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You Wait for Me with Dust

- for my wife, who waits every day

by Liu Xiaobo

nothing remains in your name, nothing
but to wait for me, together with the dust of our home
those layers
amassed, overflowing, in every corner
you're unwilling to pull apart the curtains
and let the light disturb their stillness

over the bookshelf, the handwritten label is covered in dust
on the carpet the pattern inhales the dust
when you are writing a letter to me
and love that the nib's tipped with dust
my eyes are stabbed with pain

you sit there all day long
not daring to move
for fear that your footsteps will trample the dust
you try to control your breathing
using silence to write a story.
At times like this
the suffocating dust
offers the only loyalty

your vision, breath and time

permeate the dust
in the depth of your soul
the tomb inch by inch is
piled up from the feet
reaching the chest
reaching the throat

you know that the tomb
is your best resting place
waiting for me there
with no source of fear or alarm
this is why you prefer dust
in the dark, in calm suffocation
waiting, waiting for me
you wait for me with dust

refusing the sunlight and movement of air
just let the dust bury you altogether
just let yourself fall asleep in the dust
until I return
and you come awake
wiping the dust from your skin and your soul.

What a miracle – back from the dead.

April 9th 1999