

# CHINESE LITERATURE



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*Hao Jan*

## The Vegetable Seeds

It was nearly noon. In the canteen the steamed rolls were just ready. The cooks were busy preparing the dishes. Meng Chao-hsien, leader of the vegetable team, flitted into the courtyard, graceful and swift as a swallow.

A girl of nineteen, tall and slender, she had an oval face, a pair of limpid eyes and fine arched eyebrows. Her long plait, tied with scarlet wool, swung on her back as she walked, adding to her lively and vivacious air. Her face flushed, her forehead and nose beaded with perspiration, she came up to Aunt Meng who was chopping squash. "Any letters for me, ma?" she asked, breathing short.

Before her mother could answer, the other women giggled. Chao-hsien laughed happily, seizing her mother's arm. "Give it me, ma, quick," she urged. "I'm sure there's a letter."

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Hao Jan, born in 1932, is the author of several collections of short stories including *Pearl*, *Honeymoon*, *Bright Clouds* and *Spring Rain* as well as the novel *Radiant Skies*. One of his stories, *The Eve of Her Wedding*, appeared in *Chinese Literature* No. 6, 1965.

Aunt Meng glared at her in mock anger. "They're laughing because you're such a crazy girl, always in a rush. Letters! Who's sending you a letter?"

Chao-hsien pouted. After a pause she asked, "Has the postman been? He comes here for a drink every time he passes our village. Have you seen him today?"

"No, I haven't. Chao-hsien, don't..." But her daughter had flitted out again. She sighed.

Third Sister Meng who was washing vegetables looked at the departing figure of Chao-hsien and smiled. "I never knew your daughter had a boy friend," she said to Aunt Meng. "But since she came back from buying vegetable seeds at the fair, she's been restless, waiting anxiously for a letter."

"Chao-hsien is a smart girl," put in Aunt Li. "You don't have to worry; she's sure to find you a good son-in-law."

Aunt Meng listened complacently to her neighbours' comments. It was only natural for a mother to think about her daughter's marriage. In the case of Chao-hsien, her mother did not have much to worry about because she knew the girl was sensible. But during the last few days the girl had lost her appetite and was not sleeping well. Her mother felt rather put out, rather angry with that man too. Why didn't he write? Why should he make her child unhappy? Today Chao-hsien seemed even more anxious. Unable to contain herself, Aunt Meng went to the gate and looked outside. The girl was again standing by the pond waiting for the postman. Her mother sighed.

In the shade of the willow beside the pond, Chao-hsien fixed her anxious eyes on the path which ran westward through the sorghum fields. How she hoped that a green bicycle would appear and stop before her, bringing her a pile of letters. Her eyes sore with straining, she waited and watched in vain. She counted on her fingers: One day, two days... already five days! Five days ago she had done something she thought very clever. That day she had gone to the fair at Paochuang Village to buy vegetable seeds, but once again she failed to get any. Since every people's commune was expanding its vegetable plot, seeds were in great demand. Without seeds their plan for a bumper harvest would be empty talk. Chao-hsien, clever

and capable girl that she was, bought a sheet of red paper and borrowed a brush and inkstone from the primary school to write two copies of this "notice":

To all production brigade leaders:

In response to the directive of the Central Committee of the Party and the State Council, our production brigade wants to expand the area sown with autumn vegetables. But we haven't enough seeds. The commune has provided half the seeds we need; the other half we still lack. All our attempts to buy seeds so far have failed. Now we want to enlist your help. If you have any surplus seeds, whatever the amount, please write to us and we shall immediately come to buy them. Thanks in advance.

Meng Chao-hsien, leader of the vegetable team  
of Mengchiatan Production Brigade

She pasted a copy of this notice at each end of the main street of Paochuang, then walked home well satisfied, sure that this would get better, quicker results than scouring the countryside or telephoning round to make inquiries. As soon as she got home she asked her father, who was the brigade leader, to give them an additional ten *mon* for vegetables besides the original ten *mon*.

"You young people don't seem to know how to run things properly," remarked her father, none too pleased. "How can you plan production like that? You haven't got your seeds yet, but you want the land to wait for you. You know it is already sowing time. Seven days from now it will be too late to sow. Will you be responsible if that land lies idle?"

"Give me seven days then. If no letters come in time, you can sow your buckwheat." The girl was full of confidence.

Now already five days had passed — slowly yet all too quickly. On tenterhooks, she had lost her appetite. She did not sleep soundly either. For several nights she dreamed she was shouldering a sack of seeds and woke laughing, her fists clenched. The production brigade planned to provide each member with 500 catties of vegetables for the winter and spring. This was no light task. The girl felt she should not let the members down; she must carry out the plan. But whether or not this was feasible depended on these few days. Time waits for no man. And still the wretched postman had not come!

Cursing inwardly, she looked up and realized that it was past noon. The postman must have come and gone. Perhaps somebody had taken her letters to the brigade office. She hurried to the office only to find it locked, which made her fulminate inwardly against the old accountant who must have locked it. Then she leaned against the window-sill and looked through the gauze netting. The next instant she started for joy, like a traveller lost in the dark who suddenly glimpses a red lantern ahead. On the desk she saw four parcels addressed to her. What a windfall! In her excitement she drummed on the door. She thought of going to fetch the old accountant but was too impatient to waste so much time. Pacing the courtyard she soon hit on a way. She climbed on to the window-sill and tearing loose the gauze jumped in through the window. Grasping the four parcels, she jumped out, fixed the gauze in place again, then ran straight off towards the vegetable plot.

The parcels were heavy but she laughed to herself as she ran. After a while she slowed down and opened one. It was filled with purple-black seeds. The enclosed letter said: "We have not many seeds left and are sorry that we can only send you one catty. — Huatu Production Brigade of Tangwu Commune." She opened another parcel and the note inside said, "I was keeping this half catty of seeds for my private plot; but since your production brigade is in want of seeds, I send them to you. The collective should come before the individual. Don't worry about my plot which is only one-fifth of a *mu*, my neighbours will let me have some seedlings. . . ."

Her eyes misty, the girl pressed the four parcels to her heart, moved by the comradeship behind these gifts.

As she walked on immersed in happy thoughts, a splashing was heard ahead and from a cluster of reeds emerged a man.

Once clear of the reeds he laid his package on the small stone bridge and, holding on to a willow with one hand, washed his muddy feet in the stream. Then he put on his shoes. The laces were not yet tied when he saw Chao-hsien. "Hey, comrade, is this Mengchiatan Village?" he asked loudly.

When she was in a happy mood Chao-hsien was inclined to like everybody she met and to enjoy a pleasant chat. "Yes, it's Meng-

chiatan," she replied smiling. "Where are you from? Visiting some relative here?"

The young man was tall and slim, with a broad forehead, a square jaw and lively, sparkling eyes. His blue cotton trouser-legs were rolled up, showing muscular legs. His white shirt was unbuttoned, revealing a white vest with the brilliant red character "Award" in the middle. Below in smaller characters was printed: "From the headquarters of Chiashan Reservoir Project." This made the girl eye the stranger with respect. "I have no relatives here," the young man replied. "I'm looking for somebody. Can you tell me where Comrade Meng Chao-hsien of the vegetable team lives?"

"Looking for me?"

The young man smiled, revealing even white teeth. He stepped forward and said warmly, "So you are Comrade Meng. What a coincidence!"

"But . . . I don't know you," said the girl doubtfully.

"I come from the Leap Forward Commune of Anchiu County, south of the river," the young man said in a straightforward, friendly way. "My name is Wang Yuan-ching. I've brought you some vegetable seeds."

Chao-hsien was startled. Anchiu County and Changlo County to which her commune belonged were divided by the Wen River. The Leap Forward Commune and Mengchiatan Village were more than thirty *li* apart. How had he known they were short of vegetable seeds? And fancy him coming all this way to deliver them! Too grateful for words, she picked up the young man's package. "Must have caused you a lot of trouble. How can we thank you enough?" she murmured. The package was very heavy. "How much did you sow? How is it that you have so much to spare?" she asked.

"The other day I crossed the river to your county to learn Kaoyai Commune's method of making chemical fertilizer. I passed by Pao-chuang and saw your notice. When I went back I told our brigade leader about it. He immediately asked the storeman to see what seeds we had left to send to you. It turned out that all our surplus seeds had already been given to other communes. I knew you must be pretty desperate, otherwise you wouldn't have put up that notice.

So I made the round of all our commune members and collected a handful of seeds here, another there. I got a little over ten catties."

The young man narrated this as if it were the most natural thing in world. But Chao-hsien knew the distance he must have walked, going from house to house to collect these seeds, the many anxious appeals he must have made, the sweat it must have cost him. "You took such pains for us," she said. "You could have written, or mailed the seeds to us. But you went to the trouble to come yourself."

"Yes, I intended to mail them to you, but our brigade leader said he had been to your village and knew you didn't have much experience



in growing vegetables. He gave me two days to deliver the seeds and discuss with you how best to sow them."

This was even more wonderful! Chao-hsien clapped her hands for joy. "I declare, you think of everything," she exclaimed. "That had me worried. Our vegetable team has only just been formed and I've got to learn from scratch. You must be an expert in raising vegetables; please be my teacher. Come, let's go to the village first to have a rest."

The girl's warm praise embarrassed the young man who blushed. "I don't need a rest," he said. "Let's go to your vegetable plot. I'll have to start home early tomorrow morning."

"Even if you don't want to rest, you must eat something. Don't stand on ceremony. Come on."

"I won't turn down a meal," said the young man. "But first let's have a look at the vegetable plot so that we can discuss matters when we eat."

Chao-hsien nodded. Here was a man who knew how to make the best use of his time.

The two of them made directly for the vegetable plot, talking as they hurried along. Just then Aunt Meng appeared from the other end of the reeds. A basket filled with steamed rolls on her arm, she had come from the canteen to fetch her daughter home for lunch from the vegetable plot. Pleasantly surprised to come upon the girl with a young man, she returned to the canteen to buy more rolls. Then she made for the brigade office.

The old brigade leader and the old accountant had just returned from the fields. The accountant was fumbling for the key to open the office door. Aunt Meng hurried up to her old man, beaming, and said, "Come home, quick. Hurry!" Without waiting for his reply, she put down the basket and brushed the dust from his clothes. "Look at you, all over dust. People will laugh. It's nothing if they laugh at you, but they'll think my daughter and me bad managers."

Puzzled by this sudden access of solicitude, the old brigade leader pulled a long face and demanded, "What's all this fuss about? What's happened?"

"Just fancy! The letter didn't come but he's come instead," Aunt Meng remarked gleefully.

"Who's come?" asked her husband, still at a loss.

The old accountant clapped his hands and chuckled. "We're going to have a wedding feast. It must be Chao-hsien's young man."

"Impossible. First I've heard of it." The brigade leader shook his head.

"If she didn't even tell her ma, of course she won't have mentioned it to you," his wife said impatiently. "He's already sitting in our house, and you are still in the dark!"

They hurried home. Chao-hsien had just fetched the guest a basin of hot water.

"Here are my father and mother. My father's the head of our production brigade," Chao-hsien told the young man. And turning to her parents she said, "This is Comrade Wang Yuan-ching from south of the river..."

"Fancy my meeting you for the first time today. Why don't you drop in more often?" put in the girl's mother.

"This is the first time we've met too," Chao-hsien said. She went on to explain how Wang had come to help them.

Her mother was taken aback and her face burned. She was disappointed at first. Then, impressed by the story, she smiled.

The brigade leader shot his wife a quizzical glance and then invited the guest to join them at lunch. During the meal he expressed his gratitude to Wang and asked how things were doing south of the river. But Aunt Meng managed to slip in a whole series of questions about young Wang's age, his family, and so forth. When he told her that he and his old mother lived alone, she smiled. "Your mother is a lucky woman, having such a progressive and able son as you." She helped Wang to another large steamed roll.

The people of Mengchiatan were greatly stirred and heartened by the help they were receiving from all sides. That afternoon, the brigade leader sent more than twenty members from other teams to help the vegetable team with its sowing. Wang Yuan-ching acted as their technical adviser.

The young man was as active on the vegetable plot as if he were in his own production brigade. At the very start he made an important proposal: to sow in furrows or drills instead of scattering the



seed broadcast. The result was that the seeds went twice as far and ten more *mu* of land were sown. This alone greatly impressed the villagers, especially Chao-hsien who was so eager to learn that she never left young Wang's side. She watched his hands, memorized his every movement, making him demonstrate how to sow and acting as his assistant. The young man worked systematically and deftly. The seeds were evenly spaced out and covered uniformly and smoothly with soil. Not only Chao-hsien, but all the commune members, acclaimed his skill.

Half a day and a night passed, and early the next morning Wang Yuan-ching took his leave. The brigade leader and members of the vegetable team saw him out of the village, reluctant to part with him. And there was no sign of Chao-hsien's usual vivacity as she walked silently with young Wang to the river. There she grasped his hand and said, "How can we ever thank you, Comrade Yuan-ching?"

The young man looked at the girl and suddenly blushed. "No need to thank me. I hope you will raise fine cabbages and turnips. That will be the best way to thank us."

Chao-hsien raised her head and said firmly, "Yes, I promise we will. But I hope you'll come back in the autumn, to see our crop for yourself."

The young man took off his shoes and forded the river. The girl followed him with her eyes, waving. As she watched his receding figure, a profoundly sweet sensation flooded her heart. Besides bringing them seeds and technical know-how, he had made an unforgettable impression on her, one she found it impossible to put into words.

Suddenly her mother came running up shouting, "Stop him! He's left his seed bag behind."

Chao-hsien took the bag from her mother. "Don't call him," she said mischievously. "He'll come again in the autumn. If he doesn't, I'll take it to him."

*Translated by Chang Su  
Illustrated by Ab Lao*

## Taking Over

I came back at noon from my run today. I slept until six, then got up and had supper. Afterwards, I read Liu Ching's *The Builders*. I was so engrossed, when someone entered the room I didn't know it.

"My pa wants to see you." A clear crisp voice jerked me out of the plot. I looked around. It was Kuei-lan. That reminded me. I said to her:

"What's the matter with you dispatchers? Are you trying to make life hard for locomotive drivers? I've got a complaint."

"Forget it. My pa says he wants to see you right away."

"Oh, Uncle Li wants me." It was only then that I realized what she'd been saying. I scratched my head to cover my confusion. "What for?" I asked.

---

Wang Hui-chin, born in 1933, was once a locomotive driver. His writings include the collection of stories *Galloping Horses*. One of his stories, *Our Engineer*, was published in *Chinese Literature* No. 2, 1966.



"How do I know? He just told me to call you." I must have looked kind of funny, because Kuei-lan laughed as she turned and left.

Six months before when I was still an assistant, our railway division announced that in another month tests for locomotive drivers would be held. I had been working just long enough as an assistant to qualify to take the exam. Uncle Li, who had nearly twenty years of experience as a driver, became my coach. He drew up a training plan for me. When we were both off shift at the same time, he took me to the yard and put me through my paces on an idle locomotive.

After about two weeks of this, I thought I'd got it. As an assistant I rode with a driver nearly every day, watching the way he operated and listening to his explanations of technical theory. Now, with this added practice, I felt pretty confident.

So one night after work I bought two tickets for *The Red Detachment of Women* and invited Kuei-lan. It was a film we both were dying to see. But Kuei-lan hesitated.

"Don't you have to prepare for your exam?" she asked. "My pa will scold you if you slack off."

"I'm all prepared," I said.

How was I to know that Uncle Li would come home from his run that night and call for me to practise in the loco yard? My ma said I had gone to the pictures with Kuei-lan. He left without making any comment.

When I got home, my ma told me about it. I was sorry I had disappointed him, but when I saw him the next day, he was as pleasant as ever, and I relaxed. He probably knows I really primed for that exam, I thought.

The next time I came back from a run it was in the morning. Young Chao, our fireman, said he noticed the stream behind our division was full of fish. He wanted me to go fishing with him after lunch. Everyone knows I'm crazy about the sport. When I'm out with my rod and line I forget everything — even food. Of course I agreed to go.

It was nearly dark when we got back. My ma said Uncle Li had been looking for me again. I didn't pay much attention. After sup-

per I began mending my rod. Kuei-lan came in and said Uncle Li wanted to see me. I went over with her. They live only two rows of flats away.

Uncle Li was sitting on the right side of the table smoking his pipe. I've never seen him sit on the left. The pipe had a long stem and a small bronze bowl. Kuei-lan's mother told me that when my pa was alive, he always sat on the left side of the table when he and Uncle Li talked. Uncle Li kept that place vacant in my father's memory. He said it made him feel as if my pa was still there. The pipe had been left to him by my father. Though everyone began living much better after the People's Republic was founded and could afford small luxuries, Uncle Li didn't switch to cigarettes but stuck to his pipe. By now a big chip had been worn off the front of the bronze bowl.

Uncle Li motioned with his pipe to the chair on the left side of the table. After a moment of silence, he asked, "Ready for your test?" He didn't look at me.

I hesitated, "Just about."

"Good." He refilled his pipe. "Let me ask you. Suppose you're out on a run and the connecting rod breaks, what do you do?"

I hadn't the faintest idea. "I never thought it might break," I stammered. Beads of perspiration stood out on my forehead.

Uncle Li gave me a piercing glance, then lit his pipe. His hand trembled as he held the match to the bowl. Except for his puffing on the pipe, the room was still. I felt very uncomfortable but couldn't think of anything to say. I looked pleadingly at Kuei-lan sitting opposite, hoping that she would break the silence. But her eyes were fixed on her toes.

At long last, Uncle Li spoke. "Ching," he asked, "do you know how your father died?"

I was surprised. Of course I knew. Uncle Li himself had told me many times. It was exactly twenty years ago, during the Japanese occupation. My pa had been a secret Communist. The workers went out on strike and a traitor betrayed him. He was killed by the enemy.

I said: "Yes, I know, Uncle Li."

"I'll never forget what he said when he was arrested," Uncle Li mused. I wasn't sure whether he was saying this to me or to himself. I had been only three at the time. My mother told me of my pa's request to Uncle Li: "I'm putting this child in your care. When he grows up, tell him what sort of man his father was, let him follow his father's path."

I reddened with embarrassment.

"What are you picking on the boy for?" Kuei-lan's mother had come into the room. "He hasn't done anything."

"I don't mean to be hard, Ching," Uncle Li said kindly, "but a fellow has to sweat when he's young. It's not merely to pass a test. Hauling trains all over the country day after day is a serious responsibility. It needs a lot of skill."

I understood what Uncle Li meant. Ordinarily there was nothing wrong with seeing a film or going fishing in your spare time. But when you were preparing to take a job that involved the safety of the people and their goods, you ought to really work at it. My pa and thousands like him had died for the revolution, but was I doing my best to carry on where they'd left off?

From then on, I plugged away at my study and practice. A month later, I passed the locomotive driver's exam. But I still wasn't allowed to operate alone. For the next four months I continued learning from the driver whose assistant I was.

Why was Uncle Li sending for me today? I let Kuei-lan go back first, to give me time to think. "Go on, Ching," my mother urged. "Don't keep him waiting."

As I walked over, I reviewed in my mind my work of the past four months. I had been very diligent. I didn't want to upset Uncle Li again.

He was sitting in his chair on the right side of the table, smoking his pipe, as usual. On the table was a platter of roasted pumpkin seeds. Kuei-lan's mother said they came from their own pumpkins, and she had asked Kuei-lan to roast them especially for me. I sat down and helped myself to a handful. Uncle Li looked relaxed and happy. As I nibbled the pumpkin seeds, he asked:

"Suppose we let you take a locomotive out on your own, what do you say?"

"I could use a few days more practice," I replied.

He laughed. "Don't give me that. When you're ready to operate alone, you're ready."

I laughed too. In a more serious voice, he said:

"Traffic is heavier now that it's winter. We don't have enough drivers. The leadership has decided to let you start. Director Sun talked it over with me today. He's going to put you on my locomotive. Any objections?"

"That's wonderful." I nearly jumped out of my chair for joy.

"Your pipe's gone out, pa. Let me light it for you," said Kuei-lan. She was obviously pleased for my sake.

Uncle Li took a few deep puffs. "It's an important job, Ching," he said.

"Don't worry," I assured him. "I'll definitely do it well."

"Being skilled technically isn't enough," he reminded me gravely. "You must never forget that you're working in the service of the country and the people."

As I was leaving, Uncle Li told me that he was going out on the morning run the next day. When he returned, I was to take over.

I couldn't fall asleep for hours that night. I was too excited. After my pa was killed, Uncle Li treated me like a son, and I always looked on him as a father. In the difficult years before liberation, he did his very best to help raise and educate me. He was always telling me never to forget my dead father, that when I grew up I would carry on his cause. I lived at home with my widowed mother, but if Uncle Li ever had anything good to eat at his house, he was sure to send for me. If he had clothes made for Kuei-lan, he always had some made for me also.

But he was as strict as he was loving. I remember once I was quite airy about a bad mark I got in a test at school. Uncle Li was furious. "Is that any way for the son of a working-class martyr to behave?" he demanded.

I recalled that remark as I lay in my bed. Would I really be able to do a first-rate job and prove myself worthy?

Two days later at ten in the morning, Uncle Li returned with his locomotive. It was time for me to take over. I had been sitting in the waiting room with my knapsack since six in the morning. At nine I went with Young Chao, my fireman, into the locomotive shed. Exactly at ten, Uncle Li rolled in. I clambered into the cab the moment he stopped.

"Here we are, Uncle Li," I shouted.

"Hm," he said. "Check over the locomotive." He climbed down.

We looked at the fire chamber. The flame bed had already been cleaned. We looked at the tool box. All the tools were neatly and cleanly in place. Whatever we looked at was in order.

"I've never taken over a locomotive where everything was already done for us so well," said Young Chao.

"Uncle Li is famous among the drivers," I said. "They know that whoever takes over his locomotive has only to get in and drive. They don't have to worry about a thing."

"Ching," Uncle Li called from below, "let Young Chao go and draw the oil. You and I will inspect together."

Uncle Li had me go first, while he followed behind, our hammers ringing in rhythmic cadence. His locomotive certainly was as well kept as people said. Every part was wiped till it shone like a mirror, every nut and bolt fit tightly. Inspecting here was a mere formality, I thought. I speeded up and soon left Uncle Li behind.

"Are you inspecting this locomotive or running a hundred metre dash?" Uncle Li demanded.

I paused sheepishly.

"Checking a locomotive has to be done as carefully as embroidery. Everything you're hauling is for national construction. Just think what it would cost the country if anything went wrong on your run. You can't be careless the first day you're on your own. Who said you don't have to be careful when you take over a locomotive from me? You're going to be doing that for some time. If you keep on being sloppy, you're bound to get into trouble."

Embarrassed, I scratched my head. He must have heard what I said to Young Chao. I had sworn I'd do a good job, but when it came to the details, I was being too lax.

After we finished inspecting, we got back into the cab. Uncle Li told me all about the "temperament" of the engine and how to cope with it. Only after the signal man had given me the green flag several times did he finally get off.

My heart beat like mad as I sat down in the driver's seat — I don't know whether it was because I was excited or scared. I pulled the whistle cord. The sound wasn't as sharp as usual. It quavered a bit.

