

OUR SALAD DAYS

Life is strange. Most of us want to grow up fast when we are kids. But when we have reached a certain age, we want to be kids again. A small corner of our hearts is set aside for the memories of our youth, memories that are filled with tears, laughter, anger and passion. If you could turn back time, would you put on your old school uniform and go into the classroom again?

School is the place where one starts to learn. At school, we learn to read and write. We learn numbers and calculation, though we may never understand why we should learn the multiplication tables by heart, given the availability of calculators. School is also the place where one makes friends. It may not be possible for you to remember who sat next to you when you were in the kindergarten, but you may faintly remember there was a group of little friends who played, sang and cried with you. During high school days, most of us like to hang out with our close friends, discussing excitedly what to eat for lunch and which comic book to buy after school. Girls get together in cafeterias, sharing gossip, beauty tips and their secret crushes. Inside locker rooms, boys talk about football matches, pretty girls and the best workout to get six-pack abs.

School life, however, would be less exciting if everybody was nice and friendly. Interestingly, there is always someone we dislike in school, in particular teachers. Strict teachers who can easily reduce softer kids to tears are the common enemies of students. During class reunions years after graduation, some people still feel the same visceral fear when they talk about the brutality and high-handedness of their teachers. Sheepishly they may say, "When we forgot to hand in an assignment, those sadists would insult us by ordering us to stand in the corridor. When we rushed into the classroom merely seconds after the bell rang, we would be asked to write a repentance letter of a few hundred words." In the young victims' eyes, their teachers' wish to make them better persons is simply an excuse to give them a hard time, and thus these "sadists" deserve nicknames like "The Fat Witch", "The Mad Dog" and "The Clumsy Jerk".

No one can avoid competitions in school. Willingly or not, we always have to participate in some kinds of activities, say sports days, drama festivals or singing contests. Competitions help foster solidarity. In races requiring team work, friends and foes in the same class need to work together. Determined to secure medals on sports days, runners take part in intensive drills in passing the baton for relay races. We chant, dance and wave banners to compete for the best cheering team award. Rhyming slogans like "We can't be stopped; we are the top" rock the sports grounds. We clap, yell and jump for joy when our classmates win the games. The thrill, the satisfaction and the pleasure of winning are all moments worth seeing and enjoying. However, no one is an all-time champion. When we fall down and lose a game, we get angry and frustrated. But we also learn to come to terms with failure and accept defeat gracefully.

Decades after graduation, some people still complain that they are haunted by the nightmare of forgetting to bring their exam admission cards or being caught in a terrible traffic jam when they are on the way to an exam centre. Few things can be as gut-wrenching as not knowing how to answer a compulsory question in a silent room where you can hear only occasional nervous coughing and the ominous ticking of the clock. Your face turns white and your hands sweat when you forget an important mathematical equation or mix up some essential historical facts and dates. The words "Pens Down" sound like a death knell, sending shivers down the spine of every student in the room. No matter how horrible such experiences are, exams are a necessary evil we all have to face.

Exams are indeed nightmares for students, but not as frightening as the long office hours, the monotonous lifestyle and the cold shoulder in the adult world. It is true that strict teachers' severe punishment and harsh remarks are distressing, but we do owe them words of thanks for grooming us into responsible, reliable individuals. Gone are those old school days, but the memories are as fresh as ever. How wonderful it would be if we could visit our alma mater again with some old chums to relive the cherished moments of our salad days!





Life of Pi

After a shipwreck, Pi Patel, the precocious son of a zookeeper in India, finds himself adrift on a lifeboat with a zebra, a hyena, an orangutan and a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker in the Pacific Ocean. During his journey on the high seas, the sixteen-year-old boy witnesses the cruelty of life, as a war for supremacy between the animals breaks out. After much bloodshed, only he and the tiger are left. Not wanting to become Richard Parker's next meal, Pi does all he can to keep the tiger happy with food and fresh water.

