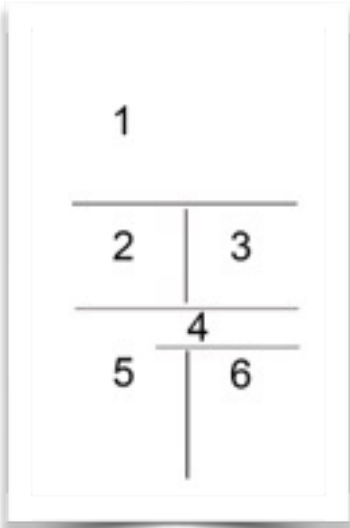


Locked Albums

145cm * 75 cm





1:

Lan comes from Yun'nan province (inland southwest China). She is the second child in the family. All the four siblings of her family are working outside. Lan was 17-years-old when she left home 8 years ago. Lan's husband comes from Anhui province (inland China). Five years ago they got to know each other and got married when both of them worked in Jingsu province (coastal southeast China). In 8 years, Lan only visited her hometown three times. The reasons of not coming back are either because the couple wanted to save the travel expenses, or they wanted to earn extra money during the Chinese New Year holiday, or Lan needed to go with her husband to spend the Chinese New Year in her husbands' hometown. Lan's parents still work hard in the field back at home. They plant vegetables and keep ducks. In this way they can make a living but it is not possible to have any savings. Lan remits 200 RMB (20 pounds) home every month. After the remittance she calls her parents telling them money has been sent and everything is fine.

“They can't really chat with you... I mean...All they want to know is if everything is fine, and that's all, no more words. If some emergency happens they will call my big brother who has a small business in our town centre because he is the only one who can go back home in a short time if necessary.”

“The year before last year, my brother bought a mobile phone for my parents, which hopefully will make our communication easier. However...they always forget to charge the mobile...coz they thought it's like a landline, and you don't need to charge your landline everyday.”

小兰的家乡在云南家里四个弟兄姐妹都出来打工了，她是老二，十七岁出来已经八年了，老公是安徽人。五年前两人在江苏打工的时候认识在一起的。八年中娘家回去过三次。要么是省路费赚过年的加班工资不回去，要么是回老家过年。家里只有父母，种点田，养几只鸭。老人不攒什么钱，养活自己就可以了。每个月，小兰往家里汇两百块钱，汇完钱给父母打个电话也顺便问个平安。“他们也不会多说什么，只要知道我们都挺好，就行了。有什么事他们会给我大哥先打电话，他在县城开店，离家近赶回去也方便。”

“前年，我哥给他们买了只手机，这样更方便了.....不过，他们老是忘了把手机充电，之前电话是不用充电的。”



2:

There is an album called 'homeland' in Lan's Qzone (social media profile), it is a 'locked' album which requires a password to gain access. One day I asked about her homeland, Lan took out her smartphone, entered her Qzone, clicked the homeland album, and showed the photos to me.

There are photos of a family reunion dinner which she took one Chinese New Year. I asked Lan why she 'locked' the album, she smiled: "all those photos are only for myself."

在小兰的QQ空间里有个叫老家的相册，是上锁的。小兰给我看她家乡的照片时，掏出手机点开QQ空间给我看。里面有父母的照片还有某年回家吃团圆饭的照片，我问她为什么上锁，她笑道：这都是留给自己看得嘛。

3:

The first time I met Lan she was working on a sewing machine in a small workshop which was adapted from a residential room deep in a narrow lane. I asked her what she was sewing. She told me the lining of pet bags. She was too anxious to even look up at me, assuming I was a journalist or inspector. Beside her, there were two kids playing around a vacant sewing machine, they were Lan's kids. The boy was almost 5-years-old, and the girl 3-years-old.

As Lan told me later it was too expensive to put two kids into nursery, thus she had to quit the job in the factory and take a flexible job (piecework) in this workshop so that she can take care of the kids while working.

Last year Lan's husband left T town to drive a crane on construction sites in Shanghai. Lan told me that he can earn 1500 RMB (150 pounds) more in Shanghai.

"When he settles down I will go to Shanghai to join him with the kids."

I asked her why not now.

"The rent in Shanghai is 5 to 6 times higher than here. What can we live on if I can't earn money immediately when I arrive at Shanghai? So he went first. If there is a chance that I can also find an ok job I will go too, if not, at the worst he can still come back...after all here is not the worst place."

第一次见到小兰她正在小巷里一间民房改造得小作坊里踩缝纫机。我问她在做什么，她说是狗窝的内衬。以为我是记者，吓得连头都不敢抬，她身旁带了两个孩子，在一张空着的工作台上玩耍，男孩五岁不到，女孩三岁半。托儿所太贵，于是小兰把厂里的工辞了，找了个计件的活，边做还可以边带小孩。小兰的老公去年离开小镇去上海的工地上开吊车去了。那边工资高一千五。

"等他定下来，我再去"

我问为什么不现在去

“那里的房租可是这边的五六倍，我去一下子找不到工作，可怎么办？所以他先去看，有可能再一起去。不行，大不了他回来，这里也不算太糟。”

4:

小兰的QQ空间名是“温度”，头像是一个少女的卡通。访问空间需要申请，她说不想给陌生人看。

The name of Lan's Qzone is 'temperature', the avatar of her profile is a cartoon image of a young lady. People need to 'apply' in order to view her profile. She told me that she doesn't want to be exposed to strangers.



5:

I took photos of the kids, and the kids smiled naturally at the camera. I asked them whether their mother took photos of them by smartphone frequently.

“Yes, and send them to Daddy!” They answered together.

In Lan’s Qzone there is another album which is ‘locked’

“Only I and my husband know the password. I always upload our kids photos to that album, and he can check them over there.”

“I rarely give him a video call...because kids will cry non-stop if they see their daddy.”

我给孩子们拍照，孩子们很自然地朝镜头笑，我问他们“妈妈平时用手机给你们拍照么？”

“拍！传给爸爸看！”两人几乎异口同声回答。

在小兰的空间中还有一个相册是锁着的。

“那个密码就我老公和我知道，常常小孩的照片就传上去，他在那边也可以看到。”

“我不太给他们弄视频，小孩看到爸爸就哭得停不下来。”

6:

在一年中我只见过小兰的丈夫阿波一次，他很安静。

我问他平时上班什么看孩子的照片，他安静了许久

“白天没空，晚上，上床睡不着的时候，看看他们心里踏实。”

说完他又安静了。

In one year, I only once met A Bo, Lan’s husband. He is quiet.

I asked him when he checks his kids’ photos. He remained silent for a while.

“I am too busy during daytime. At night, on the bed, when I can’t fall asleep. I feel peaceful when I view their photos.”

Then, he became silent again.