

Stones of Tiananmen

by Cynthia L. Cooper

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Synopsis:

Stones of Tiananmen by Cynthia L.Cooper

Prior to winning the Nobel Peace Prize, Liu Xiaobo is released from re-education camp in 1999, and struggles to find his footing in a quest for freedom of speech and democracy in China. As he seeks to recover from personal missteps, he is spurred by his encounters with Ding Zilin, founder of the Mothers of Tiananmen, and the imagined Lost Souls of 1989. Liu Xiaobo charts a path of peaceful resistance, but he and his wife, poet and artist Liu Xia, discover the consequences can be harsh. This story is of commitment to change -- as a person and as a society.

PLAYWRITING BIO: Cynthia L. Cooper

Cynthia L. Cooper (Cindy) writes a range of plays, united by a passion for human rights, stylized staging and a mix of comedy and drama. A two-time Jerome Fellow, Cooper's plays have been produced in theatres across the U.S., Canada and Europe and are published in 17 volumes.

Cooper's plays have been performed in New York at Primary Stages, The Women's *Project (How She Played the Game)*, *Wings (Slow Burn)*, Lincoln Center Clark Studio (*Starfish - Beyond Stone*), Theatreworks (*The World at Your Fingertips*), Museum of Tolerance, Anne Frank Center USA (*Silence Not, A Love Story*), EST New Works, Center for Jewish History (*The Spoken and the Unspoken*), The Actor's Temple, Clark Studio, Lincoln Center, Manhattan Theatre Source, WOW Café, Circle Rep, Art and Work Ensemble, and in Chicago (*Strange Light*), Minneapolis (*Bedfellows*), DC, Buffalo, Philadelphia, LA, Reno, Montreal, Portland, Boston, Budapest, Jerusalem, Helsinki, more. She has 14 produced full length plays, and 35 short plays. Her plays are in 17 publications, including by Smith and Kraus, The New Press (Frontlines), Applause, Henry Holt, and Heinemann. She has won awards from Pen & Brush, Samuel French Play Festival, Malibu International Playwriting Festival, Nantucket Theatre, City of Providence, Quixote Foundation and others. She teaches playwriting and creative storytelling, started a creative arts program at a facility for women leaving prison, and the author of seven books. Her book *Mockery of Justice* about a wrongful conviction was made into a CBS movie; other books and articles are on politics, law, human rights and justice. She is an Affiliate writer at the Playwrights Center and lives in New York City.

Stones of Tiananmen was initiated by the Visual Artists Guild, Ann Lau, Teresa C. Yu, and Peggy Howard Chane.

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The play is written for six actors, with some doubling.

CHARACTERS:

LIU XIAOBO (male, 44-55) – b. 1955, a literary and political critic in China, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize 2010. A scholar and a public intellectual, he also loves to probe and parry, talk and dissect, speak forcefully and pontificate. He sometimes stutters and smokes incessantly – especially the 555 brand.

LIU XIA (female, 40-51) – b. 1959, an artist in China, who uses stylized photography as her medium. Married to LIU XIAOBO in 1996, she is sometimes introverted and solitary. She shaves her head and is fond of a good glass of wine. Eclectic and sometimes moody, punctuating her language with angles and occasional curves.

DING ZILIN (female, 63-74) – b. 1936 (approx.) A founder of the Tiananmen Mothers, mother of Jiang Jieliang, 17 years old, killed during Six-Four events; a former philosophy professor; married to Jiang Peikun. She has a formal air to her conversation.

JIANG PEIKUN (male, 65-77) –b. 1930s - Former university professor in aesthetics and criticism, teacher of Liu Xiaobo, former Party member, married to Ding Zilin. (The actor also plays GUARD TWO.) Thoughtful and deliberate.

THE FIGURE – (female) A character who lives in the mind and imagination of Liu Xiaobo and, occasionally, others. A dancer, The Figure represents the Lost Souls, and bears a remarkable resemblance to The Goddess of Democracy. (The actor also plays O.S. NEWS INTERVIEWER.)

GUARD (male, 20-30) – Police security guard at the home of LIU XIAOBO and LIU XIA. (The same actor plays YANG YU, JUDGE, ORDERLY.)

YANG YU (male, 20) -- A college student. (The same actor plays the GUARD.) Minor Characters (doubling):

INTERVIEWER (I-1, II-26) O.S., a journalist from the US. (The same actor plays The Figure.)

ORDERLY (II- 16) Hospital worker. (The same actor plays the Guard/Yang Yu/Judge.)

SECOND GUARD (II-17) A police guard. (The same actor plays Jiang Peikun.)

JUDGE (II-22) A judge in Beijing. (The same actor plays Guard/Yang Yu.)

With doubling:

ACTOR ONE (m) – LIU XIAOBO

ACTOR TWO (f) – LIU XIA

ACTOR THREE (f) – DING ZILIN

ACTOR FOUR (m) – JIANG PEIKUN/POLICE

ACTOR FIVE (m) – GUARD/YANG YU/ORDERLY/JUDGE

ACTOR SIX (f) – THE FIGURE/OS JOURNALIST

TIME and PLACE:

The play takes place in China, from 1999 to 2010. The settings are: the apartment of Ding Zilin and Jiang Peikun in Beijing; the apartment of Liu Xia and Liu Xiaobo in Beijing; Tiananmen Square; the street; a detention cell; an auditorium. There are also flashbacks and scenes out of time and place.

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Act I

Scene One

(Music ... somewhat crackly, as if it is coming over a loudspeaker -- Internationale, Beethoven's "Ode to Joy," songs by Hou Dejian.)

Whispering voices, loud, are heard under the music, repeating lines of the music. What they are saying is not clearly understood, but there is a feeling of crowds, of the unknown, of people in the shadows.)

(Eight pictures are projected in a series of tableaux, and the click of a camera is heard with each projection. The voices continue.)

The pictures may show those described below, although abstract representations, such as #8, are also appropriate.

One-A crowd at Tiananmen Square 1989

Two-People standing on the Monument at Tiananmen

Three-The Goddess of Democracy at Tiananmen

Four-The Tank Man

Five-Day-after rubble in Beijing

Six-A Chinese prison facility

Seven-A scene of bustling Beijing, circa 1999

Eight-Art by Liu Xia -- horror-doll faces in cellophane)

(The images and music disappear, but the whispering voices continue from every corner, increasing in intensity, and overlapping. The time is October 8, 2010.)

VOICES

Liu Xiaobo... Jiang Jieliang. Dai Jinping. Sun Hui. Li Haocheng. Xan Wen. Wang Weiping ... Liu Xiaobo ... Liu Xiaobo ... Liu Xiaobo ... Liu Xiaobo ...

(LIU XIA sits her apartment. SHE waits, smoking. SHE is tense, a bit furtive. THE GUARD knocks on the door and enters without waiting for a reply.)

GUARD

I'm monitoring.

(HE hooks up the phone, dials some numbers, hands a receiver to LIU XIA, listens on another receiver.)

INTERVIEWER O.S.

(The INTERVIEWER, an American woman, O.S., is heard on a speaker phone. May be pre-recorded.)

Multimedia desk, New York Times. Do I have Liu Xia?

LIU XIA

Yes. I'm here. In Beijing.

(SHE is stiff and awkward, a contrast to her normal demeanor.)

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Very good. We'll be ready in a sec.

(THE GUARD taps the phone, testing it.)

Now recording, October 8, 2010.

(beat)

Liu Xia, tell us about your husband, Liu Xiaobo.

LIU XIA

(SHE holds a photo.)

He is a patient and diligent poet. That's what I want people to know. An essayist. A scholar.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

And a political activist?

LIU XIA

No. He was forced to take on politics.

GUARD

(Waves his hand, "no" "cut.")

LIU XIA

He is an independent thinker. A critic. A critic criticizes. He looks at things and sees how they could be better.

GUARD

(Waves his hand, "no" "cut.")

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

And you?

LIU XIA

I'm an artist.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Can you tell me more?

LIU XIA

I'm working in black and white. Photography. Behind the camera, I can see the scenes, three-dimensional, moments that others try to erase. I ...

Trouble.

GUARD
(Signals “no.”)

LIU XIA
I am also a poet. I avoid politics. But it hangs over my life. I used to lie awake at night, always waiting for the other shoe to drop.

GUARD
(Listens closely, puts his finger on a disconnect button.)

Will you visit him?

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

LIU XIA
There is no one but me. Who is allowed. To see him.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
What will you say?

LIU XIA
I will hug him.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
And how do you expect him to respond ... to the news?

LIU XIA
He will be pleased. He will think it's ... ironic.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
And you?

GUARD
(Catches her eye and stares at her intensely.)

LIU XIA
Me? I ... can't say what I think.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
Because ... the news is being censored in China?

GUARD
Time!
(The GUARD takes the receiver from LIU XIA.)

LIU XIA
(Stands, smokes. SHE turns her back to the GUARD and does a thumbs up to herself. And smiles. SHE EXITS to another room.)

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
Hello? Ms. Liu? Liu Xia?

(THE GUARD pulls the plug on the phone.)

End of Scene One

**Act I
Scene Two**

(Whispering voices: *Liu Xiaobo, Liu Xiaobo, Liu Xiaobo.*
The FIGURE, enters, crosses the stage.)

THE FIGURE

*I've lost my passport and identity card ... I cannot find a handful of dirt in that once familiar world
... I cannot tell day from night anymore ...*

End of Scene Two

**Act I
Scene Three**

(The time is December 31, 1999, and a new Millennium is about to be celebrated. Professor DING ZILIN and Professor JIANG PEIKUN make arrangements in their apartment, a well-groomed place of muted colors and a sense of orderliness. As the scene opens, DING ZILIN and JIANG PEIKUN set out a small banquet table. A knock at a door, off-stage, is heard.)

JIANG PEIKUN

That's Liu Xiaobo, then.

DING ZILIN

I have your promise: we'll have a quiet dinner, won't we?

JIANG PEIKUN

Yes, yes, of course. (beat) And you agree – we will say nothing about the letter I received.

DING ZILIN

And you agree, we will say nothing about the Statement. It's past.

(JIANG PEIKUN nods, reluctantly. He goes to the door, off-stage. DING ZILIN straightens photos and papers.
There are enthusiastic greetings, off- stage.)

LIU XIAOBO

(Bounds into the room with great exuberance.)

Professor Ding, hello! A new year's gift for you.

(HE holds out a gift of nuts.)

DING ZILIN

Nice to see you, Liu Xiaobo. Thank you.

(SHE is tentative. SHE takes the gift, but in due time.)

LIU XIAOBO

(Pats his pocket. Takes off an outer coat.)

Later I shall read a new poem for the new Millennium! Thank you for inviting us to join you on this auspicious, once-in-a-lifetime occasion.

DING ZILIN

It was Jiang Peikun's idea. For old times' sake, I suppose. I told him you would have New Year's offers for dance parties and fireworks – you didn't need to sit around with some old folks.

LIU XIAOBO

No better offer than from my beloved former professors! And now with Liu Xia, too.

(JIANG PEIKUN and LIU XIA enter.)

DING ZILIN

I believe we met at an art show several years back.

LIU XIA

1996! Before Liu Xiaobo was sent away.

LIU XIAOBO

1996: Three years seems like a millennium behind the cold iron doors in that dismal place they deign to call "re-education through labor." Worse than my time in prison after Tiananmen. Worse than my days of detention at unknown addresses for unknown reasons. But it's over. And now I have the special bonus of being married to my one true soulmate.

(LIU XIAOBO lights a cigarette. HE does this a lot.)

LIU XIA

We didn't exactly have what you would call a traditional ceremony. No lanterns. No bows. Not a single photograph. We were wed by a solemn exchange of forms inside the labor camp. After, we shared a single celebratory dumpling at a table with the other inmates while the guards looked on.

JIANG PEIKUN

That's a thousand miles away.

LIU XIAOBO

100,000 miles away. I now understand *The Gulag Archipelago* from the inside out. Do you know what my job was in the "reeducation through labor camp"? Counting beans!

(HE demonstrates, dropping a bean from one side to the other side, and repeating. HE laughs.)

Do you stay up at night wondering how many beans a single person with a PhD in Aesthetics and Criticism and several books under his belt can count in a day? Worry no more. The answer is 20,125. Approximately.

All those beans because I wrote about letting Taiwan vote in peace. Or was it something about Tibet? Or Tiananmen? Or, or, or ...? They never did say.

All I know is that without the visits of Liu Xia, the blood in my veins would have turned to ice, cracked and left me in pieces on the ground.

(LIU XIAOBO falls backward with a dramatic flair, and LIU XIA catches him. THEY laugh.)

LIU XIA

And I finally have you back!

JIANG PEIKUN
(Slightly amused.)

Personally, I'm shocked that the cigarettes didn't kill you first.

End of Scene Three

Act I Scene Four

LIU XIA
(Steps out from Scene 3 in a moment of flash memory. SHE steps into the locus of a government office. SHE has a wad of papers.)

"My identification. My passport. The prisoner I wish to visit is Liu Xiaobo."

This is what I say to the officer. I am very calm.

"No, I don't have a marriage certificate. We're a modern couple. For China's modern times. I'm an artist; he is a writer. Our souls are united."

(beat)

"If the application to visit is denied, then I'm appealing the decision. If the appeal is denied, then I wish to appeal the denial of the appeal No, wait."

"I wish to marry." I remain completely calm.

"Yes, he's previously been married. Yes, I've previously been married. Now we are both unmarried, and we wish to marry. Each other."

(Repeating a whispered phrase.)

"The – man – I – wish – to – marry – is – classified – as – an enemy – of – the –state."

(beat)

"YES! That 'enemy of the state' is the man I wish to marry! And I'd like to bring dumplings to celebrate."

End of Scene Four

Act I Scene Five (Same location.)

LIU XIAOBO

We actually have the Party to thank for lifelong bliss!

(LIU XIA steps back into the scene. LIU XIAOBO looks for a glass to raise and finding only water, pours it and lifts a glass. LIU XIA does as well, but they are alone in this endeavor. JIANG PEIKUN grabs a glass and raises it. DING ZILIN merely watches.)

JIANG PEIKUN

To a long and happy life together. To double happiness!

DING ZILIN

Yes. Long.

LIU XIAOBO

Thank you, dear teachers. And now I can tell you a secret. After completing my full sentence in reeducation-through-labor camp, I am 100%, fully, completely, UN-re-educated!

JIANG PEIKUN

That's no surprise! Not for anyone who has known "Mad Dog" Liu Xiaobo as long as we have. The "rock star" of Aesthetics and Literary Criticism in Beijing. Always the contrarian. Always the critic.

LIU XIAOBO

I can't help it. When they sent our family to Mongolia during the bad old days, the "Cultural Revolution." Since school was disbanded, I used to sneak books from hidden libraries and teach myself. For every question, I had to come up with my own answer. But now the Party officials won't allow me to teach at all.

DING ZILIN

(SHE looks to JIANG PEIKUN.)

No, they wouldn't, would they?

LIU XIAOBO

So you needn't worry about me tapping on the door of your office, Professor Jiang, and asking to borrow books to chew up in class.

THE FIGURE

(Enters and stands behind LIU XIAOBO. Only LIU XIAOBO sees THE FIGURE.)

