

Laura Lam

## Good Night, Good Morning

Standing in front of the hawker's stand, I turn  
my coat collar up and then  
search for the ten-dollar coin in my pocket.

Without another word, the  
hawker fills the brown tiny paper bag with two  
stinking bean curds, one  
with thick chili sauce, the other with the sweet  
one, as usual. The bean  
curd is part of my life, or I should say, I am  
part of the hawker's life -  
from Youde to the Fat Tung, from two dollars

to five dollars each, I buy  
the bean curd from him every night on my  
way to work.

"Good night," I said to him, the first words  
I've ever spoken to him all  
these years, and perhaps, the last words as  
well.

The dripping sausages paint my footsteps on

this wet and fishy-smelling  
street leading to the building. Ha, still no thief  
follows my "footsteps".

"Hey, pray to your papa before you go the  
work," same old words, my wife  
used to say, "remember to take this safety  
yellow paper with you, I got it  
from Wong Tai Sin yesterday..."

Every time I just put the "magic yellow paper"  
under the mat in front of  
the door when I left home. Of course, my wife  
did not know that. She never  
understood me - every one wants to lead a  
peaceful life but please, don't  
count me in. I had never told her my ambition  
was to be a policeman, and  
now, I have no more chance to tell her.

Though my shaking hand is covered with the  
sauces, I try to feel that  
triangular yellow paper, which has been tied  
onto my neck since the day  
she left. Yes, still here.

When I get into the building, it is 12:00 am,  
half an hour earlier than my  
duty should begin. The last guard has already  
packed his luxuries  
collected all these years - the blanket, the  
folded bed, the old blue  
magazines, and, the latest horse racing tips  
collection. I just can't  
understand why people nowadays throw  
things out so easily. See? My radio,  
which I got from the 15th floor a few years  
ago, can still work if you  
press the battery tighter.

"Bee-bu-bu-bu-" 12:30am, the one entering  
the password of the front door  
must be the girl living on the 18th floor, I am  
sure. Wearing her mini-skirt, makeup like a  
monkey's ass. She used to be a nice and

charming  
girl. I still remember the days when she was  
in school uniform, she walked  
by early at 6am every day, with her pony tail  
swaying. "Good morning, Wong  
Pak".

"Good night," she said, with her mini-skirt  
swaying as she entered the  
lift.

"Good night."

Finished unpacking my stuff and eating my  
bean curd. My body gets warmer  
again. At 2 am, I put up the "On Patrol" sign,  
for the last time.

"Ei...err..."

"Is it you, my friend?"

No one answers. After the establishment of  
the Owner's Corporation, my  
only friends - the rats and the cats were all

killed, leaving me to patrol  
all alone. The sound is just what generated  
when I open the smoke door.  
But I know, behind this door, there will be  
some sort of excitement - from  
Flat F on this 5th floor.

"Hey, you S.O.B., back to Mainland to find your  
second wife!"

"Boom-Boom!" The sound of a thrown chair?

Eavesdropping becomes my only entertain-  
ment while patrolling the building.

"I just want my only wife back, not any sec-  
ond ones" I whispered in front  
of their door, "good luck and good night!"

Just imagine if I had got the stories of this  
building written and  
published, the royalties received could have  
probably made me rich! Rather  
than now, the salary cannot even buy my food.

And the pension? Not enough  
for me to buy a coffin! Oh yeah, a thousand  
million dollars is in front of  
me now: Bingo! It's The Sun, with accurate  
horseracing tips. Tomorrow,  
if...if I still have tomorrow..

I went back to my counter with The  
yesterday's Sun, after passing along  
every corridor of this building. Nothing  
happens, as usual. 3am, I switch  
on my radio, yes, that radio.

Good morning my dear, welcome to listen to  
RTHK 2, I'm your Ocean Chan..."

"Good morning."

"Unlike the past, today I'm going to broadcast  
you the latest songs, by  
Aaron, Leon..."

"Not Teresa Teng or Adam Cheng? The  
Wynners would also be fine!"

"This is our world. We are the Youth. Nothing  
That We Care About. Ha Ha  
Ha Ha..."

"Good night!" Don't have to switch the on/off  
button, I loosen the  
battery cover.

"Youth, Youth, Youth, Youth...I count the num-  
ber of wrinkles on my  
forehead, with my fingers feeling them one  
by one. The train tracks, just  
train tracks, the tracks which my train once  
rode on when I arrived in  
Hong Kong from the Mainland, are now  
pressed on my forehead. The days..."

"Good morning, Wong Pak, have your  
breakfast?" asked one old maid.

"Good morning, Wong Pak, why not listen to  
the radio? Out of order  
again?" asked the other.

"When you have time, Wong Pak, we can go  
out and practise kung-fu

together!"

