

THE LAST NIGHTTIME STORY

(set in China)

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The Last Nighttime Story

FADE IN:

BEGIN MONTAGE - NIGHT

We SEE five or six PHOTOS from different bedrooms around the world (China, U.S.A, Europe, Africa, South America; but could be anywhere) with a parent reading to four-year-old children in pajamas (or culturally appropriate night clothes), while we HEAR a Chinese MALE TEENAGER (15) speak.

MALE TEENAGER (V.O.)

Do you remember all those great bedtime stories your parents read to you when you were little? It didn't matter what the story was, as long as your Ma, Ba, grandpa, grandma, or whoever, sat next to you and read. You'd sleep like a baby afterward.

SUPER "FIVE YEARS LATER."

We SEE the same set of bedrooms around the world (China, U.S.A., Europe, Africa, South America) with ten-year-old children in pajamas (or culturally appropriate night clothes) playing with toys, video games, or watching television in their rooms, while we HEAR a Chinese FEMALE TEENAGER (13) speak.

FEMALE TEENAGER (V.O.)

No one remembers the last time their parents read them a bedtime story. It just happens. It comes without warning. Most children are caught completely by surprise. It's part of growing up, right?

(beat)

When was the last time you were read a nighttime story?

END MONTAGE

INT. HUAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Siblings, WEI (10) and HUAN (8) in gym clothes, alternate playing with toys and video games, but neither child LOOKS interested nor happy. We SEE a small bookshelf filled with classic children's books. Two books, "*Home for Chinese New Year*" and "*Hazel and Twig: A Birthday Fortune*" are opened slightly and placed just inside the door, so they will be knocked over if the children's parents enter the room.

HUAN  
Think they'll come up?

WEI  
They've never missed two days in a row. Never! But they looked busy tonight.

HUAN  
Late day working.

WEI  
I hear the television.  
(beat)  
They aren't coming up!

Wei angrily throws some toys on the floor.

HUAN  
Hey, don't mess up my room!

She pushes Wei.

WEI  
It's our room!

He pushes her back. This creates a pushing match.

HUAN  
Only 'cause you're scared to move out!

WEI  
All my things are in here. It's my X-box, ya know.

HUAN  
It's our X-box. Ba and Ma got it for us! We have to share it!

WEI  
You don't use it anyway.

HUAN  
It's like chewing gum for the brain. That's why, birdbrain!

WEI  
They're not coming up, you know!

They stop pushing each other.

HUAN  
Probably busy on their phones, too.

Wei POINTS to the book Huan picked out, standing open by the door.

WEI

You picked *Home for Chinese New Year* again? That's so childish!

HUAN

You picked *Hazel and Twig: A Birthday Fortune!* That's not childish?

WEI

I prefer the classics!

HUAN

(snooty)  
So do I!

WEI

I can't take this abuse. I'm moving out.

HUAN

So go already. You could have had your own room all along. You're suffering separation anxiety.

They almost come to blows, and stop playing with toys.

WEI

I'll move into my room tomorrow. For sure! That will show you!

HUAN

Been saying that for two years! It's darker in there! You'll never leave my room! We'd better get to sleep.

WEI

You brush your teeth?

HUAN

Yes. You?

WEI

Had to.

HUAN

Why?

WEI

Big honking piece of spinach on my front tooth. I looked like Wang Yong with his missing tooth!

HUAN

Ewww! That's exactly why I'm not gonna miss you.

They crawl into separate twin beds and turn out the light. A nightlight goes on automatically.

WEI

Think I'll have a sleep-over with your boyfriend, Wang Yong, on Saturday. In my own room!

Huan LAUGHS hard.

HUAN

He's not my boyfriend! Think I'll have a sleep-over with your girlfriend, Zhang Li, on Friday!  
(beat)  
So there!

WEI

She's not my girlfriend!  
(beat)  
Ma and Ba are bound to trip over the books!

HUAN

They can't miss 'em!

Wei LAUGHS.

WEI

You must be quiet! We must get to sleep!

HUAN

Why? Oh yes. Big test in three days. Then, the costume parade and picnic!

WEI

Multiplication tables, and English sentence structure: subjects, verbs, adjectives, and a creative essay! Just to get a lousy picnic!

HUAN

Don't forget English adverbs, which modify verbs and typically end in "LY." Easy! And the costume parade and picnic are fun, idiot!

WEI

Especially for girls! But boys got other things on their minds.

HUAN

What things?

WEI

(mumbles)

Moving into the next room.

HUAN

Be quiet and go to sleep!

There is a deafening SILENCE as the children both glance at their closed door. Wei turns serious.

WEI

Hey, Huan? Do you ever not want to grow up?

Huan thinks for a moment, and answers sadly.

HUAN

Every night.

They quietly GIGGLE.

WEI

Good night, Sunshine.

HUAN

Good night, Moon!

Their eyes are WIDE OPEN as the night goes on and on.

INT. HUAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Wei and Huan awake to a loud KNOCK on the door! We hear Ma's voice (30s, soft spoken, kind).

MA (O.S.)

Huan, Wei, time to wake up. Dim sum is waiting.

Wei and Huan stir, but it's difficult to wake up. Wei opens one eye to see that the two books by the door are gone! He HOPS out of bed.

WEI

They're gone! Your book, *Home for Chinese New Year*, and my great book, *Hazel and Twig: a Birthday Fortune*! They're gone!

Huan still doesn't open her eyes.

HUAN

*Hazel and Twig: a Birthday Fortune?*

Wei RACES over to shake her.

WEI

I'm serious. They're gone!

Huan opens her eyes as wide as can be, and she HOPS out of bed.

HUAN

Must be here somewhere.

She looks atop and under everything. They both examine the other books in the bookcase.

WEI

Nothing!

HUAN

Me either!

They HEAR another loud KNOCK on the door.

MA (O.S.)

Downstairs! Now! You'll be late for school!

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Wei and Huan are dressed for school in nice, clean, typical school clothes. They SLURP *DUMPLINGS*, while speaking fast. We see MA and BA (30s; business clothes) from the waist- or chest-down, but we SEE them checking their SMARTPHONES and drinking TEA.

BA

Took you forever to get downstairs today.

MA

Worried you'll be late for school.

HUAN

Ba, Ma, you didn't see that old book, *Home for the Chinese New Year*, did you?

MA

No, Dear. Why do you ask?

WEI

Or that *Hazel and Twig: a Birthday Fortune* book?

BA

No. Finish your breakfast or you'll be late.

HUAN

Can't find them anywhere. I think my brother is playing a joke on me.

MA

Your brother wouldn't do that!

WEI

I think my sister got up in the middle of the night, and hid the books.

BA

Your sister wouldn't do that!

MA

Clean that room of yours, and I bet you'll find them.

WEI

We're serious. Maybe we were robbed!

BA

I've gotta get to work. Children, don't forget your lunches.

Everyone begins to leave the house.

MA

And, no stopping on the way to school. I know it's one block, and other children will be walking with you.



BA  
Walk quickly.

HUAN  
Nice adverb, Ba.

WEI  
Oh, brother!

EXT. OLDER NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Wei and Huan TRUDGE to school. A street sign reads: "Last St." They pass an old house and junkyard on a large lot surrounded by a wrought-iron fence. A rusty sign reads: "Li Jun's Old Ancient Secondhand Antique Emporium and Junkyard." Wei and Huan pass it without a thought. Their Primary School is on the next block.

HUAN  
We'll find them when we get home.

WEI  
We'd better. I blame you!

HUAN  
For what?

WEI  
Getting old so fast. You're like a mini-Ma and you're not even nine yet!

HUAN  
That's 'cause you're still a baby!

They push each other as they walk.

HUAN (CONT'D)  
They didn't walk away by themselves.

WEI  
We weren't robbed. Thieves would have taken the television, jewelry, and my transformer collection.

HUAN  
My engineering kits!

WEI AND HUAN  
The X-box!

They stop in their tracks.

WEI  
We have a hundred children books?

HUAN  
Why those two?

They SHRUG their shoulders, and TRUDGE to school.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

We see Twenty Students (8-10; various genders, all in nice, clean, clothes. The biggest boy is WANG YONG (8), missing front tooth; not so smart, but happy). The prettiest girl is ZHANG LI (10), who is very bright. Wang Yong, Zhang Li, and two other children are sleepy and cranky today. We see only the legs of MRS. XU (60, schoolmarm, pantsuit) as she RACES around the room. The children SIT in short desks.

MRS. XU  
What's the matter? Some of you  
didn't get enough sleep last night?

The children RAISE THEIR HAND before they speak.

WANG YONG  
I didn't.

ZHANG LI  
Me either.

WEI  
I didn't get much sleep.

HUAN  
Me either.

MRS. XU  
I want everyone to get a lot of  
sleep this week. We have our big  
tests coming up.

The Students GROAN.

MRS. XU (CONT'D)  
Multiplication tables, and English  
sentence structure: subjects,  
verbs, adjectives, and a creative  
essay, again!

Huan RAISES her hand.

HUAN  
 (yawning)  
 English adverbs, too?

MRS. XU  
 Adverbs often are a very important part of the test. However, let me return to the topic of creative essays. Do you remember writing your practice essays last week?

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

SUPER: LAST WEEK.

The twenty alert Students stare at blank, blue-covered test booklets. The Students struggle getting their ideas down on paper, while Mrs. Xu walks past them. The Students suffer the agony of writer's block, as we hear Mrs. Xu in V.O.

MRS. XU (V.O.)  
 Your practice essays last week were well below the five-hundred-word requirement. Many essays lacked a clear beginning, middle, and end. I don't mean to sound harsh, but there was a general lack of imagination and creativity. You have to take these district-wide exams seriously. The Principal, my boss, was very unhappy. She called me into her office and told me that your essays reflected very poorly on me!  
 (beat)  
 On me! I know each of you is capable of so much more!

END FLASHBACK

The Students look ashamed of themselves, except Wei, Huan, Wang Yong, and Zhang Li who are barely awake.

WEI  
 Five hundred words is a lot.

MRS. XU  
 Each of you has a story to tell. I think your next essays will be much more creative!

Mrs. Xu reads from a handful of essays in her hand.

MRS. XU (CONT'D)

Wang Yong, you already know that there is nothing too creative about kicking a soccer ball until your legs get tired.

The students LAUGH.

WANG YONG

Yes, Mrs. Xu. But the story does have a beginning, middle, and end, like you said.

MRS. XU

Wang Yong, your entire essay was three sentences: "I went outside to kick my soccer ball. Did good at first. My legs got tired." And you did well at first would be correct English grammar. Your entire essay was sixteen words! Not five hundred.

(beat, mumbles)

Thank goodness!

WANG YONG

(mumbles)

I really cut to the chase, Mrs. Xu.

Mrs. Xu ignores Wang Yong.

MRS. XU

And Zhang Li, you're a bright girl.

Zhang Li barely lifts her head.

ZHANG LI

Yes, Mrs. Xu.

MRS. XU

However, a whole essay about your dog sleeping is as exciting as watching paint dry.

The students LAUGH.

ZHANG LI

It was the only exciting thing that happened all week!

MRS. XU

One-hundred-thirty-seven words! Use your imagination.

(MORE)

MRS. XU (CONT'D)  
 Convey your excitement and  
 feelings! Your dog does more than  
 sleep!

ZHANG LI  
 He passes gas.

The students LAUGH.

MRS. XU  
 (mumbles)  
 That would have livened up your  
 story.

ZHANG LI  
 Yes, Mrs. Xu.

MRS. XU  
 Huan, surely something more  
 exciting happened in your life,  
 since you found a smashed frog in  
 your driveway in Kindergarten?

The students LAUGH.

HUAN  
 Yes, Mrs. Xu, but how about my  
 clever title?

MRS. XU  
 (mumbles)  
*He Croaked.*

The Students LAUGH.

MRS. XU (CONT'D)  
 Two-hundred-seventy-one words, the  
 class record!

The students CLAP.

MRS. XU (CONT'D)  
 Not funny!

The Students stop clapping.

MRS. XU (CONT'D)  
 And Wei, your essay titled, "Why I  
 Don't Like to Write Essays," is  
 certainly not going to please the  
 district judges!

The student LAUGH.

MRS. XU (CONT'D)

A one-hundred-ninety-five-word essay is no laughing matter! One great teacher said, "Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing about."

WANG YONG

Mrs. Xu, will that be on the test?

The students try to contain their giggles.

MRS. XU

If you want to score well on your creative essays, I strongly suggest you kick your imaginations into high gear. Your next opportunity will be on Friday before the costume parade and picnic. I hope your performance will be greatly improved. Creativity is everything!

(beat)

Now quietly listen for an hour, while I review the parts of speech.

Wei leans over and whispers to Wang Yong.

WEI

Here's the part of speech where I quickly fall asleep.

