

湖畔儿语

THE CHILD AT THE
LAKESIDE

王统照 著

沙博理 译

Written by Wang Tongzhao

Translated by
Sidney Shapiro

因为我家城里那个向来很著名的湖上，满生了芦苇和满浮了无数的大船，分外显得偃仄、湫隘、喧嚷，所以我也不很高兴常去游逛。有时几个友人约着荡桨湖中，每每到了晚上，各种杂乱的声音一齐并作，锣鼓声、尖利的胡琴声、不很好听的唱声、男人的居心喊闹与粉面光头的女人调笑，更夹杂上小舟卖物的叫声，几乎把静静的湖水掀起了“大波”。因此，我去逛湖的时候，只有收视反听地去寻思些自己的事。有时在夕阳明灭、返映着湖水的时候，我却常常一个人跑到湖边僻静处去乘凉。一边散步，一边听着青蛙在草中奏着雨后之歌，看看小鸟啁啾着向柳枝上飞跳，还觉有些兴致。每在此时，一方引动我对于自然景物的鉴赏，一方却激发起无限的悠渺寻思。

一抹绀色间以青紫色的霞光，返映着湖堤上雨后的碧柳。某某祠庙的东边，有个小小荷荡，这处的荷叶最大不过，高得几乎比人还高。叶下的洁白如玉雕的荷花，到过午后，像慢慢地将花朵闭起。偶然一两只蜜蜂飞来飞去，还留恋着花香的气味，不肯即行归去。红霞照在湛绿的水上，散为金光，而红霞中快下沉的日光，也幻成异样的色彩。一层层的光与色，相荡相薄，闪闪烁烁地都映现在我的眼底。我因昨天一连落了六七个小时的急雨，今日天还晴朗，便独自顺步到湖西岸来，看一看雨后的湖边景色。斜铺的石道上满生了莓苔，我穿的皮鞋踏在上面，显出分明的印痕。

这时湖中正人声乱嚷，且是争吵的厉

I seldom cared to visit the famous lake although I lived in a city along its shore. Filled with reeds and large craft, it seemed exceptionally narrow and cramped and noisy. Sometimes I went rowing with a few friends in the evening, but every night it was the same bedlam. The clash of cymbals, the high-pitched squeal of fiddles, the unpleasant singing, the men's raucous shouts, the seductive laughter of painted women with sleekly oiled hair, the cries of the vendors on the little pedlar boats . . . swept the placid surface of the lake like a huge wave.

And so, whenever I went to the lake, I would close my eyes and ears to my surroundings and withdraw into my own thoughts. Occasionally, when the sunset colours were reflected on the water, I would stroll along a quiet sector of the lakeside green grass after the rain and watch the twittering birds flit among the branches of the trees. I would feel rather stimulated, moved by a profound consciousness of nature and excited by innumerable far-reaching thoughts.

One day at sunset, violet and purple rays illuminated the emerald trailers of the weeping willows on the dyke. In a little pond beside a temple huge lotus leaves grew higher than a man. Although the lotus flowers, pure as carved white jade, had slowly closed their petals after noon, one or two bees, lured by their scent, still hovered, reluctant to depart. On the dark green water, scarlet clouds shimmered golden; the rapidly lowering rays in their midst were a remarkable variety of hues. Layer upon layer of colour, interweaving and interplaying, shone with a dazzling brilliance.

It had rained heavily for six or seven hours the night before. Today the sky was clear and I walked alone along the west bank of the lake, enjoying the fresh-washed scene. My leather shoes left sharp prints on the moss-covered flagstones of the inclined path.

