

Liu Xiaobo
by Akin Jeje

A colossal wave of righteousness rises out of the prize,
 cleansing dank cells of whippings and starvation.
 Today it is an enormous swell on a bright, raging ocean,
 Heaving swaying, crashing against a great wall resistant to motion,

It rises,
 Like the dawn that shone on the face of Mandela amidst the shattered stones on Robben Island,
 It pierces a harsh white beam through the gloaming, a frozen Gorky evening,
 On the shadow of Andrei Sakharov that lies over
 Chessboards state that stalemate is the only solution between absolution and nuclear annihilation,

It blooms a lotus of light, on the serene features of Liu Xia in a Forbidden City,
 Which she views with its openness of air and sky through a single window.

It explodes, like the momentous clash and clang of cheers and jubilation,
 In cadence with chisels, hammers and sickles the day the Berlin Wall was felled,

It genuflects and weeps, fluidly, lucidly, for the thousands who never made it off the ground on June 4th,
 1989, as he does, thin and frail in a Jinzhou Jail, three hundred miles to the north of the reddened Square.

His grief, her grief, their grief, others' sorrows stream
 Into a force that cascades, resurges as a torrent that passes through barbed wire, bars, and blockades,
 firewalls, stonewalls, and furious tirades,

It swirls and splashes against barriers that break waves, barriers that strain, as oceans smash against fragile
 shores.

Today is one that an Empire deplores.
 The crest of a perilous era is to be ignored,
 As if nature could be restrained by human dictates,
 As if the *monumentum* of freedom could be diminished by potentates.

An excerpt of Liu Xiaobo's Final Statement in Swahili

Kama wanaweza kuwa na ruhusa ya kusema hivyo, na uzoefu wa bahati ya miaka ishirini iliyopita imekuwa ya upendo ubinafsi mimi nilipokea kutoka kwa mke wangu, Liu Xia.

Yeye hakuweza kuwa sasa kama mtazamaji katika mahakama ya leo, lakini mimi bado nataka kusema na wewe, mpenzi wangu, kwamba mimi imara kuamini upendo wako kwa ajili yangu kubakia sawa kama ina daima.

Katika miaka yote kwamba mimi kuwa aliishi bila ya uhuru, upendo wetu kamili ya uchungu yanayotolewa na mazingira ya nje, lakini kama mimi ladha hayana radha nzuri wake, inabakia kutokuwa na mwisho. Mimi ni kutumikia adhabu yangu ndani ya gereza yanayoonekana, wakati kusubiri katika gereza zisizogusika ya moyo.

Upendo wako ni wa jua kwamba warukao juu ya kuta na hupenya baa ya chuma ya gereza dirisha yangu, kusugua kila inchi ya ngozi yangu, joto kila chembechembe ya mwili yangu, kuruhusu mimi daima kuweka amani, uwazi, na mwangaza katika moyo wangu, na kujaza kila dakika ya muda wangu gerezani na maana.

Upendo wangu kwa ajili yenu, kwa upande mwingine, ni hivyo kamili ya majuto na majuto kwamba mara kwa mara hufanya mimi mashaka chini ya uzito wake. Mimi ni jiwe simameni imara katika jangwa, kuchapwa na upepo mkali na mvua kabisa, hivyo baridi kwamba hakuna huthubutu siku moja kuwasiliana nami.

Lakini upendo wangu ni imara na mkali, uwezo wa kutoboa njia ya kikwazo chochote. Hata kama walikuwa aliwaangamiza katika poda, bado napenda kutumia majivu yangu na kukumbatia wewe.

English translation

If I may be permitted to say so, the most fortunate experience of these past twenty years has been the selfless love I have received from my wife, Liu Xia.

She could not be present as an observer in court today, but I still want to say to you, my dear, that I firmly believe your love for me will remain the same as it has always been. Throughout all these years that I have lived without freedom, our love was full of bitterness imposed by outside circumstances, but as I savor its aftertaste, it remains boundless.

I am serving my sentence in a tangible prison, while you wait in the intangible prison of the heart. Your love is the sunlight that leaps over high walls and penetrates the iron bars of my prison window, stroking every inch of my skin, warming every cell of my body, allowing me to always keep peace, openness, and brightness in my heart, and filling every minute of my time in prison with meaning.

My love for you, on the other hand, is so full of remorse and regret that it at times makes me stagger under its weight. I am an insensate stone in the wilderness, whipped by fierce wind and torrential rain, so cold that no one dares touch me.

But my love is solid and sharp, capable of piercing through any obstacle. Even if I were crushed into powder, I would still use my ashes to embrace you.