

# Chinese Literature



味葉

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STORIES

**Jiang Zilong**

## More About Manager Qiao

*This is a sequel to the short story "Manager Qiao Assumes Office", an English translation of which appeared in Chinese Literature No. 2, 1980, together with an article about the author Jiang Zilong, an amateur writer from Tianjin.*

*"Manager Qiao Assumes Office" described how Qiao Guangpu voluntarily returned to the Heavy Electrical Machinery Plant which was in a chaotic state. In the face of strong opposition from different quarters, he took a series of drastic measures, getting the plant working again. Other main characters are: Shi Gan, the plant's Party secretary, a capable cadre who became disheartened and overcautious because of his sufferings during the Cultural Revolution; Ji Shen, the plant's former manager, a careerist who was responsible for the anarchy and who deliberately created trouble for Qiao; Tong Zhen, the assistant chief engineer and Qiao's second wife; and Xi Wangbei, a new cadre with experience on the shop floor who was removed from office after the fall of the "gang of four" but who was reinstated by Qiao despite Xi's personal dislike of him.*

— The Editors

## Competition

### I

EARLY morning. The sleety northwest wind stung people's faces like a wet lash. Qiao Guangpu arrived early at the plant as usual. As his car passed the gate, he caught sight of a familiar figure sweeping snow in front of the reception room. He frowned. Alighting from the car, he went back to the gate. In a joking tone he said, "Old Ma, why don't you leave your den? I hope to see you on the shop floor next time."

"I'm pretty well paid," Ma Changyou answered frankly. "And I'm getting on in years now. So I'm staying put."

"Then you're not entitled to a seventh-grade fitter's wage," Qiao countered. "You should be paid as a janitor instead. Wages change according to one's work like grain rations."

Ma chuckled. "Manager," he said, "it's not for you to decide. This is one of the advantages of socialism. Wages can be raised, never lowered."

"But that surely applies equally to the sense of responsibility of an old worker like you. This system of once in a job you can never get fired isn't necessarily an advantage of socialism, as you think. In my view, it goes against the Party's programme!"

Ma's face fell. "Manager," he asked, "be frank, how long do you intend to stay in this Electrical Machinery Plant?"

Qiao was taken aback. He realized that what was worrying Ma was Qiao's opposition lobby, the big-character posters and letters of accusation against him. Naturally there were people like Ma waiting to see which way the wind would blow. Things were unpredictable.

"This plant isn't mine and you're not working for me," Qiao answered gravely. "If I die, the plant will still be here, the machines will still run."

Ma had nothing to say. He watched Qiao leave with mixed feelings — compassion or compunction?

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This story (« 乔厂长后传 ») by Jiang Zilong ( 蒋子龙 ) has been translated from *People's Literature* (« 人民文学 ») No. 2, 1980.

### 2

As the bell for work rang, three people came into Qiao's office. They were Gu Chang, the head of the manager's office, Li Gan, the former service-team leader newly promoted to be the general accountant, and Qiao's wife, the assistant chief engineer, Tong Zhen. Qiao, on Bureau Director Huo Dadao's advice, arranged his work in a scientific way to raise his efficiency. He had a strict timetable for each day, each week. The first half hour of the day, he and the deputy manager Xi Wangbei always had a talk with Li Gan and Tong Zhen. They were like his two hands, co-operating excellently with him.

"Why hasn't Xi turned up yet?" Qiao asked Gu.

"Gone to a meeting in the Foreign Trade Bureau."

"Oh?" Qiao grew alert.

"Ji Shen notified us. This meeting is about the sales rights of exported goods."

"Ah!" Qiao's heart missed a beat. Waving the question aside, he turned to Li, who handed him a short report. It listed production figures and the main problems. Drawn up by Li himself, it was simple and clear, with not one superfluous word. Qiao quickly looked it over. Seven quotas out of eight had been fulfilled. He looked searchingly at Li and asked, "Why's the production cost up?"

"Because of the moulding sand," Li answered. "Xikou sand costs forty-seven yuan a ton, Nandao sand ninety-one yuan. The quality is more or less the same, but we bought a big consignment of Nandao sand."

"Why?"

"I hear that a purchasing agent in our supply department accepted some presents from the Nandao people."

Qiao's jaws twitched and the muscles stood out. However, he did not explode. He nodded, signing to Li to go on.

"Ever since the Cultural Revolution, the supply department has stopped measuring its purchases of sand. They leave it to the sellers. When a consignment is brought here and unloaded, they pay whatever it says on the receipt. Yesterday, I measured all

the loads of sand myself. Several were twenty tons short. One was thirteen short. I told the finance department to refuse to pay."

"Wasters! If they were buying food for themselves, they wouldn't be half a catty short." Qiao told Gu, "Make a note of this. Ask the head of the supply department to come to see me at two this afternoon."

Li continued, "According to the telegram from our men in Hongkong, a foreign firm has reduced the price of its dynamos by one tenth in order to undersell us. This puts us at a big disadvantage."

"Those foreign bosses!" Qiao stood up, a cold glint in his eyes. Soon after assuming office the previous year, he estimated that there probably wouldn't be enough material to feed the plant in the period of economic readjustment. So he had approached several suppliers himself, and finally he went to Vice-minister Che of the Ministry of Machine Building. The Vice-minister knew the market at home as well as abroad. He suggested that Qiao should launch two products. One was a hundred-ton diesel electric truck, which was mostly imported, and he encouraged Qiao to compete with foreigners first in this field at home. His other proposal was a light dynamo which could be exported to Hongkong and Southeast Asia. After a year and a half, Qiao's dynamos were stealing the market in Hongkong from a foreign company which had previously monopolized it. Now this company had slashed its price, hoping to force the Chinese dynamo out of the Hongkong market.

Qiao gradually calmed down. He said to Li, "According to the rate of production increase, we can pay the state four million yuan per year from the dynamo alone. If we cut the price by one tenth, how much will we lose?"

"Four hundred thousand," Li replied.

"If we don't, we'll be squeezed out of the world market. That would mean losing all the three million six hundred thousand yuan as well. Which do you prefer?"

Gu butted in, "But how can we reduce the price? That's up to the state."

"What a stickler!" Qiao remarked. "Certainly we've the right

to adjust the price of our own products. That's the way to do business."

"Ji Shen told me that the Foreign Trade Bureau is in charge of the sales of all exported goods. It seems that the municipal Party committee and Tie Jian, chief of the Economic Commission, have okayed it. We'll know for sure when Xi's back from the meeting."

"So that's the way it is!"

"Wherever Ji goes, he tries to block us!" Li complained.

"All he wants is to take over the sales right abroad so as to squeeze something from the profits. What does he know about management? If we leave our dynamos to him, we'll be out of the world market within half a year. Production and sales can't be separated!" With a toss of his head, Qiao added, "Forget him! Cut the price and notify Hongkong right away."

Li heaved a sigh of relief.

"Apart from cutting the price," Tong said, "we must improve the quality and appearance of our dynamos. For instance, our dynamos are grey, blue, red or green. Too gaudy. We must also study foreign dynamos and avoid their weak points. Many foreign customers would like to install a light dynamo in their homes and they naturally want one that looks attractive and has a fine finish. But labour abroad is expensive. Foreign companies may not be able to afford it. This is where we have the advantage."

Qiao broke in cheerfully, "A good idea! Specify what you want, and I'll ask the service team to see to it." He scribbled a few words on his desk calendar.

Tong was still calm, not affected by Qiao's enthusiasm. She continued, "Our new hundred-ton electric truck is promising too. Chuanxi Mine cabled to me yesterday that they find it excellent and want to order another fourteen next year. They used to import electric trucks, but they couldn't get spare parts, so most of their foreign trucks are now out of action. We must take this chance to launch our product. I've decided to send two capable technicians plus two maintenance-men, whom I hope the manager will recommend, to Chuanxi Mine tomorrow as a technical team.

We must not only sell products but also repair them and guarantee the prompt supply of spare parts. Foreign firms can't compete with us in this respect. If we can first replace foreign goods with our own in the home market, then launch into the world market, we'll have more orders than we can handle instead of not enough customers."