Liu Xiaobo, Liu Xiaobo, it's all about you, Liu Xiaobo! *Standing in the curse of time.*

JIANG PEIKUN

No, I wouldn't expect that.

LIU XIAOBO

Although I might come by and use a typewriter.

DING ZILIN

Oh, dear.

LIU XIA

The authorities took his typewriter to "analyze" it. But, it never came back from analysis.

LIU XIAOBO

Liu Xia prefers to write by hand. But I scribble, and she's trained in calligraphy! In all the arts! You must see her photo prints. You will not be able to turn your eyes away. Sensational.

LIU XIA

They're nothing. I photograph items, various items, interesting things, cigarette butts, wire, door handles. Dolls. Items that speak to me, so to speak.

DING ZILIN

Sounds very ... unusual.

LIU XIAOBO

Very avant garde. Master works! The dolls have expressions like ...

(He mimics a horror image and shrieks)

... EEEK ... stunned. Twisted, constrained, bound. Brilliant. And I'm speaking as a critic, not as a husband! But my writing thrives with the sound of that clack clack clack, and with a typewriter, I know I can get going again.

JIANG PEIKUN

Perhaps you should consider a transcriber?

LIU XIA

You don't mean me, I hope.

JIANG PEIKUN

No. But, someone.

LIU XIA

I'm useless at things like that. While he was away, Xiaobo's writer friends came marching over en masse with some machine that they bought for him. It has wires going this way and that way and this big green screen. I told them: "This is one of the ugliest creations I have ever seen."

JIANG PEIKUN

A computer? I know a man in the Party who has one. He uses it to send messages and letters from one place to another – even miles away.

LIU XIAOBO

Really? Without having to go through China Post?

LIU XIA

Yes, there's a name for that. Xiaobo's friends told me. The Inter-im. Or Inter-lude. They said that an important thinker like Xiaobo must have one of these hideous machines. So they took up a collection. They stuffed the ugly thing away in our cabinet.

LIU XIAOBO

Typing away in a little corner of the professor's office, no one would even see me. And it might help me get back on track.

DING ZILIN

(Deliberately changing the subject, SHE moves over to the table. During the next lines, SHE holds out serving dishes and food, actions that may take place in pantomime.)

(DING ZILIN)

Shall we begin? It's very modest, I'm afraid.

(THEY fill bowls of food. LIU XIAOBO takes heaping servings, beyond what is polite or normal, and, in defiance of the conventional, he doesn't confine himself to sitting, even when others do.)

LIU XIAOBO

Everything is a banquet compared to what I've been eating. I wasn't sure if my taste buds would ever return to normal! But they have!

LIU XIA

This is a very tasty selection of dishes. Spicy cabbage, and ...

JIANG PEIKUN

(Abruptly and awkwardly.)

I don't have an office any more.

LIU XIAOBO

What do you mean? The university is that crowded?

DING ZILIN

No, it is not crowded. The administrators said that they were "surprised" to hear Professor Jiang on Voice of America. As if there's a rule against it.

JIANG PEIKUN

The Party thought it best to relieve me of my academic duties.

LIU XIAOBO

(Stuttering a bit in a way that afflicts him from time to time.)

What? After ... after ... after all these years? And your ... your diligence? Your service to the Party?

DING ZILIN

It does seem excessive. The Victims' group is my doing. And the Party long ago took away my teaching duties.

LIU XIA

It's crazy! I swear Kafka himself would keel over at what's happening in China today.

LIU XIAOBO

Do they think they can eradicate independent thinking? Erase people's ideas?

JIANG PEIKUN

Yes, I believe they do.

(JIANG PEIKUN puts down his bowl, and exits suddenly.)

(The others sit quietly. The only sound is eating -- mainly LIU XIAOBO -- even amplified.)

End of Scene Five

Act I
Scene Six

(THE FIGURE raps LIU XIAOBO on the head, as if trying to provoke him to action; it doesn't work.)

THE FIGURE

Generation after generation of wronged ghosts pile up ... When the sun comes out heaps of trash flood the memory...Forbidden for warm hands to help... forbidden forbidden forbidden ... forbidden ...

(LIU XIAOBO shakes his head and swats around his ears as if flies are buzzing around his ears.)

End of Scene Six

Act I
Scene Seven

(In the same space as Scene Five, moments later, DING ZILIN, LIU XIA and LIU XIAOBO fidget uncomfortably. LIU XIAOBO writes something on a paper, pulls out a cigarette.)

LIU XIAOBO

He's a Party man. There must be someone in the Party who can help him.

DING ZILIN

(Turns sharply to LIU XIAOBO.)

You have been away too long, Liu Xiaobo. He's only told you part of the story. A second letter arrived at our door yesterday. This one, stripping him of his Party credentials and, in another paragraph, notifying him that his has been placed on the publishing blacklist. One, two, three.

LIU XIAOBO

It IS like the bad old days. When I was coming up.

(A loud knock is heard at the door. DING ZILIN and LIU XIA freeze.)

(LIU XIAOBO stops for a bare minute, then lights a cigarette.)

DING ZILIN

(Calls to JIANG PEIKUN.)

Peikun, are you there? Are we expecting someone else?

(SHE starts toward the door, but JIANG PEIKUN re-enters and waves her back.)

JIANG PEIKUN

I can manage.

(JIANG PEIKUN goes to the door. DING ZILIN stands and listens.)

LIU XIA

Perhaps he can find a publisher elsewhere. Hong Kong? Berlin?

DING ZILIN

That's not his way.

LIU XIAOBO

No, he would never break the rules. Never skirt the government publishing imprimatur. Even if it breaks his heart. My books are underground tracts in China -- doesn't matter if they are about the tedious poetry of the Mao era or systems of human thought across the globe or my own verses and lines. They only arrive in China if they are smuggled in by the stray traveler who rips off the cover and hides them among dirty underclothes.

JIANG PEIKUN

(Returning.)

A man with a police security badge is asking for Liu Xiaobo.

DING ZILIN

Coming to our door? On New Year's? What is the meaning ...?

LIU XIAOBO

Let me speak with him.

(LIU XIAOBO stops, pulls his keys from his pocket, and then his wallet. HE drops them on the table.)

I'll leave these here for now.

(He turns to go to the door, and the FIGURE grabs his arm.)

Dear teachers, if anything should happen to me, I ask that you please look after Liu Xia.

(LIU XIAOBO exits. There is an uncomfortable silence.)

LIU XIA

(SHE pushes aside his items.)

Sometimes he worries about me as if I were a fragile bird living in a never-ending storm. It's not really necessary.

JIANG PEIKUN

I thought I was safe, too.

LIU XIA

Yes. Wu Dun, the novelist, moved to Melbourne. The public security invited him "to tea" and before the day ended, he was arranging flights. If you are truly on the blacklist, perhaps you want to check into Australia.

JIANG PEIKUN

Blacklist? Who mentioned a ...

LIU XIA

The letter ... from the ...

JIANG PEIKUN

Letter? Exactly what LETTER is she talking about, Zilin?

DING ZILIN

(Avoiding JIANG PEIKUN, overlapping.)

Oh no. We can't leave. I'm traveling to villages and towns all across China, collecting stories from mothers and fathers and sisters and spouses. That's what Peikun explained on the radio. These are the people who've never been heard. The work isn't done yet.

JIANG PEIKUN

What letter, Zilin? Who mentioned a LETTER?

LIU XIA

My mistake. I'm so sorry – I don't know anything about a letter ...

DING ZILIN

(To JIANG PEIKUN)

I thought Liu Xiaobo and Liu Xia should know what you've been through. A loyal CCP man all your life, and this is how they treat you.

JIANG PEIKUN

What does Liu Xiaobo care about Party credentials?

LIU XIAOBO

(Returns.)

Dear Professor Ding. One of the police – the public security personnel -- who has been assigned by the government to follow me and Liu Xia ...

DING ZILIN

Yes?

LIU XIAOBO

He's not feeling well. In a rather urgent way. And he wondered if I might prevail upon you to allow him to use your bathroom.

(THEY smile to one another and hide their laughter, being careful not to let the GUARD hear. Their shared response breaks through the tension of the moment.)

DING ZILIN

Peikun, will you do the honors ... ?

(JIANG PEIKUN exits.)

LIU XIAOBO

(With humor.)

The "Giant Pandas."

DING ZILIN

What is that?

LIU XIAOBO

The nickname for public security police – the ones who listen on the phones and follow us around. Critics joke that they are our "national treasure." Which, of course, makes them like our real natural treasure –

... the Giant Pandas!

DING ZILIN

Yes! Only without the bamboo.

LIU XIAOBO

DING ZILIN
(Amused)
A linguistics scholar must have dreamed that up!
(beat)
I've missed that sense of irony.

LIU XIAOBO
Ah! In the eyes of the beholder! We have a country full of irony, but it's still in short supply.

THE FIGURE
(To LIU XIAOBO)
That's all you can say? After everything that's happened to her?

DING ZILIN
Perhaps one day we will have a Giant Panda to call our own.

THE FIGURE
(TO LIU XIAOBO)
What of her loss? Where are all the grand words? *Your seventeen years, your youth, an unembellished thing, a limitless horizon.*

JIANG PEIKUN
(Steps into the room with GUARD.)
The young man wishes to say something.

GUARD
Thank you for your hospitality. I'm much better now.
(JIANG PEIKUN and the GUARD start to exit.)

DING ZILIN
How old are you, young man?

GUARD
I'm 20.

DING ZILIN
Yes. That's what I thought. Three years older than my son.

End of Scene Seven

Act I
Scene Eight

(DING ZILIN walks around the living room and grabs a photograph. SHE is in her own world, and holds the picture in the air.)

DING ZILIN

This one! Yes, this is what he looked like in 1986. So sure of himself -- and only 14. So tall, so firm: begging us to invite Liu Xiaobo to our apartment for dinner so he can impress his friends at school.

(As if it is 1986 and SHE is in the scene.)

And then when we do, Jielian stands stock still, like a rock, when Liu Xiaobo flies through the door in his leather jacket and jeans, reciting the words of a Teresa Teng song. Liu Xiaobo races up to Jielian and starts boxing – fake boxing, like this.

(SHE demonstrates.)

“Give me a left, Jiang Jielian. Come on! Show me what you’ve got!” And he pokes and jabs Jielian – lightly, a little. “And now tell me how this song by Teresa Teng compares to Plato, Nietzsche and the 19th century history of China since the end of the Qing dynasty! Come on, if you want to be a literary critic, you’ve got to get in there and punch. Come on now!”

Finally Jiang Jielian lifts his right fist and punches Xiaobo’s sleeve, and then he backs away ever so fast, every bit the teenager, so afraid we will punish him for being impolite.

(SHE laughs lightly.)

Poor Jiang Jielian! Maybe his sister is right that we never really understood him.
(DING ZILIN holds the photo, studies it.)

End of Scene Eight

Act I
Scene Nine

(LIU XIA and LIU XIAOBO sit, smoking. JIANG PEIKUN re-enters.)

JIANG PEIKUN

He’s gone back downstairs now.

(HE puts out dumplings, fruit, and the nuts LIU XIAOBO brought.)

LIU XIAOBO

Imagine the authorities making those guards work on New Year’s Eve.

LIU XIA

What do they think we’re going to do?

JIANG PEIKUN

I’d say “the poor fellow” – but I have no respect for public security anymore. They can rot in their uniforms. Even the ones in plain clothes!

LIU XIAOBO

He's not our enemy.

JIANG PEIKUN

"Not our enemy." That was your phrase on the Monument to the People's Heroes in 1989. When you declared your hunger strike: "We have no enemies. We must not let hatred or violence poison our thinking."

LIU XIAOBO

Right from our discussions of Nietzsche! Pouring energy into hating our enemies takes away from the path of change.

JIANG PEIKUN

I've a good memory for many of the things you've said. Sometimes they swirl around my mind. I remember, for instance, the Statement you made in Qincheng Prison after the Tiananmen Massacre. We saw it on state TV.

(DING ZILIN, re-enters, busying herself as a hostess.)

DING ZILIN

Sha shah! Enough! You promised. This is a celebration for the new Millennium. A quiet dinner.

JIANG PEIKUN

Of course. I am so sorry. Although a Letter seems to have entered the conversation ...

LIU XIAOBO

Please finish, Professor, I insist.

JIANG PEIKUN

If he insists ...

DING ZILIN

(SHE turns away.)

Aiya ya ya.

JIANG PEIKUN

We watched – like everyone in China -- when hundreds of thousands of students and workers from across the country rallied for democracy on Tiananmen Square in 1989. And then, days before the tragic events of June 4, the teaching star-turned-hot-shot-professor in our field of Aesthetics Criticism is commandeering a bullhorn at the Monument. In front of a sea of people.

LIU XIA

(SHE already senses where this is going.)

He called the hunger strike "of the Four Gentlemen." To unite the different student factions at Tiananmen.

JIANG PEIKUN

Then the tanks, the guns, the troops. The Massacre of June 4 on the streets of our city. And two days after the Massacre, the government arrests our fine Aesthetics lecturer and sends him to prison. A "black hand" behind the protests. We heard all about it – although news of the Massacre itself seems to have been entirely erased from the news.

LIU XIA

But so fresh in the mind.

DING ZILIN

As if it happened yesterday.

JIANG PEIKUN

Others who were arrested were sentenced to 10 years. And more. Thankfully, our star professor was released from prison after 18 months. But soon the government TV began playing, over and over, a videotaped statement from this same man, Liu Xiaobo.

DING ZILIN

We may be in a minority of people who saw it.

LIU XIAOBO

He's speaking the truth. And we hear so little of it these days.

JIANG PEIKUN

I can play it over, word-for-word, in my mind:

LIU XIAOBO and JIANG PEIKUN
(Simultaneously)

"I never saw anyone killed at Tiananmen Square."

LIU XIA

The truth is that Liu Xiaobo did not see anyone killed. And he was one of the last to leave the Square. He arranged for the peaceful departure of people from the Square. Thousands. He saved their lives. The Massacre was on the streets on the way to the Square.

JIANG PEIKUN

It plays over and over in my mind.

End of Scene Nine

Act I

Scene Ten

(In a moment of flashback, JIANG PEIKUN walks to a window. The time is June 3, 1989.)

JIANG PEIKUN

The best thing to do, we decide, is for the two of us to go outside and stand by the gates of the university so that we can see everyone who enters. No one will slip by. We walk together across the length of the campus. Students are out. The night is warm. A muggy Beijing night. But dark. June Third. We stand there until it becomes June Fourth. One o'clock, two o'clock, three o'clock. Looking at every face that returns. Some are bloody. We stand through the early morning hours of June Fourth. We do not move.

We wait for our son, Jiang Jielian, to return.

At 5 a.m. the sun begins to rise. At 6 a.m., it is near light. A classmate comes in. He sees us standing at the gate. He comes over to us, but refuses to look us in the eye.

(JIANG PEIKUN cont'd)

He says: "I was with Jiang Jielian on Chang `An Avenue. Near the Muxidi Bridge. We only wanted to see what was happening. We were only watching. Armored tanks began barreling down Chang `An toward Tiananmen Square. We heard gunshots so we ducked behind flower bushes. There was a terrifying noise. I heard Jiang Jielian say... 'I think I have been shot.' He stood up, and his shirt was red. Then he collapsed on the ground. After that, he didn't move again."

