

Contemporary Theater Translation

THE CREEK BETWEEN MOUNTAINS

Father-child contradiction
Intergenerational relationship

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Fang Haochang, 37 years old with a backpack, appears from the edge of the stage. He seems hesitated and a bit anxious.

Fang Haochang: May is the season when winter wheat thrives. As the high-speed train passing through plains, all I can see is that the crop flourishes and takes over the field. Spring passes by quickly in northern China, all lives have no choice but to grasp the best time of the year to grow. They can't wait to enjoy the delight of rebirth and renewal as well as to look forward to the harvest in summer. However, they will, and they must decay when winter comes, just like some incurable disease.

Following Fang Haochang's gaze, the stage setting of a ward appears.

In the ward, Fang Tongguang, Fang Haochang's 70-year-old father, stands at the window looking out. Several bouquets of flowers are randomly left on the floor in front of the bed.

Fang Haochang: The police called and asked me to come back as soon as possible. He went to the hospital by himself and caused quite a scene.

水流下来
The Creek between Mountains
顾雷 导演作品

Stage Photo of *The Creek Between Mountains*
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1

Lights on in the ward.

Fang Tongguang returns to his bed. He holds his hands on one side of the bed and start kicking legs. He can't stopping while doing just doing small kicks. Exercise is obviously not his daily routine.

Fang Haochang enters the ward while sending voice messages.

Fang Haochang: *(sending a voice message)* Give them 70%, 75% whatever. I have more than 20,000 toothbrushes in stock and how many did he sell? 20! In a MONTH! I don't care. The next thing I want to hear is "SOLD OUT"! Use your brain!

Fang Tongguang didn't expect to see Fang Haochang. He stops abruptly and holds his hands on the bed as he gets stomach cramps. He might have sprained his waist.

Fang Haochang goes to sit in the foldable chair straight away thus he didn't see Fang Tongguang spraining his waist. When he finally raises his head, he could only see him adjusting his breath.

Fang tongguang tries to talk to his son. However, Fang Haochang keeps sending voice messages as if he's avoiding his father deliberately.

Fang Haochang: *(sending a voice message)* Uh-huh... You haven't sent me the ads Manager Huang wrote for Mother's Day.

Fang Haochang peeps at Fang Tongguang. Fang Tongguang tries to say something but Fang Haochang didn't give him the chance to talk and gets back to sending voice messages.

Fang Haochang: *(sending a voice message)* Yeah, Huang is busy with hospital stuff. Just send me the files, alright? *(he's finally done with the voice messages and seems ready to talk to his father)* What were you saying?

After interrupted twice by his son, Fang Tongguang didn't respond. He takes a deep breath and walks back to his bed with his over-stretched legs.

Fang Haochang: What's going on with your legs?

Fang Tongguang sits down and puts on a serious face trying to remind Fang Haochang to show some respect in front of his father.

Fang Tongguang: They're numb.

Fang Haochang: You look good though.

Fang Tongguang: You think so, huh?



Fang Haochang ignored Fang Tongguang's upset and stops talking. They both know that Fang Tongguang is expecting him to say something else.

Fang Tongguang: That's it?

Fang Haochang: What?

Fang Tongguang: That's all you want to say? You didn't even care to ask why I'm in hospital?

Fang Haochang: I did.

Fang Tongguang: How?

Fang Haochang: *(in a dramatic manner)* OMG! What's wrong with your legs? You look...nice!

Fang Tongguang: So what is it?

Fang Haochang: Your doc's not here.

Fang Tongguang: And you can't find anyone else?

Fang Haochang: Well... you can still exercise.

Fang Tongguang: Tell them I'm dying! If they don't send a doctor ASAP, I'm gonna die! Right here! Right now! You call this bloody shit a hospital?

Fang Haochang has no interest in arguing with him. He takes out a sandwich while checking on his business on the phone.

Fang Tongguang: Did you see the police?

Fang Haochang: They called.

Fang Tongguang: What did they say?

Fang Haochang: They said, "your old man is in hospital and..." *(Fang Haochang looks at the flowers on the floor)* had an argument with his thoracic surgeon. You need to come."

Fang Haochang stands up to pick up the bouquets on the floor.

Fang Tongguang: That's it?

Fang Haochang: That's it.

Fang Tongguang: *(still mad at Fang Haochang, being sarcastic deliberately)* I thought you're better than this. Look who's back now.

Fang Haochang: I don't want to argue with you.

Fang Tongguang: I knew they'd make you come back! If you dare to say no, no matter where you are, they'll find you and stuff you in the back of a police car and bring you to me!

Fang Haochang: Yes, Sir!

Fang Tongguang: Chinese people obey Chinese law! Father gets sick, son comes back quick, understand?

Fang Haochang: You really wanna know what they said? The police said, "Your dad is a troublemaker! Can you believe it? He punched a doctor in the hospital!"



Fang Haochang swings the flowers back and forth as he talks. He couldn't find a vase for the flowers so he leaves them on the table. Fang Tongguang is embarrassed by what Fang Haochang said. He gets mad and started to be unreasonable.

Fang Tongguang: Yeah, yeah, I punched a doctor, so what?

Fang Haochang: Can you stop embarrassing me?

Fang Tongguang: You want me dead, don't you?

Fang Haochang: No, I didn't.

Fang Tongguang: That's exactly what you want!

Fang Haochang: ...What on earth do you want to say? Just say it.

Fang Tongguang: I have nothing to say to you!

Fang Haochang: Well, shut up then!

Fang Tongguang: No, why should I! *(raises his voice and shouting non-sense)*

Fang Tongguang: If you need anything, just say it and I'll make sure you have it. Other than that, let's just be quiet alright? I don't want to have a fight with you now. It's not good for your health, you get that?

Fang Tongguang is about to snap but Fang Haochang suddenly loses his temper when he sees the message.

