

**ROBERT KIRKMAN'S**  
**THE WALKING**  
**DEAD**  
**TYPHOON**

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A Novel

**WESLEY CHU**



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# 1



## THE NEW WORLD

**F**rom a distance, Fongyuan village appeared to exist outside of time. Nestled in the lover's embrace of the Yuanjiang River in the heart of Hunan province, it was an ancient and beautiful place that held tightly to its storied past and fought bitterly against the ravages of change. Lush mountains rose above the morning mists, like spines on a dragon's back. A dance of stark white cranes stood on its bank, impassively scanning the water for small prey. The muddled algae-ridden river, wide and meandering, curved through the valley like a spotted mountain viper.

The village was a collection of densely stacked old structures dat-

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ing back to the Song dynasty, along with the occasional multistory twentieth-century apartment building, all capped by traditional curved roofs and flying corners. Several buildings on both sides of the river jutted over the water on stilts, reminiscent of the cranes wading in the shallows. A waterfall cut through the mountains in the distance, feeding a narrow stream that meandered to join the Yuanjiang. Apart from the overgrown flora, burned-out car husks, and the occasional topped structure, the village looked idyllic.

Over the centuries, Fongyuan had withstood famine, foreign invaders, and civil unrest. It had fought bitterly against the Japanese during the Second World War and served as a stronghold to revolutionaries during the ensuing Chinese Civil War. Every time destruction had come for Fongyuan, the village had persisted, rebuilding itself dozens of times over thousands of years.

What it could not survive, however, was the dead rising from their graves.

Out of the mist, two figures ambled onto a stone road at the edge of the village, their movements stilted and clipped. They bumped into one another as they walked, as if deep in a drunken conversation.

Chen Wenzhu leaned over the edge of the roof and studied the pair impatiently as they passed underneath his perch. They looked worn, skin flayed to the bones, probably victims from the first days. The lucky ones.

The first figure, gaunt and slightly stooped, swayed down the rough, steep cobbled path, shoulder deflecting off a wall before careening into the middle of the street. She was missing her arm from the elbow down. Half of her jaw was exposed under a thin layer of loose

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flesh that gently quivered in the wind. Her dress, once an ankle-length floral cascade of vibrant pink, was now tattered, faded, and stained dark with blood and viscera.

The pair were unusual in that the smaller one followed closely behind the taller one and was holding her hand. Shirtless and barefoot, it looked like a little boy who couldn't have been more than five or six. He had an untouched, angelic face and black hair in a bowl cut. He could have almost passed for living if it were not for the distant look in his eyes and the ugly gash in his neck.

The two *jiāngshī*, as they were now called, were doomed to walk the world forever in this undead existence until someone pitied them with a second death. A final death.

Jiāngshī.

Zhu clicked his tongue at that name. That was what everyone called the dead-who-refused-to-stay-dead. It was an old name, one shrouded in folklore that dated back as far as the Qing dynasty. The *jiāngshī* of legend were corpses reanimated by magic or spirits. They were terrible creatures who fed on *qi*, or the life force of a person.

The dead that rose now, these things that plagued the land, were something else entirely, and their reality was much, much worse than their namesake.

Ming Haobo, crouching next to Zhu, wondered aloud. "What do you think, Elena? Mother and child? Teacher and student? Two strangers who found each other when the outbreak swept the village?"

The third person on their wind team, Elena Anderson, made a muffled sound suspiciously like a coo. "I think it's a grandma. She

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looks like an Agatha or a Maribelle. That little boy's name is Bobby. Little Bobby came to visit Grandma Maribelle out here in the countryside."

"Maribelle probably baked cookies and mooncakes for Bobby." Bo stumbled a bit on the English names, but Elena grinned at his effort. Who knows, one day his English could be better than her Mandarin.

"You always go straight to food, Bo."

Bo shrugged. "Every time I visited my *nāinai*, all I did was eat well."

Elena nudged him in his generous midsection. "That explains so much." They watched as Maribelle led Bobby to a staircase jutting out of a house. She bumped up against its side and continued to walk in place. Elena sounded wistful. "Maribelle probably took Bobby on long strolls through the village."

Bo played along. "They flew kites and caught dragonflies at the playground a few blocks back."

"They go fishing down at the stream every morning."

Bo pointed at a third *jiāngshī* farther back that had just turned onto the street. "Maybe that one behind them is the grandfather. What do you think his name is?"

