

CHINESE LITERATURE



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Front Cover: *Flowers* (traditional painting) by Chen Chiu-tsao

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Tsung Pu

The Marriage of Late Sister

A howling north wind, swirling down from the sky, shook the valley and spread a layer of yellow dust over the snow-bound fields. On this bitter winter day north of the Great Wall the wind bit into the flesh like a whip. Even the birds refused to leave their nests. But along the twisting mountain trail that connected the villages of Peach Orchard and Nestling Dale strode an old man in his sixties. Dressed in a sheepskin robe and a fur hat, he was tall and thin. His stubborn bristly beard was covered with icicles. He walked quickly, emitting frosty breaths that were like puffs of white smoke.

Everyone for miles around knew Grandpa Four. He was an expert from Peach Orchard Village. Trees under his care always produced unusually heavy yields. A few days previous, the commune administration had asked him to drop in on Nestling Dale and help them plan the layout of a new orchard. Now, he was on his way.

After the formation of the commune Grandpa Four frequently went out on such missions. He had been to more than half of

Tsung Pu, a woman writer born in 1928, is an editor of the monthly *Shijie Wenxue* (World Literature).

the forty-odd villages which constituted the commune, and he worked just as efficiently for them as he did for his own village. People were delighted, he himself was pleased. He always went out happily and returned home smiling. But today, on his way to Nestling Dale, for some reason, his expression was dark and truculent.

Anger had kept him from eating breakfast. He had charged out of the village. Actually, there was no need for him to go in such nasty weather. However, he was anxious to get those trees planted in Nestling Dale as soon as possible—Grandpa Four never delayed an assignment. At the same time, he also had some private business to conduct. The night before, his only child, Late Sister, had spoken to him about her marriage. He had been over forty when the girl was born—his wife had died in childbirth—and they had been together through thick and thin ever since. He was very glad when she announced she had found a nice young man. But when she said that the future groom was from Nestling Dale, Grandpa Four's brows knit in a frown. He didn't sleep well all night. He couldn't wait to get to Nestling Dale and collect evidence to be used against the match. That was why he now looked so grim.

For generations no Peach Orchard family had been willing to let their daughter marry a Nestling Dale boy. You could hardly blame Grandpa Four. Although the villages were less than five *li* apart, and both were situated in the area between the Sangkan River and the Southern Mountains, they were as different as heaven and earth. Fruit trees grew on Peach Orchard's mountain slopes, and the village had springs with fresh sweet water. In summer they had no end of fruit, in winter they had more grain than they could store. From the distance their houses resembled tall buildings rising along the slopes on both sides of the Shaho Stream. Peach Orchard girls seldom married out of the village, and if they did it was only to go to the neighbouring town. This was particularly true after liberation, when the landlords were overthrown and the livelihood of the people of Peach Orchard took an obvious turn for the better.

Nestling Dale, on the contrary, had neither fruit trees nor good water. Located in a gorge, it had only a single well, and a poor one at that. People had to take turns working it. Water to them was more precious than oil and the village was famed for its poverty and aridity. They had a saying: "Once a Nestling Dale girl marries and moves away, she's gone for good. Even when she comes home

to visit her family, she does it without the groom." The implication was that even a newly-wed wouldn't follow his bride to such a wretched place.

In 1956 when higher agricultural co-operatives were set up a channel was dug which brought water from a spring in Peach Orchard. But although Nestling Dale was no longer arid, it remained poor. Of course conditions were much better than before, but compared with Peach Orchard the village was still quite backward.

There had been little coming and going between the two places, despite their proximity, and certainly there were no intermarriages. The only exception occurred when the widow of a down-at-the-heels Peach Orchard landlord married an old Nestling Dale bachelor who couldn't find anyone better. The woman was addicted to adorning her face with a thick coat of powder. People noticed its resemblance to a screenwall at the south end of Nestling Dale which had just been whitewashed, and so she acquired the nickname "Southern Screenwall."

"With so many boys wanting her in Peach Orchard, why must my Late Sister want to marry into Nestling Dale, like that Southern Screenwall? What a loss of face!" Grandpa Four fumed as he fought his way through the buffeting wind.

He knew his daughter's disposition. She stuck to her tasks—the same as he. Late Sister was the assistant leader of the village's orchard team, a good worker around the house and in the field. Her liquid eyes seemed to be perpetually smiling. But she was not given much to talk, and usually worked in silence. "How like her mother," the old man thought with a sigh.

Late Sister was also a Youth Leaguer, and she knew her own mind. When he asked her: "Are you sure about Liang Chun-tai?" She looked at him with her large shining eyes and nodded without a word. When he tried to question her further, she only lowered her gaze and concentrated on the hemp she was shredding. The fine strands were like a mass of silver floss on the brick platform bed.

As a matter of fact Grandpa Four was not the backward feudal type who insisted on choosing his child's marriage partner. He didn't know anything about Liang Chun-tai. It was just that Peach Orchard people generally were contemptuous of Nestling Dale. The local school teacher once criticized this attitude. He called it "village chauvinism." However, Grandpa Four couldn't help



being influenced. When he considered the matter calmly, he was able to say to himself: "After all, we're all part of the same people's commune. What right have we to call their little village useless?" Besides, the poorer brigades were now pushing to catch up with the more affluent (in the communes today, one village usually constitutes a brigade). The Communist Party secretary of the commune had told them they shouldn't judge people by old standards. Ah, but it wasn't so easy to stick strictly to reason where your own daughter was concerned.

Yet the more Grandpa Four thought about it, the more he felt there was no need for him to get so excited. By now he could see Nestling Dale in the distant gorge. It looked pitifully shabby. Because he scorned the place so, he hadn't been there in several years. It was in such an awkward out-of-the-way spot, you didn't pass it on the road to the commune centre, or the county seat, or to any other village.

"This is one brigade that isn't going to catch up to the richer ones in a hurry," he murmured.

Part of Nestling Dale's plan for catching up was to plant an orchard. The commune was sending him to help them do it. "We've got to push along fast," he thought. "The quicker everybody gets to socialism, the better." Instinctively, he hastened his steps.

When he arrived in Nestling Dale the wind seemed to have lessened a bit. He wiped the icicles from his beard with a handkerchief and entered the village chest high. It was very still. The streets were deserted. "Probably all resting on their warm platform beds," he muttered. Reaching the production brigade compound, he found it empty. He banged a couple of times on the locked door, but nobody answered. Angrily, he returned to the street. "Are the cadres all loafing at home? No wonder the village is poor!"

Just then he saw a little boy with the red tie of the Young Pioneers around his neck come out of a house. The boy was carrying a manure basket and scoop.

"Come here, child," Grandpa Four called.

"Who are you looking for, grandpa," the boy asked courteously.

"Your Party secretary, or your brigade chief."

"Both of them are away—"

"Then ask your grandfather to come out," Grandpa Four demanded irritably.

Puzzled, the boy replied: "My grandfather died several years ago." Grandpa Four was stumped. The child went on: "If the assistant brigade chief will do, he's at the white clay diggings. Shall I take you to him?"

The old man had no choice but to follow the boy out of the village. A biting north wind immediately assailed them so savagely that Grandpa Four staggered and shivered with cold. The boy, his head tucked in between his shoulders, scanned the road. Whenever he saw any manure, he picked it up. Soon, his basket was half full.

"You've got plenty of manure here, anyhow," the old man grumbled.

"The whole village's been mobilized. During the winter slack season we're digging white clay and collecting manure. Don't you know? You must be from another village." The boy looked at him and drew himself up proudly. "It's part of our plan for catching up with the rich brigades. We made it ourselves. We've thought of everything."

"Then you kids must be included too."

"How did you guess? That's right!" The boy waved his scoop happily, nearly hitting Grandpa Four in the head. "Can you guess how much manure we've pledged to pick up during our winter vacation? We all want to give our brigade a hand."

By then they had climbed a ridge behind the village. The wind was no longer blowing horizontally—it was blasting down from directly overhead. On the bare ridge people were rushing about. They could hardly hear one another speak in the howling gale. The ridge was covered with what appeared to be snow. Closer inspection showed that it was white clay which had been excavated. Men were digging, toting loads in baskets dangling from shoulder poles, driving carts. Collars of their sheepskin coats turned up, shouting, they bucked the wind, keeping their reddened eyes on the growing bluetinted piles of gleaming white clay.

Grandpa Four knew that if you took this clay to Shacheng, across the Sangkan River, you could sell it for thirty-six yuan a ton. It was a very useful commodity. He had heard that this was one way Nestling Dale was increasing its income. But he hadn't imagined the whole village would be out digging in this kind of weather.

Suddenly the boy waved his manure scoop and shouted: "Hey, brother, someone's here to see you!" A man climbed out of a pit, dressed in a thin shirt. His face was dusty and streaked with sweat. In his hand was a pick. "Who is it?" he called as he advanced towards Grandpa Four.

The boy leaped into the pit and tossed out his brother's sheepskin jacket. He himself vanished completely, like a mole.

Grandpa Four had intended to tell the assistant brigade chief a thing or two when they met. Nestling Dale had been giving him a hard time! But now, wiping his beard with his handkerchief, he only coughed and said: "I'm from Peach Orchard. The commune wants me to take a look at your fruit tree plan."

"Oh," said the young man. He smiled awkwardly. "The commune said they'd send an adviser. We've been watching for you, but we never thought you'd come in this terrible wind."

"I've been wanting to see how you're getting on. Besides, when I'm given a job I like to do it promptly."

The young man started to leave with Grandpa Four when a couple of men called from behind: "Hey, Candid, take a look at the clay in

this pit." Candid hastily said a few words to an old man nearby. Only then was he able to get away.

"Let's go back to the village," he suggested. "It's much too cold to keep you standing out here." As they walked, he said: "Our commune leaders and Party secretaries are racking their brains for us; the old timers in every village are running their legs off for us. Although our soil is thin and our people poor, we know how to show some spunk." He gazed back at the men moving to and fro along the ridge and nodded confidently.

Grandpa Four had met most of the leaders of the different villages at meetings in commune headquarters. But since his mind was always on trees, he paid little attention to human faces. Though he could identify every tree in the commune's orchards, there were only two or three people he readily recognized. He wasn't positive who Candid was; he couldn't even be too sure about his age. But he could see that he was brimming with energy. Even the wind seemed less fierce with the assistant brigade chief at his side.

Not so simple, these Nestling Dale folk, he said to himself.

Candid took him back along a short cut and they soon reached the village. Grandpa Four saw a deep reservoir covered tightly over with boards to keep the dust out. Small ditches, leading from it, encircled the village, like the colourful bands around clouds after rain.

"Ever since the canal brought us water from Peach Orchard several years ago, every family's been able to raise vegetables in their yard. Last summer our vegetable plots looked like flower gardens. People built moon gate trellises in their cucumber patches. It was too much trouble to carry the water from the reservoir, so we dug these ditches."

When they arrived in the brigade office, Candid showed Grandpa Four the plan for the orchard they intended to plant. While the old man was examining it, Candid boiled some water for tea. For a moment, Grandpa Four couldn't make head or tail of it, perhaps because he was so stirred by the things he had seen that morning. His body tingled pleasantly from the warmth of the stove, and he sat drowsy and relaxed. From time to time icy gusts blew in through cracks in the window.

A loud wail made Grandpa Four jump. The door curtain swung aside and a middle-aged woman, her hair dishevelled, a tattered cotton-padded tunic draped over one shoulder, charged in. She plumped

herself down on a bench, covered her face with her hands, and howled. Grandpa Four was rising to ask what was the matter when Candid entered.

“Speak out, if anything’s troubling you,” he said amiably. “Must you cry?”

The woman smacked her hands upon her knees. “You cadres don’t let a person live,” she shouted. “I’m sick, so I haven’t worked for two days. People not only say I shouldn’t take any more time off, but some have the nerve to say I’m lazy. What’s lazy about me—that’s what I want to know. You cadres ought to be fair.”

She had crafty eyes and a hard pale face. Though she snivelled and wept, when she shot Candid a venomous glance and straightened her mouth, it was obvious she held the whole world in contempt.

“That must be Southern Screenwall,” Grandpa Four suddenly realized.

The woman recognized Grandpa Four. Flinging herself upon him, she wailed: “Brother Four! An intimate friend at last! We Peach Orchard women never had to put up with abuse like this. But when you marry into a poor, broken-down, dirty, lousy village, a demons’ village of a thousand unburied corpses, how can you expect to live like a human? Just because I haven’t worked for two days, I’m cursed for a fiend. In our Peach Orchard—”

Grandpa Four pushed her aside. “Speak for yourself. Don’t drag Peach Orchard Village into it.”

“Why shouldn’t I? I’m a Peach Orchard woman, a Peach Orchard bride. I blinded my eyes and came to this nest of paupers. That useless husband of mine doesn’t stick up for his wife. He lets everybody pick on me. . . .” Stamping her feet, Southern Screenwall cursed her husband, the village cadres, and the people of Nestling Dale.

The bachelor Southern Screenwall married was an honest fellow, well on in years, so she ran the household. At home, she bullied her husband; outside, she was lazy and sly and never willing to work. When everyone turned out to dig white clay she wouldn’t even help deliver the meals. First she claimed her back ached, then her legs. . . . Not only did she goof off herself, she also stirred up a number of other backward people to do the same. The women’s team was intending to criticize her, but some primary-school kids beat them to it in a jingle they made up and sang behind her back:

Southern Screenwall,
A thick-skinned dame,
Eats but won’t work,
Has she no shame?

“The Party secretary and brigade chief aren’t here today, aunt,” Candid said calmly. “Please go home. After all, there’s something in what people are saying. You don’t work yourself and you don’t let others work either. Is that a way to behave?”

Shaking her finger at him, Southern Screenwall retorted: “Your mother used my brushwood the day before yesterday. Why don’t you cut some yourself, if you’re so good, instead of borrowing from your ‘backward’ neighbours?”

The young man flushed. Their two families lived in the same courtyard. It was true—his mother had run out of fuel and borrowed a bit from Southern Screenwall.

“I’ll replace every stick, if I have to go without food and sleep,” he replied. “But brushwood is one thing and work is another. Why are you always shamming illness and refusing to go to the fields? And now you’ve hooked some other lazy fellows so that they won’t work either. What is this, anyhow? We’ve been waiting for a chance to call you to a meeting and reason with you. Since you’ve come and brought the matter up yourself, we can start the meeting right now.”

Grandpa Four knew it was often difficult for cadres to find time to go into the mountains and cut brushwood for fuel. Yet you couldn’t work and live in the house when the weather turned cold if you didn’t heat the brick platform bed. Southern Screenwall’s pettiness irritated him. He wanted to berate her, but he didn’t know where to begin. For the young man he felt a sympathetic warmth.

At that moment the brigade book-keeper, who had been listening in the next room, came in through the door. “It’s plain as day what Southern Screenwall’s up to,” he said. Turning to her, he continued: “You’ve talked a lot of people into not going to work, but all you want to do is chatter about your brushwood. What about those corn stalks you stole from Candid? It just so happens I saw you do it when I was passing your courtyard the other day. Do you dare to deny it?”

Taken aback, Southern Screenwall could only mutter curses under her breath. Nothing escaped her vile tongue, even the reservoir. She said it was full of urine from Peach Orchard, but that to the people in Nestling Dale it was holy water.

Grandpa Four brought his fist down on the table with such a furious bang that Southern Screenwall jumped, startled, from her bench, as if she had been sitting on a nest of wasps.

"Since you keep repeating in every breath that you're a Peach Orchard woman, let me tell you—Peach Orchard doesn't recognize women like you. You despise Nestling Dale for being poor? Why, you don't deserve to marry into this village. You only want to eat but not to work. Well, it just can't be done. If you don't like it here, why don't you join your landlord husband in Hell and then come out and be born again. There's nothing poor about Nestling Dale. They won't bear that label for ever. Besides, we're all in the same commune. Why must you keep talking about Peach Orchard's this and Nestling Dale's that, unless you're trying to stir up bad feeling? You're not just hurting this village—you're hurting the whole commune."

Grandpa Four was a man of standing in Peach Orchard. Southern Screenwall was a little afraid of him. Hastily, she got up and left.

Breathing hard, Grandpa Four had to laugh at himself. Why was he defending Nestling Dale? But what he had said was true. The poor brigades were catching up with the rich ones. Look at the way they were working here. There was nothing indolent about these people.

Candid served the tea. His dusty face had been wiped clean. Grandpa Four could see he was a young man of twenty-five or six. His weather-beaten face had nice features, and his eyes sparkled like a girl's.

"How can her husband stand a woman like that?" Grandpa Four asked, accepting the cup of tea.

"It's not easy for a middle-aged bachelor to find a wife." Candid gazed thoughtfully out of the window. "For poor brigades to catch up with the rich, our own experience shows that diligence is the key. But straightening out people's thinking is a complicated job. Take Southern Screenwall's husband...." He paused, then clapped his hands together. "Of course socialism can't be built in a day." Another thought occurred to him, and he asked slowly: "Do you

think a girl from Peach Orchard—I don't mean the bad kind—might really marry a fellow in Nestling Dale?"

"Sure!" That was what Grandpa Four wanted to say. But then he remembered his own daughter, and he swallowed the word back into his throat. "What makes you ask?" he countered instead.

Candid opened his mouth but no sound came out. Just then the phone rang. He picked it up. Candid grew very animated when he heard who it was, and shouted vigorously, as if afraid his caller couldn't hear:

"Twenty tons of white clay today, Secretary Yen. That's three more than yesterday. Morale? Everyone's puffed up with it like an angry bullfrog. Yes, I checked the pit props. They're all good timber. There won't be any danger—I guarantee it. Natural fertilizer? We're still collecting, we haven't let up. Right, grain is the foundation." Glancing at Grandpa Four, he went on: "Grandpa Four is here from Peach Orchard. He certainly is a pusher. I thought we'd check the terrain and pick a place to plant our trees. That's the main thing." Evidently Secretary Yen said something, for Candid handed the phone to Grandpa Four. "He wants to speak to you."

Grandpa Four picked up the phone. A voice crackled in the ear piece. All he could make out was that he was being praised. Grandpa Four felt rather guilty. He wanted to tell Secretary Yen that while his announced purpose was to help Nestling Dale with its fruit trees, the reason he had come out on such a terrible day was to attend to some private business at the same time. He could hear what sounded like other voices shouting for the secretary. Comrade Yen was phoning from a village atop Southern Mountain.

"Do your best for Nestling Dale, Grandpa Four," the secretary said. "Helping them will be helping the commune and helping your own brigade as well."

After he hung up, Grandpa Four asked to be taken to the orchard's proposed site. He knew also that the site was the main thing. Candid hesitated. "You're not a young man. Stay overnight. Tomorrow, if it's a nice day, we'll go."

The old man's beard bristled, and his wrinkled face set stubbornly. "Don't look down on me," he shouted. "Last year when we were out saving the crops from the hail, our young fellows skidded and tumbled all over the slope. But my feet never even slipped." He put on his coat and hat and headed for the door.

Candid gave a few instructions to the book-keeper and hastily followed.

Eyes half shut, shoulders bent, they trudged through the wind. Rounding the mountain, they saw the orchards of the old man's village clearly in the distance. A beautiful sight even on a day like this!

Grandpa Four pointed to a twisting path. "I guided one of our Eighth Route Army units along this trail when we were fighting the Japanese invaders."

Yes, he remembered the path well, and the trees and the grass, brown and withered by winter, even the wind. What memories they brought. There, by that little temple on the mountain top, was where the peasants of Peach Orchard and Nestling Dale executed the brutal landlord who had bloodily tormented them for so many years. They were all poor peasant brothers then. How many meetings they held together in that little temple. Grandpa Four was ashamed. In recent years he had been thinking only of his own village. Had he forgotten his origins?

They made another turn. Candid showed Grandpa Four where they were considering laying out the orchard. The old man made many practical suggestions. He recommended that most of Nestling Dale's fruit trees be planted near the back of Peach Orchard. Not only was the soil better there—a line of mountain thorn trees on which fruit branches could be grafted came over from Peach Orchard at that point. He said they ought to call in a few more experts from other villages. Then they would all sit down together and work out a final plan.

Candid was very grateful. He accompanied Grandpa Four part of the way home. They walked and walked, and before they knew it they were practically at the entrance to Peach Orchard.

"You've been a big help to Nestling Dale," Candid assured him at parting. "I don't know what else to say." He smiled shyly, crinkling his eyes. Grandpa Four was struck by his resemblance to Late Sister.

"You've got a good village, and you're a fine young man," he said warmly. "There's nothing I can add to that either." After Candid trotted away, Grandpa Four suddenly remembered something important. He ran after him a few steps, shouting: "Candid! Candid!" But the north wind blew his words back, and the rapidly moving young fellow was soon lost to sight.

As the old man headed home, his mind was troubled. The remarks of Southern Screenwall still echoed in his ears. The truth was that when he started for Nestling Dale that morning, he too had scorned it for being poor. Of course he and Southern Screenwall were different, but they had some things in common. For a man who considered himself progressive, he had plenty of backward ideas! He was a far cry from Candid. All these years he had been eating the people's millet in vain! . . . Thus berating himself, Grandpa Four felt chilled to the heart. All he could see in his mind's eye was the honest vital image of young Candid.

He reached home after dark. Late Sister had already finished the evening meal. She was very glad to see her father. "I didn't know you had gone to Nestling Dale until our brigade chief told me, pa. Your food's in the pot. I'll heat it for you." She began plying the piston bellows.

The old man sat down on the platform bed and smoked his pipe. After a long time he said: "I learned a lesson today, child."

Late Sister looked up at him.

"When I set out for Nestling Dale, I thought: 'My girl wants to marry into Nestling Dale, just like that Southern Screenwall.' But on my way back, I thought: 'How can I compare the two? As a daughter, you're going there to get married. As a cadre, you're being transferred to tend their fruit trees. . . .'"

The girl blushed but didn't speak.

He related everything that had happened and described everyone he had met. "I must have been in a daze, child," he said. "That young Candid took me around all day, but I completely forgot to ask him about Liang Chun-tai."

Late Sister still did not reply. After the old man finished eating she put things in order and got ready to go to a meeting at the brigade office. Only when she got to the door did she walk back and say softly into her father's ear:

"Candid's real name is Liang Chun-tai."

The marriage was set for early spring. It stirred up a lot of comment: "This bride is no lazy shifty-eyed widow of a landlord. She's a bouncing robust young maiden; she's our Late Sister! . . . Leaving her prosperous village to go to a hard-up place like Nestling Dale. . . . The girl's got guts!" A few remarked cattily: "What are they waiting

for? After all, she's already over twenty-two. She'd better marry him fast before he changes his mind."

Late Sister paid no attention, but the old man was quite upset. He went frequently to Nestling Dale to help them, and he got to know the place and the people well. He was not sorry that he had agreed to the match. But he didn't like the rumours.

Spring came, and with it a message from Candid saying he would come for his bride on the wedding day, and telling the old man to prepare. Actually all the preparations had already been made by several of the village's older women. Late Sister didn't want any dowry, but the old man felt he ought to give her something. At their consumers' co-op he bought two fancy covered notebooks. Then he thought: Is this a present for a bride? She's not a kid just starting school! He put the notebooks away in a drawer.

The day of the wedding dawned. Grandpa Four's mind was in a turmoil. He knew that Nestling Dale and Candid were all right, and the Peach Orchard cadres were all for the match. But how did the neighbours look upon it? They must still think it rather peculiar. When he went out with the orchard team early in the morning, an old man had asked him sarcastically, "Why don't you take the day off, Brother Four? Your daughter is marrying into a very famous village."

"I think these trees need pruning, let's have a look," said Grandpa Four, brushing aside the remark. His hands were busy but he couldn't help thinking, "What a thing to say!" He wanted to lecture the man on the importance of poor brigades catching up with the prosperous ones, but he was so angry he didn't dare trust his tongue.

Going home at noon, he found the house deserted. That girl! Where had she gone? He was on the verge of going out to look for her when she rushed in, her face pink.

"Time you got ready, child, they'll be coming for you. You can't go just as you are." Since she had no mother, he had to play the role at times.

"Getting ready won't take me long." Late Sister smiled, arching her eyebrows. She went into her own room.

Grandpa Four squatted down to think things over. "It's not like the old times," he said through the open connecting door after a dry cough. "The Party's taught us how a person should live—you understand these things better than I. I have no other advice. In

the old days, when I had to bring you up all by myself, I hauled coal in the mine so as to earn enough to feed you. The loads were so heavy, nobody could carry them with a straight back. It was all we could do to crawl... And when I went down the dike to harvest buckwheat in autumn, I had to be gone two months at a stretch. Every time I picked up my rice bowl, my heart went out to you, wondering and worrying whether my daughter had anything to eat. Now you are getting married. Since you don't want a dowry, I won't waste any money on that. What little skill you've learned from me, you must use properly when you get to Nestling Dale."

