

CHINESE LITERATURE



1
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STORIES

HAO JAN

A Sea of Happiness

Where is it, the sea of happiness?

In Lushun's sparkling harbour or in the enchanting bay of Bac Bo?
By flourishing Swatow or imposing Choushan?

.....

The fact is that the sea in all these places is happy, there are seas of happiness there.

But the happiest sea of all is that of Hsisha in the South China Sea.
Or so Miao-miao says.

Two years ago, just before the battle to defend Hsisha,* little Miao-miao went to the archipelago. And she assures everyone she meets that the sea there is the happiest in the whole world.

Miao-miao had long wanted to visit Hsisha because it was her old home.

Grandad told her: The place where a person's born is his home.

*In January 1974, the Saigon authorities in south Vietnam sent troops to encroach on the coastal waters of the Yunglo Islands in China's Hsisha Archipelago. Our naval vessels and local people fought back in self-defence.



Grandad's grandad and father had both been born in Hsisha, and so had grandad himself.

Miao-miao's father, mother and brother had been born there too.

The only one not born in Hsisha was Miao-miao. This was because her parents had gone to Kwangchow, her father to work in a shipyard building fishing boats and her mother to work in a factory making nets. So Miao-miao was born on Huangpu Island beside Humen at the mouth of the Pearl River.

Miao-miao was not at all pleased about this!

If asked where she was from she would answer: "Hsisha."

If contradicted she would square her shoulders and throw back her head. "Of course that's where I'm from. It's where my grandad and big brother still live."

Hsisha was constantly in Miao-miao's thoughts. She longed for a chance to visit her old home.

That year, the U.S. imperialists and their Saigon flunkys sent bombers to make frenzied attacks on the plains and coast of our good friend Vietnam. They flattened houses and trees, smashed boats and ripped fishing nets. . . .

China is Vietnam's vast rear. The Chinese and Vietnamese people are class brothers. The Chinese people support the Vietnamese people in resisting aggression as well as in production.

Miao-miao's father worked round the clock building new boats.

Miao-miao's mother worked round the clock weaving new nets.



When the new boats and nets were ready, both of them together with many of their work-mates were to deliver these gifts themselves to Vietnam.

That was just the time for the school holidays. Her parents couldn't leave Miao-miao at home by herself. And as grandad happened to be making a trip to Kwangchow just then to ship in some goods, he offered to take Miao-miao back with him to Hsisha.

Miao-miao was overjoyed — her dream was going to come true!

2

Miao-miao was on a boat speeding towards Hsisha.

It was a trawler belonging to the South Sea People's Commune. A big boat, as long as the classrooms in her school.

Its mast rose as straight and high as the coconut palms in the Botanical Gardens.

Attached to the mast was a white canvas awning which flapped in the wind like the wings of some huge bird.

The boat had a brand-new motor to turn the propeller, which roared like an express train.

The prow ploughed through the sea like a bulldozer, churning the water and whipping up snowy foam.

The stern flung up waves like a threshing-machine, leaving a broad wake like the tail of a peacock.

The colour of the sea changed as the boat advanced, growing clearer, bluer, more dazzling.

Soon the coast was lost to sight. All around was water stretching to the horizon.

The sea was dancing for joy.

Waves surged and plashed as if singing.

Billows broke and thundered like the roll of drums.

And the trawler was a happy boat.

As it bounded through the waves, startled flying fish plunged into the deep blue sea.

And as Miao-miao gazed about her, firing off questions, she couldn't stop laughing for glee.

Beside her sat an old man — her grandad.

Grandad's hair was grizzled, his bronzed face scored with wrinkles. His deep-set eyes narrowed, he puffed at a bamboo pipe.

Grandad told Miao-miao about the surging waves, the clouds and the fish of the Hsisha Archipelago. He told her stories about the joys and struggles of life in this lovely sea.

Grandad, formerly skipper of the trawler, was now its cook and head of the Party group. While still a boy he had fished the Hsisha sea and processed marine products. He had just made a trip to Kwangchow to deliver a whole boatload of sea cucumber, tuna, top shells and cowries. The Kwangchow Export Commodities Fair was about to open, and the Hsisha fishermen wanted friends from countries all over the world to taste their local products. They were going back to the island now — with Miao-miao.

Miao-miao looked, listened and laughed till all the excitement made her drowsy.

Grandad patted her head and laid gentle hands on her shoulders. "I'll take you to the cabin to have a nap."

"No, grandad." She pulled away. "I want to watch the sea and hear more of your stories."

Grandad told her a story then about her big brother Hai-sung.

It was a thrilling story.

... Hai-sung was swimming one day not far from the island, when he bumped into a monster of a fish.



This fish was as long as a sea cow.
It had jaws as wide as a cauldron.
Its staring red eyes flashed brighter than a hundred-watt electric bulb.

This big fish charged straight towards Hai-sung, its teeth bared to swallow him up.

But Hai-sung kept cool. Boldly and nimbly he led the monster a dance.

He swam up to the surface, followed by the big fish.

He plunged under the water, the big fish at his heels.

With a sudden turn, he straddled the creature's back.

The big fish shook its head in rage and thrashed madly with its tail.

But Hai-sung grabbed its gills and held on tight.

The fish shook and quivered, quite helpless.

Then, paddling with his feet, Hai-sung steered it ashore and dragged it up the beach. . . .

Miao-miao crowed with laughter and begged, "Grandad, tell me another."

Grandad told her another thrilling story about her brother.

. . . Once, Hai-sung was in the forest cutting firewood when he discovered a huge nettle-spurge tree.

It had fruit as red as cornelian, as yellow as golden beans.

The fruit hung in thick clusters right at the top of the tree.

This nettle-spurge swaying in the wind, sparkling in the sunshine, seemed to Hai-sung to be making fun of him.

He climbed up confidently to pick the fruit.

As he shinned up the trunk, the fruit swayed this way and that.

He climbed as high as he could and looked up at the fruit dangling overhead.

He reached up, but his arm was too short.

Hai-sung promptly slid down to the ground and climbed another tall tree growing near by. He inched his way along a branch which thrust directly towards the fruit, then let go with his feet, swinging his legs in space.

He swung to and fro till his feet caught a cluster of fruit. With a tug he pulled it over and, letting go with one hand, picked the fruit

and dropped it to the ground. He picked several clusters this way. . . .

Again Miao-miao crowed with laughter. "Good for brother! Isn't he smart!"

.

Miao-miao no longer felt tired. She no longer felt sleepy.

She sat happily on the deck as the boat drove forward through the happy billows.

3

The happy billows of the South China Sea impelled the happy boat forward.

And now they came in sight of a lovely island.

On the silver beach stood a group of jovial people.

"Hey! Our boat's back!"

"Look! Who's that little girl they've brought?"

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A lad of fifteen or sixteen stepped out from the lively crowd.

He had the thick springy hair you find only among Hsisha's fisherfolk.

He had the ruddy shining face you find only among Hsisha's fisherfolk.

He had the deep sparkling eyes you find only among Hsisha's fisherfolk.

He was wearing a light red vest over the broad deep chest you find only among the fishermen in this archipelago.

His arms bared to the blazing sun were the muscular arms typical of the fishermen in this archipelago.

Like a sea-gull now he plunged into the waves and fairly flew to the boat.

Sprinkling drops of water behind him, he leapt aboard.

Like the iron grab of a crane he caught up Miao-miao.

She struggled to free herself from the young fellow's grip and stared at him in surprise. "What's the idea?" she demanded. "Who are you?"

The lad laughed so loud that he nearly deafened her — it's only among the Hsisha fisherfolk that you hear such hearty, such resounding laughter!

"I'm your brother, Miao-miao."

"Brother?"

Miao-miao found this most bewildering. Her brother wasn't as tall as this. He wasn't so sturdy or strong.

Of course, it was two years since she'd last seen him; but in that time he'd changed out of all recognition.

"You don't look like my brother," she said.

"I don't? Why not?"

"You're too tall."

"Ha, that comes of drinking Hsisha water and eating Hsisha fish. Our Hsisha wind and waves have tempered me."

"Can I grow as tall as you?"

"Of course you can. I'll help you to shoot up!"

Miao-miao's face lit up.

4

With her brother Hai-sung beside her, Miao-miao stepped ashore the fair, fertile island.

They clambered over the reef.

The rocks here were black as iron, strong as steel, and speckled all over as if with different designs.

Half the reef was set into the shore, the other half enclosed a lagoon.

Waves crashed against the reef with a roar like thunder, tossing up spray like pear-blossom.

They walked to the coral beach.

The coral particles here were white as marble, fine as flour. And the beach was sprinkled, as if by design, with pretty shells of all kinds washed ashore by the tide.

The beach fringed the reef on one side and on the other merged with the sand-dunes.

The sun shone radiantly on the coral beach, which glinted, flashed and shimmered with heat.

10

They climbed a yellow sand-hill to gaze at the ocean all around, then at the forest behind them.

The blue, blue sea with its rolling waves seemed to stretch to infinity. This small island lapped by the ocean appeared like a little fishing boat cast adrift.

The green, green forest was a mass of thickly interlaced luxuriant foliage. Under its dense canopy the small island seemed to be wearing a winter cap with ear-flaps of the type worn in north China.

Hai-sung knew the whole island like the palm of his own hand.

He plucked a tender leaf and said: "This is ram-horn."

He caught hold of a branch and told her: "This is kalofilum."

He raised a vine. "This is our Hsisha creeper."

He laid his hand on a thick trunk. "This is a coconut palm."

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Hai-sung was a real mine of information.

With one foot he tapped a stone carved with an inscription. "This tablet was put up by some of our ancestors who came here from the mainland a thousand years ago."

He pointed at a small building. "Over eight hundred years ago, our Chinese fisherfolk built this temple here."

With glowing eyes he turned to a sand-dune shaded by palms and said: "In the war to resist Japanese aggression, the leader of the guerrillas and Party Secretary Cheng Liang used to hold meetings and camp over there."

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In the middle of this account, Hai-sung's face darkened. He frowned, clamped his lips together and shook his fist.

This puzzled Miao-miao, who had been listening raptly. Catching him by the arm she asked: "What's the matter, brother? Why are you angry?"

His eyes turned west, Hai-sung said from between clenched teeth: "A few dozen nautical miles from here there's another island called Shanhu which is part of our Hsisha Archipelago too. Our islands are like the ten fingers of someone's hands — the same flesh and blood. That island's just as lovely and fertile as this, and it belongs to our People's Republic of China. But it's been occupied by troops sent by

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the Saigon authorities in south Vietnam, and the swine refuse to leave!"

Miao-miao's heart missed a beat. "Are those the troops backed by the U.S. imperialists? The ones who've bombed the Vietnamese people's fishing boats and destroyed their fishing nets?"

"Those Saigon troops not only refuse to leave Hsisha — they keep making trouble and interfere with our fishing. In 1959, their warships drove five of our fishing boats into their harbour and kidnapped over eighty fishermen. They put our folk in prison and insulted and beat them, trying to make them sell out and turn traitor. . . ."

"What happened to our boats and fishermen?" Miao-miao cut in.

"Our Chinese fishermen have guts. They stand firm," replied Hai-sung proudly. "They fought back, blow for blow. Our government issued a stern warning, and people the world over backed us up because we were in the right. Those Saigon pirates hadn't a leg to stand on, so they had to let our boats and fishermen go. They hung on to their clothes and food though, and wouldn't give them back."

Miao-miao gritted her teeth. "The beasts! Why not send PLA warships to drive them away?"

Hai-sung shook his fist again. "That day will come."

They continued on their way, crossing a meadow.

The grass was dotted with flowers: yellow, white and purple. The flowers nodded to them gaily.

They made their way into the forest.

The trees, hung with succulent leaves and plump, sweet fruit, seemed to be clapping and nodding to them in welcome.

They reached a shed.

It had a thatched roof, straw walls and straw pallets to sleep on, sheltered from the heat and the wind. Inside was comfortable and pleasant.

Hai-sung told his sister: "This is where dad and mum lived when they fished in Hsisha. I was born here."

At that, the simple shed turned into one of those tall Kwangchow apartment buildings in Miao-miao's eyes.

Hai-sung said: "Right now, several of us sleep here — grandad, some other commune members, and me. This is where meetings are held to discuss production and revolution, where we study Chairman Mao's works and listen in to broadcasts from Peking."

Again a sudden vision of magnificent Tien An Men in Peking replaced the apartment building in Miao-miao's eyes. Without waiting for her brother, she ran towards the shed.

5

In the shed, a Party meeting was in progress.

Grandad as group leader was sitting in the middle, eagerly passing on the latest information about the revolutionary situation and the new targets in production and construction. The others listened to him with radiant faces.

"... To consolidate and develop the splendid victory of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, we must carry this movement through to the end and wipe out the poisonous influence of Lin Piao's revisionist line. We must step up our vigilance too, and put a stop to sabotage by class enemies at home and abroad. . . ."

"... To support our country's socialist construction and the revolution of the world's people, we here in Hsisha must turn our thoughts to Peking and keep the whole world in mind. We must go all out, not afraid of hardships or death, like true revolutionaries. This is the height of the fishing season now. So let's make the most of it to catch more fish and sea cucumber, boost our production, and make a better contribution to the world revolution. . . ."

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The meeting was going with a swing. Elation mounted like the rising tide.

Seated outside on the sand in the shade of a tree, Hai-sung and Miao-miao strained their ears to catch all that was said.

It was as if a cable or electric current linked the Party cadres inside with the youngsters outside.

As voices were raised in discussion inside, outside Hai-sung listened intently while Miao-miao softly repeated word after word.

As clapping sounded inside, outside Hai-sung nodded in silence while Miao-miao excitedly joined in the applause.

Grandad said: "I think I'd better stay on the island to cure fish and get supper ready for when you come back. . . . I have to keep an eye on Miao-miao too."

"Right."

"That's a good idea."

Grandad continued: "We should give young Hai-sung more chances to rough it in the wind and waves so as to toughen him. I suggest we send him out with the fishing team."

Hai-sung's face flushed. He clamped his lips together.

Miao-miao could no longer hold back. With a glance right and left she sprang to her feet and rushed into the shed, quite beside herself.

"Grandad, grandad!" she called. "I want to go to sea too. I want to rough it. I want to go out with my brother and catch big fish. . . ."

This intrusion took everyone by surprise. The next minute the whole shed resounded with laughter.

Grandad stroked Miao-miao's head. "Fishing on the high seas is no joke. We can't let you go, lass."

"Then why can brother go?"

"He's bigger than you are."

"Before I came, dad and mum told me: Brother was drawing in nets on a fishing boat when he was much smaller than I am."

"You don't know the ropes."

"Chairman Mao tells us to temper ourselves in wind and waves, not to fear hardships or death."

Grandad beamed fondly.

All the Party members in the shed nodded gravely.

Hai-sung strode in saying: "Grandad, I second Miao-miao's proposal. Let her go!"

Nodding, grandad replied incisively: "Very well."

Miao-miao threw herself into his arms, rejoicing.

And the others rejoiced with her too.

The thatched shed brimmed with happiness like the rising tide. . . .

Sunrise irradiated the eastern sky.

The sky radiant with sunrise was reflected below in the laughing sea.

The fishing team set out.

Hai-sung, a coil of rope over one shoulder, led Miao-miao by the hand to the trawler.

The sampans roped to the trawler's stern seemed a clutch of chicks following their mother hen through the grass.

Miao-miao gazed around her, blinking, fascinated yet rather tense.

In a low voice Hai-sung told her: "Once we start fishing, you sit quietly in the trawler and wait for us."

"All right."

"Mind you don't meddle with anything."

"I won't."

"You mustn't run about either."

"I know."

Hai-sung felt reassured.

He had made up his mind to help his little sister just as grandad had helped him to toughen himself in Hsisha.

He remembered grandad saying: A tree must be pruned right from the time it's a sapling to grow into good timber. And people must train from childhood to take over the torch of the proletarian revolution.

Hai-sung was quite clear about his goal in life: he meant to become a Communist like grandad. When grandad was young, he had fought the Japanese invaders in Hsisha with Party Secretary Cheng Liang, co-ordinating with the PLA to liberate Hainan Island. Then he'd taken the lead in setting up a fishing co-operative. All his life he'd served the people of Hsisha.

Hai-sung wanted all the younger generation of Hsisha to grow up like these veteran revolutionaries. Of course he hoped the same for his younger sister.

Miao-miao's heart was singing as she sat on the trawler. Her bright eyes darted left and right. The trawler put out of the lagoon, tugging

the sampans behind it. After passing the reef it chugged swiftly towards the fishing ground far out to sea.

When they reached the fishing ground, the sturdy young fellows in the team split up to man the sampans.

And Hai-sung, too, jumped into one of the sampans.

Like a flock of wild geese the sampans, filled with laughing youngsters, fanned out across the sea.

Miao-miao kept her eyes fixed on the sampan her brother was in.

Splash! Splash! One by one the young men dived overboard. When they reappeared from the foam, streaming with water, as if by magic their hands which had been empty were holding treasures from the sea.

One was clutching a big quivering sea cucumber.

Another was holding aloft a heavy bright top shell.

Hai-sung was the nimblest and quickest of the lot. His catch was the biggest of all!

Miao-miao clapped her hands.

The young men, having dumped their catch in the sampans, dived down again to the sea-bed. After several trips the sampans were filled to the brim.

As they swiftly rowed their catches back to the trawler, Miao-miao called out an eager welcome, then helped the crew pull on the ropes to haul up the crates.

At first she was afraid Hai-sung might disapprove. But with a smile and a wink he egged her on.

She worked away with a will.

After several more trips the trawler's hold was filled with sea cucumber and shells.

In the distance two junks with outboard engines were busily casting their net. As soon as it was drawn taut, they put on speed.

The net, hundreds of feet in length, reached down to the bottom of the sea like a huge bag or long wall.

