

《《 Dear Tree, 》》

A TRANSLATION

After two years of writing to each other across distance, Ran and Xingyan reunited in their favorite bookstore in Beijing, *All Sages*, on June 23, 2023.

Side by side, Xingyan and Ran translated each other's words.

The process of re-reading, translation, and collaboration makes both of us want to cry at times. This journey transcends our individual presence —by sharing, we become infinite.

**This is a book without page number. But the layout of the translation and the original copy are completely aligned. Feel free to find your own way to navigate between languages and silence, visuals and blankness.*

魏然

郭星言

The very first time I thought about writing a letter to you was also in a sandstorm day, just like today's. Ashes filled the sky, just like every afternoon of our childhood in the 2010s—an apocalyptic imagery.

In other words, I have a feeling that a different world just lands on my living world. Whenever I pick up my pen to write to you, I land in this world filled with furious wind, and I walk into this vacuum terrain between you and me. From this letter, I'm reflecting to see through my life and care about yours.

Ran

2021/04/15 Beijing

Throughout this month, I was realizing that the mother motif of my life is “phantom pain”.

I was drenched in the bitterness of empathy—both in my life and in readings. The phantom pain, originating from the nerves, inside out, up to bottom. It flows in the same stream with corporeal pain, yet retrograding.

2021/10 Grinnell

“On his 15th birthday, Liang Sheng was sure that a fish spine is growing inside his body. Specifically speaking, he has noticed it from very early on—every secretive itchiness, pain, and boredom in his body at night, all the speechlessness of words that he could not spit out. He has found the crux on this fish spine.”

2021/04 Beijing

It sounds like an extremely internal process. Yet in fact, I have faced all these fierce collision and stinging consciousness right inside the outside world. Unbelievable.

Ran

2021/10 Grinnell

Those twisted desires fermented out of the system—those meaningless tortures. Oh yes, I constantly feel that all my pain is meaningless. They make me who I am. They make who we are. How pathetic. My prison cell is nothing like even a thousandth of other's.

Suddenly, a stream of sadness flew out from my heart, I'm always trying to understand every kind of life greedily. I said, I'm just a tourist. He agreed silently.

2022/3/16 New Haven Train Station

I devoured that little piece of Plan B,
as if I am devouring the pain and anxiety of other women,
as if I'm experimenting on my own body.

XINGYAN

2022/01/17 New York City

I scold myself like this.

Xingyan

2021/4/13 Pullso Cafe, Shanwei

I can't put it into words now.

Ran

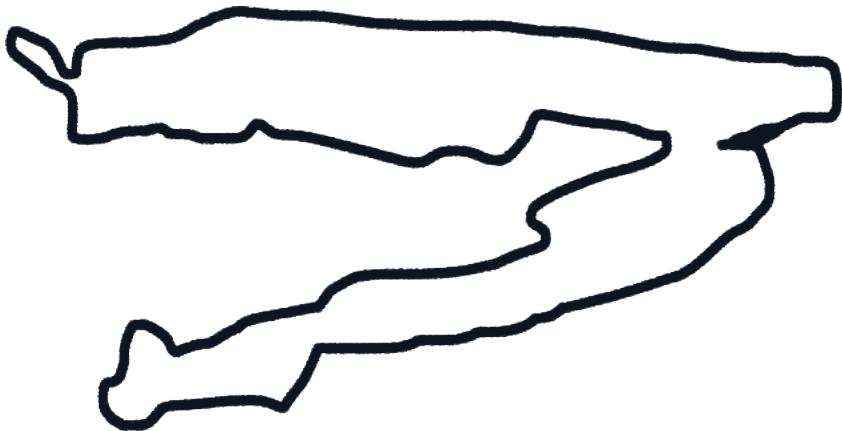
2022/07/20 Grinnell

Two weeks of living on the foreign land already begin to estrange me with my Mandarin writing. Therefore, there might be a lot of improper word choices here.

I hope you could forgive me.

Ran

2021/09/05 Grinnell



Xingyan

2021/11/28 Middletown

What i am crying for are the festering wounds on the massive land; what I'm crying for are the lives of others, which could never be saved by the hands of mine writing desperately on my laptop. It's difficult for others to understand that the theater is the only place I could place and make rest of the broken pieces of my heart and of others. For a little while, I am able to land my drifting and distant body in the story filled with Biblical and mythical symbols.

Xingyan

2022/04/12 Olin library, Middletown, CT

The mother language I am rooted in, has been rootless, it no longer exists as the soil of expression. I became a motherless child.

Ran

2022/04/12 Grinnell

We could no longer go back home.
So wherever we have each other becomes home.

