

CHINESE LITERATURE

Monthly



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Brides Galore

A Szechuan Opera

CHARACTERS

MAGISTRATE, <i>the magistrate of Chientang County</i>	OLD CHEN, <i>father of an unmarried daughter</i>
LI YI, <i>his lackey</i>	YOUNG CHAO, <i>brother of an unmarried sister</i>
COMMISSIONER, <i>the imperial commissioner</i>	LI YU, <i>a young scholar</i>
WIFE, <i>the magistrate's wife</i>	MOTHER, <i>his mother</i>
MATCH-MAKER, <i>Mrs. Tung</i>	CHANG HSUAN, <i>an acrobat</i>
TUNG TAI, <i>her son, trumpeter</i>	TSAI-FENG, <i>his daughter</i>
WANG HSIA, <i>one of the local gentry and a rich landlord</i>	LANDLORDS and local GENTRY
PU-FENG, <i>his daughter</i>	RUNNERS
UNCLE LI, <i>father of an unmarried daughter</i>	GUARDS
UNCLE LIU, <i>father of an unmarried daughter</i>	SERVANTS
	MAIDS
	ATTENDANTS

For further information on this kind of opera see the article *Szechuan Opera* on p. 150 of this issue.

SCENE I

The Imperial Decree

PLACE: *Chientang County Yamen*

(Four RUNNERS and a SERVANT lead the way with music. Enter the MAGISTRATE.)

MAGISTRATE:

Ten li outside the city I have been
To welcome the imperial commissioner;
Now I am returning with all speed to my yamen.*

(LI YI hurries in.)

LI YI: Your Honour, the imperial commissioner is here.

MAGISTRATE:

*Just back, still out of breath,
I am puzzled by this visit.
Invite him in.*

LI YI: Yes, Your Honour.

(Four GUARDS usher in the imperial COMMISSIONER's sedan-chair. The MAGISTRATE welcomes him with every sign of respect. The COMMISSIONER gets out of his chair and sits down.)

MAGISTRATE: I am honoured by Your Excellency's visit.

COMMISSIONER: Magistrate of Chientang! His Majesty has issued an edict calling for three thousand beautiful girls to serve in the palace. I must have eight hundred girls from your district within three days. If you do well, I shall see that you are promoted; if you do badly, you may lose your head. Here is the imperial edict. Lose no time!

*The lines in italics are sung.

MAGISTRATE: Yes, Your Excellency. *(He takes the edict and reads it with dismay.)*

COMMISSIONER: Now you may return to your yamen.

MAGISTRATE *(startled)*: Why, Your Excellency. . . .

GUARD: Your Excellency, this is the magistrate's yamen, not your hostel.

COMMISSIONER: Indeed?

MAGISTRATE: Yes, this is my yamen. I beg Your Excellency to return to your hostel to rest.

COMMISSIONER *(impatiently)*: Very well. I am exhausted after my journey. *(The MAGISTRATE sees him off and the GUARDS leave. The MAGISTRATE dismisses his SERVANTS and RUNNERS. Enter a MAID.)*

MAGISTRATE: Ask your mistress to come here at once.

MAID: The master is asking for you, ma'am!

(Enter the magistrate's WIFE.)

WIFE: My husband is a servant of the state, and I share the emperor's favour. *(She comes into the room.)* Why do you look so anxious after leaving your office today, sir?

MAGISTRATE: I am badly upset, madam.

WIFE: Run for a doctor, girl! *(The MAID turns to go.)*

MAGISTRATE: What do you want a doctor for?

WIFE: Didn't you say you were badly upset?

MAGISTRATE: I'm not ill.

WIFE: What is the matter, then?

MAGISTRATE: Ah!

*A commissioner with a decree from the court
Has come post-haste to Chientang
And brings fearful news:*

*We are to choose eight hundred beautiful girls
Who must pack up and go to the capital
As palace maids or imperial concubines.*

WIFE:

*With any luck,
You will become the emperor's father-in-law,*

Enjoying boundless wealth and splendour!

MAGISTRATE:

*You speak like an ignorant woman.
A lonely palace maid suffers countless hardships;
She would cry with longing for us,
But we would never see her face again,
Our daughter would be lost to us for ever.*

WIFE:

*Well, as officials we should have no trouble,
You will easily find more than eight hundred girls
Among the common people.
Do not worry!*

MAGISTRATE: Madam!

*You are taking this too lightly.
Whether official, noble or commoner,
He who keeps back his daughter will be punished.*

WIFE (alarmed): Ah!

*Our child is not yet married —
Does this mean that she may be chosen?*

MAGISTRATE:

*When the fire spreads from the city gate,
Even fish in the pool are trapped.*

WIFE:

*We are nearly forty
And she is our only child;
If she is chosen for the emperor,
Who will look after us in our old age?
Make haste to think of some plan
To save our child.*

MAGISTRATE:

*I have a plan and you shall hear it later.
By a clever move we can avoid this danger.*

WIFE: What is your plan, sir? Tell me!

MAGISTRATE: Let me whisper in your ear. (He
whispers to her.)

WIFE: Do go at once!

MAGISTRATE: No, you are the one who must go.

WIFE: How can I? I am a woman.

*(The MAGISTRATE signs to her to disguise herself
as a man.)*

WIFE: I understand. Here, girl, help me to change my
clothes.

(Exeunt the MAGISTRATE and his WIFE.)

SCENE II

The Match-Maker Is Busy

PLACE: The street

*(Enter LI YI with the imperial decree, followed by a
SERVANT carrying a gong.)*

LI YI: Aha!

An imperial decree has come to Chientang County.

SERVANT:

Beauties must be sent to the palace.

LI YI:

You and I will grow fat on this.

SERVANT:

Our pockets are ready to be lined with silver!

LI YI: Sound the gong, friend, while I post up the procla-
mation.

(The SERVANT sounds the gong.)

LI YI (*calling out*): Listen, good folk! The emperor is
going to choose beautiful girls for his palace. All
those with unmarried daughters must report to our
yamen within three days so that a selection can be
made. Anyone who fails to obey will be executed.

(*Exeunt LI YI and the SERVANT.*)

(*There is a great commotion offstage. Enter Mrs. Tung, the MATCH-MAKER, WANG HSIA.*)

MATCH-MAKER:

*I do a thriving business,
Succeeding in nine cases out of ten;
But this time I am at my wit's end —
I have run round all day and got nowhere!*

WANG: Ah, Mrs. Tung!

*Please fix this up for us quickly —
Can't you see that the sun is setting?*

MATCH-MAKER: Mr. Wang!

*Go home to wait for news,
Don't tag at my heels.*

WANG:

*If we can't find a man, Heaven help us!
I have paid handsomely for your services.*

MATCH-MAKER:

*This business is beyond me,
I'll gladly refund your fee.*

WANG:

*No, no, you gave me your word,
You can't refuse now.*

MATCH-MAKER:

So you're set on having your way!

(*UNCLE LI rushes in with a hen.*)

UNCLE LI:

*Mrs. Tung, here's a hen for you
Weighing more than five catties.*

MATCH-MAKER:

Why are you giving me this?

UNCLE LI:

Please fix up a match for my daughter.

WANG:

Mine isn't fixed yet. . . .

MATCH-MAKER:

You too!

(*UNCLE LIU rushes in carrying a roll of white cloth.*)

UNCLE LIU: Mrs. Tung!

Please come to my house for a meal.

MATCH-MAKER: I know, you want me to marry off your daughter too. It's no use.

*I'm not the only match-maker in this district,
And I have too much on my hands.*

UNCLE LIU: Mrs. Tung, I'll make no difficulties. I want nothing from the groom, not even the usual presents.

UNCLE LI: My terms are even better. Find a proper young man and I'll marry my daughter to him out of hand. The wedding can take place tonight.

WANG: I'm offering one hundred *mou* of paddy fields as dowry!

MATCH-MAKER: All right, all right! None of you is making any difficulties, I'm the only difficult one.

*You all come on one day to marry your daughters,
But how many young men are there in Chientang?*

WANG: Mrs. Tung!

*Make haste to settle my business —
Don't waste time here!*

UNCLE LIU: Mrs. Tung!

This cloth is excellent stuff! (He forces it on her.)

UNCLE LI: Mrs. Tung!

*First take my hen, and then we'll discuss the matter.
(He forces it on her.)*

MATCH-MAKER: All right, give them to me. I'll take them.

(She takes the cloth and the hen and throws them away.)

UNCLE LI and LIU (*picking them up*): Hey, don't throw them away!

(The MATCH-MAKER seizes this chance to run away.)

WANG: Here! don't run off. (*He chases her.*)

UNCLE LI and LIU: Hey, wait for me! Wait for me!



(UNCLE LI starts after the MATCH-MAKER, but UNCLE LIU pulls him back. UNCLE LI clutches the match-maker's son, TUNG TAI, by mistake.)

TUNG: Uncle Li, you've got the wrong person. I'm Tung Tai.

UNCLE LI: Where is your mother?

TUNG: Mr. Wang dragged her away.

UNCLE LI and LIU: Hey, Mr. Wang! Mrs. Tung! Wait, wait!

(They run after them.)

TUNG: Ha! How strange!

Strange, very strange,
The streets are full of searchers for go-betweens.
My mother has been a go-between for ten years,
But never done such good business;
They all want a wedding at once,
She is doing her best to avoid them;
This is certainly strange,
Quite beyond me.

(OLD CHEN hurries in.)

CHEN: Tung Tai, my daughter is getting married today.
Please come and play at her wedding.

(YOUNG CHAO hurries in.)

CHAO: Tung Tai, my sister is getting married today.
Please come and play at her wedding.

TUNG: It's no good. I can't play all by myself.

CHEN: Never mind. At a time like this, all we want is somebody to blow the trumpet so that the neighbours will know our daughter is getting married. Come on! (He pulls at TUNG.)

CHAO (pulling at TUNG also): No, come to our house first!

CHEN (refusing to let go): Come to our house first!

TUNG: Let go of me! I'll go with Mr. Chen first, then to Mr. Chao.

(TUNG goes out with CHEN, followed by CHAO.)

SCENE III

Abduction of a Scholar

PLACE: The street

(Wedding music and wailing are heard. Enter LI YU.)

LI YU:

After studying in college for half a year,
I am on my way home again to see my mother;
The road is gay with lanterns and decorations,
The streets and lanes are thronged by wedding crowds.
At weddings men should be merry,
Why is there weeping and wailing on every side?
This is a puzzling business:
Why have grief and joy combined?

(Looking round, LI YU nearly knocks into Mrs. Tung, who comes towards him followed by WANG.)

MATCH-MAKER: Oh, here is the licentiate LI YU.
When did you get back?

LI YU: I am just back from college to see my mother.

WANG: Mrs. Tung! It is late. Hurry up and think of some way.

MATCH-MAKER: I know. *(Forced to consider LI YU, she asks WANG.)* What do you say to him?

WANG *(looking at LI YU)*: Yes, excellent!

MATCH-MAKER: Wait here, then.

WANG: Be quick!

MATCH-MAKER: When did you come back, Mr. Li?

LI YU: I've just told you. I'm on my way home from college to see my mother.

MATCH-MAKER: To see your mother? No, surely to get married.

LI YU: I haven't finished my studies yet or been appointed to any official post. How can I think of marriage?

MATCH-MAKER: You may not be thinking of marriage, but marriage is thinking of you.

LI YU: What do you mean?

MATCH-MAKER: Mr. Wang's daughter Pu-feng is a pretty girl with a sweet disposition. If you miss this chance, you will never get another like it.

LI YU: What? Are you trying to arrange a match for me?

MATCH-MAKER: Of course. She is such a sweet girl, I know you will agree.

LI YU: Marriage is the chief of the five relationships, not something to be rushed into lightly.

WANG: Mrs. Tung! Hurry!

MATCH-MAKER: I know, I know! *(To LI YU.)* Mr. Li, you will be doing a good turn.

LI YU: How can marriage be described as a good turn?
This is preposterous!

WANG: Mrs. Tung, it is nearly dark!

MATCH-MAKER *(to WANG)*: See if you can help persuade him.

WANG: Sir, please come to my humble house for some tea.

LI YU: We have never met before. I must go home. *(He walks away.)*

MATCH-MAKER *(stopping him)*: Sir!

WANG *(signing to the MATCH-MAKER to seize LI YU)*:
Come on, sir!

(LI YU is dragged off by the MATCH-MAKER and WANG.)



SCENE IV

The Bridegroom Escapes

PLACE: Mr. Wang's house

(Wedding music sounds. Enter WANG.)

WANG:

*In the bright hall a feast is spread,
On this lucky day a bridegroom has been found.
Let the wedding candles be lit!*

(The MATCH-MAKER drags in LI YU. A MAID helps in Wang's daughter PU-FENG, followed by TUNG TAI.)

MATCH-MAKER: Good marriages are made in heaven,
Two lovers have met by chance.

Now, Tung Tai, blow your trumpet.

LI YU: No, no! (He tries to escape.)

MATCH-MAKER (stopping him): It's quite all right.
Hurry up, Tung Tai!

(TUNG TAI blows his trumpet while the MATCH-MAKER tries to force LI YU to go through the ceremony.)

LI YU (struggling): No, this is really outrageous! (He stamps angrily on Mrs. Tung's foot.)

MATCH-MAKER: Ouch!

PU-FENG: Ah, mother. . . . (She runs away, crying.)

MAID: Young mistress! . . . (She runs after her.)

WANG (giving chase): Now, daughter. . . .

TUNG: H'm. It's strange when a man has to be forced into marriage.

MATCH-MAKER: Hold your tongue!

(TUNG TAI looks at his mother and goes off, sounding his trumpet.)

WANG: Daughter! Daughter!
MATCH-MAKER (catching hold of WANG): Mr. Wang, how about my fee?

WANG: Come for it tomorrow.
(He hurries off.)

LI YU: This is preposterous,
absolutely preposterous!

MATCH-MAKER (grumbling):
Imagine, even this is on credit!

LI YU: Mrs. Tung, you have ruined me.

MATCH-MAKER: Well, sir,
now your bed is made you'll have to lie on it. Besides, the young lady is accomplished and pretty. The two of you are well-matched. So just make the best of it.

LI YU: You forced me into this marriage most improperly.

I shall never agree to it!

This is really preposterous, absolutely preposterous!

MATCH-MAKER: Why, what does it matter? Don't be so particular. Most men would be only too glad to marry such a rich girl.

LI YU: Be quiet! I am a scholar. How could I be tempted by money or rank?

MATCH-MAKER: Don't be so stubborn, sir. Tomorrow morning I'll announce this happy news to your mother.

(She goes out, locking the door after her.)

LI YU: Mrs. Tung! Mrs. Tung! She has locked me in.

*Wang Hsia has done a great wrong,
The go-between forced me for the sake of her fee;
They pushed me and they pulled me here,
And let me have no say in my own wedding.*



*How can I love the bride in such a case?
This is a bolt from the blue,
I must try to escape. . . . (He pulls at the door.)
Ah, the licentiate is locked in,
I shall have to make the best of the situation. . . .
No, no!
It is not for others to decide my marriage;
I am sadly at a loss
And pace to and fro in an agony of doubt.*

(He looks round and is pleased by what he sees.)

*A new moon is rising, flowered boughs are stirring,
Faint moonlight falls on my window;
The garden wall is not high
And beside it apricots grow;
The first watch has sounded,
And there is no one to stop me,
I will climb the wall and escape.*

*Ah, no good can come of a forced marriage. Wang's
plan must fail. I will get away over the wall to show
my determination. His daughter can find another hus-
band.*

Just let me escape from this danger!

(He runs off.)

SCENE V

The Acrobats

PLACE: CHANG HSUAN's house

*(Enter TSAI-FENG with a lamp as the first watch
sounds.)*

TSAI-FENG: Ah!

*I have driven Li Yi away;
The sounding of the watch adds to my sorrow.
My mother died when I was still a child,
We are poor, often cold and hungry;
With my father I tour the country
Making a living with our spears and clubs;
Forced to smile and perform in public,
I am looked down on as a low-class woman.
Already I am nineteen
Yet have had no offer of marriage;
Only roughs and insolent runners
Consider me a woman of easy virtue,
Counting on their position to pester me
Till I long to cut off their heads!
And our cruel emperor now,
Not content with his three thousand concubines,
Is searching for beautiful girls among the people!
I dread to be shut inside the palace walls,
To live alone till old age, watching the flowers,
Shedding useless tears at the thought of my old father;
He has gone out now hoping to save me.
Sitting alone by the lamp I weep in silence.*

(CHANG HSUAN hurries in.)

CHANG:

*I have been out for nothing
And can only trudge sadly home.
Open the door!*

TSAI-FENG (opening the door): Father!

CHANG (entering): Ah! (He closes the door behind him.)

TSAI-FENG: Father, did you? . . .

CHANG: Ah, daughter!

*I went out,
Hoping to find you a husband,
But this cannot be done in a hurry,
And all the households with daughters are in despair.
Your father has nowhere to turn —
Nothing can save us!*

TSAI-FENG: Ah!
*You must not be distressed,
You need not worry.
If any man attempts to drag me off,
His blood shall stain the street!*

CHANG: Well said!
*My daughter is a credit to our house,
A girl with spirit.
At worst, we can become outlaws in the hills
And set fire to this wicked city.*

TSAI-FENG: Father, soon after you left, that scoundrel Li Yi came again and had the impudence to propose that I should be his concubine. He said that if I agreed I could escape trouble; if I refused, he would report me and arrest me to make up the number of girls for the palace.

CHANG: So he is trying to bully us again! He won't get away with it.

TSAI-FENG: Yes, it is better to die than to be insulted. I beat and kicked him and soon made him run.

CHANG: Aha, that's good. Very good.

TSAI-FENG: It was good beating him, but the brute may try to get his own back.

CHANG: If he knows what's good for him, he won't show his face here again. If he does, I'll break his neck.
(LI YU in a panic drops over the wall.)

CHANG: Hush! *(Softly.)* That sounded like a man dropping over the wall.

TSAI-FENG:
That wicked Li Yi must have come back again.

CHANG:
Bring your sword and we'll have a look.
(CHANG and his daughter creep behind LI YU.)

CHANG *(seizing LI YU)*: Got you!

TSAI-FENG *(advancing with the sword)*: Take this!

LI YU: Help, help!
Mr. Wang, why should you kill me?

CHANG: Mr. Wang? Who are you?

LI YU: I . . . I . . . I'm Li Yu.

TSAI-FENG *(taking him to be Li Yi)*: So you've come to be killed! *(She raises her sword to strike.)*

LI YU: Help! Mrs. Tung proposed this match and your father forced me into it, young lady. This was none of my doing.

CHANG:
Let's take this fellow inside to question him.
(He takes the sword and drives LI YU into the house.)

TSAI-FENG *(picking up the lamp and looking at LI YU)*:
Why!
This is not Li Yi but a scholar!

LI YU: Don't you belong to the Wang family?



CHANG: My name is Chang, not Wang. And who may you be?

LI YU: I am Li Yu, a scholar.

CHANG: Why should a scholar climb over my wall like a brigand?

LI YU: Sir,

How can you say such a thing?

How can you take a licentiate for a brigand?

On my way home from college I met Wang Hsia

And Mrs. Tung from West Street;

With no word of explanation

One pushed and the other pulled me;

They pushed and pulled me along

To Wang Hsia's house,

Where they forced me to marry his daughter

And tried to drag me to the bridal chamber.

But marriage is a serious matter,

This was unjust to her as well as me.

I climbed over the wall to escape,

Not knowing that this was your house,

And so I was caught!

Every word I have said is true —

Please let me go!

CHANG: Wait!

You had better stay here with us,

For they are still kidnapping young men outside.

The cause of all this trouble

Is the emperor's search for girls;

You may as well lie low here,

Or you will escape only to be caught again.

LI YU (alarmed): But. . .

TSAI-FENG:

We are acrobats, honest folk;

Don't be afraid!

CHANG:

If you stay here,

No one will touch you.

May I ask your name, scholar?

LI YU: My name is Li Yu. I am a licentiate and have just entered the prefectural college.

TSAI-FENG: Li Yu? (*She reflects.*) Father, I know this gentleman.

CHANG: You know him?

TSAI-FENG: Half a year ago, when we used to pass North Street on our way to perform, I noticed a red placard on one gate announcing that this was the house of the new licentiate Li Yu. Another day I saw him come out of that gate, and I have seen him several times since in the street. But in the last few months. . .

LI YU (*interrupting her*): Yes, recently I have been away at college.

CHANG: So your home is. . .

LI YU: In North Street.

CHANG: That's right.

TSAI-FENG: Yes, that's right.

LI YU: When you mentioned just now that you are professional acrobats, that reminded me. . .

CHANG: Of what?

LI YU: Half a year ago when I came back from college, I saw a crowd in the street which was cheering and clapping. I made my way into the crowd and watched. . .

CHANG: What did you see?

LI YU: I saw you and your daughter performing. You had a bright spear in your hands, she a sword. You were exchanging blows, hitting and thrusting high and low, till spear and sword looked like darting rays of light. You were quicker on your feet than a young man, while she was swift and graceful. It was as spirited as a fight between dragon and tiger! I was so impressed that I could not help crying Bravo!

CHANG and TSAI-FENG: You are too polite!

LI YU: Your daughter is so young yet so accomplished that I feel ashamed when I compare myself with her.

TSAI-FENG: You are a licentiate, well-read and talented. How can you compare yourself with street performers?

LI YU: Ah, but the classics cannot compare with Uncle Chang's spear, nor literary gifts with your sword. If I had your ability, when Mr. Wang laid hands on me I would have given him a thrashing — what a pleasure that would have been!

(TSAI-FENG smiles.)

CHANG: Haha! A good idea, that! *(He claps LI YU on the shoulder.)*

LI YU *(nearly falling over)*: Help!

CHANG *(catching hold of him)*: I'm sorry, I hit too hard.

LI YU: No, it's my fault for being too weak.

CHANG: Haha!

*He must be sent by fate,
This scholar who climbed our wall.
When we were expecting ruin,
A licentiate came to our rescue!
Tsai-feng, prepare wine and food!*

TSAI-FENG *(happily)*: Yes, father. *(Exit.)*

CHANG:

You must drink a few cups with us.

LI YU: Thank you for your kindness but I must be on my way. I had better say goodbye now.

CHANG *(stopping him)*: Why, I never blamed you for climbing over the wall. Do you refuse to drink with us?

LI YU: I am no drinker.

CHANG: Drink as much or as little as you like. Wait here for a moment. I'll be back presently. *(He opens the door.)*

(Enter TSAI-FENG with wine and food.)

TSAI-FENG: Father!

CHANG: Drink a few cups with the gentleman. I shall be back in a minute.

TSAI-FENG: Yes, father.

(CHANG goes out.)

TSAI-FENG: Have some wine, sir.

LI YU: I can't drink.

TSAI-FENG: Sir, we are both in trouble. Will you refuse our humble hospitality?

LI YU: Why are we both in trouble?

TSAI-FENG: If you weren't in trouble you wouldn't have climbed the wall. And now that they are looking for unmarried girls, I don't know what will happen to me tomorrow. That is why I said we're both in trouble.

LI YU: Quite right. And they say good friends should drink to each other. Since we are both in trouble, sister, let us drink a few cups together.

TSAI-FENG: After you!

*What a polite, distinguished licentiate!
He must have a brilliant mind.
We have met in time of trouble,
This was destined by heaven, surely.*

LI YU:

*Yes, surely this was predestined.
I came to escape a forced marriage,
And it seems that you must hide too.
Tomorrow each house will be searched.*

TSAI-FENG:

*If they drive me to desperation, never fear,
(She draws her sword.)
This sword will not let them take me!
(She strikes out.)*

LI YU: Help! *(Alarmed by the sight of the sword.)* This is not a battle, sister. Why draw your sword?

TSAI-FENG:

Forgive me, sir,



The thought of this is like a knife in my heart.

LI YU:

*I am to blame for my faint-heartedness;
Please do not laugh at me, sister.*

TSAI-FENG:

*Let us drink another cup,
Then I shall have courage to kill the wicked man!*

LI YU:

*To kill a man is no joke —
I've a better plan.*

TSAI-FENG: Can you think of some way to save me?
What is it, sir?

LI YU: It is this. . . .

TSAI-FENG: Please tell me, sir!

LI YU: Excuse me! (*Aside.*) The ancients said, "A fair and virtuous maid is a good match for a gentleman." If she will marry me, I shall be happy and she will escape being chosen for the palace. I don't know, though, whether she will or not. . . . Well, let me take my courage in both hands and do my best to persuade her. I'll ask her. Yes, I'll ask her!

TSAI-FENG: Sir?

LI YU (*to himself*): No, no! The ancients said a disciple of Confucius should see, hear, say and do nothing improper. If she refuses, I shall be guilty of a breach of etiquette. No, no. It can't be done.

TSAI-FENG (*plucking up courage*): Sir, I have thought of a way.

LI YU: What is that?

TSAI-FENG: If you and I. . . .

LI YU: What about you and I?

TSAI-FENG: You and I. . . . (*Unable to speak out.*) I don't know.

LI YU: You don't know?

(*Enter CHANG HSUAN followed by TUNG TAI.*)

TUNG: The trumpeter is out of luck. All the weddings are coming at the same time. (*Passing through the door.*) Why, Mr. Li, we meet again!



LI YU: So it's you again, Tung Tai!

CHANG: Sir, I fancy you are not unfavourably disposed towards my daughter. Now they are looking so hard for girls that all families are in a panic — why don't you marry my daughter? Then neither of you need have any more worries. You won't have to hide yourselves and I shall feel easier in my mind.

LI YU (*overjoyed*): But . . . is that permissible?

TUNG: If they think so, why not?

LI YU: Marriage is the chief of the five relationships, and to marry without my mother's consent would be unfilial. Let me ask her permission first. (*He makes as if to go.*)

TUNG: They are still grabbing bridegrooms outside.

LI YU: Well. . . .

TSAI-FENG: Why, sir. . . .

LI YU: I agree to the marriage, but I must get my mother's consent before going through with it.

CHANG: You scholars have too many rules, but I don't object. Still, you must go through the wedding ceremony tonight to let all the neighbours know that my daughter is married. Then I shall feel easier in my mind.

TUNG: Mr. Li, when you take home such a beautiful bride your mother will be delighted. Why stand on ceremony?

LI YU: According to Confucius, a man must never deviate from ceremony.

TUNG: How did you get here, then?

LI YU (*embarrassed*): Over the wall.

CHANG: If ceremony means so much to you, you shouldn't have climbed over the wall.

TUNG: Come on. Go through the wedding quickly. I have to go on to other families.

(*TUNG TAI blows the trumpet while LI YU and TSAI-FENG go through the ceremony.*)

CHANG: Tung Tai, here is your fee.

TUNG: What, only two coppers?

CHANG: Is that too little?

TUNG: Never mind, so long as the thing is done. (*Exit.*)

CHANG: Now, son-in-law, you can reach the north gate by the river bank and go home to tell your mother. Tomorrow I shall send the bride to your house.

LI YU: Thank you, father-in-law. Goodbye.

TSAI-FENG: It's late — be very careful!

LI YU: I will. So after the fright I had all has ended well. I'll go home now to tell my news. (*Exit.*)

CHANG: Tomorrow I shall take my daughter to her husband's house. That will be a weight off my mind. Aha! . . . (*TSAI-FENG looks shy.*)

(*They close the door and exeunt carrying the lamp.*)

SCENE VI

The Bridegroom Is Caught Again

PLACE: A boat by the river bank

SERVANT (*offstage*): Hurry up! Here, bring that lantern!

(*Enter the magistrate's SERVANT pushing TUNG TAI. LI YI enters with a lantern from the opposite side.*)

TUNG: I tell you, brothers, I simply can't blow this trumpet!

LI YI: What are you doing with it then?

TUNG: I am a trumpeter, as you can see by this trumpet. But if you want some music, find someone else. My mouth is aching.

LI YI: All right, trumpeter, hand it over.

TUNG (*holding his trumpet tight*): This is food and clothes to me: I never lend it.

LI YI: Who wants your trumpet? You've made a pile today: give us some silver.

TUNG: I haven't any.

SERVANT: Then we'll throw you into the river.

TUNG: All right, all right! (*He fumbles in his pocket and produces two coppers.*) Here you are, one each.

LI YI: Pah! We're not beggars. What use is a copper? There! (*He throws the coppers into the river.*)

TUNG: Hey! If you don't want them, you could have given them back. Why throw them away?

SERVANT (*to LI*): Take him to the magistrate while I stay here.

LI YI (*to TUNG TAI*): Come on! (*He leads TUNG off.*)

SERVANT (*watching*): Ah, someone else is coming. (*He hides in a corner.*)

(*Enter LI YU.*)

LI YU:

*What adventures I've had today:
Dismay and happiness, meeting and parting!
Luckily my father-in-law knows what is right
And has sent me back after the wedding to tell the
news.*

*My mother will be overjoyed to see me,
And she will get a good daughter-in-law tomorrow.
The village dogs are barking on every side,
The running water is murmuring in the river.
Afraid of being snatched away again,
I hurry across rough country.*

(The SERVANT and LI YI steal up and seize him.)

SERVANT: Got you!

LI YU: Why, I'm an honest citizen.

SERVANT: Just what we want!

LI YU: I am a licentiate.

LI YI: Thank Heaven! We've had to wait up till midnight
to catch a scholar.

