



*SHOUYANG  
AND  
SHOUGANG*



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*Chapter one*



Beyond Illusions: You and I are not hallucinating, Midjourney, 2023  
超越幻象：你我皆非幻觉

Sing!  
You and I are not hallucinating.  
Dance!  
For the inexhaustible grain!  
Attack!  
To the last ruins of civilization!  
How happy!  
We were hand-picked as the first gear.

(Editor's notes: those two names means "guard the sun" and "guard the steel" respectively in Chinese. It is a common first name in China in the end of 18 century.)



Dreams of Dystopi: The Ravenous Maw of the Factory, Midjourney, 2023  
末世之梦：工厂巨兽的饥渴之口

Shouyang and Shougang were brothers, working in the third and fifth Factory respectively. Although the salary was not much, it was a lifelong job that can meet their needs of living. Those factories were like giant beasts, which roar heavily everyday. The workers worked hard to ensure that it would not explode. It seemed that it feeds on human sweat. If it is hungry, it would devour everything, including one's soul.



The Showdown: Laborers vs. the Factory Beast, Midjourney, 2023  
对决：劳动者与工厂巨兽



Inscribed in Destiny: The Metaphysical Bond of Shouyang and Shougang with Their Hometown, Midjourney, 2023

命运铭刻：守阳和守钢与祖国的形而上学纽带

Shouyang and Shougang never thought about how they were born in this country. Maybe with a population of 1.4 billion, the odds is bigger, just like darts are more likely to hit the largest board. However, they firmly believed that they were the indispensable part of this country. As the factory slogan goes: “United, we cut through steel; Unite as one and we will never fold.”

Shouyang was 28 years old and still single. Besides being poor, he had a problem with his speech. Several years ago, Shouyang loved to express himself before he got the job at the factory. Everyday, he used to pull people to listen to him. Gradually, people got tired and hid away when they saw him. So he express himself to trees, he talked to trees and hugged them. Over time, the trees withered because of his eloquence. When the leaves fell off from the last tree in the village, he and his brother went to city for work.

After entering the third Factory, Shouyang received the strictest confidentiality discipline training. There were clear regulations in the factory that all work related contents cannot be mentioned to outsiders. The eating and resting hours of workers in different groups were separated from each other, so there was no chance to talk, no time to waste. Shouyang didn't get used to it at first, but he dared not to say a word. When he felt uncomfortable, his right eyelid jumped. Later, he couldn't hold back his tongue, so he looked for trees in the neighbourhood. One day, he was too drunk and had to get it out of his chest, so he found a tree and chattered without stop. From the equipment model to the factory layout, from the leaders to the workers, and from the canteen to the toilet. Surprisingly, before he finished, he was arrested by an anonymous tip-off.

Shouyang was taken into the "black room" for self-reflection and criticism. There was different rumour about what happened in that room, but one thing was certain: after Shouyang came out, he stopped talking. Shouyang doesn't speak, but his right eyelid kept jumping. Later, his co-workers got used to it. They would asked him if he was thirsty. If his right eyelid only jumped once, they gave him water. If it jumped twice, it meant no water.

Shouyang's family was as anxious as ants on a hot pot because he was still single. In desperation, the family had to mobilize the whole village and finally helped him find a girl in the next village. Everyone called her "sister Yun".



The Eloquent Enigma: Shouyang's Tree Whispers, Midjourney, 2023  
雄辩之谜：守阳的树语



When Shouyang first met “sister Yun”, he was on his way back to his hometown for a blind date. “Sister Yun” was standing on a tractor, with a long and bright braid. She was wearing a pink cotton-padded jacket with a kite in her hand. The string of the kite stretched out from the top of the tractor. From a distance, it looked like a candle hanging diagonally on the cake, or a green caterpillar following the tractor in the air. Shouyang was stunned by this scene, and thousands of words were expressed on his violently jumping right eyelid. He felt she was like a fairy to him, a combination of unrestrained natural and romance, unlike any of the women in the factories or the city.