Wei, Huan, Wang Yong, and Zhang Li quickly doze off. Wang Yong FALLS out his desk. Mrs. Xu RACES down the aisle to help him back to his desk, but he can't keep his eyes open.

MRS. XU

I don't know why everyone's so tired lately!

EXT. OLDER NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Wei and Huan, just leaving school, walk sleepily toward home.

HUAN

So embarrassing!

WEI

I know. Right?

HUAN

I don't remember what we covered in English.

WEI

I don't even remember recess.

HUAN

It's all your fault! Talking most of the night!

WEI

You were talking too!

HUAN

I want you out of my room tonight!

WEI

There ya go again! You're like Ma!

A pushing match begins as they walk home.

HUAN

Zhang Li thought you were an idiot today. Said your essay was stupid!

WEI

Like her essay about her sleeping dog wasn't stupid.

(beat)

Odd how nobody made it to five hundred words.

HUAN

That's 'cause nothing exciting ever happens around here!

WEI

That's for sure!

HUAN

What do we tell Ma and Ba when they ask about our day at school?

WEI

It's so sad!

(beat)

I don't even remember lunch!

Suddenly, they HEAR large pieces of steel SCRAPING and CLANGING behind Li Jun's Old Ancient Secondhand Antique Emporium and Junkyard. They RACE up to the wrought-iron fence and PEEK in.

HUAN

What do you suppose that was?

WEI  
Came from behind the house.

HUAN  
Think Old Man Li Jun is burying  
something?

WEI  
Or someone!

They SEE a BRIGHT LIGHT in the attic of the old house.

WEI (CONT'D)  
What's that?

HUAN  
Brighter than a full moon!

The scraping of metal stops.

WEI  
What is all this junk in here,  
anyway?

HUAN  
Ma says he collects things every  
day and every night. Ba says he  
never ever throws anything away.

WEI  
Even his garbage?

HUAN  
Zhang Li's Ma said the same thing.  
Tried to get the village to do  
something about it, but they can't.

WEI  
It's legal to collect garbage  
forever?

HUAN  
If people don't want it, I guess.

The LIGHT GOES OUT in the upstairs room.

WEI  
I bet he's coming out!

HUAN  
Let's get out of here!

Wei and Huan SCREAM, and RUN all the way home.



EXT./INT. HOUSE - DAY

Wei and Huan RACE inside, and lock the door.

HUAN

You check all the doors. I'll check  
the windows.

They RACE around the house checking every lock, and end up in  
the kitchen.

WEI

Everything's locked.

HUAN

Let's sit by the phone in case we  
must call the Chengguan.

WEI

Good idea.

HUAN

Ma and Ba will be home in an hour.

WEI

Unless they have to work late  
again.

HUAN

Yeah.

WEI

I'll get my old badminton racket.

HUAN

It will only make them madder. And,  
you'll probably miss!

WEI

You got a better idea?

HUAN

I'm gonna call Zhang Li and have  
her keep an eye out.

WEI

She lives two houses away.

HUAN

You should know, she's your  
girlfriend!

WEI

She is not!

They push each other again.

HUAN

Call Wang Yong, then. He's right across the street.

WEI

You should know. He's your boyfriend!

HUAN

You're such an idiot. His Ma's home, and his Ba's Chengguan!

WEI

I know that, moron. But then we gotta use the phone.

HUAN

We don't have to call Chengguan now. Call Wang Yong!

WEI

You're such a monster!

Wei GRABS the phone and DIALS Wang Yong. Wang Yong's Ma, MRS. YONG (30, sweet) answers.

WEI (CONT'D)

Hi, Mrs. Yong. Is Wang Yong there?

MRS. YONG (O.S.)

Hello, Wei. Wang Yong went up to nap. Didn't sleep well last night, I guess.

WEI

Something in the air, I guess, Mrs. Yong. I'll call back later. Thanks.

MRS. YONG (O.S.)

Wei, I got a text from Wang Yong's teacher, Mrs. Xu, that he fell asleep in class.

Wei's eyes open widely.

MRS. YONG (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You don't know anything about that, do you, Wei?

WEI  
No, Mrs. Yong, but it's difficult  
for any student to stay awake  
during English.

MRS. YONG (O.S.)  
Yes, thank you, Wei. I'll tell Wang  
Yong that you called.

Wei HANGS UP nervously.

WEI  
You hear that?

HUAN  
That means Ma and Ba probably got a  
text message from Mrs. Xu, too.

WEI  
What are we gonna do?

HUAN  
First, we're going find those  
missing two books.

WEI  
Then we gotta clean our room so we  
don't get into trouble.

Huan and Wei RACE up stairs.

HUAN  
We're already in trouble.

WEI  
We'd better find those books!

LATER

INT. HUAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

The room looks like a tornado struck. Wei and Huan are poring  
over every book title.

HUAN  
Nothing?

WEI  
Nothing!

They HEAR their Ma and Ba come in downstairs.

BA (O.S.)  
Hi, children. We're home!

WEI AND HUAN

Hi, Ba!

MA (O.S.)

Hi, Wei. Hi, Huan. What are you doing?

HUAN

Just cleaning our room.

WEI

And talking about parts of speech. Big test coming up.

MA (O.S.)

That's good. Got a strange text message from Mrs. Xu.

WEI

Our teacher, Mrs. Xu?

Huan hits Wei in the arm.

MA (O.S.)

Said you both fell asleep in class. Wei, I would believe...

HUAN

Mrs. Xu speaks in a monotone sometimes.

WEI

Yes. She has a sleepy voice.

Huan hits Wei again.

HUAN

Half the class fell asleep.

BA (O.S.)

(laughs)

I remember those days!

MA (O.S.)

(to BA)

You're no help.

(to the children)

Dinner is in an hour.

WEI AND HUAN

Yes, Ma.

HUAN  
 (whispering)  
 We must clean this room, fast.

WEI  
 Yes, fast!

They angrily clean the room. In addition, Huan organizes all the books in the bookcase.

WEI (CONT'D)  
 By size?

Huan POINTS as she describes the bookcase.

HUAN  
 Size and alphabetical order. You got our young-reader books, picture books, classics, modern authors, and reference books.

WEI  
 I put all the toys away! Oh, and my video games.

HUAN  
 Shocking!

WEI  
 What? Me putting the LEGOs away?

HUAN  
 No, idiot. I didn't see two of your old favorites: *Cao Chong Weighs An Elephant*, and *The Nian Monster*.

Wei ATTACKS the bookcase.

WEI  
 What? Are you sure? *Cao Chong Weighs An Elephant*, and *The Nian Monster*? This is disastrous!

Huan POINTS at two areas in the bookcase.

HUAN  
 Should be right here!

WEI  
 I just read, I mean, saw them a while ago!  
 (beat)  
 Last year, I think!

They HEAR Ma.

MA (O.S.)  
Dinner!

HUAN  
They're gone now! I'm going  
downstairs to dinner. You probably  
threw them away!

WEI  
Not those books. Used to love 'em!

Wei EXAMINES every book in the bookcase.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Huan is almost finished with her dinner. Wei's dinner is getting cold. The parents are scurrying around. Ba is washing dishes, while Ma puts food and kitchen items away. We SEE the parents only from the waist- or chest-down.

MA  
Finally, Wei. What took you?

WEI  
(sad)  
I was looking for four books that  
have gone missing since last night.

MA  
Four books?

HUAN  
*Home for the Chinese New Year* and  
*Hazel and Twig: a Birthday Fortune*  
disappeared last night.

WEI  
And I think *Cao Chong Weighs An  
Elephant*, and *The Nian Monster*  
disappeared today because we heard  
strange noises from behind Old Man  
Li Jun's junkyard.

BA  
You shouldn't be anywhere near the  
back of that junkyard.

MA  
Ba's right. You stay away from  
there. Not safe!

HUAN

We just heard noises from the street.

WEI

Strange, eerie noises. Like steel beams scraping.

(beat)

Almost crying!

MA

Quite an imagination, dear.

HUAN

I heard it, too.

WEI

Then there was a bright light, as bright as a full moon.

HUAN

A full moon!

WEI

Shining from Mr. Li Jun's attic in broad daylight!

BA

Just stay out of that yard! There used to be a big dog, ya know.

HUAN

He's been dead since we started school.

MA

All those old sharp pieces of rusty metal all over. Huan's always telling us we could get tetanus.

(imitating Huan)

That needle is this big, ya know!

The children look up and GULP!

HUAN

I don't say it that often!

WEI

Yes, you do!

HUAN

Tetanus is a very dangerous bacteria! It can cause lockjaw, ya know!

WEI

We weren't going to go in there,  
but we think it's strange.

BA

What's strange?

HUAN

We lose the book, *Hazel and Twig: a  
Birthday Fortune*, then see a bright  
light from Mr. Li Jun's attic.

WEI

Then we lose *Cao Chong Weighs An  
Elephant*, and *The Nian Monster*, and  
we hear steel scraping in Old Man  
Li Jun's backyard.

The parents continue to scurry around.

BA

Just a coincidence.

MA

Clean your room, and you'll find  
the books.

HUAN

We cleaned the room.

Wei LOOKS away.

HUAN (CONT'D)

Wei?

WEI

The books are kind of all over the  
floor. I was looking for...

MA

(interrupts)

You get up there right now, young  
man!

HUAN

But, we are missing the books! It's  
true.

MA

Stop this silly talk, young lady.  
Now, march up there with your  
brother. I've got to work to  
tonight, and so does your father!



HUAN  
Yes, Ma.

WEI  
Yes, Ma.

Wei and Huan TRUDGE upstairs.

MA (O.S.)  
You let me be the disciplinarian  
again, Dear.

BA (O.S.)  
I'm sorry. I'll correct them next  
time. They're usually great  
children. What's gotten into them?

MA (O.S.)  
Tired, I guess.

INT. HUAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

This time, Huan forces Wei to help her arrange the books.

WEI  
Sorry about the mess.

HUAN  
It's okay. Lets you learn about  
alphabetical order, and lets me  
pick out a book for tonight.

WEI  
I should pick one out, too.

HUAN  
Ahh! *Bronze and Sunflower*.

WEI  
Expertly describing the cultural  
revolution?

HUAN  
You surprise me!

WEI  
Why?

HUAN  
Just threw together an English  
adverb and an adjective like a pro!

WEI  
Really? Which is which?

Huan hits Wei in the arm.

HUAN  
You make me laugh!

WEI  
I'm serious. The L-Y word is the  
English adverb, right?

HUAN  
Duh!

WEI  
You're ridiculously mean to me. I'm  
moving out!

HUAN  
Nobody's stopping you. And I might  
sleep better! But, you're learning!  
Ridiculously slowly for a child  
your age, but you're learning.  
(beat)  
What book are you picking out for  
tonight?

Wei carefully examines several books. He SMILES.

WEI  
*The Bronze and Sunflower.*

HUAN  
I prefer *The Niam Monster!*

WEI  
The artwork! Magnificent!

HUAN  
No! It's the writing. Pure poetry!

They push each other. This time, Wei falls over and hits his  
head.

WEI  
Ow!

Wei POPS up and hits his sister on the arm, hard. She tries  
to act like it didn't hurt, but tears form.

HUAN  
Not supposed to hit girls.

WEI  
You started it!

HUAN  
Get out of my room! Now!

WEI  
All my things are here. You can't  
make me!

HUAN  
I'll call Ba and Ma!

WEI  
I'll make your life miserable.

HUAN  
Too late!

Wei is caught off guard. Then he, chuckles.

WEI  
Sorry for hitting you.

HUAN  
Sorry for pushing you.  
(beat)  
But I still want you out of my room  
tomorrow. Time you grew up, and  
stop hitting girls!

WEI  
(sadly)  
Maybe you're right.

Wei and Huan STARE at their books; *Bronze and Sunflower*, and  
*The Niam Monster*. Then, they set them by their closed door,  
so that they'll be knocked over if the parents enter the  
room. The mood is sullen.

HUAN  
(sadly)  
Think they'll come up tonight.

WEI  
I'm sure of it. They missed last  
night.

HUAN  
But they got the text message from  
our Mrs. Xu, and they had work to  
do.

WEI  
They'll be here.

LATER

Lying in their beds, the children, with EYES WIDE OPEN, wait, and wait, and wait. Agony!

INT. HUAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

The children are awakened by a loud KNOCK.

BA (O.S.)  
Children, time to wake up. Dim sum  
is ready. Chop Chop. Let's go!

Huan and Wei LEAP from their beds. *The Niam Monster* and *The Bronze and Sunflower* are gone!

WEI  
Where are they? Did you do this  
again?

HUAN  
Didn't do it the first time!.

WEI  
Where'd they go?

HUAN  
No idea. Ma and Ba will know!

WEI  
Let's get dressed.

HUAN  
I get the bathroom first today. You  
look for the books -- without  
dumping them all out!

