

Newsletter

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Poetry

A Fight

by Melody 陳韻婷

One Friday morning,
She called him to do cleaning.
He said TV program is intriguing,
And his job is not
A house keeping.
She's angry.
He's still laughing.
She broke the TV.
He hit the ceiling.
Don't worry.
Keep waiting.
You will see they're saying sorry
And give each other a kissing.

On Life Avenue, We Dance

by Windy 謝育珊

A journey which is stressful and lifelong,
We come here and go back alone.
Today, Tonight, Tomorrow, on Life Avenue we dance,
Spin, Swag, Stumble, we try so hard to get a chance.

We'll never be well-prepared to the merciless fate
The sweet, the sorrow we unceasingly taste.
Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, on Life Avenue we dance,
Jump, Clump, Slump, we just want to follow other's pace.

Too many things just don't happen as we wish,
Frustration gives us considerable polish.
Weekday, Weeknight, Weekend, on Life Avenue we dance,
Difficult, Definite, Desperate, in the sunlight our sweats glance.

For My Friend

by Melody 陳韻婷

The world is not wonderful,
But you are simple.
Society gives us color,
But I know you remain pure.
New fashion is popping,
But you said old thing worth keeping.
Technology is convenient in our life,
But you insist giving me a write.
So my lovely friend,
Leave the sorrow behind.
Leave the beauty inside.
You are the best one.



Prey

by Cherry 林品秀

Fast as wind
Strong as lion
Shift within notice like cat
Through the bushes beyond the skylines
Here there there here

Sharp as an eagle
Hunt within a wink
Into the cities after our prey
Crimson and fresh
We thirst we kill we drink

But who as you
Why I cannot see through
Innocent and fearless of a beast like me
So beautiful so unique
Like my personal brand of heroine

Although immortal although unlike
You are the prey I pray to protect
Love is blind then let it blind
Not until the twilight fade
I cannot leave in the rest of your life

Dream

by Benetta 李昀儒

Dream the parents' dream
Can't breathe, can't breathe
Perfect plan, ardent wish
They say
This is good for me
Pressure, anxiety, disputation, rebellion
I can't breathe
Achieve their dreams
Finish my dream
After all, this is whose life (whose life is it anyway?)
Theirs or mine?

Dream my own dream
Don't worry, don't worry
Ideal plan, free heart
I say
I walk on my road
Courage, effort, patience, faith
Please don't worry
Achieve my dream
They will be happy for me
Now, let go of my hand
I dream! I dream!

Short Stories

Seduction

by Sabena 陳湘鈴

Your spotlessly white catches my eye,
Slender figure lies beneath the cover;
Emotionless smell you make me high,
Cold smooth touches the wrapped silver.

I would hold you in my hand;
I am gonna burn you in my sight.
(Or simply I would burn you in my sight)
Let me feel what you have inside,
Breathe your odor in dim light.

The light turns up,
The door is open.
I stand up
All of a sudden.
Hey! Kid
Don't you ever touch my cigar again!
Okay, Dad.



The Fight

by Candy 顏嘉伶

How dare you
Reveal your sleepiness in your downcast eyes
And your yawning all mouth wide (very funny!)
To my exclusive nineteen- inch liquid crystal screen all night?

I can detect the distraction, the bed
In which it attracts you to lie.
But please, at this very moment,
Refrain yourself from giving the devilish lure a try.
Tonight, the most heroic fight, (I love the imagery of the "heroic fight")

You and I should stand on the same line.
Your brainstorming, typing, and the energy to put the sleepiness aside
and my perfect advanced Microsoft office system 2009 Would be the key
elements to make the devilish lure outshined.
This fight won't be ended
Until we successfully reach the assignment's deadline.



Hostage

Linna 許宛伶

The building was illuminated. People went in and out. A crowd of media blocked the hallway. A policeman was answering questions. His voice was barely heard; he was drowned by uproar among the crowd and the siren from a certain police car. There were flashes and noises when the door was opened. Two police officers escorted a man towards the building. The unidentified man took an indifferent look at eager people and hung his head in reticence. When the reporters did not get any response from the man and only to stare at his profile disappearing down the corridor, they immediately turned back to the cameras with stern countenance.

"The suspect has been taken into custody. We do not know for sure his motives. He said nothing about it and answered no questions. The deputy sheriff is disappointed that the evidence is not enough to put him in jail but he was hopeful that the suspect is no longer on the loose. For the following news...."

"The man was arrested. This may rest those victims in peace for the time being. But for the prosecutors to charge him of the first degree murder, there is still long way to go. We will give you a detailed report on this, and please tune in to...."

A girl squatted on a chair facing the entrance of the waiting room. She was about 6 or 7, so fragile and so lost. When she heard the fuzz that came along with a group of uniformed men, she raised her head from between her knees and her two braids dangled. Her eyes were puffy from crying.

"Who's this girl?" a policeman in the front asked apathetically. His caterpillar-like eyebrow raised when he saw the girl.

"She got lost. We're trying to connect her parents," a gray-bearded man with a beer belly replied.

The policeman with thick eyebrows stared at the girl for a while and as if out of whim he added, "Keep her out of this. We have more serious stuff to do. A long night, it seems." He then took off his jacket and shuffled to his desk. After a yawn, he picked up the phone and dialed numbers. The girl's eyes had followed him until she noticed the clanging from the door.

Two other robust men led a cuffed man to the bench in the corner and made sure the manacle on the suspect's right hand was attached to the bar on the wall. "We'd better make a statement. Those men are going to hang out there," one of the men requested. "Just let them wait," another man in suit mumbled.

It was almost eleven. Police officers hastened in and some gathered around tables in groups examining objects in plastic and paper bags. The big-belly officer poured a glass of water for the girl and asked her to sit on the opposite end of the room, and then he moved to the suspect and questioned him for a while and left the room in a rush.

The girl now was left in oblivion. But she found her companion just three desks away. She peeked at the suspect who was playing with his fingers. The man on the bench was immediately alert to the girl's watchful eyes. He glanced back and perceived her unusual presence in this room. The suspect felt the girl was very familiar. He narrowed his eyes and searched something particular on the girl's face. He knew he has seen this face before, but he was not certain about when or where he met the girl.

The girl hesitated as she saw the man glued his eyes on her. The man smiled an encouraging smile at her. The girl was taken aback but the man seemed to expect it. He didn't plan to scare her. He spread open his fingers to show that he was not going to harm the girl. The girl's attention was drawn to the calloused and scared palms. Just then, the eyes of the suspect glittered out of excitement like that of a predator when he saw his prey. But the girl did not notice his sudden change.

As the girl raised her eyes to meet the suspect's eyes, she felt reassured that probably this man could be the one to help her out. Slowly she inched toward the bench out of her intuition. Somehow, she could tell that this man was someone she could rely on in this spacious room.

"My daddy and mommy are gone," the girl murmured as she found her place next to the suspect.

"I think I know where they are, girl," the suspect lured the girl to move closer to him.

"You know?" the girl's eyes shone a ray of hope.

But as the girl moved within an arm's reach, the suspect rapidly scooped the girl by his unattached hand. This unexpected action startled the girl so she screeched with pain. The instant the girl's scream rippled out, everyone stood up and turned to the source of the voice.

"Freeze!" a man cried out with his gun in hand, trembling. A novice in deed. And all the men in the office became alert, their eyes all directed to where the gun pointed at—the corner of the room. The girl was now in the arms of the suspect. She was kicking and yelling but the suspect, who was faced with a dozen guns pointing at him, remained unmoved.

"Don't touch the kid. Put your hands up in the air," the novice plucked up his courage and held his gun firmly with two hands.

"I can help this girl."

"What?" the thick-eyebrowed man said unbelievably.

The noise brought more people into the room. The reporters outside sounded in turmoil as well. Everyone was yelling something, but not a sentence was comprehensible. Everyone was cautious and found the man on the bench was not at all affected but only smirked. Suddenly, the girl bit into the suspect's arm and made an effort to escape. The suspect was caught by surprise; nevertheless he grabbed the girl's braid. Unexpectedly a gunshot was heard when the girl fell back to the suspect.

