

## The Ordeal of a Fragrant Soul

By: Hua Ze

Translated by: Ming Xia



Translator's Note: HUA Ze, a reporter, film producer, has an online name "Linghun Piaoxiang"(A Soul fulfilled with and radiating fragrance). With a business management major in college and a law degree in master program, she quintessentially epitomizes the "June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1989" Generation (the so-called "8964 Generation"). She once worked as a reporter for newspaper and an editor and director for TV programs. Now she is a freelance producer and blog writer living in Beijing. The following is a translation of her Sohu.com blog article (January 5, 2011) that tells her tormenting experiences after Liu Xiaobo was awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize.

### 1. Being Kidnapped

For almost half a month I have stayed in Northeast China, shooting pictures during the daytime and surfing the net in the evening. I have realized that after Xiaobo was awarded the Nobel Prize, Beijing has been shrouded by tension and fear. After consulting with Teng Biao, I have decided to stay in his office in Wangjing for a short while and will return home as soon as the magistrate's house starts recovering from its insanity.

On Oct. 27, noon, I board my flight and turn off my mobile phone lest my position be located. I disassemble the battery and SIM card from my mobile phone. I cut myself off completely from the outside.

Around 3 p.m., I land at Beijing Airport and bid farewell with Teng Biao and other friends. I take the airport shuttle bus to Wangjing with his assistant. As I am on highway, I realize my laptop computer missing. What an awful memory! I must have left it in the airplane.

Upon arriving Teng Biao's office, I put down my luggage and use a landline phone to contact the "Lost and Found" Office at the airport. I was told by a staff member that my laptop has been registered in their information database. I immediately step out and hurry to the College of Administration for Civil Aviation Officials, a stone throw away from the airport shuttle bus stop.

As I approach the gate of the College, I am surprised by someone grabbing me from behind and carrying me backwards, face up. Meanwhile, a black hood descends as if from the sky. The first idea that flashed into my mind is that the black hood is so thick, and that it stinks of foot odor.

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“Help!” I hear my cry and struggle desperately in the hope that I can hold out until people witness that I am kidnapped and to report it to the police. In this struggle, the black hood falls off. As seven to eight strongmen are stuffing me, head down and feet high, into a white minivan, I remember the last scene: I resist by hooking my feet tightly to the door frame. A kidnapper’s distorted face stares down at me and says devilishly: “If you go on resisting, you will be dead!” A moment later, I lose consciousness.

**“I am surprised by someone grabbing me from behind and carrying me backwards, face up. Meanwhile, a black hood descends as if from the sky.”**

I wake up later as the minivan stops. I think we have arrived at the destination. Moments later, the minivan starts to move again, stops again. After several rounds of stopping and going, it speeds up like light. I realize that we were waiting for the traffic lights, and now, we are driving on a highway to the suburbs.

Unaware of how long it has been, I am hit by a torrent of cold water from a basin. Illusorily I see a dark room, the only light shines on my face aggressively. Many faces float in front of me. One hand reaches towards me, grabs my collar, drags me up from the ground, and throws me forcefully onto a stool. My head hits the wall; my mouth tastes foul, my cheek aches. It reminds me of the “Garbage Cave” from the novel, The

Red Rock. [Translator’s note: The Red Rock (Hong Yan) is a revolutionary propaganda novel which tells the ordeal and eventual execution of a female communist martyr in the “Garbage Cave”, a jail camp in Chongqing under the Nationalist government. Now it has turned into a museum. The Sino-U.S. Cooperative Institute is implicated in the novel for the torture and killings.]

After several relapses into sleep, I finally wake up, lying on a bed. As if an ocean tide had receded away from my head, I am getting more conscious: all has come at last. Surprisingly it has come fast. What time is it now? Do my friends know I am missing? No later than tomorrow Huanhuan will go to the office and realize that I never returned after I left. Certainly she will inform Teng Piao.

After looking around, I guess that I am in a hostel in the suburbs. The room is about 12 square meters in area; the door and toilet are to the north, window south, and east is a writing desk and a chair that are pushed aside together under another window. A stool is in the empty space where my head struck the wall. The bed I am lying on is in the western direction. There are five or six people walking back and forth, murmuring to each other. Someone notices that I am awake.

Before the interrogation, I lay down two fundamental rules for myself: First, death by starvation is the lesser evil in comparison to the loss of dignity. I can talk about myself, but not of any of my friends. Second, to be smashed like valuable jade is more worthwhile than to be spared like common tile. I am here, I have to be prepared for the worst.

**A kidnapper’s distorted face stares down at me and says devilishly: “If you go on resisting, you will be dead!” A moment later, I lose consciousness.**

## 2. The Face-off

I struggle to sit up from the bed and lean against the headboard. A spasm comes from my back that I did not know was injured.

The interrogation begins. As other people leave the room, only “No. 1” remains (I use this number system to identify all of the interrogators). He looks around 30 years old. Covered with a thick layer of mousse, his hair is erect like someone waving for a taxi. The narrow-waisted, short-sleeved shirt hangs on his body, with the collar open to reveal his silver necklace, which probably weighed one kilogram. I really want to tell him: it looks ugly, like something for a dog.

He twists his wrists with exaggeration, lights up a cigarette, and places it in a crystal cigarette holder. He uses two fingers (one with a silver ring) to hold it, as his fingers spread out like an orchid. He slowly walks toward me and sits down heavily close to me on the bed. I lower my head to ignore him. One moment later, he uses one finger to press on my temple, lift up my head, and shove a lock of my drooped hair behind my ear. He then takes a deep inhalation and blows smoke slowly at my face. Obviously he wants to provoke me. I close my eyes in order not to be fooled. Sometime later (I feel like it has been a century) later, he gently puts his arm on my leg, his body leaning forward, almost whispering to me: “Look at me. Ah? Look at me, eh?”



I raise my eyes, unmoved, but give eye contact and see his flirting stare. He raises one eyebrow, grimaces, and moves closer to me, less than one foot away.

“Please keep away from me!” I try hard to sound strong.

“How far?”

“As far as possible.”

“Why?”

“I hate smoke.”

He gets up, walks to the table, extinguishes the cigarette and comes back.

“Look, no more cigarette. Now isn’t it time to talk? What is your name? Ah?”

“I have nothing to tell you. Bring in your boss.”

I close my eyes and ignore him.

This hooligan has plenty of patience and begins a monologue that lasts for almost an hour. A man comes in, whispers in his ear, and quickly leaves. A while later, another group of four to five people comes in. One of them looks familiar; he probably is the Team Head Zhou of Domestic Security (DS) in the East District of Beijing. Several months ago he had a talk with me once. We sat separately at two different sides of a table. Although his words explicitly revealed threat, he kept a smile on his face the entire time. Now the person before me looks stone-faced, wears sun-glasses, and is shorter than the one I remember. Apparently, he seems to have only a secondary role in this kidnapping. However, I cannot ascertain much with certainty. [ Translator’s Note: In China, there are two civilian systems for security: the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of State Security. The former is something like the FBI which also has branches at the local levels (provincial, city, county, and community), the latter is like the CIA which has reached the levels of province and city. The Domestic Security is affiliated with the Public Security apparatus, but exclusively deal with political dissidents, the Falun Gong practitioners, and ethnic activists. ]

“Get up and follow us!” someone orders.

I move to one side of the bed, put on my shoes. As I stand up, I feel an excruciating pang of pain and shiver with cold sweat. My ankle was injured. With no time to think, I am covered with the black hood again. I am dragged and pushed by two men and forced to stumble out of my cell. We travel down a long corridor and out of a gate, I am squeezed into a vehicle. The vehicle soon comes to a stop. I am led into a big room, and after ten steps or so, I arrive at another room. I am pushed to sit on a square stool. Suddenly, the noise of people subsides. Only one person is left walking slowly around me. In the quiet room, his steps are the only sound, one circle after another. He stops and snatches off my black hood. Probably having gotten used to the darkness, the light in the room hurts and blinds me.

“What is your name?”

A pair of climbing shoes becomes clear. I look up slowly and see outdoor climbing pants, blue sports knit shirt, and leisure jacket. A pale-skinned young man, with eyes as big as those of a staring antelope, is the “No. 2”. He looks like a man of the outdoors.

“What is your name?” He asks again.

“Even not knowing who I am, you kidnapped me here?”

“You answer to what I have asked you.”

“Hua Ze.”

**A death by starvation is the lesser evil in comparison to the loss of dignity.**

**To be smashed like a valuable jade is more worthwhile than to be spared like a common tile.**

**As I stand up, I feel an excruciating pang of pain and shiver with cold sweat. My ankle was injured. With no time to think, I am covered with the black hood again. I am dragged and pushed by two men and forced to stumble out of my cell.**

My eyes adjust to the environment. Looking around, I am sitting in the middle of a room with an area of about 20-30 square meters. Roughly three meters ahead of me, there are two chairs and one desk, on the desk lies a square briefcase. It is a recorder! A classic scene of interrogation you often see in movies.

