

The story of the driver nearly a month stuck in the middle of the Chinese highways during the Covid-19 epidemic

The driver from his hometown of Hubei was delivering goods when the disease broke out, the whole province was blocked so he could not return. Since then, wherever he went, he was shunned because the license plate had 'denounced' his identity.

Xiao Hongbing, 50, hometown in Tianmen City, Hubei Province. From 6/1, he began to deliver goods, plans to return to the end of the month to reunite with his family. But the Covid-19 epidemic broke out violently, causing Hubei to be cordoned off and fear spread throughout China. And Xiao, he found himself trapped in the middle of the highway of the country of billions of people, had to run very hard because there was no place to stop. All because his car has a license plate of Hubei.

"A car trip between the world. My home is the wasteland" - Xiao shared his unbelievable experience in a poem, shared on Chinese social networks.



In fact, Xiao is not as free or unruly as he writes poetry online. His despair increasingly piled up wherever he went was dispelled. The fear at the height of Covid-19 disease overwhelmed sympathy and reason, so that people could accept a ride from the epidemic center.

On January 29, Xiao decided to stop his car in Hanzhong City, Shaanxi Province to record a video of "farewell" to family and friends. He feared that he would drive to exhaustion, collapse on the steering wheel and die anonymously on the road.

Surprisingly, Xiao's video was noticed by Chinese media, which replayed and attracted millions of views. In the video, Xiao said while crying, he had to drive continuously without sleep, even slapping his face to wake up.

"I'm very tired" - Xiao said. "The greatest hope is that I can find a place to stop, eat something and sleep a kind sleep. I really don't know when I can endure anymore."

The escape route of the car that carries the Hubei Sea

After the outbreak of Covid-19, the government imposed an order to blockade Hubei Province from January 23. At that time, Mr. Xiao was still delivering, so he did not grasp the situation. On January 30 (January 26), he realized he could not leave the highway.

Xiao heard shock news while unloading in Pingchang City, Sichuan Province. Police officers wore masks and protective gear, telling him that the disease was getting worse and the Hubei license plates were "particularly sensitive".



Next, on the way out of Pingchang, Xiao stopped to eat some underwear. Immediately, three local men came to take pictures, threatening to smash the car and alert the police if Xiao refused to leave.

"I drove through cities where there was no epidemic. I was as healthy as you guys. I didn't do any harm" - Xiao replied. Even so, he still accepted to drive away.

Since then, every time the driver wants to stop for a moment to eat or take a nap, he is awakened by officials and many locals. Once, Xiao saw the road full of rugged cliffs ahead, decided to find a flat place to sleep for strength. Less than an hour later, police showed up and waved him out of the car. *"I lost all hope. I thought I was going to die on the road,"* Xiao said.

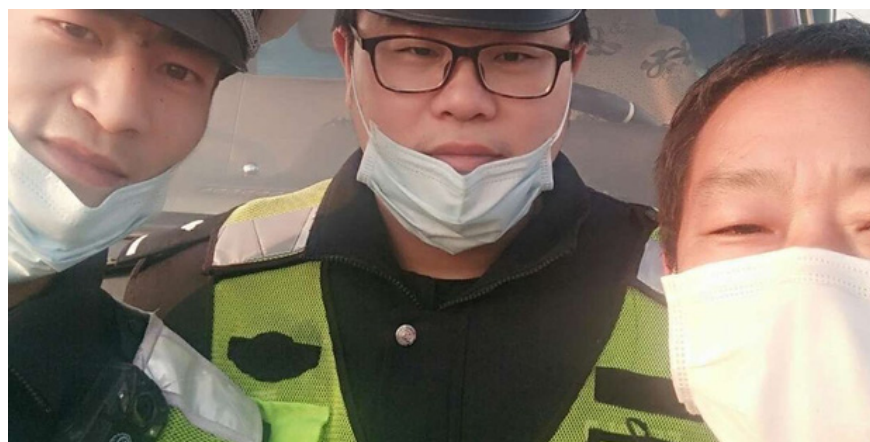
At times, he thought about returning home - the center of the epidemic, but this shipper had not finished delivery. In the middle of the crisis, all transportation services were volatile and Xiao still had many

uncompleted orders. That made him feel that he was not doing his job well.

The unexpected turning point is more than 800 kilometers away from home

Driving continuously from 6 to 29 January, Xiao thought he could not bear it any longer. He gave up. He called his family and was told his home was completely blockaded. It was then that Xiao took out his phone to return to his tragic, place of selfless situation.

Next, he drove to Hanzhong, Shaanxi province, more than 800 km from Hubei. This time, luckily suddenly smiled at Xiao when 2 policemen let him sleep at the police station. They also brought him some milk and cakes of all kinds. *"At that time I was deeply moved so I sobbed"* - Xiao said. *"On the way, I sometimes want to plunge into the abyss ."*



Xiao Hongbin (right) took a selfie with two policemen in Hanzhong who helped me.

Police in Hanzhong posted Xiao's story on social media, which was found and reported by reporters. After the broadcast, Xiao's video earned more than 19 million views. So from a wandering driver with a rejection, Xiao became an indomitable, persistent image in the middle of the epidemic season. He is supported by the online community both physically and mentally.

Since January 29, Xiao has received an average of 800 friend requests on WeChat every day. *"I talked to them for hours, everyone seemed to be worried about me . But ever since then, the phone kept running out of battery."*

In addition, Xiao was supported 10,000 yuan (over 33 million) from an anonymous account. However, as the amount of money raised steadily, he felt uneasy and decided to return it.

Touched by the story of Xiao, the Hanzhong City Government provided him with accommodation. Tianmen - his hometown - also advises not to return until the city is open. *"Because Hubei Province is the epidemic center, it will probably lift the slowest quarantine order in the country,"* Xiao said.



Hubei Province has remained dormant since January 23, but the abolition of blockade is to be expected as the Covid-19 epidemic is gradually under control.

Xiao's story is surprising but not unique. Many Hubei people were trapped in all parts of China, unable to return to their homeland because the disease was still raging. In a foreign land, they have to endure all kinds of estrangement and discrimination even if they do nothing to sin. Facing such a situation, the *People's Daily* had to immediately publish an article calling for not to alienate Hubei people. *"Please help them wholeheartedly. It is not only a humanitarian spirit but also a defense against viruses!"*

Xiao said when the country was overcome by the disease, he still wanted to continue being the same delivery driver. Now, when he is held in Han Trung, he spends time writing poems and sharing them with internet users. *"Everyday I miss my home town, I will come back in March, when the swift has sung"* - quoting an idea of ?? Xiao.

(According to the Wall Street Journal)

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