LI YU (*puzzled*): What do you mean?

SERVANT: You'll know when you see our master. Come
on. *(They take LI YU off.)*

*(The inner curtain rises. The magistrate's WIFE,
dressed in official robes, is reading by lamplight.
RUNNERS with oars are waiting outside for the order
to start.)*

WIFE:

*My husband in his yamen
Told me to disguise myself as an official;
If any men are found walking at night
My servants will drag them aboard;
Then I shall take my pick,
Choosing a talented and handsome man
To be my daughter's husband.
That will be the end of our troubles.
But the third watch has sounded,*



*My heart feels pierced by arrows;
The runners I sent ashore
Have not brought back any bridegroom.*

(Enter LI YI and boards the boat.)

LI YI: Madam. . . .

WIFE: Quiet!

LI YI (*realizing his mistake*): Your Honour! We've caught
two men breaking the curfew.

WIFE: Bring them here.

*(LI YI calls out and the SERVANT brings TUNG TAI
and LI YU aboard.)*

WIFE: Hold the lamp high.

*(In the lamplight, TUNG TAI and LI YU are startled
to recognize each other.)*

TUNG: What, Mr. Li again!
LI YU: You again!
WIFE: Who are you?
TUNG: Tung Tai, a trumpeter.
WIFE: Stand aside. (*She looks at LI YU and is impressed.*) And who are you?
LI YU: Li Yu, a licentiate.
WIFE (*very pleased*): Why should a licentiate break the curfew?
LI YU: I was on my way home after drinking with a friend. I beg Your Honour to overlook it.
WIFE: Since you are a scholar, can you compose rhyming couplets?
LI YU: Yes, Your Honour.
WIFE (*secretly taking a paper from her sleeve and reading it*): The new moon kindly visits the magpies' barge.
LI YU: Here is my second line: The spring wind proudly follows the horse's hooves.
WIFE: The magpies build a bridge over the autumn stream.
LI YU: The eagle spreads its wings on the blustering wind.
WIFE: A noble sentiment! You are a true scholar. Tell the boatmen to start, Li Yi.
LI YI: Cast off!
LI YU (*desperately*): Wait! If Your Honour is satisfied, you should let me go home.
WIFE: I . . . have always been fond of scholarship and eager to make friends with talented men. We can talk of literature together aboard.
LI YU: But my mother is expecting me at home.
TUNG: Your Honour, both Mr. Li and I should go home.
WIFE: You know this gentleman?
TUNG: Yes.
WIFE: In that case, you had better stay here to keep him company. Cast off, men! Please come in, sir.
LI YU (*helplessly*): Very well. (*He leaves with the magistrate's WIFE.*)

TUNG: Ha! I'm afraid Mr. Li is going to have to go through three weddings tonight before he can go home.
LI YI: Hold your tongue! Come on. (*Exeunt TUNG TAI, LI YI and the rest.*)

SCENE VII

The Search for the Bridegroom

PLACE: LI YU's house

(*Enter CHANG HSUAN and TSAI-FENG.*)

CHANG:

*My mind is at rest at last,
No need to snatch at bridegrooms in the street.*

TSAI-FENG:

*We have come to North Street and look round;
This must be the house.*

CHANG: Mr. Li! Open the door!

(*Enter Li Yu's MOTHER.*)

MOTHER:

*These are fearful, troubled times:
They are carrying off young men all over town;
But my son is away at college,
I need not be anxious.*

(*She opens the door and is surprised to see CHANG HSUAN and TSAI-FENG.*)

CHANG: Congratulations! Come in, daughter. (*He leads TSAI-FENG inside, calling out.*) Li Yu! Son-in-law!

MOTHER: May I ask whom you are looking for?

CHANG: We are looking for the licentiate, Li Yu.

MOTHER: Li Yu is my son.
CHANG: Ah, so we are relatives. Child, pay your respects to your mother-in-law.
 TSAI-FENG: I greet you, mother-in-law!
MOTHER: But . . . my son is still studying in his college. He has surely never married?
CHANG: Didn't he tell you?
MOTHER: He hasn't come back yet.
CHANG (*surprised*): What!
 TSAI-FENG: Then — where can he be?
MOTHER: What exactly has happened?
CHANG: Too bad! Too bad!

(*The MATCH-MAKER bustles in.*)

MATCH-MAKER: Tung Tai, where are you? Well, though I've lost my own son I still have to look for someone else's son-in-law. (*She enters.*) Mrs. Li, have you. . . . So Chang Hsuan is here too.
MOTHER: What brings you here, Mrs. Tung, in such a fluster?
MATCH-MAKER: I've come to give you good news! (*She glances round.*)
MOTHER: What good news?
MATCH-MAKER: Yesterday afternoon Li Yu married Mr. Wang's daughter.
MOTHER (*surprised*): Married Miss Wang?
MATCH-MAKER: That's right.
MOTHER: When did he come back?
MATCH-MAKER: He came back yesterday afternoon and Mr. Wang caught him at the crossroads.
MOTHER: Well!
MATCH-MAKER: Hasn't he come home to tell you?
MOTHER (*shakes her head and turns to ask TSAI-FENG*): And when did you get married?
 TSAI-FENG: Last night just before midnight.
MOTHER: Then where did he go?
(*TSAI-FENG shakes her head.*)

MOTHER (*worried*): Ah! You are snatching men right and left, but where has my son gone?
 TSAI-FENG: But mother-in-law. . . .
MATCH-MAKER: This is too bad. Now two sons are lost.
 TSAI-FENG:

*Don't worry, mother,
This is nothing strange;
Your son was unwilling to marry Wang Hsia's
daughter,
To be forced into marriage,
So he climbed the wall of our house;
He got on well with my father,
And he and I were married;
He started home after midnight to tell you the news,
But must have been kidnapped again.
I shall go and find him.*

MOTHER (*to herself*):
*She speaks frankly and with spirit,
She will make a good daughter-in-law.
(To TSAI-FENG.)
But you are only a girl,
People are likely to take advantage of you;
And if you are caught too and sent to the palace
I shall be even more distressed.*

TSAI-FENG:
*I know how to defend myself
And shall dress as a man.*

MATCH-MAKER:
*Then you may be snatched away
To make a bridegroom!*

MOTHER: That is true.

TSAI-FENG: I shall disguise myself as a professional swordsman. If any fool tries to seize me, I shall just hit him!

MATCH-MAKER: If Mr. Li had your skill he would not have been kidnapped.

MOTHER: As things are now, I suppose I must let you go. But we have no swordsman in our family and no such costume.

CHANG: We have the right clothes at home. Go back quickly, daughter, and change. I'll go out presently, too, to make inquiries.

TSAI-FENG: Yes, father.

MATCH-MAKER: Miss Chang, please ask about my son Tung Tai too!

TSAI-FENG: All right. Goodbye, mother.

MOTHER: Take care of yourself.

TSAI-FENG:

*I have roamed the country for years,
You need not worry about me;
I shall make inquiries outside
And be back by noon. (Exit.)*

MOTHER (sighing): Ah, what troubled times these are!

MATCH-MAKER (to herself): What can have happened? . . . (She goes to the door and calls.) Tung Tai! Where are you? (She starts out.)

(WANG HSIA hurries in, barring her way.)

WANG: Mrs. Tung, have you found him yet?

MATCH-MAKER: Not yet.

WANG: That won't do. You must produce him.

MATCH-MAKER: This is Li Yu's home. Go in and ask his mother. (She wants to leave.)

WANG (stopping her): Come with me.

MATCH-MAKER: All right. (They enter together.) Mrs. Li, this is Mr. Wang. Mr. Wang, Mrs. Li.

WANG: Good day, we are relatives.

MOTHER: What's that?

CHANG: See here! She is my daughter's mother-in-law. Let's not have any misunderstanding.

WANG: What does this mean, Mrs. Tung?

MATCH-MAKER: After Mr. Li climbed over your wall he married this Mr. Chang's daughter.

WANG: The idea!

*How dare you drag Li Yu away,
Stealing my son-in-law?*

You had better be careful!

Give him back and let bygones be bygones.

CHANG:

*Mr. Li, unwilling to be your son-in-law,
Climbed the wall and came to my house;
Your manner is most offensive,
You have no right to blame others.*

WANG: Ha. . . (He glares at the MATCH-MAKER.)

*You are the one to blame,
A fine go-between! (To Li Yu's MOTHER.)
We are well known in the city,
The Wangs are a highly respectable family,
Of course we take this marriage seriously.
They were wedded, they are married;
Your son appears lacking in manners,
Badly brought up.*

MOTHER:

*What a sharp tongue you have,
Accusing first one, then another!
You seized a young man in the street
Yet boast of your respectability!
Where have you hidden my son?
Give him back and let bygones be bygones.*

MATCH-MAKER:

*Don't be angry, Mr. Wang!
Don't worry, Mrs. Li!
All will be well.
He cannot disappear into thin air —
We shall soon have news of him.*

WANG: No, you must produce the bridegroom for me!

MOTHER: Since you are the match-maker, produce my son for me!

MATCH-MAKER: Fine, we may as well all take this line. Mr. Wang, I left Mr. Li with you, so it's up to you to produce him!

CHANG: My son-in-law has gone—it's up to you to produce him!

WANG: Now then, what is all this?

(Wang's SERVANT hurries in with a letter and finds his master in Li Yu's house.)

SERVANT: Sir, the magistrate has sent you a letter. Here it is.

WANG: Let me see. *(Reads.)* Greetings to Mr. Wang. My daughter is to be married today and I hope you will officiate at the wedding feast. Please come straight to the *yamen*. *(He looks round proudly.)* His Honour's daughter is getting married and I am asked to officiate. This shows the high respect the magistrate has for me. Naturally I must go to offer congratulations. *(He reads on.)* I have heard the good news today that your daughter is also married. Please bring your worthy son-in-law with you to the feast. *(To himself, worried.)* Confound it! Li Yu has disappeared but the magistrate wants me to take him to the *yamen*. What shall I do? *(He thinks.)* Mrs. Tung, I'll wait for you at home. Find Li Yu for me at once. *(To his SERVANT.)* Go back and get my sedan-chair ready to go to the *yamen*.

(WANG and his SERVANT leave in haste.)

MOTHER: Mrs. Tung, I want my son.

MATCH-MAKER: It's all very well for you to say that, Mrs. Li, but whom can I ask for my son? Since we are all in trouble, let's search together.

MOTHER and CHANG: How shall we set about it?

MATCH-MAKER: Let's take a gong and go through the town, calling. When Mr. Li and Tung Tai hear us, they will come out.

MOTHER: Come on. *(They pass through the door.)*

MATCH-MAKER: Mr. Li!

MOTHER: Son!

CHANG: Son-in-law!

MATCH-MAKER: Tung Tai!

TOGETHER: Come quickly! We are looking for you!

(Exeunt.)

SCENE VIII

Confusion in the Street

PLACE: *The street*

(Enter TSAI-FENG disguised as a swordsman.)

TSAI-FENG:

*I am rushing forward,
Burning with indignation;
My heart is full of hate for the government
Which treats the people as dirt;
On every side I have searched,
And in every street I find them snatching bridegrooms.
Where has my husband gone?
Who has news of him?
I don't know which way to turn,
My heart is breaking.
We love each other, our two hearts are as one,
Meeting in time of trouble, we pledged our faith;
Pledged to live together till our hair grew white,
And to stay together as ghosts in the nether region.
Though dark clouds have covered the moon,
I shall search high and low;
I must look further on.*

(She turns to go but shrinks back as a man approaches.)

Here comes my enemy!

(She hides herself. Enter LI YI and the SERVANT.)

LI YI: H'm. The longer I think it over, the angrier I feel. Yesterday I was out in the wind all night by the river to kidnap that Mr. Li, but today when they asked him to go through the wedding ceremony he refused. His name is Li and they insist on his marrying the



magistrate's daughter.
My name is Li too, but
no one is interested in
me.

SERVANT: Didn't you
fix anything up yester-
day when you went to
see that girl acrobat
Chang Tsai-feng?

LI YI: Oh, her? She's
a fine-looking woman
but a shrew. If I
weren't a fast runner,
I wouldn't be here
now.

SERVANT: You mean
she refused you?

LI YI: She not only
refused, she did this!
(*He lunges out.*)

SERVANT: Well, if you
don't mind my saying

so, for an intelligent man you sometimes act very
foolishly. Of course she hit you when you approached
her directly. But if you speak to her father, Chang
Hsuan, I guarantee he will agree at once.

LI YI: That's a good idea. Come on, I'll treat you to a
drink first.

SERVANT: Right, I'll drink to congratulate you on your
wedding. (*They go out.*)

TSAI-FENG: Judging by what I heard that scoundrel say,
it seems that some bridegroom has been taken to the
magistrate's *yamen*. Last night they kidnapped a licen-
tiate named Li by the river to force him into a marriage.
My husband was going home along the river shore last
night. I wonder. . . . Let me ask at the *yamen*.

(*She starts to go.*)

WANG (*offstage*): Please wait a minute, sir!

(*Enter WANG HSIA in his sedan-chair followed by
his SERVANT.*)

WANG (*alighting and bowing*): Sir, please accept my
greetings.

TSAI-FENG: I don't think we have met. What do you
want?

WANG: You have such a distinguished appearance, you
must be a gallant man who rescues those in trouble.
I implore you to help me!

TSAI-FENG: I have important business. Please excuse
me.

WANG: Ah, sir!

*Please listen, sir,
While I explain.*

*My family is in trouble,
Our son-in-law has gone;*

*I do not care if he rejects the marriage,
But if the magistrate knows we shall be ruined.*

TSAI-FENG: Ruined?

WANG:

*They are choosing girls for the palace,
To hide a daughter is to deceive the court.*

TSAI-FENG: Even if your son-in-law has run away, if
you keep quiet nobody need know.

WANG:

*The magistrate has sent a note
Inviting me to his yamen;*

*If he asks for my son-in-law
There will be trouble.*

Take pity on me, I beg you,

And pass yourself off today as my son-in-law.

TSAI-FENG: Why did the magistrate invite you to the
yamen?

WANG: His daughter is getting married today. He asked
me to officiate.

TSAI-FENG (*availing herself of this opportunity*): I was
on my way there myself.

WANG: What is your business in the *yamen*?

TSAI-FENG: I . . . just wanted to watch the fun.

WANG: Fine! Kill two birds with one stone! Boy, help the gentleman into the chair.

(WANG makes TSAI-FENG take the sedan-chair. TSAI-FENG goes out, followed by the SERVANT. WANG swaggers proudly after.)

(Enter CHANG HSUAN, Li Yu's MOTHER and the MATCH-MAKER. They meet LI YI and the magistrate's SERVANT, both roaring drunk, entering from the other side.)

MOTHER (calling): Li Yu! Son!

CHANG (calling): Li Yu! Son-in-law!

MATCH-MAKER (calling): Tung Tai! Son!

SERVANT: Hey, Li, your father-in-law is calling you.

LI YI: Calling me, is he? Good day, father-in-law.

CHANG: What! Are you jeering at me again? (He shakes his fist.)

MOTHER (stopping a fight): We have more important business to attend to.

CHANG: All right, I'll let him go for the time being. Out of my way!

LI YI: Ah, father-in-law,

Why are you angry with your son-in-law?

Is it because I never stood you a drink?

CHANG: Who is your father-in-law? (He shakes his fist again.)

MATCH-MAKER (stopping him): At a time like this, how can you think of fighting?

LI YI: Old man,

At a time like this

You are lucky to have a son-in-law like me.

SERVANT:

Most folk are searching everywhere for bridegrooms.

LI YI:

And many of them are not as good as me.



SERVANT:

He's willing — that's much better than one who's unwilling.

LI YI:

Hundreds refuse to go through the ceremony.

SERVANT:

Some even hang themselves or jump into the river.

MOTHER (frightened): What! You mean that some of them take their own lives?

LI YI: Of course. Dozens of them. I've seen quite a few myself.

MOTHER: Do you know what happened to the young man kidnapped by Wang Hsia?

SERVANT: Of course. Mr. Li here knows everything that happens. That young man taken by Mr. Wang was . . . (Lying deliberately.) drowned last night in the river.

CHANG, MOTHER and MATCH-MAKER: Is that true?

LI YI: When I called on Mr. Wang just now, the corpse still hadn't been taken away for burial.

SCENE IX

Confusion in the Yamen

PLACE: *Chientang County Yamen*

(Wedding music is played. Enter the magistrate's WIFE in ceremonial dress, attended by a MAID.)

WIFE: Thanks to my husband's cleverness, calamity has turned into good fortune. Is the wedding feast ready, girl?

MAID: Yes, ma'am.

WIFE: Tell Tung Tai to come here.

MAID: Yes, ma'am. Tung Tai, you are wanted.

(Enter TUNG TAI with his trumpet.)

TUNG:

The scholar tells me

He has been kidnapped again;

They won't even let Tung Tai go—

What the devil is this?

Madam, do you want me to blow my trumpet for this wedding you are forcing Mr. Li into?

WIFE: Be quiet! Mr. Li is willing, no one is forcing him. We have enough musicians, we don't need you.

TUNG: In that case I'll be going. *(He turns to leave.)*

WIFE: Wait! You look an intelligent lad. Change your clothes and wait on the bridegroom. We'll see that you are well paid.

TUNG: I am fond of this. *(Showing his trumpet.)* I don't know how to wait on gentlemen.

WIFE: All you have to do is look after the scholar when he is studying and serve him tea. Surely you can do that?

TUNG: I won't.

WIFE: If you refuse, you'll be taken into custody.

MOTHER *(sobbing)*: So Wang Hsia forced my son to take his own life!

CHANG *(wiping his tears)*: Ah, son-in-law!

LI YI: Father-in-law!

You had better marry Tsai-feng to me.

CHANG: My heart is heavy. I'll let you off this time. Get out of my sight.

LI YI: I won't.

CHANG: Then on your own head be it. *(In a passion he beats the two men.)*

(LI YI and the SERVANT run away.)

CHANG:

My heart seems slashed by knives.

Ah, ma'am, that old cur Wang Hsia has murdered your son, my son-in-law. I must go to Wang's house and give them a thorough beating to avenge his death.

MOTHER: This is a case for the law. Let us go to court.

CHANG: I always avoid officials, but I suppose you are right.

MATCH-MAKER: If you're going to court, I'll leave you. *(She wants to go.)*

CHANG *(stopping her)*: You were the match-maker and the witness. Come with us.

MOTHER *(seizing the MATCH-MAKER and calling out)*: Justice! Justice!

(Exeunt.)

TUNG: What does that mean?
MAID: Put in gaol.
TUNG (*crying*): Help, mother!
WIFE: Don't make such a noise. Go with him, girl, to help the gentleman put on his wedding robes.
MAID: Yes, ma'am.
TUNG (*to himself*): Ah, Mr. Li, your three weddings have made me change my trade. (*He goes out.*)

(The MAID follows him out and presently comes back.)

MAID: His Honour is here with Mr. Wang, ma'am.
WIFE: Wait on them well. (*Exit.*)
(Enter WANG and the MAGISTRATE, followed by TSAI-FENG.)
MAGISTRATE: Please remember what I told you in the hall about this marriage.
WANG: I shall remember.
MAGISTRATE: I have to trouble you to help.
WANG: I am honoured.
SERVANT: Your Honour, the local gentry are here.
MAGISTRATE: Invite them in.

(Music. Enter two LANDLORDS. The MAGISTRATE and WANG welcome them.)

LANDLORD A: Who is to officiate at this marriage?
MAGISTRATE: Mr. Wang will officiate for us.
LANDLORD B: So it is you!
WANG: Ah, I am not only officiating, I was the go-between before the bride and bridegroom were born.
LANDLORDS: What can you mean?
WANG: Listen!

*Take your seats, gentlemen,
To hear the story.
This is a remarkable marriage,
The bride and groom were fated to wed each other;
I was there when the pledge was made,
When both families promised the children yet unborn.
A gold hairpin was the pledge,
And I, Wang Hsia, acted as go-between.*

*So the marriage was predestined,
Tonight the lovers will cross the stream and meet.*
LANDLORD A: This is certainly a remarkable marriage.
LANDLORD B: Wonderful.
LANDLORD A: Most remarkable!
LANDLORD B: Absolutely wonderful!

(The MAGISTRATE, WANG and the two LANDLORDS laugh.)

LANDLORD A: What is the bridegroom's name?
WANG (*at a loss*): Ah. . . .
MAGISTRATE (*coming to his rescue*): The time for the wedding has come. Please take part in the ceremony.
LANDLORDS: Yes, Your Honour.
LANDLORD A (*announcing*): Now is the hour. . . .
LANDLORD B (*announcing*): . . . For the wedding ceremony.
LANDLORD A: Let music be played. (*Music sounds.*)
Let the bridegroom enter the hall.
LANDLORD B: Let the bride tread on the carpet.

(Enter the magistrate's WIFE dragging in LI YU, followed by TUNG TAI. The MAID helps the daughter in from the other side.)

LI YU: You are forcing me to marry against my will. This is outrageous! (*He tears off the wedding robes.*)
(WANG, TSAI-FENG, LI YU and TUNG TAI stare at each other.)

TSAI-FENG: Ah, Li Yu!
LI YU: Who are you?
TSAI-FENG: I am Tsai-feng.
LI YU: Tsai-feng?
WANG (*shocked at the sight of LI YU*): So it is you. . . .
WIFE: If you know each other you can talk after the wedding. Go through the ceremony quickly.
(LI YI rushes in.)
LI YI: Your Honour, some people are crying for justice outside.

MAGISTRATE: Confound it! Today is my daughter's wedding-day. Didn't you know that? Get out! Tell them to come tomorrow.

LI YI: Yes, Your Honour. *(He leaves but soon enters again.)* Your Honour, the swordsman Chang has beaten the drum at the gate and forced his way in.

MAGISTRATE: Then let us go to the hall. *(They walk round the stage and the two LANDLORDS withdraw.)*

(Enter the RUNNERS.)

MAGISTRATE *(taking his seat)*: Bring in the intruders quickly.

LI YI: Call them in.

(Enter CHANG, Li Yu's MOTHER and the MATCH-MAKER. Catching sight of LI YU, TUNG TAI and TSAI-FENG, they move towards them.)

MAGISTRATE: Now then, why did you beat the drum?

CHANG: I have come to charge Wang Hsia with kidnapping my son-in-law.

WANG: This fellow Chang Hsuan abducted my son-in-law. I want to charge him.

MAGISTRATE: Who is your son-in-law?

CHANG *(pointing at LI YU)*: He is.

WANG: Li Yu here is my son-in-law.

MAGISTRATE *(angrily)*: Nonsense, this young man is my. . . .

WIFE: He is our son-in-law. You deserve to be punished for kidnapping the magistrate's son-in-law. *(Tugging at LI YU.)* Come over here!

WANG *(tugging at LI YU)*: He's my son-in-law, I tell you!

CHANG *(tugging at LI YU)*: He's mine!

MAGISTRATE: Ha! How dare you try to seize a man in my *yamen*? *(To CHANG.)* You say that Li Yu is your son-in-law, but can you produce a witness?

TUNG: Your Honour, I know the whole story.

Allow me to speak, Your Honour.

After this edict came to Chientang County,

All families tried hard to find a bridegroom,

*Keeping my mother and me hard at work all day.
When this scholar Li Yu came home to see his mother,
He met Wang Hsia, who seized him*

*And forced him to go through a marriage;
The scholar escaped by climbing over the wall
And next door met Chang Tsai-feng.*

*That very day he had another wedding,
And was going home to announce it to his mother
When he was kidnapped yet again by your wife.
This is the truth, the whole truth.*

If I've lied, may I be beaten!

WIFE, WANG and CHANG *(together)*: Your Honour, this is my son-in-law. Give him to me!

MAGISTRATE: Don't shout, don't shout! *(The ATTENDANTS call for order.)*

*All is confusion and uproar in the court,
Three families are fighting for one bridegroom,
For no one wants to sacrifice his child,
To be parted from his daughter.*

*In desperation they hit upon this plan,
Seizing a young man to fix up a marriage;*

*As it happened, I used the same trick,
So there is one bridegroom only for three brides.*

Suppose I decide that he should go to Wang. . . .

CHANG *(hastily)*:

He is my son-in-law,

That would be unjust!

MAGISTRATE: Ah!

Chang Hsuan here would not agree. (To CHANG.)

Then suppose I let you have him. . . .

WANG *(hastily)*: Your Honour,

Take pity on my daughter! (He kneels.)

MAGISTRATE:

Mr. Wang, pray do not kneel;

Don't worry; we shall discuss the matter further.

Suppose. . . .

WIFE *(hastily)*:

Let us keep him ourselves!

CHANG, LI YU, TSAI-FENG: What!

MAGISTRATE:

Take care not to arouse the people's anger. (To CHANG and WANG.)

*You are thinking of your daughters,
But should we not take thought for our daughter too?
If you were the judge in this case,
What would you decide?*

CHANG: We trust Your Honour to make a just decision.

WANG (at the same time): We trust Your Honour to make a just decision.

MAGISTRATE: Ah,

*You come to me, feeling injured and resentful,
But to whom can I complain?*

*You are merely fighting for a son-in-law,
But I have still to find eight hundred girls;
If the imperial commissioner learns of this,
I shall lose my post and you will lose your heads!*

WANG and CHANG: Please make some decision, Your Honour!

MAGISTRATE: I do not know what to decide.

(Gonging is heard.) But I hear gongs.

(GUARDS escort the COMMISSIONER in. The MAGISTRATE makes haste to welcome him, but the COMMISSIONER has already entered.)

MAGISTRATE: Your . . . Your Excellency!

COMMISSIONER (looking round): What are these people doing here?

MAGISTRATE: They are. . . .

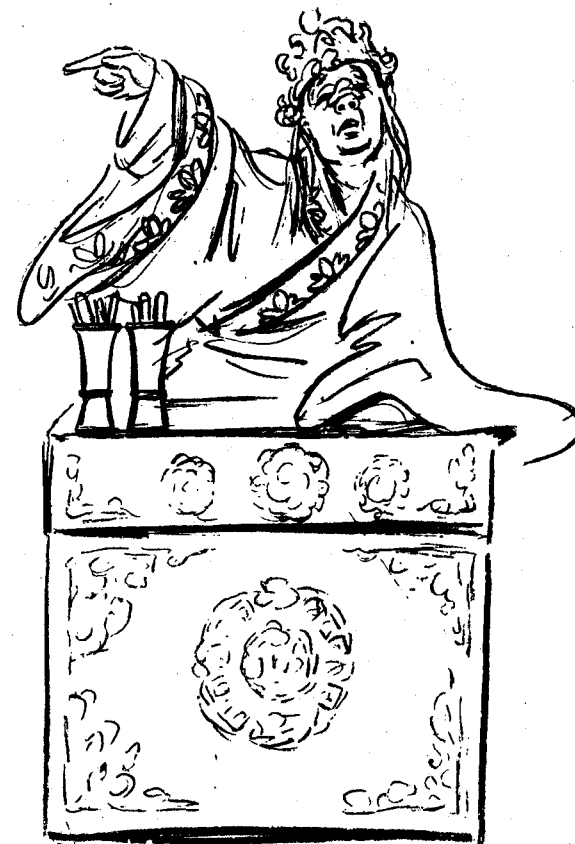
TUNG: They are fighting for a bridegroom.

COMMISSIONER: Oho! His Majesty wants brides but you want bridegrooms. This sounds interesting. Let me deal with this case. *(He takes the MAGISTRATE's seat.)* Who is the accused?

WANG and CHANG: Your Excellency! *(Pointing at each other.)* He stole my son-in-law and I want to charge him.

COMMISSIONER: Who is the son-in-law?

WANG and CHANG *(pointing at LI YU)*: He is.



COMMISSIONER: Don't both shout at the same time. Who can tell me the whole story?

TUNG: Your Excellency, I can. *(Pointing at WANG and the magistrate's WIFE.)* These two, the magistrate's wife and Mr. Wang, have stolen someone else's son-in-law. *(Pointing at TSAI-FENG and LI YU.)* These two are husband and wife.

COMMISSIONER *(looking at TSAI-FENG in surprise)*: Husband and wife?

CHANG: Your Excellency, she is my daughter Tsai-feng. We are professional acrobats.

COMMISSIONER *(disapprovingly)*: H'm. She looks neither man nor woman: how disgusting! You say they are married?



CHANG (hastily): Yes, Your Excellency.

COMMISSIONER: What witness have you?

CHANG: The trumpeter Tung Tai.

TUNG: That's right.

COMMISSIONER (*impatiently*): Very well, very well. (*To the MAGISTRATE.*) I have now seven hundred and ninety-eight girls. There are still two girls short. You and Wang belong to the class of officials and gentry. You should send your daughters to the palace to wait on His Majesty.

WIFE: Ah, my poor child! (*Exit.*)

WANG: Your Excellency! (*Pointing at TSAI-FENG.*) What about her?

COMMISSIONER: She is rough and low-born and has a husband already. How can we send a woman like that to the palace? There are only two girls short. Our emperor is a virtuous ruler: he will have eight hundred girls, no more and no less. Let her go.

MAGISTRATE and WANG: But. . .

CHANG, LI YU and TSAI-FENG (*overjoyed*): We thank Your Excellency!

COMMISSIONER: Officers, accompany Mr. Wang to his house to see that his daughter gets ready and is sent to my hostel. (*The GUARDS escort WANG off.*) As

for you, magistrate, bring your daughter over without delay. Prepare my chair. (*The ATTENDANTS shout assent.*)

TUNG: Your Excellency, how about us?

