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## Who Neighbor?

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# Who Neighbor?

Mike Vanden Bosch

I stroll through a crowded street in Dalian,  
Chinese friends serving me peaches or watermelon,  
when a gaunt-faced ten-year-old girl gets in my way,  
Her two hands lifted, she begs with her eyes,

and, as if tongue-tied, grunts for American gold,  
“As you give to the least of these...”—I hear it loud,  
but my Chinese friends block my good neighbor gift  
to the girl, leashing the stray Samaritan dog.

They wear shame at Chinese rags trying to bleed  
their American friend from the East for a few fen  
but my guilt gets up on its haunches and howls:  
“You give to me; now let me give this angel a yuan.”

“Her boss is millionaire,” says Cong, protecting me.  
“He tell her, ‘Look for Americans. They rich.’  
He play you for sucker.” I play the child, confess:  
“All Samaritans are suckers for love.”

“Who angels? Who Samaritans?” asks Cong, baffled.  
“They help the helpless,” I say. “Who helps your lame?”  
Cong fathers me, junking other-world mystery:  
“Bad leg child not our problem; government problem.”

I motion to the grunting child behind us.  
“What about her?” “She not hungry; she fed well.  
We care for old parents—and American friends,”  
he adds as a joke, but my howl is not at the moon.

“I’ve been taught to love my neighbor.”  
At my other side Li Jing says softly, “Who neighbor?”  
The lawyer’s question, I think, but honest now.  
“Even enemies,” I say; “I must love my enemies.”

“You know friends,” she says; “save love for friends.”  
I see her face, easy to love, but bow to mystery:  
“You neighbor, Cong neighbor, all Chinese—neighbors.  
But in the child’s grunts, I hear the grunts of God.”