That night, his family introduced Shouyang and “sister Yun” to each other. He looked at sister Yun with a blush on his face, and then his right eyelid jumped endlessly. The family was happy to know that it meant consent. So the marriage was arranged. The parents of “sister Yun” died early, and the only family member left was her grandfather, old and alone. Shouyang seemed to be a good choice for his steady job at the factory, and his accountability from his lack of words.



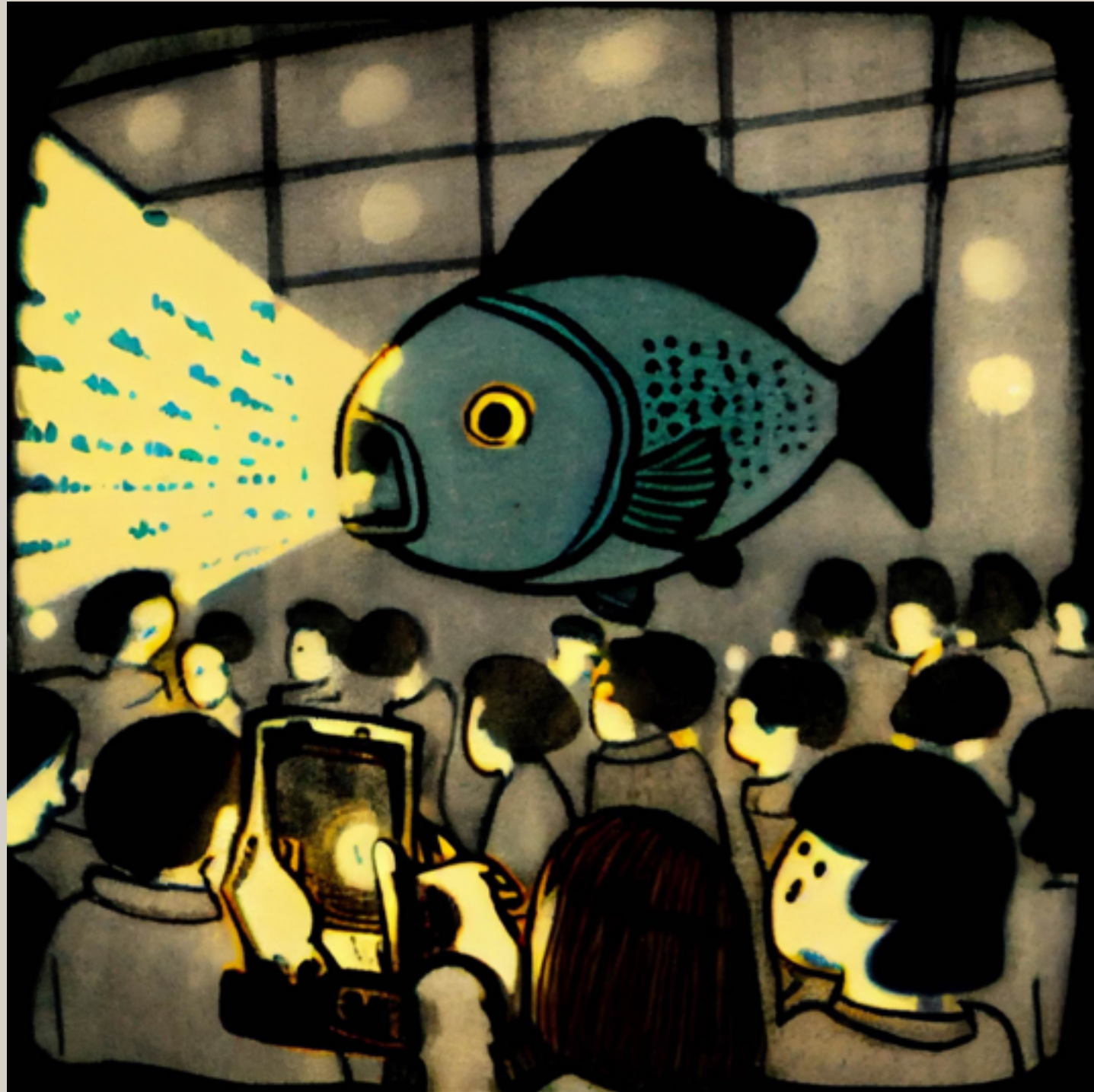


## Chapter two

The older brother, Shougang, was distressed. As the eldest son in the family, he needed to make sure that his younger brother got money to make some new furniture in the dorm which the factory assigned them. The old one was picked up, but since Shouyang was married, things are different now. Newly marriage must have some new furniture to be regarded as a festival. These days, everyone needs to make their own furniture. Those who have skills cut wood and polish it themselves, but those who don't can only pay carpenters to do it. Neither of them could make furniture, so they had to borrow some money for hiring someone, and they need to find a way to pay back the money as soon as possible.

There is an old store in the city called Dadong Food Store. It seems that it will be renovated recently, and an aquarium may be built to keep sharks brought in from the south. The two brothers had never seen a shark before, and they discussed going there to earn some extra money after they finished their work, maybe they could see this odd foreign thing.

Shouyang heard that when some fish see a flash of light in the tank, they will speed up and rush towards the direction of the light until they hit their heads and bleed. "Doesn't the fish know there's a piece of glass?" he asked. "What does a fish know? Its fate is to be eaten." Shougang twisted the butt of his cigarette on the edge of his rubber shoes.