As the days pass, Pi experiences the immense pain of starvation, illness and loneliness, though occasionally comforted by the peaceful eye of a looming whale and the shimmering blues of the ocean swells. Hope is vanishing. In spite of his constant practice of religious rituals, he feels the pressing weight of fear. "It is life's only true opponent.... It goes for your weakest spot, which it finds with unerring ease.... One moment you are feeling calm, self-possessed, happy. Then fear, disguised in the garb of mild-mannered doubt, slips into your mind like a spy," says Pi.

Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* is not an adventure of a castaway, but a spiritual journey that makes us question what it means to be alive. The relationship between the tiger and Pi is intriguing.

In the beginning, Pi feels enormous fear towards Richard Parker. However, when he admits that his death is inevitable, he stops worrying about the future and develops a close relationship with the tiger, which has been his companion and kept him alive during the harrowing voyage. It therefore comes as no surprise that Pi breaks into tears when he sees the tiger disappear forever from his life after the rescue.

At the end of the story, two Japanese investigators interview Pi, hoping to learn more about the fate of the doomed ship. Pi tells the story as above, but they do not believe it. So he tells it again, this time replacing the animals with humans. The investigators find the second version more convincing. Perhaps, in a world where people respect rationality, the story of an innocent teenager surviving his ordeal with a Bengal tiger lies beyond our concept of reality. In fact, life is a story, and you can choose what to believe.

In his struggle against hardship, Pi chooses to believe this: "It is pointless to say that this or that night was the worst of my life. I have so many bad nights to choose from that I've made none the champion."



Look at life through the windshield, not the rear-view mirror.
Byrd Baggett



A New Chapter Unfolds

It is one hour before midnight and you are still in the office, working on an assignment to be handed to your boss early the next morning. Your heart is beating fast and your neck muscles are tight. With a terrible throbbing in your temples, you are too tired to concentrate on your work. In your early fifties, you think you are getting old and can hardly cope with such demanding tasks any more. The thought of retirement flashes across your mind.

In the eyes of many people, retirement is the beginning of a downhill journey and the marker of stepping into old age. However, gone are the days when retirement meant spending your final days in a rocking chair, complaining about deteriorating health. Actually, you can still live a meaningful life after retirement. With the pressure of job responsibilities lifted, you have more time to fulfil your smothered ambitions of the past and dreams for the future. You can join a singing class, practise *tai chi*, do charity work, or even start a new career. With a whole new perspective on life, you explore, give and grow.

Ideally, life in retirement should be promising, rich and rewarding. But in reality, many retired people with no clear plans or established routine find that they

simply fritter away time, and that withdrawal from work fails to give them the sense of renewal for which they have hoped. They never start the things they have intended to do. They procrastinate over their home renovation plans again and again. Instead of joining a fitness class, they become couch potatoes and gain a few pounds. The books they bought when they had just retired remain untouched on the shelves and have turned yellow. They feel disillusioned, irritable and unfulfilled.

With about twenty years of active life ahead, why not make a smart plan before you retire? Doing something productive will keep your spirits up and make you feel young. Not everyone will run a marathon or become a martial arts master after retirement. We all have our own choices. If you love work, find a new job. If you are an introverted person, try some on-line charity services. Retirement is just the beginning of a new chapter, giving people time to slow down and truly embrace life. No matter how you choose to spend the time, enjoy every moment in your twilight years.





華麗背後的蒼涼



張愛玲說：“生命是一襲華美的袍，爬滿了蚤子。”這句話有點玄妙，但細讀過她作品的人不難明白箇中意義。這位天才橫溢的作家寫下這名句時只有十九歲，但彷彿已經歷一切，悟透人生。對她來說，生命滿是無可奈何的感傷，在華麗的背後，只是無盡的蒼涼、孤獨。