The shoal of fish rounded up on the ocean bed was dragged swiftly forward, leaping and jostling each other. As more and more were caught, they were crowded closer together. The power-driven junks drove full speed ahead, as if straining every nerve.

The skipper gave the order: "Hoist the net."

With eager shouts, both crews ran out on to the deck.

They started turning the winches.

As the task became more strenuous, more men joined in.

The crews of both vessels lined up by the bulwarks hauled with might and main, as if having a tug of war.

The engines chugged in unison.

The men roared chanties.

Feet thudded on the deck.

The winch cables creaked.

Spray cascaded through the air.

Fish large and small leapt in the net.

The crews shovelled and forked them out.

Jubilant youngsters plunged into the net to carry out armfuls of fish.

The most slippery customers were the little groupers: they darted this way and that.

The most stubborn were the big parrot-fish: they put up quite a fight.

Now the hatches were a mass of gold and silver.

Now the fish were heaped so high, it seemed as if some fabulous hoard of gems had been poured out on the deck.

.....

"About-ship!"

"About-ship!"

Hai-sung and the other youngsters had now returned to the trawler, beads of water and sweat clinging to their jubilant faces.

Miao-miao stared unwinkingly at her big brother.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" he demanded.

Rather bashfully she asked: "How long will it take me to grow as big as you?"

"Not long."

"And to be as smart as you are?"

"If you try hard and go all out, you'll outstrip me — that's for sure."

Miao-miao chuckled.

Laughter floated across the sea under the setting sun.

The trawler had a full cargo.

The sampans were loaded to the brim.

Singing all the way, they approached their little island.

The laughter on the boats mingled with the laughter on shore, adding to the jubilation on the island.

Bamboo crates piled with fish were carried ashore.

Straw bags filled with shells were unloaded.

The gangplanks creaked as men raced up and down them.

The silver beach piled with the treasures of Hsisha seemed a busy thoroughfare in Kwangchow or Chanchiang.

7

Happy Hsisha in the South China Sea! Yet this happy archipelago has its share of troubles too.

Miao-miao had her own experience of trouble here.

What, trouble in this happy sea? The mere idea had never crossed Miao-miao's mind. Hai-sung had tried to prepare her. Hadn't she listened, or hadn't she understood?

In this life, trouble is inevitable. And one day, sure enough, it materialized.

After a morning's hard work the fishing team left their nets floating and rowed their sampans back alongside the trawler. It was time to knock off for lunch.

Since coming to Hsisha, Miao-miao had developed a big appetite. Everything tasted so good here, she ate two bowls of rice at every meal.

Suddenly the skipper hurried out of the cabin. "Comrades!" he cried. "Get ready to put straight back."

The crew sprang to their feet and promptly went into action.

Some stowed away fishing-tackle.

Some weighed anchor.

Some took down the awning.

Some dismantled the mast.

The faces of all were grave, they worked at top speed.

In surprise, Miao-miao asked Hai-sung: "What's happened, brother?"

Busy as he was, Hai-sung took time out to explain: "The transistor radio has just broadcast a storm warning. A gale over the South Sea has changed course. It's heading this way — fast!"

"It'll be nice and cool then. Why go back?"

"Hsisha's winds are a real menace. At a moment's notice, a hurricane can spring up. It'll tear your nets to shreds and capsize your boat. You won't even know what's hit you!"

Miao-miao began to feel nervous.

No sooner were they ready to start back than the smiling sea started scowling.

A wind sprang up. It blew harder every minute.

The waves grew higher and higher.

The sky clouded over, clouds massing thicker and thicker.

Start the engine! Back to the island!

The trawler pitched up and down, buffeted by wind and waves.

The engine-man stepped on the gas and put on full speed to hasten their return.

The salt sea-water hissed across the boat, splattering the cabin and the crew.

Hai-sung had grown up in the South China Sea and weathered many Hsisha storms. He had no sense of fear.

He clasped his young sister to him. Miao-miao snuggled closer to him.

"Don't be afraid, Miao-miao."

"I'm not."

"You must be a brave girl."

"I will."

"If we're brave we can win through the worst difficulties. We can temper ourselves and really raise our level."

"Yes, I know."

Miao-miao drew herself up like her brother.

The black cloud-racked sky loomed just above their heads.

The storm-tossed sea was boiling all around them.

Sky and ocean seemed to have merged. The horizon was lost in one vast murkiness.

Hai-sung kept his footing firmly in the prow, like a coastal pine able to weather any storm.

His heart was ablaze with excitement. For in any crisis or danger his thoughts turned to grandad and the tales of revolution which grandad had told him about the guerrilla leader and Captain Fu Hai-lung on the PLA battleship *Chinsung*. . . .

He would follow the example of these fine islanders and, like them, prove himself a good son of Hsisha. . . .

Hai-sung kept his eyes fixed on the black sea ahead. Suddenly he cried: "Skipper! Starboard, a sandbank. . . ."

The skipper nodded and reversed the helm.

Straining his eyes through the darkness, Hai-sung presently cried again: "Skipper! Larboard, a reef!"

The skipper nodded and whipped the helm round.

The trawler steered safely forward.

Miao-miao wasn't afraid any more. Like her brother she kept her black eyes fixed ahead. But apart from clouds, mist and waves she could see nothing. She might have been blindfolded!

Abruptly Hai-sung shouted: "Quick, skipper, look! To the northwest. See those two black dots?"

Other fishermen, on the alert, rushed to the bulwark to stare in that direction.

Miao-miao looked too. But not a thing could she see except clouds and waves. She fumed with exasperation.

Hai-sung sprang forward now crying: "Cast off a sampan. I'll go and see what those two dots really are."

The skipper hesitated. Wasn't Hai-sung too young to let him take such a risk?

Without waiting for his order, three youngsters loosed the hawser and jumped into a sampan, Hai-sung in the lead.

He seized an oar and rowed off.

The small sampan, staggering through the wind and waves, was swallowed up by a great billow.

Wide-eyed, her heart beating fast, Miao-miao watched to see it reappear.

She was telling herself: "Brother said I must be brave. . . ."

She waited and waited. The sampan did not return.

She waited and waited. Still no sign of it.

The skipper ordered: "All hands, man your posts. We're going after the sampan."

Like a cleaver, the trawler sliced through the swirling waves, speeding ahead through the wind.

In her heart Miao-miao was crying: "Where are you, brother? Where are you?"

That was real trouble, wasn't it?

8

A junk had been wrecked on its way back from a distant fishing ground to Chinching Island.

The gale had blown it off course and, its crew not knowing this part of the sea, it struck a reef and capsized.

Hai-sung and his two mates had rescued two of the fishermen who were struggling in the waves, but hard as they searched they could not find the other two of the crew.

Hai-sung was treading water, gripping the sampan. His streaming face as overcast as the sky, he made his report to the skipper.

After thinking the matter over, the experienced skipper suggested: "The two men you haven't found may have been trapped in the cabin. It's possible they're still underneath the boat."

Hai-sung nodded eagerly. "That's an idea! They *were* in the cabin when the junk capsized."

"Won't they have drowned then?" asked Miao-miao.

"When a boat capsizes but stays afloat," said the skipper, "the cabin will be only half full of water. If you keep your head above water you won't drown."

"I'll go and have a look!" cut in Hai-sung.

Letting go of the sampan, he plunged like a fish below the stormy waves.

The two other youngsters followed suit, submerging to explore the overturned boat.

The wind blasted harder and harder.

The clouds pressed lower and lower.

Huge waves leapt high as houses.

All aboard the trawler kept their eyes glued on the keel of the overturned junk.

The keel bobbed up and down, waves swirling and boiling round it. Abruptly, a lad shot up through the foam. Clutching the keel he shook his head. "Couldn't find anything down below."

A few minutes later, another lad appeared. His hands on the rope, he said with a frown, "Couldn't find anything down there."

"Where's Hai-sung?" asked the skipper anxiously.

"Didn't come across him."

The skipper stripped off his pants. "I'll find him."

"Good, good!" exclaimed Miao-miao.

Just then the wind swept down on them. With a roar like thunder a huge wave broke in a flurry of white foam, and out from it shot Hai-sung.

He wiped the water from his face and gulped some mouthfuls of air.

"Found them," he gasped, "in the cabin."

Hearing this good news, people yelled:

"Why don't they come out?"

"Delay is dangerous!"

"I knocked on the cabin door," called Hai-sung. "They knocked back. But the door's wedged. They can't get out."

People eyed each other, then proposed:

"More of us had better go down and right the boat."

"It'll take all hands to get it right side up."

Hai-sung thought quickly, then raised one hand. "Skipper, give me a chopper!"

"What for?"

"To break into the cabin."

"Come back aboard. I'll do it."

"I know where the door is," cried Hai-sung. "You'd have to search. There's no time to be lost. We must rescue our class brothers."

"Can't have it, lad."

Hai-sung gripped the bulwark with both hands and pleaded: "Skipper, you have the whole crew to command. I'm the obvious one to go. If I come back, well and good. If not, tell our Party group leader, tell my grandad, I've found true happiness doing as he taught me. . . ."

All aboard were too moved for words. Their faces glowed.

With a glance at Miao-miao, Hai-sung told her gravely: "Miao-miao, you asked me to teach you how to be a good Hsisha fishergirl. Well, this is how: pass me a chopper."

Miao-miao jumped up crying, "Yes, brother!"

She fetched a chopper and handed it down to Hai-sung.

He nodded at her, then plunged back into the sea.

The skipper raised his fist and shouted: "Comrades, we must learn from Hai-sung. All good swimmers, follow me!"

At once some seized lifebelts, others picked up ropes.

Swiftly they dived overboard.

The wind roared.

Waves pounded the vessel.

It seemed ages to Miao-miao before, one by one, they came up to the surface again.

She gazed anxiously at each face in turn, but could not see her brother.

It flashed through her head: If I were brother's age and could swim in such stormy seas, I'd be able to dive down to find him!

Suddenly a wave foamed red, as if bursting into red flower.

"Blood!?"

"Yes, blood."

The next instant the red foam scattered as Hai-sung surfaced.

He had one arm round an old fisherman who had lost consciousness.

Hai-sung had rescued both men trapped in the cabin.

Hai-sung had saved both men's lives.

All made haste to throw lifebelts and ropes. Pairs of powerful hands reached down to pull them aboard.

Miao-miao, skipping for joy, helped rescue these shipwrecked men.

When Hai-sung and the men he had saved were safely aboard, his comrades crowded round.



Hai-sung was streaming with water. His face was white, his lips were blue with cold, but his spirits were higher than ever. Glancing round at them all, he smiled at his young sister.

She was going to throw herself into his arms but stopped abruptly. "Brother, your leg! It's bleeding. . . ."

Hai-sung shook his head, quite regardless of his wound. "A little scratch. It's nothing."

The others gathered closer to look.

The men rescued had now recovered their breath. They thanked Hai-sung from the bottom of their hearts.

"This youngster's a real hero."

"We must learn from you."

Hai-sung flushed scarlet with embarrassment.

He turned and ran into the cabin, coming back with a coat which he draped round the shoulders of the old fisherman.

Tears trickled down the old man's cheeks. His heart was too full for speech.

.....

The wind boomed and trumpeted.

The sea roared with glee.

Amid the general rejoicing, Miao-miao kept her black eyes fixed on her brother's face as she reached an important conclusion: It's because brother and the rest weren't afraid of danger, because they fought so bravely, that they turned this stormy sea into a sea of joy.

Yes, the sea was exulting, it was a happy sea!

9

With his bad leg, Hai-sung couldn't go out to sea.

The skipper was afraid the lad wouldn't accept this. He asked the Party group leader to talk to Hai-sung.

Grandad accepted the task. He told Hai-sung: "If you get salt water into that wound of yours, it will fester and get worse. You must rest on the island till it heals, then you can go out fishing."

"All right," agreed Hai-sung.

So Hai-sung stayed ashore to recuperate.

And Miao-miao stayed with him to keep him company.

The sky had cleared.

The wind had dropped.

The trees were greener than ever.

The wild flowers in the grass were brighter than ever.

Brown boobies wheeled overhead through the clear blue sky.

Swarms of beetles crawled over the glittering beach.

In the sunlight the sea sparkled a deep azure blue, its ripples breaking up the reflections of sails.

.....

What a happy time that was!

Yet Hai-sung sat frowning on the reef.

Miao-miao caught a hermit-crab and asked: "Why does it skulk in here, brother? Why won't it come out?"

"It's lazy."

Miao-miao caught a beetle and showed it to him. "Why does it burrow into the flowers, brother?"

"It's greedy."

Miao-miao knew that laziness and greed were no good. Only landlords and capitalists were lazy and greedy, or people who had no love for socialism.

She smashed the hermit-crab and squashed the beetle. Then she ran to and fro past Hai-sung, stealing glances at his face from time to time.

"Does your leg hurt, brother?"

"No."

"Really and truly?"

"Really."

"I don't believe it."

"In Hsisha we don't tell lies."

"What's upset you then?"

"Not being able to catch fish for the commune. . . ."

That touched a chord in Miao-miao's heart.

Miao-miao wanted to go out with the trawler too — she'd been so happy out fishing!

Wasn't it grand sending fish you'd caught yourself, fresh fish and cured fish, to Peking and to Kwangchow?

But because her brother couldn't go, neither could she.

Squatting down in front of Hai-sung, she reminded him of grandad's promise. "Don't worry. As soon as you're better you can go out to sea. And I'll go with you."

Hai-sung sprang to his feet, a determined look on his face. "No, it's no good waiting, I must put up a fight."

"A fight? Who are you going to fight?"

"This game leg of mine. Difficulties."

"But how?"

"You willing to join in?"

"Of course!"

At that Hai-sung smiled. He took Miao-miao by the hand and started off for the shed.

Grandad was cooking on the stove in front of the shed.

Rings of smoke wreathed his grizzled head.

Leaping flames lit up his broad chest.

The last few days the old man had been very happy.

He was very proud of his grandson, not that he ever praised the lad to his face.

Hai-sung stood in front of the old man in silence. Then he said:

"Grandad, tomorrow you can go out fishing."

"I have to cook for our team."

"I'll do it for you."

"You? Can you cook?"

"I can learn."

"With that leg of yours? . . ."

"I can't go out to sea, but I can work here while you go out with the trawler in my place."

"Cooking is important too, lad. And not all that simple. Our men can't work well unless they're properly fed."

"I'll make a good job of it."

"Well, first you must learn. I'll teach you when I come back from the sea."

"I'll see the meal is ready!"

"All right, that's settled then."

Realizing what had been in Hai-sung's mind, Miao-miao clapped her hands. "Good for you, brother! You're a real activist."

Grandad chuckled. "That's the Hsisha style."

10

Another happy day dawned on this fair and fertile island in the South China Sea.

Hai-sung chopped firewood.

Miao-miao picked up branches and twigs.

Hai-sung drew water.

Miao-miao helped him carry it.

Hai-sung scoured the cooking pan.

Miao-miao washed up the bowls.

As Hai-sung started washing rice, Miao-miao paused in her work to ask dubiously: "Do you know how to cook rice, brother?"

Not pausing in his work, Hai-sung answered confidently: "Chairman Mao teaches us that knowledge comes from practice, it doesn't drop down from the sky. We're not born know-alls. We have to learn by doing."

"Suppose you spoil the rice?"

"We'll experiment by cooking a small pan to start with."

"That's an idea."

"If it's no good we'll eat it ourselves, and learn from our mistake."

"Right."

They put the rice in the pan and added water, then lit the stove.

The fire burned brightly, giving off a good heat.

Hai-sung bent over the pan to sniff. After a couple of sniffs he nodded and grinned. "It smells all right." Miao-miao also bent over the pan like her brother. After sniffing hard, she said, "It smells quite appetizing."

Their first meal was a success.

A real success. The pan of white rice was done to a turn, the fresh fish chowder was tasty.

At dusk the fishermen came back, sweaty and hungry. As they ate they said:

"These kids are pretty smart!"

"Young Hai-sung can make a go of anything."

"Don't say that," protested Hai-sung. "We've got to try harder and do better. Then you'll have more energy to boost production."

"We're all grateful to you, lad."

"Write a poster commending him."

"Don't give me all the credit," protested Hai-sung again. "Miao-miao helped me."

"Good for Miao-miao!"

"Commend them both, they're fine youngsters."

Such praise made Miao-miao feel quite shy. Like Hai-sung, she brushed it aside. "Don't commend me — I'm learning from my brother."

Everyone burst out laughing heartily.

.....

Yes, those were happy, happy days.

Then came another happy morning.

Since the fishing boats did not come back at midday, Hai-sung took his sister to the wood to pick fruit.

Miao-miao's job was transportation. Each time her brother filled a bamboo basket, she carried it back to the shed.

Basket after basket was carried to the shed and the fruit laid out for the fishermen to enjoy on their return.

When enough had been picked, Hai-sung proposed: "Let's carry out another fighting task — catch turtles!"

"Have you a boat?"

"We won't have to go out to sea, they'll come to our door."

"Will we use pitchforks?"

"No, our hands. Come on. Hurry!"

He led the way swiftly forward.

Miao-miao followed close behind.

Together they searched right and left till they reached a deserted corner of the beach. Hai-sung parted the ram-horn shrubs and pointed ahead.

Sure enough, Miao-miao saw a dozen or so big turtles crawling up out of the sea. The largest looked like a big cauldron turned upside-down, the smallest was the size of a wash-basin.

Thrilled yet tense she rubbed her hands, whispering: "Aren't they whoppers? How do we catch them? If they get away that'll be too bad."

Without answering, Hai-sung crawled through the undergrowth then pounced forward to seize one turtle by its shell and turn it upside-down.

The big turtle lay on its back, its four flippers flailing, unable to get up.

Hai-sung left it to turn another upside-down.

The rest of the turtles took fright and turned to make off.

Miao-miao was looking on in stupefaction. As he gave chase, Hai-sung called to her:

"Go on, catch them! Turtles don't bite."

Miao-miao braced herself and ran forward. She grabbed the biggest turtle she could see and tried to turn it over.

