

# CHINESE LITERATURE



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## My Childhood

**EDITORS' NOTE:** *My Childhood*, a novel depicting the bitter sufferings of the Kao family and the struggle of Kao Yu-pao and other farm hands against their oppressors during the occupation of northeast China by Japanese invaders, was first published in 1955. After being revised by the author, a new edition was printed at the beginning of this year. Totalling 120,000 words, the book consists of thirteen chapters, four of which are printed below. For further information, see the author's article *How I Became a Writer* on p. 111.

### I Want to Study!

One fine April day, Yu-pao was going with eight or nine poor boys from his village to gather firewood on the hills; each carried a sickle and some rope. Outside the village, they saw the village school children marching along the road, with one pupil walking beside their column shouting, "One . . . one, two, one . . ." like a drill sergeant. The village school teacher brought up the rear.

Yu-pao watched them intently, full of envy. Then he turned to his friends: "They're on an outing while we're going for firewood. But still we can march in a column as they do. Fall in!" None of the poor boys objected. Yu-pao stuck his sickle in his belt, brought his friends into line and walked beside them, shouting also, "One . . . one, two, one . . . ." The poor boys marched in step with good spirit, holding themselves very straight, their sickles over their shoulders. Thus they followed the school group at a distance.

The village school children heard them, and one by one turned round to see who was following, thus getting out of step. The teacher also turned round to look and was quite astonished. Who was this boy who was able to keep so many other high-spirited ones in order?

He waved his hand and called: "Hello, young fellow! Come here a moment."

Seeing that the schoolmaster wanted to speak to Yu-pao, Yu Chih-cheng who had acted as drill sergeant said: "I'll go and fetch him for you, teacher."

Yu-pao went up to the school teacher and bowed respectfully, while out of the corner of one eye, he noticed that the man was quite tall and about sixty years old. He wore a gown of coarse blue cotton and the black cloth shoes on his feet were well-worn. His whole face wrinkled in a smile. . . . Yu-pao was thinking: "Perhaps the teacher really wants me to go on the outing with them, but there's no firewood at home. . . ."

The pupils did not know what to make of it all. So they just crowded around to watch.

The teacher bent over, patted Yu-pao on the head and said with a smile: "Ho, ho, you're well-mannered, I see! How old are you?"

"I'm twelve, teacher."

"And what's your name?"

Yu-pao cocked his head to one side, smiled too and said, "See whether you can guess."

"I know his name, teacher," interrupted Yu Chih-cheng. "We often play together."

But Yu-pao hastily put his hand over his friend's mouth and said: "You mustn't tell!"

The teacher found this rather amusing, so he smiled again and said: "You queer child, how can I guess?"

"Can't you really guess? Look!" And Yu-pao squatted down on his heels and traced the characters *Yu-pao* in the dust with his finger. The two characters did not look like anything at all. The teacher squinted at them, hands on his knees, and bent over to see better. Only after a long time was he able to make them out. But he smiled and said: "Quite gifted, quite gifted! And what's your surname?"

Yu Chih-cheng blurted out: "I know. His surname is Kao."

Yu-pao threw the little drill sergeant an angry glance, annoyed that he should have spoken too soon.

"And what's your father's name?" the teacher asked again.

Yu-pao smiled. But before he could say anything, Yu Chih-cheng answered for him again. "His father is Kao Hsueh-tien. They live in our village."

"Ho, so this is Kao Hsueh-tien's child — such a big boy already!" Then the teacher said to Yu-pao: "Now let me give you two characters to read — see if you recognize them."

He also squatted on his haunches and traced the characters *taiping* (peace) on the ground with his middle finger and said: "Look! What do these two stand for?"

Yu-pao, with bright staring eyes, thought and thought. These two characters looked so very familiar. Where had he seen them before? Suddenly he remembered: Weren't they the same as the first two characters on the big board outside the Taiping Village Administration Office? So he answered: "These are the characters *taiping*, like the name of our village."

The teacher shook his head and hand, saying: "That's not correct. There is no peace now in Peace Village."

Yu-pao blushed as he stubbornly replied: "But the characters are the same."

"The characters are the same," the teacher said, "but the meaning's not the same."

"Why is there no peace in Peace Village?" Yu-pao asked curiously.

"You can't understand that yet, child."

"Have you learned to read and write?" the teacher asked again.

"No."

"Would you like to go to school?"

"Who wouldn't like to go to school? It's good to be able to read. My father says that we poor people who haven't learned to read are always abused by others. That day when Wang the Red Eye came to our house to collect the rent he bullied us with his torn account book and abacus. If I could read and write, he wouldn't dare to act like that."

Seeing that Yu-pao spoke so naively and confidently, the teacher was pleased. He went on asking, "Then why don't you come to school?"

"My father and mother won't let me."

"Why don't they let you?"

"I..." Sadness welled up in Yu-pao's heart. He lowered his head. Much that had happened came to his mind and tears filled his eyes. "I ... I ... don't know."

And before he had quite finished, he turned round, squeezed his way out of the crowd of school children and ran towards the group of poor boys. The teacher called after him. Yu Chih-cheng tried to stop him. But he wouldn't even look back.

To go to school was Yu-pao's burning desire. Many times he had pleaded and argued with his parents. One day in early spring, he had gone to find his playmate Yu Chih-cheng, to gather firewood with him on the hillside. To his surprise he met Yu Chih-cheng and several other village boys in primary school students' uniforms, with satchels over their shoulders, hopping and skipping on their way to school. When Yu Chih-cheng saw Yu-pao, he called: "Why don't you come to school with us, Yu-pao? Look at my nice school-bag!"

"Aren't you going to gather firewood?"

"I'll do that after school. Go and ask your father to let you come to school with us."

Yu-pao rushed home, grasped his father's hand excitedly and said: "I want to go to school, father!"

But his father answered: "Dear child, look around you in your home.... Two days out of three we go hungry, how can we think of sending you to school?"

But Yu-pao would not listen.

His mother pulled the boy to her and said: "Listen to me, child. You're old enough to go to school. Your father and mother don't have the heart to prevent you from going. But, child, just now we have very great problems. We can't even afford to have the wound on your father's leg treated. If you don't go to gather firewood, we won't even have a fire to cook with."

Yu-pao still begged: "But I can gather firewood as soon as school's out every day. There'll be plenty of kindling..."

"But child, we can't raise the money to pay for your schooling."

"I want to go to school!"

His father said: "Don't you dare!"

Yu-pao was defiant. He threw the sickle and rope he was carrying to the ground and pouted: "Even if you won't let me go, I'll go!"

He turned and ran out of the house. His mother was very upset. She followed him, calling again and again: "Yu-pao, child, where are you off to?"

But Yu-pao did not listen to her calling. He ran through a lane and made for Taiping Village. On the way, he came to the bank of the small, quick-flowing stream. There was no bridge, not even a stepping-stone. To get across, people had to take off their shoes and wade. Just as Yu-pao had taken off his shoes, he heard a heavy thud. Turning, he saw that in running after him, his mother had stumbled over a stone and fallen. He was frightened, so he ran back, without even putting on his shoes and helped her to sit up. Then, with his head on her breast, he burst into tears. His mother rocked him in her arms and said bitterly: "It isn't that your father and mother don't love you. But the *pao* chief has asked us many times already for our contribution to the village fund for buying rifles. You know that, don't you? And there isn't even any money to get treatment for the wound on your father's leg and his stomach trouble. How are we going to live?"

Yu-pao felt as if his heart was on fire. Sobbing he said, "Mother, I don't ... want to go to school. Let's ... go ... home..."

From then on Yu-pao did not even dare to think about school.

Yu-pao's mother came into the yard with a basketful of radish leaves and told her daughter Yu-jung to wash them at the well. Then she went back into the house to change the dressing on her husband's leg. She had only just untied the bandage when she heard someone calling in the yard:

"Is Kao Hsueh-tien home?"

The voice was not familiar to her. She looked out and saw it was Mr. Chou, the village school teacher. She hurried out to greet him and ask him in. Her husband, the untied bandage dangling from his leg, also tried to get up. But Mr. Chou stopped him, saying: "Don't get up. I'm not a stranger. Mind your sore leg."

Kao Hsueh-tien then filled a pipe and handed it to the teacher. Mr. Chou looked at Kao's leg and said: "No wonder I haven't seen you around for quite some time. How did you get this wound?"

Kao Hsueh-tien gave a deep sigh. He told Mr. Chou how, at the end of the previous year, Chou the Old Skinflint, a despotic landlord in the village and father of the village *pao* chief, had set a fiendish dog on him when he went to check the wages due to him for work.

Mr. Chou sighed several times as he listened to this story. When Kao had finished, Mr. Chou said: "What brutality! What kind of a world are we living in?"

For a while, they went on talking about their daily lives. Then Mr. Chou raised the question of Yu-pao's education:

"Brother Kao, I came to see you for no other reason but this: Your Yu-pao is a clever child. He's very promising. You mustn't delay his schooling."

But Kao Hsueh-tien replied, with another sigh: "*Aiya*, Mr. Chou, just look around. In our home we don't even have enough for food, where would we find the money to pay for his schooling? If there had been even a shred of a hope that I could earn a decent living, I'd have sent him to school long ago. But really, we are like fish and shrimps on dry ground — done for in the wink of an eyelid."

Mr. Chou looked about him at the few sticks of furniture in the room: A mat so worn that it was nearly in pieces and two ragged coverlets on the *kang*, one table with only three legs by the wall, a water jar mended and still one piece missing, two small benches that

wobbled whenever any one sat on them. A few broken jugs and pots, a pile of kindling before the kitchen stove — this was all they possessed; there was not one thing of value. And as for the clothes the Kaos wore — there was patch upon patch, and still their elbows and knees were showing. The sight of this reminded Mr. Chou of his own bitter sufferings.

Mr. Chou was named Chou Hung-pu. In his father's time, his family was well-off and he went to school. But later, because of various calamities, before he had finished his fifth year of schooling, his family became very poor, as though everything had been washed away by a flood. By the time he was a man, his family had been reduced to renting from a landlord. Chou Hung-pu's wife and children were killed in the Russo-Japanese war and he, the only lucky survivor had to work for a landlord as a hired hand. Several decades of hard labour made him old and worn out and he was finally fired by the landlord and turned from his door. Empty-handed, he wandered about the countryside and finally came to Taiping Village. Some well-to-do villagers learned that he had once had a little schooling and could read and write, so they set up a school in a dilapidated temple beside the village administration office and asked him to be the teacher. He was paid with bowls of grain by the families of the school children for his living. Because Taiping Village was far from the county town, some landlords also sent their children to his school. Seeing a good chance to make money, Chou Chang-an, the *pao* chief, had said, "We'll turn this school into our village primary school," and ordered the school to begin collecting tuition fees. He gave a little of the money collected to the school teacher to live on and put all the rest into his own pocket. On top of that, he tried to force the teacher to learn the Japanese language and teach it. Mr. Chou was not willing to teach the landlord's children, or willing to learn Japanese. He lived frugally and recruited some poor children who could not pay their tuition fee. It was because of this he was cursed and sworn at several times by the *pao* chief Chou Chang-an.

Mr. Chou said: "Don't be depressed. It isn't your fault that you're poor. After all, you're not the only destitute family. If I were ten years younger and a little bit stronger, I wouldn't remain in

such a poor job. This is not teaching, but suffering humiliation! The *pao* chief has decided I must study Japanese now and teach it later. So, when the children of rich families are young, they'll learn Japanese. When they grow up, they'll work harder for the Japanese devils and be smarter than their parents in oppressing us poor. It's because I know this, I refuse to learn that language and teach it. It doesn't matter if he kicks me out. Ah, don't let's talk about that any more. I didn't come here to make money. What I wish is for the children of the poor to have some schooling, so that when they grow up they can work for the poor people. Let your Yu-pao come to see me tomorrow. I won't take any money from you. A notebook and pencil as well as textbooks I have, you needn't pay for any of them. School is over early in the afternoon, so the child can still gather firewood for you."

Kao Hsueh-tien looked at his wife, and his wife looked at him. They had often heard people say that Mr. Chou of the Taiping Village school was a good man. Now they saw that this was true. No wonder many poor children could go to school under Mr. Chou! Their heartfelt gratitude made them speechless. After a while, Kao Hsueh-tien managed to say: "Thank you for your kindness. But this boy's unruly and fond of fighting. He'll give you a lot of trouble."

Yu-pao's mother also said: "That's true, he's really a wild boy, not fit for anything. I'm afraid you'll waste your efforts on him."

Mr. Chou stood up, handed the pipe back to Kao Hsueh-tien, smiled and said: "You say this boy's unruly. I think it's better for children of poor families to be unruly, then they won't be bullied so much! Now no more about it. . . . Tomorrow let your boy come to school."

All that morning Yu-pao had been upset. He gathered less kindling than usual and felt as if he had lost something. When he came home into the yard, he put down the kindling he had gathered and did not know what to do next.

Suddenly his sister Yu-jung came running out of the house. Jumping around him, she said gaily: "Yu-pao, come here quickly, I'll tell you something — you're going to school tomorrow!"

Yu-pao didn't believe her. "You're fooling me, sister!"

"Fooling you? What for? Go and ask father. Who's fooling you?"

Yu-pao rushed into the house and threw down his sickle and rope. His mother was ladling food from the pot for his father who lay on the *kang*. Yu-pao jumped onto the *kang*, put his arms around his mother's neck and asked: "Mother, is it true that you'll let me go to school?"

In his excitement, he tipped some food from the bowl in his mother's hand. She was annoyed.

"It's true, of course it's true! But eat your food now. Is this the way for a pupil to behave?"

"You're fooling me. I can't believe it. . . ."

"Would your mother fool you? Eat your meal quickly, it's getting cold."

Yu-pao let go of his mother and crawled over the *kang* to where his father lay and asked: "Father, will you really let me go to school?"

"Your mother will take you tomorrow. But you mustn't be naughty or get into fights."

Yu-pao was overjoyed, still only half-believing his good fortune. After he had finished eating, he pulled his sister into the yard and insisted she tell him why his father and mother had suddenly decided to send him to school. Yu-jung told him about the morning's visitor in detail. Then only was Yu-pao convinced. In the afternoon, when he picked up his sickle and rope to go and gather firewood in the hills, he skipped and jumped all the way. So there would be enough kindling at home, he gathered many twigs and sticks and even climbed up the trees to break off some dead branches. He also found a dozen magpie eggs in some nests in the trees.

At night, Yu-pao was too excited to sleep. His badly worn clothes seemed unbecoming for a scholar, so his mother had started mending some of them in the afternoon. She made over an old blue gown, the one with the least holes in it, into a pupil's uniform. As there wasn't enough material, she had to use two pieces of black cloth for the pockets. In the evening, she put a little drop of bean oil in the lamp that she had skimmed from her cooking and lit it while she mended Yu-pao's trousers. The slender wick gave so little light that Yu-pao's

mother had difficulty in threading her needle. But, even so, the room appeared dazzlingly bright compared with its usual gloom. Yu-pao's shoes had to be mended too, his heels and toes were showing through — this, too, would not do for a schoolboy. By midnight, when she had finished all these jobs, she blew out the lamp and lay down on the *kang*. But immediately she thought of something else. So she sat up and relit the lamp. She rummaged around for some old pieces of cloth and made them into a satchel for Yu-pao.

"Mother, go to sleep now!" Yu-pao urged several times. But each time she replied: "You sleep, my boy."

After a while, Yu-pao sat up too. He climbed up and looked out at the sky through a tear in the paper over the window, but it was pitch dark in the yard and he could not see a thing. Only the stars were twinkling above. He lay down again, then sat up once more and asked:

"Is it daylight yet, mother?"

He hated the daylight for not appearing sooner. In this mood, he lay down to sleep but then sat up again. This he did several times. Towards morning his mother finally succeeded in calming him down and getting him off to sleep. He slept soundly for he did not know how long. Then, still half asleep, he thought he heard someone call him.

He quickly opened his eyes and heard his mother calling: "Yu-pao, get up." He saw it was already daylight. He jumped off the *kang* and rushed, barefoot, out of the door.

His mother called after him: "Where're you going, Yu-pao? Eat first."

"I won't eat. I'm going to school!"

"Don't you need any food, just because you're going to school?"

"Why didn't you wake me up earlier? Why?"

"You won't be late. Look, the sun's just risen, it's still early morning."

Certainly, the sun was only then rising over the eaves of the house opposite.

Yu-pao's mother washed his face very clean; then, making him dip his hands into the earthenware basin, she washed them and his arms



well too. When he had eaten, she helped him put on his uniform, his mended shoes and the satchel over his shoulder. Then she straightened his clothes, put some cornbread steamed with wild herbs into his satchel and said: "Let's go. Mother will take you."

His father said from behind them, as they were leaving: "Remember, Yu-pao. Watch out for your hide if you disobey the teacher!"

Without turning around, Yu-pao answered: "I'll remember." His mother took him by the hand and, together, they walked along happily. To those who greeted her, she said: "Yes, I'm taking my child to school. I'd rather eat a few mouthfuls less than ruin his future."

On their way, mother and son passed a big courtyard, where some peach and apricot trees were in blossom. How beautiful they were! Farther on, they found that stepping-stones had been placed across the stream so that people no longer had to take off their shoes. Beyond the stream, they entered a grove. The leaves on the trees were already out. The rays of the sun on the grass there made the dew-drops on each blade sparkle, dazzling the eye. Little birds were hopping about on the branches, singing. Yu-pao's mother cautioned him as they walked along on how to obey the teacher.

When Yu-pao and his mother came to the school, none of the other pupils had arrived. Mr. Chou was very glad to see Yu-pao. Yu-pao's mother said to Mr. Chou over and over again: "This child's very young and naughty. He doesn't know anything, he's stubborn and wild. If he doesn't obey you, please thrash him for me."

But Mr. Chou said: "Don't worry. Leave the boy to me. I can tell he won't do wrong."

He went into his room and brought out three textbooks, one small notebook and a pencil. He called Yu-pao and said: "Take these, my boy. But listen! Studying is not the same as gathering firewood. You must pay attention when I explain the lesson. And you must ask questions when there are things you don't understand."

Yu-pao replied: "I know." Mr. Chou pointed to a little red-lacquered desk in the front row and gave him a small stool, saying: "You sit here." By that time others had arrived.

Then the teacher went to his room and Yu-pao's mother left. Yu-pao put the stool behind the red-lacquered desk and was going to sit down. But suddenly there was nothing under him — where had the stool gone to? Yu-pao sat down on the ground with a bump, then sprawled on his back. Some pupils burst out laughing. Yu-pao jumped up and saw that the *pao* chief's son, nicknamed "Little Mischief", had moved the stool from under him. Arms akimbo, Little Mischief pointed at Yu-pao abusing him fiercely: "Get away, you little beggar, don't dirty my desk!"

Yu-pao flew into a rage; he raised his fist, squared himself for a fight and said: "Little Mischief, mind your big blockhead or I'll bash it in for you!"

The pupils immediately divided into two groups. All the poor boys sided with Yu-pao and blamed Little Mischief for moving Yu-pao's stool. Some of the boys from rich families sided with Little Mischief and laughed at Yu-pao's shabby, patched clothes. Several of the little fiends jumped on to their stools and shouted: "Fight, fight! Who strikes the first blow is the master!" But Yu Chih-cheng jumped quickly between Yu-pao and Little Mischief and shouted at the latter: "You mustn't fight!"

Mr. Chou heard the noise they were making and hurried into the classroom. Immediately each pupil sat down in his own place very quietly. Yu Chih-cheng took Yu-pao by the hand and stood with him before the teacher's platform. He said: "Teacher, please let Yu-pao sit at my desk." Then he reported how Little Mischief had knocked the stool from under Yu-pao.

Mr. Chou asked: "Chou Teh-li, why did you move Yu-pao's stool?" Little Mischief replied: "This desk was bought for me by my father. I don't want this beggar's child sitting at it." Mr. Chou said: "Child, does it really matter if he sits at your desk?" "I won't let him!" said Little Mischief.

Yu-pao then said: "Teacher, I won't sit at his desk. Please let me sit with Chih-cheng."

Mr. Chou said: "All right, go and sit with Chih-cheng, then." Checking his anger, he turned to Little Mischief: "I'll let you off this time. But you'd better think over what you've done. Is it right

to bully people?" Then, advising them all once more to behave, he began to explain the day's lesson.

Yu-pao was diligent and industrious. He learned new words quickly and had a good memory. Together with Chih-cheng, he helped the teacher light the fire and fetch water. When he was with the teacher he always liked to ask many questions. At noon one day, as he helped the teacher to cook, he asked: "Teacher, why did you say that there is no peace in our Peace Village the other day?"

"You'll soon understand when you think over what's happened in the village," Mr. Chou answered. "Take your family as an example. How was your father's leg injured? Who pressganged your uncle? How did your grandfather die? Every year many poor people are dragged away and some die. Who has done all these rotten things?"

"The Japanese devils and the *pao* chief," Yu-pao replied.

"Yes," the teacher continued. "How can we have peace if such bad people exist in the world?"

Yu-pao lowered his head and thought. After a while he said, "It'll be wonderful if we overthrow the Japanese devils and the *pao* chief!"

Looking at Yu-pao's wide, alert eyes, Mr. Chou was gladdened by the words. But he said, "Be careful. Don't talk aloud like that."

"Humph!" Yu-pao snorted. Seeing some books on a nearby desk, he asked, "Are they story books, teacher? I like to listen to stories."

"No," the teacher said, "they're not story books. But since you like stories, I'll tell you one." He then recited a passage from *Water Margin*, a famous novel about a peasant uprising. Although he had heard the story, Yu-pao felt the teacher's way of telling it was most interesting. And after that he and other poor boys often went to the teacher at noon to listen to his story telling.

Yu-pao had been going to school for just a month and a few days. Because he was good natured, studied well and had a good memory, the teacher and other poor boys liked him. But he had had to swallow his pride nobody knows how many times. At first, during lunch-time Little Mischief ate steamed bread made of white-flour and boiled eggs which his family sent him every day, while Yu-pao and the poor

boys had only cornbread steamed with wild herbs which they took along to school. Little Mischief would smack his lips and shake his head, exclaiming: "How good this tastes!" But later on, Yu-pao and other poor boys climbed trees and took magpie eggs from the nests, boiled them and took them to school to eat. These eggs tasted good and were lots of fun to gather. It annoyed Little Mischief and his group so much to see the others eat magpie eggs that they stopped boasting of their better food. Whenever Little Mischief tried to bully him, Yu-pao just thought: "I'm not like you. You may lord it over us here in school. I can ignore you. But if you really dare, let's go outside and see who is the stronger of us two!"

Little Mischief and the other rich boys agreed secretly: "If we fight in school, the teacher will scold us. Let's go outside and wait till we get him alone, then we'll beat him to a pulp."

Yu Chih-cheng always went with Yu-pao on the way home from school, and Little Mischief's band did not dare raise their hands. But one day Yu-pao happened to go home alone. When Little Mischief noticed it, he signalled to his band. Six or seven boys from rich families took a short cut and hid themselves in the grove near the little stream. They waited for Yu-pao to approach, then jumped on him suddenly and, brandishing sticks and twigs, barred his way.

Little Mischief yelled at him: "Stop, Yu-pao! Bring us some magpie eggs from the nests in the trees and we'll let you go! If not, we'll beat you up!"

It was late in April, the season when the magpies were laying their eggs. Usually, if poor boys asked Yu-pao to climb a tree and get some magpie eggs for them, he would do so at once. But now, since Little Mischief and his band were trying to bully him, he refused. He looked at Little Mischief with contempt and turned to go. The other boys glared at him and shouted: "We dare you to go!" In a flash, they had surrounded Yu-pao and threatened him: "Get twenty eggs for each of us, then we'll let you go home!"

Yu-pao replied: "Twenty? You can whistle for that many! I'm not getting a single one for you!"

Little Mischief grabbed Yu-pao and said: "If you don't, we'll thrash you!"

Yu-pao glowered at Little Mischief and raised his fist. "Look how hard it is! Hit me if you have the pluck!" he said angrily.

Little Mischief shouted: "Beat him!" and all the boys attacked Yu-pao at once. Yu-pao was outnumbered and soon thrown to the ground. But thinking quickly he freed himself with a violent jerk, jumped to his feet and caught hold of Little Mischief by the collar. "Let's see which is harder — your head or my fist!" With these words Yu-pao crashed his fist several times — bang, bang! — against the bully's head. Little Mischief let the stick drop, as he covered his head with both hands and began to wail aloud. Yu-pao picked up the stick and fought off the others with it. But they were too many for him and several times he was badly hit. He was about to lose the fight, when Yu Chih-cheng ran up with a dozen poor boys. Yu Chih-cheng shouted as he came running: "The teacher forbids fighting! Why do you bully him?"

Little Mischief, seeing that things were going badly, shouted to his gang: "Let's run!" and all of them scampered off like rabbits into the grove and disappeared.

Yu-pao's hands and face were black and blue. His uniform was torn. But he did not cry. All the poor boys were furious to learn how Little Mischief and his band had tried to force Yu-pao to get magpie eggs for them.