"Steady down, Ching," Uncle Li called from below.

On hearing his voice, I grew calmer. I advanced the throttle and the locomotive began to roll. The sound of the wheels seemed to thunder in my ears. My face felt burning hot, in spite of the wintry air.

With the locomotive in motion, I became more settled. As we were leaving the yard, I looked back. Uncle Li was standing there, watching. It reminded me of my first day at school. He had stood at the school gate, following me with his eyes as I entered the classroom. My confidence mounted.

We stopped at the station. As I prepared to pull out, I was conscious of someone standing behind me. I turned around. There was Uncle Li. I hadn't heard him climb into the cab.

"I'll go with you a couple of stations," he said quietly.

"But you haven't had any rest. You've only just come back from a run yourself."

"I'll stay with you five stations at most. Now, on this first section there's a 0.022 gradient. The section after that is better. After the fifth station, it's virtually level. You can go on yourself from there."

He had been on duty for over twelve hours. I knew he must be tired. I looked at his greying temples and tried to persuade him to go home. But he was very insistent. Actually, I was glad to have him. It was my first run, and I was a little tense. Having him with me gave me courage.

On my next run he again accompanied me five stations. He went along on the runs after that as well — sometimes for five stations, sometimes four, sometimes only one, going back on another train.



I tried to stop him, but to no avail. People said he always did that for a month or two with the drivers he trained until they were absolutely sure of those first five sections, especially the first. No wonder his "graduates" were all so good.

A month passed, but Uncle Li showed no sign of leaving my train, although I thought I was managing pretty well. He looked quite tired. Finally, after thinking it all out, I offered my arguments why it was no longer necessary for him to remain with me.

He listened, puffing on his pipe. "All right," he said. "I can't follow you around for ever. You'll have to make your own way."

I hadn't expected it to be so easy.

He stood by the side of the track watching me pull out of the shed when I set forth on my first run without him. As I was leaving the yard I looked back. He was still there. I waved to him and mentally promised: I'll deliver this freight safely and on time. Don't worry, Uncle Li.

But things don't always turn out as you plan. It was early morning and the rails were coated with frost. The wheels spun without gripping. We were four minutes late reaching the first station. By the time we got back and went off shift, I didn't want to see anybody. I ran home.

After supper Kuei-lan dropped in and said her father wanted me to come over. I went with her. Uncle Li had just returned from a meeting of model workers in the city and was finishing his meal.

"Late on this run, weren't you?" he asked as soon as he saw me. "Yes. Four minutes late."

"It must be that tricky first section. Come on, let's analyse it."

I assumed he wanted to hear a report of how I drove, but instead he began telling me in detail — where I had released steam too late, where I hadn't picked up speed soon enough, where I should have dropped sand... I was amazed. How did he know?

"You've got to use your head," he said. "Whatever work you do, just going through the motions isn't enough."

After that, each time I came home from a run, he helped me analyse the way I negotiated the first section, what I did right and what I did wrong, as clearly as if he had been right there with me. I couldn't figure out how he did it.

That night we had our first snowfall. It stopped at dawn, but the sky was still overcast. From my seat in the driver's cab I could see nothing but white — the city, the country, the hills, the streams. It was a beautiful sight. The rails were like a black track in a white athletic stadium. The locomotive, with its long line of cars behind, was like a handicapped runner.

We left the city and started up the 0.022 grade. I told Young Chao I wanted plenty of steam, and opened the valve wider. The engine let out a roar that shook the snow loose from the slope on our right and reverberated through the valley.

"Hey, look over there," Young Chao suddenly exclaimed.

My eyes were fixed on the rails ahead. Without moving, I asked, "What is it?"

"Look," he cried. "Don't you know who that is?" Young Chao came up beside me and pointed at the road below us to the left.

About two hundred metres away stood a man leaning on a bicycle. He wore a black padded hat. So big and sturdy was he that his blue padded overcoat didn't quite reach his knees. In spite of the distance I recognized his bushy brows. It was Uncle Li.

"What's he doing out here, in this snow?" Young Chao demanded.

But even as I asked myself the same question, I knew the answer. So that's how he could analyse my every move on this first section so well. It was only forty minutes from home by bicycle. By standing there for a few moments he could see exactly how I operated along the entire section.

Hundreds of things surged up in me that I wanted to shout to Uncle Li. But I was so overcome with emotion I couldn't get a word out. I pulled the whistle hard, and when the surrounding hills echoed with its clarion call, it was like a great heroic chorale.

*Translated by Sidney Shapiro  
Illustrated by Lu Yen*

## The Sun Shines Bright

August is a wet month in the north. It was a fine dazzling day at noon but a burst of thunder by dusk brought a sudden downpour. Lightning followed claps of thunder and the rains came thick and fast as if the heavenly stream was overturned.

Most people in Taohowan Village turned in right after supper on this dark, dismal night. Old Hsu Kuan and his family were the only exceptions. After the dishes were washed, Aunt Hsu tidied the room, placed a low table on the *kang* and lit a bright kerosene lamp. They waited patiently for Li Shu-ying, teacher of the part-study part-farming primary school. She came every evening to give Hsu's crippled boy a lesson. Hsu Kuan was a former poor peasant and the boy, Hsueh-chun, was his only son. Paralysed in the legs since babyhood, Hsueh-chun could neither stand nor walk and had spent his past thirteen years huddled up on the *kang*.

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Wang Chiao is a young writer of short stories.

Taohowan, encircled by streams and rivulets, was something of an island, completely cut off from the outside world in summers. As there was no school in Taohowan, it was difficult enough for healthy children, who had to go to school in neighbouring villages. A crippled child could only sit on his *kang* and day-dream.

A few days before, Li Shu-ying had come to the village from the county town. In a burst of enthusiasm, the villagers put up a thatched cottage of three rooms and the part-study part-farming primary school was ready in a matter of days. The school-age children were all delighted but poor Hsueh-chun remained on his *kang*. From his window he watched the other kids trotting gaily off to school, his heart full of envy, and he glanced at his own paralysed legs with a sigh. His mother knew what was on his mind, but there was nothing she could do except cheer him up the best way she could.

The young teacher soon heard about the crippled boy's yearnings. She took it to heart and went the next day to visit the Hsus. "Since you can't come to school," she said to Hsueh-chun, "I'll come to you. I'll bring my lessons right to your door."

Shu-ying was a recent graduate of the part-study part-farming teachers' school in the province and had come to Taohowan, determined that not a single peasant's child should remain illiterate.

Hsu Kuan's family of three sat waiting under the lamplight. Would the teacher be able to come? It was raining so hard. They waited until the bright lamp-shade was fuzzy with smoke, but still there wasn't a sign of her.

"Let's turn in," Aunt Hsu proposed. "I'm afraid she can't come today."

"Let's wait a bit longer," said Hsu Kuan. "I'm sure she'll come."

"It's pitch black outside and what with lightning and thunder and this pouring rain I'm afraid she can't get here," said Aunt Hsu.

Old Hsu Kuan glanced at the window but made no reply. He took off the glass lamp-shade and began wiping it gently with a clean towel.

"What makes you so sure she's going to come?" asked his wife.

"I understand her now."

"What do you mean?"

"You have to look at things from the very beginning," said Hsu Kuan as he placed the lamp-shade back on the rack. "Take the day she first arrived. She was a newcomer and complete stranger here, but she did not bother to ask where she was to eat and live. She simply dropped her kit-bag, rolled up her trouser-legs, and jumped into the puddle with the others who were building the school cottage. I found her doing the heaviest and dirtiest work — heaving up the central beam, tamping the earthen walls and spreading the bricks with mud. She worked on right till the school cottage was finished. Now, tell me, have you ever heard of such a teacher?"

"Well, if that's what you mean, I understand her too. She really has put her heart into doing things for us peasants."

"You've hit the nail on the head," said Hsu Kuan. "What a warm heart she has, going from door to door giving lessons to the children at home. Take that Chen girl, Chubby, who has so much housework she can't go to school. So what does the teacher do? She helps make the fire, do the cooking, feed the pigs and do Chubby's sewing, and now the little girl has time to study. Then, there's that boy Iron Ball. He always hides when he sees the teacher coming. I saw them at noon today. Iron Ball was returning to the barn with the cattle and Shu-ying was hot on his heels. Just tell me, have you ever heard of a teacher like that? That's why I say I really understand her now. She won't be stopped by rain or thunder; she'll be here even though it's raining cats and dogs."

"But tell me, dad, did teacher finally catch Iron Ball?" asked Hsueh-chun tugging at his father's sleeve.

"Let me finish," said Hsu Kuan, lighting his pipe and taking a few puffs. Before he could continue, the door squeaked open and a slim young girl entered, smiling. Holding her shoes in one hand, she padded in on bare feet, trouser-legs rolled up to the knees. Rain water was still trickling down from the seams of her raincoat.

"Oh my dear girl, look how wet you are," said Aunt Hsu hurrying down from the *kang*. "You could have let him go without his lessons for one evening." She stretched out a hand to take the raincoat.

"Don't bother to come down," said Li Shu-ying and deftly hung up her raincoat in the outside room.

"Now let's begin our lesson, Hsueh-chun, it's getting late," she said, sitting down by the *kang* table.

The old couple sat silently watching. Their feelings were mixed. The young teacher's warm heart filled them with gratitude but they also felt badly about their son, paralysed for life. What use would it be even if he learned hundreds of books?

Li Shu-ying did not know what was in the minds of the old couple but went about her lesson earnestly. She took out a stack of cardboard squares with words written on them, ranged them neatly on the table and began to teach the child: first to read them, then their meaning and finally how to write them.

After a while she noticed that the child was not as attentive as usual. Perhaps he was sleepy, for it was getting late. But no, his dark eyes were twinkling brightly.

"What's on your mind?" she suddenly asked.

"I'm just wondering whether you caught Iron Ball at noon today."

Teacher Li laughed. "Why should you want to know about that?"

"Cause Iron Ball's my very best friend. He knows I feel cooped up here on the *kang* all day so he caught me two lovely larks for company. They sing beautifully. Look!" He pointed to a bird cage hanging from the beam with two furry little larks curled up in sleep.

"That friend of yours is really a wild one. I ran and ran and nearly caught up. But just as my hands reached him, he jumped into the river with a splash and swam to the other side."

"Aiya, lessons are good things, it's silly of him to run away," said Hsueh-chun.

"It's not Iron Ball's fault," said Li Shu-ying.

"Whose fault is it then?"

"Mine."

"Why should it be your fault?" asked the child, his eyes wide in wonder.

"Every time I see him, I'm at him to learn his lessons. When he runs away I'm right after him. The trouble is he doesn't know the

advantages of being able to read and write. Forcing him is like picking a melon before it's ripe."

"But what else can you do? He's always playing hide-and-seek with you."

"I went specially to talk to his parents this afternoon, then I asked the other commune members about him. I found out that the boy is crazy about horses. He looks after the team's livestock, doesn't he? I went to his house this evening to talk to him. At the sight of me, he crawled out of his quilt and tried to get away. I told him I wasn't there to give him a lesson, he needn't hide."

"But what did you want with him if not to give him a lesson?"

"I asked him how that brown mare he was tending happened to die a few days ago. Guess how he reacted to my question."

"What did he say?"

"He burst into tears."

"Yes," Old Hsu Kuan cut in, "that child is wild but he's really good to the horses. When that brown mare died, he felt so bad he couldn't eat for two whole days."

"Would that bring the mare back to life?"

"But what else could the poor kid do? We are so far from anywhere and all that water round us makes travelling difficult. By the time we got a vet in, it was too late to save her."

"Why don't you train someone locally to become a vet?" asked Shu-ying.

"Pooh," said Hsu Kuan, "don't you know us well enough? Take a look round, have we got the sort of material for that?"

Shu-ying laughed. "The right sort of material is not born but made. Everyone has to learn to become anything."

"That's true, of course," said Hsu Kuan.

"It took me quite a while to explain that to Iron Ball," said Shu-ying. "I wanted him to understand that there are lots of things he needs to learn and do. He loves horses and is good to them, but that's not enough. He should learn how to cure them when they get sick. He was finally convinced and promised me that he would not hide from me again."

"So that's why you came so late this evening," said Hsueh-chun, but for some unknown reason, he swallowed a lump in his throat and tears welled up.

"What's the matter?" asked Shu-ying in alarm.

"Everyone else can become a really useful person but what use will I be?" asked Hsueh-chun.

Li Shu-ying wondered too. What was the use of teaching the child if all he could do was sit at home? He could study until his hair turned grey but what use was that? The boy had a point there. Why hadn't she thought about it before?

"What a thankless child you are," said Aunt Hsu, tossing her son a handkerchief. She was quite upset herself. "You must try to be content with your lot."

"Don't blame him, aunt," said Li Shu-ying, "he is quite right."

"He's lucky to have food and drink and warm clothes to wear," said Aunt Hsu. "Had he been born before liberation we would not have been able to keep him alive. And now you come every day to give him lessons. What else does he want?"

"Children nowadays think far ahead, aunt," said Shu-ying. "They're not content to live for food and comfort alone."

"But what can he do?" asked old Aunt Hsu, wiping her eyes with the hem of her tunic.

The lesson did not go on that night. Shu-ying murmured a few words to comfort the crippled boy and went off pensively.

The next morning dawned clear and bright. Sunlight, reflecting off the puddles that filled the road, lit up every corner of the little village.

Immediately after breakfast, Shu-ying hurried to the Hsu house. Aunt Hsu was washing up. "What is it, dear?" she asked, surprised to see the teacher there at that early hour. "Did you forget something here last night?"

"No, aunt, I've come to take Hsueh-chun to school," said Shu-ying.

Aunt Hsu could hardly believe her ears. "What was that you said, teacher?"

Shu-ying said she wanted to carry Hsueh-chun to school on her back.

"Oh, no, dear, you must be out of your mind," protested Aunt Hsu in a quavering voice. She was deeply touched by the teacher's kindness. "How can we let you carry that poor crippled child on your back?"

Shu-ying pulled back the door curtain and started for the inner room. Aunt Hsu was flustered. Without stopping even to wipe her hands, she tried to stop Shu-ying. She felt that she simply couldn't let the young teacher who had already done so much for them put herself to such trouble. Hsu Kuan came in and was surprised to find his wife arguing heatedly with the teacher. When he heard the whole story he too was very stirred.

"No, girl, we can't let you wear yourself out for us like this. You're very thoughtful and kind, but we can't let you do it."

"The child's right about what he said last night," said Shu-ying.

"Oh, he doesn't know how lucky he is already," said Aunt Hsu, "don't you listen to him."

"At first I thought it was enough if I came and gave the child lessons at home. Now I realize that I haven't fulfilled my duty as a teacher. I want to take him into the classroom so that he can train his mind and his character together with the other children. Home is not the place to do it."

"My dear girl, you are quite right, of course," said Hsu Kuan. "But this means doing it every day."

Shu-ying saw that they were weakening so she said, "Don't worry, it won't be hard. Just let me carry him to school." She walked over to the *kang* and began to get Hsueh-chun ready.

Aunt Hsu tried to delay. Pointing outside, she said, "Look, that shower last night has left puddles in the yard, the road must be even more wet and slippery. It's going to be tough walking. Why don't you start carrying him when the roads are better?"

Shu-ying laughed. "Getting children to school and teaching them is my job. What sort of a teacher would I be if I did it only on dry days?"

"You seem to have all the answers," Aunt Hsu chuckled, admitting defeat.

Shu-ying helped Hsueh-chun put on his shoes, swung him up on her back and went out. Aunt Hsu followed close at her heels, splash-



ing through the mud and water. "Be careful, dear, the road is slippery," she urged, "careful now."

Yellow sunflowers were in full bloom after the rain, their golden heads turned like smiling faces towards the bright sun.

"How lovely they are," remarked Hsueh-chun, gazing avidly at everything round him. He felt like a swallow who had just left its nest to soar into the sky. The horizon loomed broad and high and the whole world looked new and fresh. Even the very air seemed sweeter. He began to sing happily:

The commune is like a red, red sun,  
And commune members are sunflowers....

Suddenly he put his head on Shu-ying's shoulder and lapsed into silence.

"Why don't you go on singing?" asked Shu-ying, surprised.

"Everybody's watching us," Hsueh-chun whispered into her ear.

Shu-ying looked up. True enough, many eyes were peering at them intently. People peeped out from windows. They stood in their doorways, along the road, under the golden sunflowers. Many curious eyes were fixed on them and there were whispered comments.

"Don't be flustered," Shu-ying told Hsueh-chun. "This is our first day out and people are surprised. They won't eye us so curiously tomorrow and everyone will be glad when they realize that now you have the chance to go to school like other children."

It was more than a *li* from the Hsu house to the school. Shu-ying was slender and slight in build. The half-grown boy on her back was quite a burden. She slipped once or twice, trudging laboriously through the several inches of water covering the road, but she regained her footing and plodded on, not even puckering her brows. At last she marched triumphantly into the classroom.

The children were taken aback at the sight that met their eyes. "What is all this?" their glowing upturned faces and bright shining eyes seemed to ask. The next moment, however, realization dawned and they were moved by the selfless devotion of their teacher. They noisily got to their feet and crowded round their new school-mate. One child offered him a pencil, another an eraser, a third a penknife. . .

dozens of friendly hands stretched out to welcome him into their midst.

Hsueh-chun looked from one face to another, his lonely heart warming to the eager friendship the other children offered. He was like a young rice-shoot parched after a long period of drought and suddenly refreshed by rain. His face flushed, he eyed the classroom and everything in it with deep feelings.

The joy and friendliness of the children round her made Shu-ying forget her fatigue and wet feet.

That afternoon the children had one of their regular practical work sessions. Since it had just rained they went to help the production team collect green compost.

"Wait for me here in the classroom," Shu-ying told Hsueh-chun. "I'll get the others started, then I'll come back for you."

The other children, carrying baskets, shovels and spades, hustled off.

Alone in the classroom, Hsueh-chun enviously watched them going down the street. How he wished he could go with them and join in their work.

Shu-ying returned not long afterwards. She had assigned jobs to the other children. "Come along," she told Hsueh-chun. "We're going to the production team too."

"What will I do there?" asked the little fellow.

"Work, of course."

"But what can I do?"

"Lots of things."

Just then the boy's father entered. "You don't know what a stir you created walking down the street with the child on your back," he told Shu-ying with a broad grin.

"What did people say?"

"Some said: Shu-ying is a good girl, she's very devoted to the people. Others said: She's truly a good teacher trained by Chairman Mao. But there are also people who said: That girl's so slight she can't even stand straight in the wind; how's she going to carry such a big boy to school day after day? Probably finds it fun right now, but she'll have enough in a day or two."

Shu-ying laughed. "It's good for me to hear that."

"Why?" asked Hsu Kuan.

"I know that people are keeping an eye on me."

Hsu Kuan laughed too. "What a big heart you have, girl."

Shu-ying carried the boy to a row of houses in front of the production team office. There on the *kang* sat an old man weaving baskets, another spinning hemp rope and yet another tying the rope into halters. Shu-ying put Hsueh-chun down in front of the old man weaving baskets.

"Watch carefully how he does it," she said to Hsueh-chun. "See whether this isn't something you could do."

The old man had his legs folded under him, but his hands were working busily.

"Grandpa," Hsueh-chun called, drawing closer to him. "Will I be able to learn to do this?"

"What's so difficult about weaving baskets?" countered the old man. "If you put your heart in it, you'll learn in a couple of days. Look, you do it this way." The old man began on a new basket and explained step by step.

"This is not hard to learn either," said the old man spinning rope, beckoning to the boy. "Look, all you have to do is stuff in the hemp with one hand and turn the wheel with the other. I'm sure you could do it."

"And look at this," cut in the third man. "This is also something you can do sitting down. It's very easy to learn too."

"See that rolling field?" said Hsueh-chun's father, who had followed him into the room. He pointed out of the window. "Beyond that is a little river. Some day we'll put up an electric pumping station there. Then all you'll have to do is sit and press a button and water will spurt out of the tubes and turn our land into irrigated fields. You'll see how our crop output rises."

"There are so many things I could do!" cried the boy, his eyes bright with new-found joy. He looked at the people in the room and then out of the window, but his eyes returned to the old man weaving baskets. "Teach me to do this," he pleaded. "I'll learn the other things later."

A babble of voices sounded outside. Iron Ball had come with some other children. He tied his brown horse to a post by the door and came in to ask Shu-ying for a new batch of word cards.

"Why aren't you at your old game of hide-and-seek again?" asked Hsu Kuan, teasingly.

"If I go on doing that, who's going to be the village vet?" The tone of Iron Ball's reply was so righteous that everybody laughed.

Shu-ying continued carrying Hsueh-chun to school. She did it with more and more confidence as she saw Hsueh-chun's pale face getting rosier every day and his character blossoming in the midst of friendly school-mates. One morning when she came to fetch him she paused to chat with Aunt Hsu in the outer room. Iron Ball and Chubby slipped stealthily in, and Hsueh-chun crept over to the edge of the *kang* and wrapped his arms around Iron Ball's neck. With Chubby by his side, Iron Ball strode manfully to the door.

Shu-ying hastened over. "Leave him to me, he's too heavy for you, Iron Ball."



But Iron Ball paid no attention. Laughing and giggling, the two children reached the door and placed Hsueh-chun in a wooden cart with four wheels.

"Where did you get that?" asked Shu-ying in surprise. "We mustn't take the team's cart. They need it for their farm work."

"Our neighbours all chipped in to make it," said Hsu Kuan. "The production team gave the wheels, Chubby's mother the frame, and Iron Ball's dad the shafts. The Party secretary and I worked a whole evening putting it together. Now the children can wheel Hsueh-chun around. This will leave you free to do other work."

"Chubby can go to school too now. I've arranged to help her mother while the girl's in class," said Aunt Hsu.

Shu-ying did not know what to say. She was so happy. With the two children pulling the cart, they walked towards the school in the bright sunshine.

*Translated by Tang Sheng  
Illustrated by Yang Hsien-jang*

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*A School for the Coming Generation* ►  
(traditional painting)

by Feng Kuo-lin

Feng Kuo-lin, born in 1933 in Liaoning Province, is a graduate of the Lu Hsun Academy of Arts. Since 1951 he has been working in the Liaoning Fine Arts Publishing House. This is one of his recent works.



## Two Poems

### Storm in Chungking

Goose Peak rises sheer a thousand feet  
As treading the thunder  
I climb into dense clouds;  
Darkly splendid below  
Lies half the mountain city,  
And two storm-tossed rivers  
Lost in swirling mist.

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Lu Chi is the young author of the collection of poems *Returning to Willow Village*.

South flows the Chialing River,  
East the Yangtse,  
White mist on the water,  
Boats on the angry waves,  
And men amid the foam.

Chanties piercing the wind and rain  
Ask the mountain town:  
How much steel have you left?  
How much more rice do you need?

I await the city's answer,  
But Chungking is lost in the mist;  
And only the hooting of sirens  
Floats out from the depth of red clouds  
In the forest of smoke-stacks.

Those flames deep in the red clouds,  
Are they furnace fires?  
Or flashes of lightning?  
That pall over the smoke-stacks,  
Is it smog or mist?

