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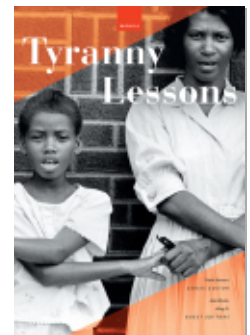
Crime against Grief: Myth of an Age

Xiao Xiao, Ouyang Yu

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Crime against Grief: Myth of an Age_____

At that time, the family of Wang Fugui
were preparing for a wedding ceremony. For a year and a half
they tightened their belts and lived off bits of rice and vegetables
they saved from the crevices between their teeth,
they calculated that the happy day
would fall on the ninth day of the ninth month in 1976
a most auspicious wedding date

they had all lived like paupers
but double happiness was just around the corner,
counting relatives and neighbors
they would need at least six tables for the guests

Wang Fugui's parents brought out meat coupons, food coupons
and oil coupons
long stashed away and saved in the bottom of boxes,
bitter poverty stored up for almost half a lifetime,
then with teeth clenched they went to town to purchase
Old White Dry, pork, tofu, noodles,
the dishes and burning liquor essential in those days at wedding
dinners

when all was ready and they were urging the bride to get into
the sedan chair
the Supreme Leader suddenly died
the nation went into mourning and all entertainment was suspended

this was a time without fridges and freezers
the wedding dinner was sitting out spoiling
and wouldn't wait for anyone
so in spite of everything, the Wang family had to finish the business

two days later, the public security cadre came
and arrested the shameless father and his son

charged with what crime?

impertinent celebration

taking pleasure in the death of The Great Leader

the highly educated political commissar came up with new terms

and so, father and son were paraded in front of the public

written on the big boards hanging on ropes around their necks:

crimes against grief

Translation from Chinese by Ouyang Yu