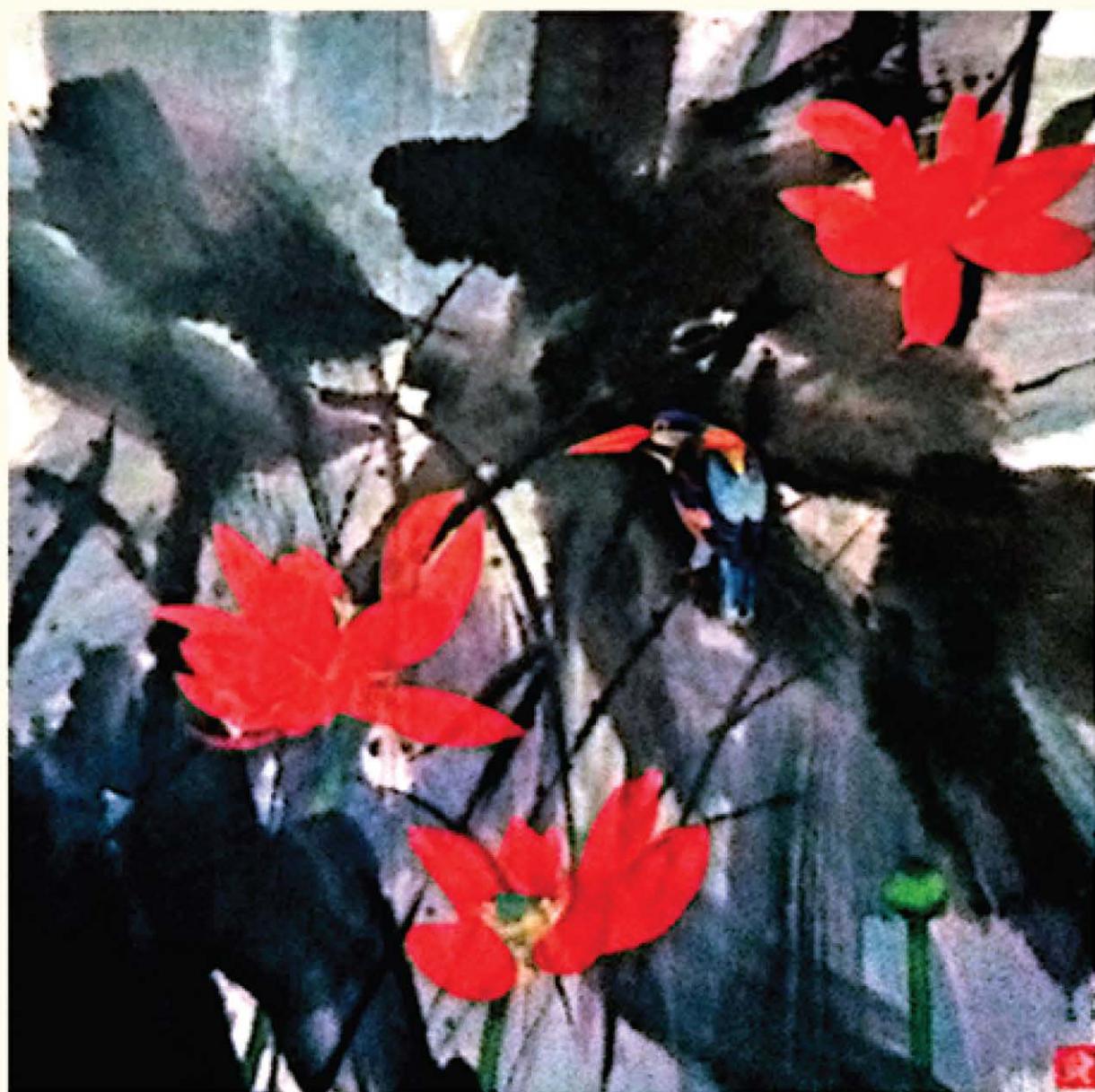


CHINESE LITERATURE

1979 **8**



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Yang Yi

A Man Who Conquered Fate

—An Interview with Ba Jin

It is as if I hear the heavy sound of fate knocking on the door, when I listen to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, his proud announcement made one hundred and seventy years ago with the famous movement beginning *allegro con brio*, stern and insistent, which appears again and again, showing how man grapples with his fate, revolting against it and finally conquering it. That music reminds me of a proud old man, wearing spectacles, with a pensive expression. The writer Ba Jin!

I am in a quiet Shanghai street. The large, fan-shaped palm leaves bending over the wall of his courtyard seem to welcome me.

Several years ago I was at his home. At that time the master was still under a cloud, having been labelled by the "gang of four" as a reactionary writer. The fourteen volumes of his collected works were banned. His readers in China and abroad could not understand how such vicious charges could be heaped on such an old writer of great intellectual integrity, who had devoted his whole life to writing about the sufferings of his people with all his honesty, love and hate. As I stood before the familiar gate, I noticed it had been newly painted. The world

had changed and the house had at last lost its isolated feeling of the past twelve years. Ba Jin's name has been cleared and he again has become a delegate at the People's Congress. Today he is a veteran writer, still full of youth and vigour, loved and respected by the people and willing to expend all his energies serving his motherland.

When I pressed the bell, the gate was opened by a tall, pretty girl, one of his nieces. I went from the hall into the sitting-room. Ba Jin came downstairs, smiled and shook my hand. He spoke in his strong Sichuan accent. He was still wearing a simple, blue padded cloth jacket and trousers, but the gloomy expression and frown he had had in past years was gone. Instead his eyes sparkled with amusement and wit. His health seemed good.

His sitting-room was comfortably yet simply furnished without much ornament. On the wall was a painting of three egrets standing by a pool, creating a tranquil atmosphere. It was by Lin Fengmian, the famous artist. There were some armchairs and low tables. As one expects, there were countless bookcases arranged along the walls, full of books. This was the most striking feature in the house. Ba Jin never desired possessions. All he wished was for a quiet life so that he could read and write. For ten years his family had been herded downstairs, and all the upstairs rooms had been sealed off. For a long period he had slept in the sitting-room. Now this has changed. Eight members of his family live in his house: his two younger sisters, his daughter and her husband, his son, his niece and his little five-year-old granddaughter. However, there was one member missing, his wife, Xiao Shan, the translator of some of Pushkin's and Turgenev's works, who died tragically of cancer in 1972 owing to the lack of proper treatment at that time. Thus Ba Jin lost his dearest companion.

After we had sat down, his little granddaughter in a red padded jacket kept darting among us like one of the happy sprites in fairy-tales. She could speak both in a Shanghai and Sichuan dialect, but since we came from Beijing, for us she used the northern accent. She solemnly announced that she wasn't at the nursery that afternoon because she had asked for leave. Her



Ba Jin and his granddaughter

serious expression made us laugh. During the last decade, while Ba Jin and his family were persecuted by the "gang of four", the old writer remained optimistic, confident of the future and full of vitality. His life was like Beethoven's symphony of fate. He had fought his feudal family when he was young and throughout his life he had fought other evils in society. There were times when he needed to rest and reflect. Sometimes he felt exhausted, but finally he was victorious in his struggle against fate.

Death had robbed him of many of his dearest ones: his parents, brothers, sisters and then his wife. At last we spoke of Xiao

Shan, whom he described as a part of himself. Earlier this year in January, he had finished writing an article in her memory. He told me: "She was calm as she was dying, conscious all the time, her eyes open. They were such big, bright, beautiful eyes. I gazed and gazed at her as if I was watching a brilliant candle flame about to be extinguished. How I wished that those eyes would always remain bright. Now I feared her leaving me. I wouldn't have cared being cut to pieces because of my works, as long as she could live in peace." Ba Jin's words reminded me of the former mistress of the house. I recalled our talk by the stove one winter night some years ago. But the past had gone, never to return. On Ba Jin's desk was a photograph of Xiao Shan, a sad smile on her face. She would remain with him always, but in silence. . . .

Once more Ba Jin had to conquer the fate which tried to crush him. Once more he was triumphant. He lives with courage, never compromising with fate. After the fall of the "gang of four", he wrote to a friend: "Zhang Chunqiao said that he and the gang were too good to me and that I should have been executed. But I was determined to live to see the day when they would fall from power. Now that moment has come, and I have seen it!"

As a young man of twenty-three, Ba Jin wrote his first novel *Débâcle* in a Parisian boarding-house, in a room on the fifth floor. Then he could never have imagined that forty years later his writing would be reviled and interrupted. He could never have foreseen the tragedies that would befall Chinese writers and artists during the Cultural Revolution. In the old society before Liberation, he had written millions of words attacking the feudal system and the capitalist society. He had strongly criticized the barbarous Confucian morality which enslaved people's minds. With his works he had aroused revolutionary fervour in young people. After the birth of New China in 1949, he had written many works in praise of the Chinese Communist Party and the people. His story *Reunion* which tells about the heroic Chinese People's Volunteers was later made into a film, *Heroic Sons and Daughters*. Even after Ba Jin had been labelled as a

reactionary writer by the "gang of four", the film was still shown, only Ba Jin's name was not mentioned. Ba Jin dislikes talking about his sufferings in the past years. He said that recently he had started to write his memoirs. In one passage he had written: "The youth of today, like those who wrote the Tiananmen poems and their readers, are much better than those of our generation. Their political consciousness is more developed and they have more courage. They are more resourceful and more determined. Without such revolutionary youth, we cannot achieve our modernization. This is the age of heroes. Their revolutionary spirit is the hope of our socialist motherland. Though I am old, I must follow these young people on our new Long March. I wish these young people all success." Ba Jin told us that although in the past some young people were deceived by the "gang of four" and did some bad things, yet he firmly believed at that time that they would later realize their mistakes. Now he, just as in the past, places the hope of our country in the younger generation and is full of confidence for the future.

Then we turned our conversation to his past career and how he first decided to be a writer as a boy of eighteen. Born in 1904, he had spent his youth in a feudal family in Sichuan. When he was only ten years old, he lost his mother who dearly loved him. His unhappiness at her death was increased by the lack of love in the well-off family. Two years later his father also died of illness. His grandfather ruled over the family like a feudal tyrant. His elder brother shouldered the burden of family affairs and submitted to the dictates of his elders. Women suffered even more, being treated as playthings and bullied. Ba Jin had several girl cousins who were forced to marry and live their lives in feudal bondage. He began to detest the feudal codes and patriarchal despotism of the elders. He did not go to a middle school but studied at home. In 1920, after the death of his grandfather, he and his second brother entered a school for foreign languages in Chengdu, where Ba Jin studied for two and a half years. Every evening he and his brother avidly studied newly published progressive periodicals like *New Youth* and *Weekly Review*. Kropotkin's work, *To Youth*, deeply impress-

ed him. Ba Jin had never realized that such books existed. From that time he formed his ideals and love of mankind. He wanted to do something to benefit the world and he was prepared to sacrifice his life for freedom. Then he chanced upon a play *Le Grand Soir* by the Polish writer, Leopold Kampf. He was profoundly moved when he read about the tragic struggles of young people fighting for their freedom and happiness abroad. For the first time, the fifteen-year-old Ba Jin had found the hero of his dreams. Another writer who had a great influence on his young mind was the Lithuanian anarchist, Emma Goldman. From her writings, Ba Jin saw the "beauty of anarchism". In 1925 he began to correspond with her and he called her his spiritual mother.

In those days Ba Jin, in contact with some other patriotic youths, wrote some articles and became the editor of a fortnightly magazine which they published. In this way he started his writing career. He met a young man named Wu, whose self-sacrifice and determination made a strong impression on him. In his letters, when summing up his early influences, he wrote: "My mother taught me love; the sedan-carrier Zhou taught me honesty; and my friend Wu taught me self-sacrifice and gave me courage."

In the spring of 1923, when Ba Jin was nearly nineteen, he and his third brother left the family, which they considered a prison, and went first to Shanghai, then entered a middle school affiliated to the Southeast University in Nanjing. After graduation in 1925, his brother went to university, but Ba Jin was in poor health and gave up his studies. He started his vagabond life. In Shanghai, he published some magazines and printed some books, as well as translating Kropotkin's *Bread and Freedom*. In January 1927, he sailed to Marseilles and then went to Paris. Friends helped him to find a lodging on the fifth floor of a boarding-house in the Latin Quarter. Although he had a few friends who visited him from time to time, each was occupied with his own life and work. Ba Jin was very lonely and often strolled round the Panthéon, pausing to look at the statues of the great philosophers, Rousseau and Voltaire, the tombs of the celebrated writers Hugo and Zola. Zola's fight to clear the in-

nocent Dreyfus of the false charges made against him left a deep impression on Ba Jin's young heart.

Every day, he heard the bells of Notre Dame. Their tolling increased his feeling of loneliness and made him recall the past: "I was reminded of my active life in Shanghai. I thought of my friends in their arduous struggle. I thought of past love and hate, joy and sorrow, sympathy and sufferings, hope and struggle. Thinking of these, my heart felt as if it had been stabbed. Then unquenchable flames started to burn fiercely again." He began writing his first novel *Débâcle* at the time when two Italian workers, Sacco and Vanzetti, had been incarcerated in an American jail for six years and condemned to death. Their case had caught the attention of the world. Ba Jin wrote to Vanzetti and translated into Chinese his autobiography *The Life Story of a Proletarian*.

At that time in China, Chiang Kai-shek had betrayed the revolution and massacred many revolutionary youths. Ba Jin was in a state of deep despair. One day he received a letter from Vanzetti, written in jail, telling him not to give up hope: "You must live honestly, love the people, and help them." In another letter, Vanzetti began with these words: "The youth are the hope of mankind. . . ." On 22nd August 1927, ignoring the protests of the whole world, the United States government executed these two workers. Ba Jin was profoundly shocked. He decided to finish his novel *Débâcle*. In December 1928, he left Paris for China. When he reached Shanghai at the beginning of the following year, he found that his first novel had been serialized in the magazine *Story Monthly*. This made him decide to be a writer. Later he said modestly: "*Débâcle* is not a revolutionary book, but it is honest writing. It doesn't point out the revolutionary path, but it truthfully exposes the soul of a petty-bourgeois, who wants to join the revolution, but has not found the correct way. . . ." And: "My main target was aimed at all those irrational old systems. What I expected was the imminent revolution. The call I made in the book can be summed up in this sentence: 'All those who built their happiness on the suffering of others must perish.' "

In 1930, he finished another novel *The Dead Sun*. At the same time he began to write short stories. In August 1931 he completed his novel *New Life*. At the end of that year he finished his long novel *The Family* and a shorter one, *Fog*.

In 1932, when the Japanese militarists invaded Shanghai, Ba Jin's home was in flames. After he returned to his war-torn house, he finished a short novel *A Dream Under the Sea*. He went south for a trip. When he came back, Ba Jin wrote another short novel *Autumn in Spring* in a week and then another about a tin mine called *The Miners*. That summer he rewrote his novel *New Life*, as the original manuscript had been destroyed by the fire in the war. Then he concentrated on his novel *Rain* and some travel notes and short stories. Ba Jin's twenty-eighth year was therefore a very fruitful one despite great social unrest.

In the first half of 1933, he completed his long novel *Germinal*, which was about a coal mine. This work pleased him. He hoped it would rouse men to demand justice and unite workers to rebel against their exploiters, like Zola's novel of the same name. In this book Ba Jin even advocated armed struggle. Soon after its publication, the book was banned by the Kuomintang regime, but two years later, in 1936, he had it republished under another name *Snow*. By the end of 1933, Ba Jin had finished his novel *Lightning*, which together with its short sequel *Thunder* concluded his trilogy *Love*, the whole three volumes being *Fog*, *Rain* and *Lightning*. This trilogy is about the revolutionary life, faith and love of some young people. It is one of Ba Jin's favourite works, for he said it was one written for himself, all the main characters being based on his friends. The last volume *Lightning* clearly shows his ideology and his optimism.

In December that year, he went to Japan and finished his books *Gods, Ghosts and Men* and *Jottings* and edited a collection of earlier prose writings *Confessions of Life*. In July 1935, he returned to China and became an editor of the Cultural Life Publishing House. Together with his friend Zhang Jinyi, he printed the monthly magazine *Literature*, which was banned after only seven issues by the Kuomintang. Then he published *Letters*,

Reminiscences and a children's story *The Pagoda of Long Life*. The first two tell about his childhood and early youth.

After the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japan in 1937, Ba Jin, together with the two writers Mao Dun and Zhang Jinyi, started a weekly magazine *The Flames of War*. In 1938 Ba Jin completed his novel *Spring*. Then he went to Hongkong, Guangzhou, Hankou and Guilin, writing many travel notes and starting on another novel *Autumn*, which was published in 1940. The three novels, *The Family*, *Spring* and *Autumn*, form a trilogy entitled *The Torrent*. In *The Family* Ba Jin said that he had cried out "J'accuse!" at the moribund feudal society. It was a strong denunciation of the old society and had a deep influence on the Chinese youth who were opposing feudalism and seeking a brighter future. Through the disintegration of the feudal family, this trilogy shows the growing generation of young rebels and points the way for young readers. In his preface Ba Jin wrote: "Everywhere I could see the torrent of life running wild, carving out its own channel through the dark crags and rocks." In the last novel *Autumn*, he said through the character of the young man Juemin: "There is no eternal autumn; perhaps autumn will depart soon." This expresses Ba Jin's revolutionary optimism, his faith in the future and his wish to inspire young people. *The Family* has become well-known both in China and abroad. It is indeed a powerful work.

When he spoke of *The Family*, Ba Jin said: "All the characters in this novel are based on people I loved and hated. Many scenes were what I had witnessed myself or experienced." He added: "I had three brothers and they were like the characters Juexin, Juemin and Juehui. Their characters were different, and so were their lives. . . . Life in the last dozen years and more oppresses my heart like a nightmare. This nightmare has ruthlessly crushed the spirit of many of my youthful contemporaries. I almost succumbed but 'innocence' and 'foolhardiness' saved me. In this aspect I was like the character Juehui. I relied on one simple faith and strode boldly towards one goal. I insisted on being my own master. I insisted on doing what others forbade me to do." He continued: "I was an ordinary young man, not

an eccentric or a fool. I just want to fight for my happiness." This is what Ba Jin is like. This work pleased him and he says of it: "In this novel I see again my youth. No matter if my past memories are full of pain, I still love the youth that has passed away, and I still say youth is something beautiful and to me it will always remain a source of inspiration."

Between 1940 and 1943, Ba Jin was in Kunming, Guilin, Chongqing and Chengdu. During this period he finished his novel *Fire*, a volume of miscellaneous notes *Dragons, Tigers and Dogs* and a short story *The Life-giving Herb*. In the spring of 1944, he married his wife in Guiyang. In 1949, he finished his short novel *Garden of Repose* which describes a young man from a wealthy family becoming a criminal. He also wrote *Ward Number Four* and *Frosty Night*, the latter is a novel about an intellectual's life and death. In these works Ba Jin denounced the iniquities and stupidity of the old society.

Such is the life of Ba Jin. Even in the early thirties he was well-known and loved by young readers. In later years his works became known abroad too. As the French scholar Dr. J. Monsterleet said in 1948: "Ba Jin's writings are stirring records of China's literary renaissance and socialist revolution. Like our intoxicating songs of ancient times, they will always remain with us. They are our literature of New China. When this age has passed away, perhaps there may be greater thinkers and writers, but his works will always be a treasured record preserved by posterity."

Anarchist thought to some extent influenced Ba Jin's early writings, but his themes were drawn from real life. During the period of the New Democratic Revolution after the May 4th Movement, the main ideological trend in his early writings shows an anti-feudal and anti-imperialist spirit. In 1966, when the "gang of four" tried to smear him, they claimed that his pen-name, Ba Jin, was derived from Bakunin and Kropotkin and that he was a Chinese anarchist. Ba Jin's real name is Li Feigan, and he himself had explained in his reminiscences long ago how he came to choose this name. He said: "My health was poor at the time, so taking the doctor's advice to have a rest, I went

to a small town Chateau-Thierry on the banks of the Marne, which was recommended by a Chinese student friend from Anhui. There I studied French in the local school and got to know several fellow Chinese students. Among these was one from north China called Ba Enpo, who stayed with me for nearly a month before going to Paris. The following year I heard that he had drowned himself near the Pont au Change. Although I had not known him very well, I was distressed by his suicide. The word Ba in my name is taken from his. As for Jin, it was suggested by my Anhui friend. At that time I had just finished translating the first half of Kropotkin's *Ethics*, and as I had the book on my desk, he chose the word Jin as a joke, when I said I needed a word which could easily be remembered."

Since 1927, Ba Jin never laid down his pen, producing fourteen volumes of works which the "gang of four" banned. In these he poured out his life-blood and tears, his burning passion and courage. They helped to inspire young people to seek a better society. He loves his young readers and has always expressed his thoughts modestly to them. In the thirties he liked to say that they must have faith in the future for it would be beautiful. Now he smiled and said to us: "I can only give these young people a general direction, hoping they will go and seek the light, but it is their own business which road they choose to take." He always believed in the path he chose and never turned back. This was the way of freedom and light. In fact in the thirties, many young people embarked on the revolutionary road after having read Ba Jin's works.

Ba Jin spoke with emotion: "A writer should express his criticism of real life." After Liberation, some young writers had advocated making criticisms of real life, and this was later considered by some as being a "rightist" remark. Ba Jin explained that when he said this, he did not mean that writers should concentrate on depicting the seamy side of the society, but that a writer must always write with genuine personal feeling about subjects with which he is familiar. He then said: "As a writer, one must do something useful for the country and the people." He regretted those years during the gang's reign of terror when

he was forbidden to do any creative writing and only started to translate the first part of Herzen's memoirs *My Past and Thoughts* in 1973. He continued: "Some of my writings are not so bad, others are not so good. I had contradictions. Sometimes I managed to solve them, at other times I failed. Since Liberation I also wanted to write about workers, peasants and soldiers, but I am not familiar with their lives. When I went to live among the masses for a while, then returned to write, I still felt I did not know them well enough, so such writings of mine are not successful." He added that despite his seventy-five years he was in good health and hoped to write for at least another five years. He wanted to write about intellectuals because he knew such people. At the moment he has embarked on two long novels and he also wants to produce a volume of "thoughts" for his readers.

The nightmare had gone and Ba Jin was sitting and smiling at me as he had forty years ago.

"Have faith in the future; the future will be beautiful!"

I seemed to hear again the stirring symphony of fate. Fate had tried to crush his spirit, but in the end he conquered fate. I woke from my reverie, rose and went outside in the peaceful darkness. It was night with a touch of spring in the air; the light breeze was not chilly. The white lilac, planted fourteen years ago in the courtyard, was already in bud, heralding the end of winter. Soon this old man with his daughter, who so resembles her mother, would visit Europe and see Paris again after half a century. He intends to write travel notes recalling many past memories. When he hears again the bells of Notre Dame, he will remember his loneliness as a young man of twenty-three, when he began his first novel. Meeting foreign friends, he will tell them about his great country China, the hard years the Chinese people have endured and the new Long March which has just begun.

We wish you all success, Ba Jin! Your irrepressible passion will melt the cold frost of winter. Young people encouraged by you will learn to be faithful to life and love mankind. Personal sufferings mean nothing to you since you have the firm conviction

tion that life means giving and not taking. We learn from you that "only the strong acknowledges his fault, only the strong is humble, only the strong forgives — and indeed only the strong laughs, though often his laughter is equal to tears."*

* From *A Family Drama* by Herzen.

Ba Jin

The Heart of a Slave

“**M**y people were slaves!” Peng told me one day proudly. Many of my friends had told me their family background, all announcing equally complacently, “My ancestors had hosts of slaves!” Most of their families still owned many slaves, though a minority had fewer than before or none at all, and their behaviour and talk made it clear that they looked back nostalgically to that golden age.

As for myself, I remember that my great-grandfather had four slaves, my grandfather eight, and my father sixteen. I inherited those sixteen slaves from him, very pleased to be a slave-owner. And it was my ambition to increase the number from sixteen to thirty-two.