Grandpa Four paused here to cough again. Though he couldn't see Late Sister's face, the familiar way she crinkled her eyes to look at people flashed through his mind. "I'm only worried about one thing. No ten fingers are alike. If there's idle talk here or in Nestling Dale, don't let it bother you."

"We don't listen to that sort of thing, pa," said Late Sister vehemently. "People don't think in the old way any more. There are very few gossipers, nowadays."

"What's this about gossip?" someone asked at the door. It was the clear voice of the brigade Party secretary. "Peach Orchard's sending Late Sister off with a dowry of five hundred fruit saplings. It's the decision of the brigade committee. Come on out and have a look at the saplings, Grandpa Four."

The old man hurried into the courtyard. He found the Party secretary standing by six baskets of fruit saplings looking very pleased. Three other men he knew were also there, all smiling broadly. One of them called out to Late Sister, "We'd like you to take this to Nestl-



ing Dale, as a token of our good wishes. When are you starting out?"

The lush green saplings were neatly arranged in baskets, their tips peeping out. Grandpa Four felt hot tears rush to his eyes. He quickly covered his face with his sleeve. "Speck of dust," he muttered. He realized now that the marriage of a Peach Orchard girl to a Nestling Dale man concerned not only Late Sister and himself but the two villages and the whole commune.

While they were getting ready, the bridegroom appeared with the Party secretary of Nestling Dale. Candid was leading a donkey with a red pompon on its head and a scarlet quilt cushioning the saddle. This was for the bride. Late Sister, who had changed into a new padded plaid jacket of red and blue and trousers of fine blue cotton, stood behind her father. She eyed the donkey and gave Candid a reproachful look as if to say, "Although it's not the busy season and the animal can be spared, there was really no need to bring a donkey. I could just as well have walked."

Wearing a new blue suit, Candid didn't seem to know what to do with his hands. It was his first visit to the home of his father-in-law and he was awkward and ill at ease. Returning Late Sister's look, he pointed at his Party secretary to indicate that the donkey was not his idea at all.

By then the yard was thronged with Peach Orchard villagers, men and women, old and young. Some had come to send Late Sister off, some to see Grandpa Four and some just to join the fun. Late Sister's eyes swept the gathering and the little compound where she had lived for over twenty years. She looked at her pa. He was standing woodenly, as if in a trance. A wave of sorrow came over her. Leave him all alone in this little compound? Her eyes became moist. The Party secretary of Nestling Dale gave the signal to start and everyone rushed for the saplings. All energy again, Grandpa Four reached the little trees in a few strides.

"This is Peach Orchard's dowry for my daughter. I'll carry them myself."

"Hoho," cried the Party secretary. "Who ever heard of a father escorting his daughter to the house of the groom?"

"I'm always doing unusual things," said Grandpa Four. He shouldered the load without any effort and called out to his daughter, "Why don't you get on the donkey? I'm escorting you there in person."

People were coming home from the fields when the bride arrived at Nestling Dale. A few youngsters were exchanging remarks about the match. "Brother Liang Chun-tai's bride is tops among Peach Orchard girls," said one. "Their other girls should follow her example. She's got courage."

"When our Nestling Dale actually catches up with the prosperous brigades, the timider ones will be willing to come here too," said another. "Never mind about that," a third young fellow, good looking and earnest, interjected. "The important thing is that she's coming to help us build the place up."

Without knowing why, Grandpa Four felt a flood of warmth course through his body. He shifted the pole on his shoulder and hoped that the others would notice the saplings in his baskets.

Liang's two little rooms were spick and span. The character "Felicity," cut out of red paper, was pasted on the door. The house was packed with visitors, including Candid's red-tied kid brother.

"So you're my sister-in-law's pa," he said, at sight of old Grandpa Four. "I didn't know you the other time."

"So you're my son-in-law's brother," said Grandpa Four. "I remember you as the boy who's got a plan."

"Our plan's been fulfilled. Go and have a look. The manure we collected is piled sky high. Our secretary says grain is the foundation of our economy. He says the manure we collected will be turned into surplus grain next year."

"Got any new ideas?"

"New ideas? Sure. Here's one!" The boy tossed a lighted firecracker at Grandpa Four's feet, dashing off with a laugh. However, no sound followed. The firecracker was a dud.

Southern Screenwall entered, swinging her hips. She hailed Late Sister as "dear niece."

"A friend at last," she declaimed. "One Peach Orchard girl is worth a hundred from Nestling Dale."

"I'll drop in early tomorrow morning," Late Sister promised. "We can go out and work in the fields together."

Southern Screenwall turned and hastily left. She never lingered when the word "work" was mentioned.

Grandpa Four was pondering where to plant those fruit saplings. Would the Nestling Dale people know how to take care of them properly? Late Sister had never tended so many saplings alone.

"These saplings need to be put in right away," Grandpa Four told the Nestling Dale Party secretary. "Got enough people to do it?"

"The trouble is we haven't. The commune office promised to send some help from other villages."

Grandpa Four opened his mouth, then closed it again.

After a while, however, he could restrain himself no longer. "You should be grafting fruit trees in the spring. There are plenty of mountain thorn trees on the slope behind the village. Have you got enough experienced hands?"

"We need technical guidance badly," said the secretary. "We've brought home a young adviser today, but what veteran would be willing to work here?"

Grandpa Four stroked his whiskers, a sign that his mind was made up. "I'll come and help for a few days."

"What use are a few days? Haven't you been dropping in on us frequently these past months? We need someone to stay for good."

The secretary of Peach Orchard joined them. He said that some time ago the commune office had proposed transferring Grandpa Four to Nestling Dale—the two villages were near each other, and he would still be able to keep an eye on Peach Orchard and give advice. But because of Grandpa Four's "village chauvinism," the matter had been dropped. Now that Grandpa Four himself was willing, the Peach Orchard's secretary was not going to stand in his way.

Delighted, the secretary of Nestling Dale patted Grandpa Four on both shoulders. "The young ones are clamouring to hear all about the bride and groom's courtship, but that's of no interest to us. Let's go to my house and have a few cups."

As the three men walked down the road, the village and its surrounding fields were drenched in pale moonlight. In the distance, the Sangkan River, just beginning to thaw, shimmered beneath the moon like silver inlaid with pearls. To Grandpa Four it resembled a pile of fallen silvery blossoms, and the aroma of wine on his own breath was like the heady fragrance of fruit. When the flowers faded, bright red fruit would take their place, spreading like dazzling rays of sunrise and casting a red glow over this poor mountain gully.

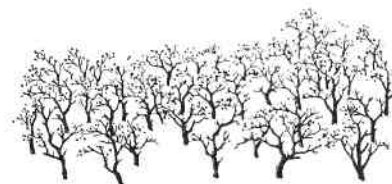
Grandpa Four would move in with his daughter and son-in-law. Late Sister was overjoyed when she heard her father's decision.

She could not tear herself from his side all evening. She knew that he was remaining not only for love of her but because of his feelings for Nestling Dale and for the commune as a whole.

People no longer say, "Peach Orchard girls never marry outside their village." They made up a new jingle that goes:

Now Peach Orchard girls come to Nestling Dale
With five hundred fruit saplings as dowry.
They're capable girls who've learned techniques
And they bring their skilled fathers with them.

Translated by Sidney Shapiro
Illustrations by Huang Yun-hua



Kuan Hua

A Night in the Open

I was sitting on the grassy river bank in the wood, straining my eyes through the darkness as I waited impatiently for someone to come down the path now lost to sight.

The River Huanhsiang which intersects this region was swallowed up in night. Gusts of wind set reeds rustling, but the frogs were still. The countryside seemed lonelier than usual. Dense black clouds pressed lower and lower, and the warmth sucked up by the sun during the day still hung heavy in the air, making it almost impossible to breathe. Rain was imminent, waiting ready to pounce like the Japanese troops before one of their "mopping-up" campaigns.

Fresh from school, having newly joined the Eighth Route Army, I had meant to go west from Peking to the Anti-Japanese Military and Political College; but before I could set out the enemy struck again. I kept on the move with District Secretary Shih. That evening he had gone to a meeting in the county, leaving me here with the assur-

Kuan Hua, born in 1921, is a short-story writer. His collections of short stories include *Three Torches*, *In the Valley* and *Ko Mei*.

ance that someone would come and take full charge of me. But so far there was no sign of my deliverer.

Thunder rumbled in the distance and blue forked lightning in the clouds at the horizon was followed by a fearful thunderclap. A howling wind sprang up, whipping waves against the bank as the lightning flashed again. Trees buffeted by the storm doggedly stood their ground, branches lashing and leaves tossing wildly with the roar of a mountain torrent. I crouched down with my back to the wind under a large tree, heard the heavy raindrops drum down on its dense foliage, and felt a bead of moisture wet my cheek. Then I caught the sound of running steps. I stood up and peered through the darkness but could see nothing in the inky night. A low voice carried over the wind to my ears:

"Hey, Brother Kuan! Where are you?" It was a woman.

"Over here!" I cried, and ran in her direction. Lightning criss-crossed the sky for a moment and revealed her standing beneath another large tree. She was tall and flushed from running, with big eyes, and in that split second I glimpsed her rather full lips. She darted towards me, shouting:

"Come on!"

She caught hold of my arm in the dark and tugged me after her into the wood. Her grip was as firm and powerful as a man's.

"Trust the old fellow to leave it so late!" she grumbled, without explaining who "the old fellow" was. "Here we are!" She let go of my arm, panting for breath.

"Secretary Shih told him to let me know, but he waited till he'd delivered all the letters—no idea of what's important and what's not!" She gasped this out to account for her late arrival. "Get closer to the tree! It's going to pour." She spoke imperiously, and her laugh rose above the thunder. "See, we've no sooner met than I give you a taste of my tongue. This place is no good. We must find somewhere out of the wind."

She took advantage of the next flash of lightning to locate a better shelter. Her blue cotton tunic flapped in the wind and the oilcloth in her left hand billowed out as if it were going to fly away, while her short fringe kept blowing wildly in all directions.

By the time we had rounded another clump of trees, big raindrops were pattering down. A cloud-burst in the distance sounded as if a giant were sweeping the earth with an enormous broom.

"Squat down, you!" she called urgently.

I was already crouching in front of her. As she spread out the oilcloth she knocked my face and I heard her laugh in the dark.

"Sorry, I didn't see you."

"Can't we take shelter in a village?" I asked.

"The idea." She flared up. "This is just the time the Japanese choose to make their raids. Come on! Pull this oilcloth over your head!" She bent closer to impress on me distinctly: "You must do as I say. Secretary Shih has handed you over to me."

Suddenly, as if the heavens were rent, the rain poured down in bucketfuls, beating wildly on the oilskin over my head. The tree thrashed and groaned. As the thunder rolled nearer, the whole sky seemed one vast sheet of corrugated iron which was being beaten with a deafening din. Small rivulets coursing through the grass soaked my feet. My clammy trousers clung to my legs and the cold blast of the storm set me shivering. The woman called out, but her voice was drowned by the thunder. When the crash died away, I heard her shout:

"Pull the oilcloth further that way."

"It's all right," I replied. "I'm sopping anyway."

In exasperation, she drew me closer to her, groped for my head and draped the oilcloth over my right shoulder. I caught her voice through the downpour:

"Your first time out in a storm?"

"Oh, this is nothing."

"Aha!" It was a lingering exclamation of approval and surprise. My teeth were chattering.

A quarter of an hour later the fury of the storm abated. We huddled without a word beneath the tree, listening to the rain hissing on the leaves and grass, each occupied with our own thoughts.

"Just joined up, haven't you?" At last she broke the silence.

"Nearly a month ago now."

Silence fell again.

"Homesick?"

"Certainly not!"

"Miss your wife?"

"I'm not married."

"Don't start getting homesick the moment things are tough.... The Eighth Route Army must be able to rough it. There's a lot



to be said for roughing it. After all, many comrades have given their lives...."

Her voice was gentle and friendly, with a distinctive womanly warmth in it. She heaved a heartfelt sigh and as the rain pattered down continued softly:

"Secretary Shih always says that everyone of our generation must make certain sacrifices, some more, some less. So that people can live happy ever after.... I can't put it the way he does, but I know what he means."

Her voice had grown even graver. When I made no comment, she went on:

"Don't lose heart because things seem hard. You may come up against much harder tests. Unless you take a few knocks, you'll never amount to much. You won't measure up to the Eighth Route Army."

Another pause. Then she added:

"You must be able to stand up to everything."

"A revolutionary must be full of humanity and courage, completely fearless." My bookish way of talking made her laugh.

The wind and rain had stopped, leaving the countryside bathed in a deep blue light, to be engulfed almost at once in infinite darkness. I could tell from the weight of the sagging oilcloth how much rain water had collected in it.

"Put that down," she ordered me. "Careful not to splash yourself."

Having carefully removed the cloth, we stood up and sighed with relief. Then we bent down to wring out our jackets and trouser legs. A faint gleam pierced the gloom as she put her head on one side to wring out her hair. With a pang of contrition I asked:

"Didn't you keep your head covered?"

"I didn't want you to get wet," she retorted slowly and teasingly. "If you catch cold, I'll be the one who has to look after you. Come on, let's find a hummock, instead of standing here in the wet."

We found higher ground and after shaking out the oilskin she spread it out.

"Sit down!"

We sat down on the ground. A gust of wind spattered us with raindrops from the trees. After another silence, she went on in the same deliberate, serious voice:

"Your sort have it easy from the day you're born. You don't know what trouble is."

"Haven't I just had a taste of the storm?" I countered, chuckling.

"Pah, what does that amount to?" She turned away. I could sense that her lips were pursed disapprovingly. She made up for this, however, by saying, "You didn't do badly for a lad fresh from school."

The storm clouds were scattering. A large, clear patch of sky, like a broad lake covered with swirling mist, was sprinkled with twinkling stars like tiny white flowers. The thunder was muffled now at the horizon.

"You wait here," she told me, standing up. "I'm going to the village to have a look round. If the enemy's not come this way, I'll take you in." With that she started off.

"Steady on," I protested. "Don't leave me here alone!"

She turned to look at me, then came back and sat beside me, saying with a sigh:

"Look what Secretary Shih has given me. A child not yet weaned, that can't move a step from its mother."

She started laughing and I joined in sheepishly.

The sky had cleared and was bright with stars. The Milky Way stretched tranquilly across the great vault of heaven. On the other side of the stream were shadowy crops, and three aspens on a hillock in the middle loomed like giants in the inky night. The village in the distance was half swallowed up in mist.

A figure moved in the fields.

"Somebody about," I whispered.

"Some villager comes out to hide," was her reply.

It was after midnight and icy cold after the rain. I hunched up, hugging myself, and could not help shivering convulsively. Her shoulders were trembling too.

"If the enemy's not here yet, it may be all right," I ventured.

"Just grit your teeth and bear it," she scolded as if telling off a child. Presently she leaned towards me to ask quietly:

"Thinking of a warm *kang*?"

"You must be half frozen yourself."

"Don't you worry about me," she answered slowly as if talking to herself.

Presently, however, she was the one to suggest:

"Well, suppose we go and spy out the land? I keep worrying about the wounded soldier I've hidden away."

She rolled up the oilcloth and tucked it under one arm. We picked our way out of the wood over sopping grass, crossed the plank bridge over the stream and started squelching along a muddy path.

"Take off your shoes," she ordered quietly over her shoulder.

Only then did I realize that she was barefoot, her trouser legs rolled up above her knees.

I stuffed my socks in my pockets and put my shoes, sole to sole, under one arm. My first step into a puddle made me shudder and gasp.

"Don't be soft!" She turned to throw me another glance. "It can't be as bad as all that."

Leaving the path leading straight to the three aspens, she stepped aside into the fields. I stopped and asked softly:

"Isn't the straight way closer?"

"Follow me." She marched on without even turning her head.

"That path's shorter and easier. Why choose this difficult way?"

"Stop arguing and come on."

We floundered on through mud, weeds and pools of icy water. The dense crops rustled as we forced a way past them. Soon our half-dried clothes were wet again. When we came to a field of wheat I was painfully pricked by the spikes, but she strode straight on, regardless, while leaves rustled and swayed behind her. After jumping over two ditches, I could see the dim outline of the village ahead

with its faintly glimmering whitewashed walls and haystacks ghostly in the darkness. She crouched down and I followed suit to listen for a while. All was quiet in the village except for the braying of a donkey.

"Here!" She beckoned me to her side and stuffed the oilskin into my hand. "Take this. I want you to follow me at a distance. Just keep me in sight." Clutching my sleeve, she whispered into my ear: "I'll slip in first. If anything goes wrong I'll call, 'Come back, doctor.' If you hear that, run for it. Wait for me in the old place."

She stood up, smoothed her hair and walked off. I followed slowly.

She turned by a hayrick on the threshing-floor and disappeared into a clump of trees. I stopped to listen, then went on. Suddenly a rifle clicked and someone shouted:

"Halt! Hands up!"

"I belong to the Lu family in this village," the woman answered calmly. "Someone in our house is ill. I've been to the north village to fetch a doctor."

I heard talk in Japanese. Then a Chinese called out:

"Come over here. Where's the doctor?"

"The doctor?" she repeated loudly. "He's here. Why, where's the doctor gone? Don't run away!"

At this signal I took to my heels. Enemy bullets whistled over my head. Bending forward I ran for my life. The wet mud slowed me down and I gasped for breath. As I jumped over a ditch, I trod on something soft and a voice protested:

"Hey! Who are you trampling on?"

There was someone lying underneath a tree.

"Run!" I gasped. "The Japanese are coming!"

He jumped up, grabbing the rain cape on which he had been lying, and raced back with me to the wood.

I sank to the ground and gasped for breath, while the other man panted too.

"Where's the enemy?" he asked.

His voice sounded familiar. I peered at him in the starlight but could see nothing except his silhouette. He was wearing a thick padded jacket. As he crouched there with his rain cape, he bent forward to scrutinize me and cried:

"Why, isn't it Comrade Kuan?"

"Yes. And you . . . ?" Our noses were barely an inch apart.

"Chang Chin-lu—remember me?"

Then of course I remembered. This was the militiaman who had spent five or six days in the hills with Secretary Shih and myself two weeks previously, acting as our liaison man. Eating and sleeping together and sheltering in the same caves had made us good friends. It was quite a coincidence to meet him here.

"You belong to that village in front?" I kept my voice down, but my spirits had soared at this unexpected encounter. I gave him a brief account of what had happened.

"That must have been Second Sister Lu. Was she tall, with an oval face, big eyes and a sharp way of talking?"

"It's all my fault for wanting to go to the village." I pounded my head with one fist. "Now what's to be done? They've caught her."

"Don't worry. So long as you got away, she'll manage." Was he saying this to comfort me, or was she really as clever as he made out?

I looked at him doubtfully, not answering.

"She often goes scouting round the Japanese bases, dressed in rags, with a stick and a calabash as if she were a beggar again. She comes back with all the information we need. You cold? Here, put this round you." He spread his cape over my shoulders and at once my numbed back felt warmer.

"She's an answer ready for every question they ask." He gave an appreciative sigh in the darkness.

Still I could not stop reproaching myself and worrying about her.

The dead silence all around was broken only by the occasional croaking of frogs in the reeds by the bank. The Huanhsiung glinted like steel under the stars. Dewdrops dripped from the trees and fell with a splash on the grass. I kept my eyes on the distant village shrouded in mist and trembled for Second Sister Lu. Chang Chin-lu filled his pipe and said:

"Take off that cape, will you, for a second?"

He spread the cape on the ground and put his head under it to strike a light. Then he emerged, carefully shielding the bowl of his pipe. After one puff, he told me:

"Put it on again!"

I slipped into the cape and sat down on the oilskin again while Chang seated himself beside me.

"Did you say she'd once been a beggar?" I asked.

"Second Sister Lu? That's right. Like a puff?"

"Have you forgotten I don't smoke?"

He chuckled and went on:

"You'd never guess, from the gay way she carries on, how much trouble that woman's seen. Her mother was blind, her father too. From the day she was old enough to ask for alms, she begged her way from door to door, one hand in her mother's, the other in her father's. Who knows what village she's from? Somewhere in Paoti County maybe." This said, Chang smoked in silence for a while.

"How did she come to settle in your village?"

"That's a long story." He dropped his voice to warn me: "Don't let on to her that I've told you. She doesn't like people to talk about her troubles."

It came as a surprise to me that this cheerful woman had a hidden tragedy in her life. So I insisted on hearing the whole story.

"When she was seven or eight she started begging with her parents," said Chang. "They wandered from village to village by day and lay down to sleep in tumbledown temples at night. They often came to our village. Those of us who were children then used to tag after her to hear the songs she sang. One day I said, 'Sing us a song and I'll give you a cake.'

"So she sang. When she'd finished I teased her. 'You sing so badly, you can't expect any cake. Clear off!'

"My goodness, she gave me a whack that winded me! Before I could hit back she followed it up with another. Soon we were rolling on the ground. Her mother and father stood there calling out helplessly, while the other kids gathered round to watch the fun. She had the advantage of me by two years, and she pinned me to the ground.

"'Will you give me that cake?' she demanded.

"'I won't.' I yelled. 'Not on your life.'

"Each time I refused she hit me. Just then up came Second Lu, one of my small friends in split pants. I asked him to help. But when he heard what had happened he lit into me too.

"'Cheating a beggar, are you?' he cried and lectured me as if he were a grown-up. When I finally escaped from their clutches and had run some distance away, I turned back to shout, 'If you like her so much, Second Lu, why not marry her?'

"The funny thing was, that's exactly what happened later."

Chang pulled on his pipe again, but it was out. Having emptied the bowl, he put his tobacco pouch back into his pocket.

"One evening it came on to snow heavily when they were sleeping in the old Tsao Village temple," he continued. "The next day her mother didn't get up—she'd died of cold. Her old man, who was blind, laid a hand on the leg of a guardian god and called:

"'Get up, quick! Let's go and find a mouthful of hot gruel before we freeze to death.'

"The little girl felt her mother's nose and breast. With not so much as a whimper, she put her arms round her father and said:

"'Don't cry, dad! Mother's dead!'

"He didn't shed any tears, the old man, but two days later he was gone. They'd been a loving couple, and after his wife died not a bite would he eat. He left the child all alone.

"The spring that she was thirteen, begging in our village, she went to the cottage where Second Lu lived, but when she called out no one answered. She heard groaning inside, and going in found his mother ill on the *kang*. She put down her calabash and stick to heat water for the old lady and when Second Lu came home with some firewood he didn't send her away. She cooked and managed for the two of them that day. And when Mrs. Lu saw her pick up her things to leave, she called from the *kang*:

"'Won't you help out here for a couple of days? This clumsy boy of mine can't cook.'

"So she stayed on. Beggar as she was, she wouldn't have stayed if Mrs. Lu hadn't asked her. Old Granny Hsu east of the village once said to her:

"'I pity you from my heart, lass. I'll keep you here to cook and mind the pigs for us.'

"'Don't waste your pity on me! I don't need it,' she said. 'You want a help for nothing, do you? But I'm not used to waiting on other folk.' That's the plucky, stubborn girl she was. After she'd helped the Lus for a few days, one of the neighbours said to Mrs. Lu:

"'That's a clever girl, and one with a good heart. Why not keep her? In a few years she and your son can make a match of it. They suit each other, and you wouldn't have to give betrothal presents.'

"When Mrs. Lu agreed, the old neighbour approached the girl. And because she and Second Lu hit it off all right, she made no bones about accepting. That's how she came to settle in our village."

Chang sighed at this point and fell silent. The moon was rising now from the eastern horizon. A full moon, red as blood.

Still no sound from the village. What had become of her? Had the Japanese left? I walked to the bank and strained my eyes towards the village, but all was wrapped in shadow. When I returned without a word to my place, Chang had his hands up his sleeves and was hunched up, listening.

"Don't you worry," he said reassuringly. "She'll manage."

We sat there woodenly for a while.

"What about her husband?" I asked suddenly.