Elena pursed her lips. "He looks like a—"

"That's enough," interrupted Zhu. "We're losing light." Although he tolerated anything that would take their mind off reality, he didn't approve of this game. Giving names to the dead made their job much harder than it needed to be. Besides, all this mucking around was going to get someone killed.



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Zhu pointed to the smaller jiāngshī. “Elena, shoot the one on the left. I’ll take the one on the right.” He looked over at the third jiāngshī. “Bo, take out the yéye.”

Elena and Bo got to work. Bo crept down the length of the curved roof toward his assigned jiāngshī while Elena drew her bow. All three dropped down from the roofs at the same time. Elena took a moment to find her balance, favoring one leg as she rose to her feet. The street was slanted and the cobblestones uneven. Zhu didn’t wait for her as he rushed the pair.

He was about to bury his machete in Maribelle’s neck when an arrow streaked over his shoulder and punched into her skull. Maribelle dropped like a sack of bones as the undeath left her. Zhu changed targets quickly and brought his blade around to the smaller figure, lopping poor little Bobby’s head off in one fluid motion.

He shot Elena an annoyed look and slapped his right arm. “This is right.”

“Sorry,” she muttered, lowering her bow. “I got them confused again.”

Zhu nodded, but wondered if that were really true. More likely she didn’t want to shoot the little boy; Elena was sensitive like that. Understandable, but developing empathy for things you had to kill was dangerous. It was a lesson he learned early in his childhood when he used to name the family chickens. The day his yéye grabbed two of his favorite hens and wrung their necks before taking them into the kitchen was one of the most traumatic of his life.

Zhu gave her the benefit of the doubt. “We’ll review again later. How’s your leg?”

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“I rolled my ankle. I’ll be fine.”

He glanced back just in time to see Bo’s sledgehammer explode the last jiāngshī’s head like a melon, splattering flesh and bone against the back wall. The big man immediately pulled out a rag and carefully wiped his hammer clean.

Bo rejoined them a moment later and glanced down at their handiwork. He looked crestfallen. “I hope you’re eating mooncakes in heaven, little Bobby.”

The wind team hurried off the main road and sprinted down the winding side street. Zhu kept an eye on Elena as she tried to keep up with her injured leg. Stones cut from all different shapes and sizes, mashed together like a giant puzzle, and worn down after centuries of use, made the path rough and uneven. The single-story buildings that lined both sides were built from a patchwork of wood, stone, and concrete blocks, each layer of materials a time stamp of its era. The roofs above each building hung low and stretched out over the street, covering the sky, save for a narrow strip down the center.

As they continued moving, weaving, and pushing past small clusters of jiāngshī, Zhu searched for another opportunity to get back to higher ground. It was never safe to stay on the ground in a village for more than a few seconds. Besides, they were a wind team; up above was where they belonged, moving silently and safely like the gusts whistling overhead. Fortunately, they were still at the outskirts, or else the jump down from the roofs would have been suicide. The shadows from the setting sun were growing longer. They had to find shelter soon.

The street itself was surprisingly clean and empty, considering it

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likely had not been swept or maintained in many months. This was likely due to the start of the rainy season that had drenched most of the province the past couple weeks. A light breeze was blowing in from the north, kicking up swirls of mist and tickling the hairs on the back of Zhu's neck. The wind carried with it faint traces of rot but also the freshness of spring and the minute promise of new life.

Zhu signaled for his team to stay close. They sped halfway down the street before turning into a narrow alley barely two body-widths across. A jiāngshī with its back to him turned and extended its arm. It just managed to growl before he kicked it in the chest, sending it toppling over a pile of refuse. Zhu's machete stabbed into its eye socket, and he continued down the alley without slowing. He made a left, then a right, and then stopped at yet another intersection to get his bearings and to check if his team was still behind him. Elena was only a step behind, and Bo pulled up a few seconds later, puffing heavily.

"It's nearly dark," she said, her eyes darting across each possible path. "Are you sure you know where we're going?"

One street had a barricade of crates and an overturned ox cart. Before it was a cluster of jiāngshī huddled around a pile of garbage. That left only one way to go, except it would lead them in the wrong direction. Unless . . .

Bo stared at that group uneasily. "Which way, *xiǎodi*?" Calling him little brother wasn't exactly an accurate term of endearment. Bo was actually almost old enough to be Zhu's father.

