



Photograph from Sam Song, Jiangxi, Nov., 2017

Field

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Feng sits on the bus, which is rusted on the outside and full of nauseous gas smell on the inside. He sits on a seat that is covered with sweat stained blocky artificial leather and smells of weird drinks. Feng used to frown and twitch his nose unconsciously, but today, it seems that he doesn't notice these things. His mind runs so far away that he loses the sense of the outside world around him. Like a straw man that carries a heavy stone in his arms, Feng can't carry the weighty secret in his head any longer.

The outside wind that pours into the opened window refreshes his head and calms him down. He imagines many versions of his

parents' reaction when he tells them he is about to marry a city girl at the end of this month. He does not know why he would hesitate to tell his parents, maybe because the men in the village all marry girls in the same village or from the neighboring villages. He is afraid his parents will be against his choice. However, whether they agree or not, he decides to tell them today, no more delay. He takes the decision, and a floating balloon finally replaces the heavy stone held in his hand. He feels steadfast.

The ticket seller stands at the head of the bus, shouts, "Arriving at Dong Town, who should get off, get off."

Feng stands up quickly. He never thinks the distance between the city and his hometown is short, but today

the trip is just long enough for him to make a decision. He exits the bus slowly, under the sharp eyes and urges from the ticket seller. When his feet touch the road, he is surrounded by a flock of motorcycles. Every driver asks, "Where are you going?" "Get on" "...". The messy sound makes his head a mess. He picks the nearest motorcycle and gets on.

On the way home, the hot wind rushes through his hair and hits him on the face. But the pain makes him feel peace. They are a family, so they must understand him. He will make a compromise on the issue of letting them move to city to live with him. They will agree.

The closer his home is, the less thoughts he has.

When he arrives at home and sees Wen and Po

are pulling the dense wood cart, he hangs on to his smile as usual and runs to help them. Po is so happy that her smile is seen up to her eyebrows. Her smile occupies her whole face.

"You come back so early today," she comes closer to Feng. "You look a bit thinner, have you eaten your breakfast everyday..."

Mom's care is always so much, Feng thinks.

"I am fine," he answers and tries to change the topic. "These peanuts are growing so well, which field?"

"The field closest to the lake. These peanuts are the best so far." Po says.

Wen is a little surprised. He knows Feng does not approve of peanuts farming. Every time his son sees the peanuts, Feng will put on

his poker face. But today he looks different; he even asks about the harvest on his own initiative.

He puts down the wood cart, and wipes the sweat off of his face and neck with his clothes. Wen hears Po's nag, and glances at Feng's impatient face. He pulls out a cigarette from his pocket. Po is still talking about the harvest.

Wen stops her words, "Cook lunch. It is not too early."

"Yes, yes, it is not early," Po claps her head. "I prepared all of the food that you like."

She looks at Feng, like a child takes pride in what she

has drawn. Feng smiles, but says nothing. This is normal to him. Every time he comes back, Po will prepare the food he likes since he gets into the college. He has gotten accustomed to it.

Wen frowns, and lights a cigarette.

"Why are you still standing here? Get into the house." Wen says.

He is not an out-going man. Even to his son, he does not express his love openly.

Feng also knows him. He follows Wen, and says, "don't smoke too much, it is not healthy."

"I know," Wen exhales the smoke. "Then, how is your work going on?"

"Well, I may have an opportunity to get a promotion," with a serious tone. "You know, I worked hard in this company for several years, so this time it may be me."

Wen looks at Feng, and he can see Feng says he "may" get the promotion, but his proud eyes and rising mouth says the promotion must be his. Wen sits down, and shakes off the ashes. He thinks he can't teach Feng anything, because Feng is an adult. And even if he does say something, Feng won't listen to his old uneducated farmer father. So after Feng's words are spoken, he just uses his nose to pronounce, "En."

Though it is hot and the noise of the pots and pans from kitchen comes into the dining room, Wen and Feng, the father and son, seem to cool down. They remain silent, sit on opposite sides of the table.

Po brings a plate of peanuts, "Try some." She pushes the plate toward Feng, "These peanuts are new. They taste very good. You try some and lunch will be ready soon." Then Po hurries back to the kitchen.

