

24 Dinner a decade later

One day, returning to the house.

As the creature, trembling in delight,

Feel blissful languor,

That day itself by expelling [97].

Van Morrison [98]

Sultry suffocating day of Tian-Tian returned home. And for an hour before I called mark said that he was already in Shanghai that wants to meet with me as soon as possible, and invited her to go on some avant-garde German film. So, almost simultaneously, in the orbit of my personal universe again appeared the two most important men in my life are so different and inseparable from each other as light and dark side of the moon.

When Tian-Tian opened the door, I momentarily froze, and then we, without saying a word, fell into each other's arms. Everyone worked inside antenna permanently tuned to the wave of another. She sensitively caught the invisible love ripple, not the radiated body and soul.

Then Tian-Tian suddenly remembered that the bottom is still waiting for a taxi and that the driver must pay.

- I myself, - I said and grabbed her handbag, ran down the stairs. You paid for the taxi 40 yuan.

- I can't change that, ' he replied.

- And do not - I smiled, turned around and went back. The taxi driver was grateful to me after. Obecause me the dazzling white sunlight faded, is left at the door, eyes barely accustomed to the dim light on the stairs. Upon entering the apartment, the first thing I heard was the sound of running water in the bathroom.

I walked over, leaned against the jamb, lit a cigarette and watched in silence as Tian-Tian takes a bath. From the hot water, his body flushed like a strawberry and cream cocktail or skin of the newborn infant.

- Makes me sleepy, ' he said, closing his eyes.

I approached the edge of the tub, took the sponge and gently began washing him. Oil for bathing came a subtle and fresh herbal aroma. The Sunny bathroom window was beating buzzing bee champagne color. The peace was so overwhelming that it seemed visible and tangible.

I smoked and looked at his thin, pretty face and soft body, immersed in sweet slumber. I could almost hear his dream-like Nocturne "Joy of love" Kreisler [99]. Looks like things were on the mend.

Tian-Tian opened his eyes:

- What's for dinner?

- What do you want? - I smiled.

Tomatoes in sweet and sour sauce, fried celery with Lily tubers, broccoli with garlic, potato salad,

quail in soy sauce and a huge portion of chocolate ice cream, and vanilla and strawberry... He licked his lips in anticipation of all that yummy.

I kissed him.

- Wow! Long time you didn't have such an appetite!

Is because I just got out of the abyss...

- And where are we going to feast?

He grabbed my hand and gently bite, like a gentle predator.

- Let's have dinner with your mother.

He froze in amazement. Let go of my hand and jumped out of the bath.

- What did you say?

- She came back, came along with her husband, a Spaniard.

Bare and wet not even drying, he splashed out of the tub straight to the bedroom.

- You're upset, right? I asked, tripping after him.

- What do you think? - almost he cried in response. Lay down on the bed, placing hands behind his head.

- It is already here, ' I said, not taking his eyes off him while he aloofly stared up at the ceiling. - It is clear that you are upset. Of course, it's not easy, but not so bad. There is no hatred, no fear. I think it's time to take a sober look at the situation. It's exactly what you need.

- She never loved me. I don't know her. For me it's simply a foreign woman who from time to time sends me money. For her, it's just self-deception, a way to pay off, mute guilt. It is always first and foremost worried about their own feelings and personal destiny.

It doesn't matter whether you like her or not. My biggest concern is that you're unhappy and that your relationship with your mother. The sooner you get them handled, the more chances that you'll have a peaceful and happy life, I bent down to hug him. - Please try to get rid of their prejudice, the doll long time to chew through their cocoon and flutter out a beautiful butterfly. You need love and help, but everything depends on you!

Silence. The walls of the room parted, she became spacious as the wide lawn. We kissed. In this vast expanse of light, almost weightless body seemed tiny, and in surrounding us space opened Bud fancy flower, whose image has superseded all other thoughts.

Then we made love, imperfect but healing. The skin on his belly was white and so smooth that my lips was reflected in it as in a mirror. Hair in the groin was soft and gentle, like a fluff of a dandelion. And the member came warm and the sweet smell of male hormones, and this, probably, is the hare (no wonder Tian-Tian was born in his year). The other arm, which I was pleasuring myself, pulsed hot and plump flesh. The touch of your fingers and tongue gave a blissful languor expiring adhesive, wet with saliva and ward off chaos, emptiness and regret.