Fang Tongguang: What the fuck...

Fang Haochang: Shhh! (Fang Haochang tells his father to zip it and reads out the message)

Fang Haochang gets anxious and he keeps eating his sandwich.

Fang Tongguang: Don't talk with your mouth full.

Fang Haochang makes louder noise deliberately.

Fang Haochang: *(sending a voice message)* What is 6 inches long, hard, goes into your mother's mouth back and forth.....
(trying to hold his temper, sending a voice message) Is this the ads approved by Manager Huang?! What kind of kid would give his mother a present that is "6 inches long, hard, goes into her mouth back and forth?!" Have a guess, do you think our clients would know that you're talking about a bloody toothbrush?!

Fang Tongguang: Don't talk with your mouth full!

Fang Haochang: *(sending a voice message)* I don't care what Manager Huang said, from now on, you do as what I say! Please write something serious to advertise on Children's Day, Dragon bloody Boat Festival and Father's Day alright? *(sending voice messages)* Send me all the ads that passed by Huang! I'll repeat this one more time, after the three big days I just told you, 20,000 Himalaya toothbrushes, not one, not two, I mean every single one of these goddamn toothbrushes must be gone! We have to get the rest of the money back or we're screwed!

Fang Tongguang: You'll get choked...

Fang Haochang ditches the unfinished sandwich in the bin and gets back to the seat. He gets choked and can't stop coughing. He checks on Fang Tongguang and gets over to the table to add more water to the mug and then passes it to him.

Fang Haochang: Drink!

Fang Tongguang hesitates for a second and knocks over the mug.

Fang Haochang takes one step back and puts down the mug. He packs his stuff and is ready to leave.

Fang Tongguang: Where you going?

Fang Haochang: Where else can I go? I'm going to check on the doctor you hurt...ask how bad the injury is...is the police already on the way... stay in hospital? You wish! You really should start to think about how many years you're gonna stay in jail!

Fang Haochang leaves.

Fang Tongguang is about to snap but suddenly he starts to cough violently. Fang Haochang is about to leave but he could hardly walk away just hearing the nasty cough.

Fang Haochang returns to the ward and squints at Fang Tongguang with his persistent wheezy cough.

Fang Tongguang finally hawks up phlegm. He looks around trying to find a container and then he points at the plastic bags on the chair. Fang Haochang gets him immediately and brings a red plastic bag to him.

Fang Tongguang spits into the red plastic bag and "accidentally" leaves his drool on Fang Haochang's sleeve after he wipes his mouth with finger.

Fang Haochang is pissed but doesn't know what to say. He turns around to get rid of the dirty plastic bag.

Fang Tongguang: Any blood in it?

Fang Haochang didn't catch what he said.

Fang Tongguang: Check the bag, any blood in it?

Fang Haochang takes out the plastic bag from the bin and pretends as if he's checking whether there's blood in the red plastic bag.

Fang Haochang: Don't know.

Fang Tongguang sits down. Fang Haochang goes to get tissue from his backpack to wipe off Fang Tongguang's mucus.

Fang Tongguang: Who did I hurt? Who got hurt?

Fang Haochang: Your resident doctor.

Fang Tongguang: The young doctor?

Fang Haochang: Who?

Fang Tongguang: That doctor in charge.

Fang Haochang: Yes.

Fang Tongguang: Where did she get hurt?

Fang Haochang: On her face.

Fang Tongguang: What?! No way!

Fang Haochang: Go ask the police then.

Fang Tongguang: That young doctor...got a pretty face.

Fang Tongguang wanders around for a while and then walks towards the door.

Fang Haochang: Where are you going?

Fang Tongguang: Go check on her. She's in the office.

Fang Haochang: Save it! She's in cosmetic surgery hospital.

Fang Tongguang: Why did she go to a cosmetic surgery hospital?

Fang Haochang: You ruined her face.

Fang Tongguang: RUINED! Really?!

Fang Haochang: Of course! Regular hospitals are not good at cosmetic sutures especially when it comes to a woman's face. She needs to find a cosmetic clinic.

Fang Tongguang bought what Fang Haochang just said and he doesn't know what to do.

Fang Haochang: As a deputy chief physician, I had to ask for a leave because my father hurt a doctor. It's ridiculous!

Fang Tongguang: Go blame them! I can't breathe. They told me nothing but running back and forth with a stupid file.

Fang Haochang: So you hit her.

Fang Tongguang: I didn't!

Fang Haochang: Of course! Violence is not your thing.

Fang Tongguang: I didn't say that! So it's my problem just because I want know what's wrong with me?

Fang Haochang: You did the right thing, lot better than last time when you beat me up. At least you know to call the right person. Well done! Bravo! I should give you a prize for that.

Fang Tongguang: Bullshit! I called the police because you never come back, because the doctors don't tell me what's wrong with me. I just called the police to ask for me but the police said they can do nothing about it. Damn it! What can they do?! I was so pissed so I smashed a vase at the glass on the door (*still couldn't figure it out*). I didn't see that young doctor!

Fang Haochang: She was right behind the door and was about to come in.

Fang Tongguang: (*sits down*) No wonder the police arrived so quickly.

Fang Haochang: They came for the troublemaker.

Fang Tongguang: Hell no! All of them panicked and kept stepping backwards when the police arrived.

Fang Haochang: Course they did. God knows who's next.

Fang Tongguang: The police asked, who made the phone call? I said, I did. I'm sick. They don't tell me the truth. Now you have to find my son and ask him to take care of me! Whatever they can't tell me, they can tell my son. Am I being wrong?



Intergenerational Talk

Fang Haochang receives a new message while Fang Tongguang talks. He checks his phone and reads out the ads he received.

Fang Haochang: For Children's Day: We care about your baby's teeth as much as we care about family happiness.

For Dragon Boat Festival: Zongzi tastes yummy but be careful, they stick on your teeth too!