The children are angry and concerned, as they get ready for school.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Again, the parents SCURRY around, while sipping tea and staring at their phones. Wei and Huan slurp dumplings, while asking questions.

WEI  
Why didn't you come up to read us a  
bedtime story?

HUAN

And kiss us good night?

Ma and Ba stop scurrying to answer (we still see them from the waist down).

MA

We did! You were sound asleep.

HUAN

What time?

BA

When we finished work.

MA

It was late. We're sorry.

WEI

When you opened the door, did you knock over any books?

MA

Didn't see any books, but it was dark.

HUAN

What about the nightlight?

BA

It was pretty dark. And we were pretty tired. Sorry, children.

MA

What's all this about books?

WEI

They're gone! *The Niam Monster* and *The Bronze and Sunflower*. They're gone!

BA

You'll have to look for them after school.

MA

You're late again. Get going. And don't forget your lunches.

Ma and Ba head out the same time as the children, who wave good-bye with forced smiles.

WEI

Old man Li Jun's place, let's go!

HUAN  
Right behind you!

EXT. MR. LI JUN'S OLD HOUSE - DAY

They RACE to the old Li Jun house and squeeze their faces between the rails of the wrought-iron fence. They see A PILE OF YELLOW AND RED SCRAP METAL, and their eyes open widely.

HUAN  
It's *The Niam Monster*!

WEI  
I wonder where *Bronze and Sunflower* are?

HUAN  
Old man Li Jun probably has the ox tied up inside the house.

WEI  
Our other books, too, I bet.  
(beat)  
He's got *The Hazel and Twig: a Birthday Fortune* upstairs, I bet!

HUAN  
We gotta warn the other children at school!

They RACE to school!

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY.

Wei and Huan look at the clock, and each other. Their faces say it all -- they're late. This time, half the class is cranky and tired, and Mrs. Xu is in a rotten mood.

MRS. XU  
I'll have to send a text message home to your parents!

WEI  
I'm sorry.

HUAN  
I'm sorry.

MRS. XU  
And what's with my class today. Half of you look like you haven't slept in weeks!

Wei and Huan take a seat at their desks.

MRS. XU (CONT'D)  
Wang Yong, did you get any sleep  
last night?

WANG YONG  
I did.  
(beat)  
After the robbery!

MRS. XU  
The robbery?

WANG YONG  
Nobody noticed it but me.

MRS. XU  
I see. What was stolen?

WEI  
We bet it was books!

Wang Yong RACES over to Wei and Huan.

WANG YONG  
Your place too?

WEI  
*Home for the Chinese New Year,  
Hazel and Twig: a Birthday Fortune.*

MRS. XU  
That's ridiculous. Nobody is  
stealing your books.

WANG YONG  
*The Chinese Emperor's New Clothes,  
and China's Bravest Girl: The  
Legend of Hua Mu Lan, and Cao Chong  
Weighs an Elephant!*

HUAN  
Wang Yong, that's so sad.

WANG YONG  
I didn't read 'em in years, but I  
do like elephants.

WEI  
That explains a lot.

HUAN

Wei says we lost *Cao Chong Weighs An Elephant*, and *The Nian Monster*. But, he hasn't seen them for years!

MRS. XU

This is not happening.

ZHANG LI

*Lotus & Feather*, and *The Dragon Slayer*. Gone!

WEI

That was two nights ago. Last night, it was *The Niam Monster* and *The Bronze and Sunflower*.

MRS. XU

Okay class, that's it. A note is going home to all your parents. This is the silliest thing I've ever heard.

Mrs. Xu looks at her class, and sees half of the class is asleep.

MRS. XU (CONT'D)

I don't know what's going on around here, but I'm sending you all out to the playground -- just to wake up. Go on! Go on!

The children wake up and stumble outside.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

Wei, Huan, Wang Yong, and Zhang Li discuss things, while the other Students run and play.

WEI

The good news is, it's not just us Huan.

HUAN

That's the bad news.

WANG YONG

Huh?

ZHANG LI

They mean something big is going on.



WANG YONG

Big?

WEI

And scary.

HUAN

What are we going to do?

WEI

I don't know. I'm just a child!

WANG YONG

Where are our books going?

ZHANG LI

(smirks)

They can't walk away!

WEI

We think it's a thief!

HUAN

We can't prove anything yet.

ZHANG LI

You have a suspect?

WEI

One. That's all we can tell you right now.

WANG YONG

Can you tell Mrs. Xu, so she doesn't think we're crazy?

ZHANG LI

(looks at Wang Yong)

Too late.

HUAN

We'll know more tomorrow morning.

WEI

We need to run around. If we get caught sleeping again, we'll be in third-year until we're twelve!

The BELL RINGS.

HUAN

Quick. Run back!

They RUN back to class.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The Students are back in their seats, and just as quickly, Wei, Huan, Wang Yong, and Zhang Li begin to doze off.

MRS. XU

Creative writing. Please take notes. The three-part structure for stories dates back to the time of Aristotle: a beginning, a middle, and an end.

WEI

(mumbles)

This must be the end.

Wei, Huan, Wang Yong, and Zhang Li are asleep. Wang Yong falls out of his seat and onto the floor. Mrs. Xu wakes everyone up.

MRS. XU

What's going on around here?

EXT. OLDER NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Huan and Wei stumble toward home, half-asleep, when Wei perks up.

WEI

Our suspect!

They RACE back to Old Man Li Jun's place. They poke their faces through the wrought-iron fence.

HUAN

Looking for evidence of *The Chinese Emperor's New Clothes*, and *Cao Chong Weighs an Elephant*!

WEI

An elephant would be hard to miss!

HUAN

So would a tiger running around!

WEI

Yeah, but maybe not *Lotus & Feather*, and *The Dragon Slayer*. They could easily hide in all that junk!

HUAN  
*Lotus & Feather* is childish? Why  
 would anyone read that one?

WEI  
 (mumbles)  
 Old books can be comforting.

Wei looks around the junkyard, and he lights up and points at  
 a cat crossing the back of the junkyard.

WEI (CONT'D)  
 A tiger!

HUAN  
 More like a cat.

WEI  
 Not the cat! That old wood carving!

HUAN  
 Could be a tiger, I guess?

WEI  
 Old Man Li Jun turned the elephant  
 into that carved tiger over there!  
 What do ya think?

HUAN  
 Must be him.

Huan looks to the opposite side of the junkyard, and sees an  
 old metal bird/crane.

HUAN (CONT'D)  
 There's the crane!

WEI  
*Lotus & Feather*?

HUAN  
 Gotta be.

WEI  
 I think we've seen enough.

HUAN  
 All the evidence we need.

WEI  
 Now, to set a trap!

HUAN  
 For tonight?

WEI

Exactly!

The front door of Old Man Li Jun's house CREEKS open. Wei and Huan don't see anyone!

HUAN

Let's get out of here!

Wei and Huan RACE home.

INT./EXT. KITCHEN/HUAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Wei and Huan RACE in, and begin locking the doors.

WEI

Lock all the doors!

HUAN

Check the windows!

They RACE upstairs, checking the bedroom windows, when Wang Yong KNOCKS on the front door.

WEI

What was that?

HUAN

Old Man Li Jun?

The siblings FREEZE! They HEAR louder KNOCKS. They whisper.

WEI

Where's my badminton racket?

HUAN

Closet.

Wei and Huan search the closet, when they hear Wang Yong KNOCK on the back (kitchen) door. The siblings FREEZE and whisper.

HUAN (CONT'D)

We're surrounded.

WEI

I'm calling the Chengguan!

Wang Yong LEAVES and walks across the street back home. Wei and Huan CREEP downstairs, PEEK out the windows. They see nothing. They RACE upstairs and SLAM the door to their bedroom.

They HEAR a SIREN a few minutes later. OFFICER (MR.) YONG (35, uniformed, but we only see him from the waist down like Ma and Ba) knocks on the door.

The children are upstairs and too afraid to answer, until they hear his voice.

MR. YONG  
Children! It's me, Mr. Yong. Wang  
Yong's Ba. Open up.

Wei and Huan come downstairs and answer the kitchen door.

WEI  
Sorry, Mr. Yong, Officer Yong, we  
think we over-reacted.

MR. YONG  
I thought so too. I was on my way  
home anyway, so I thought I'd check  
it out.

HUAN  
Just a knock at the door.

MR. YONG  
I called Mrs. Yong before coming  
from the station. She said that  
Wang came by to get a homework  
assignment. He thought you were  
home, but nobody answered.

WEI  
That was us.

MR. YONG  
Figured as much. Wang fell asleep  
in class again. Forgot all his  
assignments.

HUAN  
I'll call him right now and give  
him the assignments.

MR. YONG  
Thanks, Huan.  
(beat)  
You children look concerned.  
Something bothering you?

HUAN  
No.

WEI  
No.

MR. YONG  
If there was, you'd tell me, right?

WEI  
Yes.

HUAN  
Yes.

MR. YONG  
Good.

WEI  
Can we keep this accidental call  
from our folks?

MR. YONG  
Ha! Yes, Wei. I know you're getting  
too big to have a sitter after  
school. Practically fourth-years  
already!

(beat)  
Thanks for getting my son those  
assignments.

Huan shuts the door and locks it. Huan begins to call Wang  
Yong.

LATER

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ma and Ba arrive home with a roasted chicken and fresh  
vegetables. We see their legs.

MA  
Children? We're home!

BA  
Roast chicken! Your favorite!

Wei and Huan creep down the stairs. Wei holds his badminton  
racket, Huan also holds a badminton racket.

MA  
What were you two playing?

HUAN  
Nothing?

BA  
That's usually Wei's line.

MA  
We got another text message from  
your Mrs. Xu today.

BA  
Said you were both late for school.

MA  
Two notes in two days.

BA  
What's gotten into you? You get  
roast chicken anyway. We just want  
to know?

The siblings stand defiantly in the kitchen.

WEI  
Some of our best books have been  
stolen!

HUAN  
And we're sure Old Man Li Jun has  
been stealing them.

MA  
I'm sure they're in a closet, down  
in the basement, or under a bed  
somewhere.

BA  
We'll help you look for them this  
weekend if it bothers you so much.  
You haven't read many of those  
books in years!

Ba moves to HUG Huan, and Ma moves to HUG Wei, but the  
siblings step back.

WEI  
You don't believe us.

HUAN  
It's so obvious, when you look in  
Old Man Li Jun's junkyard!

MA  
I think your imaginations have  
gotten the best of you.

WEI  
What about all that new things in  
Old Man Li Jun's junkyard?

MA  
Did you see even one book?

HUAN  
No.

BA  
Then there's nothing to explain  
your weapons of choice?

The children put the rackets behind them.

MA  
Let's all calm down, have some  
chicken, and forget the whole  
thing!

WEI  
But we saw evidence!

MA  
Evidence?

WEI  
The tiger?

HUAN  
The crane?

WEI  
And the scraping of steel like a  
dragon screaming for help from  
behind Old Man Li Jun's house.

HUAN  
We heard it!

Ba and Ma scurry around the kitchen.

BA  
Two notes sent home from Mrs. Xu in  
two days!

MA  
And these wild stories! We don't  
know what's gotten into you.

BA  
Wei, we want you sleeping in your  
own room tonight!



Wei looks STUNNED.

WEI

(pouts)

Do I have to? There's no  
nightlight, ya know?

MA

We think you're keeping each other  
awake -- talking all night! This  
has to stop.

Wei HANGS his head. Even Huan POUTS. They eat their chicken  
in tiny bites, sadly.

BA

It's one room away, with an  
adjoining bathroom. You're not  
being sent to Siberia!

HUAN

What about the Video games?

WEI

And the toys?

MA

You can divide things up after  
school tomorrow. You can play in  
each other's rooms. No big deal,  
right?

Wei HANGS his head. Huan POUTS.

BA

You children need your sleep!  
That's why you're acting all crazy!  
Lack of sleep.

MA

I agree. Now, finish your dinner  
and get up to your rooms. You will  
not be late for school tomorrow!

The siblings STOP EATING, and march upstairs, as sad as they  
have ever been.

INT. WEI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The door CREAKS as Wei opens the door. He enters the cold toy-  
less room with tiny steps. Huan BURSTS through the adjoining  
bathroom door with a forced smile, and her arms behind her  
back.

HUAN  
Not that far away!

Wei tries to be brave, as he sits on his bed.

HUAN (CONT'D)  
I found these in the closet!

Huan swings her arms out to reveal two walkie-talkies. Wei grabs one immediately.

WEI  
You're a genius!

Wei's mood lightens immediately.

HUAN  
I know, right?

WEI  
We need to set a trap!  
(beat)  
Quick! To the bookcase!

They RACE into Huan's room.

WEI (CONT'D)  
Each of us picks out two more classic favorites.

HUAN  
What for?