Probably, I've never kissed a man with such a frenzy. In this mad dash I was aware only that Tian-

Tian was my only joy, lost but now found. My light, my inspiration, the ineffable sweetness and pain, perfect Persian rose, the original wild beauty which, like an alchemist, has recreated the unknown gardener.

We have reached ecstasy at almost the same time. I brought it to his mouth uvernuvshis from the life-giving juices in hand, breathed in the smell of his body. Tian-Tian clung to my palm with a kiss.

- Smells like a spicy duck soup with musk, anise and cinnamon - deep breath it and instantly fell asleep, never letting go of my hand.

To the half eighth evening my Tian-Tian drove to the hotel "Mir" on the Waterfront. Down there, in the brightly lit lobby, we waited excitedly, Connie with her husband.

In red with gold qipao, high heels and impeccable make-up, Connie looked stunning, the same noble and graceful as a Hollywood actress of the sixties Lou Fox [100]. Seeing Tian-Tian, she started to cry and wanted to hug him. Tian-Tian recoiled. Her companion approached her, and she, as though for support, clung to his chest, wiping away tears with a handkerchief.

Soon she got her composure, and she smiled.

- I could not imagine that you've grown up, lost weight and became so beautiful. I really... really love it! Oh, let me introduce you two! she said, approaching us by the hand with her husband. My husband is Juan, and already turning to him And Tian-Tian and Coco.

We exchanged handshakes.

- Probably all hungry, î said Juan in English with a pronounced Spanish accent. Let's eat.

He was a tall man, about forty years old. He had a bright appearance of the Matador: sturdy, strong, with a shock of thick brown hair, hazel eyes, and a hawkish nose. The picture was completed with full lips and a characteristic for Europeans, straight, chiseled chin, gave his face a virile and sensual expression. He and Connie were a great couple, the hero and his lady, only lady, apparently, was three or four years older.

We got in a taxi and went outside Gensan. Dear no one said a word. Tian-Tian was sitting between Connie and me in the back seat, tense as a steel spring.

From time to time Juan shouted something in Spanish. Can, admired the view of the night city. He first came to China. At home, in a small Spanish town, he only saw in the movies of the Chinese people in traditional dress or Chinese women in mourning clothes. As it turned out, his wife told almost nothing about their homeland. And now he was unspeakably surprised to see a modern, sparkling with multicolored lights of Shanghai.

Then we walked along a narrow alley in the street lights between the walls and ivy, until they saw the number of buildings in the European style. Walked into the courtyard, lit up in lights. It was a Chinese restaurant "Jan's Kitchen". The modest and restrained atmosphere, simple cuisine, tasty, almost home-cooked food. I do not know how it is Connie, so long ago left Shanghai, managed to find this cozy restaurant nestled among the deaf streets and tree-lined avenues. But it really was a wonderful place where you can eat in peace and talk.

Connie asked me to make an order. Came up to the table owner - Thai nationality - and began to

talk to Connie as to an old friend. In broken Chinese, Juan said that he absolutely will not eat chicken legs and pork tripe. According to him, he had the misfortune to try these two dishes at once on arrival and then landed in the hospital with diarrhea.

- Had to take him to Huashan hospital and put on a drip, explained Connie. - However, I think the food here is nothing to do with it. Just he just arrived and have not had time to acclimate.

Tian-Tian, as if in a trance, sitting next to me with multiple views, Smoking, not participating in the conversation. He made an immense effort, agreeing to see her mother, and she couldn't force myself to smile and was unable to cry.

Dined thoroughly and slowly. Connie recalled the time when she was pregnant with Tian-Tian, his birth, their life together before his thirteenth birthday. Her memory is tenacious kept every detail of days gone by, and she carefully went through them one after the other as family heirlooms.

During pregnancy, I often sat in the head of the bed, looking at the calendar. On it was depicted a little girl, a foreigner, in a game of ball. It seemed to me the most beautiful creature I ever beheld. I imagined that I would have the same wonderful baby, and a miracle happened, dreams came true, and I have a cute baby. I'm not upset that it's a boy, he was fragile and beautiful.