“Did you just get off the airplane this afternoon?”

“Correct.”

“From where?”

“Dandong.”

“For what?”

“Shooting a movie.”

“How many days were you there?”

“Three days.”

“What did you film?”

“Lawyer’s practice.”

“What did you do then?”

“To interview relevant parties and their families, to photocopy files in the court and procuratorate.”

“Do you need three days for all this?”

**“What do you mean by  
‘like’?”**

“We still did not have enough time.”

“Who is the lawyer?”

**“You will not understand,  
even if I explain.”**

“I do not want to tell.”

“Why?”

“I do not want to mention names.”

He walks back and forth again, saying: “You look very frail.”

“I am in pain, tired and unable to sit.”

He brings a chair to me: “Sit down please. Better?”

“Yes. Thanks...”

“Shall we continue our conversation?”

“Go ahead.”

“Why did you film this particular lawyer?”

“I like to.”

“Why do you like to?”



**“Do you want to have the upper hand even in this place? No way! Let me warn you: anyone who comes here cannot easily leave. Whatever I ask, you answer. This is our talk, understand?”**

“Do you have to have a reason to like?”

“Why not?”

“I do not need a reason to like.”

I hear him take several deep breaths, pause for a moment and then resume.

“Where will you have it broadcasted after the production?”

“Whoever pays for it will broadcast it. If the CCTV wants it, I have no problem.” [Translator’s note: CCTV is China’s official central TV station.]

“If no one wants it, then what?”

“Then I dedicate it to people I like.”

“You just filmed this one lawyer, or you have a series?”

“I am not sure. If I have someone I like, then I will do it again.”

“What do you mean by ‘like’?”

“You will not understand, even if I explain.”

“How did you know this lawyer?”

“Too long ago to remember.”

He persists on the topics of the lawyer and film but gains nothing.

“Pang!” The door was pushed open. Accompanied by four or five men, a tall man prominently shows up on stage.

The “No. 3” is about forty years old, narrow-eyed, in Western-style jacket and shoes. His shoes are polished so shiny that even a fly would slip down off them. He beats the desk with his cigarette pack, puts his mobile phone on the desk, and sits down. While he crosses his foot on top of the other leg and it shakes continuously. He says furiously: “You must not create trouble for my brothers. Didn’t you want to see the leader? Here I am. I must tell you, I am too busy to talk nonsense with you. You will speak straightforwardly. Will you speak?”

“Haven’t I kept talking with your brothers?”

“The talk cannot go on. It has gotten stuck. One time you say you cannot remember; another time you say you do not want to tell. Is this talk? Do you want to have the upper hand even in this place? No way! Let me warn you: Anyone who comes here cannot easily get out. Whatever I ask, you answer. This is our talk, understand?”

“Would you please show me your ID? Which department do you belong to?”

“If I tell you, you will be horrified to death.”

I am wondering: I have dealt with DS for one or two days and have never felt horrified. Maybe they are the State Security (SS)? “Tell me then.”

“At this moment I cannot tell you. Maybe sometime later.”

I laugh. The “No. 3” becomes so upset, his teeth seem to tinkle with each other, and his face becomes distorted.

“I can make you disappear from this world. You don’t believe it?”

**“I can make you disappear from this world. You don’t believe it?”**

**“I will let the wolf dog play with you, don’t you believe?”**

I continue to laugh and stare at him as if I am watching a show. Then I hear a dog bark from outside.

“I will let the wolf dog play with you, don’t you believe?”

“Okay!” I laugh so hard, I am almost unable to collect myself.

The “No. 2” jumps in to help: “Why are you so arrogant? What’s so funny? The normal people are always scared once being here.”

“Why should I feel scared? Your guys have kidnapped a weak woman by violence but dare not reveal your identities or names. This tells me that you guys are even more scared. Since you are so scared, then I don’t have to feel scared.”

The “No. 3” has obviously been driven crazy. He bangs the desk with his palm: “This is the last time I ask you, will we talk or not?”

“We have nothing to talk about.”

“Fine, you want to be the second Sister Jiang? I will lend you a hand. I always speak softly at the beginning and rough up later. Now I have shown you my courtesy. It’s time to show you the tough stuff. You just wait and see!” After he finishes, he rushes out of the door. All the men in the room swarm out after him. [Translator’s note: Sister Jiang is the heroine who was tortured and murdered in the jail by the Nationalist government in [The Red Rock](#).]

As he steps out the door, I yell at him: “Since being kidnapped by you, I have never thought about leaving alive.”

The door is slammed shut and then opens again. Here comes in the “No. 4”. He shouts loudly at me: “Stand up! Isn’t it too comfortable being seated?”

As I just stand up unsteadily, he kicks away the chair under me.

“Do you have any decent business? Ah?”

I look at him, puzzled: “What do you mean?”

“You have no man, no decent business. Right?”

Now I understand: “You think what you are doing is decent business?”

“You just shut up! Our leader showed consideration for you by asking you questions. What are your answers? Worse than no answer. If you answer in that manner, it’s better for you to speak no more.”

It is true that I have nothing to say before this skinny crooked little man.

“Why don’t you find a man? Why don’t you find a decent business? What are you now?”

What kind of logic is this?! Has this guy ever attended school?

He repeats numerous times these two ridiculous sentences. It seems that he is too bothered by the fact that I do not have a man or a decent business.

I look at him, speechless.

“Well, you don’t speak. Why don’t you speak?”

I am wondering: Isn’t he the one who just told me it is better not to speak?

In anger he circles around and stops behind me. “Courtesy” is over. Will the tough measures come? What kind of tough measures? All cruel punishments I have heard of flash through my mind. I remember the words often said by somebody I know:

**“Since being kidnapped by you, I have never thought about leaving alive.”**

**Anyway, my body would break up after a few shakes, so the pain would not last long. I am ready for it.**



Those people who droop once in and harden once out are the most despicable. I would not give this person an opportunity to judge me in that way. Anyway, my body would break up after a few shakes, so the pain would not last long. I am ready for it.

Why doesn't he throw out his punch? How long has it lasted? My right foot hurts so much; I shift all my weight to the left foot. I start to feel dizzy. Don't collapse, please, never! Don't give them an impression that I am scared.

I start to hear someone talk to me. I slowly regain my consciousness. It is the "No. 2" who brings back the chair and lets me sit down. He starts to play the white-faced good role: "Why are you shivering?"

"Cold!"

He leaves out for a while and comes back with a white bed-sheet: "I have found no clothes. Take this instead."

I wrap myself with the bed sheet. The "No. 2" pulls another chair and sits next to me. He starts the conversation with care and concern. "Why are you so stubborn? Actually we just want you to show a good attitude."

"Under bright sunlight you guys kidnapped a law-abiding citizen and brought me here. What qualifications do you still have to talk about 'good attitude' with me?"

"It leads nowhere if you always bring up how you were brought here. You cannot change the reality."

"I know I cannot change the reality. But I still can withhold my cooperation. There is no way for me to have cooperation with hooligans."

"Hooligans? Who are the hooligans?"

"Those who molest me, who want to make me disappear from this world. I can bear rogues, but not hooligans."

"What is their difference?"

"Rogues try hard to conceal their nature, for they know it is ugly. Hooligans explicitly demonstrate their nature as hooligans, for they take the ugly as the beautiful."

"Oh, it sounds right. However, aren't you too arrogant? Do you realize that? Your attitude makes people feel aggravated."

I correct him: "No aggravation. It's unnecessary. To make me disappear? Please don't play this game with me." Increasingly I speak with stronger emotion: "Isn't about death? We the tax payers spend money to raise your kind of evil-doers. I have long been fed up by what I have seen and heard about your evil deeds on a daily basis."

With constrained patience, he says: "Have you thought about this? We may not let you die, but let you suffer. Can you still bear it?"

"Let suffering come. Once the oil dries up, the lamp will die out."

"Why are you so insensitive to reality? Isn't what you do respectable? What's wrong to talk about it?"

"I have already told you, I can talk about myself, but not others."

"Under this circumstance, you are still thinking of others. Whether you can go out or not is still unknown."

"For me, the peace of my inner heart and the freedom of my soul are more important than the freedom of my body. You will not understand."

**I start to feel dizzy.  
Don't collapse, please,  
never! Don't give them  
an impression that I  
am scared.**

**"Rogues try hard to conceal their nature,  
for they know it is ugly. Hooligans  
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**"Have you thought  
about this? We may  
not let you die, but let  
you suffer. Can you  
still bear it?"**

He pauses in silence for a while: “Let me think about this. You also think about it. It’s too late now for tonight. You may rest.”

I request to use the toilet. He calls a female guard to accompany me. After I return from the toilet, I see a mattress with a set of beddings being laid on the floor. The female guard says: “Take it as your rough bed for sleep.”

What? That’s all? No torture? Not to hollow me out? Forget about it. Let me first lie down my weak and shivering body and warm myself.