All is obscured by dense clouds, serried chimneys,  
Only the sirens sound to speed the storm;  
Faster pelts the rain then,  
Harder blows the wind,  
As if to overturn the Heavenly Stream  
To wash this mountain town.

But when the rivers are washed as clear as glass,  
The hills as green as jade,  
When wind and clouds disperse,  
Mist and rain melt away;  
And when the storm  
Has passed over this mountain town,  
Its new steel mills loom  
Like hills smiling in the sun.

### The Chungking Ferry

From the south bank to the north,  
From the north bank to the south,  
Ferries shuttle to and fro,  
Weaving the far-flung waters of the river.

By day  
They trail long wakes of foam,  
By night  
They make a chain of signal lights.

By moonlight or by starlight,  
Alike in fog or wind,  
Those ferries cross  
And carry  
Boatloads of steel workers,  
Boatloads of peasants.



The hills are now ahead  
And now behind;  
The city, now behind  
And now ahead,  
As the river sweeps away to meet the sky.  
Ah,  
Is the ferry heading towards the city,  
Or is the city circling round the ferry?

While you cross once and back  
More hills grow green with trees;  
Another two-way trip,  
And more new storeyed buildings have sprung up,  
While in mid-stream the steamers hoot.  
The mountain town holds steady on its course,  
Unchecked by angry waves.

From the south bank to the north,  
From the north bank to the south  
Plies ferry after ferry,  
Each port of arrival a new starting point.

Each ferry crossing  
Is short,  
But the mountain city  
Will travel a long, long way.

*Translated by Yang Hsien-yi*

## Bitter Herb

Our two previous instalments of this novel depicted how the peasants in Wang-kuan Village tried and executed a powerful landlord and traitor and established an anti-Japanese democratic government during the War of Resistance Against Japan in the thirties. Chuan-tzu, a village girl steeled in these struggles, became a fine revolutionary. Her younger brother Teh-chiang joined the Eighth Route Army and her mother also took a keen part in various revolutionary activities. Together with the local guerrilla forces, the villagers fought against the Japanese aggressors, Chinese traitors and secret agents. The war was cruel and harsh. Wang Chien-chih, a secret agent who assumed the post of the principal of the primary school, plotted to sabotage the people's rule. The Japanese army launched repeated "mopping-up" campaigns, during which the deputy village head Chi-tzu and his wife died heroically for the cause while Hsing-mei, chairman of the district women's association, was brutally killed. Many peasant homes were broken up, but steeled in the flames of war the staunch people dealt continuous blows at the Japanese and puppet armies. During one enemy attack, due to information given by Wang Chien-chih, Chuan-tzu's mother was captured. The enemy insisted that she tell them the whereabouts of the munitions works of the Eighth Route Army as well as the names of the Eighth Route Army cadres.

What would Mother do? This is where our new instalment begins.

## IX

The fierce lightning failed to tear the thick black clouds asunder; peals of thunder rolled through the lowering skies, and sheets of rain came pouring down, obliterating heaven and earth, hissing as though heaven itself were weeping for the misfortunes of humanity. Night, pitch-black and cloud-muffled, seemed to be the sole sovereign of the universe.

Mother slowly came back to a muddled consciousness roused by the rattle of the rain on the corrugated iron roof. She was still alive. Where was she? On the *kang* at home? No, it was icy cold beneath her; was she on the floor at home? No, this was a concrete floor; the floor at home was earthen. With an effort she opened her eyes. Why was there no light? Were the children all asleep? No.... Ah! This was Wang Wei-yi's house! How did she get here? After a moment reality came back to her shocked senses. It was Hsing-mei, not she, who had been killed. That sweet girl would never walk again among the living!

Mother began to cry, bitterly.

Ah! She had been arrested. She now realized that she was in prison and she had been tortured many times. She ached from head to foot. She was tightly bound and unable to move.

Soon the door opened, and two puppet soldiers dragged her out. The rain beat upon her face, and she became conscious of a burning thirst. She opened her mouth and licked the raindrops. She continued to lick avidly at the rain-water which streamed down her face, after she had entered the big hall.

The Japanese officer greeted her with feigned geniality, "Hurry up, untie her." Then he invited her to sit down.

Mother had been bound so long and so tightly that her limbs were numb, and she had no power to move even when she was untied. She was pulled over to a chair and pushed down on it. The bright glare of the light in the room forced her to close her eyes. Her head seemed to be in a whirl. It was some time before she could clearly see what was in the room.

It had once been Wang Wei-yi's reception hall, and was now used as the headquarters of the puppet troops. Under the white incandescence of the pressure lamp everything in the room looked more sinister, the spotless white plaster on the walls and the red lacquered furniture.

Suddenly she saw her baby Man-tzu in the arms of a puppet soldier. He put the child down and she ran forward, her little arms outstretched.

Mother's patched and faded blue tunic and black trousers were torn to shreds covered with splashes of blood. The long, loose strands of her hair were matted like untidy straw. Her face, the kind mother's face, was streaked with bruises. She stopped in alarm when she saw her daughter. But she had no time to consider; her love for her child flared up. Forgetting her bodily pain, she stepped forward and embraced her little daughter, then from long habit she raised the bib pinned around the child's neck and wiped its nose. As though suddenly mindful of her duties, she touched the withered golden sow-thistle flower in Man-tzu's hair, and tucked it securely in the little tuft tied up with a red ribbon. Then she stroked and kissed the child's tender cheeks. Man-tzu wailed, and her eyes widened with fear when she saw her mother's bloody condition. She snuggled into Mother's arms and they clung to each other, hearts beating to the same rhythm, as though one!

The time had come. At a sign, from the Japanese major, Interpreter Yang picked up some sweets. Advancing towards the mother and child, he said, "Little friend, would you like a sweet?"

Mother stopped caressing her child, and her heart froze as she realized why her enemies had brought the baby to her.... She hugged the child closer and closer, as though her poor tortured body would absorb and shelter this flesh of her flesh. Man-tzu seemed to sense her mother's fears and clung tighter to her neck, burrowing her head into Mother's shoulder.

Seeing Interpreter Yang approaching like some huge loathsome reptile about to devour them, Mother stepped back in horror.

"Hah, don't be afraid," said the interpreter, pulling Man-tzu away and stuffing the sweets into her hand. "Eat them up, little friend.

The Imperial Army loves little children, particularly little Chinese children."

The Japanese major, stroking his little moustache, spoke in broken Chinese, "So. We Nippon nation most kind, most kind!"

Mother's anger flared up again, and she cried out, "Child, don't eat it! We don't eat dogs' leavings. Throw it in his face!"

At her mother's words, Man-tzu's little face set in a frown, and she threw the sweets at the enemy, saying, "I don't want it. Traitor, take it!" By chance they struck the Japanese in the eye.

The Japanese major was enraged. Mildness, he saw, was of no avail. He wiped his eye, gabbling rapidly in Japanese.

Interpreter Yang's face hardened as he said to Mother, "Old woman, you should think what you are doing, the imperial major has even allowed you to see your child. Very well, I'll tell you plainly: If you love your own child. . . ." He spoke the last words with great emphasis, then paused and looked searchingly at Mother. He saw her start violently, and then continued, "Good, you have not much to worry about. Just tell us where the machinery from the munitions works is buried, then we will not even touch your child; we will see that your injuries are properly treated, and also reward you. If you do not speak, humph! You know that when the Imperial Army is angered, it is capable of many things!"

Although Mother had been expecting this, she could scarcely conceal her terror when she heard the words spoken. She trembled, leaning weakly back against the chair. As a mother, she would willingly tear out her own heart for her child, but how could she protect Man-tzu now! She could not let her baby go, the child was her life, her everything! What mother could watch her child being killed and not move a finger to save her? No, she could not do that!

Mother hugged the baby closer and stared intently into her face. Man-tzu seemed to understand. Her wise round eyes fixed unblinkingly upon her mother, she tightened her arms around her mother's neck and wailed, "Mum. . . ."

Dear Heaven, she thought, such a thing could not be done! Mother's tears flowed, and she sobbed helplessly. . . . The child,

seeing her mother cry, also began to weep. Mother quickly controlled her sobs, "Baby, don't. . . don't cry. . . ." She knew what their captors would do to the child, and she could not look on while her child suffered their tortures. She wanted to do everything she could to protect her baby.

Interpreter Yang shouted, "Answer quickly: Do you want the child or want the munitions works? Answer!"

"I want both the child and the works. I can only die once," said Mother defiantly.

"Fine heroics!" Interpreter Yang got flustered.

The Japanese major's patience was exhausted. He roared out an order. Immediately Wang Chu, Wang Liu-tzu and several others rushed in, and tore Man-tzu from Mother's arms. Man-tzu struggled and howled.

Like a mad woman, Mother rushed towards her child, her grey hair streaming behind her. She was wrenched back by two of her captors.

The whip lashed across the baby's tender flesh, leaving a bloody streak with each blow. Soon she had screamed herself hoarse.

"Will you tell?" demanded the torturers.

One by one the little girl's fingers were broken.

Mother swooned. . . .

When Mother came round, she gave one cry and rushed to her baby, but was again dragged back.

She must save her baby; she must protect the works! She clenched her teeth until she shuddered; she gripped her hands so tightly that the fingers grew numb.

When she could no longer hear the child's cries, Mother seemed more composed. She sat dumbly on the floor. Her face was deathly pale; from time to time her body twitched convulsively.

Interpreter Yang saw her eyes reopen and said, "Well? There is still time."

"You, you inhuman beasts, you can give up that hope!" Mother spat out the words between her teeth.

The Japanese major slapped his hand on his sabre and roared, "*Bakuro!* Kill them!"



The clouds could not obscure the myriad stars. The Milky Way glimmered in the night-sky. A cooling breeze came from the mountains, and the night was filled with the chirping of insects.

In a side-room in Wang Wei-yi's house, which was used as a prison, Mother sat on the floor, leaning against the wall. She sat cross-legged, and her little daughter Man-tzu lay across her lap. A strand of moonlight bathed Man-tzu's body. The child's eyes were tightly closed, and her long eyelashes were entwined. A thin dribble of blood trickled from the corner of her mouth down her chin and on to her neck. Her body was lacerated, and the little red and blue check shirt and purple trousers, which Mother's clever hands had sewn, were dyed the same colour as her bloody, mangled flesh. Her right hand lay on Mother's breast. Since earliest babyhood she had always rested thus. Her fingers were broken off, and all that could be seen was a blackish-red, swollen fist. The withering sow-thistle flower was still firmly bound, with a red ribbon, in the little tuft on the right side of her head. The golden flower and the black hair were now dyed the colour of the ribbon — dyed with her own blood!

Mother was in a trance; there was a mist before her eyes. The child's cheeks twitched and her lips trembled as though she was talking in her sleep. Mother thought, that's right, Man-tzu likes to sing; probably she is singing in her dreams! How peaceful is her little face! She forgot that the child's blood was still flowing, mingling with her own. She was insensible to the child's fever which burned into her heart!

Their captors had thrown the unconscious mother and daughter into the prison cell while it was yet day. Mother had recovered consciousness, but was not able to think clearly or recognize things. The child was in a swoon. Then she opened her eyes a little.

"Baby, say mum, speak to your mum," Mother cuddled her.

"Mum," came the answer in a voice little more than a hoarse whisper. To Mother it sounded clear and sweet.

"Good baby, my good little girl!" Mother murmured through her tears, kissing her again and again.

Man-tzu did not cry, not that this tiny life knew how to bear suffering, but she had no strength left to voice it. She could only gaze at her mother's face.

Suddenly Mother felt that it was not a four-year-old babe that she held in her arms, but a grown person — Chuan-tzu, Teh-chiang, Hsiu-tzu, all of them. There was so much she wanted to tell her, she wanted to tell her everything.

"Dear baby, why don't you cry? That's right, don't cry. You have already cried enough. You know mum suffers for you. Good baby, you haven't passed a single day in peace since the day you were born. Before you were a month old, while you were still in my arms, I buried your uncle and your cousins and helped your father to escape. Baby, do you understand that, it was that swine Wang Wei-yi who drove our family to ruin and destruction! You went up hill and down dale with mum, crawling over the wild grass and wallowing in the mud, and your mum had no time to care for you properly. Baby, you have been reared on bran and wild herbs — even mum's milk was bitter. Dear baby, the root of the sow-thistle is bitter, but the flower is sweet. You have tasted so much bitterness, you should be happy hereafter!" Mother seemed to become happier as she talked to her child, and was almost light-hearted as she continued:

"Do you know, Man-tzu? Your sister, your brother, your big brother Chiang Yung-chuan who has carried you in his arms so often, big sis Hsing-mei and your big Eighth Route Army brothers who taught you to sing and played with you; do you know what they are doing? You know they are fighting the Japanese! Yes, baby, they want to fight the Japanese, want revolution, want to pull out the root of poverty to help our Chinese people who have suffered so bitterly. Dear baby, your mum is old, and I am afraid she won't live to see that happy day; but you will be grown up, grown into a big girl. Baby, don't you love flowers and pretty things? That's right, my Man-tzu likes to sing, too. By that time, just like big sis Hsing-mei told you, you will be an actress, and mum will go and see our big girl play! Baby, we old folks are always planning for you young ones. Baby, good baby! You have never seen your dad. When he comes

back he won't know you. My good girl, have you heard what mum told you?"

And as though she had really heard, Man-tzu opened her eyes wider, staring unblinkingly at Mother. Then her tender cheeks stopped twitching; the blood at the corner of her mouth had dried; her hand slipped from her mother's breast; her faint breathing stopped; she lay there motionless and cold; she was dead!

Mother suddenly became ruthless, her wide eyes flaming with hatred, she gnashed her teeth. She wanted to rush out! Wang Chu, the Japanese major, Interpreter Yang... all her foes she would rip them to shreds! In her mad rage she screamed, beat her head against the wall and stamped on the floor. She did not know that there were men in the world who could be so loathsome and vicious as those who had murdered her babe! She did not know that there could be grief more unbearable than that of a mother who had watched her baby tortured to death!

Deep night; the besotted enemies were deep in sleep.

The puppet soldier on sentry duty, rifle slung across his breast and eyelids drooping, yawned in a drunken stupor. He lurched backwards and forwards before the gate, as unsteady on his feet as a man without heels.

The sound of revelry, the rattle of mah-jong chips and a shrill coquettish woman's voice, drifting from deep within the compound, seemed to jeer at the puppet sentry. He glared towards the interior, then turning back he saw two dark forms approaching.

They were right on top of him, before he had time to challenge them. The heavy odour of perfume tickled his nostrils. He sniffed the air.

"Sergeant," Hsing-li's mother, the wife of Wang Chien-chih, said in a soft, pleasant voice, "my nephew Wang Chu told me to bring some food and wine. Please let us in."

Like a needle to a magnet, the sentry's eyes were drawn to the girl behind her, greedily he sniffed the perfume she had sprinkled on her clothes.

It was Lan-tzu, head of the village women's association, dressed in Hsing-li's mother's wedding garments. Her hair glistened with oil, and her face was thickly powdered and heavily sprinkled with perfume. She had never before been dressed up in such a style.

Lan-tzu pretended to be embarrassed, hung her head and did not utter a word. The sentry was bewitched and forgot to answer Hsing-li's mother. Hsing-li's mother, hiding her loathing for the beastly creature, spoke in a honeyed tone:

"Sergeant, this is my niece; she is just seventeen. She has been ill and is only just recovering. Sergeant, let us in."

The puppet soldier raised his eyebrows, and his eyes opened wide.

"It can't be done," he said thickly, "orders from above, no strangers allowed in. You can go in, but she... I won't dare take the responsibility." He gazed again at Lan-tzu's dark limpid eyes.

Hsing-li's mother glanced questioningly at Lan-tzu and Lan-tzu quickly broke in:

"You go in, aunt. I'll wait here for you."

"Ay, all right. Be a good girl and don't go far. It is dark and you should not be out alone. Wait for me and we'll go home together." Then she turned amiably to the puppet soldier. "Sergeant, here is a little wine and food for you. Niece, hand this to the sergeant..." she passed some dainties to Lan-tzu and then went in.

The puppet soldier was delighted; the mouse had stepped into the cat's den as a gift. His heart thumped. He looked at Lan-tzu and his face leered into a smile:

"Ha, your aunt is a really kind lady, offering me wine and tasty bits. You just got well, eh... Look, your pretty cheeks are still pale. Oh, they can get red, too. Don't be scared. I'm here to take care of you." He picked up the liquor bottle and drank.

Lan-tzu was now feeling a little bolder so she concealed her distaste and smiled at the puppet sentry.

"Sergeant, go into that side room and drink. See, the wind is blowing dust on the cakes."

The puppet soldier was quite tipsy. He glanced quickly in the direction of the room beside the corridor, then back at Lan-tzu.

"All right, if you'll come and eat with me."

Lan-tzu cast him a coquettish glance and questioned, "What if some one comes? I'll watch out for you."

That was not at all to the sentry's taste, and he stepped up and grasped Lan-tzu by the wrist. She shook off his hand and said, "Keep your hands to yourself, people will see us. Let's go into the room."

As the puppet soldier and Lan-tzu entered the room, two men slipped out of the shadows. One, in puppet army uniform, was Yu-chiu, leader of the militia who had come back to the village to find out things about the enemy. He pulled down the visor of his cap until his face was covered by the shadow from the lamp. Then in puppet-soldier style, he patrolled the sentry post.

The other man was Wang Chang-so, a hired-hand working in Wang Chien-chih's family. He saw that Yu-chiu had taken up his agreed post, and he darted into the compound....

Before long, he reappeared with Mother on his back. Behind him followed Hsing-li's mother, carrying the dead Man-tzu. They had found Mother still hugging her dead baby when they went inside.

In the room, Lan-tzu, with flattery and winsome words, was encouraging the puppet soldier to drink, while continuing to ward off his advances. The soldier was soon thoroughly intoxicated; white slobber dribbled from his lips. He tore open his shirt, exposing his chest, and leering from wine-reddened eyeballs he lurched towards Lan-tzu.

"Girl, it's not enough to just let me drink! You've broken my heart to pieces.... Come along now...."

Like a little bird Lan-tzu darted out of his reach. Footsteps sounded outside, she dashed to the door and pulled back the bars. In rushed Yu-chiu and with one blow of his axe felled the puppet sentry.

Yu-chiu rapped out an order, and Lan-tzu was gone like a puff of smoke. When she had been gone some time, Yu-chiu looked round and about the courtyard, then went into the room. He fastened a slip of paper to the sentry's corpse, closed the door and merging into the shadows hurriedly made his way to Hsing-li's house.

Hsing-li's mother wanted to hide Mother in the cellar of her home. At first Yu-chiu and Lan-tzu objected, thinking it was too close to the enemy. But they were afraid of being seen if they tried to move her, and as the cellar was well concealed, they finally agreed.

Hsing-li's mother had another reason for keeping Mother there; she knew that the enemy would not inspect the home of Wang Chien-chih....

That same night Yu-chiu left the village for the mountain to rejoin his unit. He was surprised to encounter Wang Chien-chih on the road, head injured and bloody.

## X

The local armed forces and the Eighth Route Army made a concerted onslaught and the enemy forces stationed in Wangkuan Village were forced to beat an inglorious retreat. Wang Chu and Wang Liu-tzu were killed.

After a number of bloody battles, the heroic struggle of the people and the army of the liberated areas shattered the enemy "mopping-up" campaign. The mountain district, the biggest threat to the enemy, was again in the hands of the people. The Eighth Route Army returned to the villages, and life resumed its normal course.

Mother did not succumb to her injuries; she struggled back from the brink of death. The wounds, which covered her body, slowly healed, and her tortured body, which had endured such sufferings, returned to normal. Only a body which had drunk the dregs of bitterness and suffered the extremes of agony could have such resilience, such a resistance to injury. Tender new skin grew over her body, bearing shiny pink scars. But she was left with one wound which would never heal.

Some time ago her son Teh-chiang had written to say that he was wounded in the leg in a battle. After his recovery, he could not walk too well and was sent to study in a school where Wang Chien-chih's daughter Hsing-li was his classmate. They had known each other since childhood. When he had time, he said, he would come home for a visit, and this made Mother very pleased. Everyday she longed

for his return. Another person she longed to see was her daughter Chuan-tzu.

Chuan-tzu's duties had greatly increased since the death of Hsing-mei, and most of her tasks were in the border districts adjacent to the enemy, so she seldom visited settlements lying away from the occupied areas like Wangkuan Village. She had only been home once since Mother's misfortunes. The district government had intended her to remain at home to take care of her mother for a while, but Mother had insisted that she could manage without her. Chuan-tzu saw that there were several woman neighbours who would help her, so she had left. Now she had a mission and was on her way home; her heart beat fast, and she wished that she could sprout wings and fly to Mother's side.

Although it was a market day, there were few people on the road. The fairs in the mountains are few and far between. The nearest for the people of Wangkuan Village was at Fengchia Village. It was more than ten miles if you went with a barrow on the highroad, and even by the short-cut over the mountains it was nearly nine. To go to the market it was necessary to be on the road at the crack of dawn, and as it was nearly noon there were few wayfarers.

Coming to the top of a ridge, Chuan-tzu found a fresh clear spring flowing from a fissure in the rock. She put down her small parcel, stooped, cupped her hands and drank. She was instantly refreshed. She stood up and wiped her lips, then looked down at the far-away foot of the mountain. A flash of light caught her eye. She looked for the source of the gleam and saw two men crawling stealthily behind a boulder at the side of the road. The sunlight on the axes in their hands had flashed her a warning.

Chuan-tzu quickly drew her pistol from her belt, loaded it and picked up her parcel. She glanced around, then under cover of the pines and bushes she slipped quietly along a diagonal gully, planning a surprise attack on the two suspicious-looking characters. But she was suddenly halted. The two men had already gone into action...

A man was climbing the mountain road, a money packet slung across his shoulder. He was walking slowly with his head down, step by step he neared the great boulder.

"Stop!" As the two men were about to attack the traveller, Chuan-tzu gave a great shout and leaped forward.

At her shout the three men stood as if frozen stiff, but the robbers quickly recovered themselves and rushed past their victim towards another ridge.

Chuan-tzu held her fire for fear of injuring the wayfarer. By the time she opened fire, the robbers had gone. Chuan-tzu could see no trace of them. Pursuit was useless, so she returned to the traveller.

The two of them cried out in simultaneous recognition.

"Uncle Chang-so, it's you!"

"Ah, Chuan-tzu!"

Chuan-tzu wiped her face.

"It is really too bad. I almost got them, but they escaped. Uncle, where are you going?"

"Eh, I'm going to the fair. Were they footpads, Chuan-tzu? They have been scarce around here for the last couple of years. That was a close shave! Actually I haven't got much on me." Wang Chang-so had not completely got over his fright, and he babbled on.

"Footpads? Yes, they are seldom seen..." Chuan-tzu repeated his words doubtfully, then asked with some concern, "Uncle, why are you going to the fair so late?"

"I didn't intend to go today, but the school principal wished me to buy him something. Where are you going, Chuan-tzu? Home?"

"Uh-huh," Chuan-tzu nodded. "I have some business in our village..."

"Oh!" Wang Chang-so's alarm had only just been soothed, when some sudden thought reawakened it, and he interrupted, "Chuan-tzu, I'll see you again at home. I have to hurry along now." He turned and hurried away.