- Very attractive, but too feminine.

I silently sipped his wine.

- And in five or six years Tian-Tian already knew how to draw well. One day he drew a funny picture and called her "Mom knitting the sweater on the sofa". In this picture my mom had four hands and the balls of wool scattered on the floor - eyes. He always asked how it is I get to watch TV and knit so fast that only the spokes flashed, the voice of Connie was muffled, but she was unnaturally loud, as if on command, laughing.

- I only drew dad as he repaired the bike, suddenly said to Tian-Tian.

I looked at him and held his cold hand. Behind a table silence reigned. It seems that even Juan realized that meant Tian-Tian. He had unwittingly violated a taboo, touching upon taboo and unpleasant subject. Everything that somehow was connected with the deceased father was touching, but kind of ridiculous.

- And I remember at nine years old Tian-Tian fell in love with a six year old girl, and so much that... - Connie went to the Chinese to finish the story. On her face an expression of mild reproach, as the mother, evoking the childish pranks of the son, but the look betrayed anxiety. She talked and talked, as if it depended on her life, if she needed to muster up the courage to endure in whatever became of...he gave the girl all his treasures alarm clock, vases, marbles, comics, a box of chocolates. He even stole my lipstick and beads and all threw his young lover from next door. He was a real devil, dragged everything that came across under a hand!

She gestures depicted the despair and again laughed out loud. In her voice that vibrated in the air like the sounds of a frustrated piano, I felt a hidden panic.

My son is able to forget everything for the sake of the beloved one! - turned to me and Connie and smiled helplessly. In the dim light of the dining hall, I read in her gaze mixed feelings: love, and envy.

- Can we go home? - asked me, Tian-Tian, deliberately yawning.

Connie was excited.

- If you're tired, go and rest, she suggested and asked it to submit the score. Then motioned for Juan to get out of the bag two color convolution.

"Thank you," calmly thanked Tian-Tian.

During all these years he took as tribute from mother and money, and gifts. He was used to them and take them as unconsciously as eating or sleeping. Just felt instinctively that they need - and nothing more. I also thanked Connie.

- Juan escort you home and then we can go somewhere, she said.

- The magazine "Shanghai today" I read, said her husband is English- that Promenade laid up is a luxury liner the "Oriana", which allowed visitors. Maybe you'll come with us to see it?

- Darling, we will have the chance to go there together. Tian-Tian was tired, Connie patted her husband on the arm. "Incidentally," she said, as if just remembering the important thing on the way back we could go in and see the building for our new restaurant. It's not far away, in a neighboring yard.

Was a clear moonlight night, and in the pale moonlight, everything seemed mysterious and cool. The courtyard where we entered was lighted round lantern with antique metal fence and is paved with red slabs. It left the facade of the old three-story mansion in the Western style, recently restored. Its external appearance has lost its noble and elegant splendor so peculiar to all buildings with more than seventy-year history. They haven't faded, adequately stand all tests of time - what can be said about most modern architecture. For the Eastern and southern portals of the mansion were massive stone steps, symbolizing the luxury and splendor of the era of foreign concessions.

A few hundred years camphor trees and umbrella Lacy foliage framed the courtyard and the facade of the house, like a lace frill on the dress. On the second floor had a spacious balcony, where in spring and summer you can have a lovely romantic dining. According to Juan, he was going to hire Spanish dancers who performed here a fiery flamenco in red skirts. Before my eyes stood this bright exotic spectacle.

We long lingered on the balcony without entering the building. Within the repair is not over, and especially to watch it no matter what.

The light from the old lantern was merged with moonlight, giving our figures and everything around the intricate shapes. And for a moment thought it was just a dream.

Connie and Juan drove us home in a taxi and waved goodbye from the car window.

Holding hands, we and Tian-Tian slowly walked up the stairs. Entered the apartment, sat down on the sofa and unwrapped gifts.

In my parcel was a bracelet with jewels and Tiana-Tiana - a book about the art of Salvador Dali and a CD of Ravel. It was his favorite artist and composer.