

【三十三】 背影 – 朱自清著

[33] I Can See Dad's Back – by Zhu Ziqing

我與父親不相見已二年餘了，我最不能忘記的是他的背影。

It has been more than two years since I last saw Dad. Most unforgettable was the last time when I saw him from the back.

那年冬天，祖母死了，父親的差使也交卸了，正是禍不單行的日子。我從北京到徐州，打算跟著父親奔喪回家。到徐州見着父親，看見滿院狼藉的東西，又想起祖母，不禁簌簌地流下眼淚。父親說，“事已如此，不必難過，好在天無絕人之路！”

That year, Grandma passed away and he lost his job, just like the old saying: good things never accompany one another and misfortunes always come in double. I took the train from Beijing to Xuzhou in order to join him on the journey back to Grandma's funeral. Upon arriving in Xuzhou and seeing Dad, I saw the yard around the house in such a disorder which again reminded me of Grandma, thus forcing my eyes to tear up. Dad, upon seeing my tears, said, "since it has already come to this, there is no need to be sorrowful. Fortunate for us, God never intends to cut one's luck completely off."

回家變賣典質，父親還了虧空；又借錢辦了喪事。這些日子，家中光景很是慘澹，一半爲了喪事，一半爲了父親賦閒。喪事完畢，父親要到南京謀事，我也要回北京念書，我們便同行。

After we arrived home, we sold and pawned some valuable items so that Dad could pay back his debts; we again borrowed money to arrange a funeral for Grandma. In those days, our family was the opposite of prosperity, what with Grandma's funeral, what with Dad's being jobless. After the funeral, Dad needed to go to Nanjing to find a job, and I had to go back to school in Beijing; therefore, we took the same northbound train.

到南京時，有朋友約去遊逛，勾留了一日；第二日上午便須渡江到浦口，下午上車北去。父親因爲事忙，本已說定不送我，叫旅館裏一個熟識的茶房陪我同去。他再三囑咐茶房，甚是仔細。但他終於不放心，怕茶房不妥帖；頗躊躇了一會。其實我那年已二十歲，北京已來往過兩三次，是沒有什麼要緊的了。他躊躇了一會，終於決定還是自己送我去。我兩三回勸他不必去；他只說：“不要緊，他們去不好！”

When we arrived in Nanjing, some friends invited us to tour around, thus we were delayed one day; the next day, I had to cross the river to Pukou, in order that I could take the northbound train in the afternoon. Dad, being busy, already told me he would not see me off, and had already asked one of the waiters of the hotel whom we knew to accompany me during the trip. He again and again bid the waiter to watch over me. However, when the time came, he still could not completely trust the waiter and put himself in such a hesitation. To be honest, I was already twenty that year, and had been to and from Beijing more than a couple times, and thus could be completely on my own without problem. However, after some hesitation, he decided to see me off himself. I more than once told him that it was not necessary, but to no effect, except compelling him to say, "no big deal; I simply could not trust nobody but myself."

我們過了江，進了車站。我買票，他忙著照看行李。行李太多了，得向脚夫行些小費，才可過去。他便又忙著和他們講價錢。我那時真是聰明過分，總覺他說話不大漂亮，非自己插嘴不可，但他終於講定了價錢；就送我上車。他給我揀定了靠車門的一張椅子；我將他給我做的紫毛大衣鋪好座位。他囑我路上小心，夜裏要警醒些，不要受涼。又囑託茶房好好照應我。我心裏暗笑他的迂；他們只認得錢，託他們真是白託！而且我這樣大年紀的人，難道還不能料理自己麼？唉，我現在想想，那是真是太聰明了！

We crossed the river and entered the train station. I then went ahead to purchase the ticket, leaving him to take care of the luggage. There were so many items in my luggage, so many so that we needed to tip the porter simply to pass through. He, then, busied himself bargaining with the porters. Being too smart at that time, I always thought that he could not talk smart enough and I had no choice but to put in my voice. Eventually, the bargaining was done; he then accompanied me to my car. He chose for me a seat close to the door; I then spread the purple overcoat that he made for me to cushion the seat. He bid me to take care, especially in the evening and not to catch cold. He also bid the waiter to take care of me. In my heart, I laughed at his being out of fashion; those people only knew money and nothing else! Why bothered to waste time! Not to mention that old as I was, couldn't I take care of myself? Oh, when I think back on that moment, I had been much, much more than just being too smart!