"Second Lu? He was the school janitor before the war, and one of the teachers who was a Communist got him to join the Party. He did liaison work for them. In the year of the big uprising, he headed our unit. I served as a squad leader under him. After the autumn harvest he went off with Commander Li and the unit was broken up by the enemy. I managed to get away. I heard that he'd crossed the river, but that was the last news we had of him. That winter the enemy tried to seize everyone who'd taken part in the uprising. Second Sister Lu had no firewood or grain in the house, and Old Hsu urged her to marry again, telling her that her husband was dead. She gave Old Hsu a proper dressing down, then got out her calabash and stick to start begging again. She had to support her mother-in-law, who was ill, but in less than a year the old lady died. In 1939, when the Eighth Route Army came and set up a village administration, she was reckoned as the widow of a resistance fighter and was able to throw away her stick for fending off dogs. But Second Sister Lu isn't the sort of woman to live on relief. She's taken over a good part of the women's work in the village. Her cottage is a home for the Eighth Route Army."

"Is Second Lu still alive?" I interposed.

"We've no news of him, and everyone thinks he's dead." He sighed heavily and lowered his voice to whisper, "No one dares to tell her."

The moon was high in the sky washed clean by rain. The stars seemed dimmed and half dissolved in the moonlight, which was casting the shadows of leaves over us. The Huanhsiang stretched like a winding road to the distance.

"Why don't we have a nap? It'll soon be light." Chang stood up to look round for a suitable place. "It's dry here, spread out that oilcloth."

We lay down and covered ourselves with the cape, but we could not sleep. What had become of Second Sister Lu? Were the Japanese torturing her in the village? Or had they taken her back with them to their base?

"What's keeping her?" muttered Chang, turning over. "You can't help worrying."

His concern only increased my anxiety.

I stared up at the leaves overhead which were rustling in the wind, and fearful premonitions filled my mind.

Dawn broke. Chang rose to his knees and looked around.

I sat up, numb and aching. The village was quiet and nobody had come out. We were very tempted to go back and reconnoitre.

The countryside was becoming more visible now. The dark green crops, yellowing wheat and three slender aspens... all were hazily revealed through drifting mist.

"Look!" Chang jumped to his feet. "Someone's going into the village. The Japanese must have left."

Small groups of peasants seemed to have sprung out of the ground on every side. Carrying quilts and rain capes, they made their way back to the village.

"Quick, let's go and see what's happened to Second Sister Lu." I folded up the oilcloth and prepared to put on my shoes, but at sight of my muddy feet I tucked the shoes in my belt.

The cape over my shoulders, I hurried with Chang towards the bridge.

"Aha, here she comes!" he cried. "Didn't I tell you she'd be all right?" He eyed me triumphantly.

She was approaching through the waist-high crops. There was no mistaking her tall figure in the morning sunlight. The green leaves parted like waves as she strode along.

"Second Sister Lu!" I shouted, running towards her. It seemed to me we had known each other for years. Because of the cape she did not recognize me and halted, shading her eyes. After shouting something which I failed to catch, she hurried towards us again, lurching a little on the slippery soil.

"Wait over there." She signalled with one hand.

I could hear her panting for breath in the morning mist.



"You all right?" she called. Before I could answer, she spotted Chang and put on a look of dismay. "Oh! What hole did you pop out of, bunny rabbit?"

"I was waiting here for the memorial service for Second Sister Lu." He grinned.

"Get away with you!" she retorted with a smile.

Her presence seemed to have brought the whole place to life.

"*Aiya!*" she gasped when she reached me, holding one hand to her heart. "I was so afraid something had happened to you. Then what would Secretary Shih have said? Thank heaven!" Looking me

up and down, she smoothed her hair which was hanging in disorder over her shoulders. Her sun-burned left cheek was streaked with blood. There was dried blood too at one corner of her full lips. A gash on her forehead had left it streaked with blood. Her patched blue jacket was torn across the shoulders, and her skin looked copper-coloured in the morning light. Her sturdy legs and bare feet were coated with mud. I stared at her in dismay.

"Did they beat you up, Second Sister?"

"It's nothing. They insisted I was a guide for the Eighth Route Army—I swore I'd just gone to fetch a doctor. When they'd kicked me and knocked me about a bit, I started screaming. I told them I belonged to the village—why should I lead Eighth Route Army men to my own village?" She seemed to be trying to comfort me, dismissing the matter as of no consequence.

"Trust Second Sister to talk her way out," remarked Chang teasingly.

She wiped the smile from her face to order him sternly:

"You take this comrade to the wood to wait while I get some food for you."

"Let me fix a meal for the two of you." Chang started off. But she caught him by the arm and snapped:

"This is no time for fooling."

"You need a rest, sister," I put in. "You've taken a bad beating."

"Oh, think I'm so soft?" she retorted, then turned to look through narrowed eyes at the village. "I'm not cooking just for you, comrade. A lot of jobs are waiting for me in the village." She counted them off on her fingers. "I haven't got women to make the shoes the district wants for the army; I must collect the vests we've sewn for our unit; I've a wounded soldier in my care and today the enemy nearly discovered him, so I must find him a new hiding-place. And Second Mother's ill in bed waiting for me to get her breakfast. Then..." She ran out of breath and could not help laughing, but with a stern glance at Chang she said crisply, "If you can do all these things for me, go ahead."

"All right!" He clapped his hands to his temples and grinned. "Have it your own way, Second Sister."

"Wait here quietly now. No running all over the place." With this last injunction she left.

After this joking and laughter, I was less disturbed by the beating she had undergone and the wounds on her face.

She walked back through the crops to the village, her tattered blue jacket fluttering in the breeze and her undone hair swaying round her shoulders. Before very long she was hidden by the trees.

"That woman's braver than most men," declared Chang, as if to clinch some argument. "She can stand anything, no matter how hard." After a second's silence he added, "Yes, she can stand up to the worst disaster."

On our way to the wood I asked:

"Isn't her mother-in-law dead? Who's this Second Mother?"

"That's Brother Ting-kuei's mother who lives opposite. Ting-kuei left the year of the uprising with Second Lu, and there's been no word from him. His old mother is bed-ridden and all alone. Second Sister Lu looks after her like her own daughter." He was speaking very gravely now, in contrast to the teasing tone I had just heard him use.

We sat down again on the grass in the wood. The east was red, for the sun had risen, although it was still half hidden by the mist. The moon, all its brightness lost, seemed a cloud floating in the sky. The red morning light was reflected in the river, waterfowl were stirring and beginning to cry among the reeds pearly with dew. A hawk alighted on an old weeping willow and turned its head this way and that, as if keeping guard over the stream. A golden oriole flew off from the three aspens on the opposite bank and winged towards the open country.

I wondered again why Second Sister Lu had avoided that short and easy path to the aspens.

"Funny," I remarked. "Second Sister Lu wouldn't take that path."

"Her daughter is buried there." Chang frowned as if reluctant to say more. "She can't bear to see her girl's grave."

"I didn't know she had a daughter."

"Yes. Thirteen she was, much prettier than her mother. She'd her dad's big eyes and rounded chin. A clever, handy girl she was too, and devoted to her mother. Second Sister Lu doted on her. She used to wash and clean and light the fire just like a big girl. Her mother's chairman of the Women's National Salvation Association, and she was head of the Children's Corps. Last autumn on her way with a message to the west village she ran into Japanese troops, who caught her and beat her. She bit one of them in the hand, and he shot her through the head. . . . Second Sister Lu carried her home without a word, but I saw the look in her eyes—wringing the necks of all the Japanese soldiers wouldn't have been enough to vent her hatred! Second Lu hadn't even a foot of land to his name, she'd have to bury her child in the common graveyard. I told her, 'Second Sister, I've five *mu* of land north of the village. Bury her under those three aspens of mine.' Several nights on end she kept watch there without a sound, crouching by her daughter's new grave. . . ."

The sun high in the sky began to burn like a ball of flame, enkindling the boundless countryside, drying all the dew on the green leaves, blazing down on the damp loam and coaxing plants into flower. The emerald plain was studded with big, undulating plots of golden wheat, and just above shone the fresh, radiant blue sky. The three slender aspens rising behind the fields seemed to be shrinking and lengthening from one moment to the next. Indeed, the whole scene

was wavering before my eyes, and the next moment it was blotted out by a mirage conjured up by the sun. All turned hazy behind that sparkling yet illusory silver screen. Golden orioles were warbling and cuckoos calling shrilly.

Second Sister Lu came back with a hamper. The rent in the shoulder of her jacket was mended, her face was washed, her forehead bandaged and her glossy black hair neatly combed, while from her thick round chignon and the two locks by her ears came the scent of cotton-seed oil. Her sleeves and trouser legs were rolled up above firmly rounded arms and legs, and her brown hands were dusted with flour. Both her bare feet were muddy and her breast rose and fell rapidly as she panted for breath.

"Come and eat," she called, putting down the hamper. "I've fed the others, it's your turn now."

Her tone was triumphant and her suppressed smile could not conceal the satisfaction which she found in her work.

Chang Chin-lu craned his neck to look into the hamper and said:

"Aha! Good for you, sister. Millet congee and pancakes."

"It's not for you." She slapped the hand he held out. But after passing me a bowl and chopsticks, she gave him a pair of chopsticks too. "Go on, eat! When you've had enough you're to go to the district with the others to fetch us land mines. Don't just pick the smallest to carry!"

As we were eating, Second Sister Lu turned to say quietly to Chang:

"If you see Chairman Wang, ask him if he's read that report I sent in. I'd like to go and talk things over with him, but I can't get away. Ask him whether I should go to the district or whether he'll be coming out here."

"Anything else?" inquired Chang.

"A whole lot more, more than you could remember, I dare say."

"You'd better get yourself a secretary." Chang grinned as he munched a shallot.

"You've no call to laugh at my lack of education," she retorted. "Once the war's won, I shall go to a foreign-style school." She threw me a mischievous glance.

Chang and I both exclaimed in surprise.

"Why not? By then I'll be chairman of a state farm."

Again we cried out in astonishment.

“Think I’m not up to it?” Like a child, she stood with arms akimbo, her face solemn and her chest thrown out, while she eyed us to watch the effect. “Well, won’t I do?”

“Of course, you’ll do fine.” I laughed.

Chang Chin-lu made a face at her. And just as she was going to box his ears we heard two explosions ten *li* or so to the east, followed by the rattle of machine-guns.

“The devils are out again.” She jumped up and shaded her eyes to look east, then started off, calling, “You wait here while I nip back to the village.”

The next minute, all we could see of her was her head and shoulders bobbing above the green crops like an eagle skimming the grasslands.

“You wait here, comrade. I’m going for the land mines.” Snatching up another pancake, Chang hurried after her.

*Translated by Gladys Yang
Illustrations by Ku Ping-hsin*

Sheep (traditional painting) by Shih Lu ▶

Shih Lu, born in 1919, is a graduate of the Chengtu Art School in Szechuan. In 1942 he went to Yen-an and worked in a cultural troupe, making woodcuts in his spare time. After liberation he took up traditional painting. Many of his themes are inspired by the loess plateau of the northwest and he shows originality in his composition and brushwork. He is at present vice-chairman of the Sian branch of the Union of Chinese Artists. *The Paintings of Shih Lu*, an article introducing his work, was published in *Chinese Literature* No. 1, 1962.



Love-seeds

More than twenty years have passed since I first read these lines by Wang Wei who lived in the eighth century:

Red seeds grow in the south,
How many shoots have they put forth this spring?
Pick them in plenty, friend,
For these are seeds of love!

I was in Kweilin at the time. Hearing that there was a "Love-seed Court" with a tree bearing these red seeds in the University of Kwangsi, I paid a special visit to it. To my regret, I saw only green leaves but no red seeds.

Working in Indonesia for several years, I heard that these red love-seeds grew all over the fields and hills there, but again I had no chance to see them for myself.

Ssuma Wen-shen, born in 1916 in Kwangtung, is the author of the novels *The Rainy Season* and *Hope* and the film scenario *Fishing Songs on the South Seas*. Having lived for many years in Indonesia, he has recently returned to China.

Once I mentioned Wang Wei's poem to my Indonesian friend G. With a strange undercurrent of emotion, he said, "I know that poem. Somebody recited it to me." Pressed for his opinion of it, he merely replied, "On the hillside behind my old home there are many such trees. I'll show them to you if you'll pay us a visit."

Before I left for China on furlough, I travelled around in Java and happened to run into G. When he learned that I was not there on business but travelling for pleasure, he took my arm and exclaimed, "Now's your chance!" That reminded me of his remark about the trees behind his home.

"Going to show me some love-seeds?" I asked.

"Yes. And I have something to tell you."

So I changed my itinerary and accompanied G.

G's family lived in the city but his old home was in the mountains some miles away. The village consisted of about thirty households, all of whom engaged in farming. With a small stream flowing all the year before it and hills covered with red flowers and green woods behind, the village was a lovely sight. Nestling in the coconut groves, the *atap* houses built of bamboo were thatched with palm leaves. Before entering the village, we had to cross a single-plank bridge under which clear water gurgled. Some dozen women and children were washing clothes or bathing in the stream. "Home for a visit?" they hailed G as we passed, and he stopped to greet each in turn.

"I grew up here," G told me. "After we won independence, work called me away, but I come back whenever I can."

"Do your parents still live here?"

"My father died twenty years ago. My mother's too old for the bustle of city life—she prefers it here."

Once inside the village we found a large group of children busy staging a mock battle with bamboo guns. They rushed forward at sight of G and surrounded him.

"Who are you fighting?" he asked them, half in earnest.

"The Green Hats!" was the unanimous reply. They meant the hated Dutch colonial troops. And dragooned into the role of Green Hats were a dozen smaller children wearing palm leaves on their heads.

"All of you Green Hats?" G teased.

They doffed their headgear and said in embarrassed dismay, "We didn't want to be. But they made us."

"Put on those hats!" ordered the bigger boys. "You haven't been captured yet."

G urged them to go on with their game and tried to comfort the smaller ones by adding, "Once you're captured, it'll be their turn to be Green Hats."

But the bigger ones protested, "Not on your life!"

As we walked on, G explained, "The Dutch colonial troops came here, killing innocent people and burning property. The villagers hate them like poison."

"Were you in the village at that time?" I asked.

"I was working hereabouts but was forced to leave. My family of four fled in three directions." He sighed. "Our home was broken up..."

G's mother, over sixty, met us at the gate. Despite all she had gone through she looked hale and hearty as she greeted me in traditional Javanese fashion, her arms at her sides and bowing.

"Here's a friend from China, mother!" her son told her.

At the words "from China" her face broke into smiles. Murmuring, "A kinsman has come!..." she hurried off. Soon many women of the neighbourhood arrived carrying a table and chairs. Having put these under a coconut palm in front of the house, some started to prepare coffee or pick fruit. The news that "a kinsman of G's has arrived" spread quickly. Before long quite a crowd had gathered to look at me and whisper among themselves.

"We have nothing good enough for an honoured guest," said G. "But how about some coconut juice?"

"There's nothing I'd like better," I replied.

So he stripped off his *batik* shirt, rolled up his trouser legs and took off his leather shoes while somebody went inside to fetch a knife. He shinned nimbly up one of the palms, the knife between his teeth, and the women exclaimed, "Why, this is just like the old days!"

In no time G reached the top and started cutting. Seven or eight coconuts thudded to the ground. Just as he skimmed down and started to cut them open, his mother came out from the house with a pot and some glasses.

"Coffee is ready!" she cried.

"We're going to drink some coconut juice," G told her.

"Don't you go giving our kinsman the idea that we can't afford a cup of coffee!" she said with a twinkle.

"Just now coconut juice would suit me best," I assured her.

So G and I tilted the coconuts and drank the refreshing juice while the women looked on with indulgent smiles.

"Are there coconuts in China too?" one of them asked.

"Yes," I told her. "On Hainan Island."

After a rest G took me to the hills, which were not particularly high. Although uncultivated, they seemed like some huge garden with bright red peacock trees and love-seed trees of an enchanting green.

"Chinese poets are superb!" remarked G as we rambled on. "Imagine writing such evocative lines about ordinary red seeds!" Casually he broke off one branch and then another, handing me the green sprays covered with those seeds inspiring thoughts of love.

"I'm no poet, but those lines by Wang Wei went to my heart," he confided gravely, as if preoccupied. "I told you that I grew up here. And my sister Inah, who was three years my senior, used to bring me up these hills to play. We climbed the peacock trees and picked the love-seeds. Though our family was poor, Inah liked pretty things. One day she went to the market with my father and longed to buy some of the artificial beads she saw there. Of course we couldn't afford them. Back home she told me how wonderful it would be if love-seeds could be strung together like beads. But the seeds were so hard we couldn't manage it. . . ."

Having climbed more than half-way up we were both rather tired, so we sat down beneath a love-seed tree for a rest.

Still in the grip of some emotion G went on, "Ever since I met you and you mentioned Wang Wei's poem, I've been thinking of somebody called Chen Hsin. He was a Chinese too and we played together as children. He lived in a town not far from here and his father and mine were old friends. He used to come to visit us with his father and sometimes stayed with us for several days, playing with Inah and me on the hills. He liked love-seeds and he was the one who recited that poem to us.

"The years slipped by until Inah was sixteen and Chen seventeen. The three of us had been playmates for so long that we were like brothers and sister. But now Chen Hsin grew more and more reserved, as if he had something on his mind. During another short

stay with us, Inah and I could not understand why he kept quoting that poem. Before he took his leave he slipped a string of love-seeds around Inah's neck. When she asked where he'd got it, he flushed and said he'd made it. 'Is it really for me?' Inah asked. Blushing redder than ever Chen Hsin turned to go, calling back over his shoulder, 'Of course it's for you!' Inah told me about this and we wondered why Chen Hsin should behave so strangely. But our mother said, 'Why, you silly things, he must be in love with our Inah!' When we didn't believe her, she said she would find out. . . ."

G paused for a while before he resumed, "Mother found a chance to go to town and called on Chen's father. He said, 'I've known for a long time how my boy feels. You don't object to the match, do you, sister-in-law?' Mother came back and asked Inah how she felt about it. Was she willing to accept the betrothal gift? Inah was so surprised and pleased that she cried all night. Why should she take on like that, I'd like to know?" Here G broke off to laugh. "Already old enough to be a bride, yet still behaving like a little girl! She said later that marriage had never entered her head, only she was fond of Chen. . . ."

Leaving the "Hill of Love-seeds," we returned to the coconut palms before G's door and found a regular feast ready on the table. After the meal, when I rose to say goodbye, his mother went into the house and brought out a large photograph in a battered frame.

"Have a look at this!" she said.

I saw a handsome young couple, both under twenty. The man wore a white shirt and dark trousers. The girl, dressed in Javanese fashion, her hair in a bun, had a pretty oval face and lovely eyes.

"Inah and Chen?" I asked.

G smiled and nodded.

"It's ten years since last I saw them," put in his mother. "Some say they're dead, others that they are in China. You come from China, Mr. Ssuma. Have you never met them?"

"China's a big country," I hedged. "When did they leave you?"

"During the first 'police action' of the Dutch army."

"Weren't you together at that time?" I asked.

The old lady sighed and G said, "It's a long story. I'll have to tell you the rest some other time."

When I was leaving Djakarta, among the friends who came to the wharf to see me off were G, his wife and five-year-old child.

"I'll be back in less than six months. Is there anything I can do for you?" I asked.

Hesitantly G pulled a package from his pocket. "I'd like you to take this to my sister and brother-in-law. Only I don't know their address! Give it to them if you can find them. But don't go to too much trouble."

"For Chen Hsin and Inah?"

"That's right."

"Is there a letter inside?"

G shook his head. "You've been to my home, seen my mother and the love-seed trees on the hills. If you should find them, just tell them that we have rebuilt our village on the ruins of the old one the Dutch burnt down. The stream still flows just as before in front of our village. Love-seeds blossom and bear fruit on the hills year after year. And please take them the love of everyone in our village." At this point his wife murmured something into his ear. "Of course we'll have news of him if we find Chen Hsin and Inah," G assured her.

"Are you looking for someone else too?" I asked.

It was his wife who answered, "Will you ask Inah whether Little G is still alive?"

"Little G?"

Tears welled up in her eyes. "Our eldest son."

"Your eldest son!" I exclaimed. "Was he with them too?"

Then G told me the rest of the story. "I haven't much hope that Little G's still alive so I didn't mention him last time. . . . A few days after our son was born, my wife and I were put on the black list during the first 'police action.' We agreed to run away before we were arrested. But what should we do with the baby? He wouldn't be able to live separated from his mother. Inah had just given birth to her second in town. Why not take our little boy to her? She might consent to look after him for our sake. So one stormy night we slipped into town and found Inah and Chen, who urged us to leave the baby with them and escape. 'I'll look after him as if he were my own,' promised Inah. 'You'll be able to find us as long as we're in Indonesia.' And she nursed Little G as if he were really her own. That made us feel much better. We had to leave our home and dear

ones then because the colonialists were slaughtering patriots, setting fire to our houses and trying to wipe out our guerrilla units. So we joined in the armed struggle until the Dutch were forced to beat a retreat."

By now Mrs. G had broken down and her husband's voice was faltering. But he sipped the drink I offered him and went on:

"When we went home we found our village and county town destroyed and could get no news of my mother, Inah or Chen. Eventually we managed to trace my mother but she had lost track of the others after the massacre and did not know whether they had been killed or had escaped. 'You'll be able to find us as long as we're in Indonesia!' Inah had said. We waited for word and published an announcement in the paper. But. . . ." He sighed and shook his head. "It's ten years now. . . ."

They left the ship as its siren called out a farewell to Tandjung Periuk and Djakarta and we set sail through the dusk.

Unwilling to disappoint my friends, I left no stone unturned until at last I succeeded in finding Chen Hsin. A man in his forties now, Chen still lived in Indonesian style although he had been back in China for some years. At home his wife still dressed in a *sarong*. I surprised them both with the very first sentence I addressed to them:

"You may be seeing me for the first time but I have seen you before in Indonesia."

"Where could that have been?" asked Chen.

"I have no recollection of it!" exclaimed Inah.

I told them of my visit to G's home and the photograph his mother had shown me.

"Why, is G still alive?" demanded Inah in tremendous excitement. "We heard that both he and his wife had died in the struggle. We wrote for news, but our letter must have gone astray."

"Is Inah's mother still alive?" put in Chen. "Where are they now?"

I handed them G's package. "Brother G asked me to look for you and give you this," I explained. "He wanted me to tell you that they have rebuilt their village on the ruins of the one destroyed by the Dutch. The stream still flows in front of the village. And love-seeds blossom and bear fruit on the hillside year after year. They asked me to bring you the love of everybody in your village. . . ."

Tears rolled down Inah's cheeks as she unwrapped the package and found love-seeds in it. Cupping them in her hands, she gazed

at them fixedly while Chen Hsin, deeply moved, exclaimed, "We had no idea! . . . No idea!"

I wanted to leave since my mission was accomplished, but they persuaded me to stay for supper. "I'll cook some Indonesian dishes for you and there's someone I want you to meet," Inah insisted.

Young voices could be heard outside the door. The next moment four children burst in, each with a satchel, among them a boy and girl both aged about ten who looked like twins to me. They trooped in to greet their mother, but quickly withdrew in confusion to another room when they discovered she had a visitor.

"Did my brother tell you nothing else?" asked Inah.

Instead of answering, I posed another question. "Is that ten-year-old boy Little G?"

"So you know the whole story!" she cried, laughing through her tears. "I've brought him up since he was three months old. . . ."

"How did you happen to return to China?" I asked.

"We made our escape during the first 'police action,' saving nothing but the three children," answered Chen. "The Dutch stole and burnt all they could. The only thing that saved us from beggary was help from other overseas Chinese. When I told Inah that the Overseas Chinese Association suggested we return to China, she said, 'I'll go wherever you do. But what about Little G?' 'Let's take him along,' I suggested. 'We'll look for his father later and send him back.' And that was how we came home."

"Does Little G know who his father is?"

"No, he calls me mother and my husband father like my other children," put in Inah. "Only our eldest child knows that he isn't our son. I must tell him the truth now that I know my brother is still alive."

I spent a pleasant evening with them, listening to stories of the past and talking about the "Hill of Love-seeds." When I mentioned the necklace of love-seeds Inah blushed as she must have blushed more than twenty years ago. On the way back I asked Inah, who with Chen and Little G was seeing me to my hostel, whether she was not a little homesick sometimes.

"The love-seeds you brought did stir old memories," she admitted with a smile. "But it's wonderful to know that G and my mother are alive. Now our children are growing up and we are all working

in different jobs. But we'll visit each other as soon as we have the chance."

On my return to Indonesia, my first guests were G and his wife. "I don't know how to thank you, brother!" cried G, throwing his arms around me. "This means so much to us! We've had letters from Chen and Inah telling us about your visit. And they have sent a picture of Little G."

His wife opened her purse and showed me the photograph. "Look, isn't he tall? . . ." She was laughing and crying at the same time.