For Father's Day: Himalaya electric toothbrush, the best present to show love to every father. *(unsatisfied)* What the hell are these!

Fang Tongguang: I like 'em.

Fang Haochang looks at Fang Tongguang.

Fang Tongguang: Sounds good to me. Children, family, father... better than the "six-inch thing".

Fang Haochang: *(sending voice messages)* These are just some fancy words...

Fang Tongguang: Not really. Sounds quite considerate.

Stage Photo of *The Creek Between Mountains*
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Fang Haochang stands up angrily. They stares at each other.

Fang Tongguang: What's wrong with me? What on earth is wrong with me?

Fang Haochang: What tests did you do?

Fang Tongguang: They asked me to stand, to lie down, they put a tube down my throat... made me sick, and here's the picture.

Fang Tongguang takes out the X-ray and passes it to Fang Haochang.

Fang Haochang gets a bit nervous. He takes the X-ray and checks it against the light. Fang Tongguang is looking at his X-ray with him.

Fang Tongguang: What's the white bit?

Fang Haochang: Your lungs.

Fang Tongguang: Not heart?

Fang Haochang: No.

Fang Tongguang: What is the problem?

Fang Haochang: ...Not sure yet. *(Fang Haochang realises how severely ill Fang Tongguang could be. He starts trembling)* I'll send this to my colleague. Take it and hold it like this.

Fang Tongguang holds the X-ray and raises it up as if he's raising a white flag. Meanwhile, Fang Haochang shoots a photo of him with his phone as if he's aiming for the bull's eye.

Fang Tongguang: What kind of deputy chief physician can't even read an X-ray?

Fang Haochang: I'm a cardiologist.

Fang Tongguang: Heart is right next to the lungs. The lungs, the lungs are like the women live next door. How can you miss them? Oh, right, I forgot you don't look at women. Huh...huh...huh...

Fang Haochang: What's your problem?!

Fang Tongguang: I'm asking you!

Fang Haochang: Any other parts of your body feel unwell?

Fang Tongguang: ...I feel this half of my throat is blocked. I don't know how to describe it. It hurts like hell when I swallow.

Fang Haochang: ...sit.

Fang Haochang asks Fang Tongguang to sit in the foldable chair and feels his neck lymph with his hand.

Fang Haochang: When did it start?

Fang Tongguang: Around last Spring Festival...the smell of cooking made me sick, lost my appetite ever since.

Fang Haochang: Have you lost any weight?

Fang Tongguang: About 15 kilos.

Stage Photo of *The Creek Between Mountains*
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Fang Haochang is stunned. Fang Tongguang taps the handle of the foldable chair.

Fang Tongguang: You sleep in this bed tonight.

Fang Tongguang stands up and gets back to bed. Fang Haochang starts to panic while looking at Fang Tongguang from his behind.

Fang Haochang: Once you're sorted, I'm gonna visit mom.....

Fang Tongguang: I didn't approve that. If you leave, I'll call the police again. I hit them once. I can hit them twice. You mess with me, I'll rip all their faces off!

Chen Yuse, the resident doctor rushes in and she accidentally heard the last half of the sentence Fang Tongguang just said. Chen Yuse is approximately 30 years old. She holds a file in her arms. The bandage on her forehead covers half of her left eye, which forces her to tilt her neck and raises her head up when she looks at people, as if it's helping her focusing but it's quite funny to look at. She is a pretty woman but somehow, maybe it's the job, or her personality, she acts like a college boy. Fang Tongguang turns around and sees Chen Yuse. He immediately changes his attitude.

Fang Tongguang: Hey, young doctor! How's your face?

Chen Yuse: It's fine. Just a small cut.

Fang Haochang: How do you do, Doctor Yang?

Chen Yuse: You're his son?

Fang Haochang: Yes, I am.

Chen Yuse: Come with me.

Fang Haochang: Okay.

Fang Tongguang: What about me?

Chen Yuse: You stay here! Stay here! Sit down! That's right. Slowly. Better not to move. Good. *(talks to Fang Haochang)* Come.

Fang Tongguang follows Chen Yuse's instruction likes a well-behaved kid. He finally sits down and dares not to move. Fang Haochang walks out with Chen Yuse.

Fang Tongguang: *(shouts at Fang Haochang)* Listen carefully to what young doctor says!

Fang Haochang stops, wants to say something but he didn't. He steps down in anger.

Fang Tongguang: If forehead counts as part of the face then I hurt my face too!

Neon lights on out of the window. It falls on Fang Tongguang. A weak sound of music from the Karaoke outside can be heard. The phone that Fang Haochang left starts to vibrate. Fang Tongguang notices. He stands up slowly to get the phone. He checks on it, hesitates for a second, picks it up.

Fang Tongguang *(puts on a younger voice)*: ...Hello...I'm in Shijiazhuang.

Fang Tongguang listens to whoever it is on the other side of the phone and his face changes from a dazed look of bewilderment to a face contorted with rage. He completely forgets what the doctor just said.

Fang Tongguang: ...he doesn't need your dirty money!...I'm his father! I got cancer because of what he did! Go away if you don't want to be the death of me!

Fang Tongguang is shaking because of the extreme anger. He doesn't know what to do. He starts to cough violently again after he ditches the phone meanwhile he looks around to find a plastic bag.

2

Fang Haochang follows Chen Yuse rushing into her office.

Fang Haochang: I'm really sorry, Dr Yang.

Chen Yuse: It's Chen.

Fang Haochang: Aw, sorry, Dr Chen. I sincerely apologise to you on behalf of my father. I'm truly sorry.

Chen Yuse: *(speaks at the same time)* His diagnosis...we're still trying to find the best way to tell him.

Fang Haochang: That's alright...You can tell me. I'm also a doctor.

Chen Yuse looks up. She lifts her eyelid with finger and looks at Fang Haochang to make sure her eyesight is okay.