人的經歷往往影響他們的人生觀。張愛玲來自沒落的顯赫家族，生活在趨炎附勢的社會裏，少時父母離異，得不到家庭溫暖，年紀輕輕早已嘗過傷悲。她筆下的人物沒有高尚的情操，沒有善良的心，盡顯人性的陰暗，哪怕是親人或是摯友，大都不念情義，只為一己私欲沉淪，人性變態得令人不寒而慄。《金鎖記》中的曹七巧一生都是為金錢而活，被沉重的黃金枷鎖壓得心理畸形，連兒女的幸福也置之不理；《紅玫瑰與白玫瑰》的佟振保虛偽怯懦，揭起這個“大好人”的面紗，便是自私冷酷的小人；《半生緣》中的顧曼璐為了留住丈夫而出賣妹妹曼楨，毀了她一生的幸福。

張愛玲又說：“人生最大的幸福，是發現自己愛的人正好也愛着自己。”不過，她

小說裏的每一段感情都是千瘡百孔，男女間的情愛只是一場悲哀的遊戲。《傾城之戀》的白流蘇算是張愛玲筆下眾多人物中，在感情上得到較圓滿結局的一個，但白流蘇與范柳原之間的感情也不算是真正的愛情，只是心機算盡的角力。白流蘇明知范柳原浪蕩不羈，無心安家，但仍孤注一擲，為的是要得到名分，若不是一場戰爭，恐怕她的美夢最終也只會變成泡影。愛情是張愛玲生命中十分重要的東西，但她認為現實殘酷，世上根本沒有真正的愛情，也沒有誰靠得住，與風流成性的胡蘭成分開後，更感幸福遙不可及，只有在物質上得到歡悅。

假如張愛玲在幼年時遇到的都是真誠善良的人，也許不會認為人生那麼灰暗。假如她不是在兵荒馬亂的時代成長，也許不會感到人生那麼無常，朝不保夕。其實，人大都有善惡兩面，能以寬容的心看周遭的人，生活或許會快樂一點，但要接受別人種種不是，無怨無尤，卻需要無比的愛和勇氣，試問有誰能輕易做到？



幾回魂夢與君同

夜涼如水，萬籟無聲，難以入眠的你翹首仰望蒼穹，看到點點繁星在空中閃動時，心裏可會想念遠方的故人？人生多變，聚散有時，離離合合本該是平常事，

但“黯然銷魂者，唯別而已矣”，面對離別，總教人千般不捨，萬般無奈。

思念使人愁，不管過往的生活是摻着苦辣，還是糝着甘甜，誰也不願意與摯愛的人分離。革命先驅林覺民為了推翻

腐敗的滿清政府，捨生取義，與家人永別。起義前夕，夜闌人靜，他在一方白手帕寫下百年傳誦的《與妻訣別書》。信中字字血淚，充滿深情。他回憶初婚時與妻子在朦朧月影下並肩攜手，低聲私語，無事不談。他又想起曾瞞着家人出走後回到家時，妻子對他哭說：“望今後有遠行，必以告妾，妾願隨君行。”夫妻鶼鶼情深，但經此一別，將成永訣，林覺民縱然豪情蓋天，不怕犧牲，也肝腸寸斷。想到死後愛妻要獨力照顧孩兒，不信鬼神的他願化作幽靈回來與妻兒重聚；生死茫茫，戀戀不捨，讓人感到無限淒涼。



生離或許會有重逢之日，但死別真的要穿越陰陽界限才能相聚。在莫言的《戰友重逢》中，少校軍官趙金在回鄉路上遇到兒時玩伴、多年戰友錢英豪的亡魂。闊別十數載，人與鬼坐在大樹上細說當年，往事如煙，一幕幕哥兒們吵吵鬧鬧的軍中生活重現眼前。英豪足智多謀，卻一槍未發就成了敵人槍下孤魂，滿腔冤屈，趙金見他壯志未酬，也不知如何安慰他才好。思故友讓人感慨萬千，憶亡兒更是椎心刺骨。英豪的父親每天都在想念兒子，腿雖不靈便，仍一癱一拐的去到烈士陵園，為的是完成兒子在夢中所託，把他的骸骨帶回老家，長伴母親墓旁。“從別後，憶相逢，幾回魂夢與君同”，思念在心田泛起，尋尋覓覓，即使陰陽相隔，也想跟心愛的人再見一面。

