

我鼓起勇氣推開門，已經很久沒有進來。水吧上的掛鐘顯示著七時一分。時間尚早，茶餐廳裡只有很少人。茶餐廳跟我記憶中的差不多，有點殘舊，但又未至於會令人覺得難受。同樣的空間擺設，同樣的枱檯，但好像縮小了。牆上菜單由毛筆手寫變成了電腦新細明體。伙記仍然是我認得的那位，頭髮變白了，仍然穿著白色制服守在掛鐘下那個屬於他的角落，看著門上方的電視。電視由箱子換成了平板，放著香港新聞。老闆沒有抬頭，坐在入口旁的收銀處。以前老闆看報紙，現在老闆看手機，跟以前一樣，老闆不時皺眉。

他坐在右邊、中間背著門口和電視的卡位，沉思著些甚麼，沒有注意到我進來。我走到他對面正想坐下，伙記就已經將一杯熱水放到桌上，左手拿著一疊紙，右手從胸口那個已經劃滿藍色筆痕的口袋中拿出了一枝筆，看著我，沒有出聲。由細到大，我都覺得伙記好像一個考官，會根據我點的餐和所需的作答時間，給我人生評分。能夠在茶餐廳出入自如的，都一定是非常了解和相信自己的人，所以我很怕來茶餐廳。我用最快的速度讀出我從枱面餐牌看到的字：菠蘿油，熱檸啡。

伙記看一看我，在紙上寫下了對我的評語，然後將我的成績單放到桌上，走回水吧。枱面餐牌寫的其實是熱咖啡，但我說錯了熱檸啡，又不敢改單。可能因為我剛睡醒又緊張，難怪伙記這樣看著我。

他安然地坐在卡位的對面，看起來精神，鬍鬚刮得乾淨。面上的微笑跟他身上的淺藍色西裝襖一樣，令人羨慕、讓人放心。他笑著問我：「熱檸啡？好喝的嗎？」「我不知道，從來沒有喝過，一陣我告訴你。」

距離我們上一次相見，已經22年。

I plucked up my courage and opened the door. It has been a long time since I last went into this Cha Chaan Teng. The clock above the bar reads one minute past seven. It's early. There are only a handful of customers. The Cha Chaan Teng is more or less the same as I remembered – shabby, but not unbearable. The space looks exactly the same, with the same old tables and chairs, only they now feel much smaller in size. They used to put up hand-written menus on the wall, now they're printed in Times New Roman. I recognize the waiter. His hair is greying, he is wearing the same white uniform, and is still in charge of the corner under the clock, watching the news on TV. The box TV has been replaced by a plasma model, tuned in to the local news channel. The Cha Chaan Teng owner sits at the cashier by the entrance, and didn't even care to raise his head as I went in. The owner used to read newspapers, and now reads from his smartphone. Just as I remembered, the owner frowns a lot.

He is seated in a booth in the middle of the right side, with his back facing the entrance and the TV. He hasn't noticed me. He seems to be contemplating about something. I am about to take a seat opposite him as the waiter brings me a cup of hot water, swiftly takes out a pen from his shirt pocket, heavily stained with blue lines. He then stares at me in silence with a notepad in his left hand. Since I was a child, I have always felt that Cha Chaan Teng waiters were kind of like examiners. They grade my life based on what I order and the amount of time I took to make that decision. Only the utterly self-assured can pass such a test. That is precisely why I was intimidated by the idea of coming to a Cha Chaan Teng. I quickly read aloud the first lines from the menu - *pineapple bun with butter and hot lemon coffee*.

The waiter glances at me and jots down my grade with his comment. He places my mark sheet on the table and walks to the bar. It actually reads *hot coffee* instead of *hot lemon coffee* on the menu, but since I was only half awake and nervous, I ordered *hot lemon coffee* by mistake. Perhaps that was why the waiter gave me that look? I don't know.

Quietly seated in front of me, he observed all this. He is clean-shaven and looks full of energy. His smile, like his azure blazer, has a comforting quality. He teases me, "*Hot lemon coffee? Does it taste good?*" "I have no idea, I've never tried it before. We'll see."