COMMISSIONER: Go and attend to your own business. (*Exit.*)

(*The MAGISTRATE collapses on to his chair.*)

ATTENDANTS: Your Honour! Your Honour! (*Curtain.*)

*Translated by Yang Hsien-yi
and Gladys Yang
Illustrations by Li Ke-yu*

TU PENG-CHENG

Yenan People

The day Lu Yu-huai arrived at the railway construction site to take up his post as secretary of the Communist Party Committee none of the comrades in charge was around. Lu put down his luggage and went out for a stroll. Work was proceeding on both sides of the mountain. Nearby were temporary living quarters, a motor vehicle pool and a warehouse. Five or six men, unloading bags of cement from a truck in a parking area in front of the warehouse, called out as they worked: "Two hundred and fifty sacks of #400. . . . Seven hundred sacks of #200. . . ."

At the door of the warehouse sat an old man, his long face blackened by the sun. The growth on his chin, curly and yellowed, looked as if it had been scorched. His blue uniform was stained with oil spots and rust. He wore cloth shoes with enormous thick soles—they must have weighed at least two cattie. A short pipe clamped between his teeth, the old man was laboriously entering figures on a piece of paper resting on his knees. His slow, stodgy air gave him the appearance of being rather dull-witted.

"Don't make any wrong entries, old chief!" the workers teased him.

Tu Peng-cheng, a young writer, is known for his first novel, *Defend Yenan!* published in 1954, an excerpt of which was printed in *Chinese Literature* No. 1, 1956 under the title "At the Great Wall." He has been working at construction sites such as the one described in this story.

The old man's only answer was to remove the pipe from his mouth and tap out its ashes against the thick sole of his shoe.

He'd make a good watchman, thought Lu. He'd never lose a single nut or bolt. But he was a far cry from what a chief of supplies should be. That job needed a man with fast legs, deft hands and sharp eyes and ears. A man who could take abuse and deal with complaints diplomatically. And he had to be able to produce materials when everyone else failed.

He's got the wrong job! Lu lit a cigarette as he walked.

"Hey, comrade! Where do you think you're going—to a temple fair?" a woman's voice hailed him.

Lu looked around. A woman of fifty odd was seated in the doorway of a cave dwelling beside the store house, stitching a cloth shoe sole.

Lu smiled and walked over to her.

"Haven't you got eyes?" The woman pointed with the sole at the wall opposite.

A notice in big letters warned: SMOKING PROHIBITED! Lu hastily pinched out his cigarette.

Grimly and vigorously the old lady plied her needle, the hemp thread hissing through the layers of cloth. It was plain that she was quite annoyed.

Lu sat down beside her. "You've got a Yenan accent. Maybe we're old neighbours!"

"What use are old neighbours? They're not edible! Smoking near the gasoline tanks!" Although she continued to scold, the old woman spoke much less severely. She examined Lu curiously to see whether he really was a native of Yenan.

"Are you one of the warehouse guards, old aunty?" Lu asked courteously.

The woman laughed. "I guess I count as a member of the royal court!"

Just then, a dozen more trucks rolled into the parking field before the warehouse, churning up dust, their engines roaring. About a hundred men came running out to unload. Calls and shouts rose on all sides.

The old chief was instantly transformed. He leaped to his feet, stuck his pipe into the back of his collar and shouted: "Little Hei's Ma! Come on, give me a hand!"

Tossing aside her shoe sole, the old lady brushed the dust and bits of thread from her jacket and hurried to the parking field. To others, the words "give me a hand" might seem quite ordinary, but they evoked a soul-stirring reaction in Little Hei's Ma.

Many years ago, the father of the present chief of supplies bought him a child bride, the daughter of famine refugees, for two pecks of maize. The young husband and wife together bore the burdens of life's hardships. In their world, there was little happiness, little kindness, and much hunger and privation. But after they joined with Liu Chih-tan, the Communist hero of the northwest, and took their oaths under the red flag, a new life began.

For over twenty years, whenever the man called, "Come on, give me a hand!" the woman unhesitatingly gave her all, whether it meant disguising herself as a beggar and collecting information in Kuomintang territory, or delivering urgent messages to Liu Chih-tan's Red Army forces, or standing guard armed with a red-tasseled spear while her husband and other Red guerrillas went off into the night for a swift raid on the sleeping enemy. . . .

As the old lady marched into the parking field, the transport workers exchanged winks. Be careful! They seemed to say. The old lady's going into action!

Drivers were reviving their engines and checking over their vehicles, transport workers were rushing back and forth, supply men were shouting, while the chief of supplies tore around, spry as a youngster, a notebook in his hand, the stub of a pencil behind his ear, leaping on and off trucks, roaring orders as if he were simultaneously commanding dozens of troop columns:

"Watch those spare parts, young fellow. Don't drop them. . . . Pile the #400 and the #200 cement separately. . . . Hey, young fellow, listen to my directions, or I'll twist your ear! . . ."

His thunderous voice rose above the bedlam of shouts and racing engines. And he kept sending his sturdy old wife to the most crucial points. "Little Hei's Ma! Look after those men moving cement bags!"

With the speed of a veteran soldier, the old lady raced to the place indicated and, as quick as two from five leaves three, brought order out of chaos. When the old lady gave a command, the young workers immediately ceased their horse-play and obeyed.

Lu observed all this with silent admiration. North and south, he had been to many construction sites in the past five or six years, but never had he seen co-ordination like that between the old husband and wife.

Just as the old lady finished helping her husband supervise the unloading, a group of wives came hurrying up. "Old Communist!" they shouted to her, "go, quickly! Number 203 is checking in!"

"What a busy day!" The old lady hastily returned home, gathered up her shoe-stitching equipment and went into the cave. She emerged a moment later with a black kerchief on her head. Locking the door, she walked over to the old man and handed him the key.

"I may not be back until the third cock's crow. There's steamed muffin in the hamper and pickled vegetables in the jug. When you get hungry, help yourself!"

Accepting the key, the old man lapsed again into lethargy. With his unlit pipe in his mouth, he sat slowly entering figures.

"Take me to 'Forty Kilometers!'" The old lady had crossed the creek and waved her hand at a passing truck. The driver jammed on his brakes.

"Climb in, Old Communist!" Smiling, he invited her to sit with him in the driver's cab. He seemed greatly honoured to have her.

The truck flew off in a cloud of dust. Lu questioned the women and they explained: Although the wife of the chief of supplies didn't work for the railway administration, she was an extremely important person on the construction site. She held several posts—chairman of

the workers' family association, member of the trade union committee, captain of the salvage team, and volunteer midwife. She was at the call of any worker's wife who was in labour. Rain or shine, she delivered babies hygienically and safely, and wouldn't accept a penny for her trouble! "Number 203 is checking in!" meant that her 203rd baby was waiting to be born.

She was also a member of the Communist Party for more years than anyone else within miles, which accounted for her nickname. People became so used to addressing her by it that hardly anyone knew her real name. Even on the trade union committee election ballots she was listed simply as "Old Communist."

Lu peered through the window of the old lady's cave dwelling. It was sparsely furnished but scrupulously clean and smelled pleasantly of pickled vegetables.

He was reminded of his old home in a gorge not far from Yen-an. Lu could remember every tree, every blade of grass. This time of the year in Yen-an millet was half the height of a man; people were singing in the fields.

In the evening, Lu heard that the chief of the construction site had returned. As he headed for the office, Lu wondered what he was like. Entering the shack, he saw a man bent over a desk, writing rapidly, pausing from time to time to calculate on an abacus or to answer the phone. When the man noticed Lu, he rose and shook hands.

"I'm Hei Yung-liang. And you? . . ."

Staring, Lu fell back a step. He examined the man from head to foot.

"Were you called Little Hei, as a kid? Aren't you from Li Family Gully in East Gorge, Yen-an?"

Now it was Hei's turn to be surprised. Blinking, he looked at Lu, unable to place him.

"High mountains produce handsome people." Lu recalled the old phrase as he gazed at Hei. Perhaps Little Hei had been through a lot in the past ten years, but his alert air, his good looks, his intelligent eyes, were still the same.

"Don't you remember, Little Hei!" Lu cried. "1947 —"

"Ah, that's right. You're Lu . . . Lu . . . Lu Yu-huai! Who would have believed it!" Little Hei hastily proffered cigarettes and poured Lu some tea. "My pa and ma are here too!" he said.

It was late at night when Lu left the home of the chief of supplies and returned to his quarters. But he couldn't sleep. Too many past events were again appearing before his eyes. . . .

Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang army had driven into the Shensi-Kansu-Ningshia Liberated Area with a hundred thousand men and occupied Yen-an in April, 1947. The Northwest Field Army of the PLA, after destroying an enemy division outside the city, was preparing to move to another position. For the sake of speed, it turned eighty or ninety of its wounded — including Lu Yu-huai — over to the local guerrillas. The leader of the guerrilla unit was called Little Hei.

It was a bright moonlit night. In the distance, a red signal flare rose into the sky. A dozen wounded men sprawled, resting, on a mountain top. The others had already been carried to safety. Little Hei was waiting for the stretcher bearers to return and transport this last batch.

But, unexpectedly, the situation changed. The sound of firing kept coming nearer. Soon shots were ringing to the north, east and west.

Cradling his rifle, Little Hei stamped his feet in exasperation. Then he recalled that among the wounded there was a company commander, a fellow named Lu. Perhaps he could think of something. Little Hei knelt down beside Lu's stretcher and opened the quilt. A face pale from loss of blood stared up at him. Lu said not a word. He only gripped the hand grenades he had placed beside his head.

This situation was growing increasingly tense. Bullets whined very close by. Many shadowy figures were active on the mountain to the north. Little Hei's heart was in his throat. Ramming a bullet into his rifle chamber, he got ready to fight.

Suddenly, a shadow was seen coming up the slope. Little Hei threw himself down, trained his rifle on the advancing figure and shouted:

"Who's there?"

But the man not only failed to halt—he walked with greater deliberation, as if counting his steps.

"Who is it? Halt, I say!" Little Hei was breathing hard. His finger curled on the trigger.

"Who! Who! Is that all you can say! After twenty years in this world you still can't recognize your own father!"

Little Hei jumped to his feet. Pleased but worried, he urged, "Walk faster, can't you! The bullets are singing all around!"

"Your pa's spent half his life among bullets, Little Hei. We're old friends!"

When his father reached the mountain top, Little Hei seized him by the arm. "Pa! We're in an awful state! I haven't got a single stretcher bearer! . . ."

Tucking in his chin, Pa glared at him like a bull. "I ought to slap your face! What are you scared of? Even if the sky falls, we're big enough to hold it up!"

He put two fingers in his mouth and whistled shrilly.

The sound drew a shower of bullets, but several dozen women, led by a woman of forty, came running up from the gully below.

"Ma!" cried Little Hei delightedly. "You're the goddess of our salvation!"

"You'd be in a real fix if it weren't for your mother and these women," said Pa. Pointing to the wounded, he called to his wife, "Little Hei's Ma! Come on, give me a hand!"

At a signal from Ma, the women raised the stretchers. Ma and three other women carried the stretcher Lu was on. All started down the mountain. Little Hei walked up front. His father covered the rear. Silently, swiftly, the procession travelled south along the ridge.

A moment later, enemy soldiers appeared on the mountain top they had just vacated. Bullets followed the stretcher bearers.

They reached the great gorge east of Yen-an after midnight. Ahead was the highway and the Yenho River. Enemy vehicles raced along the road. The little hamlets along the river were still as death. No dogs barked, no lamps shone.

After watching many enemy trucks go past and carefully looking all around, Pa issued his orders:

"Little Hei's Ma, we're going to make a dash for it. I'll lead the way with my rifle. You and the women follow. Don't stop even if the sky collapses and the earth quakes! . . . Little Hei, you cover our rear. No matter how many enemy come, hold them off for half an hour! Have you got the courage?"

"Sure!" said Little Hei.

Pa clapped him on the shoulder. "Now you're talking like your old man!" Leading the stretcher bearers, he slipped across the highway, forded the river, and climbed the opposite heights. . . .

On reaching the top, the stretcher bearers rested. Everyone breathed easier. They had eluded the enemy.

Pa and his wife gazed at the river flats below. Across the gorge, enemy machine-guns were spitting fire. Vehicles continued to fly along the highway. Little Hei, crawling along the near side of the river bank and shooting, was plainly visible in the bright moonlight.

All of a sudden, Little Hei began firing rapidly. He rose and started running to the rear, but before he had gone more than a few steps, he fell. Enemy troops charged down the opposite mountain, crossed the highway, and ran towards the river.

"Quick!" cried Pa. "Get the wounded out of here! There's a grove of trees about a mile away. They'll be safe there."

Little Hei's Ma seized him by the arm. "What about my son, you old dead-brain?"

"Women! Long hair, but short on common sense! Listen to me. Right now, only one thing matters, and that's to get these twelve wounded comrades out of danger. Then we can come back and rescue Little Hei."



"How hard you are! Little Hei's your own flesh and blood!"

Pa lost his temper. Tucking in his chin, he glared like a bull. "What's more important — one man or twelve?"

Little Hei's Ma flung herself on him and wrested the rifle out of his hands. "Go on get out of here then! I had the strength to give him life — I'll have the strength to save him!"

Pa thought a moment. "Maybe that's not a bad idea. You rescue Little Hei while I take the wounded to safety. But let me ask you — how are you going to do it?"

Holding the rifle, Ma stood in silence, the wind ruffling the hair at her temples.

Pa snatched the rifle from her, pushed her down, then he too dropped to the ground. He fired a dozen rounds, attracting a wild fusillade from the enemy. But when, after several minutes, he did not reply, they stopped shooting and advanced cautiously towards the river. Pa took out a box of matches. Running to the eastern end of the height, he struck one and immediately blew it out. Then he dashed to the western end and did the same. One after another, running back and forth, he lit several dozen matches, giving the impression of a large force. The enemy let loose with rifles, machine-guns, even a couple of mortars!

Pa handed the rifle back to his wife. "The enemy won't dare to advance for another hour or two. Strike while the iron is hot. Go get Little Hei!"

Through a rain of bullets, clutching the rifle, Little Hei's Ma crawled down the slope into the gorge and groped her way in the direction of the river flats. . . .

Grenades in hand, Pa led the twelve stretchers to the dark recesses of the grove. All sat and waited.

After what seemed a long time, Pa jumped up and ran back along the path on which they had come. The women stretcher bearers hurried after him. Lu and the other less seriously injured raised their heads.

Little Hei and his Ma, both wounded, supporting each other, were limping slowly towards the grove. . . .

The following evening after dinner, the chief of supplies and the construction chief took Lu for a tour of the work site. As they walked, Little Hei told Lu of their problems in building a railway through the mountain region. Pointing to a high arched stone bridge in the course of construction, he spoke of the advantages of using local materials and related briefly the history of arched stone bridges in China. Lu looked at him admiringly, and so did Pa. After all, Little Hei had started life as a shepherd boy.

An administrative worker stopped them as they were mounting a slope. Before long, other section chiefs arrived and surrounded Pa and Little Hei.

It was plain that this was not going to be a short session. Pa sat down on a rock and calmly lit his pipe. When he finished one bowl, he knocked the ashes out against the sole of his shoe and filled up again. Smoking, he listened quietly, his eyes half-closed, a smile on his face. From time to time he gazed off at construction sections in the distance. The men knew that when the chief of supplies set himself in this posture you could scream and curse and jump three feet in the air but you'd never disturb his equanimity.

"Come what may, you've got to give me five hundred cattles of dynamite!" shouted a big section chief.

"Unless you come across with a ton of steel ribs," threatened another, "I'm going to bring my two thousand workmen and call at your house for dinner!"

"Ah, dynamite," the chief of supplies mused. "I might be able to let you have three hundred cattles tonight about eight o'clock."

"Three hundred will be all right, if that's the best you can do," the big section chief agreed hastily. "But verbal promises don't count. Let's have it in writing."

The chief of supplies gazed thoughtfully at his pipe. "I can't write very well. My signature's hard to read. Let's get the chief of Section Seven to put his name to it."

"What do you mean, you old dead-head!" the chief of Section Seven exploded. "We don't have a single catty of dynamite to spare!"

"Really? My drivers have already picked it up."

Section Seven's chief turned pale. "Who gave it to you?"

Pa adjusted the jacket draped over his shoulders and grinned. "The head of your materials department."

"That's outrageous! I'm going to fire him!"

The chief of supplies hung his jacket over his arm and rose, straight and stern. Tucking in his chin, he glared like a bull.

"You can't fire me, and you're not going to fire him either. The whole country is building; transport is working overtime. You can't always get supplies the minute you want them. We have to be flexible, make adjustments. Your section has enough dynamite to last you through tomorrow. If you run short the next day, come and see me. I'm not going to run away!"

Lu, Little Hei and the old man walked back to the office.

The old man looked very tired. He was always on the go, hurrying from one work section to another, travelling all over the country buying materials. With the moon and stars for a mantle, he was riding fifty kilometers on a truck this very night to get to a railway station and catch a train which would bring him into Sian the following morning. . . .

Little Hei's Ma entered, a small package in one hand, a hot water bottle of red rubber in the other. She looked at Party secretary Lu, her husband, her son.

"Have you finished talking official business? I'm here on a family matter." The old lady had stood at the door for several minutes before coming in. She had the greatest respect for her son's office. Here she never raised her voice, or addressed her son by his nickname.

She asked her husband: "Must you go to Sian tonight?"

The chief of supplies grinned. "How can you ask? I was born busy!"

"Your stomach pains you all the time. When you get on the train, ask the attendant to pour some hot water into this bottle. At least you'll be able to keep your stomach warm. And here are a couple of griddle cakes. Humph! A grown man with a beard and you still don't know how to take care of yourself!"

After the elderly couple had left, Lu said: "Old uncle is a hard worker."

Little Hei pointed through the window. "There's another one."

Lu looked. The old lady was standing outside the warehouse. At times she gazed off at the distant lights, at times she looked up at the moon, at times she peered all around like a vigilant sentry.

"Is anything troubling the old lady?" Lu inquired.

Gazing at his mother, Little Hei explained: Of course there were supply men to guard the warehouse, but whenever the old man was away, Little Hei's Ma stood guard. What was in the warehouse, what the various materials were used for — she wasn't very clear. But one thing the old lady knew — these materials were part of the life fabric of her husband, her son and all of the people on the work project; they were never out of her mind. Sometimes she would awaken in the middle of the night and shake the old man.

"Little Hei's Pa! I have a feeling something's wrong in the warehouse. Get up and take a look. What if there's a fire?"

"You think I ought to go?"

"Yes, I do!"

"All right, then." Pa knew that unless he went, he was in for a hot argument. Slipping his coat over his

shoulders, he made a round of the warehouse. Only then was the old lady able to return to sleep.

Sometimes she would wake up and hastily begin to get out of bed.

"What are you doing?" the old man would growl.

"I'm afraid the watchman's been drinking."

"You're possessed, woman!" Pa would yell. "I don't know where you get such crazy ideas!"

Then the couple would sit up in bed and quarrel violently, shaking fingers at each other and shouting. Suddenly Ma would worry that Pa's legs were cold, and she'd cover him with a quilt. But before it was over, Pa would have to apologize, or the argument would never end!

On Lu's third day at the site, Little Hei took him on a tour of some of the tunnels that were being constructed. As they emerged from Tunnel Number Two, both men were streaming perspiration and they walked to the shade of a tree in the gorge.

Little Hei's Ma came along with a group of about twenty women. This was a salvage team the old lady had organized. Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, the women combed the work site, picking up bits of usable material that workers had dropped.

As the team neared the two men, Ma told the other women to go on ahead. She strode up to her son and put her basket down with a thump. It landed on Little Hei's foot.

"Let me ask you — do you know how much salvage my team collects in half a year?"

"Including nails and machine parts, a total of eight thousand catties." He reeled off the figure promptly, thinking this would stop her.

"Is that a lot?"

"Of course! An old lady like you — are you still fishing for compliments at your age?"

"Is it a good thing?"

"Certainly it's a good thing. Hasn't the trade union praised us?"

"It's not good at all! You ought to be ashamed. We pick up a lot on this construction site only because you lose a lot here!"

Little Hei was taken aback by this unexpected criticism. Just then four trucks rolled up to the materials shed by the river bank and the chief of supplies hopped out of one of the vehicles. Looking around for men to help him unload, he spotted his wife.

"Little Hei's Ma! Come on, give me a hand!"

From the full loads on the trucks, the old lady knew that Pa had not made his trip to Sian in vain; at the moment he was probably the happiest man in the world. She hurried over to him.

"Ma!" Little Hei shouted after his mother's strong straight back, "I'll lend a hand too!"

Lu looked at him and grinned. They joined in the unloading.

"You're always giving old uncle a hand," Lu said to Ma. "You ought to help me and Little Hei once in a while."

The old lady glanced at her son. "This old woman isn't of much use any more!"

"That's no way to talk," said Lu. "You shouldn't treat me like a stranger."



Little Hei's Ma laughed. "You? A stranger? You're one of the family. When we finish unloading this stuff, Ma will make you and Little Hei some nice oil fritters. You've been away from Yen-an for many years but you probably still haven't forgotten our home-made yellow wine!" She went off to help her husband, who was supervising the efforts of a hundred or more workers.

Mischievous youngsters among them winked when they saw her approaching, as if to say: "Careful! The old lady's taking the field!"

Admiring his truckloads of new materials, Pa looked twenty years younger. Strong, agile, he shuttled among the trucks, leaping on and off, a stub of a pencil behind his ear, waving his notebook and shouting: "Careful with that dynamite! . . . Hey, young fellow, those steel bars go to Number Three Warehouse! . . ." His powerful voice rose above the roaring engines and the noisy shouts.

The old lady gazed at him as if he were the world's greatest hero.

Little Hei looked at his parents with limitless joy and pride.

As Lu watched Pa and Ma and Little Hei, he felt that China's ten thousand *li* of rivers and mountains were being supported on broad strong shoulders like theirs. That's how it was in the past, that's how it was now, that's how it would always be!

*Translated by Sidney Shapiro
Illustrations by Tsao Chen-feng*



At the Ferry by Chen Ta-yu →

The artist, now in his forties, is an assistant professor of traditional painting at the Academy of Fine Arts, Nanking.

I Knew All Along

On my way to Chenchia Village, many thoughts ran through my mind. It was four years since I had left here. Had there been much change in the village during these years? Would my old acquaintances still recognize me? Was Uncle Wang the stockman still alive and well?

After I passed Hungtou Village, I noticed a newly-built irrigation ditch. In the distance, I could see three or four people bustling about on the dike. It was only when I got nearer, that I found they were plugging the holes on the dike. Coming to a bridge, I got off my bicycle and was just about to push it across when someone called:

"Hello! Is that you, Old Ma? Haven't seen you for years!" He ran towards me and I stopped short.

The man was in his forties, tall and slim, with thin lips and a pointed chin. He wore a pair of old-fashioned dark glasses with a copper frame. Mud was splattered all over his shoes and trouser-legs. He looked familiar, I was sure I had seen him somewhere before, but I just couldn't for the life of me recall who he was. He reached me in a few big strides, and shook my hand warmly. I asked casually:

"Is the ditch newly built?"

Ma Feng, a young writer of short stories, has been working in the villages of Shansi where the incident of the present story took place.

"Oh, yes, we're letting the water out for the first time today," he answered. "Are you going to our village? Good! We'll have a chat tonight."

I racked my brains to think of his name all the time I was chatting with him. He sounded like some one from Chenchia. But what was his name? I just couldn't remember. I had crossed the bridge and was getting on my bicycle, when I heard him say to the others:

"Let's go. We'll have a look on the eastern side. I knew all along that new ditch. . . ."

I did not hear the rest of the sentence, but the words "I knew all along" suddenly reminded me who he was — Chao Man-tun of the Chenchia Village Co-operative. No wonder he looked so familiar! I remembered the many stories about him. He was a real character!

Chao's nickname was "I Knew All Along." It had its origin.

He was a sharp-witted man, and a shrewd manager of his own affairs. No matter what he did, he always took everything into account, and never allowed himself to suffer. In spring, he would estimate whether millet or *kao-liang* would harvest better that year; doing small business in the slack season, he would estimate whether it would be more profitable to peddle fruit or vegetables. These calculations, though not always one hundred per cent accurate, were never much out. He was alert, sociable, and knew more than most people.

Chao liked to show off. No matter what people talked about, he would always put in a word or two, as if he knew everything. Sometimes, he got away with his tall talk; other times, he couldn't help making a fool of himself. Chao not only liked to air his views on everything; he also pretended to have great foresight. When a thing succeeded, he would say, "I knew all along it could be done." When a thing failed, he would say, "I knew all along it would go wrong." The phrase "I knew all along" was his favourite. Gradually it became his nickname.



"I Knew All Along" was one of the first members of the Chenchia Village Agricultural Co-op. He joined the co-op early in the spring of 1951, when it was founded. When Chao joined the co-op, he brought quite a bit of trouble with him. He was one of its oldest and also the most backward members. His ability to trick and take advantage of others was unrivalled. When you heard the stories about his slipperiness, you hardly knew whether to laugh or to cry.

At first, the co-op asked him to take care of the live-stock, for he had some experience in this line. Ten years before, he had bought a small donkey for three pecks of millet. No bigger than a calf, it was all skin and bones. The villagers had said it wouldn't live, but under his care, the

donkey grew big and sturdy. In less than three years it foaled. Afterwards, whenever people mentioned this, he would say elatedly, "I knew all along it would turn out well. Raising animals is only a question of hard work!"

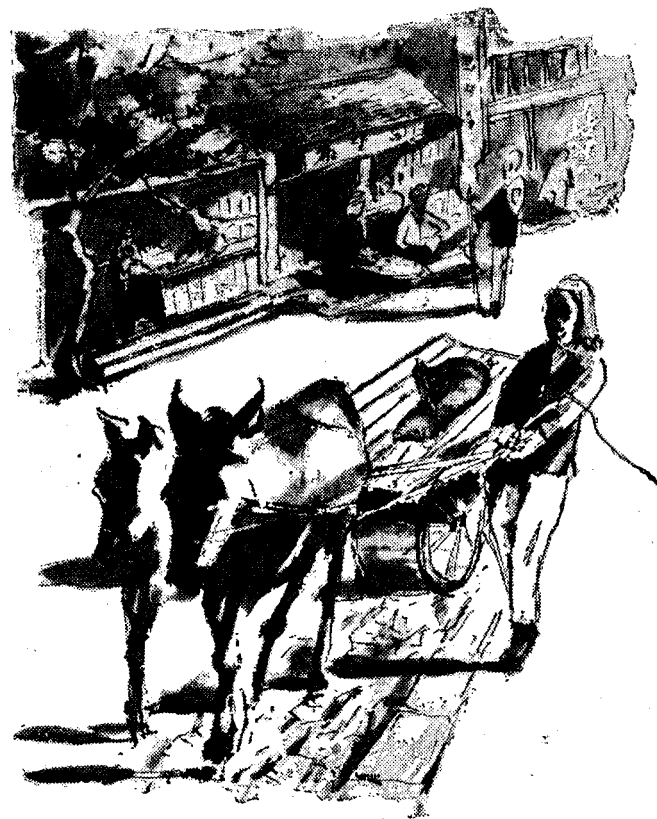
Certainly he spared no effort on his two donkeys. He showed them more consideration and patience than he did to his children. Naturally, such a person seemed an ideal choice for the co-op's stockman. Nobody expected the problems which came up as soon as he filled the post.

On the co-op's blackboard newspaper the following jingle appeared:

Horses, donkeys, cows, and mules
Together, complain of the stockman so cruel,
The hay's unsieved, the feed uncooked,
There's more mud than hay if only you'll look.
The animals are reduced to skin and bone,
Without any crutches they can't walk alone.
In a separate trough, his own donkeys fed
They live in a palace, so clean is their shed.
They've plenty of fodder and grass fine and long,
No wonder like tigers they grow as fat and strong!

Chao was stockman for less than six months, but in this short period there were so many complaints against him, the co-op had to call a meeting to discuss them. He was severely criticized and removed from his post. Someone else was appointed in his place and he was assigned to be a cart driver. His two animals were put to pulling carts.

People thought he'd probably behave now, but actually he took even greater liberties on the new job. One day that winter while going for charcoal in a neighbouring town, he passed a small town on the way and found that suckling pigs were selling cheap there. Chao had long wanted to buy a pig but as he hadn't brought any of his own money, he bought one with the co-op's money for the charcoal, and came back with his cart empty. He told the co-op chairman, "The bridge outside Lichiacha Village has collapsed, I couldn't get through. I knew all along this trip would be useless."



The whole thing was soon found out and a meeting was held to criticize him. He was given a demerit and taken off cart driving. From then on, Chao worked in the fields, bringing a lot of headaches to the brigade leaders. He cheated and bargained in his work endlessly. His production brigade also found it necessary to censure him, but this had little effect.

Chao had two ways of dealing with public criticism. One way was to treat it all as a joke. For instance, when his mates berated him for arriving late at work every morning, he only said jestingly:

"Ah, it just shows that none of you has ever been to the theatre. The star actor is always the last to come on."

His other way was to agree completely with whatever criticism people raised. He did not attempt to explain, nor was he offended. He only said, "I accept everything."

