

使命/ The duty

By tydsh

一个山区小伙，担任着邮差的工作，早出晚归，风雨无阻。他的口碑在同行里最好，只要接下任务，不论路程何等艰难，他必能在规定时间内送到。他常背一面“使命必达”的旗帜，别人见了，就知道是他来了，都翘起姆指交相称赞；更有些长辈会将孩子从屋里拉出来，看着他的背影，板起脸，说些让人听不懂的话，孩子们唯唯诺诺，也不知听进了多少，又溜进屋里去了。

A young man was a postman in a mountainous village. He worked diligently and had the best reputation among comrades. As advertised on the flag he carried, once he received the package, he sent it to the destination always on time, no matter how rough and dangerous the journey would be. Every time people saw the flag, they raised the thumb and praised him for his hard work. Some parents even drew their children out of home, staring at his back view, and taught them, as grave as a judge, with complicated and abstract sentences. Children nodded, pretended to understand, sneaked back to home and continued playing.

很多年过去，某天冒着暴风雪清早出门的小伙子，过了四五天都不见回来。人们议论纷纷，谣言流传，说是他天天起早贪黑翻山越岭，难免遭遇不测，摔下山谷去了。众人大感惋惜，更有人骂天道不公，好人短命，却没有肯去将他的尸身寻回来安葬。那个托他送信的人家，也不过暗骂自己晦气丢了几件衣物，心里难受了几天便已忘记。时光荏苒，日月如梭，人们的注意力渐渐转移，山村又恢复了平静，偶尔遇到糟糕天气，与外界音讯断绝，人们方才会想起有过这么一个人，有过这么一面旗。

Many years had passed. One early morning, the young man went out with a package in a blizzard, and didn't come back for nearly a week. People started gossiping and rumors propagated:

"He slipped at the dangerous pathway in the snowy mountain, fell into the valley and died of his duty."

"What a pity! Such a good and young person died. A misfortune."

People felt sad and cursed the unfairness of the destiny. However, no one dared to search the valley, find his body and rest him with a decent funeral. That family, who had asked him for delivery on that day, just felt sorry for the loss of their property and remained silent to his missing.

Time passed and people forgot. Other affairs draw their attention away and the

village came back normal. Occasionally, the bad weather reminds them of that young man, and the flag he once carried.

直到有一天，小伙重又回到山村，不过他没带旗帜，更拿油彩涂花了脸，教人看不出自己的容貌。他瘸着腿行走在人群之间，用嘶哑难听的话询问曾经的自己。诸人回答各不相同，有人如实说他某日跌下山崖，从此再无音讯；有人讥笑他做事过于认真，那种天气出门无异自寻死路；有人更是说物竞天择适者生存，死脑筋的家伙活该摔死。小伙找到最后托他送信的人家，那人满口惋惜，却只是说邮差工作危险有加，如此意外，殊难预料，自己只能表示遗憾云云。

The young man remained alive. One day he came back to the village with his face disguised, his legs crippled and his voice hoarse. Being a stranger that no one can recognize, he asked the story of himself and got a variety of answers. Someone told the rumor and expressed the sadness; someone criticized his stubbornness and attributed the misfortune as his own fault; someone even laughed at him for his dumb mind. The young man fell unsatisfied with the answers. Finally, he chatted with the family asking for delivery that day, but received the following comment:

"He works on such a dangerous job and should be aware of the situation. We can do nothing but show my sympathy with regard to his death."

小伙心如刀绞。那一天他因送信人的一句恳求，顶风冒雪去走极危险的近路，为的是在中午之前能把托付的东西送到。暴风雪中，他果然遭遇不测，失足摔下，断了几根肋骨，在雪地里昏迷不醒。幸而傍晚有一个姑娘路过将他救起，送至最近的旅店休息。性命虽然捡回，但右腿严重冻伤残废，要说使命必达，已经毫无可能。

The young man was heart-wretched. On that day, he chose to trudge a dangerous shortcut in response to a crying plea from that family. He slipped, fell away from the pathway, broke his ribs and went unconscious in the wild-whirling snow. Fortunately, a girl saved him and accommodated him for recovery. His life remains, yet his legs were severely frostbite and crippled, impossible to fulfill his duty again.