Qiao rubbed his hands in elation. Strange, she hadn't even hinted at such wonderful news the previous evening. "Think of all the mines there are in our country alone!" he exclaimed. "If our electric trucks sell well, we'll have a great future. Gu, make a note of that, will you? Tell the Party secretary what Tong just said. If he's for the idea of the technical team, ask him to persuade Ma Changyou to take a young fitter to join the team going to Chuanxi Mine and see Tong before setting off. Remind him, too, that this afternoon's our regular meeting. We must decide several things. First, to set up a sales department, because good salesmanship's of vital importance. We must pick as salesmen people who are strong politically, shrewd and capable like the Monkey King. Sales managers abroad are experienced professionals, who know the market well. Secondly, we must advertise our products more widely. We'd better print some attractive brochures for distribution at home and abroad, or even send some free samples. We'll explain that our products have been strictly tested and give reliable data. All orders are welcome, and we'll guarantee to attend to them without delay. Thirdly, we must find places to start our own stores. Fourthly, we must set up a world market research centre to keep track of the situation both in China and abroad, and collect and study technical information and samples from other manufacturers. We must also learn how to deal with foreign capitalists."

When Li had jotted all this down, Qiao added, "I have to alter today's agenda a little. I'm going to the service team at nine."

The other three were nonplussed, and Gu, being a smart man, reminded him, "You should be in Workshop No. 5 from nine to ten this morning."

"Put it off till noon. I'll have lunch there."

"Skip your nap again?" Tong asked, throwing a glance at him.

Ignoring her, Qiao said, "You can go now if there's nothing else."

But Tong stayed behind to demand, "Why go to the service team all of a sudden?"

"A manager can go to any unit under him if he wants to. For more than a year now this team has been trying to topple me. I don't want to leave the problem till 1980."

Tong took a deep breath. Knowing her husband's hot temper, she said anxiously, "Don't fly off the handle. Keep cool. If you get excited. . . ."

Qiao shook his head with a laugh. "What is life if we can't get excited? Fact is, I'm going to give them a good talking-to. Our plant has been forging ahead for a year and a half. This shows that the changes we've introduced are correct. Facts speak louder than words."

His confidence made Tong more worried. She knew that he was a never-satisfied, bold and capable factory manager, who would push aside all obstacles in his way. But he did not realize that the main obstacle was neither Ji Shen, nor the service team, but the rigid economic system which had evolved over a long period of time. Any day, a storm might spring up and shatter his dream. Now he was going to stir up a hornet's nest. This was asking for trouble. She decided to ask Shi Gan, the Party secretary, to try to stop him.

With a deep sigh, she turned and left. Qiao frowned, saying to himself, "Damn! What's she fretting about? It's hard to know what's in someone else's mind, no matter how close you are. . . ."

A knock at the door interrupted these reflections. The heads of the organization department and labour and pay department had arrived as agreed. Qiao rubbed his cheeks and shook his head a few times as if to shake off the unpleasant impression Tong had made on him. "Come in!" he boomed.

### 3

The woman head of the organization department looked a typical office cadre, cordial but opinionated. Long years of political work

and personnel management had made her highly principled and put a bridle on her tongue. However, there was an aura of arrogance and shrewdness about her. The man looked capable and handsome, fair-complexioned, with a black stubble on his chin. After sizing them up, Qiao suddenly asked the woman, "Hu, do you think the Monkey King can join the Party?"

She gaped in astonishment.

"Of course, this is only a metaphor. . . ."

Hu cut him short politely yet seriously, "Manager, did you send for us to listen to such a joke?"

Qiao's brows twitched. "If you take it for a joke," he said, "you're greatly mistaken. Both of you are in charge of people, and you judge them on the basis of the materials in their files. You must see them as they are in real life and find out how they work in this plant. There'll be a wage rise soon. Priority should be given to those who are capable and work well, and those who have made important contributions to the management."

Then he made his second point. "The main duty of those in charge of personnel is to see that no talents are wasted, to find and train promising workers and give them key jobs. Right now, special attention must be paid to raising the political status of experts and giving them better material conditions too. Our people are very able. Some, once they go overseas, discover proton and gluon and even win Nobel Prizes. But they can't do that here in China. Why? What's stopping them? People like you ought to think about it and feel guilty. In a way, we've let down the country, the people."

Hu could not accept such a view.

Qiao went on to ask the head of the labour and pay department to find out how many skilled workers there were in the plant. How many of them had left their workshops, and on what grounds? They were the plant's greatest assets and must play more active roles. Qiao also asked him to form a "technical advisory group" of skilled workers.

Thirdly, Qiao gave them some reference material to read. He told them that "manpower-tapping" was an important factor in industrial development. In certain enterprises in Japan, the work-

ers' intelligence and skill were considered as a kind of resource. The crux of economic competition was technological. And victory in this competition would depend, to a very great extent, on skilled workers and technical personnel.

Qiao had given them a work assignment and, at the same time, a lecture. The man found these questions fresh and interesting. But Hu instinctively felt repelled and bored. She forced herself to listen, dissenting at heart. To her mind, Qiao was peddling the handful of foreign wares he had picked up during his trip abroad earlier that year. Qiao realized this, of course, which made him more determined to convince her. If cadres at her level failed to improve their skill in management, how could ordinary cadres be expected to do it?

"I've given you three questions in your line of work," Qiao said finally. "When you get the answers, come and tell me."

To avoid a dispute, Hu grudgingly agreed. But as soon as she left the manager's office, she went to see Shi Gan. She wanted to have a serious talk with the Party secretary.

#### 4

On his way to the service team, Qiao was overtaken by Shi Gan.

"Are you coming to protect me or stop me?" Qiao asked.

Shaking his head, Shi replied, "Neither. I've come to back you up. Besides, I've something to discuss with you."

"What?"

"Tie Jian, the chief of the Municipal Economic Commission, just told me that Tong Zhen is to be transferred."

"What?" Qiao was electrified. "What does this mean?"

"She's needed by a delegation which is going to negotiate with some foreigners. But I smell a rat. Another thing, Director Huo had a talk with me. He wants us to take Ji Shen back."

"Nonsense!" Qiao raised his voice. "Our plant's just been put into shape again. Now they want to take away the assistant chief engineer and send back that bum. Are they trying to destroy this plant? Nothing doing!"

Smiling calmly, Shi said, "People say you're like Director Huo. I think, you fall far short of him. Now I understand why Huo criticized me for letting Ji Shen leave this plant. What he meant, I think, was that a fellow like Ji would only block our way if he worked in a bureau. We should have kept him here and made him work, while keeping an eye on him. Have you the guts to take him back?"

"I'm dead against it!" Having said this, Qiao stalked away. Then he turned to add, "I'll go and see Director Huo myself. If necessary I'll see Tie Jian."

The winter wind in the north cuts like a knife. Qiao pulled down his safety helmet and quickened his steps while Shi followed close behind him. Suddenly Qiao noticed cement scattered on the ground. He looked up and saw a man in a big fur hat pulling a barrow loaded with three sacks of cement. The fellow seemed in a bad temper for, instead of keeping to the road, he was jolting his load at top speed along a rugged shortcut. From one of the sacks, which had burst, cement was spilling. As Qiao was about to call him, the barrow got bogged down in a frozen puddle. The puller threw down the shafts, as if on strike. Qiao and Shi hurried over and, to their surprise, came face to face with none other than Du Bing! Their paths were bound to cross!

"Ah, it's you!" Qiao said, tongue in check. "Isn't your barrow like an ox running and urinating at the same time?"

Instead of speaking, Du Bing glared at him, his eyes full of resentment and rage.

While pushing the wheel, Qiao shouted to Du Bing, "What are you waiting for? Take up the shafts!"

Reluctantly, the young man complied. Shi Gan pushed the other wheel.

"Ready — go!" At Qiao's shout, the three men got the barrow out of the puddle. Du Bing was about to move on, when Qiao stepped forward, pressing down the barrow shafts, and said, "Wait a minute!"

"What for?"

"Move that sack a little so that the hole will be on top." Qiao met the young man's eyes. "Sulking again?"

"A clay figure can't stand too much pressure, not to say a live man like me!"

"A live man? Just how do you live? You're a shiftless trouble-maker. Want to muddle along all your life like this?" While speaking, Qiao moved the sack himself. Noticing that it was cement No. 600, he demanded, "What do you want this cement for?"

"To build a locker room."