But after these meetings, he remained his old self. He had been in every one of the co-op's three production brigades, and none of them wanted him. Not one of the brigade leaders could handle him. Everyone called him "The Headache."

During my first visit in the autumn of 1953, before I had been there three days I was told a lot of stories about him. Uncle Wang, the stockman, was particularly angry. Whenever "I Knew All Along" was mentioned, he would say:

"It's our co-op's luck that we have only one such rascal. A few more of the likes of him would wreck us completely!"

But later when I came to know Chao better, I found that he was not as bad as the others made him out. I worked with him in the fields when we were removing maize stalks, and found that he worked quite hard. If he came across small ears of maize left on the stalks, he would pull them off and pile them together. He was more careful than most of the youngsters.

Another thing about him was that he was full of fun. Although close to forty, he still liked to fool about with young folks. You never felt tired working with him. He made you feel so gay that before you knew it, it was time to knock off.

Is it because he pretends to be good in front of me, or are Uncle Wang's comments unreliable? I wondered. One evening, I talked about Chao with the co-op chairman, Chen Ming-shan.

"He used to be really backward," Chen said. "Those stories about him are not a bit exaggerated. The first two years after he joined the co-op, he hoped it would collapse. But he's improved a lot this half year. Good or bad, he's a veteran member of three years' standing anyhow. Even a stone gets warm if you hold it close for three years."

For a time, I lived with Chao and his wife. One day, I went home later than usual. Chao had already had his noon-day meal and gone back to the fields. As I ate I

chatted with Mrs. Chao. Soon the conversation turned to her husband.

"You've probably heard he's the co-op's notorious backward element, haven't you?" she asked.

I smiled and nodded.

"He was even worse that first year we joined. His heart was set on buying land. Once he said in his sleep, 'Be frugal in your home-keeping and we'll be able to buy two *mou* of land next year!' Although he was in the co-op, his heart was elsewhere!" After a pause, she continued: "Now he's much better. For three years in succession our income has been not less than what we got when we were working on our own. That has put him at ease. Now he only figures out his work points every few days."

From what his wife told me, I realized that Chao had really improved. But not long after that — just a few days before I left — another thing cropped up.

The autumn harvest was over and the co-op had launched a movement to dig wells. It planned to dig five wells before the ground froze. Chao had some experience in well digging. The well in his yard had been dug under his supervision, and the water in it was good and plentiful. So this time he was appointed technical supervisor.

The man really had something to him. He was in charge of all the preparatory work and arranged everything in perfect order. The third day after work began, the co-op decided to commend him on the blackboard newspaper. Then they found shifting sand in the process of digging and someone was sent to fetch him, but he was nowhere to be found. His wife didn't know where he'd gone. She said he had left home in a hurry before dawn.

The members of the management committee were very angry. How could he go off and drop his work like this just when he was needed at the well!

Chao did not return until after dark the following day. He went straight to the office to admit his fault. The room was crammed with people discussing what to do about the shifting sand. Everybody asked him where he'd been. He stammeringly admitted that he'd gone to the Western

Hills to buy dates. At this, the crowd burst out angrily. Everyone criticized him. With lowered head, Chao squatted on the ground puffing a cigarette. After people quieted down, he rose and said:

"I know I've done wrong. Some devil got into me. The other night when I came home after work, I met a friend from Taiping Village who had just brought some dates back from the Western Hills. He said the price was five or six cents a catty. I knew dates would certainly go to over ten cents in the winter and if I bought a hundred or so catties now, I could easily make five or six yuan. That would cover my New Year holiday expenses. I thought the work at the well was all in order, that I could just sneak off. . . ."

Uncle Wang, the stockman, happened to come into the room to fill his lamp with oil.

"A fine plan!" he cut in sarcastically. "You're really very smart. But why didn't you consider the interests of the co-op?"

"The co-op asked you to be the technician," said the co-op chairman. "That means we trust you, and everyone has great hopes in you. But you dropped your work to go and buy dates. It's good business for you of course. Make five or six yuan in two days. But don't you know how much labour is wasted and what loss we take when we stop digging for two days? Have you calculated how much this comes to? You can put aside your work to make money, but if others follow your example, who'll dig the wells?"

Chen was getting a little agitated. His face flushed. There was not a sound in the room. Chao again squatted beside the table with lowered head, not saying a word. Ashes collected on the cigarette between his fingers, which he neither smoked nor flicked, but let it burn slowly.

After a pause, the chairman continued, "Have you suffered in any way because you joined the co-op? Have you been better or worse off than when you worked on your own? You know pretty well yourself. Last summer, a hail-storm damaged the ten *mou* of good land you brought into the co-op. If it had been in the old days when you

depended entirely on that ten *mou*, would you have got so much grain after such a serious disaster? In July when you suddenly fell ill, the co-op members went in the middle of the night—in the rain too—to fetch you a doctor, and then they carried you to the hospital. They didn't ask you for a cent or even eat a meal at your expense. Do you remember all this? What's more, your medical expenses came to more than a hundred yuan. You didn't have the

money, and the co-op lent it to you. If it had been in the old society, even in a good year, let alone a year like this when your fields were ruined, would you have been able to pay such a big sum all at once? You would have had to sell your land—if not your house—even though you are pretty good at managing. Why were people concerned about you? Why did the co-op look after you? Because you're a co-op member, a member in this big family. But how much have you contributed to the family? Do you think of the good of this big family at all?"

After the chairman finished, Chao raised his head and looked at the others with moist eyes.

"I know I've done wrong," he muttered. "I haven't forgotten how good the co-op has been to me, I also want the co-op to do well. Only there's still selfishness in me. When I heard about the profit in selling dates, I couldn't think of anything else. . . ."



Since he sounded sincere, the others said no more. Just then, his daughter came to call him for supper. The co-op chairman told him he could go and that the matter would be discussed later.

After he had left the room, Uncle Wang hastily whispered in my ear, "Just listen, he'll swear as soon as he's out of the gate."

This aroused my curiosity. I tiptoed after Chao. It was dark in the courtyard and he walked with a heavy tread. The light of his cigarette glowed faintly. As I followed him out of the front gate, I heard his daughter say:

"Why do you do such disgraceful things, Pa?"

Chao didn't answer. He only heaved a long sigh and walked on. I did not know whether it was himself or others he blamed.

The following day, I left Chenchia Village, and heard no more of "I Knew All Along."

Recalling these things about Chao, I now found myself again in Chenchia. The village was surrounded by so many newly-planted willow trees that only the roofs were visible through the foliage. I remembered this used to be marshy land that was no good for farming. But what a transformation the past four years had brought about! Cycling through the willows, I entered the village. I was immediately struck by the many new houses on both sides of the road. On the threshing ground, firewood and hay were piled high. The streets were quiet and the whole village was very still.

The office of the agricultural co-operative was still in the same old place. Only now the placard on the gate read: "Three-in-One Agricultural Co-operative." I pushed my bicycle into the courtyard. An old man sat on the stone steps by the west wing of the house. A pair of spectacles on his nose, he was mending some old sacks. At the sound of my approach, he looked up. It was the old stockman.

"Uncle Wang, how are you?" I called out in delight.

He threw a glance at me and exclaimed with pleased surprise: "Ho, it's you! Well, I never!" He threw down the sacks to come over and shake my hand.

"Nowadays we are quite a big family," said he, helping me untie my baggage. "That year you were here our co-op had only fifty-two households. You remember, don't you? Now we are an advanced co-op with more than five hundred households. The co-operatives of Hungtou Village and Taiping Village have combined with ours into one. . . . Come inside and sit down."

I followed him into the office, my baggage in my arms. The office looked exactly the same as before, only some charts and banners were added to the walls, and a telephone had been installed. After pouring me a cup of tea, Uncle Wang went out. In a little while he returned with the sacks he had been mending and told me, "I've arranged everything for you. You'll sleep here in the office and take your meals at the newly-built supply and marketing co-op, next door to Chao Man-tun."

I ask immediately, "How is Chao these days?"

"Chao? He's doing all right now. He's in charge of the co-op's irrigation work and is doing a fine job. You'd never have expected it, would you? Neither did I. I used to detest him. Several times I proposed that he be expelled from our co-op. But our chairman always said we should help him to reform. It was my opinion that the sun would rise in the west before Chao could be reformed. But it seems that I was wrong."

I was curious to know what happened after that business of buying dates the year I left.

Cocking his head to one side, Uncle Wang thought for a moment and suddenly clapped his hands.

"Oh, you have a good memory," he said. "Yes, I remember now. After Chao was criticized, he went to the site of the wells before dawn the next morning. That fellow's got brains, you know. Before long he solved the problem of the shifting sand. Later on, when we were building our fifth well, there was a shortage of bricks. As they weren't able to keep up with our demands at the kiln, everybody was worried. Again, it was Chao who had a good idea. We were gathered in the office, wondering what to do. 'Why is the eastern part of our village called North Arch Bridge?'"

he asked. 'It must be that once there was a brick bridge somewhere around there. The bridge must have been buried by silt and sand as years went by. If we dig up the bricks, there'll probably be enough not for one well but for two.'

"Nobody dared believe him. The next day our chairman went to visit an old man of ninety-six. The old man recalled that in his childhood there was a bridge on the east side of the village. He pointed out the location and, sure enough, we dug up a brick bridge. Chao deserves the name 'I Knew All Along.' Even I, well past sixty, remembered nothing about the bridge, yet he knew. Strange, eh?"

I was very glad to hear this about Chao. "And nothing else happened since then?" I asked.

"Ha! That's what you think! The autumn before last there was that matter of mating the sows."

What happened was this: After the autumn harvest two years before, pig-tender Chen Lan-ying proposed that we raise Berkshires to improve the breed of the co-op's pigs. Her proposal was approved by the co-op management committee. At that time there were very few Berkshire boars in the vicinity. The Chengkuan Agricultural Co-op had one and charged two yuan for each mating. But even so the Chenchia Co-op had no chance because the Chengkuan Co-op had contracted with several other co-ops to lend them the Berkshire first. It would be two months before Chenchia's turn could be reached. Lan-ying had been after the co-op chairman more than once about the pig problem. But what could he do? The matter had to be shelved for the time being.

One morning, Li Erh-kuei of the Chengkuan Co-op was passing through Chenchia Village on his way to Taiping Village with the Berkshire, which was to be lent for mating. When Chao, who happened to be lounging outside the co-op front gate, caught sight of Li with the Berkshire, he hurried over to greet him. With utmost friendliness he invited Li to come into the co-op office and rest a bit.

Li said, "We cannot lend the Berkshire to your co-op now, you have to wait another month or so for your turn."

"Sure, sure," Chao replied, "even if you were to lend us the boar today, it would be no use; for our sows are not at the right time for it. Come in and rest. You may not be tired, but the pig must be."

It was very cold that day, and a dust storm raged. As Chao spoke so hospitably, Li followed him in without the slightest suspicion. They put the pig in an empty room and then the two of them entered the office. Chao immediately fished a pack of cigarettes out of his pocket and offered it to his guest. . . .

Speaking of Chao and his cigarettes, there was something in that too. Chao's cigarettes were never offered to just anybody. He usually kept two packets in his pocket—one of them empty. Whenever he felt like having a smoke and there were people around, he would slowly fish a cigarette out of his pocket. If anybody asked him for one, he would produce the empty pack and say, "Sorry, that was the last of the pack."

By and by, his secret was discovered. One day at wheat threshing time he played his old trick during the break. Some of the youngsters wanted to search his pocket.

"It happens the other pack is also empty," Chao declared calmly. He took out the packet and threw it away. The others were fooled of course, though it was another trick of his. He meant to pick it up later when no one was looking. Just then, a child playing near the threshing ground hurried over to pick up the "empty" packet.

"Why do you throw it away?" he cried in surprise. "There are five or six cigarettes here!"

This shattered Chao's "magic" and he had to offer cigarettes to the youngsters with a smiling face. So you see whenever Chao offered a cigarette to anyone, it meant either he wanted to borrow something or to ask for a favour of some sort. His cigarettes were never "wasted" idly.

But to get back to our story. That day, Chao not only lighted a cigarette for Li but bustled off to make tea for the visitor. Once outside, he stealthily drove the Berkshire into the pigsty where the co-op kept its sows. Then he brought in some faggots and lit a fire to boil water.



All this time he talked about everything under the sun. The two of them chatted with great animation and several people in the office thought Li was one of Chao's old friends. Actually, this was their first meeting. The fire burned poorly and the water was slow to come to a boil. As a matter of fact, Chao had purposely brought in wet faggots in order to keep his visitor longer.

Li grew a little impatient waiting for the tea, but Chao bustled about so hospitably, Li couldn't very well leave. By the time the tea was ready more than an hour had elapsed. Chao estimated that all three sows must have had their turn with the Berkshire, so he excused himself for a minute and stealthily put the Berkshire back in the empty room. Li hadn't the slightest inkling of what had happened. He thanked Chao again and again before he took his leave.

I couldn't help laughing loudly when Uncle Wang got to this part of the story. Uncle Wang laughed too and said:

"He really is a sly rascal! When our co-op members heard about it, they were very excited and pleased. They said

that Chao had really done something good for the co-op this time. The feeder Lan-ying was particularly pleased and was all smiles. Very proud of himself, Chao said, 'I knew all along that he would go to Taiping Village today after having gone to Hungtou Village yesterday. How could we let him go by without paying toll?'

"The chairman happened to be away at a meeting in town when this happened. Hearing about it on his return, he got very angry, criticized Chao severely, and told him that he had done wrong, that it was selfish and tricky and damaging to the co-op's reputation. Many people, myself included, were not at all convinced. Chao complained bitterly, 'I let him smoke my cigarettes and wasted half a workday, for what? Did I do it for myself? I did it for our co-op.' But the chairman said, 'Is it right to do something for the good of our co-op but harmful to our brother co-op? How much can a boar do in one day? Li Erh-kuei didn't know that the Berkshire had serviced three sows on the way. When he arrived at Taiping Village, he put the boar with other sows. Now what if the Taiping Village Co-op sows don't conceive?'

"We began to feel that the matter was serious. But no one knew what to do. The chairman suggested that we pay the Chengkuan Co-op for the use of the Berkshire and that Chao should go and apologize to the people of Taiping Village Co-op. It was a rational way out. But Chao refused to apologize. He said, 'There's some sense in paying the Chengkuan Co-op, but as to apologizing to Taiping Village Co-op, never! I didn't even touch any of their pigs!' Anyway the matter was dropped because soon we were all very busy, what with turning the co-op into an advanced one and then combining with the co-ops of Taiping and Hungtou Villages."

"But what happened to those sows?" I asked. "Did they bear litters?"

Uncle Wang was about to reply when we were interrupted by footsteps and laughter in the courtyard. I looked out through the window and saw women and youngsters returning from picking cotton and gleaning grain in the fields.

The quiet courtyard was filled with noise and merriment. Uncle Wang took up the sacks he had mended and walked towards the door.

"About the sows, ask Chao himself. He knows better than I." At the door, Uncle Wang turned and said, "It's time for dinner. You'd better go yourself, otherwise they'll have to come for you."

Having heard Uncle Wang's narration, I was eager to see Chao. After dinner I walked to his house. His wife who was washing the dishes said smiling, "Ah, it's Old Ma, I heard someone say that you are back. What good wind has brought you here? Come and sit on the *kang*."

She offered me tea and cigarettes. Chao had not yet come home for dinner. She said, "They are busy watering the fields. Today, Bumper Harvest Irrigation Ditch is being used for the first time — that's the ditch you saw on your way here from the city. There's no telling when he'll get home. I don't know why he didn't take some food along when he went back to work after lunch!"

I remarked jokingly, "Since he's in charge of irrigation, he can drink water when he's hungry."

"Water indeed!" said Mrs. Chao, pretending to be angry. "Ever since he took up that job, there is water in the fields all right, but hardly any in the house! Our water vat is often empty. He's too busy to fetch water, and I have my hands full with the baby."

Only then did I notice that a baby slept in a corner of the *kang*. As I waited for Chao, I went on chatting with his wife who told me that he was quite a different man now. He was always thinking of the co-op. Sometimes he even lost his sleep pondering over problems in his irrigation work.

"You know, he's trying to improve so he can be qualified to join the Communist Party!" She said this with some pride. "Now and then when I complain that he's neglecting the household, he even criticizes me for being backward. I can't help reminding him that he hasn't been progressive very long himself. And do you know what

he says? 'I knew all along you would say that!'" She burst out laughing, and I joined in.

After waiting an hour or so, Chao was still not back and I got up to go. The beam of a flashlight dazzled me as I stepped outside the gate, and a warm familiar voice greeted me. It was the co-op chairman, Chen. He had received a telephone call from the tractor station that the machines had finished elsewhere and were coming to plough the co-op fields that evening, and he was going out to the fields. I decided to go with him. We walked out of the village together.

On the way, I talked about Chao. The chairman agreed that Chao had improved a great deal. Most important, he always had the co-op in mind now instead of considering his personal interests, as he did in the past.

The night was so dark you couldn't see your hand before your face. But lights flickered in the fields. From a bright patch of light ahead came a chug of machinery that I took for tractors.

"Donkey-engines," Chen told me with a smile. "We have four. They're all at work at the wells."

We walked on and saw lanterns ahead and heard voices. Perhaps something had gone wrong with the ditch. We hurried on to where the ditch branched out. People were quarrelling over something. In the lantern light, we could see Chao at the sluice-gate.

"No, open it, quick! I knew all along that you'd be up to your tricks," he was shouting.

An old man said, "It's dark and late at night, what are you afraid of? Nobody from the Hunghsing Co-op will come here."

A young man also grumbled, "It's truly a case of wanting the horse to grow but not feeding it. You want us to water the fields yet you won't give us enough water."

Chao said, "We are eager to water *our* fields. Don't you think the Hunghsing Co-op wants to water theirs? How would you like it if they did this to us?"

On inquiring, we learned that the two arguing with Chao had half blocked the sluice-gate through which water flowed

to the land of their neighbour, the Hunghsing Co-op, so that more water would flow into their own co-op's fields.

"Here comes the chairman," Chao exclaimed, without bothering to greet us. "Let him speak."

The chairman criticized the two members. Reluctantly, they unblocked the sluice-gate.

"You go home and rest; it's time you had something to eat," said the chairman turning to Chao. "Don't come out again tonight."

Chao replied, "I was thinking of going home, myself. My stomach is roaring with hunger." He washed the mud off his spade and rubbed his red swollen eyes. I realized now why he wore dark glasses during the day.

"You should go to the clinic and have them look at those eyes," I said.

"I've been there," he replied. "It's nothing, only a slight inflammation."

The three of us went back to the village together. The incident I saw reminded me of what Uncle Wang had been telling me. I asked Chao about the sows and whether they bore piglets.

Chao said with a chuckle, "You've heard about it from Uncle Wang? I knew all along that old man would be rattling. Why do you want to know? Intend to publicize my shortcomings in the newspaper?"

"Perhaps," I said, also laughing.

"All right," he said, "I'll tell you. Soon after what happened that day, our co-op and the co-ops of Hungtou and Taiping Villages combined into one. It was decided that the sows which had been mated with the Berkshire were to be fed in our village, as we have a bean mill which gives us good pig feed. The following spring when the sows were about to farrow, the co-op chairman asked me to help Lan-ying a couple of days. I gladly consented, not suspecting that the chairman did it on purpose to teach me a lesson! The four sows of Hungtou Village produced litters of ten piglets each. Our sows also had seven and eight per litter. But the two sows of Taiping Village—what a shame! One had three; the other only two, and one

piglet died immediately after it was born. Those that lived were as thin as anything, hardly bigger than the white mice. Was my face red! People remarked pointedly, 'See what a good deed Chao has done for our co-op!' I felt bad enough as it was. The rock I tossed had landed on my own toes!"

When Chao finished his story, he turned to Chen and they talked about extending the Bumper Harvest Irrigation Ditch. Chao wanted to build two branch ditches next year, so that seventy per cent of the co-op's land could be irrigated. He also planned to plant two rows of willows on the banks. That would not only conserve soil, but would supply plenty of osier for weaving crates.

"Willows are easy to plant and quick to grow," he said. "They will not grow so high as to hamper the crops growing near by. According to my calculations, willows around the ditch in our area alone would yield thirty-five thousand cattles of osier a year. That's equal to about two thousand cattles of coarse grain in value."

He talked excitedly, quickly, as if in his mind's eye he had seen the income already. This fellow was a shrewd manager, only now he was always considering how best to manage the affairs of his large family—the co-op. Chen agreed to his plan and said that they could discuss it further at a management committee meeting a few days later.

It was nearing the end of autumn and late at night. But out in the fields it was not a bit quiet. Lights glimmered everywhere. The donkey-engines chugged, the water gurgled in the ditch, and the tractors droned—these made a grand symphony.

Chao asked me, "Old Ma, don't you think we've changed here?"

"Yes," I agreed. "Enormously." I felt it was not only their life that had changed, but what was more significant—the people themselves had changed.

"I knew all along that we would," said my friend triumphantly.

*Translated by Sun Su
Illustrations by Huang Chung-chun*



TSANG KEH-CHIA

By the Sea

THE SEA

The azure sky above
Shows me your colour,
A gust of heady wind
Brings me your tang;
Fingering clothes wet with spray
I feel your warmth,
And waking in the night
Hear your deep breathing.

A VIEW

Blue sea, blue sky,
And all this blue has melted into one
To form a background for the Young Pioneer
Whose red scarf is more vivid than a rainbow.

Tsang Keh-chia, a well-known poet, is editor of the *Poetry* monthly, Peking.

SHE AND HE

Her father has gone to sea in his fishing-boat,
Leaving his daughter to watch the house alone;
Under the awning she sits with a book in her hand,
But well I know her mind is not on the book.

A young fisherman is sunning his net on the beach,
Tugging it this way and that to pull it straight;
His eyes meet hers; his eyes are sparkling,
But well I know his mind is not on the net.

Translated by Gladys Yang

Tibetan Folk Tales

The Three Kunjams

Once upon a time there were three men with the same name: Kunjam. One of them was a chief, another a carpenter and the third a steward.

Now Kunjam the Carpenter had a wife of exceeding beauty who was greatly lusted after by Kunjam the Steward. However, the carpenter's wife was a woman of virtue. So the steward had no chance at all though he longed for her day and night. Finally he decided to do away with the carpenter so as to get hold of his wife.

Not long afterwards, Kunjam the Chief's father died. It struck the steward that now was his chance to do away with the carpenter. From that day on, he secretly learned and copied the scriptures every day until he could write in a very ancient and profound way. Finally he wrote a note in the ancient and mystic script and took it to the chief.

"Chief," he said, "I've found a note. But I don't understand a word of it. Here it is."

Kunjam the Chief did not know the script, so he handed it to his scribe to read. The scribe said, "It says here that it was sent by the old chief. He says that he is now in heaven and has been made an official. He wants a mansion for himself and he desires that the chief send him a carpenter up to heaven to build it. He wants the most skilled of all carpenters."

Kunjam the Chief missed his dead father and was worried that his father should have no mansion to live in. He sent for Kunjam the Carpenter, showed him the note and bid him to go to heaven at once.

Kunjam the Carpenter was dazed to hear this, but he dared not refuse. "Master, your order shall be obeyed," he said. "But please grant me seven days to get ready. And please send me off by burning fragrant boughs in honour of the gods in the field behind my house. In this way I shall be able to go up to heaven and build an official residence for the old chief."

Kunjam the Chief thought his request quite reasonable and consented.

As soon as Kunjam the Carpenter came out he made inquiries everywhere to discover how did such an idea come into the chief's mind. At last he learned that it was inspired by a note in ancient script said to be found by Kunjam the Steward. He pondered for a while and decided that Kunjam the Steward must have contrived a malicious scheme.

He went home and consulted his wife. "The chief bids me to go to heaven and build a mansion for his dead father," he told her. "This is absolute nonsense. But I dare not refuse the chief's order. I have asked to be sent off by burning fragrant boughs behind our house. We two must dig a tunnel from the field to the inner room of our house. We must dig it in the night in secret. Keep me hidden in the inner room. After a year I will be able to face them again."

His wife was alarmed to hear this and hated the steward very much. She was willing to do as her husband suggested. So they dug the tunnel every night.

On the seventh day the tunnel was completed. They put a stone slab over the opening and spread mud to cover the stone slab. Nobody else knew anything about it.

On the eighth day Kunjam the Carpenter was to go to heaven. The chief came with his attendants and steward to send him off with music. They piled fragrant boughs and firewood in the field and asked Kunjam the Carpenter to stand with his quilt and baggage amid the firewood. Then they lighted the firewood so that the smoke would send the carpenter up to heaven.

As the fire was lit, Kunjam the Steward, afraid that Kunjam the Carpenter would scream and create a commotion, shouted, "Let the trumpeters and drummers play! Laugh everyone, cheer! Kunjam the Carpenter is going to heaven to build a mansion for the old chief. It's a happy event! A very happy event!"

In great hilarity Kunjam the Steward pointed at the smoke and said to the chief, "Look, Chief, there goes Kunjam the Carpenter on his horse, riding up to heaven."

The chief was very pleased to hear this.

But Kunjam the Carpenter, as soon as the firewood was lit and the smoke began to curl, removed the stone slab and walked to the inner room through the tunnel.

For one whole year he did not show himself. His wife fed him with milk, butter and other nourishing food. Since he did no work during the year he grew stout and fair.

Meanwhile Kunjam the Steward had been trying desperately to seduce Kunjam the Carpenter's wife. But she avoided and ignored him. All his efforts were in vain.

While Kunjam the Carpenter was hiding in the inner room he too learned to write the ancient script. He also wrote a note in the ancient writing. Exactly one year after he was sent to heaven, holding his quilt and baggage, he reappeared on the spot where he had been burned, shouting, "Neighbours! How are you? I'm back from heaven!"

His wife was the first to rush out, ostentatiously demonstrating her surprise. She rushed to report to the chief.

The chief was delighted to hear that Kunjam the Carpenter had come back. As he had behaved with merit, the chief went to welcome him with music and ceremony and invited him to live in his mansion. He wanted to hear all about his father in heaven.

Kunjam the Carpenter told the chief solemnly, "I was very well treated by the old chief in heaven when I built the mansion for him. He was as kind to me as you are. That's how I became so stout and fair. Now the mansion is finished. It's magnificent, and ten times bigger than any mansion on earth. The old chief only lacks a steward. He misses Kunjam the Steward and desires that he should go



Scissor-cut by Hung Lin

there to look after the new mansion for a while." He produced the note which, he said, the old chief had asked him to forward.

Kunjam the Chief looked at the note and was convinced. He immediately sent for Kunjam the Steward, and ordered him to go to heaven to look after the new mansion for the old chief.

Kunjam the Steward saw that Kunjam the Carpenter had gone and come back again, stout and fair, and heard him describe heaven in lively and fascinating terms. The steward was quite puzzled. "Maybe there's something divine about me, so that when I said he should go to heaven, he really did. Perhaps it is really possible to go to heaven, and the old chief has really had a new mansion built there," Kunjam the Steward mused.

So, imitating Kunjam the Carpenter, he also asked for seven days to prepare and requested that he be sent off from behind his house by burning fragrant boughs. Since

Kunjam the Carpenter had come back, the steward thought, he would be sure to come back too.

On the eighth day he also carried his quilt and baggage with him and stood amid the firewood. The chief, as before, ordered music to be played and fragrant boughs to be burned to send him up to heaven.

But Kunjam the Steward fared differently from Kunjam the Carpenter. For one thing, after the fire subsided, there remained a pile of burnt bones, for another thing, he never came back but looked after the old chief's mansion in heaven for ever.

Translated by Chang Su

What Is Hunger?

There was once a lord in our *tung** who was so rich that no one could tell how many yaks and sheep he owned. It was said that if his live-stock were all turned into small coins, they would fill at least a hundred leather bags, and if his yaks and sheep stamped their hoofs together, the noise would be like thunder.

This lord had a swollen belly all the time, for he had all the best things to eat.

One day, having just finished a dried leg of mutton, the lord wiped the grease from his mouth. Suddenly he heard his servant, who was outside the tent, complain of hunger. The lord summoned him in.

"All day long I hear you complain of being hungry," he said. "What is hunger after all?"

* County.

The servant blinked and answered, "Oh, my lord, it is a most unpleasant thing to suffer hunger. First, your stomach aches, and pain all over your body goes right through your bones. You get so weak and feel so bad that neither sitting nor lying can ease you. Then you become nervous and everything turns black before your eyes. Oh, my lord, I'd rather be given three hundred blows of the whip than suffer from hunger."

The lord listened with round eyes and opened mouth. It was interesting yet dreadful for he had no idea what this hunger was. From what the servant said, it seemed horrible to be hungry. The more he listened, the more he wanted to know about hunger. So he asked again, "Is hunger a better feeling than sickness?"

"Oh, no, not at all, my lord," answered the servant. "Sickness lasts only a few days. You get well, or else you die. But if you're caught by hunger, it has no end. You can never be happy again because you don't know how long you're going to last."

"Oh!" the lord frowned. "So it's like that!"

From then on, the lord couldn't help worrying about hunger. The more he thought of it, the more horrified he became that hunger would seize him. He thought to himself: If I die, what about all these yaks and sheep? He looked at the numerous bags of *tsamba** behind him and thought again: And what about this snow-white *tsamba*? And that butter, what shall I do with it?