WEI  
You'll see!

They look through all the books, carefully making two selections each.

HUAN  
What do you have!

WEI  
*Sword and the Stone*, and *I Have A Lantern*. What did you pick?

HUAN  
*Look! What do You See?*, and *Buddy Is So Annoying!*

WEI  
Great. Help me move the dresser.

They struggle, but pull the dresser out.

WEI (CONT'D)

Put the books behind the dresser.

Huan puts the books against the wall.

HUAN

Okay.

WEI

Help me push the dresser back.

They struggle to push the dresser back.

HUAN

Fine! Now, we better get ready for bed, or Ma and Ba will be angry!

LATER

The siblings are in their own rooms, lying in bed, and whispering into their walkie-talkies.

WEI

Thanks for remembering the walkie-talkies.

HUAN

Thanks for setting a good trap.  
(beat)  
But it's in my room!

WEI

You wanted me out of your bedroom anyway. You said so!  
(beat)  
Nobody's gonna get those books.

Huan is unsure. She looks over at the dresser.

HUAN

(mumbles)  
Nobody.

WEI

We'll never get another bedtime story, will we?

HUAN

Every night we go to sleep will be the same.

WEI

All our favorite old books will probably disappear, one by one.

HUAN

It will be tougher and tougher to  
fall asleep.

WEI

We may never fall asleep ever  
again.

Their eyes STAY OPEN an extra-long time that night. Finally,  
much later, they fall asleep with the walkie-talkies in their  
hands.

INT. HUAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Huan HEARS a loud KNOCK on the door. She has great difficulty  
waking up.

MA (O.S.)

Huan, time to get up. Breakfast is  
on the table.

Huan HEARS her Ma's footsteps going down the hallway.

MA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Wei, wake up. School day. Breakfast  
is ready.

Huan HEARS her Ma descend the stairs. Huan looks around her  
room to see her dresser has been moved away from the wall.  
She grabs her walkie-talkie as she PEEKS behind the dresser.  
She BUZZES Wei in the next room.

HUAN

Wei! Get in here. We have a  
problem!

Huan SHAKES in fear.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ma and Ba scurry about, checking their phones and drinking  
tea. We still see only the lower-half of the parents.

HUAN

Did you at least lock the doors  
last night?

BA

It's a safe neighborhood.

MA

We don't always check the locks.  
Maybe we should.

WEI

You think?

MA

What's that supposed to mean?

WEI

Old man Li Jun lives just down the  
street!

HUAN

And strangers from outside the  
village wander by all the time.

WEI

Could be bad people?

HUAN

Or thieves!

BA

You're perfectly safe. Don't be  
late for school again. Eat your dim  
sum!

MA

If we get another note from your  
Mrs. Xu, you're both in trouble!

BA

Wei, how did you sleep last night?

WEI

Couldn't get to sleep.

HUAN

Me either!

WEI

Don't think it was a good idea to  
move out with all this commotion  
about.

MA

Don't be silly. There's no  
commotion. You're practically a  
fourth-year!

BA

I have to get to work.

MA

Me, too. Don't forget your lunches,  
children.

Ma and Ba RACE out the door. Wei and Huan take backpacks to school. We see Wei's badminton racket sticking out of his backpack, and Huan's badminton racket sticking out of hers, as they leave the house.

EXT. OLDER NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

HUAN

Something very strange is going on  
around here!

WEI

And we're gonna find out what!

They stop at Old Man Li Jun's place and STARE between the wrought-iron rails.

WEI (CONT'D)

Just gotta look closely.

HUAN

I am. I am.

Wei sees a three-foot-tall 2x4 piece of wood sticking out of the ground half-way to the front door of the old house. He points at it for Huan's sake.

WEI

See that?

HUAN

What?

WEI

There it is!

HUAN

What?

WEI

The Sword in the Stone!

Wei is excited!

HUAN

Huh? The sword of Little King  
Arthur stuck in a rock?

WEI  
Looks like a piece of lumber now,  
just to trick us.

HUAN  
(sarcastic)  
Doing a pretty good job!

WEI  
It's no coincidence that one of my  
favorite books gets stolen, and we  
find a sword stuck in the ground  
the next day!

HUAN  
(mumbles)  
Sword?

WEI  
Made to look like a piece a wood.  
(beat)  
Probably by a sorcerer.

Huan starts looking elsewhere in the junkyard.

HUAN  
Sorcerer?

Finally Huan sees an old, metal bird. She points and yells.

HUAN (CONT'D)  
The crane in Lotus & Feather!  
That's it!

Wei looks over, nodding in agreement.

WEI  
Now do you believe me?

Huan realizes the time.

HUAN  
We'll be late for school!

They RACE to school.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Again, Wei and Huan are late for school, but so are Wang Yong, Zhang Li, and half of the class standing behind them. We see the legs of Mrs. Xu, with one foot tapping the floor in anger. Wei, Huan, and the other children FREEZE, and STARE at the tapping foot.

MRS. XU

There will be plenty of notes sent home today.

(beat)

Put your things in the back of the classroom, and take your seats.

Wei begins to whisper to Wang Yong, but he is interrupted by Mrs. Xu.

MRS. XU (CONT'D)

Wei, do you have something to share with the class?

All the children, but Wei, take their seats.

WEI

Mrs. Xu, I'd like to report a crime!

All the children GASP as they turn toward Wei.

MRS. XU

A crime?

WEI

Mrs. Xu, two days ago, only Huan and me were tired.

MRS. XU

Huan and I.

WEI

Huan and I. But yesterday, six children were overly tired.

MRS. XU

What are you saying, Wei?

Huan HOPS up and joins Wei in the back of the classroom.

HUAN

My brother's right. And today, half the class was late, and they look exhausted.

MRS. XU

Maybe they were studying for the big exam tomorrow. Multiplication tables, and English sentence structure: subjects, verbs, adjectives, and especially the creative writing essays!



WEI

And adverbs, naturally.

MRS. XU

Yes, and adverbs. Maybe studying kept them up later than usual. It's perfectly normal to study for exams. Don't you agree Wei and Huan?

Wei and Huan stare at each other with their EYES WIDE OPEN.

WANG YONG

Busted.

ZHANG LI

Totally!

MRS. XU

Class, while Wei and Huan return to their seats, perhaps we can all take out our mathematics books and review the multiplication tables.

Wei whispers to Huan as they return to their seats.

WEI

Nobody believes us.

HUAN

I know!

MRS. XU

Many of you had problems with the elevens. Let's see if we see a pattern there.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

Wei and Huan sit alone at a lunch table, while the other children play a slow game of soccer (most are tired).

HUAN

Pattern.

(imitating Mrs. Xu)

Let's see if we see a pattern there.

Wei is excited.

WEI

That's it! I see a pattern! Each day, double the number of children are late and too tired for school.

HUAN

I'm more worried about the books.

WEI

Some of the classics, stolen!

HUAN

If Ma and Ba didn't do it, it means somebody is coming into our house! Who moved the dresser? Who stole the books?

WEI

Should we go to the Chengguan!

HUAN

They'd say we were crazy.

WEI

Yes. They'd say we just lost 'em.

Silence.

HUAN

Maybe we are crazy.

Soon, Wei and Huan are joined by Wang Yong and Zhang Li.

WANG YONG

Hi, Huan. Can we talk?

Huan wrinkles her face, confused.

HUAN

We can talk right here.

WANG YONG

You've been acting a little weird lately.

WEI

She's got a lot on her mind.

Wang Yong turns to Wei.

WANG YONG

You've been acting even weirder.

Wei stands up, but Wang Yong is much bigger, so Wei just stares meanly.

HUAN  
What's going on, Wang Yong?

Wang Yong pauses and looks around a bit.

WANG YONG  
I think we should stop going out together.

Huan looks more confused. She gets defensive.

HUAN  
Going out? Who said we were going out?

WANG YONG  
The other children.

ZHANG LI  
It was common knowledge.

Wei turns angrily to Zhang Li.

WEI  
Common knowledge?

ZHANG LI  
Same with me, Wei. I think we should start seeing other people!

Huan stands to defend her brother. She turns to Zhang Li.

HUAN  
Seeing other people? You see other people every day at school!

WANG YONG  
That's what I'm talking about.

Wang Yong and Zhang Li STORM away to the classroom, as the other students file by Wei and Huan with a look of pity. Wei and Huan LOOK totally confused.

EXT. OLDER NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Wei and Huan struggle to walk. They are exhausted as they leave school, and their backpacks contain extra books, along with Wei's badminton racket, and Huan's badminton racket.

WEI

What do you suppose got into Wang Yong and Zhang Li today?

HUAN

Have no idea. I didn't know I was Wang Yong's girlfriend! Your fault for starting rumors!

WEI

Not my fault. I didn't know I was going out with Zhang Li. You started that rumor.

They get angrier as they walk.

HUAN

You're such an idiot!

WEI

You're such a dummy!

HUAN

I don't think we've been acting weird.

WEI

Me neither! I don't know what to think, but I know one thing.

HUAN

What?

WEI

I know where we need to stop.

HUAN

No way! We're going home to study for our big test tomorrow?

WEI

Wrong.

HUAN

No! Absolutely not!

WEI

Old Man Li Jun's place!

HUAN

We'll get in big trouble!

WEI

Something I gotta do!

As they approach Old Man Li Jun's place, their eyes open wider, when they see a new item in the front yard: a rusty metal sculpture of a DRAGON (six feet tall), sitting across from the three-foot-tall, 2x4 post stuck in the ground. Huan sees it first. She POINTS.

HUAN

It's the dragon in *The Dragon Slayer!* You were right all along.

Wei sees the dragon.

WEI

I knew it.

Wei sees the BRIGHT LIGHT in the upstairs room. He POINTS at the light.

WEI (CONT'D)

*Hazel and Twig: a Birthday Fortune!*  
Let's investigate!

Wei tosses his badminton racket through the fence railing, and begins to climb the treacherous wrought-iron fence.

HUAN

Investigate what?

WEI

I'm going to poke around! Coming with me?

Wei and Huan YELL at each other.

HUAN

You're crazy! Old Man Li Jun will kill you!

WEI

I'll never be able to sleep, if I don't find out what happened to our books!

HUAN

You can't sleep 'cause you're in your own room, and there's no nightlight!

WEI

Couldn't sleep before that! No bedtime story, and no peace and quiet 'cause you won't stop talking at night. Big mouth!

HUAN  
You're the big mouth!

WEI  
I'm going in there!

HUAN  
Outta my way, I'm going in there  
first!

Huan tosses in her badminton racket and starts climbing. It's dangerous, but they both make it. Wei GRABS his badminton racket like a war club. Huan does the same with her badminton racket. They advance toward the house. Wei drops his bat next to the 2x4 post. He's exhausted, but he tries to pull the post out of the ground. He can't. He picks up the bat and STARES at the dragon sculpture, while Huan (also exhausted) tries to wrestle the post free. It doesn't budge. She picks up her badminton racket.

They look suspiciously at each other as they investigate the old dragon sculpture, the rusty metal bird, and several other nondescript pieces of junk. They can't figure it out!

Their level of anxiety builds just as Wang Yong and Zhang Li stroll by the property and see Wei and Huan with raised weapons.

WANG YONG  
See what I mean?

ZHANG LI  
What's gotten into them?

Wei puts the badminton racket behind him, and Huan puts her badminton racket behind her, as they nonchalantly pick their way through the junkyard back to the wrought-iron gate. Wei and Huan are defensive and angry.

WEI  
Just poking around. So what?

WANG YONG  
That's private property. That's so  
what! And that's against the law!

HUAN  
We were just leaving! So what?

ZHANG LI  
Studying for the big tests?

WEI

Extra books right there in our backpacks! Don't believe us, see for yourselves.

WANG YONG

My Ma says Old Man Li Jun can get very mean. Hope he catches you for your own good.

Wei and Huan turn and look at the junkyard and house.

ZHANG LI

I bet there are rats in there!

WEI

Rats?

ZHANG LI

Maybe you heard of them? They carry bubonic plague.

(beat)

Fingers, feet, tongue turn black. You get all swollen and sore as the bacteria multiply in your body like maggots.

HUAN

That's enough, Zhang Li. We're not going to get the plague!

WANG YONG

Sure acting weird. Maybe they already got it!

(beat)

I gotta get home to study.

ZHANG LI

Me, too!

Wang Yong and Zhang Li walk on. Wei and Huan watch them leave.

WEI

We should get home.

HUAN

Maybe we should.

WEI

This was a dumb idea of yours.

HUAN

You climbed the fence first!

As they start to climb back, they HEAR the SCRAPING of steel behind the house.

Wei grabs Huan's arm. They turn to look at the old house, and whisper.

HUAN (CONT'D)  
What was that?

WEI  
I told you. Something strange is going on here.

HUAN  
Spooky.

WEI  
Very.