"Be careful, uncle, when you come back in the evening!" Chuan-tzu called after him. But as she watched his retreating figure, she

had a feeling that something was wrong; her footsteps slowed down as she thought over the recent occurrence....

The enemy's attack at Wangkuan Village had raised suspicions as to whether there was an informer living among the people. How could the enemy's arrival in search of the munitions works be so well-planned, their attack so sudden and unsuspected? Did they have an agent in the village?

The district government had sent the district head, Teh-sung, to investigate, but he had not unearthed any suspicious characters. The cadres seized by the Japanese had all been slaughtered. Wang Chien-chih was beyond suspicion; he had put up a brave resistance. With their own eyes the villagers had seen him struck to the ground by Wang Chu, his head injured and his face covered with blood. He had afterwards found a way to slip through their fingers. Moreover, several rooms of his house had been burned by the enemy. A possible suspect was the family of a puppet soldier, formerly rich farmers. True, the members of this family had shown themselves quite obstinate, but no one had seen the puppet soldier return, and only two women and a young child remained at home — nothing could be found in support of this suspicion. When Teh-sung returned to the district, a rumour started in the village. No one in the village knew who had started it, but like the winds of heaven the whisper had spread abroad, that there was an illicit relationship between Wang Chien-chih's wife and the family servant.

In the district the matter was carefully studied; they decided that it looked very suspicious. Wang Chang-so was an old hired-hand of Wang Chien-chih, and if he were really having a love affair with Hsing-li's mother, it must have begun a long time ago. It certainly could not have started since the return of Wang Chien-chih. How was it that the villagers knew nothing about it before but suddenly heard about it now? Why had this matter, which could so easily rouse the people's wrath, come to light so conveniently, just when an investigation was in progress about enemy agents? Why had these two, always looked upon as the most backward of people, risked their very lives to save Mother? Finally, did they really have a

love affair? Or had someone spread this slander about them for motives of his own?

A whole series of questions arose which could not be immediately answered. The district decided to send the women's association head Chuan-tzu back home to investigate the matter.

Hsing-li's mother sat on a little stool before the stove, staring vacantly, and aimlessly scrawling on the floor with a charred stick. The fire was flaring out of the mouth of the stove, and she neglected to stuff in more grass. The leaping flames licked towards her face. It was thin and fallow; the cheeks were sunken; there were dark rings under her eyes and her eyebrows were drawn in a frown. She stared idly for a long time, then heaving a deep sigh she pushed a handful of grass into the stove, and again returned to her day-dreaming.

She was formerly a poor peasant's daughter sold to the Wang family to serve as maid servant. When she was eighteen, Wang Chien-chih, who was studying in Peking, came home for a holiday and raped the good-looking country girl. He left after a few days and thought no more about her. The family, however, was declining and the old master, who was old and blind, found it to his own advantage to have the girl serve him as a daughter-in-law. And so she lived in the empty big house, lonely and unhappy, doing most of the household chores but was neither servant nor mistress. Wang Chang-so was the hired-hand who looked after the farm. Gradually these two lonely people became lovers and she became pregnant. She was terrified at the thought of being found out, for in that feudal-minded little village, people having illicit affairs like theirs would have been burnt alive or beaten to death. At this time, the old master, Wang Chien-chih's father, died, and Wang came back for a few days; so later when she gave birth to Hsing-li, nobody suspected that she was not Wang Chien-chih's child. Hsing-li, since early childhood, had been very fond of Wang Chang-so, though she never knew that this was her real father. When Wang Chien-chih returned to the village this time, Hsing-li found him hard and glum. She did not feel close to him at all.

Hsing-li always preferred to play with other peasant children and she and Teh-chiang were good friends. She also took part in activities of the village children's corps, through this she became more interested in politics and patriotism began to take root in her young heart. Up till the time she went to middle school in the county town, she knew nothing about her mother's secret.

But Hsing-li's mother lived in misery and humiliation. Wang Chien-chih cared nothing for this woman whom he had left at home to serve his father. Now that he was back after an absence of ten years he was not without suspicion of her chastity. His cunning eyes searched for signs and he very quickly discovered her relations with the hired-hand. However, he told them he would not expose them provided they obey his orders implicitly. In his present position, he needed people to do his dirty work for him. Then he sent Wang Chang-so twice to the county town to pass on information. Though Wang Chang-so feared his master and carried out his errands, he never suspected him to be an enemy agent or that he himself was being used as a henchman. Hsing-li's mother and Wang Chang-so had always had a deep respect for Chuan-tzu's mother who was their neighbour. After they risked their lives to rescue her, Wang Chien-chih heard about it and felt that they were not reliable. They knew too much of his activities; he decided they should be removed. He spread the rumour about their illicit love affair, hoping thus to arouse public indignation against them. His plan had failed because the district government took a cautious line. However, Hsing-li's mother was living in trepidation and fear, thinking the storm would burst over her head at any moment. She was so wrapped up in her own thoughts that she did not notice Chuan-tzu enter the room. She gave a start when Chuan-tzu called her name.

"Ah, Chuan-tzu! Please take a seat. When did you come back?"

"Just now," Chuan-tzu replied, sitting down beside her, "I come to see you because my mother said you haven't been feeling well."

Hsing-li's mother looked searchingly at Chuan-tzu for a few moments, then suddenly gripped her hands and began to cry.

"Chuan-tzu! You. . . ." her words were scarcely distinct, "I haven't the face to see anyone! I can't . . . can't live any longer. . . ."

Chuan-tzu guessed that she was referring to herself and Wang Chang-so and encouraged her, "Aunt, tell me slowly what you have to say!"

But she only wept the harder, and could not get the words out. Chuan-tzu told her how she happened to be on the road when she saw someone attempt to murder Wang Chang-so. Hsing-li's mother cried out, it seemed, first in joy, and then in anger. She stared at Chuan-tzu for a few moments, but just as she was about to say something footsteps were heard, and the words were not spoken. Wang Chien-chih stepped into the room. He was smiling, pretending to be concerned.

"Chuan-tzu," he said, "I hear that Instructor Chiang's health is not so good, I have some nourishing things here that you can take with you when you return to the district. Eh, I was intending to go and see him, but you know I can't get away from the school!"

Hsing-li's mother's agitation made Chuan-tzu thoughtful. She had hoped that she would learn what was on her mind, but after the interruption she realized she would have no opportunity that day. She turned to Wang Chien-chih:

"Thank you for your kind intentions, principal, but there is nothing wrong with him." Then she took her leave of Hsing-li's mother, "I'll come to see you again tomorrow, aunt. Take good care of yourself. I shall leave now."

Chuan-tzu left by the big gate, and Wang Chien-chih shut and bolted it behind her. He drew his hand from his pocket. It was damp with sweat from gripping the handle of his pistol. He tossed the pistol on to the table in front of Hsing-li's mother, then grasping her by the hair, he pulled back her head, saying:

"You were going to talk, were you, you bitch? I'll kill you first!"

He pulled a dagger from his belt and stabbed its point into the table. Then he looked at her slender throat, trembling with agitation, and spoke viciously, "If you speak one word, I will slaughter you first! Do you hear me?"

Chuan-tzu mused as she walked down the road after leaving the home of Hsing-li's mother. Strange, for years there had been no

robberies in the base area. Were the highwaymen who chanced to meet Wang Chang-so agents sent in by the enemy? No, why would they want to harm him? Chance? Not likely, it looked more like a premeditated ambush. He had said that he was late going to market because the principal had sent him to buy something. Could it be that Wang Chien-chih wanted to kill him because of his relationship with his wife? Would he dare take so desperate a step for such a matter? It looked as if Hsing-li's mother had a close relationship with Wang Chang-so — the look of fear that came over her face at the news of his near-assassination had betrayed her! It seemed as though she had been expecting him to meet with some harm; could she have been a party to her husband's attempt to murder Wang Chang-so? Why, when Wang Chien-chih entered, did she suddenly cut short what she was saying and refuse to say anything more? Why had Wang Chien-chih hung around them so anxiously and interrupted just at that point?

Lost in her reflections, Chuan-tzu looked up to discover that she had reached her own gate. Suddenly she stopped. "This is not a simple matter. I'm afraid it is more than a case of adultery. Perhaps they've found out something about Wang Chien-chih, so he . . . right, we'll have to call a cadre's meeting to discuss this matter!" Chuan-tzu turned back, but had not gone far before she met Teh-chiang.

"Teh-chiang, it's you!" Chuan-tzu cried in delight.

"Sis! You're home, too! How are you?" Teh-chiang grasped Chuan-tzu's hand.

After the first joyful greeting, Teh-chiang noticed a packet under his sister's arm, as though she were about to go on some mission.

"If you've got business, sis, you go ahead!"

"All right. I have a cadre's meeting; we'll have a long, long talk when I come home. Hurry in! Mother'll be so pleased to see you." Teh-chiang did not immediately enter his home on parting from his sister but stood for a moment gazing at the familiar thatched gateway. When he was small it had seemed so high that he could never hope to climb on top of it. Now it seemed much too low and narrow, and as he entered he ducked his head.

By the light of a lamp he saw that his mother was preparing supper. He smiled and, unable to restrain himself any longer, called out:

"Mum, I've come back."

At this Mother looked up sharply, stared at her son in glad surprise, and hurried to him.

"Ah! It's Teh-chiang! You! Son, son, come here and sit on the *kang*." Once she had settled her son comfortably she did not know what to do with herself. She looked at him again and again. Overflowing with happiness, mother and son sat laughing. . . .

Mother saw that her son had grown taller and stronger, and by the light of the fire the youthful flush of his face seemed rosier and fairer. Her heart was filled with joy and gladness.

But Teh-chiang saw that Mother had grown weaker and aged, that her walk was unsteady and her hair dull and heavily streaked with white. The wrinkles upon her face were closer and deeper, and her shoulders were bent. Sorrow and pity subdued Teh-chiang's happiness and deepened his love and respect.

Hatred for the enemy had given her strength and courage, and Mother's easily excited emotions had been transformed, for she seldom shed a tear now. Certainly if now she saw Wang Wei-yi fall she would not hope that the gun would misfire. If she had the chance to take up a gun, she could shoot the enemy herself.

Bitter anger can stimulate fierce love, and Mother's love had been heightened for every one of those dear to her. This love had long ago transcended the mere bounds of love for her sons and daughters and love for Chiang Yung-chuan; now it was far wider. Her home had become a lodging-place for passing visitors from the district and county governments, and people called it the "cadres' hostel." Everyone in the district government, from the courier to the district chief, and many of the county cadres knew Aunt Feng. Mother always greeted them warmly. Her youngest son knew that if he returned to find Mother cooking something better than usual, there was sure to be a cadre in the house. Although their life was as hard as ever, and they never made a full meal of wheat flour dumplings even on high holidays, yet Mother stinted nothing for revolutionary comrades.

A woman knows that when the husband is lost, no secret must be withheld from the oldest son. He is her refuge and hope. She pours out all her sorrows, fears and distress to him and receives from him help, consolation and sympathy. Teh-chiang's mother could not fail to know this. She, more than anyone, needed the help of her son! And she never knew how many years would pass between one sight of him and the next. But Mother never leaned upon her son, had never even thought of doing so. She never let her son suspect her sadness, for she wanted her children to feel that she had a good life, even a happy one. She had long since lost any feeling that she was to be pitied or that she was unfortunate. On the contrary, she was quite complacent, even proud of her lot!

At night Teh-chiang lay rolled in his quilt while Mother sat at his side, mending his shirt by the light of the lamp. Mother listened to her son's tales of his many adventures. When he spoke of distress she would sigh deeply, and when he spoke of happiness she would smile.... Teh-chiang's recital stopped abruptly. Mother raised her head to find out the reason and saw him gazing absent-mindedly into space.

She spoke to him tenderly, "Go to sleep, son. You're tired, and you have to leave tomorrow morning."

Teh-chiang turned his head to watch her busy hands, as though he had not heard a word she had said.

"Mum, shall I get you a daughter-in-law to help with the housework?" He suddenly asked with a smile.

"Now that would be just fine!" Mother knew that her son was joking, but it stirred a pleasant feeling inside her. "At your age, it's time you were married. Ay, I know you won't do it."

Teh-chiang blushed and could not suppress a smile.

"Mum, you've guessed wrong. I've already found one." He sat up and looked at Mother intently. "Mum, what do you think of Hsing-li? She has come back with me this time."

For a moment Mother was silent, then she realized that he was in earnest.

"I think she's a nice girl."

Teh-chiang shook Mother by the arm. "Mum, would you like her for a daughter-in-law?" he asked impatiently. Mother sat silent, smiling at him.

"Bub! I want her," came the voice of Teh-kang who had awakened and now rolled out of the quilt with a yell.

Teh-chiang and Mother jumped in surprise, then Teh-chiang grabbed Teh-kang and was about to playfully flatten him out on the *kang* when another unexpected voice cut in.

"Aiya, I guessed long ago that Hsing-li was to be our sister-in-law. I raise both hands in approval!" It was Hsiu-tzu. She came running in, laughing, from the next room.

Teh-chiang was thoroughly mortified. He gave his little brother a hearty smack on the bare bottom and made a dive at his sister.

"What d'you know about it? Any more nonsense from you and see if I don't tan you!"

"Humph!" Hsiu-tzu sniffed, then jerking up her head and puffing out her chest she stalked up to him.

"Ya-a!" she taunted. "An Eighth Route Armyman can beat people, eh? I'm not afraid of you."

Teh-kang clasped his arms about his brother's neck.

"Bub," he said seriously, "if you dare to thrash our captain, we'll hold a children's corps meeting to accuse you!"

The family burst into laughter.

"Fine, fine!" Mother was smiling broadly as she said. "You're all organized, big ones and little ones, nobody dare offend you. Heh, since it's agreed by the majority, this old member of the women's association will abide by democratic ruling! Wait till your big sister comes home and we'll get her to add her vote!"

Peals of joyous laughter rang against the thatch-covered rafters and echoed from the clay walls.

After he failed to have Wang Chang-so killed on the road, and saw Chuan-tzu coming to his house to make inquiries, Wang Chien-chih was frightened. He watched his wife and the hired-hand more closely; at the same time he wired his superiors for permission to leave the place if the situation became more dangerous. He realized that he must be very careful now that Hsing-li was home.



Hsing-li turned over and licked her moist lips like a child who has just eaten a sweet and is still relishing the taste. She opened her eyes and unconsciously the corners of her mouth curled up, revealing the two dimples in her cheeks. Her ears tingled. The window was still an indistinct square, and the crowing of a rooster could be heard somewhere in the distance. She closed her eyes again, but she did not go to sleep.

When she had arrived home the previous evening, she felt that her home was becoming more and more uncomfortable and strange. Her mother seldom spoke, and her father only forced a mask-like smile, which made her feel unwelcome and annoyed. Even her dear Wang Chang-so, who had cared for her since babyhood, wore an anxious appearance like a frightened sheep. This vexed her very much.

Hsing-li had a strong feeling that this grand house was cold and empty when compared with Teh-chiang's small and crowded thatched cottage, where there was so much warmth and happiness. She longed to run there and never come back again!

Hsing-li smiled in shy joy, as she pictured herself passing beyond the land of dreams and flying with Teh-chiang. They were like two valiant eagles, soaring above the mountain peaks, flying over the billowing ocean, across the snowy wastes . . . everywhere! Then they alighted on a bough covered with blossoms and breathed in the intoxicating perfume. . . .

The cock crowed again. Hsing-li opened her eyes and saw a dim glow beyond the window. She got up and dressed. Then as she went out of the door, a shadow darted into the passage leading to the back court. She was a bit alarmed; was there a thief about? On tiptoes, she followed and saw the man go confidently straight into the recesses of the compound, not at all in the manner of a stranger to the place. She was about to call out and ask him who he was, when she recognized her father by the bald gleaming head and the carriage of his tall figure. She was going to greet him, but thought better of it as she pondered; why had he got up so early to go into those seldom-used buildings. Closely following Wang Chien-chih, she entered the first of the interior courts.

Suddenly Hsing-li sensed that something was wrong. Stepping quietly to a window, she listened intently. A match scratched and she pictured a lamp being lit, but no ray of light could be seen. Wide-eyed, Hsing-li pressed against the window, and could faintly discern that it was covered with something black. Then a sharp clicking sound could be heard coming from the room, and a shrill twittering. Hsing-li listened carefully, a cold shiver ran through her and she broke into a cold sweat. Her heart beat madly, like a fluttering bird. She understood what was happening. There was a transmitter set in the room!

"Spy?! Traitor?! He. . . ." Hsing-li repeated the words over and over again in her mind and was about to burst into the room . . . but she checked the impulse. "No! If he is really a villain, how shall I be able to manage him single-handed?" She tiptoed away from the window and towards the outer courts. Once out of the back court she broke into a run.

Hsing-li was about to call to her mother to open the door, when she was startled by the sound of sobbing inside the room.

"Ma, ma! Open the door, open quick!" she cried urgently.

The terror of the previous day was still whirling around in Hsing-li's mother's mind, as though the black pistol and the gleaming dagger were still threatening her. . . . She had been faint with terror at the time, without the least courage to resist.

She was crying, and the tears flowed unchecked. She wanted to tell Chuan-tzu everything, but refrained, fearing that if she spoke out Chuan-tzu would also suffer. When Chuan-tzu told her about Wang Chang-so's rescue, her gratitude had almost drawn the truth from her, but Wang Chien-chih had entered. . . . Misery gnawed at her vitals, but what could she do?

Hsing-li's mother was like a flower grown in a much-shaded spot. Such a flower is fine and fragile, a pleasure to the eye, but lacking resistance and easy to snap or break. Because of this, beetles and worms love to nibble it, the animals like to eat it and trample it. Such a flower transplanted to a bright sunny spot, given enough water and fertilizer, can grow strong. But to transplant it is no easy matter!

Through her sobs Hsing-li's mother recognized her daughter's voice, and hurriedly checked her weeping. She wiped her eyes, got down from the *kang* and opened the door.

The first faint glimmer of dawn peeped timidly in at the window, but the darkened room was still peopled with indistinct shadows. Standing in front of her mother, Hsing-li did not see the tear-streaks on her face; but she had heard the sobs.

"Ma!" said Hsing-li breathing fast. "Tell me, what is father doing?"

Her mother stared, shocked by her daughter's question. Although she could not see the expression on her face, she knew that her daughter was angry. Her surprise gave way to fear but she forced herself to speak calmly.

"What is he? Your . . . your father? What do you ask that . . . that for?"

"Ma, do you know what he is doing? Why has he got a secret wireless transmitter in the house? Only traitors and spies do that sort of thing! Ma, tell me, do you know what he is up to?" The more she spoke, the angrier she became. She gripped her mother's hand, and the terrified woman realized that her hand was icy cold and trembling.

Shivering, Hsing-li's mother dropped weakly onto the *kang*. Although she herself did not know anything about a transmitter set, it was obvious that her child saw it as evidence of betrayal. But when she thought of the fearful result if it became known, she forced herself to try and cover up her husband's activities.

"Hsing-li," she stammered, "don't . . . don't talk nonsense. How . . . how could it be? He is your father."

"Father! I don't want that traitor as my father!" Hsing-li looked grief-stricken and spoke with hatred in her voice. She was no longer the Hsing-li of former years. During these years, she had received revolutionary education, had been trained in struggle, and also influenced by her dear friend — her sweetheart — Teh-chiang. In this process Hsing-li's inner spirit, too, had become strong and beautiful. Thus, when she discovered Wang Chien-chih's activities, her

first feeling had not been that he was her father, but a feeling of hatred for an enemy had swept over her.

Hsing-li's words were like knives thrust into her mother's flesh, and she felt as if she were being torn to pieces. Poor, poor child, how could she guess her mother's situation! When the mother realized that this argument could not stop her daughter from doing what she thought right, she suddenly became afraid of the girl. Her own daughter seemed a stranger to her, as though she were made of cast iron, pitiless of her mother's agony. But she was still a mother, and the child was hers, brought up by her own hands. Was she, the mother, afraid of her own child? She suddenly made up her mind, stepped forward and gripped her daughter's sleeve.

"Hsing-li! Do you want your mother or not?" she said in a voice that admitted of no contradiction.

"Ma, don't be afraid. Our people's government will not hurt the innocent. Each man must answer for his deeds! Ma. . . ."

"Child! Oh. . . ." A flood of misery swept over her, and she caught her daughter in her arms and wept silently. She no longer had the strength to control herself. She slid limply down and knelt on the floor, her arms about her daughter's knees.

"Child!" she wept. "Your ma is a criminal! Ma has wronged you . . . I should be slashed with a thousand knives. . . ." Bit by bit the mother sobbed out her story. Hsing-li was torn by conflicting emotions as she listened. First she loathed her mother and Wang Chang-so, and felt that she could not forgive them for the way they had served Wang Chien-chih in order to protect their own lives. Then she began to pity them, to sympathize with their misfortune, their years of miserable existence. Then she lost all sympathy for them, and every shred of pity went from her heart. They were her mother and father, and her own life arose out of their relationship; but to this girl such relations were immoral and humiliating. However, when Hsing-li compared the behaviour of her mother and Wang Chang-so with the crime committed by Wang Chien-chih, all her loathing for their conduct became concentrated on that traitor, and she came to feel that her mother and Wang Chang-so were guiltless.

Hsing-li's agonized thoughts surged backwards and forwards and she was unable to calm herself. Then she looked down and saw her mother clasping her knees and weeping. The hot tears wet her trouser-legs, and she quickly lifted her mother up, her own tears again falling.

"Ma, listen to me. . . ."

"Child, you go and denounce us! Your ma and that evil beast will die together. I am willing. Sooner or later this kind of life will kill me! Child, I did it for you and for poor Wang Chang-so. . . ."

"Ma, you're right. I must go and denounce you! Ma, we cannot repudiate our consciences; if we are guilty, we should give ourselves up. Wang Chien-chih forced you to do wrong. I believe the government will be lenient with you. Ma, don't be afraid." Hsing-li straightened her disordered hair and turned to go, but her mother drew her back again.

"Child," her mother begged in a voice of bitter humiliation, "tell me you won't despise your ma? Will you call Wang Chang-so your father?"

Hsing-li felt a sharp pain in her heart. She looked once more at her piteous, unfortunate mother, then turned and left.

As Hsing-li stepped out of the inner court, she came face to face with Wang Chien-chih. His appearance was by no means accidental. After he had sent off his message, he had gone to his wife's window to find out whether there was any movement inside. The sound of sobs had halted him, and then he had broken into a cold sweat. . . .

Hsing-li burned to strike Wang Chien-chih, but she remembered that he had a gun and tried to pass him unconcernedly. Wang Chien-chih thrust out an arm, blocking her passage.

"Wait a minute, Hsing-li. Come into my room, I have something to say to you." He was smiling.

Hsing-li wavered; if she refused to go, he would be suspicious. So she entered his room.

Wang Chien-chih stepped back and bolted the door.

Hsing-li became alarmed, and asked, "Dad, why have you bolted the door?" It was hard for her to call him "dad", but she thought that she had better be tactful.