In the centre of the lake people were shouting, quarrel-

害。我便慢慢地踱着，向石道的那边走去。稀疏的柳枝与颤颤的芦苇旁的初开的蓼花，随着西风在水滨摇舞。这里可说是全湖上最冷静幽僻的地方，除了偶尔遇到一二个行人之外，只有噪晚的小鸟在树上叫着。乱草中时有阁阁的蛙声与它们作伴。

我在这片时中觉得心上比较平时恬静好些。但对于这转眼即去的光景，却也不觉得有什么深重的留恋。因为一时的清幽光景的感受，却记起‘夕阳黄昏’的旧话，所以对留恋的思想也有点怕去思索了。

低头凝思着，疲重脚步也懒得时时举起。天上绀色与青紫色的霞光，也越散越淡了。而太阳的光已大半沉在返映的水里。我虽知时候渐渐晚了，却又不愿即行回家，遂即拣了一块湖边的白石，坐在上面。听着新秋噪晚的残蝉，便觉得在黄昏迷濛的湖上渐有秋意了。一个人坐在几株柳树之下，看见渐远渐淡的黄昏微光，以及从远处映过来的几星灯火。天气并不十分烦热，到了晚上，觉得有些嫩凉的感触。同时也似乎因此凉意，给了我一些苍苍茫茫的没有着落的兴感。

我正自无意地想着，忽然听得柳树后面有擦擦的声音。在静默中，我听了仿佛有点疑惧！过了一会，又听得有个轻动的脚步声，在后面的苇塘里乱走。我便跳起来绕过柳树，走到后面的苇塘边下。那时模模糊糊地已不能看得清楚。但在茅芽旁边的泥堆上却有个小小的人影，我便叫了一声：“你是谁？”

ling violently. I walked slowly towards the far end of the stone-flagged path. Rustling willow trailers and the water-pepper shrubs that had just come into flower beside the trembling reeds danced in the west breeze at the edge of the water. This was perhaps the coolest and most secluded spot on the entire lake. Except for the steps of an infrequent passer-by or two, the only sound was the twittering of the little birds in the trees greeting the eventide. Frogs in the tangled grass croaked rhythmic accompaniment.

Although this made me feel somewhat more cheerful than usual, I had no desire to retain the rapidly fading scene. For it reminded me of the words, "the dusk of the dying sun"—a phrase I found rather depressing.

My head lowered in thought, I walked with heavy weary tread. The violet and purple sunset rays were growing dimmer, the light of the sun having already more than half sunk in the reflecting water. Although I knew it was getting late. I did not wish to return home. I sat down on a large white rock by the lake's edge. Listening to the last of the cicadas droning in the late summer night, I was conscious of an air of autumn in the golden haze drifting on the water's surface. I sat alone beneath the willows and watched the dusk light fading in the distance and observed far off the tiny glow of the first lamps of evening. The weather was no longer very hot during the day; with evening came a certain soft coolness. At the same time, probably because of this coolness, I was vaguely stirred by an indefinable excitement.

As I sat wrapped in idle thought, suddenly I heard a rustling behind the willows. It came so unexpectedly in the quiet darkness, I was a bit startled. A moment later, I heard light footsteps threshing through a cove of reeds. I leaped up, circled the willows and emerged on the other side of the cove. It was quite dark by then. I couldn't see clearly. On a mud bank beside the reeds I seemed to perceive a small figure.

"Who's there?" I shouted.

不料那个黑影却不答我。

本来这个地方是很僻静的，每当晚上，更没有人在这里停留。况且黑暗的空间越来越大，柳叶与苇叶还时时摇擦着作出微响。于是我觉得有点恐怖了。便接着又将“你是谁”三个字喊了一遍。正在我还没有回过身来的时候，泥堆上小小的黑影，却用细咽无力的声音，给我一个答复是：

“我是小顺，……在这里钓……鱼。”

他后一个字，已经咽了下去，且是有点颤抖。我听这个声音，便断定是个十一二岁男孩子的声音，但我分外疑惑了！便问他道：“天已经黑了下來，水里的鱼还能钓吗？还看得见吗？”那小小的黑影又不答我。

“你在什么地方住？”

“在顺门街马头巷里。……”由他这一句话使我听了这个弱小口音仿佛在哪里听过的。便赶进一步道：“你从前就在马头巷住吗？”