Xingyan

2022/11/26

On the flight from San Luis Potosi to NYC

So... I wanted to talk to you about love.

Ran

2020/12/20 Beijing

I asked him, what does "I love you" actually mean?
Why do we love, and what is it that we love?

Xingyan

2022/01/17 Brooklyn

*Being capable of love and in the moment wanting to love ,
what's between them has been always been ambiguous.*

Ran

2020/12/20 Beijing

你不爱我，你只是爱着我的爱。

Xingyan

2022/01/17 Brooklyn

Ran
2022/07/20 Grinnell

I read “Night on the Galactic Railroad” before I truly saw a starry night. I learned about “love” as a verb and the story of so-called “love”, before I have touched and tasted love. I have devoured too many symbols created by others, before I ever felt my own desire of expression.

Growing up in a city, even the stars are rare. The night before last, when I looked out from the car, the sky of Iowa in my sight was wholly embellished with the sublime stars—it seemed as if there truly was a Galactic Railroad hanging over it. Such a scenery, for me, was so impromptu.

My mind flew back to the point when I was on the way from Salkantay to Machu Picchu. With all of the stars whispering to each other in my sight, , for the first time I understood the meaning of my name, Xing Yan (the language of stars). The blessing that is embedded in my name is not an imagination out of nowhere, but a part of our life.

The pursuit of wisdom and the desire of spiritual communication impelled the ancients to write about their senses and feelings in the poem. Taken the inspiration from which, my parents gently placed these hopes and conversations on my palms, on a regular night of the fresh start of the Millennial.

Xingyan

2022/08/02 Mexico City

“I, north of the Wei, trees in spring weather,
you, east of the Yangzi, twilight clouds.”

Ran
2020/12/20 Beijing

**Poet Du Fu wrote this poem to his dear friend Li Bai.
Translated by Prof. Stephen Owen

I believe it's you that makes me free.

Xingyan

2022/11/26 San Luis Potosi to NYC

I stick my naked body closely onto the muddy ground, touching the moss covered on the stone and giving a soft kiss to the small petals. When I lift up my head, the gigantic mountains are giant women one after one another. I see all kinds of faces, breasts, feet and legs connected solidly with each other. Some lie on their sides and some look up into the sky. Others are gazing at me softly. When I look down, I discover myself on the limbs of mother earth—things I've walked on or not and things I've kissed or not are all parts of her.

Xingyan

2022/08/02 Mexico City

After watching “Nymphomaniac”, I have always been intentionally and unintentionally looking for the tree of my life.

Speaking of this

The wish of becoming a plant
has been long-existed in my heart.

Ran
2021/10 Grinnell

The Clit of Trees

Xingyan

2022/07/19 Tampobata

The Vagina of Trees

Xingyan

2022/07/19 Tampobata

And, the red that oversprawled downwardly from the top of the
tree, burning like flames of hell.

Ran

2021/10 Grinnell

Inexplicably, this tree reminds me of I myself and you.

Ran
2021/10 Grinnell

Dear Ran,

I realized that all of the analogies we made between trees and women are based on our imagination which is rooted in our daily imagination. Today, I was in Tampobata, which is a part of the Amazon rain-forests in the southern part of Peru. I suddenly sensed that the trees here are not the ones we observe frequently in urban areas, the ones that are restrained by the prison cell made from cement. Most importantly, I discovered her as a desirer. She always looks up, running after the sunlight; she moves for a few centimeters each year. Not only that, her feet could strangle her competitors as if she was a snake. She kills, she crushes others.

Xingyan

2022/07/19 Tampobata





That was not a tree in a concrete square. The tree that has been robbed of its freedom by mankind and women who have been oppressed by socialization, institutionalization, and historically constructed violence—they are bearing similar pain and yearning for similar desire.

When a woman wants to become a tree, she has to stand upside down in the rain for a long time—her hands rooting downward to become roots, her legs branching upward to become branches; as the gust laced with raindrops struck, she felt as if she heard the rustling of the leaves on her body.

Ran
2022/07/20 Grinnell

Yet as trees in the distant exilic land, we are able to tear apart
the constructed norms of bio-power with our upside-down
body, and gaze back to the world that we come from with
new sight

I desperately want to become a plant who unfastens the rein of re
rested in the water. Or one that has jumbled ponderous roots that

Ran

2021/10 Grinnell

In the worst case, whoever saw my body could witness the
traces of which time our bodies spent with each other.

Xingyan

2022/04/22 Middletown

ason, the one that is born and
bulge the flagstones.