在茫茫紅塵中，過客來去匆匆，沒有誰能陪誰走到盡頭，走到岔路口時，便要各自上路，相聚時的感動、離別時的悲傷都得放在記憶深處。繼續前行時，或許會遇到新知，或許會與舊雨重逢，又或許只剩下雙腳踏地的啪啪響聲相隨耳畔。





媽，我回來了！

下午四點左右，山區天色漸漸暗淡起來，還刮起大風，好像快要下雨。劉大媽打開木門，陣陣雨粉撲面，不禁打了一個冷顫。她捲起衣袖，趕忙走到屋前的天井，把曬乾了的玉米收起。在昏暗的暮色中，她黝黑的臉顯得特別黑，黑得像塗了炭灰一樣。明天便是七十大壽的她低下頭，彎着腰，手腳乾淨利落，不消一會兒便把所有玉米都搬到屋旁的小倉庫去。

劉大媽心滿意足地坐在客廳的沙發上，拿着兒子小洋多年前買給她的藥油，輕輕地搓着痠痛的膀子，想到小洋今年特地回來為她做壽，人便樂起來，搓着搓着，膀子都不再疼了。花梨木櫃上的吊掛時鐘敲了六下，劉大媽把門旁的小窗推開，探頭外看。雨停了，微弱的月華映照在村口那棵百年老樹上，半禿的極枝暗啞無光，落葉隨風舞動，遠處隱約傳來斷續的犬吠聲。



在山的另一邊，雨仍是下着，小洋背着重甸甸的背包，右手拖着行李箱，左手拿着長壽麵，正在趕路。雨點嗒嗒嗒嗒的打在長壽麵的盒子上。他停下腳步，從背包拿出一個塑料袋子，小心翼翼地蓋在盒子上，然後繼續往村子那邊走去。雨終於停了，小洋把臉上的雨水擦乾，整理一下濕透的衣服，看看腕錶，都快七點了，心便急起來。他已經很多年沒有回家，上次回來還是為父親奔喪。三年前，他用辛苦賺來的錢開了一家小店，忙得不可開交，過春節時都只是在電話裏給母親問安，想到這裏，鼻子不禁一酸，心裏難過極了。

劉大媽把小窗關上，然後走進廚房，把灶頭上燻得黑黑的鍋子打開，一股帶有濃濃肉香的蒸氣冒上來。她拿了一雙竹筷子，從鍋子裏挑了一塊薄薄的雞肉放在嘴裏試試味兒。鹽香雞是小洋最愛吃的，以前都只是在他老爸壽辰時才會做這道菜。劉大媽好像聽到有人在敲門，一個箭步便跑出去，差點兒給廚房的門檻絆倒。她一打開門，看到吳嫂站在那裏發抖，立刻把她迎入屋內。

“看來真的老了，站在門口才沒一會兒便抖起來。”吳嫂一邊埋怨一邊把劉大媽給她的熱茶往嘴裏送。

“對了，洋兒囑咐我們辦的桌子全都辦好了。廚子都是從城裏請來的，一共八道菜，都是您最喜歡吃的。大嫂，您真的好福氣，兒子在外面賺大錢，您不愁穿不愁吃，真讓人羨慕。可是，洋兒年紀也不小，都快三十五歲，該討媳婦了。”吳嫂絮絮不休地說了一大堆話。

劉大媽沒有作聲，只是靜靜地看着大門，但吳嫂最後說的那句話卻在她的心頭縈繞不去。

小洋繼續在濕滑的泥地上前行，走了一會，村口的那棵老樹就在眼前。他加快腳步，可是行李箱的輪子給石頭卡住。他使勁地拉扯，一骨碌倒在地上，但手裏還是牢牢的拿着那盒長壽麵。他慢慢爬起來，用力拍掉身上的泥濘，按到西裝胸口的袋子時，心慌起來了。他買給母親祝壽的金項鍊不翼而飛。小洋知道劉大媽不愛炫耀，但想到當兒子的連做點小事逗母親開心都不行，愧疚之情湧上心頭。月光斜照在冷清的山路上，小洋垂下頭站在那兒，不知如何是好，忽然看見地上有東西暗暗發亮，便蹲下來細望，原來就是掉了的金項鍊。失而復得的喜悅讓他咧嘴而笑，激動得差點兒掉下眼淚。