Everyone was so terrified that the noise was reduced to silence for a moment and people on the spot all gaped at the scene. As a splash of blood cascaded from the wall behind the bench, the suspect fell on his side on the bench, eyes wide open and breathless. The girl was dragged and tumbled down on the floor. Her tears came streaming down in fear. However, when these people were still in shock, a voice broke out and the big-belly officer elbowed his way through the crowd.

"Another body is found in the neighboring town...and..." he couldn't finish his words, seeing the mess in the room. Still, he had to inform someone. He headed for the officer with thick eyebrows who was examining the body, and stooped down whispering into his ears.

"The male body was identified as the girl's father," he paused when the officer took a sharp turn toward him.

"But the blood trace shows that there should be another one missing, but we haven't found any other victims yet. So it could be that..." he uttered with weak sound and turned his head to the girl who was now escorted by a female police officer.

"My! There should be someone to tell her the truth sooner or later," sighed the officer.



The Doll

Sherry 蔣仙卉

It's Sally again. This lovely little girl with a head of curly golden wave is pressing her delicate little face against the display window. Her elaborate tiny nose is squeezed into a mess like squelched garlic, and her dainty rosy lips stick to the window like an octopus sticking on the wall of an aquarium. She has no pity on her lovely doll like face at all and seems quite enjoy in making it an indescribable mixture. Everything on her face is turned in to a mess on the window except her eyes. Her beautiful eyes are still vivid, limpid, and, wink every now and then. The reflection in her glass-like blue round eyes inter-reflect with its own reflection on the window. They remind me of the twinkles in the cloudless sky at the autumn night ten years ago. The night he came into my life.

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(Ten years ago at the same place...)

Tonight is just another casual autumn night like those I have encountered before. The moon climbs routinely high up in the ink-blue sky and the stars stay where they used to be. Hasty pedestrian pay no attention or even a quick glance to this old, shabby and gloomy store which inconspicuously roosted at the bottom of a curved sideway. People come and go. Lights turned on and off. Nothing happened and nothing changed; everything is as usual, as they used to be. I guess it will be all the same forever...

"Ouch!"

What? What is that?

In front of the display window, a young boy about eleven is just stumbled over by the uneven path. His hat slides down from the top of his head to the back of his left ear, and his eyeglasses slips off from his nose to his chin. He stares at his knees where there is a hole in the pants. He looked annoyed and frustrated.

"Uh-oh, there's a hole in my pants. Mom's going to scold at me hysterically like a machine gun strafing a target all night for this."

Are you all right, poor boy? Don't be upset, cheer up.

"Are you worried about me? I am fine, thank you. It's no big deal. Just a *small* hole in the pants, ha. It's quite embarrassing to fall down in front of a lady, isn't it?"

You've noticed me?

No one else has ever paid attention to this store; not to mention me. It has been a long time that somebody has ever paid attention to me. I am so pleasantly surprised that I want to scream, to shout, and to flourish. A long-sealed box buried deep beneath my breast seems to be touched. I feel a slight jolt inside the box. I know what that weak jolt means --- revive.

(Three months later...)

Here comes Billy again, the lovely little boy who stumbled over right in front of the display window and ended up having a hole in his pants two weeks ago. Now his hat is right at the top of his head, his eyeglasses squat nicely on his nose, and the annoying hole is properly covered by a piece of brown cloth.

After that night, he comes to the bottom of this curved sideway to see me and talk to me every day, sometimes in the morning before he goes to school; sometimes in the afternoon after the school is dismissed; and sometimes at the night when he is sent to shop for his mother.

He always starts the conversation with: "Hello, dear lady. How's your day today?" or "Hey, guess what I have done today?" But today, these silly but warm routine greetings are blocked up by an ominous long silence

.....Billy?

Billy stands inanimately in front of the window with his head down and his hands uneasily in the pockets. The brim of his hat covers his eyes. His lips tightly bond together.

Is something wrong?

Billy looses his lips but there is no sound coming out. He tries again and this time I hear it clearly thought it is spoken in a weak voice.

"I can never come to see you again... I'm moving away to another country."

Beneath my breast, there is no more jolting within the box now.

I wish you will come back to me some day. I will always be here, my dear.

Thank you for noticing me.

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(The present...)

Here, a bright smile on Sally's pretty little face which outshines the sun brings my floating thoughts back to the window.

"Here you are, Sally."

Behind the lovely little girl stands a young man with a hat right on the top of his head, a pair of eyeglasses squats nicely on his nose, and a pair of neat brown pants. He gently lifts Sally up to his shoulder, makes a step forward to the window.

"And here you are, my dear lady. I am back."

There is familiar slight jolting within the box beneath my breast.

Welcome back, Billy.

Sally looks at her father and look back at me with confusion on her pinky face. However she swiftly sweeps the confusion out and replaces it with excitement because this is not the first time her father says something she cannot understand; after all, she is only a naïve five-year-old little girl.

Sally bends over Billy's head with one finger points at me and asks pleadingly with her glass-like blue round eyes glistening with anticipation, "Daddy, may I have that doll?"

Billy gently looks back at Sally with tenderness in his eyes.

"My dear, you don't have to ask me for it. You already have one somewhere in your heart that dreams, plays, and adventures with you. Everyone is born with one, but people tend to put them into the bottom of their hearts and pay no attention to them after growing up. I wish you can always be friends with your own one and cherish her forever."

Sally looked quite puzzled with her little eyebrows bend to each other and her rosy lips pouted. She seems has some idea of what her father is talking about but has no idea whether she can get a doll or not.

Billy softly kisses Sally on her frowned eyebrows with a considerate warm smile and say, "You'll know what I am taking about some day when you get older. Don't worry and don't rush to grow up because the doll that belongs to you will always be there for you, now and forever."

Yes, I am a doll, a doll that will always be here.

Sally is still confused but she loses her frowned eyebrows and turns her pouted lips into a bright smile because she know that she will find out what all this is about some day and she has plenty of time to find it.

The sun shines brightly through the cloudless sky and the wind blows tenderly around Billy and Sally. Their glass- like pure blue eyes reflect each other's smile, the cloudless sky, the bright sun shine, and, me.

Thank you for finding me.



The Ghostly Lady

金心宇

When I was just a little girl, there's a young lady living alone in the next door. She was pretty and always being dressed up, in an old-fashioned way. No matter it's day or night, winter or summer time, she always wears hat with flowers or colorful ribbon on it, gorgeous long dress with lots of laces, silk gloves, high heels, umbrella with laces also, and heavy makeup on her expressionless face. The color of her dress changes every day, though they all look alike.

She has her own life style. She goes out twice a day only, one time in the morning and another time at night, but no one know where she's going. No one in our neighborhood has talked to her and no one has she talked to. We never see her buying any food; never see her go to work; never see her having company. We think she's ghostly weird. All parents forbid their children getting close to her. Some say she's insane, while some say she has once married a rich merchant and they had a child, until someday her husband and son disappeared in a shipwreck. Their bodies weren't found, so that she wears the dresses her husband bought her, waiting for them.

I wasn't sure whether she's crazy or not, but since she's weird, I dared not talk to her. I can still remember that one day when I was 8, my brother and I were playing ball downstairs, the young lady walked by. I looked at her odd dressing and miss the ball. It happened to hit her, which made us so afraid that she would yell at us. However, my brother came to her, trying to get the ball back. Staring at my younger brother, her impersonal eyes were filled with tear suddenly. Her reaction terrified my brother so much that he grabbed my arm and ran home immediately, even forgot to get the ball. From that day, I partly believe the rumors about the shipwreck, at least I believed she lived in great sorrow.

It has been more than 20 years; the young lady becomes an old lady. She never changes her life style, though her hair is a little gray and her dresses become color fading. It was 2 years ago, when I finally had to leave home for college. I once followed her to see where she's going everyday, of course, out of curiosity. To my surprise, she went to the coast, and simply stared at the sea. I tried to get closer, hiding behind a rock. I saw tenderness on her face, and tears dropping weakly. At that moment, I believed the rumor and consider her a poor, ordinary woman.

