
SUMMER
SOLSTICE
夏令時間

夏令時間 - 鄭華珠

我沿著路軌前行，清晨的街道鮮有人煙，空氣中瀰漫著雨後的潮濕氣味，路上水窪處處，提腳的一刻水珠濺入拖鞋，在腳掌與鞋面之間黏合分離，呱呱作響如獸。我來到這街角一隅，從褲袋中拿出老舊的鎖匙，把木盒打開，在半透明的塑膠空間中掛滿了不同款式的錶帶與零件，旁邊的圓形皮革椅子滿是班駁脫落，坐下的一刻咳呀作響，如同我鐵鏽的關節。

又是一個不會有人來坐下的夏日。

我一直記得那年夏天，天氣沒現在的悶熱，我伏在學校的木製桌子之上，聽不見老師所說的詩詞韻律，腦中只想在沉悶的課程完結後，躲進爺爺的鐘錶店。突然，在晴朗的午後傳來一陣雷聲，然後是石頭跌落在篷篷的聲響，老師的講課驟停，我們離關座位，把頭顱擠在窗框之中。

「是否下雪？」

「香港落雪啊，還是在夏天呢。」

「世界末日啦！」

「是雹。」他輕輕地說了一句，把稍微滑落的眼鏡推回鼻樑，離開喧鬧的窗邊，走回座位。

他是很特別的存在，架上一副黑色粗框眼鏡，對書本上的知識掌控得極細緻。老師總喜愛聰明的學生，他就像一塊磁石，跟我們這些平凡的學生是不一樣的。最近我在他身上嗅到一陣奇怪的味道，是淡淡的刺鼻味道，我想了半天，也想不出那是什麼氣味。

雹擊落樹葉，墜在地上分散。老師草草地說了一句那不雪是雹便趕了我們回座。午後的一場雹下了十多分鐵便停了，現在回想，那些落下的冰塊也許是一切風暴的序曲。

「你跟我來一個地方。」這是他跟我說的第一句話。

「去哪？我要趕著回家。」

「跟我來。」他把眼鏡推上鼻樑，轉身離開。

我快速地把書包收拾好，滿心疑惑地跟著他走。穿過放學的吵鬧人潮，在樓梯中的我們如同逆流而上的鮭魚，拾級而上，來到五樓的那層，走進平日不容許我們內進的實驗室，他熟練地用鎖匙打開門，閃身而入。我不知道他如何把鎖匙弄到手，是從化學老師手上嗎？但那禿頭老頭子應該不會把鎖匙交出的。他是偷偷的把鎖匙拿去備份嗎？我胡思亂想地尾隨他進入實驗室，而我終於知道他身上刺鼻味道的來源，是炸藥。

「你家是修理鐘錶的吧，想做更有趣的事嗎？」實驗室的白色光管在他的眼鏡表面反射，我看不見他的瞳孔，只覺他的笑容帶著一絲詭異。

房間內佈滿不同的工具，瓶罐內堆滿我不認識的化學品，身旁有一些高年級的學長穿上了白袍，戴上透明的塑膠防護眼鏡，正研究那玻璃管子的液體顏色。他們看見我們內進，只是點了點頭，然後疑惑地看了我一眼，交換眼神，繼續研究桌上另一堆黑色粉末。

「這是舊款的『菠蘿』。」他把一個仿如皮蛋的異物放在我手心，異常沉重，帶有濃重的鐵鏽氣味，應是由生鐵鑄造而成的。

「他們把火藥與鐵釘放進這顆鐵蛋之中，底部放置撞針，再繫上絲布。但缺點是穩定性不足，容易因意外的撞擊而爆炸，有突擊隊的成員因而受傷，所以我們決定製作新一批，全新的，跟這些舊款的原理完全不同。」他定眼看著我，這刻他的眼鏡沒有白光管的倒影，我清楚地看見他雙眼的銳利，他笑著說：「這比修理鐘錶更刺激、更好玩、更有成就感喔。」