"Heh, heh," said Wang Chien-chih, laughing so menacingly that Hsing-li was frightened. Then he strode close up to Hsing-li, and his face looked fiendish, as in a grim voice he demanded:

"Were you going to fetch them to arrest me?" The muscles of his face twitched savagely, and he drew a dagger from his belt.

Hsing-li was as white as a sheet, but she was not afraid. She knew that he had heard what was said. There was loathing in her eyes and anger in her voice, as she challenged him, "Wang Chien-chih! Do you want to murder me? You, you dirty traitor! If you have any shame at all left, go to the government and give yourself up. If you kill me, you won't escape either."

Wang Chien-chih laughed coldly, and holding the dagger with the blade back against his wrist, spoke less fiercely:

"Hsing-li, you and I are still of one family. How could I really kill you? You can take your choice: if you promise not to injure me, I'll let you go. When it is dark I will send someone to accompany you to Mouping city where you can live a life of luxury; if you denounce me . . . don't say I am heartless — you will have chosen to die."

Hsing-li shivered. She felt so helpless against this armed traitor. She thought of shouting for help, but who would hear her deep in this many-walled compound? She began to regret that she had entered the room; her death would be a little thing, but these traitors would escape. She kept her wits about her, and quickly decided to agree, then find a chance to report them . . . so she changed her tone:

"I was stupid; if I denounced you it would injure my mother. I won't go."

"That's good," said Wang Chien-chih. "You will stay in this room and your meals will be brought to you."

Hsing-li listened panic-stricken.

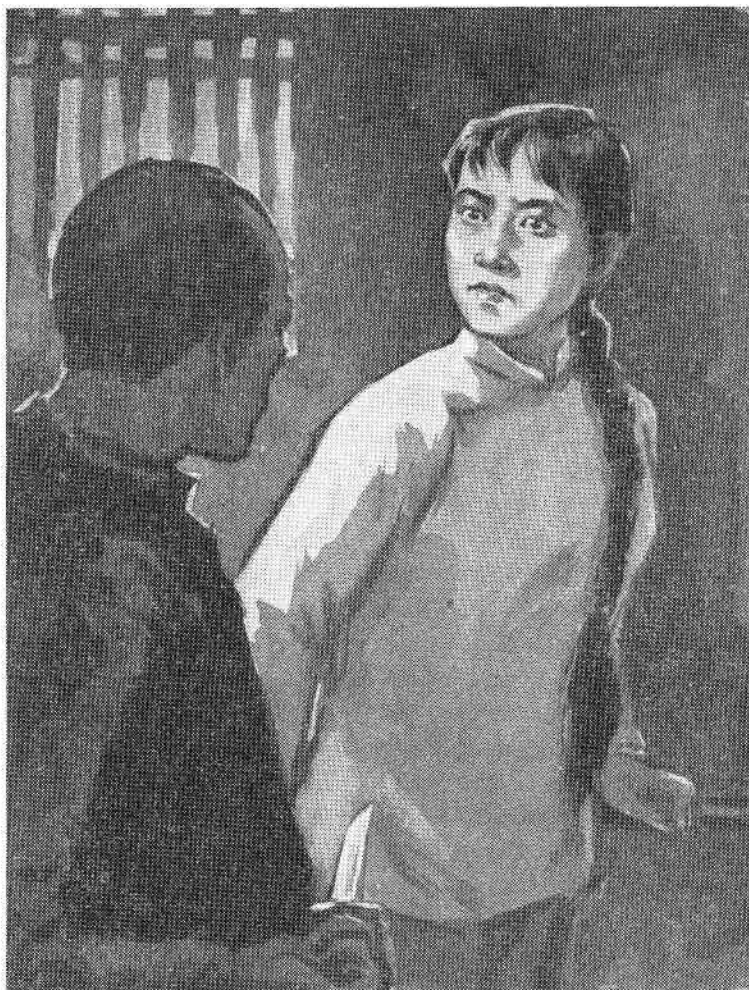
"I have to see Teh-chiang," she said hurriedly. "I'll have to tell him I'm asking leave, or he'll come looking for me."

"You don't have to worry about that. I'll go and tell Teh-chiang."

Hsing-li knew that the situation had taken a bad turn. In panic she dashed towards the door, but Wang Chien-chih pulled her back.

"Where are you going?" he snarled.

"Murder! Help. . . ." Hsing-li screamed, as she fought desperately.



She bit Wang Chien-chih's hand, and the knife dropped to the floor. The two of them struggled violently. Wang Chien-chih was stronger; he pressed Hsing-li to the floor. She struggled and screamed. Picking up the dagger, Wang Chien-chih stabbed viciously at her breast....

Blood — the warm blood of youth, gurgled in the morning light!

That morning Wang Chang-so got up and fetched water for the animals, then took a bamboo broom and swept the courtyard. As he entered the court where Wang Chien-chih lived, he heard screams. He ran to the door from which they came, but he could not open it. He looked through a crack: Wang Chien-chih was killing Hsing-li — his daughter! He picked up a brick and battered at the door....

Wang Chien-chih heard someone at the door. He drew a pistol from under the pillow and ran outside.

Wang Chang-so turned and ran, yelling, Wang Chien-chih following close on his heels.

Teh-chiang in a faded army uniform, hands thrust into his pockets, the bloom of joy on his face, whistled a call. Light-heartedly he stepped through Hsing-li's gate. Suddenly he was halted by the sound of screams and thudding footsteps. He drew his hands from his pockets. The happiness vanished from his face and the warmth from his eyes and were replaced by the tense alertness of the soldier.

A dark figure darted through the inner gate, and a gun barked, the bullet thudding into the gate panel. The lad quickly flattened himself against the wall, his eyes watching the gateway.

Wang Chien-chih rushed out, a smoking pistol in his hand. This was no time to hesitate. As Wang Chien-chih rushed past him, Teh-chiang put out his foot, and Wang Chien-chih fell heavily on his face. The lad leapt forward, planted his foot on Wang Chien-chih's wrist, and wrested the pistol from him. Then other people hearing the commotion came and seized the traitor.

## XI

After the execution of the traitor Wang Chien-chih in Wangkuan Village, there were no more enemy agents and the people's resistance grew stronger. The villagers went through more trials during the enemy "mopping-up" campaign, but they resolutely continued their anti-Japanese activities. Though houses were burnt, people were slaughtered, yet they remained undaunted and fought even harder against the aggressors. The flame of vengeance burning in their hearts, they knew they must blaze the trail to liberation through enemy

bayonets. When news of Nazi Germany's defeat reached them, it further strengthened the people's confidence in their own victory. Soldiers and civilians in the liberated areas became more active, concentrating all efforts to regain territory seized by the enemy.

Taoshui City was an enemy stronghold closest to the resistance base; so the Eighth Route Army decided to take it first, to open the way for a big counter-offensive. The local cadres and militia were given the job of finding out the situation within the city. Several times they tried to send men into the enemy's lair but their plans could not be carried out. Finally Chuan-tzu remembered that she had an aunt living in the city; though they had not seen each other for many years, she could still have a try. After some discussion the matter was decided. It was also decided to send the district head Teh-sung in with a former puppet officer Kung Chiang-tzu who had now come over; they would try to work together if possible.

Chuan-tzu went home first. When Mother heard that she was going in disguise to the city to reconnoitre, she hesitated. Then she started to help Chuan-tzu to get ready. She got a switch of long hair and a hair net from the wardrobe, helped her daughter to make a chignon and pinned it on her head. As her hands moved her thoughts were racing, and when the hair was secured she had reached a decision.

"Chuan-tzu," she said firmly. "I'll go with you!"

Chuan-tzu looked at Mother in surprise.

"Mum, how can you? you..."

"I can go. I won't have a moment's peace if you go alone to visit your aunt!" Mother looked worried as she said. "You were little when you went before, and you don't know the way. Her family and ours are two different kinds of people, and if you go bursting in alone, how do you know whether it'll bode good or evil? Besides, you are young, and the Japanese will notice you. Another thing, can you depend on that Kung Chiang-tzu?"

"No, mum, you can't go. Your health..." Chuan-tzu protested.

Mother interrupted her daughter impatiently, "Ay, there you go saying I'm ill again! I shall not be going to have a fight with the

Japanese. What's wrong with me taking you to your aunt's house and finding out how things are?"

Chuan-tzu looked at Mother, began to waver, but shook her head again.

"Mum, we're going to the enemy's heart to cut off a slice; what if anything..."

"Eh, if I didn't think it was dangerous, I wouldn't want to go with you!"

"But who'll take care of Hsiu-tzu and Teh-kang?"

"You needn't worry about that," said Mother with relief, guessing that this was the last of her daughter's objections. "Hsiu-tzu and Teh-kang aren't little children any more, and they can cook their own meals. They won't starve."

Chuan-tzu was more than half-convinced. She said:

"Mum, it's much more likely to succeed if you go. I'll go and talk it over with the others."

"...During the last mopping-up campaign with your permission I set out from Wangkuan Village with six men, to escort a cart of goods. Before we had gone a half-dozen miles we fell into a guerrilla ambush in the mountains. Some of the escort were killed; two men and myself were taken captive by the guerrillas. Fortunately I knew the area and found an opportunity to escape during the night. I hid in my cousin's house. The communist bandits searched for me everywhere; they murdered all my family and kept a sharp look-out for me. I tried to get back but was not successful until today, when my cousin and myself disguised as pedlars. We managed to slip through their fingers. Ay, most unfortunate. I am incompetent. I could not rescue the other two men. The communist bandits are really savage with us; neither my old mother, nearly seventy years old, nor my five-year-old son escaped their brutality, and my wife was forced to marry again. There is no other way for me. I, Kung Chiang-tzu, will have it out with them or die in the attempt! My cousin has come with me to find some work, to serve the Imperial Army. We beg you to help us!"

The Japanese major narrowed his un-injured right eye malevolently and listened to Kung Chiang-tzu's story. He glanced at Teh-sung, then whipped out his sword.

"*Bakuro!* Very, very bad...."

Kung Chiang-tzu went white with fear, but he knew that this was the Japanese major's usual way of behaviour... and he instantly resumed his former attitude.

"Kill me, sir!" he cried passionately. "I, Kung Chiang-tzu, will be glad to die! If I had been afraid of death I would not have come back to give myself up!"

The Japanese major's sword whistled past Kung Chiang-tzu's ear. As he drew it back he laughed fiercely:

"Very, very good! Brave man...." and he finished in a gabble of Japanese.

"Captain Kung," fat Yang said, "don't be angry. You know the major's temperament. He was trying to frighten you. He says he admires your spirit. Your cousin may remain to work."

"Thank you, sir," Kung Chiang-tzu said humbly. "We hope you will continue to help us, Mr. Yang. I have brought a few gifts for the major and Interpreter Yang. This is just a trifle...."

The Japanese major and Interpreter Yang could see a sack of pears on the cart, together with bottles of liquor, and some bright brocaded silks and satins of the kind much admired by their mistresses. Their faces wreathed in smiles.

"Very, very good." The Japanese major nodded, "Able man!"

It seemed to Kung Chiang-tzu and Teh-sung as though a heavy weight had been lifted from their hearts.

It was in this way that Teh-sung became the new cook in the enemy kitchen.

Taoshui was very strongly fortified. Row after row of iron barbs were strung over the great wall of the city, which was surrounded by a moat, thirty feet wide and forty feet deep. The ground inside the moat was studded with sharp wooden spikes and the foot of the wall was mined. Within the city, fortifications had been erected at every street corner, and open and concealed machine-gun positions could

cover every inch of the city. Thick-walled gun towers, as densely strewn as trees in a forest, rose into the sky.

Such was the enemy's stronghold, Taoshui.

Hitler's downfall had put the enemy in a panic. The powerful spring offensive of the Eighth Route Army and people of the liberated areas pressed on the enemy. The enemy had withdrawn their forces from all small stations. A Japanese company was transferred here to strengthen the original Japanese and puppet troops, and the enemy concentrated their defence forces in Taoshui. The Japanese major directed operations from a large blockhouse on the northwest corner.

The enemy rarely ventured out, and on the few occasions that they did, they hastily returned, bolted the heavy iron gates, and posted sentries several deep after raiding and looting the immediate neighbourhood. It was very difficult for country folk to gain entrance to the city without a pass signed by the Japanese major himself.

It was evening, and the four puppet sentries at the west gate were lounging listlessly at their posts, like cucumbers struck by the frost, their caps acock on drooping heads. Only when they saw two women approaching did they show any sign of animation.

"Where are you going?" they challenged.

"Ah, sergeant! We're going to visit relatives!" the older of the two women replied.

The puppet soldier eyed the young woman and demanded, "Who is she?"

"That's my daughter-in-law. We're going visiting together," the old woman answered.

"Don't expect to get in without a pass!" said the puppet soldier, his eyes concentrating on the bamboo basket covered with a red napkin and the bundle which the two women were carrying.

"Sergeant, if you don't let us through, what can we do? It's nearly dark! We're going to visit my son's aunt. I am told that her family is very well in with your officers."

"Eyewash!" growled a puppet soldier. But the sergeant in charge of the patrol was more cautious and inquired:

"Whose family? In with who?"

The old woman answered quickly, "My son's aunt is married to a rich man, Keh Lien who runs the silk mill. The other day I heard tell that my niece is a good friend of Interpreter Yang. You must know about it."

The puppet soldiers looked at each other, a little alarmed. Then the sergeant spoke:

"That's so. It'll be all right to let you in, but we'll have to search you."

"Thank you, sergeant! Here you are. We don't mind you looking. There're some food in this basket, boiled eggs and griddle cakes...." The old woman uncovered the basket and held it out, "Here, take some! Just leave a little for me...."

The puppet soldiers searched the bundle and found only some clothes; then they did not stand on ceremony, but helped themselves with the food.

"Hey, we haven't searched this young woman yet," the sergeant said.

The old woman was somewhat alarmed and hastily said:

"Good sergeant, she hasn't anything with her...."

The young woman, however, showed no alarm. She put the bundle in the old woman's arms. "Mum, carry this while they search me."

The old woman looked at her in consternation. As she watched her remove her coat, she almost stopped her ... but the sentries found nothing, and let them pass.

Mother wiped the cold sweat from her forehead after passing through the city gate. Then she whispered, "Chuan-tzu, where did you put the gun? You gave me the fright of my life!"

Chuan-tzu looked at Mother and laughed softly as she said:

"You've got it, mum!"

"I? When did I take it?"

"I gave it to you right before their eyes!"

Mother fumbled inside the bundle, and her fingers touched a hard object.

She sighed with relief, "Why didn't you tell me before. What a fright you gave me!"

Chuan-tzu drew Mother to one side, saying, "Mum, keep close to the wall."

Mother and daughter scanned the cluster of buildings and listened for any sound of activity within. Mother told Chuan-tzu to stand on one side. She then knocked lightly on the door.

The gate opened, and a grey-haired, wrinkled little woman appeared in the gateway. Mother looked and looked as if scarcely believing her own eyes, then she put a foot across the threshold and cried, in a trembling voice:

"Sister! Sister...."

She could say no more, but throwing her arms around her sister she wept.

After a moment of astonishment the old woman clasped Mother and cried out:

"What wind blew you two here? I thought you'd forgotten all about me. Ah! So many years. Ah, come into the house...."

Clutching her sister and niece she cried as though she could not stop, while Mother and Chuan-tzu, deeply distressed, tried their best to comfort her. The feeble old woman seemed to suddenly recall something and looked at the mother and daughter in alarm.

"Ah, sister! I heard that your family had all gone over to the side of the Eighth Route Army, and that you were injured very badly. I've been worried sick about you! Sister, how did you dare to bring that child here? There was no need for you to come here just to see an old woman like me. If you got into trouble for me...."

Mother and Chuan-tzu found it very difficult to calm the frightened old woman.

Teh-sung arrived the next morning and told Chuan-tzu about their situation. Kung Chiang-tzu had been made the deputy head of the special corps, while he was the cook, so they expected to get their hands on the enemy intelligence soon. The only difficulty was that the Japanese major's seal was in the possession of Interpreter Yang, who guarded it so very strictly that it would be difficult to get at. After telling Chuan-tzu to be very careful, he left.

Chuan-tzu told her aunt a great deal about the resistance movement and the principles of the revolution. She also explained the existing situation to her. Mother told her sister about her own experience. The feeble old woman wept silently, sighing as she listened. When Chuan-tzu finally asked her to go to the blockhouse and fetch her daughter, she readily assented.

Chuan-tzu tidied the *kang* and crouched at the window watching the courtyard. The gate opened, and in came a flashily-dressed woman. This was her cousin Chan-tzu.

Chan-tzu was very thin but quite pretty. Her almond-shaped eyes glistened, and her pale face was lightly rouged. Her waist was very small, and her breasts high. Her pink satin gown fitted so closely that every curve of her figure was shown, and when she walked she swayed like a willow switch, her curled hair swinging with the movement. But too much smoking had yellowed her teeth, and the nails of her delicate fingers were discoloured. . . .

Chuan-tzu watched her in pity and disgust, and she felt very uncomfortable.

Chan-tzu lifted the curtain at the door. At the sight of Chuan-tzu and the pistol on the *kang* she cried out and stepped back.

Her mother who was behind her said, "What are you shrieking about? This is your cousin Chuan-tzu."

Chan-tzu's lips trembled as she asked, "Didn't you tell me that my dad had come back from Yentai?"

"Go into the room! If I hadn't lied you wouldn't have come. Your aunt has come, too, and she asked me to bring you back so that she could see you."

Trembling all over, Chan-tzu forced a smile, but her limpid eyes watched the gleaming pistol all the time.

"Sit down. Mum and I came several days ago," said Chuan-tzu, then seeing her fright, she laughed and put away the gun. "Don't be afraid, if no one touches it, it won't go off by itself!"

Chan-tzu sat uneasily on the edge of the *kang*. Chuan-tzu drew her over, saying, "We haven't seen each other for years, I've really missed you. Are you getting along all right, cousin?"

Chan-tzu had not got rid of her fear, and her face went scarlet at this question.

"Well? Muddling through the days! There's no other way these times!"

Chuan-tzu moved closer and spoke in a low serious voice:

"I'll tell you directly what I called to see you about. I was sent by the Eighth Route Army. We're going to attack the city very soon. Just try to think what is to be done about your shameful business then?" Chan-tzu hung her head as Chuan-tzu continued, "Nazi Germany has already surrendered, and the Japanese imperialists are nearly done for. If you're smart, you'll think about your future and do a little work for us. I know you were a good woman, and that after your husband's death you were led astray into this wicked life. You must have heard that we only execute hardened traitors, and show no courtesy towards those who persist in doing wrong."

Chan-tzu was an intelligent woman, she had spent some years at school. Unfortunately, from her childhood she had loved showing off. She got mixed up with a flashy crowd, gradually came to put pleasure before everything else, and transferred her affections very easily from one person to another. After the death of her husband, fat Yang the interpreter, noticing her beauty, had chased her incessantly. At first Chan-tzu despised him, unwilling to have anything to do with a traitor, but as days passed and she was unable to find a man who attracted her, her widowhood palled upon her. She saw that the Japanese were in power everywhere, and realized that Interpreter Yang was a favourite of the Japanese and had money and influence. Eventually, she was unable to withstand his enticements and became friendly with him. During the past year Chan-tzu had seen the Japanese power waning daily; fat Yang the interpreter was no longer a man on whom she could rely. Thoughts of her desolate future made her feel very despondent, but she saw no way out and muddled along, taking each day's pleasure as it came. . . .

Her cousin's talk made her desperate; her mind was in tumult.

"Good cousin," she pleaded, "I've done wrong. I've had enough of this beastly way of living. Tell me what you want me to do, and I'll do the best I can to carry out your orders."



"Bring us the Japanese major's seal!"

"Oh! I can't do that. Fat Yang guards it very closely. I can't, I . . ." she said shaking her head in dismay.

"Why can't you? Can fat Yang keep it so close that even you can't get it?" Chuan-tzu saw that she would not agree, and again urged her, "Of course it is dangerous for you to do it, but you can find a way. Tell me where he hides it."

"He hides it in the safe in the bedroom."

"The key, where does he keep that?"

"In his pocket."

"Surely that can be managed. Wait until he is asleep, then take out the key and impress the seal on seven or eight sheets of letter paper. Isn't that easy?"

Chan-tzu hung her head; she had begun to waver.

"It can be done," she said slowly. "But I am afraid, Chuan-tzu, that when the Eighth Route Army breaks into the city you will forget to protect me."

"Don't worry! If you do well, I give you my word that you'll have no trouble of any kind," Chuan-tzu encouraged her. Then she looked straight at her and warned, "If you don't succeed, whatever else you do, don't let the cat out of the bag; we'll find some way to get you out of your difficulties. If you injure us, when the Eighth Route Army takes the city, you won't get away."

Aunt burst into the room, clutched her daughter and wailed, "Chan-tzu! Have a little conscience! Your aunt and your cousin have been so good to us, risking their lives to come and see us! We're kin, you can't take the side of the Japanese!"

Chan-tzu began to cry and gave her assent.

With beating hearts, Mother and Chuan-tzu watched Chan-tzu depart.

The next morning Chan-tzu brought them eight sheets of letter paper marked with the Japanese seal. Mother hugged her. . . .

At noon, Teh-sung brought the information which he and Kung Chiang-tzu had scouted out about the enemy dispositions.

Mother and daughter had to part, because it was necessary for someone to remain behind to establish contact. Chuan-tzu wanted Mother to go back home, but Mother insisted that her daughter go, arguing that it was more dangerous for Chuan-tzu to remain. Moreover, Chuan-tzu could walk quicker than herself and so could deliver the report earlier, so that the army could make its plans promptly. At the same time, Chuan-tzu could take part in the work. Chuan-tzu knew that Mother's health was poor, and that the journey would be difficult. In the end, her heart full of misgivings, she agreed to let her mother settle down and set off herself. . . .

It was an evening in early summer. A strong wind suddenly arose and swept across the plain, raising clouds of dust, causing the swallows to list in their flight, and tossing the sparrows head-over-heels. The sun had not set but the sky was already dark and the scattered clouds now driven together deepened the dusk. Soon the distant booming of thunder was heard.

Teh-chiang and the plain-clothes guerrillas, each carrying a pass stamped with the Japanese major's seal, entered the city. . . .

Teh-chiang found the rendezvous, where Teh-sung and Kung Chiang-tzu awaited him. They told him in detail the enemy's dispositions; then Teh-chiang said:

"Our troops have already surrounded the city, and are waiting for us. When you go back you must keep calm, and don't give the enemy cause to suspect you. When you hear the shooting start, find a place to hide until our troops have broken into the city, after that things will be all right."

"Where are you staying?" Kung Chiang-tzu asked.

"We. . ." Teh-chiang began, then he recalled Chiang Yung-chuan's warning to be careful. He continued, "We are all scattered. You just take care of yourselves."

Kung Chiang-tzu turned to go. Teh-chiang drew Teh-sung back and gripping his hand whispered in his ear:

"District head. . . . Brother! Before action starts we will be in the Fuchang Restaurant. If there is anything urgent, let me know.

Be on your guard tonight! Victory in the morning! This is the last step towards it!"