Fang Haochang: Are you alright?

Chen Yuse: Yes. *(she looks him up and down)* You're the "Dr Fang from Cardiology", aren't you?

Fang Haochang: ...Yes, yeah, that's me.

Chen Yuse: That's right. I followed you!

Fang Haochang: Thanks. Thank you...

Chen Yuse: I read the cases you posted quite often last year. I even reposted it.

Fang Haochang: What about this year?

Chen Yuse: You sent too many toothbrush ads, so I.....

Fang Haochang: Yeah, A friend and I...well, I'm starting my own business.

Chen Yuse: *(nods and makes a judgement)* You two broke up.

Fang Haochang: What?!

Chen Yuse: Em, Himalaya right?

Fang Haochang: Yes, Himalaya electric toothbrush.

Chen Yuse: I have a picture in my mind now! Himalaya, just like a row of teeth, white but crooked, with plenty of tartar underneath. How did you come up with it?

Fang Haochang: Well...I didn't actually relate it to that!

Chen Yuse: 20,000 sold in a month. That's a lot!

Fang Haochang: Aw...just alright.

Chen Yuse: Since you're a doctor, I'll be straightforward.

Fang Haochang: What?

Chen Yuse: *The Notice of Critical Illness.*

Chen Yuse pushes the Notice of Critical Illness towards Fang Haochang. Fang Haochang gets stuck.

Chen Yuse takes out the examination results one after another. She puts the CT film on a light box and then points at the statistics to Fang Haochang.

Chen Yuse: Your old man's health condition is rather critical. He came on the 5th, and then did *(points at the contents on the exam report)*... these, tumour markers...

Chen Yuse points at the statistics on the report but she still can't see them clearly.

Fang Haochang: I'll read it by myself.

Chen Yuse: Okay. CT, it's in the centre, check the size, and distance from heart. Look, they're on both sides. The left bronchus is basically fully blocked, soon will be the right side, the path is already very narrow. Besides, cancerous cells have metastasised to liver and lymph. He said there was blood in phlegm. I didn't see it but I've asked him to keep the phlegm next time. What I'm worried most about now is his paroxysmal cough that might cause a tear in the aorta.....

The longer Fang Haochang stares at the statistics, the more anxious he becomes. He looks calm on the outside but on the inside, he's messed up.

Fang Haochang: I see. What about the pathology?

Chen Yuse: The report should come out pretty soon. There's a very large chance that it is Small-Cell Lung Carcinoma.

Fang Haochang: SCLC?!

Chen Yuse: Yes.Sign here, here, and here.

Chen Yuse points to the wrong side but Fang Haochang still signs.

Chen Yuse: And...how would you like us to tell your father? Usually we would say it's Post-Obstructive Pneumonia.....

Fang Haochang: I know... but he has the right to be informed.

Fang Haochang panics as hell but he's still trying to put himself together. Chen Yuse is surprised with his response. Silence.

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Post- Obstructive Pneumonia

Fang Haochang: He's now.....

Chen Yuse: Extensive stage, under palliative treatment, after that, he's got approximately two months left, but if there's a aorta rupture, you should be prepared for the worst. He's going to lose his mobility within a month.....as for life expectancy.....

Fang Haochang: How did you come to the conclusion of "two months"?Without pathology, how do you know there's no, no, no, there is no, sorry, no possibility of chemotherapy or targeted therapy? What's the opinion of the second-line doctor? What did the Chief Physician say?

Chen Yuse:The second-line doctor is Liu, Doctor Liu. She would suggest Chinese traditional medicine. The Chief Physician is Zhang. He's here tomorrow afternoon.

Fang Haochang: Sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry, Dr Young.

Chen Yuse: Chen.

Fang Haochang: Sorry, Dr Chen, sorry. *(trying to say something)*.....I'll leave the decision to him. Maybe he's got something to do.

Chen Yuse: I'll leave it to you then.

Fang Haochang: Okay.

Chen Yuse: *(teasing)* Nice slogan for your toothbrush.

Chen Yuse collects the files and exits.



Stage Photo of *The Creek Between Mountains*
© Screenshot from Bilibili video

3

Fang Haochang returns to the ward trying to look the same as when he left, even more relaxed, but he didn't notice that Fang Tongguang is holding his temper. He looks a bit weird as he has millions of questions to ask.

Fang Haochang sits down and rubs his hands against each other. Fang Tongguang didn't ask anything. So he stands up to unpack the foldable chair.

Fang Tongguang: What is it?

Fang Haochang: Uh?

Fang Tongguang: What is it?

Fang Haochang: ...Post-Obstructive Pneumonia.

Fang Tongguang: Post-Obstructive Pneumonia?

Fang Haochang: Yes.

Fang Tongguang stares at Fang Haochang.

Fang Tongguang: You blink every time when you lie.

Fang Haochang keeps his eyes wide open to stop blinking. However, the fluorescent light starts to blink. They look at the light at the same time.

Fang Haochang: Mine workers are more likely to get this in the past. The dust you breathe in can't get out through metabolism. Instead, it gets stuck in the lungs and becomes a blockage.

Fang Tongguang: How to deal with it?

Fang Haochang: Reduce the inflammation.

Mind Your Own Business

Fang Tongguang stares at Fang Haochang to listen to further explanation on the treatment. Fang Haochang takes out an electric toothbrush to freshen up as if it's no big deal, but actually he's trying to hide his emotion.

Fang Haochang: Dirty stuff causes inflammation in your lungs and then your windpipe gets swollen and blocked. Get rid of the inflammation, the swelling goes down and your windpipe is open again.

Fang Tongguang:No wonder I'm short of breathe. I wouldn't have asked you to come back if I know it's just inflammation. I even hurt the young doctor. Ugh, her pretty face.