Last summer, I stayed home for 2 months, yet I no longer saw her. It is said that during the semester, there was a midnight conflagration. The lady luckily got out, but all her stuffs, including the dresses, were burned. She disappeared since that fire. Some say her husband came back and take her, while some say she was last seen peacefully smiling around the coast and walked into the sea.



The Bus Driver

Rebecca 林昱君

It's an afternoon as usual, but something unusual is happening. (I just know that.) My name is John, and I'm a bus driver in this small town. I've driven the bus for almost thirty years, from 2:00 pm to 12:00 pm. It is my everyday life. I love my job, because almost every of my passenger is so familiar to me. They're pretty kind and nice to me. I even know some of them when they were just babies.

Driving from the bus parking area, I'm approaching the first stop. I know Mrs. Hall is waiting with her little kid there. "Good afternoon, John." She's a very kind woman. "How do you do, today?" She smiles tenderly. "Fine." And then she leads her boy, little Jimmy, to the second row of the seats. She's a good mother. Little Jimmy is her cute and sweet boy. Mrs. Hall and Mr. Hall love him, and everyone in this town loves him, too. I can see the glister of pride in Mrs. Hall's eyes when she looks at little Jimmy.

After a few stops, here comes a very tall and strong man, Carl. There are many rumors about him. He's a notorious man. He lingers in illegal casinos everyday, and he was arrested on the charge of threatening several years ago. Oh yes, he reminds me of the turmoil in the bus company few days ago.

When I went to the office to get the key of the bus, some of the drivers were sitting there and chatting.

"... You have any idea about the letter?" "... There's not even a small clue..." And then one of the youngest drivers came and asked me,

"Hey John, do you know about the letter?" "What letter?" I was curious about that. "It was found in the mail box outside this morning." He pointed to the old mail box. "They want money, you know? One million dollars, or they will set bombs on our buses." One million dollars, it's a big number. If the passengers know there might be bombs, they won't take our buses any more. But our boss is a very stingy person; he even has never given us any raise. "Is he going to pay them?" I asked carelessly. "No, he said it's only a small trick by some stupid guys." The young driver said. Maybe the boss is right. We've received this kind of letters a few times in the past, but no bomb was even found on the buses. Nothing happened.

While I was thinking, it's almost six o'clock. Mrs. Hall, Jimmy and Carl all got off the bus a few stops before. I see Jessica waving at me under the streetlamp. It seems that she just finished her guitar class in the school. I stop the bus, and she gets on the bus carrying the guitar on her back. She smiles at me, "Hi, John. Have a nice day?" I smile at her, "As long as I can see you everyday." She laughs and sits behind me at the first row. I can see her through the rear-view mirror. She's a girl full of energy and very kind. At a moment, I thought it is Jenny sitting there. Unfortunately, this will never happen.

I haven't told you yet, right? Jenny is my own daughter. She would be seventeen years old by now. She has lovely brown hair, and she's such a beautiful and considerate girl. I love her so much. She is like an angel to me. Her mother died after giving the birth. Therefore, I brought her up by myself. When she was a baby, I got up in the middle of the nights to feed Jenny with milk. I went to her preschool to see her performing dancing with other children. When she was in the senior high school, I saw her winning the speech contest as the representative of her school on the stage, and she looked at me with pride in her eyes. There were tears on my face. She was such a wonderful girl that she never makes me worried about her. After my exhausted work, she would sing a song for me and give me a big hug, then telling me what happened in school everyday. I think that must have been the happiest time in my life.

However, everything changed until Richard appeared.

Jenny, my dear daughter, started to talk about him everyday. She said he was a charming and handsome guy that almost every girl in the school had a crush on him. Every word she said was about Richard. One



day, she told me that Richard asked her out on a date. And he said that Jenny was the only girl he loved in the world. You know what? I could never trust him. I've never met him before, but I knew he was a bad guy, he was lying. I heard several high school girls, not those nice ones, gossiping on the bus. They said they all hanged out with Richard in the club and had sex with him several times. I asked Jenny to leave him, but she refused to take my words. "I am not a little girl anymore, dad. I know you don't like Richard, but you can't abuse him like that! I hate you, dad! I will never believe you again. Never!" She slammed the door in front of me and locked herself in the room. I knocked the door desperately, but there was no answer... My heart was broken. It's the first time my daughter, my little Jenny, shouted at me... just for the bad guy...

From that day on, she seldom talked to me, and the time she went home became later and later. She took her clothes and then she left. She pretended that I was never existed. Though I was so sad, I still went to work everyday. I heard those girls saying that Richard began to appear in the club with a young, innocent and brown hair girl. It must be my little Jenny! "She looks like a fool!" They laughed loudly. "Who else will believe Richard is a good guy." What did they know!? It was all Richard's fault!

Finally, Jenny came home one day early in the morning, after I heard so many rumors about Richard and her. She stood at the door, and she looked very pale and depressed. There was no energy in her eyes. When I saw her eyes, I remembered they were once full of pride and confidence. My heart was broken again. I said nothing but gave her a hug. At first, she acted like a stone with no emotion. But after a few minutes, I could feel that she started trembling and sobbing in my arms. "... I'm sorry, dad. I'm so... sorry..." She said with her feeble and little voice. I cried soundlessly. My Jenny was back. She was finally back. That was everything to me. No matter what she did or what she said, I will always forgive her.

In the few days, I tried to ask her what had happened indirectly, but she didn't mention a word. She always tried to avoid saying anything about Richard. She went to school everyday as before but with silence. She even made no noise when she was at home. She was like a phantom or a blow of wind which might disappear one day. And she did disappear on a rainy day. There was only a letter left in her room.

"Dear dad,

I love you so much. You're the best father in the world for me. Please forgive my leaving... You're right, Richard isn't a good guy. He broke up with me cruelly, even though I got his child... I was pregnant. I don't want to abort my child... but I also don't want you to be humiliated because of me. I know you're so proud of me, so I have to leave, I want to go somewhere people don't know me... I always love you, dad. It's heartbreaking to leave you, and it was the hardest decision I've ever made. I used to think I could be with you forever. I could marry someone and we could live together happily... However, it is just like a beautiful dream, now...

Please forgive me... Take care.

Yours Jenny"

I was so sad when my wife died, but I knew I still had my daughter with me. Now, my daughter, my little Jenny left me, too. There is nothing I should care about anymore. My life is meaningless... So I made the decision...

It's the stop which Jessica should get off the bus. I open the door, and she said, "Thank you, John." with a big smile. The smile still reminds me of Jenny. She used to smile like that. "Good night, Jessica. By the way..." I hesitate for a second, "Take care of yourself. I want you to be a happy girl forever." Jessica nods her head and gets off the bus. She waves at me out of the window. Good bye, good girl.

It's time to accomplish my plan. The next stop is nearby a night club which just opened a few days ago. I've seen Richard waiting at the bus station for a few times. He's always like a stinky wiper leaning on the bus stop. There's no exception today. He gets on the bus with such a drunken and ugly face. I saw some of his photos in Jenny's drawer. He looked like a

gentle boy in those photos. No one can tell that he's such a jerk before actually knowing him. He's a devil who stained my innocent daughter! He's the one who forced my daughter to leave me! I can't endure his existence in the world. He may get some punishment from the police or someone else in the future, but I can't wait anymore. I went to the hospital last month for my coughing. The doctor told me that I have lung cancer. There's only two months left.

Two months... Even though I could find Jenny, I couldn't make sure that Richard won't bother her anymore. As her father, I have to protect Jenny. This is the last and the only thing I can do for her. I won't let the devil harm her again. Remember the threatening letter to the bus company? It inspired me a lot. I got a bomb from an old demobilized soldier. (I brought a bottle of Whiskey to him, and he was drunk when I found the bomb in his room.) I set it under the bus this morning. As long as I press the button in my bag, the whole bus will blow up and get destroyed in a second. The devil and I will go to the hell together.

Maybe after my death, the bus company will give Jenny a pension, and she'll have my heritage. I guess those young drivers would say, "Oh, poor old John, never think he would be a victim of the blackmailer." Or Mrs. Hall might be surprised when she reads the newspaper. What about Jessica? Does she know she won't see her uncle John again?