"But you don't have to use such good cement. Do you know what grade it is?"

"No. Our section leader said any cement would do."

"Show me the requisition slip."

"Haven't one."

"Stealing it, eh?"

"I'm not taking it home, anyway."

"Take it back!" Qiao flared up.

The young man thumped down the barrow, then turned to leave in a huff. Before Qiao could explode, bald-headed Wang Guan-xiong hurried out from the service team's shed to intervene. Smiling at Qiao and Shi, he shouted at Du Bing, "Young Du, what do you think you're doing?"

"But you..." Du whirled round to retort, staring at Wang, his section leader.

Wang tipped him a wink, urging him to clear off. Instead, Du Bing just stood there.

"Why didn't you issue a requisition slip?" Qiao asked Wang.

"We don't need much," Wang carefully weighed his words. "Besides, that red tape is troublesome, so we decided to scrounge a little near by."

"Section leader," Du Bing sneered, "why not tell the truth? We botched the job, wasted cement, but hushed it up. If we ask for more cement, we'll be in the red. Then we'll have no bonus at the end of the month. That was why our section leader told us to scrounge some."

"What do you mean by 'scrounge'?" Qiao asked. "It's theft, you know. Robbery! Where can you get sacks of cement like this except from our warehouse? You're upsetting the supply

department's plan. Take this back. Write a report about the accident. You can ask for some inferior cement for the locker room."

"Right," said Wang and pulled the barrow away.

"Swine!" spat out Du Bing, then strode into the shed.

This big, roughly built shed was where the service team rested, where they held their meetings. The appearance of the manager and the Party secretary caused quite a stir, because the workers thought the management had forgotten them. The team leader called back all the workers outside. They politely invited Qiao and Shi to take seats. But Qiao remained standing. He noticed that a few workers were standing against the wall as if to hide something. He stepped over, pulled aside a young woman and saw a drawing on the whitewashed wall: a Taoist priest was about to go to Heaven, on his left was a boy sitting astride a dog, on his right a girl riding a chicken. The drawing had no title, no names identifying the three characters, but the implication was clear to anyone in the plant. The priest was the manager, the boy Xi Wangbei, and the girl Tong Zhen. Qiao's blood boiled, his eyes riveted on the drawing. But he had the sense to remember that there were many eyes fixed on his back. If he were to flare up, things might get out of hand. He checked his indignation, his cheeks twitching. There were other paintings. He looked at them one by one. One showed a "gang of four" presiding over an examination. The examiners here were obviously Qiao, Xi, Tong and Li Gan while those being cross-examined were the workers. All were by the same skilful caricaturist, and the colour was very well applied. Who was the painter?

It was very still, everybody was preparing tensely for a storm. But the most worried was Shi Gan who knew Qiao's temperament. However, he could say nothing before so many people. All he could do was fix warning eyes on the manager, hoping Qiao would take the hint.

But Qiao did not even glance in his direction. In a calm, unfathomable voice, he asked, "Who painted these? I'd like to see him."

"It's me, manager. I'd like to have your instructions," Du Bing said provocatively, stepping forward.

"You?" Qiao asked doubtfully. "Never thought you had it in you. I'm not going to comment on your works. We all know what they mean. But some day you may be sorry you painted them. Still, you have a real aptitude. You must surely know how to mix colours?"

"Mix colours?" The young man was puzzled.

"Yes. You're with it. You can sing foreign songs, admire western ways, and know a bit about art. Can you tell us what colours foreigners like?" Du Bing was all at sea. Qiao had to explain, "You're a pitiful artist because all your talents are used for venting your spite and for slander. Take colours now. . . . Foreigners are not very keen on scarlet or bright green. They think them gaudy. Can you think of softer, more attractive colours?"

"Well. . . . Why not try rose-red? Or leaf-green?" Du Bing stuttered.

"What about blue?"

"Peacock blue is best."

"All nice names, aren't they?" Qiao grew jubilant. "Can you mix these colours for us to have a look?"

Du took out his pigments and brush from his locker, painted these three colours on a sheet of white paper, then handed it over to Qiao. Qiao examined the colours, muttering, "Good, we can try these." But all of a sudden he shifted his grave eyes to the young man who, no longer bellicose, awkwardly lowered his head.

"You're not a good turner," Qiao said cordially. "Nor a good mason. You don't even know the cement grades. But you may make a good painter. Try designing trade marks, painting advertisements. You ought to use your talents for a good cause. After a while, take those three colours you just mixed to the assistant chief engineer. If she's no objection, you can paint some dynamos with these colours. From today on, you'll work in Workshop No. 10. Okay?"

Du Bing nodded gratefully, too overwhelmed to speak.

Everybody in the shed sighed with relief.

Shi Gan seized this chance to say loudly, "Comrades, the manager and I have come to hear what grievances and requests you have. Setting up this service team wasn't just the manager's idea. It was carefully discussed and decided by the plant Party committee. We're going to have exams every year, and those who fail or can't man their posts on the production line will have to do service work. The young workers in this team will be sent in groups to technical schools or training centres to train. Those who do well and become skilled will be sent back to the workshops as technicians."

Qiao enlarged on this, saying, "Remember the mess our plant was in last summer? After seven every evening, some of the second shift knocked off to watch TV in the casual labourers' common room. Standing behind the casual labourers to watch, they worried about being spotted by the foreman. A casual labourer got from four to six yuan a day — much more than any of our regular workers. They were far better off and could afford to buy a large TV set for each common room. But the money they earned was the state's money. Our plant was over-staffed, with more than nine thousand workers. Just to watch the four gates we had several dozen men. Still, we hired over a thousand casual labourers. A Japanese told me that if he were running the plant, he would fire half the workers and double the production. I believe him. However, we can't do it his way. Our country has a thousand million people. Instead of firing workers, we have to find them jobs. But we mustn't let them muddle along in the old way, or our whole country including our plant will be ruined. That was why we laid off the casual labourers and formed this service team. Since you took over last year, you've saved one million two hundred thousand yuan. The bonus for the whole team is less than a hundred thousand. We've spent no more than six hundred thousand in building the kindergarten and the living blocks with the bonus thrown in. But still, we've saved six hundred thousand yuan for the state. Now tell me, wouldn't you have done the same if you were a manager?"

This startled Wang Guanxiong, sitting in one corner. He took off his cap, exposing his shining bald head, and with a frown

reflected, "A fixed sum is for a fixed purpose. When you sacked the casual labourers, that money should've been frozen. You've broken the financial rules..."

Qiao continued, "To tell the truth, a plant can't be run the way ours was in the past. For years, the word 'competition' was taboo in our country as if it was something capitalist. We used to wait for the state to assign us work and then made over our products to the state. Any loss or gain was the state's. Workers could slack but they didn't lose their jobs — there was always the state to depend on. Most factories were in bad shape, losing money year in and year out. When there's competition, factories are forced to modernize or they're done for. Now we're competing with foreigners not only at home but also abroad. We're also competing with factories in our own line at home. Of course, this competition is totally different from the cut-throat struggle in capitalist countries. We have to carry out the state's economic plan, and we can't scrap socialist co-operation. It won't do in future for workers to get equal pay regardless of their skill and efficiency. Their wages will vary according to their contribution to the plant. Though we've a lot of people, we haven't many experts or specialists. All workshops and departments need capable people, so those who have special knowledge or skill can recommend themselves."

A telephone rang. It was Xi, who wanted to see the manager on urgent business. Xi also said that he would take the Steel Rolling Plant's special train to fetch two rotor forgings the following day. Qiao promised to go straight over, then turned and looked up. The workers were exchanging eager comments. He glanced at Shi and said finally, "I've been very frank with you. Don't get taken in by rumours. Now I'm going to tell you a fable. Truth and Rumour went together to bathe one day. Rumour, behind Truth's back, stole his clothes. When Truth finished bathing and stepped ashore, he saw no sign of his own clothes but Rumour's dirty ones lay on the ground. Of course he would not touch them. Ever since then, Rumour has worn Truth's beautiful clothes while Truth is naked."

The workers chuckled and, for the first time, the service team applauded their manager.