It has been 22 years since I last saw him.

J.H. D'Anglebert
Passacaille d'Armide de Mr. De Lully

我問他，為甚麼突然約我見面。

他猶疑了一會，說：「我雙眼出了事，遺傳了家人的病，年紀越大視力會越差。六月開始，我右眼已經完全看不見，現在只剩下左眼能隱約看見藍色、綠色同黃色的東西。我想在完全看不見之前回來，再看彩虹和你。」

這時門外停來了一輛紅色跑車，跑車引擎發出的震動聲非常擾人，經過茶餐廳地上的馬賽克磁磚反射和擴大後，更令人感到煩燥。跑車的引擎開著卻一直沒有駛走。引擎聲中，老闆緊皺著眉，其他茶餐廳裡的人跟他一樣，目光沒有離開過自己的手機，很不專心地吃著自己面前的食物。

我看著他的雙眼，本來以為他會跟我說一些關於他的、我錯過了的人生，怎料聽到的卻是他將會失去的未來。

“Why do you want to meet me all of a sudden?” I asked.

He hesitates and says, “My vision is deteriorating because of an inherited eye disease. My right eye has been permanently blinded since June, and now my left eye can barely see. I can only see blurry images in blue, green or yellow hues. Before my eyesight is completely gone, I want to see Rainbow* and you one last time.

(*Choi Hung: literally means rainbow in Cantonese)

At this moment, a red sports car stops in front of the Cha Chaan Teng. The driver kept the engine running, making excessive and annoying noises. The owner is still frowning. Everyone in the Cha Chaan Teng seemed indifferent to the rumbling noise. They kept their eyes fixated on their smartphones while thoughtlessly eating.

I look into his eyes. Somehow I was expecting to hear about his exciting life that I have not been part of, not about the future that he is about to lose.

G.F. Handel
Armida Abbandonata, HWV 105

我跟他小時候都住在彩虹，是鄰居，那時候彩虹仍然是白色的。放學做完功課後，我喜歡去他在金碧樓的家玩。我們通常會先看一回教育電視當溫書，然後打電話約上另外幾個朋友，就會到樓下的公園踢足球。

We grew up together in Rainbow. Back then, Rainbow was all white. Everyday after class, we would play together at his home in Kam Pik House. We would first pretend to study by watching ETV# programmes. Afterwards we would phone our friends, and play football in the playground downstairs.

#ETV= Educational Television programmes tailored to the local primary school curriculum

彩虹有彩虹的規矩，我們小學生的，是不可以在屬於中學生、在公眾停車場天台的球場內踢足球。金碧樓樓下公園裡那塊小石屎地，自然便成了我們幾個男孩的球場。但石屎地凹凸不平，非常粗糙，我們又是好勝的小孩，每次踢完足球，我們雙手雙腳都一定會擦損。回到他家，他的媽媽會從木櫃中拿來紅藥水、雲南白藥為我們消毒傷口。

消毒很痛，對於當時的我來說，這簡直就是人能夠承受的最大痛楚。每次藥粉碰上傷口時，我都忍不住大叫，但他每次都只咬著唇，從來沒有因為痛而叫出過一聲。那時的他已經會說，「人總要經歷痛苦，這是阻止不了我回去石屎地。」

直到我小學五年級，我們父母先後都抽到居屋，各自搬離開了彩虹，亦在那時，他們將彩虹油上了彩色。自始我們再沒有見面、沒有一起踢足球、雙腳亦再沒有新的傷痕。聽說他後來考上了港大，然後又去了外國讀書，回到香港後從事金融行業，生活應該過得不錯。我一直有想過聯絡他，約他再踢足球，可是我又不敢。

There were certain rules in Rainbow. Only secondary school students were to play in the football field on the car park's roof. Primary school kids could only use the small playground in front of Kam Pik House as our own football field. But the concrete floor of the playground was rugged, covered in small stones and sharp edges. We always had small cuts on our knees and elbows after a competitive game. When we went back to his home, his mum would apply antiseptic solutions to treat our cuts and wounds.