The muffled thunder became louder and louder, as though threatening to break the bonds of the heavy clouds, rip them asunder and gain its freedom. A brilliant flash of blue lightning zig-zagged across the sky, accompanied by an explosive crackle of thunder, causing hearts to contract and the earth tremble. The wild wind mercilessly drove a slashing downpour of rain before it, obscuring the world. The first huge drops threw up puffs of dust, then the world seemed to become one vast ocean.

The troops lay concealed around the city. They stripped off their shirts to cover their guns and ammunition, and the rain ran down their strong brown bodies, running off in tiny rivulets. Although it was the beginning of summer the northern wind and the rain set them shivering.

There were nearly as many stretcher-bearers as soldiers. The stretcher teams were under the charge of the district Party secretary, Chiang Yung-chuan. The troops had told them again and again not to come to the front, but their orders passed unheeded, and they insisted on following close on the army's heels, some even trying to get ahead.

The thought of battle, battle before the dawn, excited every heart!

Suddenly the soldiers heard sloshing footsteps through the mud. Some one was coming towards them. A flash of lightning then revealed a crowd of women, carrying baskets and pots, weaving their way forward. The young women's corps of the women's association was bringing their supper.

They had taken off their outer garments to cover the baskets and buckets, the rain had plastered their remaining clothes to their bodies and strands of hair were stuck to their faces. Some had lost their shoes in the mud and were marching barefoot, a few had slipped and fallen in the mud. They looked like wet hens.

No orders were given; the women silently handed out bowls, chopsticks, dumplings and before all the soldiers had become aware of

what was happening, fragrant, hot stuffed-dumplings were in their hands.

The soldiers eagerly ate the hot food, spiced with the rain, while the women watched them with pleasure.

An urgent knocking sounded at the door.

Mother started, she had not been asleep but was seated on the *kang*. She looked at the pitch-black window and her heart kept time with the pattering of the rain. Mother thought of the soldiers lying in the mud; they must be soaked to the skin in this rain. How she longed for the sound of firing! But her longing was mixed with fear, because her son would be amongst it. Could anything happen to him? And the two children at home; they had seldom been away from their mother at night. Were they missing her? Would Teh-kang cry? Could Hsiu-tzu cook well....

The knocking broke into Mother's thoughts, and she hurried out. The courtyard was dark and she had difficulty in keeping on her feet in the mud.

"Who's there?" Mother asked.

"Hurry, aunt! Everything's gone wrong!"

Mother opened the gate and Chan-tzu, looking as though she had crawled through the mud, hair streaming down her back, stumbled in. Clutching Mother, she began to cry.

Mother knew that things must be very bad.

"Speak quickly, what's the matter?" she asked.

Chan-tzu spoke through her tears, "Aunt! That... that Kung Chiang-tzu has been caught by the Japanese; he couldn't stand up to the beating and told them everything! I overheard it all from my room. Quick, aunt, hide!..."

"Ah!" Mother stood as if rooted to the spot, unmindful of the rain which beat fiercely on her.

"Chan-tzu!" she urged, "take your family into hiding! I must go out immediately!" Mother turned to leave, but Chan-tzu clung to her, pleading:

"Aunt! Come into the cellar, you can't go out! They'll start arresting people right away!"

Mother became calmer and hurried away, saying, "Let me go! I have urgent business." She stepped out of the door.

There was a flash of lightning and a crackle of thunder; Mother slipped and fell heavily in the mud....

After Teh-sung arrived in the city he had found a single room in which to live, preparing for emergencies.

He was not the least sleepy. He thought of the battle which would soon begin, of the destruction of the enemy and was elated by a foretaste of victory. He turned things over in his mind.

He thought again of Teh-chiang's advice to keep on the alert. He always slept with one hand on the loaded automatic which he kept under his pillow. Its gum-wood handle was always warm. He sat up, and gripped the gun, as he stared at the window darkened by the pitch-black night. He could hear the wind wailing and the rain beating. Time seemed to pass very slowly; a minute seemed as long as a day....

He heard footsteps. Many people were on the move. He pressed his face against the window and peeped out — cold grey bayonets gleamed, and rain rattled on steel helmets. The thrill of battle ran through him.

"Cousin... open the door..." It was a tragic wail, like the hoot of an owl on the rooftop in the night. Behind it was a bayonet point and a sabre's edge.

"Has that fellow gone back on us?" was the thought that passed through Teh-sung's mind. He did not speak but thrust his pistol barrel through the window paper and took aim.

The rain continued to hiss down, but for a moment the enemy was quiet. It was the silence of fear.

The pistol barked and a puppet soldier dropped.

The Japanese major came up and ordered the machine-gun to open fire upon the house.

Teh-sung felt a searing pain in his arm and fell back upon the *kang*.

The window paper had been ignited by the shooting and the lattice was burning. The house, too, was aflame; heavy black smoke filled the room. Teh-sung choked. Tears ran down his face; he

could not catch his breath. He almost fainted, then struggled to the window. Again he was shot in the chest. Leaning on one arm, he continued to shoot. He was soaked with blood, had bitten his lip in pain, but the shadow of a proud smile appeared on his ashen face when he heard the cries of the stricken enemy. As his heartbeats slowed, he thought:

"Victory is approaching. The Japanese are finished. I have discharged my duty to the Party and the people. I have successfully done my part for the revolution."

The Japanese major looked wrathfully at four dead bodies of his men. Then he ordered the house to be burned to the ground.

Teh-sung's breathing had stopped. The enemy could harm him no more, and in their fury only sent the flames of his funeral pyre leaping higher.

Kung Chiang-tzu shrank in fear and trembled as he watched the flames leaping through the roof; the flames seemed to sear through his heart, burning him, choking him....

Tiles fell from the rooftops, rain hammered against the doors. Every door and window was tightly closed. The whole city rocked and trembled!

At first the enemy within their fortified walls was not alarmed by the presence of the Eighth Route Army. They smugly awaited the arrival of reinforcements from Mouping, believing that when they arrived they would only have to sally forth and the Eighth Route Army would be crushed between their two forces. But when they discovered that their opponents had actually entered the city, they were in panic.

The enemy proclaimed martial law; the guard at the gates was doubled, and all over the city people was seized and searched.

Mother continued to run, disregarding everything around her. Her clothes were soaked and she had lost her shoes as she waded through ankle-deep mud. The wind tore her hair loose, and the long grey strands whipped her face. The streaming rain also beat upon her face, so that she had to keep her head down and her eyes shut and grope her way along. She ran into a wall but, disregarding

the pain, she turned and pressed forward as if urged to hurry. She gathered all the strength in her body and charged ahead!

As Mother reached the door of the Fuchang Restaurant, she heard shots and several men rushed by her. She hesitated only a moment, then cried out:

“Teh-chiang! Mum’s over here!”

Teh-chiang and three plain-clothes guerrillas ran to her.

“Mum!” Teh-chiang cried. “How did you get here? We heard there was trouble on the streets, so we got out. Just as we left the alley we ran into the enemy. Mum...”

“Kung Chiang-tzu has told the Japanese everything,” said Mother. “You must start at once!”

They were startled by this news.

Teh-chiang quickly instructed Mother, “You hide yourself. We’ll go now!”

From the corner of the street came the sound of shots.

Teh-chiang, realizing that the situation was critical, told his men, “Quick! Go into action immediately!” As the men left on the run, he turned back to Mother and said, “Mum, get out of here quickly.”

Mother pushed him away. “Son, the Japanese are already arriving! This is a long alley and you need time to get out of it. You run on, I’ll stay and delay them!”

“Mum, how can I? You get out! I’ll take them...”

Mother cut her son’s protests short, “Don’t argue. Can’t you hear them coming? There’s only a few of you and you must open the city gate! How can you stand up against so many Japanese. Get on!” Then in a determined voice Mother added:

“Teh-chiang, give me a hand-grenade!”

“Mum! You...” her son understood why his mother wanted the hand-grenade. He had not forgotten how she had often spoken about the way in which Chi-tzu and his wife had taken the enemy with them into eternity with a hand-grenade.

“What are you waiting for? Quick! I can take care of myself!”

Tears streaming down his face, Teh-chiang could not bear to leave Mother. But the enemy was racing upon them, and if he got involved in a fight, who would lead his men to complete their task?...

Trying to force her son’s decision, Mother was already stumbling towards the enemy. Teh-chiang knew he could not stop her. He thought of his duty, then ran after Mother, pushed into her hand the revolver given him by Chiang Yung-chuan, hugged her and cried:

“Mum, take this! Pull the trigger and it’ll fire. You needn’t fix anything. Mum, I...”

“All right, son! You take the comrades to open the gate. Don’t cry, I may get out of this! Go quickly!” As she spoke she pushed her son away....

This was the first time that Mother had held a gun, and she was thrilled by the touch of it. She felt quite calm, as though the weapon was so powerful that it imparted courage. She leaned against the wall, motionless, as though resting. A mob of enemy soldiers rushed up, and Mother coughed.

“Don’t move!” the enemy shouted.

Mother answered calmly, “I’m not moving!”

The captain of the special corps Ho San swore as he strode forward, “Goddam it, it’s a woman!”

“Tell quick! Who fired a gun just now?” he yelled.

“I did!” Mother said quietly.

“You shot? Nonsense! Speak quickly! Where did they go to?”

“What, don’t you believe me?” Mother questioned as she pointed the pistol at the enemy. Her hand trembled but she pulled the trigger twice.

The enemy soldiers dodged wildly aside; one fell head first in the mud.

Mother was about to pull the trigger again, when a shot from Ho San struck her in the left breast. Her body went limp, and she slid down the wall....

Suddenly the sound of fierce firing came from the east.

Ho San fired two more shots at Mother, then rushed off with his men.

After Teh-chiang left Mother he and his men made straight for the east gate. They ran into an enemy patrol of four. Only a few paces

separated them; Teh-chiang and the soldiers opened fire, finished them off, and hastened towards the city gate.

The guard at the gate had already made thorough preparations for defence. A heavy machine-gun in a sunken pillbox by the side of the gate covered the passage through the city wall. The firing was so heavy that Teh-chiang and his comrades dared not lift their heads. They lay in a muddy ditch beside the road desperately anxious to get moving again. A green signal-flare suddenly rose high in the air illuminating the western night. Then came the sound of heavy firing, the bugle call for the charge, and the roar of battle cries. . . .

Teh-chiang knew that this meant that their forces outside had broken open the west gate, and that their troops were thrusting their way into the city. The soldiers outside the east gate could be heard beginning their assault. He burned with impatience. Finally he cast aside all caution and ordered the men with him to move closer to the gate. Then, with a grenade in one hand, its cord on his finger, he drew out his pistol and rushed to the enemy machine-gun position.

The east gate opened in the direction of the base areas, and the enemy guard was particularly heavy at this point, where the artillery was concentrated. In addition, the enemy had cut the road across the city moat, so that the only entry was by way of a drawbridge.

The troops outside the wall had already advanced to the bank, where they were forced to halt because of the deep, wide moat. When the city gate failed to open, they knew that something had gone wrong inside, and they decided to attack directly.

Teh-chiang tried to approach the pillbox from the side of a machine-gun slit, but there were gun-slits all around it, blasting at him. He looked angrily at the leaping streaks of flame, then thrusting his pistol into the holster, he drew out a second grenade and flung it at the machine-gun slit. As it exploded, Teh-chiang leaped forward and cast the first grenade into the slit. There was a roar and the guns were silenced!

Teh-chiang's companions charged through the gate-passage, opened the gate and let down the drawbridge. A great wave of soldiers surged across towards the city.

Within the city, a fierce battle commenced at every cross-street, every lane-end, every corner. As grenades left the hand the sword was drawn; the two forces were locked in mortal combat.

The battle quickly spread. Puppet troops dropped their arms and surrendered; some Japanese refused to surrender and were shot down.

At last, only the great blockhouse on the northwest corner of the city wall, occupied by the Japanese major and his men, remained.

The soldiers encircled it; some lay upon the surrounding rooftops, shooting down at the enemy.

Teh-chiang remained with the troops until the enemy was surrounded, then he ran back to look for Mother.

The shooting was now concentrated in the northwest corner of the city. Enemy corpses lay in disorder about the streets, and parties of stretcher-bearers were busy collecting the wounded. Groups of prisoners with hang-dog expressions were marched through the streets.

Teh-chiang's anxiety increased as he ran. He hoped to see Mother where he had left her, and again he hoped that he would not; for if she was there, could she still be alive? But if the enemy had taken her, her suffering might have been more brutal. . . .

He reached the Fuchang Restaurant and could not see anyone. He called desperately, but there was no answer. Flashing his torch along the foot of the wall, he saw traces of blood in the puddles. His heart bounded; he followed the blood-stained puddles to their source. Then he stopped!

Teh-chiang saw a black object partly submerged in the blood-stained water. Hurriedly picking it up he exclaimed, "Ah, the gun! The revolver!" His heart leaped and his eyes grew misty. He looked in the chamber. There was only one cartridge. Mother must have fired twice, because it held five cartridges, and two had been used before he gave it to her.

Suddenly he heard shots nearby. He pushed the cartridge back into the chamber and flattened himself against the wall.

Someone was approaching from the opposite direction. It was Captain Ho San. When he realized that the city was taken, he had tried to hide in the house of his mistress, but some soldiers had discovered him and were now hot on his heels.

Teh-chiang saw the man was nearly level with him. When he turned to fire back at his pursuers, Teh-chiang leaped out and grasped him around the middle.

Ho San was momentarily startled, but he soon whipped his gun around and shot at the man who was holding him. Teh-chiang was prepared. He gripped his opponent's wrist and pushed his hand upward — the gun fired into the air.

Ho San was desperate and, before his adversary could move again, he twisted around and dealt him a heavy blow over the heart. A fierce pain shot through Teh-chiang, but he wrested the gun from his enemy and pressing it against him ordered:

“Hands up!”

Ho San hearing his pursuers closing in, turned to flee. Teh-chiang was furious and shouted, “You swine, you won't run far!” He shot, but the gun jammed. He whipped out the revolver stained with Mother's blood and with the last bullet fired at the dark running figure.

There was a heavy splash as Ho San plunged head first into the mire.

The enemy would not surrender; there was no alternative but to exterminate them!

The Japanese again and again rejected warnings, and stubbornly held on to their solitary fort. The order was given for the final action — to blow up the blockhouse!

Our people had tunnelled below the enemy blockhouse. Several dozen mines, of various sizes, had been put in a huge, ancient coffin and placed under the blockhouse. The long fuse attached to the coffin ended at our positions. The preparations were completed.

A young soldier called out mockingly in a shrill, boyish voice: “Hey! Listen up there: This is our last warning to you! It's not too late to hand over your guns, our Eighth Route Army promises to be lenient and send you home. Don't sell your lives in battle for the money-changers. If you won't listen, we'll invite you to try our home-made aeroplane!”

The enemy, still dreaming of reinforcements from Mouping, cursed and swore.

Boom!... The blockhouse rose into the air! Bowls, helmets, guns, clothing, bones, flesh filled the sky and smashed again to the ground. The rejoicing of the multitude shook the earth!

“Truly?” was Teh-chiang's question when he was told that Mother was not dead but had been rescued by the stretcher team. He could scarcely believe it and, in his joy, the hardened youth wept like a child. He raced to the temporary first-aid station, where Mother lay on a stretcher. She had been in a coma. There was a wide bandage around her forehead, and two of her left ribs had been broken, so she could only lie on her back. Her face was pale and bloodless under the light of the lamp.

Teh-chiang rushed into the room. He saw his elder sister and knew that Mother must be there.

“Mum!...” he could not help crying out as he strode over. The other people motioned to him to be quiet and he stopped.

Mother slowly opened her eyes. Perhaps it was her oldest son's cry that roused her. Maybe it was the doctor's painstaking care. She looked around, then whispered:

“Ah, you're all here.”

“Mum, here I am, here!” Teh-kang cried in a tear-filled voice.

“Eh, don't cry, child. Mum isn't going to die.” Mother also discovered Chiang Yung-chuan and Chuan-tzu. “Haven't you anything better to do? You needn't stay to mind me.”

“Aunt, we've nothing to do!” Chiang Yung-chuan hastily assured her. “We've already won, aunt!”

A light came into Mother's eyes as she exclaimed, “Ah, the Japanese are finished!” She frowned with pain and abruptly said:

“Chuan-tzu, how's your aunt?”

“Mum, none of aunt's family was hurt,” Chuan-tzu answered quickly.

A nurse came over and said affectionately:

“Old aunt, you mustn't talk so much. It's bad for you.”

Mother looked at her, then said amiably:

“Good girl, get on with your work. I won't be any trouble.”

When the nurse left, Mother looked at her family happily. Then



she sighed and looked at the brightening window. "It's day now. Help me to the door, so I can see."

"Aunt, you're severely wounded, you can't get up!" Chiang Yung-chuan intervened.

"Eh, that doesn't matter. Yung-chuan, I want to see our city. Chuan-tzu, help me up." Mother tried to move.

Teh-chiang and Chuan-tzu hurried to help her, and one on each side they supported her to the door. Hsiu-tzu and Teh-kang stayed close by her, and Chiang Yung-chuan followed behind.

A round red sun leaped laughing from a rosy haze. Ten thousand golden rays swept across the fields fresh after the storm. Everything was smiling to welcome its arrival, receive its warmth, grow under its care.

"Mum, look! The red flag!" Teh-kang cried excitedly.

On the highest point of the liberated city's wall stood a young soldier. A clean white bandage bound his brow under the olive-coloured army cap. At his shoulder was a rifle with bayonet fixed. His hands gripped the flag-staff tightly. The fiery flag fluttered in the breeze, and a lovely blood-red radiance shone forth!

Mother looked up, raised her pale face to the red flag and the sunshine, and a faint pink flush appeared on it.

Hsiu-tzu suddenly remembered something. She ran back into the room, then returned with a sheaf of flowers.

"Mum, today is your birthday! Here..." Hsiu-tzu was about to give the flowers to Mother when she realized that Mother could not hold them. She hugged them to her breast.

Mother looked at the flowers in her daughter's hands. Rain-washed, they looked fresher and more beautiful, and glowed in the light of the rising sun. The flower that attracted Mother's attention was not the pink rose, nor the crimson peony, but the golden sow-thistle thrust among the greater blooms. Mother stared at it until everything before her eyes seemed to glow with a golden light, as though the sow-thistle bloomed everywhere.

Mother wanted to taste the cool bitterness of the sow-thistle root and sniff the fragrance of its flower. The corners of her lips trembled faintly, then set in a wry, happy smile.

(Concluded)

*Translated by Shirley Wood  
Illustrated by Ying Hung*

*Fu Chou*

## The Girl Driving Yaks

A girl from a village in Tibet  
Drives seven sturdy yaks,  
On the back of the last she rides  
And slowly, slowly drives her charges on.  
Fleecy white clouds brush her crimson sleeves,  
Low green boughs graze the flowers in her hair,  
Softly she croons a love song of her own,  
And the wind and the birds accompany her song.

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Fu Chou, born in 1928 in Szechuan Province, is the author of several collections of poems including *Ballads of the Snowy Mountain* and *Wood-cutters*.

I am driving seven yaks of different colours,  
Who so happy and free as I?  
I have crossed a thousand forests,  
A thousand mountains;  
But if you think we are roaming aimlessly  
Ask my yaks of different colours  
What loads they bear—  
These are loads not of care but of joy.

That black yak  
Carries sickles and hoes.  
That white yak  
Carries salt and wine  
That our Tibetan villages  
May reap good harvests of grain  
And have savour in our lives,  
Wine in every household.

That brown yak  
Bears the loveliest agate and coral,  
That dappled yak  
Bears bright silks and coloured cloth  
For the girls in our villages,  
To make them so gay and splendid  
All the young men will fall in love with them,  
And all will long to dance and sing with them.

That red yak  
Has precious books printed in Peking,  
That mottled yak  
Has gaily coloured pictures



For every man, woman and child in our villages,  
To unlock the treasury of our mountains and forests,  
That all may work with a will  
To build a glorious future for our homeland.

On the last, plain yak  
Sits a clumsy girl;  
What am I good for?  
Nothing.  
All I can do is ride a yak  
And sing a simple song,  
Not knowing what to sing,  
Sing of the joy in my heart.

Pretty girls of all our villages,  
Young men, old folk and children,  
Happiness is yours,  
And more happiness is to come;  
But don't forget  
The yaks that bring you joy,  
And spare a thought  
For the girl who drives the yaks.

*Translated by Yang Hsien-yi*

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*The Vietnamese Peasants* (woodcut) ▶

by Tung Chi-chung

Tung Chi-chung, born in 1935 in Shansi Province, graduated from the Peking College of Art in 1958. He is now working in the Shansi branch of the Chinese Artists' Union. This woodcut belongs to the serial *Vietnamese Women Fight the U.S. Aggressors*.



## The Scholar

One day when a scholar's wife was cooking, she found she had not enough fuel. If she went to buy some herself, there would be no one to tend the stove. She had no alternative but to ask her husband for help.

The scholar agreed and went out, a book under his arm, without asking what kind of fuel or how much he should buy.

Where to go to buy firewood, he did not know. He went to a cross-road, thinking, "Well, I'll wait here." He sat down on the ground and started reading.

Sure enough, after a few minutes a wood-cutter came up. The scholar raised his head and asked unconcernedly, "Are you selling your firewood?" Then he lowered his head and started reading again.

"Do you want to buy?" the wood-cutter countered.

The scholar, his mind on his book, did not hear what the man was saying. So the wood-cutter went away. When he raised his head the second time the wood-cutter was far off.



After a while another wood-cutter turned up. The scholar was so deep in reading that he did not notice him. He missed his chance once more.

Then, a third wood-cutter approached.

"Are you selling your firewood?" asked the scholar again.

"Yes," replied the wood-cutter.

"Do you mean it?"

"Of course. If not, what am I carrying it for? How much do you want?" the seller retorted impatiently.

"How much?" The scholar could not say. He felt in his pocket and cried, "Ah, I forgot to bring any money with me. Please wait a bit. I'll go back to fetch it..."

"No, I have to go to the market." The man picked up his load and hurried away.

Meanwhile, the cook waited at home anxiously. At last, sick of waiting, she went out to look for her husband. When she saw him standing there empty-handed with nothing but a book, she could not help getting worked up.

"What are you doing here? Where is the firewood?" she asked angrily.

"He's carrying it away," the scholar answered, pointing to the disappearing wood-cutter.

"Why didn't you buy it?"

"I forgot to bring money with me."

The scholar's wife lost her temper. She caught hold of her husband and pulled him homeward.

By this time, however, their house had caught fire. Tongues of flame were licking through the windows, with black smoke billowing high in the sky. The wife jiggled up and down in alarm and started crying, but the husband simply stared blankly at the blaze.

"Don't just stand there. Go and borrow some buckets to put out the fire!" his wife scolded.

Thus prompted, the scholar knew what he should do. But he did not want to put down his book and, taking it with him, he walked with steady, measured steps to the next house. Since by now all his neighbours had come of their own accord to help put out the fire, there were no buckets left for him to borrow. He had to go to the family at the far end of the village.

When the scholar got there, the head of the family was playing chess with a guest. He stood silently beside them and watched the game. After a long time the host raised his head and saw him.

"What can I do for you?" he asked the scholar.