They said: "Get eggs for them? That won't do. Don't be afraid, Yu-pao. We have more boys on our side. We'll settle accounts with them in a few days!"

"Quite right," said Yu Chih-cheng, "we'll settle their hash. They've gone too far. Even the teacher can't control them. We'll deal with them ourselves."

"Hey," one boy said, "look at the magpies flying around these trees. There must be eggs in those nests. Let's climb up and get a few!"

Yu Chih-cheng said, "Right, let's climb up, Yu-pao."

But a sudden gust of wind from the northwest startled them. A huge black cloud darkened the sky.

"That's bad," said Yu-pao. "It's going to rain. Let's hurry home! We'll get the eggs when the weather clears again."

They scattered and ran home. The moment Yu-pao entered the yard of his home, he heard his mother wailing.

"Oh, my poor, unlucky boy! How can mother bear to part with you? How can I watch my own child being pushed into the fire? I can't do it!"

Yu-pao was stunned. He stood in the yard and listened. His younger brother was crying and so was his elder sister Yu-jung.

He rushed into the house, seized his mother by her arms and looked up into her face. When she saw the bruises on his face she began to weep again, uncontrollably.

The *pao* chief Chou Chang-an had a daughter about fourteen years old, named Ying-tse. She was going to Talien to attend a Japanese school. In order to raise money for her expenses, Chou Chang-an had gone around the village that morning with two policemen to demand the money everyone was supposed to have contributed early that spring for the purchase of rifles. According to the *pao* chief, he had already paid the ten dollars which Yu-pao's father was supposed to contribute, out of his own pocket. Since then, Chou Chang-an had come at least a dozen times to ask for this money. When he came again that morning, he had proposed two alternatives: either Kao Hsueh-tien would give him the money at once, plus a hundred per cent interest, or Yu-pao must herd the chief's pigs. The wages would be the cancellation of the debt; besides, he would be given ninety *jin* of grain. The *pao* chief said in this way the Kao family would actually have one mouth less to feed; he was really trying to do them a special favour. But if Kao Hsueh-tien refused both these alternatives, the *pao* chief would have him arrested and sent to the Japanese as a "political prisoner". Kao Hsueh-tien could do nothing but promise to send Yu-pao as a swineherd to the *pao* chief's the very next morning.

When Yu-pao heard he could not continue going to school, he was full of hatred and sorrow. Outside, it was raining and the rain grew heavier in the evening. Yu-pao threw himself into his mother's arms. He could not go to sleep. His father lay still on the *kang*, without saying a word. His mother held Yu-pao tightly, as if she were afraid he would be snatched from her. There was so much she wanted to

tell him. Finally she managed to say: "My dear child, your mother is not so cruel that she would stop you going to school. That fiendish *pao* chief is a beast! Your poor father is helpless. Wait until his leg is healed, then he'll earn some money and you can come back to us and go to school again."

"Mother, I won't go to the *pao* chief's! He'll beat me. I want to go to school. I want to be with you, mother!"

"Child, I'll go to see you. Your father and sister will go to see you too. You're quite big. You must listen to me."

Yu-pao dreaded the daylight, because he would have to part from his mother.

"Rain, please come down harder!" he thought. "Let there be a flood so that our fiendish *pao* chief will drown. I wish I could grow up quickly, then I'd kill the *pao* chief and Little Mischief!" With these confused thoughts, in the end he fell asleep.

The next morning, Yu-pao's mother got up and cooked the meal before she called him. But he would not eat anything. His school-mates who came to fetch him went away sadly when they heard what had happened. He put on his uniform. His mother had mended the places that had been torn the day before. She also tied some of his other ragged clothes and a worn-out padded jacket into a bundle for him. When they were about to start, Yu-pao slung his satchel with the school books over his shoulder.

His mother asked: "Child, you're to herd the *pao* chief's pigs. Will they let you read your books?" Yu-pao answered: "These are the teacher's books. I want to give them back to him."

Yu-pao's father said then: "Take Yu-pao to the teacher and say goodbye. After all, he has taught him for some time."

Yu-pao's mother took the boy by the hand and they walked towards the school. The rain had stopped some time ago, but the sky was still dark and cloudy. The road had become a mess of mud puddles. They passed the big courtyard again. There was no peach and apricot blossom now. The stream was flowing rapidly, yellow with mud. The bed of the stream could not be seen, and it was difficult to walk across on the stepping-stones. In the grove no birds were singing.

Yu-pao thought: "Where have the birds gone? The rain must have frightened them away so that they daren't come out."

Yu-pao's mother had so much she wanted to tell him along the way. "My child, living at the *pao* chief's is not the same as at home. At home, when you're ill, mother looks after you; in other people's homes, you're at their beck and call, and if anything ails you, nobody'll take the trouble to look after you. You must be smart enough to take care of yourself."

Yu-pao promised: "I will." Then his mother said: "Child, you must obey the hired-hand uncles, so that they'll look after you. In the daytime, when you take the pigs up into the hill, be sure to get somebody to go with you; let the pigs go only where there're people. Don't go alone into the big ravine with them. In the evening, bring them back before it gets dark. There are too many wolves in the hill."

"I know that."

"Child, put on more clothes when it's chilly. Don't catch cold. You'll suffer if you're ill. When your clothes are dirty or torn, change them. I'll take them home to wash and mend when I come to see you..."

So Yu-pao's mother poured out her instructions and advice all the way so that they reached the school without realizing how they had covered the distance.

Yu-pao was thinking: "We have walked the mile too fast today."

Mr. Chou had already heard from the other boys that Yu-pao had to go to work as a swineherd. He was very upset. He invited Yu-pao and his mother into his own room. When they were seated, he began cursing the *pao* chief.

"Mr. Chou!" was all Yu-pao's mother managed to say, the tears choking her. Yu-pao could not utter a word either. From his satchel he took the three textbooks, notebook and pencil and put them on the teacher's desk.

But Mr. Chou put them back into Yu-pao's satchel and said: "Take them with you, child. You can still study when you have some time."

Yu-pao's mother suppressed her tears with a great effort and said: "It was most kind of you to teach him. When he is grown up..." She could not finish her sentence.

After a while, they took leave of Mr. Chou. The teacher walked with them down to the foot of the hill. Then he sighed deeply and said: "Yu-pao, there isn't much I can say to you now, just this: Be all eyes and ears when you work for the *pao* chief. There is a hired hand named Liu Wan-chung there. He came from Shantung as a refugee and worked with me for some time. He's a good man. Go to him if you're in trouble. He's always willing to help." Then, turning to Yu-pao's mother, he said: "Don't worry, Sister Kao! You go and see him first when you get there."

Yu-pao bowed deeply to the teacher, then they went on. When they had walked quite a distance, Yu-pao looked back. Mr. Chou was still standing there, looking after them.

### Looking After the Pigs

So Yu-pao began to work as a swineherd for the Chou family, under the strict surveillance of Chou the Old Skinflint. Apart from taking care of the pigs, he was made to feed the chickens and the dogs, sweep the courtyard, bed down the livestock and do many other things. During the day, he had to sweep out the droppings in the cowshed and stable into the pigsty, and in the evening go with some other hired hands into the stinking pigsty to mix the dung, which was over two feet deep, by treading in it. If he failed to sweep the courtyard clean in time, or so much as a single dropping was found in the cowshed or stable, that demon Chou the Old Skinflint would give him a thorough dressing down or even a beating.

Big Chimney-stack, wife of the *pao* chief, was even worse. She did nothing all day herself but smoke opium; nevertheless she insisted that Yu-pao's daily tasks should include cleaning the rooms. She also insisted that Yu-pao empty the chamber-pots for every member of the family. This, however, Yu-pao refused to do, whereupon, the witch-like Big Chimney-stack, mad with rage, started to beat him and pinch him till he was black and blue all over. Yu-pao was driven

to tears by his anger but remained adamant in his refusal to clean the chamber-pots for them. Thereupon, Big Chimney-stack forbade him to eat while the rest of the hired hands were having their meal, telling him that he would have to feed the pigs first before he was allowed any food.

When Yu-pao returned after having fed the pigs, he found that the hired hands had already finished eating and gone to work. He had just taken up his bowl to eat when Big Chimney-stack came along with Little Mischief and started railing at him.

"Ah, you shameful cadger!" she said. "Fancy! You're still eating when the rest've already gone to work on the hills. You've likely eaten more than's good for you. Besides, you don't work hard for us, you'll have to eat gruel instead of these buns." With that she turned and went away, taking the buns with her.

Then Little Mischief went up to Yu-pao and, snatching the bowl from him, said: "Don't eat any more, you greedy thing! This gruel is to be kept till noon for the pigs." With that he started to go away with the bowl of gruel.

Being bullied like this by Little Mischief, Yu-pao darted an angry look at him and was about to set on him, but Little Mischief was scared and set down the bowl again quickly.

Big Chimney-stack turned back, and taking in the situation at a glance, started shouting at Yu-pao: "What are you up to? Have you taken leave of your senses? Do you actually dare to strike your masters who feed you. Sonny, just let him beat you; see if he dares." "Now," she continued, turning to Yu-pao again, "if you dare so much as to touch my son, I'll wring your neck for you!"

As soon as his mother came to his rescue, Little Mischief sat on the ground, crying and kicking, pretending Yu-pao had beaten him. On hearing the noise, Chou the Old Skinflint also came out, leaning on his cane and cursing as he tottered along. Seeing things were taking such an ugly turn, Yu-pao put down his chopsticks and hurried away to mind the pigs.

Yu-pao now had hardly any gruel to eat, let alone buns. When he became famished while minding the pigs on the hill, he had to try and satisfy himself by eating wild herbs.

Little Mischief began to tread on air when he saw that Yu-pao dared not molest him. He tried every day to pick a quarrel with Yu-pao or otherwise bullied him. One day, on his way home from school, Little Mischief saw Yu-pao taking care of the pigs in company with some other young swineherds from the village, whereupon he went up to him and demanded that Yu-pao climb a tree and get magpie eggs for him. To his surprise, the half a dozen boys or so who were looking after pigs with Yu-pao all became indignant and threatened to beat him. Seeing that things were taking an ugly turn, Little Mischief took to his heels at once.

When he reached home, he said to his grandfather: "Instead of taking care of the pigs, Yu-pao is fooling away his time, playing on the hill with the rest of the village boys. He took no notice even when the pigs scampered away. When I argued with him, he actually threatened to beat me along with the rest of the boys."

On hearing this, Chou the Old Skinflint flew into a rage. He stumped all the way up the hill to where Yu-pao was, with the intention of giving him a thrashing, which made all the rest of the boys run away in fright. From that time, never again did Chou the Old Skinflint allow Yu-pao to look after the pigs in company with the other village boys. As they were all afraid of the old scoundrel, they too dared not visit Yu-pao. So Yu-pao was compelled to watch the pigs every day all alone.

The pigs were easier to manage when he pastured them together with other swineherds so that Yu-pao found it tremendously difficult now that he had to watch all of them — numbering a dozen or so — all by himself. The old sow was sly and treacherous and when beaten she merely grunted but wouldn't budge an inch; yet the moment his back was turned, she would dart off into the fields among the standing crops. The swineherd would be blamed if any were found to have been crushed by the pigs. The most troublesome of all, however, were the eight young pigs; nimble as mice, and as cunning and full of mischief, they were for ever in a frenzy trying to squeeze themselves into every conceivable nook and corner squealing noisily all the while. If Yu-pao's vigilance were relaxed for even just a moment some of

them would certainly vanish from sight and scarcely did he find one when another would be missing.

The fiendish *pao* chief had warned Yu-pao: "If any young pigs are killed by a wolf, you'll have to pay for it with your life!" As the hills in this neighbourhood were known to be infested with wolves, Yu-pao was very anxious lest these predatory creatures should actually attack some of the pigs and eat them. So there was nothing for it but to scurry about after them all day, in spite of hunger and fatigue. As a result of such gruelling work, the boy was soon reduced to a mere shadow of his former self.

One day in July, the heat was stifling towards noon. Chou the Old Skinflint, anxious lest the pigs should suffer from the excessive heat, insisted that Yu-pao drive them to a pond in the big east ravine. Along either side of the ravine not a single tree was to be seen; the ground was so hot that it might have been a heated gridiron. As Yu-pao stood watching the young pigs frisking about happily in the shallow water around the old sow or sucking at her, he could not help thinking of his own plight — separated from his own mother as he was, he was even worse off than a young pig! He began to feel very sorry for himself. His mother, he thought to himself, had said she would come to see him; how was it that she had only sent word a few times without visiting him once? He also wondered what had become of his father and his sore leg? And how about the rest of his family at home? There was no way of finding out. With such thoughts running through his head, he began to feel more wretched than ever.

He had asked leave to go home and see them, but the old scoundrel wouldn't allow him. He had thought of slipping home with the pigs, but he soon dropped the idea; for to do so, he knew he would have to trudge about two miles over a high mountain, hindered all the way by those troublesome animals; and apart from this, there was the risk of getting into a row if the old scoundrel should find out.

His thoughts then turned to Mr. Chou the school teacher and he wondered what had become of him? Since his few school books had been torn up by the fiendish *pao* chief, and none of his schoolmates and friends ever dared to come and see him for a game, life seemed to

have become a heavy burden. Oh, if he could only go to Mr. Chou and ask him for some more books! Then he would be able to learn a few more characters when the pigs had eaten their fill and were not too troublesome. He had inquired about Mr. Chou from Little Mischief, but instead of telling him anything, the little monster had just scowled at him and said: "How should I know! Maybe he's dead!" Yu-pao was so infuriated at the time that he wanted to fight.

The longer he brooded over these things, the more bitter he grew; at the same time he began to feel dizzy. It was so swelteringly hot that day that the whole earth seemed to have turned into a blazing furnace. Yu-pao felt as if he were being burned alive. He would like to sit still and have a rest, but couldn't for there was no shade. He was hungry and thirsty. He felt more and more dizzy, and before he knew it, he had fallen to the ground in a dead faint.

It was some time before he was revived by a sudden gust of cool wind, accompanied by a tremendous clap of thunder. With a start, he sat up and looked about. *Aiya!* The sky was dark with clouds; the crash of thunder and flashes of lightning were all around him and a heavy rain was starting. No wonder it had been so hot and stifling. He looked around, heard the old sow grunting and saw the young pigs rushing about in great excitement. Alarmed by all this, Yu-pao bounded to his feet and rounded them up in haste. He counted them several times, and each time he found there was one sow, four fattened hogs and eight young pigs with not a single one missing. Having satisfied himself, he started out immediately for the landlord's home, driving the pigs before him. But before he had gone very far the storm broke overhead and the rain began to come down in torrents. The pigs, frightened by the pelting rain, started rushing about helter-skelter. Yu-pao, in spite of the driving rain which was blinding him, started running about in an attempt to round them up. When he had finally succeeded in doing so, he hurried on towards his master's house with the pigs. Soaking wet through and through, he looked as though he had just fallen in a creek.

As he drove the pigs up to the gate, he found Chou the Old Skinflint standing in the gateway grumbling and declaring that the farm hands should have known better than to let a wagon stand in the rain

and be soaked. Seeing Yu-pao coming back, the old scoundrel looked at the dripping wet pigs, checked them, and found there was one young pig short. At this, he flew into a rage, and grabbing Yu-pao by the collar, slapped him savagely several times across the face.

"What do you mean, letting my pigs get drenched like this?" he demanded. "Do you want to kill them? Didn't you see it was going to rain? Why didn't you bring them back sooner? And what has become of one of the young ones? Was it eaten by a wolf? Speak! Where has it gone?"

Yu-pao had been hit so hard that he began to see stars and even his gums were bleeding profusely. On hearing that there was one pig missing, he began to tremble in his shoes. As he wiped off the blood at the corner of his mouth, he counted them carefully himself and true enough, one of the young pigs was missing.

"No, none of the pigs has been eaten by a wolf," Yu-pao stammered out. "I counted them on my way back, I tell you!"

"Where's the eighth, then?" shouted Chou the Old Skinflint, staring at Yu-pao. "Have you eaten it yourself on the sly? If so, I'll make you bring it up again; if not, go and find it. If you don't bring it back, I'll kill you!"

Yu-pao had been out in the pouring rain for such a long time that even his lips had turned purple. Trembling from cold, he stammered: "Old Master, look, it's . . . it's raining so hard just now. The moment it lets up, I'll go and . . ."

"Rot! Look sharp! What the devil are you waiting for? So you're afraid of being soaked by the rain, eh? Have you thought that my pig might be afraid of being so wet, too?"

It was raining cats and dogs; the road was slippery. Yu-pao could hear the rumbling of mountain torrents as they rushed down the hill-sides. As he went along in the pelting rain, looking for the lost pig, he began to shiver more and more violently and was less and less able to go on without losing his foothold. His head was in a whirl. He slipped and fell on the muddy slopes again and again. After each fall he staggered to his feet, but before he went much farther, he slipped and fell again. He managed to clamber over two ridges in this way, but the lost pig was nowhere to be seen. He dared not turn back for

fear of being beaten again. As he stood there in the rain, he made up his mind to go home to his mother, but before he had gone very far in the direction of his home he was sick at heart to find his way barred by a swollen creek. The water was rushing furiously downstream, carrying mud, twigs and leaves along with it. The waves were a foot high and the stream seemed to be terribly deep, so that he dared not cross it.

He stood helplessly on the bank for a long time till, unable to stand in the drenching rain any longer, he decided he had better go back to the *pao* chief's. But no sooner had he made up his mind to do that than he remembered Chou the Old Skinflint's threat: "If you don't bring back the pig, you'll pay for it with your life!" So then, he dared not go back there, either, and Yu-pao found himself between the devil and the deep blue sea. All alone, with not a single soul to be seen anywhere around, it looked as though he were forsaken by everybody. He sat down on the muddy slope with his face turned in the direction of Chou the Old Skinflint's house, wildly calling the scoundrels names. "Chou the Old Skinflint, Chou Chang-an," he cursed, "the day will come when I'll settle accounts with you!"

He didn't know how long he had been cursing, when suddenly he heard a voice calling behind him: "Yu-pao! Yu-pao! The young pig's been found. Hurry up and come back with us."

At this, Yu-pao turned and saw Liu and some other farm hands coming towards him in the rain. He quickly noticed a young pig in Liu's arms. The boy jumped to his feet and threw himself onto Liu's breast crying bitterly.

Liu handed over the pig to Old Chang, and finding Yu-pao as wet as a drowned rat and covered all over with mud, he caught the boy in his arms and asked: "Why are you crying, child? Is it because Chou the Old Skinflint's beaten you again?"

Then, Yu-pao cried more bitterly than ever and clung tightly to Uncle Liu's neck.

"Stop crying," said Liu. "The scoundrel! We'll try to make him pay for it some day!" Pointing to the young pig in Old Chang's arms, he went on, "We heard a pig squealing in a gully on our way back.

We guessed it must have been you who'd lost it. We've brought it along with us."

Feeling towards Uncle Liu as he would towards his own mother, Yu-pao had much to say to him.

Liu noticed the bleeding gums in Yu-pao's mouth, and turning to the rest of the farm hands he exclaimed: "Just look! How cruelly the child was beaten!" He then took Yu-pao by the hand and said: "Come along, now. Hurry back and change your clothes in case you catch a chill, you're so cold and wet."

As Yu-pao went along with Uncle Liu he looked at the pig. When he saw that one of its legs was broken, he was aghast.

"Don't be afraid, Yu-pao," said the kindly farm hands. "All we have to do is carry it back and put it among the rest of the pigs. Only we must take care not to let Chou the Old Skinflint see it. The broken leg will set itself in a couple of days. Come on, let's get back quickly."

It was still raining hard. Yu-pao went back to the yard with the farm hands and stealthily put the young pig back among the rest; then Liu went to Chou the Old Skinflint to tell him that the lost pig had been found, safe and sound. The latter instead of believing him, tottered off to the pigsty to have a look for himself. He found the pigs fighting for food among themselves. He counted them and only after he had satisfied himself that the number was correct did he grope his way back to the main house, snorting as he went.

The farm hands began to get busy changing their wet clothes as soon as they reached their hovel which they found had virtually become a pit filled with water. Apart from the rain which was rushing into the hovel from the courtyard in a torrent, the roof was leaking in many places. Most of their bed covers and other clothes were wet; consequently when they had taken off their wet clothes, all that some of them could do was to wring them as dry as they could and put them on again. While changing their things, they complained: "Chou the Old Skinflint has no conscience. His pig pens and stables are built on higher ground and kept in good repair. But he makes us live in a hovel worse than his animals have."

Meanwhile, Liu saw Yu-pao change into a ragged padded coat but feeling it with his hand, he found it was wet too. He noticed that as

Yu-pao squatted on the *kang* he was shaking with cold. "The child will be ill from this," thought Liu, and slipping off the dry coat he had just changed into, he told Yu-pao to take off the wet padded coat and put his on. Yu-pao wouldn't hear of it, however, seeing that this Uncle Liu had no other clothes to change into himself. Liu had to pull him forward and coax him, saying: "Hurry up and put this on else you'll be ill. That's a good boy." And finally Liu put it on the boy willy-nilly.

While they were changing their clothes, Chou the Old Skinflint suddenly appeared, leaning on a cane. Wagging a finger at the men, he growled: "Why did you stop working in the fields the moment it started to rain? Just a mere drizzle like this. Why didn't you just go and shelter somewhere? But no! Of course you have to come back and hold up the work. Look sharp! Take your shovels and get back to the fields! See the flood doesn't wash away the topsoil off my land!"

"It was such a heavy downpour, you see," answered one of the farm hands. "We were all wet through and had to come back to change our clothes."

"Go as soon as you've changed them, then," urged Chou the Old Skinflint. "It's summer time. You don't need to change at all. It'll be cooler and nicer to work in wet clothes. Hurry up! Go and look after my land!"

"Perhaps you like to be that cool!" retorted Liu. "But we don't."

When the farm hands had all left, pointing a finger at Yu-pao, Chou the Old Skinflint said: "I'll let you off this once. But mind your hide if you lose any of my pigs again! Now, hurry up and drain the water from the courtyard! And take some dry earth to spread in the cowshed. The cattle will be ill if they lie on the wet ground. Now, look alive!"

Not until he had seen Yu-pao leave with a shovel to drain the water from the courtyard did he go away.

By then the rain had ceased, but the sky was still dark with clouds. Yu-pao drained away the water in the courtyard, fixed the cowshed, then went to feed the pigs. The enclosure around the pigsty was rather high. No sooner had he put down the feed on the wall than

a number of pigs, grunting noisily, crowded forward and started to scramble for it. Only the young pig with a broken leg lay in a corner, squealing aloud incessantly, as it was hungry and impatient. For fear lest Chou the Old Skinflint should come and find out about the broken leg, Yu-pao hastily jumped into the pigsty, caught up the pig and carried it to the trough. Then he jumped out to pour the pigwash into the trough. The fully-filled pigwash bucket weighed forty or fifty *jin*. For Yu-pao who was all skin and bone, it was too heavy. Usually Uncle Liu or one of the others gave him a helping hand when he did that job. And when his uncles were out working in the fields, he could only manage it by himself with a great effort. Now it was extremely slippery on the ground after a heavy downpour and because he had not eaten anything since morning and had been drenched with rain, he had no strength left. The bucket seemed to weigh a thousand *jin*. He ground his teeth and making a great effort managed to raise it onto the top of the waist-high pigsty wall. His hands and feet shook and with a splash the bucket fell onto the ground beside the trough. Startled, Yu-pao looked over the wall and saw the pigs were desperately fighting for the food. He clambered over into the pigsty, picked up the bucket and put it behind him. Leaning on the wall to look around and finding no one near, he drove the pigs away and crouched down to scoop the splashed pigwash from the ground into the trough with his hands.

However, as ill luck would have it, at this very moment, Little Mischief, wearing a pair of galoshes, came running from the house and began to divert himself by romping about in the puddles. He happened to catch sight of Yu-pao's head as it bobbed up for a moment, then disappeared again. He stole up to the pigsty, clambered up on the wall and looked inside, where he saw Yu-pao scooping up the pigwash into the trough. No doubt, he was stealing the pigs' food, Little Mischief thought. But he hastily covered his nose with his hand because he was unable to stand the stench of the pigsty; and after making a wry face, lowered himself from the top of the wall, shouting:

"Oh! Grandfather! Yu-pao is stealing the pigs' food!"

Yu-pao started violently at the cry. He quickly kicked up some mud to cover the pigwash still left on the ground, and fearing that

the old scoundrel would discover the pig with a broken leg, he decided to leave the pigsty at once, so as to divert attention from the limping pig. However, before he could clamber over the wall, he was thwarted by Little Mischief, who, thinking that Yu-pao was going to escape, gave him a push which sent him toppling back into the sty. Little Mischief followed this up by yelling louder than ever:

"Grandfather, come here, quickly! Yu-pao is trying to run away!"

Yu-pao, being caught unawares, crashed right into the trough, splashing the pig feed in all directions. The startled pigs scampered off and started running about in utter confusion, grunting and squealing wildly as they ran. As for the pig with a broken leg, it was squealing loudly with fright. Unable to run, it was nevertheless also trying desperately to get away, limping jerkily as it went along.