夜愈來愈深，風愈刮愈大，劉大媽站在門口，望着吳嫂消失在漆黑中。回到屋內，電視正播放她最愛看的戲劇，但她只是在窗前默默守候，直到桌子上的菜都快變涼了，又把鹽香雞放回鍋子裏。突然，屋前的欄柵咯吱作響，她連忙走出去看個究竟。門一打開，劉大媽笑了。

小洋站在門外，正想上前叩門，一看到劉大媽，就像個回家晚了怕母親責罵的小孩，滿臉歉意地說：“媽，我回來了！”



記人之善，忘人之過。

《三國志·蜀書·秦宓傳》裴松之注引《益部耆舊傳》

On a rainy evening, you drive home in a bad mood after a hectic day, brooding over the mistakes you have made at work and your boss's harsh remarks. You tune in to your favourite radio channel and hear R. Kelly powerfully sing: "See I was on the verge of breaking down. Sometimes silence can seem so loud. There are miracles in life I must achieve. But first I know it starts inside of me." You hum along while tapping a rhythm on the steering wheel. Motivated by the inspirational words, you sing louder and louder: "I believe I can fly. I believe I can touch the sky. I think about it every night and day. Spread my wings and fly away. I believe I can soar." Your frustration is subsiding and your confidence is back. You believe that you have the power to make things better even when everything seems to fall apart.



Life is never plain sailing. It can spin and turn us upside down sometimes. Weeks after breaking up with your lover, you take a pint of beer inside a pub where you two used to hang around, and Mariah Carey's *Can't Let Go* is playing. The singer croons passionately: "Even though I try, I can't let go. Something in your eyes captured my soul. And every night I see you in my dreams. You're all I know. I can't let go." Knowing that all the sweet moments are gone forever,

you keep wiping your tears away as you sit alone in a dark corner. Yet having poured out all your feelings, you feel a lot better, even though you know that nothing will change. Simple notes and chords work like magic and can mend a broken heart.

Music not only heals, but also brings back sweet memories. Have you ever perked up suddenly when you heard a song that is inextricably linked in your mind with your halcyon days? Just hearing the first bar of Nat King Cole's *The Christmas Song* will drag many people back to those happy Christmases they spent with their family and friends. When people hear *What A Wonderful World* by Louis Armstrong, they will be drawn to the beauty of "skies of blue and clouds of white, the bright blessed day, the dark sacred night". Karen Carpenter's pure and unique voice makes you feel you are "on the top of the world looking down on creation".

Music can conjure up strong emotions in people. It can pamper your soul, give insights into life and relieve pain. Whether just a simple tune or an elaborate piece, it can unearth your memories, take you to a foreign shore, and even be your best friend when you need one most.



悟

春回大地，鳥語呢喃，松柏經過霜雪洗滌，益顯蒼翠，挺拔剛健。人若能像松柏那樣堅忍不屈，在困境中安然自處，生活再苦，也總會找到出路。

越王勾踐被吳王俘虜，受盡屈辱；獲釋回國後，為了警惕自己，臥薪嘗膽，十年生聚，十年教訓，最終把吳國打敗，成為越國英雄。不過，並非所有帝王都可從失敗中汲取教訓，迎難而上，擺脫困局。南唐末代君主李煜與勾踐性格迥異，雖才情橫溢，但沉溺在風流浪漫的宮廷生活裏，不通政治；亡國後，只顧傷春悲秋，感懷前事，嗟嘆“問君能有幾多愁，恰似一江春水向東流”。