I hope my little Jenny will find another man who loves her as much as I am. They will have a warm family, and my Jenny will never cry again. I have no idea what will happen after pressing the button. But I want to say that, I love you, Jenny. Don't cry for me. I wish I could see your beautiful smile again.

Good bye.



The Fashion Show

Sabena 陳湘鈴

Welcome to join the 2020 A/W Fashion Show in Beijing, now the show is almost beginning. There are distinguished people, editors of fashion magazines and entertainers all crowd around the exhibition stand. The photographers can hardly stop pressing the shutter in case they would miss best shot of this show and those celebrities. They are utterly eager to see the new fur collection of Merci Vainer, who is the most adored and impeccable fashion designer for his collection of fur clothing. Many rich and young married women are whispering into each other's ears about how Vainer's fur clothing makes them look more animated and confident. They are obsessed with the wild, crazy unruly temperament which they feel when wearing the fur clothes. The fur clothing of Merci Vainer seems to have some kind of magic, to be more specific, a kind of spell one cannot resist once wearing the fur clothes. According to one of the anonymous peeress, who is never absent from any of Merci Vainer's show since she bought her first Merci Vainer's fur clothes. She could feel the generous abundance of her passion pouring out from her body and soul whenever she's wearing it. Even though she is in her forties, she could be both as sophisticated and smart as a leopard and as sexy and feminine as a cat. "I could hear the call of wildness that reminds me of the subtle instinct I used to have when I was young. A fever of excitement is endless. I even wear the fur clothes to have wild sex with my husband; he likes the way it is." Her face turns scarlet when saying it with a glance of smile.

The uproar in the exhibition hall continues. It is usual because Merci Vainer's show always makes a hit and grabs the headline next morning. People are enthusiastic about what surprise he would bring to the public. In the backstage, the crew are in a rush and a muddle, it seems that everything is nearly under control, because the show will begin in five minutes, everyone is fully-armed and very cautious in any detail in case they will screw thing up. They are devoted and passionate because it is an honor for them to work for Merci Vainer. "Okay, we are all set now, the show will start in one minute." show director said. All the slander models are dressed in fur. Just ten minutes before, they are as pale as snow and he dark and deep holes on their faces are blank. Even though most of them are no more than twenty, no young spirit can be found in their skinny bodies, dieting is their daily routine and delicacies

are the taboo before the show. They are all stark naked and so skinny that their only a layer of skin stick to the bones. When they are all dressed up, they look just like a pile of bones that hangs up the fur coat which is the only thing that covers their bodies. But the magic of Merci Vainer's clothes works on them too, they gradually feel the call of the wildness the peeress mentioned before, a passion is pouring out from their bodies, a drastic desire for liberation is emerged, and primitive instinct is lured by the spell of Merci Vainer. His design makes them the animated beings.

Outside the backstage, the flash lamp lights up, people catch their breath, everything turns to silence and the music begins. The models step on the catwalk one by one, there are the best representations of this collection, and their bodies are so emaciated that coats make them invisible, the heavy fur coat on them endow them with the look of what they are wearing- wolf, lion, leopard, tiger, panther, jaguar, cougar, fox, coyotes, jackal and hyena. The make-up on their angular face vividly conveys the beauty of wild nature. Yet that is what the designer wants, he hates that his design will be destroyed by the model's personality, his clothes must be the focus during the show, not those models. So he decided that food is not allowed for those girls before the show, he wants those girls to be feeble and hungry, he wants those girls to act like the predator in the wild.

The magic of Merci Vainer begins to take effect, people are affected by the passion and beauty of wildness and nature, and they get blush on their cheek when their mood keeps higher and higher. On the contrary, they are not the skinny type on the catwalk; most of them are full in form. Contrast with those girls on the stage, if those girls are emaciated and hungry animals, they must be the well-fed poultry.

The show continues and the models follow one by one, every piece is impeccable and the photographers never stop pressing the shutter. To Merci, they all do a good job to act like the animals. Those girls comply with his requirement that they have to convey their hunger and desire to the extreme, especially through their eyes. The crimson eye shadow has made their eyes glowing and hard to ignore. And glowing eyes convey a strong desire for the domination of possession and control, a desire out of instinct; everyone seems to be caught by their eyes. The scarlet lips slightly open as if there is fluid dropping around the mouth. Some of them wear a foxy smile just as the smile is about to devour everyone reflected in their eyes. This is the beauty that keeps the guest in high spirit and yet suffocated. No one can escape from and resist the spell the Merci Vainer. Mreci's design perfectly grabs the attention of everyone.

Suddenly shrieks let out from the auditorium, a model fall on one of the guests and bite her out of the extreme hunger. Others jump down the catwalk when seeing that, and they start to search for their preys. They are the vivid predator in the wildness after being covered by those fur clothes. They hunt those people as though they're out of instinct, they could feel the fountain of delight and passion when gobbling. Everything is wildly out of control, and those unruly models are frantic, mad, and they cannot stop hunting. "Those things are well-fed and edible." "Food, food, fleshs, fleshs are everywhere, all at my disposal" They roar and howl at those poultries. Many Drops of rich scarlet drip around their mouth and a spot of pleasure call on their check. They are satisfied by the flesh of those rich poultries. The uproar is amplified by the shriek and screaming. Fighting and blood are everywhere. Everyone is under the spell of Merci Vainer and no one can run away from it.

Next morning, out of no surprise, Merci Vainer's show hits the headline again.



Flying the Red Kite

Jenny 黃郁婷

As the bell sings delightfully to end the last period of class, Henry throws his books into his schoolbag in a hurry and rushes out of the classroom without saying goodbye to Mr. Lin. He runs through the corridor, hops down the stairs, squeezes through a crowd of students and crosses a hectic street. He hums a merry rhythm as he turns in a tranquil alley. He is so eager to step into his home right now. He just can't wait. He can't even wait a minute because he has been expecting this day for a long time.

He's searching the key in his pocket. He's so excited that he knows his hand is even shaking. He can't help but start to imagine what will leap into his eyes when opening the door. A lot of presents, toys and candies will pile up in the living room. But that is not what he is picturing about. The most important thing is that his father is coming back home. Henry hasn't seen his father, who went to China on business, for almost a month. He is so eager to fling his arms around his father's shoulders, give him a big hug, and tell him how he misses him.

As Henry opens the door, his yearning dream all comes true. His father welcomes him with open arms and a shining smile. How wonderful it is! He jumps into his father's embrace without even taking off the shoes and acts like a satisfied baby curling in the warmest womb. How eager he is to show his father the award he has won in the running race, sing him the beautiful song he learned in the music lesson, give him the picture he drew in the art class and tell him all of the things that happened in school. But suddenly an urgent phone call requests his father to go back to the company within ten minutes, leaving Henry only a word of sorry. The tears are so heavy that they continuously slide down from his eyes, shattering his cold and broken heart. He says himself in the sofa and sobs. The pile of presents, toys and candies that his father brings back for him are just sitting quietly in the corner of the living room.

It is always Henry's tiny hope that his father can spend more time with him. But as a manager in a big company, his father is very busy at work. He works almost overtime everyday. When he gets home, Henry is always weaving his dream in bed. When Henry wakes up in the morning, he's still snoring loudly in bed. It is always Maria, the servant, who takes him to school everyday. Every time as Henry sees the parents who walk with their kids to school hand in hand, he'll always cast an envious glance. He's so jealous. He really hopes that his father can walk with him or even drive him to school one day. But that seems to be a far-fetched dream. Even though he always makes this wish before he blows out the candles on the birthday cake. For several years, it never comes true. But he'll still make the same wish the next year.

Wiping out his tears on the cheeks, Henry drags his schoolbag disappointedly to his room. He raises up his head and stares at the ceiling as he enters the room. Something up there makes him think of his mother. He misses her so much. She died of cancer when Henry's only five. Everything about his mother seems to be a mixture of black and white. It is blurred in chaos. But there is always a red diamond shining brightly in his deepest memory. That is a kite, a red kite. It is his first gift from his mother. He likes it and cherishes it a lot. He still remembers that his mother would always take him to fly the kite in the park on weekends and so did his father. It was the happiest time of his life. However, as his mother passed away and as his father got busier with his work, he seldom flies the kite. He almost never flies the kite now.