"I want you to do me a favour," was the reply.

"Why didn't you say so before?"

"Don't you see what's written there?" The scholar pointed at the inscription on the chess-board. "'A true gentleman does not talk while watching chess.' How could I interrupt you?"

"Now we've finished our game. Please tell us what you want," the host said impatiently.

"The fact is, due to our carelessness my house has caught fire. My purpose in coming here is to borrow your buckets. You may rest assured that I shall return them to you after I have put out the fire. Please favour me with this loan." The scholar spoke calmly and dispassionately.

"What! A fire!" Both the host and guest leapt to their feet. "Damn it! Why didn't you tell us earlier, you fool?" Still cursing, they took up their buckets and dashed out to the rescue.

Calm as ever, the scholar walked slowly back and said in cultured tones:

"Don't get flurried by such a small matter. Only the vulgar lose their heads and get worked up over trifles..."

His neighbours, busy putting out the fire, heard this and got very angry.

"A small matter, is it?" they cried. "Where will you sleep tonight?"

"Oh! Where shall I sleep? Where shall I sleep?..." At last the scholar seemed to understand that the problems of daily life were of far greater importance than reading dead books.

## The Lie Frame

Wang Ta and Wang Erh were two brothers, with so little land that they could not keep themselves. After a discussion they decided that the younger would stay at home to till their own small plot of land and the elder go to a landlord called Fat Li as a hired-hand.

The Li family promised to pay Wang Ta two ounces of silver a year.

This landlord, Fat Li, was a sly, greedy man and fearfully fat. Apart from all kinds of hard jobs, he had a special rule for his hired-hands — they had to tell him a lie at the end of the year. If he believed it, he would pay them; otherwise, he would not.

There were some reasons for this special rule: First, with nothing to do after dinner except worry about his fatness, it amused him to force his hired-hands to lie to him; secondly, since they were too simple and honest to tell a lie, he made this the pretext not to pay them their wages.

A year passed. Wang Ta asked for his pay. Sure enough, the landlord said with a crafty smile:

"You've not worked badly this year. Now tell me a lie. If I believe it, I'll give you your wages; if not, no pay for you, let's see how you do next year."

Wang Ta, a straightforward man, could not tell a lie. He made up one, but it could not fool this cunning landlord. So, after a year's hard work he went home empty-handed for New Year.

Full of anger and hatred, Wang Ta told the whole story to his brother when he got home.

Hearing it, Wang Erh naturally hated the landlord too. But he comforted his brother:

"Don't get so upset, brother. I'll go and take revenge for you next year."

The next spring Wang Ta stayed at home to till the land while Wang Erh went to the Lis to take his brother's place. The terms were the same. But Wang Erh said to the landlord:

"Master, we must get this clear beforehand. If I agree to all your terms, you must pay me double wages, both mine and my brother's."

Fat Li, the landlord, was sure that Wang Erh was no better a liar than his brother, so he agreed to this.

Time flew. It was soon the end of December. One day Fat Li saw Wang Erh and asked with the same crafty smile:

"Do you remember you have to tell a lie? Are you ready? If not, ha, ha... Don't blame me for the consequences."

Hatred in heart, Wang Erh had hit on a plan to deal with the fat landlord.

"Don't worry, master," he smiled. "If I can't tell you a lie, I won't ask for any wages."

That day, Wang Erh went with Fat Li to the market to do some shopping for New Year. On the way back, he strode swiftly ahead with a load of goods on his shoulder, leaving the fat man far behind. Puffing and blowing as he waddled along with a stick, Fat Li tried to catch up but failed. As soon as Wang Erh reached home, he put down his load and shouted breathlessly to his mistress: "Something terrible has happened!" He dismantled a door, put it on to his back and rushed out.

This frightened the woman nearly to death. She hurried after him, asking, "What's happened, Wang Erh? What's happened?..."

"What's happened! Master is so fat, he's fallen down and had a stroke. He is lying on the road and can't move a step. I am going to carry him back on this door. If we delay, it will be too late to save him." He broke into a run.

Frantic with alarm, the woman burst into tears and ran after Wang Erh down the road.

Running with a door on his back, Wang Erh was wet through when at last he met Fat Li.

The landlord, in a panic, inquired, "What's wrong, Wang Erh? What's wrong?..."

"What's wrong!" Wang Erh was short of breath. "The house caught fire. Your wife has been burned to death. All I've saved is this door."

Fat Li was so shocked by this that he rushed home, losing his cap and stick in his desperation.

With one rushing desperately home, the other running desperately down the road, one moaning, the other crying, both with their heads lowered, Fat Li and his wife soon came into sharp collision and both fell down.

Fat Li sat up meaning to abuse the person who had bumped into him when he saw it was his wife. So she was not dead after all. He could have killed Wang Erh. His wife also sat up, curses on her lips, when she saw it was her husband. So he had not had a stroke after all. She could have killed Wang Erh too.



Both husband and wife were roundly abusing Wang Erh when he came over to ask for his pay. Fat Li pointed an accusing finger at him and shouted, "A fine thing you've done! Count yourself lucky if I don't settle this score. How dare you ask for wages!"

"You told me to be ready to tell a lie, didn't you, master?" replied Wang Erh reasonably. "Now that I've told one at last and you've believed it, shouldn't you give me my wages?"

Although silenced by this, Fat Li still refused to pay. Instead he went to the county court to lodge a charge against Wang Erh.

The magistrate, eager to oblige the landlord, sent for Wang Erh immediately and questioned him. Why had he lied to his master and caused an accident?

"Your lordship," Wang Erh said, "I am a simple, honest hired-hand. I never lied till my master forced me to. He has a special rule that, if you don't tell a lie or he doesn't believe the lie, you get no wages. My brother worked there for the whole of last year and didn't get a cent, just because he could not lie. Should I go home empty-handed too?"

"Well," the magistrate retorted, "since you were forced to tell a lie, you must tell me one too. If I believe it, I'll award the wages to you; if not, not only will you forfeit your wages but you'll get forty strokes."

Wang Erh knew the magistrate and the landlord were in league. But what could he do? A sudden thought came to his mind:

"Your lordship, I can make up a lie, but only with the help of a 'lie frame.'"

"Is there such a thing as a lie frame?" The magistrate was surprised.

"Yes, your lordship," Wang Erh explained. "Talking about the lie frame, it's really a treasure. You can tell any lie you like with it and people will believe you every time. It never fails."

This magistrate had done innumerable dirty things in his life, yet he pretended to be a gentleman. His worst trouble was that he was a poor liar, with the result that he had often lost face before his superiors and colleagues. Now that he knew there was such an efficient lie frame, he got so excited that he forgot to pass sentence. He at once asked where it was and ordered Wang Erh to fetch it.

At sight of the magistrate's eagerness, Wang Erh felt like laughing, but he controlled himself and said seriously:

"Your lordship, it's not easy to get the lie frame. It is under the control of the God of Earth in my home town. Each time I borrow it I have to offer three pig heads to the god. . . ."

"I'll do whatever you say," the magistrate cut him short. "Here's five ounces of silver to buy the offerings, and I'll send four guards with you to help carry the lie frame. You must bring it back before supper."

Silver in hand, Wang Erh went out of the town with the four guards. When they came to a tavern he suggested:

"Fellows, it's still early. Let's go in and have a drink. That'll give us more strength to go on."

The guards were naturally glad and fully approved. They went in, sat down at a table and started drinking. They did not stop until sunset, when all of them were drunk.

Then Wang Erh ran back to town and reported to the magistrate:

"Your lordship, everything is going smoothly. We have borrowed the lie frame and carried it to the gate of the town. But it is too large to go through the gate. Please go and see what can be done."

"Since the four guards who went with him have not come back, he must be telling the truth," thought the magistrate. He ordered his chair-bearers to take him out.

When he reached the gate he asked Wang Erh, "Where is the lie frame?"

"Excuse me, your lordship," Wang Erh said, calm as ever. "I've told my lie, what do we still need a lie frame for?"

*Translated by Hsiung Chen-ju*  
*Illustrated by Chiang Yu-sheng*

*Chi Chi-kuang*

## The Hammer Forged with Blood

At the meeting to welcome new workers to our mill  
Mum gave me a hammer, a hammer wrapped in red silk.  
"Take this, son," she said.  
"Congealed in this hammer is your father's blood."

As the hot tears sprang to her eyes  
All around turned dark  
And I saw the mill as it was in the bad old days,  
Wrapped in gloom the whole year round.

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Chi Chi-kuang, a young worker in the Changchun Automobile Manufacturing Plant, is the author of *Song of the Furnace*, a collection of poems.

In a flash up strode a tall figure,  
Eyes glinting, with the muscles of a tiger;  
The killers behind him lashed out with their whips,  
Those fiends had tied his arms behind his back.

To his mates, he was a hero, a man of iron;  
To the boss, a trouble-maker, a dangerous "Red."  
As they pushed him towards the furnace  
The flames lit up the splendour of his face.

His dear ones cried out in anger,  
His mates rushed forward;  
But the killers clicked the bolts of their guns  
And, unarmed, they were powerless to rescue him.

He gazed with a scornful smile at the molten steel,  
Then shouted loud, "Long live the revolution!"  
The killers flung him into the furnace,  
Ah, then, what furious flames, what scarlet smoke belched forth!

Fierce roared the wind, loud hissed the rain,  
And Heaven itself shed tears.  
His workmates gnashed and ground their teeth,  
Then from this heat of steel forged countless hammers.

Hammers forged with human blood,  
Their clang resounds like thunder;  
Through them the spirit of our glorious dead  
Smashes and destroys the old society.

When I take this hammer forged with blood  
My eyes fill with tears of hatred;  
Heavy it weighs,  
As the blood of my father courses through my veins.

With this hammer I shall help build socialism,  
With this hammer I shall smash all enemies;  
We heirs to the revolution must guard well  
This land, flame-red, won by our forbears' blood.

*Translated by Yang Hsien-yi*

Tao Chu

## Some Problems Concerning Dramas on Revolutionary Modern Themes

Traditional Chinese drama is a synthesis of dancing, singing and acting, and one of the best-known varieties is Peking opera, which has a comprehensive set of stage conventions and tunes. Other local dramas have similar characteristics, each possessing its own distinctive features. The plots of the traditional dramas generally dealt with members of the feudal ruling class, and after this became the rule stagnation set in—these dramas grew increasingly stereotyped. In the summer of 1964, the Festival of Peking Opera on Revolutionary Modern Themes was held in Peking with wide support from the people. This new revolutionary theatre, which inherits the best features of the traditional dramas, has succeeded in reflecting a wide range of subjects from our present-day socialist construction and socialist revolution, as well as from the past struggles during the democratic revolution; it has also created many heroic characters who are workers, peasants and soldiers, while important innovations and reforms have been made on the basis of the old stage conventions. *Chinese Literature* No. 9, 1964 reported on this festival, which marked the beginning of a great revolutionary movement on the cultural front in China and has made its influence felt on all the traditional local schools of opera, which have also produced many new works reflecting the life and revolutionary struggles of today, and drama festivals have been held in many parts of China. In 1965, theatrical companies from various provinces and municipalities in central-south China held a drama

festival in Canton. The article below is an abridged version of the speech made at the festival in August that year by Tao Chu, Vice-premier of the State Council and First Secretary of the Central-South Bureau of the Chinese Communist Party.

Revolutionary drama should present a wide range of heroic characters based on real life to help raise the political consciousness of the masses, inspire them with revolutionary enthusiasm, and thus propel history forward. There can be no successful drama without successful characterization. The creation of fine socialist heroes and heroines is the soul of dramas on revolutionary modern themes and the key to their success. We want the revolutionary modern drama to take the stage by storm and occupy it; this means we want all sorts of really stirring revolutionary heroes to occupy the minds of the audience. The many excellent dramas presented in the Central-South China Drama Festival were good examples in this respect and have shown us the way forward. These dramas presented all kinds of characters including workers, peasants, soldiers, students, shop assistants, Party members, Youth League members, army commanders and government cadres, men and women, old and young. Some were splendid revolutionary heroes with an extremely inspiring educational significance, much more so than that of the characters in traditional dramas.

The fifty-one dramas staged during this festival covered a wide range of themes. Twenty-one dealt with life and struggles in the countryside, five with industry, seven with army life, four with the militia, seven with past revolutionary struggles, one with the class struggle in international affairs, and the other six with a variety of subjects including the traditions and working style of the Red Army, and the part-work, part-study educational system. This shows clearly that the revolutionary modern dramas are “a hundred flowers blossoming together.” By comparison the themes of the traditional dramas are very limited, being restricted to bad emperors and bad ministers, good emperors and good ministers, the misfortunes of young scholars or their secret rendezvous with young ladies, and the adventures of petty thieves, gangsters, monsters and ghosts. In them we look in vain for heroes from the common people; and the more one sees of these



old operas, the more disheartened and depressed one grows. Our age is one in which the people have become the masters of their fate, when "heroes are emerging in swift succession in every walk of life." "For truly great men," to quote from one of Chairman Mao Tse-tung's poems, "none but the present age will show." So our dramas on revolutionary modern themes must not shirk their responsibility but must reflect the struggles on various fronts in our socialist revolution and socialist construction, creating various types of splendid socialist heroes. This festival made a good start in this respect.

The themes of the revolutionary modern dramas cover two stages of the revolution led by the Chinese Communist Party. Our playwrights can and should write about the democratic revolution of 1919 to 1949, and we should organize them to do this in a systematic way; but we need even more plays about the socialist period since 1949, and our main efforts should go to creating heroic characters of the socialist period. Many people in China took part in the democratic revolution and showed great resolution and courage, but they were not sufficiently well prepared for the socialist revolution, and thus some of them find themselves lagging behind in this period. This is because the socialist revolution goes much deeper than the democratic one and demands a higher political consciousness. It requires us to establish a proletarian outlook in place of a bourgeois outlook, to oppose capitalism and individualism; and in order to do this many ideas in our minds have to be changed and remoulded. We fully believe in the certain and complete victory of the socialist revolution. But we must also be fully aware of the complexity and difficulty of the struggle to replace a bourgeois outlook with a proletarian outlook; we should not regard the matter lightly or relax the political and ideological education of the cadres and the masses.

Drama is a very important means of education, and therefore it must help to establish a proletarian outlook in place of a bourgeois one and create socialist heroes to educate the people. Of course, dramas dealing with past revolutionary struggles can also educate audiences with communist morality and raise their ideological consciousness, but they have a less direct appeal than dramas on contemporary themes

with socialist heroes. We should stage revolutionary modern dramas on a big scale and depict great numbers of socialist heroes on the stage, so that these new heroes will become models admired and studied by the people and will encourage and inspire the people to work harder for the socialist revolution and socialist construction.

The main need of our drama workers now is to go deep into the life of the masses, to become one with the workers, peasants and soldiers, and to develop a genuine feeling for them; for only so can they successfully create heroic characters of the socialist period. Most of our old operas have a set of conventions for presenting emperors, princes, generals, ministers, feudal scholars and young ladies, and the old actors are fairly familiar with these. But when they have to act the parts of workers, peasants, soldiers or Party secretaries, they feel at a loss because they are not familiar with these roles. The basic reason for this is that our drama workers have not merged themselves sufficiently with the workers, peasants and soldiers, so that when they portray them on the stage they are, in the words of Comrade Mao Tse-tung, "lacking in knowledge and understanding", "heroes with no place to display their prowess." Our workers in the field of drama have the task of educating the people with socialist ideology, but before they can do this they must first familiarize themselves with the life of the workers, peasants and soldiers and learn from them. Like workers in other branches of literature and art, they must pay attention to remoulding their thoughts and feelings and making them one with those of the workers, peasants and soldiers; they must get to know the characters they are going to depict by immersing themselves in the life of the masses and thereby accumulating material for their art. Twenty-four years ago Comrade Mao Tse-tung told us: "China's revolutionary writers and artists, writers and artists of promise, must go among the masses; they must for a long period of time unreservedly and whole-heartedly go among the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers, go into the heat of the struggle, go to the only source, the broadest and richest source, in order to observe, experience, study and analyse all the different kinds of people, all the classes, all the masses, all the vivid patterns of life and struggle, all the raw materials of literature and art. Only then can they proceed to creative work."

*(Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art)* In order to write good revolutionary modern dramas and act them well, to create heroic characters of the socialist period, we must go deep among the workers, peasants and soldiers, learn from them and get to know them.

To create successful heroic characters, we must liberate our ideas and have the courage to expose contradictions, unfold them and resolve them. Without contradictions there can be no drama. The world is full of contradictions, and class society is a society of class contradictions. When our drama boldly exposes, unfolds and resolves contradictions, we are taking the viewpoint of dialectical materialism and class analysis to give an objective picture of the class struggle in real life by means of vivid images and dramatic language.

What sort of contradictions should the revolutionary modern drama mainly reflect? I think, in the present period, we should give priority to reflecting the contradictions within the ranks of the people. In socialist society there still exist classes and class struggles, there still exist all sorts of contradictions and struggles. The main contradiction in China throughout the whole transitional period of socialism is the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, between the road to socialism and the road to capitalism. This contradiction reveals itself in certain spheres as a violent life-and-death struggle between us and the enemy, but under the present specific circumstances in China the contradictions between the two classes and the two roads generally take the form of contradictions within the ranks of the people. In reality, contradictions within the ranks of the people are the most numerous and most common. Among the people there exist ideological struggles between the two classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and the two roads, capitalism and socialism, as well as struggles between the progressive and the backward. There are all sorts of progressive characters, and also all sorts of people with shortcomings, who make mistakes. So our revolutionary modern drama should devote its chief efforts to reflecting the contradictions within the ranks of the people, especially the struggle between the two roads and the ideological struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. We should enthusiastically praise the heroic characters with a proletarian ideology among the workers, peasants and

soldiers; we should also take pains to educate, help and criticize those backward characters who are influenced by bourgeois ideas and old social customs, uniting with them and remoulding them. Therefore, in the present stage, while understanding that class struggle and the struggle between the two roads are the main thing and emphasizing the need to replace a bourgeois outlook with a proletarian outlook, it is very necessary to advocate that revolutionary modern dramas (the same applies to other fields of literature and art) should reflect more fully contradictions within the ranks of the people. This is the only way to continue widening the range of revolutionary modern drama and to ensure a great variety of themes. Of course, since the imperialists, the reactionaries of various countries and the modern revisionists are ready to attack us at any time, while the reactionary ruling classes in China which have been overthrown are not willing to give up, contradictions between ourselves and the enemy will exist for a long time to come, and we must never lose sight of this fact. Besides, in real life contradictions within the ranks of the people are often interwoven with contradictions between ourselves and the enemy. The revolutionary modern drama should reflect struggles of this sort too and not ignore them.

Our playwrights have not yet freed themselves from many self-imposed restrictions and have not liberated their thinking enough to make a bold exposure of contradictions. The main reason why some dramas seem rather flat and dull is because we have not delved deep enough into contradictions. This results in an absence of dramatic conflict and drama, so that the play lacks the power to make a profound impression. When a playwright is afraid to tackle contradictions, or just exposes them in a general way without unfolding and resolving them, the characters in the drama cannot reveal their personality vividly through contradictions and conflicts, and the heroes portrayed will be without life. The facts have shown that the best dramas are those which are bold enough to tackle contradictions, which have succeeded in exposing, unfolding and solving the contradictions in life. Only through the presentation of contradictions and struggles, especially profound class struggles, can the heroes portrayed acquire life and proletarian ideas reveal all their splendour.

Many good dramas in this festival depict contradictions within the ranks of the people from the viewpoint of the class struggle; and these are no less effective in raising the ideological consciousness of the people than dramas depicting contradictions between us and the enemy. This shows that it was quite unnecessary to feel afraid to reflect such contradictions and to evade the problem, as some people did in the past. Naturally, the reflection of contradictions within the ranks of the people is a new task for many dramatists, who are not sufficiently familiar with the subject and will need to go through a process of finding their way. Similarly, some directors are very worried because they are not sure how best to reflect and express the contradictions and struggles within the ranks of the people; therefore they repeatedly tone down the contradictions in the drama, smoothing them over in the belief that this is playing safe. There are various problems along these lines, problems which I want to touch upon.

First, there is the mistaken idea that if we speak of the shortcomings of the working masses, we are vilifying and "exposing" them, distorting the image of the workers, peasants and soldiers. So some dramatists work with misgivings, afraid that they may make mistakes in political orientation. This is wrong. If you love the workers, peasants and soldiers and have a genuine proletarian stand, if your main purpose is to create heroic characters in order to express some correct theme, and if you speak with the fervent desire to protect and educate the people, then to write about the shortcomings of the masses to criticize them, educate them and help them to raise their political level is not only permissible but also the duty of a dramatist in the socialist period. As Comrade Mao Tse-tung has said: "The people, too, have their shortcomings. Among the proletariat many retain petty-bourgeois ideas, while both the peasants and the urban petty bourgeoisie have backward ideas; these are burdens hampering them in their struggle. We should be patient and spend a long time in educating them and helping them to get these loads off their backs and combat their own shortcomings and errors, so that they can advance with great strides. They have remoulded themselves in struggle or are doing so, and our literature and art should depict this process." (*Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art*)

Since we all live in a class society, it is not surprising that the working people are contaminated by certain erroneous ideas, that they have certain shortcomings and make mistakes. It would be inexplicable if this were not the case. If everyone were perfect, with no room for education or improvement, what plays would there be to write? The question is what our stand, viewpoint and purpose are in writing about the shortcomings of the working people. Once this problem is well solved, we cannot vilify the working people; on the contrary these shortcomings will show the heroic characters off to advantage, bringing out their splendour and nobility and greatly heightening the educational effect of the drama.

We must distinguish clearly between "showing contradictions" and "exposing the people." When we say that revolutionary modern dramas should boldly reveal contradictions and can deal with the shortcomings and mistakes of the working people, this has nothing in common with "exposing the people" but implies criticism and education within the ranks of the people. There is indeed a fundamental difference between "showing contradictions" and "exposing the people." Exposure means making what we oppose appear thoroughly contemptible and resolutely overcoming it, and this is a means to solve contradictions between ourselves and the enemy. Showing contradictions, on the other hand, means practising criticism and self-criticism within the ranks of the people, in order to educate and uplift the people, to achieve better unity.

Secondly, as mentioned earlier, our drama serves proletarian politics, and during the entire historical period of transition from socialism to communism proletarian politics means the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the struggle between the socialist road and the road to capitalism. In other words, the drama must help to consolidate proletarian ideology and to eliminate bourgeois ideology. (Of course, in our society there are still remnants of feudalism, and solving this problem is also one of the tasks of the class struggle in the transitional period.) This is our orientation. Our revolutionary modern dramas are considered as correctly orientated provided they conform to the basic task of consolidating proletarian thought and eliminating bourgeois thought, provided they promote

the socialist revolution and socialist construction, provided they "operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy," provided they "awaken the masses, fire them with enthusiasm and impel them to unite and struggle to transform their environment." (*Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art*) The revolutionary modern dramas are bound to have shortcomings of one kind or another, but we need not be afraid of this. For writing these dramas is something new, and our critics should adopt an encouraging attitude, helping the playwrights to improve steadily. We should not condemn them off-hand for "mistaken orientation," for that will only hamper their creativeness.

