

Years

Mimi Lok

year(s) [jɪə (z)]

noun

1. The time of the apparent revolution of the sun through the ecliptic; the period occupied by the earth in making its revolution around the sun, called the astronomical year; also, a period more or less nearly agreeing with this, adopted by various nations as a measure of time, and called the civil year; as, the common lunar year of 354 days, still in use among the Mohammedans; the year of 360 days, etc. In common usage, the year consists of 365 days, and every fourth year (called bissextile, or leap year) of 366 days, a day being added to February on that year, on account of the excess above 365 days (see Bissextile). "Of twenty year of age he was, I guess." (Chaucer)

i. **A year's mind**, a time to be allowed for an act or an event, in order that an entire year might be secured beyond all question. But what, really, can be secured?

ii. **(years)** informal a very long time; ages : i) *it's going to take years to put that right.* ii) I saw *Back To The Future* for the first time.

2. a set of students grouped together as being of roughly similar ages, mostly entering a school or college in the same academic year: *Most of the girls in my year were leaving school at the end of the term.* [Got an A on a science quiz about the five senses.]

3. • **(one's years)** one's age or time of life: *She had a composure well beyond her years:* she doesn't speak

(also **calendar year** or **civ-il year**) the period of 365 days (or 366 days in leap years) starting from the first of January, used for reckoning time in ordinary affairs: [In this village, there were stories, old and many. My last night there, before I was to leave for—*good*. For England. *That's what I mean. You were leaving for good*. So my last night, it was no different from the others in that there was cooking, there was eating and there were stories at bed. I'd heard them many times before, so that sometimes I didn't listen for the story so much as the sounds and shapes of the words in the dark. I moved in and out of sleep, murmuring satisfied smiles and maybe a nodding here and there... again I came out of sleep and they were telling the story of the Lau girls. I remember moving back into sleep, then suddenly pulling myself out again as if I were afraid I'd miss something, which was strange, you know, as this was a story I knew well. But in my half-dream state there seemed to be something different and unfamiliar in the way it was being told, the way I was hearing it, I can't really say what it was. *What do you remember?* Remember the river I showed you yesterday, with the stone bridge? They drowned themselves in that river. That's how the story goes. There were seven of them. After the death of their parents, the family name fell into decline. An uncle came from the city to oversee the selling off of the remainder of the family assets. He had no interest in taking on the burden of seven unmarried nieces. First the eldest two were married off to men who treated them badly. *How badly?* They never came back. The remaining five knew the same fate awaited them, and so they took measures. *Measures*. Yes. *You mean the drowning*. Yes. *All of them, altogether?* Yes.]

PHRASES

4. in the year of our Lord (or dated **in the year of grace**) — — in the year ad — — : *I was born in the year of our Lord 1786*. [ORIGIN: *year of grace*, suggested by medieval Latin *anno gratiae*, used by chroniclers.] *with a rolling right ankle/* a short breath/ a pair of distended elbows—advice from my kung fu teacher: *don't try to punch no-one; you'll only hurt yourself—/* an ess-shaped spine (ess—S— y'know, like for superman! ah, no...)/ Diagnosis: a cold damp humour, prone to dry heat imbalance,

feed with —, avoid too much —/ traitor tongue/ Fairfax CA: *your face doesn't match your voice*// but what to do about that?! for years i've been on this mission of conversion/ it started to mean something when the mission changed, from me to you... in other words, i feel hope, faith —*something*— that you can see and feel more/ : *your voice sounds higher when you speak Chinese*—well, I say, the language demands higher things. nine tones—nine!—otherwise a mother becomes a horse, a horse becomes a grandmother (ma, *ma*, **ma**) and your mouth doesn't match your mind/ speech, movement, revolving agents, precipitates/

5. Clap

6.

clap clap your hands

Altogether now

Round and round we go

7. Worked at **Tes-co's** [delicatessen counter] 10am – 4pm. Got really good at cutting a pound of cheese / cold cuts without having to weigh it.