The bell sings again the next day. The school is dismissed at twelve. But it is now two o'clock in the afternoon and Henry still hasn't come home. Maria is really worried that she calls Henry's father



immediately. But he has no idea where his son will be. Henry's father starts to get worried, trying to contact the teacher and all of Henry's friends. However, no one has seen Henry after school and no one knows where Henry is. So his father drives the car from street to street and from alley to alley to find his son. Searching around the community for almost two hours, he can't find Henry. Weight of anxiety is swirling in his stomach. He feels so depressed. He also feels upset because he can't even think of a place where Henry will go. He is so desperate that he can only drive back home.

As he enters the house, Maria is sitting motionless on the sofa. It is so quiet as if there is no one at home. He walks slowly through the living room to Henry's room. He opens the door softly. Everything seems so unfamiliar to him. He can't even remember the last time he stepped into this room. The running award is lying proudly on Henry's desk. The wall is filled with Henry's pictures that he drew in the art class. He looks around the whole room carefully. It is quite different from the one in his mind. Then, he lifts up his head, trying to search for something familiar, the red kite. Henry had told him that the kite would be hung up in the ceiling forever because he can always see it when he lies down in bed every night. It is like his mother who is protecting him up in the heaven. But as he lifts up his head, he sees nothing. The kite is gone. Suddenly, something comes into his mind. He then rushes out of the room, grabs his key and hurries to start his car.

He drives so fast that he even feels dizzy. He knows Henry must be there, in the park. Getting out of the car, he starts looking around every corner to search for Henry. After a while, he glimpses a boy who sits under a tree with a red kite in his hands. It's Henry. He makes a dash for his son and hugs him tight in his arms. With a kiss on Henry's forehead, he spreads out a big smile with a great relief. Then, he holds up the kite and starts to chase it in the wind. As the kite soars high in the sky, he passes it to Henry. Henry flies the kite so high because he believes that his mother can see it from heaven. He is trying to tell her that he is really happy right now. He is flying the red kite, with his father holding his little hand tight.



Interviews



Haunting nightmares before the annual play

Jared Lu, who played the role of Reece through three distinct time periods, disclosed his hidden aspirations, frustrations, and even fears he strongly felt before and after the annual play and depicted how he coped with these and other emotions in an interview conducted by Kevin Zhong.

Kevin: Why did you choose the role of Reece in the audition?

Jared: At first I was much more interested in the role of Julian, but I didn't do well in auditioning for it. So I ended up getting the role of Reece, because somehow the teacher said that I look like an old man.

Kevin: So you didn't like playing that role as your first choice?

Jared: No, cause it's kind of hard—I mean I am only twenty two, young and energetic, but Reece is seventy and dying.

Kevin: Did you really find playing the role of Reece that difficult?

Jared: Yes, it was a challenge, obviously. For one thing, there were several transitions in the play for the role. In the beginning, Reece was dying and having a regretful life; in the middle, he was young and just starts his career and first marriage; in the end, he became a loving father. The transition part was hard—you had to act like a dying old man and a loving father, while making distinction of those two personalities obvious.

It was really hard for me to act like an old man, because I spoke and moved very fast. They always complained about me not being old enough, and my voice was too young. Also, most of my lines were like monologues, and I did not have a lot of interactions with Poopay, which made it even harder to memorize all the lines.

Kevin: How did you get along with other team members?

Jared: I think we had a weak leadership. Our director always got bossed around by actors and actresses. I was a very judgmental person, and it was hard for me to take initiatives to build up a more friendly relationship with them in the beginning.

There was also an issue about punctuality. Some members always came to our rehearsal late, and it irritated me. I always got to the rehearsal ten minutes early, helping to set up the settings. I always finished my breakfast before I got there, but they came to the rehearsal late and had to chew their breakfast for like half an hour.

Kevin: I noticed that, two weeks before the annual play, you suddenly worked harder on your part as an actor. Why?

Jared: Well, at first, I thought Reece was just a narrator on stage, so I thought the most important thing is to memorize all the lines, and ignored the fact that I had to act on the stage. After our first dress rehearsal, the critics were all over me. They complained about my poor

performance, with Anny dismissing me as “you are dragging us down.”

She said that in front of all the drama crew, but it was like a slap in the face and I started to wake up, thinking “it is not good, not a good sign.”

So I decided to do something about it, because I was not going to roll over and die. I asked for help from the directors of last year’s annual play, Tracy and Brian, and the actor David. They gave me private lessons four days a week, four hours at a time. It really helped.

Kevin: How did you practice with them?

Jared: When I turned to Tracy for help, she explained how to say my lines, how to raise my voice, and how to make eye contacts with the audience. She helped me visualize of how I should do as an actor. And David, the senior, demonstrated in person how to act like an old man. After we practiced and practiced, we performed before Brian, and he gave us some feedbacks for fine-tuning. We did all this in the reading lab, closed the door, and practiced.

Kevin: Did you have any pressure?

Jared: Definitely, but not until the first dress rehearsal. Before that, I had no pressure at all and thought I was good. I was wrong obviously. But as the annual play drew near, I suffered a lot. I couldn’t sleep at night, I had nightmares. I dreamed a lot. I dreamed about rehearsing the same line again and again and again on stage, then I woke up. Then I started to panic. One night, it got worse. I dreamed about forgetting the whole line on our performance day, and Poopay tried to give me some hints but I still couldn’t remember any of them. I even dreamed of Professor Peter showing up and said I embarrassed our whole department, and then I woke up. That was really scary.

Kevin: Do you have anything to say to your crew?

Jared: Well, I’d been a real jerk in the first half of our preparation, but then I started working hard on my acting. I did not want to drag you down. I hope I performed better than our first dress rehearsal, because I knew there was still room for improvement so I kept working hard to make it perfect.

Would do anything for art

Annie Liu, who played Ruella, always composed, witty, and daring who ended up orchestrating a scheme that turned her own fate and that of Poopay’s in Communicating Doors, talked about how she strived to strike a balance between the role she played and herself, pull things together when other players weren’t on the same page, and even shed weights to stay in character in an interview conducted by Linna Hsu.

L: We heard that you deliberately lost weight for the play. You want to talk about it?

A: Everyone said that I was one size smaller than I was before, but my breasts shrank, also.

When I decided to go on a diet, everyone was saying that I didn’t have to lose weight for the role. However, I thought I’d better shed some fat to get

into shape. Anyway, Ruella couldn’t be overweight, or it would be difficult to stay in character.

L: So you put extra efforts for the image of the character?

A: Among the three actresses, I was probably the ugliest. Take the costumes, for example. Everyone had beautiful clothes to wear except me. My costumes came from our director’s grandmother. And the wig was another example. Cindy had two brand-new wigs. I had only one, which I inherited from the seniors—one that was too curly to brush. Phoebe had new wig as well. She also had gorgeous makeup.

L: Well, apart from the looks, how did you like the role of Ruella?

A: After I got the role, I got to know Ruella better. She was sensible, intelligent and well-mannered. I really liked people who had these qualities, and I hope when I get older, I could become this kind of person.

L: So you and Ruella did have something in common?

A: During the audition, the teachers said that my style matches that of Ruella’s. That’s why they chose me. But I didn’t know for sure. I did want to be a person like Ruella in the future though.

L: During the rehearsals, did you always agree with the director?

A: You know our director was such a pushover. Whatever we said, she probably would agree with us. But when we were on the different page, I referred to what teachers said to convince her, or what the director for last year’s play said to do the job.

L: Did you find working with other actresses or actors challenging on and off the stage?

A: Of all the actors, the only one I didn’t perform with on the stage is Reece, I mean. I did better with Julian--Jeffery played the role--because acting with him, I felt quite relaxed. I simply took care of my own business, and he led me into the acting. I acted with Phoebe most of the time, Nicole’s role. Speaking of acting skills, Nicole and I were at the same level. She’s the one that motivated me to make progress.