## Whirlpool

I

Huo Dadao searched everywhere for Tie Jian the whole day, but in vain. If the director of the Electrical Equipment Bureau could not find his immediate superior, the chief of the Municipal Economic Commission, it must be even more difficult for ordinary people to approach him. Huo was a little annoyed because he was a busy man. But what could he do? He phoned Qiao and the two of them decided to catch Tie at home that evening.

After a quick supper, the director and the plant manager hurried to Tie Jian's home. It was a three-room house. As soon as they entered, they were flabbergasted. There in the centre of the room stood a big stove, on which Tie's wife was cooking noodles in a large cauldron. Some men dressed like peasants were helping her, one holding a wire strainer, another a large porcelain bowl. They called her either aunt or sister-in-law. The west room was like a room in a country inn. On the platform bed was a low table with a plate of fried bean-paste on it. Round this, half a dozen young peasants, each holding a bowl, were wolfing down noodles. As Tie's relatives, though rather distant ones, they wanted him to help them to get some material or equipment for their commune-run factories, or some tractors or chemical fertilizer for their production brigades. They were proud that their district had produced such a big shot as Tie Jian. The chief of the Municipal Economic Commission was in charge of the whole town's economy and factories. At a nod from him, there was nothing that could not be done. However, the only peasants who could find him were a few very close relatives whom Tie had to meet and help. But everyone who came to his home would at least get a bowl of hot noodles and, if he could not get a hotel room, could stay there

for a couple of days. The country folk stood on no ceremony. Tie Jian earned more than two hundred yuan a month, which to them was a great deal of money — he could easily afford them a few bowls of noodles. But for Tie, this meant quite a big outlay, and he could only offer them noodles and bean-paste because he had too many relatives and fellow villagers.

In the east room there were several city people who had been Tie's subordinates in the Economic Commission or the units directly under it. Some had come to ask for fair treatment both politically and financially after their hard time in the Cultural Revolution. Others wanted better jobs or to have their housing problems solved. But they could not find him either and had to wait in vain.

Mrs Tie felt dizzy from overwork. She was too busy to give Huo and Qiao more than a greeting, though they were here for a different purpose. She was a kind-hearted woman, brought up in the country. In her eyes, all those who came to her husband wanted some favour from him. She sympathized with them, knowing that they had no one else to turn to. Nowadays it was common knowledge that you could only get things done through connections. But at the same time, she disliked those people who obliged her husband to stay away from home. And she, wife of a leading cadre, had to serve as an inn-keeper. As soon as she opened her eyes in the morning, she had to receive callers, who kept her busy serving them all day long.

Noticing that she had not recognized him, Huo stepped forward and said, "Madam Tie, don't you remember me?"

Used to all sorts of flattering words, she replied without even raising her eyes, "No, I don't. My eyesight's so bad these days."

"I'm Huo, Huo Dadao," he had to announce himself.

She sized him up through the steam and, wiping her hands on her apron, came to greet him warmly, "Oh, it's you! I'm too old to see clearly."

Having introduced Qiao to her, Huo said, "We've got to see Tie Jian on urgent business. We've been looking for him the whole day. When will he be back?"

"He won't come home today. He's back once or twice a month. This home's like a railway station and he's a train. He pulls up

for a moment, then off he goes again. There's no stopping him." She had raised her voice as if for those in other rooms to hear too.

Huo had to leave. But Tie's wife followed them out. She beckoned them to turn left and entered a quiet, pleasant-looking room furnished in a modern style. Several smartly dressed girls were cracking melon seeds and listening to a foreign song played on a cassette recorder. They looked annoyed by this intrusion, and Tie's daughter, Tie Hua, glowered at her mother. But seeing Huo behind her, she had to stand up to greet him. Before her daughter, Tie's wife, usually a commanding character, was like an old wetnurse. In a low voice she said, "They've got to see your father. Will you please take them to him?"

"Oh, Uncle Huo, is it so difficult even for you to see him?" Her lips curved in a smile. "There's a foreign film being shown to a limited audience tonight in the municipality's small hall. My father must be there. I'll take you to find him."

Huo and Qiao looked at each other, but said nothing.

The daughter's friends said good-bye and left. Tie Hua's mother put a pot of fried chilli paste and some stewed chops into a basket and asked her daughter to take it to her husband. The canteen where Tie had his meals was not very good, and she sent him better food from time to time.

## 2

Having shown Huo and Qiao into the small hall of the municipal building, Tie Hua pointed to a lounge. "Would you like to see him right now or a while later?" she asked. "All the big shots are in there, and Ji Shen too."

"Ji Shen?" Qiao said, surprised. "Does he rate such treatment?"

"You're as honest as you look." The girl chuckled. "He has remarkable ability, just like the Monkey King."

"Oh no, he hasn't," Qiao corrected her.

"He's Secretary Wang's favourite anyway."

"Come off it," Huo said sharply. "You're still too young to know about such things."

"Don't think only you officials know what's behind the scenes," the girl retorted shrewdly. "I probably know more than you. If you ask me, I'd advise you to go to the lounge when the film has just started. By then everybody will be gone except him."

"Isn't your father going to watch it?" Qiao was puzzled.

"Only after the light is off and the film has started."

"Why?"

"For fear people might spot him and pester him with some difficult problems."

"Who would come here to catch him?"

"What're you doing here then?" Tie Hua winked. "As soon as the light's off, go in there and intercept him." This said, she handed the basket to Huo and left.

Sure enough, by doing as they were told the two of them caught Tie Jian. The chief of the Economic Commission smiled wryly, disappointed that once again he would miss the film. But he was a man of great patience. No matter how put out, he would never reveal it.

Qiao riveted his eyes on this man.

A little over sixty, he was tall, grey-haired. His polite smile showed his dignity and self-control. The deep lines on his forehead and round his eyes seemed to be the evidence of experience and wisdom acquired through arduous struggles and hardships in the old days. Under his grey, bushy eyebrows, his piercing eyes made people feel like keeping at a distance. He appeared to be questioning everything, as if warning himself to be on his guard. He knew immediately what they were there for, but he waited, silently.

"Comrade Tie Jian," Qiao blurted out, "why let the Foreign Trade Bureau take over the sales right of the products exported from our plant?"

"It's not finalized," said Tie, shaking his head.

"Why's Tong Zhen been transferred?"

"It's the municipal Party committee's decision. But she'll only be away temporarily."

"So Secretary Wang has really accepted Ji Shen's suggestion," Qiao persisted. "But does he know this is like sabotaging our plant?"

There was suddenly a trace of worry and distress in Tie's eyes. "Don't get carried away by your feelings, comrade," he said. "We must have the whole situation in mind. Ask someone to take over Tong's work and let her report to her new office as quickly as possible."

"What if the plant Party committee objects?"

"Are you talking about the committee of the Communist Party? How can a plant committee disobey the municipal committee?"

"What if she refuses to leave?"

"That's exactly what some people're waiting for. They would accuse you of running 'a family shop'. To be frank, there're people who hope you'll raise a hullabaloo and Tong will refuse to be transferred, because then they will make use of it to crush you."

Qiao drew a deep breath, rose to his feet and said to Huo, "I'm off now." He opened the door and left.

Tie gazed blankly after him while Huo's eyes remained fixed, challengingly, on his chief. "When they move one step forward," Huo complained, "you withdraw a step. When they have a request, you try to whittle it down but do what they want in the end. You're retreating bit by bit, making things impossible for us under you."

Huo had been Tie's subordinate for a long time, but still what he said hurt. Tie lost his temper. "What can I do? I'm like an eldest son's wife in a big feudal family. I'm in the middle, catching crap from all sides, from parents-in-law down to brothers and sisters-in-law. I try to iron out disagreements, but everyone complains to me. My own men are dissatisfied with me, and so are my opponents. I live as an ascetic, yet they're calling me all sorts of names. People pester me with their problems. What power do I have? If I spent all my energy on the Economic Commission, I might get something done. But what is my time taken up with?" He began to count his titles sardonically, "I'm

in charge of sports, the environment, family planning and flood control. But my job is industry. What have I got to do with ball games or the birth rate? You may think it's a sign of trust. I don't! Do you suppose I don't know that behind my back people call me 'the arbiter'?"

Huo felt a sudden compassion for this veteran. Tie looked calm and aloof, but in fact he was under a terrible strain, as if walking on a tight-rope. However, Huo remembered what he had come for. He must not be soft-hearted or he would have to return empty-handed. So he said, "Do you know what Ji Shen has done since joining the Foreign Trade Bureau?"