「請問換錶帶多少錢？」一位衣著光鮮的白領，踩著高跟鞋向我走來，把斷掉的錶交到我手上。

「換錶帶五十元。」

「好，我要黑色的錶帶，我趕著上班，能否盡快？」她走進了簷篷，把雨傘收好垂在身側，隨手把傘上的雨點抖落，灑在我的腳上。

製作炸彈與修理鐘錶是相似的，需要完全的專注，把所有的注意力也投放至指尖的一點，我把身體當成屏障，以雙臂與頭顱劃出一個半圓空間，把空氣的流動阻隔。在那半圓的範圍內，我只聽到零件啲嗒作響的清脆，原本細微的聲音變得異常響亮，陀飛輪的來回流轉，是均速的迴旋，如同心脈跳動。用工具把連接錶芯與錶帶的鏍絲鬆開，把斷掉的錶帶拆除，只剩下圓形的錶芯。時針與分針在錶面追逐，如同兩名孩子在追迷藏，啲嗒啲嗒，在我手中流動。

「伯伯，是否換好錶帶了。」白領小姐不耐煩地拍了拍我的肩膊。

「啊，對，已經換好了，你看看錶帶的鬆緊是否合適。」

她在我手中接過手錶，穿戴妥當後，便擠了五十元在我手，轉身離開，進入那人潮之中，變成其中一個。高跟鞋的聲音被雨聲所蓋掩，我看著路上的水窪，平靜的水面是大廈外牆的光，車輪滑過濺起水花，街上慢慢聚集上班的人，他們或快或慢地走來，撐著傘，默默地堆疊成潮，以緩慢的節奏前行。馬路彼岸的街市開始人煙沸騰，人們拿著紅色塑膠膠袋來來去去，圍繞著豬肉與蔬果移動。

那年，爺爺拖著我在街市買菜，沒有今日的喧鬧，每一間店鋪也拉上重重的鐵閂，只留下與地面接近的一絲裂縫。爺爺撐著他的拐杖，在肅清的街上快速行走，來到菜檔的鐵閂前，用拐杖的末端輕輕敲著鐵簾，鐵簾震動如浪，發出鏗鏘的聲音，他輕輕地跟檔主說出一句通關密語。

「麻煩你兩斤菜心。」

我在爺爺手中接過錢幣，靈活地蹲在鐵閂前，在那條縫隙中看見檔主警惕的雙眼，我馬上把右手伸直，穿過鐵閂的空隙，把手中的錢幣放到他掌心，然後他把一紮綠葉推進我懷內，我還來不及反應，他已把鐵閂再拉得低一點，快速地站起來，轉身離開。也許下次我要伏在地上才能在那一絲縫隙中看見他的腳踝。

「為何買菜也要這樣神秘？」我小聲地問爺爺。

「他們在玩裝作罷工的遊戲。」爺爺睿智的雙眼中帶著笑意。

街上時常湧現一些人群，白恤衫與藍褲子，戴著眼鏡，拿著紅色小本子在街頭聚集。他們常常被綠色的人圍堵，頭戴黑色盔甲，腳上是黑色襪子與皮鞋，鞋子與鞋子連結成圍牆，把手放在腰間的棒子上，目無表情地看著被圍堵的人在唱著音調奇怪的樂曲。整個城市也異常疲憊，街上的巴士只有零零落落的數輛，每輛車子也擠滿快要溢出來的人群。

那晚，我跟著他們的腳步，走進聚會的場地，大家的臉也帶有一絲嚴肅。他們哼著音調詭異的旋律，背誦小本子內催眠般的文字。我像是走進錯誤場境的演員，說不出我該說的對白，只能在最幽靜的一角發呆，裝作我整晚忘詞。他們不停地說著昔日的故事，「憶苦思甜」就是連接過去的一道橋，唸咒語般把這四字在舌尖來回把玩，我聽得得頭昏目眩，只能默不作聲。

突然，有人抬著兩個沉重的藍色塑膠桶內進，空氣中瀰漫著一股惡臭，他們把桶子放在那房間的正中，把蓋子打開，臭味更趨濃烈。我定眼一看，是一些早已腐壞的食物殘渣。他說我們是幸運的一代，沒有經歷過什麼苦難，要憶苦就要經歷上一輩人所經歷的事，來，吃一口吧。我看見那些學長們由眉頭緊皺的疑惑，到閉眼吃了一口，繼而叫身邊同伴趕快吃的瘋狂。在那幽閉而滿是臭味的空間，我只想嘔吐，逃到另一個地方，把吸進身體的一切話語也吐出來。