"Aren't you considering fetching him home?" I asked.

"We're applying for a visa to China," G replied. "We want to see Inah and the boy."

His wife said, "I agree with Inah that we should let our son stay there until he has finished college."

Six weeks later I received a package from G and his wife. It was a carved sandalwood box containing love-seeds and a letter.

My wife and I are leaving tomorrow for your great country which is now my sister's home too. This will be the trip of a lifetime. We shall see our son again after all these years!

My heart is too full to start telling you all I feel. I know you like the red seeds that symbolize love. These I'm sending don't symbolize romantic love but the ties between our two great nations and the friendship between our two peoples.

My mother and my wife helped me to gather these love-seeds from the hillside behind our house. We are sending them to you with our heartfelt thanks. . . .

Whenever I read Wang Wei's poem I always open the sandalwood box and recall the "Hill of Love-seeds" and the moving story associated with it.

Translated By Su Chin

N. Sayntsogt

Emerald Waves and a Silver Sea

Have you been
To the Chao Uda* desert?
Have you seen
That green ocean of poplars?
Have you asked the old folk
How they lived in days gone by?
Have you heard from the bird song
What manner of place it is now?

A barren land was this,
Bare as a bald head;
On that arid desert
No flowers took root or bloomed;

N. Sayntsogt, a Mongolian poet born in 1914, is the author of the well-known collection of poems *Friendship and Happiness* and the short novel *The Sun Rises over Peking in Spring*.

*In the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region.

Wild winds whipped the plain
Into seas of swirling sand,
And the wrath of the gods
Smudged the spotless clouds with dust.

Now above young verdant woods
Birds hover and build their nests,
Immensities of green shade screen the sultry sun
Where playful goats crop grass;
Fresh dug canals interlace
And pour their gurgling water over the soil,
Making the fresh, enchanting scene
Even lovelier than a dream.

What herdsman can lasso
A soaring eagle?
What marksman can bring down
Man's aspirations?
Men have made green waves
Roll over that silver sea,
And the desert is now a garden
Where cuckoos sing.

Like shoals of gleaming fish
Frisking in deep, limpid pools,
Goats with curved horns
Career through the poplars' green shade;
Like thousands of swans taking flight
To wing joyfully through blue skies
Are the tireless herdsman all aglow with hope
Whose songs linger in the air.

Good the tang of the damp earth
So soft to tread;
The road strewn with flowers
Is a carpet of many colours;
Clouds white as satin
Float unsullied now by dust,
And in the heart of happy foresters
Is a vision great as the sea.

Translated by Yang Hsien-yi



Wang Tung-chao

Shipwreck

“A few more hours should bring us in sight of the sea—a lovely sight, stretching off to the horizon. Don’t you agree, Brother Liu? You’ve seen it. Sampans fly to and fro as if they had wings, and a snatch of opera accompanied by a fiddle sounds extra good out on the water. A fellow can relax out at sea and his voice carries further. . . .” Ku Pao, a tall, sturdy carter, as he pushed a large wheel-barrow was addressing Liu Erh-tseng who was tugging in front.

Liu Erh-tseng, a peasant nearing forty, had taken up barbering in his spare time and in recent years had come to be known as The Barber. On the barrow they were pushing sat his wife of forty-odd in a dark blue homespun jacket, and two children aged eight and three respectively.

“Of course! Don’t forget our trip to buy fish a few years back, when we crossed the sea and strolled down that big road built by the German. I don’t get seasick myself, but some folk daren’t take a boat.” After trundling the barrow for several hours, Liu was panting with exhaustion, unlike his companion who took this in his stride.

“Look at you, man. You can travel by boat but not push a cart, seemingly. It’s still ten *li* to the place where we’ll stop for lunch—

think you can make it? That light work you're used to at home has made you flabby, yet you want to try your luck now in the northeast. You'll have to rough it there! I've been and I know. The cold's too much for anyone from our parts. You may have relatives there, but you can't live on them. Getting paid is easy, it's sweating at a job that's hard...."

Panting, his eyes on the lean donkey pulling the barrow, Liu Erh-tseng replied, "Of course we're prepared to rough it. Heaven helps those who help themselves. Was it our fault we couldn't make a living back there? In a good year who wants to leave home and start again? It's lucky I know a trade and perhaps can find work wherever I go. The thing is, it's easy for a single man, but I've a wife and children to support."

"Don't you go pinning the blame on us!" cried his wife, in whose arms their three-year-old was sleeping. "Did we hold you back? I was all for farming the children out and going into service myself to get good food and clothes and a chance to see the world. But you wouldn't have it. You've dragged us all this way, the children too. I hope we don't come to grief." Mrs. Liu was a capable woman with a sharp tongue, and her husband knuckled under at once.

Still panting, he spat in disgust at a stone by the roadside.

Ku Pao was shrewd. Pulling on the donkey's reins, he called out to slow it down, then mopped his sweating face with the white cloth draped over his shoulder.

"Forget it!" he cried with a grin. "You've been at it hammer and tongs every step of the way. 'A single tree doesn't make a wood'—married folk must stick together. You've hard times ahead and you're still a long way from Shaho. For heaven's sake call a truce! You don't want to break up your family. I'm famished, this barrow's so heavy. Can we get a jug of wine when we stop at the tavern?"

"Of course we can." Mrs. Liu laughed. "You laid by your work to see us off—why should he grudge you a drink? Tell you what: In nine or ten years when we're doing well, I'll send Ah-tzu to fetch Uncle Ku to stay with us."

"Yes, I'll come and fetch you back, Uncle Ku, in a sampan," chimed in The Barber's eight-year-old boy who was lying on the right side of the barrow.

They stopped talking then as the barrow slowly mounted a slope.

The wild mulberry woods around them were bathed in the noonday sun and their big leaves rustling in the warm, early autumn wind filled the hills with a murmur like waves washing the shore. Normally peasants came here in spring to raise wild silkworms, while by late summer and early autumn the woods were at their best, a source of riches for those living in this region. In recent years, however, the wild silkworms had greatly diminished and, although wild mulberry trees were still plentiful, not many people came up here in the spring. The stony path through the hills was overgrown with grass. Grey grasshoppers speckled with black hopped to and fro, more of them every day the dry weather held.

Beads of sweat were running down the faces of both men, whose bare shoulders appeared brown and worn with toil as they laboured along beneath the scorching sun. It was hard work pushing the barrow up that stony track and they had no energy to spare for talking.

Half an hour or so later they halted in front of a crazily built stone inn. The donkey half closed its eyes, as if to meditate on its hard lot and the uncertain future. The children scampered off to catch grasshoppers. Liu Erh-tseng sank down on a rough bench in front of the inn to fan himself with his tattered straw hat and mop his perspiring face. Cheerful, talkative Ku Pao squatted under the mat that served as an awning and lit a cigarette.

The name of this inn was The Rock and it lay on the way of all travellers to the wharf at Red Stone Cliff. The faint red of the boulders and soil of the hills hereabouts seemed to typify the poverty of the region. Small villages, numbering only four or five households, were swallowed up by large-leafed wild mulberry trees and poplars. The old wayside inn had just three rooms built of stones roughly piled together. And the walls, white to begin with, were blackened by the smoke of wood fires. Above the front gate, made of brambles, a blue cloth sign hung from the projecting bough of an old locust tree, giving the place a certain old-world charm. When travellers several li away saw that sign, it never failed to stir their imaginations; they would often be assailed by a sense of desolation and longing but at the same time their parched lips seemed to savour the taste of home-brewed wine.

When the innkeeper had greeted these guests he went inside with their order for unleavened griddle-cakes and vegetable dishes. On

the chipped table under the matting inside the bramble gate, he set an earthenware jug of the local liquor, a big packet of salted peanuts and two thick crockery winecups. The Barber sat down with his wife and friend to drink and recover from their journey.

"This is a good place, Brother Liu," cried Ku Pao cheerfully after a few cups. "If ever I get married, I swear I'll move here to live. With so few families and so many trees, you'd never go short of firewood. There are hills all around and it's only twenty *li* to the sea. Fish and prawns must be cheap in spring. . . . Say, why don't you try it out here instead of going all the way to Shaho?"

"Trust you to come up with a scheme like that, Uncle Ku," retorted Mrs. Liu. "You can manage anywhere, with no wife or children. What would we live on here, I'd like to know? Eat the hills and drink the sea water, I suppose!"

After gulping down some wine the lean, sun-burned Barber gazed north towards his old home, concealed by trees and clouds at the horizon. His simple heart ached with a longing that he could not put into words, making him reluctant to answer. He was thinking of his thatched cottage, the three hens he had given to a neighbour, the small courtyard in which he had grown cabbage, and his two nephews in school, two boys with shabby satchels whom he met each day when he went out with his barber's kit. More distressing still was the memory of his elder brother's parting advice and proposal that he should stay on another year. The rugged hills in early autumn brought these memories back as he sat there exhausted, and misgivings stirred in him. One glance at his firm, outspoken wife, however, induced him to hold his peace. He turned to look at the children, munching toasted buns on the grass, and two tears trickled over the dust and sweat on his cheeks.

The innkeeper came out wearing a short jacket and straw sandals and holding a bamboo pipe a good two feet in length. He walked over to the gnarled trunk supporting the matting to chat with Ku Pao, whom he knew.

He was a man of sixty, with no queue but grizzled hair three or four inches long. His withered face was scored with wrinkles. His palsied hands trembled as if he would drop the pipe.

"Where are you off to? Seeing these guests to the northeast?"

"That's right," said Ku Pao. "I suppose lots of people are traveling this way?"

"Ah, what times we're living in! I've never seen so many people heading north. Ever since spring there's been an endless stream of carts along the road. Poor souls! Some of them, I heard, just handed their title-deeds over to the authorities and left—times are too hard." This speech was punctuated by sighs.

"Things look pretty bad. But my friends here could still manage, although feeding a family's not as easy as it used to be. They're all right, though, they've relatives up north who asked them to go. You should be doing good business. Are you making plenty of money?"

"Far from it! Not with prices soaring like this and so many mouths to feed. Private schools aren't forbidden in the villages now, but who's going to send his children to school these days? It's lucky I gave up teaching before it was too late. Otherwise. . . ."

"Of course, I'd forgotten. Ten years ago you were the schoolmaster in the North Village. What a wise old man you are! Even in business you manage better than others." Ku Pao had a ready tongue and natural tact.

This reminded the innkeeper suddenly of the time, several dozen years ago, when he had taken the imperial examinations. Now he was reduced to living in this country tavern and catering for travellers from all parts of the land. He heaved a deep sigh of regret.

"What do you young people know of the world?" he demanded. "It's a wretched life I've had. In these times of great upheavals all I can do is 'retain my integrity' in a 'world that has lost the Way.'"

These literary allusions were over Ku Pao's head, but he answered at random, "True enough. If not driven by hunger and cold, who'd leave home to put up with hardships?"

The old man knocked out his pipe and walked off with a bitter smile.

A cock crowed in the woods to announce that it was noon. After stuffing himself with griddle-cakes, Ku Pao lay down on some planks and was soon sound asleep. The Barber and his wife sat facing each other in silence. He was staring at the path ahead which seemed to wind unendingly into the distance, leading him to some future as yet unknown. Lost in thought, he looked like a man cudgelling his memory in vain for something that eludes him.

The children had not yet tired of chasing grasshoppers, while the donkey twitched its tail from time to time to drive away the flies on its flanks.

Dusk found them in the Inn of Tranquillity at Red Stone Cliff, hurriedly packing up their humble belongings ready to take the boat the next day to Tsingtao, from where they would ship for Dairen and the northeast. The inn was swarming with refugees like themselves or even worse off, while groups of boys and girls, ragged and grimy, were crying and quarrelling outside the gate. A few gaunt draught animals had left droppings all over the road. The roar of the wind and waves out at sea sounded like some evening dirge or song of farewell. The Barber and his family were shown into a large room quite bare of beds which was crowded with country women and their children. Leaving his wife to keep an eye on their things, The Barber went with Ku Pao to find out about a boat.

The accountant's office was packed with peasants in short, belted jackets and sandals, who were asking what the fare would be.

"Will you take the steamer at ten tomorrow morning? It's a Japanese boat, fast, steady, and not much dearer than a sampan. Please yourselves. With this high wind, it's not certain what time the sampans can leave." The accountant, flourishing a writing brush, was an old hand at persuading villagers.

The Barber, eager to have a quick, smooth passage, paid two dollars and more for the tickets, then went back to the big room to inform his wife, who approved of his decision on the grounds that there was less chance of seasickness on the steamer.

The elder boy, hearing that they were to sail out to sea, asked round-eyed where the steamer was and if there were any grasshoppers on board.

By supper time the sun had not set completely and Ku Pao offered to show The Barber over the steamer, on which he had travelled on a previous occasion.

So after hastily swallowing the coarse meal served by the inn, they set off together.

The inn was barely a hundred yards from the sea, and there was a wooden pier for the use of passengers or porters loading or unloading boats. Red Stone Cliff had quite a number of warehouses for such a small place, as it was an important trading port for all the counties nearby. Groundnuts, bean oil and hide stored in dozens of godowns were waiting to be loaded and shipped away. Groups of sailors in navy blue and big straw hats were cheerfully playing the finger-game while they drank together in taverns along the street.

As The Barber walked down the road in the evening mist and heard the very mixed accents of the vendors of sweet potatoes and date cakes, he felt he was already far from home. To make a better impression on strangers, he was wearing the long lined gown he only put on at home when calling on clients. Many washings had transformed the dark grey cloth into a shadowy silver, and two of the buttons were missing. The evening wind from the sea swept his newly shaved head and sent a chill through his bones. Ku Pao had on the short jacket and straw sandals he wore at work every day, but he smoked a cigarette as he led the way.

This was not a clean, orderly wharf for, with the exception of one or two small foreign steamers that picked up passengers here, all the boats that put in were sampans. The sandy path by the coast was choked with cinders and weeds, and the autumn wind carried the rank smell of fish and brine. Some fishermen's straw huts stood on the cliff, their cooking fires visible through the mist that was rising from the water. All was dirt, neglect and disorder, typical of an old coastal village in the East. As The Barber followed Ku Pao down the pier, he could just see the ocean with its white-capped billows. The vast expanse of murky water inspired him with both wonder and dismay. At home he had looked forward eagerly, without any qualms, to this voyage to the northeast. Yesterday at the wayside inn a sense of desolation had stolen over him. And now that he had actually reached the ocean, could hear the roar of its waves and see its waters stretching off without end, The Barber's heart sank within him. Why had they embarked on this long and dangerous journey? But what alternative had they? He halted under a street lamp that shed a faint yellow light.

"Come on! Let's stroll over the boat!" cried Ku Pao, following some porters up the gangway to the belly of the dark monster.

A ribbon of smoke was rising from the funnel and chains were rattling as the small 200-tonner made ready for her trip the following morning.

Ku Pao walked up and down the deck as if to impress The Barber with his courage and knowledge of the sea. Gazing at the lights of vessels out in the ocean, he casually tossed a cigarette stub into the water. "Hey! Why not come aboard and see something of the boat? Come on!"

But The Barber by the lamppost shook his head, a prey to bewilderment, doubts and misgivings.

Group after group of shabby villagers were passing now in quite surprising numbers to have a look at the steamer. The same cruel winds of change had brought them to this unfamiliar coast from the fighting, brigandage, crippling taxation and natural calamities which were bankrupting the villages where they had lived so long. With their children, brothers and friends, they were prepared to let the ship of fate carry them through the darkness to unfamiliar shores far, far away.

Stern night brooded over all, while waves murmured faintly as they lapped the shingle. At last a rather sulky Ku Pao accompanied his friend back along the bleak road to the disorderly inn.

The square doss-house, large as a barn, re-echoed with the snores of exhausted sleepers, and the paraffin lamp suspended from the ceiling shed a faint, flickering light which barely picked out the sprawled figures of weary travellers, dreaming for a while after the day's long journey. Their piles of old cases and rough clothes and quilts could hardly be distinguished in the gloom. The Barber trudged in with a heavy heart to find his eight-year-old son sleeping, fully dressed, in one corner on a thin cotton mattress, an innocent smile curving his grubby lips. He certainly was a fine, lovable little fellow, and the apple of his father's eye. The Barber's wife had their sleeping three-year-old on her knees. Her husband noticed a cold draught as he sat down and saw that some tiles were missing in that corner, admitting a faint glimmer of light.

"What's the time? When do we embark tomorrow morning?"

"At ten, they told us here," was his listless reply.

"Don't look so grumpy! One trip by sea, then another, and we'll be at my brother's house in no time. Why look so down in the mouth?"

He did not answer.

"Cheer up! Remember the Wu family of Huang Village? After less than ten years in the northeast, they came back to a house and land, good food and good clothes, so that everybody envied their luck. Why should we sweat in the fields for the rest of our days? Luck's something you have to look for, don't expect it to seek you out." As usual, she was trying to encourage him.

Crooning a lullaby to the child, she dreamed happily to herself for a while in the darkness.

"See here," she resumed. "There are richer, better dressed people than us on their way up to try their luck. I just had a talk with a woman from Ishui, a daughter of a well-to-do family, who's now a 'refugee.' They fought over a dozen battles at her home, till the house was destroyed by shells and none of their land could be tilled, yet they had to pay grain and taxes just the same. It's far worse for her than for us. Her daughter, just turned eighteen, died of fright in the fighting. Compared with her we're lucky."

"All in the same boat," replied The Barber indifferently from his pallet.

His wife, silenced for a while, started thinking over their problems amid the chorus of snoring all around. Presently she asked her husband:

"How much money have you left now?"

"How much?" Plaintively, he recapitulated their account. "You know I gave up the lease of our land and sold the two pigs. I made over that one *mon* of ours to my brother for three hundred strings of cash. The pigs fetched 250. I changed that into fifty silver dollars and fifty strings of cash. So far, we've used over twenty. Think, woman, one catty of griddle-cake costs one string and we have to eat. We've still a long way to go, and we're cleaned out at home."

They fell silent again, both occupied with their thoughts. Mrs. Liu, with her strong, forthright character, could not help despising her husband's spinelessness. It was only at her insistence that they had left home. As for him, his thoughts were in such a tangle of regret for the past and anxiety over the future, that he could not sleep in this stuffy, disorderly doss-house.

As he turned on his side and caught sight of his elder son smiling in his dreams and his wife's face aged before its time by care, he felt that the snoring sleepers in the room and the pallid lamplight were a fantastic nightmare.

Every day the old owner of The Rock waited by his bramble gate for customers, while his elder son's wife and two children worked all day in the little stone tavern preparing food. Business was brisk, but the old man knew that the money proffered him by wayfarers had cost them blood and sweat. Because of the ups and downs in his own life, he did his best for these refugees on their way to the

northeast. The food and drink here were better served and cheaper than elsewhere.

One morning three or four days after The Barber's family had passed, the old innkeeper rose early and went into the woods to gather fallen leaves for his small grandson to carry back in his wicker crate for fuel. After a light meal of congee, he sat smoking his long pipe under the matting. There had been fewer passers-by the last few days, and it struck him that no one had returned from the wharf. Not that this worried him, he simply regarded it as rather strange.

The old man had an excellent memory, the result of hard application in his youth. In those days his family had been quite well-off and after studying in the village school he attended a school in town, with the result that he could recite the whole of the *Four Classics** and Chu Hsi's commentaries,** and was even word-perfect in the *Book of Rhymes*. This had won the admiration of many of his teachers and fellow candidates. So although he never passed the district examination he had something of which to be proud. When he started moving in a different world, keeping a roadside tavern, sometimes he could not resist airing his knowledge to scholars who passed that way. But in recent times scholars and country gentlemen had virtually stopped making excursions to the sea. During the fighting that raged year after year, it was only poor peasants and artisans who streamed past to the coast to find some means of livelihood in the north. For them he felt infinite sympathy and compassion. But much as he sympathized with these good, honest folk, none of them understood Chu Hsi's commentaries or the *Book of Rhymes*—their sole topics of conversation were drought, flood, fighting and natural calamities. He often reflected that the good old cultured days had gone never to return, like his vanished youth. All men knew today was suffering and hardships and no ancient culture could alleviate their distress.

That was why, when no one was by, he stood alone gazing at the distant peaks and sighed so heavily.

It was a dull autumn day. Grey clouds raced past overhead and the sun, still below the mountains, cast no light. The forest trees

* *The Great Learning, Doctrine of the Mean, Analects of Confucius and Mencius.*

** Chu Hsi, a Sung dynasty scholar of the twelfth century, wrote commentaries on the Confucian classics.

bent before cold blasts of wind and whispered to their leaves so soon to fall. Mist from the far-off horizon was billowing over the whole countryside, enough to fill every heart with autumnal gloom. Dressed in a long black gown, the old innkeeper twisted his grizzled moustache as he brooded under his matting over the past. He fixed his eyes on the track leading to the wharf, the pockets of mist in the withered brown grass and the growing network of mist. He recalled the lines:

I stop my cart at dusk to enjoy the maples,
Their frosted leaves red as the flowers of spring.

A longing for the past nearly overwhelmed him. Just then a shadowy figure loomed through the mist. The old man was too lost in thought to pay much attention, until the traveller confronted him. Then he looked up and without rising to his feet said, "You're an early bird. Back from seeing your neighbours off? Have you bought no sea-food this time?"

"Don't talk about sea-food! Of all the damned luck! I set off before it was light and ran into this fog. First give me two jugs of wine!..." The new arrival had a gown over one shoulder, but his hands were empty, his face a ghastly colour.

"Heat two pots of wine, quick! Brother Ku is back and in a hurry... Look sharp!" The old innkeeper tottered inside.

What had happened to make cheerful, talkative Ku Pao so frantic? The carter usually came back from the coast with a load of fish or a barrow for someone else, always as lively as could be, singing folk songs or smoking the cheapest cigarettes. This morning the old man had hardly recognized him.

Presently amid the fumes of liquor and smoke of cigarettes the old fellow asked: "Did you see them to Tsingtao? You've been gone some time. What's all the hurry today?"

"No, I didn't take the boat with them. Such a pitiful business! Little did I think I was seeing them to their graves! These days anything can happen—hadn't you heard?" Ku Pao kept refilling his cup with the newly broached liquor.

"What's that?" demanded the innkeeper. "To their graves, did you say? What's happened?"

"I tell you, there's been a fearful accident!"

"An accident?... That's the first I've heard of it. You don't mean the steamer? What could go wrong with that? How shocking! Were many drowned? When did it happen? No one's been this way for a couple of days, so I hadn't heard any news."

"They're done for!... All done for, that poor Barber, his wife and the two boys you saw." Ku Pao gulped down the liquor as if seething with rage.

"What!... All of them lost?"

"That's the way it was. Just their luck to arrive that day and take that confounded foreign boat the next morning. Less than two hours after casting off it foundered—only its funnel left above the waves!"

"What a terrible business! And the passengers? Were none saved?" The old man was stammering in his distress.

"Some were. The Japanese lowered one of their lifeboats in time, but it was so overloaded The Barber wouldn't get in—just pushed in his eight-year-old whom he'd been carrying. I heard that from another survivor. To make matters worse, his body's never been found. His wife was laid out on the shore at Tsingtao, still holding her baby tight in her arms. She was trapped in the cabin, poor soul!"

"So you went to Tsingtao?"

"I'd stayed an extra day at Red Stone Cliff to buy some things to take home. The next morning I took a sampan to Tsingtao to see the boat they'd salvaged and the bodies, and to get news for the folk back home."

"Well, what about the boy who's left?" In his distress the old innkeeper let fall his bamboo pipe.

"It was for him I went, the only one left of the poor Barber's family! After seeing his mother's corpse, I found out that the boy had been taken in by a home. Luckily I knew the place well enough to find it. There were several poor waifs there, Ah-tzu among them, and he seemed half crazed! He didn't know his father was lost out at sea, nor that his mother was laid out on the shore with his dead baby brother in her arms, the flies swarming round them. He couldn't talk sense and he'd lost all interest in food. He must have had a concussion. So although he's still living, who knows if he can be cured!..." By now Ku Pao had downed more than half of the spirits.

"Where is he now?"

"In the home. Not knowing me, they wouldn't let me take him. They said there's some relief fund too and his uncle should fetch the boy and the money at the same time. So I took the boat back yesterday evening. I shall get home tomorrow and tell The Barber's brother to go for the boy."

