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My Hometown's Base Creatures

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Wu Cheng · *Taiwan*

MY HOMETOWN'S BASE CREATURES

A Stone Tablet for Animal Ghosts

In my hometown there is a slaughterhouse
And in its entrance is a stone tablet

Which says: Ghosts! Go away!
Do not float back, do not float back.
Quickly, go find a peaceful resting place.
Do not float back, do not float back.

During holidays, my hometown's butchers,
Awestruck and sincere, burn incense
For prayer and sacrifice.
Won't you accept them?
Born as low creatures, you shall accept
The butcher's knives.
You can't refuse; you have no choice!

Swines, dogs, base creatures,
No need to wail, no need to complain, and
No need to be surprised.—They will slaughter you,
Pray for you, and wish you peace.
There is nothing wrong with this.

No need to wail, no need to complain, and
No need to be surprised.—They slaughter you,
They pray for you so that your wronged souls
Won't come back for vengeance. Swines, dogs, base creatures,
Ghosts, go away!

Dog

It is said that if a dog barks at midnight
Something is going to happen—

Do you have a loneliness you couldn't expel?
Do you have a formidable fear?
Did you discover something that startled you,
That made you warn my hometown?

Wang! Wang! Wang! Wang! Wang!
Your unbearable barking.
Each bark is more anxious and sorrowful,
But only to disturb our deep slumber.

All is quiet and calm, no problems.
Except for your barking
All is quiet and calm, no problems.
Suspicious fools! Why don't you sleep?
Why don't you sleep peacefully?
What are you so worried about?
What is there that you see?
All which is nonexistent and imagined.
Do not bark anymore.
Your unbearable crying would only
Make us angry.

translated by Marilyn Chin and Jesse Wang

THE MORNING READING

Each morning
I race to school against the morning sun.
You, with your little brilliant faces, say, "Good morning."
On the back wall, the map of China,
Shaped like a begonia, also greets me warmly.
In a silent flowing of glances,
Each river on the map is growing;
Each mountain is becoming taller and taller,
Each plain is enlarging slowly.
Listening to your monotonous English reading
I am tempted to say something . . .
I am tempted to say, "Stop reading," and
That we should be listening to what our rivers have to say,
And discover how much love is harbored in our mountains.