Tie was silent.

"He's like a country moneybags shopping in Shanghai in the old days. He wants everything he sees, the more expensive the better. As a result, he's taken in and imports a lot of junk. He simply squanders foreign currency. Why doesn't the Economic Commission look into the matter?"

Tie said coldly, "Why is Ji Shen so unscrupulous? Because he holds two trump cards. One, he protected Secretary Wang of the municipal Party committee in the Cultural Revolution; so Wang out of gratitude always supports him. Two, quite a number of cadres are hankering after foreign consumer goods. Ji Shen's an experienced hand in taking advantage of the situation. He even says publicly, 'Opposition to imports means opposition to China's modernization. It shows that ultra-Leftist ideas are still making trouble.'"

"Are you scared?" Huo asked. "The higher a man's position, the more cowardly he becomes. I've written a detailed report about the problems concerning foreign trade in our town. You know me pretty well. If I don't see things set right, I'll fight it out. If the municipality can't solve these problems, I'll take the case to the central government."

"Take it easy, Huo." Tie preferred procrastination to making a hasty decision. He would not burn his boats, nor would he allow others to do this.

But Huo would not let things slide. He insisted, "Ji Shen's transfer to the Foreign Trade Bureau last year was not in confor-

mity to the usual procedure. Since he belongs to the Electrical Machinery Plant, he must go back there."

Tie began to waver. He did not approve of that transfer himself. What was more, Ji would not be satisfied with just being in charge of foreign trade. He might already have an envious eye on Tie's post. Why not take this chance to send him back to the plant? Tie was fond of men like Qiao Guangpu, but Qiao's way of doing things sometimes worried him. Ji Shen might hold him in check. He weighed up the pros and cons from both the public and his private angle. And finally he consented. Smiling, he said cheerfully, "Huo, don't press me. I need time. Some foreigners laugh at us for our slow tempo. Well, that's how it is. There're a lot of things out of our reach. There's nothing perfect in the world anyway."

They exchanged views on certain other issues, and Huo got what he wanted. Yet he left with a heavy heart. He had known Tie Jian for some twenty years, yet quite often the man struck him as a total stranger. One minute he seemed so close, and the next so distant. He was hard to fathom. Thinking of Tie's nickname "the arbiter", Huo could not help feeling worried.

### 3

It is said that true love comes only once in a lifetime. There may be some truth in this. Though over forty, Tong Zhen loved Qiao as tenderly yet ardently as a girl. Qiao's feeling for her was less passionate.

In the evenings at home, Tong liked to chat. But Qiao, who went to the plant early in the morning and never had a siesta, used to come home exhausted. He might talk a bit about work. When his wife began to chat, he would nod off.

They saw eye to eye in work but their interests in life were different. Tong realized that but not Qiao. He was very happy with her. When he was late home and missed the English lesson on the radio, his wife would coach him, and he appreciated this immensely.

It was already eleven that night when Qiao got home. Tong saw at a glance that something was wrong. "What's up?" she asked.

"It's been decided that you're to transfer to the Economic Commission tomorrow." Qiao tried to speak calmly, to cover his frustration.

"Are you sure?" She had never dreamed that she of all people would be transferred at a time when the plant badly needed technical know-how. "Who'll take over my job then?"

"Who?" Qiao repeated sulkily. "No one for the time being. You keep the title of assistant chief engineer. Later, maybe, you can come back."

Tong forced a smile and said, "You're really too honest, too naive."

Qiao sighed and answered with a note of regret, "I shouldn't have rushed things by announcing our marriage. I meant to bind you, me and the plant together, to get you to take a fresh interest in your work. I'd no idea that we'd be accused of 'running a family shop'. Now we're paying for my rashness, and so is the plant."

Surprised and angry, Tong said, her lips quivering, "All right then. It's not too late now for us to split up. I'll go to the Economic Commission tomorrow."

Qiao looked up in astonishment and saw that her face was deathly pale. Aware, for the first time, of how blind he was to a woman's sensibilities, with a wave of his big hand he sighed.

Tong fought back her tears. What could she do? That was what her husband was like. She had forgiven him umpteen times. Today, again, she forgave him, knowing how pained he felt.

### 4

On the following day, Tie Jian called Ji Shen to his office.

Meetings, talks seemed to make up Tie's life. Drained of enthusiasm he had assumed a mask of cold reserve.

He was very reluctant to see Ji Shen, yet he had to talk affably

to him. "The production in the Electrical Machinery Plant is rocketing. There's too much work for Qiao and Shi to cope with, and they need your help. After all, you're the assistant manager."

"Oh?" Ji was taken aback. This was the last thing he had expected Tie to say. His lean, lined face flushed scarlet. After a moment's hesitation, he asked, "What about the work in the Foreign Trade Bureau?"

"You can keep the post there if you want," he continued. "But if you're too busy, let your director and the other deputy directors see to things there." What Tie meant was: he must work full-time in the plant.

Ji understood this. He could also see that Tie was not dismissing him entirely from the Foreign Trade Bureau. It was not that he hadn't the power; he hadn't the guts. He stood up and said, "Fine. There are still one or two problems in the bureau which I can't hand over to others. I'll go to the plant tomorrow. For the time being, I'll work at both places."

How could he let go the post in the Foreign Trade Bureau? He had no special interest in foreign trade, it was power that tempted him. Banqueting with foreigners, in front of cameras... this had gone to his head like strong liquor.

As soon as he got home, Ji Shen phoned Wang Guanxiong to ask how things were in the plant. Initially, Tie Jian's talk with him had been a disappointment. But on second thoughts, it pleased him. Nothing else exported through the Foreign Trade Bureau sold so well as the Electrical Machinery Plant's dynamos. If he could take over the sales right, apart from the fringe benefits to the bureau, he could make use of the demand for them to lay his hands on plenty of foreign goods. But Qiao had refused to let the sales right go, in spite of Ji's manoeuvres in the bureau. Now that he was to go back as assistant plant manager, he would be in a better position to realize his goal. But Qiao was a tough customer. If he failed to get the upper hand of him, he would not be able to control the plant.

Wang Guanxiong went straight to Ji's home after his shift. Ji, cordial in the extreme, treated him to dinner and soon steered

the conversation to what he wanted to know. Overwhelmed by this favour, after a few cups of wine Wang began to list his complaints against Manager Qiao. When he described how Qiao had laid off the casual labourers and set up a service team and how Li Gan had misappropriated funds, Ji's eyes sparkled. "Is this true?" he asked with a show of indifference.

"Every word."

"Good. You'd better write a report." Ji handed him a pen and some paper.

"What for?" Wang was puzzled.

"I must report this to the municipal Party committee. I can't trust my memory."

Wang's suspicion was dispelled. When Ji had this report, he cheerfully saw Wang off.

## 5

A few days passed. Xi Wangbei was due back with two large forgings. Qiao went to the loading dock to meet him. There a crowd had already gathered, eager to have a look at this special train.

Before long, a train chugged slowly into the plant. Qiao smiled wryly at sight of this unique train with dining-car, pantry and hard-sleeper coaches in front, and the parts of a heavy rolling mill on the middle and rear sections.

The Steel Rolling Plant in this town had ordered a heavy rolling mill from a machinery works elsewhere. The rolling mill weighed several thousand tons. When assembled, it would look like an iron hill. All the parts of the machine had been completed a year before and the Steel Rolling Plant had been keen to set it up and get it into production. The problem had been the transportation. Small bridges on the long way had needed reinforcing, the stations it had passed had been consulted. It had been almost as difficult as the Long March!

That spring, Xi had happened to order two large forgings of generator rotors from the same machinery works. Again there had

been the problem of transportation. Hearing that the Steel Rolling Plant had the same problem, Xi went to its manager, a Comrade Lin. He offered to make the arrangements and rent a freight train plus a few coaches, provided the plant covered all the expenses. Since the cost was high the manager was reluctant. Xi argued that if the rolling mill started production a month earlier, the plant would get all the money back. Otherwise, he might not get it for another two years. If the parts were not well packed, they would rust in the rain. And the plant would have to lump it!

