



CHINESE

ESSENTIALLY CHINESE

STUFF

波普客POPCORN



China Intercontinental Press



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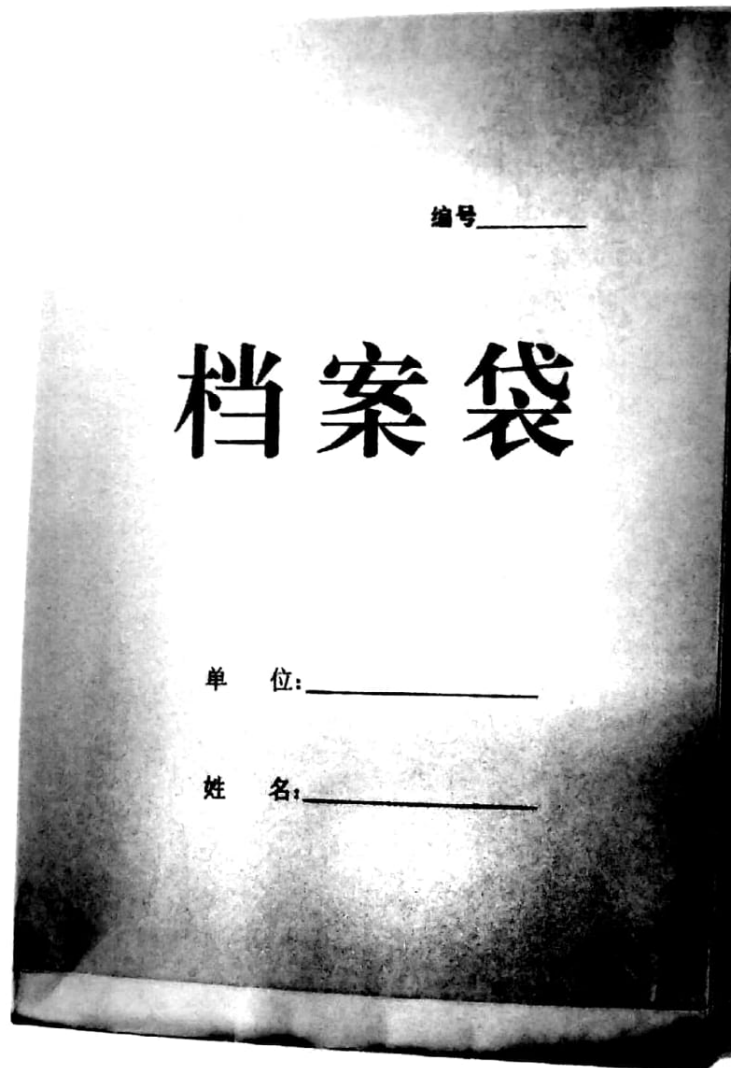
Contents

Preface	
Office & Classroom	
Food & Drink	26
At Home	42
Leisurely Recreation	100
Attire	116
Drugs and Cosmetics	136
Decoration	150
Index	166

Brown envelope

33x24x3cm
Kraft paper, String

The brown envelope contains a person's identity and other records. But the person can never open his or her own file, which is mysterious as the black box on a plane. Every Chinese has such a file envelope containing yellowing pages that keep record of the person's life. Coming from the traditional household registration system, the brown envelope is still an important way through which the government rules the country. Ever since a person's birth, major happenings in one's life are filed away in this envelope. There are questions like: From which date to which date, where did you study or work? Are you politically progressive? Who are related with you? The brown envelopes are sealed and stored in a dark room. Nowadays, Chinese still rely on the ID card and household registration card to prove their identities. But occasionally, they also need the brown envelope to prove their innocence. For decades, the brown envelope has maintained its humble appearance. Even in the time of digital information, a person's crucial records are still stored in this ordinary envelope. Everyone has such an envelope, but how much is the file related with the person's actual life?



Embroidered banner

96x72.2x8cm
Fabric, Wood, Plastic

When the Chinese want to express their gratitude in the most respectful manner, they would present a banner embroidered with the praise. It is common to find such banners in the meeting room of many "units", a term referring to the place where a Chinese works. Every time a meeting is held, the staff will be surrounded by banners showcasing the unit's awards and praises. The government grants banners to outstanding figures in certain areas; the common people also like to use this means to show their respect or gratitude. The same banner can be used among different levels of social status. The words are often succinct when the banner is given as an award. For instance, "The 2nd Class of Grade 3 in the high school has won First Prize in the tug-of-war contest", or "Zhang Weihong is honored as the role model of spiritual civilization". But the eloquence can be surprising in the event of expressing utmost gratitude. A patient might present a doctor with a banner that says: "Hua Tuo (an ancient doctor) reborn, bringing back spring with wonderful hands" as shown in the picture, or "Virtuous doctor who helps the needed with great skills". A student might give his or her alma mater a banner that praises the school as "spring breezes that bring timely rain to nurture the earth silently". People often send banners to governmental agencies with gratitude. For example, they would praise the police as "brave and fearless, with a great social conscience", or "good police for the people, guardians of life". For the governmental agency that alleviates disaster-stricken areas, the people would say "sending charcoals in snow, bright sun in winter". There are numerous such praises, which are often arranged in antithetical couplets. For Chinese, things in even number are considered perfect.