"Eat them up!" The lord muttered to himself. "I'll finish all these before running into any bad luck."

And so the lord ate with all his might. Having taken six wooden bowls of *tsamba* mixed with butter, he again ate two and a half legs of mutton. He wanted to rest, but the thought of hunger stimulated him into finishing another half leg of mutton. He wiped his mouth, and looked around him. Piece after piece of dried beef and mutton were hanging from the walls of his tent. How can I finish all

* Flour made from *Chingko* barley, a staple Tibetan food.



Scissor-cut by Hung Lin

these? he worried. Hastily, he stood up and took another dried yak-leg.

He felt worse and worse as he ate. Suddenly he had a stomach-ache. It became so bad that he couldn't help groaning. His servant hurried into the tent, thinking the lord was ill.

"What's the matter with you, my lord?"

Unwilling to let his servant know what misfortune had befallen him, he waved him away, "Off with you! There's nothing wrong with me. I'm as strong as a lion."

But actually he felt pain all over his body, he couldn't even tell where the pain was. Neither sitting up nor lying down could make him feel better.

"I'm finished," he said to himself. "No, I have to eat, I may be dying any minute."

And once again he started eating. His only regret was that he could not devour a whole lamb or half a calf at a mouthful.

He felt nausea and got worse and worse as he went on eating.

The servant ran into the tent to stop him, "My lord, you're having too much, can't you stop eating?"

"No, no, I'm all right. Be off with you."

After the servant had gone, he ate at a double speed. He grew so swollen that he could hardly move. The servant came in again.

"My lord," he asked, "are you mad?"

The lord rolled his eyes and answered, "I'm afraid I'm suffering from that hunger you told me about."

"Lord," said the servant, both irritated and amused, "you must be out of your senses to eat so much."

"Oh, no, no. I'm finished. I'm seized by hunger. I swear in the name of Buddha, I'm telling you the truth. Aiya! Everything's black before my eyes. Quick, beat me, I'd rather be given three hundred blows than suffer from hunger."

Thinking the lord had really gone mad, the servant snatched the dried meat from his hand.

The lord cried out in alarm, "I haven't died yet, how dare you steal my mutton?"

Translated by Sun Kuo-chen

The Story of Muchi Kyku

In the old, dark days, on the bank of the Yalung River lived young Muchi Kyku and his mother, who tilled a small patch of Kali Gango's land. They toiled without rest all day, like horses in harness or yaks loaded with tea. But though they were honest and hard-working folk, the landlord had no pity on them.

Now Muchi Kyku had a yak which his father, now dead, had bartered for some fox furs. The landlord was deter-

mined to get this yak. He eyed it like some ravenous wolf and turned over plans in his mind like some crafty fox.

One day before setting off for Kangting, Kali Gango said to Muchi Kyku: "When I come back from the city, you must tell me how many times you have raised your hoe. If you cannot tell me, I shall take your yak."

Muchi Kyku's mother was in despair. Does the eagle that soars through the sky know how many times it has stretched its wings? How could they remember the number? To begin with they put a straw in their pockets each time they raised their hoes. But soon they were quite confused and it took a long time to hoe even a small piece of land. Muchi Kyku's mother shed tears of despair.

"Don't worry, mother," he comforted her. "If the stream dries up, there's still snow on the mountain. If we can't think what to do, we can ask our neighbours."

They consulted their neighbours, who gave them a plan.

"To outwit a fox you must be even more crafty," they said. "You don't need to remember how many times you raise your hoe." They told Muchi Kyku what to say to the landlord on his return.

Then Muchi Kyku worked on without worrying about the landlord. A month later Kali Gango came back.

"Well?" he asked Muchi Kyku. "Are you going to tell me how many times you raised your hoe or are you going to give me your yak?"

"Master," said Muchi Kyku, "our family has always had this yak, just as the rocky mountain has always stood here. I'll tell you how many times I raised my hoe when you've told me how many steps your horse took on the road to Kangting."

Of course the landlord had no answer to this. He slunk home like a whipped dog.

After some time the landlord decided to go to Kangting again. As he rode off he passed Muchi Kyku and his mother piling stones by the side of a field.

"Hey, Muchi Kyku!" shouted the landlord. "You must have stone clothes ready for me by the time I come back from Kangting. If not, I shall take your yak."



Scissor-cut by Hung Lin

Muchi Kyku's mother was in despair again. This was as impossible as spinning cloth out of rain or brocade out of water! How could you make clothes out of stone? She shed tears of despair.

When Muchi Kyku had comforted her he went once more to find his neighbours, who again gave him good advice.

The landlord came back from Kangting quite sure that this time he would get the yak.

"Well?" he asked Muchi Kyku. "Are you going to give me that yak?"

"This yak has worked for us all its life," said Muchi Kyku. "Just as the Yalung has always flowed past our door."

"Give me the stone clothes then!"

"We've cut them out, but we're waiting for you to give us thread made of sand. Have you got it?"

Muchi Kyku held out both hands. Of course the landlord had no sand thread to give him and he was worsted again.

When you see through the tricks of a fox, it shows its true nature. After the landlord had been worsted twice he resorted to open robbery. Late one night he and his men surrounded Muchi Kyku's house when mother and son were sleeping. They tied the young man up and took the yak. The mother struggled with the intruders to free his son and was beaten to death on the spot.

The landlord and his men dragged Muchi Kyku up the mountain meaning to kill him at the top where no one would know the deed. When they had climbed a steep cliff the landlord said: "All right, let's have a rest." They let Muchi Kyku in his leather thongs lie down on the edge of the cliff while they started cooking some beef. As the meat was simmering, the landlord and his men fell asleep. Muchi Kyku had learned from his neighbours what to do in a case like this. He rubbed through his thongs on a sharp stone and put the landlord's gold dog* on the edge of the cliff. Then, putting on the landlord's yak-hair cape, he sat down by the fire to eat. Just before dawn the landlord woke with a start. Remembering Muchi Kyku, he scrambled up and hurried to the edge of the cliff. He gave a great kick and his gold dog clattered down the mountainside. The landlord gloated, imagining it was Muchi Kyku he had kicked over. He lay down again, jeering: "Eat well and dress warmly, friend!"

At daybreak when the landlord and his men woke up they saw Muchi Kyku sleeping by the fire wrapped in the yak-hair cape. They looked round and discovered that the gold dog was missing. The landlord woke Muchi Kyku.

"You woke me in the middle of a fine dream," said Muchi Kyku. "A wolf was chasing a lamb, but I shot it dead."

"Pah! Who wants to hear your dreams?" The landlord was in a towering rage. "Tell me: Where has my gold dog gone? Why are you wearing my yak-hair cape? Why have you eaten our beef?"

* Gold ingot shaped like a dog, a treasure which the rich Tibetans used to carry with them as a charm.

"Didn't you tell me to eat well and dress warmly?" replied Muchi Kyku cheerfully. "I was just dropping off to sleep when your gold dog asked me to change places with it, because you were crushing it under your head. Before I could change back again, you got up and kicked it over the edge. Then you told me to eat well and dress warmly. Though I wasn't cold or hungry, I had to do as you said. So I put on this yak-hair cape and finished the beef in the pan."

The landlord had nothing to say. He took Muchi Kyku home with him.

In the landlord's household Muchi Kyku slept in the stable and toiled like a beast of burden. Still Kali Gango was constantly finding fault and looking for chances to harm him. One day, claiming that Muchi Kyku had spoiled a marble table by putting a brass pot down too heavily, the landlord tied him up under the bridge over the Yalung River.

The sky was dark, overcast with black clouds. Under his feet the river water gurgled. Muchi Kyku looked at the sullen sky and at the snowy mountains far away. Then he sang to the river below him:

The mountains are snowbound,
When will the sun appear?
The sky is dark,
When will the black clouds scatter?

He sang on and on, weeping to think of his fate and the loss of his mother, until he saw a horseman in the distance. It was the landlord's brother, Kala Wangpo, just back from studying Buddhist scriptures in India. When he saw someone under the bridge he asked in surprise:

"Ha! What are you doing here?"

"Me? I'm just strengthening my back."

Since Kala Wangpo's back was aching, he decided to learn this exercise. "Will you tie me up there and show me how to do it?" he asked.

"I can't do that," said Muchi Kyku. "A rich man couldn't stand it. But once you've mastered this, it's an excellent thing."

That made Kala Wangpo even more eager to learn. "Do teach me," he begged. "I'll give you my gold dog."

"Very well then, if you insist." Muchi Kyku made Kala Wangpo undo his thongs and tied him up in his place. "There you are," he said. "Just practise for some time like that. But mind you don't speak or that will spoil everything."

Taking Kala Wangpo's gold dog, Muchi Kyku hid himself on a nearby slope and waited. When dusk fell, the landlord and one of his men came with a knife to the bridge. Without a word they cut the thongs by which Kala Wangpo was hanging. He fell with a splash into the river and was drowned.

"Good!" thought Muchi Kyku. "I'll take the gold dog and go away. But lambs can't live in peace while wolves are at large." He remembered what his neighbours had said: "To outwit a fox you must be even more crafty." He decided to go back to the landlord's house.

As soon as it was light, he took the gold dog to the landlord's gate. "I'm back, Kali Gango!" he shouted.

"What!" The landlord was astounded. "Weren't you drowned?"

"Drowned? Not a bit of it." Muchi Kyku patted the gold dog. "In fact I've grown rich."

At the word "rich," the landlord came rushing out.

"When someone cut my thongs and I fell into the river, I expected to be drowned," Muchi Kyku said. "But the River God welcomed me and offered me precious gifts. All I took was this gold dog." He held it up high to glitter in the sunlight.

"Suppose I were to go?" demanded the greedy landlord.

Muchi Kyku surveyed him thoughtfully through narrowed eyes. "Why not? A rich man like you would be given even finer things, I'm sure."

The landlord was overjoyed. He told Muchi Kyku to tie him up under the bridge so that he could get some treasures too. The bank was thronged with the landlord's rich friends and relations, all of them consumed with envy.

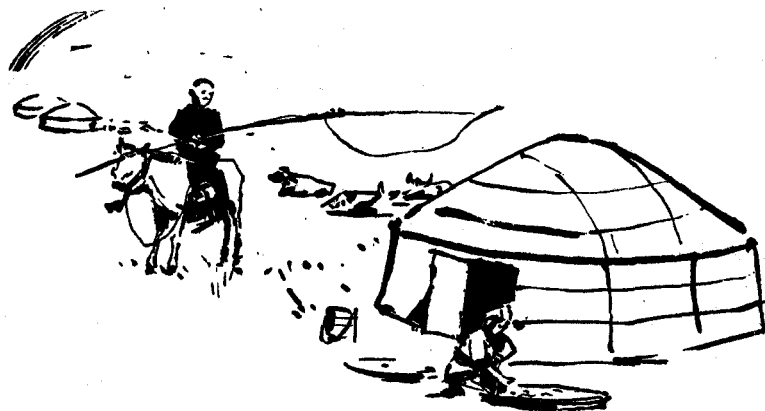
"Listen to me!" Muchi Kyku told them. "When my master goes down, I don't suppose he'll be able to carry all the treasures he's given. If that happens, he'll wave to you. Then all you rich gentlemen can jump in to help. You can share out what you get."

Under the bridge Kali Gango nodded. "All right," he said.

Muchi Kyku told them to get ready. He cut the thongs and the bloated landlord fell straight into the river. There he saw no sign of any god but swallowed a great deal of water instead and knew that he had been tricked. He signed frantically to his friends to save him, and thinking that he wanted help with his treasures they all jumped into the river.

Then like a sheep escaped from a tiger's jaws, Muchi Kyku went back to the grasslands.

Translated by Gladys Yang



WANG SHU-HUAI

Rain on the Grassland

Light rain has fallen gently,
Light rain has brought soft breezes to ruffle our sleeves;

Soft breezes have floated away across the grass,
Soft breezes have wiped away the dust on the grassland;

Light rain has floated gently away,
Light rain has scattered golden specks on the grassland;

The golden specks have silently disappeared,
The young herdsman by his tent is watching the rainbow.

Translated by Gladys Yang

Wang Shu-huai is a young poet.

Selections from the Classics

The White Snake

Pavilion tops pavilion, hill tops hill,
The music on the lake is never still;
And pleasure-seekers, drunk on balmy air,
Declare that Hangchow is beyond compare.

Our story tells of the West Lake* and the fresh beauty of its hills and water. In the Hsien Ho period (326-334) of the Tsin dynasty, when mountain streams flooded the West Gate of Hangchow, an ox golden in colour was seen in the flood. After the waters abated, this ox went to the North Hill and disappeared. All the townsfolk were amazed, believing that a spirit had manifested itself. Accordingly they built a monastery which they named Golden Ox Monastery. At the West Gate, known today as Gold Flood Gate, they built a temple and dedicated it to General Golden Lustre.

This story is based on a popular legend dating back to the Tang dynasty (618-907). The white snake was originally a monster who plagued men to satisfy its own base desires. In the course of time, however, people came to attribute to it all the qualities of a good woman. The present story, written in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) as a story-teller's text, is a well-developed version of this legend. Mrs. Pai (Pai means white) is a charming, considerate woman, who prizes true love and pursues it with all her heart. But Hsu Hsuan, her lover, surrenders to feudal conventions and superstition, spoiling the happy life they had enjoyed. The white snake is a symbolic figure whose tragic fate has won the sympathy and admiration of readers down the ages.

*One of China's most famous scenic spots, it is located in the western part of Hangchow, Chekiang Province.

Now a foreign priest named Grdhra, who was roaming this district to enjoy the scenery, exclaimed at sight of the hills: "No wonder a peak from Gradhrakuta Mountain vanished so suddenly—it has flown over here!" No one believed him, but the priest insisted: "The foremost peak of Gradhrakuta is called Vulture Peak and there is a white monkey in a cave there, which I shall call out as proof." And so he did. The pavilion in front of that hill is now called Cold Spring Pavilion.

Now there is a Solitary Hill in the middle of the lake, where the poet Lin Ho-ching once lived as a hermit. He made men carry stones and earth to build a path connecting Broken Bridge on the east with Cloud-Settling Peak on the west, and this is called the Solitary Hill Causeway.

The Tang dynasty poet Po Chu-yi built another road south to Emerald Screen Hill and north to Cloud-Settling Peak. This, known as the Po Causeway, was often swept away by mountain freshets and repaired more than once at public expense. Later, in the Sung dynasty, the poet Su Tung-po served as governor here. Since he found both these causeways destroyed by flood, he bought timber and stone and hired labourers to have them built to last, with red railings on the bridges and peach and willow trees planted along the roads. In the soft, fragrant spring the scene is as lovely as a painting. So later the name was changed to the Su Causeway.

By the Solitary Hill Causeway two stone bridges were built across the water. That on the east is called Broken Bridge, that on the west Hsi Ling Bridge. Thus—

Concealed by hills three hundred temples lie,
Two soaring peaks are locked by clouds on high.

So much for the fine scenery of the West Lake and the relics of ancient worthies. Now let me tell you of a handsome young man who while sight-seeing at the lake came upon two women. His adventures caused a great sensation in several prefectural towns and in the highways and byways of several cities, till finally a scholar recorded this romantic tale. Listen then—the story is starting.

During the Shao Hsing period (1131-1162) when Emperor Kao Tsung came south, in Black Bead Lane by Garrison Bridge in Hangchow, the southern capital, lived a small official named Li Jen, a tax-collector and a steward to Marshal Shao. His wife had a brother named Hsu Hsuan, whose father had kept a pharmacy; but since both his parents had died when he was young, Hsu worked as an assistant in his uncle's shop. He was only twenty-two when our story starts. His uncle's pharmacy was at Kuan Hsiang Kou.

One day Hsu was serving in the shop when a monk came to the door and greeted him.

"I come from Pao Shu Pagoda Monastery," he said. "The other day I brought dumplings and the list of almsgivers to your house. Now the Ching Ming Festival is at hand, the time to sacrifice to your ancestors. I hope you will come without fail to offer incense."

"I certainly will," promised Hsu.

Then the monk left.

That evening Hsu went back to his brother-in-law's house, for since he had no family of his own he had to live with his sister. He told her: "Today a monk from Pao Shu Pagoda Monastery asked me to sacrifice there. I'd like to go tomorrow to pay my respects to our ancestors."

The next morning he rose early and before breakfast bought the sacrificial paper, candles, pennons, paper coins and other things needful. Then he changed into new shoes and socks and new clothes, wrapped up his purchases and went to his uncle's house at Kuan Hsiang Kou. His uncle asked where he was going.

Hsu said: "I want to go to Pao Shu Pagoda Monastery to burn candles and pay my respects to our ancestors. May I have the day off?"

"Go ahead," said his uncle. "Mind you come back in good time."

Hsu made his way to Shou An Square, through Flower Market, past Chingting Bridge and out of Chientang Gate all the way to the monastery. When he had found the monk who had sent the dumplings, made his sacrifice and burned

his offerings, he went into the court to listen to the chanting of a sutra. After lunching there he took his leave of the monks and strolled away past Hsi Ning Bridge, Solitary Hill Causeway and Four Saints Pavilion to Lin Ho-ching's grave and Liu Yi Fountain.

Suddenly clouds gathered in the northwest and mist drew in from the southeast. It started to drizzle, then to rain in earnest. It was the spring, time for Father Heaven to send rain to hasten the flowers, and soon a steady shower was coming down. Since the ground was wet, Hsu Hsuan took off his new shoes and socks and went out of the Four Saints Pavilion to look for a boat, but not one could he find. He was at a loss when an old man rowed up and he was delighted to recognize Old Chang.

"Uncle Chang!" he called. "Will you give me a lift?"

The old man brought his boat alongside. "So you're caught in the rain," he said. "Where do you want to go?" "I'll go ashore at Gold Flood Gate."

The old man helped him aboard, pushed off and started towards Feng Lo Pavilion. He had gone no more than a few dozen yards when he was hailed from the shore:

"Uncle, give us a lift!"

Hsu saw a lady in mourning, with a white pin and comb in her lovely hair, a white silk tunic and a linen skirt. The maid beside her was dressed in blue, had red ribbons and clasps in her hair, which was parted in the middle, and was carrying a bundle.

Old Chang said to Hsu: "Since it means little extra trouble, let's take them along."

"By all means," agreed Hsu.

Then the old man moored and the lady and her servant came aboard. When she saw Hsu she parted her crimson lips, revealing teeth like jade, and made a low curtsy. Hsu hastily rose to his feet and returned her greeting. The two women sat in the cabin, but the lady kept fixing her bright eyes on Hsu. Though he was an honest lad, his heart began to beat faster at the sight of this beauty and her pretty maid.

"Excuse me, sir," said the lady. "May I ask your honourable name?"

"I am Hsu Hsuan, at your service. The eldest of my family."

"Where do you live?"

"In Black Bead Lane by Garrison Bridge. I work in a pharmacy near there."

Since she had addressed him, Hsu thought: "I may as well question her too." He rose and said: "Excuse me, ma'am, may I ask your honourable name and the whereabouts of your respected mansion?"

"I am the sister of Captain Pai of the Imperial Guards," the lady replied. "I married a gentleman named Chang, but unhappily he died and is buried at Thunder Peak here. Since this is the Ching Ming Festival, I have been with my maid to sweep his grave today, and on our way back we were caught in the rain. If you hadn't given us a lift, we'd have been in difficulties."

They chatted till the boat reached the shore, when the lady said: "I left home in such a hurry I forgot to bring any money. Would you be kind enough to pay for the boat, sir, and let me repay you later?"

"Don't worry about such a trifle, ma'am," said Hsu. "It's not worth mentioning." And so he paid for the boat.

The rain was still falling steadily when they came ashore and the lady said: "I live at the end of the lane by Arrow Bridge in Double Tea Quarter. I hope you'll do us the pleasure of coming in for a cup of tea. Then I can pay you back."

"Don't worry about such a trifle," protested Hsu. "It's growing late. I will call some other day."

Then the lady and her maid left.

Hsu entered Gold Flood Gate, keeping under the eaves till he reached Three Bridges Street where there was a pharmacy kept by his relative, whose son was at the door.

"It's late, Brother Hsu," said the lad. "Where are you going?"

"I've been to Pao Shu Pagoda to burn offerings," Hsu told him. "Now I'm caught in the rain — can you lend me an umbrella?"

The lad called: "Old Chen, fetch an umbrella for Mr. Hsu!"

Old Chen produced an umbrella and opened it. "Master Hsu, this was made by Honest Shu of Eight Characters Bridge. It's an excellent umbrella with eighty-four ribs and a purple bamboo handle, without one tear in it. Take good care of it! Don't spoil it!"

"Of course. Don't worry," said Hsu. He took the umbrella, thanked them and made his way to Back Market Street. At the end of an alley someone called his name, and looking back he saw a woman under the eaves of a small tea-shop. It was the lady he had met at the lake.

"What brings you here, ma'am?" he asked.

"The rain wouldn't stop and my shoes were wet," she said. "I've sent my maid home for an umbrella and shoes. But it's growing late — could I share your umbrella?"

Hsu held his umbrella over her and asked as they went up the bridge: "Where do you want to go, ma'am?"

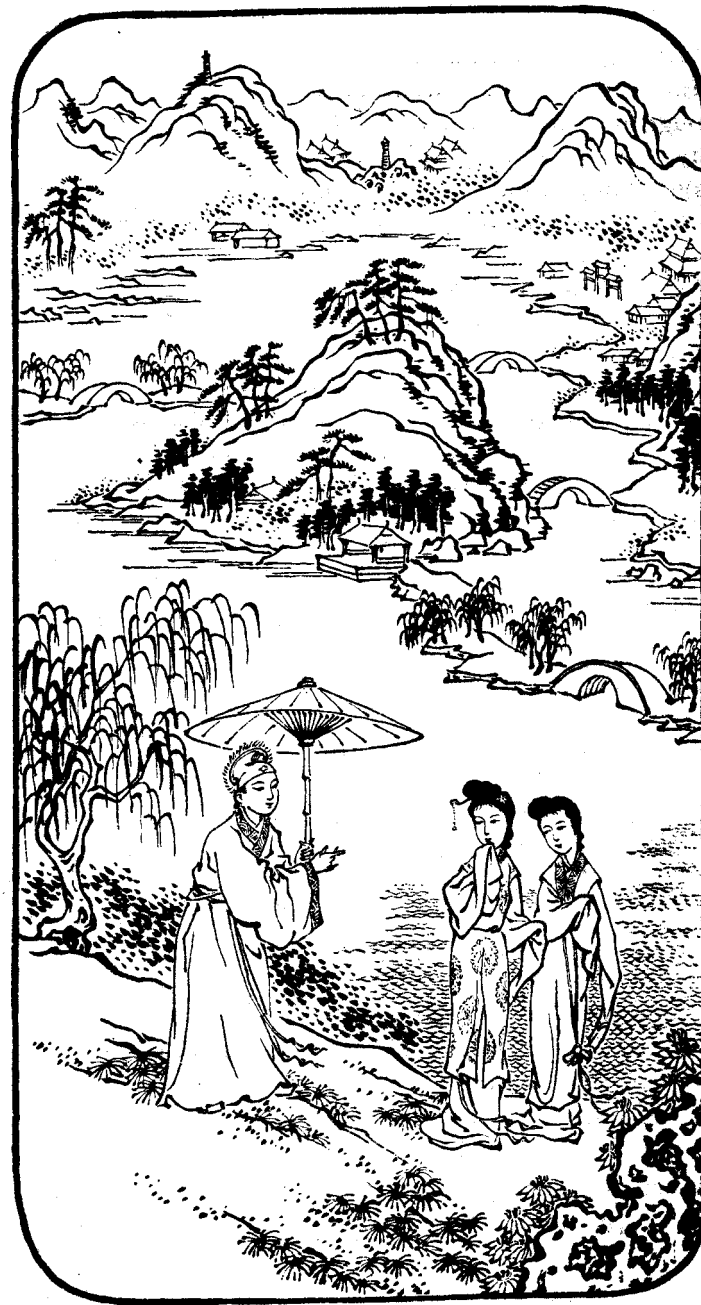
"To Arrow Bridge."

"I'm only going to Garrison Bridge which isn't far, ma'am. You'd better take the umbrella and let me come for it tomorrow."

"I am putting you to too much trouble. Thank you so much!"

Hsu started home without an umbrella, hugging the walls till he met his brother-in-law's steward, Wang An, coming to meet him with an umbrella and hobnailed boots. He went home and had supper. That night, thinking of the lady, he tossed sleepless in bed for a time. Then he dreamed he saw her as she had been that day, and they were getting on famously when the cock crowed and he awoke.

At dawn he rose and washed, had breakfast and went to the shop. He was too restless, however, to keep his mind on his work and after noon he thought: "I must make some excuse to go and fetch the umbrella." He told his uncle, who was sitting at the counter: "My brother-in-law asked me to go home early today to call on a friend. Can I have half the day off?"



by Sha Keng-ssu

"All right," said his uncle. "But come early tomorrow."

Hsu assented and went straight to Arrow Bridge, but though he made many inquiries it seemed no one knew the lady. He was wondering what to do when up came her maid, Ching-ching,* from the east.

"Where is your house, sister?" asked Hsu. "I've come for the umbrella."

"Follow me, sir," she replied.

He followed her for a short distance till she said: "Here we are."

Hsu saw a mansion with a large double gate which had peep-holes in the middle. Behind this was a fine crimson bamboo screen. In the hall were twelve black varnished arm-chairs, four scrolls of calligraphy and paintings by famous artists. This house was opposite the mansion of Prince Hsiu.

The maid slipped behind a screen and said: "Please come in, sir."

Thereupon Hsu walked in.

Then the maid called out quietly: "Madam, Mr. Hsu is here."

The answer came from within: "Offer the gentleman some tea."

Ching-ching pressed Hsu, who was hesitating, to enter the inner room which had four latticed windows. The blue curtain was lifted and the lady appeared. On the table stood a bowl of tiger lily, on the two side walls hung four paintings of beautiful women, on the middle wall the picture of a deity. Another table bore a bronze tripod and vase. The lady stepped forward and greeted him with a deep curtsy.

"Yesterday you showed great kindness to a total stranger. I am most indebted to you!"

"Don't mention it, ma'am," said Hsu.

"Do take a seat," she begged, "and have some tea."

When the tea was drunk she said: "I want to offer you a few cups of wine to show my gratitude."

* The word *ching* in Chinese means green.

Before Hsu could decline the maid brought in dishes and fruit.

"Thank you very much," said Hsu. "I'm giving you too much trouble." After drinking a few cups he rose and said: "It is late and I have a long way to go. I must take my leave now."

The lady said: "Last night a relative of mine borrowed your umbrella. Have a few more cups while I send someone to fetch it."

But Hsu said: "It is late. I must go back."

"Drink one more cup!"

"I have had ample, thank you."

"If you must really go, would you mind coming back tomorrow to fetch the umbrella?"

Then Hsu said goodbye and went home.

The following day, after serving for a while in the shop, he excused himself early again and went back to Mistress Pai for the umbrella. Once again she had wine ready to entertain him.

"Just let me take the umbrella, ma'am," he said. "I mustn't abuse your hospitality."

"It's all prepared," she protested. "Just have a cup."

So Hsu had to sit down. The lady filled a cup and offered it to him. Blushing all over her face, she parted her cherry lips to display teeth like pomegranate seeds, and said in the sweetest voice imaginable: "I can't deceive an honest man like you, sir. My husband is dead and we must have been fated to meet, for at our first encounter you showed that you were not indifferent to me. And I return your love. I hope you will find a go-between so that we can be husband and wife as long as we live — this is our destiny. What do you say?"

Hsu thought: "What a splendid match! How wonderful to get a wife like this! I'm only too willing. But there is one difficulty. I work all day in my uncle's shop and stay at night with my brother-in-law. My small savings are barely enough for wedding clothes. How can I afford to marry?"

While he was reflecting in silence the lady asked: "Why don't you answer, sir?"

Hsu said: "I am very honoured by your proposal. The truth is, I can't afford to marry."

"That's easy," said Mistress Pai. "I have money and to spare. You need not worry about that." She told her maid: "Bring me a piece of silver."

Ching-ching climbed the stairs with one hand on the banisters, and brought down a package which she gave to her mistress.

"Take this, sir," said the lady. "When it is spent, come for more." She gave it to Hsu.

In the package Hsu found a large piece of silver weighing fifty taels. He put it in his sleeve and rose to go. Ching-ching returned him the umbrella. He took it home and put away the silver.

His first act the next morning was to return the umbrella. Then he spent a little of his silver on a fat roast goose, some fish, meat, chicken and fruit. He took these home, bought a pitcher of wine and asked the maids to prepare a feast. Since his brother-in-law happened to be at home, as soon as the feast was ready Hsu invited him and his sister to table. Li Jen was most surprised.

"Why is he treating us today?" he wondered. "He's never offered us so much as a drink before. This is very strange."

The three of them sat down to drink, and after a few cups the tax-collector asked: "Why are you spending money on us like this?"

"As a small token of gratitude. I hope you won't laugh at this poor meal," said Hsu. "I want to thank you for letting me stay here all this time. And there's another favour I want to ask you. I am a grown man now and should found a family. A match has been proposed and I hope you and my sister will see it through for me."

Meanwhile his sister and brother-in-law were thinking: "In the past he's never spent a cent on us. Now in return for one meal he expects us to get him a bride." Husband

and wife exchanged glances but said not a word. After the meal Hsu went back to his business.