I always hope that I have the nerve to become a tree,
being able to let others sit on my strong branches safely.

Our fingers and toes are now rooting
downwards into the ground, safely.

Yet, the hands rooting downwards are still able to kill.

To become a tree who dances freely and wildly in the cement square; a tree who holds her neighbor's hands crossing the boundary of floor tile; a tree who had decided to run back to the woods a hundred years ago, moving three centimeters per year and aiming to arrive back to Amazon in 102022.

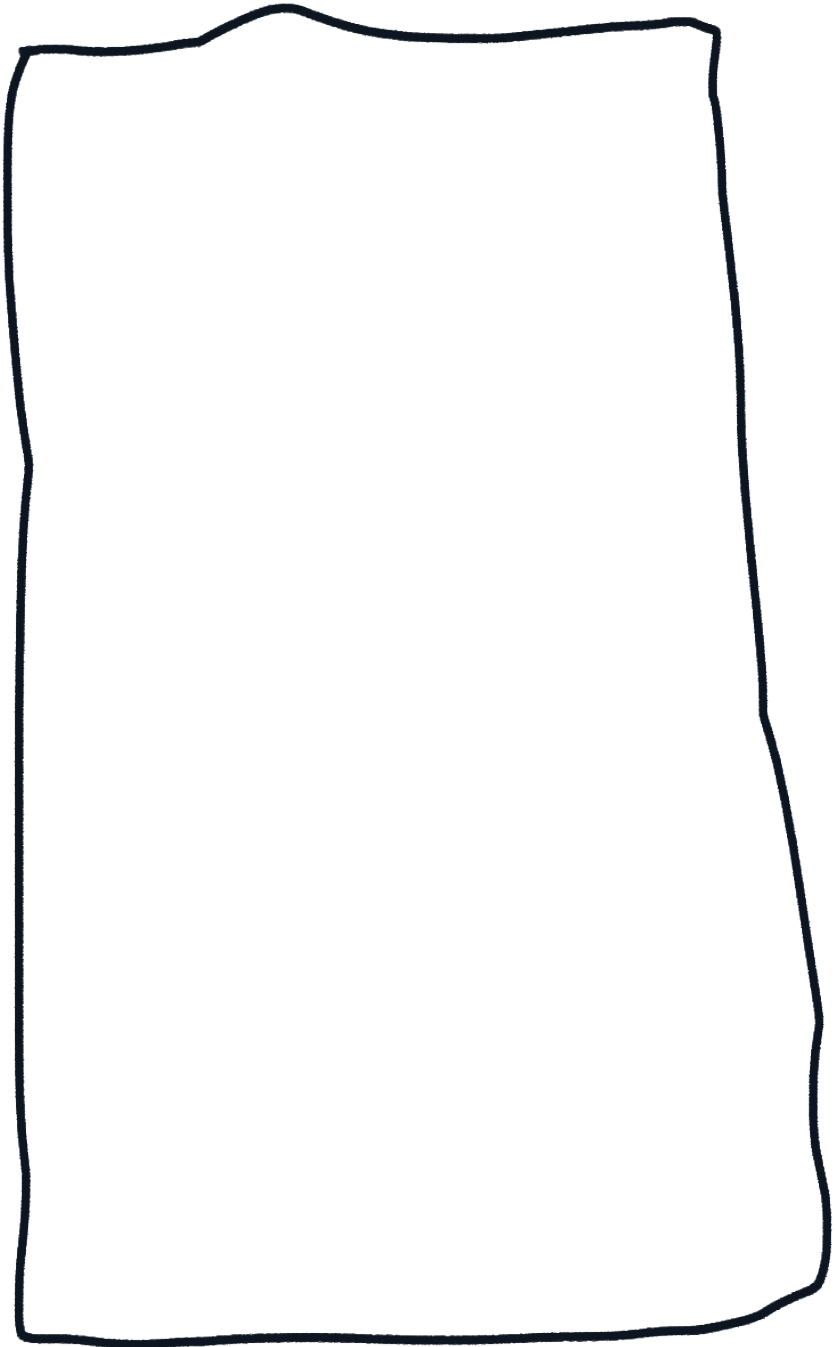
Xingyan

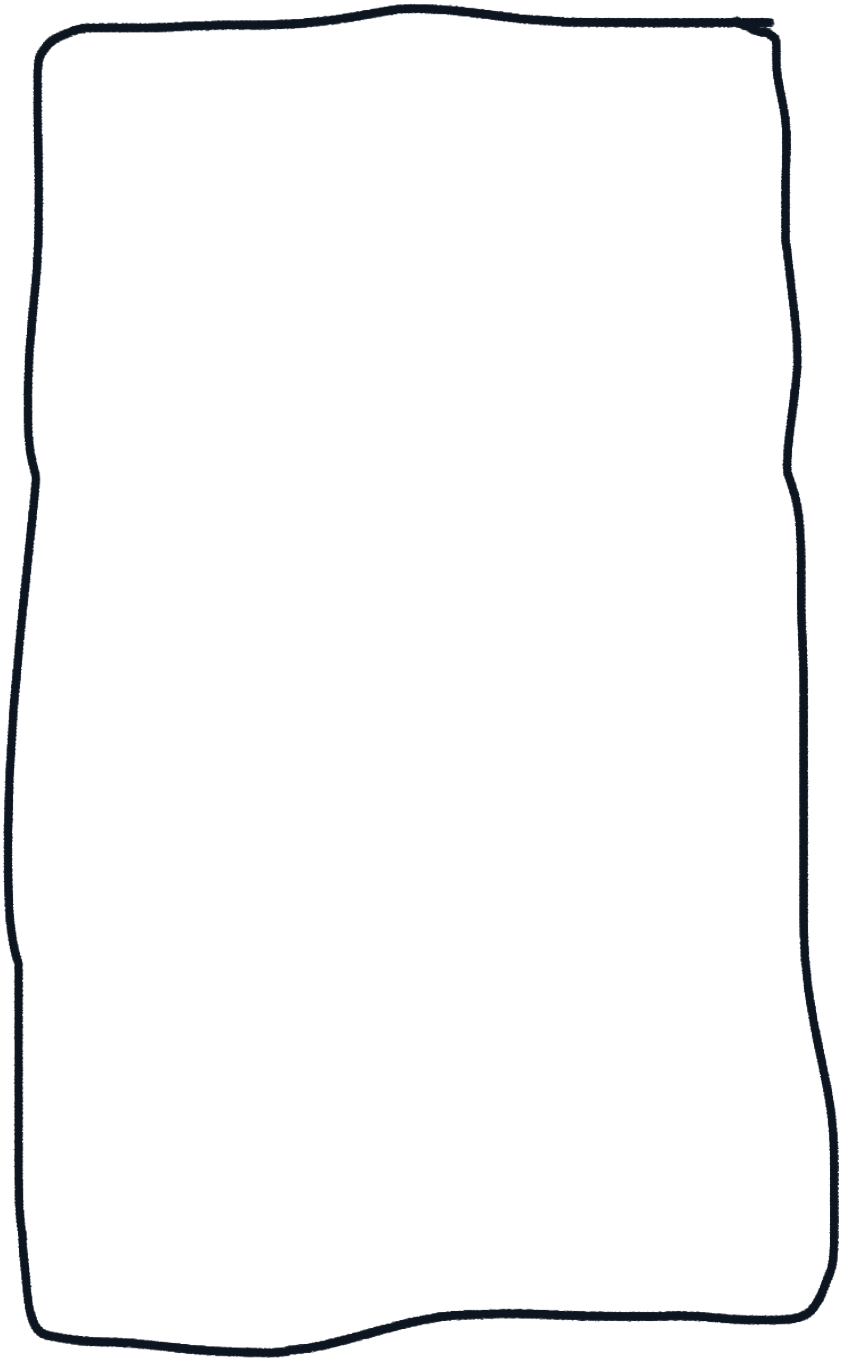
2022/07 Tampobata





Ran
2022/07/20 Grinnell









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I just realized that recording and telling could bind our lover tighter and bring it further and higher. This kind of bondings irons the pain subtly and gently in the endless routine of life. Maybe it's not enough to make the pain flat and still, but at least could unfold it.

Xingyan

2022/02/07 Middletown

Maybe life is all about combing each other's hair: we watch the hair strand falling from the fingertips and is being held tight again. Stagnate in life and then reconcile. Farewell and then reborn. Softly, gently we comb each other's hair until it turns silvery-white. Then we put each other's hair strands into our pockets, waving goodbye in silence. That's the way I love you.

Xingyan

2022/11/26 San Luis Potosi to NYC

In the end, what I want to ask the most, it's of course "What about you, how have you been recently? Have you been traveling? What could and did happen in your life?" I always have this kind of curiosity at the end of a letter. There's no better longing than this. To feel so curious about another being's life, and to be so eager to share one's own life—to express and to be understood, I believe, is the one of most beautiful things about living as humans in this world. I hope all is well with you. I hope we are both searching on our own lives.

Ran

2021/04/15 (In the Sandstorm)