Manager Lin was convinced. He entrusted the whole thing to Xi, who agreed on two conditions: "First, give our two forgings a lift and we'll pay for their transportation. Secondly, wherever the train stops, I'll see to the liaison work, but not accept any hospitality. Because I've cooked up the idea, and if I start living it up there's bound to be talk."

When Xi talked it over with Qiao and Shi, Qiao kept shaking his head. But since it was an agreement between the Steel Rolling Plant and the machinery works, and all Xi had asked for was a lift, he let it pass. Sure enough, the plan was carried out without a hitch. The parts of the mill and the two forgings were now arriving.

Xi jumped off a coach, looking haggard and travel-stained.

The workers unloaded the rotor forgings, which Qiao had sent right away to the Experimental Workshop.

Just then, Gu Chang, the head of the manager's office, cycled over at top speed and handed Qiao a newspaper. Qiao looked at him in surprise, then opened the paper. On the first page he saw a letter from Wang Guanxiong accusing Li Gan, their general accountant, of malpractices. It was based on the material Wang had written for Ji Shen. Ji had added some finishing touches and sent it to Secretary Wang, who had given the go-ahead for publication. Qiao skimmed through it. Sniggering, he suppressed his anger and threw the paper to Xi. As Xi read it he frowned.

"Ji Shen's back," Gu said. "He wants to hold a plant Party committee meeting right away. And Old Shi wants to see you."

Xi was shocked to hear this.

On his way back to the office block, Qiao noticed that many workers had hold of newspapers and were discussing the letter. On seeing him, they broke off to eye him in a speculative way. He slowed down deliberately, his face glowing, looking resolute. He went from shop to shop till he came to the service team's shed, inside which he could hear a great commotion.

"Baldy Wang, what a bloody hypocrite you are! You fight for each cent of your bonus, yet you write to the paper attacking the plant."

"Hit the jackpot, eh? Fame and money, you've got them both. How much did the paper pay you?"

Wang was blustering. If he couldn't clear himself, he had to brazen it out.

Qiao opened the door and spotted Du Bing among the crowd bawling at Wang. On his blue overalls were blotches of red and green paint. All the drawings on the wall had gone.

The workers thronged round the manager, all talking at the same time. Some voiced their support for Li Gan, others criticized the newspaper.

Deeply moved, Qiao gripped the shoulder of a youngster next to him. Never before had he felt so close to the workers. What a fine lot they were! He had come down on them hard, had criticized them. But now that he was in trouble they sided with him. He felt somewhat ashamed of himself.

## 6

When Qiao reached the Party committee's office, most of the seats around the long table were already occupied. He threw a glance at Ji Shen who was chatting away with a smug look on his face.

When all members of this committee had arrived, Shi Gan announced coldly, "We're holding this emergency meeting at the request of Comrade Ji Shen. Ji, will you speak first?"

Ji opened an elegant imported notebook and drawled, "Last night, Secretary Wang sent for me. He told me to look into Li Gan's case. The whole town is talking about it. Li Gan, will you tell us all about it?"

Li, quite unruffled, opened a folder and said, "From the start of the Cultural Revolution, our plant employed a thousand casual labourers every year, and their wages came to one million two hundred thousand yuan. When Manager Qiao took over, we laid them off. In the last year and a half, we've saved one million eight hundred thousand yuan. According to regulations, that money allocated for their wages shouldn't be put to any other use. But I spent a hundred thousand on bonuses for the service team, and five hundred thousand on the kindergarten and housing. I did this on the fourth of August last year, and on the same day I wrote a self-criticism. Here it is." He handed it to Shi Gan.

Xi and some others could not help chuckling.

Hu, the woman head of the organization department, asked sharply, "Since you knew the regulations why did you still do that?"

"Why not? I put the money to better use."

"But didn't you consider the consequences?"

"Dismissal from my post?"

Ji Shen broke in, "You didn't have the nerve to do that on your own, did you?"

Li grinned. "Want me to say that it was the manager who put me up to it? Sorry to disappoint you. I guessed this would happen, so I acted on my own, from the very beginning. You can check the accounts and records. All bear my signature. Qiao's neither my relative, nor my old friend. Why should I protect him? I say, this plant can do without Li Gan, but not without Qiao. The head of the financial department is not so important. If Qiao's ousted, the plant will suffer. It's up to the committee to decide. I've sorted out all my records and I'm ready to hand them over at any time."

"A hero, eh?" Ji said, tongue in cheek. "There's nothing more to discuss. We'll have to take disciplinary action."

The committee members contested this. Most of them were against punishing the accountant.

"Comrade Ji Shen," Xi asked, "are you here as a committee member or the envoy of Secretary Wang? You talk as if you were sent by the municipal Party committee. Does this mean

that the municipal Party committee has no faith in this plant Party committee? Otherwise, why didn't Secretary Wang ask Comrade Shi Gan, as he should've done, instead of telling you to look into the case? So what's the point of our discussing it? You make the decision."

This put Ji Shen on the spot.

But Hu of the organization department, who welcomed Ji's return, snapped indignantly, "Special cases should be treated in a special way. When there's a scandal like this, of course the municipal Party secretary should send someone to look into it. Li Gan's isn't an isolated case. The plant committee is partly responsible. Our committee's too weak. In our plant, what the management says counts, not what the Party committee says."

"Well said!" Ji elaborated this point. "Shi Gan's a very good comrade. But we all know he's only a figure-head. All our Party branches' secretaries are here. I doubt if the superintendents of workshops listen to you. What is our policy in running a factory? Do we want one-man leadership or leadership by the Party committee? Who is the head of this plant, the Party secretary or the manager? Is the Party the soul of the enterprise or is profit? Li Gan's mistake was no accident. We must change the policy in running the plant."

As soon as he finished, Qiao said, "Since it's me you're gunning for, why pick Li Gan as a scapegoat? If you want to discipline someone, discipline me."

Now Shi Gan, hitherto silent, stood up, his eyes sweeping the room. His stern look induced absolute quiet.

Though he could not speak clearly, his words carried weight. "Li Gan should not be penalized," he began slowly. "Let's first look at the way we're running the plant, the policy that Ji Shen was talking about. Is it right or wrong? If wrong, it's Qiao and I who should be penalized. Li just carries out our directives. If basically right, the work of the Party committee over the past year shouldn't be repudiated. If it was wrong to re-allocate those funds, that can be criticized. As for the leadership of the plant, I hold that we have adhered to the system according to which the manager assumes responsibility under the Party committee's

leadership. This can't be regarded as 'one-man leadership'. By the way, Comrade Ji Shen, are you officially back?"

"So it seems. But I'm still a deputy-director of the Foreign Trade Bureau."

This answer infuriated Qiao. But he controlled himself and said cuttingly, "An assistant plant manager under the Electrical Equipment Bureau is at the same time a deputy-director of the Foreign Trade Bureau. Incredible! But, Ji, a plant is a plant, you can't come or go as you choose. Either go back to your bureau and leave this plant for good, or come here to work full-time. If you prefer the latter, you're still in charge of construction. Before you make major decisions, please consult me. If you want to ask for leave, go to the Party committee's office."

But Ji Shen would not knuckle under. "I have to do the work assigned me by the municipal Party committee," he said.

They were still at loggerheads when the meeting broke up.

## Stalemate

### I

It was after ten o'clock when Qiao got home. Since his wife had left, he found the evenings so boring that he stayed in the plant till late. He was very hungry tonight and had a few bites of bread. He found it tasteless and put it aside, but couldn't be bothered to open a tin or cut himself some sausage. He paced the room irritably, as though something was missing.

With Tong Zhen away, he felt lost. He picked up his *Scientific English Reader*, but couldn't concentrate on it. He threw himself on to the bed, his head aching from lack of sleep, but he could not fall asleep. His drowsy mind was preoccupied with Ji Shen's sinister smile, Hu's recriminations, the threat to dismiss Li Gan, Baldy Wang's letter, the strange "arbiter", Secretary Wang who was such an unknown factor, the fight over sales rights. . . . These fantastic people and events seemed to be intertwined as if to hem him in and crush him. Letting out a bellow, he threw off the quilt and sat up, his hands clamped round his head. He felt

fearfully lonely. He jumped to his feet, rushed to the telephone and picked up the last telegram Tong had sent him. Having found her address, he lifted the receiver and asked the operator to put him through to Tong Zhen. He had a strong desire to see her. If he could talk to her, no matter how briefly, he could vent his frustration. It was not difficult to put through a long distance call at night. Presently Tong's voice sounded at the other end. Hearing it, Qiao burst out, "This is Guangpu! I must see you, right now! Come back, will you?"

