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# Coming Home

By Jingzhi Zou

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All right. That's it for today.

Everyone listen up.

Gather around.

You all did very well today.

Next month we will find out

the company's decisions on the major roles.

Everyone should do her very best.

Dandan.

Please go to the Propaganda Office.

Dandan.

Mother.

Close the door. Sit down.

Dandan.

I had your mother come in today

because I have something to tell you both.

- Something happened to Lu.

- Is he in trouble?

What happened?

He escaped.

Escaped?

How?

That Rightist is a sneaky bastard.

He ran off during a prison transfer

at a train station not far from here.

Have you been in contact with him?

No.

I haven't heard from him in 10 years.

I must inform you that firstly

if you know his whereabouts,

report it immediately

and help the authorities apprehend him.

Secondly,

it is strictly forbidden to meet him.

He is the enemy.

Don't cross the line.

Have I made myself clear?

Now declare your position.

I have nothing to do with him.

I will obey the Party's decisions.

Teacher Yu.

Your daughter's doing well.

How about you?

Teacher Yu.

Let me be absolutely clear.  
Withholding information  
is a very serious crime.  
I'm doing this for your own good.  
Think about your daughter's future.  
Do you understand what I'm saying?  
Mother.  
I understand.  
Mother.  
Will they let me be the lead?  
The soldier is a good role, too.  
I don't want to play a soldier.  
I'll be the lead or nothing.  
Mother.  
You mustn't see him.  
He's an enemy of the party.  
Mother.  
Get the door.  
- Deputy Li.  
- Deputy Li.  
Come in.  
Teacher Yu of Guangming Middle School.  
Her daughter Dandan,  
a student at the dance academy.  
This is Deng and his colleague,  
Comrade Liu from the political prison.  
They have some questions for you.  
Lu escaped.  
Did you know that?  
Yes.  
Please tell me, why did he do it?  
- What did you do to him?  
- Who's asking the questions here?  
She just wants to know.  
It's been so long since she heard from him.  
It's only human.  
Deputy Li, with all due respect...  
Try not to forget which side you're on.  
Fine, I'll be quiet. Please continue.  
Certain things  
the family does not need to know.  
Just answer our questions. Okay?  
It's so obvious.  
Dandan is the better dancer.

That's not the point.  
Her father committed a crime and ran off.  
Talk to her after the rehearsal.  
She was only three  
when her father was taken away.  
- She hardly knows him.  
- That's irrelevant.  
Mei will take the lead. And that's final.  
Who's there?  
Lu.  
Did you see my mother?  
Dandan?  
You're a big girl now.  
I'm your father.  
I don't know you.  
I just want to see you and your mother.  
Nobody wants to see you.  
Tell your mother tomorrow morning at 8:00.  
I'll be waiting for her at the station.  
No way.  
Did something happen?  
I didn't get the lead.  
Wu Qinghua in  
The Red Detachment of Women.  
Why not?  
What is there to think about?  
It's for a righteous cause.  
You will be justly rewarded.  
Give me good information  
and I can talk to your school.  
You can have any role you want.  
Where's your school? I'll write it down.  
Mother, I'm home.  
- What took you so long?  
- Late rehearsal.  
Mother. Are you going to meet him?  
What about me?  
Did you think about me?  
Since you were young,  
I've always put you first.  
But this time I must think of your father.  
I don't care. I won't let you go!  
Dandan.  
What I do is none of your business.

Your business is to dance Wu Qinghua.

You'll ruin everything!

I'm not letting you go!

Yu!

Yu!

Yu!

Yu!

Yu!

Move!

Over there!

Lu, run!

- Run!

- Yu!

Lu, run!

Run!

Just run!

Run!

Lu, run!

Yu!

Lu!

Mother!

Get out of the way!

Lu!

Lu!

Get out of the way! Stop her!

Yu!

Lu!

- Stop!

- Lu!!

Mother!

- Stop!

- Lu!!

Yu!

Lu!

Lu!

Mother!

Mother!

Yu!

Mother!

Mother!

"THE RED DETACHMENT OF WOMEN"

Sailing the seas depends on the helmsman

Life and growth depend on the sun

Rain and dewdrops nourish the crops

Making revolution depends

on Mao Zedong Thought

Dandan?

Mother didn't come.

But I wrote to her.

