**Dusk Mood**

**Zhu Ti**

Since I left my hometown, being so long separated from my little companions is like having lessons in counting days.

Whenever I am overly lonely, I recall old childhood dreams, sketching such lively shadows.

Having left my hometown for several years, news of the trials and hardships of home drift towards me. In these years, I have long held wild and fanciful thoughts.

In a few years, should they all grow up into human beings? Those naughty and ignorant children from then can by now change into sturdy young people. They should recall the poetic pastoral life passed down from their ancestors, otherwise they will hastily sink like me into the confusion of this human world.

Once, I stepped into a gloomy restaurant as usual. A dusty, travel-worn and weary man sat across from me. There, he was lost in thought.

Between his eyebrows is a tightly locked melancholy. Upon examining each other’s vaguely familiar faces, I remembered that he was one of my little companions in my childhood. At once, the surprise perplexed me.

From his mouth, I learned news from my hometown and the whereabouts of my little companions. But their story is repulsive and I am disappointed.

In recent years, with the rushing around for food and clothing, who can still have childish interests?

I feel even lonelier. In every green lamp, cold month evening, I hold onto the only forlorn shadow that I have left. I smile -- only bitterly, in listlessness.

Dusk quietly climbs up the neighbouring streets’ windows.

Outside the window is blurred by an imminent faraway twilight. Nothing can be clearly distinguished anymore. Boundless and indistinct city streets, boundless and indistinct pedestrians come and go. It is like a drawing board that has lost its pigments and at the same time it makes people still sentimentally attached to the layers upon layers of distinct brushstrokes on images of the interior surface of eyes. It can make people detest such a mixing up of a multitude of twilight scenes.

At dusk, inside the room darkens more. When I stand in front of the window there remains a dusky shadow. Then, I stop, motionless. Inside the room is so gloomy that it fell into loneliness.

Hua hesitantly turned on the light.

I and Hua walked from the window over to two small easy chairs and sat down, as if being expelled from a kind of illusion, a kind of deep thinking, a kind of memory. I sit silently, looking at the lamp, looking at the black window.

Outside the window, a peddler passed by crying out their wares.

“I remember the story when we listened to the camel bells in the frontier town. Such a long pensive sound made us forget all about sleep. At first, we only felt as if there were a kind of poetic emotion swaying in our hearts but, not long after, we felt that what is secretly revealed in each of the short camel bell pings is nothing more than the ceaseless cry of life. That night, I remember that you remembered something, so you shed tears.”

Hua plans to drive away this lonely dusk. The topic in the end ran into a memory again.

“I have forgotten these. Actually, as I think about it now, if a person can really find some time to use pain to drain one’s feelings, I feel that it could be a blessing, so as not to let emotions accumulate and putrefy. And me today? The era of crying has already been lost.”

“I know that I am very clear about it, I believe.”

“Is it okay to lose being able to cry? We truly don’t need to shed tears. I always feel that we should be braver again, should be braver again.”

While Hua is talking, his eyes constantly twinkle with light, like a burning bonfire from one’s youth.

“Perhaps we should be braver.”

Spring nights are actually not long. When the lights get turned on, it is already time to sleep. People in spring are often easily tired, however Hua and I often excitedly chitchat for a long time and do not go to sleep until we tire of talking.

“Eh, see you tomorrow!”

Then, following the clear and sharp sound of footsteps, Hua’s shadow vanishes beyond the other side of the door. I am left alone in this bare room! Everyone else has left. I spend every spring night alone.

I admit, too, that from last spring to now, this should always be said to be a bunch of happy memories! My life is fully immersed in happy memories, surrounded by a kind of excited mood all the time. Hope, constant hope illuminates my life. I think that in the end love is such an indispensable fortune in life!

I am in love with Hua. My love for Hua is really an overflow of emotions without restraint. I do not even know clearly myself why I do not want to interfere with my feelings. Really, is this just for the pursuit of a little love?

Something like this, I am not used to thinking about it for a long time. Perhaps there is truly no need to think about it – love. Love is just love.

When I am in love, I often feel lonely too. Just like this night, when Hua kissed me goodbye, I made a great effort to remember his last smile before he left the room. It is even harder for me to go to sleep.

My head starts to feel a bit heavier. I open the small window for some air and poke my head outside. The spring wind blows over with clammy soil debris.

Looking at the stars, I find it difficult to divert my thoughts.

The stars also lonely blink with a faint light in the dark sky, like hundreds and thousands of greedy eyes blinking.

At night, I always look forward to the brightness of spring. When the sky starts to brighten, I can quietly run to Hua’s door and flick the door panel with my fingers.

How I like to see Hua’s face covered with drowsiness!

It is as if I really saw Hua getting up in the early morning with a sleepy face and drowsy eyes filled with expectant joy… I should go to sleep!

Notes before marriage

“Bangwan de qingxu” (Dusk Mood),

*XingYa* [Rising Asia], May/June 1944

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