All this time Little Mischief was shouting loudly to his grandfather as though his life depended on it. Yu-pao was filled with hatred and anger. He struggled to his feet instantly, picked up a handful of mud and threw it at Little Mischief, who was so frightened that he ran away helter-skelter, yelling, "Mother! Mother!" Yu-pao caught up the young injured pig in his arms, with a view to hiding it in some dark corner of the sty. He tried several places and found that none served his purpose. He was on the verge of despair, when suddenly Chou the Old Skinflint appeared on the scene looking over the wall of the pigsty.

"Ha! Ha! A fine fellow you are!" said he, laughing craftily.

"What cheek! First, you've broken my pig's leg, then you still dare to steal the food!"

So saying, he raised his cane and took a swipe at Yu-pao. The boy, seeing what was coming, dropped the young pig instantly and ducked to the foot of the wall, whereupon Little Mischief picked up some stones lying handy and began to pelt him with them. Seeing that there was hardly any place where he could take refuge, Yu-pao grew desperate.

"I'm done for, anyhow," he told himself. "They'll kill me, sooner or later, for the pig's broken leg. If they're going to beat me, I'd better go outside and fight it out with them."

Having made this decision, Yu-pao began to clamber over the wall. However, before he reached the top, Chou the Old Skinflint brought his cane down again. The boy dodged to one side, caught hold of the cane and began to tug at it with all his might, while the old scoundrel on his part tugged hard at his end of it. Outside the wall there was a pit which was used to collect pig dung, and the path between the wall and pit was only about a foot wide. The pig dung in the pit had been dug in and covered with water. Chou the Old Skinflint went all out in the struggle. Finding it hard to wrest the cane from his opponent's hand, Yu-pao suddenly let go of his end, upon which the old scoundrel, being unprepared for this, fell with a splash into the pit.

Yu-pao, now heedless of anything that might happen to him, seized this opportunity to jump over the wall of the pigsty and started running away as fast as his legs would carry him. Little Mischief, seeing his grandfather had fallen into the pit and was unable to get up, shouted for his mother to come, then gave Yu-pao instant chase, trying to seize him. Yu-pao had long been provoked beyond endurance and when he saw Little Mischief rushing towards him, he was prepared to fight. He waited till the latter came near him, then, with a jerk of his head, fetched him a powerful blow. This proved too much for Little Mischief, who gave a shriek and fell headlong into a puddle of muddy water.

After he had knocked down Little Mischief, Yu-pao turned and ran towards the gateway, little thinking that Big Chimney-stack was already there, blocking the way. She seized him and with set teeth began to pinch him wherever she could lay her hands on him. Meanwhile, Chou the Old Skinflint struggling to his feet out of the pit and following Yu-pao to where he now was, together with Big Chimney-stack forced Yu-pao down to the ground. As for Little Mischief, he had brought the cane which he handed to his grandfather, while he himself had in his hand a piece of firewood which he had picked up somewhere. And armed with these the three of them took it in turns to give Yu-pao a savage beating.

The rain having ceased for some time, the villagers had come out of their houses to drain off the water which had accumulated in their

courtyards. On hearing the sound of a beating being given in the courtyard of the Chou family, accompanied by a lot of noise and hubbub as well as Yu-pao's desperate howls of pain, they came over to have a look, and found the young and old of the Chou family, or rather its three generations, the old scoundrel himself, his daughter-in-law and grandson, cruelly beating their little swineherd. After each round of beating they stopped a moment to revile him, then started thrashing again. The villagers flocked to the spot to speak up for Yu-pao. Seeing more and more people were crowding around, the old scoundrel stopped thrashing and casting a significant glance at Big Chimney-stack, said: "That'll teach the young whelp a lesson. We'll let him off lightly this time."

Big Chimney-stack dealt him a few more blows, then stopped and said: "Why, he doesn't care about anything! To think of a mere brat attacking his old master and his young master too! What a nerve! This'll teach him to behave himself in the future!" She then turned, and taking Little Mischief by the hand, started off, saying: "Let's go. We'll forgive the little brat this time. Mother'll change your clothes for you." With that she went back to the main house with her son.

The old scoundrel prodded Yu-pao a couple of times with his cane, then blustered: "Get up quickly, will you? It's time to feed the pigs."

Yu-pao had been hit so hard that he was unable to move and still lay in the puddle; even his voice had grown hoarse from crying.

When Chou the Old Skinflint had gone away, some of the villagers went in the yard and with great difficulty, after managing to help Yu-pao to his feet, carried him to the hovel west of the main house and laid him on the *kang* there.

As a result of the cruel beating, Yu-pao was covered all over with cuts and bruises, hardly a spot being left untouched. Some fetched water in a broken gourd and washed off the mud and bloodstains on his face for him. It cut them to the heart to see that his face was virtually a mass of bruises, his head swollen with several bumps and even lacerated in some places. When they were changing his clothes for him, they saw that his body too was black and blue.

"Look!" said someone. "They've hurt the boy like this, yet the old scoundrel had the cheek to tell us that they only meant to teach him a lesson for his own good. I never saw such black-hearted people!"

As all Yu-pao's clothes were wet, one of the villagers took off his own coat and put it over him. His wounds were giving him such terrible pain that he ground his teeth unceasingly. The villagers tried to get some food for him and then reluctantly went away.

So, apart from fainting from the excessive heat, Yu-pao had the further misfortune to be caught in a drenching rain. To top all this, he was savagely beaten. Consequently he was feverish all night and as he lay on the *kang*, he became delirious, calling "Oh, mother!" one moment and screaming with fright the next.

The farm hands had a terrible time of it, as they sat up all night watching over him, for they were so worried they scarcely knew what to do. Early next morning, Chou the Old Skinflint came to urge the farm hands to go off to work on the hills.

"Old master," said Liu, "I'm afraid Yu-pao is seriously ill. He's had a high fever and slept badly last night. I think we'd better send him home with some money, so that his mother can call a doctor."

"What?" said Chou the Old Skinflint, glaring at his farm hand. "Let him go home? Who'll mind the pigs, then? He hasn't even made good the loss of the pig's broken leg yet. As long as there's a spark of life in him, he'll have to mind the pigs for me."

"But old master," said Liu, "he's very ill. He's been delirious. How can he look after the pigs?"

"I don't believe it," said the old scoundrel. "He was quite all right yesterday; how can he suddenly be ill today?" He then turned to Yu-pao and shouted: "Get up! Don't lie there pretending to be dead! Get up and go to work! Want to turn my pigs into starvelings eh?"

Liu could no longer suppress his anger. "It doesn't matter if your pigs turn to starvelings," he shouted. "It matters a lot if the boy's health is ruined!"

"That's right," the other farm hands agreed. "Are your pigs worth more than people's lives? How do you treat your children if they're ill?"

"Well. You paupers!" Chou the Old Skinflint stammered as he saw all his farm hands were furious. "My meals fill your bellies so full you dare to answer me back! If you won't let him go to look after my pigs, you'll do the job for him." Having said this, he went away.

"There's no question about it," said Hsiao Ting. "I'll do it for Yu-pao."

At that moment Yu-pao regained consciousness. He opened his eyes and saw all the men standing around him. He forced himself to try and get up. Liu pressed him back, saying, "Don't get up. We'll try to get you some medicine. Hsiao Ting will look after the pigs for you. A person can do only one job at a time. If he goes to herd the pigs, he won't be able to go to the fields. It'll be good if the land is left untilled."

"The landlord is very cruel," Yu-pao thought, "if the land is left untilled, these uncles will be punished. I'd better get up and herd the pigs myself." He forced himself to sit up and said, "Uncle Liu, I'll go. You've suffered enough because of me."

The farm hands were quite moved, for they realized that Yu-pao thought of them even though he had been so seriously beaten. They murmured, "What a fine boy!" They tried to advise him not to go, but Yu-pao would not listen.

Yu-pao's torn padded coat had been put before a fire to dry during the night. Liu slipped it on for him and went with him to the pigsty where together they drove the pigs out.

On the way, Liu said to the other farm hands: "You go on ahead and hoe the fields. I'll have to help Yu-pao drive the pigs to the ravine, but I'll be back directly."

"Indeed, you'd better go and look after him," agreed the men.

With the help of Liu, Yu-pao finally reached the big east ravine with the pigs. As it was surrounded on three sides by steep cliffs some twenty feet high, no pig could possibly climb them and once the opening was blocked, no pigs could possibly get out. Having eaten nothing that morning, Yu-pao was weak with exertion and his forehead was burning with fever. With a heavy heart Liu carried him to a sand-dune and sat him down. He produced a bun from his jacket and

handed it to Yu-pao, saying: "Eat it, child. When you're hungry, cold or tired, you tell me. If they beat you, scold you, or hurt you in any way, you tell me and we'll help you. In the future though you'll have to look sharp about your work, you don't have to work for them like a slave. When you feel tired, just take a rest. Don't clean those chamber-pots of theirs for them whatever happens, and if they threaten to beat you, just cut and run. If they don't give you enough food, you may as well help yourself to it when they're not looking; only take care not to let them see you. As for the pigs, you may watch them in this ravine from now on. That'll save you a lot of trouble."

"Once the pigs are penned up here," Liu pointed to the ravine, "you can play if you like; only you must take care not to let any of the Chou family find out about it."

Yu-pao cheered up a bit and began to eat the bun; but he soon grew apprehensive again. "If I look after them this way," he said, "the pigs will grow thin. Then the Old Skinflint will beat me."

"It doesn't matter if they do grow a bit thin, just as long as they're alive. If he dares to beat you, just come to me. I'll think of ways to deal with him."

The hot sun shone overhead just as it had on the previous day. What with this and his weakness, as soon as he had eaten the bun, Yu-pao felt dizzy and sleepy. Liu helped him to walk to a big rock under a tree at the foot of a precipice. There he took off his own coat, spread it out on the rock, and after making Yu-pao lie down on it, wrapped him up in his torn padded coat. Still, he could not bring himself to leave the boy there till he saw it was quite a good spot for him, being shady, but not too windy, neither too cool nor too hot. He then said to Yu-pao:

"You lie here and have a good rest. It's time for me to go to the hills now to have a look at the fields, but I'll be with you again by and by."

Before noon, Liu came again to help Yu-pao drive the pigs back to their pen.

In the evening Liu managed to get some medicinal herbs from one of the neighbours, and prepared a brew for Yu-pao to drink. Yu-pao

drank the bitter, scalding hot medicine, and soon his stomach felt better. When he went to bed, the farm hands tucked him up under two of their own tattered quilts, so that he sweated during the night and when he got up the next morning, the fever had left him. He no longer felt dizzy. Then he was hungry, and no amount of gruel seemed to satisfy him. So, at mealtime, Liu and the other hired hands saved some of their buns for him which they gave him to eat before they went off to work.

As the men managed to save a couple of buns for Yu-pao every day, he was no longer as ravenous as he had been before and at the same time he began to feel stronger. Day after day he took the pigs to the ravine and penned them up the way Liu had taught him. As the place happened to have abundant water and grass at that time, the pigs stopped scurrying about in wild confusion and gave Yu-pao ample time to amuse himself among the sand-dunes. When the sun was too scorching hot for that, he sat under the shade of some trees where it was cool, and when he felt tired, he just lay down on the big rock to rest. For a few days time went by rather pleasantly for him. But after a while he began to find it hang rather heavy on him, and he could not help thinking of the few books he once had.

"Oh, if only I could have some books again," he wished, "so that I could learn a few more characters, sitting in the shade close to the pond. What a pity those few books Mr. Chou gave me were all torn up. . . ." When he thought of this, he could not help seething again with anger against every single member of the Chou family.

He wondered if Mr. Chou were still teaching at the Taiping Village School. It would be wonderful indeed, he thought, if he could get a few more books from Mr. Chou, see his young friends and ask Chih-cheng to give him some information about his family.

Then an idea flashed into his mind: Why not make a trip there right now and ask the teacher for some more books? So immediately, he left the shade, started climbing up the slope of Mount Taiping and soon reached the top, from where, looking eastward, he could see, at a distance of half a mile or so, the school house beside the village administration office. How excited he became when he saw it! He started dashing down the mountain. But before he had gone very

far, he stopped, struck by another thought: "How about the pigs left in the ravine with no one to look after them? What if a wolf killed one of them! Moreover, that brat Little Mischief must be at school right now; if he told the fiendish *pao* chief or the old scoundrel about me when he went home, that would be disastrous."

Yu-pao felt it better not to take the risk and so he turned back. As he did so, he thought to himself: "Oh, if only my teacher would come with the other boys for an outing on this side of Mount Taiping. Then I'd ask him for books." "Little Mischief, the bastard!" he went on thinking to himself, "I'll settle with him somehow one of these fine days. I never saw a meaner boy."

Then one day Little Mischief suddenly made his appearance in the ravine just as Yu-pao was cooking some magpie eggs to eat, for on his way home after school from a distance he had happened to see smoke rising from the big east ravine. "Few people go there," Little Mischief thought. "How is it there is smoke rising?" He ran up to the opening of the ravine, looked and saw it was Yu-pao who was cooking magpie eggs on a fire of twigs. At this, his mouth watered and he said to himself: "Since he's a swineherd working for our family, naturally I'm his master. I'll tell him to climb up the trees and get magpie eggs for me. I don't think he'll dare refuse — he's afraid of me now." So thinking this, he ran up to Yu-pao, and with his left arm akimbo, stretched out his right hand, demanding that Yu-pao give him all the cooked magpie eggs, at the same time telling him to climb the trees and get him more.

Yu-pao, sitting on the ground with some magpie eggs in his hands, was about to eat them quickly when he saw Little Mischief coming up with all the dignified air of a young master. "Well, well!" said Yu-pao to himself. "I've been wanting to beat you up for a long while, but haven't had the chance. If you've come looking for trouble here, your lucky star won't help you."

"Give them to you, indeed!" scoffed Yu-pao, dashing the magpie eggs to the ground. He tucked up his sleeves, making ready to fight when he looked around and saw that there were some people hoeing on the nearby hills. Afraid that they might hear Little Mischief's screams for help, Yu-pao changed his mind. Springing to his feet,

he picked up the stick with which he drove the pigs, and without saying another word, started going farther into the big ravine, taking the pigs along with him.

Taking this as an indication that Yu-pao was afraid of him, Little Mischief picked up a twig somewhere and followed him flicking him with it with every step he took, asking at the same time: "Are you going to get me magpie eggs? Yes or no?" Seeing that Yu-pao paid no heed to him, he started to beat him with greater zest than ever till they reached the end of the ravine.

Yu-pao penned up the pigs behind some rocks, and having seen to it that no pigs could possibly get away, threw down his stick, turned round abruptly, and seizing his persecutor by the collar, tripped him up with his leg, so that Little Mischief fell to the ground with a bump. Pinning him down with one foot, Yu-pao hurriedly untied his belt and then tried to drag his enemy to a small tree, intending to bind him to it.

Being laid low, Little Mischief made frantic efforts to get up, spewing out a torrent of curses. Only when his repeated efforts all ended in failure and he saw Yu-pao had undone his belt did he lose his nerve. He sensed that Yu-pao was going to tie him up to the small tree nearby. Knowing that he was not as strong as Yu-pao and therefore could never hope to break loose, he became terribly frightened, and opening wide that big mouth of his, began to cry aloud. Nevertheless he struggled desperately to prevent being dragged towards the small tree. At this, Yu-pao became very angry, and with his fist fetched him a couple of blows on his big head, upon which Little Mischief wailed louder than ever.

Yu-pao considered that it would never do to let people hear Little Mischief's cries, so he had better gag him. He hastily tore off a big wad of ragged cotton padding from the inside of his torn coat, and with a mighty effort he thrust it into Little Mischief's mouth. Then, for all his frantic efforts to scream, the little tyrant could utter no other sounds than a few guttural gurgles.

Yu-pao lugged Little Mischief right up to the tree and tied him fast to its trunk, in such a way that his face was turned towards the tree. Seeing that Little Mischief was no longer able to move, Yu-pao scowled

at him with his fiery dark eyes. Stick in hand Yu-pao was about to beat him when it suddenly occurred to him that it wouldn't do to go about it in a haphazard way and that if he hit Little Mischief on the face, Big Chimney-stack might notice it. So he decided that if he struck him at all it had better be on the buttocks. Having reached this decision, he raised his stick and said: "Today I won't give you more than you deserve. All I want is to be quits with you."

Little Mischief looked as though he were craving for forgiveness, but how could Yu-pao forgive him after what he had suffered at his hands? He gave Little Mischief one blow, then announced: "This is to pay you back for moving the stool from under me at school!" And when he dealt him the second blow, he said: "This is to pay you back for beating me when I refused to get magpie eggs for you!" And at the third blow he said: "This is to pay you back for forcing me to mind pigs for you!" And when he struck him the fourth blow, he said: "This is to pay you back for setting your dog on me!"

As he went on beating Little Mischief in this way, Yu-pao became more indignant and bitter than ever, and the thought of what he had gone through brought a flood of tears to his eyes. But finally, when he finished the beating, his satisfaction was immense.

While being beaten, Little Mischief endured each stroke with a grimace but as time went on, he grew so weak that he was hardly able to make even faint gurgles. Yu-pao saw that he had given Little Mischief enough, but only after he was persuaded that the little tyrant wouldn't have the nerve to scream any more did he extract the wad of cotton from his mouth.

"If you dare to even yell once," warned Yu-pao, pointing his stick at Little Mischief, "I'll kill you outright!"

"I . . . I won't cry . . ." stammered Little Mischief, thoroughly frightened. "Have mercy, let me go now!"

"Have mercy on you? Well, promise me something first, or I'll never let you go. Instead, I'll keep you here tonight, and the wolves can eat you for all I care!"

Hearing this, Little Mischief was scared out of his wits and opening his big mouth, was about to give way to tears again, when Yu-pao raised his stick and shouted: "Don't you dare to cry!"

This silenced Little Mischief at once. Yu-pao, his stick raised threateningly over Little Mischief, asked: "Will you dare to bully me again or not?"

"No, I won't," answered Little Mischief hastily.

"Will you tell your father or the others about the beating that I've given you today, will you?"

"No, I won't."

"If any of the pigs break their legs, or if anything happens to them, will you dare to tell your grandfather again?"

"No, I won't! Really! No!"

"I'm going to the school to see the teacher. I'm going home to see my parents. I'm going to see my friends and play with them. Will you dare to tattle to your grandfather the Old Skinflint?"

"No, I won't. Honestly, no. Oh, Yu-pao, do set me free now!"

"Set you free? Do you think I'm going to believe you so easily? I'd better leave you here to be eaten by the wolves. I'm going." So saying, Yu-pao made as if to leave, upon which Little Mischief grew so alarmed that he started crying afresh. Yu-pao turned upon him at once and shouted: "Stop crying, or I'll beat you to a jelly!"

"All right! All right! I won't cry," agreed Little Mischief. "Yu-pao, I won't tell about you, honestly I won't. If you catch me at it, you may punish me any way you like."

"Very well, then. I'll loosen you. Only from now on though you must be careful what you do. If you bully me again, or speak about me to any of your stinking family or try in any way to get me in trouble, I'll kill you!" So saying, he dealt Little Mischief a few more blows on the head, which frightened him greatly. Only then did Yu-pao unfasten the belt.

Little Mischief felt his buttocks and said: "Believe me, I'll never tell them about you again."

"Go and wash your face over there then," ordered Yu-pao pointing at the nearby gully which was filled with water. "Don't go home with a tear-stained face. And when you see your mother, you look cheerful."

"All right, I'll look cheerful." And he went immediately to the gully to wash his face.

That done, Yu-pao said: "Now, go ahead and help me drive the pigs home."

Little Mischief hastily picked up a stick somewhere and started driving the pigs home with Yu-pao. And all the way he kept saying "yes" to every demand Yu-pao chose to make and looked the very picture of meekness.

## The Cock Crows at Midnight

One evening, after it was already quite dark the figures of several men were seen walking wearily home from a field. They were Chou the Old Skinflint's hired hands.

"I'm simply fagged out," said one with a groan.

"Hang the cock!" cursed another. "Every night just when I'm dropping off it has to start crowing. Chou the Old Skinflint has the devil's energy — the moment that cock crows, he gets up and calls us to go off to work in his fields. We certainly have to work for a long time though before daybreak."

"They're rich, so even the cock sides with them," cut in another. "It's because they were born under a lucky star."

"What's it to do with luck?" objected Liu. "How is it that the cock, which used to crow at daybreak before, now crows so much earlier? As I see it, there's something crooked behind it all. Well, I'll kill that cock yet, you just wait and see."

Banding words about like this, they trudged along. Once back at the *pao* chief's, they went to bed right after they had taken their meal, to get some much needed rest.

For the last few days Yu-pao had been suffering from loose bowels, and that night he had not lain down for long when he had to get up and go outside to relieve himself. On his way back, he was going to the cowshed to see if there was enough hay in the trough, intending to go back to bed as soon as he had replenished it, when he thought he saw the figure of a man walking on tiptoe towards the henhouse, carrying a long stick in his hand. As there was no moon at the time, Yu-pao could not make out his features.

"Most probably he's a thief who's come to steal fowls," Yu-pao told

himself. "I'd better shout." But he soon changed his mind: "No. I'd better not. He must have been forced to do this, because there's no other way to keep his family alive. If I shout, it'll be his ruin! I'd better hold my tongue — there's nothing wrong with stealing the fowls of the rich. If all their birds are stolen, there'll be no more cocks crowing at dawn. We'll be able to get more sleep then."

He was thinking this when he saw the shadowy figure crane its neck and cover its nose with one hand. Yu-pao began to feel anxious. "Be careful," he would have liked to tell the man. "If you're caught at it by the old scoundrel, he'll have you arrested, and it'll go hard with you."

Yu-pao wanted to go back to bed right away, but he was afraid to startle the thief. "If I go now," he realized, "he'll be frightened away, and he'll have made the trip for nothing. No, I'd better not disturb him. I'll stay here instead and find out who's come to steal the fowls." Accordingly he squatted down, determined to watch the fun. However, to his great amazement, for some time nothing happened, then unexpectedly the thief started to mimic the crowing of a cock at dawn.

Yu-pao was astounded. When he saw the unidentified man scurry over towards the cowshed, Yu-pao hastily stood up and hid himself in the hayloft. He had barely done so when the prowler struck a match, went up to the trough and looked in it as if to see whether there was any hay there. By the flame of the match Yu-pao saw that it was Chou the Old Skinflint himself! So the crowing of the cock in the middle of the night was just a trick of that old villain!

Meanwhile, when the old man mimicked a crowing cock, the real cocks in the coop began to crow also, and those in the entire hamlet did the same.

Yu-pao seethed with rage. He wanted to seize the old scoundrel immediately, but a second thought changed his mind: I'm only a boy. If I accuse him, he'll deny it, and what's more, he'll beat me. I'd better tell Uncle Liu and the other farm hands and ask them to punish him. Presently, he heard the old scoundrel calling out to his hired hands at the top of his voice:

"Hi there! The cocks have begun to crow. Why aren't you up already and working on the hills?"

Having aroused them by saying this, he went back to the house to sleep again.

Yu-pao went back to the men's hut and found them all grumbling.

"Damn it!" said one. "Fancy the cocks crowing at this unearthly hour. I've only just lain down to sleep. This bird isn't a cock."

"If it isn't," asked Liu, "what is it then?"

"It's an evil spirit trying to hurry us to our graves. If we go on working like this, we'll die of exhaustion in a few more days."

"Why, I was only just dropping off. . . ." complained another.

"I'd only just lain down," said still another. "I hadn't even finished one pipe of tobacco."

Yu-pao thought: Apparently they've no idea yet that it's all Chou the Old Skinflint's doing.

"For me, however, it's just so much trouble saved," he broke in, "since I haven't taken off my clothes yet. Let's go then — I've something funny to tell you."

"Yu-pao, what is it?" they asked. "Tell us right away."

"No, I won't tell you now. Wait till we've started. I'll tell you on the way."

They flung on their clothes in disgust and set out for the hills, carrying their hoes with them. On the way they asked Yu-pao again: "What funny thing were you going to tell us? Tell us now."

"Uncles," said Yu-pao with a smile, his dark eyes shining, "don't curse the cock any more — it's not a cock but a man that's to blame."

"What do you mean?" they asked in amazement.

Yu-pao then told them what he had stumbled upon during the night.

On hearing this, they were furious. "So it was this Old Skinflint who's swindled us!" Liu's eyes blazed with anger as he declared: "We won't work tonight. We'll simply go to the fields and get some more sleep instead."

To this everyone agreed. So by the light of the none too bright stars they arrived at the fields. They put down their hoes, smoked a pipe of tobacco, then lay down on the ground and soon fell fast asleep. They were so overcome with fatigue that they did not wake up even when their clothes were dampened by the heavy dew.

The secret of the Chou family's success was this trick of mimicking the crow of a cock. Ever since the time of Chou the Old Skinflint's grandfather the family had been suspected of some unscrupulous business, and now in turn the Old Skinflint was perpetuating this well-disguised trick handed down by his forefathers. His hired hands, having to work like this, would be entirely played out by the time they had finished the third hoeing, and would be forced to leave their job, which was exactly what the Chous wanted, for they would then be able to seize this as an excuse for not paying them any wages when autumn came.