The phone makes a noise as messages come through. Fang Haochang finds his phone and sits down.

Fang Tongguang seems to be a lot more relieved after figuring out what was wrong with him. As Fang Haochang doesn't seem to be leaving soon, he drinks a sip of water and waits to find out about another question, a question that he doesn't need to ask.

Fang Haochang: You answered my phone?!

Fang Tongguang: It was buzzing.

Fang Haochang: You can't just answer my phone!

Fang Tongguang: Just answered this one. Manager Huang, you mentioned him.are you not calling back?

Fang Haochang:

Fang Tongguang: Manager Huang is...

Fang Haochang: My colleague.

The light blinks.

Fang Tongguang: Why don't you call him Doctor Huang then?

Fang Haochang: We sell toothbrushes together.

Fang Tongguang: Oh, Huang, means yellow, Manager "Yellow Toothbrush" then. Which department is he in?

Fang Haochang: What does that have to do with you!

Fang Tongguang: People are getting lazy, don't even want to brush their teeth manually.

Fang Haochang: It vibrates at 30,000 strokes per minute. Can you do that?

Fang Haochang demonstrates the electric toothbrush to Fang Tongguang. The toothbrush just vibrates in the air. Fang Tongguang doesn't know what to say. Fang Haochang lies down.

Fang Tongguang: The imbalance of Yin and Yang can easily get you that disease, that HIV.

Fang Haochang bounces up from the chair.

Fang Haochang: Mind your own business!

The light blinks again.

Fang Haochang turns off the light violently and lies down. Fang Tongguang lies down as well.

The red neon light outside the window reflects on the curtain.

Fang Tongguang: What do you think of young doctor?

Fang Haochang: Her last name is Chen.

Fang Tongguang: What do you think of her?

Fang Haochang: She's sick.

Fang Tongguang: She got hurt?!

Fang Haochang: She's crazy.

Fang Tongguang: Well, women are all crazy, not a big deal. I'm asking how do you feel about her?

Fang Haochang: How do I feel about a pirate? You tell me!

Fang Tongguang: I think you're sick! You're attached to that phone. Who are you talking to, Manager Huang, that "Yellow Toothbrush"?

Fang Haochang: I'm checking whether it's possible to transfer you to a different hospital.

Fang Tongguang: To a different hospital?!

Fang Haochang: This one doesn't look like a proper hospital.

Fang Tongguang: Huh?

Fang Haochang: I think they're bluffing.

Fang Tongguang: You think everyone else is bluffing. I think you're bluffing, can't believe a single word from your mouth. I had my appendectomy here.

Fang Haochang: That was ages ago.

Independent

Fang Tongguang: I came on the 15th, had the operation in the evening, got discharged on the next day. Unlike you, spent three months in hospital for an appendectomy. Your hospital is not bluffing.

Fang Haochang: I had a perforated appendix. When I got in the hospital, I had a fever of 40 degrees.

Fang Tongguang: Huh, doesn't make any difference. You had one open cut, I had one open cut; You had stitches and I did too; They cleaned a whole mop of filthy stuff out of your belly and they did the same with me. Just like an appendix buffet!

Fang Haochang: As if you were supervising in the theatre.

Fang Tongguang: I saw a group of students walking in chit-chatting. "I" was the buffet on the house. It turns out that appendicitis can run in the families.

Fang Haochang: It can't.

Fang Tongguang: Can't it? I got it. You got it. I had the operation when I was 15 and you had it at the same age too.

Fang Haochang: I was 16.

Fang Tongguang: Not sure about my grandparents.

Fang Haochang: No, it's sporadic.

Fang Tongguang: Genetic.

Fang Haochang: If it's genetic, there must have been a mutation in your genetic sequence.

Fang Tongguang: Genetic what?

Fang Haochang: The genomes in your body suddenly changed. You had a genetic mutation.

Fang Tongguang: Maybe it had skipped generations.

Fang Haochang: Appendicitis occurred at around 15, 16. Without the surgery, people die, not to mention to pass it to their offspring.

Fang Tongguang: How do you know that they didn't have children when they were 15, 16?

Fang Haochang: Do you believe it?

Fang Tongguang: It's better to have children while you're still young.

Fang Haochang: ...

Fang Tongguang: After you have your own kid, do pay attention once he gets a tummy ache and fever when he's 15 or 16.

Fang Haochang stands up out of a sudden.

Fang Haochang: Can you stop going on and on about it? You've been beating around the bush all the time. If you don't shut up about it, I'm gonna leave now.

Fang Tongguang: I can't even bring it up now!

Fang Haochang: Of course you can't! I get to decide whether to get married or to have children. That's my choice. I am an independent individual.

Fang Tongguang: Independent what...independent! You wouldn't exist if I die of appendicitis.

Fang Haochang: Well, lucky you.

Fang Tongguang: What did you say?

Fang Haochang: Thank god that you didn't die at age 15. *(still feels weird).....* You're not gonna die now! Please respect my choice!

Fang Tongguang: Have you fucking respected me? Your choice...what is your choice? The "Yellow Toothbrush"?

Fang Haochang: I will choose whoever I want to be with and it's not your business.

Fang Tongguang: Huh-huh, let me remind you, you've made quite a few different choices over the years.

Fang Haochang: Huh-huh, no, I haven't.

Fang Tongguang: Haven't you? Huh-huh.

Fang Haochang: Huh-huh.

Fang Tongguang: Huh-huh, huh-huh.

Fang Haochang: Huh-huh.



The father and son act in an identical way when they talk.

Fang Tongguang: You swore to marry your nan when you were little.....

Fang Haochang:

Fang Tongguang: Your choices haven't changed? Two years later, you wanted to marry a movie star; You had crush on the girl sat next to you in school; Then you wrote letters to your Chinese teacher.

Fang Haochang:

Fang Tongguang: What? You thought nobody knows about your letters?