HUAN  
Dangerous.

WEI  
Very.

They timidly CREEP toward the front door, taking small steps, and looking all around.

Wei raises his racket. Huan raises her racket.

They reach the front door and PEEK in the windows, which are so dirty they can't see in. Cobwebs are everywhere.

HUAN  
Wang Yong wouldn't like this.  
(beat)  
Cobwebs and spiders!  
(beat)  
Let's go.

Huan keeps peeking in the windows.

WEI  
We came this far!

HUAN  
Okay.  
(gulps)  
I'll ring the doorbell.

It RINGS. No one answers.

HUAN (CONT'D)  
Okay, let's go.



WEI

We came this far!

Wei KNOCKS on the door, loudly. No one answers.

They HEAR a SIREN. They turn to run, but standing between them and the fence is an elderly giant of a man, MR. LI JUN! (late-60s; a big man, unshaven for days, dressed in old work clothes; frightening), though we see only his back-side.

MR. LI JUN

What are you two doing in here?!

Wei and Huan turn to see a Police Car pull up to the house.

WEI

Uh oh!

HUAN

We are in so much trouble!

Wei and Huan are temporarily relieved to see Wang Yong's Ba exit the police car, but their mood changes when they see the scary LOOK on his face. [We only see Mr. Yong's lower body.]

MR. YONG

Sorry, Mr. Li Jun. I know these two. They won't bother you again.

Wei and Huan step past the mean looking Mr. Li Jun.

HUAN

Sorry, Mr. Li Jun. Weren't gonna take anything.

WEI

Didn't mean anything, Mr. Li Jun. Didn't want to hurt nothing.

MR. YONG

Come with me, children. I'm not coming in there to get ya. I've got a twisted ankle.

Wei and Huan walk like common criminals toward the police car. Mr. Li Jun is right behind them, escorting the children off his property, but the children are too scared to face him.

MR. YONG (CONT'D)

I'll call you for a statement in a little while, Mr. Li Jun.

Officer Yong opens the back door to the police car and points to the back seat. Wei and Huan are stone silent.

MR. YONG (CONT'D)  
Get in, and buckle up.

The officer waves at Mr. Li Jun, while the children SHAKE in fear, getting into the police car with their backpacks, badminton racket and badminton racket in hand. Officer Yong drives off without a siren.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

MR. YONG  
Trespassing and destruction of private property are serious offenses.

WEI  
Yes, Sir. We went into the junkyard, but we didn't hurt anything.

HUAN  
We didn't hurt anything, honest.

MR. YONG  
Your parents aren't going to be happy about this.

HUAN  
What's going to happen to us?

MR. YONG  
I've got to take you into the station, and fill out a report, after I talk to Mr. Li Jun.

WEI  
Fill out a report?

MR. YONG  
Have to find out if he's pressing charges. Shouldn't take long.

Officer Yong looks back at the scared children as he parks at the tiny Chengguan station three blocks away.

MR. YONG (CONT'D)  
Is this your first offense?

Wei and Huan nod, "yes."

MR. YONG (CONT'D)  
(laughs)  
They should go pretty easy on ya!

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

The front desk Officer (40; female, uniformed) LAUGHS when Ma and Ba enter the station frantically. We don't see anyone's face, but we HEAR the commotion of a police station.

BA  
Our little girl and boy?

MA  
Are they safe?

OFFICER  
Right behind me.

Ba and Ma PEEK behind the Officer to see Wei and Huan fast asleep on a wooden bench.

OFFICER (CONT'D)  
Officer Yong offered to take them home, but he had to get his ankle checked out at the doctor's. The children were so tired, we thought they might be safer here. They were rambling on about dragons and cranes, and a tiger of some kind!

BA  
And Mr. Li Jun?

OFFICER  
He helped the officer guide them to the police car after they almost fainted.

MA  
Oh my!

OFFICER  
He's not pressing charges. He didn't want them to get tetanus, or uncover a rat. We know his place is an eyesore, but we didn't write him up.

BA  
Are they going to have a Chengguan record?

OFFICER

(laughs)

Maybe for sleeping the most while  
in captivity.

MA

Were they trespassing?

OFFICER

Old man Li Jun says they were just  
retrieving their badminton rackets  
that fell through the fence. That's  
the story we're going with. You can  
take your children home any time.  
Don't be too tough on them, they're  
just overly tired.

Ma and Ba collect their sleeping children from the bench, and  
lead them to the door of the police station.

BA

Had an exciting afternoon?

WEI

Didn't mean to.

HUAN

Sorry.

MA

Oh, you'll be sorry. We know about  
the recent Chengguan call, too.  
They made Officer Yong talk!

BA

What's gotten into you children?

WEI

Just tired, I guess.

HUAN

Overly tired.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ma and Ba scurry around, checking their phones, and serving  
tea to the sleepy children.

BA

You two are grounded!

MA

On restriction!

BA  
No television.

MA  
No phoning friends.

BA  
No nothing!

MA  
Except studying.

WEI  
We're sorry.

HUAN  
Yes. Sorry as can be.

WEI  
Not entirely our fault though.

Huan kicks Wei under the table.

BA  
I hope you can explain!

MA  
(sarcastic)  
Please enlighten us!

HUAN  
Just not getting enough sleep.

WEI  
Not used to my new room.

MA  
Not used to the other bed? Same  
manufacturer?

WEI  
I haven't moved over all my things,  
so it doesn't feel like my room.

MA  
You can do it tonight, right after  
dinner!

WEI  
(sarcastic)  
Thanks, Ma.

BA

And hurry up with the move, I want you to study for those big exams tomorrow.

MA

Multiplication tables, and English sentence structure: subjects, verbs, adjectives, and your creative essay!

Huan is about to speak, but Ma interrupts her.

MA (CONT'D)

And adverbs, naturally.

HUAN

Do we still get to go to the costume parade and picnic after the exams?

BA

Yes. Your Ma and I will bring your costumes just before the picnic.

WEI

And we get to go home after the picnic, right?

MA

Yes, and you're to walk right home.

BA

Right past Old Man Li Jun's place without even looking in. Got it?

HUAN

Got it.

WEI

What if we find our stolen books?

MA

If you get arrested again, they are going to lock you up, and throw away the key!

BA

Stay out of Mr. Li Jun's junkyard at all costs! Got it?

WEI

Got it.

(beat)

(MORE)

WEI (CONT'D)

It's just that today, I swore we saw the *Sword and the Stone*.

HUAN

And the dragon from *The Dragon Slayer*.

WEI

And *Hazel and Twig: a Birthday Fortune* in the attic, all lit up.

BA

Okay! That's enough. Upstairs, you two.

MA

This nonsense has to stop!

BA

Wei, I want you to move all of your things out of Huan's room tonight! You hear me? Huan will help!

HUAN

Yes, Ba.

WEI

Okay, but...

MA

No buts!

WEI

We still can't find our books that were stolen!

BA

I don't want to hear another thing about stolen books.

MA

If you're so worried about stolen bedtime storybooks, each of you can pick out your two favorite books, and your father and I will lock them in our closet tonight for safekeeping.

BA

I'm fine with that!

Wei and Huan's eyes light up. They HUG their parents.

WEI

Okay, I'll move, then pick out books to save.

HUAN

Thanks, Ma and Ba. We can't afford to lose any more bedtime stories around here.

Wei and Huan RACE upstairs to the bookcase.

INT. HUAN'S AND WEI'S BEDROOMS - NIGHT

In Huan's bedroom, Wei is moving toys over to his room through the adjoining bathroom. The mood is solemn.

WEI

I'm taking the Starship toys.

HUAN

Go ahead. I'm keeping the pirate ship.

WEI

Go ahead.

HUAN

You're not getting any of the stuffed animals.

WEI

Stuffed animals are for children.  
(beat)  
Except the tiger.

Wei retrieves a STUFFED TIGER from the corner of the room.

HUAN

That's mine. I got it for my third birthday.

WEI

I got it for my fifth birthday.

HUAN

You're wrong! It's mine!

WEI

My memory is better. Ba gave it to me for being so brave.



HUAN  
Your legs were shaking in that  
police car.

WEI  
So were yours!

HUAN  
It's my tiger!

WEI  
Take it from me!

They scuffle and make too much noise. Ma and Ba HEAR them and shout up.

MA (O.S.)  
Move going well? I hope there's no  
trouble!

HUAN  
(yells)  
No trouble.

WEI  
(yells)  
Almost done.

Wei tosses down the stuffed tiger. Huan and Wei whisper.

HUAN  
Keep your stupid tiger.

WEI  
You take it! Stuffed animals are  
for children.

HUAN  
What about your pillow?

WEI  
That's coming with me.

HUAN  
You got another pillow in your  
room.

WEI  
This one's my favorite.

HUAN  
Let's go see how your room is  
coming.

They walk through the bathroom to Wei's less-cheerful room.

HUAN (CONT'D)  
Your room looks bigger.

WEI  
(sadly)  
A little emptier.

HUAN  
You'll get used to it.

WEI  
(tougher)  
Yes. I'm tough.

HUAN  
Almost a fourth-year.

WEI  
Yes.

HUAN  
We gotta divide the books.

WEI  
I know.

HUAN  
Come on.  
(beat)  
Back to my room.

LATER

Wei and Huan have most of the books divided into two piles. They sit closely on the floor and pore over the remaining books like long-lost friends. The decisions are the toughest they've made in their young lives. They are so busy, they fail to realize that Ma and Ba are standing half-way up the stairs listening in.

WEI  
What about *Express Delivery from Dinosaur World*?

HUAN  
You have it memorized. What about *An's Seed*?

WEI  
Good one. Yes!  
(beat)  
What's your all-time favorite?

HUAN

I guess mine is *Home for Chinese New Year*.

WEI

Yes, I agree.

HUAN

I can't pick just two.

WEI

Me either. You can't break up a set.

HUAN

Like me and you?

WEI

I'll go ask Ba and Ma if I can sleep in your room tonight.

HUAN

And I'll go ask if we can lock away all the books in their closet.

WEI

Good idea.

Ma and Ba quickly tiptoe to the bottom of the stairs, turn, and start up the stairs noisily. Wei and Huan HEAR them and poke their heads out the door.

BA

Just coming up to tuck you in and kiss you good night.

WEI

Can I sleep in my old bed tonight? Just to sleep better?

MA

I don't know, Wei. You only gave it one night. You're a big boy now.

BA

I agree, Wei. You'll get used to having your own room, and soon you'll grow to love it!

HUAN

I'm okay if Wei wants to sleep over tonight. Just to be safe? His room doesn't have a nightlight.

MA

You're perfectly safe in your own rooms.

BA

Come on children, you need to get some sleep for your tests, the costume parade, and the picnic!

The children crack a weak smile.

WEI

Can you lock away a few more books tonight?

BA

A few more? How many?

WEI

All of 'em. Except for a couple of them, ya know, for tonight.

Ma and Ba don't seem to get the hint.

HUAN

We'll help carry them downstairs.

MA

You're missing out on valuable study time!

BA

And lights are going out at nine-thirty.

MA

You need a good night's sleep for that big day tomorrow.

WEI

Okay, Ma and Ba. I love you.

HUAN

Me too.

BA

We love you too. To the moon and back.

Wei looks down.

WEI

*Hazel and Twig: a Birthday Fortune* is still gone.

MA  
It's probably misplaced.

HUAN  
We looked everywhere!

BA  
When you should have been studying  
your multiplication tables?

MA  
And parts of English speech?

WEI  
I guess so.

MA  
You get ready for bed, and we'll  
carry the books downstairs.

The children get ready for bed, and Ma and Ba cart the books  
downstairs.

LATER

The children are in their beds, clutching their walkie-  
talkies. They whisper back and forth.

HUAN  
Sorry about calling you an idiot so  
often, I've been tired and cranky  
lately.

WEI  
Sorry for calling you a moron  
lately, but you've been a moron.

Wei laughs. Then Huan laughs.

HUAN  
You know your multiplication  
tables?

WEI  
Most of 'em. Don't care about the  
others, especially the elevens and  
twelves.

HUAN  
Why?

WEI

Ridiculous to memorize things. When we get older, we can use a calculator anytime we want.

HUAN

Good point.

WEI

And when we get cell phones, maybe next birthday, they have calculators on 'em.

HUAN

Zhang Li already has one.

WEI

See. I might just wait 'til I can look up everything: parts of speech, long division, maps about where Peru is, everything.

HUAN

What if you lose your phone?

WEI

I'll know where to look for it.

HUAN

Where?

WEI

Old Man Li Jun's place. That's where!

HUAN

We can't go near that place. Tomorrow, we're crossing the street just to avoid it.

WEI

At least our books are safe tonight, locked in Ma's and Ba's closet.

HUAN

Yeah! That's good.

WEI

I'm gonna be a Dragon Slayer in the parade tomorrow. You?