Tong was taken aback by his vehemence. "What's the matter, Guangpu?" she asked.

"Well. . ." Qiao realized how muddle-headed he was. "Nothing important really. Just missing you very much."

Tong laughed, her tears brimming over. "Are you all right? Don't sit and doze off when you get home or you'll catch cold. Don't just eat bread for supper. Make yourself a soup. I forgot to tell you all this."

"You don't have to worry. I've no appetite and I can't sleep."

Alarmed by this, Tong said, "Tomorrow's Sunday, isn't it? I've got something to report to Director Huo, so I'll fly back first thing tomorrow. Have a good rest."

"Fine. As I can't sleep, I'll go to the airport now to wait for you."

"Don't be silly! I'm not sure if I can catch the plane. Promise to have a good rest. Hear me?"

"All right." Qiao rang off. After a little thought, he phoned the night duty office in the plant. "That Liu?" he asked. "Will you tell Assistant Manager Xi, Li Gan and the heads of the design office that the assistant chief engineer will be back tomorrow. If they have any problems, they should get their blueprints and materials ready. Pick important problems. Don't bother her with trifles. She can only stay one night."

### 2

Early the next morning Qiao cleaned up his flat — the first time he had done this since Tong left. Then he took a string bag

and went shopping. He had never been to a food market and had no idea what it was like on Sunday. He was stunned by the long queues. He queued up a couple of times, but then lost patience and left. He wasted half an hour like this without buying anything. Several times he wanted to give up. But there was nothing at home. What could he give his wife to eat when she came back? Would she have to queue up herself? He decided to stick it out. But that made it too late to go to the airport. When he got home with his shopping, Tong was already there.

Qiao eyed her intently.

"What's wrong with you?" she asked.

He gripped her hand and led her to the sofa. "I'm hopping mad. There's so much I want to tell you."

Tong smiled affectionately. "Get on with it then."

"Problems! What you said was right: just a few of us can't remove the obstacles. If I fail to push the rocks away, they're going to crush me to death!"

"But surely the Party will see that they're moved away."

Qiao took his wife in his arms, his cheek against her hair. Tears welled up in his eyes and fell silently on her head. She lifted his face and wiped his eyes, then asked compassionately, "Why are you crying like a little boy?"

"Yes, stupid, isn't it?" He was not embarrassed. "What's dreadful is that our economy is suffering from anemia. Not having enough blood, we can only shed tears."

"You've overworked yourself since I left. So you're run down and depressed."

Qiao said earnestly, "I've realized during your absence that we two depend on each other not only in work but in spirit. When you were here, I wasn't aware of this. When you were away, I came to know how important you were to me. . . ."

They were interrupted by a shout outside, "Is Tong Zhen in?"

Several section heads of the Electrical Machinery Plant had arrived. Tong's desk would soon be piled with designs and papers requiring her attention.

Qiao rolled up his sleeves and went into the kitchen. He had

to cook for his wife today. But what kind of meal could he make? Normally so self-confident, for once he was unsure of himself.

### 3

Tie Jian, the chief of the Economic Commission, paid a surprise visit to the Electrical Machinery Plant and asked Shi and Qiao to show him round the main workshops. A former director of the Municipal Industrial Department, he was experienced in running industry. Before very long, he noticed that the atmosphere here was quite different from most other plants. The well-swept roads, flanked with trees and flower-beds, were a refreshing sight. And hardly any loafers could be seen — something unusual in Chinese factories.

The first workshop he entered was warm. The men there seemed to be racing against time. The cement floor was spotless, white and green lines indicating the production process. The layout of the shop floor was excellent. Tie was very pleased and, as an old hand, offered one or two tips to Qiao. The way the plant was run was typical of Qiao, he thought. He said to Shi, "Qiao's certainly benefited from his tour abroad. To run a modern plant like this, we need people with vision and knowledge."

Tie Jian's visit caused a stir among the workers, who wondered what lay behind it. When he got to the office and took a seat, his enthusiasm vanished. Though he still had a smile on his face, it conveyed a vague disappointment. It seemed he was going to raise some serious issue.

Tie started off sternly, "Li Gan's made a mess of it! And by not keeping cool yourselves you've given other people a handle against you. Wang Guanxiong's accusation isn't the only one; some of your committee members are grumbling too. Secretary Wang's very angry. Right or wrong, rules are rules, and since Li Gan has broken them he can't get off scot-free. Comrade Shi, you have only two choices: Punish Li Gan, or punish both Li and Qiao — in which case you'll be involved too. It's up to you."

"Well. . . ." Shi did not know what to say.

"Go on. Take action against Li Gan and report it right away to the higher-ups."

"Nothing doing!" Qiao protested vehemently. "How serious is Li Gan's mistake after all? Tong Zhen's already been transferred. If Li's dismissed, you'll have taken my two best people. Then how can I run this plant?"

Tie's lips trembled, his hackles were up. In the municipal committee, he had spoken up for them, defended them, but instead of appreciating this they were turning a deaf ear to his advice. He retorted, "It seems I have to wash my hands of the Electrical Machinery Plant." With that he strode out of the office.

Shi Gan hurried after him and caught up with him on the landing. He wanted to persuade him to change his mind. But Tie brushed him aside. "Comrade Shi," he said, "the injury to your tongue seems to have healed, but a damaged reputation doesn't heal so easily. Now you've once more aroused public opinion against you. As a Party secretary, you've failed in your duty. You haven't held Qiao in check."

Shi Gan watched his receding back, speechless. Tie eased himself into his car which turned and sped out of the gate. Shi wondered, "How could a good Party worker become such an 'arbiter'? He poses as impartial, but in fact he supports wrong trends and opens fire on revolutionary forces. That's no way for our Party's leading comrades to behave!"

#### 4

Qiao returned to his office thoroughly depressed. He had recently been very busy and grumpy. The Foreign Trade Bureau had held up the export of his dynamos on the pretext that they had too much work to handle. As the plant was still paying taxes and fines, this meant its capital turnover was affected. Telegrams kept pouring in from foreign customers demanding delivery of the goods they had ordered. Qiao was pretty sure that this was another of Ji Shen's dirty tricks, to force him to give up the sales right. But Ji, when questioned, fobbed him off by saying that he

could do nothing about it since he had left the bureau. Qiao discussed it with Xi, but they could find no solution. Driven to desperation, he made up his mind to see Secretary Wang.

The door opened to admit Shi Gan, Li Gan and several others of the production department. Li handed him a few telegrams. Qiao looked them over and flew into a rage. Some big foreign firms were cancelling their contracts because the goods were not delivered on time. Others claimed indemnity for the long delay. The sum totalled three million yuan!

"Damn it!" Qiao flared up. "Attack from both inside and outside." He threw the telegrams on the desk and started out. But Shi barred his way to ask, "Where are you going?"

"The municipal Party committee. If I can't win this case, I'll resign. Make Ji Shen the manager. They can do whatever they like."

"How shall we answer these?" Li Gan asked, pointing to the telegrams.

"If they want to back out, let them. If our goods are delayed, they have the right to fine us. We're the ones who've broken the contracts and lost credit! Where's Xi?"

"He's directing the test of rotors in the Experimental Workshop," Li replied. "After that, he'll have to go to the warehouse which is packed with dynamos — can't hold any more. With the end of the year coming, a lot more will be turned out. Where are we to put them? He's got to tackle the problem."

Qiao turned to Shi and said, "Tell him to take charge of the production of the whole plant. If our problems can't be solved in the municipality, I'll go to Beijing."

Li reminded him, "Our sales group in Hongkong wants to know whether or not to accept new orders."

"No! The Foreign Trade Bureau is on our necks now. If we accept more orders, we'll break our contracts again and be fined more money." Having said that, Qiao turned to leave.

"Just a minute!" Shi stopped him, and after a moment's thought said, "No matter who's responsible for the delay, we Chinese are to blame. We mustn't let feeling interfere with our judgement, or lose our temper with our customers."