“不，那个小男孩迅速地说：‘我以前住在晏平街。……’

我于是突然把陈事记起，“哦！你不是陈家的小孩子，……你爸爸不是铁匠陈举吗？”

小孩子这时已把竹竿从水中拖起，赤了脚跑下泥堆来道：“是……爸爸是做铁匠的，你是谁？”

我靠近看那个小孩子的面貌，尚可约略分清。哪里是像五六岁时候的可爱的小顺呀！满脸上乌黑，不知是泥还是煤烟。穿了一件蓝布小衫，下边露了多半部的腿，身上发出一阵泥土与汗湿的气味。他见我叫出他的名字，便呆呆地看着我。他的确不知道我是谁，的确他是不记得了。我回想小顺四

But the shadow made no reply.

Ordinarily, this was a very quiet spot. At night, it was even more deserted. Now, it was growing darker and darker, and the reeds and the willows were rustling faintly. I felt a bit afraid. "Who's there?" I cried again. Just as I was turning to leave, the little dark figure on the mud bank replied in a small weak voice:

"It's me, Little Shun... I'm here... fishing."

He practically swallowed the last word and his voice trembled slightly. He sounded like an eleven-or twelve-year-old little boy. I was very suspicious.

"How can you fish after dark?" I asked him. "How can you see?"

Again the small shadow did not reply.

"Where do you live?"

"In Horse Head Lane...."

There was something about that weak voice that sounded familiar. I took a step closer and asked, "Have you always lived there?"

"No," the little boy replied quickly. "I used to live on Peace Street...."

Suddenly I remembered. "Oh! You're the Chens' little boy.... Isn't your father a blacksmith?"

The child pulled in his bamboo fishing pole and ran to me, barefoot, down the mud bank. "Yes.... Papa is a blacksmith. But who are you?"

I drew nearer and peered at the child's face. I could barely recognize him. What had happened to the darling Little Shun of five or six! His face was blackened — either by mud or soot. He wore a short homespun blue robe that was well up above his knees, and he reeked of mud and sweat. When he heard me call his name, he stared at me in astonishment. He didn't know who I was.

I remembered him when he was four or five — I was

五岁的时候，那时我还非常的好戏弄小孩子。每从他家门首走过，看见他同他母亲坐在那棵古干浓阴的大槐树的底下，他每每在母亲的怀中唱小公鸡的儿歌与我听。现在已经有六年多了，我也时常不在家中。但是后来听见家中人说，前街上的小顺迁居走了。这也不过是听自传说，并不知道是迁到什么地方去了。我每经过前街的时候，看看小顺的门首另换了人名的贴纸，我便觉得怅然，仿佛失掉了一件常常作我的伴的东西！在这日黄昏的冷清清的湖畔，忽然遇到他，怎不使我惊疑！尤其可怪的，怎么先时那个红颊白手的小顺，如今竟然同街头的小叫化子差不多了？他父亲是个安分的铁匠，也还可以照顾得起小孩子。哦！

我即刻将他领到我坐的白石上面，与他作详细的问答。

我就先告诉他：他几岁时我怎样常常见他，并且常引逗他喊笑。但他却懵然了。过后我便同他一问一答地谈起来。

“你的爸爸现在在哪里？”

“算在家里。……”小顺迟疑地答我。我从他呆呆目光中，看得出他对于我这老朋友有点奇怪。

“你爸爸还给人家作活吗？”

“什么？……他每天只是不在家，却也没有一次，……带回钱来，……作活……吗？……不知道。”

“你妈呢？”

“死了！”小顺简单而急速地说。

我骤然为之一惊！这也是必然的，因为小顺的母亲是个瘦弱矮小的妇人，据以前我听见人家说过她嫁了十三年，生过七个小孩子，到末后却只剩下小顺一个。然而想不到时间送人却这样的快！

“现在呢，家中还有谁？”

“还有妈，后来的。……”

very fond of playing with children then. Whenever I passed his door I saw him sitting on his mother's lap beneath the big shady old elm tree. He always sang me his song about the little rooster.

