

Dearest Queen:

I hope your Christmas lunch and dinner were marvellous. Yesterday I stood before the television with my inmates and watched your Christmas speech. The powder on your cheeks was subtle and your hair was so well combed. You spoke slowly so even a foreigner like me could understand every line: 'Times change. But the positive value of a happy family has not changed. The grandparents, parents and children are still the core of a community...' If I'm not wrong, your Majesty was speaking about the continuity of life! You're a wise lady! That's why I decided to write to you and tell you my story. But my English is not good, so I ask a British writer named Xiaolu Guo to help me with this.

I'm writing to you from a mad house in Lincolnshire, but I'm not as mad as the doctors here think of me. I'm very sober because I've been refusing to take their medication. The nurse believed I'd be better with those pills. You may not know about those pills, but I can tell you – if you have some mental trouble, never take anything like 'spreddee'! It'd kill you, I mean, kill your brain dead. They told me that these pills can provide anxiety relief, but all patients here were like zombies after their 'anxiety relief'. I have this trick, you see, I hide my pills. I hide them under my tongue then I spit them out after the nurse leaves. You see why I'm still sober?

Anyway, why I'm here? Your Majesty may ask. I'm here by a total accident! It was a huge misunderstanding between the western doctors and me. I'm an exiled Chinese musician (rock 'n' roll style). My music annoyed the Chinese government so I had to leave the country or I'd be in prison. I had a temporary visa a few months ago when I came to the UK. And I began to apply for a new visa once I arrived at London. But just two weeks ago I learned that the Home Office refused my application. The officer told me I was not qualified as a 'Highly Skilled Migrant', even though I had sung in concerts for 20,000 audiences in Beijing's Olympic Stadium and 30,000 people in Shanghai's Music Hall. I had even sung the Chinese version of the Sex Pistol's *Holidays in the Sun*! I am not a nobody at all. Then upon receiving a denial stamp on my passport I got mad (as I can't return to China facing imprisonment), so I went to 10 Downing St pleading for help. But the police arrested me and after grilling me with some bizarre questions they transferred me to here! The Mad Hospital said I would stay here by virtue of the 'Detention Under Mental Health Act'. But I told them I have no mental health problem; all I need is a valid visa so I won't be sent back!

Your Majesty. I know you don't have to help a Chinese and perhaps you don't like rock music. It might be too bumpy for your delicate ears. As far as I know, the last time you visited China was 1986 and you didn't encounter any modern music scene then. But since you mentioned family values in your Christmas speech, I think you understand how important it is that young people need their voice to be heard by the world. So if you can rescue me from here, I'll be grateful to you and I'll truly believe that Britain still requires a Queen. Please write directly to our Head Nurse Mrs. Mary Wilson if you'd like to discuss my case with her, or call the front desk 01522 565180. If they know it is your Majesty calling, they'll be thrilled, as the English people would say.

I beg you, from the bottom of my heart,
Kublai Jian

"Times change. But the positive value of a happy family has not changed. The grand parents, parents and children are still the core of a community ..."

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¹ Xiaolu Guo, a film-maker and novelist, grew up in south China and has lived in London since 2002. Her most recent novel, *I Am China*, is an epistolary novel about translation, love, visas, and the state repression which followed the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. The fictional letter published here is drawn from that novel. Her earlier novels include *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* and *Fragments of a Ravenous Youth*.

In 2013, Xiaolu was named as one of the twenty Best Young British Novelists by *Granta Magazine*.

Xiaolu Guo divides her time between writing and film-making.