But then Peng came into my life and did not scruple to tell me, even proudly, that his forbears had been slaves. I thought he must be crazy.

I didn't know Peng's background, but we were friends. This had come about in a unique way: he burst into my life by chance. It happened like this:

One afternoon, leaving college with something on my mind, I didn't watch where I was going. A car drove up behind me, its

horn blaring, but apparently I didn't hear it. I would have been run over had not a strong hand grasped my arm and tugged me aside. I nearly fell, but I was out of danger. When I recovered my balance and looked round, a tall lean young fellow behind me was glaring at me. He made no response to my thanks, didn't even smile, just fixed me with a gimlet stare. Finally he said as if to himself, "Better be more careful in future." With that he left. But we had become acquainted.

In college we belonged to different departments. I studied literature, he social sciences. We didn't attend the same lectures, yet often ran into each other. Each time we only passed a few remarks or said nothing at all, simply exchanging cool glances. Still, we had become friends.

Very rarely did we converse at any length, and we never made small talk about the weather.

When we did talk it was always to the point.

You might say we were good friends, yet I didn't love him. It was largely out of gratitude and curiosity that I remained friends with him. I may have respected but certainly didn't like him. There was nothing amiable about his appearance, speech or behaviour. Wherever he was, he looked dour.

I didn't know his background, as he never spoke of it. But judging by what I saw of him at college he wasn't from a wealthy family. He was very parsimonious, quite unlike the usual run of undergraduates, and didn't wear western-style suits or go to films or dances. Apart from attending lectures, he spent his whole time reading in his room or strolling in the playing-field or the town. He never smiled, merely brooded in silence.

Yes, I often wondered what he had on his mind. For three years we were classmates, and as far as I could see he spent the whole time brooding.

One day I couldn't resist asking, "What are you thinking about all the time, Peng?"

"You wouldn't understand," he answered coldly, then made straight off.

He was right — I didn't understand why a young man should be so gloomy, so eccentric. My baffled surprise made me eager

to solve this riddle. And so I paid more attention to his behaviour, to the books he read and the company he kept.

I discovered that I seemed to be the only friend he had. Of course he knew some other people, but no one liked to have much to do with him, especially as he showed no inclination to make friends. He glowered at everyone, not even smiling when girl students addressed him. And although we were on close terms he treated me coldly too. I decided that must be the reason why I disliked him.

I observed his reading habits. He was too indiscriminate, reading many weird books by authors whose names I had never even heard of. Some of them had remained for years in the library stacks with no one asking for them. He read books of every kind: one day a novel maybe, the next a treatise on philosophy, the day after that a history. So it was virtually impossible to decipher him from his reading, as I knew nothing of what was in those books — unless I took the trouble to read them myself.

One evening he came without warning to my room. That term I'd moved outside to comfortable lodgings. My upstairs room had a view of the road to the college and a newly opened miniature golf-course.

Peng came in and plumped down unceremoniously on my white sofa, dusting off his old lined gown in silence. I was reading at my desk, and after glancing up at him lowered my head again. My eyes were on my book, my mind on my new sofa under his old lined gown.

"Do you know, Zheng, how many slaves there are in China today?" his gruff voice asked suddenly.

"Several million most likely," I answered off-hand, having no idea whether this figure quoted by a friend a few days before was correct or not. It wasn't a question which had ever exercised my mind.

"Several million? No, more than several tens of millions!" Peng sounded distraught. "And, in a wider sense, at least three quarters of China's population are slaves."

"Well, at any rate I'm not one," I thought complacently. But I raised my head again to look at Peng, puzzled by his agitation.

"Do you have slaves too?" he asked abruptly and rudely.

I thought he must despise me for having none, in which case he was wrong as we had in fact sixteen. Smiling smugly I bragged, "Of course someone like myself has slaves. We have sixteen at home."

He gave a caustic laugh, and I observed even greater contempt — instead of respect or envy — in the glance he shot at me. He actually seemed to despise the owner of sixteen slaves. That astonished me. I could hardly believe my eyes. As I tried to work out the reason, it suddenly occurred to me that it was jealousy, for judging by the frugal way he lived he couldn't have slaves himself. So I asked sympathetically, "I suppose you have slaves in your family too?"

To my surprise he shot me another glance, this time filled with pride. "My people were slaves!" he announced, as if boasting of some great achievement.

"Surely not," I said, even more staggered. "There's no call for such modesty between good friends."

"Modesty? Why should I be modest?" He sounded astonished, as if I had said something strange.

"But you stated clearly that your people were slaves."

"So they were."

"And you're a college student..." I remained sceptical.

"Why shouldn't the son of slaves be a college student?" he retorted scornfully. "I dare say some of your ancestors were slaves too."

I leapt up as if lashed on the head, thinking this a fearful insult, and stepped over to confront him. "You think my ancestors the same as yours?" I glared at him furiously. "Not on your life! Let me tell you, my father had sixteen slaves, my grandfather eight, my great-grandfather four; and before that they had still more!" In fact I was uncertain about those earlier times. My great-great-grandfather may have been a small tradesman with no slaves, or the son of a slave, for all I knew. But I always

liked to imagine him a high official with a fine mansion and a flock of concubines, as well as hundreds of slaves.

I may not have harped on it but I had certainly told people several times, "My ancestors were high officials." And now he had the nerve to call me — to my face — the descendant of slaves. I had never been so insulted in all my life. This was too much to take, I must get my own back. I glared at him balefully. But when our eyes met, his steely stare gradually calmed me down. I felt I owed him more deference in view of the good turn he'd done me. I went back to my seat.

"Yes, I believe you there, because someone like you obviously comes from a slave-owning family. But someone like myself could never have been born in such a family. That's what I'm proud of." His manner was overbearing. He was obviously sneering at me.

Sure that envy had unhinged his mind, I couldn't help laughing.

His face blackened and he raised his hand as if to block out the sight of me. "What are you laughing at? Yes, I'm proud to be descended from slaves. Because our hearts are so closely linked together.... What do *you* know? Dreaming sweet dreams inside your warm quilt in this elegant room, what do *you* know about such things?... I wish I could open the eyes of people like you!... Yes, I'm the son of slaves, I don't deny it. I can proclaim it with pride. My father and mother were slaves, and my grandfather and great-grandfather before them. Going further back, there may never have been anyone in my family who wasn't a slave."

I thought he had surely gone mad and I had better trick him into leaving, before he made any trouble. But he went straight on:

"Yes, you have sixteen slaves. You're satisfied, happy and proud. But do you know how your slaves live? Can you tell me the story of just one of them? No, of course you can't.

"All right, let me tell you some stories.... My grandfather was a very loyal slave, I've never seen anyone more loyal. He worked hard in his master's house for nearly fifty years. As

the son of a slave, he was put to work very young. His hair was grey as early as I can remember. We lived in a tumble-down shed behind the house, my father, mother, grandfather and I. Not that mother often slept there, she was too busy waiting on the mistress and young ladies. I often saw grandfather cursed by the master and his sons. He flushed and accepted it with lowered head. In winter the wind shook the roof of our shed, icy air came through the crannies, and we were too cold to sleep with just a thin quilt on the hard plank bed. The three of us — I was just a child with my old grandfather and my father in his prime — used to go out to collect sticks, fallen leaves and straw to make a fire on the ground. As we squatted down to warm ourselves, grandfather's tongue would be loosened. He reminisced, then launched into a homily, urging me to be good and honest, to work faithfully for the master the way he did. Goodness would meet with its reward, he said. My father wasn't much of a talker. By the time grandfather ended his lecture the fire would have died down and it would be late, time for the



Later he was discovered hanging dead from a branch of the locust tree in the garden.

three of us to go to bed, huddling closely together through the cold night.

“Grandfather’s reward came at last. One summer morning we woke to find him gone, and later he was discovered hanging dead from a branch of the locust tree in the garden. Mother wouldn’t let me have a last look at his face, and his corpse was quickly disposed of, laid out on a wooden board, the top half covered with a mat. All I saw was his big, dirty feet. So that was my last sight of my grandfather.

“Why had he hung himself? The reason was said to be simple: the day before, the master had discovered the loss of some valuables and accused him of stealing them. Grandfather had protested his loyalty — he would never dream of robbing his master. But for this he had his ears boxed and was roundly abused, ordered to make good the loss. Grandfather was very ashamed and felt he’d let his master down by failing to win his trust and repay him for his kindness. This made him wretched. Besides, after slaving away all those years he hadn’t a cent put by to pay for the loss. So after nearly fifty years of faithful service he hung himself with his own belt on the locust tree. That was his ‘reward’.

“Though the whole household pitied him, they took it for granted that he was the thief. So I was not only the son of a slave but the grandson of a thief. However, I didn’t believe my grandfather had stolen anything. That wouldn’t have been in character. He was a good man. Most evenings my father cradled me in his arms and very soon dozed off, tired out after a day’s hard work. But I couldn’t sleep that night for thinking of my grandfather. At the thought of his kindly face, tears blurred my eyes. I suddenly felt I was in his arms and hugged him, sobbing, ‘Grandad, I don’t believe you ever stole anything. The thief must have been someone else.’

“‘What’s that you’re saying, Little Ox?’ I recognized my father’s voice. Born in the Year of the Ox, my pet-name was Little Ox. I wiped my eyes but my father — it was he who was sleeping beside me — had seen the tears. I burst out crying so that he couldn’t sleep. In tears himself, he tried to comfort me,

saying, 'You're right, Little Ox. Your grandad never stole anything. I know who the real thief was.' Clutching his arm, I begged him to tell me, and after some hesitation he said with a sigh, 'All right, if you promise not to tell anyone else.' I promised, not that a child's word counts for much, and so he finally told me bitterly, 'It was the elder young master. Your grandad knew that. You mustn't let on to a soul. Your grandad was willing to give his life to cover up for him, so I can't tell the truth. He's dead and gone now, and if I were to speak out no one would believe me. It would land us in trouble too...'"

Peng paused before adding with a wry smile, "I'm telling you the gist of what my father said, not the actual words. But I'm sure I've not left out anything important. You mustn't think I'm making this up."

I nodded in silence and let him continue, "I didn't understand my father's reason, but I was afraid to ask any further questions. Still I missed my grandfather and cried for him.

"I still had my parents and we loved each other. After my grandfather's death my father always looked anxious and very seldom smiled.

"One evening — by then it was winter — my father and I were trying to warm up beside a fire indoors when there was a sudden commotion outside, and someone shouted, 'Help, help!' In fright I flung myself into my father's arms, my hands tightly round his neck. He whispered, 'Don't be afraid. Dad's here.' Then there was silence outside. But before very long someone came to tell my father that the master wanted him. He was away so long that I felt scared all alone there. Then he came back with my mother, both of them weeping. He held me in his arms, shaking with sobs, and spoke despairingly to my mother. That night the three of us slept clinging to each other. I didn't fully understand what my parents said. All I remember is this, 'Better let me die. What's the use of my living on? We're the master's slaves, we have to do as he says... If we had more sons, and they in turn had sons, they'd all be slaves too — not one could escape that fate. If I live, Little Ox will have to be a slave too, carrying on the slaves' line. I'd rather sell my

life to the master so that Little Ox can go to school and later make his own way in the world. . . .”

Peng's eyes reddened. After a brief silence he went on, “I remember what my father said, and shall never forget it till my dying day. Of course I've polished up the language a bit to make it closer to your speech. Still, you can sense some of the feeling behind his words.

“My mother didn't say much, just clung to my father and sobbed, ‘How am I to live without you?’ I didn't know what was wrong but I cried too.

“We were still in bed the next morning when the police came for my father. My mother clutched his sleeve weeping, and so did I. He was charged with murdering someone the previous evening. I didn't believe it. He'd been with me by the fire. When the uproar started outside, he'd taken me in his arms and hadn't left me — so how could he have murdered anyone outside? My father didn't defend himself, but hung his head in silence as he was led off. I ran frantically to clutch his sleeve, while mother said nothing. They knocked me down and father was carried off.

“That was the last time I saw him. In just a few months he died of illness in prison. By then mother had stopped working for that household, we had moved outside and I was going to school. All our expenses were met by the master. He had bought my father's life to make him a scapegoat for his son (I heard later that the murderer was the young master), and he didn't go back on his word. . . . Should I have been grateful to him? No, I hated him and his son! They were my enemies who had hounded my grandfather and father to death. But I used the money they paid for my father's life. My father gave his life to make me what I am today. His goal has been reached. Come what may, I shall end our slaves' line. . . .”

He broke off abruptly, his face fearfully contorted, biting his lips to suppress an outburst of rage. I guessed that he was holding something back. Though I had been quite moved by his account, I stared at him steadily and probingly as if to ask, “What other dreadful secrets have you?”

He must have read my mind for his face flushed red — either with shame or anger. After taking a few strides across the room he sat down again with a terrible look on his face. “Yes, the story doesn’t end there. I’ve kept something back,” he said. “Well, I may as well tell you. One day I went home from school earlier than usual and saw mother sitting on the bed with a man. They didn’t notice me, so I skulked outside, my heart bursting with rage and mortification. All the time I had been studying hard at school, my mother had been prostituting herself at home! The idea tormented me, yet I loved my mother and didn’t like to lash out at her. Besides, I’d recognized the fellow as the young master. He of all people! After hounding my grandfather and father to death, here he was ruining my mother. I heard her tell him, ‘Hurry up and go now before Little Ox comes back.’ The young master said something to which she replied, ‘For pity’s sake don’t keep coming, or you’ll meet Little Ox! Please have a heart! . . .’

“When I went in, mother was sitting alone on the bed, her head lowered in thought. I rushed over to her. She gave a start and blushed furiously. ‘So you’re back?’

“I clasped her knees, torn between humiliation and fury. ‘Shame on you, mum!’ I cried. ‘Dad’s not been dead a year yet, and you play about with other men!’ She said nothing. ‘I work so hard at school, yet you carry on like this. How can you, mum!’ Mother just cried, ‘Little Ox,’ then fell back on the bed sobbing. That softened my heart, reminding me of her loving care for me and the way she kept me company when I did my homework each evening, the way she comforted me and encouraged me. ‘I’m sorry, mum,’ I apologized. ‘I shouldn’t have hurt you by talking like that. Please forgive me.’ It was some time before she raised her head and sat up, making me sit beside her. ‘You were right, Little Ox,’ she said sadly. ‘I’m the one who should ask your forgiveness. Since your dad died, you’re all I have. I’m living just for you. If not for you, I’d gladly have followed your dad to the grave. Don’t you remember his parting words? He couldn’t bear you to be a slave and wanted you to study so as to get on in the world. If he’d give his life

for that, why shouldn't I? Because, maybe, of my sins in a former life, when I was waiting on the ladies in their house the young master kept pestering me, and I couldn't escape him. After your dad died and we moved out he's kept coming here to find me. Of course I know he's just trifling with me. It's easier for him than going anywhere else, and it's my fault for being not bad-looking. His family's keeping us now and you want to study — we can't do without their money. He's capable of anything, that brute. I've no way of refusing him.... Little Ox, please forgive me! I don't care what happens to me so long as you can study and don't have to be a slave.' Of course those weren't her actual words, just the gist of what she said.

"I hugged her tight, loving her more deeply than ever. 'It's too hard on you, mum,' I said wretchedly. 'I'll stop going to school. I can't let you put up with such misery. I don't want to go on studying, I'll be a slave instead.'

"At once she put her hand over my mouth. 'Don't talk nonsense,' she cried. 'You must study and turn out well. To see you through school, I'll gladly put up with misery all my life.'

"Mother reasoned with me tearfully all that evening, and finally I agreed to do as she said. The next morning I went off to school as usual, and I said no more about not studying. I worked very hard, gulping down all the random knowledge I could at school, confident that it would lead me to a bright future. I determined to carry out my parents' wishes and end our slavery.

"But bitter reality weighed heavily on me. The past seemed like a devil that had taken possession of me. Life was too wretched, especially for someone who wanted to extricate himself from slavery. Still I had my hope, had my mother's love and aspirations to spur me on. That helped me to put up with everything.

"Of course the young master kept coming. How I loathed him! But I gave no sign of it. After he left, mother seemed a different woman. She gave way to fits of weeping, and it took me a long time to comfort her. If things had gone on like that, she'd soon have died. But luckily four or five months later the

young master took a girl as his concubine and stopped coming to our place. Mother lived in peace with me for several years, right up till I entered college.

"It's three years since my mother died. I've never forgotten her for a single day or my grandfather and father. I often think of their downtrodden existence, but without any sense of shame — I've never blushed for them. I'm proud that my people were slaves, yes, really proud. Even though my grandfather was branded as a thief and hanged himself, my father died in prison as a scapegoat, and my mother was prostituted, can you accuse them of any dirty dealings? What harm did they do anyone? . . ." He was very worked up. "I know you sneer at them, look down on them. You can't understand their mentality! They had hearts of gold, unlike people of your kind!

"The thought of them often keeps me awake at night. One feeling obsesses me — not shame but anger. I think: Here I am in a comfortable bed while elsewhere millions, tens of millions of slaves are lamenting their unhappy fate. They're living the same wretched lives as my grandfather. While their masters are lost in sweet dreams the old ones are being accused of theft, fated to hang themselves the next morning; those in their prime are being forced to be scapegoats; the mothers and daughters are submitting to the masters' embraces; the children are clinging to their fathers, weeping. I start cursing them savagely, cursing you and your kind. If only I could wipe you out to the last man! You hounded my grandfather to death, bought my father's life, raped my mother. They're all dead now while you are still living. I want to be revenged on you. . . ."

Now he frightened me by standing up and approaching me, so that it was all I could do not to cry out. As I was tensing to defend myself, he went over to the window. Standing there looking at the view, he suddenly pointed outside and fumed, "Look!" I saw he was pointing at the miniature golf-course. It was flood-lit, and a few white-clad attendants were pacing in front of the entrance where an indecently dressed foreign woman was selling tickets. Young men and girls got up in the height of fashion were strolling inside in pairs.



The fury in his voice seemed to seethe with the age-old wretchedness of a whole class.

"We work ourselves to the bone year in year out, our grandfathers hang themselves, our fathers rot in prison, our mothers and sisters are raped, our children weep. And not one of that lot — your sort — has any conscience!" The fury in his voice seemed to seethe with the age-old wretchedness of a whole class. I felt as if lashed by a whip. My eyes were suddenly opened to see countless tragic scenes. I was well aware that we had sixteen slaves at home, and remembered wishing that I could double the number. The figures sixteen and thirty-two flashed before me. I identified myself with that young master who had ruined his grandfather, had his father punished in my place, raped his mother. I was seized with dread, imagining that two predatory eyes were sizing me up. Thinking my last hour had come, I let out a scream of terror.

"What's up, Zheng? Why are you screaming?" he asked gently.

Unable to speak, I simply wiped my eyes.

"Are you afraid of me, Zheng? You ought to know I wouldn't hurt you." He gave a wry smile.

By now I was much calmer. I looked intently at his face and saw nothing threatening there. Remembering how he had rescued me from death I asked dubiously, "Why did you save my life, Peng? I'm a slave-owner too, your enemy. Why didn't you let me be run over by that car?"

Another wry smile. Then presently he said gently, "I suppose I still have a slave mentality."

I stared at him in silence, on the verge of tears.

He must have thought I didn't understand, for he elaborated, "To renounce one's own happiness to find happiness for others; to lay down one's life with no regret for others — that's the slave mentality. The mentality passed on by my ancestors to my grandfather, from him to my father, from my father to me." He pointed at his chest, and in fancy I saw a big bright red heart beating there. I glanced at my own chest. What lay beneath was hidden by my smart flannel jacket.

"When am I going to rid myself of this slave mentality, the heart of a slave?" His wretched voice so grated on my ears

that I promptly covered them. I didn't have even the heart of a slave! Perhaps I was completely heartless. Overwhelmed by shame, terror and grief I fainted away. I have no idea when he left.

After that I saw less of him, because little by little he became more eccentric. He seldom left footprints on the playing-field and was no longer to be seen strolling in town. I often went to his room but failed to find him. We became estranged, and later on I forgot his story. I had my own friends and my own amusements. I went to films and dances and played miniature golf with my girl friend. When my friends and I talked of the slaves in our families, I would boast, "We have sixteen slaves, and I mean to increase the number to thirty-two."

Within a few years of my graduation sure enough I achieved my aim. I had thirty-two slaves who served my family faithfully. Happy and content, I completely forgot the story about slaves which Peng had told me.

One day my wife and I were enjoying the cool of the garden with five slaves in attendance. As I leafed through that day's newspaper, in the column of local news I came upon an account of the execution of a revolutionary. His name was Peng. I knew it must be he, the benefactor who had saved my life and then been forgotten by me. The story he had told me, which I had forgotten for years, flashed back to my mind. I thought, now he has rid himself of that heart of a slave. His line of slaves has ended. Perhaps this was the happiest thing for him. But remembering how he had saved my life, I felt rather indebted to him. Staring at the paper reflectively, I couldn't help heaving two sighs.

"Why are you sighing all of a sudden, darling?" My wife reached out to stroke my hand and eyed me with tender concern.

"It's nothing. A former classmate of mine has died," I answered mildly. The sight of my wife's beautiful face and big eyes sparkling with love made me forget everything else.

1931

Illustrated by Li Huanmin

Ba Jin

Autumn in Spring

The novel *Autumn in Spring* comprises twenty-six chapters, the first twelve of which were published in our seventh issue. Here we present the rest of the story.

The first twelve chapters describe how Lin, a young English teacher in a middle school in C town, falls in love with his attractive, intelligent student Rong, who is devoted to him. Before long, to forestall opposition to their attachment, they leave the school and go to another town, lodging with different friends. Deeply in love, they enjoy the happiness of spring. But soon trouble arises and their springtime of love gives way to autumn.

Lin's sister sends him a telegram announcing the suicide of his elder brother whose sweetheart has married someone else. And Rong, having received a letter from her father, becomes strangely temperamental. She admires the peace of a cemetery, sheds tears over withered flowers and drowns her sorrow in wine... Lin suffers agony not because of his brother's death but because of the change in her. He feels that their hearts are far apart. Why should "autumn" rain fall in spring? What answer will the following fourteen chapters provide?

— The Editors

13

My younger sister's letter arrived at last. Though a bit late, it was a long one.

It said that my brother had committed suicide because of love.

He had fallen in love with a relative's daughter. It was their first love like that in the film.

At the same time, another young man also loved this girl.

But money, social status and honours . . . had prevented my brother from winning her. His proposal had been turned down by the girl's parents.

This poetic first love had left a deep wound on his soul.

The girl had married someone else while he himself had been ordered by my grandfather to marry another girl for whom he had no love.

Pleas and resistance were of no avail and he had been driven to desperation.

Eventually he had cut his own throat.

This was how he had ended his short life.

His death had caused more terror than tears and sympathy.

He had been buried beside my parents' tomb, circled by many cypress trees. A few small peach trees had been planted in front of his grave. But they would never bear fruit, though in spring their pink blossom would be as lovely as his sweetheart's cheeks.

My sister also told me that he had left a last testament and she would later send me a copy.

I was anxious to read it for, I was certain, there must be things I ought to know.

But my eyes were already brimming over with tears.

I wept not only because he was my brother and he had once loved me but also because he had been jilted.

In the time of Garbo, there were still men like my brother who were abandoned by women and driven to commit suicide! I had never expected this.

This ran counter to what Rong had said. In this society, it was not women alone who had a miserable fate. My brother, for one, had also been deprived of his spring.

Spring! Why couldn't everybody enjoy spring?

Garbo looked down at me with sorrow instead of a smile.

Had she anything to tell me? Would she say that women's fate was more miserable than men's?

"Rong, Rong, give me an answer!"

Rong was not in when I went to see her in the morning.

Her door was ajar and there was a note on the table:

Don't wait for me! I'm going out to see a friend and don't know what time I'll be back. I've left two packages of sweets on the table for you. They come from my home town. Think of me while you enjoy them. Go back and stay at home. I'll come to you this evening and we can take a sampan out to sea to watch the stars. — Rong.

I kissed the note before putting it carefully into my pocket.