But the turtle was too heavy for her to lift.

Hai-sung had to lend her a hand.

Several turtles had escaped back into the sea, but not those lying on their backs. Their stupid eyes flickered, their mottled undersides shone in the sun.

Miao-miao clapped her hands and skipped at sight of this catch, then doubled up with laughter.

Hai-sung grinned jubilantly. "We'll come and catch some more at noon tomorrow. Even if we can't go out fishing, it's fine to be able to catch something for the commune."

Miao-miao nodded. "You stay here and watch them, brother, while I fetch two crates from the shed to carry them back."

With that she scampered off. But halfway home she turned and hurried back. Clapping her hands she cried: "Some PLA men have come, brother. They've just come ashore."

Hai-sung was overjoyed. He loved the PLA men who guarded their motherland.

Taking Miao-miao by the hand he ran eagerly to meet them.

II

Hai-sung and Miao-miao ran forward eagerly, brushing past the branches of trees, grazing wild flowers and startling sea birds so that they took wing.

Both youngsters were eager to see the PLA men, each for a special reason.

Hai-sung wanted to learn to fire a gun. For a militia squad was about to be formed on the island and issued with new rifles. Hai-sung was determined to join the militia.

Miao-miao wanted the PLA men to tell her stories. For her primary school had started a story-telling club to tell the people in the neighbourhood stories about revolutionary heroes. Miao-miao hoped to hear some new stories which she could take back.

They crossed the golden sand-dunes, the silver coral beach. Before they reached the big rocks, the men they had come to meet appeared before them.

These three men in PLA uniform, one with a pistol in his hand, the other two holding rifles, were swaying on their feet with fatigue and kept halting to look carefully over their shoulders.

It was the scrawny soldier with the pistol who first spotted Hai-sung and Miao-miao. He stopped dead in his tracks, then stepped forward with a smile. Using the Hainan dialect with some difficulty as if he were a stranger to these parts, he said: "Ha, two little fisherfolk. How are you, youngsters? You've had a hard time."

Miao-miao threw out her arms, meaning to run over and hug them.

Hai-sung held her back, scandalized by the three guns pointed at them. What's the matter with these three PLA men? he wondered. How can they point their guns at their own people? But he was a cool-headed youngster. Not letting his disapproval show on his face, he replied with a smile: "We're fine. The times are not at all hard. Where are you from?"

"From garrison headquarters in Hainan," answered Scrawny.

Hai-sung thought: the last few times we had visits from comrades from that garrison, they always let us know in advance they were coming. Why have these three sneaked ashore without any warning? The way they drag themselves along is odd too. Are they ill, hot, seasick or what? He asked: "Which company do you belong to?"

"The newly formed special company," said Scrawny. "We're here on an extremely important mission."

"What mission?" cried Miao-miao. "We'll help you. My brother can row a boat and swim — he's really smart."

Hai-sung patted her head to make her pipe down, then asked Scrawny: "Is Garrison Commander Kuo well?"

"Very well indeed. It was he who sent us here."

This increased Hai-sung's suspicions. There was no Commander Kuo at garrison headquarters. He had thought the name up on the spur of the moment to test these three sudden arrivals.

Miao-miao was quick in the uptake too. From her brother's expression and the way he was talking, as well as from the behaviour of the three men, she sensed that something was wrong. She pulled a long face, pursed her lips and said nothing more.

Hai-sung, on the other hand, continued even more cordially: "You're very welcome. Come and have a rest in our shed."

Scrawny looked round dubiously before responding: "Right. You lead the way, lad."

Hai-sung started off calmly enough, but his mind was racing. Were these really PLA men? If not, what was their game? How to handle them?

After a while he turned his head to ask: "Did you come on the naval patrol boat?"

Scrawny's jaw dropped. "Is a patrol boat passing here today?"

"Of course!" put in Miao-miao. "A big one. I know lots of the seamen on that boat. They're fine."

Hai-sung added: "Our navy often patrols these waters to escort convoys or fishing fleets. Did you just barge in here without first making contact?"

"You kids mustn't ask. That's a military secret."

"You may call it a secret but I bet they know it," said Hai-sung cheerfully. "They happen to be calling here today."

"When?"

"This evening. Just wait here and we'll entertain you together."

Scrawny forced a smile. "We're different outfits, we can't wait. Did your people come here to fish or for some other reason?"

"You mustn't ask," retorted Hai-sung. "That's *our* secret, none of your business."

"Right!" chipped in Miao-miao. "If you won't say what you're up to, neither will we. So there!"

With a foxy smile Scrawny looked round, remarking: "I see you've built sheds and roads here and planted vegetables. Are they for the army?"

"Army and people are one family," said Hai-sung. "We support the army in every way we can."

"Is a big force to be stationed here?"

"You ought to know its size."

"I do, I do."

"Then why ask?"

"I was quizzing you. Troops come here to aid the Vietcong, the Vietnamese people, I mean. Don't you know that?"

"The Chinese and the Vietnamese people are brothers. China's the Vietnamese people's big rear area. All our seven hundred million people are ready to fight. We are willing to give our Vietnamese brothers whatever they need."

"That's right," cried Miao-miao proudly. "Our dad and mum are building new boats and making new fishing nets for our good friends in Vietnam. That's why I was able to come here with grandad to see brother."

Looking still more down in the mouth, Scrawny said to Hai-sung: "Good for you! You talk like a young activist if not a Youth Leaguer...."

"My brother's been to Peking!" cut in Miao-miao. "And I'm a Little Red Soldier."

"That's fine." Scrawny wagged his head. "We're here on a mission. Our base is on another island; but we've finished our rice and all our men are hungry. They sent us to ask for some rice. And I want you two youngsters to come back with us, to tell our commander the situation here...."

Miao-miao shook her head. "We've got to get supper for the fishing team. We've no time to go with you, ch, brother? How can we go?"

To her surprise, Hai-sung replied: "We have rice and we'll go with you. But first come and rest in our shed."

The three men looked too tired to move. Their faces waxen, their eyes glazed, they clambered painfully up the golden sand-dune, panting for breath as if at their last gasp.

Hai-sung's mind was in a turmoil, but he strode coolly on. They may be enemy agents sent here to make trouble, he was thinking. We must find some way to deal with them.

He turned to look out to sea. All around stretched white-crested waves with not a sail in sight.

He looked up at the green woods. There were flowers everywhere but not a soul in sight.

He took a grip on himself, determined to be as brave as the guerilla leader, as cool-headed as Party Secretary Cheng Liang, and to think through problems as carefully as grandad. If he soldiered on steadily, he could surely get the better of these scoundrels.

When the three men reached the shed, their eyes were caught by some left-over rice in a pan. Like famished wolves they rushed towards it.

Hai-sung barred their way. "That rice has gone bad, I'll cook you some more. And I'll get you some fish and prawns to go with your wine."

The men craned their necks eagerly, their mouths watering.

Miao-miao's lips parted to protest that the wine was for grandad and the fishing team; but Hai-sung tipped her a wink, and she held her tongue.

Hai-sung took his time over fetching the rice bin.

He took his time over fetching a vat of wine.

The three men leered as they watched him.

"Wait while I fetch some fish," said Hai-sung next.

"Where from?" asked Scrawny suspiciously.

"A creel just off the beach. I'll bring a couple back."

"Live fish or dead ones?"

"Right now they're alive — but soon they'll be dead fish."

"It's fresh fish we want. Don't poison us with stinking fish."

"Don't worry. I promise you'll find these to your liking."

Scrawny squinted thoughtfully at his famished companions and blustered: "You swear it, kid? If you poison us — watch out." He levelled his pistol at Hai-sung.

Inwardly fuming, Hai-sung longed to snatch the gun and knock the scoundrel over. But he kept calm. "Why be so suspicious?" he complained. "If we poisoned you, how could we account to the people? Don't worry, you won't die of poisoning." He turned cheerfully to Miao-miao who was pouting. "Come on.

Help me fetch the fish and gather some firewood. They're in a hurry to leave."

Scrawny flopped down in the shade of a tree. "All right. Look snappy. . . . If you support the army, don't hold us up."

Hai-sung fetched a glittering carving knife from the shed. He deliberately flaunted this in front of the men.

The two zombies sprawled on the sand shrank back in fright.

"Hey! What's the idea?"

"Put that down!"

Miao-miao clapped and crowed: "Oh, what cowards!"

Hai-sung hefted the carving knife. "I've brought this to kill fish, not to chop off your heads. Keep your heads — they may come in useful." He burst out laughing.

12

Hai-sung led Miao-miao into the forest.

In the thick green forest not a branch stirred, not a leaf rustled. No birds or insects could be seen.

All was utterly still. This small island which usually rang all day long with laughter had never been so utterly still and silent. The only sound now was the rustle of the two young islanders' feet in the deep leaf-mould.

As soon as they were out of sight of the shed, Miao-miao caught hold of Hai-sung's jacket and fixed bright anxious eyes on his face. "They look odd to me, brother, not like PLA men. Are they good or bad?"

After a moment's thought, Hai-sung raised his head to gaze west across the sea. "They're a bad lot — that's pretty certain."

"Bad men pretending to be from the PLA?"

"That's right."

"Are they landlords?"

"Scum of the same sort."

"Where are they from?"

"They must be spies sent by the Saigon troops."

Miao-miao started. For a second her face turned white. She had seen spies in films and picture-books. Little had she thought to meet some here in the happy Hsisha islands. "What have they come for, brother?" she asked anxiously.

"It looks as if they're scouting for military intelligence," he answered thoughtfully. "They want to kidnap us too, the way they once kidnapped granddad and the others."

This made Miao-miao feel even tenser. She asked: "Are you sure?"

"Yes." Hai-sung nodded. "Judging by the way they talk and act. . . ."

"What shall we do? We can't let them kidnap us, not if they kill us! Quick, brother, think up some way out. I'll do whatever you say."

Hai-sung hugged his sister tight and kissed her. "That's the spirit, kid. Our Hsisha children have guts." He squared his shoulders and told her solemnly: "The hands of these flunkeys of the imperialists are dripping with the blood of the Vietnamese people. Now they've sneaked in here posing as PLA men, invading our People's Republic of China. We must tackle them boldly and firmly, to safeguard our socialist motherland and avenge our Vietnamese brothers. That's the way to be worthy successors to the revolution."

"That's right!" Miao-miao's face lit up. "Go on, tell me what to do."

"My idea is this: catch them the way we caught those turtles. They're asking for it, coming here like this. Don't let one of them get away."

Miao-miao's eyes shone. "Catch them, fine! But how?"

"We must think up a way."

"Granddad and the others won't be back till late."

"We'll do for these spies ourselves."

"We have no guns."

Hai-sung thought for a moment then said: "We'll learn from Yang Tzu-jung and Li Yu-ho in the revolutionary model operas — use strategy to get the better of these swine!"

"What strategy?"

"Pin them down so that they can't move till our fishing boats come back."

"Suppose they won't do as we say?"

Hai-sung saw the sense of this question. Gazing anxiously round, he remembered a story granddad had told him. During the war to resist Japan, Party Secretary Cheng Liang on Treasure Island had hidden in the water by the reef then overturned the invaders' boat and buried the lot of them in the vast Hsisha sea. Stirred by this recollection he stamped his foot. "I know what," he said from between clenched teeth. "Remember that story I told you about upsetting the enemy boat?"

Miao-miao nodded.

"Well, today we'll use Party Secretary Cheng's tactics."

Miao-miao clapped her hands. "Fine! I'll help you overturn their boat and kill them."

"Steady on. Don't get too worked up. Go and see what they're doing while I find somewhere to hide; then we'll figure out how to capsize their boat."

Miao-miao sobered up. "All right, brother. I'm not afraid," she said firmly. "I'll do whatever you say."

"They want to carry us off with them, the devils. When the boat's under way, we'll jump overboard and capsize it. . . . If we can't do that, we'll each drag one of them into the water with us. Even if we die, we'll fight them to the end!"

Spoiling for a fight, brother and sister went into action.

Miao-miao gathered firewood to take back to the shed.

She walked with firm, sturdy steps, not once looking back.

Hai-sung followed her with his eyes. Then, his heart ablaze, he bounded towards the beach.

He raced past nettle-spurge trees, through ram-horn bushes, and crossing the sand-dune reached the coral beach. There floating by the shore was a rubber dinghy.

It was a large dinghy fitted with a motor and various other equipment.

His heart beating faster, Hai-sung thought: With three spies and the two of us aboard, this boat will be heavily loaded. It'd take a dozen people to overturn it.

As he eyed the dinghy another problem occurred to him: If we let the devils take us aboard and fight them with our bare hands, with all this modern equipment they may get away!

What was the answer to that?

He paced the shore anxiously.

The sea tossed uneasily.

The tide pounded the beach then recoiled, swirling and eddying.

That gave Hai-sung an idea. Having looked and listened to make sure that no one was near, like a brown booby swooping down to catch a fish he plunged to the side of the dinghy.

He raised his carving knife and with a few strong slashes cut through the cable. Then he tugged the dinghy out to where high waves were swirling and set it adrift.

The dinghy bobbed up and down in the swirling water as the wind blew it out to sea. It drifted rapidly away. Soon it was hidden from sight by the crashing billows.

Hai-sung thought: Now the enemy's trapped on the island. If we can keep them here till dusk, grandad and the rest will come back to settle their hash. Let them feel the iron fists of the Chinese people!

He clambered down the side of the reef and, stooping, hauled up a bamboo creel from which he took out a big fish.

The big fish thrashed about wildly.

Hai-sung started back, then turned to take another look. No sign of the dinghy. Exultantly he hurried back towards the shed.

Hai-sung was not a happy-go-lucky youngster. He knew that sterner ordeals lay ahead. He would need all his resourcefulness, courage and coolness to handle the enemy intruders.

In a low voice, facing the sea, he said: "Don't worry, grandad. I'm not going to lose face for our motherland or for the people of Hsisha."

Surging billows crashed as if echoing his pledge.

These three suspicious characters were, indeed, spies sent from Saigon to make trouble.

For a long time the Saigon authorities had forcibly occupied China's Shanhu Island and kept sending out small boats manned by so-called "meteorologists" to spy on the other islands.

The victory of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution had resulted in an upsurge in China's socialist industry and agriculture. This had dismayed the imperialists, revisionists and other reactionaries and thrown the Saigon lackeys into a frenzy. The rapid development of Hsisha's fishing industry, the steady increase in power-driven junks and the construction on the different islands alarmed them and made them gnash their teeth with rage. They kept reconnoitring the archipelago, hoping thus to find out how long they could drag out their existence.

The spies sent here today had a dual mission: to carry off islanders to supply information, and to seize grain because their own supply was exhausted. At first the three men had not dared carry out these orders, for fear of the Chinese people's navy and the fishermen's militia. They spent several days reconnoitring, keeping their binoculars trained on this small island. When they had ascertained that there were only two youngsters left on the island and that at midday no boats were in the vicinity, they finally screwed up the courage to make a landing. They were gloating now over the success of their plan.

As Hai-sung approached the shed he heard Miao-miao disputing with Scrawny.

She turned to Hai-sung indignantly and cried: "Brother, they're as bad as pirates! They've taken all our study materials, our books and exercise-books, our rice and sea cucumbers, our shells and shrimps. They want to carry off the lot."

Scrawny said with a foxy smile to Hai-sung: "When we get aboard our ship, we'll pay you a fair price, I promise you that."

Hai-sung felt ready to burst but hid his anger. Taking Miao-miao's arm he told her: "Never mind. Let them take the lot, if they can."

Scrawny raised clasped hands in salute. "That's what I call a progressive, enlightened boy. It's your duty to see we have all we need, isn't it?"

"Don't squabble with them, Miao-miao," said Hai-sung. "Let's hurry up and cook their dinner, then see them off." With that he set about killing the fish.

Miao-miao took the hint. Still, she couldn't help glaring at the spies.

The three enemy agents were ravenous, impatient and nervous. Their eyes fixed on the water in the pan and the fire in the stove, they kept urging: "Add more firewood. Build up the fire."

Hai-sung nodded. Deliberately, he put on wet wood.

"Isn't it ready yet?" demanded Scrawny.

"Nearly," Hai-sung assured him.

Scrawny's mouth was watering. He licked his parched, cracked lips. The acrid smoke set him coughing. A glance at his watch made him frantic. He growled in Vietnamese to the other two spies: "We've wasted too much time here. We must look out. . . . One of you go down and keep an eye on the dinghy. When the food's cooked, we'll bring it down with the wine. Okay?"

One of his men answered: "I'm so starved, I'm all in. There's no shade on the beach, I couldn't take it. He's in better shape, let him go."

The other man objected: "The dinghy's not going to get lost. What are you afraid of?"

Scrawny glared at him. "I order you to go."

The man rose unwillingly to his feet, complaining: "Our task's not done yet, you've not been promoted, yet you throw your weight about. . . ."

.....

Although Hai-sung did not understand this exchange, when one of the men shambled off towards the beach it was easy to guess his errand. Laughing up his sleeve he thought: Who knows where their dinghy's drifted by now? They won't find a trace of it. . . . We should be prepared, though, for any new tricks they may play.

At last the rice and fish were cooked.

The two famished spies each grabbed a bowl and heaped it with rice, then started wolfing this.

Just then the third man came lurching back from the sand-dune. "Squad leader!" he panted. "We've had it!"

"What's up?" demanded Scrawny. "Out with it, man."

"Our dinghy. . . . The cable's snapped. It's drifted away. . . ."

Crack! Scrawny slapped his cheek. "I told you to guard it but you refused. I'll have you shot for this. . . ."

Miao-miao clapped gleefully and cried: "Go on, hit him! Dog bites dog. . . ."

She pulled herself up and, glancing at her brother, stuck out her tongue in dismay. But luckily the scoundrels hadn't heard.

Hai-sung, inwardly laughing, urged the men: "Steady on. If you've any problem, sit down and talk it over."