小伙静养几月，意气消沉，长吁短叹，思忖自己既已成废人，后半生该如何度过。待得伤好大半，他不顾姑娘劝说，执意要赶回山村，想要看看自己莫大的牺牲，能换得什么样的结果。他想起平日行走阡陌，所闻赞叹之声甚多，诸位长辈赞赏有加，后生小辈皆以之为榜样。平日听得惯了，他仿佛便认为自己身份重要，地位不凡，于是早起晚归不辞辛劳，收件送信愈发勤快，为的是又一句赞扬，又一番欣赏。现下自己遭遇变故，总该好言宽慰，嘘寒问暖罢。

He stayed on bed for several months, and recovered. He was depressed by the irreversible injury and thought about his future. He remembered being praised by the old, being the model of the young, being regarded as important and being respected as the best. He was motivated to work hard day and night, to run the risk

spring and fall, by pleasing and compliment of the others.

"Now people in the village shall remember me and respect to my selfless sacrifice. They will definitely welcome their hero back and help me wholly-hearted."

He decided to return to the village and see how people would react to him.

姑娘笑他天真幼稚，劝他先回村乔装打听，尔后待机而动。小伙子依言而行，视众人行为举止，昔日称颂早已不见，轻狂少年施以嘲笑，巍巍老者闭口不言，当事者推卸责任，旁观者早已忘却。他心寒万分，只得拖着瘸腿，失意而去。一连几天，小伙辗转反侧，难以入眠，自己所作所为虽不惊天动地，但无愧于心；旁人举止虽猥琐世俗，但细细想来，却也无可厚非。世事如此，即便是以他二十多年粗浅阅历，本该看得透彻通明，淡然处之；可现下哀痛盈胸，愤闷满怀，窒得几欲晕去，试问悲从何来？

The girl grinned for his innocence, and advised him to disguise. "You can hear the truth and act accordingly." The young man agreed. He returned to the village with his lame legs, felt disappointed with people's thoughts and came back to the girl, with bitter and sorrow. He cried:

"They forgot my story and laughed at it! They said I am stubborn and dumb, and this was my own fault!"

He had several sleepless nights and suffered from an enormous agony. Accompanied with the girl, he complained:

"I am confused. I really don't understand where the suffering comes from. I am an adult, I am in my twenties, I understand the people, they shall forget. But...but why I am so depressed?"

小伙难以作答，姑娘说那是人心。腾达时惹人羡慕，落魄时遭人白眼，身死时无人问津，本是常情；只是小伙爱听赞扬，心怀虚荣，时日长久，默化潜移，为外物所驱而不自知，为人言所诱而不自持，飘飘然浑不知所以，懵懵然竟不知何者为重，将十年辛苦，都投进人心的大池里去，池里只映得众人刹那笑颜，却唯独见不到自己。

The young man cannot tell. The girl smiled and said:

"You know, that's human's nature. Admire the good, despise the bad and forget the dead. That's ordinary. You feel disappointed just because you build yourself on the honor they give you. Gradually, you are driven by the external world without awareness, persuaded by others' words without persistence. You feel good because of their compliment; you never know what is important. Ten years have passed and you made all efforts to their desire and need. You serve them, they give you smile,

and you lose yourself. "

小伙听罢，如醍醐灌顶，喟然长叹，不尽凄苦，然自思后悔无益，唯有顿足而已。思前想后，翻来覆去脑中只是起早摸黑，取件送信，连日奔劳，风雨夜归，如此十年如一，竟无它种景象。他生性粗疏，计费不尽精确，房屋破败，屡次遭人盗窃，因此十年积蓄不过无几。要付姑娘这几月房租杂费，已是十去其一。

"Thank you. You enlightened me."

The young man deeply sighed, with bitter and sorrow. Thinking of his old days, he found nothing else but his work in mind: get up early, deliver and come back late at night. Over the ten years, he was sketchy in accounting and absent-minded in security. Living in a crappy house, he saved little money for himself.

姑娘知他囊中羞涩，不再执意讨要；然而小伙子心知继续居住也是万万不能，于是择一个阳光灿烂的早晨，向她郑重道别。姑娘问及此去何往，他对天苦笑，天地之大，自己又有何处可去？唯有回家一途，向熟人借些劣地耕作，糊口维生而已；昔日些微荣耀，不过如过眼烟云，转瞬散尽。

Knowing he was poor, the girl didn't charge his stay. However, the young man is determined to leave. One sunny day he thanked the girl and chose to go. The girl asked him:

"What is your destination?"

"I have no choice." he replied with a bitter smile, "I will come back to the village, and borrow some lands from relatives, and strive to survive. My honor has gone and never come back."

