



1993,  
ROSTER  
YEAR



Tingying  
Ma



The other day you rested on a pile of mud closer to the bank of a river, wearing a two-piece swimming suit in flaming orange, your lips were plumped and you seemed in pain. Your permed hair stood very high on top of your head. Your body was not at all dampened by the water hitting the rock behind you, you were spotless. You saw some shadows and they were right beneath you, you looked down and looked up and looked at me.

You were wordless but gradually opened up.

You said: "The core conceit of Chinese muscularity is to be a radical self-productive agency, therefore I'm spared."

In the moment of the lapse, you and I were liberated from our position in history. The water ran, never will be stagnated. Let me know what kind of exchange you are looking for.

1993, the year of tacitness.





You surprised me. You had been busy. And where did you acquire this casual attitude and racket?

How and when did you adopt such an apolitical hobby?

The background you stood against was of an early spring rural scenery, the peach blossoms and the smoggy terraces reminded me of our sentiments of losing inner peace. It seemed like you had found this space where you could play tennis and be agriculturally self-sufficient.

A few months later, in September, would you shed a tear for having lost the championship for hosting the 2000 Olympics, would you say you would never like sports again?



Once in a while you wanted to role play the revolutionary figure that you admired. Dressed in Maoist asceticism, full of agony and vigor from the class-awakening, you wanted to bite your tongue as a suicide threat, slap the face of the enemy with thick braids tightened with red woollen threads. You felt your most feminist this way.

You missed the time when you were able to say a lot of NOs to a lot of things: empiricism, capitalism, revisionism and arranged marriage. You looked the best with no makeup on but with grinding jaws and frowning brows. When you shot guns you stood on the tips of your toes, the wooden machine gun was close to your heart. You felt your most feminist this way.

Thankfully the time was not too far in the past.





You had many roles. They especially welcomed you when you demonstrated qualities that you didn't have: passion, assertiveness, recalcitrance. Those are tropical moods that capitalism circulates and restocks. You were turning the table because you had the courage to transgress. You were the stranger in the prosaic, unchangeable interior space. You displayed, perfuse with detail, your new acquisitions.

You said: Why does a country spanning such a range of a geographic diversity only collectively dream about the archipelago and rainforests?





Your legs looked disproportionately big, you were almost a giant, with a very small head, very far away. You looked uncomfortable and cynical. Were you okay?

I'm glad that we were finally alone and had some privacy. It was you who said it was important to have a little place that would only belong to us. But you looked absent-minded and told me you could only live moment to moment.

Everything around you suggested the tactility of material comforts, self-indulgent and decadent.

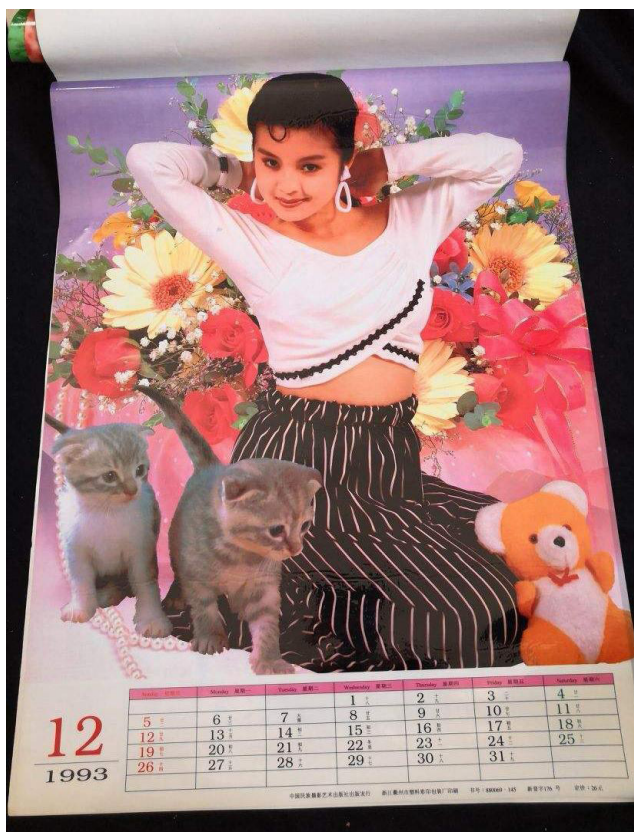


I took you down from the wall, exposing the empty wall in my worker's unit. The vision was blank. Outside my cosmopolitan wet dream, it was my room in historical transition, 10 square meters, functional, figural, shared.

I longed for that anonymous space to which I was never invited, let alone personally invited.

1993, five years before Ikea arrived.





You looked at me, greeted me, knelt down in front of me, hands thrown back exposing your armpits and protruding upper belly.

The luxurious, decorative goodies were rare supplies, their production had been long suppressed in favor of the infrastructural and industrial constructions. Flowers, fake and real: chrysanthemums, roses and baby's-breaths. Ribbons gushed out like blood from an open vein. Teddy bear, acid orange fur, leant on your thigh. Kittens, newly born and pensive looking, with harsh pixelated edges around their ears stepped onto a layered pearl chain floating in space.

You put a face to excess, you subsumed the past.

A year frozen in crescendo, as life, if it kept improving, must be getting progressively better. The feeling of temporality had been bearable, even celebratory. Make a wish. What we want and what we need will happen concurrently in this modern notion of linear time.

1993, a year of promise.





“Kiss kiss,” you winked, “and happy new year.”