Scrawny yelled at his men: "Down to the sea and find it!"

The man just back from the beach pulled a long face. "It's nowhere to be seen."

"What's wrong?" Hai-sung asked on purpose.

Scrawny slapped his own bottom. "Dammit! Our dinghy's gone. . . ."

This time Miao-miao hid her delight and made no sound.

She was learning to hide her joy in her heart until after victory was won.

Hai-sung, however, remarked cuttingly: "You don't look in any shape to fetch it back. Take my advice and wait for the patrol boat of our people's navy."

Miao-miao chimed in: "Yes, they've no choice now but to wait."

Scrawny ground his teeth and ordered his men: "Go and find the dinghy, quick!"

14

The enemy shuffled off, followed by Hai-sung. He had to keep an eye on their moves, to work out counter-measures.

Miao-miao, bubbling over with excitement, skipped after her brother.

After passing some nettle-spurge trees, Hai-sung stopped. Ignoring his bad leg, he swarmed to the top of a coconut palm and, shading his eyes with one hand, gazed into the distance.

Before him stretched blue, tossing waves.

The waves broke in silver surf.

The surf dashed against the reef.

The spies, like shrimps in a hot pan, were wringing their hands as they made a frantic search there.

Miao-miao had not yet learned to climb palms. She circled round below impatiently, then called up to her brother to come down and tell her how the dinghy had drifted away.

Hai-sung slithered down and described how he had cut the cable and set the dinghy adrift. "They'll rage like mad dogs when they find they can't get it back," he prophesied. "Still, they've no way of getting away."

Miao-miao skipped and jumped, clapping so hard that a fledgling took wing in fright.

"At sunset," said Hai-sung, "grandad and the rest will come back. They'll capture these devils alive as easily as taking fish out of a creel. Not one will get away."

Light-hearted now, Miao-miao said: "Time's getting on, brother. Shouldn't we start cooking supper?"

Hai-sung shook his head. "We must be on our guard. As Chairman Mao says, the enemy won't take defeat lying down. Although our socialist land is so powerful, they still send stupid spies over—that just goes to show. Today we'll capture these invaders alive; but first, you can be sure, they'll put up a fight."

"Well, they've no boat now. Even if they stamp and rage they can't fly away."

They heard the thud of steps then and raucous yells.

They ran back to the shed.

The agents came panting back.

Scrawny, trying to conceal his panic, called to Hai-sung: "Do us a good turn, lad. Lend us a sampan, will you?"

"All our sampans are out with the trawler," said Hai-sung. "Wait till our fishing team comes back and you can have as many as you want."

"No boats on the island?" barked Scrawny. He drew a wad of banknotes from his pocket and pulled a gold ring off his finger. "Lend us a sampan and all this is yours."

Hai-sung tossed his head. "You ought to know us Hsisha islanders better. With us, it's socialism that counts, not money."

"It's no use trying to bribe us!" chipped in Miao-miao.

Scrawny stared at them in surprise. "All over the world, money talks."

"Not here," said Hai-sung. "If you don't believe me, wait and see. Even if you had a hill of gold, you couldn't get a sampan for it today."

Scrawny was flabbergasted. His hands trembled. Breaking into a sweat, he paced up and down. Soon he spotted the tool shed and rushed into it.

Hai-sung followed to see what new tricks he was up to.

Scrawny thrust his head out, yelling in Vietnamese: "Brothers, I've found lifebelts! Come and get them. We'll swim out to find the dinghy."

Hai-sung did not know what he was yelling, but when he saw the lifebelts he understood. With no thought of his own safety, he charged at Scrawny and grabbed hold of the lifebelts.

Scrawny drew his pistol, glowering. "Out of my way, or I'll shoot."

Hai-sung threw out his chest to confront him fearlessly. Pointing an accusing finger at him he roared: "You spies sneak into our territorial waters and slink ashore our islands. You gather information and plunder us. You even want to kidnap our fishermen, you pirates! All this proves that you're out-and-out invaders. You think you can insult and fool the Chinese people. But you can't get away with it. You're trapped. Our naval vessels and fishing boats will soon be back. If you add to your crimes by killing us, you'll pay the penalty after your capture. Those gunshots will sound your death knell! Your only way out is to lay down your arms and own up to your crimes."

This tirade staggered Scrawny and silenced him. He stood rooted to the spot like a wooden post.



Miao-miao, running up from behind, butted him in the small of the back.

Scrawny fell flat.

The other two spies raced over like mad dogs. Each seized a lifebelt then ran as if for dear life.

Hai-sung and Miao-miao gave chase to recover the lifebelts.

In fury one of the agents loaded his rifle.

"Don't shoot!" shrieked Scrawny, still flat on the ground. "I want them alive. When we've got the dinghy back, we'll take them to headquarters."

The other agent lowered his rifle, cursing.

Scrawny scrambled to his feet, slipping a lifebelt round his neck. "Quick, quick," he ordered his men. The two youngsters wanted to hold him back but, covering them with his pistol, he lurched towards the beach.

When Hai-sung and Miao-miao gave chase, they could not catch up.

The spies waded into the sea. They had stolen commune property and escaped...

Hai-sung's heart burned with bitterness.

Miao-miao wept for rage.

Hai-sung resolved: We must keep our heads and find some way to fight on. We'll see this through. No setback is going to stop us.

He wanted to swim after the spies, for he was a powerful swimmer. But he had no gun to wipe out the enemy.

He strained his eyes out to sea. Not a vessel in sight. Then he looked at the spies — they were swimming with all their might, already a fair distance off.

He turned to Miao-miao, his eye caught by her red scarf which was flapping in the wind like a flag or leaping flame.

"I've an idea!" he cried.

"Tell me, brother, quick."

"We can catch the swine and win through — I'm sure of that. We must find some way to get word to our fishing team. First let's signal to them by setting fire to the shed. Then I'll swim out to meet them and report. How about it?"

Miao-miao clapped her hands. "Right!"

Hai-sung raced back to the shed. He snatched a burning faggot from the stove and set light to the thatch. To Miao-miao, who had followed, he cried: "Move everything out, quick!"

Miao-miao darted into the flaming, smoking shed. First she caught up the transistor radio — the precious radio which brought the Hsisha fishermen the broadcasts from our great capital, Peking.

The two of them had just moved everything out when the whole shed went up in flames.

Hai-sung fetched a lifebelt from the tool shed, then took the red scarf from Miao-miao's neck and dashed off towards the beach.

Miao-miao found herself a lifebelt too, and ran after him calling: "Let me come with you, brother!"

"You must stay on the island and stand guard," he told her. "Watch where the enemy go, and tell grandad when he comes back so that they can catch the devils. This is a very, very important task."

Miao-miao nodded. "Don't worry, brother. I'll carry it out."

Hai-sung, the lifebelt in one hand, the red scarf in the other, plunged into the sea.

.....

On the island the fire burned higher, smoke rose in great pillars to mingle with the white clouds scudding overhead.

15

Grandad, at work on the trawler, suddenly noticed the flames and smoke on the island. "See there!" he cried. "That means trouble."

"Is it the cooking fire?" someone asked.

"The cooking fire wouldn't make such a blaze. No, this is a signal. There's no time to be lost."

"We've just cast the net, it'll take time to haul it in."

"We'll send a sampan first to see what's up. The rest of you follow as soon as you've hauled in the net."

Two youngsters lowered a sampan.

Grandad jumped aboard it with them.

The sampan shot over the tumbling waves.

It flew like an arrow towards the island.

The two youngsters, simultaneously, spotted a red speck like a spark rising and falling with the waves in the distance.

"What's that red speck floating over there?"

"It's heading towards us."

Presently they saw what it was: a red scarf billowing over a lifebelt. Someone must be swimming towards them.

The sampan flew like an arrow towards the swimmer.

It was Hai-sung. He had plunged into the sea from a point where the spies would not see him.

He had struck out with all his might against the wind, making slow but steady headway.

After swimming quite a distance he saw the men on the sampan before they saw him.

He waved the red scarf and bailed them; but his voice was drowned by the waves. So he swam on to meet them and caught hold of the sampan.

"Grandad, go after them, quick! In the sea, over there, spies from Saigon..."

"What, spies?"

"Three of them. They came to our island to loot it and carry us off. They stole three of our lifebelts."

"Come aboard, lad, and tell me properly."

Hai-sung clambered into the boat.

Sea-water dripped like rain from his hair and clothes.

He gave grandad and the others a brief account of the happenings on the island.

The two youngsters hearing it ground their teeth with fury. "The devils! What nerve! Bashing their heads against a stone wall..."

"We'll teach them a lesson."

"You have guts, Hai-sung."

"You know how to use your head, lad."

Hai-sung cut them short. "We've no time for talk like that. After them, quick."

The youngsters chuckled.

"Don't worry, they won't get away."

"We'll catch them and make them answer for their crimes."

Grandad seemed in no hurry to speak. He was looking out to sea, his brows knit in thought.

"What are we waiting for, grandad?" asked one of the youngsters. "Let's go after them."

The other young fellow pounded the bulwark and cried: "After them, grandad, quick. They're getting further away all the time."

"Don't be in such a hurry," said Hai-sung. "Give grandad time to think out a good plan."

"But they may get away."

"You're here with the sampan, they can't escape," replied Hai-sung. "We should think up a good plan before going into action."

At last grandad spoke. "The dogs are armed, on their guard. We're empty-handed. We must rely on our wits, not on brute strength, to catch them."

"That's it," approved Hai-sung. "Tell us your plan."

"As I see it, the spies are so desperate they'll try to seize our boat. The three of you keep out of sight in the cabin. When I give the word, each grab one of them. Don't move till I give the order. All right?"

The two youngsters nodded and promised to do as he said.

"And you?" grandad asked Hai-sung.

"We'll act on Chairman Mao's instruction: **Be resolute, fear no sacrifice and surmount every difficulty to win victory.**"

"Good!" cried grandad. "Off we go."

The three youngsters hid in the cabin while grandad rowed.

Another possibility occurred to Hai-sung. "We must be prepared for tricks, grandad. Suppose, before they come on board, they shoot you? What then?"

Grandad laughed. "I've taken that into consideration, lad. If they kill me, they'll think the coast is clear and it'll be easier for you to nab them when they try to seize the boat. . . ."

This reply, so matter-of-fact yet so pregnant with meaning, set Hai-sung's heart ablaze. Grandad seemed to grow in stature before his eyes.

Miao-miao, who was watching the enemy from the island, saw the little sampan now and jumped for glee.

She dashed to the shore calling: "Hey! Those bad eggs have swum over there, trying to get away!"

The men in the sampan were too far away to hear her voice above the roar of the waves.

But Hai-sung understood. He had seen the direction in which Miao-miao was pointing.

"Grandad, row to the east!"

The sampan made a detour till, in the waves, they could faintly discern three heads. Grandad rowed steadily in that direction.

As he pulled calmly and steadily on the oar, he threw back his head and roared out a fisherman's song:

Afloat in a wooden boat
I sail the deep, deep sea;
So strong my hooks, so fine my net,
No fish escapes from me!

The spies had swum this way and that without finding any sign of their dinghy. They had not seen any merchant vessels either. They were beginning to panic.

"There's a sampan coming, chief!" one suddenly gasped.

"Prepare for action."

"There's only one old man aboard."

"So much the better. Come on. We'll knock him off and take the sampan, then go back for those two kids. We'll get a reward once we take them back to port."

Grandad saw with satisfaction that the spies were rising to the bait. He went on singing at the top of his voice.

Scrawny bellowed: "Hey, old man!"

Grandad put on a show of surprise. "Out for a swim, eh? Better watch out for sharks."

"Our boat capsized," said Scrawny. "If you'll rescue us, we'll pay you well. . . ."

Grandad nodded at them. "Sure, sure." He rowed towards the invaders.

When the spies saw rescue at hand, it was each man for himself — they all seized the bulwark. . . .

At once grandad bellowed: "Get them!"

The three youngsters shot out of the cabin and, quick as lightning, snatched the three scoundrels' guns.

Grandad wanted to swing his oar at the enemy, but not having time for this he stamped on one's arm.

Hai-sung had grabbed hold of Scrawny. Half dead with fright, Scrawny tried to fall back in the sea. The lad caught him by the hair shouting: "Wake up! This is what is waiting for all who dare attack socialist China!"

A patrol boat of the Chinese people's navy steamed towards them now through the blue wind-tossed waves.

And the trawler, its net hauled in, arrived on the scene.

On the island, the fire was still raging.

Miao-miao climbed a tree and waved as hard as she could.

Hai-sung could imagine his small sister's beaming face.

In the sampan, he, grandad and the two youngsters were laughing.

The men on the trawler were laughing.

The crew of the patrol boat were laughing.

The sea thundered approval too, exulting over their victory.

16

Happy, happy sea! The happiest sea of all is that of Hsisha in our great motherland's South Sea.

Or so Miao-miao says, on the basis of her own experience.

For it was there that Miao-miao passed the happiest, most unforgettable days of her life.

She tasted the special happiness of life in the Hsisha islands.

She tasted the special happiness of the selfless toil of the Hsisha islanders.

She tasted the happiness of fierce class struggle in the Hsisha Archipelago.

There was indeed no end to her happiness there.

At the same time Miao-miao came to understand the real meaning of happiness. As she grew in size as well as in understanding, she acquired a deeper knowledge of this precious happiness and this happy sea.

A day came when she returned to happy Hsisha, after the archipelago had won victory in the battle to repel aggression and driven out the invaders for good and all. That was when she returned to Hsisha's happy sea.

50

It was in Shih Liu Kang Square in Kwangchow.

On the silver film screen set up in the square.

There, on the screen, she saw the rolling waves of the sea.

In the sea she saw Treasure Island, bright as a gem.

She saw the impregnable rocks of Treasure Island, its jade-white beach, golden sand-dunes, vivid green forests, the meadows dotted with flowers and the brown boobies soaring freely overhead.

She saw rising from the grass a tall cream-coloured building. The open-air stage before it was gay with red flags and with fairy lights. In front of the stage a crowd had gathered, and there at the microphone before a great statue of Chairman Mao her brother Hai-sung was making a rousing speech.

She saw the army uniform Hai-sung was wearing, the new rifle over his shoulder, the big red flower, insignia of honour, pinned to his chest with a streamer on which was written: Militia Combat Hero, First Class.

She heard Hai-sung's stirring description of how grandad and their militia, in co-ordination with the people's navy, had fearlessly encircled the invaders from Saigon; how, in co-ordination with the PLA infantry, they had swiftly landed on the island, smashed the invaders' headquarters, captured them alive, and planted the five-starred flag high over our motherland's lovely Treasure Island.

Her brother's resonant voice was greeted by stormy applause and laughter both on the stage and below it.

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And the film-watchers in the square responded too with laughter and applause thunderous as the breaking billows of Hsisha in the South China Sea.

Miao-miao was one of that enchanted audience.

The sea of happiness is an embattled sea.

To do battle is true happiness.

Miao-miao understood: It's the people who create happiness, who have created a sea of happiness; it's the people who guard our happiness, guard the sea of happiness.

51

Miao-miao resolved that when she was big enough she would follow her brother's example, create new happiness in the South China Sea and defend the happy Hsisha islanders.

Truly, the Hsisha sea — the whole South China Sea — is a sea of happiness.

Illustrated by Lin Jung



A Snowstorm in March

Beyond the Chiayu Pass outside the Great Wall stretch the Alchin Mountains. The Kazakh herdsmen who live on these high grasslands make long treks twice a year to find the best pastures and water for their livestock. The shortest route from their winter quarters to the summer pasture, that is, from the marshlands around the Sukan Lakes to Front Mountain at the south foot of the Alchins, generally takes about a week while the longest takes more than a month. The herdsmen trekking the tortuous paths through the mountains wear out their whips and undergo untold hardships before they can reach the new pastures with their sheep, cattle or camels.

It was March 1969. The fifty-eight flocks of sheep owned by Red Flag Stock Farm, having wintered on Haitzu Prairie, were about to make the long journey to Front Mountain in order to be there by the lambing season. One of the shepherdesses was seventeen-year-old Yerhan. As she was so young and inexperienced and her three hundred ewes, all with lamb, were the leanest in the farm, many people were concerned for her. Would she be able to manage the

hazardous long trek and take her flock safely to its destination? This was certainly going to be a severe test for her, a girl who had only recently graduated from middle school.

To be sure, Yerhan was not responsible for the poor condition of her sheep. It was Jewabek, the previous shepherd, who was to blame.

Jewabek had been the chief groom of a rich cattle-owner, in other words, he was an overseer. After Liberation, as the revolution went ahead, this once proud overseer had to work alongside his former slaves on the collective farm where each was paid according to his work. The resentment smouldering in his heart made him a very poor shepherd. Within a couple of years the fine pedigree ewes put in his care were nothing but skin and bones.

During the trek to new pastures the previous spring, so many of Jewabek's sheep died on the road that vultures followed them all the way, circling above the flock like a black cloud. When a sheep dropped dead Jewabek cut off its ears and kept them for when he had to account for his losses. So by the end of the journey his old knapsack was bulging with sheep's ears. The farm's Revolutionary Committee called a mass meeting to censure him. He put on an act then and prevaricated: "I'm too old a camel for heavy loads or long journeys. I'm sure someone else can do the job better than me and the people will give me a way out, so that I don't go hungry." Saying this, he dropped his whip on the ground.

Presiding at the meeting was Shatadi, the chairman of the Revolutionary Committee who had risen from the ranks in the Cultural Revolution. He was a man who never compromised with any bad character or wrong tendency. In reply to this provocation he picked up the whip and weighing it in his hand cried: "Jewabek! You've given up this whip of your own accord, we shan't ask you to take it back. It was a mistake giving it to you in the first place. Open your eyes and see how our true herdsmen care for the collective's property!" Abruptly the young chairman raised the whip and called to the meeting: "Comrades! Who'll take this over?"