A short silence ensued. The matting was buffeted by a high wind and the two men felt a sense of utter desolation. The clouds drifting through the sky parted, then converged again. As Ku Pao chewed his griddle-cake, he looked up at the old man's wrinkled face. "Luck? To those Japanese, Chinese count lower than dogs! They loaded four hundred passengers on to that little boat. No wonder it foundered, in the high sea running that day! I'd warned The Barber, but he didn't want to sacrifice his tickets. Ah, grandad, isn't it all the same in the end? If you don't freeze, starve or burn to death, you'll be drowned! I reckon this was fate. Yet not one of the crew of that Japanese boat was drowned. Not because they're such strong swimmers, but because they were ready for an accident!"

The old innkeeper's thoughts had veered off at a tangent. He decided that this was the result of "forcing barbarian customs upon China." If none of those contemptible steamers touched at Red Stone Cliff, sampans might not have sunk; and even if they had, fewer lives would have been lost. To find support for this conclusion, he asked:

"How many, actually, were drowned?"

"Nearly four hundred souls, they said! Men and women, both. Some of the bodies haven't been found, they were still searching when I left. But all those were folk from Ichow. Some of the 'refugees' were quite well-to-do. You'd be surprised what different parts they hailed from. Now they'll all go down in the same register of the dead!"

Without any comment the old innkeeper stooped to retrieve his pipe having reached another conclusion: "These disasters mean the day of doom is near!" Absent-mindedly stroking his grizzled moustache, he reflected that he belonged to a doomed generation. His eyes stung as up welled two tears of bitterness and despair.

As Ku Pao finished his hasty meal and prepared to set off again, the old man was struck by an idea and said earnestly: "Will you tell the dead man's brother to drop in here on his way to fetch the lad home? Will you do that? It's not taking him out of his way."

"Of course I will. He'll be passing here." Ku Pao slung his long gown over his shoulder again. "So, grandad, you haven't forgotten the poor little fellow who was so keen on chasing grasshoppers?"

"No... because, you see, he's just the age of my second grandson..." But before the old man could finish, Ku Pao had gone, vanishing behind a clump of rustling wild mulberry trees.

October 22, 1927

Translated by Gladys Yang

About the Author: Wang Tung-chao (1898-1957), an important novelist and poet of the last generation, was born in a landlord family in Chucheng, Shantung Province. While attending college in Peking he took an active part in the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal new cultural movement in 1919. That was when he began writing. In 1921, together with Mao Tun and Cheng Chen-to, he founded the Literary Research Association advocating "literature for life" and was one of the outstanding writers of this association.

Wang Tung-chao's earlier works are largely devoted to expressing his ideals in life and most of his plots and characters are set in an imaginary world. In his later works he does not merely seek comfort from ideals but expresses an increasing understanding of the bitter sufferings of life and an urgent desire for the solution of social problems. *The Child at the Lake*, (see *Chinese Literature* No. 9, 1959) written in 1922, shows evidence of this change. With deep distress and sympathy Wang Tung-chao depicts a woman who is forced to send her son out of the house to spend half his nights beside the lake because she is supporting her family by selling herself. The author paints a vivid picture of the desperation of the city poor ground down by the social oppression of the times.

Shipwreck, written in 1927, is considered one of Wang Tung-chao's best short stories. Unable to make a living in a year of natural calamities, a peasant family in Shantung Province leave home to cross the sea and seek their fortune in the

northeast. They meet with disaster when the steamer they take sinks because the capitalists have overloaded it. At that time warlords were contending for north China while floods, famine and fighting combined to make the people's life unbearable. The fate of the peasants in *Shipwreck* was shared by hundreds and thousands of others and this story presents an epitome of Chinese villages at that time. In 1928 Wang Tung-chao wrote *The Hill* and in 1933 *Fifty Yuan* (see *Chinese Literature* No. 9, 1959) exposing the corruption of the officials, the army and the landlords with their militia, at the same time describing an early attempt of the oppressed peasants to revolt and find a way out.

Mountain Rain, written in 1932, is one of Wang Tung-chao's best known novels. It describes how the peasants of Shantung Province in spite of their strong attachment to the land flee to the cities to escape heavy taxes in a year of natural disaster and fighting, joining the ranks of the workers whose life is just as precarious. In his preface written in 1933 when the novel was published, the author said: "In *Mountain Rain* I tried to depict the disintegration of the north China countryside and its causes as well as the peasants' gradual awakening." Undoubtedly he achieved this successfully. The title of the novel is taken from a line of old Chinese poetry, "Wind fills the tower before the mountain rain," for this indicates the changes that will sweep through the villages in the coming storm. Critics regard *Mountain Rain* as a major work of modern Chinese literature.

Wang Tung-chao was a prolific writer whose works include several collections of short stories, *A Rainy Night in Spring*, *Frost Mark* and *The Bugle Call*, the novels *Mountain Rain*, *A Leaf*, *Dusk* and *Spring Flowers*, and several volumes of poems, *This Era*, *Long Nights*, *Militant Call* and *Songs South of the Yangtze*.

Wu Tsu-hsiang

Green Bamboo Hermitage

Ah-yuan and I arrived home on the tenth day of the fifth month of the Chinese lunar calendar. It was the trying damp season in our province, scorching sun alternating with relentless rain, an ordeal unimaginable for those who have never gone through it. Mother told us that Second Aunt had inquired about our return and sent a verbal message saying, "I am so ill-fated that even my nephew and his bride neglect me." This meant she would like us to visit her and stay for some time.

I had been to Second Aunt's home only once in my childhood. That was more than ten years ago before I left home to live in another world of electric lamps, cinemas, books in stiff foreign-style covers and asphalt roads. My old home had seemed a legendary place in my recollection and my impression of Second Aunt's home was even more hazy, like a wisp of cloud or a streak of pale smoke. Her large, sombre house with three courtyards, the study littered with moth-eaten, mildewed old books and the pond, bamboos and plants in the garden were all as unsubstantial as a dream in my memory.

The tale of Second Aunt's past seemed to have been taken out of a story-teller's script. Of course I never saw her in the prime of her beauty. But what I saw of her later in her life—the way she carried herself, her tall slender figure, the pallor of her comely face, her narrow sorrowful eyes and reticent melancholy—all fitted in perfectly with the sad story of her past.

We need not go into the details of her story now. As a matter of fact, my knowledge was fairly limited, for all my elders had always avoided the subject. The little I did know was gleaned from hints they let fall in casual conversation through long months and years.

It seemed many years ago, there was a clever young boy studying under my grand-uncle. He was the sole heir of a man who was an only child himself. Because he noticed the many attractive butterflies embroidered on the canopy, the brush sheath and the large square of brocade in my grand-uncle's room his heart warmed towards the girl who had embroidered them. And his admiration was reciprocated by the girl who often heard him mentioned with approval by my grand-uncle. I did not know how the hero and heroine came to meet each other, and few of the older generation knew this either. From the scraps of material I had gathered, I learned the climax of the sad story: one balmy spring day at noon my grandmother who had gone into the deserted back garden to admire the peonies in bloom caught, by accident, a pair of naughty children fumbling in confusion with their belts in the artificial rock cave.

When this comedy of beauty and talent became known, the girl so much admired for the butterflies she embroidered was suddenly scorned even by serving maids. My broad-minded grand-uncle tried his best to make a match of it but did not succeed. Several years later, the young man, on his way to take the imperial examination in Nanking, was drowned in the Yangtse River, when his boat capsized in the storm rising with the autumnal tide. The girl who embroidered butterflies was nineteen at that time. When the news reached her she tried to hang herself from a cassia tree but was rescued by the gardener. The young man's family thought there was some praiseworthy quality in the girl after all. They got the consent of her family and amid wedding music took the girl home to receive the young man's coffin. She went through the wedding rituals in mourning

dress and red bridal shoes, and holding a wooden tablet inscribed with the name of the deceased young man, paid homage to ancestors in the family temple.

This story would not have been so interesting had it not concerned Second Aunt, nor would we have been so eager to visit her had she not been the heroine of this story.

Mother urged us to go, of course, saying that we were newly-weds and we seldom returned home. We should not grudge Second Aunt, lonely all her life, what little enjoyment she hoped to get out of our visit. But Ah-yuan was more than a little afraid of the old ladies in my home. My uncle's wife was a good example of these old ladies, she loved to pull Ah-yuan down to sit on her knee, to call her pet names, kiss her cheeks, pretend to bite her and caress her arms. She even wanted me to show her how I kissed Ah-yuan. Whenever she had time, she would come to sit in our room, a water-pipe in her hands, to stare at us with a beaming face and to utter all sorts of embarrassing compliments. I personally didn't mind it so much. But Ah-yuan was often so embarrassed that she didn't know where to look. Hence her reluctance to visit Second Aunt.

Since I knew the crux of the matter I assured Ah-yuan that Second Aunt was not such an outspoken and merry old lady. Besides, I knew how to intrigue romantic young girls. I added many touching episodes to Second Aunt's story so that Ah-yuan was moved to tears and sighed in sympathy. When I assured her also that Second Aunt was not the kind to bother her, she overcame her reluctance. Before long she was all eagerness to go, for she found Second Aunt's story as interesting as those taken out of ancient Chinese romances. Furthermore she was glad of a chance to get away from the old ladies at home to enjoy the beautiful scenery of Golden Swallow Village, so much talked about, and the cool, spacious quarters of Green Bamboo Hermitage.

Second Aunt lived in Green Bamboo Hermitage, her house in Golden Swallow Village. We followed the stone dike of Chingchi Stream for seven or eight *li* until the surrounding mountains converged to meet us and the emerald green of old locust and willows deepened. There were more dark ochre boulders now in the stream and the sound of water dashing against them was louder. This part of the Chingchi was called Echoing Pool. The banks of Echoing

Pool were thronged with lush green locusts, willows and elms, their rich foliage entwining to form a canopy over the foaming water so that not a ray of sun could penetrate to the pool. A score or so of malm-brick houses could be detected among the trees, the largest of them being a white house on the west bank. Peeping out over the enclosing walls with plum-blossom shaped openings were some bamboos, half of them green, the other half, sprinkled with flowers, just turning brown. This was Golden Swallow Village and the largest of the houses was Second Aunt's Green Bamboo Hermitage.

Ah-yuan, born and bred in the city, had seen nothing comparable to this outside traditional paintings. Her delight at finding herself in such picturesque surroundings defied description. And when I remembered the western-style buildings, asphalt roads and factory chimneys which usually met my eyes in cities, I felt as if I were dreaming and random fancies filled my mind.

I hadn't seen Second Aunt for many years and found her much aged.

"Last night three big snuffs formed on the lamp wick and this morning the magpies chattered from the eaves. I knew that guests were coming."

Her pale wrinkled face was devoid of expression and her slow gait, her dull tone of voice all matched the sombre melancholy of her face. She took us inside and tottered into her own room to fetch sweetmeats and nuts, at the same time telling the maid to bring water for us to wash. The maid, Orchid, was over thirty and had formerly worked for my grandfather. He had sent her to look after Second Aunt when her own maid, who had gone with her to her husband's family, had died. Orchid had been living in this big house with Second Aunt for more than twenty years. She studied poetry and chanted Buddhist prayers with her mistress, who also taught her to embroider butterflies. She said she was not interested in getting married and having a family.

Second Aunt told us she had not expected us so soon and our rooms were not ready. She showed us around the house telling us to choose a room for ourselves. The four of us set out with my aunt in the lead while Orchid brought up the rear. Following in Second Aunt's footsteps, Ah-yuan seemed ill at ease. From time to time she turned to catch my eye and smile knowingly. We all walked in silence.

The house was massive and grim, also in conformity with Second Aunt's character. The stone steps, brick pavement, pillar founda-

tions, even the wooden walls were mottled with moss in varying shades of green. A musty smell mingled with the odour of mouldering earth and wood filled our nostrils. Light brown swallow nests hung from the eaves, a few had fallen off leaving only bits of mud, but in others the swallows were feeding their young and chirruping noisily.

All the rooms, except the suite occupied by Second Aunt herself, were locked and Orchid stepped forward to open them for us one by one. After looking through the main building, we came to a garden through a side passage. Close to the garden was a charming room with "Awaiting the Moon" written in square characters above its lintel. There were Venetian blinds on the window and a door in the shape of an ancient vase with a small opening pasted with transparent paper. I liked the proximity to the garden, and this room seemed brighter, more airy and cheerful than the others. So I told Second Aunt that we would like to have it. When Orchid undid the lock and pushed open the door, we were startled as two lizards and a bat fell at our feet. The lizards crawled slowly away while Orchid picked up the huge bat to place it in a corner, chanting something which sounded like a weird incantation:

"Please move out, Grandpa Bat, to make room for some honoured guests!"

Ah-yuan tugged at my coat with misgivings; it seemed that she was afraid to live here. Second Aunt, no less sensitive because of her age, perceived what was troubling her. "Don't worry.... These rooms are swept and cleaned every year when your uncle, my husband, returns home. I'll tell Orchid to tidy this room up properly for you and Grandpa Bat and Grandad Lizard will move out too." She went on to say, "Your uncle likes this 'Awaiting the Moon Studio' best of all. He asked me to have it repaired when he came home last year. Have a look inside. It has been newly furnished."

I poked my head into the room only to get my face brushed with cobwebs. Everything was really brand-new inside. The calligraphy and paintings on the walls and the bric-à-brac on the desk were all very fine. Only, they were covered with a thin layer of dust.

We watched Orchid make a duster with bamboo twigs and brought a broom to sweep the floor. Second Aunt had returned to her own rooms. With a childlike expression of mystified surprise Ah-yuan asked:

"What was that she said about uncle?..."

Putting down the broom and staring sombrely before her, Orchid told Ah-yuan in a low mysterious voice:

"The master often comes back. Every two or three days he appears in a dream to my mistress. I see him from time to time too, walking about in the garden in a handsome scholar's cap and a sapphire-blue gown."

Gripping my sleeve Ah-yuan stared into Orchid's eyes. When the maid had finished dusting the room she brought quilts, blankets and a straw mat. In the middle of a wide sandalwood couch against the back wall stood a small low table on which were a set of Chinese chess and a platter of large porcelain peaches. As she removed the table and made our bed, Second Aunt came tottering back with a mosquito net. It was made of fine gauze and was one used by her husband, she said. We could have it if we were not afraid of catching cold. I of course wanted to have this cool mosquito net. But Ah-yuan gave me a look as if to say that even this beautiful net appeared frightening to her.

The room was really elegantly furnished. This was clear from a glance at the walls. Four large silk panels on the east wall were embroidered with a set of poems on Green Bamboo Hermitage, the words neatly fringed with small butterflies of different colours, creating a magnificent effect. On the west wall hung a painting, *Chung Kuei Catches a Ghost*,* flanked by a couplet by Hung Liang-chi:**

The snow on plum blossoms and breeze in the pines refresh my couch
and my desk,
The daylight and shadows cast by clouds guard my lute and my books.

The window with Venetian blinds in front opened on to the garden. Under the window was a desk and on the desk stood an old vase of cinnabar red holding a horse-hair whisk.

I liked the room's air of antiquity. The clump of bamboo half green and half brown outside and the barely audible splashing of the

*Legend has it that a talented scholar of Tang dynasty (618-907) named Chung Kuei failed to pass the imperial examination because he was so ugly. After his death he was made a judge of the nether world and his task was to catch ghosts. People often hung a painting of him in their homes to keep out evil spirits.

**An eighteenth-century poet of the Ching dynasty (1644-1911).

water in Echoing Pool made the place particularly tranquil and peaceful.

Soon we sat down to supper in silence. Neither Ah-yuan nor I knew what to say to our aunt and Second Aunt herself did not say much. The large room remained as silent as an old tomb, with no sound but the twittering of swallows in the hall. Looking up at the eaves, Orchid muttered,

"Why isn't Spring Maiden back yet?"

Instead of replying, Second Aunt only nodded. Ah-yuan again stole a glance at me, I was wondering about the remark myself. After supper, when we were washing our faces a swallow flew in and circled around the room before alighting in its nest under the eaves. Orchid stopped eating. Her chopsticks resting on her lips, she murmured, "You are late, Spring Maiden." She sighed.

I was suddenly relieved and smiled at Ah-yuan who did not return my smile but kept her eyes on Orchid.

I had found our quarters bright and cheerful, but that was during the day. That night a torrential rain started. The flame of our three-wicked bean-oil lamp quivered unsteadily. The low chanting of Second Aunt and Orchid from the big house was like "Ghosts chanting the poems of Pao Chao from their autumnal graves."* And the pattering of the rain, the chirping of insects and the wind rushing through the bamboos intermingled in a lugubrious symphony which heightened the eerie atmosphere of the place. Our conversation veered naturally to the *Tales of Liao-chai*.** Ah-yuan nestled closer and closer to me as we talked about this tale or that and she couldn't seem to tear her eyes away from the painting *Chung Kuei Catches a Ghost* on the west wall. Beads of sweat stood out on her forehead and the tip of her nose. The ghost held by Chung Kuei looked terribly alive with its hair dishevelled and two fangs protruding from its blood-red, gaping mouth. A casual glance at it made me

*A line from *The Autumn Approaches* by Li Ho (A.D. 790-816), a talented Tang dynasty poet. Pao Chao was a fifth-century poet.

**A collection of stories by the seventeenth-century writer Pu Sung-ling who expressed his indignation at social injustice through stories of apparitions, ghosts, fox fairies and immortals.

jump with fright too. I had the feeling that Chung Kuei, the ghost, Second Aunt, Orchid and the two of us were all characters out of a ghost story.

"I want to go to bed," Ah-yuan said plaintively.

She kept close to me and followed each step I made. In bed, it was only natural that we found it hard to fall asleep. We turned and tossed for quite some time until the rain let up and the moonlight, streaming in through the Venetian blinds, touched up the room with a pale ghostly sheen. After the sound of a gust of wind rustling through the bamboo leaves had died down, we suddenly heard soft but distinct footsteps outside the window.

"Did . . . you . . . hear that?" asked Ah-yuan breathing heavily and burrowing her head under my arm.

My hair stood on end too.

The footsteps came nearer, grew quiet and turned to low whispers like ghosts lamenting. Ah-yuan was drenched in sweat. I coughed and the sound suddenly died. This, in connection with what Orchid had said in the day-time, made me shiver too.

Our fright subsided after a spell of silence. But our taut nerves made it impossible for us to find refuge in dreams. In order to dispel Ah-yuan's fears I began to talk of things that usually delighted her. Gradually her head began to emerge from under my arm.

"Are you homesick?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Still frightened?"

"A little."

Suddenly she gave a piercing shriek and wound her arms tightly around me. Weeping and trembling, she stammered:

"Look . . . at . . . the door! . . ."

I looked and saw the face of a ghost spying on us from the opening in the door. In the slanting moonbeams I could see it distinctly through the fine mosquito net. Quick as lightning, the ghostly face lowered itself and disappeared. I pushed Ah-yuan away and, with instinctive courage, cleared the room in three steps and threw the door open.

Outside were two female ghosts.

One retreated and disappeared down the passage to the main building. The other, unable to escape, squatted down in front of me.

"Is it aunty?"

"Mmm. . . ." She breathed softly.

Wiping the cold sweat from my forehead, I relaxed and laughed: "Don't be afraid, Ah-yuan. It is only aunty."

November 26, 1932

Translated by Yu Fan-chin

About the Author: Wu Tsu-hsiang was born in 1908 in Chinghsien, a county in the province of Anhwei. His father was a school teacher and doctor of herb medicine in a village where he spent his childhood. He started writing in 1930 when he was a student in Tsinghua University, Peking. As he comes from the village, he takes most of his themes and characters from his old home. His works include two volumes of short stories and essays entitled *In the Hsiliu Village* (1934) and *After Filling the Stomach* (1935). In *Eighteen Hundred Piculs* (see *Chinese Literature* No. 11, 1959) he gave a graphic description of a meeting of the Sung clan in their ancestral temple to dispose of the rice from the ancestral estate. While the vicious landlords and local gentry quarrelled greedily among themselves, the peasants faced with starvation chose the road of struggle and revolt. Another story *The Fan Family Shop* also depicted the peasants driven to revolt by poverty and the panic of the landlord class during those stormy years in the early thirties when the revolution was gathering strength in the countryside. In 1944, during the War of Resistance Against Japan, his novel *Mountain Torrent* was published. It described the changes in the outlook of young peasants south of the Yangtse who joined the guerrillas to fight against Japan and the struggles they waged.

Green Bamboo Hermitage, written in 1932, is one of Wu Tsu-hsiang's earlier works. This sad tale of a girl in old China who was forced to marry a dead man and live as a widow voices a strong protest against the inhumanity of the feudal marriage system.

Wen Chieh

Two Poems

Our Guide

From the city of Karashar
We have come to Kaid's bank,
And our guide is leading us
Through the Heshe steppe.

A fine young man is our guide,
A Mongolian of eighteen,
And riding slowly forward side by side
We say what is in our hearts.

Born and bred on the banks of the Kaid,
He loves the Heshe steppe,

Wen Chieh, born in 1923 in Kiangsu, is a well-known poet whose works include the collections of poems *Shepherds' Songs from the Tianshan Mountains* and *A Trip Through the Hosi Corridor* and a long poem *Flames of Vengeance*.

Loves its snow-white flocks
And, even more, Ulan the shepherdess!

If a dark cloud crosses the sky
He raises his head to look,
If a stranger comes down the road
He dismounts to question him.

He treasures peace, this lad,
Loves his free and happy home,
With his own two hands he has resolved
To build better times to come.

I ask: If a day should dawn
When the enemy in his death throes lashes out
And dreams of crushing our motherland underfoot,
What would you do then, my friend?

No answer does he make
But gives free rein to his horse and cracks his whip;
Like a streak of lightning they gallop off,
The lad steady as a rock.

He leaps his horse over grass hillocks,
He jumps it over trenches;
Then hooks his right foot through the stirrup
And slips down to ride underneath. . . .

At last he gallops back,
Neither flushed nor winded,
And laughing cries, "Should that time come
I shall fight with the mounted men!"

1952-1954

The Hunter

The head of the mutual-aid team has gone herding
And will not be back till sundown;
Our hostess prepares a meal at noon for us,
Sorry that she has no dishes to go with the wine.

Children run for Uncle Sumur,
Famed hunter of wolves.
How many wolves has he shot?
One short of a thousand!

He lights a stick of incense
And sets it before us,
He is off for some game,
Some tasty dish for the guests.

Catching up his gun
He vaults upon his horse;
And gazing after his broad back
I am reminded of his fearless forbears.

His horse, silver-grey,
Flies off like the wind-filled sail
Of a ship that cleaves the waves
In a green ocean.

Reeds hide him from sight
But three shots are borne to our ears,
And our hostess arches her eyebrows
In delight.

Back he gallops now,
Three wild-geese slung from his gun,
And when we step inside the yurt
The incense is still burning.

In vain we press him to stay,
He must round up the hunters of his team
To move on to another farm today
Now that this one has no more wolves.

