2** Pa, Ma is dead. Right outside your factory. She was taking me to Grandma's. She was shot.

**Man 3** When was this?

**Woman 2** This afternoon.

**Man 3** Afternoon?

**Woman 2** She was shot.

**Man 3** Right.

**Woman 2** Pa, Ma is dead. She's still there. On the sand outside your factory.

**Woman 1** Silence.

**Man 1** Silence.

**Man 2** Silence.

**Woman 1** Silence.

**Woman 2 (cries)** Pa.

**Man 3** Don't cry.

*Wang Yiqing looks at his captives – the father and son, and then at his son. He pulls the blindfold off the father and hands them two shovels.*

**Man 3** Dig.

**Man 1** Chief.

**Woman 1** Not here.

**Man 3** Yes. Here. Dig.

**Man 2** Dig for what?

**Man 3** Dig a hole. Be quick about it.

*The father and son start to dig.*

**Woman 2** Midday. Ma was taking me to Grandma's. I couldn't walk no more. Too hot. Ma wouldn't let me stop. Just then, someone fired. Just once. I was there all along. Blood everywhere, Pa! Blood everywhere!

**Man 2** Despicable!

**Man 1** Shut up. Dig.

**Woman 1** One, two, three... the father and son dig with all their might. Suddenly, the father puts down the shovel and looks up.

**Man 1** What now?

**Man 2** Wh... what do you want this for?

**Woman 1** Dig.

**Man 2 (petrified)** Yiqing, don't... don't get it wrong. Your wife wasn't shot by us.

**Woman 1** Silence.

**Man 1** Silence.

**Man 2** I beg you!

**Man 1** His face is blank.

**Woman 3** Pa, stop begging him.

**Man 2** God, how could they? ... If you want blood, take mine! I beg you, he's young, let him go.

**Woman 3** Pa!

**Man 1** The son digs with all his might. Blood, blood, blood.

**Man 2 (kneels)** I beg you. Kill me. Not him. He's young. Only fifteen. I beg you. I beg you. Yiqing, don't. Yiqing.

*Wang Yiqing's gun cracks. The father falls over. The son throws his shovel away and leaps over.*

**Woman 3 (sobbing)** Pa!

**Woman 1** Chief, no!

**Man 1** Chief, we said we'd take them back to the factory.

*Wang Yiqing's gun makes another crack. The son falls on his father.*

**Man 1, Woman 1 (shouts)** Chief!

**Man 3** Bury them.

*The two men pick up the shovels. Wang Yiqing turns around to look at the Boy.*

**Man 3** Come on, Guoqing, we'll go find your mother.

*Wang Yiqing takes the Boy's hand. They exit together.*

*The two men stand in a trance, shovels in hand.*

**Woman 1** Wind, cuts through the bamboo forest. Moaning. Like sobs.

**Man 1** Cloud, covers up the moon. The valley is in darkness.

**Woman 1** In the distance, fire paints the sky.

**Man 1** Intense gunshots from afar drift closer ...

*Lights fade to blackout.*

**Scene Five**

*Characters:*

**Man 1 – Wang Guoqing, age 24**

**Man 2 – Wang Guojian, Guoqing's brother, in his 30s**

**Man 3 – Wang Yiqing, Guoqing's father, in his 50s**

*Location: Chongqing*

*Time: 1978*

*Rousing music. Cheers. Man 2 enters.*

**Man 2** Eight years in the countryside. When Wang Guoqing returns to Chongqing, it is 1978. Everything has changed!

*Wang Guoqing appears upstage. He carries a rucksack, his face worn from travel. His father appears in a corner downstage.*

**Man 2** Wang Guoqing comes home on a different route. He detours far from the armory. Because in his mind, his mother is still lying there.

**Man 3** Guoqing, I found her. I wiped her body clean, wrapped her in white cloth and buried her in a grave. Guoqing, you were there all along.

**Man 1** I can only remember her body on the grass. The blood won't stop. Thick and sticky all over the ground.

**Man 2** Ten whole years.

**Man 1** Thick and sticky all over the ground.

**Man 3** Forget, Guoqing.

**Man 2** It's in the past, Guoqing.

**Man 1** You can choose to forget, or force yourself to forget. But I – can't.

**Man 3** What's the point of remembering?

**Man 1 (shouting at Wang Yiqing)** Remember, so it won't happen again.

**Man 3** Pause.

**Man 2** Ten whole years.

**Man 1** Ten whole years. Father and I haven't said a word. We're like two strangers.

**Man 2** Guoqing.

**Man 1** Brother.

**Man 2** Go home.

**Man 1** Is he there?

**Man 2** Pa? Yeah.

**Man 1 (stands still)** I don't want to go.

**Man 2** Where will you go then? *(Beat.)* Ok, how about my place?

**Man 3** Pause.

**Man 1** A city without a home, destined to be alien.

**Man 2** Wang Guoqing looks up. A crow flies with difficulty over the city's worn-out architecture. It takes all its might to stay in the air. It may fall out of the sky any moment.

**Man 1** (*lowers his head*) This city is rotting. Dead and disfigured! (*Coldly.*) Caw, caw, caw!

**Man 2** It's in the past, Guoqing. Look forward, we've still got to live.

**Man 1** You know who he is?

**Man 2** Yes.

**Man 1** I won't let him get away.

**Man 2** It's been years.

**Man 1** I'll kill him with my own hands.

**Man 2** Guoqing.

**Man 1** Brother, you don't have to say no more. (*Looks into the distance.*) In the distance, the sky is blue, the river is rapid.

**Man 2** I want Papa to move in, but he won't. He says he's afraid.

**Man 1** (*snickers*) He's afraid?

**Man 3** I'm afraid. I'm afraid that your ma would come home and couldn't find me.

*Silence. Wang Guoqing lights a cigarette, inhales and blows a smoke ring.*

**Man 1** Let's go home.

**Man 2** Guoqing? Oh, right.

*Wang Guoqing and his brother walks over to their father Wang Yiqing.*

**Man 2** Pa, Guoqing's home.

**Man 3** (*icily*) You're back!

**Man 1** (*frostily*) I'm back.

**Man 2** Pause.

**Man 1** Pause.

**Man 3** Pause. As if ten years have passed.

**Man 1** He's aged much more than I thought. His body's shriveled. His back bent.

**Man 3** You're all grown up, Guoqing. (*Beat.*) Good that you're back –

**Man 1** There's nothing good or bad about it.

**Man 3** Guoqing, you smoke?

**Man 1** Up there in Heilongjiang, if you don't smoke in winter, you're dead.

*As Wang Guoqing watches his father, he throws the cigarette on the floor and stamps it out.*

*He turns around and exits.*

*Lights fade to blackout.*

**Scene Six**

*Characters:*

**Man 1 – Wang Guoqing, 25**

**Man 3 – Wang Yiqing, Guoqing's father, in his 50s**

*Location: Chongqing City Hall*

*Time: 1979*

*Lights up. Man 1 stands centre stage.*

*Night. City noises. Cacophonous.*

**Man 3** *appears in a corner of the stage.*

**Man 1** ... sentenced to death. With immediate effect.

**Man 3** It looks bustling at the trial. More than a hundred people are being sentenced at the same time. No one can remember anybody. Wang Guoqing sits among the crowd. He feels like an abandoned child. He keeps his eyes closed and his ears keen, fearing that name would slip away – Ding Jianguo.

**Man 1** Ding Jianguo – I open my eyes, trying hard to search from the rows of men on the stage for that man called Ding Jianguo. But they all hang their heads low. I don't know which of them is Ding Jianguo.

**Man 3** Ding Jianguo, three years.

**Man 1** Ding Jianguo, three years? Sentenced to three years? How could this be? One life, just three years?

**Man 3** The treble horn blasts away, the sentenced parade up, then down, row after row. Those not on stage continue to make greetings, suck on seeds, nattering and bantering, then they disperse.

