



Photograph from Jingcheng Yan, Gongzhou, Jan., 2019

Flat on the First Floor

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I was sitting in the living room and playing my Play Station when my mom came to me. “How long have you not been to that flat?” my mom asked. “Which flat are you talking about?” I was a little confused. “Of course the one you lived in when you were little,” mom said. “Since it was rented out,” I replied.

Mom’s words reminded me of the tiny damp flat which was on the side of the street. I lived there with my parents before I went to middle school. It has been around 8 years since the last time I went back to that flat. Whenever I think of it, I have mixed feelings. The flat carries all my childhood memories, good ones and bad ones. But now when I look back, even bad memories can also make me nostalgic. I couldn’t stop thinking about those things that happened in the past. Memories overwhelmed me.

We lived on the first floor of the apartment block. Since the apartment block was surrounded by three other buildings, we could hardly see the sunlight in our rooms. The flat was dark and filled with moldy smell of damp

wooden furniture. Mom always complained about our damp flat while taking the clothes out to dry in the backyard at noon.

We had two dogs. One was named Mikey and the other was Bull. They stayed in the room during the day and went back to the backyard to sleep at night. I used to spend most of my time fooling around with them in the backyard. Sometimes mom got rid of her work and joined us when she was not busy. She taught them to sit still, wait and prone. Also, she gave a reward to whoever followed her order. Our dogs sometimes fought for food, but mom never stopped them fighting. Instead, she enjoyed watching and laughing at them. The battle between them didn't last long because Bull liked Mikey. Sometimes, they might let go of their fight and did some sneaky things together, like tearing apart one of the pillows in my mom's bedroom. They really loved breaking things, and the walls were covered with their scratches. So, my mother had to repaint the walls when she tried to rent the flat out. I didn't remember how much the rent was, but it was not large sums of money.

It was a rainy August Sunday night when I left our flat where I had been living in for 13 years. I helped my parents put our stuffs onto the car, and we got ready for moving to our new home. Mom asked me to say goodbye and give some apples to Granny Sun who lived across the street. Granny Sun loved me so much and she used to give me many little toys. She lost her son when we were going to move out and she seemed to be sad and helpless. "You have grown up," she patted me on the shoulder. "Now you are leaving as well." I didn't know what to say, so I just said goodbye and ran away. She passed away a few months later due to a heart attack, but I didn't know that until years later.

"Don't leave the television on if you don't play your games!" Mom's voice pulled me back to reality. Indeed, it has been too long since the last time I went back to that tiny flat. Even though I can still go back to that flat if I want to, I never did. The reason is that while I may be able to return to that place physically, I will never be able to go back to the place in my memory.



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