Enigmatic Seas: Corroded Gaze, Midjourney, 2023

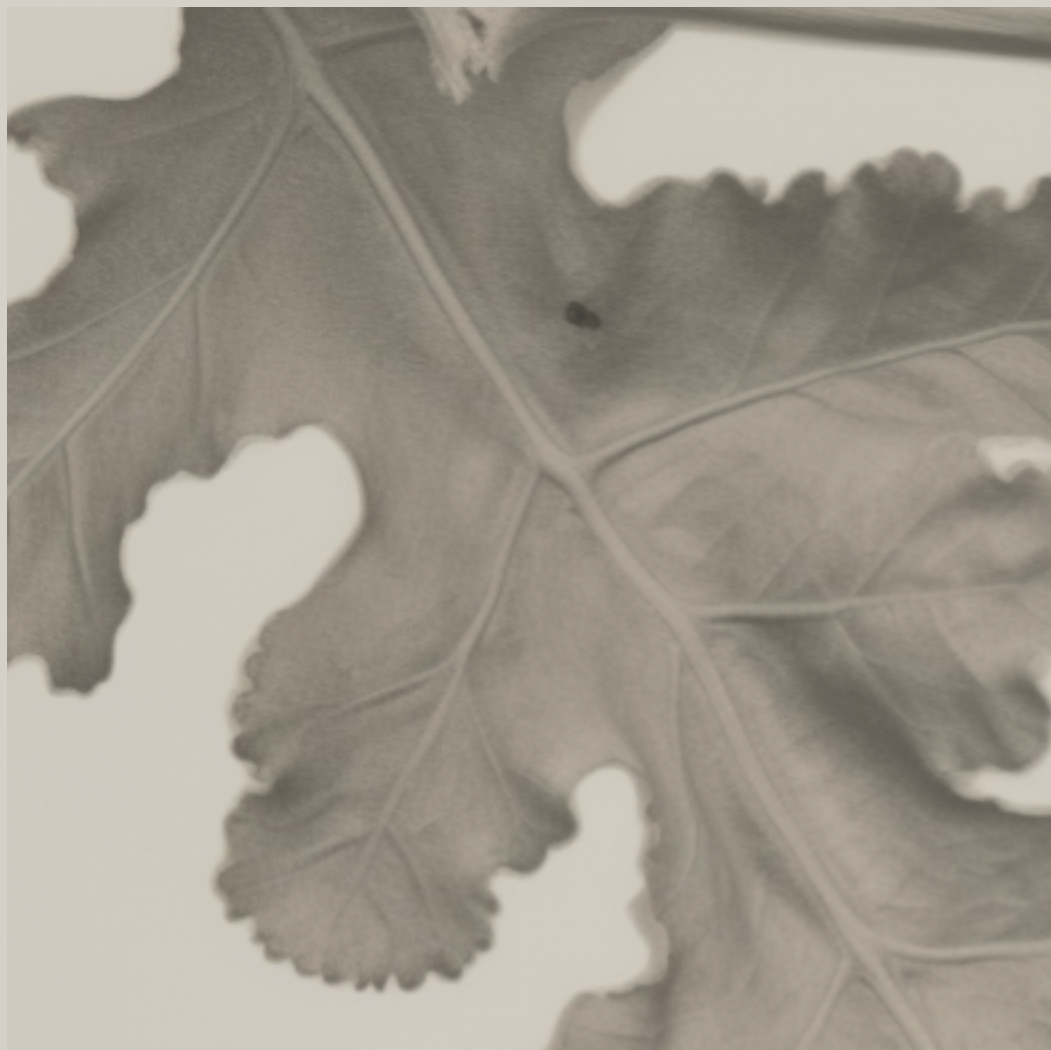
迷离海洋：锈蚀的眼神

They went to the vacant land on the river to look for carpenters. It was a gathering place for part-time workers, just like a small talent market. Everyone was topless, wearing tattered shorts and a sign on their chest, which said their skills and prices. The brothers spent a long time shopping. Due to the noisy environment, Shougang shouted at the top of his voice, and Shouyang blinked on his right eyelid hard all afternoon. Finally, they negotiated the price and found two workers with southern accent.

“Sister yunyun” came with a big sack full of kites of different colors. At the same time, there was a kite wrapped around her hand, as if it had grown into her hand. There was no wind in the city that day, but the kite was high in the air, and the streamer on its tail flew up and down.



Exotic Gravity: Wind-Entangled Hand, Midjourney, 2023  
异乡的重力：被风缠绕的手



## *Chapter three*

Shouyang asked for a day off and brought the carpenters to make the furniture. But when they asked for money, Shouyang just kept twitching his right eyelid. It turned out that Shouyang wanted to build a wooden box for his wife, sister yunyun, to store kites. Unfortunately, the carpenters couldn't understand him because he didn't speak. For a long time, they were angry and asked him whether he would pay or not. Shouyang could only twitch his right eyelid more quickly. From the carpenters' point of view, this has become a naked provocation. They left a vicious "you'll see", and then walked away curtly.



String of Incoherence: Carpenter's Anger, Midjourney, 2023  
咬字成珠：木匠的愤怒

Shouyang was depressed. This was the first time he hated himself for being unable to speak. He turned to his wife and found that sister yun still had a kite hanging on her hand. The kite was stuck on top of the shed, as if to break through the cage. And sister yun has not said a word since she entered the house.