When two or three days had passed, Hsu wondered: "Why hasn't my sister said anything?" Meeting her, he asked: "Have you talked it over with your husband?"

"No," she said.

"Why not?"

"This isn't a simple business. You mustn't be impatient. The last few days your brother-in-law has looked worried and I'm afraid he has something on his mind. I don't like to trouble him."

"Why aren't you in favour of the idea, sister? What difficulty can there be? Are you afraid of being out of pocket?"

He went to his bedroom, opened his case and got out the silver the lady had given him. Handing this to his sister, he said: "Come, let's have no more excuses! All I want your husband to do is arrange it for me."

"My, have you saved up so much in your uncle's shop!" she cried. "You must have been wanting a wife for a long time! All right, leave it to me."

When her husband returned she told him: "My brother wants to get married and seems to have saved up enough. As he wants us to see to this, I suppose we had better arrange the match for him."

"So that's how it is," said Hsu's brother-in-law. "Well, it's a good thing he has some savings. Show me the money."

His wife promptly handed the silver to her husband. Li Jen took the silver and turned it this way and that. When he saw the markings on it he cried out in horror: "Heaven help us! We are all ruined!"

She was shocked and asked: "What's the matter?"

"Several days ago," he told her, "fifty large pieces of silver disappeared from Marshal Shao's treasury. The place was locked and sealed and no tunnel was made. Now the city office has been ordered to find the thief and the authorities are pressing us hard. But so far we have not succeeded and many people are involved. A notice has been posted up giving the markings on the silver and a reward of fifty taels is offered for catching the thief. Anyone who knows his

whereabouts but fails to report it, or who conceals the culprit, will be severely punished. His whole family will be sent into exile. Now this silver has the identical numbers and markings. It must be the silver from the treasury. The police are hot on the scent. When a fire is at a man's door he can't stop to save his relatives: he has to think of himself. If we wait till this is known, it will be too late to clear ourselves. Never mind whether this silver is borrowed or stolen. We had better let him take the consequences rather than risk becoming involved ourselves. To ensure our safety I must take this to the authorities."

His wife gaped in horror as Li Jen took the silver straight to the city office. After the prefect heard this news he could not sleep all night. Early the next morning he sent his officer, Ho Li, post-haste to arrest Hsu Hsuan. Ho Li went with his fellows and some sharp-eyed, agile constables to the Kuan Hsiang Kou pharmacy. By the counter they raised a shout and bound the unhappy man. Gongs and drums were sounded as he was taken to the city office. Prefect Han took his place in court and Hsu was made to kneel before him to be beaten.

"Don't torture me, your grace!" cried Hsu. "What crime have I committed?"

The prefect retorted: "Here is the silver you stole. How can you deny your guilt? Fifty large pieces of silver were taken from Marshal Shao's treasury, yet the seal and lock were unbroken. Now Tax-collector Li has informed against you. The remaining forty-nine pieces are undoubtedly in your possession. How did you steal the silver without breaking the seal? You must be a magician." He called for some offal and blood.*

Light dawned on Hsu, who shouted: "I am not a magician! Let me explain."

"Very well," said the prefect. "Where did this silver come from?"

Hsu told him all that had happened.

* Believed to be efficacious against black magic.

The prefect asked: "What sort of woman is this Mistress Pai? Where is she staying?"

Hsu said: "She told me she is the younger sister of Captain Pai of the Imperial Guards. She is staying near Arrow Bridge, on the slope at the entrance to Double Tea Quarter. It is the black house opposite Prince Hsiu's mansion."

The prefect ordered Ho Li to take Hsu to the place to arrest the woman. Ho Li and the other officers went straight to the black house opposite the prince's mansion. They found the gate at the top of the steps locked and barred with a bamboo pole. They were also surprised to find refuse heaped before the slope. They questioned two of the neighbours: Chiu who made paper-flowers and Cobbler Sun. But the cobbler was so alarmed that he had a rupture and fell to the ground. Then the other neighbours gathered round and said:

"There is no woman here named Pai. Five or six years ago an Inspector Mao lived here; but his whole family died of some disease, and after that ghosts used to come out in broad daylight. No one dares live there now. A few days ago a madman was calling greetings to the empty air outside this house."

Ho Li ordered his men to take down the bamboo pole. When they opened the gate, a gust of cold air smelling of stinking fish made them fall back in fear. Hsu was struck dumb. One of the constables named Wang, the second in his family, was so fond of drinking that he was known as Wang the Drunkard. Now this man cried:

"Here, fellows, come with me!"

With a shout they rushed inside. They found the house fully furnished, with panels, beds, tables and chairs. When they reached the stairs, Wang went in front and the others followed him up through the thick-lying dust. They pushed open the door of one room and saw a curtained bed with cases on it. A beautiful woman in white was sitting on the bed. They dared not go forward, but said:

"We don't know, ma'am, whether you are witch or ghost, but we have orders from the prefect to ask you to bear witness at Hsu's trial."

The woman did not stir.

Wang said: "What can we do now? No one dares touch her. Give me a pitcher of wine and I'll hale her before the prefect."

A couple of men were sent down for a pitcher of wine. When this was brought, Wang gulped the contents down and with an oath dashed the pitcher at the woman. At once there came a crash like a thunderbolt and they flopped to the ground in terror. By the time they raised their heads to look around, the woman had disappeared and in her place was a pile of glittering silver. When they examined it they were overjoyed, for there were forty-nine pieces.

"We'll just take the silver to the prefect," they said.

They carried the silver to the prefect's office where Ho Li made a report.

The prefect said: "She must be a monster. Well, the neighbours are not to blame, so let them go."

The silver was sent back to Marshal Shao with a detailed report of the matter. Because Hsu was involved in this disgraceful business, he was beaten but not tattooed and sentenced to hard labour in the gaol at Soochow.

Since Tax-collector Li felt a twinge of conscience about having informed against Hsu, he gave the whole of the fifty taels' reward which he received from Marshal Shao to the young man for his journey. And Hsu's uncle gave him two letters: one to Justice Fan and the other to Mr. Wang who managed the hostel by Lucky Bridge. Hsu wept bitterly as he said goodbye to his sister and brother-in-law. Then he put on the cangue and was escorted by two officers out to New East Bridge where they took a boat. In a few days he reached Soochow. His uncle's letters were promptly delivered, and Wang bribed the officers in charge while the two escorts handed Hsu over to the local authorities and left again as soon as they had received a voucher. Then Justice Fan and Mr. Wang had Hsu released on bail and he settled down in the hostel-manager's house.

The days and months sped by, till Hsu had been there for more than half a year. One day at the end of the ninth month Wang was standing in front of his house watching the

street when a sedan-chair arrived. The maid in attendance asked:

"Excuse me, is this Mr. Wang's house?"

"Yes," said Wang. "For whom are you looking?"

"For Mr. Hsu from the capital."

"Wait a minute. I'll fetch him out."

The chair stopped at the gate while Wang went in, calling: "You have a visitor, Hsu."

Hsu hurried out to join him at the gate. Then he saw that the maid was Ching-ching and the lady in the chair was Mistress Pai.

"You wretch!" he cried. "You stole public funds, yet I was the one to suffer. You did me a fearful wrong! Why have you followed me here, you shameless creature!"

"Don't be angry," pleaded Mistress Pai. "I've come to explain. Can't we go inside to talk?"

She made Ching-ching lift down her luggage and alighted. But Hsu protested: "No, you are a monster! I won't let you in!" He barred the way.

Mistress Pai made a deep curtsy to the hostel-keeper. "Can I be a ghost, I ask you? My clothes are sewn with thread, you can see my shadow on the ground. But they bully me because my husband is dead. The theft was my husband's work, none of mine. Because you blamed me for it, I came all this way to explain. Once this is cleared up I shall be willing to leave."

Wang urged: "Let the young lady come in and talk it over."

She said: "Let us go to Mistress Wang's room to talk."

Then the on-lookers at the gate dispersed and they went inside.

Hsu told Wang and his wife: "She stole the silver and got me into trouble. Now she has followed me here — this is too much."

She protested: "My former husband left that silver. I gave it to you out of kindness. I had no idea where it came from."

Hsu said: "When the officers went to arrest you, they found a pile of garbage outside your gate and you vanished with a crash — how was that?"

"I heard you had been arrested because of that money. I was afraid you would mention me and I should lose face if I were taken to court. So I hid with my aunt in Hua-tsang Nunnery. I told someone to dump garbage in front of the gate and left the silver on the bed. I asked the neighbours to make up that story too."

"So you ran away leaving me to take the blame!"

"I left the silver on the bed, didn't I? I did my best for you. How could I know what would happen? When I heard you were here, I raised money to come by boat to find you. Now that I have explained this, I shall go. It seems we aren't destined to be husband and wife."

Wang said: "You have come a long way, ma'am. Surely you don't mean to leave at once? Why not stay here for a few days and talk it over?"

Ching-ching urged her: "Since Mr. Wang asks you, do stay for a few days, ma'am. After all, you did promise to marry Mr. Hsu."

"I could die of shame!" wailed Mistress Pai. "I'm not so desperate to marry. I came simply to clear this up."

"So you were betrothed, were you?" said Mr. Wang. "In that case you must stay." He paid off the chair-bearers.

Within a few days Mistress Pai was a favourite with Mistress Wang, who persuaded her husband to arrange a marriage on the eleventh of the eleventh month. In a twinkling the day arrived. Mistress Pai gave Wang some silver to cover the wedding expenses, and so they were duly married. After feasting the newly-wed couple retired to the bridal bed. The night passed quickly in pleasure. Before they knew it the cock was crowing and another day had dawned.

From this day on husband and wife frolicked like fish in the water in Mr. Wang's house, intoxicated with happiness.

Time flew past. Soon half a year had gone. One warm spring day when all the flowers were in bloom, Hsu observed that the streets were thronged with pedestrians and carriages. He asked his host: "What is all this bustle today? Why are so many people out?"

Wang told him: "Today is the middle of the second month, when men and women pay homage to the Sleeping Buddha. Why don't you stroll to Chengtien Monastery too?"

"I will," said Hsu. "Let me just tell my wife first." He went upstairs to explain where he was going. "I'll simply have a look," he told her. "I shall be back soon. If anyone asks for me, just say I'm out. You needn't receive them."

"What is there to see at the monastery?" she asked. "Why not stay in? There's nothing worth looking at."

"I'm going for the stroll," replied Hsu. "I'll be back soon. Don't worry."

So he went with a few friends to the monastery to see the Sleeping Buddha.

He had seen the various halls and corridors and was on the point of leaving, when he noticed a priest in a Taoist robe and cap with a yellow silk belt and hempen shoes, who was sitting in front of the monastery selling drugs and dispensing holy water. Hsu halted and heard this man say: "I am a priest from Chungnan Mountain. I roam the country giving away charms and holy water to cure all diseases. Let those who need help step forward!"

The priest noticed Hsu in the crowd because he had a dark aura over his head. Knowing that some monster had cast a spell on him, he called out: "A monster has bewitched you! You are in mortal danger! Here are two potent charms to save your life. One charm you must burn at midnight, the other you must wear in your hair."

Hsu took the charms and bowed, thinking to himself: "I've had my doubts about her. She may really be a monster." Having thanked the priest, he went back to his lodging.

That night after his wife and Ching-ching were asleep, he got up murmuring: "It must be midnight." He put one charm in his hair and was about to burn the other when Mistress Pai heaved a sigh.

"We have been husband and wife for some time," she reproached him. "Yet instead of loving me you trust a stranger and are burning a charm at midnight to destroy me. Go on! Burn it and see what happens." She snatched

the charm from him and burned it herself. When nothing happened she asked: "Well? Am I a monster?"

"It's not my fault," pleaded Hsu. "An itinerant priest by the monastery said you were."

"Tomorrow I shall go with you to see what sort of a priest he is!" she retorted.

The next morning Mistress Pai rose early to make her toilet. Having put on hair ornaments and trinkets and changed into clean clothes, she ordered Ching-ching to stay at home while she and her husband went to the monastery. A crowd had gathered round the priest who was still dispensing charms and holy water. Mistress Pai's eyes sparkled with rage and she stepped forward.

"Insolent priest!" she cried. "How dare you tell my husband I was a monster? How dare you try to trap me with your charm?"

The priest replied: "I use the Five Thunder Arts. Any monster who eats my charms must reveal its true form."

"We have many witnesses here!" she challenged him. "Give me a charm and I shall swallow it."

The priest scribbled a charm and handed it to her. As she swallowed it, the eyes of all were on her. But nothing happened.

"How could such a fine woman be a monster?" murmured the crowd. They reproached the priest, who had nothing to say for himself and was thoroughly mortified.

Then Mistress Pai said: "Good folk, he couldn't trap me. I learned some arts too in my youth. Watch me try one on him." She muttered some incantations, at which the priest staggered back as if someone had seized him and the next moment rose into the air. All the on-lookers were amazed, not least Hsu Hsuan.

She said: "If not for you, gentlemen, I should have let him hang there for a year."

With that she spat at him and the priest came down, to take to his heels as fast as ever he could. The crowd scattered too and husband and wife went home.

Mistress Pai was paying for all their daily expenses. They were a devoted couple, happy day and night.

Time sped like an arrow till it was the eighth day of the fourth month, the birthday of Buddha. The streets were crowded with pilgrims carrying cypress arches for the ceremonial bath, and there was general alms-giving.

Hsu told his host: "It is just the same in Hangchow."

Then a neighbour's son, Tieh-tou, said: "Mr. Hsu, there is a temple fair today in Chengtien Monastery. Why don't you go?"

Hsu went inside to tell his wife.

"It's not worth seeing," she assured him. "Don't go."

But he said: "I want a stroll. I've nothing to do."

She replied: "Very well, if you must. But those old clothes are too shabby. Let me smarten you up."

She ordered Ching-ching to fetch some fashionable clothes which fitted Hsu as if they were made for him. He wore a black silk cap with two white jade rings behind, a blue silk gown and black boots, while in his hand was a fan with a coral pendant, a fine piece of craftsmanship with gilt paintings of beautiful ladies. From head to foot he was dressed like a man of fashion.

His wife urged him in accents as sweet as an oriole's song: "Come home early, husband, or I shall start worrying."

With Tieh-tou as company, Hsu set out to watch the ceremony. And all who saw him were amazed at the sight of such a finely dressed gentleman.

But someone said: "Last night jewels and clothes worth four or five thousand strings of cash were missing from Mr. Chou's pawnshop. A list of the stolen goods has been published and the authorities are looking for the thief."

Hsu who heard this had no suspicion that it concerned him. He went on with Tieh-tou to the monastery. Men and women of every degree had come to burn incense and the hubbub was deafening.

Hsu said: "My wife asked me to be back early. Let's go."

He turned to find that Tieh-tou had disappeared, and walked alone out of the monastery. At the entrance were five or six constables with their badges of office hanging at their waists. Catching sight of Hsu one of these said to the rest:

"This fellow has on him some of the things on the list."

One of them apparently recognized Hsu. "Let me have a look at your fan, Mr. Hsu," he called.

Hsu, unaware that anything was amiss, handed his fan to the constable.

The officer said: "Look, his fan and pendant are the same as on the list!"

Then they shouted: "Arrest him!" and bound Hsu with a rope.

Alas, poor swallow snatched by hawks away,
Weak lamb borne off by hungry beasts of prey!

"There must be some mistake!" protested Hsu. "I have done nothing wrong."

The constables replied: "Guilty or not, you must clear yourself to Mr. Chou. Five thousand strings' worth of jewels and clothing, including two white jade rings and a handsome fan with a coral pendant, are missing from his shop. How can you deny your guilt? When the thief is caught with the loot, there is no more to say. You certainly are a bold fellow with a great contempt for the authorities. You parade yourself publicly, without a qualm, rigged out from head to foot with stolen goods."

Hsu was speechless for some time. At last he said: "So that's it! All right, all right. Someone else must have stolen them."

The officers said: "You must go to the city court to clear yourself."

The next day Hsu was taken before the prefect, who demanded: "Where are the jewels and clothing you stole from Mr. Chou's shop? Tell the truth now if you don't want a taste of torture."

Hsu said: "Your Honour, all these clothes belong to my wife, Mistress Pai. I have no idea where they came from. I hope you will judge this case with your usual acumen."

The prefect thundered: "Where is your wife now?"

Hsu replied: "On the first floor of Mr. Wang's house by Lucky Bridge."

The prefect forthwith sent Sergeant Yuan Tze-ming with Hsu to arrest her.

Mr. Wang was astonished when the sergeant came to his house. He asked hastily: "What does this mean?"

Hsu inquired: "Is Mistress Pai upstairs?"

His host replied: "Not long after you left with Tieh-tou, Mistress Pai said: 'My husband has gone for a stroll to the monastery and told me and Ching-ching to stay in. But he is so late coming back, I think I'll go out with my maid to look for him. Please keep an eye on things for us.' Then she went out and has not come back since. I thought you must both be staying with some relative, since you didn't return last night."

The police officer ordered Wang to search for her, but though they looked everywhere they could not find her. Then the sergeant arrested Wang too.

The prefect asked him: "Where is Mistress Pai?"

Wang answered at length, concluding: "She must be a monster."

After this interrogation, the prefect had Hsu put into gaol while Wang was released on bail until the final verdict.

Mr. Chou was sitting in a tea-house opposite his house when his servant told him that his lost jewels and clothes had been discovered in an empty chest in the attic. Mr. Chou hurried home and found that this was true. The only items missing were the cap, jade rings and fan with a pendant.

He said: "Clearly we are doing Hsu an injustice. We mustn't ruin an innocent man."

Accordingly he reported this to the court and begged them to treat Hsu leniently.

It so happened that Marshal Shao had sent Tax-collector Li to Soochow on business, and the latter was staying now with Wang. When Wang told him the whole story of Hsu's arrival and subsequent misfortunes, Li Jen thought: "He is my brother-in-law after all. I must do what I can."

He begged the help of influential friends and distributed bribes. The prefect after studying the case decided that Mistress Pai was entirely to blame. Hsu's only fault was

to have concealed the fact that she was a monster. For that he was sentenced to one hundred strokes and to hard labour in Chinkiang prison three hundred and sixty *li* away.

Tax-collector Li told Hsu: "You will be all right in Chinkiang. I have a sworn brother whose father, Li Keh-yung, has a pharmacy there by Needle Bridge. I shall give you a letter of introduction and you can ask his help."

Then Hsu borrowed money for his journey from his brother-in-law, said goodbye to him and Wang, entertained his two escorts to wine and food, packed up his luggage and left. Wang and Li Jen saw him the first stage of his journey.

Hsu travelled for many days, eating when hungry, drinking when thirsty, walking by day and resting by night, till at last he came to Chinkiang. The first thing he did was look for Li Keh-yung's house, the pharmacy at Needle Bridge. He found an assistant serving in the shop, and presently an elderly man came out. The two police escorts and Hsu made haste to greet him.

"We come from Tax-collector Li of Hangchow," they told him. "Here is a letter of introduction."

The shop assistant passed the letter to the old man, who opened and read it. "Are you Hsu Hsuan?" he asked.

Hsu answered: "I am, sir."

Then Li Keh-yung gave them a meal and, leaving his assistants in charge of the shop, escorted them to his house. After the case had been transferred to the local court Hsu was released on bail, and his escorts went back with their receipt to Soochow. Hsu went with Li's assistant to the old man's house to thank him, and was introduced to Mistress Li. Since the letter of introduction mentioned that Hsu had worked in a pharmacy, Li Keh-yung kept him in his shop. He took lodgings in Fifth Lane with a beancurd-seller named Wang.

Li Keh-yung was pleased to discover that Hsu was useful in the shop. He had two assistants already, Chao and Chang, the first a good, honest fellow, the second a shifty bully. Hsu's arrival annoyed Chang, who feared it might

lead to his own dismissal. In his resentment, he began to plot against Hsu.

One day Li Keh-yung came to the shop to look round. "How is the new assistant doing?" he asked.

Chang thought: "Here is my opportunity!" He replied: "He is all right but for one thing."

"What is that?"

"He likes to do big business, but he sends the customers with small business away. This is getting him a bad name. I've spoken to him about it several times but he won't listen."

"Never mind," said the old man. "I shall speak to him and he will have to listen to me."

Chao, who had overheard this exchange, reproached Chang later. "We should try to pull together. Hsu is a newcomer and we ought to help him. If he does anything wrong, it's up to us to tell him instead of talking behind his back. If this comes to his ears, he will think we bear him a grudge."

But Chang retorted: "What do you young fellows understand?"

As it was late they left.

Chao called on Hsu and told him: "Chang is running you down to Mr. Li. You must be specially careful. Be sure to serve big and small customers equally well."

"Thanks for the tip!" said Hsu. "Let's go and have a drink."

They went to a tavern and sat down. The waiter brought some dishes and they had a few cups. Then Chao said:

"Old Mr. Li is quick-tempered and can't bear to be crossed. You had better agree with him on everything and take pains with your work."

"You've been very kind," said Hsu. "I am really most grateful."

They had a few more drinks and as dusk was falling Chao said: "It's late and will soon be too dark to walk. I'll say goodbye now."

Then Hsu paid the bill and they left.

As Hsu was a little tipsy and unsteady on his feet, he hugged the walls as he walked. Suddenly an upstairs window was opened and a pan of ashes was emptied on his head. He stopped and swore:

"Silly fool! Have you no eyes?"

A woman ran to the window to apologize: "I'm so sorry, sir! It was my fault. I assure you it was an accident—do forgive me."

Hsu, half drunk, looked up and saw Mistress Pai. He flew into a towering rage.

"You thieving monster, a fine lot of trouble you've caused me! Twice you've landed me in gaol! How did you get here? Do you still deny you're not human?"

He charged into the house and seized her. "Come and settle it in court!"

"Husband!" she answered with a smile. "One night of love leaves a hundred nights of sweet memories. This is a long story, but listen. Those clothes were left to me by my first husband, and because I love you so much I let you wear them. But now you are repaying love with hate."

"Why had you disappeared when I came back that day to look for you?" demanded Hsu. "Our host said you had gone with your maid to the monastery. What are you doing here?"

"When I went to the monastery and heard that you were arrested, I sent Ching-ching to find out what had happened. Since there was no news we were sure you must have escaped. But in case they might arrest me, we hired a boat to go to my brother-in-law's house at Chienkang. We arrived here yesterday. I am ashamed to face you after twice involving you in trouble, but blaming me won't do any good. We love each other and are husband and wife—how can you leave me now? Our love is as great as mountains, as deep as the sea, and we vowed to live and die together. So for love's sake you had better take me home and we can settle down to a happy life."

At these deceitful words Hsu forgot his anger. After some reflection and, bewitched by her beauty, he decided

he would keep her. Instead of going back to his lodgings that night, he stayed with Mistress Pai.

The next day Hsu went back to Fifth Lane and told Beancurd-seller Wang: "My wife and her maid have just arrived from Soochow." Having explained how they met, he said: "I'd like to bring them here."

"Certainly," said Wang. "Very good."

That same day Mistress Pai and Ching-ching moved in. The next day they invited their neighbours to tea. The following day the neighbours asked them back, and after food and wine they went home. On the fourth day, when Hsu had washed and dressed, he told his wife: "After thanking the neighbours I am going back to work. Stay upstairs with Ching-ching and don't go out." So he went back to the shop.

Time passed quickly till another month had gone. One day Hsu suggested to Mistress Pai that she should call on his employer's wife.

Mistress Pai said: "Since you work for him I had better visit his wife and get on a closer footing."

So the next day they hired a chair for Mistress Pai, Beancurd-seller Wang carried her hampers for her and Ching-ching followed behind. At Li Keh-yung's house she alighted and went in, asking for Mr. Li. When the old man and his wife hurried out she curtsied low, Mistress Li curtsied back, and she was introduced to all the women of the household. Now although Li was advanced in life he had a weakness for the fair sex, and struck by Mistress Pai's overwhelming loveliness he could not keep his eyes off her. They asked her to a meal and Mistress Li said to her husband:

"What a charming young woman, so pretty, well-mannered and proper."

"Yes, Hangchow produces fine women," replied her husband.

After the meal, Mistress Pai thanked them and went home.

Meanwhile Li Keh-yung was thinking: "How can I get this woman for one night?" He puckered his brows in

thought till he hit on a plan. "The thirteenth of the sixth month is my birthday. If I keep my head, I can trick her into it."

The moon waxed and waned, the Dragon Boat Festival passed, and soon it was the sixth month.

Mr. Li said: "Wife, the thirteenth is my birthday. Let's have a feast and invite all our relatives and friends. That would be pleasant." He sent invitations to their kinsmen, neighbours and friends, including his employees, who sent candles, noodles, handkerchiefs and other gifts the following day. On the thirteenth all the men came to the feast and spent the whole day with Li. The day after it was the women's turn, and about twenty of them came. Among these was Mistress Pai, splendid in a blue tunic embroidered with gold thread over a red silk skirt. In her hair she had gold and silver ornaments exquisitely set with pearls and emeralds. Accompanied by Ching-ching she went to the house, congratulated Mr. Li and greeted his wife before going to the east pavilion for the feast.

As a matter of fact, this Li Keh-yung was a miser who would save the hind legs of a flea if he were eating one, but Mistress Pai's beauty had made him give this great feast in order to win her. Wine was drunk and cups were refilled, till Mistress Pai withdrew. Now Li had already told a trusted maid:

"If Mistress Pai wants to retire, take her to that quiet room in the back." Having laid this snare, he hid in the back to wait for her.

A man who will not bore a hole or clamber up a wall
Will find no lovely paramour and win no prize at all.

Sure enough, when Mistress Pai asked to be excused, the maid led her to the quiet room in the back, and left her there. Old Li in his excitement could hardly restrain himself, but not daring to burst straight in he first peered through a crack in the door. Merciful Heaven! One look so terrified him that he took to his heels and presently fell down senseless. For instead of a flower-like beauty in the room, he had seen a huge white snake as thick as a barrel,

with blazing yellow eyes as large as lanterns. Frightened out of his wits he fled, but tripped and fell. When the maids helped him up his face was ashen and his lips were white. The assistants hastily gave him a sedative and presently he recovered.

His wife and the others came to ask: "What is all this commotion?"

Afraid to tell the truth, Li answered: "I got up too early today and I have been overdoing things recently. I came over dizzy and fell."

When they had helped him to his room to rest, the guests returned to the feast and drank several more cups, after which they thanked their hostess and took their leave. When Mistress Pai reached home and thought over the incident, she feared Old Li might tell Hsu what he had seen. She decided on certain steps. As she was undressing that night she kept sighing until her husband asked:

"Why are you in such low spirits after a feast?"

"Oh, husband, how can I tell you?" she replied. "Mr. Li made his birthday an excuse for his wicked designs on me. When I left the table he attempted to rape me, pulling at my skirt and undergarments. I didn't like to call out for fear of causing a scandal among all those guests. So I pushed him over. He was too ashamed to admit the truth and pretended to have fainted. How can I make him pay for the fright he gave me?"

Hsu said: "Since he didn't rape you and he's my employer, we can't do anything but put up with it. Next time don't go, that's all."

"So you won't stand up for me!" she cried. "Do you call yourself a man?"

Hsu explained: "It was my brother-in-law who introduced me to him, and he was good enough to give me a job. What can I do?"

"Are you a man?" she cried again. "After he has insulted me like this you still want to work for him."

"But where else could I go? What else could I do for a living?"

"A shop assistant's job isn't up to much. It would be better to have your own pharmacy."

"Of course it would, but where is the capital to come from?"

"Never mind that. That's easy. Tomorrow I'll give you some money to rent a place. Then we'll work out the details."

Now it seems the world has always had busy-bodies eager to meddle in other people's affairs. In fact next door to them lived a man of this type whose name was Chiang Ho. The next day Hsu got some money from Mistress Pai and asked Chiang Ho to rent a house by Chinkiang wharf. Then they bought a set of cabinets and little by little laid in herbs and drugs, till by the tenth month all was in readiness. An auspicious day was chosen, they started business and Hsu stopped working for Li Keh-yung, who was indeed too embarrassed to ask for him. Hsu's business prospered from day to day and he put aside a tidy sum of money.

He was behind the counter one morning when a monk came in with a list of alms-givers to ask for alms.

"I am from Chinshan Monastery," said this monk. "The seventh day of the seventh month is the dragon king's birthday. I hope you will come to burn incense and make an offering."

"There is no need to put down my name but here is a stick of good incense for you," said Hsu. He took it out from a chest and gave it to the monk.

"Do come, then, on that day." The monk bowed and left.

Mistress Pai, who had seen this, remarked: "What a fool you are to give such good incense to that bald-headed ass. He'll only sell it for wine and meat."

"I meant well," answered Hsu. "If he makes a wrong use of it that is his look-out."

Soon the seventh day of the seventh month arrived. Hsu had opened shop when he noticed the bustle in the street where crowds were milling to and fro.

His assistant Chiang Ho said: "The other day you gave that monk some incense. Why not take a stroll today to the monastery?"

"Wait just a minute while I tidy up," said Hsu. "We'll go together."

"A good idea," said Chiang.

Hsu cleared up quickly and went in to tell his wife: "I am going to burn incense at Chinshan Monastery. Please stay and look after the house."

"No one goes to a temple for nothing," she objected. "Why should you go?"

"For one thing, I have never seen the monastery. For another, I gave them an offering the other day and want to burn incense there."