I don't know what happened.

Deputy Li told me.

- So, your mother...

- I didn't tell her.

Is this all your luggage?

No, I shipped some.

Let's go.

What is this place?

This is where I work,

a textile factory dormitory.

- You're not dancing anymore?

- I gave that up long ago.

Hello.

Come in.

That's my bed, sit down.

Dandan.

I'm not staying.

I'd rather head straight home.

- I have something to tell you.

- What is it?

- Is it urgent?

- I'll tell you when I get off work.

I only took three hours' leave.

I should get back.

Okay.

I'll go home.

We can talk there later.

TURN OFF THE LIGHTS WHEN YOU LEAVE.

DON'T LOCK THE DOOR.

TOMORROW MORNING I WILL WAI FOR YOU AT THE TRAIN STATION.

TURN OFF THE LIGHT.

Teacher Yu.

Grocery shopping?

You're here.

Yu.

I'm home.

Is this your stuff?

Yes, my luggage.

Sit.

Please, sit down.

Please.

Yu.

- How have you been?

- I'm well.

You must be tired.

Let me get you some water.

How's everything at home?

Everything's fine.

Dandan picked me up at the station.

Yes, Dandan picked you up.

Dandan dances...

Dances ballet.

It's tiring. Lots of practice.

Did something happen here?

No, nothing.

- What about you?

- I'm fine. Everything's fine.

Have you eaten?

Stay for supper.

I'll go buy something.

I'll get some food.

Stay for supper.

Sit.

Mr. Fang,

what are you doing here?

What did you call me? Fang?

Please leave.

What's going on?

Get out.

It's me.

- Who?

- Lu!!

What are you talking about?

Leave! Get out!

What's wrong with you?

Get out!

Get out!

Get out!

Get out!

Get out!

Dandan.

Your mother didn't recognize me.

Dandan. Come in.

We've been waiting for you.  
Yu, I brought Dandan.  
Mother.  
What are you doing here?  
Greet your father.  
Greet your father for your mother.  
So that she knows he's your father.  
Go on, Dandan, greet your father.  
What can she prove?  
Ask her.  
Did she acknowledge him before?  
I don't want to see her.  
It's pointless if you won't greet your father.  
Yu, I'll tell you one last time.  
Times have changed.  
Lu has been rehabilitated.  
We've received notification.  
Official letters are normally classified.  
There's an official letter?  
NOTICE OF REHABILITATION  
Lu.  
He's alive and he's coming home.  
I'll meet him at the train station tomorrow.  
You don't have to. He's right here.  
No, that's not him.  
Comrade Yu.  
Do you trust the Party?  
Yes, I do.  
Am I the Party representative?  
Then shouldn't you trust me?  
Yes, I should.  
Good.  
Come in.  
In the name of the Party, I assure you...  
This man right here  
is your husband Comrade Lu.  
Yu.  
I know who he is.  
He's Fang.  
Mr. Fang.  
I don't want him in my home.  
You should ask him to leave.  
I don't want him here.  
Make him go away.



That's how she is now.  
Some days are worse than others.  
She looks all right. It's her mind.  
If Teacher Yu doesn't want you here,  
we can't risk upsetting her.  
We'll find a place for you to stay.  
Xu.  
Is the store next to the kiosk still empty?  
- Yes.  
-You can stay there for now.  
I thank the Party.  
Also, you can go back to work now.  
Do you want your job back?  
Given her condition, I'll wait.  
Okay, one step at a time.  
Deputy...  
Who is this Fang?  
He was a Party official.  
Yu had been asking him to help you.  
Could we bring him over  
to help her remember?  
That's not going to help.  
He was transferred to the suburbs  
and we lost contact.  
I'll get the door.  
It's not much.  
Xu. Let's tidy it up a bit.  
Okay, I'll find someone.  
- It's just temporary.  
-I'm okay.  
It has its benefits.  
It's close to Yu's place,  
just across the street.  
I'll tell you something.  
- Yu doesn't lock her door.  
- Why not?  
Ever since that night you couldn't get in  
she stopped locking the door.  
She's always saying,  
"I must never lock Lu out again."  
How did your mother end up like this?  
- Has she seen a doctor?  
- Yes, he said it's psychogenic amnesia.  
- Psychogenic amnesia?