Thirdly, in revolutionary modern dramas it goes without saying that heroic characters of workers, peasants and soldiers should take the place of the former emperors and princes, generals and ministers, feudal scholars and young ladies. But since certain dramas shown at this festival have been called "dramas with feudal scholars and young ladies in new costumes," this point requires further elucidation. Take for example the Hunan flower-drum opera *Mending the Pan*. How can we call this excellent opera a "drama with feudal scholars and young ladies in new costumes?" So long as there are men and women in the world there will be love, and there is nothing wrong with a proper love affair. When two high-school graduates answer the Party's call to go and work in the country, since they share the same aspirations it is quite natural for them to fall in love. Besides, the young man in this drama is a tinker, and tinkers were always despised in the old days, so the love advocated here is revolutionary love, class love. These two young people are brought up under socialism by the Party, and they go back to the country after graduation to work as a tinker and peasant and whole-heartedly build a socialist countryside. How can we call them "feudal scholars and young ladies?" The girl was charmingly portrayed with the innocence and vitality of youth. This drama has been staged more than two thousand times in Hunan, where it was widely acclaimed, while at this festival more than ninety per cent of the audience praised it too. Can we say that they all have decadent bourgeois tastes? If *Mending the Pan* is a drama with "feudal scholars and young ladies in new costumes," our revolutionary modern

dramas can have no characters but old men and old women, all of whom must look grave and pull a long face.

Fourthly, some of the dramas staged at this festival were called "poisonous weeds." Was this correct? No, I think not. There were no poisonous weeds among the dramas shown at this festival. I say this with reason, on the basis of the six political criteria for differentiating between fragrant flowers and poisonous weeds specified by Comrade Mao Tse-tung in his *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*. In the light of these criteria, none of these dramas is a poisonous weed. These criteria are: ". . . if they (1) help to unite the people of our various nationalities, and do not divide them; (2) are beneficial, not harmful, to socialist transformation and socialist construction; (3) help to consolidate, not undermine or weaken, the people's democratic dictatorship; (4) help to consolidate, not undermine or weaken, democratic centralism; (5) tend to strengthen, not to cast off or weaken, the leadership of the Communist Party; (6) are beneficial, not harmful, to internationalist socialist solidarity and the solidarity of the peace-loving peoples of the world." Of course, we cannot say there were no shortcomings at all in the dramas presented at this festival; but shortcomings are simply shortcomings, it is not right to describe them as poisonous weeds. Poisonous weeds are in the nature of contradictions between ourselves and the enemy, and consequently if they do exist, then it is a question of an anti-Party or anti-socialist line. This is a matter of principle and we must abide by this demarcation line. Provided the dramas we write conform to these six criteria, we need not be afraid even if someone claims they are poisonous weeds. We Communists are thoroughgoing materialists, who act in accordance with the objective truth and therefore need have no fear. So we must have the courage to create more and better revolutionary modern dramas. Some people are afraid that poisonous weeds may appear on the stage in future, and this possibility does exist, I believe, because there is still class struggle. But it does not matter if poisonous weeds appear, for we can root them out. Our attitude towards poisonous weeds should be: first, we are against them; secondly, we are not afraid of them.

Fifthly, while creating heroic characters, we come up against the problem of how to depict backward characters or middle-of-the-roads who are neither progressive nor backward. Some people are afraid that if they describe characters with faults or shortcomings, they will be accused of supporting "writing about middle characters." This fear is also groundless. If works of art and literature are to typify the contradictions and struggles in real life, various types of characters must be created, including of course characters who are neither really progressive nor backward, who stand for the time being in the middle. So the problem is not whether we can depict middle characters or not; such characters have figured consistently in art and literature and will always continue to do so. The problem is that some people have created a special concept of "middle characters" and formulated a theory of "writing about middle characters" as a challenge to the main and central task of socialist literature and art, the task of creating heroic characters. This is the focal point of the present controversy. If we analyse the classes in our society and the political attitude of the masses, we can assert that the great majority of our people want revolution and support socialism. But at a definite stage of ideological development it is still true that progressive and backward people may be in the minority, while the majority may be somewhere in between. Since the existence of these middle characters is an objective fact, of course we can write about them. But the concept of "middle characters" refers to the political attitude. It makes the majority of our workers and peasants so-called middle characters who are neither good nor bad, neither negative characters nor positive, vacillating between the road to socialism and the road to capitalism. This is clearly a serious distortion of our political reality and the political attitude of the masses of workers and peasants. Many dramas in this festival have depicted characters in the intermediate state, but on a higher plane they have portrayed more splendid heroic characters who are the central figures on the stage and whose heroic deeds and exemplary actions are a powerful force to educate the middle-of-the-roads. This is the principle we advocate, using progressives to carry the middle characters forward and help the backward to advance. Besides, middle characters serve as a foil, bringing out the nobility of heroic figures. This is not to say, of course, that middle characters

can never have the main role in a drama; in certain cases, though not many, this is possible. The crux of the matter is the playwright's attitude towards such characters: does he sympathize with them and praise them, or criticize and educate them so as to remould them?

The unity of politics and art is an important principle in our literary and art work. Our criteria in literary and art criticism are those pointed out by Comrade Mao Tse-tung: the political criterion, and the artistic criterion — and in that order. All our work must serve proletarian politics, and the drama is certainly no exception. Actually in any class society every class sees to it that its art serves the politics of that class, the only difference between the proletariat and other classes being that we do not hide our viewpoint, while no exploiting class dares to air its views openly but pretends to advocate art which "transcends classes." Politics comes first and art must serve politics, this is the major premise and basic orientation of all literature and art. If we are not clear on this question or vacillate, we will make mistakes. But our political views must be expressed through an artistic form. Although we say that politics comes first and art second, the two complement each other, each being indispensable. When we say that politics determines art, the art we mean is political art; when we say that art expresses politics, the politics we mean is artistic politics. For as Comrade Lin Piao has said, the relationship between politics and art is not a synthesis but an amalgamation. Thus the statement that politics comes first does not mean that art is unimportant or can be dispensed with. A work that simply has a correct political viewpoint without the artistic power to move people is neither a work of art nor a competent medium to express the political content and therefore will not succeed in serving proletarian politics. Consequently a good revolutionary modern drama must achieve "the unity of politics and art, the unity of content and form, the unity of revolutionary political content and the highest possible perfection of artistic form." (*Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art*) To emphasise one side only and ignore the other would be incorrect. Achieving the correct relationship between politics and art is a long-term task in the struggle between two lines over questions concerning literature and art.

In view of the present situation on the literary and art front, which side should we emphasise in the struggle between the two lines in drama? Should we emphasise combatting the neglect of politics, or emphasise combatting the neglect of art? Speaking in general, we have just started producing revolutionary modern dramas on a large scale, and the previous tendency of many playwrights and actors to pay too little attention to politics has only just been corrected, while in certain cases it has not yet been corrected. So at present we still need to emphasise strongly that drama should resolutely serve the workers, peasants and soldiers, serve socialism, that drama workers should go deep among the workers, peasants and soldiers, become familiar with the life of the masses, share their thoughts and feelings, and depict the revolutionary spirit and zeal of the heroes and heroines among them. Every actor and playwright must put his whole heart into producing good revolutionary modern dramas. Resolutely and conscientiously, he must use drama as a means to speed up the socialist revolution and socialist construction, carry on the struggle between the socialist road and the capitalist road, and the struggle to help consolidate proletarian ideology and eliminate bourgeois ideology. So continued emphasis must be laid on political orientation, politics in command, the importance of class struggle, and the need for drama workers to go deep into the life of the masses and remould their ideology. Failing this, we shall take the wrong direction. However, having emphasised political orientation, we must also try to check and overcome the tendency to neglect art. Those comrades who are satisfied if they make no political mistakes either have a one-sided understanding of the principle of "politics first," considering politics as the only factor; or being unwilling to go deep into the life of the masses, they can only produce works which are nothing but slogans; or in their desire to play safe they think it enough to stick to a correct political content, afraid that they may make mistakes if they pay attention to artistic form. All these views and scruples show an irresponsible attitude towards revolutionary work, an attitude that is harmful to producing successful revolutionary modern dramas or to taking over the stage with socialist dramas. The masses are very eager to have revolutionary modern dramas with a powerful revolu-

tionary content as well as highly polished artistic forms, and we must not disappoint them.

To write and produce good revolutionary modern dramas, we must also pay attention to the question of inheriting and reforming past traditions. Each school of drama has its own special features, traditional tunes and stage conventions. When we produce revolutionary modern drama we should know how best to take over these traditions to serve our needs, and how to preserve the original features of different schools. Peking opera must remain Peking opera and all the local operas too must retain their distinctive characteristics, for each local opera has its own audience which will not agree to discarding these. Of course, nothing in the world is unchanging, and it would not do to take over the original conventions wholesale without any modification for our revolutionary modern drama. We must definitely discard what is decadent and vulgar in the old opera, and certain stage conventions like the use of the sleeves and fingers must be reformed when actors are depicting modern people. This accords with the directive "let the new emerge from the old." This festival supplied us with some experience in this respect. Uncritical assimilation of the old is just as wrong as rash, ill-considered changes. Both tendencies should be opposed. In order to produce good revolutionary modern dramas successfully, veteran actors should consciously absorb fresh nourishment from life and have the courage to break through old restrictions which impede the effective portrayal of modern roles; while new actors should work hard at basic stage techniques and do their best to learn the traditional tunes and stage conventions from experienced actors.

Of course the quality of the script is the most important factor determining the success or failure of a drama, but the acting is also exceedingly important. A good script and good actors bring out the best in each other; for if the script is good but the acting poor, the drama will lose much of its effectiveness. Good actors are thrown away on a bad script, while bad actors can spoil a good one. Today there are still some actors who lack a painstaking, serious approach to their work, but the performance of revolutionary modern dramas

is in itself a very serious artistic activity and should be taken seriously. Let us hope that continued efforts will be made to acquire more comprehensive experience in inheriting and reforming dramatic traditions, so that we can raise the standard of acting in our revolutionary modern dramas to a still greater height.

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*Willow and Mynahs* (traditional painting) ►  
by Hsu Ku

See the article on page 123.





## Unforgettable Memories

It was the spring of 1950, I remember, the year after I joined the People's Liberation Army, when I came across a novel with a torn cover entitled *The Tale of the Oil-can*, which described the Chinese people's courageous fight against the Japanese aggressors. I was carried away by the moving episodes in it, and that was the start of my interest in literature. After that I became a keen reader, haunting the library and spending most of my army pay on books. The Communists and revolutionaries in these books, who sweated and shed their blood to create a new society for the labouring people, have always been an inspiration to me and are still living in my heart today. As time went by I felt the urge to write about the life I knew, to tell how the Chinese Communist Party led the country to liberation, and to describe the great sacrifices made by our people for the revolution.

I was born in a poor peasant family in the Kunyu Mountains in Shantung. I have always had a deep love for the mountains and streams, the trees and plants of my home and the people there, because that part of the country has a heroic record in the revolutionary wars, and the people there, having won through such stern trials,



are a revolutionary people. This is a well-wooded district with rich mineral resources and lying near the sea it abounds in fish and salt, yet before liberation its people lived worse than cattle; the peasants had no grain, the wood-cutters no fuel, the fishermen no fish and the salt workers no salt, so harshly were they exploited by the landlords and reactionary Kuomintang regime. However, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party the local people carried on an underground resistance movement, and the smouldering fires of the revolution were ready to burst into flame at any time.

The War of Resistance Against Japan began on July 7, 1937. Since the Kuomintang officials and warlords fled without putting up a fight, the Japanese quickly occupied my home province. But the anti-Japanese national salvation movement led by the Communist Party spread throughout China, and soon the flames of resistance were burning in the Kunyu Mountains too. My elder sister and brother both joined the revolution. My mother was a poor peasant woman, who knew how to put up with hardships and brought up her children as best she could, quietly accepting the troubles that befell her because she thought that poverty and suffering were predestined and men were powerless to change their fate.

But as everyone was caught up in the revolutionary tide, under her children's influence my mother began to draw closer and closer to the revolution. She became steeled during those hard years of struggle into a conscious, active revolutionary. Her motherly love and class feeling as a poor peasant made her devote all her energy to working staunchly and tirelessly for the revolution. She did all in her power to support the front and look after the revolutionaries passing through the district, tending sick and wounded soldiers and taking part in the struggle against the enemy "mopping-up" campaigns. So comrades called our home their "rest-house," while the enemy hated it and called it "a nest of Reds." Staying by my mother's side as a child, I took to heart all she did, all her tears and joys, and I shall never forget these memories.

At that time the struggle against the enemy was a sharp, cruel, complex one. However, the revolutionary people showed extraordinary courage and steadfastness. Stirring deeds of heroism were

done on all sides. Young as I was, living in such circumstances, such an age and such a family could not fail to leave a deep impression on me. I came to know many revolutionaries and anti-Japanese fighters. Some I knew for a few days only, yet that was enough to make me love and admire them as if they were my own brothers and sisters. Sitting on the knees of these Communist-led Eighth Route Army fighters, I rejoiced with them over news of victory from the front; and sometimes I cried bitterly when I heard of the death of fighters or cadres who only the day before had been teaching us children songs. These are things I shall never forget.

Once a young woman cadre came to our village to lead the resistance against the enemy "mopping-up" campaign. Before I got to know her name she had given her life to protect us by stepping forward to confront the enemy; and before she was killed she shouted, "Down with Japanese imperialism!" and sang the *Internationale*. Another incident I could never forget was when some villagers were surrounded by the aggressors, and an Eighth Route Army platoon broke through the enemy's cordon so that the people could escape to safety, while they themselves all fell after firing their last shot. All these deeds of the people's fighters, so routine and simple for them, yet so great and sublime, have left indelible impressions on me. Though more than twenty years have passed since then, I can still remember the faces and names of many of them and tell their stories in detail. It is not that my memory is especially good, but the images of these heroes are so vivid that they have been engraved on my heart.

My novel *Bitter Herb* was written on the basis of these true stories. Many episodes are exactly as they happened in real life. The characters too, while condensed from life, are generally based on one particular individual.

One can only write creative literature when one has genuine experience of life. I first tried my hand at writing in the spring of 1952, but I was only doing a literary exercise, recording in story form page after page of incidents I had experienced myself and knew thoroughly. I wrote several tens of thousands of words in a few sittings, but was far from satisfied with the result. So I spent more

time on reading, paying special attention to the study of the Marxist-Leninist classics and the works of Chairman Mao Tse-tung in order to improve my ability to observe and analyse life. After that I tried writing again poems and essays as well as stories, but not with any thought of publication because I knew these effusions were not up to standard. If they had been published, it would have done me and the readers no good and would have shown an irresponsible attitude towards life.

During this period I again and again suppressed my urge to write. This was rather irksome, rather painful even. For the recollection of the stirring deeds of those dead heroes who still lived in my heart always stirred me and made me eager to start writing. But the realization that if I wrote before I was ready I would distort these images and do an injustice to these martyrs made me cool down again and resume my studies. In this way, the longer I suppressed my creative urge, the more vivid became the characters in my mind. I thought of them more and more every day until I came to understand them better. Gradually many characters and episodes took shape in my mind, as if I were reliving the past again, and I felt more strongly and deeply about those stirring years of struggle.

In the spring of 1955 I could hold back no longer. So while with a coastal garrison by the sea, I spread paper on my knees and started to write. That was how *Bitter Herb* was produced. Then I wrote another novel *Flowers Herald the Spring*, published in 1959, which describes how after the Chinese people had defeated the powerful Japanese aggressors, the Kuomintang reactionaries came back again and tried once more to tyrannize over the people, but they were fated to perish at the hands of the oppressed who were now armed revolutionaries, because this is the law of historical development. Relying on their own efforts the people finally saw the coming of spring, the liberation of all China.

The life and struggles of our people are immensely rich and moving. I am not yet competent to reflect them fully, but I am determined to do my best. As one who has lived through these tumultuous days, I feel it is not only a duty, but also a privilege to record them in the form of literature.

*Hu Ching-yuan*

## Hsu Ku's "Willow and Mynahs"

*Willow and Mynahs* (115.5 cm. x 52 cm.) is one of the outstanding paintings by the artist Hsu Ku (1824-1896), whose original name was Chu Hsu-po, of the late Ching dynasty. He was an officer in the army who wanted no part in the government's suppression of the Taiping peasant revolution, and therefore resigned, became a monk and secretly helped the Taipings. It was after becoming a monk that he took the name Hsu Ku. He lived in Yangchow and spent much of his time painting, but often went to Soochow and Shanghai where he made friends with such well-known artists as Jen Yi and Hu Kung-shou. The majority of his works are to be found in Soochow and Shanghai, and most of these were done after he turned monk. The Palace Museum in Peking also has a number of his paintings, including this *Willow and Mynahs*.

Flower-and-bird painting has long been an important genre in traditional Chinese painting. It made striking headway at the end of the 19th century, when original artists like Jen Yi, Chao Chih-chien and Wu Chang-shuo introduced innovations both in themes

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Hu Ching-yuan is on the editorial staff of the Cultural Relics Publishing House.

and modes of expression on the basis of the fine traditions of earlier masters. Hsu Ku was one of the artists with the courage to evolve new styles. He was highly versatile, also painting good landscapes and portraits; but he is best known for his flowers, insects, fish and animals. Goldfish, squirrels and mynahs are his favourite subjects. This painting, done when he was seventy-two, is apparently simple yet presents mynahs to the life, some perching, others on the wing, attracted by the same object. The artistic exaggeration of the birds' intent gaze gives spirit to the painting. And Hsu Ku's distinctive use of ragged yet vigorous lines brings out the suppleness of the willow branches, which are offset by the blurred foliage in the background. This contrast between clear and hazy images and the use of hazy images to suggest something concrete lend the painting variety and increase the depth and significance of the scene. This charming work typifies Hsu Ku's quiet, elegant style, his originality and mastery of his art.

## *Chronicle*

### **In Praise of Chiao Yu-lu**

Since early spring this year tributes have been paid in many forms of art and literature to Chiao Yu-lu, a revolutionary cadre who devoted his life to the people.

Chiao Yu-lu, late secretary of the Lankao County Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, took up his post in Lankao, Honan Province in the winter of 1962. The county, which was a poor one, suffered constantly from waterlogging, sandstorms and alkaline soil. Chiao Yu-lu rallied the local cadres and people to tackle these natural calamities, and by joining forces and going all out they finally tamed them, with the result that production went up in Lankao and life improved for its people. Chiao Yu-lu never spared himself, although suffering from a painful disease of the liver. On May 14, 1964 he died, at the age of 42. This spring, when his story became widely known, it stirred the people of the entire country.

Cultural workers in many different fields have chosen Chiao Yu-lu's story as their theme. For instance, the Peking Central Drama College has recently written and staged a Peking opera in ten scenes, *Good Party Secretary*; while also on show is the five-act play *A Splendid Life* by the China Children's Art Theatre. Artists of the Central Opera and Ballet Theatre are preparing a dance-drama about the life and work of Chiao Yu-lu and an operetta depicting how he braved a snowstorm to call on poor peasants and consult them. Painters of the Peking Studio have made portraits of this hero of our times, while a bust of him sculpted in Peking was sent to Lankao not long ago. The Central News and Documentary Film Studio is producing a medium-length documentary *The Lankao People Aim High* and a long documentary *Chiao Yu-lu, an Outstanding Pupil of Chairman Mao* to show how he led the Lankao people to combat natural calamities. Many of the songs



Chiao Yu-lu talking with a peasant in the Peking opera *Good Party Secretary*

and melodies composed by Peking musicians to pay tribute to his fine spirit have now spread all over the country. Artists of different cultural organizations have also given joint programmes to commemorate Chiao Yu-lu.

Artists and writers elsewhere have taken part in similar activities. An exhibition of more than 120 works of art with Chiao Yu-lu as their theme was recently held in Shanghai. A full-length Honan opera, *Chiao Yu-lu*, is playing in Honan Province, while plays of the same title are being staged in Shanghai, Kiangsi and other parts of China.

#### Handicrafts from Shanghai

An exhibition of handicrafts from Shanghai was recently held at the National Art Gallery in Peking. This display of nearly 1,000 exhibits showed the new trends in more than 20 forms of handicrafts.

The exhibition was divided into three main sections: embroidery in wool, carving and miscellaneous handicrafts. Some of the large embroidered tapestries based on oil paintings or photographs portrayed scenes from China's revolutionary history; others showed the new sights of Shanghai as well as other beautiful scenery. There were a number of smaller samplers too with original designs and distinctive local colour.

The second section showed carvings in many different materials, jade, ivory, lacquerware, wood, bamboo, inkstone and porcelain. The marvellously delicate ivory carvings covered a wide range of subjects. *The 12,000-ton Hydraulic Press* in ivory represented the new advances in Chinese science and technology; the box-wood carving *Morning Song South of the Yangtze* presented a charming scene from the countryside; *Taching People* and *Wang Chieh* in jade, and *Tachai People* in mahogany, portrayed the heroes among our workers, peasants and soldiers; the wall-tablets in carved lacquer *The South Lake Transformed* exemplified the change in our country's landscape; the camphor-wood carving *The May 30 Storm* reflected one episode in the Chinese people's revolutionary struggle; and many other exhibits depicted the present-day national liberation struggles in different parts of the world.

The large ivory carving *Glorious History* aroused great interest. Carved on a complete elephant tusk weighing 75 kilogrammes and 2.2 metres long, it presents milestones in the Chinese people's revolution under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and Chairman Mao Tse-tung. This work, which took more than two years to complete, combines relief carving and carving in the round.

The third section displayed two categories of handicrafts: embroidered dresses, pillow-cases, coverlets, scarves, table-cloths, curtains and other articles for daily use, as well as artificial flowers and birds, lanterns, scissor-cuts, dough figures and wicker-work. The subject matter and designs of these exhibits were fresh and original; their craftsmanship was superb.

#### Old Rock Paintings

Early last year Chinese archeologists in Yunnan Province discovered a group of paintings on the sheer cliffs in Changyuan. These show human figures and animals, all painted in vermilion, some hardly discernible owing to the ravages of time but most of them still clearly distinguishable. They present hunting, dancing, triumphal returns from war and other scenes of life in the old times.



A variety show in the rock painting

These paintings are simple and stylized. The body of most figures is represented by a triangle and the face has no features, but the action being performed is evident from the different positions of the arms and legs. Similarly, the bodies and heads of the animals are not clearly drawn, but certain animals can be identified by distinctive features such as horns, tails or ears.

These paintings have been found in six places, and the figures in them are often densely massed. Thus an area of less than 2 square metres may contain several dozen objects, each very small; for the largest human figures measure no more than 40 cm. in height while the smallest are less than 5 cm.

Some of these paintings depict scenes which suggest variety shows: a human pyramid; a man performing with a rope and two balls; a man standing on the top of a long pole supported on the head of another man; and a juggler throwing up balls. Hitherto such scenes have not been found in rock paintings elsewhere.

These paintings have not yet been dated with certainty. Judging by the level of production and the customs shown, the archeologists believe that they must be at least four to five centuries old.

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In this collection six authors give us tales about workers, peasants and soldiers that have the ring of the real China about them.

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