"If you insist, I won't stop you," she said. "But promise me three things."

"What three things?"

"Don't go to the monks' quarters. Don't talk to the monks. And be sure to come back early. If you are late, I shall come and fetch you."

"All right," said Hsu. "I agree."

Then he changed into clean clothes, clean shoes and socks, put an incense case in his sleeve and walked with Chiang Ho to the river bank where they took a boat to Chinshan Monastery. After burning incense in the Dragon King Hall he strolled round the monastery with the crowd till they reached the entrance to the monks' living quarters. There he stopped, remembering his promise to his wife.

But Chiang Ho said: "Never mind. She's at home and won't know. You don't have to tell her where you've been."

They went in, looked around and came out again.

Now on the high chair in the centre of the hall an abbot of great virtue was seated. His countenance was distinguished, his head was bald and he was wearing a robe. This was a worthy abbot. He called to his acolyte as Hsu passed by: "Send that young man to me quickly!"

The acolyte went to look for Hsu, but could not find him in the jostling crowd. He went back to report that the man had disappeared. Then the abbot came out himself, staff in hand, and when he could not see Hsu either, he left the monastery and joined the crowd which was wait-

ing to cross the river when it should be calmer. But the storm was gathering force and all round could be heard exclamations of dismay. Suddenly a boat appeared scudding across the waves.

Hsu remarked to Chiang: "We can't cross in this storm, but look at the speed of that boat!"

As he was speaking the small craft drew near the shore. On it were a lady in white and a girl in green. It was Mistress Pai and her maid. Hsu was horrified.

When Mistress Pai reached the shore she called to him: "Why are you so slow? Come aboard instantly!"

Hsu was about to obey when someone behind him called: "Monster! What are you doing here?"

He looked back and heard others say: "That is Abbot Fa-hai"

Fa-hai said: "Monster, how dare you run wild like this, trying to destroy human souls? It is on your account that I am here."

When Mistress Pai saw the abbot she rowed away. She and Ching-ching upset the boat and disappeared into the water. Hsu turned back to Fa-hai and bowed.

"Venerable Master, save my life!" he begged.

The abbot asked: "How did you meet that woman?"

Then Hsu told him the whole story from beginning to end. When Fa-hai had heard it he said: "She is a monster. You had better go back to Hangchow immediately. If she troubles you again, come to see me at Chingtzu Monastery south of the lake."

Hsu thanked Fa-hai and with Chiang Ho ferried back across the Yangtze. Returning home, he found that Mistress Pai and her maid had disappeared once more and this time he was convinced that they were monsters. That night he begged Chiang Ho to keep him company, and could not sleep for fear. The next morning he asked Chiang Ho to watch the house while he went to Needle Bridge to see Li Keh-yung. He told the old man what had happened and Li said:

"On my birthday I blundered into the privy when she was there and found she was a monster. I fainted away

in fear, but I dared not tell you. Since this has happened, you had better move back here for the time being."

Hsu thanked him and moved over.

After two months or more, he was standing by the gate one day when the local headman came round to order each family to prepare incense, flowers and candles to celebrate an amnesty. It seemed that because Emperor Kao Tsung was abdicating the throne in favour of his son Hsiao Tsung, a general amnesty was being proclaimed. All felons but murderers were free to go home. Knowing that he was pardoned, Hsu was overcome with joy.

He asked Li Keh-yung to grease the palms of all the *yamen* officials, after which the prefect gave him a pass to go home. He thanked the neighbours, said goodbye to Li Keh-yung, Mistress Li and their family, as well as his two assistants, and asked Chiang Ho to buy him some local products to take back to Hangchow.

On his return home he bowed to his sister and brother-in-law. But Tax-collector Li said angrily: "What sort of scoundrel are you? Twice I wrote letters of introduction for you, yet when you married in Mr. Li's house you did not even trouble to let me know. Have you no sense of gratitude?"

"I never married," said Hsu.

"Two days ago a lady came here with her maid," replied Li Jen. "She says she is your wife and that you went on the seventh of the seventh month to Chinshan Monastery to offer incense, but never came back. She has been searching for you everywhere. When she heard that you had come back to Hangchow, she came here with her maid. That was two days ago."

He called the two women out. It was Mistress Pai and Ching-ching. Hsu was speechless with horror, but he could not tell his relative the truth and had to listen to their reproaches. Then Li Jen told him and Mistress Pai to go to their room to rest. It was growing late and Hsu was afraid of her. In his terror he dared not approach her, but threw himself on his knees.

"Spirit or ghost, whatever you are, spare me!" he cried.

"What do you mean?" she retorted. "All these years that we have been husband and wife I never treated you badly. Are you raving?"

"Since I met you I have been accused twice of theft. You followed me to Chinking. And the other day when I stayed a little late at the monastery, you and your maid came after me again; but when you saw the abbot you jumped into the river. I thought you were dead, but here you are again before me. Have pity on me and spare me!"

With an angry frown she answered: "I meant well. What right have you to think so ill of me? We have been husband and wife, sharing one bed and loving each other dearly. Yet now you listen to idle talk meant to estrange us. I tell you frankly: If you do as I say and look happy, all will be well. But if you doubt me, this city will flow with blood. The townsfolk will flounder and perish in the flood!"

Trembling in every limb, Hsu was too terrified to speak, much less to go near her.

Then Ching-ching pleaded with him: "Sir, my mistress loves you because you are a handsome Hangchow gentleman with a fond heart. Take my advice and make it up with her. Don't let your fancy run away with you."

Helpless against the two of them, Hsu could only lament his fate.

Hsu's sister was enjoying the cool of the courtyard when she heard his cries. Thinking husband and wife must be quarrelling, she hurried into the room and dragged him out, while Mistress Pai shut the door and went to bed. Then Hsu told his sister all that had happened to him from beginning to end, and as Li Jen happened to come back just then, Hsu's sister said:

"He has quarrelled with his wife. I don't know whether she has gone to bed or not. Go and have a look."

Tax-collector Li went to Mistress Pai's room. Something was glimmering inside in the dark. He wet the paper window with his tongue to make a small hole through which he peered. Merciful Heaven! On the bed lay a huge snake as thick as a barrel, stretching its head out of

the skylight into the yard to keep cool. The white light thrown off by its scales made the room as bright as day. He beat a terrified retreat, but back in his room did not tell them what he had seen.

"She's asleep now," he said. "There's no sound."

Hsu skulked in his sister's room, not daring to go out, and Tax-collector Li asked him no questions. So they passed the night together.

The next day Hsu's brother-in-law took him to a quiet spot and asked: "Where did that wife of yours come from? Tell me frankly now. Don't hide anything. Last night I saw with my own eyes that she is a huge white snake. I did not say so for fear of frightening your sister."

When Hsu had told him the whole story, Li Jen said: "Well, if that's the case, I know a snake-catcher named Tai who lives near White Horse Temple. Come with me and we'll ask him over."

They went to the temple and found Tai at the gate. After greetings had been exchanged, he inquired the reason for their call.

"There is a great snake in our house," Hsu told him. "We would like you to catch it."

"Where do you live?" asked the snake-catcher.

"It's the house of Tax-collector Li in Black Bead Lane beyond Garrison Bridge." Hsu produced a tael of silver. "Please take this. I shall thank you properly when the snake is caught."

The man took the silver, saying: "Don't wait for me, gentlemen. I shall come directly."

Then Hsu and his brother-in-law went back.

Having filled a bottle with a potion containing realgar, the snake-catcher went straight to Black Bead Lane to ask for Li's house. Someone pointed it out. "It's that storeyed building in front." When he reached the door and lifted the curtain, he coughed but no one appeared. He knocked until a young lady came to the door.

"Whom do you want?" she asked.

"Is this Mr. Li's house?" asked the snake-catcher.

"Yes, it is."

"I've heard there is a large snake in your house, and two gentlemen have just been to ask me to catch it."

"A large snake in our house? Oh, no, you must be mistaken."

"One of the gentlemen has already given me a tael of silver. Once the snake is caught, he says he will reward me well."

"There is no snake here," said Mistress Pai. "They're fooling you."

"They would hardly do that," said the snake-catcher.

When Mistress Pai could not get rid of him, she lost patience.

"Can you really catch snakes?" she demanded. "I don't believe it."

The man said: "In my family we have been snake-charmers for seven or eight generations. Why should this snake be so difficult to catch?"

"That's what you say," she retorted. "But I'm afraid you will turn tail when you see it."

"I assure you I won't," said the snake-catcher. "If I do, I shall forfeit that silver."

"Then follow me," she said.

She led him to the courtyard, then turned and went in. He was standing there with the bottle in his hand when a cold blast of wind sprang up and a huge serpent as thick as a barrel came plunging towards him. The terrified fellow fell down, breaking his bottle. The blood-red jaws of the great snake gaped as it bared its white fangs to bite him.

The catcher bore the monster no ill will;

The monster saw the man and struck to kill!

The snake-catcher scrambled to his feet and panted across the bridge, wishing he had been born with two extra legs. He ran straight into Hsu and Tax-collector Li.

"How goes it?" asked Hsu eagerly.

"I'll tell you!"

The snake-catcher related what had happened and returned the tael of silver to Li Jen, saying: "My long legs

saved my life. You will have to find somebody else." He hurried away.

Hsu said: "Brother, what shall we do now?"

The other rejoined: "She does seem to be a monster. I tell you what. Chang Cheng at Chihshanfu owes me a thousand strings of cash. Ask him for a room and you can live quietly there. When the monster sees you have gone, it will go away."

There was nothing for Hsu to do but agree to this plan. When they reached home all was quiet. His brother-in-law wrote a letter of introduction and put the note of credit in the envelope for Hsu to take to Chihshanfu. Then Mistress Pai called her husband to her room.

"How dare you fetch a snake-charmer here!" she raged. "If you do what I want, I shall be merciful. If not, I shall wreak vengeance on all the people in this city — they will die an untimely death!"

Hsu trembled and was silent. In great dejection he took the note of credit to Chihshanfu, where he found Chang Cheng. But when he looked for the note in his sleeve, it had vanished. He gave an exclamation of dismay and hurried back to look for the lost envelope, but it was nowhere to be seen. In his despair he was wandering near Chingtzu Monastery when he remembered that Abbot Fa-hai had told him: "If that monster goes to Hangchow to plague you, come to see me at Chingtzu Monastery." The time had surely come to ask for help. Hsu went quickly to the monastery and asked the monk in charge:

"Excuse me, but is Abbot Fa-hai here?"

The monk replied: "No, he has not come yet."

Hsu, hearing this, fell into greater despair. He turned away and went to the bridge, where he muttered to himself: "When a man's luck is bad, even ghosts will joke with him. What am I living for?" Staring into the clear water of the lake, he determined to drown himself. But —

The day of each man's death is set by Fate;
No human agency can change the date.

He was about to jump into the water when someone behind him called: "A brave man shouldn't take his own life! That is a coward's way out! If you are in trouble, come to me."

Hsu turned to see Abbot Fa-hai with his wallet on his back and a staff in his hand. He had just arrived. It seems Hsu was fated to live: had the abbot come a moment later he must have died.

Hsu bowed to the abbot and begged him: "Save me!"

"Where is that monster now?" demanded Fa-hai.

Hsu told him, concluding his recital with, "Now she has followed me here. Venerable Master, save me!"

The abbot took an alms-bowl from his sleeve and handed it to Hsu, saying: "When you reach home, don't let her hear you go in, but slip this quietly over her head. Keep a tight grip on it and press down hard. Don't panic. Go along now."

Hsu thanked the abbot and went home. He saw Mistress Pai sitting alone and muttering: "Who can it be that has made my husband hate me? When I find out, I shall deal with him." Before she was aware of his coming or had caught sight of him, Hsu crept up behind her and clapped the alms-bowl on her head with all his might. Even when he could see her no longer, he jammed the bowl slowly down as hard as he could, too terrified to let go.

A voice inside the bowl cried: "I have been your wife all these years—how can you be so heartless? Let me go!"

Hsu was in a quandary when the servant announced that a monk had come to the house to catch a monster. Hsu hastily begged Li Jen to ask the abbot in. When Fa-hai came in, Hsu implored him: "Save my life!"

The abbot muttered an incantation, after which he gently raised the bowl and they saw that Mistress Pai had shrunk to about eight inches or so—the size of a puppet. With closed eyes she was cowering on the ground.

The abbot thundered: "What foul beast and monster are you? How dare you plague men? Out with the whole truth now!"

Mistress Pai replied: "Master, I am a great snake. During a storm I went with Ching-ching to shelter by the West Lake, and there by accident I met Hsu Hsuan. I fell so much in love with him that I could not restrain myself. That is how I came to break the rules of Heaven. I have taken no life, though. I pray you to have mercy!"

The abbot asked: "What monster is Ching-ching?"

"She is a green fish who lived for a thousand years in a pool under the third bridge at the West Lake. When I met her I made her my companion, but she has not had a single day of joy. I hope you will pardon her too."

The abbot said: "Since you lived a pure life for a thousand years, I shall not kill you. But you must take your true form."

This Mistress Pai refused to do.

Then in anger the abbot chanted an incantation and shouted: "Where are you, my genie? Make haste to catch the green fish for me and restore both monsters to their original form. Then I shall deal with them."

In no time a violent wind arose, there was a splash and a green fish fell from the sky. It was more than ten feet long. This fish lashed about on the ground before shrinking to about one foot in length. By now Mistress Pai had taken her true form too and become a white snake three feet long. This serpent reared its head to gaze at Hsu.

The abbot put these two creatures into his alms-bowl and tore a strip off his robe to wrap round the bowl. He carried it to Thunder Peak Monastery and set it on the ground, ordering men to bring bricks and stones to build a stupa. Later Hsu collected money to build a seven-storeyed pagoda there, so that not for many centuries might the white snake and green fish return to the world.

*Translated by Yang Hsien-yi
and Gladys Yang*



KEH PI-CHOU

My Home

Most beautiful, my home,
My foe in days gone by,
To me you seemed a pearl
Within some loathsome sty;
I choked within your walls
And must have air or die.

I steeled myself to leave
And welcomed stress and strain,
Not though I risked my life
Would I turn back again.
Today, a flower at dawn,
You blossom on the plain.

Keh Pi-chou is a young poet.

So I, come home once more,
Bask in the sun serene,
Gaze at the mountains blue
And at the waters green;
In this brave town of ours
Men stand no more apart,
Like some young lover now
I clasp you to my heart.

Did I abandon you?
Ah, no, for I can prove
The hate I felt for you
Sprang from excess of love.

Translated by Gladys Yang

Travel Notes

CHEN PAI-CHEN

The Inarticulate Traveller

Stepping into the waiting-room at the airport, I felt that I was on the doorstep of Moscow.

About two weeks before, I planned merely to fly over the edge of this city in transit, but due to an unexpected opportunity I was able to stay for a few days. Although unable to converse, I was gradually coming to understand Moscow a little, but just as I was getting to know the city, it was time for me to depart. How could I fail to treasure these few remaining minutes? I wanted to spend this last hour well.

My companion and I had roamed the Moscow sea of people like beginners at the beach, unable yet to swim far out but already enjoying the pleasures of bathing and flicking through wide expanses of space. Bothered occasionally by minor frictions such as the natural difficulties arising from our ignorance of the Russian language, these only added an adventurous touch to our enjoyment and presented no real obstacle. Perhaps they even served to draw us closer to the big city.

We were to leave Moscow in an hour. The waiting-room's television set was showing us the closing performance in

Chen Pai-chen, well-known dramatist and writer, is at present assistant editor-in-chief of *People's Literature*, Peking.

Moscow of the Peking Opera Company of Shanghai. The exciting beats of the drum and cymbals and the thrilling somersaults of the acrobatics caught the waiting passengers' hearts, linking all of us close together. To us, departing guests, the free flow of friendship and the expression of farewell sentiments between the people of China and the Soviet Union at this performance were particularly moving.

The last hour passed swiftly. We made ready to bid Moscow goodbye. Suddenly we were told that because of the weather the plane would not take off for another five hours. It was scheduled to leave at five o'clock the next morning. This was welcome news to us. Moscow was trying to keep her guests.

But problems arose at the same time. We knew it was time for our interpreter to go home and rest. He had been helping us for several days and had come to see us off; we should not keep him any longer.

"But you wouldn't know what plane to take and at what time," he said, still worried.

"Never mind," I answered after a slight hesitation. "We're more or less experienced now. We'll follow the crowd and go with them." But then I realized that most of the passengers in the waiting-room had disappeared.

We all tried to think of something. It was then that I noticed a girl sitting alone on one of the leather sofas. She looked like a student, quiet and simple, and was reading a thick book.

All three of us turned to look at her. Our interpreter went up and asked her destination. From her face and the word Peking that dropped from her lips we knew her answer without our interpreter's help. "Fine, we'll go with her," I exclaimed in joy.

She gladly agreed to remind us when it was time to get on the plane. Rising, she introduced herself crisply. Her name was Leah and she was going to Peking to visit her husband, an expert in one of our government departments.

We memorized her name and she in turn repeated the two Chinese names, which undoubtedly must have sounded extremely strange to her. Employing fifty per cent of my

complete store of Russian words, we thanked her for this pact of friendship.

Passengers darted busily in and out of the waiting-room. I, however, remembered my doctor's warning and decided to catch a little nap while there was time. But it was already too late. A wretched toothache woke me and I hurriedly swallowed some pills which the doctor had told me "to take when necessary." That also was too late. The pills were unable to overtake the toothache, now producing sharper and sharper pangs, not caring at all whether it was "necessary."

With head lowered I paced among the passengers hoping thus to drive off the pain. Suddenly a strong hand gripped my shoulders. Turning round, I discovered a Red Army officer. Staring at him blankly, I was sure he had mistaken me for someone he knew. But there was no mistake, for he was clearly speaking to me. To my own regret, besides spreading out my hands awkwardly and shaking my head, all I could do was force a pinched smile in spite of my aching tooth. He smiled back and this time employed a language that was international. Pointing first at his own teeth with a questioning look, he paused to wait for an answer. This time I smiled, without any effort either, and nodded vigorously.

Someone else's hand came between us at this juncture. It was a woman's. On the outstretched palm was an uncovered pillbox with eight neatly ranged little pills. From the smile on the woman's face I gathered her relationship to the officer. Without the slightest hesitation, I picked up a pill and put it in my mouth. They both smiled their satisfaction and again I called on my limited supply of Russian words.

Turning round to look for Leah, I meant to ask that she express my thanks to the kind officer and his wife. I found that she was sleeping like a baby with her head pillowed on her book. Only then did I realize how ridiculous I had been with my absorption in my toothache.

By the time I looked back the officer and his wife were already off, arm in arm, to catch their plane. A cool refreshing taste remained in my mouth.

It was not five o'clock yet when we noticed four Czechoslovak passengers returning to the waiting-room. As we hurriedly made ready to leave, we saw that they seemed to be discussing something. We had made the acquaintance of a lively photographer among them the night before. He was able to speak only slightly better Russian than mine and he used the same amount of Chinese to talk to us. Something must have come up, I thought, and went to ask him.

"Nine o'clock," he said in Chinese and shrugged his shoulders. Then he supplemented with more gestures. Pointing at my watch, he counted from five to nine and then spread his arms out like a flying swallow.

This sudden change made it necessary for us to think about the four hours which must be whiled away. Before my companion and I could discuss the matter further, the photographer returned from the Intourist Office with a slip of paper. He beckoned to his companions who picked up their bags and made ready to leave the airport.

I stretched out my hand to say goodbye to our photographer but he shook his head saying vehemently, "No, no, no!" Then he pointed to the door, put his head on his folded hands to indicate sleep, counted all of us there and pointing to his slip of paper said in conclusion, "Six, six."

It was impossible to refuse such friendly consideration. My companion and I had never thought of leaving the airport before he suggested it.

As I picked up my bag to follow our Czechoslovak friends I decided that we should not go after all. How could we leave Leah all alone? The photographer was surprised by my hesitation, but I had no words to tell him my reason. All I did was point out to him the existence of that young lady.

I don't know how the photographer comprehended, at any rate he went to Leah with a look of understanding on his face and with the swiftest gestures, the simplest Rus-

sian, talked until Leah smiled, picked up her bag and joined our small circle. In the meantime our Czech friend had dashed again into the Intourist Office with lightning speed where he had them change the word "Six" to "Seven."

As soon as we left the airport, the leadership of our international travellers' group of seven fell on young Leah. She seemed a different person from what I had taken her to be, not at all the simple, quiet student. Smartly, and with rapid movements, she first ascertained the location of the hotel we were going to, then led the way. It was she who got them to open the door when we arrived and it was she who, like a hostess, told us to show our passports and tickets and then helped the old lady of the hotel to assign us rooms and beds. All this was accomplished in only a very few minutes.

Leah continued in conversation with the old lady after we had all been given accommodations. She went on asking something and the old lady kept shaking her head with a helpless and apologetic air. As I was the last to go I could not help wondering what they were talking about. Maybe there was no bed for Leah herself now that she had seen to all of us. I wanted to ask her but she, as if she knew my question, waved me upstairs.

It wasn't quite seven when the old lady of the hotel woke us in a tone that commanded absolute obedience. We dressed and completed our toilet within five minutes and filed downstairs, anxious not to keep the other passengers waiting. Halfway down I noticed that Leah, neatly dressed, was still in the chair she had occupied before we went upstairs. I became more suspicious. Gesticulating, I asked if she had slept. I didn't know whether she was telling the truth or whether she didn't understand. Anyway, she nodded, smiling. Without giving me another chance to ask, she stood up, saying something that seemed to be, "Shall we go?"

She led our group as we strode towards the airport. The snow crunched under our feet. We followed her like a bunch of schoolboys.

Suddenly Leah gave a startled cry. It sounded like a command; we halted at attention in the snow. She said something, but we were only startled and didn't understand what she wanted. She too realized that it was pointless to speak. Opening her bag, she produced her passport and waved it with a questioning look. I nodded reassuringly, showing at the same time the passport which the hotel had returned to us before we left. She laughed with childish pleasure, and again uttered a command of some sort; we continued to stride over the snow towards the airport.

It was nearly twelve when our plane reached Kazan. Following the crowd we entered the airport dining-room. My companion and I smiled wryly at an elaborate menu in Russian. The few dishes we had, with effort, learned to pick out from the menu in Moscow restaurants were nowhere to be found. I suspected they were tucked away somewhere in the list of dishes. The menu was not arranged in groups like a table d'hote so we couldn't just point at one of the meals. The few English words which we used in Moscow had no effect at all here; we began to feel quite helpless.

Finally relinquishing the menu completely, I motioned to the waiter to make him understand that I couldn't read Russian. He continued to bombard us with well-meaning questions. Desperate under this stream of words, my companion said eagerly in Chinese, "Anything. Give us anything." It was so comical that I had to laugh.

A Soviet comrade who shared our table laughed too. He looked like a worker and had been on the plane with us. He was bound for Novosibirsk. Pulling the waiter to him, he teased him gently in a bantering tone, then went ahead and ordered lunch for my companion and me. The problem was solved.

All the Soviet comrades seemed to share a common illusion about us Chinese—they imagined we were very fond of eggs. At least that was the impression I got in Moscow. Now, when the waiter brought us platters of fried eggs, I remembered this and chuckled. Our friend,

the worker, looked up quite pleased, saying something that must have meant, "Well?" I answered in Russian, again with one half of my vocabulary. He smiled with pleasure.

By the time we finished eating, our friend had returned with some fruit bought at the counter. Perhaps he thought we hadn't eaten quite enough or perhaps it was due simply to friendliness. Anyhow, he pressed a huge apple, a kind not at all common in Moscow, on each of us. I meant to say thank you, but such an ordinary phrase was hardly enough to express my feelings. He seemed eager to say something too but also swallowed it back. Finally we both resorted to smiles and gestures to convey our feelings.

All the way to Peking, we never met with any difficulties at meals again. Leah was practically always at our table and helping us. This made us feel a little guilty. After all we had only asked her to help us at the Moscow airport. But she had taken us under her wing throughout the journey. We were afraid we were being too much trouble to her.

In private, my companion and I talked once or twice about our wish to repay her kindness. We noticed that she was coughing slightly but we had no medicine to give her. Perhaps her coat was not quite heavy enough, but

Terraced Fields (design for a screen) →

This design is a collective work by the Central Institute of Applied Arts, Peking. It has the following folk song as its theme:

Terraced fields climb up so high,
Young men plough against the sky;
In the clouds our lasses hoe,
Mum sends tea from down below;
Dad plucks herbs up in the wood,
Winter's left these parts for good!



we had no women's apparel for her to wear. We didn't even have the vocabulary to express our heart-felt gratitude. Like the falling snow, our feeling of uneasiness grew heavier, the further east we travelled from Moscow.

I hoped to be able to fulfil my wish during our journey between Irkutsk to Peking. Chinese planes usually flew that section of the line. I'd be able to play host to our friend Leah. The Chinese attendants on the plane would also help. They could serve as interpreters and help us express our gratitude.

In the waiting-room at Irkutsk, I noticed Chinese pilots going in and out. My hopes rose. When it was time to embark, I was more relaxed than at any other time of the journey. Like a real host, I was the last to leave the waiting-room that had Chinese characters on its door. At the threshold I paused for a last look, silently bidding farewell to Soviet land.

It was then I discovered that our friend Leah also had her careless moments. The thick book always in her hands had been forgotten in a corner of the sofa. I picked up the book and chased after her. At the head of the file, she was already climbing the ladder to the plane. I glanced at the emblem painted on the tail of the plane. To my disappointment, this was not a Chinese one.

The next moment, I saw Leah charging down the ladder to run back to the waiting-room. Knowing what was on her mind, I stopped her with outspread arms. Leah halted, startled. Then she saw her beloved book in my hand. Gasping for breath, she smiled. Again she repeated that simplest of Russian phrases, one I could fully understand.

That, I reflected, was probably the only service I could do for her before we reached Peking. By then, of course, I could still make use of the remaining half of my Russian to bid her farewell.

Translated by Tang Sheng

Notes on Literature and Art

WANG CHAO-WEN

Szechuan Opera

There are several hundred kinds of local opera in China, each with its distinctive features. The opera of Szechuan Province is one of the oldest and has spread over a wide area with a population of more than seventy million. In recent years much has been done in Szechuan opera to rediscover and edit old plays, as well as to train new actors. More than two thousand old plays have been brought to light, which give a comprehensive picture of life and with their distinctive style express the people's wishes and aspirations, their sense of right and wrong. Heroes and heroines of several centuries ago can still arouse our admiration and love today; while the pitiless exposure of evil, worthless characters reveals the common people's love of beauty and goodness. These highly humanistic plays have an educational value even now.

Szechuan opera does not exist in isolation but has always been influenced by other types of drama, and alien elements have been absorbed and integrated. While Szechuan opera follows the general pattern of other Chinese schools of opera, it is based on the life, language and feelings of the Szechuan people, their special tastes, their likes and dislikes. The language, music, plots and acting are distinctively Szechuan.

Five types of music are found in Szechuan opera, involving different ways of singing, different melodies and different musical instruments. These are *Kunchu*, *Kaochiang*, *Huchin*,

Wang Chao-wen is a sculptor and art critic.

Tanhsi and *Tenghsi*. All these are accompanied by percussion instruments, but the main musical accompaniment varies. In *Kaochiang* most of the singing is a kind of chanting accompanied by a chorus singing offstage. In *Kunchu* the chief accompaniment is the flute, in *Huchin* it is the Chinese fiddle, in *Tanhsi* the clapper, in *Tenghsi* a low-pitched string instrument. These differences are not absolute, however. For example *Her Ghost Seeks Revenge* is an opera of the *Kaochiang* type, but in one scene when the heroine, Kuei-ying, laments her fate she sings a *Kunchu* tune. This music expresses very clearly her anger and sorrow at being forsaken by her husband and her decision to commit suicide, arousing the audience's sympathy.

Of the five kinds of music the most popular is *Kaochiang*, which comprises great variety having some three hundred tunes. There is considerable variety in the chorus singing too: the chorus may sing at the beginning of a song, at the end, or after one line. The chorus singing is closely linked with the state of mind of certain characters under the sway of strong emotion. Thus in the scene when Kuei-ying sings in despair: "We drift south and north, north and south," the chorus off-stage chimes in: "As the stream that flows east to the ocean never returns." Those seeing Szechuan opera for the first time may think it strange for the chorus to join in like this, but once you are used to this device you realize that it expresses the heroine's mental conflict more strongly. Sometimes the chorus voices the audience's reaction, thereby strengthening the effectiveness of the singing. Sometimes it speaks for the playwright, commenting on the actions of the characters. An example of this is a popular episode in *The Wife's Tragedy*. Lu Ngo's husband, Yao An, suspects her of having a lover. One day when his wife and sister are sharing one bed he thinks she is with her lover and kills her — then discovers his irrevocable mistake. At this instant the chorus bursts out: "Miserable wretch, you have done a great wrong!" This chorus singing in the third person appears quite natural and heightens the dramatic effect. Indeed, it serves a double purpose, revealing the husband's remorse and reproaching him on behalf of the audience.