- Yes, psychogenic amnesia.

- How long has it been?

- Over a year now.

Can she manage day to day?

Yes.

- She doesn't get lost?

- No.

Dandan.

Do you always stay at your dorm?

I visit her mornings and evenings.

Your mother's not well.

Why don't you live with her?

- She won't let me.

- Why not?

I need to get going.

Good morning, Teacher Yu.

Yu?

Wait in line, don't push, one at a time!

Get your tickets, don't push!

Mind your belongings!

Your food!

- Comrade, is this the train from Xining?

- Yes.

Comrade.

Are there any more passengers?

No.

Hi, Lu.

A letter for Yu.

You can give it to her.

Thank you.

Come in.

- Dandan.

- What's so urgent?

The letter I wrote to your mother  
has just arrived.

Hurry and take it to her.

- It's already out-of-date.

- That's okay.

I only wrote that I'd arrive  
on the 5th of the month.

I didn't specify which month.

I think, once she reads it,

she'll want to meet me at the station.

We must hurry.

Today is already the 4th.

What's your plan?

Mother.

Dandan.

What are you doing here?

A letter from Father.

Your father wrote me?

**LU:**

How did she get this disease?

Right now its causes  
are still relatively unknown.

Physical injury,  
psychological trauma, malnutrition  
can all be factors.

She recognizes other people, why is that?

- How long since you've seen each other?

- 20 years.

- Has your appearance changed a lot?

- I suppose so.

That could be it.

Dr. Wang. Can she be cured?

There's not much we can do right now.

An article in a foreign journal mentioned  
hypnotism, subliminal suggestion  
and other psychological treatments.

But we don't have them in China.

- Maybe you can experiment yourself.

- How?

An English article I read  
talked about a "Dj vu" effect.

Dj vu.

It means "already seen," right?

Yes. That is correct.

- It's French, isn't it?

-Yes.

- You speak French?

- Yes, a little.

The "Dj vu" theory suggests that,  
through imagination,  
the human brain can create  
fictional memories.

When encountering  
similar moments in real life,

the patient can subconsciously  
activate the fictional memories  
and make them seem real.

For example?

For example...

Places you have lived,  
familiar locations,  
movies you have seen,  
music you have listened to,  
letters,  
books, old photos...

They may all be helpful.

There they are.

Come, put them here.

That's it. That's everything.

Who did all this?

It was me.

I heard she doesn't even recognize you.

Seems she's not getting any better.

Zhen.

Do you have any photographs  
from when we were young  
with me in them?

I think so.

Wait here. I'll look.

Thank you so much.

It wasn't easy to hold onto  
this photo for so many years.

- I'll return it soon.

- No, you should keep it.

How is Wei?

He committed suicide.

Dandan.

Remember,  
tell her it was you who kept this photo.

Go. I'll wait here.

Who is it?

Mother.

What is it?

I have a photograph of Father.

A photograph of your father?

You kept it?

So you do have a heart.

You never really saw him.

Come here.  
This...  
This is me.  
Who is this?  
This is Wei.  
Wei.  
And this is Zhen, your old classmate.  
Mother. Who's this?  
This is...  
This is Lu.  
Your father.  
This is your father.  
Look, it's your father.  
Take a good look.  
Mother, you were so pretty.  
Father was dashing, too.  
He's coming back.  
He's coming home.  
- He's already back.  
- The 5th... He comes back on the 5th.  
Mother. Who is this?  
Yu.  
Yu.  
He looks familiar...  
- Who is he?  
- Lu.  
Lu.  
What kind of nonsense is this?  
Dandan.  
Don't ever bring a stranger  
into my home again.  
Do you hear me?  
You can't have this photo.  
I can't have you  
cutting your father out again.  
You and your scissors.  
Dandan. I'm telling you,  
the things that you did,  
I'll never forgive you.  
Never.  
Now go. Go. Just go.  
Did you see that?  
She gets mad at me over every little thing.  
Dandan.