We waited all night. We saw his classmate. He spoke to us. We could not move.

(HE stands, frozen, and returns during the next scene to the group.)

End of Scene Ten

**Act I
Scene Eleven**

THE FIGURE

"And I have learned, from your seventeen years that a life is a simple and unembellished thing like a horizonless desert/requiring no water/requiring no adornment of tree or flower/to withstand the ravages of the sun... ."

End of Scene Eleven

**Act I
Scene Twelve**

DING ZILIN

(Standing with the others, SHE holds a picture, caresses it.)

I never was a person who went looking for trouble. I forbade my son from going out that night. I locked the doors. I locked that door. And that door. I locked them so he could not go out. I held the keys in my hand. I made him sit with me on the couch. I could not let him go. But, despite the wishes of his mother, he slipped into the bathroom and climbed out the bathroom window.

(beat)

He was 17 years of age. He wanted to see for himself.

JIANG PEIKUN

(With contained rage, to LIU XIAOBO.)

Our son, Jiang Jielian, wasn't "no one."

LIU XIA

Liu Xiaobo couldn't know that his statement would be broadcast. He couldn't have known it would be used to support the Party lies that nothing happened and no one died.

JIANG PEIKUN

I would be interested in hearing how our top Aesthetics lecturer knew nothing, how our critic of all critics, the one who called out the hypocrites and sycophants, was blind and deaf and dumb. I would be interested in hearing that. Yes, I would.

DING ZILIN

There are people across the land who know that people died. I've met them. I've held their hands in my hands.

THE FIGURE
(Pushes LIU XIAOBO)

Now ... NOW!

LIU XIAOBO

I ... I ... did know. I knew it would be used.

End of Scene Twelve

Act I Scene Thirteen

LIU XIAOBO
(Steps out, re-living this moment in the present, the kind of visual and verbal recounting experienced by trauma.)

The scenes flash through my mind like slides on a screen. We Four Hunger Strikers are posted at the Monument in the center of the Square.

People race onto the Square, describing mayhem on Chang `An Avenue. We hear shots ringing out on the streets. Tempers rise. Someone takes me to a young man who has a rifle wrapped in a blanket. I ply the weapon from him and smash it.

Soon, tanks surround the Square. All four sides. Everyone is trapped. It's early morning, June 4. The lights on the Square snap off. The student leaders declare that bloodshed will make them martyrs. Some sit and write their wills.

The four of us decide to appeal directly to the troops. We dispatch two through the darkness. They reach a commander and miraculously secure an agreement to allow peaceful departure before dawn. We take the megaphone at the Monument at 3 a.m.

People start moving off the Square. Thousands exit. Many are shaking as they walk through the columns of guards. Some are roughed up. But they exit through the Southeast gate -- alive. At 6:30 a.m., I am one of the last to leave.

Our little group finds a safe haven in the diplomatic quarter. We hide out there, with friends, many friends, waiting for things to quiet down.

On June 6, I set off by bicycle to return to my home in Beijing. I stop at a cigarette stand. A van comes careening around the corner and smashes my bicycle. Four burly men leap out, snatch my glasses, stuff rags in my mouth, tie my hands, put a black cloth over my head, and throw me in the back of the van.

Soon I'm found guilty of being a "black hand," a guiding force, behind the demonstrations and I'm sent to the infamous Qingcheng Prison. But I hadn't planned the protests. I wasn't even in the country when they began. All of it is a large lie. This is what I own: nothing but a large lie.

I hear of other prisoners who are tortured and beaten. I'm spared the violence.

(LIU XIAOBO cont'd)

But, even so, I feel the prison walls closing in. Death is hovering above me.

“Countless nights behind iron-barred windows/and the graves beneath starlight/have exposed my nightmares.”

They take me for questioning – again. I’ve lost track of how many times, but, this time, this day, I make a statement... “I never saw anyone killed at Tiananmen Square.” The Statement. Eight words. Each word is true. But as a collection of words – they have no integrity.

I’m released, and the TV begins to play the Statement. Again and again on CCTV. The Party uses my eight words to prop up an even bigger lie – the complete denial that the People’s Army has driven tanks into the streets, fired rounds of shots at unarmed people, killed hundreds, thousands – not near where I stood, nothing that I could see, but in the indescribable blackness of night on the streets nearby. Innocent citizens, slaughtered.

THE FIGURE

Monument waves of weeping/marble grain fused with blood-stained veins/Belief and youth beaten beneath/a tank’s rust-chained treads ...Naked red heart collides with iron and steel...Time has been petrified/I cannot tell day from night anymore ...

(LIU XIAOBO steps back into the present of the living room with DING and JIANG and LIU XIA.)

LIU XIAOBO

I have no excuse. I didn’t think about the dreams of the students. I didn’t think about the sacrifices of the victims. I didn’t think about the Lost Souls, buried in anonymous graves, or not buried at all. I do not even qualify as a survivor because I failed to show that even a grain of my humanity survived. I did not think about the suffering of the families. I betrayed them. I betrayed you.

THE FIGURE

(Flops down.)

At last. Finally! The truth emerges.

LIU XIAOBO

I am deeply sorry.

JIANG PEIKUN

(Exhausted and weary, not really accepting XIAOBO’s apology.)

And I – I should like to believe in something again.

(LIU XIAOBO turns quickly, and exits.)

LIU XIA

Xiaobo! Wait ...

(LIU XIA stands to go after LIU XIAOBO. Sounds of apartment door closing. SHE stops herself, sits back down, firm in her knowledge.)

He won’t leave me here.

End of Scene Thirteen

Act I
Scene Fourteen

THE FIGURE

So many names. I know the names. Jiang Jielian. Dai Jinping. Sun Hui. Li Haocheng. Xan Wen. Wang Weiping ...

End of Scene Fourteen

Act I
Scene Fifteen

LIU XIA

(Quietly, filling the air in the living room. JIANG and DING barely listen, absorbed in their own thoughts.)

He's a diligent poet. Patient. We met on the poetry magazine at the university. Long ago when both our lives were arranged in quite a different way.

(LIU XIA speaks as if seeing the moment that follows unfolding in front of her.)

All of us go to the pro-democracy protests. I sit on a hill in the park far in the distance. I don't like crowds. I sit and smoke. And then I see him on the Monument. He had gone abroad earlier that year, a visiting professor. But there he was. On the Monument. Women on each arm. Two on one arm, one on the other. His wife is nowhere in sight, just "fans." He is surrounded by admirers. A "public intellectual."

He holds the megaphone. Everyone is looking up to him. I don't have a chance to say a word before he becomes a character in the news.

I watch the sky. The sun is bright. The sky is lush. This isn't good weather, I think.

(Directly, to DING and JIANG.)

But, then, you know that.

Adjusting these last few weeks hasn't been easy. But I've noticed that birds flutter outside the window. From time to time.

DING ZILIN

(SHE rifles through a drawer and holds up some papers.)

One may never adjust to some things. These are the people I've met. I've seen the circles under their eyes.

(SHE reads from a manuscript.)

"On the night of June 4, 1989, our beloved son, Liu Hongtao, was shot. Upon hearing the news, it felt as if the sky had fallen down. Even heaven and earth could feel the injustice. We cry day and night. We wait for the day of truth. When it comes, we will go to the riverside, sprinkling wine for his comfort, wishing him peace in the underworld."

LIU XIA

The sun was so bright that day when I saw him standing on the Monument. So horribly bright.

End of Scene Fifteen

Act I
Scene Sixteen

(LIU XIAOBO re-enters the apartment. HE is carrying a bouquet of white flowers and puts them in front of a photo of Jiang Jielian.)

THE FIGURE

I know seventeen years cannot hate or begrudge ...

LIU XIAOBO

(Speaking at first to the photo.)

I haven't the courage or the right to come bearing flowers. Or to give breath to my words. I'm alive, and when your seventeen years collapsed upon the road, the road disappeared. Your seventeen years of unfinished love.

Dear teachers ... I don't blame you if you've lost your respect for me. I haven't an ounce of it for myself.

LIU XIA

(Snuffing out a cigarette, LIU XIA reacts physically.)

LIU XIAOBO

(Continuing)

Some have called me arrogant, and I can't argue with them. I should have stood by the gate with you. I should have helped the injured on the streets, ripped off my shirt, and covered the wounds of the bleeding. I feel responsible for everything that has befallen you.

DING ZILIN

(Finally looking up.)

You are responsible? Are you the one who ordered 35,000 troops to clear Tiananmen Square? Who sent armored tanks down the city streets, shooting live ammunition at innocent people on the sidewalk?

LIU XIAOBO

I can't bear to think about the pain that you've suffered.

DING ZILIN

(Picking up her papers.)

These are the people who are suffering, Liu Xiaobo.

(Shaking the manuscript.)

We victim families only want a list of who died. We want the right to mourn our losses. We want recognition that our loved ones were not criminals. Some families won't even talk about it for fear they will be labeled anti-Party. Do you know there are parents who hide the pictures of their loved ones in hollows under the floor?

LIU XIAOBO

No, I didn't know that.

LIU XIA

Everyone knows what happened.

DING ZILIN

The authorities tell us they have investigated “the Beijing turmoil” – that’s what they called the 6-4 massacre -- and “no citizens were killed.” No citizens were killed! This is exactly what they say when they block us from visiting graveyards where the dead should be buried. And meanwhile they only care about building China’s economic prowess: “To get rich is glorious!” Self-induced amnesia. Forget the past.

LIU XIAOBO

The past hunts me down daily. I am surrounded by my failings like rows of tanks that can’t be penetrated. After three years in “re-education,” I am not sure I know how to carry forward.

DING ZILIN

The families don’t need the humility from deep within ... they need people to stand up for them!

LIU XIAOBO

The truth is we probably should not have attempted a celebration so soon after ... after ...
(HE reaches for LIU XIA, to leave.)

DING ZILIN

We need you, Liu Xiaobo!

(DING ZILIN quickly wraps her manuscript.)

We don’t what direction to go. We need someone who can see and evaluate and chart a new path. Please, I want you to read this.

THE FIGURE

Between the flower and the tank/between the salute and the bayonet/ between the dove and the missile/ Between the ordered step and the numbed expression/the old century ends ...

JIANG PEIKUN

But, Zilin, your manuscript ... you’ve been working on it for years ...?

DING ZILIN

It’s mine, and I have made up my mind.

End of Scene Sixteen

Act I

Scene Seventeen

(Later that same night. LIU XIA and LIU XIAOBO enter their apartment. It has an artsy and idiosyncratic aura, a clear contrast to the DING apartment and somewhat different from what might be expected in a standard Beijing flat. The walls are covered with paintings, photographs, masks, postcards. Books and bookcases fill the space, and odd dolls peek out from various corners. A table with a desk is on one side, and one filled with art projects on another. As soon as they enter, LIU XIA stiffens. LIU XIAOBO flops down, begins to unwrap the package with the manuscript.)

LIU XIA
(SHE stands with her back against the door.)
Your poem.

LIU XIAOBO
What of it?

LIU XIA
You didn't read it to the teachers.

LIU XIAOBO
I said it silently.

LIU XIA
I see what you're doing. Hiding. Avoiding. Where is the Xiaobo who regaled crowds at bookstores and literary gatherings? Where is the Xiaobo who recites Kafka and laughs with me at the absurdities of our lives?

(SHE moves rapidly to her art table and holds up a print.)
Where is the Xiaobo who looks at my art work and actually sees it?
(beat)
You told Professor Ding that you have no SELF-RESPECT ...

LIU XIAOBO
I'll recite my poem for you if you like. You can help me improve it.
(Pulls out a paper.)
Between the flower and the tank/

LIU XIA
I traveled to the labor camp every month! Made special food for you. Brought magazines and books and

LIU XIAOBO
(Goes to hug her.)
I am so grateful. I told my friends ... don't look to me for late-night parties anymore. I found my rock, my anchor

LIU XIA
My camera!
(Overlapping. Suddenly tearing apart her table.)

LIU XIAOBO
What about it?

LIU XIA
Did you move it?

LIU XIAOBO
Of course not. I would never move an artist's tools.

LIU XIA
It was over here. And now it's over there.

(SHE points to a shelf.)

It was moved! While we were gone. I have never put my camera on a shelf. But now it's on a shelf.
(LIU XIA pulls the camera down.)

LIU XIAOBO

Is it alright?

LIU XIA

It isn't where I keep it.

LIU XIAOBO

I imagine this is our official welcome to the new century in China. The spying eyes. Shall we drink to it? Isn't there a bottle of red wine in the kitchen?

LIU XIA

They're trying to disrupt my creative process.

LIU XIAOBO

It's me they want to control.

LIU XIA

They are trying to drive me mad.

LIU XIAOBO

We can't let them tear apart our lives. Equanimity. At all costs.

LIU XIA

„Equanimity”? As in ... “composure” ... “peacefulness” ... “contentment” ... “calm.” Is that how you dare to say to the teachers that you do not wish to survive? While I am sitting there?

LIU XIAOBO

I said I didn't qualify to be called a survivor. In three years, everything's so different. This new China ... chasing gold and consumerism ...

THE FIGURE

(Emerges from behind a screen, taunting.)

Join the Lost Souls in the underworld. Come with me, Liu Xiaobo. We have a place for you!

LIU XIA

I'm not a fool. I heard your meaning. What does it say about me if you no longer wish to live? Am I worth so little to you? Am I so small in your eyes?

LIU XIAOBO

Of course not.

LIU XIA

Do you think it was easy, sitting here on my own for three years? Planning my life around trips of 1100 miles for a half-hour visit? All month, it looms. Advice from everywhere. ... “Don't be sad.” “Get some fresh air.” “Go visit your friends.” Then I have to travel in the company of a public security officer. Or two. And as I recover from one trip, it looms again. Dangles into my life. Crashes about my sleep. And my reward ...?

LIU XIAOBO

You are the burning flame, I am the ash.

LIU XIA

I am not a flame, Xiaobo. I am me. And I don't need any burning anything.
(SHE exits.)

End of Scene Seventeen

Act I

Scene Eighteen

THE FIGURE

(THE FIGURE slides close up to LIU XIAOBO.)

My long-lost friend. At last, we are alone together.

LIU XIAOBO

(Scribbling with a pencil.)

I think I can rework some of these lines. ..

*Between the flower and the tank/
between the dove and the rifle ...*

THE FIGURE

Read THIS.

(Thrusts the Ding Zilin manuscript in front of him.)

(LIU XIAOBO does not look.)

"Seeking Justice for the Witnessed Massacre."

LIU XIAOBO

(Points to a stack of mail.)

There's a lot to read – letters, cards, people who've written. Look, an offer to teach in the U.S. A mother from Sichuan who wants to know what to tell her 10-year-old about 6-4.

THE FIGURE

(Looking at the book.)

This has names. I've been collecting the names. The Lost Souls are waiting.

LIU XIAOBO

(Cynically.)

Yes, we've all been waiting.

THE FIGURE

For some one, some thing, some body. You don't recognize me ... do you?

I arrived two days before your hunger strike. Everyone was talking about you. I saw you standing on the Monument as they put my head on my shoulders.

LIU XIAOBO

No riddles needed. I know who you are. But how did you get past the security police?

THE FIGURE

“Goddess of Democracy” means nothing to them. The old ones have forgotten all about me. The young ones never knew. Ten years brings a whole new set of recruits.