**Man 1** Like a dream.

**Man 3** The auditorium is trashed. Only two men are left. They stand far, far away. Heads down. Not talking.

**Man 1** It's pouring down. The rain hits the old glass panes on the outside of the hall, pounding hard.

*The sounds of a downpour, louder and louder.*

**Man 1** Wang Yiqing walks outside. The rain grows more intense. In the square outside the hall, there is not a single person. The city observes the silence in the rain.

**Man 3** This city has just woken up, but not yet awake. Wang Guoqing can't move his leg. His legs don't feel like his.

**Man 1** I stand next to him, quietly watching the rain.

**Man 3** He stands next to me, not a word.

**Man 1** Rain, pouring down. Everything looks blurry.

**Man 3** Rain, pouring down, like everything's depending on it.

**Man 1** A crow stands on a power line not far away. The rain has doused its feathers. It huddles tight, totally still.

**Man 3** Wang Yiqing watches that crow. It may fall any moment.

**Man 1** Three years?

**Man 3** Manslaughter.

**Man 1** He meant it.

**Man 3** Back then...

**Man 1** What?

**Man 3** Can't blame him completely, at the time everyone was... mad. *(Pause.)* I too, was mad. You saw. That night on the hill... I... I should have been up there too today.

**Man 1** *(looks at his father)* You should have been... but that doesn't justify it.

**Man 3** It's the fact.

**Man 1** I won't let him get away.

**Man 3** What're you going to do?

**Man 1** Three years.

**Man 3** Three years?

**Man 1** I'll wait another three years.

**Man 3** Guoqing, you were young. You didn't understand. But you should know now. This is pointless.

**Man 1** Yes, I was young, I didn't understand. But I know now. I'll kill him – no matter what.

**Man 3** He's got what he deserved.

**Man 1** *(sniggers)* Three years? That's enough?

**Man 3** It's never enough, Guoqing.

**Man 1** You work with him. You know it's him. Yet you let him off.

**Man 3** Silence.

**Man 1** Silence.

**Man 3** Silence.

**Man 1** Silence.

**Man 3** Rain, pouring down, like water spilt on the ground.

**Man 1** Their faces dark like stale water.

**Man 3** Rain, pouring down.

**Man 1** Hey, look over there.

**Man 3** Wang Guoqing points at the power line by the road not far away. A crow stands on it. It's huddling tight, and it's watching him. What does it mean?

**Man 3** Silence. Only the sound of rain.

**Man 1** Silence. Only that crow.

*Wang Guoqing lifts his head.*

**Man 1** He says nothing. He hunches and walks straight into the rain.

**Man 3** Rain falls on my body. In no time I'm completely soaked.

**Man 1** The threadbare old-man shirt is wet through in an instant, sticking to his torso, revealing his flimsy body.

**Man 3** I try hard to straighten my back. My whole being drenched in rain. I seem to be crying. I can't let him see me cry.

**Man 1** I watch him slowly dissolve into the rain.

**Man 3** Raining hard. All tears.

*Wang Yiqing walks upstage and exits.*

**Man 1** Wang Guoqing lifts his head. The rain beats on his face, ice cold. He stares at the crow, as if he's also standing on the power line. Above this city, dark clouds gather. Infinite lines of rain falls from the night sky, Wang Guoqing feels his body drifting in the rain, ascending, ascending... appraising this city – it's so alien.

*The rain hits louder and louder.*

*Lights fade to blackout.*

**Scene Seven***Characters:***Woman 1 – wife of Wang Guoqing, in her 20s****Man 1 – Wang Guoqing, age 28****Man 3 – Wang Yiqing, Guoqing's father, in his 50s****Man 2 – Wang Guojian, Guoqing's brother, in his 30s****Woman 3 – female nurse***Location: Chongqing**Time: 1982**Lights up. Sounds of drumming amidst a boisterous celebration. **Woman 3** enters.***Man 2** It doesn't matter when. This country is always celebrating. Anything louder than a fart, they'll celebrate for days.*Upstage in the light, sits **Woman 2** and **Man 1**. **Man 3** sits in another corner.***Woman 1** I'm in my twenties. Also a rusticated youth. Been a textile factory worker since coming back to Chongqing. (*She is forthright.*) I'm a year younger than you. I was in Jiangxi. Where were you?**Man 1** Heilongjiang.**Woman 1** That's far.**Man 1** I chose it. The farther the better.**Man 2** Guoqing went there for me.**Woman 1** I've got a house. Mother just died.**Man 2** Father?**Woman 1** Died more than ten years ago in the armed struggles.**Man 2** Guoqing...**Man 1** Fine.**Man 2** What?**Man 1** Fine, brother. I'll marry her.**Woman 1** We're getting married.*Wedding music. Two chairs appear center stage. Wang Guoqing and his Wife sit facing each other.***Man 1** Thank you.**Woman 1** What for?**Man 1** For marrying me.**Woman 1** Then I've to thank you too. For marrying me.**Man 1** I'll try to be a good husband, a good father, but... Wang Guoqing looks at this wife. A touch of confusion lurks in the blissful happiness on her face.**Woman 1** What's wrong?



**Man 1** I'm a man with a vendetta.

**Woman 1** Vendetta?

**Man 1** My mother's murder. I must avenge. At all cost, even if...

**Woman 1** His eyes are full of hatred. I can't help but shudder. Oh, I see.

*The Nurse enters. She pushes a hospital bed to Wang Yiqing. He lies in it. Wang Guoqing, his Wife and his Brother walk over. The Nurse shakes her head.*

**Man 3** You... I've got something to say to Guoqing.

*Guoqing's Wife and Brother and the Nurse exit.*

*Wang Guoqing looks at his Father.*

**Man 3** Guoqing, you should smoke less.

**Man 1** Right in his face, I inhale, then exhale slowly.

**Man 3** Guoqing, I...

**Man 1** Yeah, I'm listening.

**Man 3** That afternoon, in the factory's yard, those guns that were handed out... His gun – I gave it to him. (*Beat.*) The gun Ding Jianguo fired. I gave it to him.

**Man 1** Pause.

**Man 3** Pause.

**Man 1** Wang Guoqing can feel his head ringing.

**Man 3** Guoqing?

**Man 1** Wang Guoqing clenches his fists tight. He can hear his joints pop.

**Man 3** Guoqing? Guoqing!

**Man 1** Wang Guoqing stares at his father.

**Man 3** Guoqing...

**Man 1** Wang Guoqing watches his father's body stiffen, trying to sit up. His hand extends rigidly, trying to touch his son. Wang Guoqing dodges him. He watches his father as he falls heavily back onto the bed.

**Man 3** Guoqing!

**Man 1** I watch him as his face becomes more and more twisted.

**Man 3** Guoqing, I, I...

**Man 1** Wang Guoqing turns his head and stares at the monitor. His heart's beating slower and slower. Time's also slowing down.

**Man 3** Guoqing!

**Man 1** He struggles in the bed. But I'm not looking at him. I'm only staring at the monitor. Until his ECG turns into a straight line.

*Wang Yiqing convulses for a short while, then all is still. Guoqing's Brother and Wife as well as the Nurse rushes in. The Nurse bustles around.*

**Man 2** Pa! Pa! Pa!

**Woman 1** Quick, call the doctor!

**Woman 3**      Doc, doc!

*The Nurse exits running.*

**Woman 1**      Pa, pa! Guoqing! Guoqing?

**Man 1** (*goes downstage, smoking*)      I saw my mother's body on the grass. The blood won't stop. Thick and sticky all over the ground.

*Lights fade to blackout.*

**Scene Eight***Characters:***Man 1 – Wang Guoqing, age 33****Woman 1 – wife of Wang Guoqing, in her 30s****Man 2 – Ding Jianguo, in his 40s****Man 3 – Wang Guojian, Guoqing's brother, in his 40s****Woman 3 – waitress****Woman 2***Location: At home in Chongqing; a hospital in Shanghai**Time: 1987**Lights up. Silence. Woman 2 appears upstage.*

**Woman 1** Day after day goes by. This is destined to be a riotous spring. Fiery sun, desolation. This is destined to be a melancholic, hushed summer. How long has it been since everything happening in this world has nothing to do with Wang Guoqing?

