One month after my grandmother died, I still feel the grief of losing her and that grief remains within my family. My grandma's pictures are everywhere in my grandparents' apartment. Black and white pictures of her and my grandpa at their wedding day, the family pictures when my mother and my aunt were still small girls sitting on my grandparents' laps, to the color picture where I as a baby lay sleeping in my grandmother's arms. Photos tell stories, the stories about the wonderful life my grandma had with my grandpa, the stories of how she played the role as a wife, a mother, a grandmother, and a doctor. Pictures of my grandpa and grandma visiting my uncle and aunts in California; they were sitting in the swings with bright smiles blossoming on their faces. Pictures were taken when she was performing an operation as a surgeon. It is hard to tell my grandma's age from the pictures. She was such an energetic person even in her sixties and seventies, and I always felt that there were still lots of things in her life waiting to be done, to be experienced.

Grandma stopped her life journey at the age of eighty-three, yet this age was too young for her to die. She had the energy that can shine for years. She once told my mom that she would have her last surgery at the age of ninety. There are still so many cancer patients waiting for her, putting all their hopes in my grandma. Maybe these are the reasons that it is so hard for us to
accept the fact that grandma has already left us, and she was extinguished by the cancer which she had fought with her whole life.

I stepped into my grandpa’s study and the table was piled with photo albums, academic magazines and an old newspaper which had published grandma’s medicinal thesis. Grandpa had collected all the memories of his beloved wife. I opened the photo album, and after every photo there was grandpa’s brief caption about the place and time of that specific moment. I unintentionally revealed a notebook as it lay hidden in the corner beneath the photo album. When I realized it was grandpa’s diary, and I could not help but read it. Grandpa’s beautiful floating handwriting kept his sensations alive in the last period of time in grandma’s life to the days after she died. He talked to his dearly loved wife in his diary. My eighty three year old grandpa remembers when they first met at a ball room dance and their bittersweet family stories in during the disastrous Cultural Revolution that occurred when they were with their two lovely daughters. Beneath these gentle life fragments is the great grief grandpa has, how much he loved her and how much he wanted her to come back. When I closed the diary, I found I was dissolved in tears. After nearly one year, I read C. S. Lewis’s reflections on the experience of bereavement of his wife. It reminds me too much about the pain grandpa has of losing his wife. It was as if I was reading my grandpa’s thoughts.

“No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear” (Lewis 1). The first sentence of *A Brief Observed* already has enough strength to drag me back to the grief grandpa had while mourning for the loss of my grandma. My grandpa was so composed. My grandpa is the master architect in all of China. Mom told me he is such a brilliant person because of his complacent mind, where he can learn to accept everything no matter if it is good or bad. I remember when I was still a little kid, I was so proud that I had a grandpa like the most kindhearted old men portrayed in the
fairy tales. He never got angry or worried and never blamed anyone. He always kept that warm smile on his face and held the most positive attitude inside his heart. Even at the time my grandma was terribly sick, she and grandpa still kept the hope of a miracle recovery. But after grandma passed away, I heard the first sign from grandpa ever in my life, sorrow interwoven with bitterness. I saw the helplessness through his eyes. He suddenly became very talkative and kept calling my mom when he was alone, repeating the same benign things again and again. C. S. Lewis dreads the moments when the house is empty. The empty house is a metaphor of the vacant mind after his wife suddenly vanished from their world. Although my parents and I spent time with grandpa, the tremendous emptiness still traps him. It was so painful for me to see how much grandpa changed since grandma died. I felt as if I started to hate grandma; I hated her because she left the people that had loved her so much and at the same time took the grandpa I loved so much away from me, the grandpa who always gave me peace.

In more than fifty five years of marriage, two souls had melted into one. Like C. S. Lewis described, “There is one place where her absence comes locally home to me, and it is a place I can’t avoid. I mean my own body” (Lewis 11). His wife’s death is tearing apart his own identity. He felt the emptiness inside him. A life story treasured by two people is now only held by one lonely person, the one that is left apart in this world. Grandpa’s life is not just his own but the life he has shared with my grandma. His other half walked out and blurred the direction of his life. “A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside” (Lewis 6). In Zora Neale Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God, Tea Cake sees Janie as the key for him in opening the kingdom door of happiness. This is exactly the same as my grandparents; now grandpa has lost his key to happiness and, like Lewis, the door slammed at his face. I wonder if grandpa was the same as C. S. Lewis, afraid to lose the memories of his wife as they
were the only weapon she left him to get away from the nightmares. That is probably why he put grandma’s photos everywhere to imprint every single heartbreaking moment they had together in these pictures.

I found my grief increased as time passed by seeing my grandpa suffered from mourning for my grandma. I moved in with grandpa and tried to help him drive away that dreadful loneliness. In the middle of the night, I could hear grandpa turn on TV several times. He must struggle to go to sleep from missing of his wife. Later I found out he was taking sleeping pills to force himself to get some rest. His situation worried everyone in my family. Grandpa sometimes just cannot stop talking and keeps repeating things. His memories seem decreased a lot, or he just wants to get his mind paralyzed, then he can stop thinking grandma. That enormous emptiness has trapped my beloved grandpa. Since then, I wish every night that the kindhearted old man would come back to my fairy tales again.

When the whole family continued to mourn for grandma, I left my hometown where I spent almost all my life and went to the other side of the Earth to study. In this one year as I live by myself, I sometimes hear about grandpa from my mom when she calls me. I had a chance to talk to grandpa recently. He told me how proud he and grandma were. I have a happy life and that is the biggest reward for them. I can still feel the quiver of his voice when he mentions grandma, but I am certain he is in the process of getting over it. Let time heal the wound; let time fade the color of grief. “You can’t see anything properly while your eyes are blurred with tears. You can’t, in most things, get what you want if you want it too desperately” (Lewis 45). Time will let everyone who lost his or her spouse to understand these principals. I believe grandpa starts to pick up the signal from grandma from his memories. Space and time will not stand as a
barrier and will not cut off this strong connection. Like Lewis the less he mourns, the nearer he seems to her.

I decided when I go back to China I will translate the whole book *A Grief Observed* to my beloved grandpa. And I will tell him grandma never left him; she is still living in his memories.

Works Cited