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A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers

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Extract

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‘What are you thinking?’

Usually the man says a thing, and the woman questions it. Their conversation goes like this:

HER: ‘What are you thinking?’
HIM: ‘Nothing’
HER: ‘But what it is going on in your head?’
HIM: ‘I feel sad about my life.’
HER: ‘Why?’
HIM: ‘Everything feels empty and endless.’
HER: ‘What you want then?’
HIM: ‘I want to find happiness.’
HER: ‘You can’t have happiness at all times. Sometimes you will be sad. Don’t you think?’
HIM: ‘But I don’t see any happiness in my life.’
HER: ‘Then what’s your most near happiness?’
HIM: ‘. . . The sea.’

Before

Sorry of my english

prologue

prologue n introduction to a play or book

Now.

Beijing time 12 clock midnight.

London time 5 clock afternoon.

But I at neither time zone. I on airplane. Sitting on 25,000 km above to earth and trying remember all English I learning in school.

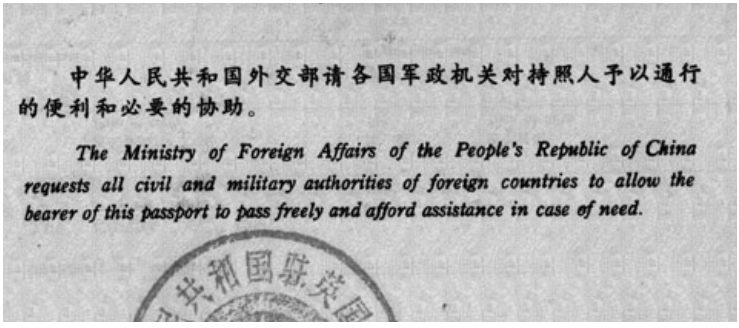
I not met you yet. You in future.

Looking outside the massive sky. Thinking air staffs need to set a special time-zone for long-distance airplanes, or passengers like me very confusing about time. When a body floating in air, which country she belonging to?

People's Republic of China passport bending in my pocket.

Passport type	**P**
Passport No.	**G00350124**
Name in full	**Zhuang Xiao Qiao**
Sex	**Female**
Date of birth	**23 JULY 1979**
Place of birth	**Zhe Jiang, P. R. China**

I worry bending passport bring trouble to immigration officer, he might doubting passport is fake and refusing me into the UK, even with noble word on the page:


中华人民共和国外交部请各国军政机关对持照人予以通行的便利和必要的协助。

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China requests all civil and military authorities of foreign countries to allow the bearer of this passport to pass freely and afford assistance in case of need.

China further and further, disappearing behind clouds. Below is ocean. I from desert town. Is the first time my life I see sea. It look like a dream.

As I far away from China, I asking me why I coming to West. Why I must to study English like parents wish? Why I must to get diploma from West? I not knowing what I needing. Sometimes I not even caring what I needing. I

not caring if I speaking English or not. Mother only speaking in village dialect and even not speaking official Mandarin, but she becoming rich with my father, from making shoes in our little town. Life OK. Why they want changing my life?

And how I living in strange country West alone? I never been to West. Only Western I seeing is man working in Beijing British Embassy behind tiny window. He stamp visa on brand new passport.

What else I knowing about West? American TV series dubbing into Chinese, showing us big houses in suburb, wife by window cooking and car arriving in front house. Husband back work. Husband say Honey I home, then little childrens running to him, see if he bringing gift.

But that not my life. That nothing to do with my life. I not having life in West. I not having home in West. I scared.

I no speaking English.

I fearing future.

February

alien

alien adj foreign; repugnant (to); from another world n foreigner; being from another world

Is unbelievable, I arriving London, 'Heathlow Airport'. Every single name very difficult remembering, because just not 'London Airport' simple way like we simple way call 'Beijing Airport'. Everything very confuse way here, passengers is separating in two queues.

Sign in front of queue say: ALIEN and NON ALIEN.

I am alien, like Hollywood film *Alien*, I live in another planet, with funny looking and strange language.