8. **letters** [14 JUNE 1969] The weather here has taken a surprising turn. I say surprising, because not only is it unseasonably warm for this time of year, it also comes on the tail of the worst typhoon to have hit the territory in half a century. What I find peculiar is that, besides the weather, there is little else that has been talked about recently. No one speaks of their damaged crops, or the businesses that have been forced to close temporarily for repairs, or the dead woman at the village entrance, or the minor infractions with the law... All this talk of the weather would bore me were it not so suspiciously incessant and monotonous: *How hot it is!* I must have heard this phrase dozens of times in the last few days, with little variation, save the occasional, *It's so hot my trousers are about to jump off my legs*. It's as if they are clinging to the present, resistant to looking back or forward. But where this is all coming from I haven't the

faintest idea. I have reasons of my own to avoid looking back, but surely the rest of the village cannot be in the same condition. It's as if a spell has befallen this place—no, it's as if a spell were being incanted, the incantation being, *How hot it is! How hot it is! How hot it is!* The purpose of this spell I do not know—it cannot be simply to maintain the warm weather, or to stave off another typhoon. If this were true it would be ridiculous and unnecessary—surely it would take several months for another typhoon of this magnitude to strike? Even if you have been indulging me this far, you may nevertheless suggest a more mundane reason, that they only wish for the warm weather to last so that they can dry out their floors, their walls, their cars. This may be part of the truth; but I think there is more.

9. Sang **kar·a·o·ke** for the first time [ORIGIN 1970s: from Japanese, literally 'empty orchestra'.]: *Tie A Yellow Ribbon* in Tsim Sha Tsui.

10. total destruction—all the cabbages have been destroyed by ants. “they look like strewn corpses on a battlefield” and “ugly” is what i think each time i pass them; each time i fail to take care of things, yank them into invisibility, non-existence. i keep my attention on sowing, digging, watering...

11. **letters** [2 JULY 1969]

It's cold here, but I like it.

You didn't tell me about the dead woman. Who was she? Did you know her? Did I ever meet her?

There's a woman who lives next door. She fascinates me. She's about fifty, and her name is Bowen. She has a lot of visitors. Sometimes there's a line outside. Last Sunday there were so many people that the line stretched down the lane and onto the main road. For such an old house, the walls are very thin. During the day I can hear noises—moaning, or crying out, sometimes a bang or a loud report, like an explosion. I think she has some kind of talent—perhaps she communicates with the dead? When I told my husband, he said I had a wild imagination. I feel no desire to prove my point. I would like to talk to her, but I feel shy about approaching her. We'll see what happens.

Now I must prepare dinner.

I hope you are well.

12. • **(one's years)** one's age or time of life: [leelee] See the lush shoulder mountains, circled in a wide, silent meeting? See the scattering of iron eiffel masts, poking at the blue sky? See the silhouettes of eagles gliding high above the village, where small figures move amongst furrows bursting with green abundance, and a sharp voice or a bicycle bell or even an insistent bee may not stir the dogs sleeping in their hot stone yards? This is where LeeLee Mo has been brought to safety, where she and her mother can walk and breathe without surgical masks, which LeeLee doesn't wear properly anyway. She doesn't know how to wind the straps around the crook of her small ears on her own, so that the protective swathe hangs loose below her nose. (In two weeks, almost four hundred have been infected; ten have died. Parents decided to keep their children home long before the Education Bureau announced the territory-wide closure of schools.)

LeeLee telephones her one friend, Charlenne, and asks what she is doing. Charlenne lives in a high rise in the city. She is playing computer games and watching cartoons. She is not doing her homework because she's hoping that school won't ever open again. Don't say that, says LeeLee. Charlenne says her mother makes her take the stairs, afraid that they'll catch it in the lifts. Through the window LeeLee spies her elderly neighbour walking by with a large cardboard box; she tells Charlenne she has to go and runs out of the house.