Fang Haochang: What's wrong with you?!

Fang Tongguang: Post-Obstructive Pneumonia. So what?

Fang Haochang: You're sick!

Fang Tongguang: Yeah, I had a generic mutation. After you wrote letters to your Chinese teacher, you fucking left for college, you were gone for good. Do you know that I worried sick about you? Your Chinese teacher divorced after you graduated!

Fang Haochang: You investigated her?

Fang Tongguang: I surely did! I was afraid that you only went to college to fool me and got back together with her!

Fang Haochang: You're disgusting!

Fang Tongguang: I'm disgusting? You forgot how many letters you wrote to her, and what was in it.....?

Fang Haochang: Stop it!

Fang Tongguang: Huh-huh, you haven't changed? Your history says something different. She was your teacher! What were you thinking? Where's my crazy son? Where's my crazy son who had a crush on every single woman he met even his teacher? Puff, all in a sudden, you think you can be like the Monkey King ①, you're the master of your mind, you can turn your back on your own father!

① The Monkey King has no parents. He came out from a rock.!

Fang Haochang is so pissed that he stands on the foldable chair wanting to scream, but there's nothing to say.

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Fang Tongguang: Are you going to bite me? You can try! Never argue with your old man, huh-huh.

Fang Haochang: You have no idea how I lived my life, working extra hours, the night shifts, endless operations, 24 hours on call.....

Fang Tongguang: I do know that you're spending a lot of time on that toothbrush.

Fang Haochang: What's wrong with starting my own business?

Fang Tongguang: Who knows what the heck you were doing together, 6-inch long, 30,000 strokes per minute, why don't you bloody make it 300,000 strokes per minute?!

Fang Haochang: Huh-huh, stop being bitter of other people's success just because you never achieved anything.

Fang Tongguang:I achieved nothing? I brought you up. You called that nothing!

Fang Haochang: I'm not.....

Fang Haochang: I accomplished nothing yet here I am. Somebody or nobody, at this age, I am and going to be smoking, reading and fishing anyway.

Fang Haochang: I'm not saying that your life is unsuccessful.

Fang Tongguang: I achieved nothing, you think you're young, you had a doctor degree, you became the chief in your department, you can say some jargons that I don't understand..... all of these are achieve to your own credit? Bollocks! It's because you were lucky. I worked my ass off one year after another to make this happen. Whatever you have now is because I did nothing but one thing for my entire life, raising you! Huh, forget it. I'm used to your uncaring words.

Fang Haochang: I never said anything uncaring.

Fang Tongguang: I've lost count of how many times you did.

Fang Haochang: When did I say that?

Fang Tongguang: Seven. Other kids became rebellious at eleven or twelve. You, you started when you were seven.

Fang Haochang: I was going through puberty.

Fang Tongguang: I know. Yours started at eleven.

Fang Haochang: Huh, you know everything.

Fang Tongguang: I was the one who washed your duvet cover all these years, of course I bloody knows when you went through puberty. You, you, you think that I didn't notice the yogurt stain in the middle of your duvet all the time?

Stage Photo of *The Creek Between Mountains*
© Beijing Tianqiao Performing Arts Center





Fang Haochang is so annoyed and he doesn't know what to do. He wanders around in the room. He stands on the bed and gets off soon. He then sits down and stands up again. He ends up sitting in the chair.

Fang Tongguang: I knew why you slept in that room in the east so often. You were supposed to be afraid of sleeping alone but you couldn't resist the temptation, that calendar hung in the wardrobe. Whenever you were sleeping in that room, you went through it over and over again, and you, you... ah, were dating Mrs. Palm and her five lovely daughters. That's no secret. Your mom was about to use that calendar to dry pickles. I told her to leave it for you and your mom thought you became some sort of horny, bad kid. I said all boys are like that. Now you are a mature man, you are allowed to have some adults-only entertainment. Why did you quit your favourite teenage habit? Is this because you didn't end up well with one of the girls you dated or what? Why? Why are you down this path now? Tell me!

Fang Haochang, however, calms down.

Fang Haochang: I didn't have any bad break-up, nor good ones. Everybody has his own path. Most people just follow the crowd and that's the easiest way to make one go blind and can't see his real needs.

Fang Tongguang doesn't seem to understand what he's saying.

Fang Tongguang: What is your needs?

Fang Haochang: Whatever my needs are, they aren't going to change because what other people say.

Fang Tongguang acts like something suddenly pops up in his mind.

Fang Tongguang: Tell me, are you that?

Fang Haochang: What?

Fang Tongguang: Are you the same as.....Shorty?

Fang Haochang: Who's Shorty?

Fang Tongguang: You might not have seen him.

Fang Haochang: No. How would I know if we're the same? What about him?

Fang Tongguang: There's something wrong with him.....

Fang Haochang: What is it?

Fang Tongguang: He's got sunken cheeks. Shorty... his cheeks were hollow because of that. He couldn't bear the pain so he finally went to hospital and the doctor said he's only got one ball. The other one was hidden inside and it was septic.

Fang Haochang: Cryptorchidism.

Fang Tongguang: This ain't right, isn't it?

Fang Haochang: No. What are you trying to say?

Fang Tongguang: When you were young, sometimes I could feel them both, but sometimes I could only feel one. The other one was not so obvious when it gets cold.

Fang Haochang:You felt my... a lot?

Fang Tongguang: You...your... were playing hide-and-seek with me.

Fang Haochang:

Fang Tongguang: I heard a lot about Shorty from your Uncle Liu. Every time I bathed you, I would look for them and see if they are where they should be.

Fang Haochang: I don't have that disease.

Fang Tongguang: You loved it when I bathed your bum back then. As long as I said "Let's wash your bum", you would take your trousers off, squat over a potty and ask for daddy. You couldn't stop gurgling. I acted as if you stink while I was bathing you and watching me bathing your smelly butt gave you so much fun . You were laughing the whole time. You were really cute back then.

