

When her time came, Hu-Chi drove her to the hospital.

There the nurses took charge; but Hu-Chi stayed by Sandy's side.

The screams of a mother giving birth astonished him.

They were sounds that were to remain with him all his life.

That such pain could produce such beauty.

The boy born to them was beautiful, he thought.

The miracle was here.

All else fell away.

Distress stepped aside.

Sandy smiled in joy.

The boy slept in bliss.

A week later,

they all three returned home a new family.

## CRISIS: STEP 6

Since his vision of the Light, a change had come over Larry.

He was no longer so elated.

He felt nervous, as if stalked by shadows of the mind.

He still meditated on the beauty of his paradise.

The colours, the sounds, the shapes of the mountains,

the blue of the skies, the greens of the forests below, all kept him positive and happy, but always there was a haunting.

When would he be able to go home?

And home was England.

He had been yearning to return for some time

Of course, it was all pre-arranged.

The twelve months were nearly up.  
Sandy would come, he felt sure of that.  
Or at least, Hu-Chi, and the exchange could be  
made back again.

And yet, he did not want to finish before he knew.  
He had to wait and to concentrate.  
Days and nights passed.  
And still he felt he had not won his battle.  
He did not know the exact days, but he realised  
that there were not many more before he had to go back  
to the village for the final wait.

He did not like pressurising himself.  
He felt that this would thwart him.  
He decided to leave his cave for a few nights.  
He thought to climb a little higher, and find a  
place  
where he could stay outside, under the stars.

He walked to a level of ledges and peaks.

There did not seem to be anything in these  
reaches.

No birds.

No animals.

No flowers.

No trees, bushes

Nothing but himself.

The afternoon passed tranquilly.

Then, as he watched the sun go down in a blaze of gold  
and red, he felt a breeze.

But it wasn't a breeze such as disturbs grass and  
so forth,

but more a presence, a caress.

The breeze separated itself, and formed sounds,  
and eventually words began to become clear.

Words that Larry could hear and understand.

Words: You have been selfish to leave everything  
and come here.

Suffer and perish.

Larry: Go away.

I will not listen.

Words: You will.

All your life, you have, without thought of  
others, sought me, and so I come to you,  
even though you are undeserving.

Larry: I was happy until you spoke.

Be silent.

Words: Now I have spoken,

I will not cease until  
you have heard all, and understood all.

Larry: Listening to you will drive me crazy.

Words: You have been crazy for a long time.  
Crazy to stay in China, crazy to leave all  
you love.

Larry: I didn't feel I was loved.

I was made to feel rejected.

By people who in themselves were  
nobody.

I used to think that's why they hated me,  
because they hated their nothingness.

I hated my nothingness.

That's why I came here, to see if I could  
find something that made me something.

Words: And have you?

Larry: I don't know.

Words: No, of course you don't know. That's  
because you are blind and deaf to yourself.  
You are too stupid and selfish.

Larry: Stop it. I'm no more selfish than anyone  
else.

We are all trapped in our own selfish  
minds,  
straining from birth to escape our prison.

Words: Prison. You have put yourself there.

Larry: Shut up. Leave me alone.

Words: Oh, I have left you alone.  
You were nothing till I came.

Larry: You? I don't know you.  
I can guess though.

Words: Can you? Who am I then?

Larry: I expect you're the Devil,  
come to tempt me,  
like you did Christ in the wilderness.

Words: Aha! Always you think I am the Devil.  
Nonsense.

Larry: Then some angel.

Words: Angels. So old-fashioned.  
But then I've noticed  
you are a very stiff, old-fashioned sort of  
person.  
I shall leave you to think over my  
identity.

Larry: I shan't give it much thought.

The air stilled and silence returned.

Larry caught his breath and wept.

He hadn't felt so sad since making his decision to stay by  
the Shendong river.

Was he selfish he asked himself?

He concluded he was.

Did it matter?

After all, it was his life he had to get through, as best he  
could.

Nobody cared for him.

Nobody but Sandy.

Alone in the world, in the universe.

Oh, what agony.

Why had anybody ever had him?

He was nobody, nothing, nowhere.