I also worked with Jessica to improve our acting. There was a scene that Harold, Jessica and I performed together. Whenever we three acted together, the play was sort of being dragged down. It’s just not like what you would expect in a drama. It lacked the appeal.

L: So which scene was the most challenging for you as an actress?

A: I think the most difficult part was Act one Scene 4. Only Phoebe and I took up that part, which was so boring. It’s about Ruella realizing they were time traveling. It’s all about this realization. It’s like monologues, really hard to act out.

I could hardly bring myself into the plot. The boring scene was difficult for me to make myself part of it and it was hard for audience to get into it as well. In this play, I had to be composed, but I myself talked so fast and was way too energetic. Professor Liu said that I have the look but not the mindset of that character.

L: You mean you were still impatient and anxious?

A: Yes. In reality, I was so different from Ruella. Back to that point, it’s really different. Probably she’s a middle-age woman. She’s really



composed and calm. And I was just not like her.

L: Were you under a lot of pressure from others?

A: Along the way, I realized that pressures did not come from the fact that you had to perform on the stage, but from the seniors and sophomores of our department. The seniors were supportive and told us that we were doing fine and we were great; however, I was concerned if we lived up to their expectations. The sophomores may have felt relieved though, because they probably would think they won't be worse than us.

L: When actors or actresses didn't agree with each other, would the conflicts delay your preparation or affect the relationships between each other?

A: It did delay our schedule, but it had all passed. I think our director was quite good at negotiating, you know. We were all grownups, after all. We could handle this. People need to grow up.

L: There were many classmates who work so hard behind the scene. Do you have anything to say to them?

A: In fact they were one of the sources of my pressures. Although the whole class was involved in this project, there were only six actors really under the spot light. So we really needed to perform well for them. Like the members of the public relations group, they worked so hard to get sponsors for us. And the executive producer, the members of art and publicity, and the set and prop team. We really needed to do our best to make their efforts worthwhile.

Every time those members behind the scene came and accompanied us during rehearsals, I felt overwhelmed. This play belonged to the whole class. This made me want to have a better performance. It was the dedication of each class member that made the play better and made the actors get the sense of responsibility to perform well.

Nothing lost in translation, almost...

Kevin Zhong wasn't originally the leader of the translation team, which took charge of translating the whole script for the annual play, until when a reliever was desperately needed to take over. He talked about the ups and downs of the transition and how he personally evaluated the well-received work of art in an interview conducted by Jenny Lee.

Q: You took over as leader of the translation team halfway through the preparation for the annual play. What happened?

A: It was an incident. One day the convener tried to reach me several times on the phone, and the next morning, I was asked if I could take over as leader of the translation team. Of course, I cannot say no.

Q: So you did not have any hesitations and just said yes?

A: I was not eager for the position; however, the translation group needed a new leader and someone suggested that I was qualified for the job, so... I took it.

Q: How did that make changes to your life afterwards?

A: Actually, I was also a member of the props team, as you know, but I had to spend most of my time translating the scripts, which was very time-consuming. During the most hectic period, we spent our non-class hours from 7 o'clock in the morning and stayed at school until 8 o'clock

at night, for three weeks.

Q: Was it difficult for you to take over the job from the former leader?

A: Sort of. If the works had been done as scheduled before I took over, it would have been a lot easier, because we then could have more time to discuss with the director or professors, and make revisions. The original translation was not so precise; therefore, we not only had to finish up the whole script, but had to go back and made revisions in contents and style.

Q: How would you describe your style of leadership after taking over as a reliever?

A: I always tried to make impartial decisions.

Q: Could you be more specific?

A: Sure. No decision was meant to be arbitrary. Discussions were very important. When in doubt, I would ask the director or the actors or actresses, especially Cindy, for help. Moreover, I consulted with professors. Translation could only be done as a team work.

Q: Would you personally consider translation as one of your options in your future career planning?

A: Sometimes when I see a movie, I would pay attention to the translation of subtitles. But once I had a talk with teacher Hsueh, and he suggested that working as a stringer translator is hard to make ends meet. So I might have to consider more about working in the field of translation.

Q: So you were already interested in translation before you became the leader?

A: Yes. Personally I believe it is a great way to consolidate our English abilities, and it is also a good way to prove ourselves.

Q: Some people complimented the translation of the script, especially some of its humorous lines. Which part of the translation impressed you the most?

A: I think the most humorous role was Harold, who often considered himself as know-it-all but actually he just about misunderstood everything. We spent a lot of time interpreting his humorous lines. My favorite part was when Poopay and Ruella tried to move Julian's body, Ruella called Poopay "You're just a feeble, sniveling little creature...you little wimp!" Although it wasn't meant to be humor in the original script, we tried to make it funny.



Pretty Woman inspired

Nicole Chien's love for drama helped infuse the high-flying spirits into the supposedly down-to-earth character of Poopay in the annual play. She talked about how the Hollywood movie Pretty Woman inspired her to perform the role of a dominatrix in a play composed by a British playwright in an interview conducted by Julia Hsiao and Jenny Lee.

Q: You are going to study drama as an exchange student in the United States. When did you start to get interested in drama?

A: I started to love drama in high school, because I was the leading

character of a school play and we got the first place, which helped me build up confidence.

Q: Now that the annual play was over, did it meet your expectations?

A: I learned a lot from it. For example, I asked the professors to help with my pronunciation and improve my body gestures.

Q: We heard that some actors were at odds with others as the preparation progressed. What happened?

A: It was mostly about attitudes. Someone might not pay enough attention while making preparations. It called for concentration at that stage.

Q: So, did that make anyone want to quit?

A: No, because it's really a big project of our department. I think the conflicts made our performance better. Opinions should be communicated, which could be turned into a source of progress. We got pushed to a higher level.

Q: Do you think the annual play changed the way you see your classmates?

A: Yes, take Cindy for example. Before the annual play, I didn't have a lot of chance to really get to know her, but then I found that she is outgoing, and we can chat a lot.

Q: Can you comment on your character in the play?

A: She's...a whore...a prostitute, which sounds better. Anyway, she is a lot like me, outgoing, straightforward. But she is a little timid. When she faces challenge, she draws back, perhaps because of her profession. But if somebody encourages her, she will overcome it. As for me, if I meet a challenge, I go through it.

Q: Tell us how you prepared for the role.

A: A professor suggested me to go watch the movie *Pretty Women*, and it's a good movie. I watched it a couple of times and imitated some of the female character's moves, the way she walks, and the way she talks.

Q: Which scene did you think is the hardest to perform?

A: The second scene, in which I performed with Reece. He had a lot of lines, but the teacher told me that the focus would not be on him but me, because he's an old guy and nobody wants to see what he is trying to say. I had to perform even though I didn't have a lot of lines, since I was the focus. It's a little bit hard for me.

Q: What's your first reaction to the sexual part of the play? Did you feel embarrassed when being so intimate with your partner?

A: Actually not at all. I was a little bit excited about this part because you know...because Julian is one of my best friends and we know each other very well. I felt like we were playing a game, so I mean it's OK...well it's just a lot of fun.



Q: Did he feel the same way?

A: I don't think he cares. He's like...um...just like I mentioned we've known each other for a long time. But if I have to do the same thing with Reece, it would be a different story.

Q: Did your previous love experience help you in any way?

A: Um...not really. I wasn't really thinking of my previous love affairs when I was playing Poopay. Cause she is a prostitute. There's no love between Poopay and others.

Q: If there is someone else to play the role of Poopay. What would be your advice for her?

A: Don't be shy, just go for it. And I will advise her to see *Pretty Women* as well.

Q: Besides Poopay, which role do you like the most, or you actually want to play?

A: If I were a boy, I will choose to play Julian cause...he's different, he's a mother killer. And I think he's strong, his character in the play is strong.

Q: A character who can kill someone?

A: Yeah, yeah, not to be killed but to kill. You know Poopay is the one who is going to be killed, so I don't like it. I am more boyish.

Q: was there anything you feel less confident about, such as your accent or pronunciation?

A: My figure. So I exercised everyday, probably everyday. I did it also because in act one I had so many lines and gestures, so when it came to the second part, I felt tired. I also tried to lose some weight. And I tried to sleep less. I usually sleep like 10 hours or 11 hours a day, and it's just too much for me.