我說道：“爸爸，你走吧。”他往車外看了看，說：“我買幾個橘子去。你就在此地，不要走動。”我看那邊月臺的柵欄外有幾個買東西的等著顧客。走到那邊月臺，須穿過鐵道，須跳下去又爬上去。父親是一個胖子，走過去自然要費事些。我本來要去的，他不肯，只好讓他去。我看見他戴著黑布小帽，穿著黑布大馬褂，深青布棉袍，跛行地走到鐵道邊，慢慢探下身去，尚不大難。可是他穿過鐵道，要爬上那邊月臺，就不容易了。他用兩手攀著上面，兩腳再向上縮；他微胖的身子向左微傾，顯出努力的樣子。這是我看見他的背影，我的淚很快地流下來了。我趕緊拭幹了淚，怕他看見，也怕別人看見。我再向外看時，他已抱了朱紅的橘子往回走了。過鐵道時，他先將橘子散放在地上，自己慢慢爬下，再抱起橘子走。到這邊時，我趕緊去攙他。他和我走到車上，將橘子一股腦兒放在我的皮大衣上，於是撲撲衣上的泥土，心裏很輕鬆似的。過一會說：“我走了；到那邊來信！”我望著他走出去。他走了幾步，回頭看見我，說：“進去吧，裏邊沒人。”等他的背影混入來來往往的人裏，再找不着了，我便進來坐上，我的眼淚又來了。

I said: "Dad, why don't you go home." He then peeked out of the car window and said, "let me go and buy some oranges. Stay here, don't move." I raised my head and saw some vendors outside the fence on the other side of the railway tracks waiting for customers. To reach the platform on that side, one had to cross the tracks, and to jump down and then climb up again. Being corpulent, it would be difficult for Dad to make that trip. I was going to go, but he would not hear of it, so I had to let him do it. On top of his head was the black cloth mandarin cap, and on him was the black mandarin robe and dark-green upper tunic. He limped to the side of the tracks, and then slowly tested his way down. It was not that hard up to this point. Now, after he crossed the tracks and had to climb up the platform on the other side, that was the real challenge. His hands reached up to the edge and slowly drew his feet upward; his corpulent body leaned to the left obviously with extreme efforts. That was how I saw him from the back and immediately tears welled up in my eyes. Stealthily, I wiped away my tears for fear that he would see me, and for fear that people around would see me. When I looked out of the window again, he was already on his way back, with bright-red oranges huddled in his bosom. When he was about to cross the tracks, he spread the oranges on the floor of the platform first, climbed down carefully and slowly, and

then collected the oranges into his bosom and then crossed the tracks. When he reached the edge of the platform I was on, I rushed to pick him up. He then walked with me to the car and dumped the oranges upon the leather overcoat I had spread upon the car seat. After that, he dusted off his clothes, with an expression of relief upon a mission accomplished. Now, he said, "I will be on my way; write to me when you get there!" I watched him go. When he had walked a few steps, he turned around and saw me there, and said, "get in, there is no one in there." When I could no longer see his back in the thronging crowds moving back and forth, I returned to my seat; there my eyes welled up again.

近幾年來，父親和我都是東奔西走，家中光景是一日不如一日。他少年出外謀生，獨立支持，做了許多大事，那知老境卻如此頹唐！他觸目傷懷，自然情不能自己。情鬱於中，自然要發之於外；家庭瑣屑便往往觸他之怒。他待我漸漸不同往日。但最近兩年的不見，他終於忘卻我的不好，只是惦記著我，惦記著我的兒子。我北來後，他寫了一信給我，信中說道：“我身體平安，唯膀子疼痛利害，舉箸提筆，諸多不便，大約大去之期不遠矣。”我讀到此處，在晶瑩的淚光中，又看見那肥胖的，青佈棉袍黑布馬褂的背影。唉！我不知何時再能與他相見！

These past years, both Dad and me were moving around, prosperity of our family was spiraling downward. He left his home when he was young to make a future and be on his own, and actually made some achievements; however, who knew that, in the old age, he would end up in such miserable manner! When he looked around, even the surroundings saddened him, and made it difficult to bear himself peacefully. With the bitterness inside, it was natural for him to have to vent his anger. Small matters of the house would enrage him. His attitude toward me gradually changed. However, for the past two years, we did not see each other, and he began to forgive my shortcomings, and only misses me as his son, and also my sons. After I came north to Beijing, he wrote to me once. In the letter he wrote: "My body is ok. Only that my shoulders are very painful, making it difficult for me to raise chopsticks and writing brushes, which makes me think that my end is coming one of these days." When I read this part of the letter, I can see through crystal-clear tears that corpulent -- clothed in black mandarin robe and dark-green mandarin upper tunic -- back of Dad. Oh! God only knows when I can see him again!