

## Reality, and a few other facts

“What I used to think was me/is just a fading memory/I looked it straight in the eye, and said goodbye/I’m up above it ...” ~ Nine Inch Nails

I don’t have much of a choice other than to renew myself, do I? My dog is dead, and my friend and flatmate has decided to seek her salvation on a different continent. Some people first ignore me, then they decide they just want to be friends, and then finally they come to the insight that even that is too much for them. Other people play cat-and-mouse to show me who needs whom the most. The rest of my acquaintances avoid me for a variety of reasons – I never go on weekend trips, religious differences, and perhaps simply because I’m not fun enough to hang out with. My TV is broken. My computer is broken. My bicycle is only half of what it was a year ago. My scooter has been dripping oil on the porch for almost a year. My water bills haven’t been paid in months, and my scooter registration has never been paid. My student loans are also still outstanding. My apartment smells like a shack in the woods. Insects fly and walk all over the place like they own the joint because I killed the only predator, a giant spider. I don’t currently enjoy any female companionship because most South African women here are strictly group-oriented, and I walk in and out of places on my own. And Taiwanese women find me too bizarre – even for a foreigner. The old geezer who owns the school in the countryside where I teach twice a week thinks I’m a lousy employee because I cancelled a one hour class because the train was late by half an hour, and I don’t want to start the class half an hour later because that would mean I would have to wait 45 minutes for a train back home. And the principal at the other school irritates me because she fails to understand why I have to leave two minutes before the scheduled end of my class on Mondays and Fridays, despite the fact that the owner said it was okay to leave *five* minutes early. In about ten days I’m going to South Africa for three weeks, but it already

feels as if I am going to look, feel, sound and act like a failure, until I get on a plane back to Taiwan. In the meantime, the insects would have taken over my apartment as a new ecological system, my bike will be a rusty pile of junk, everything will be wet outside, and damp inside because of all the rain, and I will have nobody to call and say I'm back, let's go have a cup of coffee. My computer will still be broken, and if I buy a new computer my savings will run out much faster, in which case I will probably, if I'm lucky, again have to sing "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" to four year olds who either want to scream or sleep.

There – there's the reality of my life on Tuesday, 17 June 2003 at 10:22 in the morning – at home, because the train to Number Nine Crooked Village was delayed by 35 minutes. However, my dishes are clean (for the first time since late April), and the washing machine is giving my bed sheets a final spin. A nap, therefore, sounds like an excellent plan.

(Finished napping, 12:05)

It's just as well. You can't start a new life if the old one is still kicking. I've tried it before, it doesn't work.

## **NOTE:**

THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS TEXT FROM  
**“THIRTEEN MINUTES – NOTES, HALF-TRUTHS  
AND A FEW INCIDENTS”**  
BY BRAND SMIT.

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