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Chang'e 4

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Chang'e 4

Carolyn Lee

China successfully lands the space rover, Chang'e 4, on the far side of the moon, exactly 50 years after Americans landed Apollo 11 on the near side of the moon.

January 3, 2019.

Chang'e 4 lands on the far side of the moon.

They cannot send a rover to the near side of the moon
because it has already been done by the Americans 50 years ago.

It must travel further,
must do something never done before.

If you took the time to watch the landing,

you would notice 2 things:

that the gray, gray dust breaks softly,

rigid and sandy like the fingernail dust of my mother's nail file,

and that someone has already been there:

a lonely woman, a white jade rabbit.

it's as if the 4,000 year-old folklore prophesied a returning.

it's as if the Chinese already marked their landing and claimed it theirs.

it's as if someone, somewhere, immortal and not, whispered

do it again

do it again.

July 20, 1969.

If you took the time

to listen to the air-to-ground transcriptions

between Mission Control and the Apollo 11 crew,

you would notice that Chang'e and the white jade rabbit

were mentioned as one entity:

the Bunny Girl.

2019.

The Chinese, who skip the number 4

because '4' (四: sì) sounds like 'death' (死: sǐ),

must have forgotten about that

old Chinese superstition because

it was the 4th Chang'e that made the landing,

and came back for the bunny girl.

When they both meet,
would the goddess recognize
her own name scribbled
on the metal lander? And would
the machine dismiss her as a pile of dust,
forgotten or collected for research?
And could you have seen
what Chang'e 4 saw,
would you have heard her whisper:
I am not angry
I am not angry.

1 "Apollo 11 Technical Air-to-Ground Voice Transcription." Manned Spacecraft Center, July 1969.
page 179.