LIU XIAOBO

Of course they know. Although some thought you were too “Western” – too much like the Statue of Liberty.

THE FIGURE

“Revolutionary Realism.” That’s what the art students said – the ones who did the sculpting – if polystyrene and paper maché can actually be called sculpting. Russian. Like Vera Mukhina and her “Worker and the Woman” statue.

LIU XIAOBO

But ... why are you here? ... Have I survived re-education camp to lose my wits in our apartment?

THE FIGURE

We’ve been connected a long time, my friend.

End of Scene Eighteen**Act I****Scene Nineteen**

(THE FIGURE reenacts the moment, as if standing at Tiananmen Square 1989.)

THE FIGURE

I arrive in parts. The art students wheel me through the streets. Then, piece by piece, they put me together on the Square until my eyes look straight into the portrait of Chairman Mao across the road.

The crowds had dwindled. But there I am, proud and tall – a sight to see! The people start gathering again.

Thousands upon thousands. They hear about me – and the famous professor -- and come flocking back. Hundreds of thousands.

They drape me in cloth for a grand unveiling.

(Strikes a pose, both arms in the air, holding a torch. Then relaxes.)

I’m thirty feet in the air.

(THE FIGURE cont’d)

(Strikes a pose again.)

That makes me five stories high. My arms raised above my head, holding the torch with both my hands. A voice comes over the loud speaker.

"We have made this statue as a memorial to democracy, and to express our respect for the Four Gentlemen Hunger-Strikers."

The speaker says the names. “Professor Liu Xiaobo, who left a guest professorship at Columbia

University in New York City to be with us, and three who join him: Songwriter-singer Hou Dejian ...” -- there is clapping and screaming. “And Zhou Duo, a recent graduate and student of Professor Liu, and Gao Xin, editor of *The Beijing Normal University Weekly* -- and a Party member!”

“Today, in the People’s Square, the People’s Goddess of Democracy stands tall and announces to the whole world: A consciousness of democracy has awakened among the Chinese people! The new era has begun!”

(Dramatically)

And then they drop the cloth from my face, and the crowds cheer and yell, “Long live democracy!” “Long live democracy!”

(Music is heard faintly. LIU XIAOBO joins in.)

Waving yellow scarves in the air, flashing a V for victory. Bouquets of flowers are dropped at my feet. Choral students sing Beethoven’s “Hymn to Joy.” Then the crowd breaks into the “Internationale.” They go wild! 300,000 of them! I can see them all!

(Enthralled with the vision of the huge crowds, LIU XIAOBO looks on in wonder.)

Only days later on June 3, I can see the tanks coming down Chang ... `An Avenue. I try to wave my torch to send an alert to everyone.

When the light of June 4 comes to the Square, I stand alone -- me and the abandoned tents of the students on the wide stones that stretch north, east, west, south. Then they come for me.

Knock me down. My torch hits the ground first. Then the rest of me. Smash me into a pile of bumpy dirt and dump me into the garbage. All in less than a minute.

I’m a memory that’s been erased. A eulogy never delivered. A dream that’s exiled. I collect the names of the Lost Souls; I’m looking for someone to bring back their stories. *Yang Yan-sheng, Luo Wei, Dai Wei, Hao Zhijing, Su Yahn, Li Dezhi, Zhou Deping, Yang Minghu, Xiao Jie, Wu Guofeng ...*

End of Scene Nineteen

Act I

Scene Twenty

LIU XIAOBO

(Opens the manuscript from Ding Zilin, reads.)

“My son was called Wu Guofeng. He was born on July 3, 1968. He was a third-year Industrial Economics student at People’s University of China. He was killed on June 4, 1989.”

(Calls to LIU XIA.)

Xia? Come and listen to Ding Zilin’s manuscript! You’ll want to hear this!

THE FIGURE

Wu Guofeng. Don’t stop.

LIU XIAOBO

(HIS voice, growing in angry strength.)

“Afterward, the local government informed us, ‘Your son was a rioter and died in Beijing.’ My immediate response was my son is an outstanding Three-Goods student in Chengdu City in Sichuan Province, not at all a rioter.”

LIU XIAOBO
(Suddenly excited)

These are real narratives of the people affected. No one in China has done this before -- collecting the tales of ordinary people and honoring the truth of their lives.

THE FIGURE

Yes, that voice. That's how I remember you.

LIU XIAOBO
(HE flips through the manuscript.)

"On June 11, 1989, we first saw our son's body at the Postal Hospital in Beijing. His whole body was covered in blood, especially his head, which was basically wrapped in plasma."

(LIU XIAOBO puts the book down, overwhelmed.)

THE FIGURE
(Takes the manuscript now.)

"There was a bullet hole in the back of his head. There were the four wounds from which the blood flowed out. It was all so ghastly that my husband and I fainted."

(THE FIGURE is also overwhelmed, stops.)

LIU XIAOBO
(HE picks up the book once more.)

"We carried our son's ashes back home. A retired teacher from his alma mater sent a poem: 'Patriotic and studious, a tragic death.' However, rumors began to spread in the city, saying he was a rebellious counter-revolutionary. This is not who my son is. One day, the truth will prevail."

THE FIGURE

One day, the truth will prevail.

LIU XIAOBO
(Calls to another room.)

Xia! Can't we share these stories together?

LIU XIA

I'm here.

(LIU XIA returns with a bottle of wine and some glasses and sits beside him. They fold into each other's arms.)

End of Scene Twenty

Act I
Scene Twenty-One

THE FIGURE
(Reading in a singular space.)

"My son, Luo Wei, was shot in the abdominal cavity. When I saw him in the hospital, I said ... 'Luo Wei, I am here! Mum is here!' A teardrop as big as a bead rolled down my son's cheek. I was telling him not to go... but, despite that, he went and never returned."

(THE FIGURE cont'd)

“Today, skyscrapers are being built all around and people talk less and less about the tragic event. But the pain does not go away.”

End of Scene Twenty-One

Act I

Scene Twenty Two

(LIU XIAOBO and LIU XIA sit together on a couch in their apartment with the manuscript.)

LIU XIAOBO
(Firmly, decisively.)

There are 188 here.

LIU XIA

The horror of it all.

THE FIGURE

My eyes were blind. When the dead set out on the road I never saw them off.

LIU XIAOBO
(As if thinking of it for the first time).

The Tiananmen Mothers. That's what I'm calling them.

LIU XIA
(Sitting close)

Like the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina.

LIU XIAOBO
(Firmly, decisively.)

There are 188 here. We need to do something to get them out to the public.

LIU XIA
(Gets up, goes to her work table.)

That's for you. I have canisters of film. I have images in my head.

LIU XIAOBO

Of course, of course.

(beat)

If only we had an association that could speak up for the people who aren't being heard.

LIU XIA

Yes. If only. If only the government allowed people to form associations.

LIU XIAOBO

We can create our own little group!

LIU XIA

Yes, the Universal Association of People Followed by Public Security.

LIU XIAOBO

(Laughs)

That would be a very LARGE group. And who would know who is really in it? ‘Are you following me?’ ‘No, are you following me?’

LIU XIA

And who among you moved my camera!

LIU XIAOBO

Writers can do something.

LIU XIA

Haven’t they all left?

LIU XIAOBO

You can’t be free in hiding. You can’t be free unless you practice being free.

LIU XIA

Shall we sleep on it?

End of Scene 22

SCENE Twenty-Three

THE FIGURE

*I can see the dead souls...standing in the starlit road/
...this time this moment/ life’s only existence ...*

End of Scene 23

SCENE Twenty-Four

(A knocking at the door.)

LIU XIA

WHAT! Can’t they leave us alone? Why can’t we escape this madness? We have friends all over. We could go to Berlin. Los Angeles. Or Queens. We have so many friends in Queens!

(LIU XIAOBO packs up the manuscript and stuffs it away.
More knocking. LIU XIA puts her camera behind books.)

LIU XIAOBO

Yes, Queens. Where no Pandas roam.

(LIU XIAOBO takes out his keys and wallet and hides them.)

LIU XIA

Don’t they know the time? What’s wrong with them?

(beat)

You don’t have to answer! It’s not reasonable!

(LIU XIAOBO moves to answer the door. SHE exits.)

End of Scene Twenty-Four

Act I

Scene Twenty-Five

(The GUARD stands at the door of the LIU apartment. LIU XIAOBO answers. The FIGURE stands nearby.)

GUARD

(As the door is opened, peering around.)

Mr. Liu ... is everything as it should be? I saw the lights, heard some sounds. It's so late.

LIU XIAOBO

We're fine. Nothing out of the ordinary.

GUARD

Mr. Liu: I wonder if you have plans to go anywhere tomorrow. My little girl's grandparents are visiting. The other guard scheduled to watch you is so new – a junior officer who isn't at all familiar with the assignment. I had hoped to spend the day with my wife's parents and my little girl, but if you are going out, I should probably be on duty.

LIU XIAOBO

I'm not going anywhere tomorrow.

GUARD

You're not planning on leaving the country tomorrow, then? Because in training, they warn us to be particularly careful about travel movements.

LIU XIAOBO

I'm not leaving.

GUARD

Thank you so much, sir. I'll bring your wife some candies from the visit. I know she likes that sort of thing.

(GUARD begins to exit. LIU XIAOBO stops him.)

LIU XIAOBO

Tell me, young man: Have you ever heard of the Goddess of Democracy?

GUARD

No, sir.

LIU XIAOBO

The Tank Man?

GUARD

No, sir.

LIU XIAOBO

The events of 1989?

GUARD

Do you mean the student riots? We learned about them in the training academy.

LIU XIAOBO

And I suppose you learned the names of all the Party officials and the words to all the patriotic songs?

GUARD

Yes, I did, sir. I expect we'll be singing some at our dinner. We do that every time we get together. And we'll watch some funny animated videos, too.

(beat)

One of the rules is that we are not supposed to converse with the people we are assigned to watch. So they don't corrupt our thinking.

LIU XIAOBO

That would be quite a challenge, wouldn't it?

(beat)

And ... The Tank Man: he was a lone individual who stood in front of the martial law tanks outside Tiananmen in 1989 and made them halt. A very dramatic moment.

GUARD

I see. That's quite a story. Sir.

End of Scene Twenty-Five

Act I
Scene Twenty-Six

DING ZILIN

(SHE stands alone in an isolated space, reading a text.)

"If Dai Wei had lived, he would have been quite a famous cook in the Peace Gate Roast Duck

(DING ZILIN, cont'd, reading a text)

Restaurant. On the night of June 3, 1989, Dai Wei left home for his nightshift. Who could know it would be a journey of no return?

"When I got to know that Dai Wei was shot in the alleyway behind Minzhu Hotel, I could not help but shout, 'Where is justice in this world?'"

(SHE exits.)

End of Scene Twenty-Six

Act I
Scene Twenty-Seven

(LIU XIAOBO stands with THE FIGURE.)

LIU XIAOBO

They're trying to pave over our history. In get-rich China, the People have forsaken independence to be cogs in a machine of money and authoritarian nationalism.

THE FIGURE

(Doubled over.)

No one remembers me. The pain of it being so tall and now being so little and ... useless. You must know how it feels, don't you, Liu Xiaobo?

LIU XIAOBO

You're an inanimate object.

THE FIGURE

I'm an object of art. We have feelings. We live ... in the mind's eye.

LIU XIA

(Calling from O.S.)

Are you there?

LIU XIAOBO

(Calling to LIU XIA.)

Yes, we're okay.

LIU XIA

We?

LIU XIAOBO

I. I'm okay.

LIU XIA

(Enters.)

You won't let them take you away again, will you Xiaobo?

LIU XIAOBO

I'm not going anywhere. I won't leave you again.

LIU XIA

(Exiting.)

My toes are cold. I don't like lying alone in the dark.

LIU XIAOBO

Soon.

THE FIGURE

I've seen the Lost Souls.

LIU XIAOBO

The memories are flooding through my mind.

THE FIGURE

They sent me. From the underground. We need a thinker. Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia. We need our own think tank.

End of Scene Twenty-Seven

Act I

Scene Twenty-Eight

JIANG PEIKUN

(HE stands alone in an isolated space.)

“Wang Weiping was a medical school graduate on her way to work in a hospital ward. She threw herself into the effort to save the wounded. She was leaning over an injured victim, applying dressing to a wound. She looked up briefly and she was hit in the neck by a bullet. She died instantly.”

(HE exits.)

End of Scene Twenty-Eight

Act I

Scene Twenty-Nine

LIU XIAOBO

(Jumps up, runs to the cabinet, pulls out boxes with the computer.)

Let's get this thing going.

THE FIGURE

(Pulling out cords.)

What? Now? Why? A machine?

LIU XIAOBO

It's going to be our escape hatch.

(To THE FIGURE)

Here ... start connecting these wires.

THE FIGURE

(Reading instructions, working on computer.)

I think this goes in there.

LIU XIAOBO

(Picks up a phone and dials.)

Wen? Hello! It's Xiaobo.

(Listens)

Oh? It's that late? I didn't know.

(Listens)

As long as you are up, I need to a place to gather writers. A place where the music is loud enough to ward off the Giant Pandas.

(Listens)

I'm developing a think tank for writers in China.

THE FIGURE

(Plugging in various cords.)

Yes! Good idea!

LIU XIAOBO

(Listening)

Surely, some writers are still here. I'm here. We will link arms.

End of Scene Twenty Nine

Act I

Scene Thirty

(LIU XIAOBO stands at the end of a table, in a café, speaking to an unseen group of people. Music plays and then drops. LIU XIAOBO modulates his voice, occasionally falling to a whisper. THE FIGURE sits at a table, and listens.)

LIU XIAOBO

(HE toasts with a bottle of beer.)

Hello, friends. Here's my toast to being back!

I propose that we band together as writers to advocate for freedom of expression and democratic rights. We can't concede to letting the Party decide what we can and cannot write. Freedom of expression is an inherent right. Poets, essayists, novelists – PEN. We will have our own PEN China like PEN groups around the world. The Chinese writer is entitled to exercise human rights.

Change will never come from the top; it comes from the bottom up. It comes from inside ourselves, from our own decisions and actions. In the movement for Civil Rights in the United States, people joined hands and worked together in nonviolence actions. We can only be free by practicing freedom.

You remember the song we sang from the Monument?

*"Friends of conscience, open your hearts
Friends of democracy, take each other's hands ..."*

THE FIGURE

(Turns, as if watching someone leave.)

LIU XIAOBO

Wait. Hear me out. Writers worldwide will stand with us.

(Another listener walks out. THE FIGURE waves goodbye.)

Of course, I can't guarantee that no one will lose a writing contract. Don't we sometimes need to take risks? Like boxers, we can only fight if we are in the ring. How can any of us be safe if some of us are not?

(THE FIGURE waves, as if more people are walking out.)

THE FIGURE

They don't want to listen, Liu Xiaobo.

LIU XIAOBO

(LIU XIAOBO sits down next to THE FIGURE, who observes, sympathetically.)

That's all right. I'll meet with another group next week! I will say that we can't survive by being passive sheep grazing on the grass approved by the regime. In their hearts, they want to join.

THE FIGURE

Wait Someone's coming back! Look ... !

LIU XIAOBO

(Raises his beer.)