**Man 1 enters.****Man 1** I'm just plodding on.**Woman 1** Pause.

**Man 1** I'm driving trucks. Always driving. I like driving. Only when I'm driving – on the road, then I know I'm driving towards a defined destination. Until that day, by chance, I find out he's in Shanghai.

**Woman 1** You're back.**Man 1** Yeah. (*Looks at his wife.*)**Woman 1** What's wrong?**Man 1** I found him.**Woman 1** Him? (*Surprise.*) Him!**Man 1** Yes. Ding Jianguo. He's in Shanghai.**Woman 1** Guoqing, your son's doing well in his exams.**Man 1** We'll... divorce.**Woman 1** Food's ready.**Man 1** Everything's yours. Including the child. Let's just divorce.**Woman 1** I made the slow-cooked pork that you like.**Man 1** I'm going to Shanghai.**Woman 1** Let's eat.**Man 1** He's sick. In a hospital.**Woman 1** Chilies?**Man 1** I've stolen a jeep. When it's done, we'll see, maybe I won't come back.**Woman 1** They like their food sweet in Shanghai.

**Man 1** If I'm alive... I'll send money back.

**Woman 1** Beer? Guoqing.

**Man 1** It'll be tough for you.

**Woman 1** It's cold.

**Man 1** I fail you, but you can't give up. This has nothing to do with you or the child.

**Woman 1** ...

**Man 1** Sorry.

**Woman 1** I'll get you some more rice.

**Woman 1** *turns around and exits.*

**Man 1** I drive the jeep to Shanghai. During the day, I find a quiet spot to nap in the car. At night, I drive. All the way I feel I'm being enveloped by darkness. Only the headlights are on, shining on all kinds of roads. Most of them are dirt tracks, dust flying everywhere. I feel I'm the dust churning in the headlight, there's no chance to settle.

*Upstage lies Ding Jianguo in a hospital bed.*

**Man 1** I know somewhere in this world, a man called Ding Jianguo is still alive. We're like two planets. One tries to run away, one tries to hold on. We've both lost our orbits. They won't line up. One day, they'll clash. Only when one's destroyed, then the other may get back on course.

*Wang Guoqing walks over, with a sharp knife in his hand. He points it at Ding Jianguo.*

**Man 1** Get up.

**Man 2** *(hoists himself up)* Who's that?

**Man 1** You don't know me.

**Man 2** Yeah.

**Man 1** I know you.

**Man 2** What do you want?

**Man 1** To kill you... Twenty years ago, you killed a woman.

**Man 2** I didn't –

**Man 1** You shut up.

**Man 2** Let me explain.

**Man 1** There's nothing to explain.

**Man 2** Who are you really?

**Man 1** I'm her son.

*Wang Guoqing stabs Ding Jianguo.*

*Ding falls back into the bed.*

*Wang cleans the knife with the bed linen, then heads downstage.*

*Upstage where the bed is, lights start to dim.*

**Man 1** I've played it over and over in my head how I'd kill Ding Jianguo... I pull him out of the prison, burying him alive. I intercept the prison transport, sentencing him to death in front of other offenders... and this time, I'm killing him on his sick bed.

*Wang Guoqing blankly walks around while he mumbles.*

**Man 1** The streets of Shanghai are busy. The hospital's easy to find.

**Woman 2** Are you blind?

**Man 1** At eleven forty-five, the doctors and nurses will go to the canteen for lunch. No one'll be in the ward at that time, just him. At twelve thirty, they'll be back. I only have forty-five minutes. I've brought a nylon bag, rope, knife – several knives... I've filled the jeep up, parked it outside the hospital. If he fights back, I'll kill him there and then. If he cooperates, I'll take him back to Chongqing and slaughter him at mama's grave.

*Upstage, where the hospital bed is, lights up – gradually.*

**Woman 2** I'm blind.

**Man 1** Early that morning, I take a seat in the restaurant opposite the hospital.

**Woman 3** Mister, eating in?

**Man 1** Are you serving?

**Woman 3** Breakfast or lunch?

**Man 1** Lunch.

**Woman 3** Bit early for that!

**Man 1** Are you serving?

**Woman 3 (unwillingly)** Yeah.

*Wang Guoqing gives the waitress his order. She takes it, then returns with a few dishes and two bottles of beers.*

**Man 1** Chewing the food, but can't taste a thing. I seem to have lost my sense of taste.

**Woman 3 (crossing her arms and looks at him)** Nutcase.

**Man 1** People hover back and forth in front of me.

**Man 1 (looks at his watch)** What time is it?

**Woman 3** Eleven. (*Grumbles.*) Hey, haven't you got a watch?

**Man 1** The bill.

**Woman 3** When he pays, his hand is shaking.

**Man 1** She looks at me. She's a bit nervous.

**Woman 3** Something's wrong with him.

**Man 1** Would she call the police? I go into the hospital, find a corner to squat down. I checked it out a couple of days ago. I stash one knife in my waistband, I hold one in my hand, wrapped in newspaper. In the bag, I've got a big one. Rope, tape, hammer... everything's ready.

**Woman 3** Wang Guoqing sits on the floor. He's covered in sweat.

- Man 1** How could it be this hot? It's only June.
- Woman 3** His eyes never leave the door to the ward.
- Man 1** It's quiet and still. No one comes in or out.
- Woman 3** Eleven thirty. Wang Guoqing stands up. He wobbles, almost falls over. He slaps himself hard.
- Man 1** A loud slap. My head rings. My whole body seems to swell up. The doctors and nurses leave with their packed lunches, chattering away.
- Woman 3** His legs stride mechanically forward. A hundred meters ahead is Ding Jianguo's ward.
- Man 1** Through the window, I can see shapes moving.
- Woman 3** Wang Guoqing checks his watch.
- Woman 1** Eleven forty.
- Man 1** I can see the drip stand. A bottle hangs from it.
- Man 3** Eleven forty-one.
- Man 1** The ward's curtain is lifted up.
- Woman 3** Wang Guoqing turns around and leaves in a hurry. He goes back to the corner.
- Man 1** Fuck!
- Woman 3** Eleven forty-three.
- Man 1** The curtain's moving. Fuck, it's the wind.
- Man 3** Eleven forty-four.
- Woman 3** He takes two deep breaths and knocks his head. Eleven forty-five. He stands up and dashes outside. The yard is quiet, he can even hear birds chirping. The landing is a bit slippery. He almost loses his footing and falls over. He drops the nylon bag he's been carrying. It clatters. He snatches it up, throws away the paper in his hand and kicks the door open.
- Wang Guoqing dashes over to the bed upstage.*
- Woman 3** Wang Guoqing lunges toward the bed and yanks the blanket off. The bed is empty.
- Man 1** My head goes numb. The bed's empty!
- Woman 3** Like a caged lion, he paces around the room looking.
- Man 1** Nothing, nothing, not a single soul.
- Woman 3** Wang Guoqing looks at the tag on the bed. Ding Jianguo, that's right. The name on the drip, Ding Jianguo, that's right.
- Man 1** Wang Guoqing paces. Back and forth.
- Man 3** Eleven fifty-five.
- Man 1** Outside, a shadow passes, soundless.

