

Heartache

By Kohn Liu – March 2005

His heart started to ache. He looked at his table clock, it was ten past four. Annoyed, he took out the clock's batteries.

"Time is useless," he murmured.

He opened the desk drawer, looking for a cigarette, but only found a crumpled Marlboro Light box. The package was quickly torn opened and a few leftover tobacco shreds fell onto the mahogany desk. He was delighted and with two trembling fingers he picked up a cigarette butt from the ashtray and stuffed into it the tobacco shreds.

"I need to stay awake, or else I will never finish this letter." He shouted, as if announcing something extremely important to people around him. But the echoing apartment was empty; it had been deprived of any signs of life for a while, except for his lamenting, slowing heart beats.

He let out a dry cough, then a sigh, and then he stood up, smoking his last cigarette, picked up the pile of paper that he had been writing and walked into the bathroom. At first he sat down on the toilet and began to write again, but it wasn't comfortable, so he stood up abruptly and flattened the pile of paper against the cold tile wall. In this way his last letter would be completed.

These were the paragraphs that he wrote inside the bathroom:

Forgive me for writing so much. About two hours ago, I ripped my first letter to you into pieces because I felt it was too long. Yes I ripped them into pieces, all two hundred twenty-three pages of it, with my own hands even, not with those expensive shredders that I have in my apartment. You know I have two of them. But no, I would never use a machine to destroy the words I meant for you. Never.

I mailed out the letter I wrote yesterday to you this morning. The mailman at the post office, with whom I have grown very close, asked me if the big package was for you again. How ironic, he asked me the same thing the day before too. Why do people ask questions when they already know the answers? Obviously it was for you. I can only write when I think of you, and I think of you perpetually. You know I would mute, my hands would cease to speak, if you ever forsake me.

About an hour ago I cried a little. There were no tears, just more thoughts of you in the form of tinny salty raindrops, rushing out of my eyes, onto my desk. Indeed my desk was flooded with images of you. How beautiful that was. I had to stop writing for about five minutes because I had to clean up the mess I made. Of course, it was a pleasure, it was always a pleasure to know that I have a beautiful obsession, and that is you. I know I talked to you for about thirty minutes tonight, as I prayed at the same time. But that was not enough. One day I will stand right in front of you, naked and pure as a newborn baby, and you will hold me so tight, until I feel you going through me, and I through you.

I haven't been going to work for a month now. I just stopped going. I don't care if they fired me. And I haven't read a single book ever since I met you, you know I used to love to read, novels, magazines, newspaper, packaging labels, road signs, and everything else. Words have no use for me anymore, because I only need so many words in me to express my feelings toward you. And I haven't been thinking either, because your glory precedes my every thought. I am not allowed to think anymore, not about anything other than your beauty, or just the mere scent of it. Your light overshadows me, and I am haunted by this wonderful bliss. Did I mention that you are the one, the only, and I was born a slave for you? I think I have probably mentioned that a million trillion times, in my every letter, my every breath.

But I would really appreciate if you could accept my letters, actually. Every single one of them had been returned to me. Sometimes I wonder if the mailman thinks I am mad ...

At that moment his clock that hung solemnly in the living room struck five. He paused, retrieving his thoughts in the darkness. The bathroom light was never turned on and it was dim, very dim inside. The full moon that cast a ghostly but guiding light was now fading away in shame, hiding from the looming morning sun. Then suddenly he realized that his right hand had become so numb and cold writing against the wall, the words written had deteriorated into slightly illegible scribbles. He turned around, his bony back against the wall, holding the letter close to his chest, and began to sink down slowly, until finally, he sat onto the cold bathroom floor. Then he placed the letter on his bloodless knees. The heartache had worsened now.

Heartache really exists, he thought. It's not a metaphor, but a phenomenon you experience when you experience love.

He took off his white, but somewhat stained shirt, and stared at his left chest. At about three fingers down from the left nipple he felt a gentle pain that oscillated within the bones. A rusted razor was carelessly retrieved from the sink and he marked a small cross on that very spot. The cut was deep, but not painful. His blood immediately seeped out, like magic ink working in reverse, and then the bright red started to flow nervously downwards.

"This is the sacrifice."

"This is my faith. This is my love for you. This is for knowing that I am not foolish, for I know what I want, I know what is right, and that is you. This is for all the things I will ever do for you and only you. In exchange, only will you please reply my letters, all the letters."

His blood traveled silently from his skinny, yellowed body onto the pale bathroom floor. It continued, only to stop reluctantly by the drainage. The floor was cold as ice, and his blood soon began to solidify into irregular clusters of dark red, opaque jellies.