Belated Letter Of Thanks
To Da Wang And Daughter

What can we say for ourselves after so much
time. What’s the measure? Another day of roar becomes
evening, and I can still see you—a nice man—a man
given to peaceful loving routines. Or I can
say, we were all peaceful in a time
not known for its peace—for example, a month after
the Red Army bulldozed a human landfill around
Beijing, I bought greasy pecan cookies three
evenings a week at the market, and you

rode by on your bicycle in the darkness.
You were the man with the big smile, singing
to his tiny little girl—a girl so small, I
even thought, in the darkness, if she might be
a bag of oranges. But she was no
bag of oranges, and you were no soldier, only
a lullaby bike rider, and I was just
a cookie man. For years now when the evening comes
down, we’ve stayed like this: me, a bumbling big
faced foreign man strolling mindlessly under
a parasol of trees with Chinese cookie grease
bleeding through a brown paper bag—and you
pedaling through the darkness with your most
precious cargo. I just
wanted to say: “Hello, Mr. Wang.” I just
wanted to wish you well, and thank you for
singing songs that have kept the darkness
friendly—all these years—little songs
wrapped in a circle of dust, stretching
from one side of night to the other.

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