Fang Haochang: I'm not your toy.

Fang Tongguang: I wasn't teasing you. You enjoyed it so much.

Fang Haochang: That's a revenge. A revenge to the repressed patriarchy.

Fang Tongguang: You forgot how to speak human language after a few years abroad. You didn't just grow up without me. I should never have bathed you. I thought about it when I was washing your bum, it's just a butt, you can't wash your bottom every day. If you do, then you might be interested in exploring your bottom, just like Shorty.

Fang Haochang: I'm not. I'm normal. It's perfectly normal that one is hidden during childhood. I got two.

Fang Tongguang:Then why on earth?!

Fang Haochang: I choose to be this way.

Fang Tongguang: Fuck your choice! That's not your choice. That's you being an asshole! God didn't give you that thing to play with poop.

As Fang Tongguang talks, he goes near Fang Haochang and slaps his private part with the back of his hand. Fang Haochang was stunned.

Fang Haochang: Don't touch me!

Fang Tongguang: Well, I just did! What turns you into this?! What turns you into this?!

Fang Tongguang keeps touching his son's private part while he interrogates him. Fang Haochang had no choice but to keep stepping backwards.

Fang Tongguang: What are you gonna do huh?

Fang Haochang: Don't fucking touch me!

Fang Tongguang slaps Fang Haochang in the face. Fang Haochang pushes away Fang Tongguang spontaneously. Fang Tongguang takes a few steps back and fall next to the bed.

Fang Tongguang: You pushed your old man!

Fang Haochang: You're a savage.

Fang Tongguang: You're a civilised man. If everyone is like you, human goes extinct!

Fang Haochang packs his stuff and is about to leave.

Fang Haochang: I don't give a shit about human!

Fang Tongguang: Go, you leave now, I'll call the police.

Fang Haochang walks out. He seems to have received a phone call or a message.

Fang Tongguang: What do you know? You know nothing about life. A man lives to my age witnessed how the world has changed. Today they ask you to believe in this and tomorrow they ask you to believe in that. None of them lasts more than a few years. No matter how they've changed, getting married and having children are always the right thing to do. You only got a few years of golden age. Whatever you believe in is fooling you. If you don't do nothing, your golden age is over!



Fang Haochang comes back in anger.

Fang Haochang: What did you say in the phone?

Fang Tongguang: If people are all like you, human will go extinct.

Fang Haochang: What did you say in the phone?

Fang Tongguang: ..."Yellow Toothbrush" wanted to bribe you. I told him to fuck off and don't pass you any bloody diseases that normal people don't have!

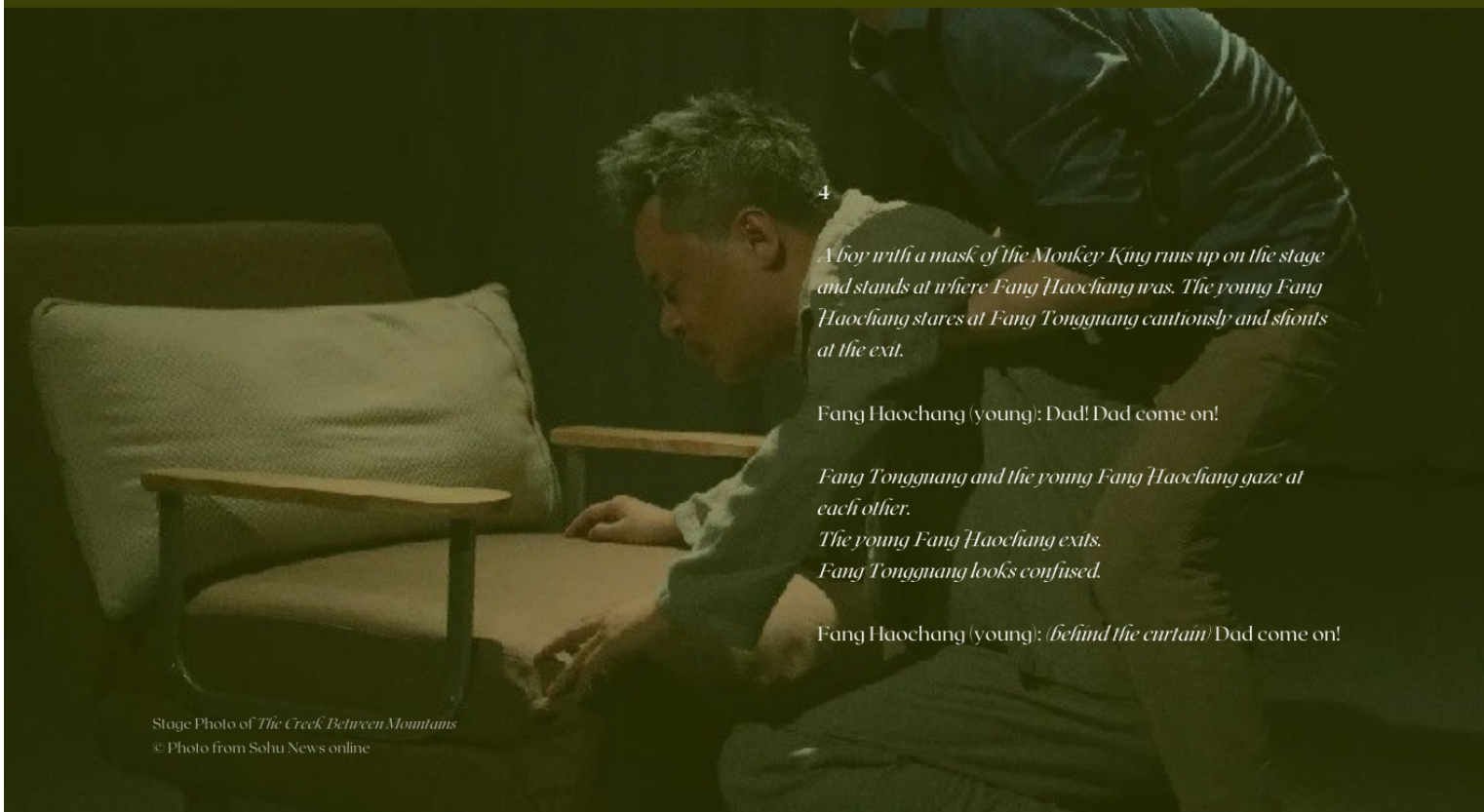
Fang Haochang: You're an asshole!