放下帝王之尊，忍辱負重是勾踐成大業的原因之一。相反，李煜感性多情，捨不下鳳閣龍樓、春花秋月，結果下場悲慘。勾踐為了最後勝利而包羞忍辱，固然並非常人所能效法，要解開心結，活得輕鬆自在一點也談何容易。北宋詞人柳永仕途坎坷，踏入官場便開罪朝官，被貶為平民，潦倒失意，從此寄情聲色，孤單落寞

時唯有以文字宣泄內心寂寥。《雨霖鈴》中“今宵酒醒何處，楊柳岸、曉風殘月”的淒清情景，道出他孤獨茫然的心聲。他若參悟官場如戲，對得失一笑置之，便不會終日鬱鬱寡歡，借酒澆愁。

人一生中總有寂寞的時候。寂寞是心結，孑然一身，內心空虛，固然會感到孤苦零丁，但在喧嘩熱鬧的聚會中，也會有“冠蓋滿京華，斯人獨憔悴”之感。“獨倚望江樓，過盡千帆皆不是，斜暉脈脈水悠悠”是情深女子思念愛人的寂寞；“無可奈何花落去，似曾相識燕歸來，小園香徑獨徘徊”是對時光流逝的惋惜，是對事過人散的無奈；“惻鬱邑余佗傺兮，吾獨窮困乎此時也”是忠臣被放逐感到悲憤絕望的孤獨。



人生如水，跌宕起伏，悲喜相互交織，時而失落，時而得意。李白懷才不遇，杜甫憂懷家國，李清照暮年飄零，都只是古往今來不斷重複的故事。流光易逝，匆匆數十載，轉眼便成雲煙，若能坦然面對一切，平淡中帶點苦澀的生活都可變得精彩，讓人感動。



“淋雨中”

消防處
一級法定語文主任楊靜儀

長途公共汽車在服務區停下，讓乘客稍作休息。甫下車，我便見到兩名青年與一位大叔爭執，其中一人更奪去大叔的相機。就在這當兒，一位身穿導遊外套的瘦削男士上前說道：“這點小事鬧上公安廳，對誰都沒有好處。”一聽此話，兩人竟乖乖作罷，倏地消失於人羣中。我正納罕此人的能耐，便跟他打個照面，原來是林翀。

林翀是朋友在北京的親戚，性格挺有趣的。猶記得他曾自謔道：“老師點名時常常把我喊成林羽中。”“淋雨中？”怪不得我們相識，也是在雨中。十年前，我和朋友到北京旅遊，他抽了兩天帶我們遊覽老北京。阿翀那時只有二十來歲，當過教師，因愛遊山玩水，後轉當導遊，本以為可乘工作之便，到訪名山大川，才不過一年光景，便發覺再美麗的風光，如果每天都在看，早晚會覺得不外如是。

遊老北京，少不了古樸的胡同，何況阿翀是在胡同長大的。他說自己不大喜歡胡同的生活，十多戶擠在一起，衛生環境甚差，但後來看着一條又一條胡同消失，反倒懷念在舊街小巷的日子。細雨霏微，我們的三輪車走過一條條冷落的胡同，拐過一個個淒清的街角，看着灰蒙蒙的四合院向後退去，心忖都市發展的巨爪摧毀了老北京的面貌，消逝中的胡同很快會變成“老北京”的回憶。我恍然明白，阿翀懷念的，不止是曲折迂迴的小街巷，還有那些印證了他成長歷程的痕跡。

北京人熱情好客，阿翀也不例外。有一次，他拉了我們到一家道地小店，一坐下，便點了三十多道菜及十多碟小吃：羊雜湯、豆沙燒餅、豆汁，還有很多我喊不出名堂的人間美味。我們只有三個人，當然吃不下所有佳餚，但那大碟小碟擺滿一桌的場面，至今仍叫我難以

忘懷；忘不了的，不僅是肉香菜香，還有北京人的盛情和排場。

阿翀說，天子腳下的人民膽子大，我想他是在說自己。阿翀看來孱弱，卻愛冒險。他說，沒有艱辛，就沒有回憶。每次放假，他總愛獨個兒騎單車穿州過省，到外面看看。他曾隻身由四川成都騎單車到西藏拉薩，冒着遇上強盜和患上高山症的危險，翻越一座又一座四千多米的高山，以豆大的汗水和疲憊的身軀換來足以細味一生的回憶。