HUAN

Pirate.

WEI  
You are getting older.

HUAN  
Okay, we gotta get to sleep.

SILENCE

WEI  
What book did you put by your door?  
I put *Express Delivery from  
Dinosaur World*.

HUAN  
*An's Seed*. I felt like the little  
seed that didn't grow.

WEI  
(sadly)  
Three nights in a row.

HUAN  
(even sadder)  
I know.

Pause.

WEI  
Good night *Hazel!*

HUAN  
*Good night Twig!*

Neither child can get to sleep. They STARE at their doors,  
hoping for a bedtime story. Their eyes are wide open.

INT. HUAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Both children hear a loud KNOCK on their bedroom doors.

MA (O.S.)  
Time to get up. Get dressed  
immediately, will you?

BA (O.S.)  
We have a little problem.

HUAN  
Okay, okay!

WEI (O.S.)  
(excited)  
Right away.

Wei sees his book is gone.

WEI (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*Express Delivery from Dinosaur  
 World!*

(beat)  
 It's gone!

Huan sees her book is gone.

HUAN  
*An's Seed is gone too!*

The siblings RACE to brush their teeth and get dressed. They RACE downstairs to see their parents, and Wang Yong's policeman father, Mr. (Officer) Yong (in uniform). The parents scurry around looking at their phones, serving tea to Mr. Yong and breakfast cereal to the children. We see only the lower halves of their bodies.

MA  
 Officer Yong was kind enough to  
 stop by before his shift.

WEI  
 Hi, Mr. Yong. Is Wang Yong, okay?

MR. YONG  
 Wang Yong's fine. Morning children.  
 You had a rough afternoon  
 yesterday, but this might be worse.

BA  
 Seems that you children might be  
 right about a burglar in the  
 neighborhood.

HUAN  
 What happened?

MA  
 Your books are gone.

BA  
 Vanished.

MR. YONG  
 We're looking into the matter, I  
 assure you.

WEI  
 Did you lock them in your closet  
 like you said?



BA

Well, you see, our closet doesn't have a real lock.

MA

In fact, neither of us remembers locking the back door.

HUAN

What? That's how somebody stole *An's Seed!*

BA

Or the front door for that matter.

WEI

Huh! That's how somebody stole *Express Delivery from Dinosaur World!*

MA

Our fault entirely. We left the books right here on the kitchen table, so we could carry them up to your rooms in the morning.

BA

Then, this morning...

(beat)

Gone. But don't worry, Officer Yong will find them.

MA

He promised.

MR. YONG

I'll have to fill out an official report.

WEI

Okay.

HUAN

Okay.

MR. YONG

Can you children make me a list of all the books you had in your collection?

HUAN

All of 'em?

MR. YONG

I'm going to need all of them.

WEI

But we'll be late for school?

MA

And today is a big test day.  
Multiplication tables, parts of  
English speech, and the creative  
essays.

MR. YONG

Wang Yong's been studying all week.

BA

At least there's a costume parade  
and a picnic afterward.

MR. YONG

That's right. I have to bring Wang  
Yong his baseball uniform and  
plastic bat at lunchtime.

WEI

What about finding the thief who  
stole our books?

MR. YONG

I can check out the used-book  
stores, but cases like this are  
hard to crack if your doors were  
left unlocked.

HUAN

Because the thief can say the books  
were left out for charity?

MR. YONG

Exactly.

MA

We were unforgivably negligent.

The children are sad.

HUAN

Good adverb, Ma.

WEI

Should have locked the door, Ma and  
Ba.

BA  
We know, now!

MR. YONG  
I'll still need a complete list of  
the missing books for my report.

HUAN  
Some we hadn't read in a while.

MR. YONG  
How long?

WEI  
A really long while.

MR. YONG  
Day?  
(beat)  
Weeks?  
(beat)  
Years?

WEI  
It's hard to read them all, all the  
time.

HUAN  
We get busy with other things.

WEI  
Toys.

HUAN  
Engineering kits.

WEI AND HUAN  
Video games.

MR. YONG  
I see.

WEI  
Doesn't mean we didn't like the  
books.

HUAN  
Being a kid is busy. We had lots of  
homework too.

MA  
That's true.

BA

Maybe the thief took the books for his young children, who weren't as busy.

MR. YONG

I could hunt down possible thieves with younger children?

WEI

I can't believe they're gone!

HUAN

Something funny is going on around here. Why isn't the television gone?

WEI

Or the computer?

MR. YONG

Maybe the thief is a book-lover?

WEI

It's not fair. We like 'em too.

MA

Maybe you could make a complete list of stolen books after school?

HUAN

I suppose we could try.

BA

Good plan.

MR. YONG

I'll look into the stolen books. Don't worry, children. I'll get to the bottom of this! Thanks for the tea.

BA

Thanks, Officer Yong.

The children notice as Mr. Yong LIMPS out. The children do not look comforted.

EXT. OLDER NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Wei and Huan are tired after the first few steps toward school. Wang Yong and Zhang Li join them from across the street, but they walk several steps behind Wei and Huan.

WEI

Hi, guys.

ZHANG LI

Hi, guys. Tired too?

HUAN

Didn't sleep much.

WANG YONG

Me either. Burglary.

WEI

What?

WANG YONG

Burglary!

HUAN

Your Ba is a Chengguan!

WANG YONG

(defensive)

He still goes to sleep.

HUAN

What did they take?

WANG YONG

Bedtime story books.

ZHANG LI

Our house too!

WEI

Something really strange going on!

HUAN

Anything else stolen?

WANG YONG

No.

ZHANG LI

No.

They walk a few steps and stop.

WANG YONG

You guys go on ahead. My Ma said I shouldn't associate with common criminals.

WEI  
Common criminals?

ZHANG LI  
It's common knowledge you were  
hailed downtown by the Chengguan.

HUAN  
It was just Wang Yong's Ba, and it  
wasn't downtown. It was three  
blocks away.

WANG YONG  
You guys are acting so weird  
lately.

ZHANG LI  
Totally weird.

HUAN  
We're the same as we were last  
week, except a little more tired.

WEI  
Wang Yong, why is your Ba limping?

WANG YONG  
Leg got stuck down a sewer drain.

HUAN  
How's he gonna catch the book  
thief?

WANG YONG  
He's gotta do office work for three  
more weeks. How should I know?

They walk toward school, with Wei and Huan leading by several  
steps. They start to pass Old Man Li Jun's place. Wei guides  
everyone across the street.

ZHANG LI  
Why are we crossing the street?

WEI  
Avoiding another arrest.

WANG YONG  
Heard about that. My Ba says next  
time is big trouble.

HUAN  
Why?

WEI  
They think we're crazy.

ZHANG LI  
You two are being ridiculous!

WEI  
We only hopped the fence to get our rackets back.

They stop across from Old Man Li Jun's place, and strain to look in.

HUAN  
A flower pot!

WEI  
Wasn't there yesterday.

HUAN  
An's Seed!

ZHANG LI  
What are you talking about?

HUAN  
You don't see the connection? My book, *An's Seed*, was stolen last night, and we see an empty flower pot in Old Man Li Jun's junkyard today?

Wang Yong and Zhang Li look bewildered. They mumble quietly.

ZHANG LI  
I don't see a dinosaur, and my book *Express Delivery from Dinosaur World* is missing?

WANG YONG  
A dinosaur is missing?

They are interrupted from across the street, when Old Man Li Jun RACES out from his front door.

MR. LI JUN  
I warned you children! Stay away from here!

The children RACE to school.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Wei, Huan, Zhang Li, and Wang Yong are late! Mrs. Xu is TAPPING her foot.

MRS. XU

Nice of you to join us! Do we need another note sent home?

HUAN

No, Mrs. Xu.

MRS. XU

Take your seats. Or should I say, beds.

Wei, Huan, Zhang Li, And Wang Yong SEE that most of the students in class have their heads on their desks.

WEI

We didn't sleep well either.

MRS. XU

How am I expected to administer an exam, when all my students are asleep?

Wei, Huan, Zhang Li, and Wang Yong take their seats. They too are barely awake.

MRS. XU (CONT'D)

I thought you would all be bouncing off the walls with the costume parade and picnic today! It's a Friday, too!

WANG YONG

Will that be on the test? Days of the week? I didn't study those!

MRS. XU

No, Wang Yong. Class, you may read quietly for a few minutes, while I go speak with the principal about delaying our tests until Monday.

Mrs. Xu leaves the room. Wei comes to life, and JUMPS to the front of the room.

WEI

How many of you slept horrible last night?

Huan raises her hand, then races up to join Wei.



HUAN  
 (loudly)  
 Come on, show of hands!

Nearly all hands go up.

WEI  
 How many of you have slept poorly  
 all week?

Nearly all the hands go up.

HUAN  
 How many of you have had bedtime  
 story books lost or stolen this  
 week?

Nearly all the hands go up.

WEI  
 I told you!

HUAN  
 We have a terrible, sneaky book  
 thief in the village.

WEI  
 We think we know who! Old Man Li  
 Jun!

The students GASP!

ZHANG LI  
 Don't you need proof?

HUAN  
*An's Seed?*

WEI  
 The scraping of steel in the  
 backyard has to be *Cao Chong Weighs  
 An Elephant!*

HUAN  
 And we saw a bird there! Like *Lotus  
 & Feather.*

The students GASP!

WEI  
 And how do you explain a bright  
 light in his attic, if it wasn't  
 the *Hazel and Twig: a Birthday  
 Fortune?*

HUAN

And you can bet *The Nian Monster* is  
in the backyard too! Been missing  
for days!

The students GASP!

ZHANG LI

Should we go to the Chengguan?

HUAN

Wang Yong's Ba is on the case, but  
he has a bad foot since he stepped  
in a sewer drain.

Wang Yong, fast asleep, falls out of his desk and onto the  
floor with a THUD. Several Students help Wang Yong back to  
his seat.

WEI

I think we have to handle this  
ourselves.

ZHANG LI

Uh oh. I don't like the sound of  
this.

They HEAR footsteps coming down the hall.

HUAN

Sit up straight. Wei will explain  
his plan later!

Huan and Wei whisper back and forth as they go back to their  
seats.

WEI

What plan?

HUAN

You'll think of something! We've  
got to do something to get our  
bedtime stories back!

WEI

I'll think up a plan!

Wei and Huan STARE at each other in fright!

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The students sit up straight and tall in their desks. They  
look alert, and smile like angels. The classroom door opens,  
and we see two sets of hands and legs; Mrs. Xu' and the

PRINCIPAL's legs (50; strict female in a pantsuit).

PRINCIPAL  
They look wide awake to me.

MRS. XU  
But they were all asleep.

PRINCIPAL  
You may administer the test immediately. However, the creative essay portion of the test has been delayed until Monday.

The students CHEER.

MRS. XU  
I don't understand.

PRINCIPAL  
Try varying your voice patterns.

The Principal STORMS away.

MRS. XU  
Class, please take out two sharpened pencils, and do not open your test booklets until I tell you to do so.

Mrs. Xu passes out test booklets.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

The students gather around Wei and Huan in the middle of the soccer field.

HUAN  
It doesn't matter how you did on the multiplication tables! Tell 'em, Wei.

WEI  
Someday your calculators, smartphones, and tablet computers will do all those for you. You'll be able to say, 'what's eleven times twelve?' and an answer will bounce right back.

WANG YONG  
Two-hundred and fifteen?

HUAN  
No, Wang Yong.

WANG YONG  
Fifty-seven?

WEI  
No, Wang Yong.

WANG YONG  
What if your smartphone isn't that smart?

HUAN  
They will be. Back to the plan, Wei?

Wei whispers so they all lean in.

WEI  
The shortest person in class leads the parade every year.

HUAN  
Right. So nobody trips on them.

ZHANG LI  
Uh oh. I don't feel good about this.

WEI  
Huan and me will take over when we get outside.

HUAN  
That's Huan and I.

WANG YONG  
Don't be silly, Huan, that's two of you!

WEI  
Don't worry, Wang Yong, we have until Monday to learn English grammar.

HUAN  
Just have those swords, spears, and badminton rackets ready!

WEI  
Then just follow our lead!

The bell RINGS.

## INT. CLASSROOM

Mrs. Xu watches as the Students get into their costumes, over their school clothes. Wei is in a Dragon Slayer costume with a wooden sword. Huan is a pirate with a plastic sword. Wang Yong is a baseball player with a yellow Whiffle Ball bat. Zhang Li wears a pith helmet and carries a butterfly net. The other students are equally equipped with some type of potential weapon (e.g., badminton rackets, fishing poles, golf clubs, etc.).

MRS. XU

Be careful with those clubs and bats. I'll go out and tell your parents that you'll be out in five minutes so they can get their cameras ready.

ZHANG LI

Five minutes?

MRS. XU

That's right, Zhang Li, and you lead the group.