"Last time you asked us to move to the city, and I know you are a filial son, you want your mother and me to live a better life, I know," Wen puts down his hand which holds the cigarette, and keeps silent for a while. "And I know last time, my words may be harsh, but you need to know your mother and I are used to our life here. This small village

has our friends and relatives... you may understand..."

"I know, and it's your choice," Feng said. He thinks it is rare that Wen would say this to him, but it also warms him. They are a family; they will understand him like he understands them.

Wen looks at him, and is surprised that Feng could be persuaded so easily. The room gets back to silence.

"Here comes lunch." Po's voice breaks the tension filled atmosphere.

Po sits next to Wen. She always puts the food on Feng's plate, "in the city, the

food can't be so good. Here, this is your favorite shrimp..."

Feng eats the shrimp, and says, "This is too much for me, you should eat more." Then he gives one shrimp to Wen and one to Po. He sees Po smile and Wen mollifies his face. He believes it is a good time to tell them.

But before he opens his mouth, Po asks, "Feng, is there any good girl you like? If not, you know, our village has many good girls. Although our village is a little small, there are many good local girls. I tell you a few days ago..."

"Mom, I also want to

tell you something today." He stops Po's words, and tries to use a normal tone. "I met a good girl in the city," he looks at Wen, "she and I are going to the same university."

Po is so happy. Her son has a girlfriend which means her grandson is not far away. "It must be a very nice girl. When are you going to bring her back?" She turns her head to Wen and turns back, "to introduce us. We want to meet her."

"Very soon, at the end of this month. The wedding ceremony will be held in the city at the end of this month."

Photograph from Yinghuai Lyu, Zhuhai, Oct., 2019



Just after his words are spoken, Wen and Po put down their chopsticks. Po's smile is gone, and Wen looks at Feng with a scowl. Wen tries to control his anger. He asks, "Wedding ceremony?"

"Yes, this is the reason why I came home today." Feng answers.

"Ah," Wen twitches his mouth. "Good." He picks up his chopsticks, but does not move. He asks, "University students? Why didn't you bring her home?"

"She does not like the countryside very much."

"Why didn't you tell us?"

"I am telling you right now."

Wen stops. From Feng's words he knows his son does not comply them.

Feng is unhappy. Feng stands up. He thinks he does a lot to please his parents, especially Wen, from childhood to now, but they are never satisfied. A volcano bursts from his heart



Source: <https://www.pixabay.com>

to his head, and he shouts, “Good? What do you mean by good? Why are you unsatisfied? Say it.”

Wen does not say a word.

“Every time I... I ask you to move to the city to live with me, you say you like staying in this small village to plant those stupid peanuts, and I made the compromise. As I was a child, you did this too. I like playing basketball, and you make me study the whole day at home; I



wake up at four o'clock to pull up the peanuts with you, I do all you want me to do. Just this time, I choose a city girl to marry, and I love her. Why? Why you act like this? Can you respect my choice?”

“Respect?” Wen laughs. “You never brought the girl home. You never mentioned

anything about her...until today. And, today you tell us that you are going to marry her?” Wen throws the chopsticks and stands up. “You do not respect me, why should I give you my respect then?” He draws out a cigarette, holds it in his hand, and walks outside.

Po tries to calm Feng down, “Eat your lunch; we should talk about this after lunch.”

However, it does not work. Feng follows Wen outside.

“No matter whether you agree or not, I have already decided.” Feng shouts.

“You think I am too overbearing, so you do not need to listen to me,” Wen lights the cigarette, quiets for a moment, and points to Feng. “Now you grow up. You can decide your life without asking us, and you do not need to bother with me. You should go now.”

“Go? Leave? ”

“Yes, leave this place if you can't stand it.”

“Well...well. Go, I will go right now.” Feng takes his bag and prepares to leave.

Po looks at Wen. Then Po looks at Feng. She wants to stop Feng but she can't produce a sound.

Finally, she goes to Wen and asks, “Why did you talk about those things?”

Wen sits on the threshold with head down and holds his cigarette. How can he tell his son that he wants Feng to be a steadfast man under the hard work in the field? How can he tell his son that his father is useless? And his only use is to be serious with his son. He inhales the cigarette, but chokes.