She catches up with her neighbour and starts hopping and grinning shyly alongside her.

"Didn't think you'd miss this," says the old woman, winking at her from under the brim of her wide bamboo hat.

"Are they awake?" asks LeeLee.

"Can't you hear them jumping 'gainst the walls? Here, help me with the gate."

LeeLee slides the metal latch and pushes the gate into the yard, letting the old woman through, then pushes it to from the inside, biting her teeth at its long, squeaking groan.

“Let’s have a look, then.” The old woman has set the box down by the front door of her house and is folding back the flaps. LeeLee squats next to her and peers inside. The chicks are smaller than she’d imagined, no bigger than plums. They are soft, furry balls of gold and chocolate brown. She tries to count them, but they keep moving, hopping and tumbling into each other; she guesses fourteen.

“They’re so cute”, she says. “What are you going to do with them?”

“After lunch I’m taking them to the allotment. I’ve made a nice pen for them up there.”

“Is it big? Will they be able to run around?”

“They’ll have enough space.”

“And then?”

“There’s feeding, cleaning—”

“Can I help?”

“They don’t stay cute for long. You’ll lose interest once that happens.’

“I promise I won’t.”

“And it’s a lot of work—it’ll take four months to get them to a decent size. Besides, won’t you be back in the city by then?”

LeeLee counts on her fingers. “May. We might still be here. Just in time for the Tuen Ng festival.”

“That’s right.”

“You’ll eat three or four and keep the rest for eggs”, says LeeLee.

“Or give some away. Ask your mother if she’d fancy one for Tuen Ng.”

LeeLee nods, nods, her enthusiasm inspired less by the hope of pleasing her mother, or of eating juicy, steamed chicken laced with ginger and scallions, as her desire right then to touch one of the creatures, to pick it up and let the warm thing sit in her curling palm and run a finger along its soft, flossy fur, feeling its tiny bones and holding all of its fragility in her hand, before it is obliged to jump out, and become something else.

13. Very tired all day.

14. • (one's years) [identify yourself] i love borrowing other people's clothes, feeling the weird power of transformation that lives in a football shirt, a leather belt, an itchy tweed pencil skirt. everything is fancy dress. but it shouldn't look like it; costumes are too much, 'I'm not really/usually like this', or, 'I live for the weekends only', or, 'Look at me! Look at my wackiness! Is the dip vegan?' i think maybe uniforms are the ultimate. i recently bought a dress that looks semi-military, semi-airline stewardess, when really i just wanted to buy an airline stewardess uniform. i don't want the job, i just like the distancing effect of the tailoring, and the neck ties... medical scrubs, the green ones—during SARS, i enjoyed walking around the city with a surgical mask on... what is it, beyond a lame fetish? maybe it's the idea of a body being a blank slate, or a glob of putty that can be poured into these prescribed moulds and—no, the putty isn't blank, it's putty with personality, that's important—and so when you pour yourself into these moulds you're not going to fit exactly, because maybe you won't reach into all the little nooks and crevices of the shape, or maybe there's too much of you and there's overspill... that's interesting to me, the parts that don't fit, that jar a little or look a little lopsided; that's a nice, strange little fusion starting to happen. it's a bit like writing for me. occasionally, either as a brief workout or exercise or when i should have better things to do, i might attempt a few pages of copycat writing. but even if i can 'do a faulkner' or whatever, i find i can't go for more than 500 words before my essex accent or chinese-jewish mother traits start poking at the surface. and sometimes it's a fine mess, and sometimes faulkner starts asking you if you remembered your house keys and telling you you'll catch your death in a nasally, essex whine...