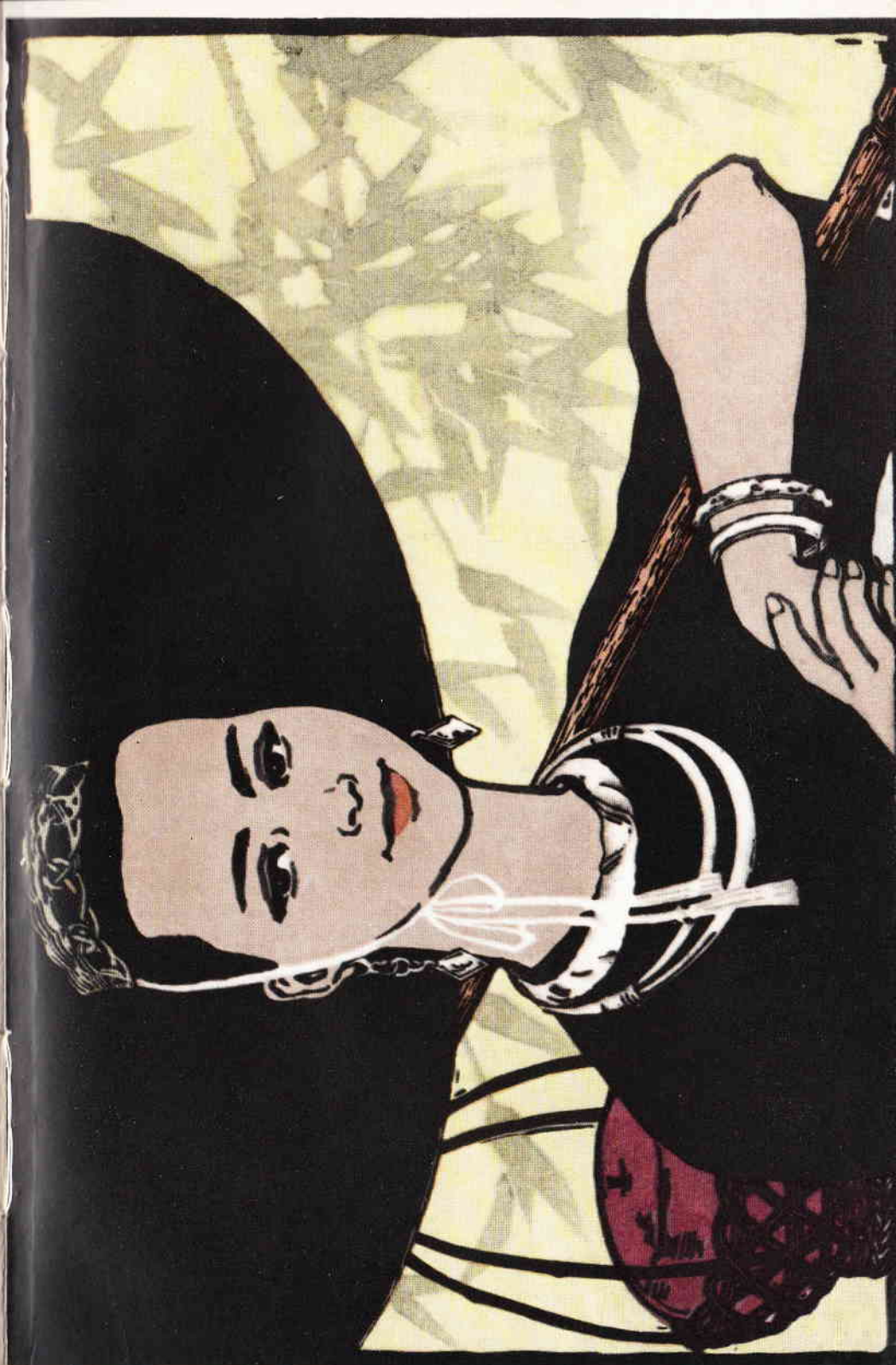
1952-1954

Translated by Gladys Yang

A Girl of Tung Nationality (woodcut) ▶

by Ho Yun-lan

Ho Yun-lan was born in 1938 in Chekiang and graduated from the Graphic Art Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Peking, in 1962. Her interest in Chinese traditional painting and folk art has influenced her woodcuts.



Anecdotes of the Warring States

Frankness Rewarded

Tsou Chi was over six feet tall and strikingly handsome. After putting on his robe and hat one morning, he examined himself in the mirror and asked his wife, "Which of us is the better looking, Lord Hsu of the north city or I?"

"Your looks are perfect," replied his wife. "How can Lord Hsu compare with you?"

Since Lord Hsu of the north city was one of the most handsome men in the state of Chi, Tsou Chi still had his doubts and he posed the same question to his concubine, who gave him the same answer.

The following day a visitor called, and as they sat chatting Tsou Chi asked him, "How do I compare in appearance with Lord Hsu?"

"Lord Hsu is not nearly as handsome as you, sir," his visitor assured him.

The next day Lord Hsu himself called and Tsou Chi, examining him carefully, suspected that he was outmatched. Another look in

For an introduction to this selection see the article *An Earliest Work of Prose* on p. 87.

the mirror convinced him that he fell far short of the other. In bed that night he thought the matter over and reflected, "Partiality made my wife call me the more handsome, fear made my concubine do the same, while my visitor was governed by the fact that he wants something from me."

Then he sought an audience with King Wei and said, "I am well aware that I am not as handsome as Lord Hsu, yet my wife through partiality, my concubine for fear, and a visitor in hope of a favour, all assured me that I was the finer man of the two. Now Chi has a thousand square *li* of land and one hundred and twenty cities. All your court ladies and attendants are partial to you, all your ministers are afraid of you, and all your subjects hope for favours from you. Judging by this, Your Majesty is very likely to be misinformed."

The king saw the truth of this and issued the order: "All those of my ministers, officers and subjects who dare to rebuke me to my face will receive high rewards. Those who offer written remonstrances will receive lesser rewards. Those who censure me in public, if their words reach my ears, will receive a lower reward."

After the proclamation of this order the palace gate at once became as thronged as a market-place with men come to remonstrate. A few months later some still came from time to time; but after the lapse of a year, eager as men were to speak, they had no charges to bring. When the states of Yen, Chao, Han and Wei knew this, they all paid homage to the king of Chi. This is what is known as a victory won at court.

Adding Legs to a Snake

Chao Yang led the forces of Chu against Wei and, having destroyed its army, killed its generals and captured eight cities, prepared to march against Chi. Chen Chen went as the king of Chi's envoy to see Chao Yang and knelt to congratulate him on his victories. Then rising to his feet he asked, "According to the law of Chu, what official post and honours should be yours for destroying an enemy army and killing its generals?"

"The post of grand councillor," replied Chao Yang, "and the title Bearer of the Jade Sceptre."

"Are there no higher ranks?" inquired Chen Chen.

"Only that of prime minister."

"Yes, the office of prime minister is the highest, but your king will hardly appoint two prime ministers. May I tell you a parable? Once a native of Chu while offering sacrifice gave a goblet of wine to his stewards, who consulted together. 'This is not enough for all of us,' they said, 'but more than enough for one. Let us draw a snake on the ground and give the wine to the man who finishes first.' The first to complete his drawing took the goblet in his left hand while with his right he went on drawing and remarked, 'I can add legs to it.' Before he had done so, however, another who had finished snatched the goblet from him, protesting, 'Why do that? A snake has no legs!' And this fellow drank the wine while the one drawing legs lost out.

"Now you, sir, have led the men of Chu against Wei. You have routed Wei's army, killed its generals and taken eight cities without much loss of strength, so that now Chi is trembling because you mean to attack it. Your last exploit has won you fame enough and cannot bring you any promotion in rank. One who wins every battle but does not know when to stop will lose both his life and his honours, just like the man who drew a snake with legs."

Then Chao Yang, convinced by this, withdrew his troops.

The Wise Protégé

Feng Hsuan, a native of Chi, was so utterly destitute that he begged Lord Meng Chang through a friend to become his patron.

"What special interests have you?" asked the lord.

"None," was Feng Hsuan's reply.

"What special abilities?"

"None."

Then Lord Meng Chang accepted him with a smile.

Since the lord's retainers imagined that he had a low opinion of Feng Hsuan, they served him the poorest fare. Soon he leaned against a pillar and, beating time with his sword, sang, "Home let us go, long sword! Here is no fish to eat."

When the retainers took word of this to their lord he said, "Let him have the same food as my other guests."

But soon Feng Hsuan drummed with his sword again and sang, "Home let us go, long sword! Here is no carriage."

The retainers all laughed at this and reported it to Lord Meng Chang, who ordered, "Give him an equipage like my other protégés with carriages."

Then Feng Hsuan rode out in a carriage, brandishing his sword and called on a friend to tell him, "Lord Meng Chang is treating me as an honoured guest!" But before long he drummed with his sword again and sang, "Home let us go, long sword! I have no way to support my family."

The retainers were disgusted, thinking there was no end to this fellow's greed. However, his patron asked him, "Have you any parents living, sir?"

"I have an old mother," he replied.

Then Lord Meng Chang supplied her with food and other necessities so that she lacked for nothing. And after that Feng Hsuan did not sing again.

Some time later, Lord Meng Chang produced certain bonds and asked his protégés, "Which of you gentlemen understands accounting and will collect some debts for me in Hsueh?"

Feng Hsuan handed in his name as able to do this. The lord asked in surprise who he was and laughed when his retainers said, "This is the one who sang 'Home let us go, long sword!'"

"So he has some ability after all," observed Lord Meng Chang. "Yet I passed him over and never spoke to him." He sent for Feng Hsuan and apologized, saying, "Worn out by business, distracted by care, diffident and dull by nature, I have neglected you, sir, in my preoccupation with state affairs. But instead of taking offence, are you really willing to collect debts for me in Hsueh?"

Feng Hsuan replied that he was, whereupon a carriage was prepared and his luggage made ready. Just as he was setting out with the bonds, he asked, "After I have collected all the debts, what should I buy to bring back?"

"Anything that is lacking in my household," was the answer.

Feng Hsuan drove to Hsueh and ordered the officer there to summon all the debtors to check their bonds with his. As soon as this was done, in his patron's name he cancelled all the debts and burned

the bonds, amidst loud shouts of approval. He then drove straight back to Chi and immediately begged for an interview with Lord Meng Chang, who, surprised by his speed, dressed formally to receive him.

"Have you collected all the debts?" he asked. "How is it you are back so quickly?"

"I have finished my task."

"And what have you brought back?"

"You told me to bring something lacking in your household, sir. I reflected that your palace is well-stocked with precious things, your stables are filled with horses, your kennels with hounds, and you have a troop of beautiful serving maids. The only thing that your household lacks is goodness. So I invested in some goodness for you."

"How can you invest in goodness?"

"You have a small fief in Hsueh, my lord," said Feng Hsuan, "but instead of caring for your people there you use them as a source of profit. So by cancelling their debts in your name and burning the bonds—which they most warmly applauded—I invested in an act of goodness for you."

"I see." Lord Meng Chang was displeased. "Well, that will do, sir."

A year later, the king of Chi informed Lord Meng Chang, "I dare not keep as my minister an elder statesman who served our former sovereign." So Lord Meng Chang started back to his fief at Hsueh.

While he was still a hundred *li* from that district, the people flocked out, old and young, to welcome him. And Lord Meng Chang turning to Feng Hsuan remarked, "Now I see what you meant by investing in goodness for me!"

"A wise hare has three holes," rejoined Feng Hsuan, "yet barely escapes with its life in time of danger. How can you, with one hole only, sleep at ease? Let me dig two more holes for you."

Lord Meng Chang gave him fifty chariots and five hundred catties of gold to take west to Wei, where Feng Hsuan told King Hui, "The king of Chi has dismissed his chief minister Lord Meng Chang, and the state that invites him first will grow rich and strong."

Then the king of Wei transferred his prime minister to the post of high marshal and sent an envoy with a thousand catties of gold and one hundred chariots to invite Lord Meng Chang to become his prime minister. But Feng Hsuan went ahead to tell his patron,

"A thousand catties of gold is a handsome gift. One hundred chariots are a mark of high favour. They will hear of this in Chi."

The envoy of Wei went three times, but three times Lord Meng Chang declined his invitation. And word of this reaching the king of Chi struck dread into all his court. They dispatched the Senior Guardian to Lord Meng Chang with a thousand catties of gold, two handsome four-horse carriages, a sword and a sealed letter of apology. The letter read: "Ill-fated that I am, misled by evil spirits in the ancestral temple and influenced by flattering ministers, I have offended you, sir. I deserve no consideration, but I beg you to have regard for the ancestral shrines of our former kings and return to govern the people."

Feng Hsuan then advised, "Ask for the sacrificial vessels of the former kings and set up the ancestral temple in Hsueh." When this temple was built he went back to inform the lord. "Now your three holes are ready," he said. "You can sleep at ease and take your pleasure, sir."

So Lord Meng Chang served as prime minister of Chi for several dozen years and passed unscathed through danger, all thanks to Feng Hsuan's manoeuvres.

The Elixir

Someone presented the king of Chu with an elixir. When the chamberlain brought it in, a bowman of the guards asked, "Is this to be eaten?" Upon hearing that it was, he snatched it and swallowed it.

In his rage the king ordered the guardsman to be killed, but the man sent someone to plead: "I ate it because the chamberlain said it was to be eaten. The fault is not mine, then, but the chamberlain's. Besides, if a stranger presents a drug of immortality and His Majesty kills me for eating it, this means that it is a drug that causes death. His Majesty by killing an innocent subject is simply making it clear that he was cheated."

Thereupon the king pardoned him.

Buying a Dead Horse

After King Chao* of Yen came to the throne and rebuilt the state on its ruins, he bore himself modestly and offered rich gifts to attract men of talent in order to avenge his country.

To this end he went to consult Master Kuo Wei and said, "Chi took advantage of the unrest in our state to launch a sudden attack and overthrow it. I know well enough that Yen is too small and weak to take revenge, but I would like to share my government with worthy men to wipe out the disgrace to our former kings. May I ask how this could be done?"

Master Kuo Wei answered, "An emperor treats men as his masters, a king treats men as his friends, an overlord treats men as his ministers, and one destined to lose his state treats men as slaves. If you defer to others and humbly seek their advice, men a hundred times better than yourself will come. If you are quick to work and slow to rest, quick and tireless in asking questions, men ten times better than yourself will come. If you work as hard as others, men who are your equals will come. If you sit back with your cane, looking round contemptuously and keeping everyone at your beck and call, none but servants will come. If you glare in fury, hit, trample on and curse people, then only slaves will come. From of old this has been the rule in governing the state and attracting men. If the world knows that you have selected worthy men from all parts of your country and are paying homage to them, gentlemen from all over the land will flock to Yen."

"To whom should I pay homage?" asked the king.

Master Kuo Wei replied, "I have heard that a monarch of old was willing to spend a thousand pieces of gold to buy a swift horse, but for three years he searched in vain. Then his attendant offered to try, and the king sent him out. After three months he tracked down

*Son of King Kuai who during his reign highly valued his minister Tzu-chih. Later he listened to wrong advice and wishing to follow the example of the ancient sage kings Yao and Shun allowed Tzu-chih, instead of his own son, to succeed to the throne. Tzu-chih, however, was not popular with the people, and in less than three years disorder overtook Yen. The state of Chi seized the opportunity to attack, killing Tzu-chih and King Kuai, and left the country in a state of ruin. When King Chao came to the throne he gradually restored order in the country.

a thoroughbred, but it was already dead. However, he gave five hundred pieces of gold for the carcass and went back to report this.

"The king fumed, 'I wanted a live horse: what use is a dead one? Why throw away five hundred pieces of gold?'

"The man answered, 'If you will pay so much for a dead horse, it goes without saying that you will pay better for a live one. The whole world will know how eager you are to buy horses, and horses will be forthcoming.'

"Sure enough, within a year three fine horses were brought.

"Now if Your Majesty really wants to attract talented men, you can make a start with me. If even a man like myself is respectfully treated, it goes without saying that men more able than myself will be better treated, and they will come no matter how great the distance."

So King Chao had a palace built for Kuo Wei and treated him as his master. Then to Yen went Yueh Yi from Wei, Tsou Yen from Chi, Chu Hsin from Chao—men of talent raced to the state. For twenty-eight years the king of Yen shared his people's joys and sorrows, mourned for the dead and showed concern for the living, so that the state prospered until the troops living at ease started spoiling for a fight. Then the king appointed Yueh Yi as his high marshal and allied with Chin, Chu and Tsin to attack Chi. The army of Chi was defeated, King Min fled the country, and the men of Yen pressing their advantage entered the capital city of Lintzu, captured all Chi's treasures and burned down its palaces and ancestral temples. All the cities of Chi, except Chu and Chimo, were conquered.

*Translated by Yang Hsien-yi
and Gladys Yang*

Tsung Shu

An Earliest Work of Prose

Prose writing was already fairly developed more than two thousand years ago in China, when it could be roughly divided into types: philosophical works like the *Analects of Confucius*, *Chuang Tzu*, *Mencius* and *Han Fei Tzu* and historical writings like *Tso's Commentaries*, *Sayings of the States* and *Anecdotes of the Warring States*. These early prose works not only proved of value to later philosophers and historians but exercised a great influence on subsequent literary development.

The five anecdotes published in this issue are taken from *Anecdotes of the Warring States*, a work which records events in twelve different states between the fifth and the third century B.C. The author of this work, which contains thirty-three anecdotes in all, is unknown. Some scholars believe that he was Kuai Tung, a noted orator who lived at the end of the third century B.C., but they cannot marshal conclusive evidence. He must at all events have been someone of that period who collected anecdotes about the Warring States and compiled them in one volume. Later this work was edited by the Han dynasty scholar Liu Hsiang (77-6 B.C.) and gave it its present name.

The events recorded here took place between 460 and 220 B.C., stopping short at the time when the First Emperor of the Chin dynasty united all the states of China and established a strong central authority. During the Warring States period, the royal house of Chou had declined and no longer held sway over the different states, some of which became powerful enough to annex more territory in the course of constant fighting. The state of Chin in the northwest was the strongest after expanding at the expense of its rivals. Its growing strength gave rise to many conflicts until it finally united all China in a new empire. Before then, although issues among the states were largely decided by wars, an important part was also played by political struggles based on the stratagems of orators. The bulk of the *Anecdotes of the Warring States* deals with the speeches and arguments of such men, their various proposals regarding war and peace, and their strategies and schemes. This work therefore gives us a unique reflection of the political rivalries of that period.

The orators of those days wandered from state to state advising different rulers and carrying on diplomatic activities. They were intelligent persuasive men who excelled in analysing the situation and used their ready wit and eloquence to induce those in power to accept their proposals for solving difficult political problems. For instance, if one state was invaded by another, they would prevail on a third state to come to the rescue or urge several states to ally together to resist or attack the common enemy. Although these men had no real authority themselves, they played a significant role in political affairs, for sometimes a few words from them could change the fate of a country or influence the balance of power. Chen Chen's story in this issue about adding legs to a snake subtly pointed out Chao Yang's position and persuaded him to withdraw his troops, thereby saving Chi from invasion. Similar tactics were employed in the following anecdote from the same work.

When Chao was about to invade Yen, Su Tai went for Yen to speak to King Hui of Chao.

"On my way here today I crossed the River Yi," he said, "and there lay a mussel, its shell open to bask in the sun. A snipe pecked at the mussel, which clamped down on the bird's beak and held it fast. 'If it doesn't rain today or tomorrow,' said the snipe, 'there will be a dead mussel lying here.' 'If you can't prize loose today or tomorrow,' retorted the mussel, 'there will be a dead snipe here too.' As neither would give way, a passing fisherman caught the pair of them. Now

Chao is about to invade Yen. If they contend against each other so long that their people are exhausted, I fear powerful Chin will play the fisherman's part. I beg Your Majesty to consider this well!"

The king approved and called off the invasion.

Of course, since these orators were out for personal fame and profit, they remained with their patrons only so long as their advice was taken. Chen Chen, for instance, was a typical turncoat who served Chin, Chu and then Chi. (The anecdote we have chosen here deals with how he helped Chi against Chu.) Similarly Feng Hsuan in "The Wise Protégé," after his own demands were satisfied, helped Lord Meng Chang to consolidate his position so that the king, who was envious of his power, could not dismiss him from the post of prime minister. Since the author of this book was an orator himself, far from disapproving of cunning and ruthless schemes to secure personal advantage, he related these stratagems with a gusto which shows his admiration for such behaviour.

On the other hand, certain passages in this work praise high-hearted and fearless men, as in the anecdote about Lu Chung-lien who opposed the tyranny of Chin and gave help to Chao. By justly refuting the sophistry of Hsinyuan Yen, the orator sent by Wei to persuade Chao to surrender to Chin and acknowledge its suzerainty, he saved Chao from danger yet declined all rewards and honours. Another man of this calibre was Tang Tsu, who at the risk of his life refuted the blustering king of Chin in his palace and advancing with his sword forced Chin to give up its unjust demand for the land of Lord Anling. Again there is the story of Ching Ko who died a hero's death in his attempt to assassinate the king of Chin and so avenge Yen. All these men were admired by later generations, for their fearlessness in the face of tyranny clearly reflected the wishes of the people of that time and served as an example for posterity.

The language of the *Anecdotes of the Warring States* is vigorous and dramatic, making effective use of hyperbole. Graphic narrative and vivid characterization are features of these stories, as we can see from the following anecdote about the scholar Yen Tso who defied King Hsuan of Chi.

When King Hsuan saw Yen Tso, he ordered him, "Come forward!"

Yen Tso retorted, "You come forward, sir!"

The king fumed and his attendants said, "The king is a ruler of men and you are a subject. How can you issue a command like a king?"

"If I went forward," replied Yen Tso, "it would be for fear of his power. If the king were to go forward, it would be out of respect for a gentleman. Better for him to respect a gentleman than for me to fear his power."

Flushed with anger, the king demanded, "Which is the nobler, a king or a gentleman?"

"A gentleman is nobler than a king."

"Have you proof of that?"

"Yes," said Yen Tso. "When formerly Chin advanced against Chi, an order was issued saying, 'Whoever dares to fell trees within fifty yards of the grave of Liuhsia Chi* shall be put to death and not pardoned.' The same order declared, 'Whoever brings in the head of the king of Chi shall be made a noble with a fief of ten thousand families and rewarded with a thousand pieces of gold.' From that it is clear that the head of a live king is worth less than the grave of a dead gentleman."

King Hsuan glowered but was silent.

Later the king tried all manner of threats and bribes to make Yen Tso yield, but the scholar did not hanker after riches or fame and had no desire to serve the king, so he said, "All I want is permission to go home. I would rather sup frugally than eat meat, rather stroll than take a carriage, rather keep my hands clean than become a nobleman. I shall take pleasure in a quiet, upright life. . . ." This said, he went away without a care and there was nothing the king could do about it. This anecdote ridicules the rulers who blustered but looked fools when rebuffed, and it sets forth the philosophy of Yen Tso, his courage and integrity in insisting that a gentleman is nobler than a king. Although this and some other anecdotes record nothing but an exchange between two men, the dialogue vividly brings out their thoughts and characters. This is subtly and delicately done in the anecdote about handsome Lord Tsou Chi in this issue. The scene of Ching Ko's departure for Yen on a desperate mission to assassinate the king of Chin is also noted for the vivid characterization of brave Ching Ko and the economy with which it conjures up an atmosphere of heroism and tragedy.

. . . So they made ready to go. The crown prince and those protégés who knew of this went in white mourning garments to see them off at the bank of the River

*A sage gentleman of the state of Lu.

Yi. After offering a sacrifice for the journey, Kao Chien-li struck his cithern and Ching Ko sang a tragic air, at which all shed tears and wept. Then Ching Ko stepped forward and chanted, "The wind soughs, the Yi flows chill; brave men go forth but never will return." He passed to a martial strain, at which all present glared and bristled with rage. Then Ching Ko mounted his carriage and drove off without casting so much as a glance behind.

The *Anecdotes of the Warring States* contains many ingenious parables effectively used by orators to illustrate their arguments. In this issue we have one about an elixir and drawing a snake with legs, and there were numerous others including that of the mussel and the snipe. There was no collection of fables in ancient Chinese literature, but a number of fables and parables are embodied in philosophic and historical works, and these are vivid, penetrating and full of wisdom. In this sense the *Anecdotes of the Warring States* is a book of considerable literary interest.



Shu Chiang

The Actor's Contradictions

We say that an actor plays a part. By this we mean that an actor has to play different roles on the stage in front of hundreds of spectators. And these distinctive circumstances pose certain problems which do not confront other artists.

First, there is the contradiction between his understanding and his acting. In life, mind and body form an organic whole, closely related. Bodily movement is the expression of mental activity, which is the basis of movement. The objective world acts upon a man's senses to arouse his subjective consciousness—his thought and emotion—and the body responds to this mental activity. Since the objective world is constantly changing and developing, differences in time, place and conditions bring about changes in man's mental activity with corresponding physical responses: different movements, gestures, expressions, tones of voice and sounds....

Shu Chiang, born in 1915 in Nanking, began acting in 1931 and after 1949 both taught and did research work in the Central Academy of Drama. He directed the popular opera *The White-haired Girl* and is at present vice-director of the Central Experimental Drama Troupe. His published works include *On Acting and Producing Plays* and *New Problems of Histrionics*.

In theory, an actor should behave on the stage like the role he is playing and be governed by its special logic, so that both his mental activity and bodily movement correspond to those of the stage character. In actual practice, however, there are usually contradictions between the actor and his role, between his understanding and impersonation. The player is often uncertain how a character should think and react to the people and changing action on the stage. Sometimes he can enter into the thoughts and feelings of a character, but still does not know how he would speak and behave. Or his bodily eloquence is too limited to express the ideas he has grasped. Again, he may copy from life certain movements or superficial mannerisms akin to those of his character, without really understanding his inmost feelings, and consequently he fails to give a correct, profound and moving representation.

An actor must have a full insight into the life, thought and emotions of his character to present him in a way both truthful and moving. The beautiful formalized movements of Chinese traditional opera are the outcome of years of hard work on the part of earlier actors; but a player who has no real grasp of the individuality of his part cannot move the audience with these graceful movements. Only when he combines the stylized gestures of the traditional opera with a genuine understanding of his role can he give a lifelike and a brilliant performance.