A bad guy awes in spot lights

In the annual play, Jeffrey Lee played the role of Julian, who murdered two innocent women and smothered his own mother. While Julian may have terrified the audience with his acts of menace, Jeffrey said, in an interview conducted by Julia Wang and Kyle Huang, he sometimes goes nuts with explosive acrimony in Julian's style.

Q: How would you describe Julian, the character you played?

A: Well.....

Q: A bad guy?

A: Yap, of course, a bad guy.

Q: A murderer?

A: Well, in fact.....I always like to see this kind of movies and I have a weird habit. When I see characters like Julian, I will analyze their facial expressions, thinking if I were him, would I have acted and interpreted the same way? And the first time I read the script, I found Julian is easy for me because the role suits me.

Q: So it wasn't even a challenge for you?

A: At first, I thought I knew how to act. But then, I realized there were so

many details I needed to learn and make adjustments as required.

Q: Did you see any similarities between you and Julian?

A: Sometimes, I would go nuts like him! I am a Pisces. A Pisces likes to repress his anger till he can't tolerate, and then he explodes with wrath like a loose cannon and go nuts. When I explode, I would be like Julian and I couldn't control myself.

Q: Was there a chock point bothering you?

A: Well, my lines in the play bothered me because they were too long for me. I mean there were long soliloquies which were more difficult than very long conversations. For me, long conversations would be much easier because I could interact with others and it helped me to memorize these lines.

Q: How did you interpret Julian in the play?

A: A horrible man, of course, and I interpreted it in an exaggerated way. After all, we were giving a stage performance, not a movie.



Q: Did you learn anything from the annual play?

A: Peter was an inspiration for everyone. Whenever he came to see our rehearsal, we would be more tense and anxious. Because Peter

had a lot of experience, so we all wanted to show our best in order not to disappoint him. Sometimes, I was even amazed by the caliber of other players in action when Peter was seeing our rehearsal.

Q: You mean you acted differently when Peter was around?

A: Yap, we became better performers. Sid really astonished me. He did make progress a lot. His voice became louder.

One day, Peter came to see our rehearsal, and I met Sid at the backstage. He told me in a hoarse voice "fxk! My throat kills me I could not speak anymore." And in the next scene, I saw him on stage with a strong and loud voice again. Peter was there.

Q: How would you compare ours with last year's annual play?

A: I really admire and love *Noises Off*. You know their harmonious rapport among the players. Their actors got along with each others very, very well. It's a comedy, and they had to present and perform a chaotic situation in the middle of the play. The most successful part is that they got audience totally drawn and immersed in this play.

Q: Is it because it was a comedy, which naturally drew the audience's attentions and made them laugh?

A: Absolutely!

Q: Among all of you, who inspired you to act out your greatest potentials?

A: Poopey. At first, no one got involved in the play, so she didn't show

her emotions. But later when everyone made progress, she started to display her fear, and I got to know how to act out the scary nature. At first, the director said that Julian should be a terrifying person, but Poopey didn't seem to be frightened at all.

Q: Did you ever give her a few pointers?

A: No, she interpreted all by herself.

Q: Poopey and you had some intimate scenes. Did you feel shy or awkward?

A: I felt shy only at the first rehearsal, but after that I realized that, as an actor, I shouldn't show my personal emotions. All I had to show was the emotion of the character I played. And once I thought in that way, there was no effect in my mind.

Q: Did you discuss details of those intimate scenes with Nicole, who played Poopey?

A: Certainly. We had to know how to walk or move while acting. Like we had to change the way the table was located on the stage or she might twist her ankles.

Q: How did you work with the director?

A: I obeyed what she said. I was not the kind of person who cut his hair five weeks before annual play.

Q: What is your favorite scene in which you played?

A: The second act of course! Most of my scenes were in the second part, killing people, falling down the balcony, yelling crazily. I did make a huge breakthrough in the second act.

Q: Could you confidently say that we did better than our seniors?

A: *Noises Off* definitely is the peak, which is hard to beat. When I read the script, I knew it shouldn't be a problem to outshine *We Won't Pay*. As to *Noises Off*, to beat them, we had to practice more, and we needed better teamwork. As individual players, we could beat those involved in *Noises Off*, but we needed to work very hard to outperform them as a team. But in my heart, I always knew we are the best.

A whistle blower with carrots and sticks

Natasha Chen was the assistant director of the annual play and she greatly enjoyed the position behind the scenes. In an interview conducted by Cynthia Liu and Vivi Liu, she talked about how the role of a coordinator influenced her personal life and why disciplines were needed to keep the play on course.

Q: You were the assistant director of our annual play. What made you want to be in that position?



A: Oh, the director Ceria invited me to. So, I agreed. Originally I wanted to be the lighting technician, because I thought controlling the light is fun.

Q: How did you separate work between you and the director?

A: She was responsible for everything about the actors and actresses, like acting and other details. I helped her to make

sure that things were on track, and I also reminded actors and actresses some little things. She owned the throne, but when she was not around, I had the power.

Q: When it was necessary to discipline the actors and actresses, like shouting at them, who did it?

A: Me, of course. I was always the whistle blower.

Q: When actors and actresses didn't agree with each other, or if the director had difficulties communicating with them, how did you handle the situations?

A: I talked to each one of them, and ask them to make concessions, so the work could continue. Like in the beginning of our preparation, someone might not be in the mould for real acting, and that irritated others. Then there were arguments between them.

Q: How was that solved?

A: Let them take a break, having lunch, and then rehearse that scene again. In the meantime, I tried to let them know that someone needed some time to adapt to the mood for acting.

Q: Who, among the actors and actresses, impressed you the most?



A: Annie, who played Ruella. She made me feel that she was very suitable for that role. She was very much into the role from the beginning, and she acted that role out so naturally. But sometimes she forgot her lines at rehearsals.

Q: We heard that they had to pay fines for forgetting lines?

A: In the beginning, yes, but not afterwards, because Annie had to pay too much money at a time (laugh).

Q: The director and you were chosen before the audition. Did you have any preferences during the audition when actors and actresses had to be selected from the pack?

A: After I read the script, I already had someone in mind. The final result was not far from our decision with the teachers. In fact, the selection of the roles of Phoebe and Julian exactly matched my expectation.

Q: Did you ever think about cross-casting, like choosing Lena to play Harold?

A: No. it is better to let a man play Harold.

Q: Tell us something about your time management, as we know you were the chief of our academic committee, you had to go to the cram school four days a week for graduate study plans, and you also had a boyfriend to take care of. Life as the assistant director must have been very hectic?

A: I spared most of my time for the annual play.

Q: Did you talk to your boyfriend about the annual play?

Q: You probably had little time left to go dating. Did you give up

something important in life as the assistant director?

A: Yes. I withdrew from my baseball team, and I hardly had time for entertainment. Originally, I did not want to, but I had no choice. I talked with my teammates. They knew that I was too busy, so they let me leave. On my way home, I almost cried out for that decision.

Q: Did you ever regret?

A: Now I only hope I could get into a graduate institute in Taipei, so I can go back to my baseball team. I still have very strong passion for it.

Q: After you were chosen as the assistant director, how did you prepare yourself for that position?

A: I watched several old suspense films, hoping that I could get some inspirations about acting and pass them over to our actors and actresses.

Q: Have you ever thought about being an actress and play a role in our annual play?

A: No, I don't think I am good at acting myself. I could probably perform for a while, for the fun of it, but I can't do it for a long time.

Q: If you were given a second chance, would you still want to be the assistant director?

A: I would want to be the lighting technician (laugh).

Money talks and it matters

As the leader of the PR team, responsible for seeking sponsors to deepen our pocket for annual play expenses, Lisa Shih went through an ordeal unknown to many people on and off the stage. In an interview conducted by Melody Chen, she revealed the hardship and offered some hard-earned experience for the juniors.

Q: Getting sponsors for our annual play was a tough job. Why did you take it?

A: The PR team was originally led by Annie, a good friend of mine, so I joined the team. I thought everything would be fine with Annie being the leader. Unfortunately, Anne went to the audition and got a role to play, and I was elected to be her successor.