15. fox•trot

noun

- 1 a ballroom dance in 4/4 time, with alternation of two slow and two quick steps.
 - a piece of music written for such a dance.
 - a gait in which a horse walks with its front legs and trots with its hind legs.
- 2 a code word representing the letter F, used in radio communication.
- 3 beginning bronze

forward basic
back basic
hesitation left turn
hesitation right turn
left box (reverse) turn
side sway
promenade

16. letters [4 JAN 1970] It may interest you to know that I have been reading poetry again, mostly the classics. I have made some early, faltering steps towards writing my own poems. I should say they are cowardly gestures, for I am contributing nothing of myself to these pieces. For the moment I am hiding behind the words and meters of the masters. To put it more plainly, I am simply copying out these works, with perhaps a superficial alteration here or there. I feel I can confess this to you without fear of judgement. For some reason, I am assured of your neutral attitude towards plagiarism. This is not meant in any way as a slight; merely that I doubt you have given much thought to the subject, and were you to give it thought, you would likely fail to see what the fuss is all about. I find this a quality to admire rather than fault. I can think of nothing more to say for the time being. I hope you are well.

17. Watched the UK elections from Hong Kong. Realise have missed absentee voter deadline.

18. the city of *chin jies*: Towards the end of the second millennium, the city suffered from an overabundance of residents called Chen Jie—3 million to be precise—which caused an increasing amount of confusion amongst officials, and was eventually labelled a ‘social and administrative nightmare’ by the central government.

A law was passed that prohibited new parents from naming their children Chen Jie, and that demanded a random selection of existing Chen Jies to change their names.

This was to little avail; invested as it was with such auspicious qualities (Jie meaning pure, clean) the name continued its popularity, with census figures showing that the number of newborn Chen Jies had risen by 27% in the last year.

In the face of such blatant insubordination, the government was forced to change its tactics: first they increased the fine imposed on those refusing to change their name, or wilfully naming their child Chen Jie, from 1,000RMB to 5,000RMB; then they began arresting people and throwing them into jail; eventually they started performing public executions of people with the name Chen Jie.

It is conceivable that this last measure may have eventually produced the desired effect, had an underground collective known only as 'The Protectors' not been so effective in rallying the citizens to secretly burn their identification papers in protest and take to the streets at noon on National Day, chanting: *You will have to destroy the entire city, for I am also Chen Jie! I am also Chen Jie!*

19. ordinary affairs: from the bottom of the stairs we learn of a death. this death took place somewhere else, right before dinner. we are told to stay downstairs. the adults remain in high rooms. we can hear the grainy light. they forget to feed us.

20. ordinary affairs: Got drunk for the first time at Mr. Purves' class party.

21. ordinary affairs: She never lets his hair crawl past his earlobes. Time for a cut. She snips at his hair in the kitchen, bright by night, dark by day (it doesn't catch the sun). He finds the sound of the scissors comforting. She is very good. After each new haircut he gets whistled compliments from his staff and soft, raised glances from Englishwomen. He sends his younger waiters to her when they start to look like hippies. Something about having their hair cut by the boss's wife makes them act more respectfully towards him (though behind his back they still call him 'Professor' and make fun of his serious politeness and his insistence on doing things 'in the proper way', but perhaps not as much as before. Still, they don't articulate to each other what

it is about the light, swift motion of her fingers in their hair that fills them with a strange new kind of longing, a combination of lust and homesickness, or the sobering effect of the cold warning steel against their necks and ears).

22. Yes, she is good. She could do this for a living, if it weren't for the children. She is carrying their second child, also a girl. They do not yet know its sex, and are both openly wishing for a boy, but to themselves they wish different things. She wants a boy. A boy would be more troublesome, perhaps, but he could carry on the family name. Her blood is in her children and in their future children; but her concern is the name line. Since hers is lost, it is even more important to continue her husband's. Her husband, meanwhile, wonders at the diminishing strength of his own conviction. Scissors in hand, she pauses to admire her work. Her gaze snags on a tiny pink spot, almost hidden in the thick of his wavy black hair. She continues to work with the brisk detachment of a professional, all the while silently scrutinizing the bald-spot-in-progress as if it were some kind of alien parasite. *When did it get there? What is it doing? How soon before it spreads?*

23. Later that night she runs an uncertain hand through her own locks. People often give amazed compliments at how shiny and black her hair is. She smiles in her modest way, and doesn't tell them (doesn't know how to tell them) that she consumes black sesame seeds like rice, and that she regularly pulls out her white hairs and rubs ginger into the roots to stop them springing up again.