Your mother is not well.  
You have to be more understanding.  
I just don't get it.  
She forgets everything,  
but remembers all my faults.  
I don't remember the make.  
I've forgotten.  
It hasn't been played for a while.  
I'd like someone to tune it.  
There's no one?  
When can he come over?  
It's quite urgent.  
My husband is coming home soon  
and he loves to play the piano.  
PIANO TUNING HANDBOOK  
Comrade, who are you looking for?  
Is this Teacher Yu's residence?  
Yes.  
I'm the piano tuner.  
Piano tuner?  
Didn't you call for a piano tuner?  
Oh, yes, I did. Come in.  
Please come in.  
This is the piano.  
It's pretty old.  
Hasn't been used for some time.  
Yes, a very long time.  
Comrade, can you tune it?  
No problem.  
Aren't you feeling well?  
Is there anyone to take care of you?  
- Do you have children?  
- Yes.  
She's a ballerina.  
- She takes care of you?  
- She's busy rehearsing.  
She doesn't have time.  
Can you get by on your own?  
Yes, I'm used to it.  
Who plays this piano?  
My husband.  
What does he do?  
He's a professor.  
He was sent to the Northwest.

But he's coming back soon.  
Teacher Yu...  
I heard those people have already returned.  
They already came back.  
No, on the 5th.  
My husband wrote and said  
he's returning on the 5th.  
PICK UP LU ON THE 5TH.  
You two have been apart too long.  
Well...  
I'm worried about your mother.  
You should go back and live with her.  
You know, since that day  
you tried to come home  
she can hardly look at me.  
Since she got ill,  
she won't let me in the door.  
She doesn't know I quit dancing,  
or where I live.  
I'm so sorry about you two.  
It's all my fault.  
Not at all. I'm the one to blame.  
If it wasn't for me,  
you two wouldn't be like this.  
It's all right.  
It's all in the past now.  
You still have to work tomorrow.  
Go get some rest.  
Father.  
I was the one who reported you.  
Yes, I know. Deng told me.  
Teacher Yu.  
There's a package for you.  
Come down and get it.  
It's from Lu.  
Teacher Yu. I'll get going now.  
Thank you.  
Do you need help?  
Sorry to trouble you.  
You first, go ahead.  
Here we are.  
Come in please.  
Where should I put it?  
Put it here.

- Thank you.
- You're welcome.
- I'll get going then.
- Thanks again.
- Do you want me to open it?
- Okay.

Do you have scissors?

Scissors.

I'll look for them.

Here they are.

Okay.

It's okay. Allow me.

Here we go.

What are these?

Letters.

That's right.

Why are there no envelopes?

Looks like they were never sent.

- So many of them!

- They look rather old.

It's hard to read.

Who wrote them?

It says "Lu" at the end.

Lu.

Lu wrote me all these letters.

Why didn't he use proper paper?

I guess he just wrote on

whatever he could get his hands on.

Things must have been difficult.

Was he losing his eyesight?

More likely he wrote them in the dark.

Can you tell me what he wrote?

"We went to the Gobi Desert to gather sand.

"We ran into a tornado and saw it  
spiraling right up to the sky.

"It was quite spectacular."

Comrade.

Can you help me read them?

- Is that okay?

- Yes.

Okay.

Shall I begin?

"Winter is almost over...

"Our strength is restored,



"and our tans have faded.  
"Yu, spring is in the air.  
"The mare was giving birth,  
"but having some difficulties.  
"We got some rope,  
"tied it around the foal's legs  
and pulled it out.  
"We watched the foal struggle to stand  
on the grass, yellow flowers blooming.  
"We realized spring had arrived."  
No need to see me out.  
Remember, we already read these.  
Don't mix them up.  
Good-bye.  
Comrade.  
- Will you come back?  
-To read more letters?  
How about tomorrow?  
Great.  
See you.  
Hello, Teacher Yu.  
- You are...  
- Did you forget?  
Yesterday you asked me  
to come back to read more letters.  
You are the letter-reading comrade.  
Please come in.  
"I've been dreaming a lot.  
"I dreamed of you and Dandan.  
"She was dancing, like a little fairy.  
"It was very beautiful.  
"Today is her birthday.  
"Please send her my birthday wishes.  
"I am her father,  
"yet I was never around for her.  
"It's the biggest regret of my life.  
"I still remember  
"how you didn't want her  
to become a dancer.  
"You said only science and technology  
"could make a meaningful contribution  
to our country."  
It's true. Back then I was against it.  
And now? Does she still dance?

Yes, she does.

Later on I became very supportive.

That was Lu's wish, for Dandan to dance.