Heavy snow covered the sky and the earth, making the world dark. Two carpenters squatted under the stairs outside the dormitory, with their teeth grinding. The edge of the PLA hats on their heads was covered with gray ice, and their dark hands were glued to iron bars. "I need to establish my authority on this area." They said to themselves that they should find a way to stay in this wasteland like city. They have an iron will. From hot summer to cold winter, they are familiar with the surrounding terrain.

"Tonight, tonight."



Secrets Beneath the Iron Bars: Frozen Prisoner, Midjourney, 2023

铁栏下的秘密：冰冷囚徒

The carpenters rushed into the door and hit Shouyang's head with a stick. Shouyang felt dizzy when he was hit, it seemed like a fireball burning his whole neck. He wanted to open his mouth, but he felt a scorching smell coming from his throat. The smell was like rusty gears in a factory. He drew out a hammer from his cloth bag on the ground and chopped it down on the worker's shoulder. He recalled the hammer he swung in the factory every day. The hammer hit the red parts and made a pleasant sound. Finally, blood was spurting from the carpenter's body, like red molten iron splashing sparks.

Shouyang dragged his tired body out of the house. The staff dormitory was quiet. The only sound came from a banner hanging between two dead trees. It sounded in the cold wind, rolled up, unfolded and rolled up again. Between blows, Shouyang saw several words, "We workers must think for the sake of our country. Who will be laid off if I don't?" Shouyang's eyelids stopped beating, and his eyes were attracted by his hands. He found his fingers dry and wrinkled, like old roots. The blood in the cyan blood vessels seems to have coagulated.