24. Quit job. Decide never to work again in a place that has a dress code.

25. Funeral for grandmother.

26. fox-trot intermediate bronze

progressive quarter turns

progressive quarter turns to r.

forward changes o.p.

back changes o.p.

right box (natural) turn

promenade w/underarm turn to l

promenade w/underarm turn to r.

27. Coffee shop, Little Italy. Eavesdropped on man talking to woman about Catholicism: *The nuns are butch and the priests are gay.*

28. she doesn't speak. the desire is there. she doesn't speak. she doesn't have the words. she does not speak. the desire is not there. she does not speak.

29. H. says we should break up.

30. **A year's mind**, a time to be allowed for an act or an event, in order that an entire year might be secured beyond all question: (And in the dark we rise and reach for our clothes, says the First. I hear slow drawn breathing, buttons scratching through eyes, shifting feet. I hear chair joints softly moaning, and other movements I know, pockets and helping, as we straighten each others' collars and tighten our scarves as if it were an ordinary outing.

31. The Second hold me still, says the Third. She places something heavy in my right pocket, and it pulls my shoulder down, another heavy thing in my left, and I want to scowl at her, though I know she is doing the same for the others. I have to straighten myself, practice standing evenly with the new weight. I feel the stones, each one so big and rough my hands can't describe it all. Heaviness spreads, dreadful coldness; I shiver and yawn, think to the journey ahead. I know I will tire, and so I will have to pretend I am carrying a small animal or a child, otherwise I'll be tempted to drop a stone here and there and ruin everything. I no longer want to go. I would like to go back to my bed and dream. But I am not scared. I am simply tired.

32. We can't hold hands, says the Fifth, as we are walking in a line, and I am at the end because I am the youngest, though I think the Second or the First should be behind me for protection. My back is cold. See, they do not lead so well. So I must tread carefully by myself over the bumpy, sharp ground. I have no hands to balance or break a fall; they are occupied with bunching and weighing my coat pockets, to keep the stones from hitting against my sides. I wish we could hold hands, though I do feel a little safe and grateful for the moon; I can now see something of their dark shapes moving ahead through tree arms and bushes and down and up soft muddy slopes. The faint roaring sheet of river is constant, so we know we are going the right way. I may occasionally complain, but at this moment I am glad to be the youngest and freed from the burden of leadership, unlike the First and the Second—find the stones, find the river. And even if I were older and leading, I cannot imagine doing a good job of it, for since my birth they have fed my fear and laziness, my eyes half-shut and my body half-asleep and blind to real sense of direction. It is too late to try and be different now, to look after any of them (although I have always had good ears, and would still hear the roaring sheet of river, so perhaps, perhaps I could lead if I had to).

33. We shiver in the dark light, says the Second. I feel weak and near to crying for myself—the poverty—our poverty—the struggle—the waste—the absence of struggle—Father—

34. I am tired, says the Second, and very heavy. It grieves me that I do not look behind once for the Third, the Fourth, and the Fifth. I worry that one of them will trip and fall, or scratch themselves on a branch; not because the injury will be great, but because it may jolt them from their sleepy resolve and suggest more fear to them, and this will exaggerate and we cannot, cannot have more fear—but I do not look behind. I love them, I say, but I no longer know what it means if I am also tired of them and wish for them to die so I am free of worry, free of thought. How wonderful to forget. How satisfying, to feel no weight or sense. The heaviness grows, it has no mercy. I am full of revulsion and longing for my blood. The First chose night, so we wouldn't have to see each other. She too thought it would make

us weak, doubtful... but she forgot about the moonlight, which means it is not really so dark, and we are able to see a little of our faces, our dim shapes. But none of us will look. Perhaps she knew this too.