It was a painful process. As a child, I thought that having my cuts disinfected was the worst pain anyone could ever bear. I could not help but scream every single time when the antiseptic powder brushed against my wound. But he, unlike me, would keep his mouth shut and kept silent. He used to say "Pain is inevitable, whether we want it or not. It won't stop me from returning to the playground!"

When we were in the 5th grade, both of our families applied to the Home Ownership Scheme and eventually moved out of Rainbow. It was around that time when Rainbow got its renovation - the colours of the Rainbow were painted. Since then, we haven't seen each other, we didn't play football together, and no longer got new wounds on our knees. I heard that he got into the University of Hong Kong, studied abroad and got a job in finance. I supposed he has a successful life. I have thought about getting in touch again, to ask him to play football together sometime, but I did not have the courage.

伙記送上我們點的食物。蛋撻、熱奶茶、菠蘿油、熱檸啡。

他隨著熱力慢慢摸到了奶茶，將杯推向自己的正前方，然後左手開始在枱面摸索著甚麼。

我自作主張，將糖罐拿起，問他想要多少糖。我正想打開糖罐的時候，他卻突然提高聲線說：「不用幫我！」他的笑容消失了，我理解不了他生氣的原因，不知道如何反應。

「你不知道我想要多甜。」

我將糖罐放回枱面。他慢慢摸到了糖罐，將它遞到非常接近他左眼的前方，打開蓋，用匙取了些糖，然後在眼前測量了很久，最後才將他認為合適份量的糖倒進那一早放置好的奶茶杯中。他攪拌著奶茶，一直沒有出聲。我問他：「這樣續漸失去視力的生活，是不是很可怕？」

The waiter served us our food – Egg Tart, hot Milk Tea, Pineapple Bun with Butter, hot Lemon Coffee.

Barely able to see, he locates his cup of milk tea by sensing the heat, and sets it right in front of himself. And then he starts to search for something on the table with his hands. I take it upon myself, grab the pot of sugar and ask how much sugar he wants. He raises his voice and says bluntly,

“You have no idea how sweet I like my milk tea!”

I put the pot of sugar back on the table. He slowly holds the pot near his left eye. He opens the lid and took a small spoonful of sugar. It took him some time to measure the right amount of sugar and finally pours it into his cup of milk tea. He didn't say a word while stirring his milk tea. I ask, “Are you scared of what your life will become, knowing that eventually you'll lose your sight?”

H.I.F. Biber

Passacaglia (Guardian Angel)

他沒有立即答我，先喝了口奶茶。慢慢神情回復到之前的輕鬆。

「你可以嘗試閉上眼咬一口菠蘿油，看它的味道會不會與你看著它去咬時有所不同？」

我猶疑地拿起菠蘿包咬了一口。是一個香噴噴、溫暖鬆脆的菠蘿包。茶餐廳的食物水準依舊的好，我忍不住閉上眼再咬了第二口。

He takes a sip of milk tea, calming down slowly.

“Why don't you try to taste the pineapple bun with closed eyes?”

Hesitantly, I take a bite of the pineapple bun. It is warm, crunchy and savoury. This Cha Chaan Teng has managed to keep up its high standard. I cannot help but take a second bite with my eyes closed.

「我曾經都以為，盲了以後將會甚麼都看不見，剩下漆黑一片。但現在就算我夜裡閉上眼，我腦袋仍然會出現一層層淡淡的黃與藍色。諷刺的是，因為我的眼疾我再也看不見完全的黑暗。」

逐漸變盲，就好像看著一個很長很長的日落，眼前的景色和顏色一日比一日變得暗啞、一日比一日變得遙遠，直到一日，它們完全消失在灰暗之中，再也看不見。

放棄很容易，隨時都可以，但都已經走到這裡，我不甘心。我寧願選擇繼續走下去、選擇相信，相信只要我努力記著那些我親眼看到過的事物，它們不會因為我不再看得見而變質、消失，我只需要學會用別的感官去感受它們的存在。」

