

MOTOKO SMILES

山城畫蹤

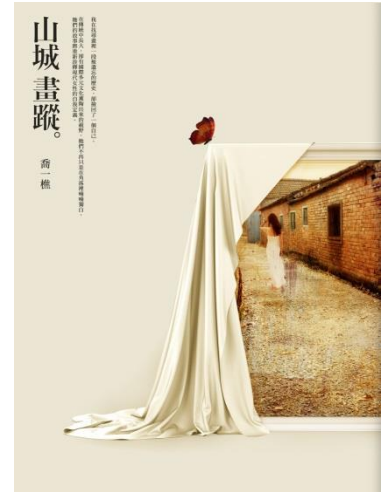
Winner of the 2011 Cross Straits Literary Competition

Her discovery of a lost da Vinci makes Amelie an overnight star in the international art scene, but failure to find a buyer before the deadline takes fame away equally fast. Broke and disgraced, she flees Europe to her hometown—a mountain city in Taiwan—to attend her grandmother's funeral, but also to nurse her wounds.

While going through her grandmother's effects, Amelie finds an entry in one of her grandfather's notebooks that hints at a hitherto unknown masterpiece by Zhao Bo, a famous painter who was killed in a political uprising half a century previously. The painting was apparently a gift to her late grandfather and would be worth millions if discovered. It would also be her ticket back to the art world. Amelie's treasure hunt soon becomes a journey of self-discovery as she navigates the complicated relationships between Zhao's heirs and her own family, her hometown's tragic history and Zhao's mysterious lover, Motoko. The key to the lost painting seems to be with Jiang Zen, the Japanese sculptor who came to Taiwan to guard Zhao's artistic legacy, and the man Amelie is destined to fall in love with. Based on a true story, *Motoko Smiles* is upmarket women's fiction at its best, seamlessly blending art, mystery, family secrets and searing romance.

Joy Chung 喬一樵

Writer, translator, art dealer and traveller. Joy Chung is a wandering soul, who calls no country and every country her home. She graduated with a Master of Philosophy from University of Paris 8, and has worked in galleries and as an art dealer alongside her writing. *Motoko Smiles* was selected out of over one thousand entries as the winner of the Cross Straits Literary Competition in 2011. She has published three novels and translated numerous more into Chinese.



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MOTOKO SMILES

By Joy Chung. Translated by Canaan Morse.

Prologue: Through the Storm

On the first weekend after Christmas, Europe was hit by an unexpected snowstorm. Sixty percent of flights out of the major Western European airports were cancelled, and the remaining forty delayed indefinitely. Hundreds of thousands of passengers trapped at airports searched desperately for hotel rooms in which to weather the storm and wait for their flights to resume.

Amelie sat in the lobby of a five-star hotel and watched angrily as travelers streamed through the doors and clamored at the front desk for reservations. Though these frustrated tourists ought to have been company for her own misery, the sight of them didn't comfort her at all. She looked on with loathing as they rushed from the airport to the city centre in hopes of finding a room at a five-star establishment. They were either too naïve, or just desperate.

And yet Amelie was the most desperate of them all. Unlike them, she had planned to stay at this hotel, and as a result had procured by far the most comfortable accommodation: the Presidential Suite. Nevertheless, she faced not only the inexorable feeling of being trapped, but also the brutal reality waiting behind the weather. He too had been unable to board the flight that would have taken him to her.

Watching the mobs of tourists going insane trying to find a room drove her mood into the gutter. She had given up so much for this date, including four thousand euros a night for the room. And while she would no doubt be able to find someone in this lobby willing to pay twice that much, she couldn't very well sleep on the street. Even as she sat on a soft Louis XVI sofa in the luxurious lobby, a perfectly made margarita in one hand, the thought of having hemorrhaged so much money on a broken date made her depressed. Perhaps it was fitting that the lowest point of her life should be juxtaposed with such a bitterly absurd scene.

'There's no way for me to get there, sweetheart,' he had explained only moments ago over the phone. 'The airport is closed, and none of the flights tomorrow or the next day are confirmed. It looks like we'll have to reschedule.'

His tone didn't seem the slightest bit regretful. That was to be expected. At that very moment, he was sitting in a comfortable apartment in Manhattan's Upper East Side, while an army of secretaries arranged everything for him. He was not a man to allow himself to end up stuck at a check-in desk or in a hotel, praying for a miracle. Amelie was sure his people had already reworked his schedule: it wasn't hard to imagine how many extra meetings he could set up with North American art dealers, mistresses, and mistresses-cum-art-dealers by canceling a trip to Europe.