35. As I bend under branches and step over the rocky ground, I am thinking of nail heads, says the Third, those shiny flat pelts starring the joints of the wooden gate that separates the pig pen from the vegetable garden. I think of the nail heads and marvel at my love for them, never knowing till now how I depended on the sight of them for reassurance. They are footprints in mud, a smudge of breath on a window; evidence of the human effort. I see dear old Fung, kneeling over planks of wood with hammer and purpose in mind to create a useful thing, pushed by cooks' hands, servants' hands, gardeners' hands. And mine and the Fourth's, because we loved the pig.

36. We shall miss our studies with Master Liang tomorrow, says the Third. We shall miss his stooped old back, which reminds me sometimes of a homeless bird, and his clumsy entrance of books, manuscripts, rolls of paintings spilling out of his arms as he edges towards the desk. We shall miss his rounded words heavy with intent and sadness, and the thoughtful pauses that sometimes drift into permanent silence. Today, while reciting a poem about a hunter in a forest, the interruption of a swallow flying into the room and perching on his lectern elicited this response: "Well, a good afternoon to you, sir. But I'm afraid you have flown into the wrong classroom." Then he spent a considerable amount of time waving his book about, finally succeeding in shooing it back outside. He caught me covering my smile, and gave me a brief scowl. I shall miss his scowling. I shall miss the novelty of being unfavoured, for once my beauty and charm ignored. And I shall miss our painting classes, and I shall miss my fingers light against the zither, and I shall miss the mottled shadows on the calligraphy book that almost dissolve the painful effort of my brushstrokes, and make me happily resigned to the ordinariness of my penmanship.

37. They responded to my authority with sad compliance, says the First, as if they all knew there was no other way—except perhaps the Second, who spent the next few days avoiding my eye, trying to hide her dark look of doubt and mistrust. But then she surprised me in class this afternoon; when Master Liang was preoccupied with the swallow, she reached over and placed a pebble next to my book. She held my gaze for a moment and nodded to me, *yes, yes*.

38. We find a place at the river, says the Fifth, although it doesn't feel so much like a place that we've chosen, as somewhere we've happened to stop at, having finally come to the end of our strength. We stand a little while in a dark, bluish clump, panting lightly, nudging against each other with soft elbows, shoulders. Our bodies are warm from the walking. We do not look at each other. Hand in hand we meet the water: the First goes in, leading the Second and Third in after her. I hear the Fourth say, It's cold, and I realise it's the first time we've spoken since getting up in the dark, and then the Fourth takes my hand and pulls me towards the water cold shock around my legs I gasp going in quickly it is up to my neck I gasp, and push, why push, why reach for the bank and roaring but the hand and the stones are pulling me back, but I kick and push, but the hand and the stones, but I kick and stop, stop, you see, don't you see, says the First, the line of crowns will crumble and dissolve; no weight, no sense, no memory, remember; not to be sent; not to suffer alive; not to fear alone; not to die alone; not to disappear into broken myth. Now, calm. Together we step down. We sink. We lay down. We are close, and we remain. We remain.)

39. we travel light, it seems

40. we travel light, it seems (or only little seen in our hands). we travel light, it seems: swift, low, creeping... leap! a single bound and suddenly no it takes more, it takes going into the ground and a rising and another passing before the possible exchange of here and there, of yours and mine, before the fall, the land, the roll—this is the trickiest part, for at times we falter, betrayed by doubt, while at other times the ground simply

distrusts and repels us. but there are also times, and these are few, but they are there, when we are able to execute a landing so silent, so perfect, that there are no betraying movements, no consolatory steps. we finish standing, straight, with the look of someone who has been here all along.

