




Anon: I'm Calling You, Mother


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Note from Andrea Worden: The following poem was given to me by a medical student in Changsha on June 9, 1989. Aware that I would be leaving Changsha two days later, he wrote in a note accompanying the poem: "On your departure, all I have to give you is a passionate heart dedicated to fighting for democracy and freedom. I'm hopeful that my country will become strong and prosperous, and I hope that you and I ,my teacher, will meet again one day in a world that is democratic and free."

Good mother, why do you close your eyes so tightly?
I hear your heart beat like thunder
Why do you hold everything in?
Your heart will be destroyed by the sound of thunder
The children you raised will have no place to rest
The mountains and rivers you embrace will turn red with fresh blood
Why do you close your eyes so tightly?

Good mother, open your eyes, good mother,
The longer you keep them shut, the more likely your thoughts will harden,
The longer you keep them shut, the more likely you'll be fooled by others,
The longer you keep them shut, the more likely the life of spring will turn into the darkness of winter.
Why do you keep your eyes shut so tightly?
Your children reach out their hands, covered with blood,
And fall before your eyes.

Good mother, my good mother, are your eyes open now?
You've opened them in the past, but today, you cannot bear to look at your children
Who shed blood for you and fight for freedom.
You cannot look at their faces,
In a pool of blood, they lift up their hands, and present to you the flower of democracy.
Your children pledge their lives unwaveringly, and yearn for freedom and democracy. Open your eyes and look around you, the scene stirs the soul.
My good mother, who wears a dragon necklace
Your broken heart is also bleeding.

Good mother, perhaps—no—you must, remember.
Seventy years ago, your children used their lives to destroy the chains of authoritarianism
And raised the flag of democracy and science.
And they also used fresh blood to forge their beliefs.
You opened your eyes then and radiated a matchless universal light.

Our hands were like pillars, lifting you up,
 In the darkness, your children advanced wave upon wave for today's light.
 Your children made it through the brambles, but are facing an even more difficult challenge ahead.
 Your bloody children are embracing you, why won't you stand up and embrace your children in return?

Good mother, today, after seventy years, why did you do this?
 Were you kidnapped by savages?
 Or was it that your children have shed so much blood
 that your heart couldn't hold any more sadness?
 You let the blood flow freely and you let dignity and justice be crushed,
 You let your children's corpses lie on the solemn heart of the Capital,
 You let your children cry until they go blind,
 You let fresh blood flow until there's no more.
 Good mother, how can your fragile body ever become strong and powerful?

My good mother, good mother! Your children are calling,
 Your children are fighting for you,
 Your children are not afraid of guns nor are they afraid of a 5,000 year-old legacy.
 All those who participated cried, wept, shout and fought.
 My good mother, good mother
 There is blood under your feet and scars on your body
 This is a difficult time, a critical juncture
 My good mother, open your eyes, I will fight for you until the end . . .

Translated by Andrea Worden and Ivy Su

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