More than six years had passed, and I was often away from home. People in my family told me that Little Shun had moved, no one knew exactly where. When I passed his house and saw someone else's name on the door I felt sorry, as if I had lost a constant companion!

Meeting him today again in the cool dusk by the lake-side, how could I help but be surprised? Strangest of all, how could the rosy-cheeked Little Shun with the clean white hands have become virtually the same as the dirty little beggar boys on the street? His father had been a respectable blacksmith, quite able to look after his child financially.

I led Little Shun over to the rock and made him sit down beside me. I told him how I often saw him when he was very young, and how I had played with him and made him laugh. He looked at me, bewildered. I began to question him.

"Where is your papa now?"

"At home, you might say. . . ." Little Shun replied hesitantly. From his expression I could see that he thought this old friend was rather peculiar.

"Is he still working?"

"What? . . . He goes out every day, but he never . . . brings home any money . . . Working? . . . I don't know."

"What about your mother?"

"Dead," the boy retorted briefly.

I was shocked. But of course it had to be. Little Shun's mother had been a frail little woman. People said she had borne seven children in thirteen years. Little Shun was the only one that remained alive. But I hadn't thought her time would come so quickly!

"Who else do you have at home now?"

"I've got a ma, a new one. . . ."

“哦！你家现在比从前穷了吗？看你的

小顺果然是个自小很聪明的孩子，他见我不客气地问起他家‘穷’来，便呆呆地看着远处迷漫中的烟水。一会儿低下头去，半晌才低声说道：

“常是没有饭吃呢！我爸爸也常常不在家里。……”，

“他到哪里去？”

“我不知道，……可是每天早饭后才来家一次。……听说在烟馆里给人家伺候，……不知道在哪里。”说这几句话时，他是低声迟缓地对我说。我对于他家现在的情形，便多分明了。一时的好问，便逼我更进一步向他继续问道：

“你……现在的妈多少年纪？还好呵？”

“听人家说我妈不过三十呢。她娘家是东门里的牛家。……”他说到这里，脸上仿佛有点疑惑与不安的神气。我又问道：

“你妈还打你吗？”

“她妈，没有工夫。……”他决绝地答。

我以为他家现在的状况，一个年轻的妇女支持他们全家的生计，自然没得有好多的工夫。

“那么她作什么活计呢？……”

“活计？……没有的，不过每天下午便忙了起来。所以也不准我在家里。……每天在晚上，这个苇塘边，我只在这里；……在这里！……”

“什么？……”

小顺子也会摹仿成人的态度，由他小小的鼻孔中，哼了一声道：“我家里常常是有客人去的！有时每晚上总有两三个人，有时冷清清地一个也不上门。……”

我听了这个话，有点惊颤，……他却不断地向我道：

“……我妈还可以有钱做饭吃。……他们来的时候，妈便把我喊出来，不到半夜，是不叫我回去的。我爸爸他是知道的，他夜里是再不回来的。……”

"Oh, is your family poorer than before? You look...."

Little Shun had always been an intelligent child. At my blunt question, he stared off into the misty distance. Then he dropped his head. After a long time he said in a low voice:

"Sometimes we have nothing to eat. My papa is often away from home...."

"Where does he go?"

"I don't know.... He doesn't come home till after breakfast.... I hear that he works in an opium den.... I don't know where."

His low voice spoke very slowly. I was beginning to understand. I felt compelled to go on.

"How... how old is your new ma? Is she good to you?"

"I hear she's only thirty. She comes from a family inside the East Gate...." An uneasy expression stole over his face. I asked him:

"Does she beat you?"

"She? No, she has no time." He said this decisively.

If the young woman was the sole support of a family like his, she obviously couldn't have much time to spare!