A man and a woman move two chairs to sit beside my mattress. In my life it is a completely new experience that I close my eyes under the light of a 200-watt bulb and under the watch of two guards.

Although exhausted, I have a sleepless night and can feel my heart beating hard in my chest. My whole body starts aching: shoulders, abdomen, and four limbs. Probably they are the result of my hysterical struggle as I was being kidnapped. The amount of activity was too excessive for me.

I lie there helplessly. As they change guards, the footsteps, the murmurs, the squeaks of chairs, and the sound of breathing are so surreal.

What’s the time now? The daylight penetrates the thick window curtain to reach the room, which is facing south. A short, strong-built man enters. I know this hatchet man was one of the kidnappers yesterday. As he walks to me, he keeps his hands in his pants pockets. He stares at me with the beam of evil, then, he kicks the mattress twice: “Get up! You think you are here for rehab?”

I get up, make my bed, and then sit on the mattress silently.

The “No. 2” comes, pulls a chair, and sits next to me.

“Let’s continue our topic from yesterday’s.”

“Let me repeat: I will only talk about me, nobody else.”

“Is this your principle?”

“Yes.”

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“What do your names Hua Ze mean?”

“They mean the ocean of flowers. In classic Chinese, Hua as grand and Hua as flower were the same.”

He starts to ask me some trivial and boring details that may be important for him: the family background, the circumstances of my upbringing, my educational experiences, etc. The conversation flows casually and aimlessly.

I get chance to ask a question: “From yesterday to today, there are more than 20 to 30 people to handle me. Is this how you treat tax-payers’ money?”

“How do you know we are spending tax-payers’ money?” He looks at me with curiosity.

“Not?”

“Maybe not.”

“Then from Anyuanding?” [Translator’s note: Anyuanding is the name of a private security company in Beijing which has been exposed to be running notorious jails on behalf of the authority for petitioners from all over the country.]

“Hard to say.”



**“For me, the peace of my inner heart and the freedom of my soul are more important than the freedom of my body.”**



“Isn’t it suffering to take this job? Is the heart covered by dark shadow?”

“How are you so sure?”

“You look educated, at least a college graduate. Will you tell your family that you kidnapped me?”

“That’s not kidnap.”

“Then what is it?”

**“What do your names Hua Ze mean?”**

“We call it: Take in.”

“Do you realize this is violating the law?”

**“They mean the ocean of flowers.”**

“Laws include many layers, some you know, and some you don’t.”

“Oh, that’s new to me. Something I am not allowed to know can still be called law.” I look at him with curiosity: “Tell me, which department do you belong to?”

“Even if I tell you, you will not understand. Until someday we see each other at another occasion, you will still be unable to understand.”

“Then, tell me your name. Although you are one of this organized criminal group, someday when you are on trial, I may testify in court that you have not applied torture to me as I am kidnapped.”

He chuckles, “When do you think this day will come?”

“Human calculation cannot beat karma. It may take ten years, or just one night. But I am sure, in our life time, we will see this day.”

“Then what do you plan to do before this day?”

**“Laws include many layers, some you know, and some you don’t.”**

“To use pen, to use heart, and to use camcorder to record the changes of this time.”

He nods and then changes the topic: “You should eat something. What do you like?”

“I like to brush my teeth first. Without brushing my teeth, I have no appetite.”

He spends the next ten-plus minutes on trying to convince me that rinsing mouth with water can also have the same effect. I insist on using a toothbrush and toothpaste.

Finally he admits: “As a matter of fact, it is not difficult to find a toothbrush for you. However you were emotionally unstable yesterday evening, I am concerned that you may hurt yourself.”

“So that is how it is! As I sleep, I am guarded by someone beside; as I go to toilet, I also have a bodyguard next to my skin to provide security, because they are afraid of me committing suicide.”

“You see, you did not even blink as you talked about death yesterday. You have frightened me.”

This time it is my turn to laugh: “Take it easy, I will not commit suicide. This bloody debt is reserved under your name.”

“Had you been killed here, no one would know.”

“You cannot be so sure. How can you guarantee that out of 20-30 people there is not a single one who has conscience? Even if today no one will speak out, how can you be so sure about twenty or thirty years later? Don’t be so self-confident.”

“Are you really not afraid of death?”

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“It is one life, no matter how you live. You can be mediocre for your whole life, or you can be splendid. What is this to be afraid of?”

“Then you should eat something, and take good care of your body, so you will be able to live splendidly.”

“I must brush my teeth before eating.”

“You are so stubborn. Did you know, your friends have more wisdom than you do?”

“I know that.”

The final result of my negotiation is that I have to use my fingers to brush my teeth with toothpaste. Then I eat a few pieces of green vegetables, mushrooms, and some instant noodles.

The “No. 2” leaves. Immediately come in two guards, sitting at each side of me. It seems I can continue my rest.

That ends today’s “talk”. What do they want? They kidnapped me here with fanfare, and then let me stay? Clearly we cannot understand each other. We are not the same kind. The difference between them and me is probably much bigger than that of a wolf and dog.

It’s so quiet, except for the barks. Occasionally you hear thunderous airplane flying over. I guess that I am east of the airport. Am I in a secret detention center? A place specifically used for dissidents like me? How many secret houses like this do they maintain? How many dissidents have ever been detained? Have cruel tortures happened here? Can those who step out of here return to a normal life? Just one year ago, no matter what, I could not have been able to imagine my current situation. My mind chases after wild ideas, in the meantime, it turns dark and then bright.

The hatchet man returns and kicks my mattress. I turn over and show him my back. He tosses off my bed sheet. I keep still and ignore him. He turns mad and walks two rounds around my mattress. Then he starts yelling and cursing: “You cheap bitch. Who do you think you are? What the fuck do you pretend to be?” He goes on and on with disgusting words that I cannot put on paper.

I gather my courage and sit up suddenly: “What thing are you? Get out of here!”

He aggressively comes closer to me: “Say it again? I will kill you!”

The “No. 2” opens the door and comes in unexpectedly. I shout loudly at him: “Keep this hatchet man off me. When you want to kill me, you let him in.”

The “No. 2” stops the hatchet man who tries to run to me. Before he steps out of the room, he points his finger at me: “You just wait! I will drag you out, dig a pit and bury you!”

I start shaking out of anger: “I wait to be buried by you guys. I know you may not hesitate to do it. But keep in mind, there will be a day when you are on trial!”

This is the third day after being kidnapped. How can I let my friends outside know my whereabouts?

There are five shifts of guards to watch over me. Every shift has one man and one woman, in every two hours it changes. Every time when the “No. 2” comes in, the guards step out; as he leaves, they come back right away. From their brief conversations I find out that they are drawn from different departments. They may have no idea about my background. If I speak loudly to myself, let them know who I am, how I was kidnapped here, will some of them send out a message for me? I do not believe that all people I have been together are a monolith and are as cold-hearted as iron and stone. I bury my head onto my knees, pondering silently. Suddenly with a big “pang”, the door is pushed open. A gang of men rush in. One of them sits close to me on the mattress. This is the “No. 1”, the little hooligan. He pokes my ribs with his elbow: “Raise your head! Look at me!”

**“When do you think this day will come?”**

**“Human calculation cannot beat karma. It may take ten years, or just one night. But I am sure, in our life time, we will see this day.”**

**“Then what do you plan to do before this day?”**

**“To use pen, to use heart, and to use camcorder to record the changes of this time.”**

I do not move and keep silent. He pokes again, and again. I still keep silent. He lights his cigarette, smokes hard, finds a perfect niche, and blows the smoke to me through the space between my head and elbows. I move away from him and keep burying my head. He continues to move close to me: "Hello, why are you so calm? Were you trained in Taiwan?" Laughter breaks out from others.

Judging from this, I have reconfirmed that they are not from the Domestic Security (DS) Detachment, but the State Security (SS). Have they been indoctrinated with such information? I am a spy, a special agent, and have harmed the state security, therefore, have become an enemy of the state. Otherwise how does it make sense when you see these educated youth do wicked things without feeling a bit disturbed in their consciences? How can you make them believe they are doing decent job? At this moment, clearly they have come not to interrogate me, but to make fun out of boredom. I keep burying my head deeply and say not a single word. After they have messed around for a while, they lose freshness and interest. The entire gang walks out in a drove.

In the aftermath, the "No. 2" occasionally comes in, stands by, and chats with me. I realize that he is trying to figure out what is in my backpack.

"Is your backpack for video recorder or camera?"

**"Had you been killed here, no one would know."**

"For both."

"Where are they?"

"I left it at a friend's home."

He tries to figure out what the SD cards are for. Since these cards are for professional use, he cannot see the data inside by using an ordinary camera.

"Did you make the April 16th documentary?" [Translator's note: This is a documentary about that a group of rights defenders went to Fujian to support three "net pals" who were on trial on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010.]

"Yes."

"Not so good. Any storyteller can do it. It has no technique."

"Thank you for your compliment. The highest achievement in making a documentary is the invisibility of technique."

"Why do you care about these people?"

"I love them."