Whispering Remnants: Forgotten Eyes, Midjourney, 2023

低语的残迹：被遗忘的眼眸

When Shougang returned home, he saw countless kites rushing out of the door and flying to the sky with sister Yun. Moss grew on all the furniture at home, sending out a rotten stench. Shouyang had fallen to the ground, and his blood and flesh gathered to the edge of the hammer like a stream, but his bones floated like a ghost.

Only his eyes disappeared. It seemed that he took off his skeleton and flew outside to look for the kite.



*In mandarin*



## 第一章

高歌吧！你我均非幻觉。飞舞吧！为那吃不尽的米面！出击吧！冲向文明最后的遗址！三生有幸！至此不逢寒食天。

工厂如同愤怒的巨兽，每日发出沉重的低吼。工人们费劲力气才保证它不会爆炸，似乎它以人的汗水为食物，一旦没被喂饱，它便要吞噬一切，包括你的灵魂。

守阳守钢从未想过自己如何投胎于这个世界人口最大的国家，也许 14 亿的人口基数，几率确实要大一些，就像飞镖永远最容易砸中面积最大的板块。但除此之外，有一点是他们十分笃定的——自己是这个国家不可缺少的一份子，就像工厂的口号一样：“团结一心，其利断金；众志成城，飞跃巅峰。”

守阳今年 28 了，到了成家的年纪，却在城里讨不到媳妇儿。除了家里穷，还因为他说话成了问题。守阳进厂前，最爱说话，每天拉着人讲话，后来人们听烦了，看见他就躲远，他就搂着树说。久而久之，村里的树都让他给唠枯了。等他讲到方圆十里最后一棵树的树叶掉光时，他就和哥哥进城打工了。

守阳被带进了“小黑屋”，进行严格的自我反省，屋子里面发生了什么，大家众说纷纭，但是有一点确定的是，守阳出来后，就不再说话了。守阳虽不说话，但右眼皮却一直跳。后来大家也习惯了，问他喝不喝水，他右眼皮跳一下，就是喝；跳两下，就是不喝。

守阳家里看他还不成家，急的像热锅上的蚂蚁，最终给他在隔壁村里寻摸了一个好媳妇，大家都叫她“毛毛姐”。守阳第一次见“毛毛姐”是在回老家相亲的路上。“毛毛姐”站在一个拖拉机的副驾驶上，梳着一条又黑又粗的大麻花辫，上身穿着粉底碎花小棉袄，手里牵着一个风筝。风筝的线从拖拉机铁棚顶里伸出，远看像是一根蜡烛斜着悬置在蛋糕上，又或是一条绿色的毛毛虫在空中紧跟着拖拉机庇护。“毛毛姐”一手扶着拖拉机的铁框，一手拉着风筝线，半个身子悬在空中。守阳被这一幕惊呆了，千言万语都表现在他剧烈抖动的右眼皮上。他感到这个女孩像是下凡的仙女，集恣意潇洒与浪漫为一体，与城里工厂的女人都不一样。

守阳到家后当晚，家里人把“毛毛姐”带来给他看。他看了看毛毛姐，脸倏地红了，接着右眼皮抖个没完。家里人很高兴，知道他这算同意了，亲事就这么定了下来。“毛毛姐”父母早亡，家里只有一个年迈的爷爷。守阳家里之所以能谈下来这门亲事，正是因为她家里不需要高额的彩礼。而且，村里人都流传一个说法，说毛毛姐脑子不正常，智力只在 12、3 岁。

## 第二章

现在，哥哥守义苦恼了起来，守义苦恼不是因为自己没讨到媳妇，而是苦恼弟弟的房子。苦恼房子不是因为房子没有着落，而是苦恼弟弟新房的家具。厂里给哥俩分配了一个两室一厅的小屋子，哥哥住里面，弟弟住外面。俩人因为没钱都是用捡来的家具。但如今弟弟结婚，这就不一样了，新婚一定得有点新家具才算喜庆。这个年头，每个人家的家具都需要自己造，有手艺的砍了木头来自己打磨，没手艺的只能花钱请工人做。哥哥弟弟俩人都不会做家具，只好问邻居朋友间借了些钱，请了工人后再想办法还上。想着能省就省。