"And what sort of work does she do?"

"Work? She doesn't work. But she gets very busy late every afternoon. That's why I can't stay home.... Every evening I come out to this cove of reeds; only here... just here...."

"What?..."

Little Shun had learned to take a grown-up attitude. He wrinkled his small nose and snorted: "There are always guests in our house! Sometimes two or three in one night. Sometimes not a single one shows up...."

I was rather shaken. But he continued:

"... My ma can earn money to buy us food.... When they come, she chases me out. She never lets me go back till very late. My papa knows. He doesn't come home at night either...."

我听到这里，已经明白了小顺是在一个什么环境里了。仿佛有一篇小说中的事实告诉我：一个黄而瘦弱、目眶下陷、蓬着头发的小孩子，每天只是赤着脚，在苇塘里游逛。忍着饥饿，去听鸟朋友与水边蛙朋友的言语。时而去听听苇中的风声——这自然的音乐。但是父亲是个伺候偷吸鸦片的小伙役。母亲呢，且是后母，是为了生活，去作最苦不过的出卖肉体的事。待到夜静人稀的时候，惟有星光送他回家。明日呵，又是同样的一天！这仿佛是从小说中告诉我的一般。我真不相信，我幼时常见面的玉雪可爱的小顺，竟会到这般田地？末后，我又问他一句：“天天晚上，在你家出入的是些什么样的人？”

小顺道：“我也不能常看见他们，有时也可以看一眼。他们，有的是穿了灰色短衣，歪戴了军帽的；有些身上尽是些煤油气，身上都带有粗的银链子的；还有几个是穿长衫的呢，每天晚上常有三个和四个，……可是有的时候一个也不上门。”

“那为什么呢？”

我觉得这种逼迫的问法，太对不起这个小孩子了。但又不能不问他。

小顺笑着向我说道：“你怎么不知道呢？在马头巷那几条小道上，每家人家，每天晚上都有人去的！”他接着又笑了。仿佛笑我一个读书人，却这样的少见少闻一般。

我觉得没有什么再问他了，而且也不忍再教这个天真烂漫的孩子，多告诉这种悲惨

By now I knew quite well what kind of environment Little Shun came from. It was like something in a novel: a tousle-headed child, sallow, thin, with sunken eyes, every night had to wander among the reeds, barefoot. When he grew hungry, he could talk to his friends — the birds and the frogs, or listen to the music of the wind blowing through the reeds.

His father was a waiter in an opium den. His mother — rather his stepmother — in order to keep alive did the bitterest of all things — she sold her flesh.

Only the stars kept Little Shun company when he returned home in the still, deserted night. But the following day, it was the same all over again. It was too much like a piece of fiction. I couldn't believe it. I remembered him so well as a clean, lovable child. How could he have come to this?

"What kind of people are they," I asked him, "these men who come to your house every night?"

"I don't see them very often," said Little Shun, "and then only for a moment. Some wear grey military tunics, with army caps cocked over one eye. Some smell of kerosene oil and wear thick silver watch chains on their vests. A few are dressed in long scholars' gowns. Usually we have three or four visitors a night. But sometimes not even one comes to our door."

"Why is that?"

I felt my persistent questioning was very unkind to the child. But I couldn't stop.

Little Shun laughed. "Don't you know? All the houses in Horse Head Lane are open to visitors every night!..." He laughed again, as if amused that I, an educated person, should understand so little.