"We're almost there." That was a small lie. Zhu wasn't sure. Much had changed over the years and nothing looked familiar any-

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more, especially after the world had fallen apart. His chest clenched. He shouldn't have come here.

They hurried down the only way available to them, giving the rest of his team no other option but to follow. They were halfway down the street when he found what he was looking for. He tossed his machete onto the tin awning of a chicken coop, and pulled himself up. Elena and Bo followed on his heels.

“Watch your step.” He glanced around the edge of the coop where the roof supports sat. Who knew how many jiāngshī were inside the buildings beneath their feet. The three navigated the ancient maze of high and low roofs before finally dropping down to an enclosed courtyard where two jiāngshī were stuck in a muddy koi pond. They raised their arms at the sight of people, but were otherwise not a threat. The team scaled the opposite wall and tightrope walked gingerly along the perimeter until they reached the second-story balcony of the adjacent building. A short jump later, they entered what appeared to be an abandoned apartment building.

Zhu shed his duffel and sniffed. The air had no trace of rot, thankfully, but he wavered at the doorway as a wave of familiar memories and nostalgia washed over him. “We should be able to rest here.” They were fortunate to have a roof over their heads tonight. He wasn't sure they would make it by sundown. The village was only a half day's journey from the farthest yellow flag, but it had taken his wind team two days to navigate a safe route through this uncharted region.

The sparse living room had a couch on one end, a tube television in the corner, and a broken rocking chair. Even after all these months, the elements had not found a way to invade this building. The place

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looked neat, tidy even, save for the thick layer of dust. Just like he remembered. Old memories flooded Zhu's head: the familiar smell of his nǎinai's hotpot, the long nights the family spent together watching fireflies light up the night sky, spending an evening with his sister in the living room taking apart the kite so they could make bows and arrows from the frame. Bo hit a little too close to home earlier when he was chatting with Elena.

This used to be his grandparents' home. His parents actually lived in the apartment downstairs, but any place on the ground level was far too dangerous to investigate. The last time he was here, the apartment was overflowing with four generations of the family Chen. Now, as far as he knew, he was the only one left. Zhu had no idea what happened to any of them. His great-grandmother must have perished early on. She was to be ninety-nine this year. As for his parents, grandparents, and sister, Zhu lost contact with them shortly after the power grid and phone lines went down. He had not heard from them since.

The place now looked peaceful and empty: empty of death, of jiāngshī, of violence. For that he was glad. He had steeled himself in preparing for the worst. Zhu turned away from his team and squeezed his eyes shut, murmuring a goodbye to his family and apologizing for not being here when they needed him. He should have been a better son and returned home as soon as he realized that the government was losing control of the outbreak. He should have taken the first bus back to the village when the infection spread. He should have walked when the buses and trains stopped running. But he didn't. Now the only thing he could do was finally put his past to rest and move on. He had no other choice.

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The final days before the country fell were filled with confusion and chaos. The Ministry of Health's last report had warned that there could already be seven hundred million jiāngshī. That meant over half of China's population had perished within the first few weeks of the outbreak. That number could only be higher now, six months later.

At the time, the government had assured its people that everything was under control. Everything would be well again! The people would overcome, the dead would be cleared, and the survivors would rebuild! China would survive as it always had, on the strength and determination of her people!

They trumpeted that message all the way up to the final moments, when Beijing suddenly went quiet. Panic spread to the rest of the body once the head became silent. Many of the local governments collapsed. Outside of large cities, the roads were the most dangerous places to be in China. People from the cities tried to flee to the countryside to get away from the rivers of dead, and those from the villages tried to flee to the cities where they thought the government could protect them. The result was that travel ground to a halt in every direction. Anywhere people congregated and sought refuge, death soon took up residence. The outbreak found an abundance of carriers, spreading to every corner of the Land Under Heaven.

Elena, picking through the drawers and cabinets, put her hands to her hips. "How did you know about this place, Zhu?"

There were definitely places with easier access and better amenities in which to hole up for the night, but Zhu would rather not get into that right now. He did not want to spend the rest of the night talking with his team about his past. The guilt was still fresh and the

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pain raw. Besides, they had a job to do. But as long as he was coming back to his Fongyuan, Zhu knew he would regret it if he didn't at least stop by his family's home one last time. This could be his last chance. "It's just an abandoned apartment." He pointed at a stove tucked in the corner. "Get a fire started. Bo, check the kitchen. I'll search the rooms."