**Woman 1** Wang Guoqing dashes out of the ward. He stands in the yard, exhaling deeply.

**Man 1** It's as if I've been holding my breath all the time. It's as if I've never taken a breath in my life.

**Woman 1** Wang Guoqing stands there, mumbling and fussing away.

**Man 1** I can't control myself. A chill takes over my body, can't stop shaking and shivering.

**Woman 2** Twelve twenty.

**Woman 3** A nurse goes into the ward.

**Man 1** Wang Guoqing leaves the hospital in a hurry.

*Wang Guoqing walks rapidly away on the stage.*

**Woman 1** Midday. The sun's fierce.

**Man 1** The street, full of uncaring faces.

**Woman 3** Wang Guoqing feels he's drifting in the crowd.

*Wang Guoqing stops suddenly. He stands upstage.*

**Man 3 enters with a phone.**

*A clear ringtone.*

*Lights upstage where the hospital bed lies. Ding Jianguo gets out of the bed and answers his phone.*

**Man 3** Ding Jianguo?

**Man 2** Yes.

**Man 3** I'm Wang Guojian.

**Man 2** Wang Guojian?

**Man 3** Wang Yiqing's son. Elder son.

**Man 2** Hi.

**Man 3** You're in Shanghai?

**Man 2** ...

**Man 3** My brother's coming for you.

**Man 2** ...

**Man 3** He knows which hospital you're at in Shanghai. He's coming for you.

**Man 2** ...

**Man 3** He's been looking for you... You... should lie low.

*Wang Guojian hangs up.*

*The exaggerated sound of a phone hanging up. Ding Jianguo hangs up, haunted and lost, exits in a run.*

**Man 1** Brother?! Brother! Why?

*Wang Guojian looks at his brother, emotionless.*

**Man 1** Why?

*The knife in Wang Guoqing's hand falls on the ground.*

**Man 3**           Caw, caw, caw!

**Man 1**           A crow caws as it flies. It's flying really fast.

**Man 2**           It quickly disappears into the Shanghai night.

**Man 1**           Shanghai in June 1987 can actually be this cold.

*Lights fade to blackout.*



**Scene Nine***Characters:***Man 1 – Wang Guoqing, age 46****Man 2 – Ding Liming, son of Ding Jianguo and a judge in Shanghai, age 26****Man 3, Woman 1, Woman 2 and Woman 3***Location: The Bund, Shanghai**Time: 2000**Lights up.**The light and sound of fireworks.***Man 3, Woman 1, Woman 2 and Woman 3** stroll on the stage.*Ding Liming walks between them. A smile on his face.**Wang Guoqing appears in a corner of the stage, watching Ding.***Man 2** The last night before Y2K. Millennium night! Once every thousand years. Shanghai, the Bund, people everywhere.**Man 1** Fireworks explode in the sky, vanishing in a blink. Flickers brighten the faces of the crowd looking up. The city at night is moaning and groaning as if it's about to orgasm.**Man 2** Amidst the crowd, so packed that nothing's standing straight, Wang Guoqing watches people cheer and their inexplicable excitement. Buffered by the crowd, he has eyes only for one person.**Man 1** Buffered by the crowd, my eyes never leave him. His face, full of hope, future, determination.**Man 2** Ding Liming cuts through the crowd, like a minnow in a stream. To be in Shanghai, to be a judge, that's his life's dream.**Man 1** A man can disappear for thirteen years without a trace. But there are always some clues.*Wang Guoqing circles Ding Liming, appraising him.***Man 1** Thirteen years. I didn't find Ding Jianguo. I found his son, Ding Liming.**Man 2** A judge.**Man 1** A minnow.**Man 2** Minnow?**Man 1** A small fish that swims fast. They've got one that leads, whether right or wrong, the shoal follows. I'll give you a deadline. It's also for me.**Man 2** A date?**Man 1** Yes. When my mother died, I was thirteen. So, you'll have thirteen years.**Man 2** Thirteen years?**Man 1** Thirteen years. If after thirteen years, you're still a good person, I'll let you off.

**Man 2** Good? (*Laughs.*) What's good?

**Man 1** We'll use the standard that applies to most people – the law.

**Man 2** The law?

**Man 1** In the next thirteen years, if you stay on the right side of the law, I'll let you off.

**Man 2** You haven't got the power.

**Man 1** Power? (*Laughs.*) Your father gave it to me.

**Man 2** My father?

**Man 1** His name is Ding Jianguo.

**Man 2** Ding Jianguo, that man I call father, is far away on the horizon, drifting.

**Man 3, Woman 1, Woman 2 and Woman 3 exit.**

**Man 2** Far away, that man. He looks at people funny. He's in the crowd, but has nothing to do with the people.

**Man 1** Everyone else doesn't seem to exist. Just me and you. Man to man.

**Man 2** The fireworks are over. The crowd creeps along in the dark. So many people. Who's good? Who's bad?

**Man 1** Maggots in a pile of shit.

**Man 2** The city, panting.

**Man 1** Lights dim.

**Man 2** Darkness is just a placebo. It masks the issue, but it can't stop the pain.

*Wang Guoqing and Ding Liming stare at each other.*

**Man 1** What are they all cheering about?

**Man 2** The world may be entering a new millennium, but it's old and dying.

*Lights fade to blackout.*

**Scene Ten***Characters:***Man 1 – Ding Guoqing, age 54****Man 2 – Ding Liming, age 34, middle aged man****Man 3 – Police****Woman 1 – Ding’s wife****Woman 3 – Ding’s lover****Woman 2***Location: Shanghai, Beijing**Time: 2008**Lights up.**Wang Guoqing is wearing a raincoat, standing silently. He’s shivering a little, his body shudders.**Others stand at a corner of the stage, watching him. They are in a stand off.***Man 3** Silence!**Man 2** Lub-dub, lub-dub, lub-dub...**Woman 1** Silence!**Man 2** Lub-dub, lub-dub, lub-dub...**Woman 2** Silence!**Man 2** Lub-dub, lub-dub, lub-dub...**Woman 1** Silence!**Man 2** Lub-dub, lub-dub, lub-dub! So quiet that you can hear your heart beat.**Man 3** Wang Guoqing stands in front of a notice board. He can’t find any trace of the protest letter he stuck on a week ago.*Wang Guoqing shouts with all his might. He huddles and squats. But he can’t make a sound.***Man 3** Silence!**Woman 1** Silence!**Woman 2** Silence!**Woman 3** Silence!**Man 2** Silence! No one cares, no one!**Man 3** Vanished.**Woman 1** Silenced.**Woman 2** Gone.**Woman 3** Unheard.**Man 2** ...**Man 3** It’s happened, but it’s like nothing’s happened.

**Man 2** Unexpected, but within expectation.

**Man 3** Wang Guoqing knew it'd be so.

**Man 2** He's just one in the shoal of minnows, but he'll never be the lead one.  
*Wang Guoqing stands up slowly.*

**Man 1** I feel like I'm a crow standing on a power line. I cry with my life, but no one hears me.  
*The crow opens its beak and caws.*

**Man 2** Caw, caw, caw!  
*More and more sounds from the city: people, cars, noisy and indistinct.  
The sound gets louder and louder. A wall of noise that drowns the crow's caw.  
It quiets down. Silence.  
The crow's beak is still open, but no sound comes out.*

**Man 2** ...

**Man 3** Silence!

**Woman 1** Silence!

**Woman 2** Silence!

**Woman 3** Silence!

**Man 1** The whole city, like it's dead. So quiet, I can hear my heartbeat. It's very rhythmic, the war drums that push me to march forward.  
*Distant thunder.*

**Man 3** Thunder, rolling closer from the distance.

**Woman 3** The city, restless.

**Woman 1** The air, stifling.

**Man 1** I'm walking on the street, sweat dripping non-stop. People around seem blurry. I keep walking, faster. Determination powers my body.  
*Wang Guoqing walks rapidly.*

**Woman 3** The crow flies.

**Man 3** It's raining.

**Man 1** He makes a move. He's not a good person. That's enough. I've got my warrant. It's my turn.

**Woman 3** The crow flies away.

**Man 1** I'm your stealthy shadow of the night. But when I raise the knife, it glimmers, and you lose your shadow.

**Woman 3** It's raining. The peach blossoms have bloomed.

**Man 1** I bought four cars. Changed different drivers. To follow him.

**Man 3** Boss?

**Man 1** Follow him.

**Man 2** Honey, I'm home.

- Woman 1** Finished for the day? Must be tired.
- Man 2** Yeah, never ending cases.
- Woman 2** Boss?
- Man 1** Follow him... This is not his house?
- Woman 2** Boss?
- Man 1** You go.
- Woman 2** What about you?
- Man 1** I'll make my own way.
- Man 2** Honey, I'm home.
- Woman 3** Who's your honey? I'm like a cat on a hot tin roof, took you so long. Come in, quick.
- Man 2** I know you can't wait.
- Man 1** I stoop by the door, watching my watch, watching the second hand move, then minute, then hour. Two hours. Son of a bitch. He's got stamina.
- Man 3** Boss?
- Man 1** Go on.
- Man 2** Honey, how was the parent-teacher meeting?
- Woman 1** Yeah, you do remember.
- Man 2** Busy.
- Woman 1** Others aren't busy?
- Man 2** I won't be back tomorrow night.
- Woman 1** Again?
- Man 2** Got a case.
- Woman 2** Boss, keep watching him?
- Man 1** Yeah.
- Man 2** Darling, I'm back.
- Woman 3** Why are you so late?
- Man 2** Gotta go to my daughter's parent-teacher meeting.
- Woman 3** You?
- Man 2** Fine, won't talk about that.
- Woman 3** Won't let you go tonight.
- Man 2** Fine, I won't leave.
- Wang Guoqing goes to the center of the stage and hesitates for a long time. Then he knocks.*
- Ding Liming's Mistress opens the door.*
- Woman 3** What?
- Man 1** Delivery.
- Woman 3** (eyes Wang up and down) Delivery?
- Man 1** This is Flat 603, right?

