

A FAREWELL

by

Ruoxi Zhu

I'm vaguely conscious of how I lost it. I know clearly that I lost it by will, but I keep telling myself that I had no choice. I remember holding his shoulders while sitting on the back of his motorcycle. He was sending me home after an awkward family meal at his new place. He tried to make his little girl smile by telling clumsy little jokes like before, but this time I made no reply, intentionally. I fixed my sight on his finger. There used to be a wedding ring, but now there was nothing but a whitish mark.

I know precisely the art to infuriate others. Close your five senses of perception, and be indifferent to the doings of the others; however, remember to sustain a delicate balance between highly sensitive and extremely slow. A state of being totally unaware, but nothing is out of observation. Meanwhile, carry a faintly discernible smile on your face, and try to show tolerance and mocking at the same time. Tested.

And now as he is driving me home, lots of memories come to my mind. I remember how happy we used to be and how much care he had given to me when I was a little kid. I remember he taught me how to make the shadows dance on the wall with the movements of hands. I remember he always took me to the countryside to pick wild flowers, those tiny little yellow daisies. When we got back home, he would show me how to dry them in the sunshine and make pillows from them. And those days I used to fall asleep in the sweet smell of flowers and have those wonderful dreams. He is just so romantic. Maybe too romantic. I remember the song he sang when I was on the backseat of his bicycle. It was a bittersweet song, a little bit sadness, a little bit tenderness, and a little bit sweetness. Hearing him singing this song always made me think that there was a little sensitive boy hidden in his body, somewhere we can't see but somewhere that really exists. That song haunted my head for years, but I never told him so.

Now I am in the backseat again, and the night wind is cold, and it makes me feel dizzy. Just like in a dream. After he left us, I used to have those dreams. And in each one of them I could never find the way home. Endless nightmare. Just like the day when we found out everything. My mother was shouting aloud at him, and I was just sitting there in a blown down battlefield full of broken pieces of plates and glasses. I could tell at that moment that all my life was falling apart, and nothing would be the same any more. He was abandoning us.

I felt cheated. And I was cheated. I didn't even care that it was in fact my mother that he had cheated on. All that was in my mind was how he could do this to me. He used

to be such a great dad. Sometimes when I felt a doubt or two I would ask him, and he always promised he would never leave us. But he did. I trusted him so much, but it only turned out that he had been collecting enough dynamite, just waiting to give me a big bomb at the right moment. And he succeeded. I was black and blue all over my heart.

Suddenly, I felt a chill rising up from my instep. I was afraid it might be an ugly and disgusting little toad, and I wanted to scream. But I didn't. I shook it off and had a quick look at it, and it turned out to be only a cold, wet piece of fallen leaf. At that moment, a phrase captured me. "I had a soul, but not a heart." I almost had the impulse to cry.

And then there we were. In front of the door gate of my neighborhood. I got off the motor and stood there, still. I wanted to say something nice and friendly, but my throat was as dry as a piece of wood. I wanted to tell him to take care on his way back, but words failed me again, just like they did thousands of times before.

"So, goodbye then," I said, without even looking at him. "And, thank you." He replied with a smile and said goodbye to me. I turned around quickly and walked through the gate. I didn't know if he was looking at me, but I did know that something is slipping away swiftly, and it will never find its way back. I lost it forever.