

Dear Jinn:

Before I start, I have to inform that a local resident who happens to be educated wrote this letter for me in exchange for a small sum of money. O my dear wife, do you miss me? It's been almost a year since leaving you and our six-month-old daughter Nieu Nieu, who I have never seen. Tomorrow is my 26th birthday; you won't believe how much I wish to spend the special day with the both of you. I made lots of friends with other Chinese workers, as well as workers from other countries, although they had trouble pronouncing my name Liang Zhu. My body is still in very good condition, stronger than ever. My daily wage is one dollar, which is less than half of what the Europeans are earning, but if you look on the good side, it beats the mere eight cents a day back in China. In total I have earned \$300 so far, but along with this letter I can only send you \$60, since all the rest has gone to pay for food, strong boots, and the shovel I need for this work.

My sea voyage to Canada has been the most brutal three weeks of my life. Our ship was immensely overpopulated; my fellow Chinese and I were thrown in what was called the forward hold, which is below the water line. As we walked in, it looked pretty good with the walls all painted white. But once we start moving the white wash would fall off in chunks and you can see manures under it, I guess it had been used to transport animals. Each cabin was designed to hold four immigrants, two upper and two lower beds made of plain boards and straw mattresses and straw pillows, that's where I slept through 20 nights. The meals they served us were terrible; they were often made from the leftovers from the upper classes. I once tasted chicken and sausage in a pie.

Our ship arrived at Halifax on December 1883, where we started another journey under the lead of our agents, traveling all the way from the east side of Canada to the west side. Sometime during the trip we were lucky enough to get a wagon, but most of the time we had to walk, and there were also a couple of times we were put on boats. En route, we often got homesick, so we song songs to fulfill our long tiresome trip. On the way, we encountered snow falls as high as 10 cm, the temperature was always around ten below, and there were days that get under 40¢XC. What fascinated me was the appearance of the local residents, the men here don't have to keep a ponytail, and the women here wear shirts that show their chests, which was never seen back in China.

When we finally arrived in Craigallachie, we were immediately placed into work. My job is to move the rocks that lied where they want to put the tracks. In order to have room for the tracks, we have to move sections of mountains or put tunnels through them. The work here is dangerous. We have learned to be careful around the dynamites. Last week an Englishman shook off the ash in his pipe, while he was standing beside the dynamite. He was killed along with two of my Chinese friend. I've been working here for about ten month, and they say the railway will finish next year. My goal is to save up enough money by then to start a small business here in Canada, then bring you two here to live with me.

But the thought of our family reunion could be very unrealistic up until now. I just heard that from now on all Chinese immigrants have to pay a head tax for entering Canada. Therefore I have to pay about \$100 for the both of you, plus the ticket for your ride on the ship. Heck, I would have to work about three more years to save that much money. And beside all that, would I bear to let you two go through the brutal sea voyage of 20 days deep in the hold of a ship? I'm starting to doubt my decision for coming to Canada as of now, the reason being I can't see a future for our family at this place. Would it be good for our daughter to come here and live in a country with so many mountains and lakes, but hardly any people? However, even if bring you here means this much trouble, I still choose not to go back to China where I get paid eight cents a day. I'm sort of stuck in a dilemma right now; can't decide what to do with my future. So help me out by writing me back, my dearest wife. And make sure the first word little Nieu Nieu learns to say is "daddy".

Love Liang,