There didn't seem to be anything else to ask him. I couldn't bring myself to make this innocent child tell any

的历史。他这时也像正在寻思什么一般，望着黄昏淡雾下的星光出神。我想：果使小顺的亲妈在日怕还不至如此，然而以一个妇女过这样的生活，他的现在的妈，自然也是天天在地狱中度生活的！

家庭呵！家庭的组织与时代的迫逼呀，社会生计的压榨呀！我本来趁这场雨后为消闲到湖边逛逛的，如今许多烦扰复杂的问题又在胸中打起圈子来。

试想一个忍着饥苦的小孩子，在黄昏后独自跑到苇塘边来，消磨大半夜。又试想到他的母亲，因为支持全家的生活，而受最大且长久的侮辱，这样非人的生活！现代社会组织下贫民的无可如何的死路！

我想到这里，一重重的疑问、烦激，再坐不住，而方才湖上晚景给我的鲜明清幽的印象，早随同黑暗沉落在湖的深处了。

我知道小顺不敢在这个时候回家去，但我不忍遗弃这个孤无伴侣的小孩子，在夜中的湖岸上独看星光。因此使我感到悲哀更加上一份踌躇。我只索同他坐在柳树下面。待要再问他，实在觉得有点不忍。同时，我静静地想到每一个环境中造就的儿童，……使我对着眼前的小顺以及其他在小顺的地位上的儿童为之颤慄！

正在这个无可如何的时候，突有一个急遽的声音由对面传来。原来是喊的“小顺……在哪……里呵？”几个字，我不觉得愕然地站起来。小顺了吓得把手中没放下的竹竿投在水里，由一边的小径上跑过去。我在迷惘中不晓得什么事突然发生。这时由苇丛对面跑过来的一个中年人的黑影，拉了小

more of his tragic history. He appeared to have something on his mind; he gazed abstractedly at the stars shining palely through the dusk.

If his own mother were still alive, perhaps things would be different. I mused. The life this poor woman who is his present mother leads is no better than hell!

Ah, the family! The family organization and the pressure of the times, the urgent need to make a living! I had come for an idle stroll along the lakeside after the rain. But instead of finding relaxation, I ended with many troublesome problems knotted in my breast.

Just think of it. Suffering hunger and discomfort, a child must come to a cove of reeds at dusk and remain half the night. His mother, because the burden of supporting the whole family rests on her, must endure endlessly the worst of all humiliations. Such a life is less than human! The poor in our present society can take only this hopeless, dead-end road!

I was consumed with doubts. I felt agitated, unable to sit still. And the lakeside scene which had given me such fresh, soothing impression had long since been swallowed up by the darkness.

Knowing that Little Shun did not dare to return home yet, I didn't have the heart to leave him to watching the starlight alone by the shore. I sat down beside him beneath the willows. Though I wanted to question him further, I felt that it would be too cruel. In silence, I reflected on the fact that a child is moulded by his environment... and I trembled for Little Shun and all other children like him!

Suddenly an agitated call drifted over from the opposite bank. "Little Shun... Where are you?..." I jumped to my feet. The child was so frightened that he dropped his fishing pole into the water and began hurrying along a small path. I was completely bewildered; I didn't know what had happened. Just then a middle-aged man burst through the reeds,

顺就走。一边走着，一边说道：“你爸爸今天晚上在烟馆子被……巡警抓了……进去，你家里……伍大爷正在那里，谁敢去得？……小孩子！……西邻家李伯伯，叫我把你喊……去。……”

他们的黑影，随了夜中的浓雾，渐走渐远。而那位中年男子说话的声音也听不明白了。

我一步步地踱回家来。在浓密的夜雾中，行人少了。我只觉得胸头沉沉地，仿佛这天晚上的气压度数分外低。一路上引导我的星光，也十分暗淡，不如平常明亮。

一九二二年八月。

took Little Shun by the hand, and rushed off with him. I heard the man say:

"Your father was arrested by the police tonight. . . . They raided the opium den. . . . We couldn't tell your mother. Master Wu is calling on her. Who would dare to disturb him! . . . Child, you were the only one we neighbours could notify. . . ."

Their shadows gradually disappeared into the night, and the man's voice faded away.

Slowly, I trudged home. Few people walked abroad in the dense night mists. There was a weight on my chest, as if the atmospheric pressure that evening was exceptionally heavy. The stars that guided me were very pale, not nearly so bright as usual.

August, 1922