**Woman 3** No, this is 1603.

**Man 1** Sorry, my mistake.

*Ding's mistress shuts the door.*

**Man 2** Who's that?

**Woman 3** Delivery. Got the wrong flat.

**Man 1** (*calls on his phone*) Hi... I want to report Judge Ding Liming...

*Wang Guoqing hangs up.*

**Man 3** He's got three properties, each worth more than ten million. His wife doesn't work. He also keeps a mistress...

**Man 1** None of these is fatal... So, I went to Beijing.

*The crow opens its beak, but makes no sound.*

**Man 2** ...

**Man 3** Silence!

**Woman 1** Silence!

**Woman 2** Silence!

**Woman 3** Silence!

*The cast takes off Wang Guoqing's ragged old clothes and dress him in a suit, leather shoes and raincoat. With a leather bag in his hand, Wang looks fresh and spirited.*

**Man 1** I'm not a visitor and I'm not here with a petition.

**Woman 1** State Bureau for Letters and Calls.

**Man 3** Name: Wang Guoqing.

**Woman 2** Central Political and Legal Commission.

**Man 3** Gender: Male.

**Woman 1** Supreme People's Court.

**Man 3** Age: Fifty four.

**Woman 2** Beijing. The capital.

**Man 3** Ethnicity: Han.

**Man 1** I want to report Judge Ding Liming!

**Man 2** Beijing's winter. The wind cuts your face like a knife.

**Man 1** The wind pulls at my hair, howling with abandonment in my ears. The wide avenues, empty. Only the distinct neons flicker restlessly. A crow that has died from the cold lies stiffly on the concrete. Its claws clenched, as if trying to clutch onto something. But there's only the cold wind.

**Woman 1** A street cleaner walks past, she sweeps the dead crow into her pan.

**Man 1** I'm being swept into the pan by that woman, then tipped into the bin. My stiff body hits the bin with a thud.

**Woman 1** The thud instantly disappears into the cold wind, without a trace.

**Man 1** I once roamed the sky, always brooding.

**Man 3** A policeman comes over.

**Man 3** Hey, what are you doing?

**Man 1** Nothing.

**Man 3** What're you doing here?

**Man 1** Me?

**Man 3** ID.

*Wang Guoqing digs out his ID, stunned, then passes it onto the Policeman. He looks at it.*

**Man 3** Name.

**Man 1** Wang Guoqing.

**Man 3** What's in your bag?

**Man 1** Papers.

**Man 3** Open it.

*The Policeman looks into Wang's briefcase, hands the ID back, then leaves.*

**Man 3** Move, move along!

**Man 1** Right.

**Man 2** A middle-aged man comes over.

**Man 2** The Olympics are over.

**Man 1** I know.

**Man 2** Then why are you hanging here?

**Man 1** ...

**Man 2** Would you?

**Man 1** I'll go now.

**Man 2** Be smart. This is not the place to hang around.

**Man 1** I really want to beat the drum and make a petition now. But, where's my drum?

*In the distance, intense drumbeats, getting louder.*

*Lights fade to blackout.*

**Scene Eleven***Characters:***Man 1 – Wang Guoqing, age 56****Man 2 – Ding Liming, age 36****Man 3 – dancer in the public square****Woman 3 – dancer in the public square****Woman 2 – girl****Woman 1***Location: Shanghai**Time: 2010**Lights up.**A man and a woman sit at the opposite ends of the stage. They wear the same outfit: floral shirt, white trousers, black leather shoes.**They look at each other.***Man 3** Dusk. The sun hasn't set yet. In a street corner park sits a man and a woman. They're both old, but it's impossible to tell their age. They're dressed immaculately.*The Woman eventually stands up. She tries to twist from her waist, a few dance steps. Becoming a bit self-conscious, she stops.***Man 3** The man looks at her. He asks quietly, 'New here?'**Woman 3** No. You?**Man 3** No.**Woman 3** How come I haven't seen you before?**Man 3** Me neither.**Woman 3** You know how to dance?**Man 3** No.**Woman 3** Me neither.**Man 3** No, you're doing great.**Woman 3** It's embarrassing.**Man 3** I know.**Woman 3** The woman looks at the man. She hasn't got anything else to say. Silence.**Man 3** Silence.**Woman 3** He looks at his watch.**Man 3** *looks at his watch.***Man 3** She runs her hand through her neatly done hair and turns her head away.**Woman 3** The sky is stained red in the west. Rays of sun struggle between the curtain walls of skyscrapers, flashing dazzles of gold. He's looking at me?**Man 3** The man's looking at the woman.



**Woman 3** The woman turns her head. He's looking at me. (*Smiles.*) We're early.

**Man 3** It's all right.

**Woman 3** Yes, it's all right.

*Two couples enter. They also wear the same outfit.*

*The Man and the Woman both immediately become much more at ease.*

*One of the men is carrying a boom box. He presses a button, loud pop music bursts forth.*

*Following the music, the three couples start to dance. The steps are simple and crude. The dance looks boring and monotonous, but the dancers are reveling in the process.*

*One of the men gradually dances out of the crowd. He stops to watch the dancers ponderously. He takes off his floral shirt. He is Wang Guoqing.*

**Man 1** Wang Guoqing watches the dancers in the square. They were once section heads, division directors, bureau chiefs. Blue collar, white collar, gold collar. Professors, teachers, clerks! But now, they're all dancers in the square.

*One of the women gradually dances out of the crowd. She stops to watch the dancers ponderously. She takes off her floral shirt. She is the Girl.*

**Man 1** A girl walks to this street corner. Starts yelling at the dancers angrily.

**Woman 2** (*with her hands on her waist*) Stop dancing. Stop the racket.

**Man 1** The music and the dancing continue. No one pays any attention.

**Woman 2** (*with her hands on her waist*) Look how old you are! You should know better!

**Man 1** The music and the dancing continue. No one pays any attention.

**Woman 2** (*with her hands on her waist*) You know this is public nuisance, eh? I'm going to sue you. You've got family, kids. Don't you realize other people still need to live? Hey, I'm talking to you. Are you all animals? Are you all idiots? Idiots! Idiots!

*One of the men walks to the boom box. He turns a dial, the music becomes louder.*

**Man 1** The girl watches them.

*The Girl watches this group. She gradually calms down. Then slowly puts on the floral shirt and join in the dance again.*

**Man 1** Wang Guoqing watches these people. He's a bit frightened. He longs to be one of them, but is also scared of becoming them.

*Music fades out. The dancers take off their floral shirts. They walk around the stage, Wang Guoqing weaves in and out.*

**Man 1** Wang Guoqing walks along on the streets. He feels an eagle is circling his head. So he buys a pair of glasses with a video camera and starts to make plans. One year, two, three. He's not in a hurry. To catch a fox, you have to outwit him. This is a war between two men. He's not relying on the crowd, but he can use them.

*Wang Guoqing stands still.*

*Ding Liming enters. He looks at Wang Guoqing from a distance. Wang turns to watch him. They seem to recognize each other. Ding walks toward Wang then walks on past him. Wang turns to watch Ding exit.*

**Man 1**            This year, I've been following him. We've come face to face many times. I think he must have noticed me, but each time, we simply brush past each other.