I standing in most longly and slowly queue with all aliens waiting for visa checking. I feel little criminal but I doing nothing wrong so far. My English so bad. How to do?

In my text book I study back China, it says English peoples talk like this:

'How are you?'

'I am very well. How are you ?'

'I am very well.'

Question and answer exactly the same!

Old saying in China: '*Birds have their bird language, beasts have their beast talk*' (鸟有鸟语,兽有兽言). English they totally another species.

Immigration officer holding my passport behind his accounter, my heart hanging on high sky. Finally he stamping on my visa. My heart touching down like air plane. Ah. Wo. Ho. Ha. Picking up my luggage, now I a legal foreigner. Because legal foreigner from Communism region, I must re-educate, must match this capitalism freedom and Western democracy.

All I know is: I not understanding what people say to me at all. From now on, I go with *Concise Chinese–English Dictionary* at all times. It is red cover, look just like *Little Red Book*. I carrying important book, even go to the toilet, in case I not knowing the words for some advanced machine and need checking out in dictionary. Dictionary is most important thing from China. *Concise* meaning simple and clean.

hostel

hostel n building providing accommodation at a low cost for a specific group of people such as students, travellers, homeless people, etc

First night in 'hostel'. Little *Concise Chinese–English Dictionary* hostel explaining: a place for 'people such as students, travellers and homeless people' to stay. Sometimes my dictionary absolute right. I am student and I am homeless looking for place to stay. How they knowing my situation *precisely*?

> Thousands of additional words and phrases reflect scientific and technological innovations, as well as changes in politics, culture, and society. In particular, many new words and expressions as well as new usages and meanings which have entered the Chinese language as a result of China's open-door policy over the last decade have been included in the Chinese–English section of the dictionary.

That is sentence in *Preface*. All sentence in preface long like

this, very in-understandable. But I must learning this stylish English because it high-standard English from authority. Is parents' command on me: studying how speak and write English in England, then coming back China, leaving job in government work unit and making lots money for their shoes factory by big international business relations. Parents belief their life is dog's life, but with money they save from last several years, I make better life through Western education.

Anyway, *hostel* called 'Nuttington House' in Brown Street, nearby Edward Road and Baker Street. I write all the names careful in notebook. No lost. Brown Street seem really brown with brick buildings everywhere. Prison looking. Sixteen pounds for per bed per day. With sixteen pounds, I live in top hotel in China with private bathroom. Now I must learn counting the money and being mean to myself and others. Gosh.

First night in England is headache.

Pulling large man-made-in-China-suitcase into *hostel*, second wheel fall off by time I open the door. (First wheel already fall off when I get suitcase from airport's luggage bell.) Is typical suitcase produced by any factory in Wen Zhou, my hometown. My hometown China's biggest home-products industry town, our government says. Coat hangers, plastic washbasins, clothes, leather belts and nearly-leather bags, computer components etc, we make there. Every family in my town is factory. Big factories export their

products to everywhere in the world, just like my parents get order from Japan, Singapore and Israel. But anyway, one over-the-sea trip and I lost all the wheels. I swear I never buy any products made from home town again.

Standing middle of the room, I feeling strange. This is *The West*. By window, there hanging old red curtain with holes. Under feet, old blood-red carpet has suspicions dirty spots. Beddings, they covering by old red blanket too. Everything is dirty blood red.

Room smelling old, rotten. Suddenly my body feeling old too. 'English people respect history, not like us,' teachers say to us in schools. Is true. In China now, all buildings is no more than 10 years old and they already old enough to be demolished.

With my enormous curiosity, walking down to the night street. First night I away home in my entirely twenty-three years life, everything scare me. Is cold, late winter. Windy and chilli. I feeling I can die for all kinds of situation in every second. No safety in this country, I think unsafe feeling come from I knowing nothing about this country. I scared I in a big danger.