While lying sound asleep on the ground, some of the hired hands were awakened suddenly by a sharp pain. With a cry of alarm they scrambled up. Looking around, they saw the sun already some way above the horizon and Chou the Old Skinflint savagely beating the rest of them one by one with a stick. They all scrambled to their feet.

"I feed you and pay you wages," fumed Chou the Old Skinflint, his eyes glaring angrily, "yet you repay me like this. Instead of working, you come here to sleep. Now listen, if you don't finish hoeing this field for me before noon today, you needn't expect any food to eat."

He then turned towards the cowherd who had come with him, and said: "Carry the food back home for me."

Now Chou the Old Skinflint was an early riser. That morning, when he got up and found the hired hands had not yet come back for breakfast, he thought: "They must still be hard at work for me. I'll get someone to take their food to them so that they can eat it in the field. This way, instead of wasting time over the trip here and back and holding up the work, they'll be able to hoe more land for me." Having reached this conclusion, he went to the market-place to ask Old Li the cowherd to carry the meal to the hills for him. Little did he think that when he arrived there with the cowherd, he would find the hired hands sleeping instead of working for him. He was so angry that on the spot he decided they should not have anything to eat. So he told Old Li to carry the food back. After Old Li had gone, Chou gave them another piece of his mind before he went off.

When the hired hands saw that, apart from being beaten and given a regular dressing down, they were even denied a meal, they were furious. Some decided not to hire out as a farm hand any more; others wanted to go back to settle scores with the old scoundrel; still others declared their intention of going home at once.

"We won't work any more," Hsiao Ting threw his hoe to the ground, "let's go."

Liu stopped him, saying, "Where will you go?"

"Anywhere away from here," Hsiao Ting replied. "I'd rather starve to death at home than work here like this for the Chous."

"The Japanese and traitorous landlords are everywhere," Liu said. "How shall we be able to earn a living if we go home? Now the autumn harvest season is drawing near and if we go home right now we'll be paid nothing for the whole year. That's exactly what Chou the Old Skinflint plans. Even if we have to leave we should at least think of a way to punish the old scoundrel."

How can we punish him? The farm hands began to think. Yu-pao sat by one side, lost in a dream. After a while, he said smiling, "Uncles, I've thought of a way to pay him back — what do you say about giving the old devil a beating?"

"Yu-pao, are you crazy or what?" objected one of the hired hands. "He's rich and influential; besides, his son is a *pao* chief. He can do anything he likes in this part of the country. How can we dare to so much as lay a finger on him?"

"No, I'm not crazy, uncle," Yu-pao said. "Do you remember the *pao* chief once told us that 'we must seize any thieves who come to steal'?" He then proceeded to tell them the details of his plan. "Why shouldn't we beat him up and teach him a lesson?" he argued, smiling. As they listened, they grew so pleased with the idea that they burst out laughing aloud.

"Good! Good! Let's do it, then," they said.

"I have to admit you're a smart fellow, young though you are," observed Liu with a smile.

Towards noon, when they went back to have their lunch, they found Chou the Old Skinflint still cursing them but none paid any notice to him, however, and so there the matter rested.



A couple of days after this, all the hired hands made their clubs ready. As soon as they had finished supper, they put out the lamp and told Yu-pao to keep watch behind the door. They waited for some time, then they saw Chou the Old Skinflint walking with stealthy steps towards the henhouse. He had barely reached the door when Yu-pao gave a shout: "A thief!"

At this, all the hired hands dashed out, each carrying a club in his hand. They threw Chou the Old Skinflint to the ground and started beating him.

"Oh, don't beat me! It's me!" Chou the Old Skinflint yelled hastily.

"You're just the one we want to punish," retorted the hired hands. "Just see if you'll dare to come here and steal fowls again!"

Next Yu-pao ran to the middle of the courtyard and cried aloud: "*Pao* chief, get up quickly! Here's a thief! We've caught him!"

On hearing the alarm the Japanese officer who was in bed in the west front room, came running out with two orderlies, carrying a pistol in his hand. He shouted as he ran: "Show no mercy to the thieves! Kill every single one of them!"

That night the *pao* chief happened to be away from home. His wife and Little Mischief, when they heard shouts from the house, called out in alarm: "Don't. . ."

But before they could finish, two shots rang out — Bang! Bang! The Japanese officer had opened fire on Chou the Old Skinflint. The latter gave a shriek of terror and cried: "Oh, it's me —" then started crawling on all fours straight into the hen-coop. He was so scared out of his wits that he involuntarily wet his pants.

The Japanese officer rushed forward and was going to shoot again when the *pao* chief's wife, seized with panic, came hurrying out of the house, only partly dressed and shockingly dishevelled.

"It's the old master!" she protested.

Only then did the officer desist. The hired hands hastily crowded forward.

"Why, the old master never went near the henhouse before," they exclaimed. "How is it that he's come for fowls now and at this hour of the night? Go and fetch a lamp, somebody, so that we can see."

At this point Little Mischief came out from the house with a lamp. They looked, and saw that the two shots had wounded Chou the Old Skinflint in one thigh which was bleeding copiously and, by the way he was trying to bury his head ostrich-like in the hen-coop, it might be thought he had a liking for fowl droppings! When he was dragged out, his face was covered all over with them. He sat up, clutched his wounded leg and set up a howl. The hired hands were secretly overjoyed, but they could not very well laugh in his face.

"We all mistook you for a thief," said Liu. "We had no idea that it was our old master. Why did you come for fowls in the dead of night, though?"

"Enough of that," croaked Chou the Old Skinflint. "I was sleeping soundly. I have no idea myself how I came to be here."

"What a narrow escape you've had!" said one of the hired hands. "Perhaps you were possessed by an evil spirit? You'd better be more careful in the future."

The old scoundrel was then carried into the house. Big Chimney-stack told two of the farm hands to go for a doctor at once.

Chou the Old Skinflint looked crestfallen and dejected but, although he wanted to pour out his grievances, the words stuck in his throat.

And so the hired hands had their revenge. "It's a pity the Japanese didn't kill him outright," they said.

### Solidarity Among the Hired Hands

After two of the hired hands had driven away in a cart to the county town to fetch a doctor, the rest of them returned to their small shabby hut, and sitting around an oil lamp, began to smoke their pipes. In low voices they began to chat among themselves.

"The sound beating we gave the old devil will make it impossible for him to go to the fields again and nag at us for at least three months," one said.

"The Old Skinflint is really a bit skinned this time," put in another.

However, in addition to their elation, they were slightly worried. Originally, they just wanted to punish the old scoundrel, but none of them had dreamed the Japanese officer would fire two shots pointblank

at him. When the *pao* chief found his father wounded like this, he would not vent his anger on the Japanese but on them, so there would certainly be trouble ahead.

Sensing the fear among them, Liu said, as he knocked the ash from his pipe, "It's no use being afraid. We must think of a way to deal with him."

"How can we deal with him?" asked Hsiao Ting anxiously, for he was more worried than the others.

Liu moved nearer to the lamp, lowered his voice and asked, "What did we rely on when we beat Chou the Old Skinflint?"

"On our strength and unity," replied Yu-pao without thinking.

"That's right. We relied on our solidarity in beating the old scoundrel and we must also rely on it in dealing with the *pao* chief. So long as there's solidarity among us, there is nothing to fear. When the *pao* chief asks what happened, we'll just say we mistook his father for a thief and beat him by mistake, and he can do nothing to us."

The hired hands felt Liu's words were fine and the fear in their minds melted. So they went to bed and fell fast asleep.

It was now early morning. The hired hands had returned from their work in the fields and were standing around a high table in their little shed, eating their breakfast. Suddenly, they heard the gate to the courtyard fly open with an ear-splitting screech. Yu-pao stuck out his head to have a look, but instantly shrank back.

"Uncle Liu," he whispered, "the *pao* chief's come back."

At this, all the hired hands turned to look at Liu.

"Don't be afraid," said Liu. "Let me go and have a look." He put down his bowl, went to the door and saw the *pao* chief, his lined coat thrown carelessly over his shoulders and his hat cocked on one side, rushing in like a whirlwind, apparently in great agitation. His narrowed eyes were blinking all the time, his face looked fierce and savage and he pounded his walking-stick noisily on the cobbles. Wang the Red Eye and Little Mischief were scurrying after him, apparently also greatly flustered. The three of them went hurrying into the house.

The old scoundrel was heard to say, "Oh, Chang-an, none of the Chou family, from my grandfather down, has ever been beaten up by

anyone, I can assure you. But now you're *pao* chief, your own father's been beaten up. Oh, I gave you birth for nothing. Your brother Chang-tai (head of police in the county town) must be sent for at once. If he had been at home, I'd never have been bullied like this."

"Where're the hired hands? Tell them to come here at once!" shouted the *pao* chief.

"*Pao* chief, calm yourself." It was Wang the Red Eye's voice. "Keep cool and listen to me. I'll tell you what. . . ."

At this point, Wang the Red Eye's voice was lowered to a whisper. Presently, all voices grew so faint that the farm hands could no longer hear what they were saying. They guessed, however, that the *pao* chief and his friend must be putting their heads together and hatching some sort of plot.

Liu eyed the hired hands and then told them, "No matter what plots they hatch we'll say just as we've planned. After we've finished eating we'll go up to the hills."

After breakfast, they took up their hoes, ready to go to work in the fields. Liu picked up Yu-pao's small padded coat, put it on for him and said: "Yu-pao, you'd better go and mind the pigs on the hills too, but remember, if anyone asks you anything, be careful what you say."

"Don't worry about that," answered Yu-pao, and picking up his stick, he went to the pigsty to drive out the pigs.

The *pao* chief, hearing the grunting of the pigs, came out to have a look. When he saw the hired hands were on the point of starting for the hills, his eyes became bloodshot with rage. He wagged a finger at them.

"Here!" he snarled. "Where're you going? Come back! D'you think you're going to escape after having beaten your old master?"

Meanwhile, Wang the Red Eye had come outside too. The *pao* chief and Wang the Red Eye, the two of them, standing on either side of the doorway, with their teeth bared and eyes glowering, looked just like two fierce devils inside a temple gate.

The hired hands laid down their hoes and went to the main house nonchalantly. Yu-pao was about to take the pigs from the pigsty

when he heard the *pao* chief call out: "Here! Yu-pao, you come along, too."

Yu-pao was obliged to pen up the pigs once more and follow the hired hands into the main house.

The *pao* chief took them to the east room which was Old Skinflint's bedroom.

"Now, you can see for yourselves," he said. "This is no put-up show, is it? Who caused all this trouble? Speak up!"

On hearing the *pao* chief's question, Yu-pao protested. "It was the Jap — I mean the officer who did it with his pistol."

"Am I to understand," bellowed the *pao* chief, "that the officer opened fire before you started the trouble? Speak up, was it you or was it not, who first hurt the old master?"

Liu answered: "It was indeed, but. . . ."

"It was," interrupted Yu-pao, "but we thought we were beating a thief."

"Beating a thief, indeed!" The *pao* chief yelled flaring up, and rushed forward. Then he went on: "You've hurt the old master, yet you still have the impudence to say you were beating a thief. Whose idea was it? Speak!"

Wang the Red Eye was standing before the *kang*, his arms akimbo.

"There now," said he coolly. "Own up! It'll go ill with you if you don't. . . ."

"Speak up!" roared the *pao* chief once again, staring hard at the farm hands. "Who put you up to all this? Out with it!"

"No one put us up to it," Old Sun, a hired hand, said. "We were all fast asleep when suddenly we heard a cry of 'thief' or rather a cry that there was someone trying to steal the fowls. As we were worried about your fowls. . . ."

"It's a downright lie!" shouted Chou the Old Skinflint, but immediately following this he cried "Ouch!" Even the slightest exertion caused him severe pain. "How could you hear cries of 'thief,'" he continued, "seeing that you always sleep like logs at night and can't be roused even by a loud call? Besides, I told you outright it was me, but you never listened! What on earth do you mean. . . . Ouch!"

"Rot! Stealing fowls indeed! You may go and make inquiries

anywhere to the north or south of this village as to whether there was ever anyone who dared to steal my fowls. Now then, whose idea was it?"

"*Pao* chief," said Liu, "none of us dreamed that the old master would go to the henhouse at that late hour of night. We had only just waked up from sleep. We were still in a daze and what's more, the night was too dark for us to see anything clearly. So you see it all happened because of a mistake. . . ."

"All because of a mistake?" exclaimed Big Chimney-stack, gesticulating. "Stuff and nonsense! Even when I was in the house I could tell it was the old master's voice. How was it that you couldn't?"

"Really, we didn't believe it could be the old master," Liu answered, "so we didn't try to find out whose voice it was. But the moment we found it was our master, we stayed our hands."

"I don't believe that, either," said Wang the Red Eye, patting his bald pate with his left hand and gesticulating with his right. "There must be someone at the bottom of this, otherwise the old master wouldn't have been so seriously hurt."

The *pao* chief noticed Hsiao Ting had not spoken, so he decided that perhaps he was the one who could be bullied into telling the truth. Accordingly he took off his coat, rolled up his shirt sleeves, stepped up to him and collared him.

"Hsiao Ting!" snarled the *pao* chief. "Who put you up to all this?"

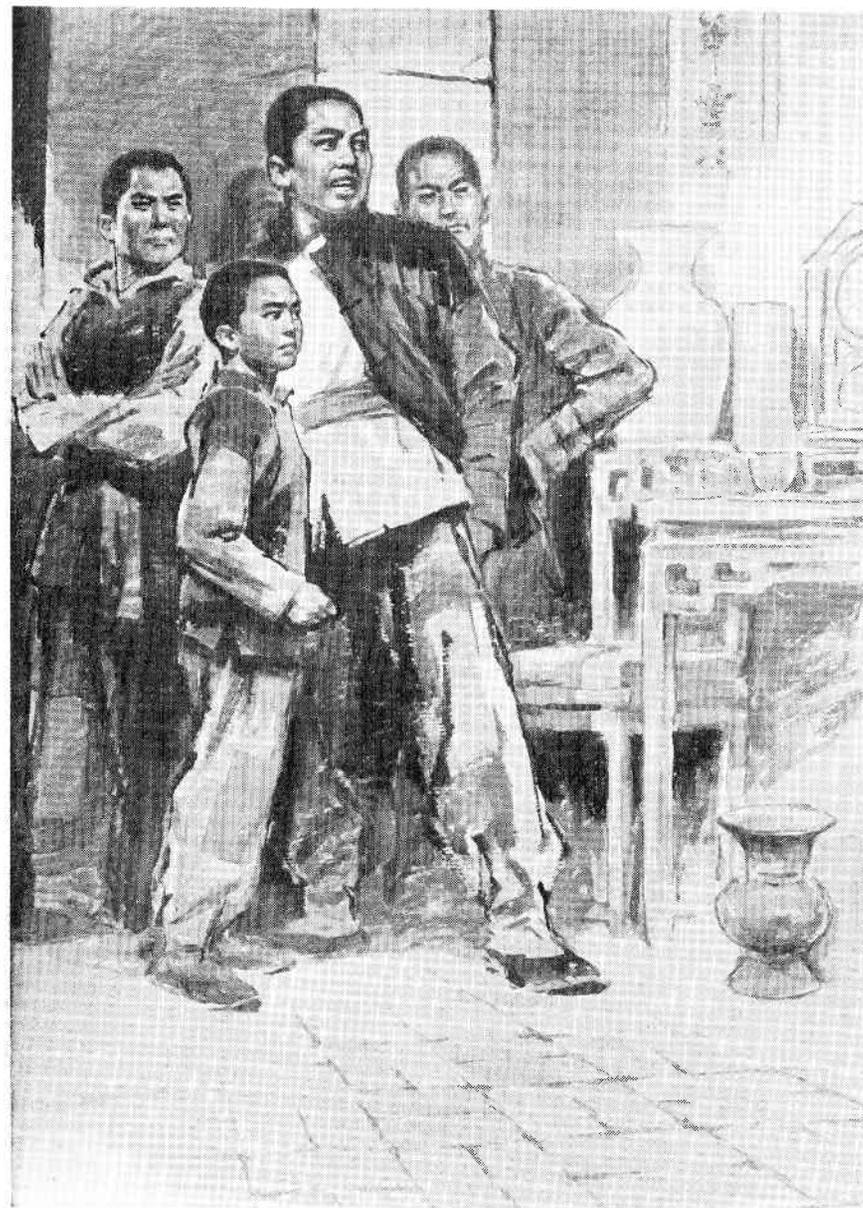
"No one put us up to anything."

"If you refuse to speak the truth, I'll take it that you were the ring-leader." The *pao* chief raised his hand and was going to beat the boy but was stopped by Liu, who said:

"*Pao* chief, what Hsiao Ting said is true. Honestly, no one ever put us up to it. We were all anxious to beat the thief and we never thought it was the old master."

"Who was the first to give the alarm, then?" asked the *pao* chief.

At this, Yu-pao who knew he had right on his side, pulled himself up very straight and answered boldly: "I was. I saw someone trying to steal the fowls, so I gave the alarm."



“So it was you who first saw it! How did you see it? And what did you see? Speak!”

“I’ve had loose bowels for the last few days. That night towards midnight I had to go out to relieve myself. On my way back I saw someone trying to lay hands on the fowls. It was very dark, I couldn’t make out who it was. I was worried about your fowls, so I shouted to my uncles. When they heard me, they ran out, still half asleep, and they tried to seize the thief. Then the Japanese officer came and opened fire. . . .”

“Bah! You little brat! . . .” With that, the *pao* chief strode up to Yu-pao, and grabbing his neck in both hands, started shaking the boy with all his might, at the same time roaring: “I’ll teach you to shout again! Speak out! Who put you up to it?” Yu-pao did his utmost to twist away from those hands and screwed up enough courage to answer: “I did it on my own! I shouted because I was worried about your fowls. What’s wrong with that?”

Liu immediately followed this up, “Look, *pao* chief, it was you who set the rules that if we discovered a thief, we must catch him; we were acting according to your rules, and caught the old master by mistake. We didn’t do anything wrong.”

“The rules I gave you were all right and you should remember them; but I didn’t tell you to consider the old master a thief.”

“It wasn’t our fault we thought him a thief, because he acted like one. You tell me: if he wanted to catch one of his own fowls, why did he sneak about and try to hide himself?”

“Eh. . . . Well, he was afraid the hen might get away.”

“Is that so? Then why didn’t he do it some other time of day and not try to catch the fowl at midnight? In the past if there was some work to do, the old master always sent for us; how is it that this time he went to the stinking henhouse himself to catch a fowl? Furthermore, you told us to look out for thieves, and no one in your family warned us beforehand that the old master wanted to get up at midnight to catch a fowl. How could we help but make this mistake?”

“Eh. . . eh. . .” The *pao* chief perspired profusely at Liu’s questions and had nothing to say. Sitting in his chair, he lowered his head and breathed hard. Big Chimney-stack still wanted to say something,

but Wang the Red Eye saw that the more they tried to explain, the more embarrassing the situation would become; so he hastily tipped Big Chimney-stack and her husband the wink, and spoke to the farm hands in a changed tone; "It really happened through a mistake, then. Well, you go back to work."

Since threats and cursing did not get him anywhere, and he could give no good reason for the old man's behaviour, the *pao* chief was angry and frustrated. After the farm hands had gone, he took out his handkerchief to wipe the sweat from his brow, and paced to and fro in the room. After a while, he said to Wang the Red Eye, "Mr. Wang, these beggars are really tricky."

"I've noticed that for some time; just bullying them won't do; they're not afraid of us at all. We must think of some good plan, so that the old master gets his revenge," said Wang the Red Eye.

Suddenly a voice was heard calling out: "*Pao* chief! *Pao* chief!" The chief turned and saw that it was Wan the Blind, a messenger from the village head.

"What's up?" asked the *pao* chief.

Wan the Blind stood stroking his hair which he wore so long that he looked like neither man nor woman. "*Pao* chief," he said with an impudent smile on his face, "the village head wants you to hurry over to attend a meeting."

"What for this time?" Wang the Red Eye asked Wan the Blind, holding the latter's hand in his.

"I hear it has to do with the conscription of labour."

The *pao* chief looked at Wang the Red Eye for a moment, then said: "Well, you may as well know, we'll have our work cut out for us — the quota this time will be several times that of last time."

"Didn't you always say 'the more, the better'?" taunted Wang the Red Eye.

The *pao* chief smiled a wry smile. "I did say that, but the trouble is that this time those higher up say it's urgent and insist that we hurry up about it."

When the chief went back into the house to get his outer coat, he heard his father calling out amid groans: "Oh, Chang-an! This

time we've thrown the helve after the hatchet. As far as I am concerned, I'm not going to stomach it!"

"You needn't tell me that!" said the *pao* chief impatiently. "Do you think I'll let the pack of knaves off so easily?" And with that he went off with Wang the Red Eye to the village administration office to attend the meeting.

Urged by the Japanese devils to hurry up the matter of conscript labour, the *pao* chief became even busier than before. This time the quota for Taiping Village alone was 150 men, while that for the first *pao* under Chou Chang-an was sixty — five times the figure for the last time. The Japanese stipulated this time that, as long as a family had three sons, one had to go, irrespective of the economic status of the family. However, in practice it was a different story, for how many of the rich were willing to see their sons sent to be worked to death? Accordingly, every day a good many people called at the *pao* chief's home, some to bribe him, others to ask favours, and he was not slow in seizing this as a chance to extort money. So, what with having to receive such visitors and with trying hard to squeeze the villagers, he was kept so busy every day that he had to leave the field work entirely to his hired hands. He had no time to make a check on their work, either.

One thing, however, puzzled the hired hands. Ever since Chou the Old Skinflint was taken to the county town by his second son for treatment, they had not heard the *pao* chief refer once to the beating his father had received. On the contrary, he seemed daily to grow more friendly towards them than he had ever been before. Sometimes, on their return from work in the fields the *pao* chief would greet them with a few words. To Yu-pao he showed even greater kindness. Every day, on his return from minding the pigs, Yu-pao thought to himself: "This is just like a wolf paying a New Year call on a chicken — it's all some hidden trick." He accordingly kept his eyes wide open for any trick that the Chous might play.

This was October. It had already grown quite cold. One evening, Yu-pao happened to get back with the pigs before the field labourers had returned. He was putting the pigs in the pen when he saw the

*pao* chief come out of the main house with a man in police uniform who had a pistol with him.

“Go back into the house, please,” the man in uniform was saying respectfully to the *pao* chief. “You may rest assured that I’ll give your letter to Captain Chou as soon as I get back to town.”

“Good! Good! I’m much obliged.”

As soon as the *pao* chief had seen off the man in police uniform, he went up to Yu-pao.

“Young fellow, how is it that you’ve only just come back now?” he asked in the kindest manner imaginable. “The crops on the hills have all been gathered, haven’t they? When there’s no longer any grass on the hills, the pigs can’t find much to eat there. The weather’s getting cold too. From now on you may as well come back earlier in the evening.”

He felt Yu-pao’s tattered coat which scarcely reached to his waist.

“Oh! How mean your parents are to you,” he exclaimed. “They never seem to think about taking care of you, their one thought is just for you to earn grain for them. You must have suffered from the cold. I’ve sent several times for your mother, telling her to bring you some clothes, but she never comes. Don’t you feel cold?”

The *pao* chief next took a look at Yu-pao’s feet, and said: “My eye! Your feet are badly scratched. And not a word of complaint either, even when you’ve no shoes. But you can’t go about barefoot in autumn. When the ground’s covered with stubble and bean-stalks, what will happen if you run a splinter into your feet? Come on, take a pair of my son’s shoes.”

Yu-pao was taken into the house by the *pao* chief. The moment he entered the west room, he saw in the three pier-glasses the reflection of Big Chimney-stack lying curled up on the *kang* like a big shrimp. She seemed to have only just woken up from her sleep; her hair was dishevelled, her face unwashed and her eyes bleary. The quilts lay in disorder on the *kang*. She was heating a clot of opium over a pretty little brass lamp. When it was ready, she put it in her pipe and started smoking desperately over the little brass lamp. She seemed to have an insatiable craving for the drug. So intent was she on smoking that she hadn’t even looked up when they entered the room.

The *pao* chief fumbled under a chest and brought out a pair of Little Mischief’s worn-out cotton shoes.

“Here you are,” said he.

Yu-pao shook his head and retreated a few steps. “No, I don’t want them,” he said. “My mother’ll send me a pair in a couple of days.”

“Why wait for your mother to send them to you when you’ll be packing up in a couple of days? Now, just take these and put them right on.”

Still Yu-pao would not hear of it.

“Why do you refuse? Well, I see. You’re afraid that the hired hands might beat you if you’re seen wearing them, is that it?”

Yu-pao looked at the *pao* chief curiously, then shook his head and answered: “No.”