我不敢跟爺爺說那次的聚會，也不敢說在實驗室發生的事，每次回家也會仔細地把散落在身上的粉末掃走，害怕身上會散發刺鼻的味道。也許他會因我不再黏在他的鐘錶店有一絲的失落，但我卻想看清那些鐵鑄盒子內蘊藏的一切。

下課聲響起，我會走進那充滿刺鼻氣味的空間，他們不再研究那生鐵鑄造而成的皮蛋，卻在研究一些閃閃發亮的粉末，把些粉末反復測試，在玻璃器皿中攪拌，在試管之中看它的色彩變化。那種精細比修理鐘錶更甚，所有動作也極為輕微而緩慢，就好像有一些龐大巨獸伏在旁邊午睡，我們只可小心翼翼地移動，稍一不慎就會把它吵醒，拼發出難以收拾的火花，正如那夜。

「先生，我有一隻錶壞了很久，你可以幫我看看能否修理嗎？」

抬頭一看，看見他眼鏡背後的銳利與失去了的左臂，我便知道是他。他似乎不認得我是誰，也是的，差不多是半世紀前的事，我已由當年的小孩變成現在的禿頭老翁，他不認得我，更好。

「嗯，好，我幫你看一看吧。」

「謝謝，它壞了很久呢，我只是來試一試。」

「需要我幫你改裝成這種銀色的鬆緊錶帶嗎？這樣你便能單手戴錶。」

「不用了，我不戴錶的。一直習慣了左手戴錶，沒有了左手以後，把錶繫在右手總覺得不習慣，後來便直接不戴了。最近整理舊物時發現了這隻錶，如果能把它修好，送給孫兒作禮物也不錯呢。」

他說起孫兒時，眼中帶有一絲溫柔，那刻我知道他早已不是當年身上帶有火藥味的少年，我們也從那場硝煙之中慢慢離開。他不再戴錶，我卻沉迷在錶芯的跳動之中。

我一直記得被遺下的那隻手指，微曲的指尖帶著焦黑，在血肉模糊的鮮紅之中，人潮喧嘩逃離，昏迷的他被學長抬著離開實驗室。他們胡亂踏過他流下的血液，在地上散落鞋印。血跡慢慢乾涸，我看見被遺下的腕錶，把它在半乾的血泊中拾起，擦走血跡與焦黑，走回班房，把錶放在他座位的抽屜之中，裝作一切也沒有發生。

這腕錶今天回到我手上，時針分針一直停留在那一刻，那不存在的夏令時間。爺爺跟我說他經歷過全年也是夏令時間的日子，每天也要早一小時醒來，那時天還沒亮，而他們活在虛構的清晨之中。四年過後，夏令時間只在夏天出現，數十年過後，它甚至在夏天消失。

啲嗒啲嗒，啲嗒啲嗒。

我經常看見有一對姊弟在圓形的錶面上奔跑著，這麼多年，他們時快時慢地遊走，經過不同數字的軌跡，如同在階梯中上落交錯。我把他們圈養在錶面上，把壞掉的錶芯修好重新運轉，就好像他們的心臟沒有停止跳動，不曾打開那個紙盒，仍在那條街道嘻笑奔跑。

歷史事件參考：

夏令時間是指把法定時間調快一小時，配合盛夏晝短夜長的特色，以提高生產力。香港曾於1941年推行夏令時間，在1942至1945日治期間，全年也實行夏令時間，變相與日本的時間相同。自1946年起，夏令時間只會在3月至11月間實行，直至1980年，官方正式取消夏令時間。

1967年，根據天文台的紀錄，香港在春夏之間下了一場雹。五月時份，新蒲崗人造花廠爆發工潮，工人不滿薪酬被大幅削減而發起罷工，及後變成大規模的騷亂，左派號召市民罷工罷課，警察扣捕大批左派人士，近半數巴士停駛，市面一片蕭條。時事評論員劉銳鉊曾就讀勞工子弟中學，他憶述在六七暴動前後，在鬥委會聚會中，曾有人抬出兩桶豬餿，請參加者「憶苦思甜」。