Aha! Welcome, my friend.

End of Scene 30

Act I

Scene Thirty-One

LIU XIA

(LIU XIA appears on her own in an isolated space. SHE is reliving an earlier time, but it also is a projection of a time to come.)

I awaken, every night, like a sleepless cat. Nothing brings slumber. I walk the empty apartment, and there are only empty glasses and empty plates and empty chairs. They look lovely in Van Gogh's paintings. But in real life, they are frozen in time. I can't eat, I can't sit. I can only see what should be there. I see the moment when they came and the next thing I know he is in the back of a police van pulling away. Without so much as goodbye. No word where, or why, or what to expect.

I stand in the darkness while dapples of moonlight creep through the windows, like the Hale-Bopp comet, like an angel coming to visit. I wave my hands in the air and make puppet shadows on the wall. Finally, my hands lead me to my camera. We begin to click away, that angel and me. I lose all sense of time.

When the film is developed, yes, I can see what I am feeling -- the absurdity of it all. The despair. The torment. And I live through another day.

(SHE exits.)

End of Scene Thirty-One

Scene Thirty-Two

(DING ZILIN sits, bundled up, in a park. It is cold.)

THE FIGURE

(THE FIGURE enters, hovers.)

Du Guangxue ... Liu Hongtao ... Yuan Li ... Li Dezhi ... This mother walks on ... Su Yan ... Jiang Jielian ...

(LIU XIAOBO, entering, listens for a moment, then sits next to DING ZILIN. He carries a package. The GUARD follows LIU XIAOBO in and quietly sits nearby, mostly doing nothing but shivering; HE wears a hat over his ears and frequently puts his gloved hands up to his face. Sometimes LIU XIAOBO and DING ZILIN gesture or use coded language; other times, they speak with daring abandon.)

LIU XIAOBO

Thank you for meeting. The park lends itself to talking so much better than our phone lines.

DING ZILIN

(Referring to the GUARD.)

The crisp air suits me. I see you've brought your "national treasure." I hope he doesn't report me as one of your flirtations.

LIU XIAOBO

Ha! Those rumors of my "playboy" lifestyle are outdated, professor. That's an earlier "me." And I've replaced him.

DING ZILIN

No more "Mad Dog"? Hard to imagine.

LIU XIAOBO

Liu Xia and I are like the covers of one book – hers the more artistic, of course. I'm to give you this item from her with our thanks for your manuscript.

DING ZILIN

The victim families are very close to losing hope.

LIU XIAOBO

Cyberspace is going to take care of that.

DING ZILIN

Cyber ...?

LIU XIAOBO

Computers! Bits and bytes. See!

(HE takes out an out-fashioned looking floppy disk.)

A disk! With all the stories from the Mothers of Tiananmen.

DING ZILIN
(SHE looks at it.)

On this? How odd.

LIU XIAOBO

These testimonies force the voices of the powerless into the narration of history. I'm learning how to move things across the Internet. I can get essays to the Hong Kong, the States, Great Britain, all with the click of a button.

DING ZILIN

But what good is "cyberspace" to the families? We've asked, and asked our leaders for a small acknowledgement. We've written. We've petitioned. But the authorities haven't offered a single, half-hearted promise of reform in ten years.

LIU XIAOBO

The problem is that we've become too accustomed to pelting our "requests" at the authorities as if they are the Emperor and we are the subjects.

But we're citizens. We will change the regime by changing society. We will change the society by changing ourselves. We change ourselves by changing our actions. We must turn ourselves into resisters.

DING ZILIN

I'll do whatever it takes. There's no going back.

LIU XIAOBO

On every document, we must talk about universal human rights. China's now bidding for the Olympics in 2008. The eyes of the world will be upon us.

DING ZILIN

Yes, I can do that.

LIU XIAOBO

Instead of private petitions, we must use Open Letters. Our demands will no longer be secret. We can post them on websites.

DING ZILIN

Websites? I have a lot to learn.

LIU XIAOBO

I'm gathering Chinese writers who believe in human rights. I have five already. So many topics to address. Child labor at the kilns. Farmer displacement. The environment. Publication rights. If writers are threatened, we'll support them. Let them know they aren't forgotten, like Liu Xia did for me. We'll nominate people for awards. We will raise the voices of the Lost Souls.

DING ZILIN

It is a matter of survival for me.

LIU XIAOBO

Pictures from that night at Tiananmen are engraved in my mind. I can no longer turn away from the Lost Souls. You've taught me that lesson. They are part of me like stones in a river.

THE FIGURE

(Sits on the bench with them.)

“Freedom loving friends, spread your wings ...”

DING ZILIN

(Beat. DING ZILIN speaks with deliberateness.)

I cannot allow the government to deny the 6-4 Massacre or the humanity of the innocent lives taken.

LIU XIAOBO

(HE stands, leaving the package.)

We won't let that happen. And, this print, from Liu Xia. We're calling the series “Ugly Babies.”

(LIU XIAOBO exits; the GUARD follows and then THE FIGURE. DING ZILIN opens the picture, cradles it.)

End of Scene Thirty-Two

Act I

Scene Thirty-Three

THE FIGURE

(Joins LIU XIAOBO in an isolated space.)

“Friends of democracy, let's take each other's hands; Friends of conscience, open your hearts ...”

(LIU XIAOBO joins on the last line.)

THE FIGURE

(After a beat)

Tell me the truth, Liu Xiaobo: Did you see it happen? You said in your “confession” from prison that you did not see anyone killed on Tiananmen Square. Did you see it happen to me?

LIU XIAOBO

No, my friend. I did not.

(beat)

But in the darkness I felt ... I felt ... the last hot breath of freedom escape.

(Music.)

End of Scene Thirty-Three

END OF ACT ONE

ACT II
Scene One

(The time is June 2008. The setting is the apartment of LIU XIA and LIU XIAOBO.)

(It's dark, except perhaps for light emanating from a computer monitor and a cigarette. LIU XIAOBO's voice is heard but at first he cannot be seen. HE is talking on SKYPE, using a headset, but we are not really aware of it immediately. The table, floor and surrounding furniture are piled high with books and papers. LIU XIAOBO is smoking, eating, drinking, reading, writing, texting on a phone at the same time as he talks on the SKYPE.)

(A series of eight photographs is projected. THEY may look like this, or they may be more abstract like #8.)

One – A Beijing poster
 Two - An empty Tiananmen Square
 Three – Chinese officials
 Four – People/protesters on the street
 Five – A Chinese factory
 Six -Television reporters on state TV
 Seven – Fireworks, Beijing readying for the Olympics
 Eight – A Liu Xia doll/art image

LIU XIAOBO

(Talking via a headset into his computer.)

Surely, you see the wisdom, Dr. Lee! Once *Human Rights Reporter* nominates Ding Zilin for the Nobel Peace Prize, the world will be alerted to her work. I can't see how the Olympics make any difference. All I see in Beijing is one deceit-laden spectacle of hypocrisy. "Boundless Glory!" "The Rise of A Great Nation!" Posters on every wall and it's still two months away.

(Heavy equipment construction sounds are heard.)

LIU XIA

(Off-stage) (SHE screams.)

AYYY ... AYyyiii ... AYYYYY.

LIU XIAOBO

(On SKYPE, but looks around in response to the scream.)

You're hearing road construction! Yes, even at 3 a.m. That's the boundless glory at work.

LIU XIA

(Overlapping ... SHE screams again)

AYYY-AIYA. AIYA!! EEE-YA.

LIU XIAOBO

(Turning momentarily from SKYPE to LIU XIA.)

Liu Xia, what is it?

LIU XIA

You're talking to someone? At this hour?

(LIU XIA turns on the lights. LIU XIAOBO nods "yes.")

LIU XIAOBO

(To LIU XIA)

New York. Dr. Lee – the new editor.

(To SKYPE)

Listen to this crazy story, Dr. Lee: To comply with the International Olympics Committee, China set up three free-speech sites. Protesters can apply to use them. Then, as soon as they seek a permit, they're arrested! Haha! Isn't that the 100-year Olympic dream? Our rich tradition of persecuting people for their words.

(Laughing about this, while watching LIU XIA.)

LIU XIA

You talk and talk and talk!

LIU XIAOBO

Everything happens behind a black curtain, and in front, fireworks to distract you: The Golden Age of Prosperity!

LIU XIA

(SHE tugs at HIS headphones.)

CAN'T YOU HEAR ME??

LIU XIAOBO

(On SKYPE)

Excuse me ... May I mute this for a minute?

(HE drops the headphones.)

What is wrong?

LIU XIA

I dreamed they came and took my work. My Ugly Babies. Were they knocking?

LIU XIAOBO

It's Olympics' construction. Nothing more. I'll be done soon.

(LIU XIA starts searching through her art. LIU XIAOBO returns to his SKYPE call.)

My wife, Liu Xia, sends her regards. I'll have to send you a print of her art. Brilliant.

THE FIGURE

(Self-assured, THE FIGURE comes out of the shadow, stands near LIU XIA.)

Do you want me to pose? Now that we're family? I'm very photogenic.

LIU XIA

It's like waiting for the other shoe to drop. I'm always wondering, when are they going to arrest you again?

LIU XIAOBO (To LIU XIA)

It's been eight years. Eight years – 800 essays!

(LIU XIAOBO) (On SKYPE)

Liu Xia is asking the same thing. The fact is they aren't going to arrest the high profile writers when the eyes of the world are on the Olympics. All of us in Independent China PEN agree.

(beat)

We have quite a large number of writers in China PEN! Over 50 now! We have monthly meetings by computer. Cyber-assemblies. We have several active committees – freedom of speech, publishing rights, family support. I do the prison committee myself. We have an annual award! Well, some years we have it; some years the Giant Panda forces a cancellation. But we're showing what a group of peaceful civilians can do, even in China!

LIU XIA

Except for the ones who dropped their membership after the police confiscated everything.

LIU XIAOBO

Liu Xia's recalling that the People's Police seized my computers in 2004. But that was four years ago. I have new computers now. Better ones!

LIU XIA

Took your letters! My poetry! And I'm not even political. It's like a pogrom!

LIU XIAOBO

(On SKYPE, but also to LIU XIA, overlapping)

Don't worry about me! Wouldn't it be odd for the head of an organization that speaks out for imprisoned writers to be put into prison? It would be a comedy routine.

LIU XIA (Overlapping)

If they understood my art, they probably would have taken that, too. But abstract doesn't translate in modern day China.

LIU XIAOBA

Of course, they follow me. But you have to be in the ring to fight! The Internet is our miracle. Write, punch, send.

THE FIGURE

You can't name the Lost Souls in public.

LIU XIA

We can't travel! For fear that they won't let us back home! It's a life Kafka couldn't have imagined.

LIU XIAOBO

(Putting microphone aside, to LIU XIA)

You and I should take a day off. Go to the beach, let the sound of the water fill our minds. Maybe Qingdao. We can take the train.

LIU XIA

I want to climb a mountain and look down from the highest peak. Get above this craziness.

LIU XIAOBO (To LIU XIA)

When we're in Qingdao, we can climb Mount Lao.

(LIU XIAOBO cont'd)

(Back into SKYPE.)

Of course they monitor the computers. Now that computers are everywhere, 50,000 people have the auspicious job of censoring every byte and blog. Definitely added to the employment rolls.

THE FIGURE

Even eyes under surveillance/ feel the night's dead souls

LIU XIAOBO

It's a game: June 4 is now May 35! 1989 is the ... year before 1990. (beat) That's why the award for Tiananmen Mothers will send a powerful message to the regime. China PEN put Professor Ding's name in, but a nomination by a bigger human rights organization will have real clout!

LIU XIA

And what if they come for you next time?

LIU XIAOBO (TO LIU XIA)

I'm not going anywhere. I promise.

(LUI XIAOBO (Back to SKYPE)

I don't think you can say the Nobel is "never" awarded to a group airing past grievances. Ding raises the narratives of ordinary Chinese people victimized by state brutality. No one from China has won the Nobel Peace Prize ... other than the Dalai Lama for his campaign for Tibet, and he was in exile. The point is ...

(beat, listens)

I'm not interested in a petition by Chinese professors. We have to stop petitioning. In PEN, we're building the power of writers, and ordinary citizens. I'm sure the intelligentsia can write something intelligent without my help.

THE FIGURE

Each year each month each day each hour each moment Inevitably there'll be a day

LIU XIA

(Ranting, both to and apart from LIU XIAOBO.)

We can own all the products we want in our "socialist" state, but should we hold an opinion that disagrees with the "rulers," we are forbidden to own our own thoughts.

THE FIGURE

Inevitably ...

LIU XIAOBO

Please think about it, Dr. Lee. Don't forget the 20th anniversary of 6-4 is barely a year away. Honoring the families is a noble cause.

(LIU XIAOBO disengages with his SKYPE call.)

He has other priorities. He says.

LIU XIA

(SHE gathers her camera.)

You'll have another idea. You always do.

(SHE poses an 'ugly baby' doll on his shoulder.)

Hold still.

I like this doll.

LIU XIAOBO

(The shutter clicks.)

End of Scene One

Act II

Scene Two

THE FIGURE

Do not say 19 years of light's been wasted in the Eulogies of the Mothers Young departed souls, do not say defeat ... The candle flames cannot be cut off from the night ...

End of Scene Two

Act II

Scene Three

(DING ZILIN walking across the stage, as if she is doing her daily exercise routine in a park.)

DING ZILIN

Since the moment my son died, my pain and my suffering surpassed my fears and my comfort. Time cannot heal the loss of my son. Not 1 year later, not 10 years later, not 19 years later. Not ever.

It took two years after I lost my son before I broke my silence. I'm not really a political person. But I will not sit by.

When I began contacting the mothers and the victims, I made a decision. Since then, I have never been scared again.

End of Scene Three

Act II

Scene Four

(Weeks later. A soft light indicates dawn with a light rising slowly. Scenes 4 through 13 reflect two simultaneous conversations in different settings. The conversations move back and forth seamlessly. One setting is at Tiananmen Square, where THE FIGURE and LIU XIA encounter JIANG PEIKUN. The other setting is the apartment of LIU XIAOBO, where YANG YU appears.)

THE FIGURE

(Takes place in the wide open space of Tiananmen Square. The scene has an imaginary quality. THE FIGURE dances and does light exercises, reciting names slowly.)

Yang Yan-Sheng, Luo Wei, Duan Changlong, Li Dezhi, Wang Nan ...

(During the above sequence, LIU XIA enters and looks around, to the ground and to the sky. From the way she observes the scene, you get the impression of space and distance. Every now and then she holds her hands up to her eyes as if framing a picture. SHE is mostly lost in a reverie.)

LIU XIA

(SHE looks at the paving stones.)

I feel vibrations in every stone.

“Stones have seen great ruin and are speechless/ the sky looks down over all and is speechless ...”

End of Scene Four**Act II****Scene Five**

(On a separate part of the stage, a young man, YANG YU - - a serious-looking student – knocks on the door to the apartment of LIU XIAOBO.)

YANG YU

Hello. Professor Liu. Hello?

LIU XIAOBO

Just a minute.

(HE quickly dresses, puts away his notes.)

End of Scene Five**Act II****Scene Six**

(As LIU XIA stands, engrossed in her own thoughts, in the space, real or imaginary, of Tiananmen Square, JIANG PEIKUN walks up, carrying groceries and shopping items.)