*The light on Wang Guoqing dims.*

**Scene Twelve***Characters:***Man 1 – Wang Guoqing, age 59****Man 2 – Ding Liming, age 39****Woman 2 – prostitute****Man 3 – security guard, Ding Jianguo***Location: A private members club in Shanghai**Time: 2013**Darkness. A man is panting hard.***Man 3** Darkness! Can't see anything.**Man 2** Darkness! Can feel everything. Banging, over and over. Unstoppable, insane banging. Each time closer and closer to a climax til he comes.**Man 3** Darkness! Can't see anything.**Man 2** Darkness! I bang it away time after time. I can see the whole world.**Man 3** Darkness! Oppresses everything.**Man 2** Darkness! Allows everything to expand rapidly. Bigger and bigger. Stronger and stronger. The height of pleasure. I become fireworks.**Man 3** The fireworks explode in the night sky, dazzling.**Man 2** I light up the whole night sky.**Man 3** Darkness, gone.**Man 2** I see my twisted, deformed face.*Lights come up gradually. Ding Liming and the nurse fasten their clothes.***Man 3** Man is a strange animal. Spends so much time in the chase, then just in a few seconds, falls from the sky back to earth.**Man 2** I feel like I'm –**Woman 2** A pig.**Man 2** ...?**Woman 2** Man, you've really got it.**Man 2** Really?**Woman 2** Someone almost couldn't handle it.**Man 2** So, which is it? Got it, or can't handle it?**Woman 2** Shameless. You've got it, others can't handle it.**Man 2** I hope so. I'll come looking for you next time.**Woman 2** Man, you're mean. Turn around and I'm a stranger.**Man 2** I remember you.*Wang Guoqing enters wearing glasses. He goes close to Ding Liming and the nurse, circling them, watching.*

**Man 1** Stop. Right. Here. Can you play this slower?

**Man 3** What did you lose?

**Man 1** A briefcase.

**Man 3** You can call the police.

**Man 1** You're funny. I'm here for the ladies, and you want me to call the police?

**Man 3** Hey, hey. Did you have too much fun? Did everything else go out the window? (*Laughs.*) Be more careful next time.

**Man 1** Just take it back, here.

*Wang Guoqing circles Ding Liming and the nurse. Ding is holding her hand.*

**Man 1** Stop. Here. Can you play it slower? Let me see. Yes, this is the man. I've seen him. I remember I still had the bag when I passed him.

**Man 3** You've seen this lots of times.

**Man 1** Yes, I have, many times. But when did I put my bag down, and where did I put it, I just can't remember.

**Man 1** Looks like I won't be able to find it.

**Man 3** Why did you bring a bag for the ladies? All you need is a pouch.

**Man 1** Pouch?

**Man 3** (*Laughs*) You know.

**Man 1** Oooh, you're bad.

**Man 3** We're not as bad as you. We're the security, we can only watch the tapes. Not like you. You can watch, and you can – you know.

*Ding Liming and the nurse exit.*

*Wang Guoqing points in the direction where Ding has gone. He turns around to look at Man 3.*

**Man 1** I know, I know... You've got to hit 'em where it hurts. Ding Jianguo, I don't care where you're hiding. Your son is where it hurts.

*Ding Jianguo exits.*

*Wang Guoqing takes his glasses off and looks at it.*

**Man 1** Glasses that shoot video. What a fucking great invention. Now, it's my turn.

*Lights fade to blackout.*

**Scene Thirteen***Characters:***Man 1 – Wang Guoqing, age 59****Man 2 – Ding Jianguo, age 69****Man 3, Woman 1, Woman 2 and Woman 3***Location: Online**Time: 2013**Lights up. Three men and three women appear on stage.**Sounds of typing and the different noises the Internet makes.***Man 3** The Internet, what a great place!**Woman 1** There's a person behind every mark there.**Woman 2** Randomly pick a nickname, you can rant about anyone. After your rant, nobody knows who you are.**Woman 3** If the ones with names end up in your mouth, you can bite and tear as you like. As long as he's flesh and blood, you'll find something to snap your jaws on.**Woman 1** You're a rabid dog lurking in the dark, ready to pounce. You're never worried because the shouts would attract a crowd. People like watching dogs bite men, as long as they themselves stay out of it.**Woman 2** They'd love to watch a man bite a dog, but no one is willing to bear their teeth at a dog. Otherwise, they'd get an even bigger crowd.**Woman 3** In conclusion: the man gets mauled all over, while the dog has its day, barking away.**Woman 1** As long as it's someone else being bitten, no one would care whether it's a dog – or a pig – that's doing the pouncing.**Woman 2** They lurk in the dark, their teeth sharpened, ready to dash out, to bite.**Woman 3** Bite, bite furiously.**Woman 1** Hounding people with labels, acting like pigs and dogs. Bite.**Man 3** She's a mistress!**Woman 1** Bite.**Woman 2** She's got an Hermès!**Woman 3** Bite.**Man 2** He's taking drugs!**Woman 1** Bite.**Man 3** He's wearing a Rolex!**Woman 1** Bite.**Woman 2** His cigarettes are so expensive!

**Woman 3** Bite.

**Man 2** He's divorced!

**Woman 1** Bite.

**Man 2** He's back with his wife!

**Woman 1** Bite.

**Man 2** He's divorced again!

**Woman 1** Bite.

**Man 2** He's back with his wife again!

**Woman 1** Bite.

**Man 3** He's got seven kids!

**Woman 1** Bite.

**Woman 2** He's been to the bathroom three times in one morning!

**Woman 3** Bite.

**Man 2** He's human!

**Woman 1** Bite.

**Man 3** Who is he?

**Woman 1** Bite.

**Woman 2** Who is he?

**Woman 3** Tear him apart.

**Man 2** Who is he?

**Woman 1** Tear whoever he is apart.

**Woman 1** Bite.

**Man 3** Bite.

**Woman 1** Bite.

**Woman 2** Bite.

**Woman 3** Bite.

**Man 2** Bite.

**Woman 1** Bite.

**All** Bite.

**Man 1** I sign up for an account with the name "Andy Lau Says I'm Hot." I upload the video and beg a few friends to repost. Then, the biting begins.  
*Sounds of dogs barking and fighting, in crescendo.*

**Man 1** Half an hour.

**Woman 1** Wang Guoqing sits in front of the computer. He watches the number of reposts shoot up.

**Man 2** One hour.

**Woman 2** We can smell blood.

**Man 3** Two hours.

**Woman 3** Dog bites man, man bites dog, dog bites dog, man bites man...

**Man 2** Judge visits hooker. Repost.

**Woman 1** Judge pays for sex. Repost.

**Man 3** Scandal. Repost.

**Woman 2** Exciting. Repost.

**Woman 3** OMG. Repost.

**Man 2** Fab. Repost.

**Woman 1** Fuck. Repost.

**Man 3** Repost.

**Woman 2** Repost.

**Woman 3** Repost.

**Man 2** Scum.

**Woman 1** Criminal.

**Man 3** Kill him.

**Woman 2** Kill him.

**Woman 3** Kill him.

**Man 1** They're angrier than me.

**Woman 1** Dogs – always seem angrier than men.

**Man 2** Three hours later.

**Man 3** Wang Guoqing deletes the video, deletes the account.

**Woman 1** The storm is brewing.

**Man 2** Five hours later.

**Woman 2** Viewers, we've just received the news. A video of a judge visiting prostitutes has been leaked online...

**Man 2** Seven hours later.

**Woman 3** The video of Judge Ding Liming in the act with a prostitute has gone viral...

**Man 2** The next day.

**Woman 1** Are you Mr. Wang Guoqing?

**Man 2** The municipal's Discipline Commission and High Court are investigating the incident of five judges visiting prostitutes, including Ding Liming ...