While eating the sweets I wished I could kiss her lips because they were just as sweet. But she would not let me kiss her lips every day.

I did not do as I was told. I went to her room again after lunch and had a nap on her bed. But even then she did not turn up.

Thinking she might go straight to my place, I went back home. Then I had another nap on my own bed.

Though it was dusk, there was no sign of her. I guessed that she might not come.

It was a starry night. How delightful it would have been watching the stars at sea together with her.

I tried to find her again.

She was in this time.

I heard a sob from her lightless room.

It must be her sobbing.

I switched on the light.

The screen had been moved aside. She was lying on the bed weeping.

I halted in amazement.

"Why are you crying, Rong? Didn't you invite me to go to see the stars?"

She did not reply.

"What's the matter? What has made you so depressed? Who has upset you?"

She was still silent.

"What on earth is it? Tell me! If I've offended you, you'd better tell me, and I can apologize. Better give vent to your anger instead of ruining your health by crying."

"Not you," she sobbed.

"What is it then? Why need we keep any secrets from each other? Couldn't our love warm your heart? Tell me what you want me to do. I'm willing to do anything and everything for you, even to lay down my life. Please, speak up!"

"You'll know in future." Her voice sounded like the strains of a flute in the autumn rain.

In future? But you're worrying me to death now!

I knew she was keeping something secret. Since I would know in future, why couldn't she tell me now?

Despite all this, I loved her and cared for her. I took her sorrow as my own. When she cried I felt sad.

I bent closer to her, whispering consoling words.

At first I tried to soothe her but soon I too was weeping bitterly over all my grievances.

We stopped finally and regarded each other with tearful eyes, then smiled. I did not know why I had cried or why I smiled.

Love was like a game.

But I felt I loved her more than ever before and she seemed to feel the same.

We brewed some tea.

When I left her it was already late at night. She attentively saw me off.

It was really a beautiful night with all those stars in the dark sky.

I found Orion. Three stars in the middle made a short sloping line, and outside each of the four corners shone a bright star, one of them a brilliant red. These seven stars were my old friends. I could always find them whatever their place in the firmament among all the other stars sparkling overhead.

Oh, the everlasting stars!

I hoped that our love would prove as everlasting.

Before I got up in the morning she had sent somebody to me with a slip of paper:

Don't come to see me! I'm going to do some shopping with a girl friend. Here's a bunch of lilies for you. Put them near your pillow and have a nice dream with them beside you. When you awake you'll see me already beside you. — Rong.

I took the lilies and pressed them against my face. Their fragrance reminded me of the scent of her hair.

"Rong," I murmured her name again and again till I fell asleep.

When I woke up, not knowing the time, I smelt the flowers.

The lilies were still close to my pillow. But she had not come.

On a sudden impulse I decided to go and see her.

I hurriedly put on my clothes and went out.

I walked lightly through the soft breeze, fresh air, bright sunshine, shade of verdant trees, scent of flowers and songs of birds.

How beautiful spring was! Especially this spring that had brought me love.

I leapt and laughed on the street. I smelt the scent of lilies and though I hadn't much of a voice I hummed *Where Is My Song of All Songs*.

Very soon I saw her gate.

"Slow down a bit," I thought. "She is not expecting me. What shall I say first?"

"Perhaps she is out, in which case the door will be locked."

"Who did she go out with? Who is this girl friend?"

"She's probably stayed at home to pull my leg. Lovers get up to all sorts of games."

However, my speculations were cut short.

The gate opened and out came two figures. Two faces flashed past me. They were a man and a girl.

The girl was Rong. The man was in his thirties, with fat cheeks and a sparse moustache. A stranger!

They walked away from me.

“Who is that man?”

All my blood rushed to my face.

“She has cheated you. Catch up with them and unmask her!”
I said to myself and set off in pursuit.

“Who is that man? What’s their relationship?” I hesitated.

“Must be her lover. No wonder she’s been behaving so oddly recently.”

“Stop making a fool of yourself,” I warned myself.

I stood there at a loss. The blue checked blouse and the blue serge suit disappeared round a corner.

I let them go quietly, standing there without making a sound for fear they might turn and see me.

Slowly, I approached the green gate.

The gate looked very attractive in the sunshine with red and white flowers behind it.

Her window was open, but screened by green wire gauze and a white lace curtain.

Leaning against the gate I scrutinized all before me.

My heart ached, gnawed by jealousy, disappointment and loneliness.

I stared intently at the house.

What made me do that? Would I never see it again? I did not know the answer.

“I’ll stay here all day if need be till she comes back,” I said to myself.

“When I get home I must have a good cry,” I thought.

I wanted to cry then and there. I could not wait any longer.

Cry, poor man! You have been cheated by a woman.

I dragged myself away.

There was no sunshine in the street, no fragrant flowers, no shady trees. I could not see them because my eyes were filled with tears of sorrow.

The way home seemed extremely long today.

As soon as I got back I sank down on the sofa as if I had had a long journey.

"It's not worth crying for a girl. I'm not a man to be trifled with."

However, tears, blinding tears, were running down my face.

I had so many tears to shed!

Suddenly the word "suicide" loomed large in my mind. I thought of my dead brother.

"Suicide is the best revenge for a man who has been jilted.

"But will she know why I commit suicide?"

"Probably not.

"Even if she does, what good will that do me? I shan't have any consciousness by then, besides, she won't grieve for me.

"I'll write a last testament as my brother did.

"But people may not believe me. She's alive and able to defend herself, but I couldn't come back from the grave to answer her.

"What good would it do me if people did believe me? Some would curse me as a fool, others might write a play about me and stage it to earn money. So many men kill themselves because they are jilted, but not a single woman is punished for it.

"Better kill her and be the first man to punish a jilt.

"But she is so lovely. It would be a pity to kill her!

"Better kill that fat-faced fellow. See if she still cheats me after her lover's dead.

"But he may not be her lover. I've never seen him before. If she loves him why should she cheat me? She could simply ignore me.

"Perhaps she's only got to know him recently.

"But why should she love a man in his thirties? I'm not necessarily inferior to him. How can she abandon me for him?"

"She must be trying to get hold of us both.

"No, she is not that type. The girl I love would never do such a thing.

"Besides, they weren't walking in the way lovers do.

"That man is not her lover.

"They didn't deliberately avoid me. Why didn't I catch up and have it out with them?"

"Yes, that's what I should have done. Then things would have been cleared up.

"It's my fault. Didn't she tell me not to call? Why didn't I listen to her?"

"You spineless, suspicious weakling!"

That was my conclusion.

The lilies beside my bed looked limp.

I had forgotten to put them in the vase, had not taken good care of what she had given me.

I went to pick up the flowers and sniffed at them. Already they were losing their scent.

"She would shed bitter tears if she knew this," I thought.

I changed the water in the vase and put the lilies in it, hoping the clean water would revive them.

"You must live on," I prayed, "to symbolize our everlasting love."

Xu came in unexpectedly.

He was puzzled by my expression.

"Have you been crying, Lin?"

Instead of replying, I turned to look at the portrait of Garbo.

"What did you cry for?"

I was still silent, my eyes now on the portrait of Rong.

"Must be because of love, because of Rong." He sat down on the sofa.

"Lin, I said your love would not have a happy ending," he went on gloomily.

"Nonsense," I retorted with anger.

"I'd like to advise you not to take love too seriously. Men do not live only on love."

I wanted to break in: "Live on money, eh?" But I thought better of it.

"Because of love you forget friendship. Because of Rong you forget your brother. It's not right, is it? Besides, a man of your age should get down to work. Instead, you're fooling about with a girl day in and day out or lying on your bed weeping. Do you still call yourself a man?"

He seemed to be reciting a text.

"Can he have seen Rong and that fellow too?" This question flashed into my mind.

But I thought immediately: "You know the way he talks. Never mind about it!"

I stepped to the desk suddenly and took out my sister's letter from a drawer. "Have a look," I said, passing a few pages to him. "Some details about my brother's death." I thought: "This should shut you up."

He sighed while reading it. Afterwards he said: "Look, this should be a lesson to you."

"But what would you do about those who are willing to be cheated by women without ever complaining?" I was stubborn.

"You can do nothing about them. Say there's a well in front of you, and I ask you not to jump in, but you insist. What can I do?"

"Well then, you'd better shut up!" I said with a grin not of amusement but anger, though I was not angry with him.

16

She came to me soon after I had got up in the morning.

"An early visitor!" I said, tongue in cheek.

"You're being sarcastic. Is it because of yesterday?" She smiled an autumn smile.

"Yesterday?" I asked, my voice trembling.

"I said I'd come but I didn't."

So it was that.

"Ask her! Who was that man?" I urged myself.

"Who's that. . . ." I faltered.

"Who's what?" She blushed faintly, her eyes sparkled.

"... That girl friend of yours — the one you went out with in the morning."

I found it difficult to speak, my face had turned red too.

"You're lying! She'll correct you," I warned and consoled myself.

"Oh! That girl. Yes, she is from my home town and I have to show her round for a couple of days. We went to South Pu Tuo for the day, going early in the morning and not coming back

till the evening. Then we went boating and watched the stars, those beautiful stars at sea."

"A likely story!" I thought with indignation.

Her unnatural way of talking convinced me that she was lying. Besides, I had seen that man with my own eyes.

"I knew you'd make a day of it, so I went to bed early instead of waiting for you."

I was able to tell a lie too. There was nothing wrong in paying her back in kind.

But I had got up quite late. How to explain that?

"She's leaving tomorrow. No one will ever disturb us in future."

She said that as if telling the truth.

"What's her name?"

"Lin Xiujuan."

"Lin Xiujuan," I repeated, in my mind a picture of the man in his thirties with fat cheeks and a sparse moustache. His name was Lin Xiujuan? I almost laughed.

"How lovely those lilies are!" she said looking at them on the desk. "I sent the boy to buy some, but he came back with such poor ones that I almost cried. I had to go and buy these myself."

This time she had told the truth. I should be grateful and forgive her despite her lies.

The lilies were indeed lovely. They had revived overnight I was delighted to see.

Those lilies were the symbol of our love. It would revive too, wouldn't it?

We began talking in our usual way, talking of love.

At first, I could distinguish lies from truth. But soon I took all she said, even lies, as truth. I was sure that it was the same with her.

Love was a strange thing, a sort of game. But instead of our playing it, it played with us. If in a good mood it would give us wine; other times it would give us tears.

Never mind whether she lied to me or did not love me, so long as she often came to me with smiles and flowers. I loved her anyway. I would take her lies as truth. If she kissed me too, so much the better.

I received my brother's last testament. It was not long, less than ten thousand words altogether.

Judging by the contents, it had not been written all on one day, but had probably taken him more than a week from beginning to end. In fact, the dots at the end indicated that he still had more to write.

I am killing myself of my own accord, because I want to die. No one has forced me to do this. No one else is responsible for my death.

This was the beginning of his testament.

I want to die because, to me, death is preferable to life. I don't hanker after life. What I hanker after. . . .

I love her, shall love her until death and still wish her happy. . . .

I am killing myself not because of love, but because life is unbearable. An unbearable life should be ended, as others have said before.

So up to his death my brother had talked in this high-sounding way. But on another occasion he wrote:

Why should she marry into the Wang family? Didn't she often assure me that she did not love that man, loved only me?

Another day he wrote:

She's married! My sister says though it was her mother's idea she herself was willing.

So all her vows were lies. What a fool I've been! She's cheated me for so long, yet I believed her implicitly.

Another day he wrote:

It's too bad that you men who are cheated by women will

never wake up to the fact! The best thing for you is to commit suicide!

He wrote later:

Will my suicide haunt her and make her remember me for ever? Probably not. Women have poor memories.

One day he wrote:

I'm not killing myself because of her. She's not worth it.

Later:

Actually I am killing myself because of her. I can't live on without her. Can a loveless life be called a life?

Another day:

There was so much in the past worth dwelling on! Moonlit nights, windy wet evenings, spring gardens and autumn suburbs, all the world seemed ours. There were only flowers, light, love and warmth in my life. But now? All these have become bitter memories.

She who stole my heart away had a voice like music and a smile like an angel's, so innocent and pure. How could she bear to leave me for another? Will she forget all her sacred vows? Will she make up her face, dress gaudily and fool away her time with that man on theatre-going, shopping and gambling?

No, I'm sure she won't. I'd rather die than see her behave that way. But that's what she's doing now.

He wrote on another page:

An arranged marriage, a match without love, the old traditional concept . . . have ruined my happiness. Can I tolerate all these and live on?

My ruthless grandfather, her ruthless parents, have robbed us of our youth. Do you know the bitterness of a life without youth? . . .

On another page:

You refuse me what I want and force on me what I don't want. You don't understand my feelings yet judge me by your own.

To give yourselves temporary satisfaction you're ruining my life. Don't you realize that, if you had your way, I should have to play a tragic role all my life?

Such a life would be piecemeal murder. It would be better. . . .

Another day:

I have ready a knife — my salvation. It will relieve me of this unbearable life.

I've downed a glass of rose wine by way of a farewell drink. The world is saying goodbye to me. The wine is as red as blood. I've gulped my own blood.

Later:

The moon is beautiful. I can't die on such a fine moonlit night. If only I could see her once more under the moon in her pale blue blouse, smiling an innocent smile. All I want is to say one word to her or to kneel down before her to be kissed, then I would sink happily into the nether world.

But this is only an unattainable dream.

Another day:

Take action! Take up the knife! Is there anything you cannot part with in this life?

Everyone has to die. That goes for me too. Better take up the knife rather than be killed bit by bit.

I'm willing to die. Let others live while I die. She will live on, but the girl I loved is as good as dead already.

I'm drinking the last glass of rose wine. I'm tipsy.

Tomorrow somebody else will drink wine made of my blood.

Wait till tomorrow. . . .

This testament was in my sister's keeping. Apart from her, I was the only one to read it.

18

Rong came to see me that same evening after I had received my brother's testament. While reading the testament I had forgotten Rong, but when I saw her I forgot my brother.

My girl had not betrayed or jilted me. She never made up her face heavily, never wore gaudy clothes. She never fooled about with other men in theatres, stores or at gambling tables. Her voice was like the chime of a silver bell, her smile as warm as sunshine. She had won my heart. Because of her, I forgot my brother. Still, that was justified.

"Lin," she called, her voice warmer than ever before. But I sensed there was something wrong.

I guessed that she was upset because I hadn't been to see her that day. I felt that I had wronged her.

"I received my brother's testament today. So. . ." I said as if to excuse myself.

"Lin, I've decided to go home." She spoke firmly yet, to me, her voice sounded once more like fluting one autumn evening.

"Go home?" Forgetting myself, I cried out in a voice which shook the house. Her going home would be the end of our affair.

"Yes, I'm leaving tomorrow morning. My mother's ill. . . . Besides, I've something to discuss with my father."

"Tomorrow? So urgent? I thought you would never go home!" Sinking despairingly down on the sofa, I felt like crying.

"Lin," her voice was more tender than ever, "don't worry. I'll be back in three or four days."

"Impossible. You won't, you'll never come back." Forgetting everything else, I fought to hold back my fast vanishing hope.

"She will leave you for good." These words were engraved on my mind. I buried my face in my hands.

She began to sigh. The sound made my heart ache.

She came over and sat down beside me. Nestling against me, she stroked my hair with her soft hand.

I remembered: When I was a small boy and cried for something, an equally soft hand had stroked my head. That was my mother's hand which had already rotted in her grave. Now this hand had taken its place. But only for such a short time. This hand was going to leave me for ever too.

"Lin, believe me. I love you, love you with all my heart.

"I love you more than anything else, even myself.

"I shall always be true to you.

"What makes you think that I won't come back?

"Who else deserves my love besides you?

"I love you and will never leave you.

"You're the only one in the world whom I love.

"Believe me, I'll be back in three or four days.

"No pressure can diminish my love for you.

"My love for you is as everlasting as the stars. . . ."

There were tears in what she said. It was like autumn rain soaking my heart.

My heart was bleeding.

"Please, don't go home. Promise me not to go home."

I held her hand and caressed it as if grasping at my last hope.

"Lin, I understand how you feel. But I won't be long. Just wait for three or four days.

"I'll be back before those roses in your vase wither."

My heart was drenched again by autumn rain.

"Are you sure? They may keep you at home for a long time. They won't let you go."

The middle-aged man with the fat face appeared in my mind's eye again. Her decision must have something to do with him.

"They'll let me go. My heart is here, so they can't keep me there."

She seemed quite certain.

"They may be tricking you into going back. Your mother's probably all right, or they're using her paralysis as an excuse."

"They wouldn't do a thing like that. Even if my mother is all right, I ought to go back to see her. She often cries because she misses me. As her daughter, I should go and comfort her."

Her tender, melancholy voice reminded me suddenly of what Xu had once said.

Everybody except me had a mother. While she looked after her mother, I would lose my happiness. . . .

"Besides, I have something to talk over with my father, something important."

What was it? Our affair? If she told her father about me that would be disastrous.

"Doesn't your father dislike people from other provinces?" I asked in surprise.

"It doesn't matter. I love you, so nothing can stop us." Her voice quivered slightly as if she was not really sure.

So she made it clear that she was going to talk to her father about our love affair. Why should she go? It was obvious that something had happened.

"Rong, don't go. Asking your father's consent would be running your head against a wall. Why not go on as we are?"

She smiled an autumn smile which made me feel like crying.

"What a suspicious man you are! Don't I know my own father's nature? Besides, I'm going to see how my mother is and convince her that I'm doing nicely here, to set her mind at rest."

Mother, mother, she kept harping on her mother! But I was motherless.

"Why insist on this? Wouldn't it be better if the two of us went together one day?"

"Lin, why don't you believe me? I love you. Isn't that a good guarantee? If I really wanted to cheat you, I'd leave without telling you.

"Don't keep on about it. If you do, I shall get really cross and refuse to talk to you.

"You still don't understand how I love my mother. I won't feel easy unless I go back to see her."

"Your mother again!" I thought with irritation.

Suddenly Xu's gaunt face appeared before me. He seemed to be carping at me in his usual way: "Don't let selfish considerations blind you to what's right. Don't stop her from going to see her mother."

Xu wasn't in the room but in my mind.

What could I say to this? My happiness would be taken away by her mother.

"Go then. Let hope and happiness fly away. My love will keep me company for ever. She won't cheat me. I believe her, believe in her love."

I tried to console myself despite my despair.

19

The night was still young as we went out.

Against the dark sky clustered stars, everlasting stars.

It was quiet and still, the air soft and cool. What a beautiful night!

"Let's take a boat to watch the stars," she suggested. "It's such a beautiful night!"

"Fine," I replied, too moved to utter another word.

"Let's hurry then."

We came to a ferry and got on a sampan.

The boatman rowed us out to sea.

She nestled against me, her head on my arms. I inhaled the perfume on her hair and caressed her.

The only sound we could hear was the splash of oars in the sea.

Both of us lifted our faces to see those sparkling white, red and green stars.

There were lights on the bank. We were virtually surrounded by the night and the stars in the sky.

"There are only the two of us left in this world.

"Nobody can come between us or separate us.

"I love you and you love me. We shall love each other for ever, our love as eternal as those stars."

She murmured softly as if in a dream.

In ecstasy I bent to kiss her abundant hair.

My heart was filled with love. I forgot myself, forgot everything but her.

She was the only one in my world.

"Oh, look at the Milky Way. Like a hazy white belt. Why is it so pale?"

She pointed to the sky while still murmuring.

"It's not autumn now!"

As I answered I gazed up at where she was pointing.

"Lin, see that row of three stars to the west of the Milky Way? Isn't that big yellow one in the middle the Cowherd?"

"Oh, there are three others on the opposite bank. Isn't that big pale blue star his sweetheart the Weaving Maid?*

"Poor lovers! Only able to meet once a year.

"Why is there no ferry boat in the Milky Way? Why is there no bridge except on the Double Seventh?"

She kept on murmuring.

I held her close to me, feeling we were in a dream.

"Why are they allowed to meet only once a year?"

"Why should they be punished so severely?"

"Is it the same in heaven as on earth with no free choice in love? Has a lady star no right to choose her own lover?"

"The Milky Way isn't all that wide or deep. Why doesn't somebody build a permanent bridge so the Cowherd can go across to keep the Weaving Maid company?"

We were still in a dream.

"I'd like to build a bridge across so that the lovers can meet every day."

She spoke dreamily, glancing up at me, her eyes misted over.

"Rong, how will you show your compassion for your Cowherd? I'll soon be losing my Weaving Maid."

I suddenly remembered the river separating us. I woke with a start, my heart aching.

"I shall come back, back to your side if not tomorrow, then the day after or the day after that."

* In Chinese mythology the Cowherd and the Weaving Maid are lovers, only allowed to meet once a year on the seventh day of the seventh moon.

"I won't be able to see you this time tomorrow. I'm not as lucky as the Cowherd who can at least see his Weaving Maid."

"I shall see you because I've captured your reflection in my eyes."

"Rong, don't watch the stars now. Come closer and let me have a good look at you to imprint your face on my eyes."

"Lin, can you see me clearly? I'm afraid it's not bright enough."

"I can see you all right by the light of the stars and your eyes. Now don't move, I . . ."

"I feel I'm melting, Lin. Hold me tight. Don't let me go."

"I feel the same, Rong. I think this is the last time we'll be together. After today everything will be gone."

"All will be gloomy tomorrow. Will the stars and the moon over our heads be still as bright as today?"

"Rong, there won't be any stars tomorrow. There'll be rain, autumn rain. It'll be autumn tomorrow."

"So soon! Spring nights are so short! Look, another shooting star has fallen."

"A shooting star! One more shooting star in my life."

"Lin, will it come back?"

"No. Once it falls it leaves the sky for good."

"Oh, tomorrow . . ."

"Rong, do you still remember that gypsy girl's song in *Immensee*?* You often used to sing it. Will you sing it for me again?"

"My heart is melting away. I can't sing. Hold me tight and don't let me go! Oh, today, only today am I still . . ."

I could no longer see her eyes.

I cradled her face and kissed it madly.

I could not bear to lose her. She was more precious to me than my life.

It seemed like the night of the Double Seventh when the Cowherd and Weaving Maid meet.

But tomorrow, early in the morning . . .

Today, only today,
Am I still so fair.

* A novel by the German novelist T. Storm.

But tomorrow, oh, tomorrow,
All will be gone with the wind...*

20

The next morning I escorted her aboard a little steamer.

Having exchanged a few words with her, I was forced to leave by the hooting of the siren.

Before leaving, holding her hands, I noticed that her eyes were brimming with tears.

"Please wait for me. . . ." She broke off there.

"You must come back!" I at least managed to complete a sentence.

"Come back as soon as possible!" I smiled at her despite the tears coursing down from my eyes.

Sitting on the sampan, I waved to her. But unfortunately she was hidden by a fat woman.

"Is this a dream or is it true?" I asked myself again and again, gazing at the receding steamer.

When I got home I sank down on my bed, exhausted. But I could not fall asleep. I wanted to cry yet had no tears. I was too tired to pull myself to my feet. All I could do was gaze blankly at the ceiling.

21

There was no news from her for three days. I felt aged.

I roamed the streets from early morning till evening. When hungry, I ate in a Western restaurant. When thirsty, I had an ice in a café. My heart was burning with anxiety.

Xu had not put in an appearance for several days. I wanted to see him but feared his moralizing.

On my own, I felt very lonely.

At night, I went to bed, exhausted, but my mind was racing.

* Lines from a song in *Immensee*.

"She's bound to return tomorrow."

"What shall I say to her?"

"Once she comes back she will never leave me again. She'll be mine for ever."

"Will her father keep her from coming back?"

"Will anything detain her?"

"If so, she won't come back."

"She's sure to come back. She promised."

"She's sure to come back. She won't cheat me."

"Just wait. After tonight, everything will be fine."

"Oh, why are spring nights so long?"

22

Sunlight came shining into my room the next morning.

Rubbing my tired eyes, I yawned at the sun.

I had dreamed that she had come back and said many sweet things to me.

I dressed myself smartly and went to the dock to meet her.