Zhu wandered down the hallway clutching his machete. If there were jiāngshī in here, they should have heard it by now. They definitely would have smelled it by now. One couldn't be too certain, or careful, however.

His grandparents' bedroom was bare except for a large traditional stone bed and wooden dresser. All the drawers were opened and empty. The opposite wall with one window was decorated with several portraits of his nǎinai and yéye that spanned from their teenage years into when they were both gray, wrinkly, and stooped over. The largest picture on the wall displayed his extended family, which easily numbered into the fifties. If Zhu looked carefully, he could just see the upper half of his teenage head on the far right, right next to the blotted-out face of his cousin's ex-husband. Nǎinai was merciless when it came to family.

On a small table in the corner was a shrine to the Buddha with spent incense sticks still resting in cups. A *xiàngqí* board sat on a small bench next to the bed, its pieces set up and ready for a chess game that would never happen.

Zhu picked up one of the pieces—the elephant—and noted its worn edges and many scratches, no doubt from all the times he had hurled it angrily to the ground in frustration. He was a sore loser

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when he was young, and his yéye was merciless, even to an eight-year-old boy. Zhu tapped the piece on the board before placing it back exactly where he had found it. Maybe someone else would find it and put the game to good use. It just wouldn't be him. Games, while highly sought after at the Beacon, were given low points as scavenge. Besides, he couldn't bear thinking of someone else playing his grandfather's xiàngqí set.

The next room had two small beds with the headboards meeting in the corner. One was perfectly made. The other was a mess. On the near side were two desks lined up side-by-side. Zhu stood at the doorway for several seconds. This was where he and Ahui lived. Their parents' place downstairs was only a one bedroom, and they worked all the time, so he and Ahui spent most of their childhood here. He walked over to the messy bed and sat down, taking everything in.

This room looked much smaller and more cramped than he remembered. He glanced at where the two beds touched. He and Ahui would stay up late, whispering to each other for hours at night until their yéye would barge in and threaten to make them kneel in opposite corners for the entire night.

When they were little, Ahui used to steal ramen packs from their mother's convenience store. During their afternoon naps, she would stay up and suck on the pepper packs. That went on for an entire summer until nǎinai discovered a mound of opened ramen packages with the noodles discarded under her bed. Of course, being the older brother, Zhu never gave her up and took the blame. To this day he couldn't recall a time when he was switched that badly.

That was when he noticed it.



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Zhu got up and walked to the desk closest to the window. He pushed aside the dusty notebooks and manual pencil sharpener and pulled down a discolored photo taped to the wall. It was a picture of a scrawny twelve-year-old boy wearing a stupid grin flanked by two girls, both slightly younger. All three were in school uniforms. The boy and one of the girls could have passed for twins. The other girl had a thin oval face and large striking eyes. She would have been pretty if it weren't for that crooked smile. Perhaps, Zhu considered, she was pretty in spite of it.

It didn't matter. These were ghosts living only in the past. The only thing that mattered now was moving forward. On the back of the photo was an inscription in black marker: *Ahui and Meili and annoying brother. Primary school graduation. Age 10.*

Zhu flipped the photo back to the desk and left the room. A part of him thought he should take the photo with him. It was the only picture he had of his sister. Another, more urgent part of him couldn't handle the guilt that rose up and gnawed at him every time he looked at it, so he left it where it belonged. In the past. He felt the tears coming, then, and rose to open the bathroom door.

Instantly, his nose was hit with the strong odor of death. Without a sound, a nearly skeletal figure toppled out onto him from the dark. It wrapped both hands around his arm holding the doorknob and nearly tore a piece out. Taken completely by surprise, Zhu fumbled for his machete, lost his balance, and flailed backward. Whoever it was in its life had already been old before it died.

He threw a punch on instinct and knocked it down, sending it tumbling into a heap on the floor. Zhu shook his bruised hand as he

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picked up his machete. Punching bone was not pleasant. Annoyed, he stomped over to the fallen jiāngshī and kicked aside the arm reaching for him. He reached for his machete . . . but hesitated.

For a moment, recognition stayed his hand. Was it the narrow eyes or the tattered braided hair or the glints of gold in the teeth? Something he couldn't quite get his mind around. Before his head could play any more tricks on him, he drew his machete and brought it down hard on the jiāngshī's head, splitting its skull nearly in two. A moan escaped his lips as cold realization, mixed with guilt and fury, took over. Zhu brought his machete up and hacked at the jiāngshī several more times until it was completely still.