41. is this what you wanted?

42. *Identify yourself.*

43. **on return:** *Border control.* the national guard is exhausted. but *they*, they have all these new filters: retinal scans, thermal scans, rubber gloves, all to ensure that you are who you say you are, or that you are the same you that left this country, beep! beep! *Identify yourself.* what? oh, i'm — *Papers.* papers. *You're missing a form.* what? *You're missing a form.* no-one told me i needed a form. *You're missing a form.* do i really need it? *We can't let you through without a form.* aren't they overrated anyway? *What?* isn't it all illusion anyway? *What are you talking about?* doesn't it all come down to cells and sub-atomic particles and wavelengths, vibrations? rising, passing away, replenishing, rising, passing away, replenishing... who i am, and you, and you, yes you with your rubber stamp, not to put too fine a point on it... but, biologically speaking, the me and the you at the beginning of this procedure no longer exist; in fact, in the time it's taken us to go through this, you and i have died a hundred, no, a thousand times. no, my papers don't state that i'm a scientist, or an enlightened being (but sometimes, when sitting, and the mind is still and the body follows accordingly, and the auto-opsis is being performed, a particle may be caught). *Identify yourself: who are you?* you really don't let up, do you? can i say fuzzy tongued bi-tri-quadrilingual, jelly-limbed, over-personalised putty in a... don't look scared. it's okay. it's all temporary — just a phase i'm going through. can i go through?

44. the turnips are better this year.

45. **fox•trot** full bronze

right pivot turn
twinkle
back twinkle
promenade check
promenade twist turn
promenade pivot
grapevines

46. Met Bob Woodward's daughter in San Francisco.

47. **on return:** *How do you feel, being back?*

I'm back.

Yes. How do you feel?

I can't taste anything.

How can that be?

An exaggeration. I taste things, of course. But the tastes do nothing for me. They don't make me want more. They don't make me smile for memories of my mother. They don't feel like a reward, not even satisfaction, for a day's work. And I work.

I see you.

I work endlessly, I am dull from it. No, I was dull when I came here. Why is it that I can't touch anything, grab it? If I were to clench my fingers around a small neck I doubt I'd feel anything. Why can't I touch anything and have it inspire feeling in me? I want to know why nothing feels palpable.

You seem distant.

But I am nowhere else. I am weighted here. See how I move more slowly here?

Your irises tickle the roofs of your eye-whites. You are bored.

Yes I am bored. I am bored to despair. But it isn't as if I don't have enough to occupy myself with. I am frightened.

Of what?

Of this numbness, this lethargy. I wonder if I am alive. No, I exaggerate again. I know I am alive. I just wonder if it is really me who is alive.

48. Plane ride to HK: The lights in the sky are beautiful. I get drunk and eat too many peanuts.

49. • (one's years) I dream about you sometimes, in situations that seem familiar and yet odd, as they are not suited to you. You are surrounded by artists and people dancing, your house is constantly filled with music and lively conversation and you are so busy chatting to a sleek, small faced man sitting on your chair arm that you barely notice me when I walk through your door and cannot find a place to put my bag. I can't believe I have come all this way and you still need several moments before you see me. I should be stunning you with my entrance, with this silken coat falling off my limbs and my dazzling reappearance, the weight of all the time we have lost. But here I am, hiding. I thought I was the sure one, the one who knows how things have fallen since. I didn't know certainty could be shaken in such a way. And by you, my supposed ally, now, stranger. You possess this never before serenity, this stillness that can only come from a certain wisdom, a certain wisdom that can only come from a certain battle... Yes, this is all familiar, odd. This is not how things are, not how they are supposed to be. I sit in the corner. The night goes on. I close my eyes and become the sleeper. When I finally awake—it feels like years—I realise that you have lived my life and I have lived yours.

50. J came home from the hospital. 6lbs 4 oz.