The language of Szechuan opera is both colloquial and poetic. *Her Ghost Seeks Revenge* is a notable example of this. This tragedy condemns Wang Kuei, the selfish husband who breaks faith and when fortune smiles on him abandons the woman

who has saved his life. The heroine is depicted as a gentle yet resolute woman who, when she realizes that she has been forsaken, goes to the temple of the sea god and pours out her woes to the god and his attendants. Finally she hangs herself and her ghost flies over mountains and rivers to the capital to seek her heartless husband. In highly poetic language the playwright depicts the complex emotions of a wronged wife and condemns the heartless lover. These passages on the stage are very stirring.

Szechuan opera is richly imaginative, as can be seen from that amusing yet thought-provoking comedy *Brides Galore*, which is introduced in this number. One of the characteristics of this opera is bold inventiveness. The plot is fantastic in the extreme, and the episodes are not all based on historical fact, yet the whole gives a truthful reflection of reality. The emperor causes great dismay among his subjects by demanding several hundred girls for his palace; and all the families with marriageable daughters are desperate to find husbands for them so that they need not be sent to the palace to live a life of splendid misery. This strange tale deals with what happens in the families of a magistrate, a rich man and a professional acrobat. It contains a deep though unspoken criticism of the emperor, who does not appear on the stage; and by means of extraordinary adventures and amusing episodes the playwright attacks the selfishness, cruelty and hypocrisy of the feudal rulers while revealing the sterling qualities of the down-trodden yet courageous common people.

Another Szechuan comedy, *The Counterfeit Bride*, describes a local bully who tries to kidnap a bride but ends up by getting a husband for his sister instead, an odd-looking, awkward young scholar called Chiao. Chiao is on his way to the capital for the examinations and cannot find a lodging one night, so he creeps into a sedan-chair for shelter. Then the bully comes to kidnap the girl, mistakes Chiao for her, and carries him off at night. When Chiao discovers what has happened, to save the girl he disguises himself as a woman. The bully wants to have the wedding the next day, and sends his intended "bride" to his sister's room to rest. The sister discovers that Chiao is not a girl and he explains the reason for his disguise. She falls in love with him and they are married. In this play, although the young man keeps clowning, when the spectators laugh at him they remember that his eccentric

behaviour hides a sense of justice. Because he has the courage to interfere and trick the bully, the audience's laughter is friendly and admiring. They sense the noble spirit beneath his ludicrous exterior. Thus the playwright has combined humour with lofty ideals to make an original play.

Traditional Chinese operas observe certain conventions, and Szechuan opera is no exception. But these conventions are faithful to reality, and seek to convey what is beautiful in real life. The characters in Szechuan opera belong to the usual general categories, such as gentlemen (*sheng*), ladies (*tan*), rough fellows (*ching*), attendants (*mo*) and clowns (*chou*); but their acting is not restricted by this. The dancing movements, as in other operas, follow definite musical patterns; even the relatively free movements of a clown are governed by rigid conventions with the emphasis on formal beauty and rhythm. But since all these rules are closely linked with realistic characterization, the conventions regarding dancing, singing and elocution serve to portray different characters in a way that is true to life. In the scene in *Her Ghost Seeks Revenge* when the forsaken wife is alone on the stage and sings to express her despair, instead of lying or sitting down listlessly she dances

Kuei-ying (played by Hu Shu-fang) pours out her woes in the temple of the sea god.



wildly to impassioned music. While this would not happen in life, it reveals the heroine's state of mind, her powerful emotions and bitter mental conflict.

It is a truism to say that while art must be based on reality it must not be an exact imitation of life. The drama, like other forms of art, represents the result of the artist's understanding of life but not life itself. This is the view of many accomplished

Tibetan Folk Music and Songs

actors and actresses such as Hu Shu-fang and Yang Yun-feng who for many years have played the part of Kuei-ying in *Her Ghost Seeks Revenge*. In the scene when she smashes the idols in the temple she is mentally deranged, yet it would be inartistic to act as a maniac does in real life. The exponents of Szechuan opera often show great originality. In the same play when Wang Kuei decides to write a document divorcing his wife, though he knows this may drive her to her death, at the moment when he dips his brush in the ink, smoke and flames belch from the inkstone. This is an example of artistic exaggeration to reveal his mental conflict.

When Kuei-ying knows that she has been deceived and there is no one to whom to pour out her woes, she goes to the temple of the sea god to lament to the images of clay and wood. These idols are played by real men. They remain unmoved when Kuei-ying appeals to them, till she topples them over in anger and falls in a faint. At this point the overturned idols stand up. They sing and make stiff, puppet-like gestures as they leave the stage. They declare that Kuei-ying never made offerings to them before, but now that she is abandoned by Wang Kuei instead of going to accuse him she vents her anger on them. This bold treatment casts light on Kuei-ying's state of mind. There are many similar cases in Szechuan opera, but the audience does not consider that the artists are acting in an unrealistic manner. On the contrary, by these strange devices the artists conform to the rules of realism in art and make their performance more expressive.

According to one folk legend, there are as many folk songs in Tibet as mountain tops—each peak has its song. From very early times the Tibetan plateau has been the home of song. Here songs accompany every daily task: hoeing the barley fields, mowing meadows, grazing sheep, building mud walls, lighting fires, carrying water or washing clothes. There are songs for every occasion. During festivals the people of several dozen villages gather and set up their tents together. They drink tea and wine and enjoy spirited horse-racing, archery competitions, singing and dancing. They often have singing and dancing contests, and the finest performers or composers become popular heroes.

It is hard to say when the first songs were made in Tibet. According to Tibetan scholars, ancient books record that as long ago as the third century an earthen musical instrument called the *degling* was popular, showing that the Tibetans already had a music of their own. In the seventh century, when the Tang princess Wen Cheng married the Tibetan prince Sron-tsan Gampo, she took musicians and musical instruments in her train, and this exercised a considerable influence on the development of Tibetan music. These Tang dynasty instruments are still preserved in a monastery in Lhasa.

Tibetan folk music is of two types. There is the purely vocal music, including pastoral songs, drinking songs and love songs, and there are other songs to accompany dancing or

Gonpo Gyalstan is a Tibetan folk musician who travelled widely over the middle and lower reaches of the Chinsha River collecting songs. He is now working in the Central Nationalities Song and Dance Ensemble in Peking. Huang Ping-shan is a young Han musician in the Ensemble.

different types of labour. Both forms are well developed and found in all the farms and pasturelands, as well as in the towns. Indeed after Tibet's liberation in 1951, concert troupes — both professional and amateur — were set up in the towns, where folk music has now taken root and begun to develop further.

Here mention must be made of the *ralpa* singers who play an important role in Tibetan music. These are minstrels who roam the country singing for a living. These Tibetan singers are performers, collectors and popularizers of folk tunes. Since liberation most of them have been absorbed into state concert troupes.

Tibetan music is closely linked with dancing. The songs and dances vary in different localities, even in adjacent hills and valleys. For instance the type of music known as *dro*, which is found throughout Tibet and has its distinctive slow and dignified style, also shows local variations. The *dro* do not deal with love or sparkle with wit. They are serious in tone, sometimes profound, giving expression to aspirations or longings.

Let me fly to the blue, blue sky
To greet the sun and moon;
If all is well with them
I shall return again to my happy home.

Let me climb the high snow mountain
To greet the mighty lion;
If all is well with it,
I shall return again to my happy home.

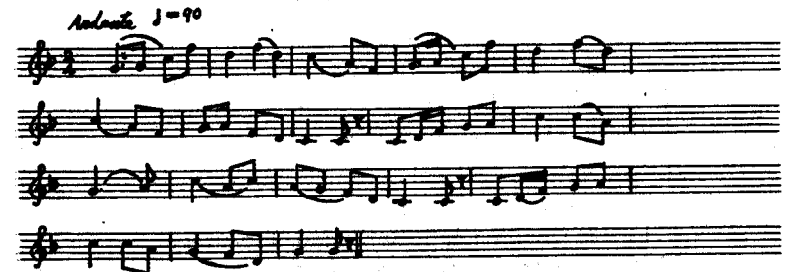


These *dro* make a most impressive chorus sung by a group of young people.

In eastern and northern Tibet stringed instruments are much played and songs called *zhæ*, accompanied by strings, are even more popular than the *dro*. These songs make an especial appeal to the young because they deal with everyday life, and the music is lively, gay and charming. The *dro*, which are handed down from earlier times, have a rather more rigid form. Though the *zhæ* also have regular six-word lines, the language is easier to understand. Some of it, indeed, is colloquial speech.

Judging by the few hundred *zhæ* that we collected, these songs deal with a very wide range of subject matter, covering virtually every aspect of life, including love, patriotism, unity, dress, scenery and personal aspirations. Songs of the first two types are the most popular. Here is one example:

In the white porcelain bowl
Is pure white milk.
Do you ask if my love is pure?
Look in the bowl!



The *zhæ* which sing the praises of the country are very fine too with their beautiful imagery to evoke the mountains and streams, the plants and trees. They conjure up the fragrance of the soil, the splendour of the flowers and the magnificence of the scenery. Here is one instance:

Snow melts on the mountains
And rushes down the slopes;
The good earth, watered,
Will bear better crops.

Ah, silver snow-capped peaks,
Which gleam the whole year round above our land;

You make both crops and cattle grow,
Giving our people strength and fortitude.

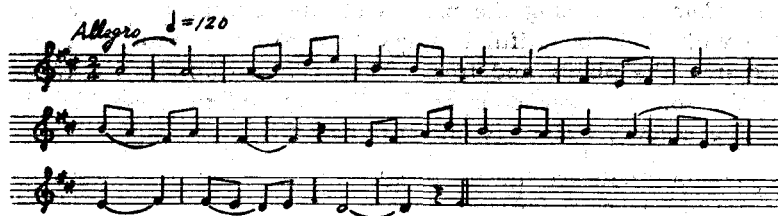
LIN SHOU-CHIN



These folk songs give expression to some of the people's wishes and ideals, reflecting their life and feelings. And in a similar manner many new songs have appeared in recent years.

Over Peking, the capital,
A golden trumpet is blown;
I do not know who the trumpeter may be,
But we exult at the sound.

Like the sun the Communist Party,
For it makes all things grow;
Like the moon Chairman Mao Tse-tung,
For he shows us the way to go.



These songs which combine a new vigour with the old lyrical beauty mark a further development of a fine tradition.

Some Archaeological Discoveries

Archaeology is developing apace in New China. All I can hope to do here is to mention some of the most significant discoveries in this field during the last ten years.

Several types of neolithic culture existed in China. Because the first of these to be excavated was found in Yangshao in the county of Mienchih in Honan, this type is usually called the Yangshao culture. In 1954, Chinese archaeologists discovered the remains of a village belonging to this culture in Panpo, Sian. This is a well-preserved prehistoric village built five thousand years ago.

This village stood on high ground above the east bank of the Chan River. There were many huts in it, thirty-four of which have been discovered so far. These huts were square or round, a few yards across; some were built on low ground, some had walls around them made of earth reinforced with wooden pillars or planks. In one wall there was usually a sloping entrance, and in the middle of the hut a hearth. In one corner there was generally at least one pit for food storage.

The villagers relied mainly on agriculture for a living, though they also hunted and fished. Their storage pits contained thick layers of rotted grain as well as many farm tools of stone and bone, and finely made fish-hooks, harpoons and arrowheads of bone.

The men of the Yangshao culture made beautiful painted pottery. They used finely sieved earth as the base, polished the surface and painted designs on it with red and black mineral colours. The colours emerged from the kilns bright and unfading. This painted pottery gives us a good idea of

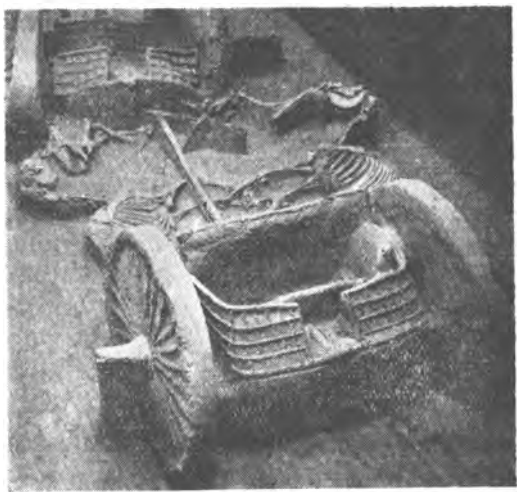
Lin Shou-chin is a young research worker at the Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Peking.

neolithic art. Some of the painted fish and human heads are strikingly decorative and lifelike. East of the huts we discovered many pottery kilns.

These villagers had distinctive burial customs. Adults were buried on the north or northeast of the village, sometimes four of them in one pit, while children were buried in pottery jars near the huts.

China had a slave society during the Shang dynasty (16th-11th century B.C.), if not earlier. In 1952 we excavated a large royal tomb in Anyang, Honan, the Shang capital. This tomb was a rectangular pit with entrances on the south and the north, extending over more than three hundred square yards. The king's wooden coffin was in the middle of the burial chamber, with the body of an attendant beneath it and forty-one men and women buried around it. At the northern entrance two more men were buried. At the southern entrance, although digging has not been completed, we have already found one man's kneeling body. These slaves were buried before the tomb was sealed up. After it was sealed, thirty-four human skulls were buried nearer the surface. Southeast of this royal tomb we have excavated seventeen pits in four rows, in which 152 slaves were buried.

Remains of a wooden chariot of 655 B.C. excavated from the royal tomb of the state of Kueh near Shenhhsien.



historical records, the capital of Western Chou was Fengkao, southwest of present-day Sian. Between 1955 and 1957 large-scale excavations were carried out there, supplying us with some preliminary data about the culture of that period.

Among the discoveries on the site of the Western Chou capital were the remains of some houses, over one hundred

tombs and five pits with chariots and horses buried in them. The centre of this ancient capital has not yet been located. As all the houses unearthed have been small ones, they probably belonged to the common people. The chariots, made of wood, have rotted; but traces remain which enabled us to reconstruct them. They had two wheels and a single shaft, with a horizontal bar of wood in front and one or two reins on each side. Some chariots were drawn by two horses, others by four. The body of the chariot had wooden railings with a gap behind through which to mount or alight. Bronze decorations made the chariot and the horses' trappings magnificent. But of particular interest is the fact that in every pit a driver was buried along with the chariot. These relics are our most reliable materials for a study of ancient vehicles.

During the Spring and Autumn period between the 8th and the 5th century B.C., the state of Tsin was very powerful and south of it lay Kueh, separated by the smaller state of Yu. The ruler of Tsin, determined to conquer Kueh, sent jade and white horses to the prince of Yu asking permission for his army to pass through that territory. Kung Chih-chi, minister to the prince of Yu, advised his master against this. He urged that Yu and Kueh were like the lips and the teeth. Once the lips went the teeth would feel the cold; thus if Kueh were conquered, Yu would be in danger too. The prince, however,



Bronze decoration for horse trappings excavated from the Western Chou burial pit near Sian.

was impressed by the gifts and ignored his minister's advice, allowing the army of Tsin to pass through his country. After the troops of Tsin had conquered Kueh, they turned back and overthrew Yu, taking away their gifts of jade and horses. This story is well known in China.

According to historical records, the state of Kueh was southeast of Shenhhsien in the province of Honan, though in the past its site was never discovered. In the winter of 1956, an ancient tomb and an earthen pit with chariots and horses buried in it were discovered at Shangchunling, near Shenhhsien. Inscriptions on two bronze halberds in this tomb said that they belonged to the crown prince of Kueh. Clearly this was the crown prince's tomb, and the site of the state of Kueh was finally identified.

With this clue, we were able to discover 234 tombs and four burial pits for chariots and horses containing twenty chariots and forty-two horses. South of these tombs were found utensils belonging to the same period.

These tombs were rectangular pits lined with wood. Wooden coffins were placed in them with objects near by. The bodies wore strings of beads, having several hundred beads to one string, and there were jade rings near the ears. The objects buried included utensils for washing, containers for food and drink and cooking vessels, as well as weapons, musical instruments, trinkets and trappings for chariots. The utensils in the larger tombs were of bronze, those in the smaller ones of pottery. Bronze vessels were found in thirty-seven tombs altogether. Never before in China have so many bronze vessels been excavated on one site.

The objects excavated include many never found before. Thus there are three bronze mirrors, two of them bare of ornament but one with a design of tigers, deer and birds. These are the three earliest mirrors ever discovered. There are also four bronze swords which, together with the one discovered at Loyang in 1954, are the five earliest swords known. Archaeologists used to believe that bronze swords and mirrors were not made until the Warring States period (403-221 B.C.) but this discovery shows that they were manufactured several hundred years earlier.

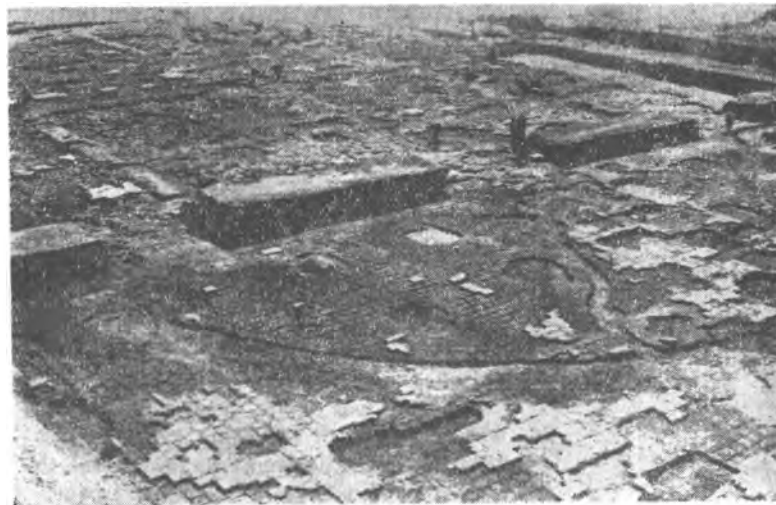
In about the 5th century B.C. in the southern state of Chu, there lived the great poet Chu Yuan who has left some of the most beautiful poems in Chinese literature. The state of Chu

had a distinctive culture. After liberation, excavations carried out over a period of years in Changsha, Hunan, obtained rich results from some thousand Chu tombs.

Most of these tombs were sealed up with a kind of white clay so that the contents are excellently preserved. Like other tombs of the Warring States period, these Chu tombs contain iron agricultural implements, confirming the accounts in historical records about the wide use of iron implements during that period. There are large quantities of lacquerware and things made of bamboo and wood. The lacquerware, with wood or sackcloth as a base, has beautiful designs. Woven silk and hemp are also found in these tombs, as well as the earliest writing brushes and bamboo records known.

In the Han dynasty (206 B.C.- A.D.220) the capital, Changan, was northwest of present-day Sian. Between 1956 and 1958 a series of excavations was carried out here. The site of the ancient city was studied and surveyed, while some of the city gates and one temple for imperial worship were excavated. Changan was also the capital in the Tang dynasty, and the site of the Tang capital has also been studied and explored. The excavation of ancient Changan is an important event, and digging is still going on.

Relics of the site of the Tang capital in Changan.



In the Ming dynasty feudal China attained a high pitch of civilization. The capital then was present-day Peking, and north of Peking are the tombs of thirteen Ming emperors. Between 1956 and 1958 one of these tombs were excavated. This was the tomb of Emperor Wan Li who reigned for forty-eight years (1573-1620). He ascended the throne at the age of ten, and work started on his tomb when he was twenty-two. Thousands of workmen were employed and the construction took six years. This sepulchre was covered with an earthen mound. Now, after two years' excavation, an underground palace has been revealed. Built of marble and bricks, it consists of five huge halls with the coffins of the emperor and the empress in the last hall. Here were found a gold crown in filigree, jade vessels, gold and silver ingots and over one thousand other precious objects, all of immense value for historical research. A museum is now being built here to display these relics.

The relics excavated show the level of culture at different periods, and are extremely valuable to us for the study of our past history, especially the history of social and economic developments.

Flowers and Butterfly (26.8 cm. x 21.3 cm.)
by Wen Shu→

Wen Shu was one of the few well-known women artists of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). For further remarks on her see the article by Hsu Pang-ta on the next page.



Women Painters' Works in the Palace Museum

According to a Chinese legend, the ancient sage king Shun had a younger sister Lei who invented the art of painting. So tradition has it that the first painter in China was a woman.

Be this as it may, we know from past accounts of Chinese painting that there were many famous women artists. The Palace Museum in Peking has a painting of bamboos by Kuan Tao-sheng or Kuan Chung-chi, a well-known artist of the 13th century who was the wife of the great Yuan dynasty calligrapher Chao Meng-fu. The bamboos' luxuriantly drooping leaves convey an effect of mist and light rain. This is, to our knowledge, the only genuine work left by this artist.

There were many celebrated women artists in China during the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. Two of their favourite subjects were bamboos and orchids, for from ancient times in China these graceful and noble plants were frequently compared to beautiful ladies, and women artists liked to paint them to convey their own refinement and sensibility. Ma Shou-chen, Hsueh Su-su and Ku Mei in the 16th and 17th centuries were renowned for their bamboos and orchids. Ma Shou-chen, who painted her orchids with ink outlines, was well-known in China and abroad, and envoys from Siam used to buy her painted fans.

Hsueh Su-su was not only a painter but an expert in the military arts as well. Her skill with the cross-bow was so great that she could hit an object on a girl's head a hundred paces away, and the girl would not even know that it had been knocked off. Ku Mei was both artist and musician, whose husband Kung Ting-tzu was a good poet. A long scroll in the

Hsu Pang-ta is a research member of the Peking Palace Museum.

Palace Museum has orchids painted by her in ink with easy, free, spirited strokes, and poems appended by her husband.

Many old Chinese families had a long artistic tradition. Thus Wen Shu was the great-great-grand-daughter of the 15th century artist Wen Chen-ming, and her forbears Wen Chia, Wen Yuan-shan and Wen Chung-chien were distinguished painters too. Her younger brother Wen Nan was also an artist. Wen Shu was noted for her paintings of flowers and herbs, and loved to draw rare plants. She painted an album of herbs used in Chinese medicine. Many of her works have come down to us, and she is considered as one of the best of the 17th century women artists.

Li Yin, a few years younger than Wen Shu, also excelled in painting flowers. She liked to paint entirely with ink, which was rather unusual for a woman. The work of most women artists is polished and delicate, but Li Yin's paintings convey a feeling of strength.

At the beginning of the Ching dynasty, towards the middle of the 17th century, there was a good poetess and artist, Huang Yuan-chieh. Since she lived through a period of great social unrest and change at the fall of the Ming dynasty, when refugees were fleeing from place to place, her poems are full of sadness. She was a good landscape painter noted for the lightness and delicacy of her brushwork.

The artist Yun Shou-ping of the late 17th century and his pupil Ma Yuan-yu each had a daughter who was a painter too: Yun Ping and Ma Chuan. Yun Shou-ping's school of flower painting was the most popular in the early Ching dynasty. Instead of ink outlines he used pastel shades of water colour, a departure from the old tradition. Yun Ping and Ma Chuan also belonged to this school, and since most women artists after them used this new method of painting flowers their influence was considerable. Ma Chuan was a brilliant painter of butterflies too, which she rendered in the most vivid and lifelike manner; and many later artists of her sex imitated her style. During the 17th and 18th centuries other women belonging to this school included Fan Hsueh-yi, Hsi Jen, Wu Kuei-chen, Yun Huai-ngo, Chiang Chi-hsi and Liao Yun-ching, all of whom had their distinctive style.

Fan Hsueh-yi was as well a good painter of figures — something comparatively rare among women artists. Chin Li-ying painted a portrait of the Sung dynasty poetess Li Ching-chao,

and though she copied this from an earlier work she succeeded admirably in conveying the distinction of the subject.

In the early 20th century Chin Chang, sister of the famous painter Chin Cheng, was known for her paintings of gold-fish. The Palace Museum has a scroll by her with over one hundred gold-fish. Each has its own distinctive appearance and colour: some are swimming on the surface, some down among the different weeds, some are floating, some blowing bubbles.

In the long period of feudalism in China, women had little chance to develop their gifts and their range of life was also limited; hence the themes of their paintings are limited too. In spite of these restrictions, however, they proved that they were capable of fine work, showing careful and penetrating observation and producing sensitive and evocative paintings.

Today, of course, women artists in China enjoy much better conditions, for the changes in their political, economic and social status have given them much greater opportunities to observe and experience life. True, contemporary women artists still paint flowers, birds and landscapes, but they are also interested in depicting the rich and colourful new life round them. This new life, together with the exquisite technique and the great realist tradition of classical Chinese painting, enable them to start a new chapter for their work which will surpass the achievements of their predecessors.

Chronicle

Handel Commemorated

On April 14, over 1,200 people in Peking, including many writers, artists and musicians, met to commemorate the second centenary of the death of Handel. Present at the meeting were many well-known cultural figures, among them Kuo Mo-jo, chairman of the Chinese People's Committee for World Peace; Chu Tu-nan, president of the Chinese People's Association for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries; Chu Ke-chen, vice-president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences; and Ma Szu-chung, vice-chairman of the Chinese Musicians' Union. Paul Wandel, ambassador of the German Democratic Republic, also attended this meeting.

Mao Tun, member of the Standing Committee of the China Peace Committee, made the opening speech. He pointed out the deep humanism of Handel's music and its power today to inspire men to advance, and emphasized that modern men should inherit and carry forward his democratic ideals and humanist spirit. Chao Feng, member of the Secretariat of the Chinese Musicians' Union, gave a talk on Handel's life and work. The German ambassador also spoke to the meeting. We remember this great German composer together, he said, as an expression of our common will and our common actions to strengthen the friendship of the German people and the Chinese people and in order to serve humanity, social progress and peace among all people.

The programme of the concert that followed included Handel's *Concerto Grosso in G Minor*, the aria "Rejoice Greatly" from *Messiah*, the *Sonata for Violin in E Major*, *Sonata for Oboe*, and other selections from Handel's oratorios and operas.

"The Corsair" in Peking

This spring the Peking School of Dancing performed *The Corsair*, the ballet by the French composer Adam inspired by Byron's well-known poem. The last classical ballet presented by this school was *Swan Lake*. As ballet is quite a new art in China, started only after the liberation, the success which the present performance has scored marks another step forward in the development of this art. *The Corsair* was directed by the school's advisor, P.A. Gusev, merited artist of the R.S.F.S.R. who restaged this ballet in the Soviet Union and played the role of Conrad. This time he made changes in certain scenes and introduced some Chinese dancing movements as well as the Chinese gong and drum. The part of Medora, the heroine, was played by Pai Shu-hsiang and Chang Wan-chao, one a sixth and the other a fifth year student of the school. Pai Shu-hsiang, who had the role of Odette in *Swan Lake*, has made considerable progress since her last performance. The youngest dancer in this ballet was only 11.

Commemoration of Tagore

May 8 was the 98th birthday of the great poet Rabindranath Tagore, and it was with deep affection and admiration that the Chinese people commemorated this friend of China. The *Renmin Ribao* carried an article by the Indian poet Hemango Bisvas entitled "Tagore and China." This described how Tagore was drawn to China as a young man of twenty, and how till the time of his death he showed concern for Sino-Indian friendship and the Chinese people's struggle against imperialism. In 1924 Tagore visited China, and in one speech he said that he came to China as a fellow Asian. For long ages silent Asia has been fighting to regain her voice. The friendship and unity of China and India are the corner-stone of a fighting Asia. The *Renmin Ribao* also published an article by Feng Hsin called "I Love the Country of Tagore."

In the past few years many of Tagore's works have been translated into Chinese and were enthusiastically received. The People's Literature Publishing House plans to publish his selected works in ten volumes, six of which will come out this year, including his poems, his novels *Gora* and *The Wreck*, and

some of his best stories, essays and plays. Recently other publishing houses have also published some of Tagore's plays and poems. These works are translated by the late writer Cheng Chen-to, the woman poet Hsieh Ping-hsin and others.

A New Generation of Peking Opera Artists

On April 6 the Youth Company of the National Peking Opera Theatre was formally inaugurated and gave its first public performance. This is a new generation of Peking opera artists. Since liberation, efforts have been made to train young actors and actresses in this traditional art. All the members of this company have studied for eight years in the Chinese Opera School and their average age is 21. They joined the opera school in 1950, and by dint of painstaking study and hard training during these years they have laid a firm foundation in their art, mastering the techniques of singing, recitation, acting and acrobatics in many different parts. Indeed, most of them can play thirty to fifty leading roles in well-known traditional operas. The over sixty pieces which they presented as students showed considerable skill and were well received by Peking audiences.

Pictures of Taiping Revolution Discovered

Last December in Yangliuching in the province of Hopei, twenty New-Year pictures of the period of the Taiping Revolution were discovered. This is another important find comparable to that of the past discoveries of Taiping frescoes and paintings. According to the experts, these paintings date from the time when the Taiping expeditionary army reached Hopei in 1853. They show the way in which Taiping artists attacked superstition. New-Year pictures usually reflected feudal ideas and had for its content only objects considered auspicious, but one of these shows a scorpion and a praying mantis, though the scorpion is poisonous and would usually be tabooed. Another picture of fallen peach blossom on which a butterfly is alighting is also a departure from the usual tradition in which fallen flowers were considered ill-omened.

Another painting shows a praying mantis catching a grasshopper while a sparrow lurks behind it, and is probably intended as a warning against hidden enemies. Yet another depicts Swallow Cliff near Nanking, and is a landscape with no figures in it. Students of the Taiping Revolution believe that these pictures are important finds, reflecting the bitter and deep-reaching struggle of the peasant revolutionaries against feudal ideas.



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