那年市面出現真假難分的土製炸彈，俗稱「菠蘿」。據統計，香港曾出現1525枚真炸彈，4217枚假炸彈。八月下旬，兩名分別八歲及兩歲的姊弟在北角清華街被一枚包裝成禮物的土製炸彈炸死，事件引起全城關注。同年，在中華中學有學生在實驗室被炸傷，失去了一隻手臂。

Summer Solstice - Jessica Cheng

I walked along the railway tracks. The morning streets were mostly empty, the air damp with the lingering scent of post-rain humidity. Puddles scattered across the road splashed as my slippers stepped in them, water clinging and separating between the soles and my feet, producing a sound like the groaning of a beast.

Reaching a corner of the street, I pulled out an old key from my pocket and opened a wooden box. Inside, a translucent plastic case held an array of watch straps and small parts. Next to it sat a round leather stool, its surface peeling and patchy. Sitting down, the stool creaked beneath me, a sound reminiscent of the rusty joints in my body.

Another summer day where no one would sit with me.

I always remembered that summer. The heat wasn't as stifling as it is now. I lay sprawled over a wooden desk at school, unable to hear the teacher's recitation of poetry. My mind drifted, eagerly anticipating the end of the tedious lessons, so I could escape to my grandfather's watch repair shop.

Then, out of nowhere, thunder cracked on a clear afternoon, followed by the sound of stones striking the awning. The teacher's lecture abruptly stopped as we pushed back our chairs and crowded by the window.

"Is it snowing?"

"Snow in Hong Kong? In summer?"

"It must be the end of the world!"

"It's hail," he said softly, pushing his slightly slipped glasses back up his nose. He left the lively window crowd and returned to his seat.

He was a peculiar presence, with his thick, black-framed glasses and his meticulous grasp of knowledge from books. Teachers adored smart students, and he was like a magnet, distinct from ordinary students like us. Lately, I had noticed a faint, strange smell around him, something sharp and acrid. I couldn't quite place it.

The hail battered leaves from trees, scattering them across the ground. The teacher dismissed us back to our seats with a hurried explanation about hail and not snow. That brief hailstorm lasted barely ten minutes, but looking back, perhaps those falling ice pellets were the prelude to a much larger storm.

"Come with me," he said. It was the first thing he ever said to me.

"Where? I need to get home."

"Just come," he insisted, adjusting his glasses before turning to leave.

Curiosity piqued, I quickly packed my bag and followed him. We weaved through the noisy after-school crowd, ascending stairs like salmon swimming upstream, until we reached the fifth floor. There, he unlocked a door to the chemistry lab—normally off-limits to us students—with practiced ease.

How did he get the key? Did he steal it from the bald chemistry teacher? My mind raced with questions as I followed him inside, only to be struck by the source of the strange smell: explosives.

“Your family fixes watches, right? Wouldn’t you like to do something more exciting?” The fluorescent lab light reflected off his glasses, concealing his eyes, though his smile carried a hint of something unsettling.

The room was filled with tools and jars of chemicals I didn’t recognize. Senior students, dressed in white lab coats and protective goggles, were experimenting with liquids in glass tubes. They acknowledged our entrance with nods, their eyes lingering on me momentarily before returning to their tasks—tinkering with a pile of black powder on a nearby table.

“This is an old-style ‘pineapple,’” he said, placing a heavy, iron-like object resembling a preserved egg into my hand. Its weight and rusty scent were unmistakable—it was made of cast iron.

“They packed gunpowder and nails inside this iron shell, with a firing pin at the base and tied it with cloth. But the problem is, it’s unstable and can explode from accidental impact. Some of our members have been injured because of this. That’s why we’re making a new batch—entirely different from these old designs,” he explained, his sharp eyes visible now that the glare of the lights was gone. His smile grew wider. “This is much more exciting than fixing watches, don’t you think?”

“How much does it cost to replace a watch strap?” A sharply dressed woman in high heels approached me, handing over a broken watch.