觀其書，知其人。我看書只重情節，但阿翀看書的境界早已在我之上。有次跟他談論《西遊記》，他將《西遊記》的唐三藏比喻為企業老闆，孫悟空、豬八戒和沙僧則代表三類僱員。倘若大企業財困，非裁員不可，他們三人當中，相信只有看似平庸的沙和尚才能逃過裁員的厄運。他娓娓分析道：“孫悟空有百般武藝，但桀驁不馴，難以駕馭；豬悟能懂得籠絡人心，卻愛吃懶做，難當大任；只有沙悟淨默默耕耘，遇險也不離不棄，大企業無論出現任何狀況，總少不了這類僱員。”阿翀的理想是在三十歲前開一家旅行社，讓更多遊客認識祖國的綺麗風光。聽其言，斷其行，我深信他必有一番作為。

兩個鬧事的青年跑掉後，阿翀回轉頭來，認出了我，跟我寒暄一番。事別經年，他仍然熱愛旅遊，現在已當上旅行社的老闆，偶爾仍會帶團，了解顧客的需要。聽到他夢想成真，替他高興之餘，也深感振奮。十年前在北京的短短相聚，阿翀留給我的，除了那些同遊老北京的瑣碎回憶，還有他的生活態度對我的啓發。人的相知相識，不在乎長短，能教人有所感悟的，縱使只是一刻都值得珍惜！



寄蜉蝣於天地，渺滄海之一粟。
哀吾生之須臾，羨長江之無窮。

蘇軾



那年春天

三月下旬，維多利亞港煙雨迷濛，兩岸的摩天大樓像快要消失在灰白的霧靄中。那一年的春天，我們的城市格外沉寂，平日熙來攘往的大街上只有疏疏落落的行人匆匆走過。人人臉上蒙着口罩，雙眼一片茫然。操場上聽不到孩子嬉戲喧嘩，校工拿着抹布不停擦拭課室的枱椅，到處都是刺鼻的漂白劑氣味；食店門前不見等候的人羣，食客寥寥可數；地鐵車廂中偶爾有人輕輕打個噴嚏，旁人即時避開。在這擁擠的城市中，我們的距離從未如此遙遠。



又有病人被送到傳染病房，那兒是生與死的戰場，密密麻麻的病牀上，老老幼幼的病人在奮力頑抗，有的拼命地喘氣，有的靠着呼吸機續命，身體狀況好一點的，也虛弱得手也抬不起來，無法接聽不停在響的手提電話。附近的護士把電話送到他們耳邊，然後繼續和同事細心地為其他病人抹身、餵食，一點都不畏懼，就像平日一樣工作。

一身綠色保護衣物的醫生在病房急步走過，就像披着盔甲衝鋒陷陣的戰士，但是他們從來沒有打過這樣沒有把握的仗，猶如霧裏行軍，連敵人的面貌都看不清楚。面對種種困難，他們感到束手無策，唯有窮盡所學，設法把病人救活。

四月初，廣場中的電視大屏幕播放着最新的疫情，身穿全套保護裝備的警員和醫護人員在一幢大廈門前嚴陣以待，居民一個跟一個走出來，登上將要把他們送到郊外隔離營的旅遊車。他們有的拖着行李箱，有的抱着小孩，個個憂心忡忡，一臉徬徨無助。困在隔離營的第一晚，有人坐在窗前掉淚，有人按捺不住衝到大門前嚷着要離開。看守營舍的人員感慨萬千，主動卸下防護頭套，勸慰憤憤不平的居民，詢問他們所需，替他們張羅奶粉，安裝電視，盡力減少他們離家之苦。我們的距離原來並不遙遠。

時光荏苒，十載光陰匆匆流逝，有人拖男帶女來到墓園。孩子們把一束束的鮮花放在墓碑前，好奇地問為何要前來拜祭。父母着孩子坐在草地上，慢慢說起當年那段動魄驚心的日子，幽幽道出我們城市這段感人的故事。微風輕拂，雲霧飄散，和煦的陽光再灑在欣欣向榮的青草地上。



Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.