JIANG PEIKUN

A familiar face!

LIU XIA

Professor Jiang, you startled me!

JIANG PEIKUN

You're the last person I expected to see at Tiananmen.

LIU XIA

I might say the same to you. Why would you want to be anywhere near?

JIANG PEIKUN

Some people self-immolate here. I just stop by from time to time. I imagine going into the Great Hall of the People and slipping into the chamber where Party leaders sit neatly, all in their rows. I shout: "HAVE YOU NO SHAME?" and then I magically escape back to the Square while my voice echoes from wall to wall. After I think this, I feel better, and walk on.

THE FIGURE

Is there a force somewhere in the sky/ that can turn the clock back?

LIU XIA

I am studying the paving stones. So clean.

JIANG PEIKUN

No stains. No drops of blood. No chanting. "Harmony" is the latest slogan and to ensure harmony, half the people on the Square are guards. They make sure no Falun Gong believers appear. And no Tibetan protesters. And no people angry about the shoddy schools that collapsed in the earthquake and left children crushed in the ruins.

LIU XIA

But it's the air. The air suffocates.

End of Scene Six

Act II Scene Seven

(At the LIU apartment.)

LIU XIAOBO

(Answering door.)

Hello. Who are you?

YANG YU

I am Yang Yu. A student. May I enter?

(LIU XIAOBO opens the way.)

Professor Zhang Zuhua of Beijing and Mr. Zhou Dagon, the writer, of Shenzhen, asked me to visit you. I have a letter of introduction.

(HE holds out a letter; LIU XIAOBO barely glances at it.)

LIU XIAOBO

The Internet isn't working in Shenzhen? Zhang Zuhua has lost my email address?

YANG YU

They thought a personal greeting would best.

LIU XIAOBO

That's sounds like trouble already. Didn't the guards downstairs question you? Even if they're here to watch me, I count on them to screen out the knock-on-the-door types.

YANG YU

Sleeping.

LIU XIAOBO

It is a boring job. Believe me, prison is the same.

End of Scene Seven

Act II
Scene Eight

LIU XIA

(At the space, real or imaginary, of Tiananmen Square.)

I prefer the small cafes. Gardens. The old houses. Not this

JIANG PEIKUN

(Pointing. While he talks, the FIGURE gestures, as if demonstrating to a game-show audience.)

A "must-see" for tourists. To the north, Forbidden City, dates to 1400. Chang `An Avenue -- the Street of Eternal Peace. To the south, Chairman Mao in his crystal coffin. Daily, fresh bouquets and grasses. Watching us all: cameras on every pole. In the center, the venerable Monument to the People's Immortal Heroes.

LIU XIA

There are awful-smelling vapors rising from the ground. Memories. How do you keep going?

THE FIGURE

(Sinking to the ground.)

Where is my crystal coffin? My memorial hall? Flowers!

End of Scene Eight

Act II
Scene Nine
(At the LIU apartment.)

YANG YU

Zhang Zuhua and Zhao Dagong are drafting a document, along with prominent intellectuals ... who count you as the most erudite on issues ...

LIU XIAOBO

Is this a speech they gave you to recite? I'm done with petitions. Dead-end. The regime is not going to grant our rights based on a request from the "intelligentsia."

YANG YU

This document is different.

LIU XIAOBO

They're all the same. Tell me ... have you read any of my books?

YANG YU

I've read three, sir. Some are hard to find.

LIU XIAOBO

All are hard to find in China.

Have you heard of The Tank Man?

YANG YU

No, sir.

LIU XIAOBO

The Goddess of Democracy?

YANG YU

I might have seen a picture.

LIU XIAOBO

Do you know anything about Tiananmen, June 4, 1989?

YANG YU

My mother was there. She wanted to tell me before she died. In Sichuan. Two years ago. Lung cancer.

LIU XIAOBO

I'm sorry for your loss.

YANG YU

She told me that she wrote to you once for advice.

LIU XIAOBO

(Making this up as he goes along.)

I'm planning a big celebration next year – the 20th anniversary. You can join in. We're going to rebuild the Goddess of Democracy. We'll have replicas all over the world. And a cyber-Tiananmen. Bloggers all around the globe! Chinese PEN will be taking a lead role. And, of course, we'll work with the Tiananmen Mothers ...

YANG YU

My mother mentioned them.

LIU XIAOBO

Should win a Nobel Prize. The authorities won't even let Professor Ding light a candle on Chang `An Avenue to recognize the soul of her own murdered son.

YANG YU

Doesn't that violate universal human rights?

LIU XIAOBO

Very good! You know two important words: “human” and “rights.”

YANG YU

May I show you the draft, then?

End of Scene Nine

Act II

Scene Ten

JIANG PEIKUN

(At the space, real or imaginary of Tiananmen Square.)

When Ding Zilin is planning a meeting, she’s like a general preparing a march. After our son was murdered, she cried all day, and every day for months. Six times, she almost succumbed. I will not let her go.

LIU XIA

I look across the Square and I see them still: one million bodies spread across the plaza. Claiming this space as their own. And then, gone. In my studio, I give them new spaces.

JIANG PEIKUN

Be careful what you make, Liu Xia.

LIU XIA

Ideas tap me on the shoulder. Even I’m surprised at the outcome. This is who I am.

JIANG PEIKUN

I’m warning you. They will take what is most important. This is what the Party is good at.

LIU XIA

I am a nobody, a nothing. I don’t get involved in politics. I don’t talk to news people. I am only married to a somebody.

THE FIGURE

Love is so simple ...

JIANG PEIKUN

Gao – the lawyer for persecuted prisoners -- they put him in prison, and when he went on a hunger strike, they threatened to withhold food from his family.

LIU XIA

They can’t use a child against us. We decided that early on.

JIANG PEIKUN

It is, of course, the reason why Liu Xiaobo never mentions Liu Tao – his son. His first wife left the country with him, never a word. Liu Xiaobo will spin in circles, talk to the early hours, make your ear sag with his sentences and paragraphs. And still never mention his son.

LIU XIA

Xiaobo suffered doubly from Tiananmen - the Lost Souls and his own son.

THE FIGURE

Love is so simple yet so difficult.

JIANG PEIKUN

Mark my word. When they wish to get at Liu Xiaobo, they will go after what he loves. You. Then, they will go after what you love. Your freedom? Your art? Your independence? They'll figure it out.

LIU XIA

I won't let them use me. People think I'm fragile. Perhaps I am. But I have granite in my bones.

JIANG PEIKUN

Zeng Jennifer -- after she came out of prison -- they humiliated her by getting her 11-year-old daughter to denounce her and call her swine. You should think about leaving China while you still have time.

LIU XIA

And what about you?

JIANG PEIKUN

No need. They already took everything. Stripped me to the bone. Except for the anger that bubbles up in my chest from time-to-time, and the tiniest bit of dignity.

End of Scene Ten**Act II****Scene Eleven**

(At the LIU apartment with YANG YU.)

LIU XIAOBO

What good will come from my looking at their draft? I know this "intelligentsia" -- half will denounce me as too liberal. The other half will denounce me as too moderate. One half will complain that I only want freedom of speech and an end to one-party rule, and the other side will say that my ideas for reform are too incremental. And another half will ...

YANG YU

That would make three halves, which is more than the whole by fifty percent.

LIU XIAOBO

Exactly. The third one-half will go on about "300 years" and something I said on the radio in Hong Kong decades ago.

YANG YU

Oh no. I don't think that's the case, sir.

LIU XIAOBO

Come on, Yang Yu. You want to ask me yourself, don't you? The government propaganda you hear all the time?

YANG YU

No. No. I don't think about that.

LIU XIAOBO

This is what I mean! Nothing will ever be accomplished if we don't start telling the truth.

YANG YU

My friends did say something about a radio show. But I don't care about it. Truth is, I'm in Beijing to see a boxing match at the Olympics! China will be counting up the gold!

LIU XIAOBO

(Starts poking YANG YU.)

Want to fight? Want to box?

YANG YU

(Backing away.)

No, Dr. Liu.

LIU XIAOBO

Then ask me your question.

YANG YU

(beat)

My friends said: "Why did Dr. Liu say that for China to realize true transformation ..."

LIU XIAOBO

Continue ...

YANG YU

"... it would take 300 years of colonialism." That it's taken 100 years of colonialism for Hong Kong, and China is at least three times as large, so ...

LIU XIAOBO

How could I say such a shaming thing? I must be a traitor to China! What about the honor of the Chinese people?

YANG YU

Yes, that's what my friends asked.

LIU XIAOBO

I was being sarcastic!

YANG YU

But you never took it back.

LIU XIAOBO

Why should I? I'm free to speak my mind. And to change it, too! And even free to make mistakes! Don't you know the ancient Chinese saying: "A speaker is blameless because listeners can think!" Look at you ... afraid of your own shadow. How will the Chinese people ever be free if they don't practice freedom? Think for yourself Yang Yu! Wake up! Take action!

YANG YU

I will tell my friends.

LIU XIAOBO
(Holds out his hand.)

Give me the papers.

(HE leafs through them.)

I'm not interested. A waste of time. Will get zero attention.

YANG YU

I am to explain that they wish to emulate Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia but with Chinese characteristics.

LIU XIAOBO

I can see that. But Vaclav Havel wrote for the people – from the bottom up. We need an open platform where citizens can sign on! A bill of rights. They need to reference the 2004 amendment to the Chinese constitution, “respect and protect human rights” -- even if it is written on thin paper with even thinner ink.

YANG YU

Professor Zhang wants to release it on December 10 for International Human Rights Day.

LIU XIAOBO

And they need a snappy title.

(HE hands the papers back to YANG YU.)

YANG YU

You don't want to join them?

LIU XIAOBO
(HE chuckles at this joke and pokes YANG YU again.)

Not unless you want to box with me.

End of Scene Eleven

Act II
Scene Twelve

(At the space, real or imaginary of Tiananmen Square.)

JIANG PEIKUN

When Zilin saw the picture that you presented to her -- the one with the funny dolls –

LIU XIA

“Ugly babies.” They scare most people.

JIANG PEIKUN

Nothing scares her. She put it on the wall, right next to the picture of our son.

LIU XIA

At least I have an exhibit somewhere in China.

JIANG PEIKUN

I imagine our phone service will be cut off during the Olympics to keep any foreign reporters from contacting Ding Zilin.

LIU XIA

That's crazy. What harm can she do to the People's Republic of China?

JIANG PEIKUN

Every whiff of trouble must be crushed. Every threat, no matter how small. Stability, at all costs.

LIU XIA

(SHE shows him her phone; HE studies it a moment.)

I have an extra cell phone tucked away.

JIANG PEIKUN

Maybe the future will be brighter. China will win all of its gold medals and the world will swoon to its pyrotechnics. The Party will relax and loosen the reins.

End of Scene Twelve

Act II

Scene Thirteen

(At the LIU apartment, with YANG YU.)

YANG YU

So then it's true what they say -- you are too western for China.

LIU XIAOBO

You must learn to separate propaganda from truth, young man. Tell Zhang and Zhao I will be contacting them about Tiananmen-Twenty. We'll reinvent the Democracy Wall, but online. Now, goodbye.

YANG YU

(Refusing to leave, he points to one of LIU XIA's works.)

That photograph. What is the meaning of it?

LIU XIAOBO

It's called "Ugly Babies." It means what it means to you.

YANG YU

I see the masks that we put on to get by in a society that wants us to think in a singular way. I see the postponed dreams of writers, artists, and citizens. I see how one generation must stand on the shoulders of another.

LIU XIAOBO

Perhaps there is hope for you yet. Good luck.

YANG YU

I have an opinion, Dr. Liu. In my opinion, you should keep these papers. And to take action on that, I will simply leave them on this table here.

(With some trepidation, YANG puts them on a table.)

LIU XIAOBO

Getting bold, Yang, aren't you?

(Punches YANG YU lightly.)

Maybe you will use your Olympics' ticket to investigate ultra-nationalism and the effect on freedom of speech. Leave your email.

YANG YU

Thank you, Dr. Liu.

End of Scene Thirteen

Act II

Scene Fourteen

(August 8, 2008. In the LIU apartment. LIU XIA is watching television, leaning forward, staring into a small set. THE FIGURE sits nearby, sullen, listless.)

LIU XIA

(Sounds of the Olympics from the TV.)

Haha! Xiaobo! You must come and see this! On CCTV!

LIU XIAOBO

(Calling from another room.)

No answer on Ding Zilin's telephone!

LIU XIA

They are showing this girl singing, but she's not really singing! It's dubbed. I'm sure of it!

LIU XIAOBO

(Enters, with phone.)

Now our phone is out.

LIU XIA

You will want to write about this! "Brilliant civilization." "Glorious era." Look ... they are pretending these children are from all 56 Chinese ethnicities ... in "native" costumes. But they're all Han Chinese child actors! Not another ethnicity among them. They're faking it ... look at their faces ...

(Sound cuts off, and lights go out on TV and elsewhere.)

What! What's happening!

LIU XIAOBO

(Flicks a cigarette lighter, then a flashlight.)

Phone is out. Electricity is out. Internet down.

LIU XIA

An outage? During the Olympics?

LIU XIAOBO

Plus I can't get a ring on the phone for Ding Zilin and Jiang Peikun.

LIU XIA

08-08-08 is supposed to be China's luckiest day.

LIU XIAOBO

Perhaps I will get lucky in finding matches and a candle, then.

(LIU XIAOBO is opening drawers, moving around the apartment. A cell phone rings.)

LIU XIA

My cell phone! Now ... where have I put it?

(SHE starts searching for it in semi-darkness, as well. Comically THEY bump into each other.)

LIU XIAOBO

Ooops! Was that your foot?

LIU XIA

No ... I think it was yours!

LIU XIAOBO

Careful with those Nijinsky toes!

(HE finds a flashlight.)

Aha! Light.

LIU XIA

I think my cell phone is under a cushion! Yes. I have it!

(SHE picks up a phone, opens it.)

Hello.

(SHE listens, talks in the phone, then to LIU XIAOBO.)

It's a neighbor of Ding Zilin.

LIU XIAOBO

What's going on?

LIU XIA

(On phone, then to LIU XIAOBO)

No!

(beat)

She's saying that the security police were at Ding Zilin's apartment, and that four guards arrested Professor Jiang.

LIU XIAOBO

For what? On WHAT grounds?

LIU XIA

(On phone, then to LIU XIAOBO)

He was wheezing and coughing. He was handcuffed.

LIU XIAOBO

He's an OLD MAN! He's in POOR HEALTH!! Where did they take him?

(LIU XIA hands the phone over to LIU XIAOBO.)

LIU XIAOBO

Liu Xiaobo, here.

(beat)

Yes, it's really me.

(beat)

Thank you, I'm flattered. The guards ... did you see any insignias on their uniforms ...

(beat)

HELLO? Hello?

(To LIU XIA.)

Cut off. Can't hear anything.

LIU XIA

(Takes back the phone.)

Hello? Are you there? Hello? Isn't there some kind of button? Some call back thing? Here!

(Finds and pushes a callback button.)

Nothing. Ringing.

LIU XIAOBO

This is cruelty beyond what I can imagine!

