

A Glimpse of Home

When I return to China,

I am afraid to look at Mother's eyes, droopier and baggier;

I am afraid to touch her hands, covered with callouses and cuts;

I am afraid to answer the question from my extended family,

“What do you do in America?”

“I am creating a solo performance based on my story. I want to find out what I love to do and then do that.” I try to say it in a heroic way, but I don't feel heroic. I feel stuck.

“You are selfish then,” my cousin's mother-in-law blurts out.

I know, I know. I have family responsibilities on my shoulders, my aging parents in China and my new family yet to be formed...

“I want to go to school!”

“I want to go to school!!”

“I want to go to school!!!”

My mother, 11-year-old, ran to the river by her thatched home and cried.

Her father's words still lingered.

“What's the use for a girl to learn to read? We don't even have enough to eat! Baba needs you to stay home to carry some family responsibilities.”

She never went back to school again.

“The only thing you need to worry about is studying. I will do anything to support you going to school, even if I had to climb the mountain that's sharp as a knife, or jump into the sea that's full of fire, or roll on a board that's covered with pointed nails.” Mother's words accompanied my growing up.

She farmed, worked in polluted factories, and even sold her own blood; I studied, studied, and studied. Across the Pacific, I studied, studied, and studied; then I worked, worked, and worked.

From 9 to 5, I worked and dreamed in the financial district in San Francisco--the callouses and cuts on Mother's hands would heal; she and Father could move out of that leaking house because I was going to buy them a new one!

Every morning, in front of the mirror, I reminded myself,

“I love my job. Cherish what I have.”

Everyday, from 9 to 5, I worked and dreamed.

And got lost.

One day, my wrist hurt; I began to question my life.

“Who am I? Where is my real home?”

No more 9 to 5.

I set forth to find my way home, where my heart could be pure, pure as a newborn.

I caught a glimpse of home, while walking to my apartment in San Francisco.

My body felt so light,

I could almost fly;

I caught a glimpse of home, while standing on a subway train in Shanghai.

My chest filled with so much joy,

I almost laughed out loud by myself;

I caught a glimpse of home, while strolling with Mother in my hometown,
the night before I returned to America.

In the cool breeze, Mother's words lingered,

“Mama supports you doing whatever you want.”

The callouses and cuts on her hands gave me strength.

I caught a glimpse of home, when I wrote down a story;

I caught a glimpse of home, when I sat still by the water;
I caught a glimpse of home, when a stranger understood me.

Five years have slipped away since I set forth to find my way home.

But I've lost sight of home--
for a while.

I am tired; it's too vague.

Maybe home is just an illusion.

Ticktock, ticktock. Sleepless night...

Am I selfish?

Ticktock, ticktock...

Out of my room, under the twinkle little stars,

tears wet on my cheeks,

heaviness hooked around my heart.

Breathe in, breathe out.

Breath in, breath out...

Keep on going, it's not a choice;

keep on going, it's what I do;

keep on going, it's what we do.

I may not reach home before my time,

but I know home is always there.

A little stream is determined to reach the ocean. She keeps on going; no obstacle can stop her. Finally, she is in the ocean! Being pushed by the ocean, she becomes the most beautiful big wave she could ever become. "Look at me! Look at me! How beautiful I am!" she shouts on the top of her wave. But soon she comes down. All she can see is the vast ocean, so peaceful. But who is seeing?