Teacher Yu.

Father.

Why did you stop reading the letters?

Mother is looking for you.

Do you know

how your mother looked at me

when I read her my letters?

If this goes on any longer,

to her I'll eventually become

nothing more than a letter reader.

Father.

Everything that you've done so far was

to be close to her, to take care of her.

Does the rest really matter?

Think about it.

I'm going to check on her.

Hello, Teacher Yu.

- You are...

- You forgot?

I'm the letter reader.

The letter-reading comrade.

I've been waiting for you since morning.

Come in, please.

Teacher Yu,

would you like me to read you

the most recent letters?

"Another year has gone by.

We are getting old.

"I've grown forgetful.

"How about you?

"If you are in the same boat,

I'd suggest not going out so often.

"If you must go out,

"write down our address

on a piece of paper

"and keep it in your pocket.

"Or even better, take someone with you."

Teacher Yu.

Do you go out often?

No, not really.

I need to go to the train station on the 5th.

Do you really have to?  
I have to pick up my husband.  
He told me he would return on the 5th.  
I have to pick him up.  
"It's getting chilly."  
"It's going to be a cold winter.  
Remember to stay warm."  
"Don't forget to seal the stove at night,  
"or gas will leak out."  
"I heard you and Dandan  
"are having some problems."  
"She is very sad."  
"She said you only remember her mistakes  
"and that you don't want to see her."  
Teacher Yu, is that true?  
"Yu, I'm so sorry."  
"I have been the cause  
of all the changes in your lives."  
"Dandan is a little headstrong."  
"Whatever mistakes she may have made,  
"she's just a child."  
"Everyone makes mistakes."  
"I'm already a bad father,  
"I'm depending on you to be a good mother."  
"I don't think it was right to kick her out."  
"I hope you will let her come back home."  
- Lu said that?  
- Yes. Look.  
Come in.  
Dandan.  
We're going home.  
- Father. Is Mother really okay with this?  
- Of course.  
Why did she agree?  
You'll find out.  
Okay.  
Go, go in.  
Mother.  
Dandan.  
Come. Come in.  
I've got something to tell you.  
Come in.  
These are your father's letters.  
- So many?

- Yes.

Lots of them.

Your father wrote that  
you should move back home.

He also said that...

I was wrong to let you live alone.

Dandan.

Why not move out of the academy  
and come back home?

Here's what he wrote.

Come home.

Mother. Did you like it?

What role was that?

Wu Qinghua in

The Red Detachment of Women.

The soldier is a good role too.

I thought the costume would help,  
but I guess it didn't work.

Come. Eat it while it's hot.

She's sleeping.

Fang. What are you doing?

Lu was not executed.

He was not executed.

I'm indebted to you for life.

But you can't do this again.

You can't touch me again. Get out!

I won't allow it anymore.

Get out.

- Out.

- Yu!

Get out! You leave!

Get out!

I won't be violated again!

- Yu!

- Get out!

- Get out!

- Mother, calm down!

- Out!

- Mother.

Mother, open the door!

Mother!

Mother!

Out!

Mother!

Get out!  
Mother!  
Mother!  
Open the door!  
Dandan!  
Come here.  
Come!  
Hurry!  
When did Fang do this to your mother?  
When?  
Tell me!  
I was little...  
I only remember one time.  
He was hitting her with a ladle.  
Thank you.  
Fang?  
Fang?  
Who is it?  
Who are you?  
Is Fang home?  
Are you with the investigation?  
I was just about to go to your office.  
When will my Fang be released?  
What did he do?  
How dare you investigate him!  
Everyone knows Fang is a nice guy!  
He's been gone for so long.  
When will you release him? Give me a date.  
It's just me and my child.  
Day in and day out we wait for him.  
We want him back for the New Year!  
Tell me!  
When will he be released?  
How much longer do we have to wait?  
Tell me!  
Answer me!  
When will he get out?  
Give us back my husband!  
He's a good man, you hear me?  
You should be locked up!  
Come back, don't leave!  
You come back!  
Mother, don't wait anymore.  
The letter reader is ill.

I'll put them away.  
It's New Year's Eve.  
Let's have dumplings.  
What did you just say?  
He's ill?  
He caught a cold.  
He's fine, nothing serious.  
PICK UP LU ON THE 5TH.