赠一汽公交巴士车队黄洪民司机

拾金不昧 品德高尚
热情服务 情义深

乘客林良园敬赠

二零一一年三月



Certificate of merit for "Three-Good Student"

38.4x26.6x0.1 cm
Paper

"Three-Good Student" is the most coveted honor for Chinese students and their aspiring parents. Liu Yafei, a diligent student, has been gaining such honor every year since primary school. Her parents put up all her awards on the most prominent wall in the sitting room. Every visitor would praise the girl and her parents heartily. Occasionally, a guest would go home to reprimand his or her less diligent child and promise to reward the child if he or she gains such a certificate. The "Three Goods" refer to "virtue, intelligence and physical health". It is intended for those who are balanced in all three respects. But in reality, most parents and teachers only focus on the second standard, or the scores of examinations. Practiced for many years in China, such a system has met increasing criticism. More and more people believe that better ways should be found to develop a student's full potentials, especially when a student couldn't meet the traditional standards of the "Three-Good Student".

Red-blue-white bag

75.5x36x14.5cm
Plastic

The plastic bag with red, blue and white stripes is used widely in China. The plastic is originally a cover for construction sites. Many people call the bag "snakeskin" because of its coloring and rough surface. The big bag can contain a quilt and many sets of clothes. It is stronger than common plastic and protects items inside when a family moves to another house. Many migrant workers carry such bags, which are very cheap. An old man named Wang Wanlin has been helping waifs in Hangzhou of Zhejiang province. The old man has no children himself, but the 400 children he helped all regard him as Dad or Grandpa. His biggest fortune is a red-blue-



white bag containing some 1,000 letters from his "children". This might be the most touching content such bags carry in the world. In 2007, Louis Vuitton introduced a new smaller bag with exactly the same red, blue and white pattern. Even though "Louis Vuitton" is printed on the bag, Chinese consumers can hardly associate it with the world-famous luxury brand. People are surprised at the minute difference between the common and the fashionable. Hopefully, the common bags won't become expensive thanks to Louis Vuitton.



Liberation Shoes

26x9.8x9cmx2
Fabric, Rubber

Liberation Shoes are green cloth shoes with rubber sole. Such shoes used to be the standard equipment for the Liberation Army, but many civilians also like to wear the shoes. On May 1, 2003, the army adopted new training shoes. The era of the Liberation Shoes is gone. The official name of such shoes is "cloth shoes with rubber sole". There are many guesses about its popular name. One says that the shoes were first made in the Liberation War before 1949; another simply says they were worn by the Liberation Army. For whatever reason, Liberation Shoes won great popularity among soldiers and civilians in the past half of the 20th century. At times when the nation suffered natural disasters, political turbulences and economic setbacks, there were few other choices than the green military shoes. Even though such shoes look humble, the sole is rather thin, and the ventilation is so poor that many suffer from beriberi, a skin disease, such minor problems have not reduced people's attachment to the shoes. In the mushrooming military wear equipment shops, many young customers choose these shoes, not because of its price or practical function, but more for its political color – just the same as the popularity of Cuban revolutionist Che Guevara. When no more Liberation Shoes are produced by state-owned factories, wearing such shoes display a nostalgia for the old times.



Glass bottles for tea

9x9x22.5cm
Glass, Plastic

Old Huang is a bus driver. He has a huge glass bottle for tea. Everyday before he sets out for work, Old Huang grabs a handful of tea and puts it into the bottle, pours in hot water, tightens the cover and puts the bottle in its special string bag. This is a whole day's drink for Old Huang. At the red light, he would take off the cover and sip the strong tea, enjoying a rare moment of relax in the hard work. Old Huang's bottle used to contain the Nestles coffee. Used bottles for canned fruits and extract of malt and milk powder are never thrown away. Some of the big ones are turned into tea bottles that supply a day's drink. The bottles are made of thick glass that won't crack easily when boiling water is poured in. With a string bag covering the bottle, even hot tea won't burn the hands. Some elderly men in Beijing often take such bottles on their daily routine of playing Chinese chess with old friends under a shady tree, or sing a few arias from Peking Opera. The tea keeps the throat moist throughout the day. As days pass by, the inside of the bottle is covered with a layer of sediment. It is said that sediment from tea does no good to health, hence people have invented many ways to clean it. The most useful methods involve tooth paste or salt. Drinking tea with such big glass bottles has nothing to do with kungfu tea or top grade tea. The most ordinary tea leaves prepared with the common water can bring the folks a day of leisurely enjoyment.