"5am, immediately I know. They are the "Fit-  
ness Club" members of our  
building. Every morning before the cock  
crows, they go to the neighboring  
park to practise "Kung-fu".

"One day. One day..."

"It's a bit colder in this early morning, and, a  
bit darker. I put on the  
woolen sweater which my wife knit for me. The  
new and young security guard  
will be coming in his full uniform, as recom-  
mended by the Owners'  
Corporation.

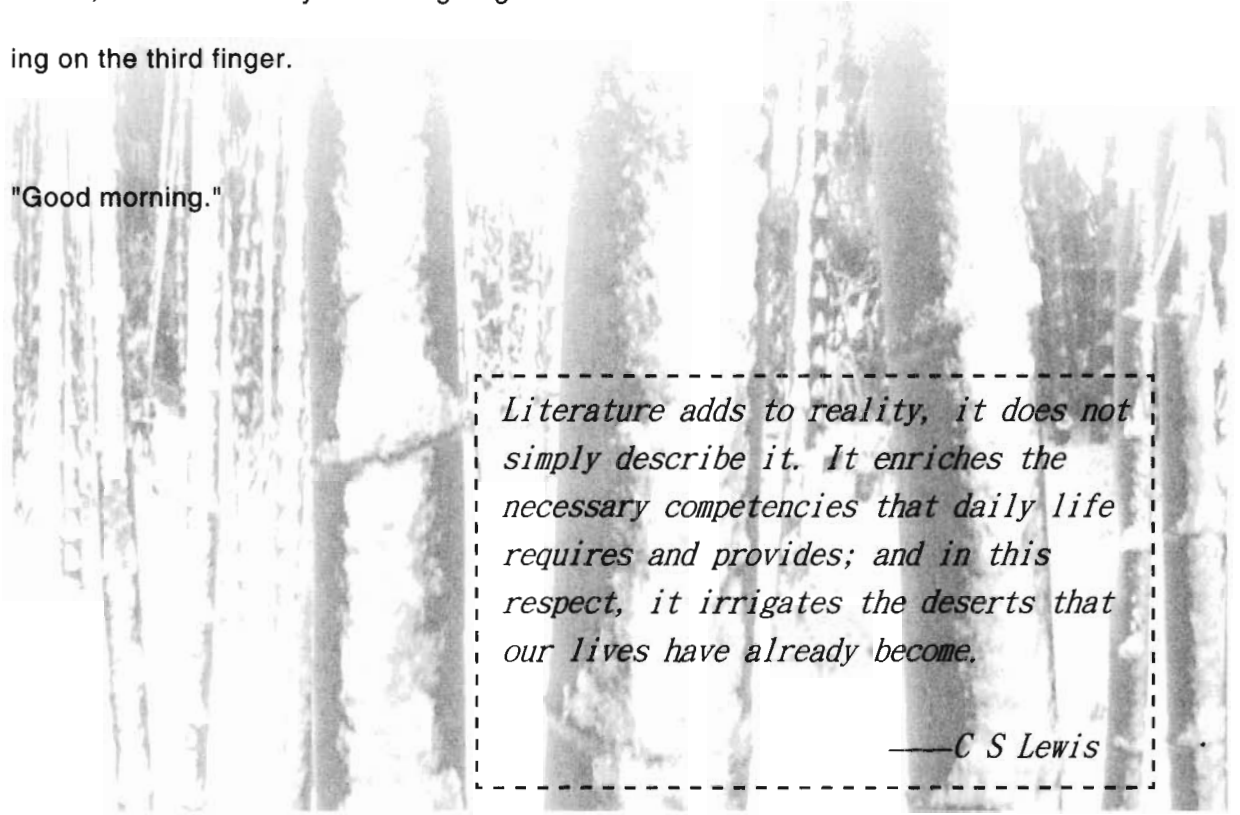
"Soon I will leave this tiny dizzy room. I put  
some drops of White Flower  
Oil on my forehead. Not long, I can breathe  
the fresh air again; not long,  
I can go to practise Kung-fu with those guys.

"Good morning," the uniformed one finally

comes, with a loaf of Life  
Bread in a Park'n Shop plastic bag.

"Immediately he glances through this tiny  
guard counter, seems searching  
something, with his two fingers pinching his  
nose. It's the mixed smell of  
the stinking bean curd and the White Flower  
Oil, I know. Looking into his  
eyes, I see them sparkling with the light of  
energy and hope, I see  
myself: I once stood in his position, in my  
brand new white shirt and  
shorts, and with that eye-catching ring shin-  
ing on the third finger.

"Good morning."



*Literature adds to reality, it does not  
simply describe it. It enriches the  
necessary competencies that daily life  
requires and provides; and in this  
respect, it irrigates the deserts that  
our lives have already become.*

—C S Lewis