I scared by cars because they seems coming from any possible directing. I scared by long hair black man passing because I think he beating me up just like in films. I scared by a dog. Actually chained with old lady but I thinking dog maybe have mad-dog-illness and it suddenly bite me and then I in hospital then I have no money to pay and then I sent back to China.

Walking around like a ghost, I see two rough mans in corner suspicionly smoke and exchange something. Illlegal, I have to run – maybe they desperate drug addictors robbing my money. Even when I see a beggar sleeping in a sleep bag I am scared. Eyes wide open in darkness staring at me like angry cat. What he doing here? I am taught everybody in West has social security and medical insurance, so, why he needs begging?

I going back quickly to Nuttington House. Red old carpet, red old curtain, red old blanket. Better switch off light.

Night long and lonely, staying nervously in tacky room. London should be like emperor's city. But I cannot feel it. Noise coming from other room. Laughing in drunkenly way. Upstairs TV news speaking intensely nonsense. Often the man shouting like mad in the street. I worry. I worry I getting lost and nobody in China can find me anymore. How I finding important places including Buckingham Palace, or Big Stupid Clock? I looking everywhere but not seeing big posters of David Beckham, Spicy Girls or President Margaret Thatcher. In China we hanging them everywhere. English person not respect their heroes or what?

No sleeping. Switching on the light again. Everything turning red. Bloody new world. I study little red dictionary. English words made only from twenty-six characters? Are English a bit lazy or what? We have fifty thousand characters in Chinese.

Starting at page one:

A

Abacus:	(meaning a wooden machine used for counting)
Abandon:	(meaning to leave or throw away)
Abashed:	(meaning to feel embrassed or regretful),
Abattoir:	(meaning a place to kill the animals)
Abbess:	(meaning the boss of woman monk's house)
Abbey:	(meaning a temple)
Abbot:	(meaning the boss of a temple)
Abbreviate:	(meaning to write a word quickly)
Abduct:	(meaning to tie somebody up and take away to somewhere)

Words becoming blurred and no meaning. The first night I falling into darkness with the jet-lag tiredness.

full english breakfast

1. Builder's Super Platter:
double egg, beans, bacon, sausage, bubble, mushroom, tomato, 2 toast, tea or coffee included.

2. Vegetarian Breakfast:
double egg, bubble, mushroom, beans, veggie sausage, hash browns, tea or coffee included.

'*Talk doesn't cook rice*,' say Chinese. Only thing I care in life is eating. And I learning English by food first, of course. Is most practical way.

Getting up early, I have free *Full English Breakfast* from my *hostel*. English so proud they not just say *hotel*, they say *Bed and Breakfast*, because breakfast so importantly to English situation. Even say 'B and B' everyone know what thinking about. Breakfast more important than Bed.

I never seeing a *breakfast* like that. Is big lunch for construction worker! I not believe every morning, my *hostel* offering everybody this meal, lasting three hours, from 7 clock to 10 clock. Food like messy scrumpled eggs, very salty bacons, burned bread, very thick milk, sweet bean in orange sauce, coffee, tea, milk, juice. Church or temple should be like this, giving the generosity to normal people. But 8.30 in the morning I refuse accepting two oily sausage, whatever it made by pork or by vegetables, is

just too fat for a little Chinese.

What is this 'baked beans'? White colour beans, in orange sticky sweet sauce. I see some baked bean tins in shop when I arrive to London yesterday. Tin food is very expensive to China. Also we not knowing how to open it. So I never ever try tin food. Here, right in front of me, this baked beans must be very expensive. Delicacy is baked beans. Only problem is, tastes like somebody put beans into mouth but spit out and back into plate.

Sitting on breakfast table, my belly is never so full. Still two pieces of bread and several 'baked tomatoes' on my plate. I can't chew more. Feeling guilty and wasty, I take out little *Concise Chinese–English Dictionary* from my pocket, start study English. My language school not starting yet, so I have to learn by myself first. Old Chinese saying: 'the stupid bird should fly first before other birds start to fly' (笨鸟先飞).

When I am studying the word *Accommodate*, woman come clean table, and tell me I must leave. She must hate me that I eat too much food here. But not my fault.