(beat)

Remember everyone, walk in a single file line. Give yourselves plenty of space to the person in front of you, so that you don't accidentally hit someone with a bat or racket!

Mrs. Xu STARES at Wang Yong. Wang Yong pays no attention.

STUDENTS

Yes, Mrs. Xu.

MRS. XU

March around the playground and soccer field, and return to the picnic tables for the picnic. Is that clear?

STUDENTS

Yes, Mrs. Xu.

Mrs. Xu exits to the playground. Wei PEEKS out the door to see Mrs. Xu speaking to twenty-five PARENTS, including Ma and Ba, Officer (Mr.) Yong and Mrs. Yong, Zhang Li's parents (all in their 30s), and 5-10 adult extras (30-35 various types).

WEI

Okay, everyone! We know what we gotta do.

HUAN

Follow us! Let's do this!

Rather than go out the back door to the playground, Wei leads the group in a quiet, single-file line, out to the hallway, down the hall past the Principal's office, and out the front door of the school. They march down to Li Jun's Old Ancient Secondhand Antique Emporium and Junkyard. Wei and Huan stand at the gate, with the Students behind them. Wei and Huan view the entire field of battle.

WEI

Pick an objective, everyone.  
Something to rescue.

Wei points to the 2x4 post stuck in the dirt.

WEI (CONT'D)

I'm going after *The Sword in the Stone!*

Huan points to an old flower pot.

HUAN

I'm going to rescue *An's Seed*.

Zhang Li looks puzzled at first, but then sees a dragon sculpture.

ZHANG LI

I've got to rescue that dragon for  
*The Dragon Slayer*.

HUAN

This is where the dinosaurs are!

WANG YONG

Dinosaurs?

WEI

Haven't seen any elephants, but  
we'll be on the lookout.

HUAN

Everybody got a target?

ZHANG LI

What do we do if Old Man Li Jun  
comes out?

WEI

We storm the Forbidden City!

HUAN  
He means the house.

WEI  
That's where our books are!

Wei puts his arm around Huan.

HUAN  
We're sure of it!

WEI  
On the count of three!

HUAN  
We don't have much time. Mrs. Xu  
and our parents will find us soon!  
Ready?

WEI  
One, two...  
(beat)  
Three.

WEI AND HUAN  
(yell)  
Charge!

The children charge into the junkyard, yelling, and screaming, and hitting everything with their "weapons."

Zhang Li charges to the dragon sculpture, and swats it with her butterfly net in a comical moment.

Wei charges for the 2x4 post, drops his wooden sword, and tries to remove the post from the soil, but it's too difficult.

Wang Yong swings his plastic baseball bat wildly at everything!

Huan battles a large empty flower pot with her pirate sword.

The other children are in battles of their own, all across the junkyard. They CHEER and LAUGH. A kid dressed as Superman is lifting an old tire. Spiderman is climbing an old bench-swing. Everyone is having fun!

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

The children are so LOUD that Mrs. Xu and the Parents can hear them from the school playground. They turn their heads toward Mr. Li Jun's place.

MRS. XU  
Are those my students?

MA  
I may have recognized a voice.

BA  
Me, too.

BACK TO:

EXT. OLDER NEIGHBORHOOD -- DAY

In Mr. Li Jun's junkyard, Huan RACES over to help Wei with the post. Together, they SUCCEED. Wei hoists the big post up like it's Excalibur! Huan now has her pirate sword in one hand, and Wei's wooden sword in the other.

Wei SEES a bright light in the attic.

WEI  
*It's Hazel and Twig: a Birthday Fortune!*

All the children look up and GASP!

WEI (CONT'D)  
Storm the Forbidden City!

HUAN  
Let's go!

The children hold their weapons high, and CHEER as they follow Wei and Huan up the stairs to the front door.

As they reach the front door, it mysteriously opens! Behind it, is a smiling Mr. Li Jun.

The Students charge in and they SEE four long TABLES piled high with books. And books in boxes beneath the tables, each with a Student's name on it.

Mr. Li Jun bursts out laughing.

MR. LI JUN  
Come in. Come in.

The Students are stunned.



WEI  
What's going on?

HUAN  
Yes, what?

MR. LI JUN  
Your teacher and parents will be  
here any second. Ask them!

Mrs. Xu is the first to arrive. She RACES into the house and roars with LAUGHTER. We (the audience) finally see her smiling face!

MRS. XU  
My brilliant students finally  
solved the case of their missing  
books! Children, put down your  
swords, they are useless against  
knowledge!

Ma, Ba, and the other parents come racing in. Mr. (Officer) Yong limps in last. We SEE all of their faces!

MA  
Our little secret is out!

WEI AND HUAN  
Huh?

BA  
Mrs. Xu will explain.

MRS. XU  
Students, listen carefully. After  
reading your practice creative  
essays, I called all your parents.  
I suggested we revitalize your  
imagination.

ZHANG LI  
How, Mrs. Xu?

MRS. XU  
First, I asked the parents to quit  
reading bedtime stories.

WANG YONG  
That was rotten, Mrs. Xu.

MRS. XU  
(smiles)  
Yes, it was.

(MORE)

MRS. XU (CONT'D)  
Then, I asked the parents to  
"borrow" your bedtime storybooks.

WEI  
We couldn't sleep without our  
nighttime stories! That was  
especially rotten, Mrs. Xu.

MRS. XU  
(smiles)  
Yes, it was. Then, I asked Wang  
Yong's Ba, Officer Yong to do all  
the pretend investigating.

HUAN  
That was evil, Mr. Yong.

Officer Yong puts his head down, and chuckles.

MRS. XU  
Then I asked my father, Mr. Li Jun  
to you, if he'd store all the  
books, temporarily.

The Students GASP!

MRS. XU (CONT'D)  
Most of you are too young to  
remember that my kind, elderly  
father was a very respected  
Professor of Literature in his day!

The students turn to Mr. Li Jun, who LAUGHS heartily.

MR. LI JUN  
Dear students, all of your books  
are in the boxes, but you are  
welcome to take any of my books on  
tops of the tables.

MRS. XU  
Your real creative essay test will  
be administered Monday morning.

HUAN  
We can read a lot of books by then.

MRS. XU  
I hope your parents read to you,  
too.

The parents nod, 'yes.'

MA

Can't wait.

BA

Me either!

MRS. XU

More important, I would like you to have wonderful adventures this weekend. Build a fort, take a hike, camp in your backyard.

WANG YONG

Watch a movie?

MRS. XU

Don't just watch a movie, write your own.

MA

It might do us good to unplug our televisions, and put our cellphones in a drawer this weekend.

BA

And stay off our computers.

MRS. XU

Use your imaginations, they are the costumes for your minds.

MRS. YONG

That should be three bedtime stories, and three good night's sleep before your test on Monday.

MRS. XU

Okay, everyone, thank Mr. Li Jun for storing your books.

STUDENTS

Thanks, Mr. Li Jun.

MRS. XU

Students, be sure take those books home with you after our picnic. We have lunch waiting at the picnic tables behind the school. Let's go, everyone.

STUDENTS

Yes, Mrs. Xu.

MRS. XU

Ba, I hope you can join us at our picnic.

MR. LI JUN

(laughing)

Yes, Mrs. Xu.

The Students and Parents thank Mr. Li Jun and Mrs. Xu.

The parents help cart the books back to the school and the picnic. Ma, Ba, Wei, and Huan remain behind to talk to Mr. Li Jun, who turns to Wei and Huan.

MR. LI JUN (CONT'D)

You two figured it out. You should be very proud.

Wei and Huan smile.

WEI

Our imaginations got a little carried away.

MR. LI JUN

Your imagination can never get carried away; but it can carry you on endless adventures.

HUAN

But you called the Chengguan on us.

MR. LI JUN

I couldn't let you figure it out too soon. Some parents were behind schedule getting their children's books to me.

MA

And you needed a bit more time to appreciate their loss.

WEI

You mean, we had to miss the books more?

BA

Exactly. "You don't know what you got 'til it's gone," singer Joni Mitchell said.

MR. LI JUN

Before you go, children, I'd like to give you something.

From the top of the fireplace, Mr. Li Jun retrieves two very old brass door keys. He hands one each to Wei and Huan. They all look very carefully at the keys.

WEI AND HUAN

Thanks, Mr. Li Jun.

MA

Look, children, they have letters on them.

MR. LI JUN

These are very special keys.

WEI

What do they open?

MR. LI JUN

They open your creativity.

HUAN

He means, do they unlock anything?

MR. LI JUN

They unlock your imagination.

BA

What are the letters for?

Mr. Li Jun points at each letter.

MR. LI JUN

This part of a key is called the bow. It's the part you hold on to. The "B" is for "Beginning," the "M" is for "Middle."

He points to the shaft.

MR. LI JUN (CONT'D)

You need a long middle, like the shaft of a key.

(beat)

And the "E" forms the wards of the key, which open any lock.

BA

Beginning, middle, and end; the parts of every story!

MR. LI JUN

That's right! These are the keys to every story!

MA

Thank you, Mr. Li Jun. The children  
will cherish them forever!

Wei and Huan HUG Mr. Li Jun.

WEI

Thanks, Mr. Li Jun. We won't let  
anybody steal this story from us!

HUAN

Special thanks, Mr. Li Jun.

BA

We've got to get to that picnic!  
Mrs. Xu needs us there!

The all Laugh, and carry as many books as they can carry out.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

The picnic is in full swing, when Ba, Ma, Wei, Huan, and Mr. Li Jun arrive behind the school. The Students CHEER as they enter the picnic area. Five students finishing lunch, vacate their seats next to Mrs. Xu for the honored guests. Huan is clutching her key, while Wei clutches his key.

MRS. XU

Take a seat. Enjoy the picnic.  
Thanks, Ba. I hope my students  
didn't hurt your junkyard too much.

They grab some lunch.

MR. LI JUN

You mean our Old Ancient Secondhand  
Antique Emporium and Junkyard. I  
inherited most of those things from  
your Ma, and Grandma, and Great-  
Grandma!

MRS. XU

Ma collected junk? All these years,  
I thought it was you!

Mrs. Xu HUGS her Ba.

MR. LI JUN

She said everything on Earth had a  
story. She was determined to learn  
them. I agree with her!

Wang Yong stops by to pull Huan away from the table a little bit to whisper to her.

WANG YONG

Huan, what you did today was very brave. You're my hero.

HUAN

Thanks, Wang Yong.

WANG YONG

And my Ma and Ba know you're not a common criminal anymore.

HUAN

Good to know, Wang Yong.

WANG YONG

So if you want to keep going out, it's okay with me.

HUAN

Good to know, Wang Yong. I'm very young, so I'll think about it.

WANG YONG

Okay. Good.

Huan rejoins the table and Wang Yong politely stands behind her, listening in to the conversation. Then, Zhang Li taps Wei on the shoulder, and indicates with her index finger that she wishes to talk to him privately. Wei gets up and stands a few feet from the table where they whisper.

ZHANG LI

That was pretty cool what you did today.

WEI

Thanks, Zhang Li,

ZHANG LI

Any time you want to study your eleven and twelve multiplication tables, I could help.

WEI

Thanks, Zhang Li.

ZHANG LI

Look, it's common knowledge we're going out again.

WEI

Good to know, Zhang Li.

Wei smiles and rejoins the table. Zhang Li squeezes next to him on the picnic table. Wang Yong sees this, and sits at the very end of the table next to Huan. Moments later, Wang Yong falls off the seat. Huan ROLLS her eyes in delight, and extends an arm to help him up. Wang Yong SMILES.

MRS. XU

So, Ba, our family has been collecting antiques for five generations.

MR. LI JUN

I suppose we have.

WEI

What's all the scraping metal sounds we heard from the backyard?

MR. LI JUN

Scraping metal sounds?

HUAN

Like a metal elephant scraping against *The Nian Monster*.

MR. LI JUN

I haven't heard scraping metal sounds like that. But my hearing isn't so good these days.

MA

I've walked by several times. Perfectly quiet.

BA

Me, too.

MR. LI JUN

Bring your parents by and check it out sometime. Nobody's been in the backyard for twenty-five years.

MRS. XU

Ma would never let us go back there when we were children.

WEI

What's the big bright light up in the attic?



MR. LI JUN  
Big bright light?

HUAN  
Brighter than a full moon.

WEI  
Brighter than the illustrations in  
*Hazel and Twig: a Birthday Fortune*.

MA  
I've never noticed it.

BA  
Me either.

MR. LI JUN  
Must be coming from the attic.  
Nobody's been up there in fifty  
years!

MRS. XU  
Ma never let us go up there either!  
Maybe it's a light that goes on?

MR. LI JUN  
No electricity up there. Old house.

WEI  
Could be lots of cool junk, I mean  
antiques, up there.

HUAN  
Or buried treasure!