The mixture of adrenaline and rage finally left his body, and he deflated. A chill passed through him as he stared at the withered and emaciated corpse, pathetic even by jiāngshī standards. There was no mistaking who this was. His ninety-nine-year-old grandmother, abandoned and left alone to die. Her final moments must have been terrible. That thought ate Zhu up inside. It must have been a difficult choice for his family to make. He had no right to be angry or to judge them, however. He hadn't been there. Maybe things would have been different if he had. Maybe he could have saved them. Maybe everyone would still be alive if it weren't for his absence. A choked hiss escaped Zhu's lips, and he stormed out of the bathroom and back into the living room.

By now, a small fire was burning in the stove, and a glow of warmth pushed back the damp air. Elena, nurturing it, looked up, puzzled. "Everything all right?"

He did his best to mask the welling in his eyes. "I need some fresh air."

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“Hey xiǎodì,” said Bo excitedly, brandishing a half-empty Styrofoam tray of black oval objects, as if he had found gold. “I found hundred-year-old eggs. We’re going to feast tonight.”

Zhu didn’t reply as he stepped onto the balcony overlooking the Yuanjiang.

“Something I said?” asked Bo.

Zhu leaned over the balcony and watched the shore on the other side. The smell of fish and algae and dank rot filled his nostrils. A bloated corpse floated past a family of geese. Shortly after, another corpse floated by and then a dozen more, followed by a clutter of debris. He paid the ghastly image barely more than a thought. Probably a capsized boat. Sights like this downstream along the rivers weren’t uncommon.

Elena joined him on the balcony a few seconds later. Her arm looped around his waist, and she leaned into him. “Hey, is everything all right? You’ve been twitchy all day.”

Zhu pulled her close and inhaled. She smelled like someone who had been wandering in the wilderness through mud and garbage for weeks, which was a given. It was a combination of sweat and dirt and something that honestly smelled a little like feces. But below all that, Zhu smelled her. It was wonderful. He gave her a small squeeze. “I’m just a worried about going so deep into an urban area.”

“First rule you taught me about survival,” she reminded him. “Stay away from population centers. I’m kind of surprised you came up with this plan.”

“We had no choice,” he replied. “We haven’t hit quota in weeks. We need a good scavenge.”

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“But all the way out here? How do you even know about this pot at the end of the rainbow?”

Zhu wasn't sure what that meant; Elena's American vernacular didn't always translate well in Mandarin. It was part of her charm. He sniffed the air. “Something smells like rotten eggs.”

“Bo smashed a shelf for firewood that was coated with tar. We're cooking dinner now,” she replied. “That stove is ancient. It looks like it came from the Ming dynasty.”

He sighed. “What else is for dinner?”

Elena took on a haughty British accent that could pass for bad mix of Singaporean and American cowboy. “Today's appetizer is stale water in a flask with a squirt of chlorine flavoring. The main course is peanut sticky rice wrapped in dried banana leaves. Dessert is a can of durian that you and Bo can share between the two of you.” She paused. “We also have those hideous egg things Bo found.”

Zhu made a face. “This menu is terrible. I want to talk to the manager.”

“Of course, sir. You can lodge a complaint here.” She gave him the middle finger, then switched to her pinky, which was the Chinese way, and then broke into a grin. “Seriously, though—if we're going to finally hit quota, the first thing I want to do with the points is get real fruit.”

“Durian is real fruit.”

“We can agree to disagree.” She pointed at the horizon. “There's a fog rolling in. If it's still here tomorrow, we're going to be trapped in this village. We definitely shouldn't be exploring in the middle of it.”

“It'll be gone by morning.”

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“How are you sure?”

“It will,” replied Zhu confidently. He craned his head and looked back into the room. “What’s Bo doing inside?”

“Reading his books.”

Bo was the only one on the team who had been too poor to own any electronic devices prior to the collapse. Zhu carried a point-and-shoot camera and small MP3 player loaded with music, while Elena had a everything: a camera, phone, MP3 player, and one of those fancy portable DVD players as well. All Bo had were books. On the one hand, that was fine, because he never had to pay the points to charge his entertainment, but it also meant he was often relegated to reading the same few books he had in his possession over and over again. Zhu had put his foot down about him carrying only one book at a time on scavenges.