Winston Churchill



Seize the Day

If you had only twenty-four hours to live, what would you do?

A tiger mother would say, "I would write a letter to each of my children, telling them that I have never wanted to be a strict mother, and that it pains me to push them to practise the piano and study every day. I only want them to understand that they have to work hard if they want to stay competitive in this complex world. I love them. With only a few hours left, I would forget good grades, snuggle with them on the couch, and share one last story before bedtime."

A wife would say, "I would bring my husband back to the park where we first met, to recall some of the sweet moments we have experienced. We would take a stroll under the starry night.

Before the final moment came, I would secretly put a note in his pocket, telling him that I would miss him wherever I would be. I would thank him for his support and tolerance over the years, and wish him happiness in the days ahead. Then, I would spend the rest of my time in his affectionate embrace."



"My heart pounds whenever she walks past me. We work in the same building, but I don't know her name. We meet on the footbridge every day. I steal a glance at her whenever there is a chance. When she notices that, I blush. My heart sank when I saw her holding a bouquet of flowers on St. Valentine's Day this year. If I had only one more day to live, I would tell her how beautiful she is and how her angelic smiles have captured me," says a young man.

"I have never cooked for my parents. Even though I have worked in a kitchen for years, my mother has always been better at cooking. I would go to the market early in the morning to choose the freshest vegetables and meat, and make a dinner for them. I would also ask my siblings and friends to come over. We would drink, eat and dance all night. I am not greedy. I just want to see my family and friends smile, and spend the last evening in their company," says a chef.



Why must we wait? Life is ephemeral. Act now!

HARD TO MAKE A DECISION?

Life is full of choices. Smart decisions are the results of sound judgment while bad decisions offer us opportunities to learn from mistakes. To know more about decision-making, read the following passage and fill in the blanks with the most appropriate words. The first letter of each word has been given to you:



There always c _ _ _ _ a time when one must make a decision. A bottle of mineral water normally c _ _ _ _ \$10, but would you pay \$100 for a bottle when you were t _ _ _ _ and exhausted in a desert? It is not a hard decision, is it? Most of us would pay the money if we wanted to stay a _ _ _ _ . However, some people believe that value is i _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ to an object, and water should not cost that much. In fact, the value of things v _ _ _ _ _ enormously, depending on what you need it for. Decision-making is a personal business — it is about assessing what is valuable to you. There is no absolute best job, best car or best partner. Value is in the eye of the b _ _ _ _ _ _ .

Some people meet, fall in love and get married right away, while some can spend hours in a department store, weighing the p _ _ _ and c _ _ _ of buying a white or blue sweater. Ambivalent people tend to p _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ or avoid making decisions. In a relationship, they may w _ _ _ _ about being hurt or abandoned even in moments when their partner is doing something nice. If we understand that everything has good and bad elements, decision-making may not be such a d _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ thing.

Please send your entry to the Editorial Board of *Word Power*, Official Languages Division, Civil Service Bureau, Room 2310, High Block, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong before 9 August 2013. Watch out for our coming issue to see if you get all the answers right, and better still, if you are one of the lucky five to win a prize. The Editorial Board will have the final say on the answers.

Name: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms (*delete as appropriate*) _____
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第五十一期答案

1. A
2. C
3. B
4. A
5. D
6. A
7. C
8. C
9. C
10. D

以下得獎者將獲專函通知領獎：

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Yeung Sze-man	水務署
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Issue No. 53 (September 2013) : Art of Communication

二零一三年九月第五十三期主題：傳情達意

Issue No. 54 (December 2013) : Knowledge is Power

二零一三年十二月第五十四期主題：知識就是力量

Contributions from colleagues are welcome. Please refer to Issue No. 42 for details.

歡迎同事投稿，細則請參閱第四十二期。

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