MR. LI JUN  
Buried treasure's more likely to be  
in the basement. Nobody's been down  
there in a hundred years.

MRS. XU  
(laughs)  
Ma never said anything about a  
basement!

HUAN  
Stories galore!

WEI  
Imagine the treasures! You might be  
rich, Mr. Li Jun.

MR. LI JUN

Only creativity can make you rich,  
and it can make you rich beyond  
your wildest dreams.

Wei and Huan STAND.

WEI AND HUAN

We've gotta go back, Mr. Li Jun!

MR. LI JUN

To my place? But why?

WEI

The bright light in the attic, the  
*Hazel and Twig: a Birthday Fortune!*

HUAN

We have to know what it is, and the  
steel scraping sounds in the  
backyard, or there's no "E" to our  
story.

WEI

We have to know what causes them!  
Huan's right. We need to know the  
end of our story.

MA

We've caused enough excitement for  
one day.

BA

How about just going home and  
resting?

Mr. Li Jun LOOKS at Wei and Huan. Wang Yong and Zhang Li look  
equally excited.

MR. LI JUN

These aren't the kind of children  
who give up easily!

The school bell RINGS.

MRS. XU

Schools over for the day, you're  
free to go!

WEI

Can we go, Ba and Ma?

BA

If Mr. Li Jun says it's okay.

MA

But we're coming too. In case there's spiders.

WANG YONG

I hate spiders.

HUAN

We'll protect you, Wang Yong.

ZHANG LI

I hate rats. Did I ever tell you about the bubonic plague?

WEI

We'll protect you, Zhang Li.

MR. LI JUN

Bring a flashlight! Meet at my place, at sundown!

HUAN

Sundown?

WEI

It will be dark then.

Wei GULPS.

MR. LI JUN

All great adventures begin at sundown!

(beat)

Besides, I have a doctor's appointment in an hour to get a tetanus booster shot.

Huan and Wei LOOK scared.

HUAN

Tetanus?

WEI

And dark?

EXT. OLDER NEIGHBORHOOD - SUNDOWN

Mr. Li Jun waits outside his wrought-iron fence, as Ma, Ba, Wei, Huan, Wang Yong and Zhang Li walk slowly up the sidewalk with flashlights lit.

MR. LI JUN  
Sundown! Great. I see you all have  
flashlights.

Mr. Li Jun lights an old-fashioned LANTERN. The children are  
a bit nervous.

HUAN  
Thanks for inviting us, Mr. Li Jun.  
How was your tetanus shot?

MR. LI JUN  
An ouch of prevention is worth a  
pound of cure.

WEI  
It's getting mighty dark.

MR. LI JUN  
Without the dark, we wouldn't  
appreciate the light.

WEI  
Will there be spiders in there?

MR. LI JUN  
I hope so, they eat a lot of  
disease-carrying smaller bugs!

ZHANG LI  
How about rats?

MR. LI JUN  
You know that our people lucky  
enough to be born in the Year of  
the Rat are said to have the highly  
desirable qualities of creativity,  
honesty, generosity and ambition?

ZHANG LI  
I knew that!

MR. LI JUN  
It's common knowledge.

Wei and Huan look at each other and chuckle.

MR. LI JUN (CONT'D)  
Let's begin our adventure, shall  
we? No one's going to get hurt, but  
a little danger is the spice of  
adventure!

MA

I agree, Mr. Li Jun.

BA

We'll watch them, too.

MR. LI JUN

Before it gets much darker, we should check out the scraping metal sounds in the backyard.

Mr. Li Jun opens the gate, and leads them through the junkyard to the side of the house. The children's flashlight beams bob nervously.

MR. LI JUN (CONT'D)

How are we doing do far?

WEI

Fine.

HUAN

Fine.

WANG YONG

Fine.

ZHANG LI

Creativity, honesty, generosity and ambition?

The wind SWIRLS, and they HEAR the scraping of metal in the backyard!

HUAN

What was that?

MR. LI JUN

Let's go find out!

They walk on. Mr. Li Jun's old lantern SWAYS in the wind.

MR. LI JUN (CONT'D)

Careful stepping over the antiques.

They walk on slowly and carefully with their flashlight beams pointed every direction.

They HEAR an owl HOOT, and the children's eyes open widely.

MR. LI JUN (CONT'D)

Just an owl. Keeps the mice population in check. Little bit further.

They reach the back of the house. Another GUST of wind comes up, and they HEAR the SCREECHING of steel.

WEI

*Cao Chong Weighs An Elephant?*

HUAN

*The Nian Monster?*

Their flashlights converge on the screeching. We SEE a tipped-over backyard windmill (four-meter tall), with blades SPINNING and SCRAPING against an old corrugated metal fence.

MR. LI JUN

Just our old windmill!

(beat)

Come on. Since you're all here.  
Help me stand her up so the noise  
doesn't bother the neighbors.

They make their way to the windmill. Mr. Li Jun sets his lantern down, and the others help him push and pull the heavy windmill upright. They grunt and smile.

WEI

We did it!

HUAN

Sure did!

The children CHEER!

MR. LI JUN

Let's head up to the attic to find  
your *Hazel and Twig: a Birthday  
Fortune!*

WEI

This is great!

MR. LI JUN

Watch your step. We'll go in  
through the back door.

HUAN

How come you're lights aren't on?

MR. LI JUN

(laughs)

Did I mention that we're on an  
adventure?

MA

Would have been too easy, I guess.

WANG YONG

Probably so I can't see all the spiders!

ZHANG LI

And so I can't see the all of the rats!

Mr. Li Jun guides them through and over piles of junk on the way to the back door. The flashlight beams SHINE in every direction. The old screen door CREAKS as it opens.

INT. MR. LI JUN'S OLD HOUSE - NIGHT

Mr. Li Jun leads the way with his old lantern.

MR. LI JUN

The doors to the attic are off of the kitchen. Never understood why.

ZHANG LI

Doors, plural?

MR. LI JUN

One at the bottom and one at the top. Never understood why.

BA

Maybe that's why you haven't been up there much.

MR. LI JUN

Not in fifty years.

MA

This should be exciting, huh, children?

They nervously respond with uh-huhs, as Mr. Li Jun comes to a heavy wooden door. He turns the knob and pulls.

MR. LI JUN

Locked. You children must have the keys. Gave 'em to you this afternoon.

Huan fumbles through her jeans' pockets.

HUAN

I found mine.

MR. LI JUN

Good. Open the door. I'll keep them  
unlocked from now on.

Everyone shines a light on the key in Huan's hand. She  
inserts the key and turns it. They HEAR a CLUNCK!

HUAN

It worked.

MR. LI JUN

Wei, your key must be for the top  
door. You go first. It's a narrow  
staircase as I recall.

Wei GULPS.

WEI

It's very dark, even with the  
flashlights.

MR. LI JUN

(laughs)  
I bet the old stairs creak, too.

Wei takes one step, and they all HEAR a loud CREAK.

WEI

They do creak!

BA

(laughs)  
Of course they do!

WEI

Lots of spider webs.

WANG YONG

Great!

MR. LI JUN

Probably holding the walls up!  
Let's go. Don't you want to see  
what's up there?!

They climb the stairs slowly.

WEI

(mumbles)  
Could we come back in the daytime?

MR. LI JUN

What kind of adventure is that?



They reach the top, and Wei pulls out his key. They all provide the light. They don't hear anything.

WEI

Uh oh.

MR. LI JUN

Turn the key the other way.

They HEAR the CLUNK. Mr. Li Jun pushes the door open. It CREAKS and SQUEAKS. We see an attic filled with boxes, crates, antiques, and more cobwebs.

MR. LI JUN (CONT'D)

I'd better go first and test the floor!

The wooden floor CREAKS. They all fight through the cobwebs following Mr. Li Jun.

MA

Look at all this things!

Mr. Li Jun STOPS, and looks down.

MR. LI JUN

Hey, look at this! It's my Ba's compound microscope. This is for Wang Yong.

WANG YONG

Me?

He hands the wooden box to Wang Yong, who opens it up to see an antique compound microscope.

WEI

Cool, Wang Yong.

WANG YONG

Thanks, Mr. Li Jun.

MR. LI JUN

Once you start examining insects and spiders under a compound scope, you gain an appreciation for biology, evolution, and bugs!

Zhang Li stops at a pile of children's board games.

ZHANG LI

What's this?

All the flashlights turn to the top game, "Mouse Trap."

MR. LI JUN

Wow! That's *Mouse Trap*, an antique American board game in the original 1963 box. Take it. It's yours. It may teach you that some rodents are fun! Change the name of it to *Rat Trap*!

Everyone LAUGHS.

HUAN

Where was that bright light coming from?

MR. LI JUN

Follow me. I have an idea.

Mr. Li Jun leads the group to a stand-up mirror by the window.

MR. LI JUN (CONT'D)

I bet this mirror reflects sunlight in the daytime. What do you think?

Wei and Huan sound disappointed.

WEI

Our *Hazel and Twig: a Birthday Fortune*?

HUAN

Yes.

Mr. Li Jun rummages through a stack of books beside the mirror, before he pulls out a thick, old leather-covered book, "*Don Quixote*."

MR. LI JUN

(excited)  
What's this?!

The flashlights turn to the old book.

WEI AND HUAN

What?

MR. LI JUN

Will you look at this?! It all makes perfectly good sense now! The treasure!

Now, Wei and Huan are excited.

WEI AND HUAN

What?!

MR. LI JUN

You children were all racing through the junkyard with your toy weapons reminded me of a certain Spanish knight errant who battled a windmill and dragons with a broken, old jousting pole!

Wei and Huan STARE at the old book. Mr. Li Jun opens the book to a line drawing of Don Quixote battling a windmill.

MA

*Don Quixote.*

WEI

We did battle the windmill in your backyard!

HUAN

And we were victorious!

WANG YONG

Sure were!

ZHANG LI

Without question!

BA

My favorite book of all time!  
Haven't read it since university.

MR. LI JUN

It's an early edition. Hundreds of years old! Worth a fortune, I would guess, but I want you two to have it.

BA

They couldn't possible accept...

MR. LI JUN

(interrupting)

Nonsense. You see, this was one of the first novels ever written, where a crazy old man wasn't afraid to see the world not as it is.

(beat)

But as it should be.

WEI

Like our brass keys that opened the doors, I bet the story has a beginning, middle, and end!

HUAN

That's the key to every story!

MR. LI JUN

His imagination runs wild! Many thought he was crazy. But he was the sanest of them all. Oh, it may be too much to read at your age, but my guess is, *Don Quixote* will become your best friend in time!

Then, Mr. Li Jun holds his lantern up to a string coming down from the ceiling. He pulls the string, and a light comes on!

Everyone LAUGHS.

HUAN

I thought you said there was no electricity in the attic?

MR. LI JUN

It would not have been such a fabulous adventure, if we made it too easy!

Everyone LAUGHS again.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The family sits around the table for dinner. We see all their faces. There are no cellphones anywhere to be seen. On the kitchen counter behind them, is the old book, *Don Quixote*.

HUAN

This is nice.

MA

We all learned a little something from Mrs. Xu and her Ba.

BA

We thought stealing and hiding the books was a silly idea, and that it wouldn't work.

WEI

Worked great, and we got our books back and more!

MA

You got your love of reading back.

HUAN

So, do we get a bedtime story tonight?

Ma reaches over and RUBS Huan's head, while Ba reaches over and RUBS Wei's head.

BA

What do you think?

MA

No one is too old for bedtime stories.

(beat)

Now, what are some exciting adventures we can plan for this weekend?

WEI

We can build a fort in the backyard.

HUAN

Camp out under the stars!

WEI

We can storm Mr. Li Jun's junkyard and attic some more.

MA

Wait, wait, wait.

WEI

And bring him homemade cookies.

BA

Let's have him over for dinner. I bet he's a great storyteller.

HUAN

We gotta build a campfire in the backyard, and tell ghost stories until all the stars come out.

WEI

We can invite Wang Yong and Zhang Li. This will be great!

HUAN

So great!

ROLL CREDITS

BEGIN MONTAGE

We see the same set of photos of bedrooms around the world (as in the opening montage; China, the U.S.A., Europe, Africa, South America) with ten-year-old children in pajamas (or culturally appropriate night clothes) playing with toys, video games, or watching television in their rooms, as their parents knock and enter their rooms holding a bedtime storybook in their hands.

FEMALE TEENAGER (V.O.)

You are never too old for a bedtime story!

MALE TEENAGER (V.O.)

Never!

END MONTAGE

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

We see the Students taking their creative writing exams filling page after page with great stories. We SEE all of Mrs. Xu as she SMILES and walks up and down the aisles. Wei and Huan have their BRASS KEYS on their desks. They have HUGE smiles as they write "The End" at the end of their very long stories.

FADE OUT.

THE END