LIU XIA

It's to humiliate them. To strip away his dignity. They go after what you love the most. That's what he told me.

LIU XIAOBO

We'll go over there.

LIU XIA

I'll get a few items from the refrigerator.

(SHE exits and returns quickly with items. THEY pack, put on their shoes. LIU XIA and LIU XIAOBO open the door. LIGHT beams in. THE GUARD is standing there.)

GUARD

What can I do for you?

LIU XIA

The electricity is out.

GUARD

I meant to inform you earlier.

LIU XIAOBO

We're heading elsewhere for the time being.

GUARD

I'm sorry. You won't be leaving. We have a team downstairs, one down the hall, to make sure of it.
(GUARD points, as if there are many guards, just offstage,
and HE is being watched, as well as watching.)

LIU XIAOBO

You're saying we must stay in our apartment?

GUARD

Only for the duration of the Olympics.

LIU XIA

So you are holding us PRISONER?

GUARD

You're not prisoners. We're only restricting your ability to leave.

LIU XIA

If our ability to leave is restricted, that makes us prisoners.

GUARD

To be a prisoner, you would have to be under detention.

LIU XIA

But we CAN'T LEAVE! You are DETAINING us!! That MAKES us prisoners!

GUARD

There would have to be a special order for you to be a prisoner.

LIU XIAOBO

Is there a special order?

GUARD

No. Only the one that says you are restricted from leaving.

LIU XIA

AAAhiii! This is crazy!!! Kafka! Kafka! Kafka!

GUARD

I don't know that word, I'm sorry.

LIU XIA

This is ridiculous! I won't stand for it.

(SHE tries to walk past the GUARD.)

GUARD

(Blocks her, forcefully.)

Go back into your apartment. You WILL NOT BE LEAVING.

LIU XIAOBO

Let's be reasonable and see what we can work out. We have an emergency.

(LIU XIAOBO steps out.)

GUARD

I AM WARNING YOU. DO NOT TAKE ANOTHER STEP BEYOND THE THRESHOLD. GO BACK INSIDE! RIGHT NOW!

(Now LIU XIA moves back. LIU XIAOBO stands firm.)

I SAID GO INSIDE.

(The GUARD pushes LIU XIAOBO roughly; LIU XIAOBO falls down. THE GUARD shoves him with his feet.)

LIU XIAOBO

(Still on the ground.)

We simply wish to attend to a person in need. Then we will return and stay in our apartment for the duration of the Olympics.

GUARD

You ARE NOT LEAVING! There is a TEAM down the hall! Another downstairs.

(Looks at a message he has received on a phone.)

And GIVE ME the cell phone.

LIU XIA

I'm not understanding your meaning.

GUARD

A signal indicates someone from your apartment made a call on a cell phone. GIVE IT TO ME NOW OR WE SEARCH THE ENTIRE APARTMENT.

LIU XIA

Cell phone? Oh, this?

(LIU XIA hands over the cell phone.)

GUARD

If there's more trouble, we'll station guards inside your unit.

(The GUARD closes the door and cannot be seen.)

LIU XIA

(SHE helps LIU XIAOBO up, then lights some candles.)

This is so outrageous! HOW CAN THEY DO THIS!

LIU XIAOBO

They were right. I was wrong, and they were right.

LIU XIA

About moving away?

LIU XIAOBO

There was a young man here -- Yang Yu -- with a document that the "intelligentsia" wants to release. Have you seen it?

LIU XIA

What does that have to do with us being held as prisoners in our own apartment?

LIU XIAOBO

Ah! I have it. They want to release it for Human Rights Day. I wanted to save our firepower for June 4. But the world must know everything ... now. I need to make it a manifesto for human rights.

LIU XIA

In the dark?

LIU XIAOBO

I can see perfectly well.

THE FIGURE

I have learned that life is a simple and unembellished thing/like a horizonless desert/requiring no water.

LIU XIAOBO

(Thinking this through.)

The first signers will be the Chinese in China. Who are first-hand witnesses. Then we will take it to the world.

LIU XIA

Can't other people carry the load? Why must it always be you?

LIU XIAOBO

(Now slipping deeper into his own world.)

This will be the first document in China to publicly mention the Tiananmen MASSACRE. The Lost Souls.

LIU XIA

What about the living?

End of Scene Fourteen

Act II

Scene Fifteen

(December 7, 2008. THE FIGURE is racing down a street, holding papers.)

THE FIGURE

Liu Xiaobo, please Liu Xiaobo, can you slow down? I'm not as young as I used to be.

LIU XIAOBO

(LIU XIAOBO, emerges, walking rapidly, wearing a winter coat, carrying a knapsack, smoking.)

Time is running out, my friend. Only three days to collect signatures and hit the send button.

THE FIGURE

(Takes one of his papers from his pack, reads.)

"2008 marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We are approaching the 20th anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre of pro-democracy protestors."

(THE FIGURE cont'd)
(Turns the paper over to check it.)

Does it really say that? “The Tiananmen Massacre.”

LIU XIAOBO

Good, isn't it! One of the things I negotiated. But I promised 300 signers inside China. I have the PEN writers; must get The Teachers.

THE FIGURE
(LIU XIAOBO exits. THE FIGURE reads the document.)

“The Chinese people have endured uncountable struggles. Now many see that freedom, equality, and human rights are universal values.”

It becomes me!

(THE FIGURE strikes a pose.)

“Democracy means a government ... ‘of the people, by the people, and for the people.’”

“We dare to put civic spirit into practice by announcing Charter 08!”

End of Scene Fifteen

Act II

Scene Sixteen

(From Scene Fifteen. LIU XIAOBO hurries along.)

THE FIGURE

We're off to another poet's apartment?

LIU XIAOBO

Have to get to the hospital.

THE FIGURE

You smoke too much. I knew it. You'll never last.

LIU XIAOBO

(LIU XIAOBO enters the door of a hospital, speaks to an ORDERLY seated at a counter.)

I'm here to see patient Ding Zilin.

(LIU XIAOBO shows an ID. THE ORDERLY exits.)

THE FIGURE

Professor Ding? No!

(DING ZILIN is wheeled by THE ORDERLY. THE ORDERLY sits.)

LIU XIAOBO

I rushed over.

DING ZILIN

Minor surgery. Do me a favor -- please make sure Professor Jiang is eating properly. He hasn't been well since they took him in during the Olympics.

LIU XIAOBO

I just saw him -- you needn't worry.

(beat)

I have another project going. I was able to include some points that are certain to cheer you.

(HE covertly pulls out a copy from a bag, holds it out.)

DING ZILIN

My eyes ...

LIU XIAOBO

Well, let me summarize. The "Mothers" are mentioned in the foreword.

DING ZILIN

My goodness!

LIU XIAOBO

There are 19 measures for a healthier China. Number 19 -- (whispering.) "Restore the reputations of families who have suffered political stigma and of people who have been labeled as criminals because of their thought, speech or faith."

DING ZILIN

Oh my. (Nods) What did Jiang Peikun say?

LIU XIAOBO

He said people at the top might not be too happy. A lot of the big professors are wringing their hands. I told them: "Use my name if you want." Citizens must be able to put their names on it -- or what is the point?

DING ZILIN

(SHE scribbles her name.)

If this is a stepping stone, I'm not afraid to step on it.

(LIU and THE FIGURE exit; THE ORDERLY stands, checks his phone, wheels her out.)

End of Scene Sixteen

Act II

Scene Seventeen

(The next night. The LIU apartment. Darkness and quiet. LIU XIA lies on a couch. LIU XIAOBO, asleep, with a book in his hand, holds HER. There is a crash.)

LIU XIA

(Sits up. SHE speaks quietly.)

The other shoe! It's them! Xiaobo ... wake up!

LIU XIAOBO
(Half awakened.)

What is it?

LIU XIA
The nightmare! I can feel it happening!
(Now much more crashing, banging, slamming.)

GUARD
(Accompanied by at least one other GUARD.)

OPEN UP!

LIU XIAOBO
I'm sure it's nothing. Some drunk.

LIU XIA
Ayayayay! Xiaobo ... your computer ...

GUARD
(Continued banging.)

OPEN THE DOOR!

LIU XIAOBO
(Now, wide awake.)

Yes! We're coming.
(Stands, begins to organize things, but THE GUARD has entered and is standing inside with the SECOND GUARD.)

GUARD
The door opened on its own.
(SECOND GUARD grabs LIU XIAOBO, pins his arms.)

LIU XIA
You can't do that! Stop!

GUARD
(GUARD indicates that the SECOND GUARD should remove LIU XIAOBO.)

You can take him down.

LIU XIAOBO
(HE speaks to LIU XIA as the SECOND GUARD puts a cloth in HIS mouth and a black bag over HIS head.)

Xia, remember, until I return, soon, my love is embracing you ...
(SECOND GUARD abruptly but perfunctorily marches LIU XIAOBO out. LIU XIA sinks.)

GUARD
(GUARD sits at the computer. He speaks to LIU XIA.)

What is the password?

LIU XIA

I don't know. I'm an artist, not a computer technician.

GUARD

Ahh. Mr. Liu left it on.

LIU XIA

What's on the computer is freedom of expression; freedom of expression is in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China.

GUARD

Then the authorities in the People's Republic will make sure no one has exceeded that freedom.
(Working at computer.)

LIU XIA

I want to know what you are reading.

GUARD

Can you sit down over there, please?

LIU XIA

(Moves.)

May I smoke?

GUARD

Of course.

(Taking notes.)

E-mails. Zhang, Yang Yu -- "Charter '08"? The prosecutor will definitely be interested. "Freedom of Expression." "Freedom of Religion." "Protection of the Environment." Ayayi. Listen to this: "The June Fourth Massacre is a ... human rights disaster." He's referring to the student riots?

Liu Xiaobo is pictured on the front as one of two sponsors. Have you seen this?

LIU XIA

No.

GUARD

There's so much here. Articles with Mr. Liu's name on the BBC. "Who Says the Chinese People Deserve Only One-Party Rule?" Well. The CCP says so, that's who!

(beat)

And this ... "Plans for 'Tiananmen-Twenty.'" "Dear Friend: I am writing to solicit your support in memorializing the massacre of June 4, 1989"

Ayyayay.

"Subject: For the 20th Anniversary. My husband, Yang Yan-sheng was standing on the sidewalk when a military vehicle fired shots. Someone cried, 'Help!' Yan-sheng went to help and he was shot in the liver. How many times have I shouted toward the sky... Why? Why?"

(beat)

Seems to be fiction.

LIU XIA

What shall I say about why you've taken Liu Xiaobo?

GUARD

"Subversion of state power" might be a good one.

(Packing up computer and papers.)

The authorities do need to maintain stability.

LIU XIA

You're taking our papers, as well? Wouldn't that be redundant?

GUARD

I have a warrant.

(GUARD removes photos and paintings off the wall.)

LIU XIA

The artwork belongs to me.

GUARD

The warrant says to take everything.

(LIU XIA doubles over. Suddenly, the GUARD lays down her photos and art on a table.)

I don't think the investigators will need these photographs.

(THE GUARD takes collected items, including the computer, but not Liu Xia's artwork. The GUARD exits.)

LIU XIA

(Sits. Smokes. SHE picks up the phone.)

Professor Jiang. I'm sorry for the late hour. The other shoe -- it dropped.

End of Scene Seventeen

Act II

Scene Eighteen

(One year and two weeks later: December 25, 2009. LIU XIAOBO is in a detention center, along with THE FIGURE.)

LIU XIAOBO

(To THE FIGURE)

Only you and me. Hope you can be more entertaining now that I'm finally having a trial. Know any Teresa Teng songs?

THE FIGURE

We should practice our statement.

LIU XIAOBO

I've had thirteen months to work on that -- 381 days since I was "removed."

(beat)

How about: "*The Moon Represents My Heart*."

THE FIGURE

If you hadn't gotten us into such hot water, I could have had a glorious re-emergence at Tiananmen-Twenty. Flowers, confetti. Instead, a big zero.

(Poses, holding arms aloft.)

LIU XIAOBO

If Liu Xia were here ...

THE FIGURE

Love is so simple yet so difficult.

LIU XIAOBO

I was looking forward to the virtual paper lanterns.

(beat)

Or "*When Will You Return?*" We used to play it on a little cassette player -- our "brick."

THE FIGURE

Yes, When Will You Return.

LIU XIAOBO

"After we part today, when will you come again? ...without pleasure life is harder to bear."

They won't want to keep me locked up much longer. Soon -- a glass of wine, a pot of noodles, a hug from Liu Xia, and a long, long session with my computer.

End of Scene Eighteen

Act II

Scene Nineteen

(LIU XIA sits with JIANG PEIKUN and DING ZILIN in the apartment of the latter. December 2009. DING ZILIN serves congee (porridge)).

LIU XIA

You didn't have to invite me here today.

DING ZILIN

What more important day than the day of the trial? (beat) Congee?

JIANG PEIKUN

(To DING ZILIN)

Hadn't you better take it easy? You don't want to end up in the hospital again.

DING ZILIN

That's over a year ago! You're the one to worry about. Both of you, eat.

LIU XIA

(SHE eats.)

What is the point in trying to make an example of Liu Xiaobo?

JIANG PEIKUN

“Kill the chicken to scare the monkey.”

LIU XIA

But who is the monkey?

JIANG PEIKUN

We are all the monkey.

DING ZILIN

It’s a nightmare - but soon over. After the trial, we can come back together.

LIU XIA

(Reading papers.)

“Criminal Indictment Number 247.” It specifies seven phrases from his articles. But he’s written hundreds! And Charter `08. This is the commission of a crime? -- “Incitement of subversion of state power.” Who was incited? Who was harmed?

JIANG PEIKUN

Since when does the Chinese government make sense?

LIU XIA

But this ... this goes too far.

DING ZILIN

The international community will be watching! We made sure of that. China will lose serious face if they keep him in prison any longer.

JIANG PEIKUN

We all know that the judges do whatever the Party officials tell them to do.

DING ZILIN

They will have to drop their claims!

JIANG PEIKUN

That has never happened.

DING ZILIN

Good. This will be the first time. The Tiananmen Mothers contacted editors in New York and Los Angeles and Hong Kong. We’re a bunch of old people – the Party can’t ignore us.

JIANG PEIKUN

The Party has ignored us very well for over 20 years. Except when they dragged me to the station house in front of the neighbors.

LIU XIA

Trying to rob your dignity. Horrible!

DING ZILIN

Well, now they will have to contend with the fact that 10,000 people around the world have signed Charter `08! The Internet is very exciting!

LIU XIA

You're an adherent now, Professor Ding?

JIANG PEIKUN

Yes, she's become quite modern.

DING ZILIN

I will do what needs to be done. It's because Liu Xiaobo visited me in the hospital that the authorities suspected something.

JIANG PEIKUN

If the authorities wanted to arrest him, they would have found a way.

DING ZILIN

In any case, I will be at the courtroom when the judges hand down the decision. They will have to look this old mother in the face.

JIANG PEIKUN

What makes you think they will allow you to go in?

DING ZILIN

If they don't let me into the courtroom, then I shall stand outside with a placard and talk to the press. I'm not afraid.

End of Nineteen

Act II
Scene Twenty

(In the cell.)

LIU XIAOBO

Here, I'm practicing:

"Twenty years have passed, but the ghosts of Tiananmen have not been laid to rest. Now, I have been shoved back into the dock by the enemy mentality of the regime.