“I wish I could read Hànzì better,” said Elena wistfully. “What’s the word for that sort of story again?”

“*Wǔxiá*, which means ‘martial heroes.’ It’s where all those kung fu stories originated from. I can teach you to read better, if you’d like. After all, you did such a good job with my English lessons, before all this happened,” said Zhu, searching for her hand.

“The apprentice has now become the master,” she smiled, letting him lead her inside.

Dinner was exactly as described, sticky rice with peanuts and soy sauce wrapped with banana leaves. Zhu and Elena both gave Bo a little bit of theirs, since the big man was easily their total weight combined. She also gave him her share of the durian.

The woodstove leaked as much smoke into the room as it fun-

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neled out, but the team was willing to put up with anything to keep the cold away. They passed the time sharing their limited entertainment, listening to music on Zhu's MP3 player and clustering around Elena's small screen to watch videos. Afterward, Bo read aloud from his *wǔxiá* book while Zhu helped Elena with her Mandarin.

They huddled closer to the stove as night fell and the temperature dropped. It became too dark to read, so Elena regaled them with stories of her life in America, telling them how her folks would go boating nearly every weekend, and how they barbecued and strolled along sandy beaches and did something called "tubing" on a great river known as the Colorado. She told them about how her father took her and her brother Robbie bowhunting for white-tailed deer. Certainly explained why she was such a good shot.

Every time she talked about home, Elena's face would light up. It was obvious how badly she missed her family. Being so far away when the world had fallen apart must have torn her up inside. She hadn't heard anything from America since she and Zhu had evacuated from Changsha in the early days of the disaster.

Bo raised a hand as she tried to explain tubing to them again. "I don't understand." He ticked his fingers. "Your family has their own boat that you drive around for fun, not going anywhere or carrying anything. But then you also like to sit on tire tubes and float on the lake for fun."

She nodded. "It's not about actually going anywhere. It was about being together and enjoying the experience. Besides, there are always parties on Lake Travis. We cruise around and tie a couple boats together and everybody just has a good time."

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Bo looked a little confounded. Zhu didn't blame him. The two of them hailed from rural villages, Zhu from western Hunan and Bo from somewhere far up north. Both had left farms to find work in the city and ended up working next to each other on the assembly line in a factory. Zhu had met Elena shortly after when he was looking for an English tutor.

Bedtime music was a mix of gǔzhēng folk, classic Andy Lau, and Chinese death metal—the last one being somewhat of a recently acquired taste. Bo took the space next to the stove while Zhu and Elena shared a sleeping bag. One less sleeping bag to pack meant much more room for salvage to haul back to the settlement.

Zhu first checked the stove and added a few more pieces of wood from the shelf Bo had smashed with his sledgehammer. He checked the pipes once more to make sure the smoke was filtering out of the apartment. It would be a shame for them to survive the jiāngshī apocalypse only to succumb to smoke inhalation.

By the time he crept into the sleeping bag he shared with Elena, she had already dozed off. Zhu wrapped his arms around her protectively as she instinctively pressed her back into his chest. He blinked once, feeling the exhaustion weigh down on his consciousness. He glanced to his side to see Bo still reading his book using his head lamp as a light.

“We have an early day tomorrow,” he said.

The light turned off. “Okay, xiǎodì. Sleep well.” The big man must have been exhausted. He was out within seconds, and soon his loud, labored snores that sounded not unlike a hissing jiāngshī filled the room.

## WESLEY CHU

To Zhu's dismay, Elena, nuzzling inside the crook of his armpit, soon added to the chorus, her soft breathing alternating with Bo's loud hisses. Together, they fell into a rhythm that was soon joined by the cicadas singing just outside.

Zhu continued to stare up at the ceiling of his childhood home well after this strange symphony had finally subsided. He wondered if jiāngshī slept, if they remembered any traces of their former lives, and if their souls were still in their bodies somehow. He mainly thought about his nǎinai sitting there all that time in the toilet, waiting for nothing.

He hoped desperately that the grandmother he loved and cherished had truly died alongside her body all those months ago and that her soul was now with the rest of her loved ones. She wouldn't have to wonder then, wouldn't have to worry, and most of all she wouldn't be lonely. The last thought he had before sleep swept over him was feeling guilty that he was allowed to escape and slip away into blissful unconsciousness.