Genuine understanding of the character, important as it is, does not mean that the appropriate bodily movements will follow naturally. In practice, this is seldom the case. Because the man on the stage is acting a part, not living his own life, even when he understands his role he may not interpret it successfully. On the contrary, he may have made a careful study of his part and feel deeply stirred himself, yet fail to convey this to an audience.

This is why the study and use of gestures are just as important to an actor as understanding his character, whose individuality must be expressed through movements before the audience can appreciate it. Without gesture and speech there could be neither understanding nor performance. To achieve real understanding, the actor must put himself in the role's place and think and act according to its logic.

He will then convey this understanding through action by means of bodily movement and speech on the stage.

A character's emotions are especially hard to grasp, and it is not easy to feel real emotion during a performance. Even if you can reproduce the emotion required, it is difficult to repeat this at each performance. However, bodily movement, tones of voice and the speed and rhythm of dramatic delivery can be grasped, and to a certain extent may be regulated and produced to order. The actor therefore must master the technique of transforming emotion into movement and using movement to express emotion as well as to provide a relatively fixed interpretation. Then if in each performance he can repeat these fixed movements and speeches accurately and convincingly, this will enable him to enter into the personality as he has conceived it and to convey its emotions. This is due to the organic unity of body and mind and the fact that mental activity arouses bodily movement, which in turn can stimulate mental activity.

But bodily eloquence, important as it is, does not suffice to create a character and impersonate his emotion. To do this correctly, we must make a serious study of the character's life and mental activity, for lacking this foundation the most beautiful movements will lose all significance. Understanding is the groundwork of acting. Without deep understanding there can be no moving expression, just as a body without a soul is a lifeless puppet and not a real individual. So all acting must stem from understanding, all bodily movement must be based on the character's life and personality. The mental activity and bodily movement on the stage should form one organic whole and it would be wrong to pay exclusive attention to either at the expense of the other.

The second contradiction is between reason and emotion. It has long been debated whether the actor should let emotion control his performance or should accurately and unemotionally reproduce certain carefully rehearsed movements and expressions.

Of course, a stage performance needs genuine, full-blooded emotions, but these can only be conveyed after a long period of basic training and study, after many rehearsals and much painstaking work.

And the actor must not rely solely on emotion. While rehearsing he must be guided primarily by reason. He must analyse the drama and study the specific circumstances of a character's life, his ideas, feelings and behaviour. He must comprehend the play and his role's relationship to the central theme. To achieve this he should, if possible, live among people similar to his character and collect and study relevant written material. At the same time, to interpret the role faithfully, he must recall similar experiences which have happened to him or others and work out the best way to fit in with other members of the cast. In all this preparatory work reason must be his guide, for only so can he "get inside" his part and give a truthful performance.

A performance not guided by reason is unthinkable, but this does not mean that an actor works only with theories; for if he lacks the imagination to identify himself with his character in different circumstances, he will not feel the appropriate emotions. In order to have a full grasp of the role he is to play it would be useful for him to make a class analysis of the character, write a brief biography of his life and even study the family history; but such a study will help his performance only if linked with analysis and understanding of his role in the specific circumstances of the play. Moreover, even when all this is done and the actor has worked out the unspoken dialogue of his part, if he fails to think and act according to the logic of his character, detaching himself from the people and action on the stage and running through the lines and actions he has learned in a mechanical way, his performance will still lack veracity.

A stage performance after all is not life but art. It is good if the actor can put feeling into it, but his aim is not to stir himself but his spectators. He should enable the audience to hear the dialogue clearly, grasp its meaning and follow all the thoughts and feelings behind his movements. At the same time the total effect must be aesthetically pleasing. Too much reason without emotion appears dry and colourless. The actor, however, should skilfully control his emotion instead of merely letting himself go. This control is not something negative, but designed to use emotion rationally to portray the character. Only when reason and emotion are organically integrated will a performance be convincing and gripping. But reason

should take the lead, controlling emotion. Hard work and experience are required to merge these two conflicting factors into one harmonious whole.

Although each character's thoughts, behaviour and emotions are carefully thought out and rehearsed, the actor has to create the illusion that his actions are taking place for the first time and stem naturally from his subconscious self, just as in life. His aim, therefore, during a performance is to forget himself, his "first self" that is, and to enter so fully into his role that subconsciously it becomes his "second self."

But should an actor forget himself completely during a performance? Can he really identify himself with the character he plays? No, this is neither possible nor desirable. For a moment or two he may be carried away and act spontaneously; but as anyone with experience of acting knows, most of the time he does not forget himself. To do so, in fact, would be unthinkable. In an opera he must listen to the music, which gives him his cue to start singing; and during a mock fight he must not really cut off his opponent's head. So while thinking and acting like the character, he must not forget that this is a play and that acting is an art. The role created on the stage springs from the contradiction between the actor and the character played.

During a performance any involuntary feeling, thought or movement that is "in character" is all to the good. And after many rehearsals the actor may indulge involuntarily in new feelings and gestures which stem from the "subconscious of the character." Improvisations of this kind, far from spoiling the total artistic effect, give it fresh life and truthfulness; and although apparently accidental they are actually the result of a long period of conscious creative work. They are based on a careful analysis of the character's specific circumstances, an understanding of his purpose and action, and an imaginative reconstruction of his behaviour to make it convincing, consistent and true to life. In order to identify himself with his role, however, an actor must not forget himself. To act "unconsciously" requires conscious effort. Yet this is the only way to create a lively and well-integrated part. Without conscious activity there can be no art. Naturally, if the performance runs counter to the logic of

the character, if the actor fails to live his part but simply apes a certain feeling or personality, this conscious activity cannot give rise to any subconscious activity. On the contrary, it will hamper it, because such a rendering is not organic and truthful but stereotyped and artificial. In acting, both conscious and subconscious activities are important, but the former has the leading role.

In the whole creative process of acting, the performer makes a conscious effort to lose himself in his part until he is able to act truthfully in complete accord with the logic of his character, until he "becomes" the character himself. This enables him to live the part while at the same time enjoying the satisfaction of artistic creation and appraising his own performance. Thus the whole process of acting means resolving the conflict between the actor's first and second "self," between his conscious and subconscious self.

The fourth contradiction is between truth in life and truth in art.

A stage production must correspond to everyday reality, yet it cannot reproduce real life. The actor's function is to create characters which correctly reflect life and disclose its essence in order to deepen the audience's understanding and encourage men to change reality.

People go to a play to see the life and action of the characters, to sense their thoughts and feelings. If audiences are moved by a play, it makes them think and draw certain conclusions about the life presented and the actions of the characters. If a drama has a deep ideological content and is well and truthfully acted, it will exercise a strong sway over an audience and produce a great political influence. A weak, stereotyped performance, on the other hand, is so unconvincing and dull that it cannot grip the audience, still less influence men's political thinking. An actor must take into consideration beforehand what effect or reaction his performance may arouse. On the stage he must forget his audience, and yet he is reminded of them by their reactions, their laughter, exclamations and comments. The contradiction between the actor and the audience is resolved when the actor tries to "become" his character; for the more eager he is to convince and move his audience, the harder he tries to identify himself with his role and give a truthful performance. An actor who remains

outside his character and plays in an artificial or exaggerated way, which is obviously untrue to life, will not carry the audience with him.

Play-goers should have the illusion that what they are seeing is true, and to achieve this the actor must treat fictitious events as real. However, the truthfulness of the stage is not the truthfulness of life but of art; hence the two opposites, true and fictitious, co-exist in every performance, for a drama must be based on the objective laws of life as well as on the laws of art.

The action on the stage must not be an exact replica of real life. Stemming from life it should be a product of art. Every separate movement in the theatre ought to be an integral part of the whole action expressing the drama's main theme. The player's actions must portray the character truthfully and be good theatre, enabling the audience to see or sense every least gesture or feeling of his role. In other words, actions on the stage must be richer in content, more profound, more concentrated and more typical than in real life. They must ring true. Both movements and speech ought to be highly expressive, having a greater rhythm, grace, vividness and beauty than in life.

Truthfulness on the stage should to a high degree combine the two opposites of truth in life and truth in art.

Of the many contradictions in acting, the basic one, however, is that between the actor and his part. Without the actor there would be no part, but there would be none either if the stage character were to think and speak like the actor.

The character's thoughts and feelings cannot be identical with those of the actor, who must accommodate himself to his part. At the same time, however, the character's thoughts and feelings are determined by those of the actor. In fact, whether the latter realizes it or not, he invariably draws on his own experience, direct or indirect, his own knowledge, recollections and so forth, to create a figure in a play. Thus the character is determined by the interpretation of the actor, whose world outlook is bound to be reflected in his role.

When we say that an actor "becomes" his character, we mean that on the basis of his imagination and understanding he relives his own personal and second-hand experience in the artificial circumstances

of the play. If he has an incorrect understanding of the reality reflected in the play, the character he creates cannot be authentic. The same is true if he lacks experience similar to that of the part he plays, cannot conceive of such a character and has no feeling for it. All the sentiments of the stage personality come from the actor and are based on his understanding and experience of similar individuals in real life. This is why we say that an actor "puts himself" into a part. However, this is only the beginning of acting, the ultimate aim of which must be to live the part. This means that the actor must change himself to meet the demands of his role. He must in the first place have a correct and comprehensive understanding of the character's life and personality. This brings us to the question of the actor's own political stand, viewpoint and feelings. A correct, scientific world outlook which can be achieved through a thorough study of Marxism-Leninism and the thought of Mao Tse-tung, a rich experience of life and a good knowledge of the people which can be secured by living for long periods with the masses, will certainly help increase his ability to understand and analyse life correctly, thereby solving his contradiction with his character.

The whole process of acting abounds in contradictions. Different actors may encounter different ones, but every movement on the stage contains the contradictions between understanding and expression, reason and emotion, and the actor's conscious and subconscious self. In the course of a play different contradictions will emerge and develop, and it is up to the actor, helped by the director and entire cast, to discover these in good time and resolve them.

The actor should learn at different stages of his work to differentiate between the main contradiction and lesser ones, in order to solve them correctly. Just to practise elocution is no solution. The time for that, if he is weak in dramatic delivery, is after he has gained a genuine insight into the character's specific circumstances, ideas, feelings and behaviour. The same role acted at different times and places or under different conditions may produce different contradictions. These will vary too during rehearsals and in a performance before an audience. Even after an actor has played the part many times, one move-

ment may look right on one occasion and inappropriate the next. Or if success has gone to his head he may stop trying to understand his character and concentrate on empty movements and gestures, in which case a contradiction previously resolved may crop up once more. Again, the actor may play one part successfully and solve his contradictions well, but in another drama he may not solve certain problems or understand the role, and then he will fail. Since an actor plays different parts in different dramas, he is always meeting all sorts of new contradictions, and even while interpreting the same part he must constantly improve his understanding of the character. As his experience and knowledge accumulate, his understanding will deepen, posing new contradictions and making it imperative for him to improve his technique. The better his technique and the richer his experience, the more creative he will become. But while this facilitates the solution of the contradictions between him and his part, it raises new problems and the demand for more profound and beautiful characterization. Therefore an actor's whole career is one long process of discovering new contradictions and solving them. And in the course of this, his life, thinking and acting are gradually raised to an ever higher level.

Chou Liang

Peking People's Art Theatre

Peking audiences are known to be discriminating, for this city has had a flourishing theatre for centuries and the well-known Peking opera originated here nearly two hundred years ago. Peking opera is a highly formalized song-and-dance drama, but its popularity in the capital is now rivalled by that of modern drama. More and more theatre-goers are coming to enjoy this type of play, which came to China from the west a mere five or six decades ago; yet in this short period it has succeeded in acquiring a distinctively national style and reflecting the life of our country.

Peking has several well-established theatres for modern drama, of which the Peking People's Art Theatre is one of the most influential. It was established in 1952 by amalgamating two earlier companies with a revolutionary history. Today it has six directors and more than ninety actors and actresses. The well-known dramatist Tsao Yu is its president, while the first vice-president and chief director is the distinguished playwright Chiao Chu-yin. The company plays in the Shoudu (Capital) Theatre built in 1956 in the heart of the city with an auditorium that seats more than a thousand spectators. This theatre has modern equipment and excellent lighting and acous-

tics. On both sides of the revolving stage are spacious wings for the scene-shifters, and the comfortable dressing-rooms behind can accommodate two hundred actors at once. There are lounges, too, for actors not on the stage. At the back of the theatre are four rehearsal halls. I went there at nine one morning when rehearsals were just beginning.

In the first hall I found them rehearsing a new production, *The Younger Generation*. This four-act play about the life and problems of the younger generation in China today reminds young people not to forget the hard struggle of the last generation to win them a happy life. It inspires them to greater efforts for the revolution, encouraging them to advance boldly towards communism.

I was told that plays about contemporary Chinese life form the bulk of those staged by the theatre today. They reflect the brimming enthusiasm and heroism of the masses in our great socialist construction, stirring audiences with their noble ideals. Play-goers like these plays which present familiar situations and crucial aspects of their own life and struggles. During the past eleven years plays of this kind have been staged and restaged by the People's Art Theatre, in response to popular demand. Noteworthy among them is *Dragon-beard Ditch* by the veteran dramatist Lao Sheh, who shows the transformation of a slum district after liberation and pays warm tribute to the deep concern of the people's government for working people. Tsao Yu's *Bright Sky* reflects the changed outlook of Chinese intellectuals in recent years, while *The Test* by another veteran playwright Hsia Yen deals with the struggle on the industrial front during socialist construction. Works by younger writers include Liu Chuan's *Red Hearts and Blazing Fire*, the story of workers who go all out to build an advanced industry from scratch; Tu Feng's *Immortal Heroes*, a drama of the noble internationalism of the Chinese People's Volunteers who defended world peace on the Korean front; and *On Guard Beneath the Neon Lights* by Shen Hsi-meng and others playing currently, which presents the deeds of "the good Eighth Company on Nanking Road," a unit of the People's Liberation Army in Shanghai, the former "adventurers' paradise." The soldiers of this company retain a firm political stand, refuse to be corrupted and keep a vigilant guard over the city in the best tradition of the People's Liberation Army.

Plays about past revolutionary struggles are another important part of the repertoire of the People's Art Theatre. One of these is Tu Feng's *Li Kuo-jui*, which I saw being rehearsed in the second hall. This play, written during the War of Resistance Against Japan, describes men of the Eighth Route Army led by the Chinese Communist Party. The actors in uniform, rehearsing hard, were reviving scenes of twenty years ago to make people think back to those arduous years and realize more deeply that every step towards victory was hard. Plays of historical significance like this are permeated with a revolutionary spirit and fine militant tradition.

Similar in nature to *Li Kuo-jui* are *Comrade, You've Taken the Wrong Path!* by Yao Chung-ming and others, which describes the struggle against rightist opportunism in the revolutionary ranks during the anti-Japanese war; and *The Capture of Mount Weihu*, adapted by the theatre's vice-presidents Chao Chi-yang and Hsia Chun from the novel *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*, which brings out the courage and resourcefulness of men of the People's Liberation Army in the fighting against remnant Kuomintang troops. Tu Hsuan's *Unforgettable Years* is about the underground activities of Communists in a city ruled by the Kuomintang; *A Spark of Fire Can Set a Plain Ablaze* by Chao Chi-yang and others is devoted to the peasants' revolutionary movement; and *Red Crag*, adapted from the novel of the same name, is the true story of some revolutionaries who would not submit to the reactionaries even under torture. All these productions recall the past and tell people hard struggle is necessary to win a better future.

On my way to the third rehearsal hall I dropped in at the archives, where stills of *Thunderstorm* and other relevant material were being assembled for a foreign company that meant to put on this play. Tsao Yu's *Thunderstorm*, written thirty years ago, has been played more than three hundred times in this theatre and always to packed houses. Other popular plays of that period are Tsao Yu's *Sunrise* and *Peking Man*, Tien Han's *Death of a Famous Actor* and Ting Hsi-lin's *Three Dollars*. These are outstanding examples of the realist drama that followed the new cultural movement of 1919 and so forcefully exposed and attacked the wrongs of that age. Lao Sheh's interesting and original play *The Tea-house*, although written in 1957, belongs to this category too.

In the third hall they were running through Tien Han's gripping historical drama *Kuan Han-ching*, the tragic story of a playwright in

the thirteenth century who fearlessly took the side of the common people against the cruel oppression of the nobles. The People's Art Theatre is noted for its staging of historical plays. Those by Kuo Mo-jo are: *The Tiger Tally* about the Lord of Hsinling twenty-three centuries ago, who helped a weak state to resist a powerful foe; *Tsai Wen-chi*, which describes how two thousand years ago the wise statesman Tsao Tsao ransomed a talented woman from the Huns; and *Wu Tse-tien*, the drama of the first woman statesman of China, who ruled the country as empress in the seventh century. Tsao Yu's play about the Warring States period (475-221 B. C.), *The Gall and the Sword*, is another example of these colourful dramas which gives a vivid picture of the life and struggles of the men of old.

The People's Art Theatre has also introduced many fine plays from abroad. These include *The Man with the Gun* by Pogodin of the Soviet Union, *Red Propagandist* by the Korean playwright Jo Baik Ryung, *A Fisherman's Family* by Suleiman Pitarka of Albania, Gorky's *Yegor Bulychov and Others*, Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, A. Ostrovsky's *There's a Bit of Foolishness in Every Wise Man*, Molière's *L'Avare*, *Aesop* by Figuerido of Brazil and plays from Poland, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere. These productions stimulate our own dramatic art. A play like *Red Propagandist*, reflecting the heroism of the Korean people in building up their motherland, has aroused tremendous enthusiasm in our cities and countryside.

After I had spent some time watching the rehearsals, Tsao Yu told me, "No matter what type of play we produce, our playwrights, directors and actors all follow the principle that a vivid stage performance must be based on rich experience of real life."

Throughout the fifty years' history of Chinese modern drama, plays have been staged by amateurs and professionals in the countryside. Tsao Yu stressed, however, that only since liberation has the modern drama been truly accessible to the masses. Apart from performing regularly in Peking, every year the theatre sends some of its best actors to the villages, factories, mining districts and coastal garrison areas to put on plays for the workers, peasants and soldiers.

The People's Art Theatre makes a point of encouraging originality. It welcomes innovations made by its directors, actors and set-designers. In this connection, Tsao Yu mentioned the direction of historical plays by Chiao Chu-yin.

Chiao Chu-yin has more than thirty years of stage experience. He has made a deep study of the traditional Chinese theatre, especially Peking opera, as well as of the western stage. It was his ambition as a young man to absorb the best elements of modern drama into Peking opera and to transfer the spirit and some conventions of the traditional theatre to the modern stage. Only after China's liberation was he able to realize his aim. In 1956, to bring out the powerfully romantic spirit of *The Tiger Tally*, he boldly adopted certain dancing movements and rhythm from Peking opera, while the stage sets were reminiscent of the concise decor of the traditional stage. He also used certain features of the composition and colour combinations of Chinese painting. After Tien Han saw this performance, he remarked, "This production of *The Tiger Tally* marks the beginning of a national style in our staging of historical plays in the modern drama."

Following this, Chiao Chu-yin introduced the expressive movements of the traditional theatre to *Tsai Wen-chi*, *Wu Tse-tien*, *Kuan Han-ching* and *The Gall and the Sword*, choosing those gestures and motions most

Chief-director Chiao Chu-yin (*first left*) and playwright Kuo Mo-jo (*middle*) with some members of the cast



suiting to the different styles of these historical plays. He told me, "The art of our classical stage is highly concise, combining song, dance and drama. It uses singing and dancing movements to express the inmost feelings of men involved in stupendous dramatic conflicts. I am trying to find the right way to introduce the rhythm of the traditional opera into the modern drama, so that our performances may make a greater impact on the audience."

Of course, the director's aim can only be realized through the players. The People's Art Theatre has many actors and actresses of the first rank. Shu Hsiu-wen, who plays Chu Lien-hsiu, the heroine of *Kuan Han-ching*, is one of those who has created unforgettable characters. Chu Lien-hsiu is a talented singsong girl with a strong spirit of revolt who lived at the end of the thirteenth century, and Shu Hsiu-wen, who has acted for thirty years, excels in roles of this kind. Her elocution is faultless and powerfully moving, and she makes the fearless singsong girl come to life on the stage. In the same play the veteran actor Tien Chung gave a most successful rendering of the ardent, scholarly playwright Kuan Han-ching, a very different role from that of the peasant-soldier Shetlin in *The Man with the Gun* which he interpreted equally brilliantly.

Tiao Kuang-tan, another actor with more than twenty years of stage experience, played the part of Lenin in *The Man with the Gun*. In *Tsai Wen-chi* he was the wise statesman Tsao Tsao. Now he has the title role in *Li Kuo-ju* and gives a most convincing portrayal of the contradictions and defects in this soldier so recently a peasant, as his character gradually matures.

Among the most popular of the younger actors are Yu Shih-chih and Tung Chao. The former played Cheng Feng-tzu in Lao Sheh's play *Dragon-beard Ditch*, which has been well received both in China and abroad. And Tung Chao in *The Capture of Mount Weibu* gave an unforgettable impersonation of an army scout who is loyal, intrepid and resourceful. These younger actors, who were in their early teens at the time of liberation, have developed quickly thanks to the help and guidance of older artists.

The theatre's deputy chief director Ouyang Shan-tsun has also made a unique contribution to the theatre on the basis of more than thirty years of experience. In 1937 Ouyang Shan-tsun accompanied a repertory group to the revolutionary base Yen-an, and during the War of Resistance Against Japan he led army drama troupes to perform



Deputy chief director Ouyang Shan-tsun (*first right*) with the steel workers at Anshan

at the front. Having grown up in revolutionary struggles, he has his own views about the staging of plays on these themes, and he is noted for his production of comedies. The plays he directs are fresh and full of life. He and Mei Chien together directed *Li Kuo-ju*, the whole cast of which consists of ten soldiers. The drama unfolds through sharp clashes between men of very different temperaments, and the witty dialogue keeps audiences roaring with laughter even while they see how the revolutionary army is one big, well-knit family in which officers and men alike through criticism and self-criticism grow into revolutionary fighters with a high degree of political consciousness.

"No comedy can ever depart from life to look for laughter," said Ouyang Shan-tsun. "The comedy grows out of the clash of personalities. It is not enough to make audiences laugh, there must be some significance in their laughter."

Fierce struggles and the life of the masses are the sole inexhaustible source of artistic creation. The People's Art Theatre has always



Tiao Kuang-tan as the playwright Kuan Han-ching and Shu Hsiu-wen as the singsong girl Chu Lien-hsiu in *Kuan Han-ching*.

been convinced of this. Soon after its establishment, the theatre divided its artists into four groups to go for long periods of time to live among workers and peasants, working together and learning from the masses. This was how they produced their first four one-act plays which vividly reflected the new life of our labouring people. Since then they have kept in constant touch with the workers, peasants and soldiers and have made good friends in factories, mining districts, villages and army units in all parts of China. They have worked in the fields, on reservoirs, by blast furnaces and in coal mines. They have stood guard with garrison troops along the coast. Most of them have taken part in land reform, the co-operative movement and the building up of people's communes. Recently, before putting on *Li Kuo-ju*, the whole cast, set-designers and directors went to serve in a company for a month, living exactly like the soldiers to familiarize themselves with army life. When I was leaving the theatre, I thought to myself: This is perhaps what helped them to make their performances so authentic.

Tso Hai

“Ladies on a Spring Outing”

Going out with a few companions on lovely spring days is a common pleasure now as in time past, in China and elsewhere in the world. However, an outing a few hundred years ago was quite a different affair from one today. *Ladies on a Spring Outing*, reproduced in this number, is a painting of an excursion in the old days by the famous seventeenth-century artist Chen Hung-shou.

This painting is completely devoid of any background, which throws into vivid prominence the figures of five women and a girl, informally grouped with their heads half turned in a lively, natural composition.

The five women are evidently mistress and maids. The aristocratic lady leading the way has a little girl close behind her, and it is easy to see that they have just visited one beauty spot and are going on to another. The lady seems to be lingering, reluctant to leave, and

Tso Hai, art critic and connoisseur of traditional Chinese painting, is an authority on the history of Chinese art and contemporary painting. *Ladies on a Spring Outing* reproduced in this number comes from his collection. Last year *Chinese Literature* Nos. 8 and 9 published his articles Huang Chou's "Gathering Water-chestnuts" and Chou Hsun's "Waiting for a Ferry."

has turned back as if for a last look at the spring flowers and shady paths. There are freshly picked flowers in the hands of the girl and the oldest maid on her left, both of whom appear to be enjoying their scent. Two younger maids are carrying musical instruments while another older one has a kettle. They have everything needed for a pleasant excursion.

