



Steel Gate to Freedom: The Life of Liu Xiaobo

Yu Jie

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On December 10, 2010, on stage in Oslo City Hall, an empty chair sat before more than one thousand people, holding only the medal and diploma of the year's Nobel Peace Prize winner. A larger-than-life photo of a smiling Liu Xiaobo hung in the background.

This striking image is now known throughout the world. But who is Liu Xiaobo? For the first time, this biography by renowned Chinese author and close friend Yu Jie offers a first-hand look into the man behind the empty chair. Dissident, prisoner, poet, scholar, Liu was compelled by intolerable circumstances to embark on a campaign of intellectual dissent, becoming in the course of his journey a leading human rights activist and one of the most important political figures in modern history.

In the quarter century since the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989, Liu has been unable to lead a normal life. In this first authorized biography, Yu traces an extraordinary man's odyssey, from growing up in the northeast and Inner Mongolia during the Cultural Revolution, through his meteoric rise in Beijing's intellectual circles and his pivotal role in the Tiananmen protests and subsequent imprisonments, to the founding of the controversial Independent Chinese PEN and groundbreaking Charter 08, his poignant relationship with wife Liu Xia, and winning the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize. It is also a love story between two poets who, though separated by three hundred miles and eleven years behind bars, are united in their persistence to speak truth to power, inspiring countless others.

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