I waited a long time for that little steamer. How late it was today. But the other day it had cast off so quickly.

At last it arrived and its siren made my heart leap with joy.

I took a sampan out to meet it.

The steamer began to discharge passengers and luggage.

I searched everywhere for my Rong.

There were men and women, old and young, but no sign of a girl with big eyes and slender eyebrows.

I hurried on to the deck and called her name. No reply.

I rushed to the upper deck.

Some passengers were jostling one another on their way down. I examined each face carefully.

By the time I reached the upper deck there were not many passengers there.

"Rong!" I called, making people stare.

I searched the steamer twice and still could not find her.

"She must have disembarked," I told myself sagely.

"Yes, that's it," I convinced myself.

I went back on the sampan, climbed ashore and ran towards my home.

When it came in sight, I put on a spurt. Ignoring the barking dog, I pushed open the gate and shouted: "Rong!"

No reply. Everything in the room remained the same. No one had come.

"What a fool you are! She must have gone to her own place first!" I told myself even more sagely.

"She must be waiting for you in her room now!"

I set off at once.

The green gate was closed and would not budge though I pushed hard. I pressed the bell but nobody answered. I knocked at the gate, still no response.

The red and white flowers in the courtyard were beginning to wither and this reminded me of my roses at home.

The green wire gauze and the white lace curtain screened everything inside.

The sun caressed my back, a violin sighed.

I passed the next house and a child smiled at me.

"She may come back tomorrow." Yet a third bright idea occurred to me.

But tomorrow seemed far away.

I must write to her demanding the reason.

"The roses will soon have withered, why don't you come back?"

23

Her letter arrived. It had been sent express.

It was short but the meaning was clear. She addressed me as Mr Lin.

Dear Mr Lin, I realize that our relationship in the past was altogether childish. Now I'm taking my father's advice, studying at home and looking after my mother. So from now on we shall have nothing to do with each other, and please don't write to me or the letters will be sent back unopened.

With my best regards and wishing you good health,

Yours sincerely,

Zheng Peirong

It was her handwriting!

"It's too bad that you men who are cheated by women will never wake up!"

"The best thing for you is to commit suicide!"

These sentences in my brother's testament came back to my mind.

"Cry! One can't help crying over the misery in this world!"

I wept bitterly, my eyes full of tears, my heart bleeding.

I gazed through my tears at the portraits of her and Garbo on the wall.

"What on earth are women's hearts made of?"

I pulled the roses she'd given me out of the vase. Pointing at them she had promised to come back before they withered.

But now they had withered.

I pressed the flowers to my heart and wept. I longed to revive them with my tears, tears that came from my heart.

24

I no longer went out for walks because spring had gone. I no longer went into the garden because the flowers there would never again be as beautiful as before. The sunshine no longer smiled at me, the stars had lost their sparkle.

There was no fragrance, no sunshine in my room. There were only pictures of Rong and Garbo, my brother's testament and my own sighs.

I dreamed all day long, either of killing myself or of her being murdered.

"It's too bad that you men who are cheated by women will never wake up!"

"The best thing for you is to commit suicide!"

But I lacked the courage to take up a knife.

Xu came. Having heard what had happened, he carped at me as usual:

"I told you that your love affair would not have a happy ending."

"But I love her, love her with all my heart," I argued angrily with him. I knew he was about to start moralizing.

"People don't live just on love.

"It's nothing to be jilted. Women are only an insignificant part of the vast world before us.

"There's nothing more foolish than committing suicide like your brother.

"I don't want to see you jump into a well.

"There are plenty of good girls. Why eat your heart out for Rong?"

"Life in the newspaper office is so disgusting!"

His moralizing ended with his standing complaint.

"Mother, my mother! . . ."

The only thing he could never forget was his mother.

I had no mother. My mother had died long ago.

25

"I am ill, sick at heart.

"I don't feel like eating or doing anything. I just want to lie down and weep.

"I have begun to pine away. Every day I look at myself in the mirror and sigh.

"Has the peach blossom before my brother's grave withered? Please pick a few petals and send them to me! Those pink petals are just the colour of my sweetheart's cheeks.

"Autumn is already here. This autumn will not bring me flowers but rain, drop after drop of rain to drive me demented!

"It's autumn in my heart, the autumn in spring which is the only season in my life.

"I think of my old home, my mother's grave, the peach blossoms before my brother's grave and your face.

"Who could ever forget the scenery in the Yangzi Valley? I shall be coming back.

"If I'm to die, I prefer to die in my old home.

"When real autumn arrives, I will drag my weak body home."
This was what I wrote to my sister.

26

When autumn approached its end, I decided to go home. The ticket had already been booked.

Before setting out I received two letters forwarded to me by Xu.

Lin, come and see me! I'm already on my death-bed. But I must see you before I die to beg you to forgive me. Come what may, I must see you.

I have been ill for more than a month. Death holds no terrors for one who has lost everything. But the loneliness, the loneliness of my heart, dying a lonely death, lying in a lonely grave with wind sighing through the trees around, like so many mourners — how can I stand all this!

There is no autumn sunshine shining on me. I can no longer bite through the rind of longans. The herbal brew is so bitter, always so bitter. And my father, like the statue of some god, holds forth as if reciting from the classics.

I often throw away the bitter brew when no one is around. Why should I drink it? To me, death is preferable to life.

It'll soon be the Double Seventh. The stars in the sky must be sparkling! Unfortunately, I can't get up to watch the Cowherd and Weaving Maid's annual reunion.

When will my Cowherd come to see his Weaving Maid? The sea, sky and stars . . . how I miss them!

I refuse to marry into the Chen family. I assure you, they can't drag me there by force. I've given myself to you, heart and soul. I'm dying.

I love you, shall love you for ever!

Do you still hate me? Will you forgive me for writing that short letter?

Come! Come to me! I shall be happy even if you reproach me, because then I shall be sure that you are safe, not shot through the head by my father's pistol.

Come! Come while my cheeks are still rosy.

With love,

Rong

That was the first letter.

Mr. Lin, my elder cousin died at half-past nine in the morning on the twenty-fifth this month. Before her death, she often called your name. She asked me to cut off a lock of her hair and send it to you. That's what I have done.

She died peacefully, her cheeks still rosy, her eyes closing slowly, her lips curved in a faint smile. The autumn sun lit up her face and we thought she was sound asleep.

The last words we heard her say were: "Love . . . everlasting stars . . . as everlasting as the stars . . ."

With my best regards, wishing you good health,

Yours sincerely,

Zheng Peiyu

The second letter had been written by her cousin three weeks after the first — more than ten days ago.

"When did the letters arrive?" I almost shouted at Xu.

"You can tell from the postmark. I kept them away from you for fear you might cancel your visit home and go crazy again. That's why I've only delivered them today. I meant well."

Xu's lean face was flushed and he was stuttering so that it took him some time to complete this speech. Obviously he was in earnest, awkwardly trying to justify himself.

This was the first time I had seen this moralist flustered. But I myself was almost weeping with anger.

"Have a look." I gave the letters to him, cursing inwardly: "Your morals have ruined me and killed her!" I did not say this however. It was true that he meant well.



I drew the lock of hair out of the second envelope and examined it.

Now this was really the end of everything.

I sank down on my sofa, drew the lock of hair out of the second envelope and examined it on the palm of my hand.

Pink blouse, short black skirt, shining eyes, slender eyebrows . . . a figure appeared before me.

But in a flash it disappeared.

I fixed my eyes on the hair and lowered my head until my face almost touched it. I seemed to smell the scent of lilies.

I kissed it as if kissing a beautiful memory.

How soft the hair was!

It had the fragrance of flowers.

It reminded me of the spring in the south.

But would there ever be a spring in my life again?

1932

(The End)

Illustrated by Yao Youxin

Patricia Wilson

An Artist of the People: Huang Yongyu

This year in Guangzhou, Beijing and Dalian, a one-man painting exhibition drew enthusiastic and excited crowds. The humorous cartoon poster by the well-known cartoonist and art critic, Hua Junwu, which advertised it, depicted the back view of a man, a cap on his head, vigorously puffing at his pipe. Unmistakably this was Huang Yongyu, one of China's foremost artists. Small and wiry in build, Huang seems possessed of limitless energy, and his paintings express an intensity, power and startling vividness that it is difficult to dismiss. It is surprising, therefore, to learn that it was as a woodcut artist and not as a painter that Huang made his artistic reputation. It is only in the last decade or so that he has concentrated on painting.

Today Huang lives in a spacious, modern, third-floor, Beijing apartment-studio with his charming wife, Zhang Meixi, and his son, Huang Heiman. His daughter, Heini, is studying in the United States. In the warm family atmosphere, Huang, smoking a cigar or pipe, entertains his delighted guests with funny stories, which

he has a genius for remembering. His sense of humour and his optimism are among his most striking qualities. These, his love of life and his art have helped him to overcome the hardships and persecution he has known since childhood.

Huang once said of himself: "I am from a small national minority people, the Tujia. I am influenced by their customs. Many aspects of my character are also the result of my national minority origin. I lived in times of bitterness, struggle and difficulties, but I never lost courage. I always remained optimistic. That is the legacy my people and my hometown gave me. I believe a European writer once said that joy and poverty are good for a person. This in essence sums up my experiences, my life. I lived with joy in poverty!"

Born fifty-five years ago in Western Hunan in 1924, Huang spent his early childhood in the town of Fenghuang, where one of his brothers and his family still live. Fenghuang is picturesquely situated, surrounded by mountains and with a river winding through it. Houses at the river-side were built on stilts as a precaution against the spring floods. Huang often speaks of the region's wild



Huang Yongyu with his wife, son and daughter

beauty and of his early impressions. Once he chanced upon a book of sculptures by Henry Moore in 1947. "I was amazed," he says. "Moore's sculpture were exactly like the rock formations in my hometown."

The colourful culture of the minority people with their traditional dances, songs and festivals left a deep impression on Huang. He recalls how at festivals the streets of Fenghuang were decorated: "Gaily coloured kites danced in the sky. Craftsmen were busy making paper figures or carving wooden buddhas. I loved to watch them, and it was from those men that I learnt to mix colours. They taught me a sense of colour which I still retain."

Huang was the eldest of six boys, all of whom are alive except for one. There was a strong artistic influence in his family, and one of his brothers is also an artist. Both his parents had studied art and taught in local schools. Huang's father was a talented musician and loved to play on the harmonium, singing to himself, his eyes closed in reverie. He was also an accomplished painter. Huang remembers his father with deep affection. While Huang was still a child, his father lost his job. Life for the large family became harder. Huang says: "I remember the poverty of those days as we struggled to live. But my father faced difficulties with optimism. He was always hopeful."

As a child Huang liked to paint. "I painted everything I could," he smiles. This often led him into scrapes. With his friend, a deaf-mute boy, whom Huang insists was a far better painter than he, one day he found a newly white-washed house. His friend started covering one of the walls with drawings of animals and birds until the irate owner of the house suddenly appeared, cursing and threatening to beat the boys as they fled. Huang laughs: "So I realized at an early age that artists are fated to be cursed and beaten!" The irony in this is that during the time when the "gang of four" was in power this was indeed the fate of many artists.

Although he loved to paint, Huang was never a "sissy". On the contrary, he earned himself the title of "Little Yellow Bull of the North Gate" because he was such a good fighter. Huang means yellow in Chinese, and his home was near the north gate of the town. Fighting was a way of life in the area. His grandfather

and uncles were all fierce men. Once, when one of his uncles found Huang painting, he roared at him: "Why the hell are you painting? It's disgusting to see a boy like you doing that. Why don't you learn to shoot instead?" In fact hunting is one of Huang's passions and many of his trophies adorn the walls of his home, along with treasured antiques, beautiful paintings and family photographs.

In the old society, before Liberation, the misery of the people was indescribable. Bandits, warlords and later the Kuomintang created havoc among the people. Huang often saw executions. "We'd be sitting in our class, when there would be a commotion outside. Rushing out to see what it was all about, we children often saw people being killed." For the majority, life was wretchedly poor. Unemployed, Huang's father was forced to seek work in other towns, separating from his family. In 1937, aged twelve, Huang went to visit his father, who then sent him to an uncle in Fujian. There Huang attended one of the best middle schools in China at that time.

Huang confesses he was a lazy pupil, finding the lessons rather boring except for art, which fascinated him. Here he was introduced to the work of some western artists for the first time. Apart from studying art, Huang liked sitting in the library, reading voraciously. Years later, when Huang met some of his former teachers, they admitted their amazement at his having ever achieved anything, because he had acquired an education despite them. While at school Huang won an award in a painting competition and when he collected his few dollars' prize money, he remembers this had a special significance for him, inspiring him and giving him hope for the future.

He does not attribute any influence of the school on his artistic development, except for the important fact that it was there he was introduced to woodcut art by a progressive teacher. In 1938, he filled in a form to join a local branch of the All-China Association of Woodcut Artists. Poor boys like Huang could not afford to study painting, but woodcut art was open to everyone. "Anyone who had a knife and who knew even a little about making woodcuts could join. Woodcuts were a democratic art form and cheap to

practise," Huang explains. Thus his lifelong interest in woodcuts began. "Once you start doing woodcuts, you can never stop entirely," he adds.

After three years, Huang ran away from the school because he had beaten up a landlord's son who had refused to share his lamp with Huang. His only formal middle-school education thus ended abruptly, and the fifteen-year-old youth embarked on what Huang calls his "vagabond days", wandering all over Fujian and Jiangxi, finding odd jobs in porcelain factories where he was badly exploited, until he managed to join a travelling theatre troupe for whom he painted the scenery. One of its leaders impressed Huang with his kindness and moral integrity, and Huang says this man influenced his development. Later Huang discovered he was an underground Communist Party member. When the theatre group disbanded, Huang was offered a home by a friend who had a vast library. Huang read all his books, and it is to this man, Huang says, he owes his literary education. Indeed Huang is a very cultured man, with a wide knowledge of Chinese classical and modern literature as well as foreign literature. He writes both prose and poetry.

In 1937, as Huang had left his home in Fenghuang to attend the school in Fujian, the War of Resistance Against Japan had broken out. While the war raged, life was disrupted as the Chinese people fled from the Japanese invaders. Among the refugees who went to Jiangxi was a beautiful Guangzhou girl, Zhang Meixi, whom Huang met in 1944. She was very musical and worked in the music section of the local cultural office, while Huang worked in the art department. Although Meixi's family disapproved of and looked down on Huang because he had no college education and came from a small minority people in the mountains and was so poor, Meixi and Huang decided to elope. Before they married, Huang made a woodcut entitled *Ours Is a Hard but Happy Life*, which showed Meixi standing singing, while he painted. They were married in 1946, Huang being only twenty-two and Meixi just eighteen.

After a few months, because of the difficulty in finding work, Huang made his way to Fujian and Shanghai, while Meixi went to

Hongkong in 1946, where she taught music in a primary school. In Shanghai in 1947, Huang had very little money and often went without meals or boarded with friends. Although his life was as hard as ever, he says two things gave him hope: "These were revolution and art. I understood a very simple truth. Down with the Kuomintang and support the Chinese Communist Party!"

In Shanghai, Huang made contact with the main office of the All-China Association of Woodcut Artists and became the youngest standing member of the committee, aged only twenty-two. The woodcut movement, which had been started in 1931 by the great Chinese writer Lu Xun, was led by the Chinese Communist Party. Thus the Kuomintang suspected all woodcut artists as being Party members. Huang says that although he didn't know a great deal about the Party at that time, he was convinced it alone could get rid of the corrupt Kuomintang regime. "So I considered the work of the Association of Woodcut Artists as very important," he says. The association held many exhibitions and sold their woodcuts in great quantities. When some of Huang's woodcuts were on show, people were astonished to learn that Huang was such a young man.

As many of Huang's friends were also progressive students, he took part in their demonstrations against the Kuomintang. After one big, violent demonstration in which Huang had been active fighting the police, that evening Huang made a woodcut of the day's events. After Liberation in 1949, this woodcut was hung in the building of the Shanghai Students' Federation. In 1948, the Kuomintang increased their censorship and pressure on the progressive forces in Shanghai. Huang's situation became more critical, and so he went to Taiwan, where he tried to find work for a brief period with two other artist friends. One day a friend warned him that the Kuomintang were planning to arrest him. That night he packed and escaped to Hongkong the following morning.

Reunited at last with his wife, Huang was appointed the art editor of a progressive newspaper in 1949, writing articles and illustrating them with his woodcuts. Huang has said that one's existence and environment decide one's ideology. In Hongkong, Huang depicted the life of the poor Chinese workers, who were badly exploited. Apart from his woodcuts, Huang also painted

scenes from the life of the national minority people in Fenghuang. He held three very successful exhibitions and also found time to write two film scenarios. With the liberation of Guangzhou, Meixi, meanwhile, went to study at the Literary Institute of South China in Guangzhou in 1950. She spent two years there and some months in the countryside with the peasants, before returning to Hongkong.

In 1953 Huang and his family decided to go to Beijing, where Huang was appointed a lecturer teaching woodcuts in the graphic department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. Aged only twenty-nine, he was the youngest teacher in the academy. Later, in 1959, he became an associate professor. He was formally on the staff of the academy for twenty-four years until 1977. As he says: "I gave the best years of my life to working with woodcuts and to my students. I taught until the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. Now I am known as a painter, but in reality most of my life was devoted to woodcuts."

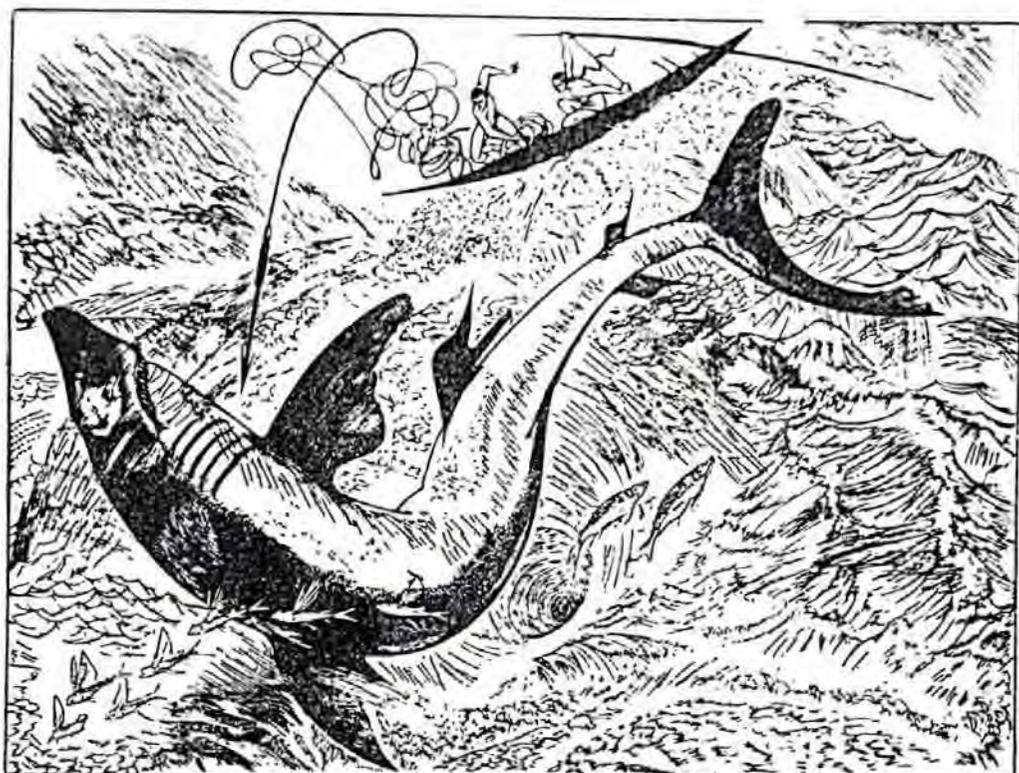
At first Huang lived in the eastern district of Beijing in a large courtyard with about a dozen other artists and their families who were connected with the academy. In the courtyard the atmosphere was such that all the children liked to paint, either collectively or individually. Both Huang's son, Heiman, and his daughter, Heini, were talented child artists and won international prizes. Heiman says: "I saw my father working every day on his woodcuts or painting, so naturally I wanted to be like him. My father taught me that painting is serious work. The paper had to be of good quality and laid on the table correctly. I was made to sit straight on my chair. In this way I learnt that painting was real work and I felt very happy and proud to work like an adult." Huang adds: "I can say that the childhood of my children was very beautiful. They were much happier than I had been as a child."

With his students at the academy, Huang often made trips to various parts of China. Sometimes he went alone or with Meixi, who as a writer of children's books accompanied him to collect material. They once collaborated on a book, *Life in the Forests*, for which his illustrations won a prize at an international book exhibition in Leipzig in 1959. Three times Huang went to the

forest areas of the northeast near the Soviet border and lived among the forest workers, whom he deeply admires. Twice he went to Yunnan, where he collected material for his illustrations for the Sani folk legend *Ashma*. When he arrived there in 1955, the county Party secretary held a meeting to introduce Huang to other officials and solicit their help in introducing him to some beautiful Sani girls to be a model for *Ashma*. One man shouted out to the Party secretary: "Introduce him to your wife, she's a real beauty!" Everyone roared with laughter.

In south China, in a fishing village, he met a young man who had jumped into a canoe to harpoon a large shark. The harpoon stuck and the shark had towed the canoe for three days. Without food or water, the boy was almost dead with exhaustion, when he was rescued by a fishing boat. Back in Beijing, Huang decided to make a woodcut of the incident from his imagination. He experimented with sticks in water observing the ripples and folded his bed-clothes to look like waves. He even got some boys to throw spears so that he could watch their movements, which were similar to harpooning. The true story is about one boy, but in Huang's woodcut there are two figures. Huang explains that originally it was proposed that he put in several figures to show the strength of collective work. But as he says: "The result would have been to lessen the heroism of the boy. If a man single-handed kills a tiger, then he is a hero. But if a group of people kill it, they aren't especially brave. Still I wanted to have two figures to balance the picture, to achieve a harmony between the vast ocean, the shark and the tiny canoe."

During 1964-65, Huang spent a year living in a village in Hebei in the district of Xingtai. This was the first time he had got to know the peasants so well in New China. "I had come from the countryside too and I'd always thought I knew and understood village life, but in Xingtai I realized I hadn't really understood the life of the peasants. I learnt much about their wonderful qualities and their ability to treat people well." At the Spring Festival, Huang made paper cuts of the peasants' animals. He says: "Each family insisted that I didn't cut out just any animal, but I had to make a likeness of their particular ones." It was during his stay



Fighting with the shark

here that a serious earthquake struck the area, Xingtai being at its epicentre. Fortunately the casualties in the village where Huang was staying were few compared to other places. Huang will never forget the heroism of the people at that time.

The happy creative life of the Huang family was interrupted in 1966 with the advent of the Cultural Revolution, when Huang like most other artists and intellectuals was criticized and badly persecuted. His art was condemned and he was prevented from teaching. With his family he was moved into two tiny, poorly-lit rooms where he was to live for over eleven years. Unable to teach or do woodcuts, Huang began painting seriously in secret. The Cultural Revolution undoubtedly hastened his turning to painting, but he says this would have been an inevitable natural development.

In 1971, Huang was sent to Hebei to do physical labour in the countryside, returning to Beijing in 1973. In the following year a painting he had made for a friend was taken and hung in an exhibition of condemned art by the "gang of four". Huang had painted

an owl with one eye open and one eye shut, but the "gang of four" interpreted this to mean that he wished to express his criticism of socialism and the Cultural Revolution with the closed eye. This was manifestly absurd, but other artists were similarly attacked on ridiculous charges.

Huang's interrogators tried to force him to admit his owl meant an attack on socialism. He refused to do this. Questioned all day, he would paint at home at night. Because of his cramped rooms he painted his larger paintings in sections. As his home was frequently searched, he became adept at speedily rolling up and concealing his work. His ingenuity and spirit of defiance before his persecutors is admirable, but he makes light of it, insisting that an artist will paint under any conditions. In such a tense and difficult situation, Huang produced some of his most beautiful paintings, a testament to the artist's resistance in those years.