First morning, I steal white coffee cup from table. Second morning, I steal glass. So now in my room I can having tea or water. After breakfast I steal breads and boiled eggs for lunch, so I don't spending extra money on food. I even saving bacons for supper. So I saving bit money from my parents and using for cinema or buying books.

Ill-legal. I know. Only in this country three days and I

already become thief. I never steal piece of paper in own country. Now I studying hard on English, soon I stealing their language too.

Nobody know my name here. Even they read the spelling of my name: *Zhuang Xiao Qiao*, they have no idea how saying it. When they see my name starts from 'Z', stop trying. I unpronouncable Ms Z.

First three days in this country, wherever I walk, the voice from my parents echo my ears:

'No talking strangers.'

'*No talking where you live.*'

'*No talking how much money you have.*'

'*And most important thing: no trusting anybody.*'

That my past life. Life before in China. The warns speaking in my mother's harsh local dialect, of course, translation into English by *Concise Chinese–English Dictionary*.

properly

proper adj real or genuine; suited to a particular purpose; correct in behaviour; excessively moral

Today my first time taking taxi. How I find important place with bus and tube? Is impossibility. Tube map is like plate of noodles. Bus route is in-understandable. In my home town everyone take cheap taxi, but in London is very expensive and taxi is like the Loyal family look down to me.

Driver say: 'Please shut the door properly!'

I already shut the door, but taxi don't moving.

Driver shout me again: 'Shut the door properly!' in a *concisely* manner.

I am bit scared. I not understanding what is this 'properly'.

'I beg your pardon?' I ask. 'What is *properly*?'

'Shut the door properly!' Taxi driver turns around his big head and neck nearly break because of anger.

'But what is "properly", Sir?' I so frightened that I not daring ask it once more again.

Driver coming out from taxi, and walking to door. I think he going kill me.

He opens door again, smashing it back to me hardly.

'Properly!' he shout.

Later, I go in bookshop and check 'properly' in *Collins English Dictionary* ('THE AUTHORITY ON CURRENT ENGLISH'). *Properly* means 'correct behaviour'. I think of my behaviour with the taxi driver ten minutes ago. Why incorrect? I go to accounter buy little *Collins* for my pocket

My small *Concise Chinese–English Dictionary* not having 'properly' meaning. In China we never think of 'correct behaviour' because every behaviour correct.

I want write these newly learned words everyday, make my own dictionary. So I learn English fast. I write down here and now, in every second and every minute when I hear a new noise from an English's mouth.

fog

fog n mass of condensed water vapour in the lower air, often greatly reducing visibility

'London is the Capital of fog.' It saying in middle school textbook. We studying chapter from Charles Dickens's novel *Foggy City Orphan*. Everybody know Oliver Twist living in city with bad fog. Is very popular novel in China.

As soon as I arriving London, I look around the sky but no any fogs. 'Excuse me, where I seeing the fogs?' I ask policeman in street.

'Sorry?' he says.

'I waiting two days already, but no fogs,' I say.

He just look at me, he must no understanding of my English.

When I return Nuttington House from my tourism visiting, reception lady tell me: 'Very cold today, isn't it?' But why she tell me? I know this information, and now is too late, because I finish my tourism visiting, and I wet and freezing.

Today I reading not allowed to stay more than one

week in hostel. I not understanding hostel's policy. 'Money can buy everything in capitalism country' we told in China. My parents always saying if you have money you can make the devil push your grind stone.

But here you not staying even if you pay. My parents wrong.

I checking all cheap flats on LOOT in Zone 1 and 2 of London and ringing agents. All agents sound like from Arabic countries and all called Ali. Their English no good too. One Ali charges Marble Arch area; one Ali charges Baker Street area. But I meet different Alis at Oxford Circus tube station, and see those houses. I dare not to move in. Places dirty and dim and smelly. How I live there?

London, by appearance, so noble, respectable, but when I follow these Alis, I find London a refuge camp.