“Well, I never!” exclaimed the *pao* chief, putting the pair of shoes on the edge of the *kang*. He went up to Yu-pao and pulled him to the side of the chest, the top of which was loaded with a clock, glass vases, a tea-pot and cups. He then hitched up a chair for himself near a desk and when he had settled down in it, he said:

“Those hired hands of mine must have been threatening you, else you’d tell me the truth about the beating they gave the old master. I’ve asked you a good many times. You’ve no reason to be afraid of anything. Tell me how they’ve been bullying you. They won’t let you tell me the truth about the beating, I suppose. Hsiao Ting told me it was Liu and Old Sun who started the whole thing; is it true? Answer me. Don’t be afraid. I’ll keep it a secret, and I’ll help you if they bully you again. . . .”

Yu-pao thought: “Uncle Ting won’t talk like that. The *pao* chief must be lying.”

“It’s not true! It’s not true!” he cried. “No one ever put us up to anything. Hsiao Ting was lying. That night it was I who first saw. . . .”

At this, Big Chimney-stack blew out the lamp with a puff and sat bolt upright on the *kang*.

“That’s a whacking lie!” she blustered. “Don’t give him any shoes. I’ve said all along that this little brat is utterly unable to appreciate kind-

ness when he receives any. He'll never talk unless we give it to him hot!"

Giving Yu-pao a withering look, she continued: "He doesn't deserve our shoes. We'd better throw them on the dung pile and let them rot there than give them to him."

Yu-pao's blood was up, too. "I never asked you for any shoes!" he retorted. "I'd sooner go barefoot and have my feet worn down to stumps than wear those worn-out shoes of yours!"

Yu-pao knew that his words were sure to drive Big Chimney-stack mad with rage and entail a beating. So, as he spoke, he started backing away towards the door.

"Worn-out shoes, indeed!" cried Big Chimney-stack. "We won't even give you that!" She picked up the pair of worn-out shoes and hurled them at Yu-pao with all her might.

Yu-pao dodged to one side. Bang — crash! One of the shoes hit a pier-glass which, under the impact, came hurtling down right on the vases, tea-pot, cups, the clock and all. The *pao* chief gave a cry of "Hang it!" and dived headlong under the desk for fear of being hit by the splinters of flying glass and china.

"Oh! My goodness!" screamed Big Chimney-stack, thinking that her husband had been hurt by the falling glass. Mad with rage, she jumped off the *kang* barefooted, in an effort to strike Yu-pao.

Yu-pao, seeing that things were going from bad to worse, immediately turned and took to his heels. Once out of the house, he bumped into about a dozen landlords who had come to call on the *pao* chief to secure exemption for their sons from conscript labour. Yu-pao paid no heed to them but continued running straight on to the main street. Big Chimney-stack gave up the chase only when she caught sight of the landlords.

Yu-pao left the *pao* chief's house behind him, ran to a shed on a small threshing-floor at the end of the hamlet and hid himself there. Every day Uncle Liu and the others passed that way when returning from work, so he decided to wait there for them, tell them how he had been questioned behind their backs, to warn them and put them on their guard. He would then go back with them, so that he wouldn't have to face Big Chimney-stack alone if she should try to beat him again.

Before long, he heard Hsiao Ting's voice at a distance, saying: "Whether he allows it or not, I'm going home tonight to have a look. My mother's very ill. In the circumstances, can't a fellow even go home to see his mother? If he won't let me go home, I'll simply stop working for him."

"If you stop working for him right now," came Liu's voice, "when the drive for conscript labour is in full swing, you'll be pressed into service the moment you get home."

"Well, we'll see," Hsiao Ting was saying.

"If he refuses you leave to go home," came Liu's voice again, "don't insist. You just go quietly in the night and attend to your mother's illness. Come back early tomorrow morning, though, and don't let anyone of the Chou family find you out. You can come direct to the field; we'll bring your breakfast there along with us. . . ."

Hearing that Uncle Liu and the others were on their way back, Yu-pao darted out of the shed, shouting as he ran: "Uncle Liu! Uncle Liu!"

Liu, seeing who it was, asked the boy hastily: "What's up, Yu-pao?"

Yu-pao ran up to Uncle Liu, and catching hold of his hands, said: "Uncle Liu, come with me quickly. I've something to tell you!"

"What is it? What's happened?" asked the rest of the hired hands anxiously.

"Come here," said Yu-pao. "Let's go into the shed so that we can talk without being seen by any passer-by."

When he had taken them into the shed, the hired hands asked anxiously, "What's happened?"

"Oh you don't know anything yet," said Yu-pao. "Let me tell you. Just a moment ago, I was given a long questioning by the *pao* chief. He said I had to tell him whether it was you two who had put us up to beating Chou the Old Skinflint. He even tried to bribe me with a pair of worn-out shoes. He said Uncle Ting had told him everything."

Hsiao Ting was furious. "Blast the liar!" he cursed. "What have I ever said?"

"Take it easy," said Liu. "No one'll ever believe what the *pao* chief says."

"Uncle Ting," said Yu-pao, "don't be cross. I don't believe it."

Old Sun spoke up, "Naturally no truth will ever drop from the lips of a man like the fiendish *pao* chief."

Liu made haste to stop them from talking any longer by saying: "Have done! Let Yu-pao finish his story."

Yu-pao then proceeded to tell them all that had happened to him — how he had been questioned behind their backs and how Big Chimney-stack had tried to beat him. He finished up by reiterating: "Uncle Liu and Uncle Sun, you two had better go straight away, or else the *pao* chief will make things hot for you."

"Where ever can we go?" asked Sun. "Wherever we go, it'll be the same. The landlords, the Japanese devils and collaborators are everywhere."

Liu thought for a moment and said, "It may not be as hopeless as all that. I've heard that there're some troops called the Eighth Route Army which is led by the Communist Party. They only fight the Japanese devils and traitors, and they all come from poor families. If we find them, we'll be all right."

Hearing this, one of the other farm hands said, "If there really are such troops, that'll be wonderful."

Yu-pao was delighted, "Uncle Liu, let's go quickly and find them."

Old Sun waved his hand hastily and said, "That's only a story you've heard. We don't know whether it's true or not. Besides, nobody has ever seen such an army. Where shall we go to look for them?"

Liu said, "If there are billows, there must be a wind. Since we've heard about them they can't be beyond reach. As long as we make up our minds, we'll find them somehow. It doesn't matter if we don't know what they look like. Since they're all poor men like us, we'll recognize them all right."

"All right, then," answered Old Sun, "We'll make inquiries. If there's really no way out, I'll go back to my home district in Shantung for the time being."

Liu said, "If we leave here, we won't leave in peace. We must. . . ."

Before he had finished, Yu-pao joined in, "Right! In a few days when we've worked out our wages, let's set the whole place on fire before we go!"

Another farm hand then said, "I like Yu-pao's idea, but at the moment they're conscripting labour. What if the *pao* chief plays a dirty trick and conscripts us first?"

Liu thought for a moment, then he said, "Don't worry. We're not dead men. We'll watch out for them. Anyway we must punish the *pao* chief, and we won't let him get the upper hand."

They all agreed. After discussing a few other things, they left the shed.

They went back to the *pao* chief's courtyard. When they entered the gate, they noticed the two gatehouses were filled with sacks of grain and there were many more sacks in the courtyard. Big Chimney-stack was complaining that there was no more room for them. They reckoned there must be at least ten tons of grain all together. The farm hands whispered to each other: "This devil! Where did he get so much grain?" "Where? It's all we poor people's sweat and blood!"

After their evening meal, Hsiao Ting went to look for the *pao* chief in his quarters. As soon as he mentioned that he wanted to go home to see his mother, the *pao* chief refused him and he left in anger. Hsiao Ting then decided that when it was dark he would slip away.

Just as Yu-pao lay down to sleep, he heard the fiendish *pao* chief shouting outside, "You swineherd, are you asleep as soon as it's dark? Get up, you lazy-bones. Come, carry the lantern for me. I must go to the village office."

Yu-pao cursed as he threw his ragged coat over his shoulder and went to the *pao* chief's house. He lit the lantern and went with the *pao* chief.

When they entered the courtyard of the village office, Yu-pao could hear the sound of gambling in the north room. They went there and saw four people sitting round a square table. The man facing them was the village head, on his left there was Wang the Red Eye, on his right Wan the Blind. The one on the fourth side was a woman

whom Yu-pao recognized at once. It was Feng-tse, the daughter of Wang the Red Eye.

The woman turned round and saw the *pao* chief. She called out in a coaxing tone, "I've been waiting for you for two rounds. Come quick and take my place."

When the others saw the *pao* chief, they all stood up to greet him. Wan the Blind hastily said, "Chief, take my place. I'll go and make some tea for you all." The *pao* chief nodded to the village head and sat down on the chair Wan had just vacated. He turned to Yu-pao and said, "Swineherd, put out the lantern. Wait for me in the west room."

Yu-pao then left them and went to the west room. In the dim lantern light he saw there was only a long bench there, nothing else. After looking after the pigs all day, he was tired and sleepy and he thought: Goodness knows how long the *pao* chief will be gambling. Why not take a nap on the bench? He moved the bench, put out the lantern and lay down.

He closed his eyes and slept, but the noise they made in the north room with all their joking and card-playing woke him up again. Then he heard the woman Feng-tse shrieking with delight, "Chief, you've won the rubber and it's nearly a grand slam!" Yu-pao was puzzled by all these terms. What were all these 'rubbers' and 'grand slams'? He quietly slipped out of the room and stood in the dark outside the window to listen.

The woman Feng-tse was silent now, but Yu-pao could hear Wang the Red Eye's voice: "Chief, you're our God of Wealth all right." Then the *pao* chief laughed as he reshuffled the cards and said, "Mr. Wang, when we play cards, we don't care about money, we're playing for fun. If we want to make money, we must get it from those paupers."

"That's right. This time you sold a few of them for quite a lot of money. Just those few sacks of grain must amount to some ten tons I expect."

"Well, Mr. Wang, you know all about this business," the *pao* chief admitted as he reshuffled the cards, "I didn't do it just for the grain. I did it simply to avenge the old master. That day after I returned

from the village, I realized that those beggars wouldn't take any more bullying, so I must use a different tactic, to make them blurt out the truth. After the old master was taken to the county town for medical treatment, I didn't say a word about the beating any more, but concentrated my efforts on the young swineherd. However, although he's only a boy, I couldn't get anything out of him. He insisted that no one planned anything and that the beating was all a mistake. Ah, these paupers are hard to crack and they admit nothing. I made several efforts but couldn't get the upper hand. Then there was this conscription for labour. Since we couldn't get enough men I thought it was a good chance to let the Japanese army deal with them. This would be killing two birds with the same stone. At first I was only thinking about selling old Liu and Sun to make an example of them as a warning to the others. Then I thought that all those beggars were a bad lot. If I kept any one of them, I'd be inviting trouble, so I might as well make a clean sweep and sell them all. They'll not make trouble for me again. I don't want anybody to raise the alarm, for they might make trouble for me yet. I've sent a message to my brother, telling him that when he comes for conscript labour he's to take them away quietly. It's a pity the Japanese army won't take the young swineherd; they think he's too small, so he'll be left behind."

Hearing this Yu-pao was flabbergasted. So that's why there was so much grain in the *pao* chief's yard. It was in payment for selling his uncles. What a poisonous snake! Then he heard the woman Feng-tse asking, "Chief, where are these conscripted men going this time?" He heard the *pao* chief put down his cards to drink some tea. The *pao* chief spoke again, "Humph, they'll be sent to the copper mine." What? To the copper mine? Yu-pao was shocked and nearly cried out, for he had heard about that place. It was a veritable Hell, and no one ever came out alive. Hsiao Ting's father and many other peasants had been taken there over a year ago, and nothing was heard of them again. If Uncle Liu and the others were taken there, they would die too. . . . Then voices came again.

"When will they leave?"

"Tomorrow morning."

"Chief, don't talk so loud. Don't forget that young swineherd's in the other room!" Wan the Blind then reminded the *pao* chief.

"Ah, that's right. You'd better take a look and see whether he's asleep or not."

"There's no need. That boy's very lazy. He likely went to sleep long ago."

But then Wang the Red Eye objected, "No. You must be careful. It's better to take a look. Go now."

Hearing this, Yu-pao hastily slipped back to the west room by going along the wall, and lay down pretending to be asleep. Wan the Blind went to the west room, coughed twice outside the door and called in a low voice, "Little swineherd, are you asleep?" When he heard no reply, he went in to look for himself. He thought Yu-pao was asleep so he went back to the north room. After Wan the Blind had left, Yu-pao sat up and lay down several times. He was full of hatred and very worried. He thought: What shall I do? Tomorrow morning the uncles will be taken to the copper mine, but they don't know it yet. What can I do to help them escape? . . . I must go back immediately to tell them and we must all leave this very night. After he had made this decision, he couldn't think of anything else, but quietly slipped out of the village office and ran to the shed where the farm hands were sleeping.

Before he had gone very far, he knocked against someone coming towards him. "Who's that?" "It's me." "Ah, Uncle Ting, why are you here? Go quickly. Something terrible has happened." "What's happened? I am looking for the *pao* chief." Yu-pao looked round and saw there was no one about. He took Hsiao Ting by the hand and they ran to a grove by the roadside.

In one breath Yu-pao told Hsiao Ting what he had just heard, then asked, "Why are you looking for the *pao* chief so late at night?" Hsiao Ting said sadly, "My mother died. I came to ask him for my wages."

Apparently, after Yu-pao had left with the *pao* chief, Hsiao Ting had started to go home, but on the way Uncle Chang, a neighbour of his, brought him the bad news that his mother had died that afternoon. His friends had collected a few planks of wood to make a coffin, and

they wanted Ting to go back to bury his mother. Hearing this, Hsiao Ting was overcome with grief and cried for some time while the other farm hands tried to console him. Then he thought of begging the *pao* chief for his wages. Asking Uncle Chang to wait, he ran to look for the *pao* chief. But now, learning that in the morning the farm hands would be taken away for conscript labour, he no longer cared about the money. He said to Yu-pao, "I won't ask for my wages now. My mother's dead anyway. Friends will help with the burial. But if we don't run away, we'll lose our lives. Let's go quickly."

He took Yu-pao by the hand and started running. But after running a few yards, Yu-pao stopped and said, "Uncle Ting, I can't go with you." "Why not?" "If the *pao* chief discovers that I've gone, he may suspect that I overheard the news, then he'll tell the police and stop us. In that case you won't get away. So I'd better go back before he suspects me. He won't stop gambling till dawn, so during that time you can easily escape."

"Yu-pao, we'll live and die together. I can't leave you behind."

"Uncle Ting, I'm too young. They won't take me for conscript labour. You must go quickly."

"All right then, Yu-pao, if we manage to get away, we'll find some way to help you in the future."

Yu-pao waited till Hsiao Ting was out of sight, then he quietly slipped back into the west room in the village office. As he lay down on the long bench, he seemed to see the cheerful faces of his kind uncles and hear their friendly words. He tried to comfort himself: "Now these uncles are safe, why should I feel sad?" However he could not help but shed a few tears. As he thought about these uncles who'd gone away he felt sad. But thinking of the *pao* chief, Wang the Red Eye and the Japanese devils, his heart burned with hatred. After a long time, he heard Wan the Blind's voice outside the door: "Little swineherd, wake up. The chief wants you to boil some water."

Obedying orders, Yu-pao went to the east room to boil some water. Since there was not much firewood left in the room, he went out of the main gate and brought back a few bundles from the wood pile. He started the fire and put on the water, but the twigs were newly gathered by different families. Some were green branches cut from

the trees on the hills and they only sizzled without flame. The fire was a poor one. Though Wan the Blind kept hurrying Yu-pao, the water would not boil. It took almost as long as to prepare a meal before Yu-pao managed to have the water boiling.

As Yu-pao left the stove to call Wan to fetch the water, he heard a woman shrieking like a ghost in the courtyard: "Help! Help! Chou Chang-an, go home quickly! The house is on fire...." Yu-pao, hearing this voice, recognized it was Big Chimney-stack who had come with the news that the *pao* chief's home was on fire. Yu-pao was delighted. So his uncles really had set fire to the house. How wonderful! He looked out of the door and saw Big Chimney-stack in the lantern light pulling Little Mischief along with one hand. She was dishevelled and bedraggled, had only one shoe on; the other foot was bare. She looked just like a half-drowned hen just pulled from the water.

Since the *pao* chief's mind was all on the game, he had not listened to his wife. He went out and calmly asked: "What's the matter?"

Seeing his nonchalant attitude, Big Chimney-stack was furious. She shrieked, "Have you feathers in your ears? All the grain in the house is burned. We two nearly perished in the fire. Yet you still play cards and enjoy yourself. You scoundrell..."

Hearing that his house was on fire, the *pao* chief was aghast. He started sweating and his eyes nearly popped out. Clenching his teeth, he asked in haste: "Why didn't you get the farm hands to put out the fire?"

"To Hell with your farm hands!" retorted Big Chimney-stack. "When I saw the house on fire, I caught up Little Mischief, and calling for help, I started to run out, but the door was fastened on the outside and, however hard we pushed, we couldn't open it. We shouted till we were hoarse and no one answered. Then we climbed out of the window, but we couldn't find a single soul. The grain in the gatehouse was burning and spluttering in the fire. Then I decided to come and find you. By the time we reached the gate, it was burning too, and my hair and clothes caught fire. Little Mischief took me to the pig pen, splashed some of the slops from the feed trough

over me and managed to put out the flames. Then we found a ladder and climbed over the wall."

When Wang the Red Eye, the village head and others heard that the *pao* chief's house had been set on fire and that the farm hands had run away, they were like ants in a hot pan. They shouted, "This must be reported to the Japanese army. How could such a thing happen? This is terrible!"

"I'm ruined, ruined!" the *pao* chief lamented. Then he asked his wife: "Why didn't you ask the neighbours to help?"

"You're talking rot. Which of the villagers would come if I shouted for help?"

"You're so useless. Couldn't you find anyone?"

Wang the Red Eye's hare-lip started twitching and he said, "Don't blame each other now. We must put out the fire."

The village head joined in: "You're right, Mr. Wang. The important thing is to put out the fire. Wan, run and get the police to help. Let's hurry, *pao* chief."

Only then did the dazed *pao* chief remember that this was important. He hastily said; "Right." Then he called out for Yu-pao, "Swine-herd, wake up! Quickly. Get the lantern ready."

Hearing him, Yu-pao thought: So now you're in a hurry to leave, but I'm in no hurry. "I'm not asleep," he answered slowly, "I'm boiling water for you."

The *pao* chief panting heavily ran to the east room and shouted, "To Hell with boiling water. Quickly, light the lantern and go with the young master." Then he turned and dashed out with Wang the Red Eye and the others.

The fire had practically burned down the *pao* chief's house. All that was left of the fine gate was a heap of ashes. The police went everywhere looking for the farm hands but could not find a single one. Since he had no one for conscript labour, the *pao* chief was seriously scolded by the Japanese; all day long he paced on the ground with lowered head, like a crop after a heavy frost. Seeing this sight Yu-pao was very pleased. But he was soon thrown out of the ruins. He felt resentful that he had worked for the landlord one whole year,

had been so often beaten and scolded, yet would not be paid one single cent.

"You dog, just wait. A day will come when I'll settle this with you." Yu-pao cursed and kicked the ashes of the gate; then with a heart full of hatred he left the place. He thought as he walked, "How can we poor people live when there are such rotten eggs as this fiendish *pao* chief, Wang the Red Eye and others? How can we crush these bad men? When can we poor folk escape from this wretched life? Will this dog who's bullied me go scot-free?" Then Yu-pao thought of these farm hands, his uncles. How wonderful that they'd set fire to the house! But he wondered whether or not they had found the Communist Party and the Eighth Route Army....

*Illustrated by Tung Chen-sheng  
and Chen Yu-hsien*

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*Morning in Nanking* (painting in the traditional style) by Chen Ta-yu and Fan Pao-wen ▶



*Yi Ling-yi*

## The Ford

A small trim craft  
Cuts through the waves;  
The old boatman, a poor peasant,  
Rows with long sweeping strokes.

Snow on his shoulders,  
The river under his feet,  
His oars outspread like wings,  
He makes good speed  
To Support-the-Army Ford.

A boatload of soldiers,  
A boatload of red stars,\*

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\*Referring to the red stars on the soldiers' caps.

Each dear to the old man's heart  
As his own flesh and blood.

In time past,  
When the mighty storm broke over Nanking,\*  
This old boatman played his part,  
Rowing ammunition and men  
Across the Yangtse.

These twenty-three years,  
High-hearted  
And giving of his strength unstintingly,  
He has ferried countless young soldiers  
Off to communes, the docks, the front....

Support-the-Army Ford  
Is bathed in sunlight,  
The small craft plies to and fro incessantly;  
People and soldiers are close as fish and water,  
Their love enduring as the Yangtse River.

*Hsin Ping-chan*

## The Ordnance Survey Corps

Overhead the blazing sun,  
Underfoot the marshes,  
Shouldering sextants we climb  
Uphill and down;  
Pressing through brambles and thorns,  
Loud and clear from our hearts we sing:  
"Chairman Mao's revolutionary line  
Guides us over mountain ranges;  
Chairman Mao's survey corps  
Braves every storm."

We plant gay-coloured poles  
In morning clouds,  
Our red survey flags flutter

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\*In 1949, the People's Liberation Army crossed the Yangtse to liberate Nanking.

In greenwoods;  
Our glorious far-flung homeland  
Passes inch by inch through our lenses;  
No mountain blast can blur  
Our surveyors' keen eyes.

From our drawing boards burst  
Explosions blasting mountains;  
Our fine pencils plot  
Breathtaking blueprints;  
Soon, amid the roar of machines,  
The red blaze of banners,  
We shall pack up our gear  
And set off on new campaigns.



*Cheng Ming-wan*

## Our Herbalist

Emerald bamboos, green willows,  
Grey tiles, white walls;  
At the foot of the hills by the pines  
Stands our commune's pharmacy.

The door stays locked by day,  
But at night light shines through the windows;  
Hung-ying, just seventeen,  
Is our pharmacy head.

To find her by day you must go  
To crags where eagles hover,  
But come after dusk  
And the breeze will waft to you  
Sweet fragrance of herbs.

A little bamboo basket at her waist,  
She sings as up she clammers,  
Climbing sheer precipices,  
Filling her basket with herbs of every kind.

When evening mists descend,  
She sets to work drying  
And processing the herbs;  
When the rising sun  
Reddens all the mountain tops,  
She is off to gather more herbs.



## The Fisher-girl

Round her waist a sea-blue apron,  
On her head a bamboo hat,  
The rosy-cheeked fisher-girl  
Scans the far horizon.

Pulling on the oars,  
Cutting through billows,  
Holding her course through mist and fog,  
She fears neither reefs nor shallows.

Tossing back her plaits  
As fish leap and sea-gulls wheel,  
The fisher-girl tames the sea,  
At home on the deep.

Racing thunderstorms,  
Riding wind-tossed foam,  
Year in year out on the azure deep  
She follows shoals of fish.

And rolling back her tarpaulin  
To stow away her catch,  
At the top of her voice she sings  
A fisherman's shanty,  
While wind and waves make music.



*Yuan Ming-yun*

## The Train Attendant

Fresh as a breath of spring,  
Pleasant, smiling,  
Deft, light-footed,  
You never rest.

You bring us tea, hot water,  
Giving your youth to this mundane task,  
Concerned for the passengers' comfort,  
Whole-heartedly serving the people.

South of the Yangtse,  
North of the Great Wall,  
Rolling plains and palm groves  
Are your vast scene of action;

Sparks of molten steel, seas of paddy,  
Sirens, thunder,  
Are your resounding song.

Racing wheels are your battle chargers,  
Bright carriage windows are your eager eyes;  
Landscapes lovely as paintings  
Intoxicate like wine,  
The train's long whistle  
Vibrates with ecstasy.

The fire in your heart  
Fills our mighty homeland  
With the warmth of spring;  
The red badge at your breast  
Is a heart that beats for ever.

The train races through the wind,  
The wind races the train;  
Through this great artery  
Of our motherland  
The hot blood of your youth  
Is coursing.

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*A Militia Girl* (painting in the traditional style)  
by Yang Chih-kuang ▶



*Fang Nan*

## The Ferry at Billows Harbour

On a bright spring day in March I arrived once again on the shores of the East China Sea to collect material on our defences and preparedness for war. My destination was Langkangyu, a place to which I had longed for years to return.

Unfortunately, on the morning I was due to start out there was a windstorm. According to the comrades at the local weather station, it would gain in momentum that day. This worried me. If the gale continued for several days, I should be held up there. With a mind to try my luck, I started out early in the morning for the ferry at Billows Harbour.

Not a soul was in sight on the wharf, by the rocks or along the beach. Across the turbulent sea there was not a single boat to be seen. Only a few sea-gulls braved the wind as they soared and hung in the cloud-laden sky. Huge combers, lace-edged with froth and spume, raced up the beach, sweeping up and spewing out sand and pebbles as they crashed thunderously on the shore.

Impatiently I stood watching the surf break on the stony beach. Suddenly, a giant breaker crashed its head on a nearby rock, shower-

ing salt sea-water all over me. Far in the distance, I could vaguely see the outline of Langkangyu Island and haunting memories swirled into my mind as turbulently as the sea churned before my eyes. There, from Langkangyu, I had started out once on an unforgettable journey across the sea....