临别，姑娘拿出旗帜包裹，言之是当日掉落在他身边，一起拣回。小伙闻言，猛然大呼，一把抢过，背上旗帜，扫过包上地址，便草草拜别。姑娘满眼含泪，后悔莫及，知此一别小伙必定凶多吉少。可他执念如此深重，心思如此单纯，世间碌碌，有几人能够做到？罢了，罢了，不如其心愿罢。

When he was about to leave, the girl returned him the flag, and the package he dropped on that day of blizzard. He saw it, shouted, grabbed it and disappeared at the end of the view. The girl regretted. She wept. She knew him so well.

"He has the obsession and determination that few of us have. Let him go."

两个月后，姑娘寻到山村，破屋仍在，然人已不知去了何处。姑娘找到最后托他送信的人家，追问情由，果然在某个风凛云卷的昏暗傍晚，包裹已经送到，但邮差浑身伤痕，惨不忍睹，三分像人，倒有七分像鬼，家人骇然之际，将他推出屋外。比及天黑开门再去看时，已不知所踪。

Two months later, the girl visited the village and found his crappy house. The house was there, but the young man was gone. She found the family sending the final package, and they told her an astonishing story, with a pale face and an upset voice:

"The other day a shadow came to my relative's house and knocked at the door. It was twilight with dark and cloudy sky, and thrilling wind was blowing. My relative opened the door and saw a human-shaped figure. He held the package with his body full of injury and blood, too horrible to stare at. Believing it is a ghost rather than a human, my relative was extremely scared. She pushed the ghost out and slammed the door. When the darkness covered the ground and the night came, she opened the door again, and no one was there."

姑娘见其陈述吞吞吐吐，显是那日受惊不小，不意再度惊扰，就此拜别。行至一处，竟看见小伙泥塑立于祠堂，诸般冥器皆已置办完备，香火缭绕青烟袅袅。原来邮差作鬼，履约送信，此事早已传遍村里，众人个个悚然，慌忙出钱出工，塑像建祠，求个心安。如此齐心协力，不过一月有余，已然有模有样。祠堂门口有碑石，记叙其人一生功绩。姑娘细细品读，笔迹娟秀，文辞华丽，正要颌首叫好，然虑及此情此境，顿觉句句虚饰，字字可憎，不免悲从心来。

The family members were disturbed and the girl left without asking more details. Somewhere in the village, she was surprised to see the sculpture and monument of the young man, with flowers, candles and objects used to rest the dead. She asked the people nearby. They told her the terrible story again, concluded that he died in pain and sorrow and his soul was not at rest. For the sake of peace and safety, the villagers hurried to gather a lot of money and made concerted efforts to build the sculpture and monument, all in one month.

She nodded and read the epitaph that recorded the achievement of the dead. The handwriting was beautiful, the sentence was elaborate. Everything seemed perfect and well-designed.

But everything was faked.

Thinking of his destiny, sadness came from her heart.

人已逝，尸骨无存，这些又有何用？

"He died. Nothing left behind. All decorations are just useless junk. "

此时正是夕阳西下，收工时光。姑娘见不远处人群聚集，男孩掷石为戏，女孩翩跹起舞，少年呼朋唤友，老者谈古论今，皆无忧无虑，怡然自得。回望小伙泥塑，大旗扛肩，包裹夹腋，一双明眸眺视远方，略显凝重。使命加于身则身不得轻，责任系于心则心不得闲，日日夜夜步履匆匆，悠然恬淡与己无缘，未了如风离去，

一世记忆散入陈年书简，不复为人提及。

She said. The twilight came. The sun was about to set. People relieved from their daily work and started to enjoy life. Boys were playing; girls were dancing, youngsters flirting with friends and elders talking about life.

All relaxed.

She turned back and stared at the sculpture of the young man. With the flag on the shoulder and the package below the armpit, his eye gazed afar and his face appeared solemn.

"The duty on you and you are in charge; the responsibility you undertake and you are not free. Day and night, your step is hasty; spring and fall, you enjoy no leisure. Finally you leave, with your mystery hidden in the history, and never be mentioned again."

此一生是耶？非耶？

"Is your entire life right? Or wrong?"

姑娘摇头，也不知答案，然而却在悲伤之余，略感欣慰。终于，他这一回历尽艰辛不辱使命，非因外物而起，非因他言而动，只为从一而终之夙愿，是为己而非为人。

The girl was confused. But a spot of light suddenly came to her heart and subtly alleviated the sadness.

"At least, you fulfilled the goal and finished the journey, not because of the external world, not because of others' compliments, but just because of yourself, of your determination. "