This painting occupies an important position among the works of Chen Hung-shou. With its original, somewhat poetic theme and fine, precise brushwork it ranks among the best Chinese figure paintings. Although Chen Hung-shou was no mean poet and calligrapher, he is best known as a painter. He created his own school of landscapes and flower-and-bird paintings, but his greatest achievements were in figure paintings. According to the records, he was born in 1598 in the county of Chuchi in Chekiang Province and died in 1652 at the age of fifty-four. One of his biographers, Chu Yi-tsun of the seventeenth century, noted that he showed an aptitude for figure painting from an early age, and this is borne out by various anecdotes. Once his father-in-law had his house repaired and was so proud of the newly whitewashed walls that when he went out he ordered a serving boy to make sure that no one touched and dirtied them. Chen Hung-shou, eager to paint something on the wall, sent the boy off to have a meal and took advantage of his absence to stack up some tables and stand on them to paint a portrait over a dozen feet high of Kuan Yu, a second-century general who was deified after his death. When the servant boy came back and saw the snow-white wall covered with a painting he burst into tears for fear of his master's anger. But the father-in-law on his return was so struck by the lifelike figure that he went down on his knees to worship it, thinking Kuan Yu had descended to protect his house.

This anecdote shows that Chen Hung-shou's figure painting reached a very high level quite early in his life. *Ladies on a Spring Outing* dates from his middle age when he had a thorough mastery of his art. The six figures outlined in flowing, pliant lines are reminiscent of the work of the eleventh-century painter Li Kung-lin, whom Chen Hung-shou took as a model in his younger days.

Chou Liang-kung, another writer of the seventeenth century, tells an interesting tale of how Chen Hung-shou copied the earlier artist's works. Having heard that there were stone inscriptions of the portraits of the seventy-two disciples of Confucius by Li Kung-lin



on the walls of the Hangchow Prefectural College, Chen Hung-shou sailed down the River Chientang to Hangchow with the necessary equipment and before long returned with a set of carefully made rubbings. For ten days he stayed at home behind closed doors to study Li Kung-lin's technique, and when he showed his copies of the portraits and the original rubbings to his friends they praised the close likeness he had achieved. But he still was not satisfied. He worked for ten more days and this time when he showed the results to his friends he was delighted to be told that they were further from the originals, for instead of merely making faithful copies he had displayed originality, freely interpreting Li Kung-lin's manner and improving his own style. This had been the purpose of his study.

Chen Hung-shou's debt to Li Kung-lin and his own creativeness can be clearly seen in *Ladies on a Spring Outing*. The contours of his figures are graceful yet dignified, vivid and strong with a sureness of touch that makes every stroke seem inevitable. The lines of the drapery not only suggest the texture of the material but the way it clings to the figure. Pleats, seams, curves and folds are painted simply and precisely, while the postures and gestures are brilliantly executed, corresponding closely to the speed and force of each figure's movement, with a natural grace and harmony between the contour lines and the folds of the garments.

The soul of figure painting lies in characterization, and the technique of line-drawing might be called the mainstay of characterization. For a painting like *Ladies on a Spring Outing* is made up entirely of lines, quite unlike Chinese paintings of the "boneless" type in which artists generally make sketches without any outline and then apply colour washes. If all the lines here were removed there would be no painting left, and this is the most important feature of Chinese figure painting. This work by Chen Hung-shou is a brilliant example of line-drawing. In painting a picture like this, the purpose of every stroke must be utterly clear, for once drawn a line cannot be changed and absolute accuracy is required of the artist in putting his conception on paper.

To give each line such accuracy that it is a generalized expression of ordinary movements means understanding the general rules governing gestures and movements and depicting them with a minimum of fine lines. This can only be achieved by long and hard practice and not by talent alone. Chen Hung-shou's line-drawing technique

shows that he was both gifted and painstaking. He neither disobeyed the rules of plastic art to make a parade of his versatility nor stooped to thoughtless, naturalistic sketching. His brushwork is characterized by simplicity, dignity and natural grace, yet careful thought obviously went into each line, for we cannot find a single careless stroke and the whole work shows his mastery of technique.

The lines of the noble lady's garments tell us that she is wearing silk and heavy brocade. Knowing the pliant quality of silk, the artist uses strokes which best depict the soft, supple texture of the material. The collar, lapels, sleeves and skirts have a distinctive smoothness, being bordered with heavy brocade. The gowns of the four maids have different lines because they are woven of silk and hemp, while the little girl's clothes are different again, their relatively stiff folds denoting that she is wearing a linen material. The lines of the clothing of all six figures are finely drawn down to the last little detail, with no confusion between upper and lower garments and no impression of disorder. The strokes depicting movement are often enhanced by a light wash of ink or colour along one side to widen the crease or fold in the garment, for this serves to strengthen the three-dimensional effect of the painting.

Chen Hung-shou reached a high level in the art of line-drawing because he made a sedulous study of traditional masters and was a keen observer of life itself. It was said that towards the end of his life when he had moved to Hangchow, he visited the market nearly every day in order to watch the gestures, movements and special characteristics of people from all walks of life. Having memorized these, he went home to put them down on paper. He also spent some time every morning tending his flowers and birds and observing them closely. That was why he painted such good flower-and-bird studies.

The picture reproduced here gives us a glimpse of the artist's method of painting flowers. The round fan in the noble lady's hand is decorated with bamboo and rocks. Although a painting in miniature done with very few strokes, it presents a satisfying picture of gaunt rocks and graceful bamboos, no less significant because of its size. The round fan suspended from the wrist of the older maid on the lady's left bears a spray of plum blossom. Here again we have a well-constructed painting in miniature so carefully done, with not a single faulty stroke, that it brooks comparison with much larger paintings.

As for the flowers in the hands of the girl and the maid, their petals, leaves and stems are executed with meticulous attention to detail. Equal attention was given to the woven and embroidered patterns on the tunics, sashes and other articles of clothing, as well as the design on the silk cover of the guitar. Chen Hung-shou showed such fine discretion that these exquisite but not unduly elaborate patterns do not distract attention from the figures. For the most important thing in the picture is still the people, not any single part of their dress or adornments. Costume and ornamentation only help to portray the figures more vividly. There is not a superfluous stroke in this work, which shows finished taste and technique. And this is the secret of the charm of Chen Hung-shou's painting.

It is no accident that students of Chinese figure painting speak so highly of Chen Hung-shou's brush strokes, for skill in line-drawing such as his is not easy to attain. The school of painting founded by Li Kung-lin and carried on by Chen Hung-shou used for the most part the tip of a full brush to make the even lines known as "iron-wire" strokes. Strokes of this type date from a much earlier period. The *Admonitions to Court Ladies* by the great fourth-century master Ku Kai-chih already had gossamer-fine strokes of the same category. However, Chen Hung-shou's strokes have their own distinctive characteristics, for certain basic techniques in traditional Chinese painting can be varied and modified in the hands of different masters, each of whom finds his own way to improve on tradition. *Ladies on a Spring Outing* is a fine example of Chen Hung-shou's line-drawing.

Pocket Library of Literature

People's Literature Publishing House, Peking

The Pocket Library of Literature published by the People's Literature Publishing House, Peking, is winning ever wider popularity. One sees these pocket editions read in trams and trains, during the break on worksites and in the countryside.

The first batch of Pocket Library books came out in 1958. More than 150 volumes have been published and new ones are coming out continuously. The aim of this library is to popularize the best Chinese and foreign works and to serve as a ladder for readers who are beginning to take an interest in literature by introducing them to samples of major literary works. The handy size is popular too with readers well acquainted with literature who want something to carry in their pockets and enjoy during moments of leisure.

Roughly half the titles published to date are Chinese and the other half foreign, while among the Chinese works we find a fair division between works of classical, modern (1919-1942) and contemporary literature.

It is only right that contemporary Chinese literature should occupy a prominent position in this Pocket Library, because our people are naturally most interested in works reflecting present-day revolutionary struggles and the construction of our new society. By contemporary literature we refer to works written since Chairman Mao Tse-tung's *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art* in 1942. This category

includes Chao Shu-li's *Rhymes of Li Yu-tsai*, Liu Shu-teh's *The Bridge*, Sun Li's *Lotus Creek and Other Stories*, Li Chun's *Not That Road*, Wang Yuan-chien's *One Family*, Ju Chih-chuan's *Lilies*, Ai Wu's *New Home*, Li Chi's long poem *Wang Kuei and Li Hsiang-hsiang*, Chiao Lin's *Magnolia* and Ho Ching-chih's *Singing Aloud*.

Chao Shu-li is one of the most outstanding contemporary writers in China, whose *Rhymes of Li Yu-tsai* contains the five stories: "Hsiao Erh-hei's Marriage," "Rhymes of Li Yu-tsai," "The Emancipation of Meng Hsiang-ying," "The Floor" and "Fu Kuei," all published between 1943 and 1946. The editors' note to this volume says: "Couched in simple, concise language and a fresh vigorous style, these stories give a vivid reflection of the life and struggles in the villages of the old liberated areas during the period of democratic revolution in China, and the new atmosphere after the land reform." The new peasants described by Chao Shu-li have become the masters of their fate and their buoyant optimism contrasts strongly with the misery of the humiliated, downtrodden peasants depicted by writers of the previous generation. Li Chi's best poem *Wang Kuei and Li Hsiang-hsiang*, first published in 1945, narrates the story of two steadfast young lovers and truthfully mirrors the thoughts and feelings of the labouring people and the class struggle in northern Shensi during the agrarian revolution. The form of the Shensi folk song *hsin-tien-yu* is a perfect medium for this narrative poem. These works by Chao Shu-li and Li Chi enjoy wide popularity and are generally considered as the most representative works to have appeared after the *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art*.

Not That Road by the young writer Li Chun is a collection of six stories about different aspects of life in the Chinese countryside during the early stages of the co-operative movement after liberation and the growth of new socialist types of men and women. A new middle peasant in the story "Not That Road" has gained emancipation as a result of land reform and thinks that the way to prosperity is to buy land; but finally his son is able to convince him that in the new society he should find his personal happiness in the collective welfare of the co-operative. *Lilies* is another collection of tales including the story "Lilies" by the young writer Ju Chih-chuan and "Seven Matches" by Wang Yuan-chien. The first story, delicately written with a well-knit plot, conveys the nobility of the soldiers of the People's Liberation Army and the love felt for them by the masses.

The second story in a bare two thousand words conjures up a vivid picture of the Red Army's arduous Long March through the marshlands and the selfless heroism of ordinary soldiers.

In the field of classical Chinese literature, this Pocket Library presents *Selections from the "Book of Songs,"* Chu Yuan's *The Lament, Selections from Ssuma Chien's "Historical Records," A Hundred Poems of Tu Fu, Prose Romances of the Tang and Sung Dynasties, Selected Poems of Su Tung-po, Selected Plays of Kuan Han-ching,* the Ming dynasty vernacular tale *The Courtesan's Jewel Box* and *Selections from the "Tales of Liao-chai"* by Pu Sung-ling.

The *Book of Songs*, the earliest collection of songs in China, gives us a picture of Chinese society and the life of the people more than twenty-five centuries ago. Thirty-four of the 305 songs in this work are included in this selection. Here the labouring people of ancient China voice their love and their hate, their anger against tyranny. These songs bring back to life fearless fighters, dancing girls, the luxury and licence of the nobility, the tang of north China's yellow soil, the fragrance of its dark grain and the sweat of the labourers. These thirty-four songs have been translated into readable modern Chinese in the style of folk songs by the distinguished scholar Yu Kuan-ying.

The Lament is a long poem by the great poet Chu Yuan of the fourth century B.C., an ardent patriot who had political forethought but was exiled by the king of Chu and drowned himself when the capital of Chu fell to an enemy. During his exile, the knowledge of his country's danger stirred him to write many poems, of which *The Lament* is the best. Brilliantly imaginative, it embodies wind and clouds, thunder and lightning, phoenix and dragon, flowers and herbs. Its aspiring spirit, striking imagery and passionate emotion make it the great romantic poem in ancient China. The poet Kuo Mo-jo has rendered *The Lament* into modern Chinese and succeeded well in conveying the patriotism of the original.

Ssuma Chien was a great Han dynasty historian and writer of the second century B.C., whose *Historical Records* covers the three thousand years of Chinese history from the time of the legendary Five Emperors to the reign of Emperor Wu in Ssuma Chien's life-time. He describes historical events and characters with consummate literary skill, combining important historical happenings with rich descriptive detail so that all he writes is convincing and all his characters are life-

like. Ten of his best-known biographies have been published in this selection.

Tu Fu (A.D. 712-770) was a great realist poet of the Tang dynasty. More than 1,400 of his poems have come down to give us a penetrating reflection of every aspect of the life of that time. These works represent the highest pinnacle of the realist tradition in Tang poetry and later generations have acclaimed them as "history in the form of poetry" written by "the sage among poets." The Pocket Library has selected one hundred of his best poems from all periods of his life—a feast for lovers of Tu Fu's poetry.

The *Tales of Liao-chai* by Pu Sung-ling (1640-1715) of the Ching dynasty relate in a classical, elegant style strange stories of fox-fairies, ghosts, flower-spirits and other supernatural beings, all with such human qualities that through their adventures the writer was able to expose social contradictions and abuses, obliquely expressing his discontent and indignation. This library's selection contains eleven of Pu Sung-ling's finest stories.

Since Chinese literature has a history of several thousand years, during which time not only have situations changed but the language has undergone marked modifications, it is natural that modern readers should find difficulty in understanding classical works. The editors of the Pocket Library have made commendable efforts to help readers in this respect by enlisting the services of specialists to write prefaces explaining the historical and social background of each classical work, analysing its form and content and giving a brief outline of the author's life. Commentaries are provided when necessary, with detailed notes on each abstruse word or phrase, and when even these seem insufficient a translation into modern Chinese is made.

In the field of the modern literature ushered in by the new cultural movement of 1919, this Pocket Library has published Lu Hsun's collections of stories *Call to Arms* and *Wandering*, Mao Tun's volume of short stories *Spring Silkworms*, Kuo Mo-jo's collection of poems *The Goddesses*, Lao Sheh's short story *Crescent Moon*, Pa Chin's short novel *Life-giving Herb*, Yeh Tzu's novel *Harvest*, Tien Han's collection of one-act plays *The Moonlight Sonata*, Tsao Yu's play *Sunrise* and Hsia Yen's play *The Fascist Germ*.

Lu Hsun (1881-1936) is China's greatest modern writer and the standard-bearer of our new culture, whose complete and selected works have come out in several editions. *Call to Arms*, his first

collection of short stories, was first published in 1923 and includes fourteen stories, among them "The Madman's Diary," "Medicine," "My Old Home" and "The True Story of Ah Q." The editors' note to the Pocket Library edition states that these stories "blazed a trail for China's new literature since the new cultural movement, marking the beginning of new realist writing. This collection was the first milestone in the history of modern Chinese literature." *Wandering*, Lu Hsun's second volume of stories, was first printed in 1926. "The New Year's Sacrifice," "In the Wine Shop," "The Misanthrope," "Regret for the Past" and other stories in this collection are artistically more mature than those in *Call to Arms*, cover a wider range and reveal deeper feeling. Lu Hsun flayed the injustice of the feudal system in these powerful tales of the fate and soul of peasants, women and intellectuals who were humiliated and ground down. He encouraged men to fight against that moribund feudal system, to take their fate into their own hands.

Kuo Mo-jo's *The Goddesses* came out in 1921. Its fifty-seven poems include "The Nirvana of the Phoenix," "The Hound of Heaven" and "O Earth, My Mother." In these first poems the poet sang with irrepressible revolutionary romanticism of revolt against the feudal system and his longing for a new China. The fresh style of these poems was completely unlike that of classical Chinese poetry. This collection reflects the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal spirit of those times and is a landmark of the new poetry. Other important works of modern Chinese literature are also published in this library.

Turning now to foreign literature, we find works in the Pocket Library from every part of the world. Among these are Shakespeare's *Othello*, Shelley's *Ode to the Skylark*, Burns' *My Heart's in the Highlands*, Molière's *L'Avare*, Mérimée's *Carmen*, Maupassant's *Boule-de-suit*, Balzac's *Gobseck*, Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Mark Twain's *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg*, Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter*, Gogol's *May Nights*, Chekhov's *The Steppe*, Tolstoy's *Hadji-Murad*, Gorky's *Old Izergil*, Mayakovsky's *Poems*, Fucik's *Report from the Gallows*, Rosa Luxemburg's *Letters from Prison*, Fatmir Gjata's *Tana*, Tagore's *Two Acres of Land*, Kobayashi Takiji's *March 15, 1928* and Ishikawa Taku-boku's *We and He*. Some of these are single works, others are collections of stories or poems, and there are brief introductions to each volume. The number of important or representative works of classical or modern world literature in this series makes this Pocket

Library a garden of many flowers which should tempt readers to look for other works by these writers.

Many of these foreign authors are already familiar to Chinese readers as their complete or selected works have been translated into Chinese—sometimes more than once. Most of such works in this series are old versions which have been revised, a few are new translations. But all the translations are faithful and fluent. These works give our readers an insight into the life and thought of the peoples of different countries and their struggle for freedom and happiness.

The Pocket Library comes out in two formats and the layout is attractively simple.

—Tsung Cheng

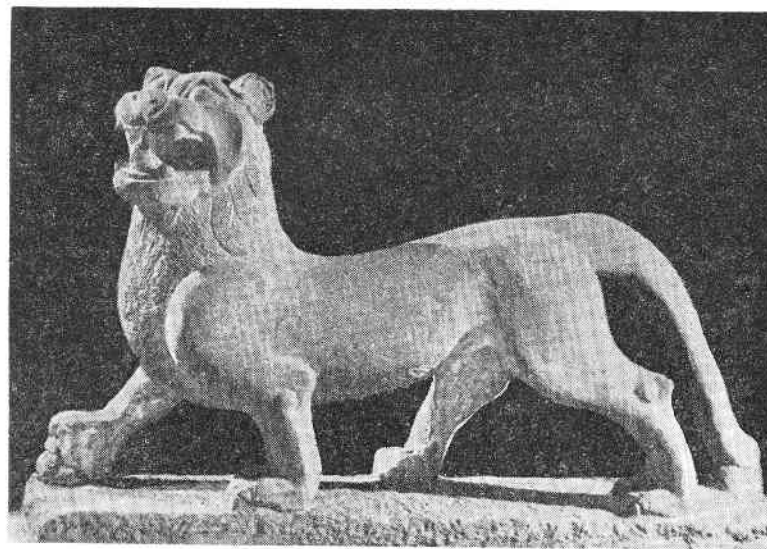


More Books for the Villages

As most of China's younger generation of peasants today have had some education, they are becoming big readers. To meet their demand, the China Youth Publishing House in Peking has compiled a series of books for them with the help of specialists and writers in various fields. Eighty-seven recent titles include books on philosophy, history, ethics, geography, natural science and literature. Among the thirty-three literary works chosen are the novels *Red Crag*, *Keep the Red Flag Flying*, *Red Sun* and *The Builders*, Wang Wen-shih's novel *Black Phoenix* and his collection of short stories *Snowy Night*, reflecting life in the villages; Yao Hsueh-ying's *Li Tzu-chen* based on a peasant uprising of the seventeenth century; and *Chairman Mao Tse-tung's Poems with Annotations*.

Treasure-house of Stone Sculptures

A large Exhibition Hall for Stone Sculptures was added last year to the Shensi Museum in Sian, which now houses the most comprehensive collection of ancient sculptures in China apart from those in grottos in various parts of the country. On display here are more than a hundred valuable sculptures dating from the third century B.C. to the ninth century A.D. which show the development of sculpture in China.



A third-century stone lion

Apart from stone relics unearthed in and around Sian itself which had been a political and cultural centre from the third century B.C. to the beginning of the tenth century, many others have been brought to this museum from elsewhere in order to provide a truly representative and systematic exhibition in one hall. Among the exhibits is a third-century lion with head raised and hind legs apart. Its long tail curves downwards vigorously in the instant before it leaps with a mighty roar. Also on exhibition are the world famous "Six Steeds of Chaoling," stone reliefs of the favourite horses of Emperor Tai-tsung of the Tang dynasty. After the emperor's death these six reliefs were placed outside the Chaoling Mausoleum at Lichuan in Shensi, where they weathered snow and storm for over 1,200 years. In 1914 some U.S. adventurers stole two sculptured reliefs of a curly-maned steed and a roan steed and broke the other four. Today, the Shensi Museum displays these four reliefs which have been skilfully repaired and reproductions of the two which were stolen.

Another treasure here is a finely carved stone tablet of the fifth century with reliefs on both sides depicting the life of that time in an intricate and decorative composition. Small Buddhist images on

translucent white jade are so brilliantly carved that one feels the texture of the fine gauze scarves, the lace and the smooth cheeks of the figures. Other striking exhibits include a massive rhinoceros weighing nearly ten tons, a dancing figure no higher than ten centimetres and a finely carved stone seat. All testify to the consummate skill and industry of the unknown sculptors of old.

First Issue of "Children's Literature"

Young people form an important part of contemporary Chinese reading public. Many periodicals are issued specially for children. Among them, *Little Friends*, a monthly for school children in the lower forms, *Children's Times*, a fortnightly for those a little older and *Youth Literature*, a monthly for junior middle-school students, all published in Shanghai, are the most popular. Recently the China Children's Publishing House in Peking started a new magazine, *Children's Literature*. The first issue includes short stories, poems, sketches, fairy tales, biographies, reminiscences of life in the old days by veteran workers, science stories and comic dialogues. Among the contributors are the well-known women writers, Ping Hsin, Han Tzu and Liu Chen as well as the writer of juvenile literature, Chin Chin and the young poet, Ko Yen.

Japanese "Warabiza" Song and Dance Ensemble

Led by Taro Hara, Japan's *Warabiza* National Song and Dance Ensemble, which has grown up in the midst of the Japanese peasants, gave powerful and impressive performances to packed houses in Peking late last autumn. The folk dance *Awa Odori* and the dances celebrating the "driving out of devils" express the strength and power of the Japanese people. Other folk dances depicting the villagers planting rice seedlings, fishermen rowing boats, the celebration over a bumper harvest and leaping deer, are equally striking. In an article she wrote after attending a performance, Tai Ai-lien, noted Chinese dancer and director of the Peking School of Dancing, said, "The beautiful Japanese folk dances are imbued with an unusual virility."

A suite of songs entitled *Young People of the Village* was received with particularly warm applause. Some of these songs were composed by Taro Hara with words by Yoshiko Hara, others were folk songs rearranged by the composer. The suite is divided into three sections dealing with village life "from winter to spring," "from spring to summer" and "from summer to autumn." Chinese musicians took a keen interest in these new compositions which blended harmoniously with the other folk songs and dances and reflected vividly the life and struggles of Japanese youth today.

Performance of Indonesian Song and Dance Ensemble

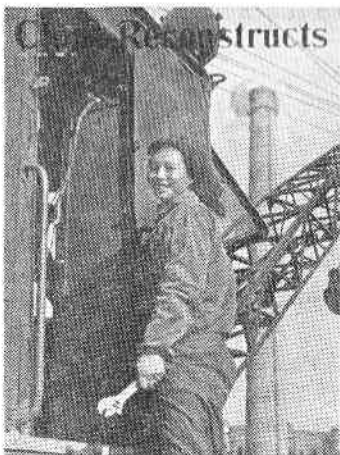
The Song and Dance Ensemble of the Indonesian People's Culture League gave a series of performances in Peking last year during the long, golden autumn. Every item performed by the thirty musicians and dancers from Djakarta, East, West and Central Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan and Maluku, was applauded with great warmth. The *Kemajoran* (Krontjong music) performed by Andy Mulja, one of the two vice-directors of the ensemble, was enchantingly fresh. Interspersing his singing with cheers and hailing the "never fading friendship between the Indonesian and Chinese people," he stirred the hearts of his audience.

The *Masked Dance* portraying a vigorous youth was brilliantly performed by the well-known dancer Sampan Hismanto who gave this virile, intricate classical dance a new significance thanks to the dynamic rhythmic motion of his hands, shoulders, head and feet. The modern *Fishermen's Dance*, *Farmers' Dance*, *Dance of the Paper Tiger* and *Dance of Peasant Women* expressed the Indonesian people's revolutionary spirit, their unity in struggle and their tireless labour to create a better life.

Sopranos Effie Tjoa and Eveline Tjiauw rendered *The Immortals* and *Kunlun*, two of Chairman Mao's poems set to music, with great virtuosity and feeling.

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