As for his owl, it also became something of a symbol of resistance against the "gang of four" and their fascist policies. Huang had often painted owls before, but this painting acquired a new and serious political significance. Although it had only taken him a few minutes to paint, as Huang always works very quickly, the repercussions were great and lasting. Huang jokes today that if he had known he was to be picked out by the gang as one of their prime targets because of that owl, he would have painted a much bigger and more splendid bird. In Huang's recent exhibition, there was a painting of an owl made after the fall of the gang. The owl seemed to be winking triumphantly at the gang as if to say: "So we smashed you after all!"

The downfall of the "gang of four" in October 1976 gave the Chinese people their second liberation. Huang was officially reinstated at the academy, but he didn't stay there long. With the decision of the government to build a memorial hall for Chairman Mao Zedong, a huge tapestry was required to offset a white marble statue of the chairman in the entrance hall. Huang's design was chosen for the tapestry. He based his vision on two lines from Chairman Mao's poem, *Changsha*, written in 1925, which read:

I ask, on this boundless land
Who rules over man's destiny?

Huang decided on an aerial view of the Chinese landscape, with cloud-covered mountain ranges and rivers snaking through gorges far below, conveying vastness and space. It is a magnificent work and achieves Huang's aim of depicting Chairman Mao's breadth of vision as a revolutionary fighter, philosopher and poet. The tapestry was made in Yantai in Shandong by forty-three women weavers who worked for fifty-eight and a half days to complete it in time for the opening of the memorial hall in September 1977.

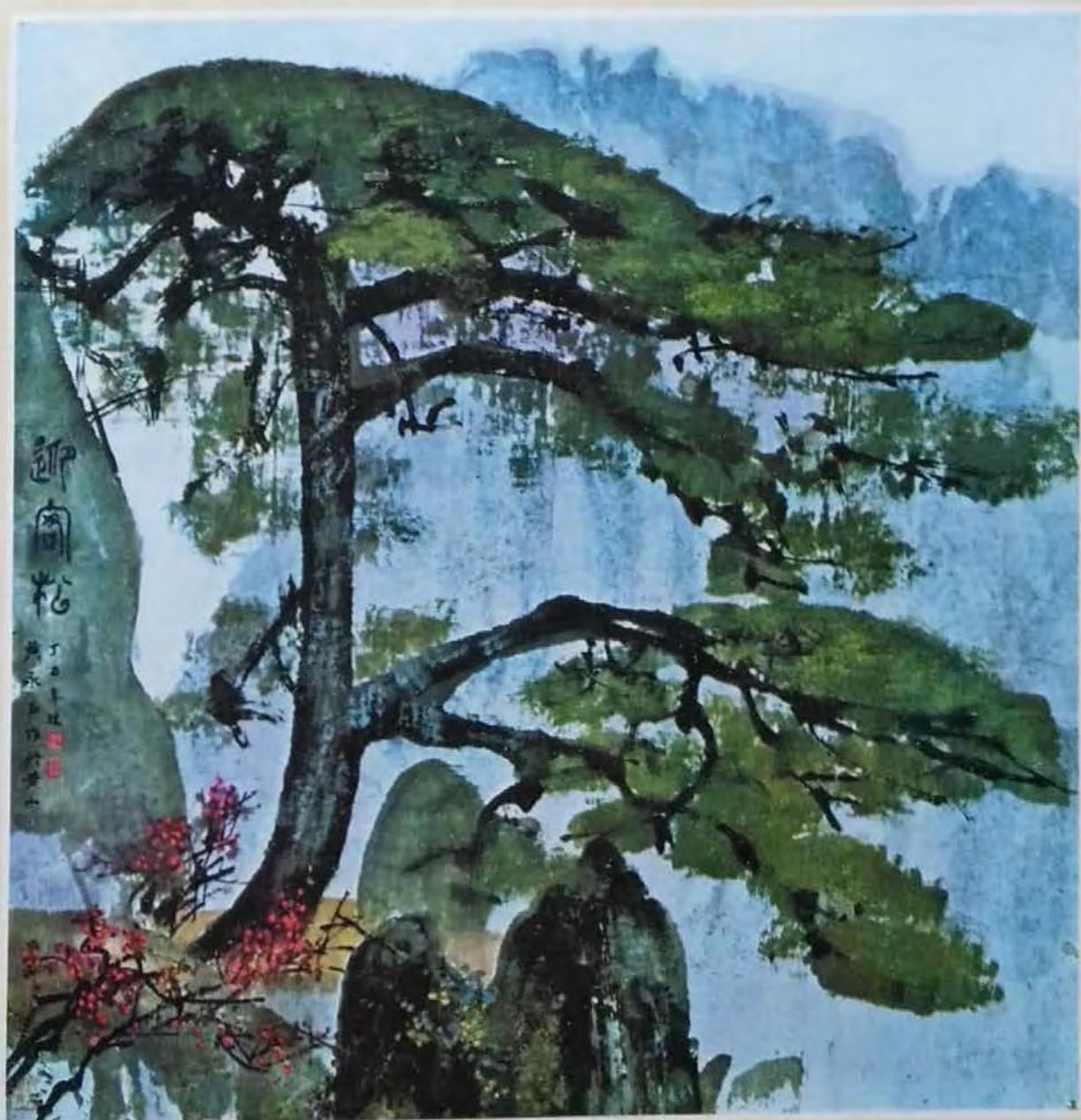
Since then Huang has been working in an artists' group under the State Council. He receives a regular salary each month, as well as a commission on each painting that is sold to the state. Some of his paintings now hang in Chinese embassies abroad or are given as presents to important visitors. Recently Huang went with an artists' delegation to Japan, where his works are greatly admired.

Huang speaks of his painting in terms of much mental effort and hard work. "Each work combines all my previous knowledge, all my past experience. Each painting is a summation of this. . . . If for example I am beside a lake watching the waves on the surface of the water, this will remind me of something. Then I put the waves and this memory together and in this way a painting will develop in my imagination." He adds: "An artist may paint a picture because of a chance idea but the result is always based on former experiences. . . . I have painted several thousand lotus flowers. Now when I paint them I know where and how to place the brush strokes. I make each stroke with confidence. It is rather like boxing. In the beginning, when you are learning, you may hit wildly and be off target. Once you have learnt more and have some experience, then you will place each blow according to necessity. Painting is like that. From necessity you develop into freedom!"

Speaking of his own artistic development, Huang stresses: "I brought into my art the uniqueness of my people. As a child I witnessed much misery. Later in Shanghai and in Hongkong, I made many woodcuts and cartoons against the Kuomintang and imperialism. The times demanded these themes, that my art reflected the sufferings of my people. I tried by my art to mobilize

the masses to resist. Afterwards when I taught in Beijing in the academy, I participated in all the great movements of the times. I used my art to depict these and help construct socialism in my country. During the period when the 'gang of four' controlled our lives, I could only paint flowers and landscapes secretly. I was prevented from going among the people and painting them. In future I hope I can paint the people. I come from the people. I am one of them. And I tell you, the lives of the people are more beautiful than any flower or landscape I ever painted!"

Several of the paintings in Huang's exhibition were made during the time of his persecution. The others have been painted since his rehabilitation and reflect that he now has freedom to paint as he chooses. Huang's art was born of hardship and suffering and is vibrant with struggle. It speaks with the certainty that the forces of good will one day overcome the forces of evil, that revolution will overcome reaction. It tells of one man's faith in his people and in his art, of his efforts to create a more just and beautiful world.



Pine

Paintings by Huang Yongyu



夜 鴞

此鳥數年
未聞盡多
少人面目
亦此一晒
聞鴞兼鳥大
益鳥回害目之
祥童稚可解

黃永玉



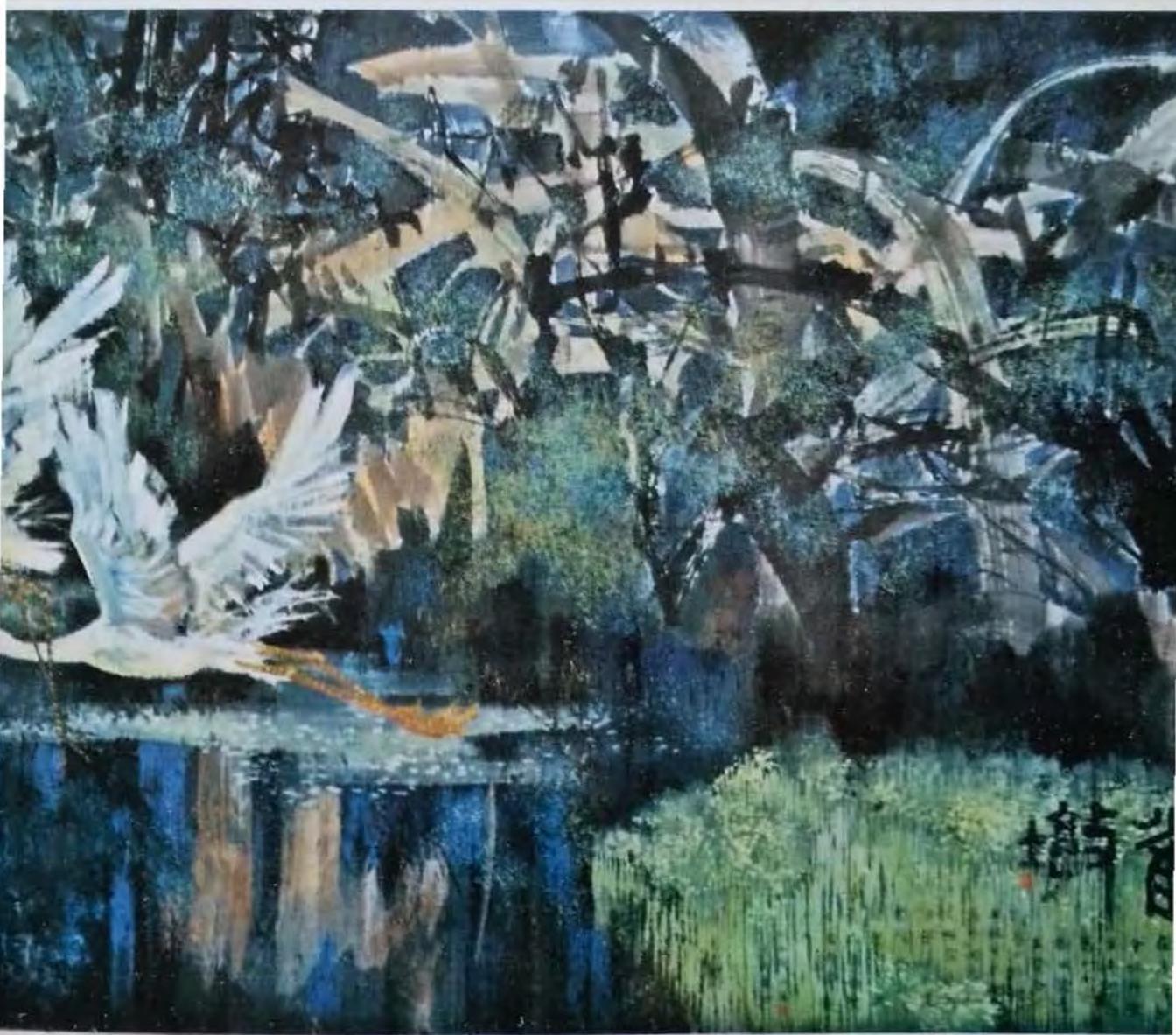
Owl



Lotus in the Wind



Bird Sanctuary





Bright Blossoms and Green Willows



澤畔有吟不見煉
微
先難
馬

戊午年歲杪
作
畫
詩
意

王
玉

王
玉

The Poet Qu Yuan

Huang Miaozi

A Painter of Delightful Dreams

—Thoughts after Seeing Huang
Yongyu's Exhibition

The sky is overcast, the pool hushed in tranquillity. A red lotus stands erect, while two white egrets soar up vigorously from one corner of the pool, breaking the silence, bringing men light and hope. This painting, enchanting as a dream, was finished on 5th October 1976. On the following day, the fascist regime of the "gang of four" was shattered. It was as if this painting had foretold the fall of the gang. The artist was Huang Yongyu.

Huang Yongyu had made his name as a woodcut artist in the fifties in China, through his meticulous depictions of the lives of the Chinese workers and peasants. He portrayed the forest workers in the northeast as well as the fishermen in the South China Sea fighting a giant shark. The Sani folk narrative poem *Asbma* having caught his imagination, he went to Yunnan to live among the people and successfully created a series of woodcut illustrations for it. Huang worked hard as a teacher in the woodcut department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, from the

The writer is a well-known Chinese art critic and close friend of Huang Yongyu.

time he came back from Hongkong after Liberation. Though conditions were poor, Huang was always happy, making his contribution to socialism.

After 1966 the situation abruptly changed during the Cultural Revolution when Lin Biao and the "gang of four" were in power. They and their followers persecuted Huang. His house was illegally searched and his treasured books and paintings confiscated. Later when he happened to paint an owl with one eye shut in a friend's album, this was discovered by followers of the "gang of four". The painting was labelled as reactionary, vilifying the Chinese Communist Party and socialism. Huang was publicly criticized. The local people in Huang's hometown in Fenghuang County in western Hunan are noted for their fiery temper and fighting spirit. Huang himself has fought since childhood, but under the gang he had to resist through his paintings. He worked even harder at his art in solitude.

Under such abnormal circumstances, what subjects could Huang paint? Huang has said that at that time he remembered the lotus pool at his primary school in Fenghuang. As a child, every summer when the lotus flowered, he would sit and enjoy their beauty. Recalling this, he decided to paint lotus flowers. One special lotus flower he painted was on 8th January 1976, when Premier Zhou died. In mourning for this great revolutionary leader, Huang painted late into the night,* trying to depict the pure noble character of the premier.

An artist creating a work is rather like a mother giving birth to a baby. The baby is the mother's flesh and blood; an artistic work is created from the artist's soul. The life force of the artist is expressed in it. Huang's paintings give a strong impression of his vitality. Take for instance his painting of some white lotus flowers beside a calm pool. The colours green and white predominate, giving a feeling of tranquillity, yet this tranquillity is resonant with life. In his painting of birds and narcissi, the flowers, birds and flowing stream not only convey nature's beauty but are full of emotion. When a work of art has a life force of its

* See *Chinese Literature* 1978, No. 3, p. 40.



Huang Yongyu at work

own, then it evokes personal associations and feelings. Huang is also fond of painting egrets. All his works with water fowl express joy and vigour.

In ancient Chinese artistic theory, artists spoke of "conveying the spirit through concrete forms" and "showing vitality by evoking an atmosphere". By "spirit" is meant the inner nature of the object, while atmosphere is the way in which the artist captures and expresses this inner nature. I think this is more important than the vitality of a painting. An artist must search endlessly to recapture the spirit of his subject and evoke an atmosphere.

We can see his efforts to depict the spirit of a subject from his paintings of human figures. He has made several paintings of the

ancient poet Qu Yuan, for whom he has immense admiration. Under his brush, Qu Yuan's proud and unbending character comes to life. One of his Qu Yuan paintings is of the poet singing in sorrow by the lake, glaring angrily, his hands clasped behind his back. The bold work fully expresses the poet's spirit and anguish. Huang has also made a painting of the Tang-dynasty poet Du Fu, showing the poet's patriotism. On hearing that a rebellion has been crushed by government forces and that the northern territory has been recovered, Du Fu is so full of joy that he tosses his poems and pen in the air. I think such paintings could only have been created in a mood of strong passion, with the artist possessing the maturity of technique to express his feelings adequately. Huang, however, says regarding the paintings of human figures, he is still only in the exploratory stage. Huang likes to quote two lines from our great ancient poet Qu Yuan:

Long and endless lies the road ahead;
I must seek high and low for it.

This sums up his arduous exploration of his art. In that sense these paintings of Huang are just a good beginning. Since he is only in his fifties, his art will develop even more in the future.

Understanding and technique alone are not enough. The artist must also be passionately committed to his art and feel strongly what he wishes to express. Only then can his work have the power to move people. In April, when Huang's exhibition was shown in Beijing, one middle-aged man, an architect, stood for a long time before one of Huang's paintings. He moved away and then returned. Later he said to me with emotion: "I think the beauty of nature aroused such feelings in the artist that he felt he must express it in his lines and colours. Look at that dark green forest pool, the strange colours shining as through a dark glass; the thick undergrowth of the banyan and other tropical trees in various hues forming a harmonious unity of blue and green. And those exquisite white egrets full of life transport you into a dream-like world." Gripping my hands, he was so moved that tears filled his eyes. He continued: "Have you ever dreamed of this? I have. In my dreams, I sometimes see all the beauty I have witnessed since child-

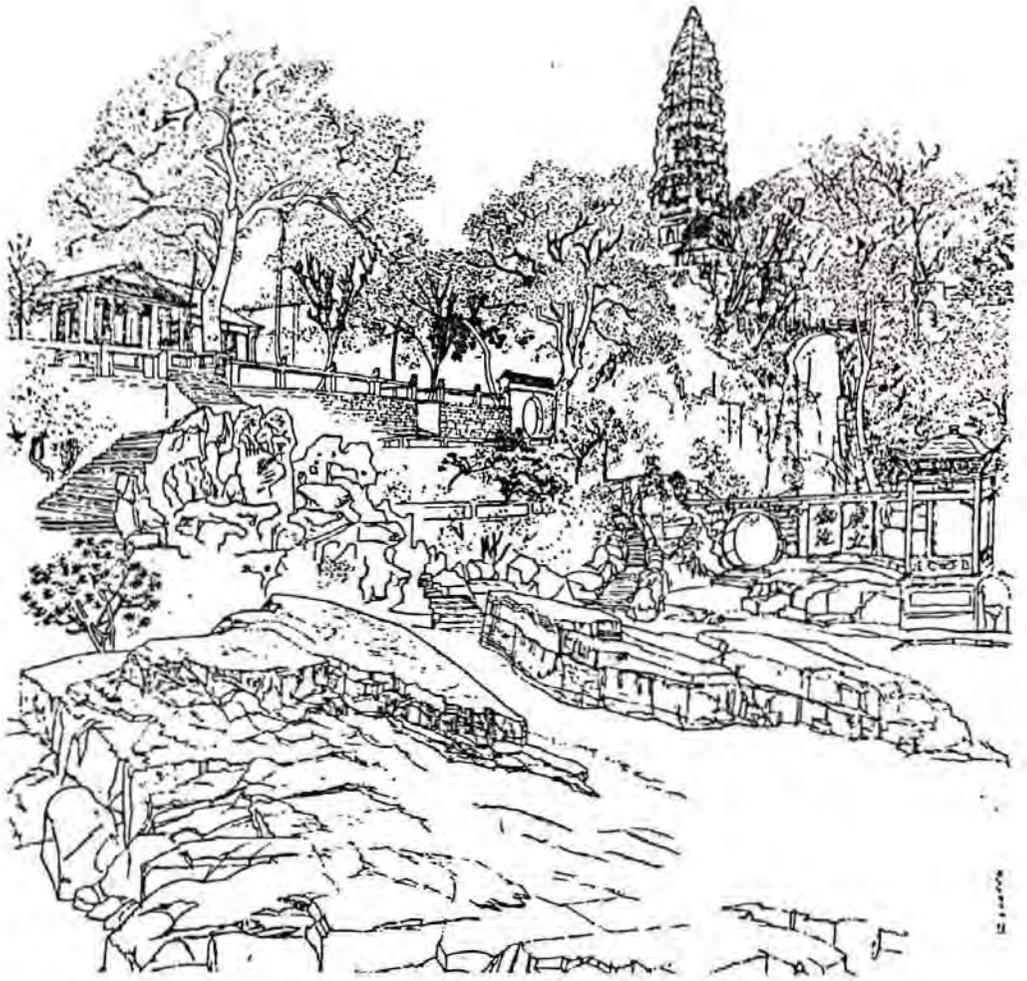
hood. Together they form a dream land, which I never tire of seeing. I've always longed to capture my dream-like impressions, but I'm no artist. Here in this painting by Huang Yongyu, I have recaptured the dreams I have lost."

At the exhibition, some people most admired his lotus paintings, others his narcissi and birds or his pine tree at Huangshan. Some have asked: "Can these paintings of Huang Yongyu be considered as traditional Chinese ones?"

I think they follow the best traditions of Chinese classical paintings. His brushwork and ink technique, his composition and perspective, all follow the traditional style. The Chinese rice-paper, brush, ink and inkstone are all traditional. He also inherits from ancient masters the various kinds of brushwork and ink techniques. He applies ink with a broad brush on the back of his paper to heighten the colours on the surface, a technique often used in ancient silk paintings of human figures, flowers and birds in the meticulous style, though usually paint and not ink was used in ancient times. The use of the broad brush was also employed in traditional Chinese frescoes. Huang's great variety of colours, both Chinese and foreign water-colours, enrich and further develop the Chinese style.

Huang Yongyu is not the first modern artist to develop and experiment with traditional techniques. Since the nineteenth century, some painters have been exploring new methods to break through the traditional rules in Chinese painting, experimenting with new ways of expression. Early in this century, some artists in south China introduced from Japan western techniques of light and shade. The talented artists Xu Beihong and Lin Fengmian both succeeded in integrating Chinese and western techniques. Huang Yongyu has followed their examples, producing new styles to suit the requirements of our age. For example, when painting a lotus flower, he uses light ink as a background to heighten the feeling of shimmering water and the variety of colours of the petals in the sunlight. In this way he enhances the ink effect with more atmosphere, creating a new kind of beauty.

Artists of different ages must both inherit from the past traditional techniques and strive to break through the set rules to create something new for their times. It has been said that an artist



A sketch of Hu Qiu

must have a greedy and healthy appetite. It is hard to say which Chinese artists have most influenced Huang. He has absorbed and digested all things Chinese and foreign, ancient and modern, if they have aroused his interest. Discarding the useless, he accepts the good. He is against uncritical acceptance and copying ancient or foreign masters. There are, however, many of their influences in his paintings.

While the "gang of four" was in power, Huang Yongyu could only paint in his small room which measured less than eight square metres. At first he was in a quandary. There was no space even for a large table on which to paint. If he wanted to make a large

painting, how could this be done in such a limited space? Then he remembered that, in his youthful vagabond days in Quanzhou in Fujian Province, he had seen how the folk artists had painted temple frescoes. Spreading a carpet on a wall and pinning the rice-paper over it, Huang taught himself to paint against the wall.

Huang has learned from different art forms to create his special style of painting, but I think its main basis is derived from his woodcut art. During all his years as a woodcut artist, he gradually evolved a style combining both the precision of line drawing and unbridled romantic imagination. He pays great attention to the maturity of his technique. The mastery of his woodcut art helped him to develop his painting style. He is also a fine calligrapher. This and his passion for history, literature and music have all enriched his art.

In China today there are many fine old and young artists, like Huang Yongyu, whose works give the people joy and make life more beautiful. Now Huang Yongyu's art is arousing great interest with its outstanding works.

Zong Pu

Melody in Dreams

Murong Yuejun, a teacher of the cello at a music college, was wedded to her instrument. She and her cello were as one, and playing it she could express all her feelings. This day, however, she could not finish any piece. Putting the cello aside, she walked on to the balcony and gazed into the distance.

It was September 1975. In the setting sun a strand of her white hair gleamed. Although she was over fifty, her face was still attractive. She gazed at the end of the street, expecting a girl to appear, but no one came. This was the daughter of her close friend Liang Feng, whom she had nearly married. Although he had since died, she remained fond of his daughter.

On the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War in 1937, Liang Feng and other youths had gone to Yanan, the revolutionary base. Yuejun, however, who was a music student at Yanjing University in Beijing at the time, had been taken by her parents to the south. Then she had won a scholarship to study abroad and had not returned until after Liberation in 1949. After the death of her parents, she had immersed herself in teaching music.

Now it was growing dark. She went back into her room thinking.

