



THE VAN ALONG THE ROAD



---- Edward Lin

Based on "No Surprises" by Radiohead

“You drive my van back to the mountain, right up the second mountains. I’ll head back and get the stuff. You hear me?”

“Are you going back to your house? We don’t want to hold you here for long, sorry for dragging you in...”

“No, I’ll stay. I miss home, but I will be here to stand for all laborers in the nation.” He learnt the quote from the newspaper.

The van sneaked through the city back, stopping in front of the mountains. His roommate, who was now driving, gripped tightly on the letter that meant way more than words and greetings. So far away. He already predicted the truth that he would joined the uprising, no matter what, until the men were free, and the monopoly was crashed.

Did he miss his life he had once fulfilled on the mountain, hanging over the sky? – He did.

And yet, he stayed.



No Surprises by Radiohead



A HEART THAT’S FULL UP LIKE A LANDFILL
A JOB THAT SLOWLY KILLS YOU
BRUISES THAT WON’T HEAL
YOU LOOK SO TIRED, UNHAPPY
BRING DOWN THE GOVERNMENT
THEY DON’T, THEY DON’T SPEAK FOR US
I’LL TAKE A QUIET LIFE
A HANDSHAKE OF CARBON MONOXIDE
NO ALARMS AND NO SURPRISES
NO ALARMS AND NO SURPRISES
NO ALARMS AND NO SURPRISES
SILENT
SILENT
THIS IS MY FINAL FIT
MY FINAL BELLYACHE WITH
NO ALARMS AND NO SURPRISES
NO ALARMS AND NO SURPRISES
NO ALARMS AND NO SURPRISES, PLEASE
SUCH A PRETTY HOUSE
AND SUCH A PRETTY GARDEN
NO ALARMS AND NO SURPRISES
NO ALARMS AND NO SURPRISES
NO ALARMS AND NO SURPRISES, PLEASE





The Van along The Road

Each morning followed the same route of life. He woke up before dawn when lights didn't hit the windows. His wife still spelt in dreams every time he walked by, listening to her calm breaths. He moved in quiet steps softly so the children could sleep longer. He pulled on the same jacket worn for years, as the air was thin and chilly, ready for work at their ranch. Slow but consistent, the work played around with fence repairs, log transport, and feedings. He got a pack of cigar from the club during the visit to the town with his wife once or twice a year; the smoke, just like the smoke released from his van on winter days, disappeared in the sky without telling more. Pool of winds rushed in their property, rustling and rattling. He watched his children growing as time elapsed, realizing that the innate curiosity of his children was no longer confined to cows and goats, the windmills and water wheels; yet he decided to pave the road for his whole family, in his 40s, by leaving for the city.

*HE LOVED HIS SIMPLE LIFE,
SINCERELY, NO SURPRISES.*

The rebellion was real. It quickly went out, in a collision of every corner.

Roger maintained the manager in office, so that he couldn't notice the disturbance.

Roger called Sean out from the main gate.

"I guess you are now part of us." "I see." "Not coming?" "No, I want to get to my van."

Roger stepped on the street; he was working there for 2 months straight; it had been a while since the last time he looked at the sky, yet a bit darker than his own ranch. He saw his van parked by the lot, remaining tranquil and still.

"Roger!" One of His roommates chased after him.

"What's wrong?"

"Do you know how to repair the pipe?"

"Sure."

"We are stuck in the workshop; water kept merging in to break the lights. It's dangerous."

Roger stared at his letter that contained his newspaper slits and some clumsy handwritings of him as the father figure, as well as some CDs.



It was simple, sometimes, too simple.

“Nothing unusual on the floor today?”

The others came after and listened to them behind the door. They realized they had forgot about him. Roger felt the weight of their silence press against his back like heat from a sealed room. He knew the truth: the meetings held after shifts, the notes hidden beneath toolboxes, the careful plotting for shorter hours and safer machines. With one wrong word, they all were going to be caught up.

He answered anyway.

“NO, SIR,” Roger said, steady enough that it surprised even him. He thought of crushed fingers



of lungs burned raw by dust, of men too tired to protest anymore. This lie was not betrayal; it was a shield.

The boss nodded and turned back to his desk.

When the door closed, the room exhaled. No one spoke at the critical juncture. Roger felt neither triumph nor relief—only the quiet knowledge that the point of no return had passed. Roger was gathered by his team; the first time they chose to believe this austere man and shared their plan for him. In truth, Roger never had had ill intent.

Along the grumpy driveway curling off the mountains upon mountains, turning from ridges to ridges, the van carried not only the weight of the aged soul living in the field for nearly all his lifespan, but the burden of what thought would have shielded his children and family.

The center part of the state was more hectic than he thought. The streets walked the bustle lives of thousands, or even more, he never knew nothing other than the night club located at the foot of the hill entering the clamor. What he noticed became weird. He saw dusty faces of laborers walking in silence; store windows were glued on the wall and most of them were closed. A mailman ran into him and tried to sell a newspaper to him. He claimed that he could not read or write, but then, he paid two pennies for it and kept the rusty paper in his package. He thought about his children.





For the first few days, he had nowhere to stay overnight but the club. By evening, the streets thinned into long stretches of shadow, shop

fronts shuttered and doorways offering no shelter. The pub, by contrast, held warmth—low voices, the scrape of chairs, the dull amber glow of lamps suspended above the bar. He returned each night to the same corner table. No one asked his name. No one questioned how long he stayed. In that familiar seat, with a glass left untouched beside him, he found a temporary place to breathe without explanation.