Fang Tongguang is stunned.

Fang Haochang: Listen! I, am just like Shorty. You, you have cancer. Use the time you have left and do whatever you want to do.

Fang Haochang exits.

Fang Tongguang collapses in the chair.



Stage Photo of *The Creek Between Mountains*
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A boy with a mask of the Monkey King runs up on the stage and stands at where Fang Haochang was. The young Fang Haochang stares at Fang Tongguang cautiously and shouts at the exit.

Fang Haochang (young): Dad! Dad come on!

Fang Tongguang and the young Fang Haochang gaze at each other.

The young Fang Haochang exits.

Fang Tongguang looks confused.

Fang Haochang (young): *(behind the curtain)* Dad come on!

Fang Tongguang is still confused.

The young Fang Haochang enters with his gold-banded cudgel. He walks towards Fang Tongguang trying to identify him and finally he finds out this is his father. Meanwhile, Fang Tongguang recognises the young Fang Haochang.

Fang Haochang (young): Tai! I'll give you a taste of my cudgel!

The young Fang Haochang is playing hide-and-seek with Fang Tongguang around the bed in the ward. He runs behind Fang Tongguang and makes the gesture of taking off his clothes.

Fang Haochang (young): Let's do it!

Fang Tongguang realises that this is the clothes-off contest before battling between them. He then makes the gesture of taking off his clothes as well.

Fang Tongguang: Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four.....

Fang Haochang (young): Ah!

The young Fang Haochang is competing with his father excitedly. He throws his clothes everywhere on the floor and only keeps his panty on. The young Fang Haochang wins the contest. Fang Tongguang looks at the clothes on the floor.

Fang Tongguang: Those on the floor don't count! Three, two, one!

Fang Haochang: Ah!

The young Fang Haochang picks up the clothes on the floor immediately and holds them in his arms. Then he takes out his toothbrush, squeezes toothpaste onto the toothbrush and gives it to Fang Tongguang.

Fang Tongguang: You want me to brush your teeth?

Fang Haochang: And tell me a story!

Fang Tongguang: Tell a story and brush your teeth.....

Fang Haochang: Yeah, tell a story.

Fang Tongguang: Okay, I'll tell you a story.

Fang Tongguang is excited. He stumbles to the young Fang Haochang to pick up the toothbrush but they missed each other.

Fang Tongguang: You want me to tell a story?
Fang Haochang: And brush my teeth.
Fang Tongguang: Okay, tell a story and brush your teeth.

The middle-aged Fang Tongguang shows up behind the old Fang Tongguang holding a bowl of boiling water. He pours the water into a big bathtub. Steam comes out from the tub. The middle-aged Fang Tongguang takes the toothbrush and starts to brush teeth for the young Fang Haochang.

Fang Tongguang (middle-aged): *(opens his mouth)* Ah—
Fang Haochang (young): *(opens his mouth)* Ah—
Fang Tongguang (middle-aged): In Fang Haochang's mouth, there's two lines of snowy mountains. The Bacteria's family lives in between the mountains. They are just about to eat dinner. "Fang Haochang didn't brush his teeth after dinner and thanks to him, we can have dinner now!"
Fang Haochang (young): Who's in the family?
Fang Tongguang: Let me take a look, there is...the father, the mother, the grandparents and two young germs, Biggie and his younger brother.
Fang Haochang (young): What are they eating?
Fang Tongguang (middle-aged): They are having...stir-fried eggs, steamed buns, veg, huh, they even drink pops! These are exactly what you were eating!

This father-son scene which takes place thirty years ago is as graphic as ever yet Fang Tongguang can't touch it or feel anyone in the scene. This makes him anxious as hell.

Fang Tongguang (middle-aged): "Ah, my stir-fried eggs! Give me my eggs back!" "Ah, my steamed bun! I can't hold it anymore!" "My veg, don't take my veg away! Without these vegetables, what's left for my children and their grandparents!"
Fang Haochang (young): Who's speaking?
Fang Tongguang: Father Bacteria. "My pops! I want to drink pops! Dad, I want my pops! Ah! Ah!"
Fang Haochang (young): Biggie or his younger brother?
Fang Tongguang: The young one. Alright, here we go, come on, give it a good rinse!

The young Fang Haochang rinses his mouth.

Fang Tongguang (middle-aged): Come on, flush away the Bacteria's family and their meal! One more rinse, spit!

*The young Fang Haochang spits out the water in his mouth.
The middle-aged Fang Tongguang takes off his kid's underwear and checks on his private part.*

Fang Tongguang (middle-aged): Let me check your wee wee. Ew, it stinks! It smells really bad! Let's wash it!
Fang Haochang (young): I wanna walk on the cloud ②!
Fang Tongguang (middle-aged): Okay, let's do cloud-walking first.

The young Fang Haochang plays with his gold-banded cudgel. The father and son start to act as if they are walking on the clouds. The whole scene is spinning. Fang Tongguang stands up trying to catch the spinning scene. He keeps getting dragged into the scene and then left out. When he finally gets to reach the young Fang Haochang, he feels that he's trapped in a different space. He bursts into tears.

[To be continued...]

② The signature move of the Monkey King from the novel *Journey to the West*.