

A FATSO BY THE SEA AT DUSK

Past middle age, the punishment God chose for him
was to make him gain weight, turning him into a fatso
with a dejected look,
huffing and puffing just for walking.

One day Fatso felt the urge to see the ocean,
so he humped and bumped to the end of the world.
This hopeless fat man stood on the windy beach,
seeing the beautiful sun fall into the deep blue sea,
his heart ached and broke into tiny petals
to float on the waves as they rose and fell.

Seen from behind, his huge body
looked like a lonely planet, gently ceaselessly quivering.

THE SHAPE OF FOG

The fog is a shapely thing,
visible and touchable.

Floating around the tree, it condenses into the shape of a tree;
adrift on the mountain path, it stretches out like a ribbon;
lingering over water, it takes the shape of mist.

When the fog caps the mountaintop, it looks like a tower.

The fog is a shapely thing,
visible and touchable.

But the fog in our hearts
is vague and obscure.

No one knows what shape it takes.

It sits on our hearts year-round and never dissipates,
a little chilly, a little damp, sousing our body and soul.

If someone insists that I describe its shape,
I can only say it has the shape of a riddle.

WASTED GARDEN

Seemingly random, but in fact every flower and every blade
was carefully curated.

Seemingly disjointed and wasted, the garden
was tidied up only yesterday.

Even those insouciant-looking pedestrians
make a special point to come to visit.

This little critter is the exception — its fleeting shadow,
its hysteria is unplanned.

UNEARTHED IN YIWU

Yiwu is a trendy place, the epitome of international trade.

Yiwu is also very earthy, marked by the typical image of hustling peddlers with a rattle drum.

At Yiwu Bus Station, a bazaar's energy overflows —
the smell of sundries, spices, and sweating bodies.

Laughter, cries, and squabbling commingle to raise a torrent.

A Rolls Royce is stuck in the traffic amongst migrant hawkers.

Anxiety, jubilation, and pain flash through people's faces, until
tears and rain become inseparable as they seep into the earth.

Here, the meaning of grassroots comes true.

During a short trip to Yiwu, my usually spiffy
corduroy trousers caught some of the long-parted mud.

Most metropolis have only concrete pavement,
but here, there is also the earthly fragrance of soil and weeds.

PHONE CALL FROM MOTHER

I received a call from my mother in the car,
and scrambled to free up a hand from the steering wheel.

It was the first time my mother, nearly 70, used a cell phone,
she decided to try it by calling her son who lived far away.

I quickly answered: Mom, is everything alright?

Mother said: Nothing's the matter, I just wanted to try the cell phone.

I said: That's great. Is that all?

My car was making a turn.

I was about to put down my phone when Mother spoke again:

Nothing is new. We're all well, but you must take care of yourself. Try not to gain weight.

I muttered: All right, I will. Any other things?

My car was merging into the surging traffic, I felt a bit overwhelmed.

Mother continued: Nothing's the matter. We are all well.

Your dad is fine, too, you needn't come home all the time.

Actually, I do not go back that often;

but the traffic was picking up.

I quickly said: Okay, you look after yourself, too.

Mom replied: I'm doing alright. You don't need to come home all the time.

Your dad is the same as before.

You must take care of yourself. Don't worry about us.

My words were picking up speed: Yes. Yes. I will.

Mom paused, then said: All right, that's all.

Take care of yourself even if workload piles up...

A police car appeared in front of me, I tapped the phone off.

My nose felt it first, but soon tears couldn't help but roll down my face.

THE AGE OF COLD WEAPONS

In the old days we preferred fist fights over knives and machetes.

We adored physical power, brute force, and savagery.

Our bodies were the only participating cold weapon
without cheering audience or opposite sex in the battlefield.

We fought as if in a silent film, and the only scream came from the losers.

We were animalistic juveniles in those days,

in the confused age of glum abstinence.

Some were headstrong with a stiffened spine,

countering gloom with gloom,

fighting a repressed spirit with a repressed body,

bloodthirsty for cruel pleasures.

Wherever we went, a hair-raising cold followed us.

We rushed into the concrete jungle like a pack of wolves,

roaming the streets, desolate taverns and under the bridge.

We geared up for fights, elbowed each other and locked horns.

We swaggered, paraded ourselves, and trespassed others' turf.

We came with a murderous intention from a long way away,

frightening people with a hawkish stare.

Even if we tried our best to show constraints,

all girls scurried for safety at the sight of us.