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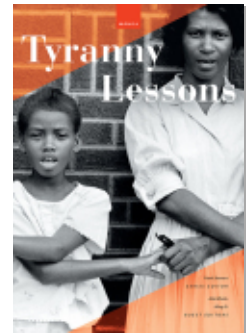
## Sickened by Steel

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### *Sickened by Steel*

I'm always afraid of reliving that night—  
the fires erupting,  
my rushing blood burns through my body again,  
the powerful cries jolt me out of my quiet life.  
In flames, the square expands and contracts—  
swelling in the soaring enthusiasm,  
then suddenly shrinking. The exploding lights  
blind the witnesses.

(I don't want to resurrect the emotions of that night  
or cause other people to relive them through me,  
the deaths, the pain.)

That night has sickened me.  
The grinding steel has become a disease  
that's made me sick with rage.

In this new era, that is without  
heroes or butterflies, I can calm myself  
with the smell of fresh oranges, or  
by making tea and chatting about cowardice.

When memories threaten us,  
we simply enroll in a school in the suburbs,  
find a job, or ring a bell every day  
like a monk marking the hours.

We go on living like that, pretending  
to be lighthearted  
as if nothing had happened.

But deep inside, we are infected.  
We laugh then abruptly stop.  
We are sad, so sad that we are nothing,  
like a river without fish,  
a sky without birds.

Living a meaningless life—  
Struck or not, a bell is still a bell.  
A monk is still a monk.  
Even airplanes would be sickened  
seeing the world through dark glasses.  
Like a failed abortion  
we are scraped out, hollowed,  
boring and meaningless souls.

Before that night I lived like a feather.  
Now, when I awake  
I have turned to dead ashes.

Sichuan  
1990.10.19

*Translation from Chinese by Ming Di and Frank Stewart*