“As usual?” The bartender raised up to him.

“Just some water, please.” He nodded.

“It’s been quite often that you came for a drink but ordered some water. What’s going on up there?”

“Not much, I just need a job.”

“Wait, what? Why? ... never mind, Roger. Take it easy. Water will be in seconds.” The bartender walked away.

Remained in seat, he goofed around and then was pulled in the group conversation.

“I can barely get the money back.”

Back to dorm after a adrous day of working, he was often time alone. But fortunately, he brought a dictionary with him, learning to read and write in his spare time; his wife stuffed in some photos of the kids and her – he marked on them in his way. He tried to get closer unintentionally, somehow, he felt the authentic sentiment from those people – hatred about the working conditons, or about even for him. He learned the word “depression” when he saw from the newspaper; the tough working hours even worn him down. He reminded the smile on his family of six. Everything was worth it. He conducted a letter, on an old, creased piece of paper; he started his line with “Dear Mrs. Roger, little Roger...”

In his irregular schedule, he ordered nothing to the manager but telling his stories in the farm – he assumed that would have distracted him.

One day, the theory of rebellion had revealed. Roger put it in mind in the late evenings when his roommates had prepared the material through borrowing and stealing. That night, he didn’t fall asleep. Roger walked through the office door as usual when the boss asked the question.



Roger had first confronted such situation ever in his life; he didn't have much thought because he knew it pretty much wouldn't be his business for long.

"I know it was hard; I feel it. You know what, since the boss knew that I could pay my bills because I got savings, he had been delaying my paychecks for I can't imagine, like 6 months whatsoever. I'm on their side."

Roger listened; but the only thing he cared about so far, was not only that if he could fill up the tank for his

van, nor to get his tire fixed – **at any time he thought to return home.** Something

more valued in his mind, while he couldn't name it.

"What do you want me to do?"

"Basically, I need you to make fake news for him. At any time possible in a day during your work, just pretend nothing or don't tell him anything. Deal, buddy?"

He was on task, almost immediately.



"How come the price keeps surging?"

"Neither could I. The boss kept all of our parts in his hand. So damn unfair."

"I can't afford groceries. My kids need milk. I can't even have one full meal a day."

"Hey, you," one of the drunk guys turned to Roger. "What do you do?"

"I'm... from the..."

"Come on, what is that?"

They heard a piercing loud noise from the outside, feeling like an inch close to the front gate. The bartender left the bottle at the counter and checked on the entrance. Among the crowded people, he skipped from the barrens, tables to where Roger sat.

"I think you van got shot." He said to Roger.

Roger stood up immediately, then, he was called by the bartender to make a room for him.



“Squeeze... here we go. Anyway, don't worry about the car. Look, I got something for you.”

The bartender handed a job advertisement to Roger. “5 dollars two hours. Perfect deal for you. Not bad, check it on.”

The next morning, when the moment of peace shortly lingered at the hub, he took a free shower provided by his old friend bartender and wiped off the smokes and alcohol smell.

The destination, factory “AA&C”, was situated in the middle of the city – dim, and murky under the loom in shadow. In his eyes, that had manufactured machines like his beloved van, a place of enduring working. The manager was surprised at his existence early in the morning, even though no appointment was made. He made it to the job without knowing too much about the work and was set to the minimum wages working for 10 hours a day. He met his co-workers on the same day.

“Oh, see who it is, what's good, the new man? Everybody is now set back to minimum wage. Thank for giving a hand for the job.”

come on, buddy.” He left after patting at Roger's shoulder. “I'll take care of your van.”

Roger accepted his advice, repeatedly aligning the parts for a total of 1000 for his first day.

“Listen up guys, we got some more to deal with. We got a shift.” Standing next to Roger, Sean brought up some bad news.

There were moaning, but they already seemed to comply with the arrangement, like it always happened.

“You see that, they were so sick of it everyday they come to work. It's not their fault to, you know, drag their face and speak around. Oh yeah, it's only going to be a bit left for you,” Sean pulled Roger to the side, “get over here, you are going to help me clear some files.”

“I can't read...” Roger saw Sean skimm through the documents for each active worker.

“Shh,” Sean said, “I know, but the manager asks for it. The higher-ups had found severe intents of the group that they are going to knock down the whole thing.’ And he, assigned me to figure out what is going on and who they were to attempt such scheme. And he – wants – you to get more information from those guys.”

Roger walked by a chat. He heard discussion on his appearance around the workshop, nonetheless, he stayed in his position until his group foreman came to him in a worn uniform.

“Hi, there. How is the job, so far?”

“Good. All good.”

“Just so you know, we are doing the same process of embedded the same medal components for billions of products. That’s it. But it’s going to be a long, long day...”

Roger nodded, pointing at other laborers in the workshop.

“Hey, speed up. Everybody goes to their position,” the foreman shouted, “alright, yeah, don’t put it in heart the gossips. You’re fine. I’m Sean, by the way. You can call me that. I can see your austere trait,



The short story is depicted in the rhythm and lyrics of

“No surprises” , new life experience of the man from the mountain seeking a job in the city. The core idea of the story remained personal

Nostalgia for family and life in the ranch,

Nation causes beyond private bond, he decided to join the movement.

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Shortcut for No Surprises in
Apple Music