Self-confidence had been her biggest mistake. Thinking that having exclusive representation of the painting was a golden ticket, she had carried herself with the utmost dignity throughout the early stages of their relationship, staying in five-star hotels, eating at Michelin-starred restaurants, and frequenting other such common meeting places of the upper classes. And while the persona did help catch his attention, it depleted her savings at a lightning pace.

Her current financial dilemma was all the Russian's fault. When he never paid up she had to compromise by recouping only half the piece's value, and then sell off a Kandinsky in wonderful condition for a bargain price. After

that, her bank account took a nose dive. Any of the veterans in the game would have said it was a common enough event; if you play the game long enough, eventually you'll lose. The art market was famous for incredible profit margins, but the risks were also proportionally great.

It wasn't that she didn't understand that, but rather that luck had always been on her side. Before her interaction with the Russian, she hadn't had any real problems. Just be careful and she wouldn't lose, that's what she'd always believed. Sure, it would be especially difficult for an Asian woman to succeed in the art world's highest circles, so she had worked even harder and done her deals even more carefully than everyone else. To her, there was no such thing as an impossible task, only incompetent people.

And her self-confidence was derived as much from street smarts as it was from hard expertise. Most importantly, she knew that to Westerners she possessed a fatal charm, and anything she committed herself to, she could accomplish.

Six months ago, the portrait of the young noblewoman, supposedly of the Dusseldorf school, was sitting quietly in her inbox, waiting to be discovered. She saw immediately that it was exceptional. The woman's serious expression and crystal-clear eyes sent an unmistakable signal to Amelie, quickening her pulse as her imagination began to run wild. She calmed herself and, with shivering hand, contacted the seller, a castle owner who was eager to get rid of it. As soon as the call went through, she demanded that he allow her in to see the painting herself.

It was too late in the evening to catch a last-minute train or flight, so she decided to drive, from Paris all the way to Lausanne, by the shores of Lac Léman in Switzerland. For seven hours she tore over the road like a madwoman, praying that no one else would get there first and confirm what she suspected.

She arrived just as dawn was breaking. Though she should have been exhausted, it was with a brimming vigor that she got out and pushed the broken-down bell at the castle gate.

The castle owner surprised her with the announcement that she was the only dealer to contact him. He'd bought the painting ten years ago at Christie's in London for £11,000, then tossed it in a drawer and forgotten about it. He hadn't even bought a frame for it, let alone restored it. Now, the economic crisis was forcing him to sell the castle, meaning that all the furniture and collectables inside had to go as well. Put another way, it was a giant fire sale.

Blowing off the dust and seeing the yellow-ochre surface of the painting for herself confirmed her initial doubts: this painting was not of the Dusseldorf school. Its shadows were thicker than those of paintings from the same period, and close observation of their fullness and purity made it obvious that this came from a much earlier era.

But it was that unmistakable, left-handed technique that made her so excited. It had been her thesis topic for her master's in art history, there was no way she could be wrong. This portrait was the work of a left-handed Renaissance master who liked to use watercolor over chalk.

Of course, the appraisal from Christie's gave her pause. Unless it were an incredibly high-quality fake, it represented the greatest mistake in the auction house's history.

Holding back the urge to say what she was thinking, she suggested to the seller that he send the painting to Lumiere Technology for digital imaging and verification. Meanwhile, she herself took high-resolution photographs to send to her thesis advisor, now curator at the Louvre in Paris, for his opinion. A detailed lab report and official certification took five months to get, during which time she also got a positive response from her advisor. Now she could tell people with confidence: this was a da Vinci.

In order to keep himself in shoe leather, Leonardo da Vinci used to paint portraits of members of the nobility. It

was believed that his portraits of young women were commissioned by aristocratic families looking to arrange marriages for their daughters who remained hidden out of sight in the boudoir. Thus there were left behind a whole series of portraits of young Milanese women, of which *La Belle Ferronière*, now hanging in the Louvre, was an example.

The young lady in this portrait did bear some similarities in demeanor to *La Belle Ferronière*. Da Vinci believed the eyes were the windows to the soul, and therefore paid special attention to detail in his expression of them—another reason why alarm bells had sounded in Amelie's head when she noticed those glittering pupils.