"Are you kidding? You love so many people, but remain unmarried."

"The love I am talking about is different from yours."

He has been watching the April 16th documentary. Will he be moved by the scenes that have struck so many? I really want to tell him, that is love.

"How many mobile phones do you have?"

"Several."

"Why did you take them apart?"

"Want to clean up."

"Why keep them off?"

"Saves battery."

**"You just wait! I will drag you out, dig a pit and bury you!"**



He is examining my mobile phones. I have two. The one I use exclusively for Twitter was bought a few months ago. His touch has tainted it.

“Your life is not bad, since you have been to quite a few countries.”

“I believe so. My dream is to travel around the world.”

Is he looking at my pictures? In my u-stick drive there is nothing. Is he reading my blog-site?

“Have you made lots of money?”

“Every penny I make is clean.”

“Don’t you wish to return to your past life?”

“I wish it every day. But unfortunately I am unable to go back.”

“We can provide you help.”

“You help me? How? Will you make the infants who develop kidney stones for drinking melamine-tainted milk healthy again? Will you release Zhao Lianhai? Will you resurrect all the school children killed by the collapse of jerrybuilt school buildings in the Wenchuan Earthquake? .....” [Translator’s note: Zhao Lianhai is the father of a sick girl who was fed with tainted milk. He organized some parents to petition to the government for more help and was arrested and sentenced to two-and-a-half years in jail.]

“Is there a single thing in this country that makes you satisfied?”

“Just allow me ask you one question: Why have you kidnapped me? Have I violated any law? Will any government in a civilized country do things like this?”

“Certainly. The American CIA kidnaps, too.”

“Young man, have you watched too many American blockbuster movies? The CIA targets outward, not at home. There is no way it kidnaps citizens at home.”

“Do you ever know compromise?”

“Different interest groups can compromise; different interest claims can compromise. But do you compromise with hooligans? How do you compromise with the man who rapes you? He says he will do it ten times, is it a compromise if you agree to twice? He says he will do it for one hour, is it a compromise if you say twenty minutes?”

The “No. 2” turns back and walks out.

After another sleepless night, I get up in the morning and feel extremely frail. My suspender jeans have become loose. I put on my shoes, stand up unsteadily, and steps on the bottom of my pants leg. I bend down to roll it up. As I try to stand up again, I blackout.

I vaguely hear a hubbub of voices, it seems far away. Someone is pinching the center of my upper lip, the nail is almost piercing to my teeth. With the pain I open my eyes, see the gloating face of the hatchet man. I feebly lie down, face-up and helpless. Five or six men surround me, including the “No. 3” and Team Leader Zhou from the East District DS Detachment. Now I feel sure that is him, although he still wears sun-glasses and does not utter a word.

“Get up, put on your outerwear, and follow us.”

I am carried away, have the black hood put on me the third time, and pushed into the backseat of a car. With two men sandwiching me from both sides, I leave the place where I have been jailed for four days.

---

**At this moment, clearly they have come not to interrogate me, but to make fun out of boredom.**

**“Why have you kidnapped me? Have I violated any law? Will any government in a civilized country do things like this?”**

Unsure of where I am being taken to, I try to guess the direction I am going. The car zigzags continuously. There is a call in. I can recognize Team Leader Zhou sitting in the front passenger seat answering the phone. I can hear a long sigh from him. It sounds that this assignment has not been handled very well.

Roughly after two hours, I hear the broadcasting from the Train Station loudspeaker: "Attention please! Passengers....." I realize they are sending me back to my hometown.

"Where are you sending me to? I have no clean clothes with me. You must notify my family." I forcefully toss off the black hood. The two men yell at me loudly and force the hood upon me again. The man sitting to my right pushes down my head vigorously. My chin is pushed against my chest and I cannot move at all. As I resist, I shout loudly: "Let go of me!" "DS Zhou" in the front seat orders me to stay quiet. The man at right holds my hand tightly and rubs it ruthlessly. "You fight! Then, fight!" His voice is so low, only I can hear. It is the hatchet man again. He is getting his revenge!

"DS Zhou" opens the door and gets off. As the hatchet man tries to twist my wrist to my back, he squeezes out his curses: "You want to shout! Go on! Aren't you so tough? I am going to crush you! Crush you, the cheap bitch!"

I answer back loudly: "You, the dreg of mankind, are not fit to carrying my shoes! You can kill me if you dare!"

My wrist is twisted by him to form a 30-degree sharp angle. My limbs tremble and gradually become numb and totally insensible. "DS Zhou" returns to the car. The car starts and then stops after a short distance.

"Get off!"

"I cannot move my leg."

"Damn, what are you feigning for?"

The hatchet man kicks me and drags me out. Before I am dragged out of the car, the black hood is removed.

I am standing on the platform, just in front of the train car. The bright sunshine of late fall shines on my face. Under the day light, under the bright heaven and on the nurturing earth, I am kidnapped openly and dragged forward on the ground by two men. I cannot hold my tears any more. They pour down.

I cry out: "Let go of me! Let go of me!"

Someone embraces me from behind: "You cannot treat her this way. You let go of her."

I look up and ask: "Who are you?"

"I am Chen Ming." [Translator's note: A pseudo name is used here by the author.]

"Ah, Chen Ming? Is it you?"

"Yes, it's me, Chen Ming, to accompany you back to Xinyu."

Chen Ming, the office director of Xinyu Broadcasting and Television Bureau, the husband of my friend. After many years of not seeing each other, we meet here in this manner.

Chen Ming carries me to the train, my limbs are all numb. The passengers have not been allowed in, so there are only Chen Ming, me and two "DS" officers who claim to be two officials working for the neighborhood government.

Forty minutes later, the train departs from the Beijing West Station. After a total of 68 hours, I finally escape from the evil grip of a criminal gang and start my days under house arrest.

**I forcefully toss off the black hood. The two men yell at me loudly and force the hood upon me again. The man sitting at right pushes down my head vigorously. My chin is pushed against my chest and I cannot**

**"I am going to crush you! Crush you, the cheap bitch!"**

### 3. House Arrest

Xinyu is a city administered directly under the provincial government of Jiangxi. Twenty-one years ago, I was a reporter for The Xinyu Daily. In 1989, I resigned from the post and started a sojourner's life for several years. I cannot remember in which year exactly that I returned to Xinyu to process my passport application. Since my residential registration was still with the collective registration system in the newspaper, I had to travel thousands miles to go back. Thus, I asked my good friend Jianjian, Chen Ming's wife, to do me a favor by relocating the residential registration under her household. Jianjian could easily help me handle some bureaucratic formalities. Chen Ming became my head of the household.

Approximately one month before I was kidnapped, the DS contacted Chen Ming for my background information and told him that I was involved in some serious rights defense activities. Chen Ming returned home to tell Jianjian: "Have they got it wrong? Will Hua Ze involve herself in these activities?" Jianjian was quite positive about the answer: "No doubt, it's her. I know her."

On Oct. 28, evening, Chen Ming was informed by his superior that he would go together with the municipal DS to pick me up in Beijing; all the expenses would be paid by his work unit. I don't know whether Chen Ming regretted or not to allow my residential registration under his household. Was he scolded by his superior for "making friends recklessly". All in all, Chen Ming and his work unit are implicated by me.

As soon as I get on the train to Jiangxi, I am ordered to have my backpack checked. An officer in plainclothes hands me the backpack. As I am unzipping it, a mobile phone drops out. A female officer in plainclothes snatches it away: "I will keep it for you." What she does not realize is that I have an extra one which I use exclusively for Twitter and have never called anyone on. It is as clean as a newborn baby. When I was on a shoot in the Northeast, I had only one battery for the phone I call people with. To take precaution, I saved two friends' phone numbers in my phone for Twitter. I know my memory: if I do not save it, I cannot even remember my home phone number. This precaution will save me from many troubles.



I put my lucky phone into my pants pocket. After the train starts, I take the opportunity as I am in the bathroom to make two phone calls. First I dial Pu Zhiqiang's number. The ring tone lasts for a long while, but he does not answer. Then I dial to Teng Biao and have a difficult conversation due to strong background noises and signal interruptions. I tell him that I am kidnapped. One DS from the East District was among them. Now I am being repatriated to Xinyu, Jiangxi. My laptop computer is still left at the airport and he must find a way to get it for me. Then the phone is disconnected. But Pu Zhiqiang calls in and tells me that he has been put under house arrest since he returned to Beijing on Oct. 27. Luckily he still can contact the outside. I repeat to him what I said to Teng Biao. He pauses and then tells me with a serious tone: "This is a life you have chosen. Earlier or later, things will come to you. You must learn how to face it independently." I answer: "Sure, I know."

In the coming fifty or more days of isolation from the outside world, I have remembered these words numerous times. I take it as advice from a pioneer to a follower. Face it, this is our life.

After these two phone calls, my battery has only one bar left. I am uncertain what is ahead of me; I must keep this last bar for an SOS in case of real danger. Although I do not know who will help me and how, I cannot let myself disappeared in this way. I must let my friends know of my situation.