It was early in 1950, on the eve of the Choushan Islands' liberation, when the fisherfolk were still suffering untold miseries. After an ignominious defeat on the mainland, Chiang Kai-shek's bandit troops beat a hasty retreat and entrenched themselves on the hundreds of small isles which constitute the fishing grounds known as Choushan. The Communist Party Committee in the Eastern Chekiang Special Area sent dozens of liaison men out to the islands to investigate conditions there so that the local Party organizations could support the Chinese People's Liberation Army when its expeditionary forces crossed the sea to wipe out these bandit remnants. I was one of these scouts. Langkangyu, where I was sent, was a strategic island and therefore one of our main battle targets. Soon after my arrival I made contact with our underground communications man old Ming-hai, and with his able assistance I obtained most of the needed information.

Shortly before I was due to leave the island, there was an unexpected turn of events. Bandit troops blockaded the ferry and grounded all ships. In collusion with the local despots, they searched the island with a fine tooth-comb. I was already near the beach at the time and when I saw what was happening, I turned round and raced for the rock-bound far end of the island. From a distance enemy soldiers fired a few volleys at me and, unfortunately, just as I was clambering over a high rock, a bullet nicked me in the left shoulder. At this critical moment a big hand from above hauled me up. Its owner rolled me onto his back and quickly carried me into a hidden cave farther in among the rocks. When he finally put me down, I recognized the face of old Ming-hai. He bound up my wound but had to leave me again for, since the situation had taken this sudden turn, in spite of the risk to his own safety, he needed to gain more information for me. Before the old man disappeared we agreed to meet again that evening in the same cave.

Cooped up there, I was torn by anxiety. According to plan I was to take what information I had gathered to the Party Committee that very evening. The wind increased at dusk and soon became a real gale. Giant waves pounded nearer and nearer until some crashed right into the cave. Worry overwhelmed me as I watched the maelstrom. Suddenly, I heard a sea-gull's cry. That was our signal. I answered promptly. As a shadow flitted near and entered the mouth of the cave, I rushed towards it. To my astonishment, it was not old Ming-hai but a young fisherwoman, a baby strapped to her back. She wore a jacket of some brown waterproof material and the customary wide trousers. Her jet black hair was knotted at the nape of her neck in the local style and a little red flower was tucked in it. Bright ear-rings hung from her ears and a small blue apron was tied around her waist. She was barefooted. "I'm Ah-chu. Comrade, Uncle Ming-hai sent me," she said to introduce herself as she deftly pulled out a small wad of paper from her knot of hair and handed it to me. It contained all the information I needed.

"Where's Uncle Ming-hai?" I asked anxiously.

Ah-chu was silent for a second, quite obviously having to compose herself. She told me then how old Ming-hai had been captured on his way back to me after having obtained the needed information. Though he was cruelly tortured, he refused to reveal any hint as to my whereabouts and they beat him until he lost consciousness. Yet in spite of all this, he had found a way to send the information I needed by this young woman. I was so enraged that I pulled out my pistol. "Where have they put old uncle?" I demanded, longing to wipe out those beasts there and then.

Ah-chu's intelligent glance halted me. "You've to cross the sea tonight, comrade," she said and sighed.

I gradually controlled my anger. "But we've no boat. Even if we can find one, how shall we cross this stormy sea?" My heart was very heavy.

"On the contrary," said Ah-chu brightly. "The storm will help us. Otherwise, I don't know how we'd ever find a boat." I was quite at a loss to know what she meant.

Without pausing to explain, she glanced at me again, then hurriedly unstrapping the baby from her back, she put it in my arms. "You wait," was all she said before she disappeared. "Where . . . are . . ." But before I could question her there was a splash as she dived into the rolling waves. My heart sank again.

I hugged Ah-chu's small daughter tight. She looked very like her mother. A bright silver necklet flashed against her scarlet coat and from a bracelet around one chubby little wrist dangled two pretty sea shells which gleamed like gems. With bright eyes she stared at the sea into which her mother had disappeared.

Darkness came followed by the rising tide. The gale continued and the sea grew wilder. Not another sound came across the water from the isle occupied by the Kuomintang bandits.

After an hour or so, a small sampan suddenly appeared at the cave entrance. Ah-chu climbed in, took up the baby and, as she strapped the child onto her back, she ordered, "Quick, comrade, get on board." She was very firm.

"Did you get it from the ferry?" I asked, jumping on board.

"Yes. I swam close to the wharf and peered around. The bandits, sheltering their faces in their coat collars, were milling around the dock into fear," Ah-chu replied as she jumped into the boat. "Go ahead and mill around, you bastards, I thought. I've work to do. And so I quietly untied a sampan, weighed anchor and towed the boat out."

Ah-chu's description sounded so simple, but well I knew the hazards of swimming out in this wild stormy sea and then towing a boat out from that wolves' lair so closely patrolled. It was an extremely dangerous exploit.

The sampan flew in the direction of the ferry. The howling wind and raging seas surrounded us in a net of horror but our little boat rushed bravely ahead. From time to time, I turned around to look at the young fisherwoman wrestling with the waves. Fear gripped me, mostly for the baby strapped to her back who, like us, felt the fury of wind and water.

Our sampan had barely left the rocky shore when Ah-chu cried out: "A gunboat!"



I listened intently. True enough, above the howling wind I vaguely made out the roar of a motor. Immediately, a shaft of white light cut across the darkness, piercing the dark gloomy night, and swept towards us. I pulled out my pistol, ready to fight it out with them. At this critical moment Ah-chu swung the rudder vigorously, bending in her efforts and, as the boat swerved sharply to the left, we glided quickly into a channel between the reefs. The light flickered on the rocks all around us.

I gaped at what the light revealed. What a weird place it was. Steep, sharp-edged rocks surrounded us as our sampan whirled through the narrow channel between them. I felt as if we were in a maze. Ah-chu, however, was quite unperturbed. Both hands on the rudder, she manoeuvred the boat as it flew along on the tide. After about half an hour's wrestling, we finally escaped from this weird rock-bound place.

"Where were we?" I asked, turning for a final look at those piles of odd-looking rock formations.

"They're the Tiger-Head Reefs!"

"Tiger-Head Reefs," I repeated in awe.

After three hours or so of battling wind and sea, Ah-chu brought me to the mainland. Wiping the mingled sweat and sea-water from her dripping face, she said, "We're sinking in a sea of misery, comrade. We look forward every minute and every hour for our own army to come and liberate us."

"It won't be long now, Comrade Ah-chu," I assured her, as I gripped her hands. I wanted her and the baby to stay for a bit until the storm subsided before they returned to the island. Ah-chu only smiled and said, "Don't worry about us, comrade. We grew up on the salt waves of these island seas." Before saying goodbye I looked at the baby with a special fondness. She was sleeping soundly, still strapped to her mother's back. A few drops of sea-water sliding towards her baby lips parted in sleep sparkled on her fat cheeks. . . .

That happened more than twenty years ago. Since then, I'd gone here and there as work demanded but never had the chance to return

to Langkangyu, nor did I meet this brave fisherwoman again. Whenever I thought of the sea or if friends mentioned it, memory recalled this courageous woman and her baby daughter. They flashed into my mind's eye linked with the shores of the East China Sea.

My mind now turned to my immediate task, which was to cross to the island. It looked as if it would be impossible to go right then. Perhaps I had better wait in my hostel in the county town. Before I set off I took one last look at the tossing sea. Suddenly, for a brief second, I spotted a flash of red. In contrast to the wide expanse of foam-flecked waves the bright red showed up like a spray of red plum blossoms in a snowy scene. That red dot rose and fell with the heaving combers, now climbing a crest, now dropping out of sight in a trough. It came nearer and nearer until I saw clearly that it was a red jacket worn by a young girl.

She stood erect on a tiny sampan, a five-foot rifle slung across one shoulder. Braving the wind, the boat was sailing straight for Billows Harbour Ferry. I soon made out two others on the small craft: one a girl in a sky blue jacket, the other in a pale green one. All three girls were armed.

Overjoyed, I ran towards the wharf. But I had barely reached it when I noticed that about two hundred yards off the shore the sampan suddenly turned. I snatched off my cap and started to wave frantically. After a few seconds the boat swung around again and came towards the ferry landing. About twenty yards from the shore, the sails were lowered.

"Hey there, comrade, where d'you want to go?"

"Langkangyu Island. . . ." I shouted back.

"What for?"

"I've business with the revolutionary committee."

The girls looked me over vigilantly, then they took up oars and poles to bring the sampan to shore. Because the sea was so rough the girls had a hard time bringing the boat to the wharf. As I stood there fretting, the girl in the red jacket who was steering, turned the rudder sharply, following the upward swell of a wave and the boat slipped along beside a jutting rock close to the wharf. I jumped in quickly, but before I could get my balance, the sampan tipped

sharply and I nearly fell overboard. A strong hand steadied me just in time. It was the girl in red. I nodded my thanks. She only smiled as she said, "Be careful, comrade, you must stand firmly on such a rolling sea." Then, continuing in the same polite manner, she asked: "Have you a letter of introduction, comrade?"

"Of course," I replied and quickly showed her my papers. She looked them over and handed them back still smiling.

Then all three girls set to work. One started poling, another used an oar. They bustled about on the small craft quite steadily as if they were on land. "Raise the sail," commanded the girl in red as she kept one hand on the rudder and with the other pulled at the sail rope. The other two raised the jib and, humming a work song together, they hoisted it up in less than a minute. All this they did in close co-ordination and perfect timing, each of them working so skilfully that I was really impressed.

The girl in red seemed to be the eldest. She was likely in her early twenties, had lively eyes, looked quite intelligent and physically strong. With her right hand, she kept a firm grip on the rudder while still holding the sail rope, as she directed the sampan on its course. Though still so young, her every movement was that of a veteran seaman used to roughing it on the sea. I was told her name was Hai-ying (Sea Blossom). Her two companions were Shui-chu (Water Pearl) and Hai-hua (Flower of the Sea).

"Must be your first journey on such a rough sea, eh comrade?" asked Hai-ying, glancing at me. "How are you feeling?"

I had to admit honestly that I was a little tense. In my turn, I glanced at them one by one and couldn't help asking, "Where are you girls going, armed to the teeth like this?"

"Target shooting," they answered in unison.

"But can you do that in this storm?" I asked, very surprised.

"Why not? We pick days like this to go out on the sea for target shooting on purpose," Hai-ying told me. "You see, there's nothing frightening about the sea. As for wind and waves, there's nothing to them either. Although they appear fierce, they're actually paper tigers. As long as you know all about them and dare to struggle against them, they're easy to tame."

The sampan sailed swiftly with the wind. Shui-chu and Hai-hua took up their rifles, then knelt down on one knee. Seeing that they were taking careful aim, I looked in the same direction. After careful searching, a tiny target appeared in the distance no bigger than a bean, which bobbed up and down, first distinct, then blurred.

I said apologetically to Hai-ying, "I'm afraid that ferrying me across is keeping you from your militia exercises."

Hai-ying shook her head. "Not a bit of it. Your coming is just right, for we intended to practise crossing too."

"Crossing?" I was surprised again. Hai-ying's reply was clear cut. "Yes. Our instructor told us that since we are a sea-borne militia we must learn to shoot well in a storm and steer steadily in a gale."

"Oh, steer steadily in a gale," I repeated.

"That's it," said Hai-ying excitedly. "Our instructor was telling us only yesterday that we must practise steering through violent storms so that we won't lose our course under any conditions. We should be able not only to brave fierce gales and towering waves, but navigate through dangerous rocky channels and treacherous reefs too. Only then shall we become skilled navigators and be able to go wherever we please."

"Well said, Comrade Hai-ying," I cried. "Count on me then as a new militiaman in your exercise."

"Then you must give us plenty of advice," answered Hai-ying delightedly.

We were now half-way to the island. Suddenly, an unexpected blast pressed down on us and the sampan tipped to one side. Water streamed in. The wind was getting stronger and the waves were higher. Hai-ying looked up at the sky, then out to sea.

"Comrades," she began shouting orders for the exercise. "The enemy has blocked our course across the sea to Langkangyu. We must change our direction immediately. We shall turn northwest, stem the wind and tide and slip along the channel through Tiger-Head Reefs." So saying, with both hands on the rudder, she turned the sampan at a ninety degree angle. Shui-chu and Hai-hua stop-

ped their target practice, jumped to their feet and made ready for action.

Tiger-Head Reefs! My pulse quickened at the name. What a coincidence that I was to go through those dangerous reefs a second time.

After our sampan changed its course we sailed towards Tiger-Head Reefs, bucking the storm. As most sailors know, the most difficult navigation is against a head wind. Right then, our craft was sailing against the tide also. It was difficult to make much headway. We zigzagged along for about thirty minutes when about two hundred and fifty yards ahead of us a stretch of white foam caught my eye. It looked as if there were thousands of sharks frisking just under the surface of the sea. The waves crashed with such a thunderous roar that even from this distance I realized we were nearing Tiger-Head Reefs. My! Those gigantic rock formations looked really hazardous, just like so many jagged tigers' teeth. Between the protruding rocks and hidden reefs lay a narrow navigable channel which wound its way around them. Wind-borne combers and the rushing tide joined to form a swirling current which surged through the narrow channel. It was evident that to sail through it we might run the risk of being tossed into the undertow and swallowed or crushed against the rocks. As we neared the reefs, I asked Hai-ying, "Have you sailed through here before?"

"Yes," said Hai-ying. "But never in weather like this."

I tried sounding her out further. "There's a strong gale and we're going against the tide too. Are you sure you can make it?"

"Sure!" Hai-ying gave me a swift glance out of the corner of her eyes. "You know you can't seize a tiger cub unless you dare to venture into the tiger's lair. Since we must tame Tiger-Head Reefs, we need the guts to navigate this channel. In case of war, the enemy won't pick good weather to invade. Isn't that so, comrade?"

"Good for you. So you're actually following the old saying, 'Going into tiger mountain, knowing full well there are tigers there.' Isn't that so?" Hai-ying smiled at me, a smile both confident and full of pride.

"Comrades, we're now approaching the channel," announced Hai-ying as our sampan skirted a half-hidden reef and entered a narrow waterway. Huge rocks with razor-sharp edges reared up on either side of our boat as it skimmed over a swirling undertow. Hai-ying steered competently, looking quite unruffled as the sampan twisted on its way, in spite of the swift current, now skirting a rock, now rounding a hidden reef. Riding the combers, we shot right into the howling wind. Soon, half the course was behind us and we reached a sharp turn.

"Enemy strafing has broken our main mast," Hai-ying announced suddenly. The other two girls leapt into action. With a swish, they lowered the main sail and mast. The sampan slowed down. The girls quickly seized the oars and began to row vigorously. I too scampered up to the bow, grabbed a pole and pitched in. Hai-ying continued to steer, keeping us steadily on course. The little sampan resumed its journey.

After about an hour's hard work, we approached the last difficult channel in the Tiger-Head Reefs known as the Tiger's Jaws. It was also the most dangerous. Four giant rocks reared up out of the water like enormous fangs, each edged with foaming white spray. Concave below, they almost formed an arch above, very much like the jaws of a tiger, while countless waves poured in and out between them.

As a rapid current lessened, I spied in the distance a dark mass much like the remains of a big shark which was impaled there. The Tiger's Jaws were divided by it into two halves. When I pointed to it, Hai-ying shouted to tell me that it was the wreck of a Kuomintang gunboat. In the early days right after liberation when our brave People's Liberation Army men were still pursuing remnants of the Kuomintang bandit troops as they fled south in a desperate attempt to escape, an enemy gunboat tried to make a get-away by rushing through the Tiger-Head Reefs. Sailing at full speed into the Tiger's Jaws, it was rammed by a rock and smashed, some pieces sinking, but some still remaining above water. That, of course, was years and years ago and one rusty part of the boat still stuck up in the channel. Hai-ying's description of the bandits' desperate flight

amused me. But what I feared was that this rusty piece of the wrecked ship had become another iron tooth set into the tiger's jaws, making it more difficult for our sampan to pass through. I glanced back at Hai-ying. She was standing firm looking as determined as ever. I knew that my apprehension on her behalf was quite unnecessary.

When our sampan was about thirty yards or so from the Tiger's Jaws, we all pitched in with the poles and oars, in an attempt to rush through the channel, but the wind and tide swept us back again and again.

Hai-ying's brows were gathered in a frown, as she looked angrily at the Tiger's Jaws. Then, pushing back a lock of wet hair from her forehead, she shouted at us: "Comrades, however sharp the tiger's fangs may be, however fierce the storm, we must tame them. The enemy is right there among the rocks, yet we shouldn't simply rush straight at them. We must analyse the enemy's position and take it by strategy. Let's think of a way quickly." With Hai-ying still steering, we had a quick discussion meeting, while the rest of us continued rowing. Since I knew nothing about these rocks and shoals I could only listen.

"I think we should avoid the head-on waves," yelled Shui-chu.

"But how can we when the Tiger's Jaws are shaped like this?" Hai-hua yelled back.

"If we avoid the first strong waves and then rush in by sailing along the edge of the current we may make some headway."

"Hai-chu's suggestion sounds reasonable," shouted Hai-ying. "The jaws stand at one end of the reefs; narrow as it is, it's also blocked by the remains of that enemy gunboat. The tide comes in through here and we've come at high-tide which makes going straight against it extremely difficult. But look carefully, comrades. See the peculiar way the waves roll in through the Tiger's Jaws: they're more rapid on the right side and higher. Why? Because of the position of this wreck. Its stern is on the left and its bow on the right, so that the whole skeleton leans outwards. The water swirls around it and creates an undertow. That's why we must rush along the left side if we want to get through."

Under Hai-ying's command, we launched a new attack. Just then, I caught a glimpse of a boat outside the channel. A figure stood erect in the bow, but in a flash, it disappeared from view.

We rushed towards the jaws along the edge of the reefs. This time we were more successful. Rowing was not as strenuous as before. When we were barely ten yards or so from the jaws, we let a particularly large breaker sweep past, then Hai-ying shouted, "Now, comrades, let's get through!" Straining hard, we all worked steadily and although some combers swept across our bows, the sampan edged forward little by little. Just as we entered the narrow jaws, a huge breaker like a small mountain rushed towards us. With a quick twist of the rudder, Hai-ying turned the boat swiftly around the wreck and we all shouted together: **"Be resolute, fear no sacrifice and surmount every difficulty to win victory."** We heard other voices beyond the Tiger's Jaws, shouting these same words in a chorus which soared above the roaring sea. Instantly we gained new strength. We breasted one rolling wave after another as our little craft sliced through the strong current. The old wreck receded rapidly behind our stern. Then, breakers, rocks, rushing current and the whole Tiger-Head Reefs, like a defeated beast, were left far behind us.

The victory was ours!

As soon as our sampan emerged from the jaws, we discovered a large boat moored to a rock on our left. An elderly fisherwoman stood erect in the bow, a pistol in her belt and a fishing line in her hands.

"Hi there, political instructor!" cried Shui-chu at sight of her as our sampan edged alongside.

"How did you know we were coming through the reefs?" asked Hai-ying.

"From a distance we saw that half-way across you turned and went against wind and tide. I guessed immediately where you were heading."

A young girl came closer to us. "Oh, Sister Hai-ying, you and your crew are remarkable," she cried in admiration. "You came through the jaws of the Tiger-Head Reefs in this stormy weather and

succeeded in escaping the sea tiger's iron teeth. You've tamed the reefs now."

Nodding towards me Hai-ying told the fisherwoman: "This comrade wanted to come to our island. Since there was no ferry, he came with us."

Only then did the elderly woman turn to me. I, too, was staring at her. When our eyes met, we cried out practically at the same instant. In a flash she leapt over into our boat. Hands, roughened from decades of rowing, gripped mine tightly. With beating heart, I examined this sturdy woman, a political instructor of the militia guarding our eastern sea. Revolutionary vitality seemed to flow from her and her shrewd eyes, so characteristic of the fisherfolk, shone with discernment. Her short greying hair fluttered in the wind; she looked astute and experienced. Fine wrinkles round her eyes and across her forehead only enhanced the indomitable character of this veteran who had weathered many storms. It seemed to me, she was even more vital than twenty years ago.

"Ah, comrade," she remarked. "Everything's changed..."

"Yes, so it has!" I answered, gazing around me. "Changed indeed. The sea's changed and the women of these sea isles even more so." Then I asked with concern, "Is old uncle still alive and well?"

"You mean Uncle Ming-hai? He's going on seventy but still able to steer a ship to the outer seas," she answered. Then, turning to Hai-ying beside her, she asked, "Look, who's this? Ha, I'm sure you don't recognize her. She's that baby I carried on my back. The child's grown up."

I gazed again on this young commander of the militia exercise I'd shared at sea and said with deep feelings, "Yes, indeed! She certainly has grown up."

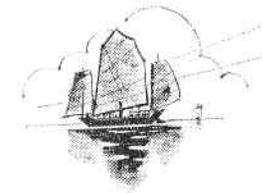
The gale increased in intensity and the waves rolled higher. Soon, sails were hoisted on both craft and, riding with the wind, they shot towards Langkangyu across the foam-tipped waves like two stormy petrels skimming over the sea.

On deck, the militia women, carrying their rifles, stood bravely and gallantly erect in spite of the tossing sea. Morning sunlight pierced the heavy clouds. It turned the foam golden as it danced over the

crests of the waves. The whole eastern sea and the militia women were tinged with crimson.

Suddenly, as our boats sliced through giant breakers, they crashed over the decks and spray showered down on us like sparks from fireworks on festival nights. The girls were drenched with spray. As it showered on the fresh young face of Hai-ying, I remembered what Comrade Ah-chu said more than twenty years before: "We grew up on the salt waves of these island seas."

*Illustrated by Tung Chen-sheng*



## Home Leave

Some time ago Political Commissar Wang Chiang moved in with a company of his regiment to size up the situation there. Finding that Company Commander Liu's wife had volunteered to work in a mountain district and would be setting off soon for her new post, he immediately granted Liu home leave to go back to his village and see his wife off.

As Liu was on the point of leaving, he heard that Squad Leader Kao Wu's mother was ill. But Kao when questioned declared it a false alarm. His squad had an important task still to finish.

Liu knew from years of experience in the army that where personal affairs are concerned soldiers will never admit to having any problems. He suspected that Kao was holding something back. Just then, however, regimental headquarters rang up again urging him to delay no longer. So having delegated his work to others, he slung his kit-bag over his shoulder and lost no further time in setting off.

As the red bus bowled down the smooth highway, Liu could not get Kao Wu's mother off his mind. He decided to break his journey

to call at the squad leader's home. And as soon as the bus had passed Mount Taliang, Kao's village came in sight.

Liu alighted and headed straight for the west end of the village, to stop before a new house with a tiled roof. Two red plaques on the door indicated that a soldier from this family had died for the revolution, and that one of its members was now serving in the army.

"Are you at home, aunt?" he called.

The woman who came to the door was younger than Liu had expected.

"Aunt Kao is ill," she explained, inviting him in.

Liu found Mrs. Kao lying on the *kang*.

Opening her eyes with an effort, Mrs. Kao thought for a moment that it was her own son standing there before her. What a happy surprise! But then, her vision clearing, she saw that this PLA man was taller than her son and broader in the face. His big eyes under thick black eyebrows were bright with concern.



"I'm Liu Cheng, Aunt Kao, your son's comrade-in-arms," said the company commander by way of introduction. "I heard you were unwell, that's why I've come." He sat down on the *kang* beside the old woman.

"Some time ago we had a spell of rain," said Mrs. Kao's neighbour. "Aunt Kao caught a chill while out collecting green stuff for our brigade's pigs. That brought on bilious attacks, and she had to take to her bed. Our brigade cadres wanted to send a message to your company asking for leave for young Kao, but she wouldn't hear of it...."

Liu was too moved to reply immediately. The sight of the old woman ill in bed and the thought of spirited young Kao convinced him that he had done the right thing by coming here.

"You must have had your hands full nursing Aunt Kao," he said to the neighbour. "This is a busy farming season, too. Let me take over now and look after her." He saw the neighbour off, then came back inside.

"You know the proverb, aunt," he said. "'Feed a man of iron and turn him into steel.' Hot noodles with hot soup are just the thing to settle your stomach, I'm sure." With that he rolled up his sleeves and, ignoring Mrs. Kao's attempts to stop him, started mixing dough.

Liu happened to be an old hand at making noodles. As he kneaded the dough he described the good progress young Kao had made since joining the army. Mrs. Kao listened and watched him, fascinated, until suddenly something distracted her attention. She propped herself up to reach out for Liu's worn kit-bag which he had laid on the *kang*. And as she examined the red star embroidered on the bag, her lips quivered.

"What is it?" asked Liu with concern. His inquiry aroused Mrs. Kao from her reveries, but did nothing to solve the question in her mind.

"Was this kit-bag issued to you by your company?" she ventured.

"There's a story behind that, aunt." Liu wiped his hands, sat down on the edge of the *kang* and embarked on an explanation.