Moreover, the Lausanne seller's portrait might be even more valuable than the *Ferronière*, because the subject was painted in half-profile, which was rare among da Vinci's portraits. This may very well have been why it escaped the auction house appraiser's eye, and was wrongly classified as a nineteenth-century work by an anonymous artist of the Dusseldorf school.

Verifying the painting as a da Vinci was an incredible discovery, but, from a practical standpoint, the seller was not about to relinquish his newfound opportunity, nor would he be so stupid as to stand by his initial asking price. Instead, he agreed to give Amelie exclusive rights to represent the work for one month only, as recompense for her contribution; he also stipulated a minimum sales price of sixty million euro.

Now, as she sat in the lobby thinking back on the events of the past six months, she couldn't help but feel another surge of regret: her first day in Lausanne, the seller had offered to sell her the painting for two hundred thousand euro. Only two hundred thousand euro! What was so embarrassing was that after the Russian had gotten to her, she didn't even have that much, and representation was her only option.

Thinking of the castle owner's arrogant expression made her clench her jaw with rage. 'I'm giving you this month out of gratitude for having such a sharp eye!'

It wasn't long before the top art dealers in the world came swarming in. She knew that her window was narrow, and instead of wasting a month dealing with all comers, she would be better off picking a few major targets and going after them directly. There were not more than ten collectors in the whole world with the taste and money, and she needed to find someone strong enough to stand against Christie's. There was only one collector with enough money, taste, and guts for that: New York's Marvin Lynch.

Seduction, though not very original, was the first tactic that came to mind. It would be the quickest way to get his attention and secure a spot in his packed itinerary. He had already made overtures to her before in past deals (most of which were for small sums); for a collector of his standing to stoop to doing business with a freelance dealer like her obviously had more to do with personal rather than professional interest.

Chemistry wasn't the hard part. Her reputation for success had already earned her industry-wide respect and approval. They went to parties together at the Cartier Foundation, and all of Paris watched with envy as she went arm-in-arm with the most important collector in the world. She knew they were waiting to see her fail.

Of course, Marvin was no fool. He would have heard about the da Vinci long ago from other dealers. He was merely enjoying her company while he waited for her to mention it. After three weeks of preparation, her month finally ticked down to its final weekend; she planned to take advantage of his business trip to Brussels to host him at this luxury suite, away from the turf wars of the art world. She was sure she could persuade him to buy the painting.

She was ready to quote him the minimum price the seller was demanding, plus a five million commission. An offer of sixty-five million euro for a piece easily worth two hundred million seemed completely reasonable. She knew how

merciless Paris art dealers could be: they'd never open with anything less than a hundred million. But inflating prices wasn't her style and never had been, which was one of the reasons she was able to carve a place for herself in the industry. Her prices were transparent. The client would pay the seller's minimum price, then the two would negotiate her commission according to their relationship and the quality of her services.

She had already prepared herself for the possibility that they'd talk her down from five million to four, or even to three. That thought had been enough at first to make her ill; but she never imagined she would come away with nothing.

She could, of course, tell him about the painting over the phone; yet she didn't believe that this was the medium to communicate with the kind of force necessary to persuade him to spend sixty million euro on a 'legendary' painting.

She was so confident, so sure he would be interested, she had even bought tickets to Lausanne for the following day. The mere thought of the congratulatory handshake with Marvin Lynch in front of the avaricious castle owner was enough to send her into the clouds.

Now, it was all gone, and no matter what, she couldn't bring it up with him over the phone. The deal could be broken; Marvin Lynch's trust could not. He couldn't be allowed to know that she had merely been using him from start to finish.

Marvin Lynch must never know that to Amelie, this whole fairy tale was never anything more than business.

Amelie was very aware of her mother's disapproval. It took two years of meeting with a psychiatrist in Paris and an enormous force of will to drive away the sensitive, self-deprecating child within. In the end, the psychiatrist attributed the cause of her problems to her mother's repeated criticism and withheld approval; and while Amelie knew the psychiatrist's analysis was limited to what she herself was willing to reveal, it seemed reasonable given the kind of mother she had. She had never been able to satisfy her mother like her older brother or younger sister could. She had worked hard over the last few years to overcome her cowardly, overly-emotional side and live the life she wanted. But as soon as she met her mother, the child within immediately threatened to take hold again. She set her jaw and fought back, telling herself she must not show weakness.

Her mother must never know the truth of her bankruptcy.

'I have a few clients in Asia. I figured I could take these two months to do some business with them,' was her final explanation.