In the train, the two officers in plainclothes ask me with curiosity about Liu Xiaobo. This is the first time someone has mentioned these three Chinese characters since I have lost my freedom.

"What is your relationship with Liu Xiaobo?"

"What has Liu Xiaobo done?"

**After a total of 68 hours, I finally escape from the evil grip of a criminal gang and start my days under house arrest.**

My hunch is finally confirmed. All is because I signed my name on "The Statement Regarding Liao Xiaobo's Reception of Nobel Peace Prize." I left my name Hua Ze, Beijing as my residential city, documentary director as my vocation. Just for these



less than a dozen words they kidnapped me and will keep me under house arrest in the coming days. I also have confirmed that the people in the operation are from the State Security.

This is a savage state and a thug government. Rules in civilized societies are not followed here. Comparing it to the Qing Dynasty one hundred years ago, the only difference is that then dissidents had their heads chopped off and were forced into exile, now they are kidnapped and made to disappear.

To explain to them, I start talking about the June 4<sup>th</sup> of 1989, the Charter '08, the Nobel Peace Prize, etc., and I become excited by these topics. If the magistrate's house uses kidnap and arrest to let me share Liu Xiaobo's honor, I cannot live under an undeserved honor. I will sow the seeds along the way as I go.

As the train is approaching our destination, the two officers in plainclothes and Chen Ming all advise me: "We are solely responsible for picking you up. We will not stay together as we arrive at Xinyu. We wish you not to get hurt. You just bend when you have to."

I thank them with a smile for their kindness. But I know the word "bend" is not in my dictionary.

At Xinyu Train Station, Mr. Chen Jianjun, a DS from the city comes to receive me. He is about 40 years old, looks like he has a soldier's background and appears to be not well-educated. As soon as he sits in the car, he starts to lecture on me, such as:

"Don't wash your dirty laundry in public. But you guys bring the domestic scandal to the international community. It damages our state's image."

"Don't try to exploit the loopholes in law. You guys claim to use law as a weapon, but law is not the whole thing."

"Maybe your intentions are benign, but you have been manipulated by the anti-China forces."

Even though I am not good at speaking such clichés, or having sympathy for someone who is brainwashed so thoroughly, I have to respond with patience.

"Exactly with a concern for our state's image, we appeal for the release of Liu Xiaobo. How can you keep a Nobel laureate in jail? To win a Nobel Prize had always been a dream for China for a century!"

"Laws are made by the ruling party. How can you say that to maintain the integrity of law is to exploit the loopholes of law? If we do not resort to law as our weapon for defense, should we rather use tanks as weapon?"

"As for the anti-China forces, I want to know how I have been used. Will you tell me?"

He says: "I still do not know you very well. We will have time to talk about it again."

Then I tell him in a serious manner: "If you do not know me well, please do not label everything so easily. Please come back to talk to me after you have done some home work."

I despise those without professionalism. How could it be that this time everyone I have met is without professionalism? Why cannot they at least spend some time to get to know me? Don't they realize that I am more easily convinced by soft talk than rough threat? I believe that even with the shameless professions such as DS and SS, some professionalism should be maintained.

In Xinyu, I am sent to the Xiaofang Guesthouse, a six-storey building located in the north part of the city. [Translator's note: Xiaofang, literally means "Fire-Fighting". Since "fire-fighting department" is part of the Public Security apparatus, it is reasonable to assume that this hotel is affiliated with the PS system.] It should have been built in accordance to its triple star standard, but now it looks outdated. Fortunately, the beddings are clean and bleached, and the toilet room spacious too. I am housed in Room 9207 at the second floor. I was told that this is the only three-bed room in this guesthouse. Two female

**"This is a life you have chosen. Earlier or later, things will come to you. You must learn how to face it independently."**

**This is a savage state and a thug government. Rules in civilized societies are not followed here.**

police officers live with me. Other two male officers live next door. There are four guards in every shift. The shift changes after 24 hours. In total, I have eight “body guards”.

As I step in the room, Ms. DS Ouyang announces the following rules: Not allowed to have contact with the outside; not allowed to meet friends; all activities are restricted to this building.

All “bodyguards” introduce them to me only with surnames, never given names. Some say they are police officers in criminal investigation, economic crime, or public security. None of them admits as “DS” officer. Ironically, this department is too ugly to be revealed. However after having been dealing with so many “DS” officers, with my sharp eyes I can immediately recognize three of them, who are from the “DS” detachment, others from different departments. My security level has been so high; none of them has ever had any experience. The officers and their top boss in the district bureau know only that they are assigned to a special task. As for where and what the assignment is, it is classified.

Team Leader Hu comes to meet me. No one mentions his position title; he is just introduced to me as a “leader”. After a while I figure it out by myself. The leader is very polite and says: “Since this is a coordinated action from the Ministry of Public Security, how long you will stay here depends upon the order from the above. The Xinyu authority does not want to keep you for a single minute more. I wish you will cooperate with us.” He advises me to take it as a vacation or recuperation.

I request Team Head Hu to allow me call my mother and tell her I am okay. My mother is almost seventy. She must have been worried for not hearing from me for so long. Team Head Hu says that he has to report to his superior for a decision.

No one comes to talk with me anymore. No one comes to explain to me why I have lost my freedom. My life under house arrest, which has a beginning but no end in sight, has started.

When I have the opportunity to use the toilet, I send a message to Teng Biao: “I am living in Room 9207 at Xuaofang Guesthouse in Xinyu. The police here treat me decently, so don’t worry too much.” Since my mobile phone has little power left, I cannot wait for a response and turn off my phone.

Then I take a shower. For five days I have never taken off my clothes. I have them on as I sleep on a bed or lie down on the ground. I cannot bear it for one more minute.

I take them off and have my first view of the “gains of pains” from the past four days of being kidnapped. The crescent-shaped cut on my upper lip is deep, a gentle touch on it causes piecing pain. The wound on my back is below my neck, which makes it impossible for me to turn over as I sleep. Four limbs, especially the right arm, are covered with black and blues. The right foot was twisted and hurts. The wounds on my upper lip and right hand were inflicted by the hatchet man on the day of repatriation. But how did I have other injuries? I fainted several times on the kidnapping day, so I can hardly remember what they had done to me.

After the shower I am completely exhausted. I lie on the bed near a window, peeking at the sky of Xinyu through the iron window bars. I have no relatives here, so it is a strange city for me. I even have no idea about where this guesthouse is exactly located.

I have to get used to sleeping with two bodyguards in one room. I hope that they will not snore, grind their teeth, and talk in their sleep. After a long time with insomnia, I have become very particular with my sleeping environment. It has to be very quiet and clean.

The planned trip to Europe in November has become impossible. Probably exit restrictions will be imposed upon me; my dream to travel around the world might have just ended. Has Teng Biao retrieved my laptop? I hope it will not be in the hand of the gang members. My bank credit is going to have its first bad record for missing the due date. They must have accumulated a large amount of interest on my transaction of more than 20,000 yuan for the air ticket to Europe. What am I going to do when I miss my daily prescribed medicine? Will I have health problems?

Why am I worrying about all these mundane issues? Without freedom, what else should I worry about? Let it be that I cannot travel all over the world, for so many people even have never stepped out of the city of Beijing. Let my credit history be spotted, I have no plan to apply for loan anyway. Teng Biao will find a way to get back my laptop, even if cannot get it back, I will

**If the magistrate’s house uses kidnap and arrest to let me share Liu Xiaobo’s honor, I cannot live under an undeserved honor. I will sow the seeds along the way as I go.**

**Without freedom, what else should I worry about?**

accept that. What does it matter if I cannot take medicine regularly, if I was already prepared for death? The only person I cannot keep off my mind is my mother who has a serious heart ailment. On the evening of Oct. 8, when the Nobel Committee announced the award, many of my friends were arrested as they were gathering in restaurants to celebrate. The next day my mother left Beijing for Jiangxi. As I was bidding farewell to her, I promised: "I will be fine. Be at ease." Now I only want to say to my mother: "I am sorry, Mama. I did not keep my promise."

Now that I am stuck here, I have to take it easy. It's no use to be anxious and angry, which will only impair my acumen and judgment. I try to comfort myself: "It's fine. I just take it as an opportunity to train my meditative power."

The next morning, DS Chen Jianjun who picked up me at the train station opens the door and comes in. As he is listening to his phone, he points at me: "Did you contact someone in Beijing? Do you still keep a communication device?" He turns back and gestures to the two female "bodyguards": "Search her body, her backpack, and the bed!" My mobile phone is confiscated, so is the last hope to be able to contact the outside world. With it they also take away some of my professional equipments: a wireless walkie-talkie and a camcorder. They do not know what they are used for, but when they take everything away, they can feel relieved.

The only thing left in my backpack is the manual book for my camcorder. Since it has not been very long for me to shoot film by myself, I still cannot remember all the functions of the camcorder. I have it with me in case I need to consult it. In the coming days, this manual has been my only reading material.