Servants of God we may be,  
automatically doing His bidding,  
but it has to stop,  
because he, Larry Languid,  
cannot take any more,

cannot do any more,  
release me , Lord,  
all is nothing  
all is nowhere  
all are nobody  
the mountains, the rivers,  
the earth, the skies,  
cry of oblivion

in the deep pools of darkest space  
I have not seen a pair of eyes  
deceptive portals  
I do not wish to see anyone anymore  
release  
relief  
take me, where are you?

The breeze stirred again.

Words:            You are answered.

Come with me, and forget all.

Larry: I don't like you. I don't know who you are.

Words: Don't you?

Larry: No. If you aren't going to tell me,  
go away.

Words: Why, Larry, I am Death.

Larry: Then it's all over.  
I shall end my life on this  
mountain top.

Death: Don't you want to fight me?

Larry: No. I have never fought.

Death: No. That is your mystery.

Ah Larry, tonight we shall sing and dance  
of life and death.

The greatest lovers ever.

Leave off your Troiluses,  
your Romeos,  
your Tristans,

pah, they are nothing to us:

the twin players  
that are life and death.  
Don't you know the joy of heaven in our  
mating?  
I thought you at least had by now seen the  
brilliance of the stars and the skies.  
The Creator's handiwork.  
No doubt you have, but then that's you,  
man,  
feeble man,  
ever filling yourself with doubt.

You look amazed  
So you should  
Soul and self: that's you Larry.  
Pondering yourself in nature.  
And why not?  
Be miserable if you want.

Larry:           You don't disturb me from my course.

Death: Oh, don't I?  
And what course is that?

Larry: The course of truth.

Death: You have no idea of truth.  
It's just a word to you,  
a word rather like death.

Larry: I do not wish to die with you tonight.

Death: I know.

Larry: I want to go home.

Death: I know that too.  
And are you ready?

Larry: I'm not sure.

Death: Let me make you sure.

Death wraps a large black cloak around Larry,  
and seems  
to whisk him up into the sky.

## PREPARING TO LEAVE

Almost two months had passed since the birth, and it was really time for one of them, if not both, Hu-Chi and Sandy, to return to China to collect Larry.

Hu-Chi: I think it is better if I go on my own.  
You are not fit, and the baby cannot be left with anyone.  
I can come back another day.

Sandy: I hope you will want to.

Hu-Chi: Larry will be waiting.

Sandy: If he is still alive.  
Sometimes I wonder.

Hu-Chi:           Whether he is or not, I must go.  
                      I want to go.

So Hu-Chi said goodbye, and made the journey back home.

He was sad at leaving Sandy and their son, but some things just have to be.

He thought he might re-establish himself in his village, and start a new family with some village girl. He decided he rather liked children. He might surround himself with them.

He would have to tell Larry about the boy.

## CRISIS: STEP 7

The song and dance of life and death:  
the greatest of all lovers.

Larry had been back in his hut for several weeks.  
He knew Hu-Chi would arrive soon, but not exactly  
when.

The boys from the village had come to see him, as soon  
as they knew he was back.

They sang songs to him.

Their mothers brought him food, and in fact quite a  
festive party took place that night.

Larry was recovering from it the next day when he went  
down to the river, and for the first time in ages, he looked  
at his own reflection.

Larry:           Pain on every face.

Movement, the revealing miracle.

He splashed the water to rid it of his image.

He could see the stones on the river bed.

Paradise, that's what this place is.

And now am I ready to return to the conflict, and drudge  
of my own old world?

Those weeks passed, with Larry preparing for that return.

One afternoon, Hu-Chi arrived.

He stood in the doorway.

Larry was seated in a corner.

Hu-Chi:           The boat leaves soon.

                          Are you going on it?

## **I n c o n l u s i o n**

The gigantic bird of steel flew over the North China mountains on its way back to Britain.

A man in Western casual clothes sat by the window.

Another identical man sat in a garden surrounded by a stone wall.

The hut was on the hillside rising above the Shendong river.

THE END

postscript:

so who returned

to the western world

who was on the aeroplane

Hu-Chi

or

Larry Languid