**Woman 2** Aren't you afraid of revenge?

**Man 2** The Municipal Party Committee announces the verdict for the judge prostitution case...

**Woman 3** Why are you exacting revenge?

**Man 3** Analysis of public sentiment on the judge prostitution case...

**Woman 1** How did you get first hand information?

**Man 2** The whole story of the judge prostitution case...

**Man 3** One week later, these will all just be marks on the Internet. No one will remember.

**Woman 1** People get on with their lives.

**Woman 2** Dogs keep their jaws open wide.

**Woman 3** Bite.

**Man 3** Bite.

**Woman 1** Bite.

**Man 2** Bite.

*A phone rings. Man 2 is dialing. Wang Guoqing picks up his mobile.*

**Man 1** Hi! Hello! Hello?

**Man 2** I am Ding Jianguo. I'm in Hong Kong. Come. I'll be waiting for you!

**Woman 1** The rain grows more and more intense.

**Woman 2** Lights dim.

*The sound of rain.*

*Lights fade to blackout.*



**Scene Fourteen***Characters:***Man 1 – Wang Guoqing, age 60****Man 2 – Ding Jianguo, age 70; Ding Liming, age 40****Woman 1 – mother of Wang Guoqing, in her 40s****Man 3, Woman 2 and Woman 3***Location: Hong Kong**Time: 2014**Lights up.**The sound of rain gets louder and louder.***Man 3, Woman 1, Woman 2 and Woman 3** are all wearing raincoats, wrapped tight. They stand silently in the center of the stage.**Woman 1** Thanks to the sunshine, I break out of the sea. I dance happily in the air, rising steadily. The temperature gets colder, I bump into you.**Woman 2** There's no more you. Or me.**Woman 3** I keep rising. More and more water droplets. Tiny droplets. We keep rising.**Woman 1** We bump into each other. We get together.**Woman 2** That's me. I'm a cloud, accumulating in the night sky.**Woman 3** Getting thicker.**Woman 1** Getting cooler.**Woman 2** Raindrops come together in the cloud.**Woman 3** I come together in your body.**Woman 2** I can't hold you.**Woman 1** I wrestle out of the cloud, shouting, crying, happily rushing to the ground.**Woman 2** We run towards the ground together.**Woman 3** Sliding past skyscrapers, treetops, towards the ground.**Woman 1** The rain falling ceaselessly!**Woman 2** Down, down!**Woman 3** Hitting the ground, hitting on bodies. Dispersed.**Woman 2** Wang Guoqing listens to the rain outside. Dense. Knocking on his heart.**Man 1** I'm staring at the clock on the wall. Watching the second hand go forward bit by bit. But the minute hand seems to be stuck.**Man 3** Three forty-seven a.m.**Woman 3** From beyond the window comes a low, deep sound of singing. Barely audible, distant, rolling like the thunder, and rolling away in the city's night sky.**Woman 2** The grassland after the rainy season, the stampeding herd.**Man 3** hums a song – a march.

**Man 3** Hum...!

**Woman 3** Wang Guoqing stands up. Darkness envelops him. He can hear blood flowing, through his face, his chest, even to the ends of his hair.  
*Wang Guoqing suddenly appears in the light. He's standing and he's naked.*

**Woman 1** Lightning glows without reason. Outside, the dark night opens its mouth, swallowing everything.

**Man 1** I put my feet on the ground, but it feels like I'm stepping on spring.

**Woman 2** Wang Guoqing hobbles to the window.

**Woman 3** Outside, pitch black. Occasional lightning in the distance, illuminating the thick clouds, far, far away.

**Man 3** Hum...!

**Woman 3** Wang Guoqing walks to the bathroom. The floor is moist. His toes curl. The floor is cold.

**Woman 2** He turns on the light. It actually works.

**Woman 1** At the first beam of light, he can't help but sway, not quite steady on his feet, can't see clearly.

**Woman 3** Wang Guoqing turns the tap, splashing water onto his face, drinking a few mouthfuls in the process.

**Woman 2** The water is cool. He's suddenly much more awake.

**Woman 1** The cold water travels down the esophagus into his stomach, pulling him from midair back down to earth.

**Woman 2** He turns on the shower. Water gushes out.

**Woman 1** Water hits his body. He can't help but shudder.

**Man 3** Hong Kong, September 2014. A hotel in Central. Eleven minutes past four in the morning. Cold water hits Wang Guoqing's body. He can't help but shudder.

**All** Pants... t-shirt... trousers... shirt... jacket... socks... tie... leather shoes... watch...

**Man 3** Four thirty-two a.m.

**Woman 1** Wang Guoqing is dressed.

**Woman 2** He checks his bag once more.

**All** Hammer... chopper... kitchen knife... dagger... packing tape... rope... gloves... entry permit... train ticket... wallet...

**Woman 2** He pulls out a *renminbi* note. The person on it is laughing.

**Man 3** Ha ha ha!

**Woman 2** Door card... door... No one's in the lift.

**Man 3** Four forty-one a.m.

**Woman 3** *Ding...*

**Woman 2** The receptionist looks up, sleepy.

**Man 1** Hi.

**Woman 1**      Going out?

**Man 1**        Yeah.

**Woman 1**      Take care.

**Man 1**        Bye.

**Man 3**        The lobby's empty. Wang Guoqing pushes the glass door hard.

**Woman 2**      The wind whips his tie up, onto his face.

**Woman 3**      The rain falls ruthlessly on him.

**Man 1**        Fuck, forgot an umbrella.

**Man 3**        You've never needed one.

**Man 1**        Wang Guoqing heads into the rain. The rain falls on his hair, cheek, neck, into this body. Soaking him.

*Wang Guoqing walks rapidly. Man 3, Woman 1, Woman 2 and Woman 3 put on rain hats. They follow him, encircling him, even pulling him back. He moves forward with difficulty.*

**Woman 1**      Wang Guoqing walks in the rain.

**Woman 2**      Wang Guoqing walks on the streets of Central.

**Woman 3**      Wang Guoqing walks amidst the crowd.

**Woman 1**      Rain, falling harder and harder, hitting the ground and the people.

**Woman 2**      The streets are full of people, dense and packed.

**Woman 3**      They're singing.

**Man 3**        Hum...

**Woman 1**      People are sitting quietly.

**Woman 2**      People are sitting quietly on the street.

**Woman 3**      People are sitting quietly in the rain.

**Man 3**        Hum...

**Woman 1**      Wang Guoqing walks through the crowd.

**Woman 2**      He steps on people's clothes.

**Woman 3**      No one moves.

**Woman 1**      His bag bumps into people.

**Woman 2**      No one moves.

**Woman 3**      He kicks someone hard. He falls – on someone.

*Wang Guoqing falls.*

**Woman 1**      No one moves.

**Man 3**        Hum...

**Woman 2**      No one moves.

**Man 1**        Sorry

**Woman 2**      No one moves.

**Woman 3**      Wang Guoqing climbs out of the crowd.

Wang Guoqing climbs out.

**Man 1** Sorry, sorry. Sorry, sorry.

**Woman 1** People are looking ahead. In the distance, the black building squats there like the devil. It's been plastered with all kinds of slogans. Wang Guoqing seems to have seen it somewhere before.

