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To X (Written on This Device You Made)

On the last day of September, a 24-year-old migrant worker... jumped out of a window of a residential dormitory run by his employer, Foxconn, the huge electronics manufacturing company... that makes the majority of the world's Apple iPhones.

—Washington Post

1.

Pick it up.
Black glass our mirror when it's
off but it is never
off. Press home button
now. Flex. Press.
My fingerprint my hot oils is that
your finger pressing the button into place now on
assembly line in Shenzhen
before it's wiped clean
I see you I think I
see you load your
poem onto it, into me, into me now Did you just like that, standing,
fall asleep Did you fall farther than you meant Did you
mean me to be reading this I want
to touch the sky/feel that blueness so light/
but I can't do
any of this so I'm
leaving this
world I was fine
when I came and fine when I
left In this blue touchlight
fine rain starts
scrolling down

2.

On the contract, there are four options. Two show you will consent and
two show you will not. Do not tick the options which indicate you are
not willing. Tick the two which say you are. If you tick the boxes which
say you are not willing, the form will be canceled.

3.

What do you see? Under
razor bright lights
blue hats blue jackets
every identification card
taken away long ago you
came 28 hours by bus

Rules are: no long nails
no yawning no sitting
on the floor no talking
or walking quickly no being
late no transients or pretens
no families If you doze off

and fall against the machines and
there is a live wire no one will
save you The workshop
still as a ravine in autumn
when you slump and slide
back off your stool it's
a hare breaking out of the
underbrush

4.

Workers have up to ten minutes for visits to the toilet Such visits are possi-
ble only if a supervisor is available and willing to stand in for the workers
on the shop floor The toilets are equipped with cameras When a work-
er's time is up a loudspeaker calls for him by name until he returns He
returns For now

5.

That night rain's pouring into
the underpass
fills up to the brim—cup of opaque
liquid crystal display—frame—shield—

If you get lost in the city you will be
replaced I have people lined up to
replace you $1.85 per hour no errors

Now you turn your head to see
the train coming
rain torn by wind, unstoppable rain, fetid rain
It’s scentless They rinse your uniform so many times
   it’s scentless

6.

I pick it up. I ask it Who made you I don’t understand
   Who was the person
who put this phone together Do you mean call history Was it wiped

at the factory or after How many hands touched it before mine I don't
know myself but I can find out I breathe in it’s your air

7.

Motherboard left
your village you
miss her free
garden of plums
ravenala a language
of tightening
screws Do you type
your poems into it

lychee verbena bougainvillea
eucalyptus asbestosflower

at least three screens
a minute at least
twelve hours a day
spray the polish
onto the display

then wipe it dry
if you leave a trace
wipe it again

ten more nets go up

8.

The delegation comes to visit the factory the city government seeds the
clouds to cause rain it rains it clears the smog it leaves behind blue skies
from the ground silver iodide rockets fly up into the clouds which con-
dense which fall toward earth: raindrops. The air tastes harder. The light
sleeker. A frozen glass is rinsed in milk.

9.

Eighteen, your name meaning Walk Forward,

triple-bunked twelve to a room fences ten feet
tall on the roofs

   bedsheets full of ash
dried gum in your fingerjoints and burrs
pricking behind your right shoulder

When you place it in its box
do you imagine me.

In the testing area the belt keeps running never stops
halfway through the sixteen-hour shift you recall
a corner of roof where one’s torn be quick—
Eighteen your name meaning Walk Forward
Eighteen meaning unfree meaning

falling from a great height

10.
You are the one
who installs front
camera with proximity
sensor leaning
over the factory
assembly a shadow—
sensor gains awareness
six hands later in process

but you figure out how
to turn it on early What if
there were a faint summons
they could feel Sensor makes
a square around your
face and focuses A pair
of bands gently opening
a red lacquered door

11.

"On his rare days off Xu Lizhi likes to visit bookshops, lingering in the
aisles. He frequents the factory library, and writes poems and reviews.
He twice applies unsuccessfully for desk jobs—as a librarian at the fac-
tory and at his favorite Shenzhen bookstore Youyi. When a local jour-
nalist asks him about his future, he says: our lives will become better
and better."

12.
I pick it up with my free hand, screenshot, Xu Lizhi, you're
standing on an overpass in Shenzhen, green plaid shirt,
your right hand holds your left forefinger,
you look older than
anyone your age—light traffic below and the railing's covered
in stickers, phone numbers...

I hold you in my hand you can't feel
proof of single status physical exam card
wastewater pours into the river, paystubs
scurrying like minnows certificate of conformity can't be both a boy and
a worker, choose one They've trained me to refuse to skip
work, refuse sick leave, refuse to be late, refuse to leave early—

Shenzhen once a fishing village children laugh dashing past
green lychee trees hulls heaped trash and scrub hills above
where now stands a bronze statue of Deng Xiaoping a corridor
made of nonfiction When it happened no one was there to see it
ten more nets go up

13.
You are the one
who changes air

filters in the manager's
office the yellow-
stained black-caked
filter a seine
that catches night in itself
all night

14.
I pick it up, type in your words  A screw plunges to the ground
working overtime at night  Another worker's falling asleep on the line
iron moon  head jerking  Drops straight down with a faint sound that draws
no one's attention  just like before on the same kind
of night a person—
ten more
and grates on every window

15.
The boy breathing
next to you  12cm

tweezers turning thin

fingers the smallest
parts he moves by
hand always wears

gloves to touch it
until one morning he
picks it up and

types into it  My eyes are
so tired they won't open

16.
I look at it. Locked. Is there space for a distress signal if you wanted
to leave one. I switch silencer off, hit home, it gives me
only one emergency call, no private numbers, but it can take
a picture. Will record whatever I do next. I've heard there's a time
difference with foreign countries, here it's daytime, there it's night—

Designed by Apple in California Assembled in China Model A1549
FCC ID BCG-E2816AIC 579C-E2816A IMEI 3557952070868852

17.
I pick it up
forgive me

I pick it up

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Note: "To X" responds to the collection Iron Moon: An Anthology of Chinese Worker Poetry (ed. Chin Xiayu, trans. Eleanor Goodman). It adapts language from Chinese and English media reports on the suicides at the Foxconn facilities where iPhones are assembled.