Every day I go through the same routine:

At 7:30 a.m., I get up, wash and brush, and then go downstairs to have breakfast.

In the morning: I read something, write in my diary and practice yoga. At 11:30 am, have lunch. In the afternoon, I read, practice Pilates (A hybrid of yoga and gym to increase oxygen inhalation), and take a shower. After dinner, I watch some TV and then go to bed.

At the very beginning I could not get used to the environment. The "body guards" keep the TV set on from morning to night. Its noise disturbs you. Luckily I soon learn how to read, write and do exercise to the bombardment of TV noise.

One day after dinner I request to walk outside. Chen Jianjun calls his superior for permission. The reply is: "Walking is allowed, but you are restricted to the courtyard of the guesthouse." So my life has one more activity.

Every evening, I wear my red wool sweater, suspender jeans, and a black coat (they are all the clothes I had with me when I was kidnapped) and circle the courtyard twenty times. Surrounded by four "bodyguards", the scene must have been very impressive and funny.

There are only a few guests in the Guesthouse. The court yard is a rectangle, eight feet from east to west, and thirty-five from north to south. There are only two rooms with windows that have iron bars installed. My Room 9207 is one of them. During the first walk, I discover a moderate-size Osmanthus tree in the Southeast corner. This green plant with small white and yellow flowers and a strong fragrance adds life force to my daily routine.

On the first day of my arrival to Xinyu, I requested to call my mother. After a week, I have heard no response. On November 9 [Translator's note: The original text is Oct. 9. Based upon the context, it is corrected as Nov. 9.] at breakfast, I have my request again. Chen Jianjun replies: "It is not a big deal to let you call your mother. But you kept one phone and contacted the outside. This incident caused serious consequences. So we cannot let you call your mother."

"What serious consequences have I caused?"

"I cannot tell you about it."

**But I know the word  
"bend" is not in my  
dictionary.**

I immediately burst out: "Had I been a criminal, you still should notify my family. But you treat a law-abiding citizen with no minimum humanity. I had an extra mobile phone and the Beijing police did not inform you about it as I was transferred to you, this is not my problem. Anyway, it is my right to inform my friends about my whereabouts. Are you punishing me for that? Go ahead. Aren't you afraid of that I contact the outside? From now on, I start my hunger strike! When I collapse, dare you not send me to hospital? Once I arrive at the hospital, I will cry for help and tell everyone that you have kidnapped me."

After I finish these words, I leave the dinner table and walk out. I can hear the footsteps that some ones are chasing after me.

“Little Chen does not know too much. Please don’t take him too seriously.” [Translator’s note: As the Chinese address young or junior people, they would like to call “Little so-an-so”. ]

**I believe that even with the shameless professions such as DS and SS, some professionalism should be maintained.**

“It’s nothing wrong with being inexperienced. But you cannot lose your humanity. Everyone has parents.”

“We cannot decide on whether you can call your mother or not. We have to send a request to our superiors.”

“I have already given you nine days. Even if you have to go through the UN, it should have been done.”

I return to the room and launch my first hunger strike for the right to call my mother!

In the morning, Team Head Hu comes: “I will send my request to the leader right away. But there must be some time for this, right? You first eat your meal.”

“Please send your request first, I can wait. I will not eat before I call my mother.”

The next morning, Chen Jianjun comes with an exaggerated smile: “The superior has granted you to make a call to your mother, but on two conditions: First, you cannot mention that you are kidnapped, or under house arrest. Neither can you say that you are in Xinyu. Second, the mobile phone must be held by us and you use the speaker mode. Agree?”

I never have intention to tell my mother what has happened to me. I just want to say hello to her and let her not worry about me.

They connect to mother’s phone and hold the mobile phone close to my ear. I hear my mother’s anxious voice: “Where are you? Why has your phone been off for so long? We are worried that something may have happened to you.”

Calmly I lie to my mother: “I have been traveling in Europe. My phone broke down. International roaming service is too expensive, so I cannot call you often. Please be at ease. It’s far safer here in a foreign country than in China.”

Before I travelled abroad, I always call my mother before my boarding. Before I left Beijing, I used to send to my younger brother by email my itinerary, contact numbers and booked hotels and addresses, all kind of information regarding accidental insurances and companies. This time is so different. I don’t know whether my mother has been convinced or not.

**Calmly I lie to my mother: “I have been traveling in Europe. It’s far safer here in a foreign country than in China.”**

Thereafter I am allowed to call my mother once a week and to say hello to her. To keep in touch with my mother, I take no chance to reveal her my real situation.

The sleepless night is so long, I try to fill it with my longings. The feeling of my longings can be warm and sad at the same time.

Ten years ago at a Christmas party in a bar in Sanlitun (the embassy area), Beijing, I met Xu Zhiyong, a Ph.D. student at Beijing University. That night, a group of friends and their friends were enjoying themselves heartily. Against the noisy and chaotic backdrop, I had a cool conversation with Zhiyong. He talked about his ideals on constitutionalism, the villages where he regularly visited to conduct field research at the grassroots level. These topics deeply interested me, because his ideals are also mine. Ten years later, he becomes my lawyer in my lawsuit for the freedom of speech and gives me tremendous help.

At a legal aid conference I came to know Teng Biao. After Zhiyong mentioned to him about my lawsuit, he nods without any hesitation: “Great! I support!” The next time I saw him again in front of Daxin Court House where people were showing support to Zhao Lianhai. Facing officers in



plainclothes who were recording us by camcorder, he shouted out: "This is Teng Biao! Dare you say your name?" That captured all females present.

For the past one year or so, I have participated in or filmed many citizens' mobilizations and legal cases that were initiated, sponsored, or supported by the Citizens Union. They cover issues such as violent tear-down and relocation, education injustice, The Day of Twitter Friends on the Fourth of July, Zhao Lianhai case, The Three Netizens Case in Fujian, Xia Junfeng case, Leng Guoquan case, and many others. Common ideals and shared experiences have created strong bond among us. At the deep bottom of my heart, Zhiyong and Teng Biao are my comrades as well as my brothers!

Early last year, I was harassed by the DS for publishing my article, "In Search of China's Path." I called Auntie Qing, the wife of Tan Zuoren, to reveal my desperation and helplessness. Auntie Qing said: "You need a lawyer. Go to Pu Zhiqiang." So I called Zhiqiang and had our first meeting half an hour later in his messy office. Standing before him, I felt that all my law school trainings were a waste and I became a chattering legal-aid seeker.

He interrupted me: "This is nothing, you will be fine."

"If I am in trouble, will you agree to be my lawyer?"

"I agree."

**At this moment I feel extremely sad, because in this land, the only thing my lawyer can do for me is to have just warned me.**

From then on, whatever trouble I got, I went to him, still chattering as before and often depleted his patience. From his facial expressions I could read explicitly: I am that child who cries wolf. On Oct. 24 he and I parted in Yichun. I went to Dandong to meet Teng Biao. During these several days, he always ended his phone conversation or text message with "take care!". Now I suddenly realize, he was sending me warning signals. At this moment I feel extremely sad, because in this land, the only thing my lawyer can do for me is to have just warned me.

The first time I came to know the name Cui Weiping is through the poet Hai Zi. Then, I was preparing to make a biographical film on him. In doing research, I encountered a series of articles written by Cui Weiping on Hai Zi. At first glance, her writings moved me, so that I finished reading all her articles I could found. Later I met her at a farewell dinner for Tu Fu. That was before the April 16<sup>th</sup> event, Tu Fu was taking great risk and leaving as an advance guard for Fuzhou to show support to three "net friends" who were about to be tried. Teacher Cui resolutely joined the "Watch Group" to show her support. She said: "Today, let us forget about the world. At this moment, we only care about Tu Fu!" Several days later she wrote a long poem, "Those Just People!" in which one paragraph is about me.

Along with the stream of my recollections come Older Sister Wang Lihong, Tu Fu, Tian Tian, Wang Yi, Zhang Hui, A Er, Qiang Ben, and others.

Every time when I think of them, I feel a warm stream flowing down my cheeks. That excitement from my inner heart silently blends into the dark evening and greets the dawn.

On November 14, I return to my room after dinner. I sit on bed reading something. Knock, knock. I don't pay attention, believing it to be the "body guards" next door. The Female DS Ouyang goes to open the door. I hear someone say: "We are looking for Hua Ze!" Ms. Ouyang shuts the door promptly. I understand what is going on. I can hear the loud shouts from the outside: "Hua Ze, Hua Ze, please answer! Let us know you are inside." I get up quickly from my bed, while the female DS stares at me in surprise. The voice outside becomes even louder: "Hua Ze, we love you!" My tears burst out. I rush to the door with no fear. Since Ms. Ouyang is guarding the door, the door is kept ajar. But I can see three strangers' faces: one girl and two boys.

"It's me, Hua Ze. Who are you?"

"We are net pals, come to see you!"

"Where do you come from?"

"They two are from Xinyu. I am Chen Maosheng from Fengxin, do you still remember me?"