**Woman 2** Wang Guoqing moves forward through the crowd with difficulty.

**Woman 3** People are looking right into the distance.

**Man 3** Hum...

**Woman 1** The rain covers Wang Guoqing's face.

**Woman 2** He seems to be floating in the rain.

**Woman 3** Being washed to a distant place.

**Man 3** Hum...

**Woman 1** Wang Guoqing struggles to get out of the crowd.

**Woman 2** The streets are deserted.

**Man 3** Four fifty-nine a.m.

**Man 3** Amidst the sound of the rain, Wang Guoqing can hear his own footsteps. Very fast.

*Wang Guoqing shakes off everyone else and starts to run. Man 3, Woman 1, Woman 2 and Woman 3 walk slowly to the edge of the stage.*

*Wang Guoqing runs with all his might.*

**Woman 1** Th embankment.

**Woman 2** Stands there coldly.

**Woman 3** The sea.

**Woman 1** Rolling, boiling.

**Woman 2** Blackness, rolling.

**Woman 3** Spitting white foam. Miserable.

**Man 3** Five a.m. In the wind and rain, Wang Guoqing runs on the streets of Hong Kong.

**Woman 1** The city is enormous. Standing there hushed.

**Woman 2** The clouds shroud the skyscrapers. Everything looks imaginary.

**Woman 3** Rain, wind, waves, the distant song.

**Man 3** Hum...

*Wang Guoqing covers his face and squats down.*

*Ding Jianguo suddenly appears in the light. He's wearing a suit, standing silently.*

*Wang senses Ding's appearance and looks up. He stares at Ding then stands up swiftly.*

**Woman 3** Rain keeps pouring down.

*Sound of a downpour.*

**Man 3** They eye each other wordlessly.

**Man 1** The rain rolls down his face with abandonment. He squints, looking at me.

**Man 2** The rain hits his face. His eyes widen, looking at me.

**Woman 3** Rain, wind, waves, the distant song.

**Woman 1** Shh!

**Woman 2** Silence.

**Woman 3** Wang Guoqing can hear his heartbeat.

**Man 2** I am Ding Jianguo.

**Woman 1** Sky, intensely blue.

**Man 2** I want to forget... back then...

**Woman 2** Still.

**Man 2** People lost their reason. Everyone. I was just one of them.

**Woman 3** The sun is venomous.

**Man 2** I didn't know what I was doing, and... I killed your mother.

**Man 3** Crows circle in the sky.

**Man 3** The woman's face, pallid.

**Man 2** Sorry.

**Woman 3** Blood gushing from her body, relentless, onto the patch of grass.

**Man 2** From Chongqing to Shanghai, from Shanghai to Beijing.

**Woman 3** Grass, intensely green.

**Man 2** You destroyed my son.

**Man 1** He deserves it.

**Man 3** They eye each other wordlessly.

*Ding Jianguo pulls out a gun, pointing straight at Wang Guoqing. Wang takes a step back.*

**Woman 1** Rain, falling harder.

**Man 2** I've been running away. You never gave up.

**Woman 2** Wind, cuts the face, painful.

**Man 2** It's not his fault. Ding Liming, my son.

**Woman 3** The sea crashes into the embankment, crashing like thunder.

*Ding Jianguo turns the gun around slowly.*

*Wang Guoqing watches Ding. He takes the gun slowly and points it at Ding.*

**Man 2** Sorry. I've been on the run for more than forty years. It's time to end this.

**Woman 2** Rain falls on Wang Guoqing's hands, splashing, dissipating into the wind.

**Man 2** A shot for a shot.

**Man 1** How come this gun's so heavy? My face is hot. It's tears. How come I'm crying? Crying in front of him?

*Wang Guoqing looks at Ding Jianguo. He slowly lowers the gun. Ding looks at him in shock.*

**Man 1** Rain drips from the tip of his nose, a long drip. Why is he crying?

**Man 2 (extends his hand)** We were young and naive back then. We believed anything grown-ups did was right. We believed anything that the majority agreed on was correct. The

power of the masses could move the sky. There was nothing we couldn't do. No one ever thought twice about what they were doing. Thinking twice was laughable and stupid. Everyone was doing the same thing – of course it must be right. We didn't know what reason was, what humanity was. No one needed...

**Man 2** Cock the gun. It's that simple.

*Wang hands the gun back slowly.*

**Woman 3** Suddenly, Wang Guoqing lifts his arm and flings the gun away. It falls into the sea, without a trace.

*Wang throws the gun away.*

*Ding Jianguo takes off his suit jacket under the spotlight. He becomes Ding Liming, standing silently.*

*Wang senses it – he looks up and sees Ding Liming. He stands up swiftly.*

**Man 2** You're Wang Guoqing? I'm Ding Liming.

**Man 1** I know who you are. Where's Ding Jianguo?

**Man 2** Ding Jianguo? Thank you for still remembering him. June 1987, he came out of the hospital in Shanghai... and soon after... he died.

**Man 1** Died?

**Man 2** Suicide.

**Man 1** Suicide?

**Man 2** Yes, suicide. Ding Jianguo, my father. I've long forgotten what he looked like.

**Man 1** June 1987... Ding Jianguo... suicide... He's already dead?!

*Ding Liming pulls a gun from his pocket and points it at Wang Guoqing. Wang looks at him silently.*

**Man 2** So many people!

**Man 1** Just you.

**Man 3** Silence.

**Woman 1** Wind, blowing more fiercely.

**Man 3** Silence.

**Woman 2** Rain, falling harder.

**Man 3** Silence.

**Woman 3** The sea crashes against the embankment.

**Man 3** Hong Kong, Central, by the sea. In the rain. Wang Guoqing, Ding Liming, standing silently.

*Wang Guoqing turns around to leave. He walks away quickly. Man 3, Woman 1, Woman 2 and Woman 3 follow him.*

*Ding Liming still has the gun raised, but his hands are shaking. The light on him dims.*

**Woman 2** There isn't a soul on the streets.

**Woman 3** A sliver of light cuts through the horizon.

- Woman 1** The city is gradually becoming clearer.
- Woman 2** The rain. When did it stop?
- Woman 3** The wind. When did it stop?
- Woman 1** Wang Guoqing walks quickly.
- Man 1** I look up. The cloud is gone. Only the empty sky. Pale and pallid.
- Man 3** Wang Guoqing falls over suddenly.
- Wang Guoqing falls over suddenly.*
- Woman 1** A crow. That crow.
- Woman 2** A crow on the ground.
- Woman 3** A dead crow on the ground.
- Man 3** It lays there stiffly.
- Woman 1** A street cleaner walks over.
- Woman 2** You all right?
- Man 1** Yeah.
- Woman 1** She sweeps the crow into the pan.
- Man 1** I'm being swept into the pan by her, then tipped into the bin. My stiff body hits the bin with a thud.
- Woman 1** Look, how sad.
- Man 1** Yeah, how sad.
- Woman 2** Wang Guoqing climbs up.
- Wang Guoqing climbs up.*
- Man 1** Eh? Where's the crowd?
- Woman 2** Gone.
- Man 1** That many people, gone?
- Woman 1** Yeah, gone. People start shouting, you shout along. What's the point? Don't you need to make a living?
- Woman 3** The street cleaner goes away.
- Woman 1** The streets are deserted.
- Woman** Walking along the street, Wang Guoqing feels the cold.
- Man 1** So cold.
- Man 2** Where do you think you're going?
- Man 1** Who?
- Woman 3** You.
- Man 1** Me?
- Woman 1** Yes, you. Wang Guoqing.
- Woman 2** Silence.
- Man 1** I don't know.
- Woman 3** Silence.

**Man 3** Wang Guoqing seems to have heard a gunshot.

**Man 1** I seem to have heard a gunshot.

*A loud gunshot. Wang Guoqing is shaken.*

*Far away, in the corner of the stage, **Woman 1** enters. She is holding a pair of child-sized canvas shoes. She puts them on the stage, sits down and stares at them.*

**Man 1** turns and looks at her.

*Blackout.*



**Epilogue**

**Characters: Man 1, Man 2, Man 3, Woman 1, Woman 2 and Woman 3**

*Location: Theatre*

*Time: Now*

*Lights up.*

*The cast stands in the middle of the stage, dressed in black.*

**Man 3 (exaggerated)** A flock of crows. They're thirsty, looking for water everywhere.

**Man 2** The crows see a bottle. Water inside.

**Man 1** But not much. The bottle's neck is small. The crows can't get to it. What to do?

**Woman 1** What to do?

**Woman 2** What to do?

**Woman 3** What to do?

**Man 1** The crows die from thirst.

**Man 2** We die from thirst, on the pebbles.

**Man 3** If only I were alone.

**Woman 2** If only I were alone.

**Woman 1** If only I were alone..

**Man 2** If only I were alone.

**Woman 3** If only I were alone.

**Man 1** If only I were alone.

**Man 3 (Looks at his watch.)** Nine thirty in the evening.<sup>3</sup> Theatre. Lights. Performance ends. Audience leaves.

*Light dims.*

Translated from the Chinese by Gigi Chang  
Revised for USA version by Claire Conceison

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<sup>3</sup> Adjust according to end time of the performance.