

Dissecting a corpse

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(Translated by David Luesink)

Last night a savage wind kicked up,
with a rain like a blade pressing from both sides,
in the street and by the road,
how many people might freeze to death?

This morning, this very morning, we here
suddenly received four or five dead bodies!
Gray hearse shaking in the mud at the water's edge,
gives the one being transported limitless sorrow!

From inside the vehicle a rattan coffin is lifted out,
on top using a blue cloth to conceal,
open the rattan cover, exposing a paper and plaster bottom,
inside lying prostrate--a gaunt skeleton.

Two people lift his head and legs,
roughly lifting him out,
boorishly tossing [him] onto the dissecting table,
with the sound of a "dong"—the skull collides with the slab!

Just like this quietly recline on a white plank,
hands and legs all tenaciously, crookedly bent,
tattered, unlined garment resting on the dry body,
filthy face, peacock blue-black paint

Long hair filthy with mud,
yellow teeth exposed, lips shrunken,
frozen blue eyes, mercilessly open,
gazing up directly at the ceiling!

Those stinking, tattered clothes, give them to someone to toss out,
exposing that chapped and wrinkled body;
someone uses force to bend hand and foot,
with the sound of "zhi-zha"—bitterly cold, stretching them out!

Stiffly reclining, oh, like a piece of bamboo firewood,
Whole body sacrificially exposed without shame or disgrace,
Forthright blue eyes—you poor man,
"What do you want to see?"

Ah! You unlucky people.
Where do you come from?
What kind of work do you do—
no one knows, no one knows!

Ah! You unlucky people,
Do you have no hometown?
Do you have no family—
no one knows, no one knows!
All that is known is that you died of cold with no one to [bury you] encoffin!

Maybe you are lost compatriots from the same place?
Your home in Northeast Arabia!
You originally had land and wealth to spare,
you originally had a peaceful home and estate.
But traitors sold you to the enemy,
violent enemies looted all!
Thereupon you took on a miserable hope,
left your home, into exile from your motherland!
Even so, your homeland lost to the conqueror in a day
And you also froze to death in the breast of the motherland!

Maybe you are farmers from the countryside?
You originally had a happy home.
When the devil's hand of imperialism stretched out
Your days then became such that you could not tell one day from another!
The landlord squeezed your flesh and blood dry,
the land tax administration broke you until you had no life!
Some of you worked hard in poverty,
some of you died of cold and hunger!
In order to subsist—life's iron whip,
drove you out of the home of a loving family,
to this city just to look for a bowl of rice?
But now you froze to death on the side of the road!

Maybe you were fleeing from calamity?
Until today you could not forget the situation:
First a period of bandit raids, then a period of soldiers pillaging
plunder and war destroyed your village!
Or maybe an evil flood engulfed your whole village!
Or maybe a drought that burned up the earth and the rivers,
or maybe a cruel and evil epidemic roamed about
from within a deathtrap you became a fugitive to the city,
only hoping for a charitable person to swoop in with a compassionate heart
but who is there, who has pity on all of you?

You all just die a tragic death beside the road!

Maybe you are a hard working laborer?
You are always being bullied and humiliated!
Capitalists consume [absorb] all your sweat and blood,
[Militarist?] Careerists also manufacture the miasma of war!
The world has become hungry and panic-stricken,
And because of this you have lost your job!
Lost your job, and so [you] pace up and down the street,
Famished and cold, homeless on the street!
A burst of cold wind—how savage and cruel,
Sends you to leave this world!

Maybe you are a wealthy person whose fortune has declined?
Maybe you are a criminal who has just been released from prison?
Maybe you were homeless from the day you were born?
Maybe...
Oh! You all are a group of unlucky people!
Society has no place for you!
Society has no place for you!

Right now you have been delivered to this dissection table
(this dissection room is full of the smell of chemicals and [death?])
You have previously had the same bitter fortune,
Now you will again have the same outcome:
We will first submerge you into medicinal liquid,
And in that chemical bath allow you to soak,
Afterward peel off your wrinkled skin,
Then dissect each piece, each slice:
Chop off a hand and arm, or a single digit,
Cut off the head, or an ear,
Dig out an eye, or cut out the heart,
Slice into the belly, grab a handful of intestines...
In this way carve you up to become a miserable fragment,
Oozing black blood and foul-smelling fumes of chemicals,
Afterward clear away into a pile,
A dustpan used to bury you underground!
Ah! You unlucky people!
Before birth, you were already oppressed and exploited,
After death, again, you have been insulted and injured!

Look! Rich man in your apartment tower, fur coats, sumptuous dinners!
Look! Rich man's gold, silver, and fortune!
Afterward, society is not yours!
Afterward, society has no place for you!
Now you die, die,

Maybe people will be delighted:
If the police can have just two *yuan* in their hand,
The coffin manufacturing company can receive six *yuan* as transportation fee,
Our school pays some money,
Will also rejoice greatly to receive you to come and be our specimen!

Ah! All of you unfortunate people!
Why were you delivered to this dissection table?
(although you have made a contribution to medicine!)
Where is your native place?
Who, who are your kinsmen?
No one knows, no one knows!
[They] only know that you died and no one received a coffin!

No one received a coffin, stiff you recline here,
[your] whole body exposed, not afraid of shame!
Frozen blue eyes gazing straight at the ceiling----
What are you thinking?

[finished]