Shatadi held high the whip. At once, over a dozen people sprang forward to snatch it. The one who succeeded was Yerhan.

Yerhan had taken on a difficult job. Yet she was a girl full of tenacity. She rose early and went to bed late, working hard from frosty dawn till misty night. After nearly a year of her devoted care the sheep had gained weight, their mortality rate had slumped. But as the saying goes, one meal won't make a fat man. The flock was still graded lowest on the farm's weight chart. Now that she was to set off on such an arduous journey, people's anxiety over her was only natural.

Yerhan, however, never backed away from difficulties. One day when she went to headquarters to fetch fodder, the old storekeeper said to her with concern: "You've got a heavy task ahead of you, lass."

"Don't worry, grandad," rejoined Yerhan firmly.

"It's a long trek, child."

"I'm planning to take a short cut."

The girl's ringing declaration reached the ears of Jewabek in the next room. Since being reprimanded, Jewabek had been assigned to do odd jobs on the farm. When Yerhan went to him with the storekeeper's chit for special fodder for weaklings, he was yelling at the mule pulling the grindstone.

"Ai! If there were two fools in the world, I'd be one of them; if only one, that would be me, for sure," muttered Jewabek.

"Don't be so modest," Yerhan mocked. "I know what you really think—the only wise man in the world is Jewabek!"

"No, no. I can look at myself objectively. For instance, if I hadn't been such a fool, I'd have taken a short cut on my last journey. I'd have whipped the flock on to cut down the time on the way. Then I could have kept out of trouble."

Yerhan had a low opinion of Jewabek and was normally on guard against him. But since his remarks today made sense to her, she said: "Why, Jewabek, seems you've started remoulding your thinking."

Yerhan loaded her horse with the fodder then and left. As she rode back she racked her brains. And by the time she reached her yurt she had thought out a plan.

The following day Shatadi came to check the preparations for the journey. Yerhan gave him a business-like account of her plan. The gist of it was to choose the shortest route and travel at top speed to rush through the trek. Then her flock would arrive victoriously, in good time, at the spring pasture!...

After listening attentively to Yerhan's report, Shatadi asked: "Yerhan, is this your own idea or somebody else's?"

"It's my own idea, chairman, but not well thought through," replied the girl modestly.

"Mm. I'd say you've put a lot of thought into it."

"What suggestions have you to help me improve on it?"

"Suggestions? I suggest: Take a sack along," Shatadi said with a smile.

"A sack?" Yerhan stared in surprise. "What...what do I need a sack for?"

"To hold the sheep ears. Or else what are you going to do with them?" Shatadi burst out laughing.

Yerhan flushed up to her ears. She ran over to give Shatadi a thump on the shoulder.

"Chairman! You..."

When the joke was over Shatadi said to the girl, "I'm not going to go into your plan in detail today. Just enthusiasm isn't enough, you know. We have to make a thorough investigation and careful study of the facts. If you like, let's go and find some experienced herdsmen and see what they have to say."

Grandad Kuban's yurt was snug and warm. The iron stove burning cakes of dried sheep-turds was red-hot. The old man gave Shatadi and Yerhan a cordial welcome. While offering his guests the customary milk-tea, yogurt and pastries, he listened to the girl's plan for her journey. She followed this up by saying: "Some comrades like to exaggerate the difficulties to frighten me. They say, 'Little girl, it's dangerous over there. Hairy-faced Mama Bear is waiting to eat you up.' I'm not a little girl but a real shepherdess. The paths over the Alchins may be hazardous but our cattle, sheep and herdsmen have long since turned them into beaten tracks. After

my trek last year I didn't turn in any sheep's ears. If I could make it from Front Mountain to Haitzu then, why can't I manage the return trip this year? Grandad Kuban, what d'you say?"

Thinking her argument thoroughly convincing, Yerhan looked to the veteran herdsman for support. To her surprise Grandad Kuban, stroking his grey beard, said gravely:

"This time it's quite different, child. Let me tell you the reason. Last year you started the journey in autumn. Your flock had grazed in lush green meadows all summer, so they were in top form when they set out. You had fine weather on the way and found plenty of grass and water. Naturally your flock came to no harm. But the hard winter has enfeebled your sheep, and now that spring is here they're weak and scraggy. Don't you know the saying: Well-fed in summer, in autumn stout; weak in winter, in spring worn-out? In your coming trip you'll find the grass withered and the water turbid. The wind will blast you, the cold will be piercing. And your ewes are near their time. Struggling up those slopes they'll give three gasps at each step... Even if they were a first-grade flock with a first-rate herdsman, he wouldn't dare drive them hard. Yet you've taken it into your head to find a short cut and speed up the journey, to get this third-grade flock of yours to a lush spring pasture in no time! Can't be done, lass. This plan of yours will only be approved by fellows like Jewabek."

Grandad Kuban's outspokenness left Yerhan speechless. Like buttercups doused with cold water, she hung her head. At heart she knew that the old man was right. Hadn't Jewabek flattered her in a subtle way? Actually he was only too eager to see her in big trouble. As a Kazakh proverb runs, "A friend's water is sweeter than an enemy's honey." She pondered these words and saw light...

After thinking the matter over, Yerhan raised her head and said frankly: "I was wrong. Please show me the right path to take."

"No path in the world is straight," said the old man. "Be prepared for twists and turns."

"The path may twist and turn, but the future is bright, Comrade Yerhan," said Shatadi. "The Party committee has decided to ask our respected elder — Grandad Kuban — to help you carry out this difficult but honourable task."



“Oh, splendid!” exclaimed Yerhan, her face lighting up.
“I’ll be very glad to go.” Grey-haired Grandad Kuban nodded.
The girl clasped the old man’s hands, tears of joy in her eyes. . . .

March in the Alchins is still very cold. The snow on the shady sides of the hills had not entirely melted. Not a speck of green could be seen — nothing but the withered grass from the previous year. It seemed spring was slow in coming to these desolate wilds. But suddenly the bell-wether raised its head and bleated. Wandering through a clump of shrubs, the old goat had detected some young blades of grass sprouting from the humus. Its bleat of joy heralded spring on the grassland.

Yerhan, riding a chestnut horse with a black mane and white fetlocks, reined in on the top of a ridge. In the breeze her red kerchief fluttered. She cracked her whip sharply. At the sound the flock slowly mounted the slope. Cupping her hands over her mouth, she called at the top of her voice: “Grandad Kuban. . . .”

“Here. . . .” the old man responded in the distance.

“Where are you?”

“*Here.* Come round past the white rocks.”

As the girl pressed her stirrups lightly against the horse’s belly, it cantered off with a snort towards the big white rocks protruding from the foot of the mountain while she sang softly:

Spring comes to the Sukan Lakes
With the winging swans,
Spring comes to the Alchins
With the melting of snow.
Beloved friends,
Do you know
How spring comes to the Kazakhs?
The red, red sun that never sets
Shines for ever in our hearts.
Ah!
We have spring in our hearts,
So bright!

So warm!
So splendid!

Thirteen days before, Yerhan's flock had set out on their trek from Haitsu Prairie. Guided by Grandad Kuban, they left the beaten track to travel beside broader streams and deeper gullies. This route was full of dangers, yet because few herds of cattle had passed that way it provided relatively good pasturage. The sheep could graze as they plodded on and for them, in their poor condition, this was of the utmost importance.

These thirteen days had passed without mishap. Not a sheep had been lost. The vultures, which had circled overhead, thwarted of their prey flew off into the distance. According to Grandad Kuban, if all continued to go well, they would reach their destination in three or four days. Victory was in view. Yerhan was very happy.

Skirting the white rocks, Yerhan saw Grandad Kuban standing on a rise with his pitch-black steed, reins in hand. Strapped across his shoulder was a lute — a *tumbra* — wrapped in a cloth cover. Stroking his silvery beard, he was gazing thoughtfully at White Rock River.

"Child, look!" The old man pointed his whip at the water. "We had unusually heavy snow last winter and now the ice 'bridge' has melted. It's going to be very difficult to cross."

"We can wade it, can't we?" Yerhan dismounted and stood beside the old man.

"Just now I tried but found it quite deep in the middle. Besides, the river is wide. I don't think the timid ones of our flock can make it."

"Why not take the lead-goat across first? The sheep will follow."

"They'd be soaked to the skin, and the wind at night is icy. Our ewes with lamb couldn't stand it."

The two of them stood on the bank, trying to devise a safer means of crossing. The tinkle of camel-bells in the distance interrupted their discussion. Raising their eyes, they saw a Kazakh coming their way from a valley further up. He was bellowing at two horses to urge them on. A close scrutiny revealed that the man was Jewabek.

Now, since the start of the move to fresh pastures, the farm had organized a service team consisting of veterinarians, doctors, salesmen and the people in charge of fodder. Jewabek had been sent to take care of the pack-camels and horses.

"How goes it? All well with your flock?" Jewabek dismounted to greet them respectfully.

"All's well. The flock is safe and sound," replied Grandad Kuban. "Where are you going, Jewabek?"

"Two of our horses bolted. It's taken me a day and a night to find them. . . . Old brother, can you let me have a light?"

"Yerhan has matches. . . . Give them to him, child."

Yerhan reluctantly took a box of matches from her pocket and tossed it to Jewabek. Thanking her profusely, he lit a cigarette and returned the box to the girl. Then, puffing greedily at the cigarette, he belched smoke through his mouth and nostrils.

"Fine weather we're having," he said. "How warm the sun is!"

"The last few hours I've felt a pain in my joints, as if the weather was going to change," said Grandad Kuban.

"Don't you believe it." Jewabek chuckled. "You've been too long in the saddle, that's the reason. This fine weather isn't going to change. Impossible! Look at the lush grass on the banks. Better let your sheep browse before going on." With this, he mounted his camel and waved good-bye. "So long, then! My, what fine weather!" With a tinkling of camel-bells, Jewabek went off.

"Do you believe what he said, Grandad Kuban?" the girl asked dubiously.

"What d'you think, child?"

"My feeling is that what Jewabek says is often just the opposite of what he means," replied Yerhan thoughtfully. "For instance, when he wishes you good health he's hoping you'll get typhoid. He pays lip-service to our Revolutionary Committee but dreams of the return of the old cattle-owners."

"You're absolutely right." Grandad Kuban nodded with approval, then unslung his *tumbra* from his shoulder. After taking off its cover, he plucked the strings and listened intently. He frowned and said grimly: "It's flat — another sign that a storm's brewing." He

went on gravely, "Just think, before us is the wide river; behind us, high mountains. There isn't any shelter here. If there's a snowstorm, we'll be in a spot."

In dismay Yerhan asked the old man what they should do. Grandad Kuban put his lute back into its cover and said decidedly: "Cross the river at once. . . ."

It was then about ten in the morning. They set to and carried the sheep one by one, on horseback, to the other bank. There were over three hundred of them. By the time they had been at this for nearly five hours the wind began to gather force; dark clouds assembled from all sides; the sky turned grey. Over thirty sheep still had to be carried across. As the wind roared and snow-flakes whirled, the sheep on both banks milled round and bleated in panic. The two horses kept rearing up in alarm, their manes tossing in the gale. Suddenly the chestnut stumbled over a round stone in the river-bed. Yerhan was almost flung off. The small goat under her right arm, kicking out in fright, plunged headlong into the water.

"*Aiya!*" Grandad Kuban promptly reined in his black horse. He was coming back to her rescue when Yerhan urged her steed through the waves several yards further down the river. There she stood the horse crosswise to intercept the goat. When it floundered within reach she deftly bent down and caught it. Easily lifting the wet goat up she laid it across her saddle. In no time it was landed on the other bank.

By the time the whole flock had been carried across the river, the snowstorm was raging still more savagely. Snow, driven by the howling wind, seemed about to smother the whole grassland.

Young Yerhan, however, did not panic. The question in her mind was: In this blinding blizzard, which way should they take the flock?

"Grandad Kuban! Where shall we go?" she shouted.

The old herdsman did not reply. He strode up a mound and in the teeth of the gale strained his eyes, thinking hard, then came to a decision. He raised his whip and pointed to the left. "Yerhan! Drive them on! . . . Towards Wind-Carved Ravine! . . ."

Wind-Carved Ravine was one of the narrowest of the thousands of valleys of the Alchins. On one side it was flanked by hills; on the other by a steep cliff carved out by mountain freshets. The foot of the ravine had been eroded by water and wind, so that its top jutted out like the eaves of a house above the long gorge below. Except in heavy thunderstorms during summer, the ravine was seldom flooded.

Now, Grandad Kuban and Yerhan, regardless of the lashing wind and snow, headed for this ravine. They had a hard time rounding up their flock and setting it on the right track. By dusk, however, they arrived and found the overhanging cliff a good shelter against the snowstorm. Indeed, this covered passageway carved out by Nature provided a timely refuge for the two herdsman and their three hundred and eighty sheep.

After tethering their horses and settling their flock on the sandstone under the cliff, they checked up to make sure that not a sheep was missing. The sheep, recovered from their panic, lay quietly chewing the cud. Leaving them there, Grandad Kuban, with Yerhan at his heels, went round to look for twigs, roots and dried animal droppings with which to light a bonfire. For a pot of hot tea is a comfort to any herdsman, and Grandad Kuban and Yerhan, after a day's hard fight with the storm, certainly needed a hot drink to revive them.

Grandad Kuban rigged up a fire grate with rocks while Yerhan unloaded their kits and filled a saucepan with snow.

"Light the fire, Yerhan," said Grandad Kuban. "We've had a hard day of it, now we can warm ourselves up."

"All right. I'll light it right away. I'm longing to dry myself out."

"With your clothes wet through, of course you'll feel cold."

.

"*Aiya!*" Yerhan gave a sudden cry of dismay.

"What's wrong?"

"The matches — they're wet!"

Grandad Kuban put on his torch to examine her box of matches, then tried striking two of them. They would not light. At this Yerhan silently turned away to lean against the icy cliff and heaved a deep sigh.

The old herdsman switched off his torch and put the wet matches back into the box. He stood thinking in the gathering darkness for a while, then asked calmly: "Hey, lass! Why so quiet?"

"I feel very bad about this," Yerhan answered remorsefully. "Because I didn't keep the matches dry, we'll have to suffer in the cold."

Grandad Kuban fished a sheepskin coat out of his kit and told the girl to put it on in place of her wet one. While she was doing this he said gravely: "Yerhan, we're shouldering a heavy task for the revolution. On a long trek like this anything can happen. So a single match may be of vital importance. Lass, a real herdsman has to be careful as well as bold. When the weather is fine, never forget there may be a storm in the offing."

As to how Yerhan reacted to these words, it was impossible to see in the dark, but the way she kept blowing her nose seemed to indicate that the girl, in spite of her strong character, was crying over her fault.

So Grandad Kuban continued more mildly: "Well, just take this as a lesson. As long as the revolutionary fire in our hearts is still burning, we can win through. Can you hold out, child?"

"Sure, even if I were twice as cold!" answered Yerhan.

The wind kept roaring, the snow swirling. Wolves howling somewhere in the distance added an eerie note to the pall of darkness.

This snowstorm at night in the deep rugged mountains made Yerhan's thoughts turn to the glowing red lanterns at Tien An Men. In the autumn of 1966, she and a dozen of her schoolmates had set off from the Alchin grasslands on a long march to Peking. Passing through the Chiayu Pass, they had tramped all the way to the capital, to be reviewed at Tien An Men Square by our great leader Chairman Mao. How excited and happy they had been then! When Yerhan thought of that thrilling scene, she felt the blood burning in her veins and could not hold back the tears of joy in her eyes. . . . "Dear Chairman Mao," she vowed, "your Red Guard Yerhan will follow you to make revolution for ever, never flinching from any hardships!"

"You know, lass," resumed the old herdsman, "a cold night like this is a good test for us. Now let's warm ourselves by the fire and have a meal."

"What fire? What meal?" asked the girl, bewildered. "Are you joking, grandad?"



The old man laughed. "I've lived seventy-two years, child. I'm not such a fool as to come out on this big revolutionary task without even bringing matches."

He struck a match. Its welcome flame lit up the kindly smile on his wrinkled face.

Now a bonfire blazed and crackled in Wind-Carved Ravine. Its leaping flames scattered the cold and lit up the darkness, reddening the ridges, rocks and snowdrifts all around.

The two herdsmen sat by the fire, enjoying its warmth as they sipped hot tea and chatted. Yerhan was smiling as she dried her wet clothes. Grandad Kuban steered the conversation back to the cold reality before them. Judging by the strength of the gale, the whole valley would soon be blocked by heavy snow. There was no knowing how long they and their sheep would be trapped there. They must be prepared for the worst. Cut off from outside, they would run out of food and fodder. . . . Might even be called on to make supreme sacrifices. . . .

"Our comrades will come to our rescue, there's no doubt about that," said Yerhan.

"Sure enough, they will," rejoined Grandad Kuban. "But it's a long way and the road is hazardous. In a snowstorm like this it may take them days to find us."

This set Yerhan thinking.

Her reflections were interrupted by the sudden notes of a *tumbra*. She raised her eyes and in the fire-light saw Grandad Kuban thrumming his lute. He was playing a folk-song which Yerhan had loved as a child. It described an eagle winging across the sea. Carried off by the stirring rhythm, Yerhan in fancy winged beside the great bird.

. . . The sea stretched off to the far horizon . . . on powerful wings the great bird sped on and on . . . a howling wind raged in the sky; huge waves surged down below . . . but the eagle battled bravely on, steady, unswerving, scorning every danger . . . till at last it crossed the illimitable ocean and triumphantly reached shore. . . .

The music came to a stop, its last notes swept off by the whirling wind and snow. Like a bird alighting after a long flight, Yerhan slowly came back to earth. There was joy in her sparkling eyes, in her young heart an excitement too deep for words.

"Grandad Kuban!" she exclaimed. "You played that differently from the song I used to know, didn't you?"