In the first years after Liberation Liang Feng had worked abroad. In the sixties he had been recalled to China to do cultural exchange work. Yuejun had heard him speak at some meetings. She was impressed by his way of expounding the Party's policies and moved by his devotion to the Party. She even met his wife, a good comrade and kind mother.

Yuejun had met their daughter, but the girl had not left a deep impression on her, except on one unforgettable occasion. It was during the Cultural Revolution, when all sorts of bad characters emerged to slander celebrated artists and intellectuals. Yuejun, because she had studied abroad, was attacked. At a meeting, she and some others were lined up on a stage. Some famous musicians were pushed to the microphone to denounce themselves as reactionaries. Suddenly three or four youngsters beat and kicked a middle-aged man on to the stage shouting: "Down with the revisionist monster Liang Feng!"

Stealing a glance at him, Yuejun was surprised to see her friend being forced to the microphone. Facing the crowd, he said: "I'm Liang Feng, a Chinese Communist!"

No sooner had he said this when some thugs leapt on to the platform and punched him. Blood poured from his mouth. Then a girl's clear voice was heard shouting: "Father! Father!"

There was an uproar as some protested against the beating, while others rushed to the girl and kicked her out of the hall. Though Yuejun's head was lowered, she saw the whole scene, except for the girl's face. Whenever she thought of her, she felt a mixture of sadness and warmth.

Now she was expecting her.

There was a voice outside. Yuejun asked: "Is that you, Pei?" A plump woman of Yuejun's age entered, a Party committee member in her department.

A bosom friend of Yuejun, she said: "I just popped in to see if Liang Feng's daughter was coming to see you today."

"She's supposed to, but she hasn't turned up yet."

"Do you remember...?" Pei looked out of the window.

"I haven't forgotten all those slanders." Yuejun's mild glance rested on her. After each criticism meeting, Pei had whispered in her ear: "Chin up! It's a test." Or: "Never mind. Don't let it upset you too much!" This had enormously encouraged Yuejun.

Pei had high blood pressure and was easily excited. Controlling herself she said: "You must teach her well, Yuejun."

"Of course. I want to, but could I supplement the material?"

"I think one should, but who has the authority? The bad people aren't only trying to destroy the good ones, but also our whole civilization and socialism." Pei's voice quivered.

"But what can we do?" Yuejun muttered.

"Wait until..." Pei slapped the arm of the armchair. After a while she said she was going to see her paralysed husband in the hospital. Smiling bitterly, she left.

It was night as Yuejun gazed out of the window at the maple tree illuminated by neighbouring lights. Thinking of the girl, she supposed she wouldn't come that night. Then there was a knock at the door.

Before she could answer it, a girl came in saying loudly: "Are you Aunt Yuejun? I had such trouble in finding your home, I must have asked about a dozen people the way. Your room's dark but I spotted your cello when I came in, so I guessed this must be the right place. I'm Liang Xia."

Switching on the lights, Yuejun saw that Liang Xia was a pretty girl, with her hair cut short. She was wearing a cream-coloured jacket over a black woollen jersey, and deep grey trousers. With large eyes, slender eyebrows and rosy cheeks, she was smiling quizzically at Yuejun.

"So she's sizing me up too," thought Yuejun, who shook hands with her, saying: "I've been waiting for you..."

2

Liang Xia was nineteen. She was ten years old in 1966 when the Cultural Revolution had begun and this marked a turning-point in her life. Until then she had been the pride of her parents, but her happiness had fled with the start of the Cultural Revolu-

tion. Since her father had been a leader of his office, one night some people broke into their home and dragged him away. Then her mother was separated from her. Liang Xia, bewildered, was alone at home, cooking meals to take to her parents. Her father liked eating noodles and flapjacks, while her mother liked sweet food. Sometimes because Liang Xia hadn't cooked enough food, she herself went hungry in order to give her parents their meals. She did this until one day a man told her not to prepare any more for her father, since he had died five days earlier.

After her parents were detained, some of their comrades invited Liang Xia to live with them, but certain people objected saying that she could only live with a relative. She had an aunt, her mother's sister, but she had refused to take Liang Xia, only allowing the girl to visit her and help her with various chores. At that time Liang Xia was in the fourth-grade at school. Because of her parents, she too was criticized from time to time.

In those unhappy days, Liang Xia often dreamed she was being weighed down by a heavy stone. Unable to remove it she would cry herself awake. But in time she became accustomed to the sneers, and hid the hatred in her heart. After her mother's release, her mother was sent to a cadre school to do manual labour and took her there. Then her mother was transferred to work in a small town in south China, where she met a cello teacher, who had been dismissed from his school. So that Liang Xia wouldn't idle away her time, her mother arranged for her to have cello lessons. Two months previously, her mother had died of illness. This was tragic because it was said there would soon be a meeting to clear her husband's name. Liang Xia came to Beijing and stayed with her aunt. She hoped that Yuejun could give her cello lessons. That was the reason for her visit.

"I'm sorry for being late, but I had to help my aunt with the washing up." She glanced round the room in which Yuejun had lived for many years. Against the window was a marble-topped mahogany desk left to Yuejun by her parents. At one corner stood a piano against which leant a cello. In front of her bed was a folding screen painted with flowers and birds. Two armchairs

flanked a stand, behind which was a lamp with an orange shade. The gentle light gave an atmosphere of tranquillity.

"It's nice and cosy here," Liang Xia said as she followed Yuejun to the kitchen, where she took the thermos flask from her and poured herself a cup of tea. "We were driven out of our home and had to leave everything," she said matter-of-factly. "When my parents were detained, I stayed in the attic. It seemed quite cosy at the time. But mother was ill after her release and whenever she used the stairs I had to carry her on my back."

Yuejun wondered how Liang Xia, with her delicate build, had managed that. Curious to know about her mother's illness, Yuejun nevertheless said nothing in case she opened old wounds.

But as if she had read her thoughts, Liang Xia continued: "Mother had all sorts of complaints. I was like her doctor. I knew every medicine she took. In the end she died of pneumonia. I thought many times she would die, but she always survived. So I thought she'd recover that last time." Her tone seemed detached. Yuejun, however, was very sad.

"How many years have you been playing the cello?" Yuejun looked at her cello. "You love music, don't you?"

"No, I don't." Her reply surprised Yuejun, who stared fascinated at her thick lashes and dark eyes. "I have to learn something to get myself a job. I've been playing since I was fourteen, but I'm not interested in it. I really preferred working in the countryside, but since my mother was too ill to join me, I went with her."

Yuejun was disappointed and wondered whom Liang Xia would follow now.

The girl added: "My parents were always talking about you, so I feel as if I've known you for ages. Mother said you could help me to become a musician." A flicker of hope came into her eyes veiling the indifference which seemed to say: "Anyway, it doesn't matter if you refuse."

"Why bother learning to play the cello if you don't like it?"

"To make a living of course," Liang Xia giggled.

If she had heard such a reply ten years ago, Yuejun would have been insulted. Now nothing astonished her.

"Play me something," she said after a pause.

When Liang Xia went to take the cello, she found a curtained-off recess behind which Yuejun stored her junk. Lifting the curtain, Liang Xia exclaimed: "Goodness! Why do you store away all your things here, auntie? One day I'll help you sort them out." Then holding the cello she began to play.

She played the second movement of a concerto by Saint-Saëns. In spite of her poor technique, there was something moving in her playing which touched Yuejun. Although she failed to grasp the meaning of the music, she expressed her own feelings. She was making music.

"She has a good musical sense," Yuejun thought.

Although she soon finished, the room was filled with the atmosphere she had created. Putting aside the cello, Liang Xia searched Yuejun's face.

"To have a feeling for the music is most important," Yuejun said warmly. "But you don't handle your bow correctly yet. Look, it should be like this," and so saying she took the bow and gave the girl her first lesson.

3

After that, Liang Xia came once a week. When she wasn't studying, she'd chat or help Yuejun with something. She was bright and seemed to know a lot, though sometimes she was ignorant of the most common knowledge. For example, once a colleague was discussing some classical novels with Yuejun, when Liang Xia interrupted them saying she had read many of them. It seemed she had read whatever she could lay her hands on, but there were very large gaps in her education. She may have seemed self-centred, knowing how to take care of herself, because since the death of her parents no one had shown any concern for her. She sometimes, however, was ready to help others.

One day Yuejun was learning to give injections. Liang Xia offered her arm because she said she wasn't afraid of pain. Then she added coolly: "Trouble is, you're afraid because you haven't been beaten up enough!" She seemed to have seen through every-

thing and scorned the glowing revolutionary jargon in the newspapers. She would say: "All lies! Even Premier Zhou was slandered as a reactionary. Who's foolish enough to swallow that!" Her only belief was that Premier Zhou would triumph over those "bastards". Yuejun hoped the same.

When she referred to Jiang Qing, she called her a "she-devil" who had created so many scandals and who still tried to fool the people. "She praises a novel about vengeance, while she really intends to attack us. One day I'll take my revenge on her!" Her words puzzled Yuejun. She spoke freely, not caring about the situation. At times Yuejun was afraid lest she should get into trouble.

Pei, a frequent visitor, soon got to know Liang Xia well enough to make her drop her pose of flippancy and talk seriously.

One day Pei came to hear Liang Xia play. After listening to her she asked Yuejun, "If you want to supplement your teaching material, why not use some Western études? You're too timid, I think."

Bow in hand, Liang Xia protested: "Of course she's timid, but what about you?"

"I never said I was bold," Pei smiled, "but we've each got a head on our shoulders, and we should use our brains to find ways and means."

"My head's too heavy for me. I don't like it. If you want, Aunt Pei, I'll give it to you. Then you'll be bold enough to make revolution. Only don't get scared because you'll have to turn everything upside-down." She burst out laughing. "Revolution sounds fine but they murdered my father under that name also!"

"No, that was counter-revolutionary," Pei burst out. "Stop playing the fool and remember what your mother said to you. Remember those who hounded your father to death. You must think seriously about your future."

Liang Xia immediately became grave, bit her lip and stared at Pei. After a moment she lapsed into her usual flippancy and sneered: "I don't give a fig for them! What about dinner? Let's go and make it. I'm quite good at cooking. . . ." She laughed.

That was how she had reacted.

Once when Yuejun asked about her future plans, she answered as briefly as before, adding with a movement of her eyebrows: "I'll fool around until my aunt throws me out, but that won't be immediately. She knows that my father's name may be cleared and that she stands to gain." Then she went to the recess and lifting the curtain looked at it again.

Before long her aunt turned her out. It was on an early winter day, when Liang Xia should have arrived for her lesson. At sunset she still hadn't come. Yuejun wondered in concern what had happened to her.

Suddenly Liang Xia burst in, a bulky satchel over her shoulder and a string bag in her hand. With a face flushed with rage, she cried: "Sorry to keep you waiting, but I've just had a hell of a row with my aunt." Then putting down her bags in a corner, she sat down fanning herself with a handkerchief. Her eyes burned with resentment as she jeered and laughed: "It's just ridiculous!"

"Don't laugh like that," Yuejun said patting Liang Xia's shoulder. "Tell me what happened."

"My aunt said that my father's name can't be cleared because he was a reactionary and that he had killed himself to escape punishment. As for me, since I'm his daughter there's no future for me. My staying with her has caused her a lot of trouble. Since her husband is going to be made a deputy-minister and their block of flats is for ministers, ordinary people like me shouldn't be living there. We're a security risk. What rot!"

Yuejun sympathized with her and wondered what she would do next.

"I'll stay with you, if I may? You aren't afraid?" she asked standing up.

Yuejun was silent. Of course she was afraid! To let Liang Xia stay with her could mean she too would be labelled as a counter-revolutionary. But how could she push her out? After all, she was Liang Feng's daughter.

Seeing Yuejun's hesitation, Liang Xia smiled with scorn. Then she noticed that she had reached a decision. Before Yuejun could say anything, Liang Xia walked over to the curtained recess and put her things by it. "I've thought about it before. We can put

a bed here." As she spoke she began pulling out the junk. "You sit over there, auntie." She sneezed. "So much dust! I always said I'd help you spring-clean it one day. Now my words have come true!" She laughed delightedly.

Despite the dust she hummed a tune as she worked. Having finished cleaning, she arranged the things in two piles of boxes and cases, on which she placed some planks for a bed. Then she made it up with sheets and a quilt lent to her by Yuejun. With a board from the kitchen she made herself a desk. Among the junk she had found a tattered scroll on which was written a poem. This read:

Coming from your old home
You should know what is happening there;
Leaning against the window,
Did you see the plums in blossom?

Holding it in her hands, Liang Xia softly read it twice.

"Who wrote it?" she asked. "Both the poem and the calligraphy are good. Why don't you hang it up?"

"Wouldn't that be criticized?" Yuejun replied joking. "It was only this year that I put my screen here. Honestly I'm afraid of courting trouble."

"Well, I'm not." Examining it, Liang Xia noticed the inscription: "A poem by Wang Wei copied by Yuejun in G. city." The girl exclaimed: "So you wrote it! No wonder the calligraphy's so good." Immediately she hung it above her bed. Stepping back she gazed at it and then, clapping her hands, asked: "But where's G. city?"

"Geneva, in Switzerland." Yuejun looked at the old writing with some emotion. "I was there alone studying music and I felt very homesick. Once I listened to Dvorak's *New World Symphony* a dozen times non-stop. Whenever it reached the second movement I was deeply moved. So I wrote that poem on the scroll. What awful calligraphy!"

"There's patriotism in your words." Liang Xia gave a bitter smile. "Now even patriotism is getting criticized."

"I didn't have any clear ideas." Yuejun sat down at the table. "But I truly missed China then. My ancestors and I had been



As Yuejun was correcting her, there was a knock at the door.

born here. I was proud to be Chinese. That's why I appreciated that short poem. But if that is all wrong now, what's left?" Moodily she turned to the window: "Of course I learned Western music, but only so that I could serve my country better."

"Your country?" Liang Xia mocked. "Today that means individualism, egotism and counter-revolutionary revisionism!" Then she laughed: "Anyway you're all right as a musician. Isn't singing and acting coming into fashion?"

Yuejun didn't want to comment on her harsh words.

At last Liang Xia had finished tidying up. "My bed's rather like a raft, isn't it?" Going over to it she said: "I'll stay on my raft. I'll be as quiet as a mouse in the day." Having climbed on to her "raft" she suddenly popped her head out of the curtain and quipped: "Carefree on my raft, I don't mind whether the seasons come or go." Then she was quiet.

"Now there's no need to act like that," Yuejun laughed. Drawing back the curtain, she found that Liang Xia was lying back on her quilt, her eyes closed. On her rosy cheeks were streaks of dirt. "Get up and wash your face, Liang Xia. We'll have a lesson. Since you'll be staying here for a while, you mustn't waste your time."

On hearing her say "for a while", Liang Xia smiled faintly and glanced sadly at her.

At half-past eight that evening they had a lesson. Liang Xia played first. Her technique was improving. As Yuejun was correcting her, there was a knock at the door.

A youngster in a green uniform without any insignia entered. The expression on his regular-featured face was troubled. Seeing Liang Xia sitting with the cello in her hands, he said to Yuejun: "Excuse me, are you Aunt Yuejun? I'd like to have a word with her." Then he smiled at Liang Xia.

Ignoring him, Liang Xia concentrated on her music, but after a while she explained: "This is Mao Tou. A friend of my cousin. Let's continue our lesson."

"Mao Tou? Is that a nickname?" asked Yuejun casually, wondering about their relationship.

"Actually I don't know his real name." With this Liang Xia continued playing.

Snubbed, the young man turned to Yuejun for help. She suggested, looking at Liang Xia, that they go for a walk in the fresh air. Then she went to her desk and switched on the lamp. Pouting Liang Xia slouched out with her friend.

The next day at school, Yuejun told Pei about her decision. The latter was delighted. "I agree with you. She should live in your home." Some colleagues who sympathized with Liang Xia felt in this way she could have an opportunity to study, as she'd become an orphan and a loafer. "But who'll be responsible for her?" Pei asked. Those who objected said: "What if the police start making inquiries? And if Liang Xia does something illegal, Yuejun will be implicated." Yuejun was worried, but decided that if the authorities insisted the girl should leave, then she must do so. Otherwise Liang Xia could stay as long as she liked.

Time passed, and Yuejun and Liang Xia got on well together. The latter was able, diligent and considerate. Always in high spirits, she reminded Yuejun of an elf from a dance by Grieg. But Liang Xia claimed to be a very down-to-earth sort of person. "If you were me," she argued, "you'd be just as practical."

The weather grew chilly and Yuejun bought Liang Xia some cloth intending to have a jacket made at the tailor's. But Liang Xia took it and said she could make it herself. She went to Pei's home where there was a sewing-machine. On her return, she looked grave.

"What's the matter?" Yuejun asked.

"Oh, nothing!" Liang Xia fidgeted with the remnants of the cloth. "Aunt Pei's husband's been paralysed for three years, and she has to go to the hospital every day to take care of him. Though she has high blood pressure, she still goes to her office and studies the works of Marx and Lenin. She told me that in the Yanan days, she wore straw sandals yet every step she took seemed significant. Life was so full of hope. There she became friends with my parents." After a moment her face brightened and she continued: "Aunt Pei said my father helped to reclaim the waste land and that my mother spun yarn. I'd like to live such a life, but

now even playing my cello's illegal." Scissors in hand, she shredded the cloth.

Her usual apathetic and scornful expression returned, her tender heart seemed to have hardened. As Yuejun stroked her silky black hair, there was a knock at the door. Two young men with high sheepskin hats and fashionable trousers entered. Seeing them, Liang Xia sprang forward and told them to get out, banging the door shut. Her friends annoyed Yuejun, who didn't know where Liang Xia picked them up. If she was at home, then Liang Xia would take them out, but while she was teaching or elsewhere, Yuejun was quite ignorant of what went on in her home. As most of them were boys, she once tentatively warned Liang Xia against falling in love too early.

Hearing this, Liang Xia burst out laughing. "Don't worry! I shan't be such a fool! I don't respect those boys. When I marry, he'll be a high official!" She grinned pulling a face, as if in her eyes high officials were toys for amusement. Then affecting gravity, she added: "Or perhaps I'll be a spinster like you. By the way, why didn't you marry, aunt?"

"You tell me," Yuejun countered trying to avoid the question.

"It isn't that you believe in being single, but that you've never met a man you loved." She was sharp.

Since her arrival, Yuejun had been strict in making her practise various pieces every day. Though she did not assign any Western musical scores, Liang Xia often played some to amuse herself. One day when Yuejun returned, she overheard Liang Xia playing a plaintive melody by Massenet. It was so melancholy that she waited till Liang Xia had finished before entering.

Yuejun often wished that Liang Xia could attend a proper school, since she had real musical talent. But it all depended on when her father's name would be cleared. If that happened, then the girl would be in a better position to study.

Meanwhile Liang Xia led a seemingly carefree life. Apart from playing the cello and seeing friends, she often read some books on her "raft". One day Yuejun was shocked to find her reading a hand-written copy of an "underground" book. "Why are you reading that?" she asked.

"Why not?" Liang Xia retorted.

"The cover alone scares me."

"You wouldn't even say boo to a goose!" Liang Xia giggled. "When my parents were detained I was often criticized and beaten. Later I fought the boys back. They beat me and I punched them. I loved it!"

Not knowing what to say, Yuejun stared at her pretty, youthful face. Despite the merry, contemptuous expression, she sensed hidden apathy and misery.

"Since I'm older now, I've grown out of fighting. It bores me." Then she tried to reassure Yuejun: "Please don't worry, auntie. But I can't play the cello all day long. I must read some books too. Since I can't find any good ones, I'm reading these, even though they're bad. It's like food. When there's nothing delicious, I eat anything. So there!" She glanced at the cabinet in which were locked some good books.

"You're wrong." Yuejun tried to argue against her.

"I know." Smiling she added: "Now I just exist. If one day I can't go on like this, then I'll change my world outlook. That's how Mao Tou puts it."

"You can read what he's read, I think." Yuejun had found that Mao Tou was a thoughtful young man who had studied seriously some books on philosophy, literature and history. Although known as a "scholar" in his factory, he refused to join any writing teams run by the authorities. His father was an old cadre, who had often shown concern for Liang Xia.

Yuejun's suggestion made Liang Xia smile again. After a moment, Yuejun opened the cabinet to let her choose whatever book she wanted. Happily Liang Xia looked through it until she suddenly murmured: "My father had many books. However late he worked he never went to bed before he had read a little. What a pity I was so young! I... I hate..." Turning round she clutched hold of the cabinet, her eyes blazing. "Oh father! Father!" Her voice was as clear and pained as a few years before. "I don't believe that my father, a Communist full of enthusiasm, committed suicide. They killed him, but insist that he killed himself." She didn't choose a book, but stood there gazing wistfully at

Yuejun. "Do you think the day I long for will come? Mother told me I must live to see it."

Yuejun couldn't bear to see her expression. Wanting Liang Xia to have a good cry, tears began pouring down her own face. Even if her father had killed himself, he would never have done so unless driven to it. He must have been in a terrible situation. She wanted to cry with Liang Xia hoping the girl's tears would wash away her cynicism. Instead Liang Xia rushed to her bed, leaving on the cabinet two snicks from her nails.

4

It was 1976 and the Spring Festival was approaching. Despite the festival, everyone was grieving. Where was the spring? People were profoundly anxious about their future since the death of Premier Zhou. There was a dreadful abyss in their hearts, which could not be filled by their tears and thoughts.

Before she went to the cadre school in January to do some manual labour, Yuejun entrusted Liang Xia to Pei's care. When she heard the sad news of the premier's death, she felt desolate. Worried that something might happen to Liang Xia, she wrote to her asking how she was. After she had posted the letter, Yuejun was afraid lest Liang Xia reply in an incautious way, so she quickly sent a message telling her not to answer. However, her reply came. It said: "I'm prepared to shoulder my responsibilities now." Though cryptic, it signified that a storm was imminent.

On her return home, Yuejun found Liang Xia had changed. She seldom talked and never laughed in that old distressing way. She thought more about her responsibilities. Sometimes Yuejun told her to play her cello to find peace in the music, but thinking about Premier Zhou disturbed her playing. In the past three weeks she had suddenly matured. Her flippancy had gone. In her dark eyes was a clouded expression, since her thoughts seemed too heavy to convey. Some of her friends stopped coming, since they were just playmates. When asked by Yuejun where her friends were, Liang Xia blinked as if she had never known them.

She had got rid of those frivolous books, but she was not in-

terested in serious literature either. To Yuejun's surprise, Liang Xia sometimes read works of Marx and Lenin. On the eve of the Spring Festival, Pei found her reading an article by Chairman Mao, a notebook by her side. Leafing through its pages, Pei was astonished to find a heading: "Crimes perpetrated by Jiang Qing." The charges listed were logical and cogent. Pei grasped Liang Xia's hand and said admiringly: "I always thought you were a fine girl, Xia!"

Liang Xia smiled a genuine smile. "I thought a long time about your advice. I shouldn't fritter away my life and youth. Especially at this time."

Most of the notes had been made by Liang Xia and some by Mao Tou. As Yuejun read them, she felt they were telling the truth. But the truth meant trouble. She searched Pei's face wanting to know what to do.

Pei smiled at her. "It's correct to expose them for what they are. These notes are what we've been wanting to say ourselves."

Liang Xia told Yuejun: "I know that's the way you feel too. But you are too timid, auntie."

Yuejun sighed: "To whom could we speak?"

"We're only allowed to parrot the editorials," Pei added.

Liang Xia was silent. Her smile faded into contempt and pessimism.

Yuejun anxiously looked at the girl, while Pei warned: "It isn't just a question of daring to struggle. It's also knowing how and when to strike."

After a quick supper in the dim light, Yuejun wanted to ask Liang Xia why she and Mao Tou had written these notes, but she didn't press her.

Suddenly there were three knocks at the door. Liang Xia immediately darted to open it and Mao Tou entered. Although he looked tense, he didn't forget his manners, greeting Yuejun before turning to Liang Xia. "Let's go out," he suggested.

"What's the matter?"