'I just can't imagine how you can survive on that. Sell only a couple of paintings a year, no salary, no office, no security. What happens if one day you get in an accident or there's no more business?'

That's pretty much how things went in a family of teachers: any job outside of teaching or public service, anything that wasn't an 'iron rice bowl' was necessarily 'unstable' and 'insecure.' Thus her brother and sister—one an accountant at a public university, the other an elementary school teacher—were, in her mother's eyes, much more successful than she.

All these years abroad selling Picassos and Warhols, handling millions of dollars at a time, hobnobbing with the

most powerful art dealers, collectors, and bankers in the world, all she'd worked for and endured was less worthy than taking that stupid teacher certification and moving to some backwater to teach elementary school kids their phonics!

She let go of her father's flabby arm and stalked out of the recovery room, holding in her anger. She found a quiet corner in the courtyard, shook out a cigarette, and stared in a daze at the morning glories on the wall.

How could she make enough money to get back on her feet and leave here forever, never to come back?

She took a drag on the cigarette and stubbed it out immediately. What a dump this place was—you couldn't even get a decent menthol cigarette. This one was tasteless, like smoking paper.

Silently gripping the steering wheel, she darted around the cars in front of her.

'Drive slower! This isn't Europe. The speed limit is seventy on provincial roads, and there are trucks everywhere.'

She downshifted into fourth gear and spat impatiently: 'Does this guy know how to drive? He's not even going fifty!'

She felt her mother's eyes on her and her temper slowly building.

'It would be better to ask Headmaster Huang if there's any chance you can substitute a few classes at school.' There it was: the words she'd been waiting for all day.

Amelie rolled her eyes. 'I've only been back for two days, can't you give me a break?'

'Your grandmother's funeral won't be for another two months, and you saw the condition your father's in. There's no telling when it might change. Better to sub for two months than flying around doing your deals. You have a Master's from a foreign university, I'm sure it'll be fine.'

She let out her anger in one breath. 'Since we're on the topic, what kind of funeral has to wait a whole week? What's so special about one particular day that you have to wait two whole months?'

'There aren't many auspicious days this year, but the most important thing is finding a grave with good *feng shui*. We have to wait until it's all arranged before we can bury her, right?' Her mother's tone resembled a teacher explaining simple mathematics to a child.

'I've never seen anything so ridiculous,' Amelie muttered. 'In Europe you wait for a week at most, nobody wastes time with auspicious days or geomancy...'

Shu-Ping ignored her daughter's observations. 'Think about substituting,' she said with an air of finality. 'While you're at home, you can help organise your grandmother's things. The old lady loved collecting old junk, and I just haven't been bothered to go clean out her rooms. And there are a few of your grandfather's and father's paintings. You understand that stuff, take a look to see if any of them are valuable, and whether we should give them to your uncles and aunts or sell them.'

Her ears pricked up. 'Grandma had Grandpa's paintings?'

Her grandfather had been an elementary school teacher in the village. She had heard the adults say that when he didn't have classes and wasn't tilling the family lands, he liked to dabble in painting, but she had never seen any of his work.

‘They’re mixed in with your father’s. I can’t tell them apart, that’s why I’m asking you to go through them.’

She was certainly familiar with her father’s style. He was a decent landscape painter whose goal from the very beginning was to imitate Zhao Bo, Taiwan’s most famous painter. He’d won a few second-rate exhibition prizes, but his work lacked creativity, and that plus his conservative bent made it incompatible with contemporary trends. From a professional dealer’s perspective, his paintings were no more than idle knickknacks, suitable as gifts for friends, but not something you could ask real money for.

She tried to imagine her grandfather’s style.

‘The painting they used for Grandma’s altar, was that Grandpa’s work?’

This morning they had hung a portrait, done in oils, at her grandmother’s altar. Her uncle said that her grandmother’s will had stipulated that this particular painting should be used as her funerary portrait. The woman in the portrait was not yet twenty, with the faintest smile on her lips. How could one describe her? Pretty? No, that wasn’t the right word. It was the image of a bashful, charming young girl. She knew her grandmother had been beautiful when she was young, or at least that’s what the adults said. They also said that none of her daughters had inherited it. That was her family: they only passed on the bad genes. She was a good example: she hadn’t inherited her mother’s slender grace and delicate length of bone. If she didn’t watch her figure through exercise and careful eating, she would swell up into an elephant immediately. People most commonly used adjectives like ‘bright-eyed’ and ‘voluptuous’ to describe her; others like ‘graceful’ and ‘elegant’ were destined never to end up in the same sentence as her name.