"It *is* different, child," he answered significantly. "I've put into it some of my feelings after studying Chairman Mao's great teaching: **'Be resolute, fear no sacrifice and surmount every difficulty to win victory.'**"

"It's magnificent!" cried Yerhan, deeply stirred.

By now light was filtering through the dim clouds. It was dawn. Grandad Kuban wrapped up his instrument and said calmly yet firmly: "It's the instinct of self-preservation that makes eagles fly over the seas, but we as conscious revolutionaries should battle to realize the great aims of communism. Child, from this minute on we should save every bit of our fodder and gather every blade of grass we can find to get our sheep safely through these difficult days. We must also use sticks, our bare hands and the hoofs of our horses to clear away the snow between the bushes, so as to open up a small pasturage. . . . Now is the time to display all our fighting spirit, to do everything in our power not to let a single sheep die of hunger. Stick it out, and we shall win!"

"Yes!" echoed Yerhan loudly. "Stick it out, and we shall win!"

Two days before the snowstorm the commune office had sent horsemen out to dispatch the gale warning at top speed. But so vast was the area that the news had not reached all the herdsmen on their way to new pastures; hence quite a few flocks were locked up by snow in the valleys.

In the morning of the fifth day of the snowstorm, Shatadi rode up to the station at Goose-foot Shoal. After several days and nights of rescue work his horse was streaming with sweat while its rider's cheeks were sunken, his eyes bloodshot. But under his thick eyebrows his flashing glance remained as brilliant as ever. After handing over his horse to Jewabek, Shatadi strode towards the hut built of red clay.

Within, about twenty people were having a meeting, presided over by Papahumal, head of the horsemen's team. Ever since midnight they had been discussing how to rescue and preserve their flocks. As Shatadi walked in, one of the members was speaking. Shatadi signed to him to go on and found himself a seat, where he settled down to listen. They were now discussing how to find some clues to the whereabouts of Yerhan and Grandad Kuban.

Outside, Jewabek was walking Shatadi's horse. After a few rounds he tethered it in the stable and loosened its girth. Then, feeling uneasy, he quietly entered the hut. Finding that it was now Shatadi who was speaking, he squatted down to listen in one corner.

"... Yerhan and Grandad Kuban started on March the twelfth. As their sheep were in poor condition, they would have to let them browse on the way. That would slow them down. So they can't have gone further the first day than Wild Camel Springs." Shatadi consulted his notebook and then went on: "By noon on March the thirteenth we think they should have reached Sandy Ditch Head. The path on from there's narrow and twisting. They'd have to help the weaklings over it one by one, maybe even carrying them in their arms or on their backs, which would take from two to three hours. They'd almost certainly spend that night in the old sheepfold at the mouth of Dry Gully, the safest place in those parts. On the third day, the fourteenth, they'd go down the sunny slope where the grass is good, and most likely stop half a day there to graze the sheep..."

"Right," Chiamina the woman doctor cut in. "On the fifteenth, a herdsman of Team Four brought his sick child to see me. He mentioned that the previous day when passing Dry Gully, in the distance he'd seen two herdsman, one with a red kerchief and the other playing a *tumbra*. He remarked to me, 'An interesting character, that shepherd!'"

"That confirms it then." Shatadi went on analysing the information he had. "Yesterday while searching for the other lost flocks I made a point of looking into that cave at Red Cliff. There I found freshly burned ashes of wood. On the ground I saw the prints of Yerhan's sports shoes — I'd bought them myself for her in the county town..."

"Then which night actually did they spend in the cave?" someone asked.

Shatadi leafed through his notebook again before answering: "To go from Dry Gully to Red Cliff you have to pass Wild Horse Slope, Kokosail and ten other hills and valleys. I've figured out that they must have put up at Red Cliff on the ninth day of their trek, that is, on the night of March the twentieth. Think it over, comrades. Agree with my estimate?"

Quite a number of the herdsman and cadres at the meeting were familiar with the topography of that region. After consulting together for a while, they came to the conclusion that Chairman Shatadi's estimate was right.

"In that case, on their tenth day, the twenty-first, they'd cross Wild Fox Ridge and head for Tipusaik."

After a pause Shatadi went on: "By March the twenty-second, the eleventh day, according to my estimate Yerhan and Grandad Kuban should have reached Icy Grass Slope. The best place to put up the next night would be outside the asbestos factory because there are several empty houses left by a prospecting team which went further to search for new asbestos mines. Both the herdsman and their flock could stay there. Unfortunately it's too far away and the snow's too deep for us to go and check up. But never mind, I've phoned the asbestos factory to inquire. They told me that at dusk on the twenty-third their workers saw smoke rising from one of those vacated houses. That was Yerhan and Grandad Kuban, no doubt about it. If our reckoning is right, then on their twelfth day, March the twenty-fourth, they would surely pass the night at Hulusdai. The next day, the twenty-fifth, the day the storm started, they would have crossed Dry River Dam and Second Ridge. By eight or nine in the morning they must have reached White Rock River..."

By now Jewabek, who had been crouching behind the door to listen, felt his heart thumping hard. Beads of cold sweat oozed from his forehead. "Blast you, Shatadi!" he swore to himself. "Your analysis is as bloody accurate as if you'd seen their trek with your own eyes. Well, you may be smart but your careful calculations are

no use. After five whole days in the snow and ice that flock won't come back alive. So to hell with your analysis. . . ."

"Comrades," Shatadi continued. "I've consulted a good many people. They all agreed with me. The snag is, how could the flock cross White Rock River? I was told that because we had heavy snow last winter, by the middle of March the ice 'bridge' over the river had been swept off. That would present a problem. Anyway Yerhan and Grandad Kuban must have been delayed by the river for quite some time."

"We were notified by the commune office of the gale warning on March the twenty-fourth," veterinarian Hatai put in. "The trouble was that on that day two of our station's horses bolted, so we had to send Jewabek to find them. The next afternoon just before the snowstorm set in, he came back with the horses. I asked him where he had found them, and his reply was: Near White Rock River ferry. But Jewabek's said nothing about seeing Yerhan's flock there."

"Jewabek's here," someone cried. "Say, did you see the flock?"

"Speak up, quick!" another urged. "Are you deaf?"

Jewabek wanted to slip away, but it was too late. With so many compelling eyes focused on him, he stuttered: "Maybe . . . but that fierce snowstorm got me all mixed up. . . . I may have seen the flock, yet. . . ."

All present lost patience. A storm of protests burst out. "Don't be so vague! Whose flock was it?" "Did you pass on to them the gale warning?" "Why didn't you report this earlier?" "What's your game? Sabotage?"

"I lost my head completely, comrades. That fearful snowstorm. . . . What day is today? . . . Damn the weather. . . . Let me think . . . was it. . . .?"

Jewabek broke off as a young Kazakh, horsewhip in hand, darted in. He brought with him fresh information: The PLA men who had come to help with the rescue work had just seen through their telescope faint smoke rising over the hills near the middle reaches of White Rock River. . . .

"Good. That must be Yerhan's flock," Shatadi said positively. "They'll be in Wind-Carved Ravine."

The atmosphere in the hut immediately became lively. The smoke was a signal. Their class brother and sister trapped deep in the mountains — in such desperate conditions — were still living! What a stubborn fight they must have put up, to protect the collective's property!

Soon a caravan of camels loaded with fodder set off for White Rock River, closely followed by a team of cattle and of horses. Trampling out a track in the deep snow they marched on.

When the rescue team came to places where the snow lay knee-deep, they dismounted to clear the path with shovels, rakes and snowploughs. Digging, scraping, sweeping and removing all obstacles in their way, they pressed forward towards the Alchins, towards White Rock River and Wind-Carved Ravine.

In March the following year, the first spring of the seventies, I went to Red Flag Stock Farm on the Alchin grasslands to write up the outstanding achievements there in the movement to learn from Tachai, the nation's red banner in agricultural production.

Chairman Shatadi introduced me to the two outstanding herdsmen described in our story. Old Kuban was kind enough to play the song about the eagle for me on his *tumbra* while Yerhan sang her *Song of Spring*. Their sheep, now fat and strong, were rated first-grade. When I asked about Jewabek, Chairman Shatadi replied: "He's set us a negative example; in this sense he's still of some use to our farm."

Illustrated by Huang Ying-bao

POEMS

WANG EN-YU

Ah, Chungnanhai, Pride of My Heart

Here green waters glimmer in the soft dawn light,
Here wooded glades are caressed and cradled by the sun;
Every time I pass by your side,
I gaze around, full of pride,
My heart is moved when I come to these magnificent red walls;
My blood races, coursing wave upon wave.
Ah, Chungnanhai, pride of my heart!

From here the east wind crosses many mighty mountains;
From here a call to battle sounds, reaching many lands;
The rising sun lights up our epoch,
Its brilliant rays illuminating our bright future;
From here Chairman Mao directs our revolutionary course;
Glorious records are kept in these rippling waters.
Ah, Chungnanhai, light of my heart.

Chungnanhai in Peking is where Chairman Mao lives.

From liberated serfs to modern steel workers,
From hardened veteran fighters to younger generations . . .
All hearts beat as one when your name is mentioned,
All eyes glisten with joy and happiness;
Your wide bosom enfolds the love of fighters, young and old,
And the boundless pride of countless revolutionaries.
Ah, Chungnanhai, our hearts turn to you.

So many have come to you with longing,
With tears of joy, like children rushing to their mother,
Greeting you with news of successes on all fronts,
News aflame with your spirit of the Big Leap,
They salute you with iron wills, tempered in struggle,
And vows to fulfil your mighty vision.
Ah, Chungnanhai, the site we dearly love.

Here Chairman Mao meets heroes from all our fronts,
His instructions deeply implanted in their hearts;
Hands that have hewn out new paths clasp those of our leader;
Expressing to the Party our will to transform the earth.
Let the sun and moon, lofty peaks and rivers bear witness,
We people are the creators of history and masters of the world.
Ah, Chungnanhai, sea of sparkling wisdom!

So many have returned to their posts,
Carrying with them Chairman Mao's instructions
To write a thousand pages of new history
And fulfilling his great expectations.
Like the beating of battle drums the sound of your waves
Urges us on to re-arrange our mountainous terrain and rivers.

Like banners your tall trees flutter
Leading us on to the glorious battles of our age.
Ah, Chungnanhai, command post of the working class.

It is your light that has dyed crimson the flags of Taching,
The red flowers of Tachai are watered by your spring,
The fruits of the Cultural Revolution are nurtured by your hands,
New socialist things spring from this source.
All our high achievements have been bathed in your dew,
Awakened by your spring breeze a hundred flowers are in bloom.
Ah, Chungnanhai, where the sun for ever shines.

Your limpid streams have given us clearer vision,
To pierce mist and fog, distinguish true from false.
If any dare to sully your fair waters,
Without pity they'll be swept away by rising waves,
As they were at Nanhu* or by the Yen River,**
When storms arose and routed the enemy.
Ah, Chungnanhai, storm centre of revolution!

A few noisome flies still buzz around our tiny globe,
A few sombre clouds may still darken the horizon.
Though our journey is long, with your brilliant rays as our guide
Our steps will never falter or go astray.
Though we must climb perilous heights, your sun will still shine,
We shall remain undeterred, our resolution firm.
Ah, Chungnanhai, where the red flag will always fly.

*A lake in Chiahsing, Chekiang Province. The First National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party held a secret meeting here in 1921.

**A river in Yenan, cradle of the Chinese revolution.

So often you have stretched out eager hands
To receive comrades and friends from distant lands;
Encouraging a militant unity among the Third World's peoples,
Your friendship spans mountains and wide seas;
When thunder rumbles in Asia, Africa and Latin America,
You loudly cheer this tumultuous age.
Ah, Chungnanhai, that bridges the world's wide oceans.

You are linked with all the storm-centres of our times,
You are tied to us by nerves and sinews,
Our hearts pulsate in rhythm with your own
Thus bound to you our lives are one.
When wild winds rage, we'll form a protecting wall.
We'll shield you as a forest when cold currents flow.
Ah, Chungnanhai, defended by all revolutionaries.

From you stems the energy our seven hundred million need
To start their locomotive speeding along the socialist road.
Because of you our vision's broader, our strength increased,
Because of you our ancient land's regained its vibrant youth.
From you flows all our wisdom and strength;
Your brilliant light will illuminate the future for ever.
Ah, Chungnanhai, pride of my heart.
Ah, Chungnanhai, pride of all of us.

LI CHANG-HUA

Heroes of the Red Flag Canal

I

When we sing of the heroes of the Red Flag Canal,
The first we acclaim is Chin Tieh-cheng.
Ah, Chin Tieh-cheng,
That first September when I went to the canal
On my way I heard the roar of distant blasting.
High mid a thousand perilous peaks and passes
Swirled tenuous skeins of mist and cloud.

The Red Flag Canal is in Linhsien, Honan Province, in the Taihang Mountain area where the land is poor and the rainfall insufficient. In 1960, the people of this county decided to cut through the mountains and build a canal. After ten years of hard work, the Red Flag Canal was built, and now water from the River Chang in Shansi Province is brought to this county, forming an irrigation network. The canal's construction involved many feats of heroism on the part of the builders, two of whom are described in the two poems here.

As I climbed the rocky path through clawing brambles,
My heart leaped and thudded within me,
For above a sheer cliff pierced the sky,
But beneath my feet lay a yawning chasm.
Tell me quickly Chin Tieh-cheng,
How many more peaks to climb before I reach you?

Pointing to the sky, workers on the rocks answered,
"To find him you'll have to climb three more peaks,
The Devil's Head, Eagle's Beak and Plover's Crest.
If you can climb these you'll be near the stars."

When I'd found my way to Plover's Crest
Around me lay a dream world, a wilderness.
Before me, as swallows flew, they brushed my face,
Behind, a plover's cry rang in my ear. . . .
Chin Tieh-cheng, answer quickly, tell me where are you?

I glimpsed red flags waving in the air,
Teams of workers digging at the rocks.
From a cliff an old comrade raised his head,
Through the wind he shouted loud and clear:
"To lead the river up the mountainside,
We've tossed a rope and hung it higher up;
And Chin Tieh-cheng is on it, hanging in mid air.
You'll have to look still higher to find that stout fellow."

I was already in the eighth heaven;
So I gazed above into the ninth heaven.
And there I saw him, a swaying figure,
Hewing away at the cliff-face in that perilous place,
Hanging and swinging there up among the clouds.

Ah, Chin Tieh-cheng, I was flabbergasted.
I stared in amazement for quite a while,
Watching you — the blood raced faster in my veins,
Watching you — I felt younger all of a sudden.
I wanted to call out to you:
“My good comrade, you are not a cloud, an eagle;
How can you fly so high among those crests?
How can you work suspended in mid air?”

From Plover's Crest Chin Tieh-cheng answered me
With each blow of his sledge-hammer on that rocky anvil:
“The sun rising from Mount Shaoshan has melted the ice.
Chairman Mao has liberated us.
We poor peasants will always follow the Party;
We'll always be loyal to the revolution.
We're determined to bring the River Chang to our fields
And completely transform the Taihang Mountains. . . .

“Chairman Mao has given us wings.
He told us about the Old Fool who moved mountains*
And gave us the courage to fly among clouds,
To ride on the wind to achieve our desires.
No old poor peasant is afraid of death!
If we fear death how can we carry out the revolution?”

“No! An old poor peasant is not afraid of death!”
From the crags around his words re-echoed.

*The ancient Chinese fable *The Fool Who Moved Mountains* tells how an old man leads his family, in spite of many difficulties, to remove two mountains in front of their house.

“If we fear death how can we carry out the revolution?”
Everywhere comrades share the same thought.
We'll never forget Chairman Mao's words:
“On perilous peaks dwells beauty in her infinite variety.”

2

Now we sing of Tsao Hsiu-li,
A fine girl from Pachiao Village.
When only ten she thought herself a commune worker
And, tramping the hills, herded cattle with her dad.
The wind brushed her tousled hair,
The rain washed her muddy feet,
But in wind and rain she grew fast and strong.

One day, like a young calf nudging its dam,
Cuddled in her mother's arms, she pleaded:
“Mother, in the distance, I can hear them blasting,
It makes me feel so excited.
Please let me go and help build the aqueduct;
I want to work for socialism too.”

Gently but firmly her parents dissuaded her:
“You're still far too young, little daughter,
When you're older, we'll certainly let you go. . . .”
So, for a few more years of wind and rain, the sapling grew,
And before long Tsao Hsiu-li was seventeen. . . .

One day at a meeting called in the village,
The team leader wrung his hands, scratched his head.
“The Red Flag Canal has reached just west of the village

But there's eighty feet of tunnel to be dug through the mountain
And we're short of hands," he announced.
"What helpful suggestions do you comrades have?"

Like a sudden clap of thunder from a blue sky, she spoke,
Even small clouds stopped on their way to listen,
And birds in the tree branches twittered their approval.
"You have good eyes, old brother,
But why are you ignoring us young women?
Chairman Mao has told us:
Times are different now. Men and women are equal.
His words have given us courage.
Now we women must help to dig this canal,
And no one can stop us doing such work."

The crowd parted as Tsao Hsiu-li stepped forward
Followed closely by a file of hefty girls,
All standing proudly, heads held high.
Ah, Tsao Hsiu-li,
The hard struggle attracted you as a magnet.
Leading the girls, you set the pace,
Like horses racing over the grasslands,
Like tigers plunging through tangled brambles,
Like stormy petrels flying against the wind,
Like mountain eagles cleaving the clouds. . . .
Tied with thick rope around her waist,
She was the first lowered into the hundred-foot deep pit
To start digging the tunnel through the bosom of the earth.

Tsao Hsiu-li, you wielded your pick skilfully,
Like a needle embroidering fine tapestry on the hard rocks.