"One pitch-black night during the war to resist U.S. aggression and aid Korea, the rain started coming down in torrents. Our com-

pany's mission was to attack a height north of Shihyentung; but a big river barred the way, both its banks under enemy fire. Our commander took up a position on the north bank to direct our company across in safety. Then flashes flared up on the south bank, and shells started exploding all round us. One of our men, Wang Chiang, was just communicating with headquarters when our company commander sprang forward to push him to the ground and cover him with his own body. The next moment shrapnel ripped through this kit-bag and wounded our commander. Comrade Wang Chiang came through unhurt, and passed on headquarters' instructions to our unit; but our commander — we all thought the world of him — died a hero's death. That's why this kit-bag of his with the embroidered red star is now one of our company's most treasured heirlooms. It reminds us of our revolutionary tradition, inspiring us to learn from those before us who so bravely laid down their lives."

"What was your company commander's name?"

"Kao Chan-feng."

"I thought as much!" Holding the kit-bag in both hands, Mrs. Kao examined it closely under the lamp. The red star which she had embroidered at night, just before her husband left for Korea, seemed brighter than ever before.

"Did you know Kao Chan-feng, aunt?" asked the company commander.

"He was my husband. My boy's father."

Liu stared in amazement at the kit-bag, now even more precious in his eyes. Young Kao Wu had never breathed a word about this.

"I've been wondering all these years what became of this kit-bag," continued Mrs. Kao. "Just fancy your turning up with it today!... But how did it come into your hands?"

"As to that... I've done nothing really to deserve it." The company commander made haste to change the subject. "I must see about boiling these noodles."

Soon water was bubbling in the pan. When Liu raised the lid, steam eddied out. The whole room seemed warmer.



Two days of nursing did wonders for Mrs. Kao's morale, but she still had bilious attacks from time to time. After preparing her breakfast on the third day, Liu went into the courtyard to chop firewood. Suddenly he heard retching inside. He ran in and found Mrs. Kao vomiting again. Liu decided to fetch the commune doctor, then

ring up company headquarters to send Kao Wu home to look after his mother. He hurried to the commune health centre, only to find a notice pinned to the wall: "This morning all our health workers have gone to the Hohsi Brigade."

Company Commander Liu began to feel worried. He dashed to the post office and rang up his unit, then set off at full speed to the Hohsi Brigade on the other side of the river to fetch a doctor. Dark clouds were gathering in the sky. The growl of thunder heralded a storm.

The stream flowing down the valley looked like a sharp sword cutting the hills into two. By the time Liu reached the bank, rain was pelting down. Wiping his streaming face, he strained his eyes towards the village hazily visible on the other side, wishing there were some way to vault across. The roaring torrent and driving rain reminded him of that battle in Korea during which his old company commander Kao Chan-feng had given his own life to save a comrade. A force much greater than himself spurred him forward. Storm or no storm, he must ford the stream at once.

After the doctor fetched by Liu had examined Mrs. Kao, he gave Liu a package of herbs. "These will cure the patient in no time," he predicted.

This reassurance took a load off Liu's mind and banished his fatigue. Squatting down by the stove, he started to brew the medicine.

Mrs. Kao's illness took a marked turn for the better after she drank the medicine. The next day, she hung the old kit-bag over Liu's shoulder and urged him to be off. She had learned the previous evening that the company commander had obtained home leave to see his wife, and she would not hear of him staying a single day longer.

"You're not completely better yet, aunt," he protested. "Let me stay at least until young Kao comes back."

"No, I'm quite well enough now to look after myself," she answered.

Since she was adamant, Liu did not insist. But there were many things he had not got round to doing for Mrs. Kao. Sitting down on the *kang*, he took out his pen and wrote on a slip of paper for young Kao all the chores he thought still needed doing.

"Hurry, or you'll miss the bus," urged Mrs. Kao. She saw Liu to the gate, and stood there watching until he was out of sight.

The sounding of a horn announced the approach of the bus. It entered the village just as Liu reached the bus stop.

"Company Commander!" called a familiar voice, and from the bus down jumped a beaming young soldier.

"So you've come, Kao Wu." Liu grasped both Kao's hands in his own. "Your mother's much better now. Hurry up home and take good care of her."

The young soldier gripped his commander's hands, not knowing how to express his gratitude.

As the setting sun reddened the distant horizon, Liu climbed aboard the bus and it started off. Sitting quietly by a window, Liu thought over the happenings of the last few days. Clearly etched in his mind's eye was the good, kindly face of old Mrs. Kao, wife of his former company commander and mother of one of his men.

*Illustrated by Huang Chia-yu*

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*Off to Work* (painting in the traditional style) ▶  
by Liu Ping-liang, Chang Wen-tao and Chen Kai-ming



*Wen Chun*

## An Opera on Proletarian Internationalism

*On the Docks*,\* a new model revolutionary Peking opera written under the guidance of Chairman Mao's line on literature and art, is now being staged again after careful revision. Reflecting the militant life of our dockers, it presents a graphic picture of the complex, acute class struggle during the period of socialist revolution and construction and sings the praise of the proletarian internationalism of the working class of China. It highlights the heroine Fang Hai-chen, a splendid, inspiring character who continues to make revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The opera draws its material from the life of dockers. With proletarian internationalism as its theme it has a topical significance. The imperialists started their invasion of China through the Chinese docks. The Chinese dockers who were the lowest of the low before the liberation felt the whole weight of the oppression of imperialism, feudalism

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\*The libretto of this opera was published in *Chinese Literature* No. 5, 1972.

and bureaucrat capitalism. The miserable life they led in the old society is still the lot of millions of the oppressed in the world today. After the liberation, however, the situation in China is entirely changed. Today China's dockers work for a great cause, because every package they load into ocean-going freighters is closely linked with the anti-imperialist struggle of the world's people. Set in the prosperous, busy port of Shanghai, from which boats sail "across the seas to every continent", *On the Docks* elucidates the idea that **"the people who have triumphed in their own revolution should help those still struggling for liberation. This is our internationalist duty."**

Fang Hai-chen, the leading character, is an outstanding example of the many heroes of our time who, standing firm at their posts, have the entire motherland in mind and the whole world in view. Originally a coal shoveller at the docks, she suffered miseries untold in the old society at the hands of the bosses while still a child scarcely higher than the handle of her shovel. As she grew up she took part in many strikes. After the liberation, she helped the People's Liberation Army to take over the Shanghai docks from the imperialist aggressors and Kuomintang reactionaries who fled, utterly defeated. Her experience and development epitomize the revolutionary struggles carried out by the Chinese working class during recent decades.

The blood and tears which have flowed into the Huangpu River and the bugle call for battle arousing the port deepen Hai-chen's understanding of the suffering of the oppressed and their longing for revolution, and enable her to hold fast to proletarian internationalism. She realizes that the people fighting for emancipation "very much want the support of revolutionary people of the world. Their anti-imperialist struggle is also powerful support for us." Prizing freedom from the bottom of her heart and infused with a fierce hatred for class enemies and a profound love for her class brothers both at home and abroad, she develops a revolutionary proletarian outlook irradiated by the communist ideal that **"the proletariat must emancipate not only itself, but all mankind."**

Inspired by this great ideal, Hai-chen consciously links the everyday task of loading with world revolution. She is eager for the African people to sow their rice in due season, because this will help them to

develop their national economy by relying on themselves and free them from colonial exploitation. To this end she defies all difficulties and leads the dockers to finish the loading of rice for Africa before the storm breaks out. Her heart beats with the hearts of the African people. Although she never stirs a step from Shanghai, her thoughts fly over mountains and seas to wherever the revolutionary storm is raging.

Hai-chen has a high sense of class struggle. She is well aware that to carry out proletarian internationalism is not smooth sailing. "We must keep clear heads in victory, class struggle exists every step of the way."

The action of this opera takes place shortly after the Tenth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party convened in September 1962, a time of great historical significance. Taking advantage of the natural calamities that befell our country for three consecutive years from 1959 to 1961, class enemies at home emerged from hiding to stir up trouble, while imperialists, revisionists and reactionaries abroad raised a hue and cry against China.

The Tenth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee marked a turning point in the class struggle during the period of socialism. **"Never forget class struggle!"** This great call issued by Chairman Mao at the session marked the start of a new battle, a counter-offensive waged by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. It is with Chairman Mao's great thinking that Hai-chen arms herself, the cadres and the masses. In a most moving scene in the new stage version of the opera, after reading the Communiqué of the Tenth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee, she sings:

*A great future has our land, pretty as a picture,*

*How can we allow monsters here to wreak havoc?*

These lines express her militant determination and faith in winning victory.

Class struggle has special features of its own under a powerful proletarian dictatorship. The handful of class enemies dare not reveal their counter-revolutionary stand and programmes. They can only work under cover by means of double dealing, doing their best to corrupt the waverers among our ranks through whom they hope to achieve

their counter-revolutionary aims. Based on these features the new script brings out the theme by portraying Chien Shou-wei as a counter-revolutionary, making this contradiction between the enemy and ourselves the chief dramatic conflict and relegating the contradictions within the ranks of the people to a secondary position. This adds enormously to the stature of the heroine.

In the sharp, complex class struggle Fang Hai-chen is "good at seeing through those who pretend to support the revolution but actually oppose it." The rush loading of the Scandinavian ship, the exposure of wheat sacks in the open and the jamming of the transport line just before a storm are accidental phenomena to people like Chao Chen-shan, chief of the dockers' brigade, whose sense of class struggle is hazy. But the perspicacious branch Party secretary Hai-chen links these incidents together and sees at once that they cannot be "mere coincidence". A spilled sack or a transfer request may seem small matters, but Hai-chen detects enemy activities here by analyzing these commonplace events from the standpoint of class struggle.

Chien Shou-wei, a hidden counter-revolutionary, a henchman of the imperialists and Kuomintang, harbours an intense hatred for New China. As a dispatcher he extends his counter-revolutionary activities into every nook and cranny of the dock, now openly now secretly, depending on the current development of the class struggle. He has a flair for intrigue. As soon as the Communiqué of the Tenth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Party is published, he senses a change in the political climate and the approach of a storm. A presentiment of the doom of his class makes him put up a desperate struggle against the proletariat and revolutionary people. If his plan falls through he is prepared to flee abroad.

This counter-revolutionary logic is typical of the class enemy who seeks to sell out his country. International reaction is always on the lookout for such people in our country who can be recruited as agents and lackeys; and these traitors in turn rely on the imperialists, revisionists and reactionaries to help restore them to power. It is therefore natural that they should sabotage every effort of the world's people to support one another. They also do their utmost to prevent the Chinese people from discharging their proletarian internationalist

duties. Chien Shou-wei, guided by his class instinct, understands fully the political implications of our aid to the people of the world. He tries to use Chao Chen-shan and Han Hsiao-chiang to damage China's international reputation.

But no matter how cunning a fox may be, it can never outwit a good hunter. The struggle between Hai-chen and Chien goes through two stages. First, Hai-chen frustrates three attempts at sabotage by Chien. At this stage, though she keeps a watchful eye on Chien, she has no idea that he is a class enemy. But her conscientious, militant style of work and sense of political responsibility for the foreign-aid programme enable her to smash his plots in time. Then Chien tries different tactics. Taking advantage of young Han's dislike for his job, he engineers a political incident by slipping fibreglass into a spilled sack of wheat and putting it with the sacks of rice to be shipped abroad. He prides himself on having done something smart, ignorant as he is of the political consciousness and revolutionary resolve of the Chinese working class armed with Mao Tsetung Thought.

Thus the struggle develops in depth and complexity. First Hai-chen inspects the scene of the accident and finds scattered fragments of fibreglass. To her "it doesn't look like an ordinary accident". She therefore makes the bold decision to lock the warehouse, keep the place intact, rouse the masses and investigate further. Here Hai-chen's political acumen and firmness stand out in sharp relief.

Secondly, when Chien Shou-wei tries to cover up his crime by pretending to check the sacks in the warehouse, Hai-chen stops him by calling out, "Put down those keys! . . . We'll search the warehouse tonight!" This incisive decision weighs upon Chien like Mount Tai. He cannot but tremble with fear. This unexpected turn of events upsets Chien's counter-revolutionary scheme, greatly deflates his arrogance, and at the same time brings out Hai-chen's militant spirit and heroism.

Thirdly, in the scene "Searching the Warehouse at Night" the struggle against the enemy and the ideological conflict within the ranks of the people reach a climax. But a great difficulty also confronts Hai-chen: Only three hours are left before dawn while the spilled sack

is still not found. Hai-chen, confident of victory, however, is not in the least perturbed. "Thinking of the Party gives me vision and courage." This declaration of hers shows where she derives her strength. Those who follow the Party line are sure to win victory.

She mobilizes the dockers to analyse their failure in locating the spilled sack, while keeping a close watch on Chien's activities. A direct confrontation between Hai-chen and Chien is introduced in the new script. Firm, cool-headed and quick-witted, Hai-chen presses on the enemy but gives him rope enough to hang himself. And Chien is seized with panic, exposing himself unwittingly while trying to cover up his tracks. They contrast sharply with each other. Having seen through her opponent completely, Hai-chen peels off his camouflage layer by layer until the mystery of the spilled sack and mislaid sack is finally unravelled. This struggle reflects two aspects of Hai-chen's character: While leading the masses to put up a resolute fight, she keeps a cool head, analyzing every problem carefully and using flexible tactics.

Fourthly, by helping Han Hsiao-chiang recognize his mistake, Hai-chen gets to the bottom of the accident. In this way they achieve victory both over the enemy and on the ideological front. And the brilliant image of Hai-chen, an advanced fighter who continues to wage revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, is fully rounded out.

Chairman Mao points out in his *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art* that revolutionary writing also **"portrays negative characters, but this only serves as a contrast to bring out the brightness of the whole picture"**. Proletarian heroes must dominate the stage. Under no circumstances can negative characters be allowed to air their arrogance for the sake of dramatic effect, because this does not conform with the reality of the dictatorship of the proletariat, still less with the proletarian Party principle of socialist literature and art. This, however, does not mean that we should avoid writing about sharp class struggles, since to do so would create the illusion that victory can be easily achieved and the negative characters would also fail to set off the heroic characters.

Chien Shou-wei does not sing a single line throughout the opera. But his few dialogues and actions reveal every detail of his vicious features. His depravity and criminal activities arouse our disgust and loathing, but in contrast with them Hai-chen's class consciousness and mastery of tactics call forth our admiration. "Fang Hai-chen, the sight of Communists like you makes me see blood!" fumes Chien. What an exposure of this schemer's hatred! But at the same time what a compliment to Hai-chen: as a Communist she makes the enemy "see blood"! This is a sure proof that she, firm in her stand, has drawn a clear line of demarcation with the enemy.

"We fight still more gallantly in the storm!" Hai-chen's revolutionary stance is characterized by the fact that the fiercer, the harder the role struggle becomes, the more militant her spirit. Hers is the dominant in every sharp conflict. She is the deciding factor in promoting the development and solution of the contradictions. As a heroic figure she is at once convincing and moving. This is not because she is the leader of the Party branch in the thick of the fight, but because more specifically she plays a decisive part in the struggle. In discharging her foreign-aid duties she excels in combating not only the enemy but also the mistaken ideological tendencies within the ranks of the revolutionaries.

The contradiction between Hai-chen on the one hand and Chao Chen-shan and Han Hsiao-chiang on the other is a contradiction within the ranks of the people. It is complicated by the intrigues of the enemy. But Hai-chen always takes care not to confuse this contradiction with that between the enemy and ourselves. This is how she succeeds in strengthening the unity among comrades on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and in bringing the foreign-aid task to a victorious conclusion. Correct treatment of contradictions within the ranks of the people helps to isolate and expose the enemy, while the disclosure of the enemy facilitates the solution of the contradictions within the ranks of the people. The treatment of the relationship between the two kinds of contradictions in the opera follows the dialectics of life and reflects the high level of Hai-chen's proletarian Party spirit and understanding of policy. It also adds tremendously to the ideological significance of Hai-chen as a typical character.

Chao Chen-shan, a cadre, and the young docker Han Hsiao-chiang are utilized by the enemy who knows their ideological weaknesses. This accords with the law of class struggle in the period of socialism. Like Hai-chen, Chao shovelled coal in the docks before the liberation and was ground down by the feudal foremen and Chinese lackeys in the service of foreign bosses. He has a deep and genuine love for the Party and socialism. But as his sense of class struggle fades, he is taken in by the enemy's machinations.

Han Hsiao-chiang, a docker's son, has grown up under socialism. He loves the Party and socialism no less than the older generation. But being a naive and simple-minded lad, he is not altogether immune to bourgeois thinking. Not satisfied with a docker's job, he dreams of becoming a seaman. This affords the enemy an opportunity to exercise his influence. As a result young Han is instrumental in causing the accidents. Hai-chen is right when she says, "Because your thoughts were scattered, your wheat was also scattered. Because your ideas had gone wrong, your sack went wrong too."

In presenting Hai-chen's handling of the conflict and contradiction with Chao and Han, the opera highlights her skill in achieving unity among comrades while educating the youth and correcting his erroneous ideas. She follows Chairman Mao's teaching to actively combat wrong ideological tendencies while achieving unity among comrades; and while holding fast to principles, she warm-heartedly helps her comrades take the right path.

Of course against the enemy Hai-chen wages a relentless struggle, never yielding an inch of ground. Although she is all concern and love for her comrades, what she considers primarily is their political progress. To raise her comrade-in-arms Chao Chen-shan's political consciousness, she chats with him about their bitter experiences in the past and their happy life today, pointing out the difference between the two. Then she studies together with him Chairman Mao's teachings at the Tenth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Party.

"Chao, we must not forget to be vigilant," she says significantly. "We mustn't let the whirl of machinery drown out the sound of the class enemy sharpening his sword."

These words touch Chao deeply, and make him see the link that may exist between Han's request for a transfer and Chien Shou-wei's intrigues. He admits, "I'm afraid I haven't thought enough about class struggle."

Han Hsiao-chiang's case helps Hai-chen to realize how hard the enemy tries to win over the younger generation. She is well aware of Han's good qualities and foibles, and so also of the fact that the boy must have been duped by the enemy. When Han tosses his identification card down in front of her, she feels very unhappy. But she keeps cool. She sings, "Han — Perhaps someone has cast you adrift alone in a boat." Her analysis tells her that the boy is not the one to be condemned. It is Chien who is the culprit. She comes to the conclusion that they must see to it that Han "mends his ways".

Han does not want to "make a living with a carrying pole", to let "twelve years of learning go to naught". His mistaken ideas have to be rectified. The opera reaches a climax when Hai-chen and Ma Hung-liang, with profound class feeling, educate Han politically. As a result, the young man realizes where he has gone wrong and how he must mend his ways.

Those who have lived through severe cold and snowstorms appreciate the warmth of the sun, but those who are brought up in easy circumstances seldom value their good life as much as they should. That is why old Master Ma, holding the identification card Han has tossed away, pours out the bitterness of Han's family in the old society and describes how his father died. The contrast between the past and present of the dockers reinforces the drama of Hai-chen's entry on the stage. A carrying pole and a "red identification card", trivial as they may appear, nevertheless symbolize two different social systems and two utterly different historical destinies. The carrying pole represents the class hatred of the proletariat, the wrong suffered by the nation, as well as the revolutionary tradition of the working class. And the identification card stands for the great goodness of the Party and Chairman Mao, bespeaking the happy life of the dockers who have now stood up and are their own masters.

But all this is beyond Han's comprehension at the beginning. Ignorant of the class sufferings of the past, he does not realize that the

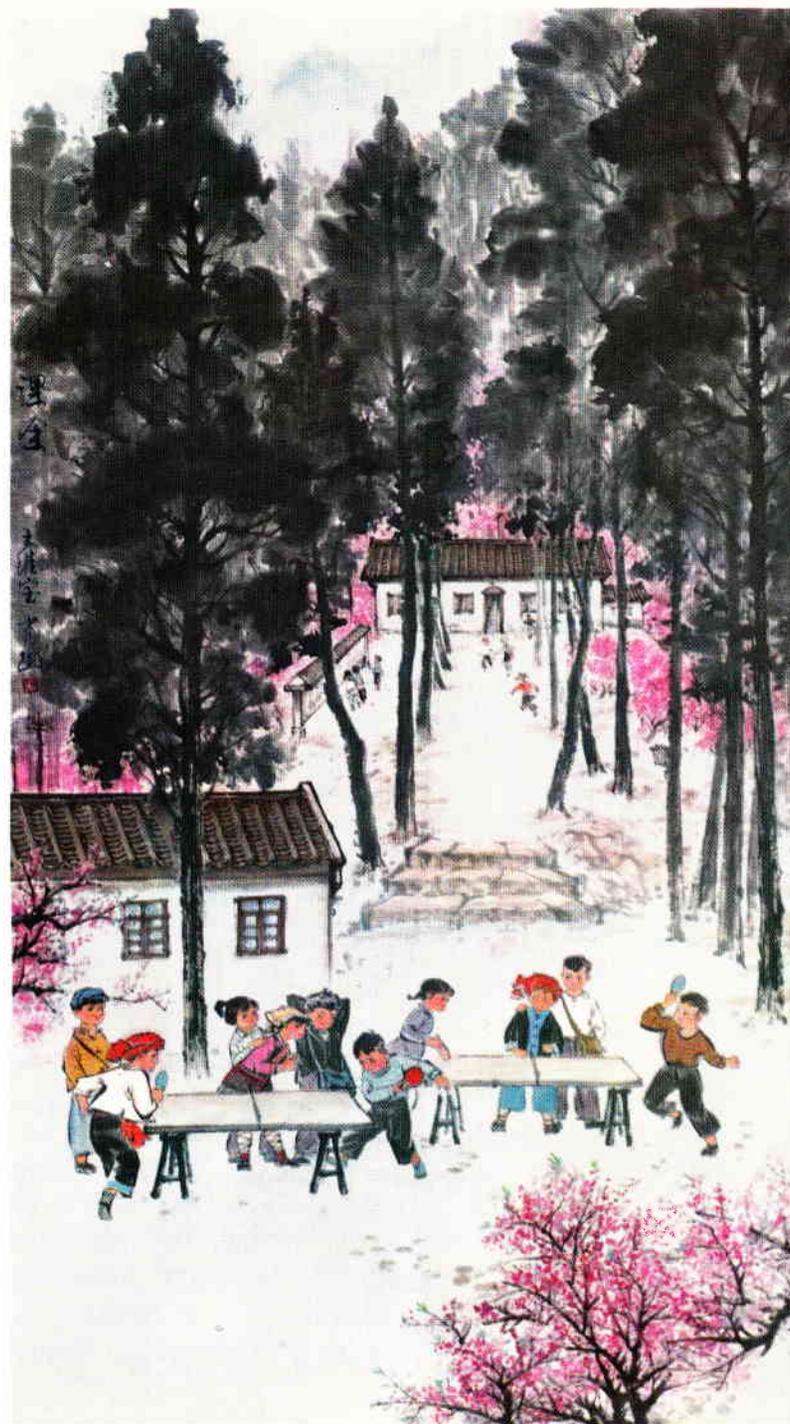
happiness he enjoys today was won at a great cost. Thus he fails to differentiate between the life of a coolie slaving away with a carrying pole for the capitalists and the job of a docker which constitutes an indispensable part of our revolutionary work. Starting from this point, Hai-chen educates the young man with the history of the dockers' struggle and the difference between the old society and the new. This helps him to understand the revolutionary ideals of communism and the meaning of proletarian internationalism.

To clear up Han's muddled ideas about classes and revolution, Hai-chen helps him to analyse how Chien Shou-wei, though he also works on the dock after liberation, is "not the same" as the dockers. She then proceeds to help him draw a line of demarcation between class enemies such as Chien and the workers who love Chairman Mao and the Party, pointing out the attitude a revolutionary ought to take towards revolutionary work. Every revolutionary task, no matter how ordinary it may be, has a far from ordinary significance. A proletarian internationalist must not look down on the job of a docker. Here the opera reveals the high-minded resolve of Communists such as Hai-chen "to dedicate ourselves to the world revolution, to be a never-rusting cog in the great revolutionary machine."

This great resolve represents the outlook of the Chinese working class which is continuing to make revolution guided by Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. Bourgeois and revisionist literature and art propagate narrow nationalism and great-nation chauvinism. Internationalism can be reflected only in genuine proletarian literature and art. *The Internationale* was the first bugle call for proletarian internationalism. Ringing with the majestic strains of this great song, *On the Docks* is a new paean to proletarian internationalism set to music, having as its libretto the militant life of the Chinese working class in the period of socialism.

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*A Ping-pong Match After Class* (painting in the traditional style)  
by Wang Wei-pao and Hsiao Yao



## How I Became a Writer

During our celebrations of the thirtieth anniversary of the *Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art*, I have been deeply stirred thinking back over that period of my development when, guided by Mao Tsetung Thought, I wrote *My Childhood*.