"Certainly."

**"Hua Ze, we love you!"  
My tears burst out. I rush  
to the door with no fear.**



We had communication on Twitter. I remember his big-head picture, a handsome young man. He looks more refined than in pictures. I shake hand with each of them and feel unspeakable warmth. The female net pal hands me a bouquet of fresh flowers. All tell me to take good care of myself. Ms. Ouyang pushes the door from behind and shuts it with force.

The room falls into dead silence. As she is changing her clothes, Ms. Ouyang tells me: “Two of them are from Xinyu Steel Mill, the so-called rights defenders. They are bad, always seeking opportunity to provoke people to create trouble to the government. ....”I don’t listen what she is talking but feel happy that Ms. Ouyang recognizes them, so they must recognize her too. They will soon spread words about me out on Twitter. I will not disappear from this world without anyone notices.

**That was my first trip to Sichuan and met Tan Zuoren and his wife. Sixteen years later the same scene comes into my dream. But now my life has been completely changed by the sentence of Uncle Tan.**

Ms. Ouyang finishes changing her clothes and hurries out. She is going to report this to her superior, leaving me to another “body-guard”. I am discovered, that must be a big incident. They are going to keep themselves busy for a while.

The next early morning, Team Head Hu comes and orders me to pack up and move.

I am moved to The New Blue Sky Hotel, not far away from the old one. This hotel has no courtyard and getting out of it you are on street. So I have to go out if I take my walk. Actually they already allowed me to take walk beyond the gate.

The new hotel has no dining service, so we have to go to a restaurant next door for meals. The rooms have no heating, either. I have no problem with living here for about ten days, but the “body guards” cannot bear the cold. They soon realize that the net pals just come to see me and have no plan to rescue me. Therefore on the eleventh day, we move back to the Xiaofang Hotel with the strong insistence from the bodyguards.

One night I have a dream. In a cold winter morning I was on top of Emei Mountain, snowflakes descended heavily and elegantly, the peaks far and close were covered white. Morning bell rang from a monastery on the foot of the mountain. That is the real scene I once experienced in the Spring Festival of 1994. That was my first trip to Sichuan and met Tan Zuoren and his wife. Sixteen years later the same scene comes into my dream. But now my life has been completely changed by the sentence of Uncle Tan. [Translator’s note: Tan Zuoren was convicted to five year jail sentence for documenting the tragedies of school children who were killed by the collapse of school buildings. ]

About at the end of November, I was told that my house arrest will last beyond the Spring Festival of 2011, or even worse, indefinitely. I am psychologically prepared for the worst scenario that my release will come after December 10 when the Nobel Prize ceremony is held, for I know I was kidnapped and put under custody for Liu Xiaobo’s reception of Nobel Peace Prize.

If that is not the case, I will go on hunger strike and fight to my death. I must somehow send a message to the outside.

I keep my habit to write diary. It is scribbled and does not have coherent paragraphs. I use disconnected sentences or hints to record what important things have happened and how I have felt about them. I know Ms. Ouyang likes to peek into my diary, every time as I leave the room, I would make a small mark on my diary, put it in a particular position, or leave a hair on it. My plan to send a message out has to be done very carefully lest she finds out.

One evening I hide myself in the toilet and write a short note with the following message: I am under house arrest and am not allowed to contact my family. Please send a text message to the following two numbers: 186..... and 139..... (They belong to Teng Biao and Pu Zhiqiang. In the train I memorized them deeply in my head and will never forget in my whole life). These are the contents of my message: 1. My mobile phone has been confiscated and I am asking help from a stranger to send this message, so please do not publicize. 2. If after the day of the ceremony I am still not freed, I will start my hunger strike. Please try to help me out. 3. If it is possible (but I am concerned that they may have been restricted their freedom), I authorize you two to be my lawyers. I once left an authorization letter for Pu Zhiqiang at home (the address, exact location of my letter, and the contact number for retrieving my home key, etc.). 4. I am in the hands of Xinyu DS Detachment, being kept in Room 9207 at Xiaofang Guesthouse. I put this note together with a fifty-yuan bill in a pocket of my inner shirt.

On December 1, evening, when I take my walk outside, I stuff my note with money in the hand of a stranger I have carefully evaluated and chosen (I cannot tell too many details here). I am not certain whether this stranger would send out the text message for me. But that is what I can do; I leave all remaining developments to the divine intervention.

**I see the stranger. He is waiting there, gesturing me an Ok.**



Two days later as I take my walk out again, I see the stranger. He is waiting there, gesturing me an Ok.

As the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony approaches day by day, I have become more anxious. Every day without freedom is as long as a year. I feel I am entering an endless dark tunnel. I know there will be light ultimately, but I still cannot see it.

Many nights as I am about to fall asleep, I have a nightmare, I feel out of breath, anxious, and a strong urge to yell. I have to try hard to control myself, not let myself be driven crazy. Facing this strong sense of helplessness, I keep telling myself: You cannot have a breakdown! No!



Even if I am released the next day after the Nobel Prize ceremony, I will have been isolated from the world for forty five days. Such a price is unbearable for me who values liberty over life. Sometimes I wonder, if I had softened my attitude, told them whatever they ask after I was kidnapped, they might have already released me or just restricted my freedom, not to keep me entirely isolated from everyone. This might have happened with a high probability. But I do not regret what I have done. At the moment they kidnapped me, any possibility for a negotiation with me was eradicated. Not because I cannot compromise, but because I cannot succumb to violence.

Nobody may blackmail me. Violence cannot intimidate me. Interest cannot tempt me, neither the use of family for that purpose. The frail do not have to be powerless. The little one does not have to lose his/her dignity. What differentiates the strong from the weak is not the intensity of power, rather the strength of belief.

Finally the day for the Nobel award ceremony has come. Based upon the time of the announcement for awarding, the ceremony should be around five o'clock in the afternoon of Beijing time. Based upon what has happened to me, I expect no one from China to attend the ceremony. I visualize that there are rows of empty chairs both on the platform for the recipient and the honor quests in the audience. The camera can slowly zoom in on these empty chairs, which perfectly tell the world about the current situation of human rights in China and the historic significance for awarding the peace prize to Liu Xiaobo. I cry over the imagination of such a scene. Later after I was released, I saw the video of the ceremony. The scene really has an empty chair!

In the morning of December 21, I announce my hunger strike!

In the afternoon, Director Zhang of Xinyu Public Security Bureau comes. He tells me that he had reported yesterday to the Jiangxi Provincial Bureau of Public Security and will receive instructions in the coming one or two days. He wants me to be more patient and also asks whether I have some requests. I tell him: First, please explain to me the reason for my continued custody; second, please tell me a specific timeframe for its end.

I lie on the bed helplessly, leaving my fate to the heaven and letting my consciousness go away. My body seems floating, weightless. My other self, no, maybe my soul goes out of my body and look down upon me in the midair:

“How long can you still persist?”

I smile back: “To the limit of challenge.”

“Do you try to destroy yourself?”

“No. This is going to make me perfect. They are using brutality, wickedness and lifelessness to destroy me. I will resist it by using delicacy, purity, and vitality. They can destroy my body, but never my inner heart.”

**Nobody may blackmail me. Violence cannot intimidate me. Interest cannot tempt me, neither the use of family for that purpose. The frail do not have to be powerless. The little one does not have to lose his/her dignity. What differentiates the strong from the weak is not the intensity of power, rather the strength of belief.**

On December 15, Team Head Hu replies to my requests: First, since there will be a concert after the awarding ceremony and many rights defenders have gone to Beijing, the Beijing police are overwhelmed. Therefore, I cannot let you go back to Beijing right now. Second, before December 20, we will release you, but on a precondition that you must start eating.

That day, I end my hunger strike.

In the evening of December 17, Team Head Hu comes again: “Tell you good news. On December 20<sup>th</sup>, you will be free. Where will you go?”

“I want go back to Beijing.”

“How?”

“Either by train or by airplane is fine.”

“You can ask Chen Ming to buy a ticket for you.”

**“They are using brutality, wickedness and lifelessness to destroy me. I will resist it by using delicacy, purity, and vitality. They can destroy my body, but never my inner heart.”**

“I am not here for vacation, or visiting my family. I have no money left. How you have brought me here is the way you will send me back. Otherwise, I will wait for my friends in Beijing to come to receive me.

“Wait, I will report to the superior for a solution.”

The next day, I get a clear reply: On December 20<sup>th</sup>, we will purchase a ticket for coach car and send you to the train.

#### 4. Freedom! Really?

In the morning, December 19, Team Head Hu notifies me to pack up and move out of the hotel. He says that he could not get a ticket for coach train to Beijing and has requested the Branch Bureau of Fengyi Public Security for help. “Today we go to Fengyi first and tomorrow afternoon see you to the train there.”

I start feeling nervous, because his idea does not sound logical. Xinyu is a municipality directly administered by the provincial government, Fengyi is a county administered by Xinyi. How can it happen that a municipal bureau could not get a ticket and requested a county bureau for help?