‘I seem to remember it was one of your father’s, a practice piece he did when he was young.’

Hearing her mother say this, she cocked her head and thought for a while. ‘Was this before he started imitating Zhao Bo?’ It was a pity. Looking at that piece, it seemed her father had really had some talent for portraiture. If only he hadn’t fallen in love with Zhao Bo’s style and insisted on doing landscapes and still lifes.

‘Painting’s not my area of expertise. Oh, that’s right. His old principal said something about putting on an exhibition. Kisuke Gallery will provide the space. Your brother and sister-in-law don’t have time to deal with it, but since you do, you might as well go talk to them.’

‘Kisuke Gallery.’

‘On Daya Road. Zhao Bo’s grandson opened it.’

‘Who am I supposed to talk to?’

‘The grandson, Dr Zhao Ching-Sheng. He runs the place.’

Was she imagining it? Why did she feel like her mother was avoiding eye contact, like she was anxious to drop the subject? Wasn’t it a good thing that his school and the gallery wanted to host an exhibition for him?

When she entered her grandmother’s bedroom, Amelie finally realised what her mother meant. The place was more a landfill than a living space. Aside from a single sheet still covering one segment of the multi-unit bed, every other flat surface was piled high with shoe boxes and cracker tins of every size. Every available corner was hung with plastic bags and cloth sacks, and even the space under the bed was filled with junk.

She spent an entire day moving everything out to the bean arbor in the back yard, emptying the room and cleaning it, then two more days throwing out the junk—funerary cloths, knickknacks from the Elderly Society, magazines and newspapers, hideously out-of-date flower-print cloth, grandmother-style clothing, birthday flatware. . . A mountain of

worthless mementos into which she dove as if it were all that were left in the world.

One evening, Wan-Yu brought her kids back from after-school classes, and sidled into the backyard before dinner to see the sister-in-law who had buried herself in Grandma's room.

'How's it going? Got everything cleaned up?'

Amelie, her nose buried in a red leather journal, didn't even look up.

'Amelie?'

'Uh, yeah?' Amelie finally raised her head. Her gaze, while distracted, was still able to recognise the concern apparent in her sister-in-law's face. 'Oh, you're home!'

Wan-Yu snatched the journal from her hands and flipped through it. 'What's so interesting?'

It was a notebook, with pages dated from the fourteenth year of the Japanese occupation all the way up to 1991, was marked with only a few simple lines of text.

'What's this? It's all in Japanese.'

'It looks like Grandpa's handwriting. You can see in the margins, how much rice harvested every year, sold for how much money. It's a harvest record.' Amelie took the notebook back and flipped through it. 'Here, you can see the characters at the top: 'Summer, *da-da-da-da* this many bushels; Winter, *da-da-da* this many bushels...'. What could it be but a harvest record?' She used 'da-da-da' to stand for the Japanese she couldn't read.

'Why didn't Grandma tell us about it?'

'What does it matter? It's not worth anything.' Amelie tossed the notebook to one side.

Wan-Yu picked it up and brushed the dust of the cover. 'I'll show it to Ma, she might be interested in it as family history.'

Amelie shrugged, and went back to searching through the pile. 'Your choice, but I don't expect my mother will be interested. You know, if Grandpa really was a painter, how come he didn't leave any paintings behind?'

Wan-Yu, still perusing enthusiastically through the notebook, replied: 'I heard your brother say that Grandpa only painted as a hobby. He wasn't a real painter.'

Amelie paused, then snatched the notebook back once more. 'Maybe he wrote about his paintings in here.' She paused for a second, 'The fourteenth year of the occupation was...'

'Nineteen forty-one,' Wan-Yu, a history major in college, replied immediately.

'Hm. Grandpa would have been in his twenties by then. Everybody says he painted when he was young, so he would have started studying before he went to fight with the Japanese in the Pacific. You can tell from the first couple of pages.'

She turned back to the beginning, and searched slowly through the swoops and scribbles of the Japanese for the occasional Chinese character.

When she got to 1948, she suddenly came across four characters together that stopped her dead: 'Zhao Bo sent a painting.'

Zhao Bo?!

She stood up.

'What's wrong?' Wan-Yu was staring at her.

'Grandpa knew Zhao Bo?' Amelie practically screeched.