I was born into a poor peasant family in Liaoning Province, at a time when the Japanese imperialists were invading China. Owing to Chiang Kai-shek's capitulationist policy, the whole vast region of northeast China, including Liaoning, fell into enemy hands. Life was hell on earth for the people of the northeast. The Japanese aggressors and Chinese traitors hounded my grandfather and uncle to death, then killed my mother. My younger brother died of starvation. At the age of nine, because my family couldn't pay its debts, I had to herd swine for the landlord. Then, while still a boy, I worked in a copper mine in place of my father, whose health had broken down through doing conscript labour for the Japanese. Often I had to scavenge and beg for food. Thus during my young days I tasted the bitterness of slavery.

In August 1945, Japan had to announce unconditional surrender and the Chinese people's War of Resistance ended in victory. In 1947, after my home was liberated, I joined the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

In the army I learned why the poor had suffered such misery in the old society. I realized that to win complete liberation the poor must smash the old China which had protected the interests of the exploiting classes, and must build a new China which would represent the interests of the people. With this goal in mind, I threw myself into the War of Liberation to overthrow Chiang Kai-shek.

In the old society I had no chance to go to school. Now the great school of the PLA provided me with excellent conditions for study. As soon as I knew enough characters I started reading fiction which thoroughly gripped me, just as had the story-tellers' tales which I loved to hear as a child. Most of the books I read to start with were what we called "old writing", dealing with the emperors, princes, generals, ministers, talented scholars and beauties of feudal China. Later, on the advice of the leadership, I read new books as well. One of these raised this thought-provoking question: Why are all the main characters in the old writing members of the ruling classes, with not a single peasant among them? This was the case with the tales I had heard as a child, and with the old novels too. To me, this seemed a very pertinent question. Nobles, officials and rich landlords had all lived off the sweat and blood of peasants or workers like my family. Why, then, had no one ever written about us, the poor labouring people?

I found the answer to this question later with the help of my comrades by studying the *Yenan Talks*. Chairman Mao points out: **"If you are a bourgeois writer or artist, you will eulogize not the proletariat but the bourgeoisie, and if you are a proletarian writer or artist, you will eulogize not the bourgeoisie but the proletariat and working people: it must be one or the other."** These words provided the answer to my problem. Like a bright lamp, they lit up the path I should take, laying the ideological foundation for my writing *My Childhood*.

Before long I read a new novel about people driven by poverty to make revolution. The experiences of the hero were not unlike my own. They reminded me of the savagery of the accursed Japanese aggressors and traitors, of the unjust deaths of my grandfather, mother, uncle and younger brother. This book made my blood boil. The training and education I had received from the Party after joining the army inspired me and filled me with gratitude. It struck me that if I could write about my own bitter experiences, the class brothers reading my book would keep the viciousness of our class enemies more firmly in mind and wage a braver, more resolute struggle against them. At the same time this would prevent me from forgetting the class sufferings of my childhood and my hatred of imperialist aggression, spurring me on to carry the revolution through to the end. Chairman Mao calls on writers to serve the workers, peasants and soldiers. I must write a good book for them. This is how the idea of writing first came to my mind.

I started work on *My Childhood* in August 1949. Immediately, I ran into difficulties. I knew very few characters at that time. Far from enough to put my thoughts into writing. Frustration often drove me frantic, making me fling my pen down in despair. After all, every kind of work we do is for the revolution. Why look for trouble by attempting to write?

**"Our most important task today is to study and to study hard."** Lenin's maxim gave me strength. Nobody's born educated, I told myself. As Lenin says, what counts is perseverance and determination.

My commanders and comrades all encouraged and helped me, giving me detailed advice on how to write. This, too, strengthened my resolve. If I couldn't write a book in one year, I'd plug away for two years, three years or even more. But write a book I would!

Where there's a will there's a way. When I came up against characters I didn't know, I jotted down a symbol in their place. For "devil", for instance, I drew a devil's face. Then in my spare time I consulted others. In order to get the book written, I seized every possible moment on the march and during lulls between fighting to learn new characters. I kept this up steadily, copying down in a notebook the new words my comrades taught me and practising

writing them on my hand while marching, or on the ground during halts. When we pitched camp and our tasks were done, I practised again. By keeping this up day after day, I gradually enlarged my written vocabulary, and my interest in writing grew apace. With the help of our leadership and my comrades, in eighteen months I finished the first draft of *My Childhood*.

*My Childhood* is not an autobiography. I wrote it as a novel. According to the *Yenan Talks*, the life reflected in a work of fiction ought to be on a higher plane and more typical than actual everyday life. This involves concentrating the raw material of life and generalizing from it, to make it more typical. But because my first draft was restricted to my personal experience and lacked artistic polish and imagination, my portrayals of both landlord and peasants were superficial.

My comrades advised me to revise this first draft, basing the book mainly on my own experience but using other material as well. In the chapter "The Cock Crows at Midnight", Chou the Old Skinflint mimics the crowing of a cock to rouse his hired hands and make them start work. Something of this kind happened while I was working for the landlord. Actually, he prodded the cock with a stick to make it crow, but I made him mimic a cock instead, so as to bring out his ruthlessness and craftiness more fully. In this chapter the hired hands discover what the landlord is up to and get their own back by pretending to take him for a thief and beating him up. I heard of such a case when I was small. Incorporating material of this kind made the story more dramatic, the characterization more vivid. In 1955, *My Childhood* was published.

After I had written this book, the Party sent me to middle school and then to university. As I entered the gate of the university, I was stirred by recollections of my childhood. To go to school had been my burning desire. I contrived once to borrow a book, meaning to learn a few characters while tending pigs. As soon as the landlord saw that book, however, he seized it and tore it up. "I Want to Study!" describes this incident. Now that my dream in the old society had come true in the new, this vivid contrast between past and present spurred me on to study hard for the revolution.

Apart from my university course, I studied Marxist classics and Chairman Mao's works whenever I had time. A literary worker who wants to write revolutionary works must first be a revolutionary himself. As our great writer Lu Hsun said: "To my mind, the fundamental thing for a writer is to be a 'revolutionary'. If he is, then no matter what he writes about or what material he uses, it will be 'revolutionary literature'. All that gushes from a fountain is water; all that flows from blood vessels is blood." To be revolutionaries, we must make a good study of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. This is the major subject which all revolutionaries must study faithfully.

After graduating from university I went back to the army, in accordance with Chairman Mao's teaching: **"China's revolutionary writers and artists, writers and artists of promise, must go among the masses; they must for a long period of time unreservedly and whole-heartedly go among the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers, go into the heat of the struggle, go to the only source, the broadest and richest source."** Although I came of a worker-peasant family, I realized that my thinking and feeling were not quite the same as those of workers and peasants. Besides, life itself was developing and changing. New people and things were constantly coming to the fore. I was familiar with the life of the past. But to mirror our new age, I must familiarize myself with the new society and new people, must draw fresh material from life. The Party branch of our unit backed me up in this, and arranged for me to go and experience life in villages and factories. During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, I was sent to do mass work and had the chance to take part in the class struggle and the struggle between two lines.

The revolutionary practice of workers and peasants proved a furnace in which I was able to temper myself. The copper mine where I worked as a boy is on the coast. Many miners, slaving there as I once did, had worked themselves to death. But today's miners with their own hands had opened up new shafts under the sea from which they were extracting high quality ore.

Stupendous changes had also taken place in my home village which I had left for twenty-odd years. The barren hills where I once tended pigs were now covered with lush green orchards. In the centre of the village stood a new primary school, attended by all the children of school age. The hired hands of the old days had become masters of the new society. The achievements of the workers, peasants and soldiers, the true creators of history, were an inspiration to me.

Life among the masses helped me to remould my thinking. It supplied me with material for writing, too. One day I went ploughing with some peasants. During a break for rest they fell to discussing "The Cock Crows at Midnight", and an old poor peasant recounted a similar story about a landlord who roused his cocks at an unearthly hour. In this case, however, the hired hands banded together to burn down the landlord's barns and then ran away. This episode held a valuable lesson for me, deepening my understanding of the revolt of the proletariat and labouring people against the old social system, and the nature of their struggle. When I re-read *My Childhood*, I realized how inadequate was its portrayal of the nature of different class characters, how limited, shallow and inaccurate was its reflection of reality. I made up my mind to revise the book again.

I rewrote "Solidarity Among the Hired Hands" according to the account of the old poor peasant. Originally I had described how the hired hands' solidarity thwarted the *pao* chief's efforts to discover who was responsible for beating up his father, and by way of reprisal he had them all sent off to do conscript labour. In my altered version I laid stress on the courage, resourcefulness and spirit of revolt of Kao Yu-pao and the other hired hands. In keeping with this, I added certain details to bring out more vividly the cruelty of the negative characters.

I changed the ending of the story too. The book originally ended with "Mother's Death". In this, Kao Yu-pao's family are forced to flee as refugees to Talién, but finally hunger drives them back to their village. That was a thoroughly depressing ending. In the present version Kao Yu-pao, on the advice of some workers, goes to Shan-

tung where the Party has organized a base of resistance to Japan. The implications of this are more positive, exemplifying the fighting spirit of the labouring people. This revised version of *My Childhood* came out early this year.

Summarizing my development as a writer has brought home to me one truth: Important as is the writer's own experience of struggle, it is only a drop in the ocean compared with the revolutionary practice of the worker-peasant-soldier masses. **"The life of the people is always a mine of the raw materials for literature and art... They provide literature and art with an inexhaustible source, their only source."** A writer, no matter how talented, if he cuts himself off from the revolutionary struggles of the people, will be unable to write works which they welcome and which give a profound reflection of life. For this reason, literary and art workers must go deep among the masses for long periods of time, taking the road of integration with workers, peasants and soldiers.

More than twenty years of experience have completely convinced me that Chairman Mao's *Yenan Talks* are like sunlight and dew nurturing the growth of revolutionary writers and artists. And the revolutionary struggles of the broad masses, our best teachers, are the rich soil in which we grow.

## Meeting “Haguruma” Artists

Arise, arise!  
Listen! The fighting bugle call has sounded,  
We'll smash the shackles,  
We'll break the yoke. . . .  
Forward march our valiant ranks!  
Forward march!

The shipyard is seething with workers, sirens are blowing and red flags fluttering. United, defying the suppression of U.S.-Japanese reactionaries, the shipyard workers are pressing forward in the thick of the Japanese people's revolutionary storms. The air vibrates with their militant songs.

This is a scene from the full-length drama *Raging Waves* performed by the visiting Japanese “Haguruma” (Gear) Theatre Group for the workers, peasants and soldiers of Peking. On their Chinese tour these Japanese artists staged the heroic struggle of the Japanese working class against the revival of Japanese militarism by the U.S.-

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This article was written by a Hsinhua correspondent.

Japanese reactionaries and against the Miyamoto revisionist clique. Their performances were warmly welcomed by the Chinese audience.

The “Haguruma” Theatre, a troupe of Japanese revolutionary artists, is well known to the Chinese people. Its last visit was in 1967, and on December 26 last year, led by Natsuko Fujikawa, it renewed its visit. At the time of their arrival, holding high the slogan “Long live the militant unity between the two peoples of Japan and China”, the Japanese artists sang to their Chinese friends Chairman Mao's inscription for the visiting delegation of Japanese workers to China in 1962, which they had set to music, “**The Japanese revolution will undoubtedly be victorious, provided the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism is really integrated with the concrete practice of the Japanese revolution.**” They brought with them the fighting spirit and profound friendship of all Japanese revolutionaries.

In the great revolutionary struggle being carried on by the Japanese masses, the “Haguruma” Theatre acts as a gear that works non-stop.

The theatre group was set up in Yamaguchi Prefecture on April 20, 1952 during the U.S. imperialist war of aggression in Korea.

Denouncing the enemy (from *Raging Waves*)



This was a time when the Japanese people's anti-U.S. struggle was at a peak. Their slogan was: "U.S. imperialism, get out of Korea and Japan!" In the twenty years since the founding of the theatre, all its productions have been orientated towards, and faithfully served, the revolutionary Japanese people. Its artists have travelled the length and breadth of Japan from Hokkaido in the north to Kyushu in the south, performing in cities as well as the countryside. Through their revolutionary plays they have sounded a bugle call, inspiring and awakening the Japanese people to unite and struggle unremittingly against the U.S.-Japanese reactionaries.

These revolutionary artists have linked their future with that of the Japanese working class, their pulse throbbing in unison with the revolutionary masses of Japan.

Two of the "Haguruma" Theatre's artists, Kyoko Aya and Kiyofumi Yasumoto, related this incident to me: In May last year some of them went to Sanrizuka to perform for the local peasants who were waging a magnificent struggle against the U.S.-Japanese reactionaries' forcible occupation of farmland for the building of a military airfield. On a simple stage they presented the play *A Town on the Lower Reaches of the River* which exposes the crimes of the U.S.-Japanese reactionaries and praises the dauntless fighting spirit of the Japanese people. This is one of the songs which they, in peasant costume, sang to their audience:

Flames of suppressed rage in our hearts  
Are melting the snow atop the mountain crests.  
Raise high the fighting banners!  
The desire to reform the world  
Is burning like fiery flames. . . .

The song touched the hearts of the peasants. Some of them were moved to tears, others clenched their fists in anger; the feelings of the performers and the audience were fused. At the end of the performance, many spectators went onto the stage to shake hands with the artists and said: "This is the kind of art we need! Your play reflects our own struggle and redoubles our strength to face difficulties. To safeguard our homeland and defeat the U.S.-Japanese reactionaries, we'll fight to the end." The peasants told the artists that

the Miyamoto revisionist clique had also sent a troupe to Sanrizuka in an attempt to demoralize the local people. It presented such songs as *Happiness* advocating a false road to peace and other revisionist trash. Refusing to be inveigled into capitulating, the peasants drove the revisionist art group away.

Our great leader Chairman Mao says: "**Japan is a great nation. It will certainly not allow U.S. imperialism to ride roughshod over it for long.**" The Japanese workers and peasants have proved this by their actions. From Sanrizuka to Okinawa, they are supporting and encouraging each other in the fight against the U.S. and Japanese reactionaries. And this struggle is spreading throughout Japan like a tidal wave.

The members of the "Haguruma" Theatre often join in the struggles of the Japanese people to draw political nourishment and from them enrich their productions by reflecting these struggles. They make the best use of revolutionary literature and art to unite and educate the people and hit hard at all enemies.

Last autumn, Hisayoshi Fukushima, one of the troupe's playwrights, went to Okinawa during the fierce confrontation there between the peasants and U.S. imperialism. He made wide contacts with local workers, peasants, students and teachers. The heavy blows given to the U.S. and Japanese reactionaries by the one million Okinawan people that he witnessed gave him fresh inspiration.

On June 30, 1971, before daybreak, the majestic strains of *The Internationale* and fighting slogans resounded over Noha, a U.S. military centre and the capital of Okinawa. More than a thousand workers on the base held a mighty demonstration jointly with over seven hundred people who came to support them. With red flags flying and slogans lifted on high, they brought this military base to a standstill. The reactionary authorities sent police and a mobile force to suppress them. But the Okinawan people were not to be intimidated. They waged a blow-for-blow battle against their oppressors, and this greatly inspired Hisayoshi Fukushima and other playwrights, who wrote about the heroic deeds of the people with a revolutionary sense of responsibility. The one-act play *Angry Flames over Okinawa* is a vivid description of this grim battle. Its presentation in Yamaguchi



Determined to devote themselves to the people (from *Raging Waves*)

Prefecture caused strong repercussions among the local people. After seeing the play, a representative of the Okinawan workers said: "In order to achieve the independence and liberation of the Japanese nation, we workers in Okinawa are prepared to die rather than to surrender. We'll fight the enemy to the bitter end, kick the U.S. imperialists out of Okinawa and restore it to the Japanese people."

During the past twenty years, the artists of the "Haguruma" Theatre have plunged into many intense revolutionary struggles. They have learned from the broad masses of workers and peasants, writing and producing many revolutionary plays that really serve the workers and peasants and enhance their fighting morale. In writing the full-length drama *Raging Waves*, the theatre's general secretary Yoshiaki Fujii together with Taku Yamamoto and other playwrights took jobs as casual labourers for three to eight months in big factories owned by the monopolists so that they could portray the heroic Japanese workers from first hand knowledge. Living and working among the workers, they understood much more deeply than ever before what a miserable life they were leading under the cruel oppression and exploitation of

the monopoly capitalists, and what heroic struggles they were waging under the leadership of the Japanese Communist Party (Left) against the U.S.-Japanese reactionaries and the Miyamoto revisionist clique.

The struggle of the New Japan Shipyard workers as depicted in *Raging Waves* in a highly concentrated, generalized and intensified form is based upon actual battles the playwrights witnessed at several big shipyards. When the first script was finished, members of the writing group read it over time and again to the workers. The latter warmly gave their comments. It was due to their help that the play became a success after being revised seven times. Reviewing their experience in writing this play, Yoshiaki Fujii draws the conclusion that writers must share the life of the people. "We can never for a moment divorce ourselves from the masses," he says. "Still less can we divorce ourselves from their fierce and arduous struggles!"

The "Haguruma" Theatre's progress has not been plain sailing. A stormy petrel bred in Yamaguchi Prefecture, it has braved tempests and passed severe tests in revolutionary actions. Takeo Tawara, Tetsuyuki Terao and Fuki Watazu said that under the reactionary Sato government, the police authorities used to make things difficult for their company, bringing political and economic pressure to bear on them. Sometimes the reactionaries closed a theatre to cut short a performance, attacked the troupe in articles through their literary hacks or even resorted to barefaced suppression. But the "Haguruma" Theatre has the support of the masses and has never ceased its activities. The company sends small troupes to tour factories and villages, presenting the audience with a rich and militant repertoire of skits, new types of song-and-dance dramas, children's plays and full-length plays.

Workers, peasants, students, townspeople and men of letters often call on the artists after seeing their performances, acquainting them with the local situation, contributing money and encouraging them to raise high the banner of revolutionary literature and art in the service of the people. Thanks to such wide-spread support, these revolutionary artists have become even braver in their fight against the U.S. and Japanese reactionaries, against decadent bourgeois and

revisionist literature and art. The Miyamoto revisionist clique formerly tried its best to influence them with bourgeois literature and art and a revisionist line in an attempt to switch them to the right. But the "Haguruma" Theatre, arming itself constantly with Marxism-Leninism, keeps on advancing through the storms of class struggle, and its members, by sharply criticizing revisionist ideas in literature and art, strengthen and expand their ranks in the process.

It has been a great experience for us to meet the artists of the "Haguruma" Theatre and see their performances. Their determination to stand by the Japanese people and march along the road towards national independence and liberation as shown in their productions inspires their Chinese counterparts and has won high admiration from their Chinese audience.

## Chronicle

### **Distinguished Maltese Guests Attend Modern Revolutionary Ballet**

During their visit to China, Prime Minister Dominic Mintoff and the Maltese Government Delegation headed by him saw a performance of the *Red Detachment of Women* on April 4, in Peking.

Accompanying the distinguished Maltese guests were Chou En-lai, Premier of the State Council; Wu Teh, Head of the Cultural Group under the State Council and Acting Chairman of the Peking Municipal Revolutionary Committee; Chiao Kuan-hua, Vice-Foreign Minister and Han Tsung-cheng, Vice-Minister of Economic Relations with Foreign Countries and others.

### **Theatrical Performances in the Provinces**

In commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art*, various theatrical performances have been given in China's provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions.

The Production and Construction Corps under the Sinkiang Units of the PLA held a festival of amateur performances. More than six hundred spare-time artists of various nationalities coming from farms, pastures, factories and construction sites on both sides of the Tienshan Mountains presented more than a hundred new items in praise of the great victories of our country's socialist revolution and socialist construction under the brilliant leadership of the Communist Party and Chairman Mao. These items depict the life of the fighters

reclaiming wasteland, their militant unity and resourcefulness in building up and in guarding our border regions.

Kiangsi Province, after concluding a first round of drama festivals throughout the province, held a festival of Peking opera in Nanchang. The twelve Peking opera theatres or cultural propaganda teams which took part staged the revolutionary modern Peking operas *The Red Lantern*, *Shachiapang*, *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*, *On the Docks* and *Raid on the White Tiger Regiment*. They exchanged experience by singing selections from the revolutionary model dramas and performed several new Peking operas written by Kiangsi artists depicting historical and contemporary struggles.

In Hupeh Province a festival of new drama was held in Wuhan. Eleven drama troupes from all parts of the province performed one hundred new items by local playwrights.

Special performances were also put on in the Inner-Mongolian Autonomous Region.

A new vitality is evident in the Chinese theatre.

### Japanese "Haguruma" Theatre Leaves for Home

The Japanese "Haguruma" (Gear) Theatre led by Natsuko Fujikawa which arrived in China last December made an extensive tour of our country, performing in Peking, Shenyang, Tientsin, Wuhan, Sian, Nanking, Shanghai and Kwangchow. The Japanese actors gave more than forty performances of revolutionary Japanese dramas which were warmly received by Chinese audiences. After a farewell performance in Kwangchow on March 31, they left for home.

### Peking Exhibition of Fine Arts and Photographic Works

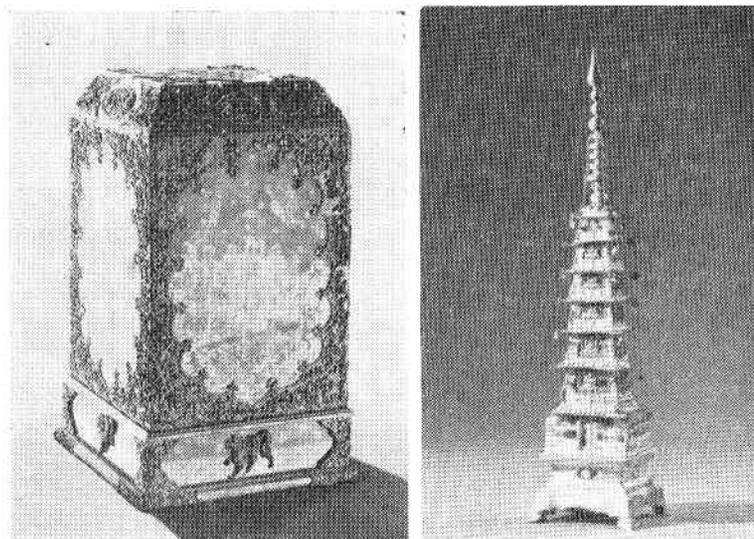
On display at the China Art Gallery in Peking is an exhibition of works by workers, peasants and soldiers as well as professional artists. Held in commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of Chairman Mao's *Yenan Talks*, this exhibition shows how our artists have implemented Chairman Mao's revolutionary line on literature and art and so spurs the development of creative work by the masses.

More than three hundred and thirty works of fine art and one hundred and seventy photographs are on display. These were chosen from among thousands recommended by various organizations after careful discussion among the masses. Most of them were contributed by workers, peasants and soldiers who, guided by Chairman Mao's revolutionary line in literature and art, have in their spare time portrayed many of the heroic figures fighting on various fronts in Peking. They convey the dynamic spirit of the capital's people, tempered in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. An outstanding feature of these exhibits is their originality, simplicity and vitality.

The exhibits also include some new works by professional artists who have been living with workers, peasants and soldiers and have portrayed their life. These show the progress our artists have made in their efforts to create better works of art for the people.

### Significant Discovery of Ancient Handicraft Works

Handicrafts of the Northern Sung Dynasty (960-1127) were discovered in 1966 and 1967 in the Huikuang Pagoda in Hsienyen, Jui-an County,



Chekiang Province. This important discovery was made by local peasants.

These handicrafts include the earliest examples yet found of gilded carved lacquerware, and the earliest specimens of reversible embroidery to which a definite date can be ascribed. The Buddhist sutras discovered are rare examples of Northern Sung printing on strong, smooth white paper. There are also finely shaped silver pagodas ornamented with gold. The fine craftsmanship of these finds indicates the high technical and artistic level of Chinese lacquerware, textiles, paper making, printing and metal work during the Northern Sung Dynasty.

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## Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy

(In English)

This modern revolutionary Peking opera has been revised by the *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* Group of the Peking Opera Troupe of Shanghai. Conforming more closely now to Chairman Mao's line on literature and art, it has taken on a new brilliance.

The action takes place in 1946 in northeast China, early in the War of Liberation. Acting on Chairman Mao's directive "**Build stable base areas in the Northeast**", a pursuit detachment organized by the Party committee of a regiment of the PLA wipes out a diehard Kuomintang gang headed by the bandit Vulture deep in the mountains.

Revolutionary realism combined with revolutionary romanticism brings out in bold relief the splendid image of the proletarian hero Yang Tzu-jung, a PLA scout platoon leader. The whole work is a high tribute to Chairman Mao's great teachings on people's war.

The English translation was made from the Chinese script of the opera as staged in July 1970.

With coloured stage photographs and selected arias from the opera.

126 pages

16.5 × 23 cm.

Cloth and paper cover

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# TO FIND MEN TRULY GREAT AND NOBLE-HEARTED WE MUST LOOK HERE IN THE PRESENT

(In English)

This booklet presents four articles on the popular revolutionary Peking opera *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*, evaluating its successful portrayal of the proletarian heroes of modern China by means of plot, characterization and revolutionary innovations in music and dancing.

76 pages

18.4 × 13 cm.

paper cover

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