


There are many thieves in the train but I am not a thief.

There are always many trains coming and going, and many people, and much hustle and bustle, and they use this to their advantage, as a distraction. And though my clothes are dirty and my beard is long, though my eyes are weary and my cap is worn, I am simply a traveler and I would never cause another person pain just for my own gain. I am a decent man.

It is summer now, and so the stations are more hot and dusty and chaotic. The cafes, once something of a refuge from the crowds, have been overrun—the tables are all full and even the spaces on the floor are taken, and I've heard that by the afternoon there isn't any tea left at all; although this is hard for me to verify as I don't touch the stuff.

Summer is also the time when I begin my travels in earnest. In June I will leave Xi'an and take a train to the coast, to Guangzhou where I once had relatives; but I have not been for a long time. I will look them up, I think, but I should not torture myself with old family history as they will want me to. Perhaps I will not look them up.

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