How little you cared when your hands were bruised,
Or how often your muddy face was washed by sweat.
How splendid is our youth in battle!
Ah, Tsao Hsiu-li,
Each time your sledge-hammer clanged you whispered:
"Chairman Mao!"
Each time you took up a new pick, you sang a song.
"Ah, Chairman Mao, we swear to you,
We'll never forget the Old Fool who moved mountains,
And we'll find the strength to transform the earth.
Maybe wind and rain will obscure our path,
But we'll never fear losing our way.
We'll bring the River Chang right to our district
And paint all the mountains green. . . ."

One day there was the sound of gongs and drums
And people singing in Pachiao Village.
The canal had been dug right through the mountain.
At the celebrations the girls won the red banner,
Each one wore a red flower pinned on her jacket.
The villagers praised them as their good daughters.
When Tsao Hsiu-li, the team leader, was chosen
To attend a conference in the county town,
Her parents and others went to see her off,
As far as the foot of the mountain, ten *li* away.
Then Tsao Hsiu-li asked them to turn back,
Her eyes glistening with happiness,
Saying to them at parting,
"Don't worry, comrades and neighbours.
As the daughter of a former poor peasant
I'll remember to be modest in facing this honour.
I'll bring back to you all the other comrades' experiences,
Then we'll make our district even more beautiful."

LI YING

Snowy Night

Night, dark swirling drifts of snow,
A wild wind, howling over the grassland.

In our thick-walled sentry-post the brick beds are warm,
But our thoughts go out to the herdsmen on the pastures.
Will that fierce wind tear down their yurts and barns?
Will drifting snow block the entrance to their yurts?

No sooner thought than we fasten our boots, harness the horses,
To take them a sleigh-load of dried dung for some fires.

Our whips flail, runner tracks are fast obliterated,
No snow can block the fraternal feelings coursing through our hearts.
Our storm lanterns, two red stars in the dark night,
No bitter wind can cool our warm solicitude.

Eyeing the snow-mantled scene stretching far and wide,
How I long to cover it with my army greatcoat.

Icicles hang from the horses' nostrils,
Steam rises from their sweating flanks,
As into the blizzard they boldly plunge,
Snorting wildly as they gallop on.

Faster! faster! We press on through heavy snow,
Determined to deliver our load of dried dung.

Of course we know that commune and brigade leaders
Have visited every yurt and barn,
There's no doubt the herdsmen are well provisioned,
Have good clothes, ample food and fodder for the winter.

But how can we soldiers of the people taught by Chairman Mao
Sleep uncaring by ourselves on such a night as this?

No. These are times of peace. We feel
The herdsmen as dear to us as our parents.
If invading armies come we shall be ruthless,
And smash them totally with our powerful guns.

LI YING

The First Catch

Yesterday, the last sledge sped over our Heilung River
And rumbled away into the hills,
Today, a misty vapour shrouds
The river's wide expanse.

Spring, bursting through the cracking ice,
Clammers to the topmost branches of the trees;
With the first floes floating downstream,
Comes a shower of wild peach petals.

The sounds of spring spread far and wide,
The river sparkles, mountain flowers are gay,
But to whom do we owe this sweet security?
Who protects our oars and ploughshares?

At dawn on the bank, grandad gauges the river's flow.
"Come on," he says, kicking off his thick felt boots,
Then pushes his boat deep into the stream.
In his hands a new nylon net shimmers.

This first catch of frisking, tumbling fish,
Where shall we send it? There's no need to ask.
Where else but to our good neighbours?
So, to the sentry's post the loaded crates of fish are carried.

They study with us, fight by our side,
Together we sweat and are willing to shed our blood.
They defend our frontiers while we fish and farm,
Spring comes to us while they guard our motherland.

A new spring, horses gallop in the east wind,
A new spring, melting snow leaves our land green.
Dear people's soldiers, please accept our first catch,
Though it can never convey all our commune members' love.

Warm winds waft the thaw across the hills,
Cuckoo calls awake every family.
Peach petals floating on our Heilung River,
A picture of our love and unity.

SKETCHES

CHEN YING-SHIH

A Visit to My Native Village

In July when the wheat was turning golden yellow and the apricots were ripening in the mountains north of the Great Wall, I went back to my native village after an absence of a good many years.

When I reached Eagle Village in Ten-*zi* Valley I stopped short struck by the breath-taking view: orchards of apricot trees on the hills and ridges stretched far and wide into the distance, their luxuriant branches laden with plump fruit swaying among the thick foliage. In the dazzling sunshine, the scene was magnificent. I took a look around and saw that a lot of work had been done in the orchards: the fields were neatly terraced, a network of irrigation ditches had been built and around each tree three square feet of earth had been dug out. There, the soil was as loose as if made of feathers and fertilizer seemed to have been applied recently. The trees were living proof that the days when apricots grew wild and untended were now a thing of the past. After the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the trees in my native village were well cared for.

I was still marvelling over the apricots when Little Liu from the store caught up with me. Though out of breath she said merrily, "Don't be in such a hurry, comrade! If you're not afraid of wearing your shoes out, you can walk up and down all the mountains and admire the apricots to your heart's content."

"Are the apricots on the other mountains growing well too?" I asked eagerly.

"Even better," the girl quickly retorted. "Don't you know that our Eagle Village almonds are among the very best? You know, they played their part in our revolution during the War of Resistance Against Japan."

Her remarks set my mind flashing back to the past. I suddenly remembered the flourishing apricot tree on Pestle Cliff—the scene of one of my most stirring childhood memories, and I immediately set out for it.

I soon came within sight of it. The tree still stood erect on the high cliff, but was now more thriving and vigorous than ever before. Looking at it I felt my heart swell up with emotion. For the apricot tree had meant something special to me ever since my childhood, not only because its fruit allayed our hunger during the hard years before Liberation, but because it was above all a symbol of the love and loyalty that the people in these mountains had for the revolution. My native villagers, by nourishing our wounded soldiers with soup made from its almonds, had in fact been nourishing the revolution!

In the summer of 1942, more than thirty wounded soldiers were sent to our mountains. At that time our village had just been devastated by the barbarous Japanese invaders, who had looted all our grain, slaughtered all our pigs and sheep, and even smashed our bowls and cooking utensils. Our villagers were forced to go deep into the mountains where they lived in caves and, for food, picked wild herbs in the forests. But they never, even for a moment, ceased their persistent struggle. In those days it was hard enough for a family to survive, let alone get food for so many wounded soldiers.

However, no difficulty could daunt our villagers loyal to the revolution. They tore up the only quilts they had to bandage the soldiers' wounds. To collect medicinal herbs and find grain for the wounded,

Grandpa Pine, our liaison man, often risked his life, climbing high peaks and plunging through heavily guarded areas in spite of enemy patrols.

Luckily, when the most crucial moment came the apricots were ripe. The sight of the ripening fruit made the villagers happy beyond words. Having posted sentries, Grandpa Pine organized the other villagers to do the harvesting. One morning Grandpa Pine and I went to pick apricots at Pestle Cliff ten *li* from where we lived. He did the picking while I kept watch on the mountain. With a bag tied round his waist, he laboriously climbed the cliff, his hands gripping the vines that hung down its precipitous face. Once at the top, he set to work immediately.

Just as he finished lowering his second bag of apricots from the top of the cliff, gunshots rang out from the other side of the mountain, and bullets began whistling past overhead. The enemy had come. I immediately cried out a warning. Without uttering a word in reply, the old man, nimble as a lizard, slid back down the face of the cliff. He tied the two bags of apricots together, slung them over his shoulder and taking me by the hand began running. Coming out of a cave on our way back I noticed some blood on his face and cried: "Grandpa, your face is bleeding!"

"It doesn't matter," he said calmly, his hands tightly gripping the two bags. "It's only a scratch I got from some branches."

When we got back we saw that all the villagers were busy cracking apricot-pits out in the sunlight in front of cave doors or at the foot of the cliffs. At lunch time blue smoke from the cooking stoves filled the air, carrying the appetizing fragrance of almond soup everywhere. Then bowl after bowl of this delicious soup was brought to the wounded soldiers. Grandpa Pine, though his own bandaged wound was still oozing blood, quickly set to work spoon-feeding the casualties unable to move their arms.

"What are you thinking about, comrade?" asked Little Liu suddenly, bringing me back to the present.

"I'm thinking about Grandpa Pine. How is he?"

"He's fine. He's now leader of the team in charge of over five hundred *mu* of apricot trees. There's no end to his energy. He aims

high and his team has fresh ideas every year." With glowing eyes she added, "We call him our 'Great Mountain Tamer'."

"Great Mountain Tamer?!" I exclaimed in surprise. "What a terrific name."

"He deserves it. He's really a grand old trail blazer in transforming barren mountains. In these past years he's planted more than thirty thousand trees with his own hands."

The girl's words made me even more eager to see the old man again, so I quickened my step.

We arrived at the apricot orchards of Eagle Village when the sun was already high in the sky. Then I saw the truth in the saying: hard work hastens the autumn harvest. Now, on these mountains over 1,500 metres above sea level, the apricots were being harvested. Several dozen young commune members, armed with long wooden poles, were carefully knocking the fruit off the heavily laden branches, bringing golden apricots showering down like raindrops. A group of women were working so quickly their fingers seemed to fly: some were gathering the fallen fruit, some drying it, others cracking apricot-pits. The fragrance of these plump almonds embalmed the whole countryside.

After we had climbed over a ridge and walked on for a short while, we saw a seedling nursery among the green mountains. Ah, yes. This was the place where we had nursed the wounded soldiers. Towering Eagle Peak had become even more magnificent, its pines more vigorous and sturdy. The barren slopes at the foot of the cliffs had been transformed; they now were terraced fields, on which green plants swayed gently in the breeze.

I was eagerly taking in all these changes, when I heard Little Liu's ringing voice call out cheerfully: "Grandpa Pine, I'm bringing you a guest. Guess who it is." At the same time she skipped playfully in front of me to hide me from being seen.

Standing on tiptoe and peering over her shoulder, I caught a glimpse of an old grey-haired man emerging from among the sturdy young seedlings. With one hand raised to shelter his eyes from the sun, he gazed at me. I strode quickly over to him. "Grandpa Pine!" I exclaimed and clasped his powerful hands tightly.



As the old man sheathed his grafting knife, he examined me from head to foot. After a moment he recognized me. "What! It's you!" His voice trembled. "I never thought you'd come back. How you've changed!" Then he led me to a nearby hut.

It was a simple working-shed the size of two rooms. Hung in the centre of one of its whitewashed walls was a coloured portrait of Chairman Mao flanked by two striking slogans written in red: Transform China in the spirit of the Foolish Old Man who removed the mountains; take grain as the guiding principle and ensure an all-round development.

"Grandpa!" I exclaimed. "While working deep in these mountains, you've kept the whole motherland in view."

The old man beamed. "You know when we keep the needs of the revolution in mind we feel more enthusiastic and work harder," he said briskly. "Each tree we plant and each catty of almonds we get are for the revolution."

As he was speaking so exuberantly, the bulletin board on the opposite side caught my eye. The articles posted on it criticized such rubbish peddled by Lin Piao and Confucius as "the highest are the wise and the lowest are the stupid". Each article was based on the experience of the people of my native village who dared to change the earth and sky and expose the reactionary nature of such idealist fallacies. They affirmed that the working people are an irresistible force, a force to destroy the old world and build up the new.

Before I could ask any questions, the old man suddenly stood up and said: "They're coming. I must go and have a look. You stay here and rest."

I looked outside and saw that several hundred commune members, men and women, carrying picks and shovels over their shoulders, had just arrived at cloud-capped Comb Mountain. There had been a timely rain recently and now the whole production brigade had turned out to plant apricots for two days while the soil was still moist.

Having no desire to sit idle in the shed, I ran after Little Liu and followed her up the mountain.

Although rain had fallen, Old Grandpa Pine still took along two buckets of water. "Some dry places will need watering," he told the

commune members. "We must see to it that every seed we plant sprouts. There is no room for carelessness in our work." Some youngsters ran to take the buckets from him but he held on to them firmly. He said jokingly, "Don't forget I'm the 'Great Mountain Tamer'."

Amid peals of laughter a contingent set off carrying water, with Old Grandpa Pine at the head.

His step sure and steady, the old man led them along the zigzag path which wound in and out among the jagged rocks on Comb Mountain two thousand metres above the sea. Two full buckets of water hanging from the pole on his shoulder, he strode along vigorously.

Stopping in front of a big rock he put down his carrying pole and helped a youngster pick out all the small stones from a freshly-dug hole. After refilling it with a shovelful of humus that he had gone to get from some distance away, he carefully placed two apricot-pits in it. As he did the watering he said to me, "Though we plant apricot trees every year, I never feel there are enough. Of all fresh and dried fruits I like apricots the best."

"Aren't you a little prejudiced, grandpa?" I teased.

The old man's eyebrows shot up. "Don't you forget that apricots are the 'staple crop' in these mountains. They served us well in the hard years during the War of Resistance Against Japan."

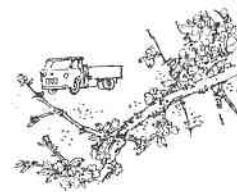
Truly, apricots deserve their fine reputation. The tree grows well and bears fruit anywhere, even under adverse conditions. Each and every part of it is useful: almond oil is a high quality lubricant for machinery, it doesn't congeal even at forty degrees below zero; in addition to their use in the food industry, almonds are an essential ingredient for certain Chinese medicines; the tree's leaves provide good nourishing feed for pigs; its trunk, fine wood for small cabinets and knick-knacks; the pits are used for making active carbon; and resin can be collected from the bark — in a word, every part of the apricot tree is of value. Besides, it grows fast, bears early and costs little to plant. So it has a special place in the hearts of the mountain people, who call it their "Staple Crop".

But Old Grandpa Pine's devotion to the apricot tree was not only because of its material value but chiefly because he admired its for-

titude, its stubborn defiance of hardships, its selfless striving to benefit mankind. In fact, Old Grandpa Pine was a tree of this kind himself.

I was sorry when the time came to leave Eagle Village. On the way back my heart was in a tumult and my thoughts were still with the old man. . . .

Illustrated by Tai Tun-pang



NOTES ON ART

WANG WU-SHENG

National Art Exhibition

The National Art Exhibition of 1974 was held in October and November last year in Peking. When we entered the China Art Gallery, we saw before us magnificent scenes of our age depicted in oils, water-colours and woodcuts. Some of the four hundred and thirty new works on display presented episodes from the life of Chairman Mao, great leader of our revolution; some conveyed the heroism with which our working class has adhered to the Party's policy of self-reliance; others depicted the splendid achievements of our poor and lower-middle peasants in their arduous struggle to transform our land, or our soldiers' courageous battles against aggressors. Works reflecting the current movement to repudiate Lin Piao and Confucius formed a striking, spirited part of the exhibition. They showed workers, peasants and soldiers throughout the country denouncing the crimes of Lin Piao and Confucius in speeches or big-character posters by blazing steel furnaces, at work-sites to level mountains, on military manoeuvres, in hostels, barracks and work-

sheds late at night. . . . In short, the exhibits covered a wide range of themes, had a significant content, and expressed the strong militant spirit of our age. Revealing the new achievements and new heights attained on our art front, this exhibition was a new victory of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line in art.

The warm, vivid colours of the oil paintings aptly conveyed the revolutionary optimism of our worker-peasant-soldier heroes; the vigour and conciseness of the woodcuts expressed the spirit of our life and struggles; the technical innovations in the traditional Chinese ink and water-colour paintings highlighted the new features of our age; and the sculpture also succeeded fairly well in tackling new themes by creating images of the working people who are now the masters of our society. This exhibition surpassed previous ones in quantity as well. Many of the works displayed were relatively successful integrations of politics and art, content and form. It was also very apparent that the ranks of our art workers are growing steadily with the emergence of many new amateur artists from among the workers, peasants and soldiers, who accounted for quite a number of these exhibits.

The oil paintings stood out in this exhibition. Visitors were struck by their successful depiction of heroic characters and their heightened expressive power. One of the most praised was the oil *Only When We Keep in Step Can We Win Victory*. This shows Chairman Mao in 1928 teaching Red Army men the three main rules of discipline and eight points for attention for our revolutionary army. The scene is the Shatien district of Kueitung County in the Chingkang Mountains revolutionary base. The sun has risen, mountains can be seen in the distance, and in a clearing before a bamboo grove Chairman Mao, in a Red Army uniform, is giving a lively description of revolutionary discipline to the soldiers and local people. Chairman Mao's kindly face conveys his high expectations of our people's fighters, while the soldiers and peasants around him are listening attentively to his instructions. The revolutionary truth "only when we keep in step can we win victory", like sunlight piercing the bamboo grove, irradiates the hearts of his hearers, inspiring the fighting men and civilians alike and strengthening their

confidence in winning victory. So each face is alight with joy. It is evident from the clothes they are wearing that here are worker and peasant Red Guards who have come to China's first rural revolutionary base built by Chairman Mao in the Ching Kang Mountains. They have rallied round Chairman Mao with weapons to fight for the revolution. The painting also reminds us how poorly equipped the people's armed forces were in those days — apart from a very few artillery pieces and rifles, their weapons are for the most part swords and spears. Yet this people's army created and led by Chairman Mao, after being tested and steeled through the Second Revolutionary Civil War, the War of Resistance Against Japan and the War of Liberation, has grown steadily larger and more powerful. It defeated Chiang Kai-shek's eight million troops equipped with modern arms and won liberation for China in 1949.

Another good oil painting *Where the Oil Is, There Is My Home* reflects the swift development of China's petroleum industry and the militant spirit of our young oil workers. The scene is quite simple: some young workers come to open up a new oilfield and are roughing it and drawing water from a reedy lake covered with ice and snow. Their arduous living conditions contrast strongly with the workers' exuberance, bringing out their revolutionary optimism, their conviction that shouldering hardships is an honour, their delight in struggle and their noble resolve to contribute all they can to the development of their motherland. To make the chief character stand out vividly, the artist presents a broad vista and depicts the hero as if seen from below. Thus the young worker's figure appears more imposing and the sweep of the canvas, the sense of freedom achieved, suggest his high aspirations.