城里有家老店，叫大东副食，据说最近要翻修，可能还会建个水族馆养鲨鱼。兄弟俩都没见过鲨鱼，两人商量着忙活完这阵就去那赚个外快，指不定能见到这洋玩意儿。

守阳听说，有些鱼在缸里见到闪光，会一股脑地加速向光的方向冲去，直到撞的头破血流。“鱼不知道那有块玻璃吗？”他问。“鱼能知道个啥，还不是让人吃了。”守钢把烟屁股在胶鞋边上拧了拧。

他们去河边上的空地寻找木工，那里是打零工的工人的聚集地，算是一个小型的人才市场。每个人光着上身，下面穿个破烂的短裤，胸前挂着一个牌子，写着自己会的技术和价钱。兄弟俩逛了半天，由于人太多、环境太嘈杂，守钢扯着嗓子喊了一下午，守阳右眼皮眨巴一下午，才终于讲好了价钱，找了两个南方口音的工人。

当晚，“毛毛姐”来了，只带着一个大麻袋，里面全是不同颜色的风筝。同时，她手上还缠着一只，好像长到了她的手上，当天城市里没有风，但是风筝高高地飘在空中，尾巴上的飘带上下翻飞。

### 第三章

守阳请了一天假，带来工人造好了家具，但是工人要钱时，守阳却只是不停的眨右眼皮。原来守阳还想为媳妇毛毛姐造一个木箱子放风筝，可惜他不说话，工人就听不懂。周旋半天，工人急了，问他到底付不付钱，守阳只能更快速地抽搐他的右眼皮。这在工人眼中，就变成了赤裸裸地挑衅。工人恶狠狠的留下一句你等着，便骂咧咧地走了。

守阳心里郁闷，这是他第一次恨自己不能说话。他再转头看向自己的老婆，发现毛毛姐的手上依然挂着风筝，风筝贴在棚顶上，好似要冲破牢笼。

大雪铺天盖地，搅地天地一片昏暗。两个工人蹲在宿舍外面的楼梯下，牙齿磨的吱呀作响。他们头上的解放军帽子边缘结了一层灰色的冰，黝黑的手已和铁棍粘到一起。“要在这片儿立棍。”他们对自己说，要想办法留在这片荒地般的城市里。他们有着钢铁般的意志，从酷暑到寒冬，他们对周围的地形烂熟于心。

今晚，就是今晚。

工人冲进了门，对着守阳的后颈就是一棒。守阳被砸的头晕，他感到喉咙中似有一个火球在燃烧，灼烧着他整个脖子。他想张嘴，却感到一阵烧焦的味道从食道中传来，那气味又好像工厂里生锈的齿轮。他在地上的布包里抽出一把铁锤，一下下地砍在工人的肩膀上。他回想起自己每天在工厂里抡起的锤子，铁锤砸在烧红的零件上，发出叮叮咚咚悦耳的声音。最后，血从他的身体喷涌而出，好似红色的铁水一般，飞溅出点点星火。

守阳拖着疲惫的身体向屋外走去。职工宿舍里静悄悄的，唯一的声音来自一面横幅，挂在两颗枯树中间，在寒风中猎猎作响，卷起来。展开。又卷起来。卷展之间，守阳看到几个字眼，“咱们工人为了国家想，我不下岗谁下岗。”守阳眼睛不再跳动，他的目光被双手吸引。他发现自己的手指枯干，布满皱纹，像苍老的树根。青色血管内的血液仿佛已经凝固。

哥哥回家后，看到无数的风筝冲出门外，带着毛毛姐飞向天空，家里的家具全部生出了苔藓，发出腐烂的恶臭。而守阳已经倒地，他的血和肉像溪水一样汇集到锤子边，但他的骨头却漂浮着，像一个幽灵。

唯独他的眼睛不见了，似乎脱离开骨架，飞到屋外，寻找风筝去了。