Having married into an artistic family, Wan-Yu had absorbed a little art history; she knew him to be the most

famous painter in Taiwan's history. 'What's so surprising about that? Zhao Bo lived in Zijing then too, and the art world was small back in those days.'

Amelie shook her head and said excitedly: 'Zhao Bo sent Grandpa a painting!'

'Really?' Wan-Yu still didn't understand what the fuss was about.

Amelie began pacing back and forth under the arbor, notebook in hand. 'The market price for Zhao Bo's work... If it's one of oils in the Zijing Park landscape series, one of those went for six million dollars at Sotheby's in Hong Kong. If it's one of the Lantan Lake watercolors, it would still be over five hundred thousand.' Amelie's brain was working fast. 'If it were sent to a friend, it's probably something simple, like a sketch. If it's on paper, then preservation will be an issue. I'll have to ask the auctioneer for an estimate...'

Wan-Yu laughed and stretched out her arms. 'You don't even know where the painting is, what is there to estimate?'

Amelie looked at her unflinchingly. The hopelessness that had occasionally crept into her demeanor during this first week back home was totally gone, and her face seemed to shine. 'I will find that painting. Wan-Yu, you're not allowed to mention this to anybody. Wait until I've found it before you do, okay?'

As she walked to the kitchen, Wan-Yu called back: 'You know, I don't really believe Grandma has any paintings by famous artists.'

Amelie caught up with her. 'Wan-Yu!'

'Okay, okay, I won't tell anyone, all right? So I guess the pile of trash has suddenly turned into a gold mine?'

'Nobody except for me is allowed to touch Grandma's stuff.'

Wan-Yu laughed out loud. Amelie was still just as straightforward as she always had been.

When the woman first walked through the door of Kisuke Gallery, everyone inside stopped what they were doing and stared in quiet astonishment.

The soft curls of her hair had been tucked back by a pair of Chanel sunglasses, exposing the subtleties of her make-up, which was light, but applied with the utmost care. Her pale golden eye shadow was both natural and enticing, and two thin, dark eyebrows rose in the proud but cultivated fashion of an aristocrat. Her long torso was draped with a simple, off-the-shoulder cashmere sweater of pure white, while a thin cotton skirt made her perfectly-proportioned legs seem even longer. Her skin, tanned the color of wheat, worked with her makeup to communicate the exact image she wished to present: one of confidence and impeccable taste.

Hsiao Ching whispered an apology to the guests she was showing around, and hustled forward. 'Miss, can I help you?'

The woman's gaze moved slowly over Hsiao Ching's face. 'I have an appointment with Dr Zhao Jing-Sheng.' Hearing her low, slightly breathy undertone, Hsiao Ching finally understood what people meant by a seductress' voice.

'Dr... Dr... Zhao stepped out with Mr Jiang, they'll be back in a bit,' Hsiao Ching stammered as she spoke.

The woman looked around the brilliantly-lit gallery space, walls hung with Zhao Bo originals. She stalked over to

a massive landscape painted in oils and put her face so close she almost touched the canvas as she scrutinised the artist's signature.

'I'll wait. Ring him, would you?'

Hsiao Ching picked up the phone. As she dialed Dr Zhao's number, she asked, 'What name should I give him?'

'Amelie.' The woman spoke with such force she interrupted the burbling of the waterfall wall on one side of the gallery, disturbing the timeless ambience of the space.

Ten minutes later, Zhao Jing-Sheng and Jiang Zen walked into the gallery. Hsiao Ching made a face and looked towards the rear gallery room. 'In the back.'

The two men looked at each other.

'A woman who can scare Hsiao Ching must be a hard case,' Jiang Zen quipped. 'I'll head out for some sushi and beer, and give you the office.'

Zhao Jing-Sheng cracked a wry smile. 'I don't think so. We're both innocent bystanders. If you're not there and Jing-Hsue hears about it, what do I do when she flies back from America to have it out with me?'

Hsiao Ching, accustomed to the two friends' teasing humor, passed them a business card.

Jiang Zen took the card and read out loud: 'Amelie Chong, International Art Dealer.'

Zhao Jing-Sheng shook his head. 'So that's why you're trying to run off.'

'You know I'm allergic to art dealers.'

'Well, I'm allergic to her name. You can't leave. Come with me.'

Jiang Zen raised an eyebrow, but refrained from asking what his friend meant. Zhao Jing-Sheng grabbed him and pushed him into the rear gallery.