Q: Did you know then that the play needed a budget of up to NT\$190,000?

A: No idea. Actually, the budget was at first projected for as much as NT\$320,000. When I knew it, it was like a bolt from the blue.

Q: That sounds terrible.

A: I tried to cut the budget, but could only go as far as to make it NT\$260,000, still very huge. I was thinking like I had to borrow money from everyone I know.

Q: At a time of economic recession, getting sponsors would be even more difficult. Did you feel any pressures?

A: Yes, a lot. No one pushed me though, knowing it was an impossible task anyway, except the coordinator, who was also my roommate. She always asked me, "Oh, Lisa, how's the sponsoring thing going?", though she helped me make a lot of phone calls for sponsorship.

The pressure actually came from me, thinking that the financial squeeze may fall on all the classmates if we were caught short of funds. Then I would be the one to blame for all the mess, which made me very nervous.

Q: Did you have any experience getting money from sponsors before?

A: No. That was why I asked the team members not to choose me as the leader to take over from Annie. But the more forcefully I asked them not to, ironically, the more votes I got.

Q: I guess that meant your ability got recognized. How did it go when you started looking for sponsors from retailers?

A: Getting sponsorship from the business didn't go very well. They always asked us to send them a proposal, which ended up going nowhere cause they never replied. So we had to get their response in person by making phone calls. Then they would tell us that they do not have the extra budget to sponsor school activities this year. The process was frustrating.

Q: Did you have any bad experience while looking for sponsors from retailers?

A: I gave you one example, which was interesting now that I looked back, but also miserable then. The coordinator and I went to a store that sells vehicle parts. We were desperate for money, so we just about tried all possibilities. The owner's wife, a middle-age woman, asked us to perform part of the play on spot. She said that she wanted to know the quality of our play. Although we explained that we were not in charge of acting, she insisted. So, instead of acting any part of the play, which I didn't know how to do anyway, I promised to sing a song for her.

Q: How embarrassing!

A: She even asked me to sing a Korean song she loved. When I started the first few notes, she interrupted and asked me to sing another song instead. I did what I was told to, but barely so because I didn't quite learn the lyrics by heart, which was even more embarrassing. After all this, she gave me NT\$100.

Q: That was really miserable.

A: Actually, She was a nice person, when I think of this. I didn't feel upset. There were other embarrassing occasions. Some store owners would immediately turn pokers' face when we walked in their store with folders in our hands. "No soliciting," they would say. Some retailers didn't even want to listen to us and just shook their heads.

Q: Getting all the rejections must have had a bad bearing on you?

A: I would be happy if the store owners would be willing to listen to our proposal for promotion, because I didn't expect everyone to give me money. But after I dealt with the stores on Fuxing Road, I felt very low for a period.

Other stores knew that we were college students, so they were not mean to us. They would say they're sorry. However, the stores on Fuxing Road were a different story. Perhaps because they were so close to our school, they were fed up with students looking for sponsorship from them. When we stepped into the stores, some just dismissed us by saying, "Oh, there they come again!" Some said those promotions didn't benefit them; others said they could hardly earn any profits themselves due to the recession. They said they were also muddled in a hard time.



I felt frustrated after all these, and I suspended my job for about two days because I had bad mood.

Q: Then what happened? Did they really upset you?

A: The bad mood only last for a few days. The deadline was approaching, and I knew I still had work to do to find sponsors. I then tried retailers in other areas, and luckily they were a lot nicer. After I got some sponsors, I deleted all the bad memories and was in a good mood again.

Q: And you didn't feel discouraged again?

A: As I said, if only the store owners were willing to listen to our proposal, I felt very happy. Even if at the end of the day I still got rejected, at least my efforts were appreciated. And my suggestion to those in charge of getting sponsors for next year's annual play is, give it a try no matter how small the stores may look.

Q: Were there any good experiences in getting sponsors you want to share with us?

A: I had one happiest experience. The money we got from retail stores was not much, usually between NT\$500 and NT\$1,000. Some gave us as little as NT\$50. One day, we found a sponsor that sells computer parts. As a routine, we explained what we were up to, then the store owner said without any hesitation that he wanted to sponsor NT\$3,000. The coordinator and I were shocked. We immediately bowed in 90 degree angle and said thank you. But you know, we couldn't show our excitement on the spot, because we were afraid that he might regret.

Q: Have you learned anything after all these ups and downs as the head of the PR team?

A: The first thing I've got, as a side effect, is that I've become an expert knowing everything about Sanxia. I used to be a person who didn't like to go out. I even cooked dinner on my own. Getting sponsors changed everything, because most retail stores were busy at night, so we had to eat out and stay out until 7 o'clock. I'd been to every little corner in Sanxia. I had a motorcycle, so I could reach even the most remote areas, somewhere I'd never been to in three years. The other one was that I'd been very energetic when I was talking. That is my natural character, but now I think I am even more confident and convincing when I talk to people.

The angels in the details

Rebecca Lin was the assistant coordinator for the annual play, and, although much of what she did was not as glamorous or even went unnoticed, she glittered with gifted crafts and wits in that position. In an interview conducted by Stephanie Chen, she explained how individual talents could be integrated to create synergies when the whole group acted in one.

Q: What did you have to do as an assistant coordinator for the annual play?

A: I mainly helped our coordinator, Vicky, to coordinate among other teams. We had to know if posters and brochures were being printed on schedule, for instance, or if the team in charge of design and advertisement needed help. We tried to back them up when needed. If something came up that we couldn't handle, we turned to our classmates for help, holding a class meeting for a better solution.

Q: Was holding class meetings a good way to smooth things over?

A: Vicky and I had to make sure that everything was on track and on

schedule, but when we encountered with something that required inputs from everybody, like the selection of T-shirt with our logo on, and the design of our poster, we held the meetings for collective decisions. We two had no right to decide on our own.

Q: What does it take to be a good coordinator for an event like the annual play?

A: He or she had to be very attentive to details, because each team had their own schedule ahead. It was also important to be agile, as things might just happen contingently. Responses to any unexpected situations had to be fast. Needless to say, a coordinator also needed to have great endurance capacity for pressures. When dealing with things happening between each team or among team members, it was important to be impartial and unbiased to be trusted by people involved.

Q: What was the biggest challenge for you in your position?

A: Keeping each team on or even ahead of schedule was a challenge, as things may just happen, including conflicts between team members, to have the deadline missed, even if the scheduled had been planned carefully. And in many occasions, things were not black and white. There was a great grey area in situations like this.

Q: How did you get along with Vicky, the head coordinator? Did you always agree with each other?



R: You know we personally had been very good friends, but we were different in terms of our personalities. So sometimes we didn't have the same perspectives over the nature of the situations or solutions to them. We dealt with those differences by constant communications and discussions, trying to keep things straight as we dealt with business. But if the situations were too complicated and we couldn't

agree with each other, we took the matters to the team-leader meeting, which functioned like a cabinet.

Vicky and I had only two brains, but with the help of the meetings, we got more than ten brains to storm together for the best solutions for the annual play.

Q: Had you ever been in a situation where you couldn't get a solution even in those meetings and found yourselves going nowhere?

A: We did have many different perspectives and we tended to see things from different angles, but at the end of the day, we had to reach a common ground to get things going. Like I said earlier, things were not always black and white. Take the venue for our annual play for example. Opinions among us diverged with one side supporting the Hakka Museum and the other supporting Chientan Youth Activity Center. Each option had its pros and cons, so we ended up having to have a class meeting to take a vote on this matter. When the result came out, everyone turned to support it as a collective decision.

After all, the whole class was a big team, in which we all worked together to make it happen. The annual play was not an event for just a few actors or actresses, but something everyone involved and participated. We had to be one, even if we originally had different perspectives toward certain issues. We must move forward as one and I think our class has been good at this.

Q: Have you ever felt depressed when the going got rough?

A: Vicky and I were optimistic kind of people. When problems popped up,

we dealt with them, and deep in our hearts we knew that all problems would be solved. When problems came and went away, we said good-bye to any stress we might have.