“Fifty dollars for a new strap,” I replied.

“Great, I’ll take a black strap. I’m in a hurry—can you finish it quickly?” She stepped under the awning, closed her umbrella, and shook off the raindrops, which splashed onto my feet.

Making bombs and repairing watches share a strange similarity: both demand complete focus and meticulous attention to detail. My body acted as a barrier, my arms and head forming a semi-circle that blocked out the surrounding air. Inside that space, the world narrowed to the crisp sounds of tiny watch parts clicking into place. These faint noises grew louder in my ears, as if amplified. The tourbillon spun in a precise rhythm, like a heartbeat.

Using a small tool, I loosened the screws connecting the watch movement to its strap and carefully removed the damaged band. All that remained was the circular watch face. The hour and minute hands chased each other across its surface like children playing hide-and-seek, ticking softly in my grasp.

“Excuse me, is the strap ready yet?” The woman’s impatient voice broke my focus as she tapped my shoulder.

“Oh, yes, it’s done. Please check if the fit is comfortable,” I said, handing the repaired watch to her.

She slipped it onto her wrist, gave a quick nod of approval, and pressed fifty dollars into my hand before disappearing into the crowd. Her high heels clicked faintly, drowned out by the patter of rain.

I watched as the street came alive with the morning rush. Umbrellas bobbed through puddles, people moved briskly, carrying red plastic bags filled with groceries, their footsteps weaving around vegetable stalls and butcher shops.

I remembered a time when my grandfather took me to the market. Unlike today’s bustling streets, the shops were shuttered, heavy iron gates pulled down, leaving only a narrow gap near the ground. My grandfather, leaning on his cane, walked quickly through the quiet

streets until we reached a vegetable stall. He gently tapped the iron gate with the end of his cane, the metal vibrating with a hollow clang.

“Two catties of choy sum, please,” he said softly.

I crouched down, slipping coins through the gap in the gate. Through the small opening, I saw the wary eyes of the vendor, who swiftly pulled the money into his hand before sliding a bundle of greens out to me. The gate clattered as it was pulled lower, leaving me wondering if I’d need to lie flat on the ground next time to catch a glimpse of the vendor’s feet.

“Why is buying vegetables so secretive?” I whispered to my grandfather.

“They’re playing a game of pretending to be on strike,” he replied, his wise eyes twinkling with amusement.

The streets back then were often filled with crowds—people in white shirts and blue trousers, holding red booklets and gathering at street corners. Green-clad officers in black helmets and polished shoes would surround them, forming a barrier with linked arms and expressionless faces, ready with batons at their waists. The crowd’s chants were strange and melodic, clashing with the heavy tension in the air.

That night, I followed their footsteps to a meeting place. The atmosphere was tense, their faces marked with a seriousness that I couldn’t quite place. They hummed a peculiar tune, reciting hypnotic phrases from their red booklets. I felt like an actor who had walked into the wrong play, unsure of my lines. In the quietest corner, I stood silently, feigning a calm I didn’t feel, as they shared stories from the past.

“Revisiting the hardships of the past” was their bridge to history, an incantation repeated with reverence. But their words overwhelmed me, leaving my head spinning. I stayed silent.

Suddenly, two heavy blue plastic barrels were brought into the room. A rancid stench filled the air as they removed the lids. Rotting food waste spilled forth, the smell nauseating. Someone declared that to understand the suffering of the past, one must experience it firsthand. “Eat a bite,” they urged.

I watched in disbelief as older students, hesitant at first, grimaced and took a bite. Their reactions shifted from shock to fervor, urging others to join in. The room, cloaked in its fetid air, became suffocating. My only instinct was to run—to escape the stench, the chants, and the oppressive weight of their collective rituals.

I never told my grandfather about that night, nor about what happened in the lab. Each time I returned home, I meticulously brushed off any stray powder from my clothes, afraid he might catch the acrid scent. Perhaps he felt a twinge of sadness that I no longer spent time in his watch shop, but I had grown captivated by the mysteries hidden within those iron shells.