"None of the police who monitored, arrested and interrogated me, none of the prosecutors who indicted me, and none of the judges who judge me are my enemies."

THE FIGURE

They could DO something. They could think for themselves!

LIU XIAOBO

"Hatred can rot away at a person's intelligence and conscience. This is why I hope to be able to dispel hatred with love."

THE FIGURE

And what about Liu Xia?

End of Scene Twenty

Act II
Scene Twenty-One

(YANG YU peeks in DING ZILIN's apartment.)

YANG YU

Professor Ding – are you ready?

DING ZILIN

Yang Yu is going to accompany me to ... what is it? Branch No. 1, Intermediate People's Court.
 (Pointing YANG to food)

Congee?

YANG YU

Thank you. Several activists plan to appear. Chinese PEN. Some environmentalists.

JIANG PEIKUN

They won't let you in the courthouse.

DING ZILIN

You don't know that.

JIANG PEIKUN

I'm preparing you. The same way they won't let Liu Xia attend.

YANG YU

They won't?

JIANG PEIKUN

Of course not. Official order. And she didn't even sign Charter '08.

LIU XIA

I'm not very political in that way.

DING ZILIN

Professor Jiang is going to wait here with Liu Xia. And, with luck, we shall return with Liu Xiaobo between us, one arm each. Keep some soup on!

LIU XIA

Xiaobo -- he would rather a bottle of wine and a computer keyboard.

JIANG PEIKUN

And -- you.

LIU XIA

And me. Only two visits in 54 weeks.

JIANG PEIKUN

They had us in for questioning about Charter '08 within days of his removal. "What do you know about the people on the cover?"

YANG YU

I was expelled from classes. They say that all 303 signers in China were questioned. Although that might be a Weibo rumor.

JIANG PEIKUN

Weibo?

YANG YU

The microblog. (beat) Chinese Twitter? ... Opened four months ago – everyone's using it!

DING ZILIN

Twit?

YANG YU

I'll show you. We'll have a Weibo session when we come back with Dr. Liu.

LIU XIA

No, no. I don't do we-bo, even for Liu Xiaobo, I don't do we-bo.

DING ZILIN

We had better be twittering on our way if we plan to be at the court.

(YANG YU exits. DING ZILIN puts on a coat, grabs a bag of materials.)

JIANG PEIKUN

What if you're arrested? Are you sure you know what you're doing?

DING ZILIN

You ask me this after 20 years?

JIANG PEIKUN

Do you forget that they dragged me away for no reason? They can be barbaric.

DING ZILIN

Yes, I know that very well.

(SHE goes to the door, turns back.)

Perhaps this once I should stay home. What difference can I make?

JIANG PEIKUN

What? No! Are you insane? You're not staying here. Yang Yu is waiting!

DING ZILIN

Yes.

(DING ZILIN nods to him and exits. LIU XIA and JIANG PEIKUN sit quietly, saying little for a spell.)

LIU XIA

We fell in love through poetry.

JIANG PEIKUN

Yes, I know.

LIU XIA

He's a patient and diligent poet.

JIANG PEIKUN

That's true.

LIU XIA

I imagined many things. Travel, the creative life, the world.

JIANG PEIKUN

Yes.

LIU XIA

Some days, I am like a grapefruit with skin so tough that it takes a knife to cut through it.

JIANG PEIKUN

I never saw you that way.

LIU XIA

No? Perhaps you are right. I didn't imagine this.
(beat)

JIANG PEIKUN

We live in unusual times.

End of Scene Twenty-One

Act II

Scene Twenty-Two

(LIU XIAOBO stands, and turns, as if he is in court. The JUDGE is on a high bench, the lead JUDGE of an unseen panel of three.)

JUDGE

Mr. Liu. The prosecutors have presented scientific evidence tracing six articles signed by you, as, in fact, written by you. These include: "How a Rising Dictatorship Hurts Democracy in the World," published by the BBC; and others. The indictment also indicates that you wrote in part and gathered signatures for a document called Charter '08.

Do you have anything to say before the court renders its sentence?

LIU XIAOBO

I present my claim of "not guilty" based on China's constitution and United Nations conventions.

I hold that China's political reform should be gradual, peaceful and orderly. I look to the spread of rights consciousness and the expansion of civil society.

My expression of dissenting political opinion is an exercise by a Chinese citizen of the right to freedom of expression....

JUDGE

Your time is up.

LIU XIAOBO

I haven't finished my statement.

JUDGE

You've used all of your allotted time, Mr. Liu.

LIU XIAOBO

May I conclude, then?

JUDGE

I will confer.

(The JUDGE turns away momentarily.)

Twenty seconds.

LIU XIAOBO

(Speaking slowly and deliberately, not rushing at all.)

There has been nothing remotely criminal in anything I have done. I hope that I will be the last victim in China's long history of treating words as crimes.

JUDGE

We are ready. On this date, December 25, 2009, it is the judgment of the Court that Defendant Liu Xiaobo, with the goal of overthrowing the People's Democratic Dictatorship, took advantage of the Internet, with its features of rapid transmission, by writing and posting articles to slander and to incite others to overthrow state power. His actions show deep subjective malice. The articles had a despicable influence. He qualifies as a criminal whose crimes are severe."

FIGURE

(Flops on the ground.)

No.

End of Scene Twenty-Two

Act II

Scene Twenty-Three

(LIU XIA and JIANG PEIKUN sit in silent meditation in the DING-JIANG apartment. DING ZILIN enters in haste.)

DING ZILIN

Very cold outside. Let's get a pot of tea brewing!

JIANG PEIKUN

You had to stand outside?

DING ZILIN

Yang Yu will be up momentarily. The poor fellow is shivering terribly.

LIU XIA

Xiaobo is with him, then?

DING ZILIN

We couldn't get into the courtroom, just as Peikun predicted. But I held up my sign, "Free Speech, Free Liu Xiaobo." The reporters weren't able to get into the courthouse either, so an old lady out in the cold must have looked appealing. Let's see, I spoke to BBC, Reuters, a woman from some kind of New York Times radio

YANG YU

(Knocks and enters, shivering, as DING finishes.)

Professor Ding must have talked to ten bloggers. More!

DING ZILIN

Yes. Many bloggers.

LIU XIA

But what happened? What is the verdict?

DING ZILIN

(DING ZILIN and YANG YU look at each other.)

They did give him credit for the time he has been in custody. Or some of it.

LIU XIA

He was found guilty, then?

YANG YU

They said he can appeal.

JIANG PEIKUN

It's all predetermined by the Party. No one is ever found "not guilty."

DING ZILIN

Come, Yang Yu, and let's get to work on getting some messages out on the Weebunny.

YANG YU

Weibo.

DING ZILIN

Yes, precisely.

(DING ZILIN and YANG YU exit.)

LIU XIA

(Takes the "ugly babies" picture and holds it.)

I feel like knives are cutting through me.

End of Scene Twenty-Three

Act II
Scene Twenty-Four

(The detention facility. The FIGURE sits, curled up. LIU XIAOBO stands, thinking.)

LIU XIAOBO

I must know some other Teresa Teng songs.

FIGURE

Did you hear him? “The defendant Liu Xiaobo has committed the crime of incitement to subvert state power and is sentenced to eleven years in prison.”

LIU XIAOBO

Everywhere, if you mentioned Teresa Teng, people’s faces would light up. “Tears of Raindrops.” Liu Xia likes that one. Do you know it?

THE FIGURE

You’re leaving her all alone.

LIU XIAOBO

Perhaps she will forgive me.

(THE FIGURE takes a pair of shoes and deliberately drops one, and then the other.)

LIU XIAOBO

Or “Small Wish.” That was a good one, too. Or, or -- The Internationale. They can never take those away from us.

End of Scene Twenty-Four

Act II
Scene Twenty-Five

(It is October 8, 2010, nine months later. LIU XIA is sitting in her apartment, wrapped in a blanket, reading. There is banging at the door. She ignores it.)

GUARD

Ms. Liu?

(HE gets no response from LIU XIA.)

Please answer.

(SHE keeps reading. A PHONE starts ringing, as well.)

I have to give you something.

LIU XIA

(SHE finally gets up, goes to the door.)

Why are you knocking?

GUARD

It’s a telegram.

I see. LIU XIA

GUARD
You missed the October One celebrations last week. There were big banners: "2010, The 61st Anniversary of the People's Republic!" Sparklers! Fireworks!

I didn't feel like celebrating. LIU XIA
(The phone is ringing.)

I thought perhaps you were sick. GUARD

I am sick. LIU XIA

Feel better, then. THE GUARD
(HE gives her the telegram. SHE puts it on a table and begins to close the door.)

GUARD
It's from Norway. Don't you want to open it?

I will. LIU XIA
(SHE closes the door, goes back to reading. The phone starts ringing again.)

GUARD
(FROM outside the door.)
Have you opened it?

I will when you leave. LIU XIA

GUARD
(From outside the door.)
I'm leaving, then. I'm going back downstairs.

LIU XIA
(SHE waits a minute, then opens the telegram. SHE reads it. SHE re-opens the door. THE GUARD is still there.)
I need to see Liu Xiaobo in prison! Tomorrow. Help me to arrange it.

GUARD
I don't have the power to do that.

LIU XIA

When you needed to use our facilities, he let you. When you wanted a day off, he promised not to get you in trouble. When you came to arrest him ...

GUARD

I thought he would be back home by now. I want to express my apologies.

LIU XIA

This is how you can show it.

GUARD

I can't ... Very well, I'll inquire.

(HE hands her a business card.)

You might want this -- a woman from some news place in New York wants to interview you.

LIU XIA

I don't do interviews.

GUARD

(Closing the door.)

I know. If you change your mind, I'll need to sit in.

End of Scene Twenty-Five

Act II

Scene Twenty-Six

(The entire scene is a recorded VOICE OVER. The SAME INTERVIEWER from Act One, Scene One is heard. LIU XIA listens to it, gathering items from her apartment, then moving into the action of the next scene.)

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

What will you say?

LIU XIA (O.S.)

I will hug him.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

And how do you expect him to respond ... to the news?

LIU XIA (O.S.)

He will be pleased. He will think it's ... ironic.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

And you?

LIU XIA (O.S.)

Me?

End of Scene Twenty-Seven

Act II
Scene Twenty-Eight

(Overlapping Scene 26. In the prison where LIU XIAOBO sits with THE FIGURE. A buzzer sounds, loudly, doors clank.)

(LIU XIA enters. LIU XIAOBO, surprised, stands, and the two hug, warmly, fully, separate parts temporarily whole.)

LIU XIAOBO

Were you scheduled? How are you? How are the Teachers?

LIU XIA

They're fine. Everyone is fine. I received a telegram yesterday.

LIU XIAOBO

Yes?

LIU XIA

The Nobel Committee awarded the Peace Prize for 2010.

LIU XIAOBO

Finally.

LIU XIA

To you, Xiaobo. To you.

LIU XIAOBO
 (Begins crying.)

No, no, no. Not to me. NO! No!!

LIU XIA

For your "long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China."

LIU XIAOBO
 (Still crying.)

This is for Ding Zilin. This is for the Tiananmen Mothers. This is for the Lost Souls of Tiananmen.

LIU XIA

They say Vaclav Havel made the nomination. Others, too -- Desmond Tutu, PEN, Human Rights China, the Dalai Lama.

LIU XIAOBO

This doesn't belong to me.

LIU XIA

Maybe it will help us. It has been all over Weibo.

LIU XIAOBO

Weibo?

LIU XIA

It's a new thing on the Internet; started last year. 200 million Chinese are on it.

LIU XIAOBO

Someone must tell the 200 million to send red carnations to the Tiananmen Mothers.

LIU XIA

Ding Zilin went on Weibo and announced it, too.

LIU XIAOBO

(Laughs a bit, then is serious.)

I am so happy for Weibo. While it lasts ...!

LIU XIA

As soon as someone posts something positive about the Nobel Prize, the authorities remove it. But, by then, some people have already seen it and reposted it! Yang Yu told me that so many posts with "Nobel Prize!" are being taken down each hour that the censors put out a call for emergency workers!

LIU XIAOBO

(Laughs a bit.)

And the Government Propaganda Department says ...?

LIU XIA

You can imagine.

LIU XIAOBO

You don't have to protect me.

LIU XIA

"Liu Xiaobo is a criminal." "It's an insult to China." That sort of thing. Recalled the Ambassador to Norway. Demanded that other countries boycott the ceremony. And so on.

(A very loud buzzer sounds three times.)

LIU XIAOBO

(Hugs LIU XIA again.)

Time? Already? You are my rock, Liu Xia. I couldn't survive an hour in here if were it not for you. Even to make this trip ...

(The buzzer sounds again.)

LIU XIA

(Exiting, turns back and smiles.)

I did an interview. A journalist from The New York Times Multimedia!

LIU XIAOBO

Thank you.

(LIU XIA exits.)

(LIU XIAOBO sits, hides his head in his hands.)

THE FIGURE
(Punches LIU XIAOBO.)

Well, congratulations.

LIU XIAOBO
(Looking up.)

You will have to say the names of the Lost Souls in Oslo.

THE FIGURE

Me? But ... you? Or Liu Xia ...?

LIU XIAOBO

They won't let me out. They won't let her go. Can't you see how she's suffering? The regime will make life harder for her now. What she will have to face ... the pain of it ... almost too much to bear.

(beat)

Oslo will be up to you.

THE FIGURE

You aren't crazy now, are you, Liu Xiaobo? I can't go anywhere: I'm a figure of your imagination.

LIU XIAOBO

You must make them feel your presence.

End of Scene Twenty-Seven

Act II **Scene Twenty-Eight**

(An auditorium. A light frames the Nobel Peace Prize, carefully placed in an empty chair on the stage.)

THE FIGURE

(THE FIGURE goes to the chair, takes the Nobel Prize and swings it in a circle, as if dancing with it.)

I have no enemies and no hatred.

(In one area of the stage, LIU XIAOBO stands. In other areas, LIU XIA, DING ZILIN and JIANG PEIKUN appear, each slowly moving behind THE FIGURE. THE FIGURE speaks.)

There is no force that can put an end to the human quest for freedom, and China will, in the end, become a nation where human rights reign supreme. I hope that I will be the last victim in China's long history of treating of words as crimes.

The most fortunate experience of the last 20 years has been the selfless love I've received from my wife, the artist Liu Xia. I am serving my sentence in a tangible prison while she is locked in the intangible prison of the heart.

This Nobel Peace Prize is dedicated to Professor Ding Zilin, the Tiananmen Mothers, and the Lost Souls of Tiananmen.

(THE FIGURE cont'd)

Hear their names: Jiang Jielian, Hao Zhiging, Xiao Jie, Zhou Guocong, Yang Minghu, Du Guangxue, Chen Lai-shun, Liu Hongtao, Ma Chenfen, Yuan Li, Su Yan, Zhou Deping, Li Dezhi, Ye Weihang, Wu Guofen

(Whispering voices repeat names; the FIGURE continues.)

Each year each month each day each hour each moment; inevitably there'll be a day when rock will be moved, weep, and burst apart. The candle flames cannot be cut off from the night.

(MUSIC)

End of Scene Twenty-Eight

END OF PLAY