"Please sit down," Yuejun urged. "It's so cold outside. Don't go out. Tell us what's happened."

Eying them both, he said: "My father's been arrested!"

"What?" Yuejun was dismayed.

"On what charge?" Liang Xia asked.

"They can trump up anything," he replied, trying to control his anger. Then he continued: "A few days ago, my father told me they were concocting some charge against Premier Zhou. He said as long as he was alive he'd defend him and speak out. This morning your uncle told my father that they wanted him to attend a meeting. A neighbour reported that my father was bundled into his car. He wasn't even allowed to leave a note for the family."

"I was luckier. I saw my father being dragged away," Liang Xia murmured.

"When I went to their office to see my father, the man on duty told me coldly that he's to stand trial and wouldn't let me see him. Then he shoved me out of the door."

Yuejun was outraged thinking how many families had been ruined by the gang; how many young people had been deprived of their right to work and study or even lost their lives. They wouldn't even leave the premier alone. Our great hero had left nothing of himself after his death. Even his ashes had been scattered over the mountains and rivers. Now they intended to blacken his reputation.

Liang Xia trembled with rage. She suddenly laughed aloud. Yuejun took her hand which felt cold. "Xial!" she exclaimed.

"Those monsters are about to tear off their masks!" Brushing Yuejun aside, she put one hand on the table and the other to her breast.

"Yes, I think they are going to show their true intentions soon," said Mao Tou, looking coolly at Liang Xia. "We must continue collecting our material. The day's coming when the gang will be brought to trial and condemned."

"If my father were alive today, he'd do as yours has done, I'm sure."

Mao Tou paced the room and then said he was going to inform his friends about his father's arrest. He left after shaking hands with Yuejun and warning her to be careful.

At the door Liang Xia suddenly cried out: "But you haven't had your supper yet!" Mao Tou shook his head and left. Yuejun knew that his mother had died of a heart attack after a struggle meeting. Now he had no parents to look after him.

5

Despite disasters afflicting the society, time marched on. Tempered by grief, doubt and anxiety, the people came to see the truth.

On the eve of the Qing Ming Festival in April 1976, darkness enveloped Beijing's Tiananmen Square. But bright wreaths overlapped each other; the loyal hearts of the people challenged the sombre surroundings. Some wreaths were as high as a house, while others were very small. They stretched from the Martyrs' Monument to the avenue. It was like a great hall of mourning, unparalleled in history, made by the people for Premier Zhou. The pine trees, covered with white paper flowers of mourning, were like a bank of snow. Gaily decorated baskets hung from the lamp-posts. Balloons floated in the air with streamers inscribed with the words: "Premier Zhou Is Immortal!" The crowds in the square were like a vast moving sea. They were silent, though all were indignant and at the end of their patience. The flames of truth in their hearts at last were about to blaze.

If the truth could be seen, Yuejun thought, it was in that square. The people were prepared to give their lives for it. She knew Liang Xia came every day to copy down poems and see the wreaths. Yuejun and Liang Xia were making their way to the monument in the middle of the square. They hung their basket on a pine tree. It contained pure white flowers entwined with silver paper, which glistened like their tears.

Liang Xia remembered pacing in the quiet square in January after the premier's death when she heard people weeping. A middle-aged woman had lurched towards the monument crying: "Oh premier, what shall we do in future? What?..." Her cries were carried round the square and reverberated in Liang Xia's heart.

Suddenly Yuejun felt Liang Xia shudder. Looking in the same direction, she saw a streamer by the monument which read: "Even if the monsters spew out poisonous flames, the people will vanquish them!" Though the street lights were dim, these words seemed ablaze. This was the strength of the people! The people had begun to fight back!

Yuejun and Liang Xia walked among the crowds who were engrossed in copying poems. Some far away couldn't see clearly, so others who were nearer to the monument read them aloud. If some had no paper, others would tear out pages from their notebooks. People wrote leaning on others' backs. All the crowds shared one purpose and cherished a deep love for Premier Zhou.

Unexpectedly Mao Tou appeared. With a serious expression, he whispered something in Liang Xia's ear. She hurriedly pulled Yuejun away from the crowd.

On their way home, Yuejun was filled with grief and anxiety. She wasn't afraid for herself, but very worried about Liang Xia and Mao Tou, and all the other young people in the square who were reciting poems. On reaching home, she sat down at the desk in front of a photograph of Premier Zhou, taken when he was young. Yuejun wished she could talk to Pei who had given her this photograph, but she had been in hospital because of a heart attack since March. She had been working too hard.

Liang Xia was busy on her "raft". After a moment she emerged and poured herself a glass of water. She looked calm and happy, though pale. "Would you like some water, auntie?" she asked. There was no answer.

Then Yuejun said looking at her: "I want to say something to you. I guess you're going to put up some posters. It's too dangerous!" She paused before adding: "You're young. You must live to see the day. . . . You're the only survivor in your family."

Not in the least disturbed, Liang Xia replied: "I don't want to hide anything from you. But we must speak out and let those bastards know we are still living. As you know, I'm not afraid of anything."

Yuejun said after a pause, tears streaming down her face: "Then let me go! I'm old, but I can do it as well as you!"



Liang Xia put up posters at Tienanmen Square.

"You?" Amazed, Liang Xia gazed at her kind, pleasant, tear-stained face. She too began to weep, though she tried to hold back her tears.

"Xia!" Yuejun hugged her tightly. Her tears dropped on the girl's hair, while Liang Xia's wet her breast.

Liang Xia soon dried her eyes. There was no time for a good cry. It was as if she heard the bugle call. Flames of love and hatred blazed in her heart, melting it. She had thought of telling Yuejun that she had already distributed some leaflets in the trolleys and parks. Some had expressed her views, while others contained only one sentence: "Down with the gang, the cause of all disasters!" She was sure there wouldn't be any trouble, but still it was better not to involve Yuejun. She decided to keep her in the dark and so she changed the subject: "All right, I won't go out now. Where are you going, auntie?"

"I'm serious, you little wretch!" Yuejun protested.

"So am I." She wiped away her tears. "You must rest. You're too excited." With this, she went to make up Yuejun's bed and quietly slipped two sleeping pills into a glass of water. Handing it to her, she persuaded Yuejun to lie down.

Soon Yuejun felt very sleepy so she lay down, while Liang Xia paced the floor, cheerfully. "You should put on something more," Yuejun advised, noticing Liang Xia was only wearing her woollen jersey. "You must take care of yourself!" Then she wondered if she was really getting old, as she was feeling so tired.

Yuejun fell asleep and was unaware that Liang Xia had tidied up the room. Before leaving, she had fondled the cello and turned to gaze again and again at the screen behind which was Yuejun's bed. Finally she made up her mind and gingerly opening the door went out. . . .

That night she didn't return. On the second and third nights she still hadn't come home.

One evening after her discharge from hospital, Pei came to visit Yuejun. It was already summer. Through the window the stars shone. The two women sat facing each other in silence.

After a while, Yuejun took a notebook out of a drawer, saying: "I found this yesterday. Xia made notes in it."

Pei was startled when she flicked through the pages to read: "I won't live under the same sky with the sworn enemy of my family and my country!" She read the sentence again and again before saying confidently: "Don't be sad. I believe she'll come back one day."

Yuejun nodded: "I hope so. I know where Mao Tou is imprisoned. But I've no news about Xia."

"We'll try to locate her." The notebook was clenched tightly in Pei's hand.

Yuejun heaved a sigh: "Recently I feel as if we've been playing a piece of music interminably but it may break off any moment now."

"Don't worry. We'll end this symphony on a magnificent, triumphant note. By the way, in the past two months, an instruction came from our ministry to investigate the relationship between you and Liang Xia, but we refused to do it."

Rising to her feet, Yuejun declared: "Tell them Liang Xia's my daughter. I'll adopt her as my own daughter." Her worn, sweet face brightened, and in her eyes shone determination.

Pei grasped her hand firmly.

That night Yuejun dreamed that she was playing her cello at a concert. The music from the cello was splendid and triumphant. In the audience a pair of dark eyes danced to the melody. They belonged to Liang Xia.

Then suddenly it was Liang Xia and not she who was playing on the stage. Her skilful playing was inspiring and encouraging. Happy tears poured down her cheeks. The stage lights shone on her white gauze and silver-threaded dress and on her glistening tears. The powerful music reverberated inside and outside the hall. She played what was in her heart and in the hearts of the people.

The dream of the people will be fulfilled. The reactionaries will be smashed. Historically this is inevitable.

Illustrated by Shen Yaoyi

Malaqinfu

Slogging Across the Deep Snow

It was exceptionally warm before the Spring Festival. The ice and snow had thawed and the road across the fields was muddy. The fresh scent of soil in the moist air was intoxicating, and it was really a pleasure to see spring approaching so early north of the Great Wall.

My wartime commander lived in the same town with me, but both of us were too busy all the year round to get together for a chat or exchange of views. Especially as that former commander of mine always went all out, whether fighting battles in the past or in her work after the establishment of the People's Republic. She could be said to have devoted her whole life to the people. However, some years ago even a person of her calibre had been imprisoned on a trumped-up charge. As she happened to be released just before the Spring Festival, I went early in the morning of the lunar New Year's Day to pay her a congratulatory call; but to my surprise she was out. According to her family, she had gone to spend the festival with some herdsmen. She had by then been reappointed director of the bureau of animal husbandry. I completely understood what prompted a veteran fighter to spend the Spring Festival among the masses, after being cut off from them so long in prison.

For three years in succession I went to wish her a happy New Year on New Year's Day but the outcome was the same. Each time her husband, a deputy commander of the military area, threw out his hands and joked, "What's to be done? I'm a general, yet I have to be on duty at home every New Year's Day."

This year, not wanting to embarrass the old general again, I went to visit her on New Year's Eve to make sure of meeting her.

As I slogged along the muddy road, I recalled her well-nigh legendary past. In the years when these pastures were a sea of misery, she was known as a heroine there. When I first met her, she was only twenty-seven but already in charge of our unit. Dressed in a red Mongolian robe and a pair of red riding boots, she rode on a roan horse. Utterly fearless, a gun in each hand, she commanded a cavalry column which swept through the region north of the Great Wall and repeatedly performed outstanding services. . . .

She was our commander Hongol and I was her messenger, being then merely a boy of fifteen, no taller than a rifle.

More than thirty years had passed in a wink. Now I was nearly fifty, but in the eyes of my old commander I remained a "little devil". Now, as excited as in the old days when I went to see my commander, I was approaching Comrade Hongol's home.

Just then a jeep swung out of the courtyard. I saw that the driver was Comrade Hongol herself. She recognized me too, for she abruptly pulled up and jumped out.

She looked like a pilot in her leather jacket and black riding boots, just as vigorous as in her younger days. If not for her grey hair, who would be aware of the elapse of time?

I walked up to grip her hand, saying jokingly, "You're still so martial, it's too bad you no longer have your roan horse."

With a wry smile she said, "Even if I had it today, I couldn't ride it. My back aches driving a jeep, let alone riding on horseback!" Her voice had a quaver in it.

This reminded me that she had been wounded twice during the war years and, what was more deplorable, had been badly injured in the lumbar regions by beatings while in jail. I regretted my tactless mention of the roan horse and hastily changed the subject.

"I came to see you before at the Spring Festival but you were never at home. So I came a day earlier this year."

The bitterness promptly disappeared from her face and she threw back her head with a hearty laugh. Giving me a slap on the shoulder she declared, "If you'd come a minute later you'd have missed me all the same."

"You're going out again?"

"Come along, let's spend New Year's Day on the pasture."

I agreed and got into the jeep. Although sixty now, she always took the steering wheel herself. So I found myself riding in state like a commander.

On the back seat there was nothing but a faded red Mongolian robe. I could not guess where she was going this trip or for how long.

"Where are you planning to go?" I asked.

"Haven't decided yet. We'll see later on."

"Have you rung them up beforehand?"

Tilting her head she arched her thick eyebrows abruptly. I knew this was a sign of disapproval.

I explained hastily: "It's New Year's Eve today. It would be more convenient for them to let them know in advance."

"What does it matter? Any herdsmen you visit will treat you as their kith and kin if you've made a special trip from town to spend the New Year with them."

Now the jeep began ascending the Dayin Mountain highway. The mountain was high, the wind fierce, and the view here of a boundless expanse of snow was quite different from that on the other side. There was not a trace of spring in the air. However, the winter scene had its own grandeur.

Gazing at the snow-capped ranges in the distance I thought to myself: Every year Comrade Hongol spends the Spring Festival with herdsmen. She must do this after careful consideration. As far as I knew, when she adhered to some set plan it was often with a view to fact-finding. To sound her out, I ventured, "It seems you've made it a rule to spend the Spring Festival among the herdsmen."

She did not reply at once, and looked as if on the watch for any

vehicles that might round the hair-pin bend ahead; but I believed she was thinking over her answer. After we had passed the bend she asked in reply: "Little Devil, after building socialism for thirty years, we should know that our way has been as tortuous and precipitous as this mountain road. We've paid a high price for this lesson. What conclusion should our Party and old Party members like us draw from that? . . ."

I did not interrupt her with further questions, hoping she would elucidate.

She went on, "We must know what the people are thinking at any given moment."

"What the people are thinking. . . ." I repeated to myself.

"That's not asking too much, is it, of the Party in power in a country of eight hundred million people and of us Party members of several decades' standing?" She paused before continuing, "We knew what the people were thinking in the war years and we understood them fairly well during the early years after Liberation. But later on, some of our cadres neglected this crucial question. . . ."

She fell silent, obviously thinking over the past. Suddenly she said rousinglly: "Let bygones be bygones. Today we're out to modernize our country. If we pay no attention to the people's opinions, will they agree with us? There are so many new problems ahead of us. How can we solve them if we just stick indoors?"

"That's why you like to spend New Year with the herdsmen?"

"Yes. On New Year's Eve when auspicious snow is falling or on the sunny morning of New Year's Day, we drink from the same cup and sing the same songs. When they're merry after some cups of warm wine or fragrant tea, they stop treating you as an 'official' and naturally will open their hearts to you. They'll tell you what pleases them and their ideals, as well as their demands and grievances. This is a better way of gauging their feelings than by calling a meeting."

"Right, only by knowing what the people feel can we win their support," I agreed.

"Well said! If we can't find out what's on people's minds and solve new problems as soon as they arise, to speed up moderniza-

tion, Marx won't be pleased with us Chinese Communists! Have you ever thought about this?"

"Yes, I have," I replied with feeling. "So have most other Party members, I suppose. This is what has turned so many old cadres' hair white."

She was too moved to say any more, and I too remained silent.

Our jeep had already reached the top of the Dayin Mountain. Snow buffeted the windows and blurred our vision. Comrade Hongol turned on the windshield wipers. Through the fan-shaped spaces cleared by them I looked out and found that except for some nearby mountain peaks all was obscured by the snowstorm.

This world of ice and snow was bitterly cold. I couldn't help shivering. Comrade Hongol, noticing this, braked and turned round to take the robe from the back seat and drape it over my shoulders. Then she drove on, defying the wind and snow.

I felt warm at heart with the robe over my shoulders. Past events flashed to my mind. . . .

When I worked as Comrade Hongol's messenger over thirty years ago, she had been like a flower, no, a flame in her red robe, as she galloped over the battlefields north of the desert. Life was very difficult in the army then. The cotton-padded uniforms we wore served us as bed-clothes too. For fear I would catch cold, every night before she went to sleep Comrade Hongol took off her robe and covered me with it.

One night when I curled up under the robe I smelt the reek of burnt cloth from a patch on the left shoulder. I ripped open the patch and found a bullet hole with blood-stains around it. In great distress I threw myself into her arms and wept:

"You're wounded, commander!"

She seemed touched by my reaction. Stroking my cropped hair she assured me, "It'll soon heal."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"What need? What soldier doesn't get wounded? The good thing about wounds inflicted by the enemy is that they keep alive our hatred, hatred that can be transformed into boundless strength. We don't let wounds get us down or stop us advancing. We heal them in order to go back to the front and charge the enemy more

fiercely than ever!" She broke off, not wanting to get too carried away. Then gently wiping my tears she resumed earnestly, "Little Devil, no matter how many times in your life you're wounded, remember this: a genuine revolutionary turns a blind eye to his wounds but keeps watch on the way forward — the way to make the people's ideals come true! Therein lies the whole significance of our life."

For thirty years I had kept her words in my mind. They sustained me in the stern test I later underwent, and saved me from succumbing to despair. . . .

Our jeep, winning through the wind, snow, clouds and mist on the icy road, sped towards the northern slope.

Suddenly dozens of people, red flags flying over their heads, appeared on the slope.

"What are they up to?" Hongol got out of the jeep and walked over to the crowd.

She came back presently with a group of herdsmen carrying pickaxes and hammers. "They are off to quarry stones," she told me.

"Quarry stones?" I was baffled. After all, this was New Year's Eve.

"Yes, they say a deputy secretary from the banner Party committee is staying in their brigade to help improve their work. He told them to give up the holiday and come to quarry stone here."

"Why, that's the bad old way. . . ."

"What's there to be surprised at?" Comrade Hongol cut me short with a wave of her hand. "This secretary really spares no pains. He went ahead to the mountain yesterday. We have comrades like that — you can't help admiring and deploring their behaviour at the same time!"

After greeting the herdsmen I asked, "What do you want the stones for?"

A young man replied, "We've been told to wall off part of the pasture to store fodder or use for rotatory herding. But as far as I know, countries more advanced in animal husbandry have better ways of doing things."

I made no comment on the technical problem. What I wanted

to know was this: Why must they come out to work on New Year's Eve?

"Stones quarried on a festival must be exceptionally valuable!" Comrade Hongol spoke up before the herdsmen could answer.

A roar of laughter went up.

"Neighbours," she added, "you should go down at once and spend New Year at home."

Sudden silence greeted this. No one could guess whether she was serious or just making a joke. One of the herdsmen, probably their team leader, stepped forward and said, "This shock team of ours is headed by the deputy secretary of the banner Party committee. Tomorrow — New Year's Day — we're to go all out!"

"Let's take Hongol's word for it," called out an old man with a silver beard. "What are you afraid of? Down we go, I say! My three grandsons are waiting for me to celebrate New Year together."

"Then . . . what about the deputy secretary. . . ." The team leader was in a dilemma.

"You've been working hard for the whole year," Comrade Hongol declared. "You should join your families for the New Year. As to the deputy secretary, I'll have a word with him."

The herdsmen brightened up. Whooping with joy, some youngsters raced downhill. The team leader finally followed.

Gazing after them Hongol said to me, "Now I've done it! Come on, let's go and confess to that banner secretary."

The quarry headquarters was on a nearby slope. We drove to it up a rugged, twisting track.

It turned out that the deputy secretary was one of my old comrades-in-arms. In other words, he was also Hongol's former subordinate. He was called Hatu, meaning tough fellow, and he had lived up to that name on the battlefield. Now, wearing greasy overalls over his padded coat, he was busy fixing up a loudspeaker with a young electrician in preparation for a pep talk the next morning. The sight of his hoary temples and weather-beaten face aroused my respect — respect mixed with compassion.

When he turned and found Hongol and me standing before him, he was too surprised to greet us.

"I wondered what 'master-hand' was making the people quarry stone on New Year's Day," said Hongol. "I never thought it was you!"

The deputy secretary simply grinned widely without a word.

Walking over to him Hongol laid her right hand on his shoulder. "Stop fixing that loudspeaker, Hatu," she said bluntly yet fondly. "I'm going to tell you something that may make you angry with me. . . ."

"Impossible!"

"I'm very sorry but I've sent your shock team home for the New Year without your permission."

Wiping his hands Hatu chuckled, "You haven't changed — you always liked playing jokes on us soldiers."

"No, she's not joking," I chimed in. "Comrade Hongol has really sent them home."

Hatu looked dubiously at me and then at Hongol.

Gently taking his arm Hongol led him out of the tent. Outside, they could still see the faint black figures on the snowfield at the foot of the mountain. Pointing down Hongol said, "Look, those are your men. Well, Hatu, here's a home truth: We must stop chivvying the people about! Not that I'm blaming you, no, you've worked harder than they have. I was told that you came up here yesterday. . . ."

"If I've done something wrong," Hatu said sincerely, "please criticize me."

"It's not a question of criticism. We have the same problem — our minds are warped by metaphysics. We've grown accustomed, for instance, to considering collecting manure on New Year's Day as 'revolutionary'. Anyone who opposes it is labelled as Right-deviationist. We are still fettered by these invisible shackles. . . . I wonder if this applies to your way of thinking?"

Honest Hatu said nothing. He was mulling over the advice of this former commander.

The howling wind whirled snowflakes through the air. The whole mountain seemed to be shifting, revolving and rolling under our feet.

"That's true! Invisible shackles!" This was all the banner deputy secretary said after a long silence.

Hatu was a man of integrity. If his mind was made up, ten oxen could not budge him; but once he saw the light, a gentle nudge could make him go all out. Now he immediately told the young electrician to gather up the tools and go down to enjoy the festival.

With the two of us lending a hand, they soon loaded the gear on a tractor which the youngster drove away.

The three of us walked towards the jeep.

Hongol asked Hatu how this idea of forming a shock team had occurred to him. His reply was frank and we could hear the dilemma in his voice as he said, "I knew I should let them have a happy New Year, but..." The words stuck in his throat.

"It's usually after 'but' that we get to the point. Go on," Hongol urged him genially, allaying his scruples so that he was willing to open his heart to her.

"The secretary of our banner committee has gone off to hear a report on the Third Plenary Session of the Party's Eleventh Central Committee. We four deputy secretaries went to different production brigades to gain first-hand experience. I heard that the others had been getting good results, and that made me frantic! Things are different today from in the war years, you know. Now, in the same leading body there's always someone who finds fault with the others; so you have to be on your guard and leave yourself a way out. . . ."

"Oh, I see. In order to avoid the others seizing on your mistakes, you made this plan to quarry stone on the first day of the new year."

"That's it!"

"Thank you for coming clean, my dear comrade!"

Hongol halted. Standing in the deep snow with her right hand on a tall poplar, she surveyed the white mountain ranges and said slowly but forcefully: "Your state of mind is by no means unique in our Party. It's the outcome of abnormal Party life. We've been building socialism for about thirty years, yet China was reduced to chaos before the downfall of the 'gang of four'. How can we be easy in our minds when we remember all those

who gave their lives to establish our People's Republic? All the members of our Party have a collective responsibility. We must see to it that that wretched chapter of history never recurs in China!"

Hongol walked rapidly forward. The slope was steep and slippery.

I knew that this veteran fighter, who had experienced so many vicissitudes, had four wounds on her body. Two inflicted by the enemy, the others — more deplorably — by our own people. I hurried forward to support her for fear she might fall, but she gently pushed my hand away.

She was acting on the advice she had given us more than thirty years ago. She turned a blind eye to her wounds, not letting them hold her back. As she braved the snowstorm now, her eyes sparkled with the same militancy as in the past. Brimming with youthful vigour in her leather jacket and black riding boots, she was courage incarnate! Such a person would still be an indomitable heroine spurring her horse and wielding her sword in the new Long March, because in her veins there only flowed the fresh red blood of a true Party member!

At dusk we arrived at a village. Lamps lit up all the Mongolian yurts from which sounded festive songs and the melodious strains of fiddles. We got out of the jeep and slogged forward across the deep snow. We were going to merge into the herdsmen's jubilation on New Year's Eve. . . .

Wang Laiyin

Rare Cultural Relics Excavated

A striking exhibition recently held in the Palace Museum displayed more than two thousand articles unearthed in the royal tombs of the State of Zhongshan.

The State of Zhongshan, a vassal state of the Zhou Dynasty, was founded by the Bai Di people from the north in 414 BC in the southwest of present-day Hebei during a period of transition from slave society to feudalism, when there was frequent fighting among different states. In 409 BC it was conquered by the State of Wei, regaining independence some twenty years later, only to be subjugated again in 296 BC by the combined forces of the States of Zhao, Qi and Yan.