Fengyi and Xinyu are only thirty some kilometers away from each other. It takes half an hour to get there. Two cars we are in go through the central area of the county site and move to suburban area. As we drive longer, we get to a more isolated place. Finally we stop at a holiday resort at the hill foot. The police officers from the Fengyi Bureau are waiting for us. Our group is the only one to spend the night here. Because we are in the mountains, the temperature is at least three degrees Celsius lower than in the city. The entire night I wrap myself tightly with a comforter, trying to figure out what comes next. Will they send me to a labor camp for re-education? Will they formally arrest me? In May of this year, a friend of mine was arrested in Jiangxi for “subversive activities”. After he was released on a parole for medical treatment, he told me that the Jiangxi Police asked him about my information.

The “bodyguard” is playing with her computer. I ask her a favor to search for tomorrow’s train schedule for Fengyi-Beijing line. She checks it on “Baidu.com” search tool and is surprised that the train to Beijing will not stop at Fengyi at all.

I start to throw my tantrum: “Go to ask your leader, where will they send me to?” This “bodyguard” is a young and inexperienced girl. She says, “The order I received is that our assignment will be over tomorrow afternoon. You will be released tomorrow. Don’t worry! The leader will take good care of it.”

A moment later, Director Zhang of Xinyu Public Security calls and tells me that he will come to see me, but has trouble to find his way. Someone in Fengyi Branch go out to receive him. After a long time, one “bodyguard” returns to tell me that they did not meet the leader: “Tomorrow morning the director must come. He will say goodbye to you.” I feel the situation is getting more mysterious.

I have another sleepless night. After I get up in the morning, I do not say hello to the “bodyguards”, walk straight out, and sit down in the yard to bask in sunshine. I feel deeply disturbed. I cannot understand. If they are going to release me, then why bring me here? Several “bodyguards” come out to me and start assuring me: “There should be no problem. The leader will arrange things well. If today you are not released, we will launch a hunger strike together with you.”

**“I am not a publicist, I am more a critic.”**

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Close to noon, we finally depart for an upscale restaurant in Fengyi county site. A whole group of people surrounding a table is waiting for us. They include Director Zhang, Team Head Hu and four more from the Provincial Police Bureau. Among them, a senior, who looks like a leader, tells me: “We came here to pick up you; we will bring you to Nanchang, from there you will fly back to Beijing.”

“When will you return to me my mobile phone, so I can call my friends to pick me up at the airport?”

“Don’t worry, we will return it to you.”

I am in no mood for meal. Isn’t it closer to go to Nanchang from Xinyu, but why via Fengyi?”

Among the four from the Provincial Bureau is a middle-aged woman, Ms. Xiong, is so friendly to me that I cannot think of her as a DS agent. She says: “Teacher Hua, you must have seen tremendous changes in Jiangxi? Please help us publicize all these.”

“I am not a publicist, I am more a critic.”

“Isn’t Teacher Hua specialized in historical and cultural documentaries? Our Jiangxi has a long, rich history.”

“That’s true. I once did some research and proposed a program on ancient academies in Jiangxi. Unfortunately, the department head did not think this program would have good ratings, so it was not funded.”

“That’s a wonderful idea. If you propose it to us, we will help. We can provide funding, reception and accommodation, everything you need.”

“Ha, ha, ha, ha……, that’s good.”

This is fascinating. It does not look as I am to be sent for labor camp; rather, it looks more like persuading me to surrender.

After the lunch, I get in a Ford minivan with the four from the Provincial Bureau and a female “bodyguard”. Followed by a car by Chen Jianjun, the DS from Xinyu, we drive as in a parade toward Nanchang.

As we are approaching Nanchang, the senior official says, “We still have several hours before the flight departure, we can accompany Teacher Hua to visit The King Teng Pavilion.”

At an inner room of a Teahouse at the pavilion, they have a carefully pre-arranged “friendly conversation” with me:

“Teacher Hua, you have been in Jiangxi for almost two months. Have the comrades in Xinyu taken a good care of you?”

“Very good. Sorry for troubling all of you.”

“You have a law background. So do I. As for some legal issues, let’s put aside. Some issues have to be left for history to judge. Do you agree?”

I do not say a word, keeping a smile.

“Today I am not talking to you in any capacity. As a senior to you, may I offer you kind advice?”

“Please, go ahead.”

“From now on, you’d better not get involved in Liu Xiaobo’s matters?”

“What kind of Liu Xiaobo’s matters?”

“Such as the signature campaign.”

**“As for some legal issues, let’s put aside. Some issues have to be left for history to judge.”**

**I am truly sure, I am free at last!**

“That does not always happen.”

“Good, that’s good. Also, as for things regarding the Jiangxi Police, you don’t need to mention them.”

“I think the Jiangxi Police have done well, enforcing law in a civilized way.”

“From now on, we are friends. If you have any business in Jiangxi, feel free to contact us. We will do our best to help. You and our Little Xiong can exchange phone numbers, so we can keep close communication. Welcome you to come here more often, but of course not in this way.”



I am wondering, so Little Xiong is going to be my special agent? I answer: “I will always come back, for I still have family here. But it is beyond my control if I will come back in this way.”

“Your project on Jiangxi ancient academies is a very good idea. You can send us a proposal; we can process it immediately to help. That’s no big deal.”

“Good, I will certainly come to you when I need.”

“Then we have it settled.”

At seven o’clock in the evening, I am sent to the VIP waiting area. Little Xiong asks me for my National ID for exchanging the boarding pass. I once again ask her to return my mobile phone. Xiao Xiong says: “We will put it in your deposited luggage.”

I am getting serious: “The mobile phone is a valuable item, I do want it to be deposited. You must give to me. It will be late as I arrive at Beijing; I have a thin layer of clothes, so I have to call my friend to pick me up.”

“We have prepared extra clothes for you. I know you do not have enough money in your pocket, so I have also prepared for you the taxi fare. In addition, our Bureau has also prepared some gifts for you, so I will pack up them together with your phone and deposit them.”

“Are you concerned that I will call my friends in Beijing, so a welcome delegation will come to the airport to greet me? I promise you, I will not get many people out to receive me. Anyway, it is so cold and as I arrive at Beijing, it will be pretty late.”

“It’s better to deposit it.”

“I will not agree to what I cannot. Once I have promised, I will keep my words. Please give me back my mobile phone.”

The senior official intervened: “Okay, give it back to Teacher Hua. Since Teacher Hua has already been so explicit, I am also frank to tell you: We are concerned about any new snafus. We are also thinking of your interest and wishing you a safe journey home.”

The airplane takes off at eight o’clock. At 7:40 p.m., I am escorted directly from the VIP waiting area to the airplane. At the gate, I wave to the people from the provincial bureau and enter the airplane. I immediately turn on my phone and call Teng Biao to report my safety.

At this moment, I am truly sure, I am free at last!

The next day after I returned to Beijing, I find out why the last two days before my release the Jiangxi police made so much trouble and transported me from one place to another. Teng Biao, Xu Zhiyong, Tu Fu and some other friends organized a “watch group on Piaoxiang” on Dec. 18. The group members from different parts of China and four lawyers had decided to go to Xinyu for my release.

**I have a dream! I dream in the near future my friends will never be kidnapped, disappeared, or jailed. I dream they will never live in exile as a sojourner far away from home and their country.**

Eleven days after I got my freedom back comes the New Year. As the New Year bell rings, I write down the following words: I have a dream! I dream in the near future my friends will

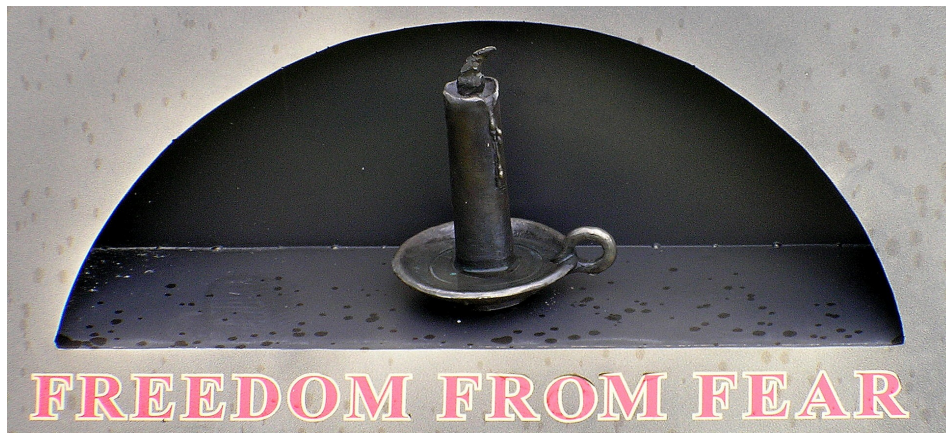
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never be kidnapped, disappeared, or jailed. I dream they will never live in exile as a sojourner far away from home and their country.

(The end)

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