他慢慢摸到了在枱面的蛋撻，拿起聞了很久，咬了一大口。

我一邊看著他把蛋撻吃掉，一邊喝了口面前那杯陌生的熱檸啡。咖啡的苦混上檸檬的酸，味道的確十分奇怪，絕不是那種可以讓人欣然大口吞下的味道，但確實會令人頭腦清醒。「我覺得你會喜歡熱檸啡。」我讓他試喝我的熱檸啡。他說：「不要破壞我的味蕾。我還想繼續吃蛋撻。」

這時門外的跑車終於駛走。茶餐廳回覆平靜，電視傳來天氣報告：天文台剛掛上一號戒備信號。外面的天色已經變得很暗，好像想下雨。老闆放下手機，走了出門，抬頭看著天，坐在水吧旁的伙記跟了出去。他們指著天空聊了些甚麼，然後笑了起來，笑得很大聲。其他食客抬頭看了看，自言自語了些甚麼。

"I thought, blindness was complete darkness, that there would be nothing to see at all. But now, even when I close my eyes at night, I would see a faint mist of yellow and blue tones. In fact, I cannot see complete darkness because of my eye disease. Isn't it ironic?"

Becoming blind gradually is like watching a very very slow sunset. Day by day, scenes and colors before me fade and lose their vibrance. Until one day, they disappear entirely in the distance, and can never be seen again.

To give up is easy, one can always quit at any time. But I have already been through so much. I don't want to let go. I would rather keep going. I will try hard to remember all that I have seen with my own eyes, and I believe that their nature will not change or disappear just because of my blindness. All I need is to learn to feel their presence with my other senses.

He picks up his egg tart, smells it without hurrying and takes a big bite.

I watched him finish the egg tart while I take the first sip of the unfamiliar lemon coffee. The mixture of bitter coffee and sour lemon juice is a very strange taste indeed. Too strange that one would not want to take a big gulp. Certainly it would keep one's mind clear. "I think you might like lemon coffee," offering him a sip of my drink. He said, "Don't muddle my palate. I still want to eat the egg tart."

The sports car finally left. Quietness returns to the Cha Chaan Teng, The weather reporter on TV says, "The Hong Kong Observatory has just issued tropical cyclone warning signals no.1." The morning sky dimmed, it will probably rain very soon. The Cha Chaan Teng owner puts down his smartphone, walks outside and looks up at the sky. The waiter follows him. They both point at the sky, exchanging a few words and start to laugh loudly. The other customers look out as well, murmur something.

C.P.E. Bach
Sanguine and Melancholic

我們在茶餐廳內一直聊，直到他想起了甚麼，伸出戴在左手手腕上的手錶，打開玻璃錶面，摸了摸時針和分針的位置。我看了看水吧上的掛鐘：十時一分。他說他沒有時間，要走了。我說我會再多坐一會。

結賬時，他很小心地從一個有很多個間格的銀包中，拿出了一張紫色的50元紙幣。老闆說現在紫色的50元很珍貴。他說：「我現在看不見，對我來說每張50元都是紫色的。」老闆笑了笑，找回他28元，叫他好好袋好。

他步出茶餐廳之前，回頭向著水吧的方向說：「希望下次再來的時候，蛋撻依然是蛋撻、奶茶依然是奶茶、茶餐廳依然是茶餐廳。」

We keep chatting in the Cha Chaan Teng until he suddenly seemed distracted. He lifts the glass lid of his watch open, and reads time by touching the hour and minute hands. I look at the clock above the bar: one minute past ten. He says he is running out of time. He must go. I say I will stay for a while longer.

He takes out a 50-dollar bill in purple colour from one of the many compartments in his wallet. The Cha Chaan Teng owner says nowadays 50-dollar bill in purple is extremely rare. He says, "Now that I cannot see, all 50-dollar bills are in purple." The Cha Chaan Teng owner smiles. He gives him change: 28 dollars exactly.

As he walks out the Cha Chaan Teng, he turns back, facing the bar and says, "I wish when I come back next time, Egg Tart is still Egg Tart, Milk Tea is still Milk Tea, Cha Chaan Teng is still Cha Chaan Teng."

M. Marais
Les Voix Humaines (Human Voices)

完
End