Few references to this kingdom exist in historical records, and for a long time it sank into oblivion. From 1974 to 1978, archaeologists in Sanji Commune of Pingshan County, Hebei Province, discovered royal tombs in what was formerly Lingshou, the capital of the State of Zhongshan. Well over ten thousand relics were unearthed from thirty tombs, the most precious finds being those in the tombs of two Zhongshan princes. The funerary objects consist of bronzes, objects inlaid with gold and silver, jade ves-

sels, pottery, weapons, utensils and tools. A number of them were of a kind never found in China before.

Below is a brief introduction to a few of the rarest finds.

1. Bronze Base in the Shape of a Tiger Eating a Fawn (length 51 cm and height 22.5 cm)

A large number of exquisite bronzes were excavated, some distinctively inlaid with gold and silver. Unique among the latter is this bronze base in the shape of a tiger eating a fawn, the main body of which is a fierce tiger with round eyes and pricked-up ears. Holding a fawn in its mouth and grasping its prey's left hind leg with its right claw, the tiger crouches forward on its left foreleg, its hind legs braced against the ground and its tail looped upwards. It seems to be trying with might and main to prevent its prey from escaping. The fawn, arched below the tiger's neck, is struggling desperately. The contrast between the tiger's ferocity and the fawn's pitiful plight is vividly brought out. These works of art undoubtedly reflected the social reality of that time. They also show the rich imagination and superb technique of the craftsmen.

There are two mortises on the back of the tiger, still containing the rotten ends of tenons. It is the same height as the gold and silver inlaid rhinoceros base and buffalo base discovered at the same time, each of which also has a mortise on its back. These three bases are artistic treasures which could support large boards. They are believed to date from the late 4th century BC and to have been used by the prince to display precious objects.

2. Dragon-and-Phoenix Rectangular Stand (height 37.4 cm and width 48 cm)

This bronze stand of exquisite craftsmanship unearthed in the same royal tomb is the first of this kind ever found in China. The whole stand is inlaid with gold and silver decorative patterns. The main body is composed of four vigorous intertwined dragons and four lively phoenixes while the base is a circle supported by four docile deer couchant. The rectangular tray resting on the dragon heads may have been lacquerware, but it had rotted away by the time of the excavation. The whole stand is most skilfully wrought with hair-thin welding lines and



Bronze jar with inscription

smooth rivet seams. The scales of the dragons, the plumage of the phoenixes and the coat of the deer are all inlaid with gold and silver and the animal forms are most lifelike.

Another object of this type is a winged mythical animal, gorgeously inlaid with gold and silver and full of animation, testifying to the superb craftsmanship of the ancient artisans of the State of Zhongshan.

3. Bronze Lamp-stand

Bronze lamps of various types were widely used during the period from the Warring States to the Han and Jin Dynasties (fifth century BC to fifth century AD). This lamp-stand 84.5 cm in height, discovered in the tomb of a Zhongshan prince, has fifteen bronze oil-lamps and is another rare treasure. Shaped like a flourishing tree, it is composed of eight detachable parts with adjustable joints. The top of the tree is adorned with a coiled dragon. The hollowed-out round pedestal is engraved

with a *kui* dragon design and supported by three feet in the shape of tigers, each holding a ring in its mouth. Standing on the pedestal are two slaves in short skirts. Bare from the waist up and with fruit in their hands, they are looking up at the tree where monkeys frolic and birds sing in the branches. Two thoroughly lifelike little monkeys are hanging on to a branch with one hand and reaching out with the other for the fruit.

4. Other Bronzes with Inscriptions

Many bronzes unearched in the Zhongshan royal tombs bear inscriptions. An iron-footed tripod, dragon-designed square pot

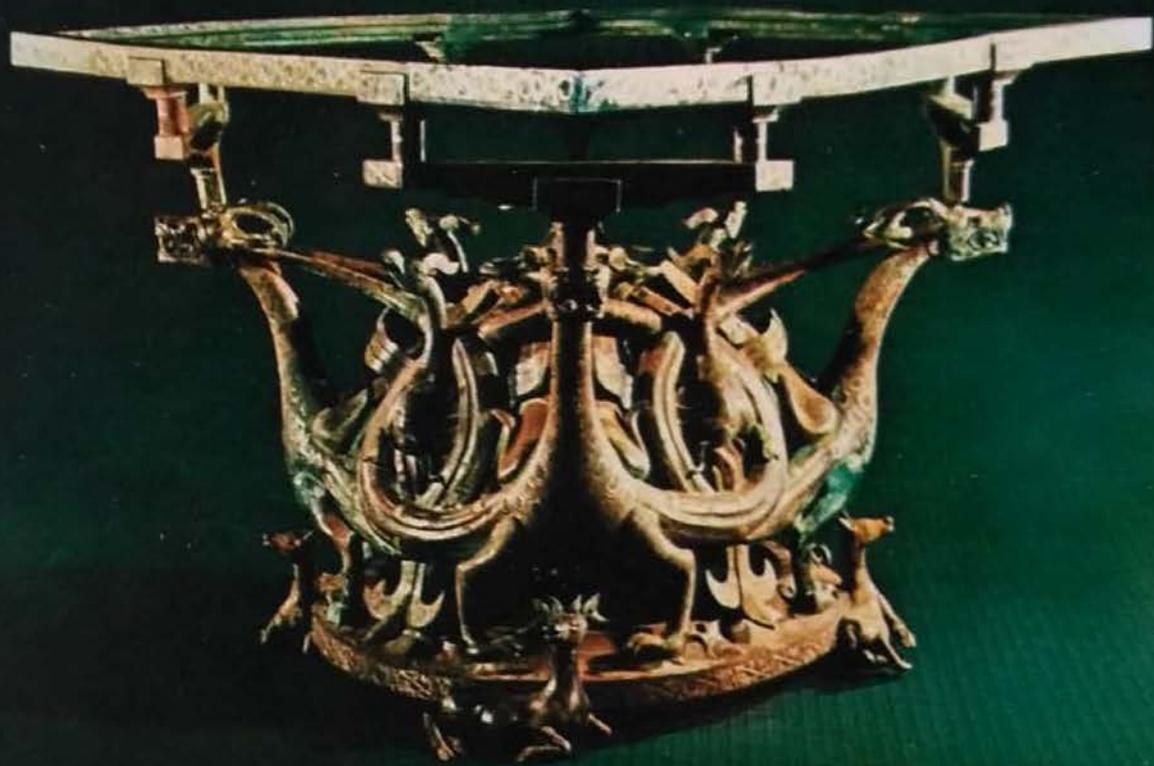


Winged mythical animal

and round pot all have inscriptions of over 200 characters each, which are of great value for studying the history of that time. The vigorous and elegant script shows the high skill of the engravers.

These relics of the State of Zhongshan, with their great variety and distinctive style, are recently discovered gems in the treasure-trove of Chinese culture.





Dragon-and-Phoenix Rectangular Stand

Relics from Warring-States Tombs



Bronze Base in the Shape of a Tiger Eating a Fawn



Detail





Bronze Lampstand

Tao Zhu

Five Poems

Tao Zhu was one of the early revolutionaries. He was born in Qiyang, Hunan Province, in January 1908. In 1966, soon after the start of the Cultural Revolution, he was persecuted by the "gang of four", and he died in November 1969, after a serious illness. His name was cleared after the fall of the gang. He devoted his life to revolutionary work, but in his spare time he wrote some poems and essays. Most of his poems were written in classical metres. In this issue we present five of these.

— The Editors

In Prison*

Inspired by autumn storms to write poetry;
Grey my iron cell, black wolf-hounds abound.
Not all the country is lost, yet the people are half dead.
I receive no news from home, still it haunts my dreams.
They excel in their empty talk of resisting the invaders;
They surpass all in their skill of oppressing the people.
I ask why Heaven is deaf to such things?
Shedding hot tears, I mourn our martyrs.

1935

* This poem was written in jail after his arrest by the Kuomintang for taking part in revolutionary work. At that time the Japanese militarists were invading China. Instead of resisting them, the Kuomintang regime was carrying out an "extermination" campaign against the Chinese Communists, on the pretext that the revolutionaries must be crushed before they could resist foreign invaders.

Mourning General Zuo Quan's Death*

When I heard you had died in bloody combat,
Tears flowed from my eyes and wet my clothes.
Flowers will bloom brighter from your supreme sacrifice;
The earth will be more fragrant from your blood shed in war.
I long for our hero facing the foreign aggressors;
Sighing that in our country brothers still fight each other.
I call for your spirit to return in the southern summer rain,
As the country rises to resist in the Taihang Mountains.

1942

* Zuo Quan (1906-1942) was a general in the Communist Eighth Route Army, who died in a battle in 1942 in the Taihang region.

To Our Men Returning After Fighting the Flood

In springtime we enjoyed good weather,
But don't thank Heaven prematurely for its bounties.
Sudden storms shattered all the tiles;
The fierce flood raging, even hills were submerged.
But the people have the power to change Heaven's will;
Vipers and scorpions cannot use their poison.
I await a miracle after the autumn harvest;
When the devastation will vanish and new villages emerge.

1959

Before the Balustrade*

Before the balustrade, flowering trees flourish;
The wind carries their fragrance far away.
Sitting in solitude, I find some joy in butterflies;
Sleeping at night, I am disturbed by droning mosquitoes.
Wrongly imprisoned, Zhou Bo in the Han Dynasty never
complained;
Yue Fei in the Song Dynasty gallantly accepted his torture.
Men cannot avoid being wrongly charged with crimes;
Working for a just cause, one is not concerned for one's
name.

1967

* In 1967, Tao Zhu and his wife, Zeng Zhi, were kept under house arrest by the "gang of four". The historical allusions to Zhou Bo, a famous Han-dynasty general who was falsely charged and imprisoned, and to Yue Fei, a Song-dynasty general who was also falsely charged and killed, were to expose the "gang of four", who were persecuting true revolutionaries, and to express his own resistance to them.

To My Wife*

It is hard for me to return to the battlefield;
Your deep concern and soaring spirit move me.
My hair turns white as the seasons pitilessly pass;
My remaining life in shame, my bitterness I suppress.
A sick horse neighs in the stable, too late to join the battle;
A withered palm-tree fears the onslaught of the frost.
All one's past exploits forgotten, vanished like the mist;
Yet wide the world before me, my heart free of selfish
desires.

1969

* This was the last poem he wrote for his wife as they parted. At the time he was mortally ill, but the "gang of four" had him removed to a prison in another province in October 1969. He died little more than a month later.

Huang Ruiyun

Three Fables

Two Date Trees

Two date trees grew side by side on the hill. One tree was laden with fruit, while the other was barren.

When the dates were ripe, people came to pick the fruit. Some climbed up the tree to pluck the dates, while others used poles to beat the branches. Without its fruit, the tree looked stripped and battered. The barren tree remained lush and green.

"It's your own fault," the barren tree declared to the fruitful one. "You think it's good to give people so many dates. You're only asking for trouble. Look at me, I'm all right. Who'll harm a single leaf of mine?"

"Certainly you're well preserved," replied the other tree, "but what have you contributed to the world?"

The Mare and Her Colt

The mare led her little foal along on the road. When they came to a muddy pool, she said to him: "You must go slowly here. Don't take your second step until you're sure of your first." Soon they came to a mountain stream, the water gurgling as it rushed down. The colt was frightened.

"Don't be afraid!" the mare told her son. "Just go ahead. You can walk quickly here."

"Mama, when we crossed that quiet pool just now, you were so careful. Here where the current is swift, why are you so sure it's safe to go quickly?" he asked.

"Never be afraid of walking in a clear stream," she explained, "because you can see the bottom. But in a muddy pool, you must be extremely careful, because you never know how deep it may be!"



The Songster's Fate

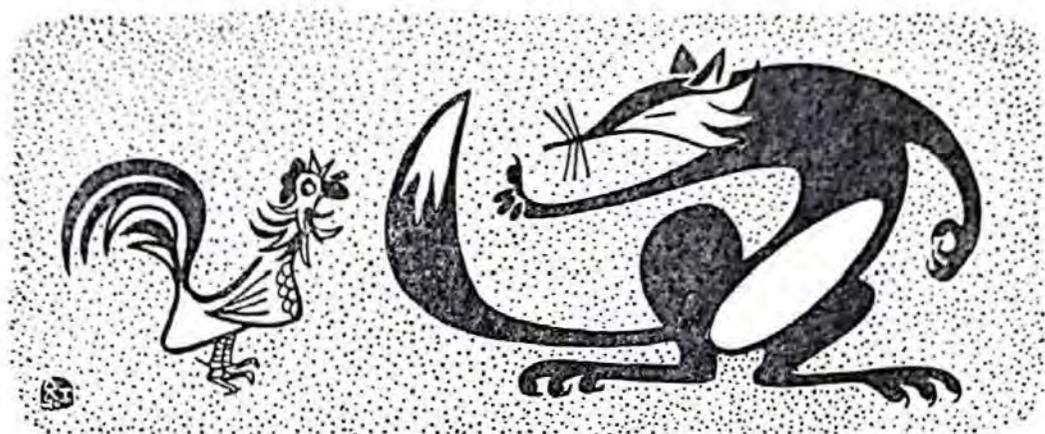
A cock rose early one morning and started to crow in the courtyard.

Its mistress was displeased. "That wretched cock!" she complained. "Making all that noise as soon as it gets up, thinking it sings beautifully! It'll wake my baby if I don't drive it away." So saying, she threw the broom in her hand at the cock.

The cock scuttled away. "Hey! Damn you! Damn you!" Indignantly, he cursed back at her.

A fox saw all this through a crack in the wall. When the cock reached the side of the wall, the fox consoled and flattered him. "My dear brother," he said, "you've been badly wronged. Go ahead and sing. I like to listen to you. You are the songster of dawn, nature's alarm clock. You wake the slumbering earth and welcome the splendour of day. Ah, how majestic you are! How resonant your song! Sing on, my songster!"

This flattery made the cock very happy. He strutted up and down and proudly emerged from the yard. Raising his head and stretching his neck, he started to sing happily. Before he could finish his song, the fox rushed over, picked him up in his mouth and ran away.



When you are unjustly criticized, you shouldn't take it to heart. It may not mean anything. But if you are praised unduly, beware! Someone may be plotting against you.

Illustrated by Li Yubong

Tian Xiu

Tang Yin and His Painting “Four Beauties”

Four Beauties is a painting by the well-known Ming-dynasty artist Tang Bohu (1470-1523). Tang Bohu has long been known throughout China because of the popular ballads, operas and folk-tales in which he figures. One anecdote about him relates that he fell in love with Qiu Xiang, the favourite maid of a high official's wife, and went to work as a tutor in the official's home so that he could have access to her. His learning and mastery of painting won his master's favour. Finally he succeeded in marrying the girl.

In the eyes of the people, Tang Bohu was a highly versatile gallant. Although many of the stories about him were later fabrications, genuine poems and paintings of his as well as quite a number of examples of his calligraphy have been preserved as treasures in our museums.

People usually call him Tang Bohu, but his real name was Tang Yin. He was born in Taohuawu in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province.

蓮花冠子道人春日侍君王宴
紫微花榭不知人已去華開猶

與李俶

蜀後主每打宮中累小甲命宮妓
杜道君冠蓮花冠日尋花榭以
侍甜宴蜀之諺已溢耳矣而主之
不絕注之竟至滋結俾後想淫
種之合不與抗疏唐憲



His father kept a tavern on a busy street, and among his many customers were quite a few literati and artists. They became his friends and gave him paintings which he hung on the walls of his tavern. Tang Yin was a precocious child, quick to memorize all he was taught. After school each day he went to help his father in the tavern, where he met men of letters and artists and enjoyed the paintings on the walls. He began to learn to paint on the sly by copying these paintings. His work came to the notice of a well-known scholar who introduced him to the great landscape-painter Shen Zhou (1427-1509).

The latter, too, thought him a promising lad and told him honestly: "You have real talent. Your brushwork isn't stereotyped but has a style of its own. Of course, copying is an essential part of your training, but you must lay more emphasis on spirit instead of form. You had better study more old masterpieces and visit famous mountains and rivers. You still lack a solid grounding. Strictly speaking, your paintings are only skeletons lacking flesh and blood. They have form but no spirit. I shall recommend you to a well-known artist who can give you a good grounding."

Tang Yin, impressed by his comments, asked: "Who is the well-known artist?"

Shen Zhou answered: "Zhou Chen. The beauties he paints have charm without being in the least vulgar."

Zhou Chen was a famous artist who painted not only beauties but also landscapes. So Tang Yin went to him and learned modestly from him until he had acquired a sound basic training.

After visiting some places of historical interest and scenic beauty, Tang Yin began to paint landscapes which he took to his teacher for his comments.

Zhou Chen told him, "Seeing more of the country has helped you make progress in painting landscapes. You'd better show these to Shen Zhou. I am sure he will give you some good advice."

Then Tang Yin took his paintings to Shen Zhou who told him, "You must seek imagination in reality and reality in imagination. If you travel more widely and see more, you will do even better work."

Tang Yin took this advice and travelled extensively. He also read more widely. Finally he surpassed his teachers.

Zhou Chen himself admitted: "My paintings are not as good as Tang Yin's because I don't have in my mind's eye so many thousands of models."

Later, Tang Yin's paintings fetched a high price and were very much sought after.

Originally, Tang Yin had hoped to win fame by passing the imperial examinations, and his scholarship should have enabled him to succeed. In a Nanjing examination, he came first. But to be awarded an official rank he would have to pass two higher examinations, and before he could take these he was arrested on a charge of bribing the chief examiner. This was a serious setback in his career. With no further hope of becoming an official, he devoted himself entirely to painting.

Tang Yin had a profligate streak in his character. After this setback, he threw restraint to the winds and frequented houses of courtesans. He observed carefully the movements and expressions of these women. This is why his paintings of beauties are so lifelike.

Four Beauties, reproduced in this issue, depicts the court life of King Meng Chang of Posterior Shu (926-965) during the Five Dynasties. Posterior Shu was a small kingdom in Sichuan. Although it existed for only a few decades, its rulers and high officials were able to live in luxury in the southwest where they were little affected by the wars fought in the central plains. The rulers of the previous Shu Dynasty had been such heavy drinkers that one day an official warned them that, if they went on in this way, the kingdom would fall. Hearing this, the king and his ministers burst out laughing, saying that the official must be drunk himself. But, sure enough, before long their kingdom fell. The rulers of Posterior Shu lived just as extravagantly. Even their chamber-pots were adorned with jewels. Meng Chang had many court ladies to attend him and led a licentious life. He wore a cap on his head and made his ladies dress up in outlandish costumes, then romped about with them wildly.

Four Beauties was based on this episode. On the painting the artist wrote a poem lamenting the fate of rulers whose decadence led to their downfall. The two beauties facing us are noble ladies, the two with their backs to us are maids who are offering them fruit and wine. At the order of the king, the two ladies are wearing Taoist robes and hats in the form of lotus-flowers exactly as described in historical records. This shows Tang Yin's serious attitude towards painting historical subjects. In addition, he drew on his experience of women's expressions and movements to portray these figures to the life.

The works left us by Tang Yin cover a wide range of themes including landscapes, figures, flowers and birds. Some of his paintings were done with free and unrestrained brushwork, others were done with meticulous detail. The *Four Beauties* belongs to the latter category. It was painted in bright colours with meticulous, careful strokes. The images are true to life and indeed have charm without being vulgar. This work is representative of Tang Yin's paintings of beauties.

English Translation of *A Dream of Red Mansions* Completed

The first English translation of the complete text of the classical Chinese novel *A Dream of Red Mansions* is being published in three volumes by the Foreign Languages Press, Beijing. The first and second volumes have already been distributed in China and abroad.

This novel was translated by the celebrated Chinese translator Yang Xianyi and his British wife Gladys Yang. The coloured illustrations are by Dai Dunbang. There are many editions of this book. This translation is based on versions believed to be closest to Cao Xueqin's original novel.

Books to Be Published in Tibetan

The Tibetan People's Publishing House plans to publish 18 books in Tibetan including the classics *The Story of King Gesar — the Conquest of Dasai*, *The Life of King Norsang*, *The Story of Minariba*, *Songs by Minariba*, *Mirror of Poetry*, *Sagya's Maxims and Annotations*, *Six Young Men*, *The Tale of Damei* and *An Unfinished Story*. With the exception of *The Tale of Damei*, all are being printed for the first time from wood-block editions and manuscripts. There will also be the song books *Gyibainyima — the Happy Sun*, *Tibetan Songs* and *Tibetan Folk Ballads*.

Studies on Foreign Literature Starts Publication

The first issue of *Studies on Foreign Literature*, an academic quarterly published by the Foreign Literature Association of Hubei Province, has recently been distributed throughout the country.

With the well-known writer Xu Chi as its editor-in-chief, the magazine has invited well-known writers, literary and art critics and translators to serve as its advisers. The first issue includes the columns Chinese Writers and Foreign Literature Reading and Appreciation, and Studies Abroad.

The New Magazine Chinese Painting and Calligraphy

The magazine *Chinese Painting and Calligraphy* appeared not long ago in Beijing. Its main coverage is traditional painting, calligraphy and seal engraving in China today.

The first issue features the work of 25 modern painters and includes *Riding a Donkey in Springtime*, a traditional Chinese painting by the late Xu Beihong; *Galloping Forward* by Huang Zhou, depicting a group of Kazakh students on horseback; nine of Liu Danzhai's figure paintings based on the classical Chinese novel *A Dream of Red Mansions* and examples of the calligraphy of Guo Moruo (1892-1978).

Outstanding Dramatist Ouyang Yuqian Commemorated

Recently the modern version of the well-known drama *Peach-blossom Fan* and excerpts from the Beijing opera *Peach Blossoms and the Girl* by the outstanding dramatist Ouyang Yuqian were staged in Beijing on the ninetieth anniversary of his birth (born 1889).

Ouyang Yuqian was one of the founders of modern Chinese drama. He made important contributions to the reform of traditional Chinese drama and the teaching of art. A playwright and

director, he was also president of the Central Academy of Drama. He died in 1962.

The *Peach-blossom Fan*, a modern version of the well-known poetic drama by Kong Shangren (1648-1718), took him twenty years to write. It was about a Ming-dynasty courtesan Li Xiangjun, who fell in love with the celebrated scholar Hou Fangyu. Then the Ming Dynasty fell and Hou betrayed the people to win wealth and position. When he returned to Li Xiangjun as an official, she spurned him and committed suicide. *Peach Blossoms and the Girl* written in 1920, also dealt with the love between two young people in ancient times.

Beijing Stage Productions for May 4th Anniversary

Dramas and songs commemorating the May 4th Movement of 1919 were staged in Beijing on the 60th anniversary of this anti-imperialist and anti-feudal new cultural movement.

The productions included *Death of an Actor* and *On the Night the Tiger Was Captured* by Tian Han (1898-1968), founder of China's revolutionary drama; *Thunderstorm* by Cao Yu, and three one-act comedies by Ding Xilin (1893-1974) — *A Wasp*, *Oppression* and *Three Yuan*. Also presented were the revolutionary songs *The Pathbreaker*, *The Song of the Great Road* and *Roar, Yellow River* by Nie Er (1912-1935) and Xian Xinghai (1905-1945) and *The Moon Reflected in the Second Fountain* by Ah Bing, well-known folk musician.

Sixth Drama Series in Beijing

The sixth series of theatrical performances to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China has been playing to packed theatres in Beijing. The repertoire includes *Tea House* by the outstanding dramatist Lao She (1899-1966) and a new play *Song of Love*.

Lyons Symphony Orchestra Gives Performances in Beijing

Not long ago the Lyons Symphony Orchestra gave performances in Beijing. The French musicians played such representative works by French composers as Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, Debussy's *La Mer* and *Pelleas et Melisande* as well as Stravinsky's *L'oiseau de Feu* composed during his stay in France in his early days. They also played Liszt's *Piano Concerto No. 1 in E Flat Major* with the Chinese pianist Liu Shikun as the soloist, conducted by the celebrated French conductor Serge Baudo.

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Mother and Child (woodcut)

by Huang Yongyu



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