After school, I would enter the pungent laboratory, where the students had moved on from studying iron bombs to experimenting with shimmering powders. They tested the powders repeatedly, mixing them with careful precision in glass containers and test tubes. The work required even greater finesse than repairing watches. Every movement was delicate and deliberate, as though a great beast lay sleeping nearby, ready to awaken with fiery destruction at the slightest mistake.

And then, one night, it did.

“Excuse me, I have an old watch that’s been broken for years. Could you take a look at it for me?”

I looked up to see a man standing before me. Behind his glasses, his gaze was sharp, but his left arm was gone. I recognized him instantly. It was him.

He didn't recognize me, though. How could he? It had been nearly half a century since we last met. I had grown from a young boy into a balding old man. It was better this way.

"Yes, of course," I said, taking the watch from him.

"Thank you. It's been broken for so long. I thought I'd see if it could be repaired."

"Would you like me to change the strap to a flexible metal one? It might make it easier to wear with one hand."

"No, that's not necessary. I don't wear watches anymore. I used to wear one on my left wrist, but after losing my left arm, it felt wrong to switch to my right. I eventually stopped wearing them altogether. Recently, while sorting through old belongings, I found this watch. If it can be fixed, I'd like to give it to my grandson as a gift."

As he spoke about his grandson, his eyes softened with a warmth I hadn't seen before. I realized then that he was no longer the boy with the scent of gunpowder. We had both moved on from the smoke and chaos of those days. He no longer wore watches, while I had become consumed by the intricate movements of clockwork.

I still remember that day—his hand left behind, fingers slightly curled, charred black at the edges. Blood and flesh mingled in stark red as the crowd panicked, fleeing in chaos. He was unconscious, carried out by the senior students as they hurriedly stepped over his spilled blood, leaving smeared footprints on the floor.

As the blood dried, I found his watch lying amidst the mess. Picking it up from the half-dried pool, I wiped away the blood and soot, and returned it to his desk drawer in the classroom as if nothing had happened.

Now, that same watch had returned to me. The hands remained frozen at that moment, stuck in a time that no longer existed—a perpetual summer daylight saving time.

Grandfather used to tell me about the days when daylight saving time was in effect year-round. They had to wake up an hour earlier every day, starting their mornings in darkness, living in a fabricated dawn. Four years later, daylight saving time was confined to summer, and decades after that, it vanished altogether.

Tick-tock, tick-tock.

In the circular face of the watch, I often imagine a pair of children running endlessly. Over the years, they've sped up and slowed down, weaving through different numerical paths like climbing stairs. I've kept them captive within the watch, repairing its broken movement so it ticks once more. It's as if their hearts never stopped beating, as if that summer and its laughter still echo in the streets.

Historical Context:

Daylight Saving Time

Daylight saving time refers to adjusting the official clock forward by one hour during summer to align with the longer daylight hours, thereby improving productivity. Hong Kong implemented daylight saving time in 1941. During the Japanese occupation from 1942 to 1945, daylight saving time was observed year-round, effectively aligning with Japan's time zone. From 1946, daylight saving time was applied only between March and November until it was officially abolished in 1980.

The 1967 Events

According to records from the Hong Kong Observatory, hail fell in Hong Kong between spring and summer of 1967. In May of that year, a workers' strike broke out at a plastic flower factory in San Po Kong, sparked by significant wage cuts. The strike escalated into large-scale riots, with leftist factions calling for city-wide strikes and school boycotts. Police arrested numerous leftist activists, and nearly half of the city's buses were taken out of service, leading to widespread economic stagnation.

Political commentator Johnny Lau, who was a student at the Workers' Children Secondary School at the time, recalled attending gatherings held by leftist committees. At one such event, two barrels of food waste were brought out, and participants were encouraged to "relive the hardships of the past" by eating the rotting scraps.

The "Pineapple" Bombs

That year, improvised bombs, commonly known as "pineapples," began appearing across the city, making it difficult to distinguish between real and fake devices. Statistics show that Hong Kong saw 1,525 real bombs and 4,217 fake ones during this period.

In late August, a homemade bomb disguised as a gift killed two siblings, aged eight and two, on Tsing Hua Street in North Point. The incident shocked the entire city. That same year, a student at Chung Wah Middle School was injured in a laboratory explosion and lost an arm.