Several works depict school-leavers going to the countryside. The oil *Willows in the Spring Breeze* shows a group of youngsters from a school in a city come to a village where they mean to settle. They are seated on benches in orderly rows at a welcome meeting organized by the peasants. They look happy and touched, for in their hands are bowls of freshly brewed tea given them by the village women. The hot tea suggests the peasants' warm love for Chairman Mao and warm concern for the youngsters, as well as the warmth



The Miner's Son (sculpture) by Tsai Hsiu-chi



Where the Oil Is, There Is My Home (oil painting) by Chang Hung-tsan



Willows in the Spring Breeze (oil painting) by Chou Shu-chiao



Only When We Keep in Step Can We Win Victory (oil painting)

by Kao Hung, Peng Pin and Ho Kung-teh



We Are Reversing the Old Judgements on History (traditional Chinese painting)
by Yen Sheng and Hou Chieh



The New Classroom (traditional Chinese painting) by Ou Yang ▶



in the young people's hearts which increases their determination to work hard in the country. This homely touch makes the painting very moving. The artist has also succeeded in depicting the different features of these youngsters and their individual characteristics. The old brigade leader seated by the window on the right and smiling contentedly is also well portrayed. Indeed, this whole painting is realistic and lifelike.

Other outstanding oils were *Chairman Mao Meets Norman Bethune*, *Fetching Water from the Milky Way* and *The Piglets Are Growing*. Since oil painting is still a young art in China, it is gratifying to see such good works.

The woodcuts in this exhibition were highly praised too, notably *The Hope of the Emancipated Serfs*, *Tachai's New Look* and the series *The Victory of the Hsisha Archipelago* and *The Slave System Must Never Return!* The first of these forcefully projects the character of the emancipated serfs of Tibet by showing three new Tibetan cadres. At a commune rally a veteran cadre is presenting the Tibetan translation of the works of Chairman Mao to three newly elected cadres. The face of the girl in the middle shows deep emotion as she respectfully takes this gift with both hands. The elderly man by her side looks jubilant. And though the young Tibetan in front appears graver, he is clapping his hands, unable to contain his elation. Effective use is made in this woodcut of the contrast between light and shade to reinforce the clear-cut black-and-white treatment characteristic of woodcuts.

The coloured woodcut *Tachai's New Look* also shows innovations in technique. It presents the new heroic achievements of the peasants of Tachai in their struggle to transform nature and improve their land: high-voltage cables span the peaks, the new reservoir shines bright as a mirror, the autumn paddy is vivid as emerald, tiers of terraced fields cover the hillsides, and the whole landscape is clad in verdant green. The old Tachai, with its barren gullies and slopes, has now become as fair and fertile as the Yangtse Valley. This woodcut succeeds in bringing out the new features and transformation of this village so that it looks fresh and full of vigorous life.

Another significant theme, the battle of the Hsisha Archipelago, is reflected in several art works including the coloured serial woodcut *The Victory of the Hsisha Archipelago*. By using the serial form and presenting this important theme from different angles through a series of scenes, the artist is able to express it more comprehensively. Each of the woodcuts is a separate entity, while together they form an integrated whole. These eight woodcuts give us a fairly full picture of the life and struggle of the troops and islanders in this archipelago, vividly expressing their revolutionary spirit as they build up and defend these islands. Simple colours are used and the composition is concise and uncluttered. The colour varies from scene to scene, yet the eight scenes make up a harmonious whole. The modern woodcut only developed as an independent art little more than forty years ago under the encouragement and guidance of Lu Hsun. Chinese woodcuts played a positive role in the revolutionary struggles of that time and were considered a "militant art form". It is good to see this militant tradition being carried on and further developed. A considerable proportion of the woodcuts exhibited dealt with important modern themes such as the victory in the fight to defend China's Hsisha Archipelago.

Since the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution traditional ink and water-colour paintings, a form of art loved by the Chinese people, have blossomed out and been rejuvenated. The seventy-five traditional paintings in this exhibition showed the progress made in exploring new means of expression. Here we had successful paintings of people, landscapes, flowers and birds. The painting *We Are Reversing the Old Judgements on History*, made jointly by a worker and a professional artist, is a striking one. It presents a mass meeting to repudiate Lin Piao and Confucius, at which a young miner is about to go up the platform to make a speech. His helmet and boots show that he has come straight from his fighting front in the pit to join in this fight on the ideological front. His right fist is clenched and in his left hand he holds the draft of his speech. Striding vigorously to the platform, he looks full of confidence. This stirring picture brings out the fine spirit of our working class, the main combat force in this mass movement. In our imagina-

tion, we see the new contingent of Marxist theorists with the workers, peasants and soldiers as its main force marching forward, shouldering its historic task.

The genre painting *The New Classroom* which reflects our revolution in education also aroused keen interest. Other noteworthy works in this category were *Gifts from Peking* which reflects the solidarity and struggle of the troops and islanders in the Hsisha Archipelago, *New Songs from the Front* and *The Leader of the Production Brigade*. All these lay stress on creating heroic pictures of our workers, peasants and soldiers, and they have absorbed good techniques from other art forms to give their portraits greater depth and realism while at the same time developing the special features of traditional painting with its distinctive use of ink and brush-work. The landscape *New Canal by the Great Wall* and the flower-and-bird painting *Spring in West Szechuan* embody certain innovations too.

This exhibition also presented more than twenty sculptures. *The Miner's Son* attracted crowds of spectators, because it graphically conveys the noble desire of New China's children to grow up to be workers, peasants or soldiers themselves. The sculptor, familiar with the way children love to imitate grown-ups, shows a boy trying on his miner father's helmet, supporting the rim with both hands so that the big helmet will not eclipse his whole face. By depicting his elation, the sculptor shows the healthy love of mischief combined with revolutionary ideals typical of our Chinese children.

Another sculptural work *The Mountains Are Laughing* also aroused great interest. This shows three girls who have just laid a charge of dynamite to blast a tunnel through the mountains and are waiting behind a ridge for the explosion. Their postures and expressions show their different characters, but what they all have in common is revolutionary optimism and pride in their work; so this exhibit conveys to us indirectly the rapid development of our socialist construction in the mountain regions. The wood carving *Women Militia on the River* is clear-cut, polished and striking. The appearance of such successful works shows that China's sculptural art is making good progress in depicting our socialist society and our new heroes and heroines.

The "Erh-hu" and "Pi-pa"

The *erb-hu* fiddle and the *pi-pa* guitar are two traditional string instruments which have long been popular in China.

Since the founding of the Chinese People's Republic in 1949, and especially since the Cultural Revolution initiated in 1966, revolutionary Chinese musicians inspired by the revolution in Peking opera have been carrying out Chairman Mao's policy of **"making the past serve the present and foreign things serve China"**, and **"weeding through the old to bring forth the new"**. In order to create new music which reflects the heroic images of the proletariat, our musicians have gone to live with the workers, peasants and soldiers and have composed many works reflecting current revolutionary struggles; at the same time they have been arranging large numbers of traditional pieces by critically assimilating their best points and introducing certain innovations. They have also improved the tonal volume, range and pitch of the traditional instruments created by various Chinese nationalities through the centuries, while preserving their distinctive features. The improved *erb-hu* and *pi-pa* for example, are now used not only as solo instruments but also in symphonic music and in the orchestral accompaniment for modern revolutionary operas and modern Chinese ballets.

The earliest *erb-hu*, a fiddle known as the *hsi chin* which was played with a bamboo bow, originated among the nomadic tribes of the north during the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618-907). By the 18th century, when folk music and local operas had further developed, it was widely played by the Han people as well.

Since Liberation, schools of music throughout China have offered special courses in *erb-hu* music and trained many fine *erb-hu* players. Min Hui-fen of the Shanghai Philharmonic Society is one of these promising young musicians. The revolutionary passion of her solo rendering of such tunes as *The Water in the River* and *Delivering Grain to the State* expresses the feelings of our labouring people in both the old and the new society. Her performances also manifest the new spirit of our younger generation of artists who have been steeled by the Cultural Revolution.

The Water in the River started as a flute solo popular in northeast China. In 1963 it was adapted for the *erb-hu*. This music conveys the sorrows of the labouring masses before Liberation. In order to express their feelings more fully, Min Hui-fen has introduced some innovations to stress the people's hatred and revolt against the iniquitous old society. In 1967 when she travelled up the Yangtse to Szechuan, she talked with the crew of the steamboat. As they passed through the gorges an old boatman pointed out to her the deep lines scored on the rocks of the bank and told her with feeling: "Those lines were made by tow-ropes. Each of them is marked with the blood and sweat of poor devils before Liberation." He himself once had to toil in this way for a living, towing boats up the gorges in wind and rain, in sultry summer and in freezing winter, straining at every step. So this old man's words made an unforgettable impression on her. In recent years Min Hui-fen has paid many visits to factories, communes and army units to receive education from the workers, peasants and soldiers. This has deepened her understanding of the vast difference between the new society and the old. When she plays *The Water in the River*, she underlines this strong contrast by various fingering techniques and striking variations in the volume, successfully expressing a profound content in distinctive *erb-hu* style.

Delivering Grain to the State, a new composition by two Shanghai musicians, describes the joy of commune members when they are delivering grain to the state after a bumper harvest. The tune is cheerful, melodious and simple. Once when Min Hui-fen was doing



Min Hui-fen playing the *erhu*

manual labour with some other teachers and students of the school of music, they helped peasants from the outskirts of Shanghai to push carts loaded with vegetables over a bridge to deliver them to the city. The jubilation with which the poor and lower-middle peasants worked for the revolution imprinted itself on her mind, helping her to interpret this composition better. In the first part, Min Hui-fen brings out the elation of the peasants who sing as they work; her bowing here is lively, fluent and melodious. In the second part, she bows faster to suggest the swift rumbling of cart-wheels on the road, working up to a climax. And finally by using clear,

crisp tones followed by a gradually muted pianissimo she shows that this joyful convoy is receding into the distance along the highway.

The name *pi-pa* originally applied to all instruments of that type played by plucking the strings and suggests that the two basic finger movements were plucking the strings inward and outward. The *pi-pa* originated in the third century B.C. during the Chin Dynasty, when it had a round sound box with a leather surface and a long neck, and was then called the *hsuan-chao* (stringed drum). During the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) a type of *pi-pa* with twelve frets appeared. The present-day *pi-pa* was evolved from these early instruments. The ancient *pi-pa* had a narrow tonal range, for the player with his plectrum could only strike a limited number of strings. After centuries of improving this instrument the performer abandoned the plectrum to use his fingers, while the number of frets was increased from four to fourteen. However, during the long feudal period in China, because the ruling class despised folk music this instrument still had a limited sound range and rather weak tonal capacity, while sometimes it sounded discordant.

After the founding of the People's Republic, the *pi-pa* was further developed. Most music schools teaching traditional instrumental music started courses in *pi-pa* music, and this instrument occupied an important place in concerts of traditional Chinese music. In the course of re-arranging traditional *pi-pa* tunes, the instrument itself was improved. The frets have now been increased from fourteen to twenty-eight, more scientifically and closely spaced so that semi-tones can be played. This has done away with discordance and it is possible to transpose to twelve different keys. Formerly the performer either used bare fingers or wore metal finger-sheaths; now plastic sheaths which are more durable and more flexible are used. The strings, originally of silk, are now made of metal or nylon, which has greatly increased the volume besides improving the quality of the sound. The modern *pi-pa* is thus a highly expressive instrument. The two hands are free to perform their own variations, producing clear crisp high notes, mellow middle notes and a deep resonant bass. In this way vigorous heroic works as well as gay lyrical tunes can be played.

Since the Cultural Revolution, China's *pi-pa* musicians have adapted a number of old scores and composed new ones too. One example is the *pi-pa* solo *Linyang River* adapted from a Hunan folk

tune, which with its exquisite melody expresses our revolutionary people's love and admiration for Chairman Mao. The young *pi-pa* virtuoso Liu Teh-hai of the Central Philharmonic Society has kept in close touch with the life of the masses in order to draw inspiration from it to enrich his work. He learned to play the *pi-pa* while still a child and in his middle-school days took part in amateur performances, thus laying the foundation for his present mastery of *pi-pa* technique. Later, when he went to study in the Central Academy of Music, he made a point of studying *pi-pa* folk tunes. This has made

Liu Teh-hai playing the *pi-pa*



his playing lively and melodious, full of the atmosphere of real life. In *Linyang River's* prelude, he imitates the sound of a flute to present the main theme of this folk-song. The first part is played on the third string, a deep bass suggesting a male voice singing; the second part is played on the first string, which is soprano, and by using the traditional technique of producing tremolo with the left hand over the strings a soprano duet is suggested; the last part, a further development of the traditional technique of strumming two strings together, expresses the deep feeling of the revolutionary masses as together they sing the praise of Chairman Mao.

Another *pi-pa* solo *Besieged on Ten Sides* is a celebrated composition from early times. During the Cultural Revolution it was revised and rewritten, becoming something new. This work describes a battle in 202 B.C. between the forces of Chu and Han. It pays tribute to the strategy of Liu Pang, Prince of Han, who upheld a progressive line against retrogression by following the Legalist School, and who encircled and finally defeated Hsiang Yu, Conqueror of Chu, who wanted to restore the old order.

The whole composition has eight passages describing the pitching of camps, deployment of troops, forming of ranks, ambush, initial skirmish, main battle, battle-cries and pursuit. The music of the first passage conjures up the roll of drums, the blare of trumpets, the discharge of missiles, all heralding a great battle. Here, the irregular beat and use of certain fingering techniques build up a powerfully dramatic effect. Then we seem to hear the commanders issuing orders, the troops falling in and marching off, as Liu Pang's Han army prepares for the engagement. Each passage has its specially adapted technique to unfold the whole composition. The second part starts with the ambush followed by the skirmish; then comes the main battle with its battle-cries and the crescendo is reached. This music is compact and vivid with a strong, militant rhythm. Special fingering techniques convey the effect of the clash of arms, the din of cymbals and drums, the shouts of men and the whinnying of horses, so that we feel carried to a real battlefield.

Besieged on Ten Sides is a stirring composition, rich in variety. And Liu Teh-hai's spirited rendering skilfully conjures up the battle scene. While faithful to the style of the original, he has imbued its musical images with a new freshness and richness.

CHRONICLE

Selections from the Modern Peking Operas

In order to spread the model revolutionary theatrical works more widely among the workers, peasants and soldiers eager to learn to sing them, two books have been edited by a team of the Cultural Group under the State Council and published by the Peking People's Music Publishing House: *Main Arias from the Modern Revolutionary Peking Operas* and *Passages from the Modern Revolutionary Peking Operas*. The two books, which were recently put on sale all over the country, include more than 130 selections from the modern revolutionary Peking operas: *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*, *The Red Lantern*, *Shachiapang*, *On the Docks*, *Song of the Dragon River*, *Red Detachment of Women*, *Raid on the White Tiger Regiment*, *Fighting on the Plain* and *Azalea Mountain*.

New Serial-Picture Books Published in Shanghai

Since the beginning of the current movement to criticize Lin Piao and Confucius, the Shanghai masses have been active in drawing serial pictures during their spare time and have created many fine art works, the best of which were compiled and published recently by the Shanghai People's Publishing House.

Covering a wide range of subjects, these newly published serial-picture books include: *The Criminal Life of Confucius* and *The Work-*

ing People's Anti-Confucian Struggle in History, two books designed to help people further develop the present movement to repudiate Lin Piao and Confucius; *The Flying Train*, a reflection of the heroic deeds of a train crew; *On the Banks of Sea-Lion Pond*, about the life and struggle of militiamen; and *The History of Hungnan Village* which shows the process of agricultural collectivization. Other books are based on modern Peking operas, feature films and novels such as *Song of the Dragon River*, *The Fiery Years* and *The Little Trumpeter*.

Many of these new publications depict the life of children, for example: *Locust Flowers Bloom in July* and *The Little Sentry at the East Sea*.

Peasant Cultural Activities in Anhwei

During the current movement to criticize Lin Piao and Confucius, the cadres and members of Wangjen People's Commune in Hsinhsien County, Anhwei Province, have put into practice what they learned from the experience of Hsiao-chin-chuang* near Tientsin in developing cultural activities. They have taken up their pens to write poems or draw pictures in their spare time, singing warm praise of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and of the profound changes made in the socialist countryside, while denouncing the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius and all the reactionary ideas of the exploiting classes peddled by Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao. In addition to their many poems and paintings, they have produced over 400 political cartoons, criticizing Lin Piao's criminal attempt to restore capitalism in socialist China, which have been shown in the villages. They have also painted pictures, accompanied with poems, about the heroic anti-Confucian struggles of the working people and outstanding Legalists in ancient times. They have organized a travelling display too, going from village to village, to show the working people's anti-Confucian struggle in the past, and to illustrate the struggle between the Confucian and Legalist schools in Chinese history, thus spurring on the movement to repudiate Lin Piao and Confucius.

*See *Chinese Literature* No. 10, 1974.

At present over a thousand people are painting and writing poems in this commune. Paintings cover the walls of every village, poems are read out from the platforms set up and competitions have been organized.

Theatrical Festivals

Recently theatrical festivals were held in Tientsin, Hupeh, Liaoning and Shensi.

Over a thousand art workers from more than a hundred different organizations participated in the Tientsin theatrical festival. In addition to staging the model revolutionary Peking operas, they also performed some scenes and arias from them in the style of their local operas, such as the Hopei clapper and the *pingshu*. At the Hupeh festival eleven different repertoires were presented including a dozen adaptations of arias, scenes and even complete model Peking operas. The Shensi festival was the scene of fourteen different presentations including adaptations into local operas of the model Peking operas, modern plays, operas, dances, music and *chuyi* (balladry, story-telling and cross-talk).

These festivals clearly show how profound and widespread is the movement for popularizing the model revolutionary Peking operas in China today.



The Hope of the Emancipated Serfs (woodcut)

by Li Huan-min



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