

Durians, Oranges, Apples & Bananas



A fictional story by Michael Leung

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Tommy sat on the grey marble floor, leaned against the pillar and waited for the station worker to announce the C7127 19:01 train from Guangzhou East to Shenzhen. A few moments later a mother and her son sat next to him on the station floor and shared the same large pillar as a back rest.

Tommy was reading the last regular issue of LEAP art magazine which caught the attention of the child. The young boy, probably around five years old seemed fascinated by the article about the recent feminist art exhibition in a new art space in west Guangzhou. Some images on the page showed secret photographs exposing three male politicians inserting their sexes into a single durian. Other politicians followed suit with other durians in the background. The smoky interior made it difficult to see just how many spectators there were surrounding the five or six durian activities. In the text the writer explains that the men must have picked up the masturbatory party game called ‘Soggy Biscuit’ during their boarding school days in the UK, and had added a “Chinese twist” to the multiplayer game.¹

Tommy considered turning the page. He didn’t want to be responsible for giving a premature sex education to the young boy. Tommy turned to face the boy and then noticed him wearing an Apple Watch on his left wrist. Tommy, a struggling Hong Kong artist who works part-time in a vegetarian cafe in Mong Kok, was impressed to see a young boy wearing such an expensive watch —

however it was a bit loose on his wrist. The watch had a blue rubber strap and still had its protective film adhered to its display/watch face. Tommy looked at the mother's wrist and she had the same watch on but with a black strap, and also with the protective layer on.

After going through the ticket barrier and ordering a fresh RMB ¥20 orange juice from the vending machine, Tommy lost sight of the mother and son. He was later re-acquainted with them in the seventh train carriage six-seat table (3A, 3B, 3C, 4A, 4B and 4C). When the boy saw Tommy again sitting opposite him, he whispered into his mother's ear. His mother looked closely at Tommy and noticed how he moved his mouth as he read the magazine text, whispering a foreign language to himself.

The mother interrupted Tommy and asked him abruptly in Cantonese, "What are you reading?" Tommy closed the magazine and said, "LEAP magazine," unaware that he said the English name instead of 艺术界. In Cantonese she asked, "English?!" Tommy answered, "That's correct," in a near-perfect British accent. At his home studio, Tommy was halfway through season two of Sapphire and Steel and often replayed David McCallum's well-scripted lines with the volume down, repeating the English subtitles to himself.²

The mother introduced herself as Ms. Liang and her son, Chen. She got straight to the point and asked Tommy if he could offer her son weekly English tuition classes and that she would pay him generously. She wrote down '¥500元/小時' (RMB ¥500 per hour) on her iPhone 8, which also had

its protective layer on. This was a very attractive amount compared to his HKD \$45 per hour cafe salary (RMB ¥38 per hour). Tommy asked if Sunday late afternoons would work and Ms. Liang immediately said yes without consulting Chen who already took the occasion to sneakily flick through the pages of LEAP magazine.

The arrangement was perfect for Tommy. He would visit his partner Ying in Guangzhou on Thursday night, stay a few days and then meet Chen, her son, at Martyrs' Park metro station at 4pm every Sunday. The classes would continue on the train to Shenzhen, and they even extended onto the MTR train from Lo Wu to Kowloon Tong station. Ms. Liang even purchased Tommy's Guangzhou returning train ticket every Sunday (always the C7127 train).

After several months of English lessons, Ms. Liang proudly informed Tommy that Chen had passed a school interview and he would be starting at the prestigious La Salle Primary School in Hong Kong this September. Tommy was shocked as he knew that the school fees were extortionate at that school.

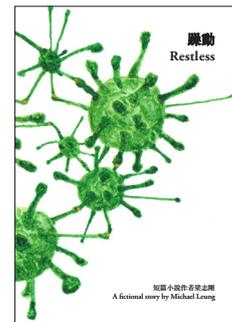
After the next lesson, one stop before Shenzhen station, Chen was asleep and Ms. Liang was smiling whilst staring out of the window. Tommy, who had recently left his part-time job, said to Ms. Liang softly, "Ms. Liang, you don't have to keep paying for my train ticket and the hours that I travel with you both. Chen's asleep now and it doesn't feel right to be paid for this." Ms. Liang said it was fine as her business was doing well since she left her husband in Beijing a few years ago.

After a few minutes of silence, Tommy looked down to Chen who just changed his sleeping position, and exposed the latest Apple Watch on his left wrist, again with the protective film layer on the display/watch face.

Interrupting Ms. Liang again, Tommy asked, “Ms. Liang, I hope that you won’t mind me asking, but may I know what line of business you are in?” She replied, “Of course not, I’m an Apple reseller.” This explained the weekly Hong Kong visits and the electronic products always with their protective layers on.

Tommy sunk back into his seat, shared Ms. Liang’s view and looked outside the window at the banana farms that were zooming past. He smiled as he thought about moving to Guangzhou and setting up a vegetarian cooperative cafe with Ying and their friends.

Other titles



躁動 Restless



東京ドーナツ Tokyo Doughnut

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¹ 'Soggy biscuit is a male masturbation game reportedly played by British school children where the participants stand around a biscuit masturbating until ejaculating onto it. The last person to do so must eat the biscuit' – https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soggy_biscuit

² www.k-punk.abstractdynamics.org/archives/001316.html



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