

I Come From

I come from the rain, the gloom and the wet.
A cold city,
But full of kindness,
In the people I meet.

I come from the sun, the warmth and the love
Of my family and friends,
And the school janitor,
Who is now up above.

I come from the moon,
The darkness of night,
Exploring with friends,
In the bushes and trees, hoping we won't get a fright.

I come from the wind and the icy cold breezes,
Walking to school,
Through the sounds of cars and buses,
Hoping I won't freeze.

I come from the earth,
The strong ground and soil,
Working hard but having fun,
Not knowing true sweat and toil.

I come from a place,
Which may not seem unique,
But within its heart,
And among its streets,
There are people
Who make it what it is.

Rachel Steadman

Understanding The Characters

When I was young,
My grandpa gave me a Chinese dictionary,
Covered with pale greenery,
So old, published in the last century.

But sometimes
I found it was not working,
Because, so strange, over time,
Just like people,
The characters keep changing.

Tianyi Gao

The Old Dragon's Head

I come from Qinhuangdao, the island of the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty,
A small town, a busy town, a harbour town
Where the sea meets with the mountains and forests,
And the very beginning of The Great Wall, they call the Old Dragon's Head.

There is no special recipe in our town,
Only the best fresh seafood, to cook any way you want.
There is no particular fashion in our town,
But every Spring Festival my Grandma made me a cotton coat.

Every week my family gather to play mah-jong,
The favourite game of my grandparents,
And like hundreds of children throughout China,
I am told to study hard, and get my degrees.

Tianyi Gao

Hutong

I come from the most narrow street
Of a huge and modern city,
An alleyway, that we call the hutong.

I come from that tiny house,
Father built on the corner, facing south,
Green ivy on the wall,
A water channel by the door,
Waiting always for me to go home.

I come from long and longer walks,
Going to clothes stores, grocery shops, all along the hutong;
Mother is holding my hand, forever,
Asking which place I would like to go next.
I come from my parents' tireless preaching
Ending in warm embraces,
'You are always our pride,' they whisper,
'Yes, I know.
That is also what I feel about you.'

Yangling Guo

Shunde

'I come from Guangzhou,
A big city in the south of China.'
That is my answer to the common question,
'Where are you from?'

But more exactly, I come from a small city, near Guangzhou.
Its name is Shunde.
I seldom say its name, because seldom people know it.

You ask how do I learn about it?
I don't need to learn it.
I know it because I live in it,
For days, for months, for years.
I know it because it still has another name.
HOMETOWN.
My hometown.

Twenty years ago, it was a small village,
Surrounded by ponds and fish,
Farms and wheat, rivers and boats.
No roads, no bridges, no buildings,

Today, there are more buildings,
Made of steel and concrete,
More highways, going to the outside worlds
More officers and workers from other cities.

But fortunately,
We still have the river flowing under the bridge,
The pond near the house,
The farm beside the restaurant.

We still have the local old man ,
Always friendly, full of energy and passion,
Always saying with pride,
' I am from Shunde.'

Liu Jingyi

The Grey Sweater

Even the day before,
You were still working,
Knitting the sleeve,
Persuading the neighbour,
To sew on the buttons.
The whole winter long,
You made the grey sweater,
Knowing I would be leaving,
Knowing you would miss me,
Knowing I had to go.
But wanting me to be warm and safe,
Even so far away from you.

Jiangling Liu

I Come From

I come from a small city
In the south of China,
Where legend says,
Wild geese spend their winters.

I come from the Xiang River,
With the wind, the osmanthus fragrance
And the barefooted fishermen walking along the banks
As the green bus drives across the bridge.

I come from friendly men, chatty women,
Spiced dishes, chopped peppers, mah-jong and cards.
Relaxed, slow-paced dinners, and dad's cooking,
Always the best.

I come from the bookshelf and the table lamp,
A busy school life with loads of homework,
Then suddenly, after 18, freedom – and support.
'Remember, you must make decisions for yourself,
But you will never be alone.'

Jiangling Liu

The Second House

I come from the second house,
that we all lived in together.
Drawing up outside the new
house in an orange VW van.
A city that always felt a bit
apart.
Over a decade folded into one
set of feelings.
I come from endlessly cutting
pictures and typography from
magazines with no particular purpose.
An internal imaginary life.
Passing my driving test,
Driving to the beach in the night.
I come from the fixtures and
fittings of that house,
which started intensely dated
but were gradually erased.
Trying to work out what we
were passionate about.
A cupboard full of hockey sticks
and Brownie uniforms but
we just wanted to smash
leaves in a bowl to see if
we could make ink. We couldn't.

Linda Pittwood