"Yes! Right!" Li supported him.

Shi told Li Gan, "Reply to our customers in good faith. We'll pay for their losses according to our contracts. Explain to those who want to cancel their contracts that, first, we admit our fault, secondly, we hope they'll wait and we'll dispatch the products as soon as we can. Accept new orders in Hongkong and sign contracts immediately. We can't turn away prospective customers. Qiao, what do you think?"

Qiao looked at the Party secretary for a moment, then signalled abruptly to Li Gan. "Do as Shi says."

Li and the others left in high spirits.

Shi fixed his sharp eyes on Qiao, looking very serious. "Qiao," he said, "what's the matter with you these days? You lose your temper far too easily. What do you mean by resigning? Forgotten your resolution? Forgotten what you said when you hauled me back here? The truth is, I'm raring to go now. The boat is in mid-stream, but you want to throw away the pole! You're not yourself! You ought to have been prepared for all this. The climax is yet to come."

Lowering his eyes, Qiao muttered his agreement.

"You stick to your work here," Shi went on more mildly. "Leave the other business to me. First I'll go to the municipal Party committee. If nothing comes of that, I'll round up Director Huo and go to Vice-minister Che of the Ministry of Machine Building. If necessary, we may ask him to take the case to the State Council. If all this should fail, we can give up the sales right, but our dynamos mustn't be delayed any more. Anyway, all money earned goes to the state."

Before Qiao could speak, there was a sudden hubbub of voices outside the window. The noise came nearer and nearer, approaching the door.

As soon as Shi and Qiao stepped outside, they were surrounded by a crowd of people all talking at once. Some even gripped Qiao's sleeve. Impossible to hear what they were saying.

Ma Changyou, the old fitter just returned from the technical team's tour, waved vigorously to quiet the others down. "Stop making such a row! Now listen to me! Manager Qiao belongs

to the Electrical Machinery Plant, to its nine thousand workers and staff members. We workers support him. No one can dismiss him at random. We need him! We trust him!"

"Hear! Hear!" the others exclaimed. "We need him! We trust him!"

The old man continued, "Let's send two representatives to the municipal Party committee. Tell them what the workers think of Qiao."

"Fine! Ma counts for one..." There was another roar of approval.

Shi called for silence. In a calm voice, he said, "Who says Qiao's been dismissed? Don't you believe it! I give you my word as Party secretary. If Qiao were to be dismissed, I'd have to be punished first. I've done less work than he has but made more mistakes."

The workers looked at the Party secretary and were silent.

A sudden sting in his eyes, Shi shook his head and cried, "If you trust me, I'll be your representative. I'll convey your support for Manager Qiao to the municipal Party committee."

"Hear! Hear!"

Qiao did not speak. Fighting back tears, he gripped Shi's hands, then headed for a workshop.

Shi Zhongxing

## The Re-election

It was dusk as a grey sedan drove smoothly into the campus of Dongfang University and pulled up outside the entrance of the Party committee offices. Back from a meeting in the municipality, Jiang Hao, secretary of the university Party committee, entered the building, a bulging portfolio under his arm. He seldom looked in the mirror, but at that moment he could not help pausing in front of the one in the hall, stroking the hair at his temples. Lean and neat in appearance, he had a slightly weary look. His grey hairs and lines were increasing. However, he felt very fit.

The only item left on the agenda of the university Party congress was the re-election for the Party committee. The list of candidates had been distributed to all the department representatives for consideration. At the meeting in the municipality that afternoon, Jiang had reported on the progress of the re-election. Now, as soon as he stepped into his office, he sent for the director of the Party committee office. When he arrived, Jiang asked in

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This story (« 改选 ») by Shi Zhongxing (史中兴) has been translated from *People's Literature* (« 人民文学 ») No. 10, 1979. Shi Zhongxing, in his forties, is an editor of *Wen Hui Bao*, Shanghai.

a rather relaxed tone, "Have all the departments finished discussing the list of the candidates?"

Shen Risheng, the capable and experienced director answered tersely, "I've written a brief report on it and have had it mimeographed." With that, he carefully placed on Jiang's desk a copy of the report smelling strongly of fresh ink. Jiang liked efficiency. The relaxing of the crow's-feet near the corners of his eyes showed he was satisfied.

Taking up the report, Jiang glanced at his watch. It was exactly eight o'clock, time for the news broadcast that he never missed. He turned on the transistor radio on his desk and heard the warm, mellifluous voice of the announcer reporting, "Mei Guoren, a lecturer in the Department of Physics, Dongfang University, has done some important research on the energy spectrum that has aroused the interest of scientists both at home and abroad." Jiang listened attentively and then phoned Ding Shancheng, deputy secretary of the Party committee.

"Hello Ding, did you hear the broadcast? Mei Guoren's important research on the energy spectrum has just been announced!"

Apparently Ding did not know the news, as he murmured through the receiver, "So what? We all know the Americans\* are far more advanced than us in scientific research. We can't compare with them!"

"Americans!?" Jiang raised his voice. "It's Mei Guoren, a lecturer in the Physics Department, the one who was cleared of being a Rightist last month. You must see to it that his title is restored as soon as possible." As he replaced the receiver, Ding's answer, both amusing and annoying, still lingered in his ears.

He took up the copy of the report again. It was well-organized and compact. The general response of the representatives was good. They warmly supported the candidates, believing that those selected were proper and reliable, completely in keeping with the wishes of all the Party members, administrative staff, lecturers and students. The report analysed the three characteristics of the list: it included a large proportion of old revolutionaries, a few

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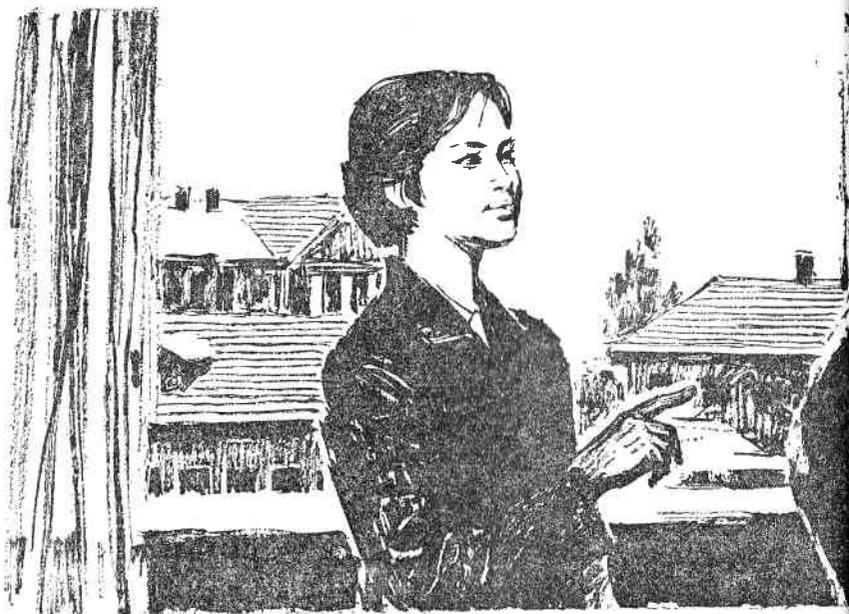
\*"American" is pronounced *meiguo ren* in Chinese, which is similar to the name Mei Guoren.

famous academics and not one person who had been mixed up with the "gang of four". Jiang was somewhat cheered by that, but he thought the analysis was too sweeping, as it overlooked the glaring fault, that there were hardly any young candidates on the list. Jiang had heard such opinions at the group discussions. Why didn't the report include these? He asked Shen for the notes of two group discussions, one from the departments of liberal arts, the other from the science departments. As he leafed through them slowly, a passage in the one from the science departments aroused his attention. It read:

In 1952 the average age of the members of our first Party Committee was thirty-one. That of the candidates this time is fifty-seven. Isn't this a bit too old?

Jiang frowned as he read on:

What is the criterion for nominating a candidate? Does it depend on his political character and ability to lead, or is it



merely because he was formerly a secretary or committee member?

Jiang murmured in agreement. The questioner sounded reasonable and had voiced some of his own thoughts. Jiang was fully aware that the masses would oppose his nominating Ding, but since all the other deputy Party secretaries had already been reinstated, he thought he could not make an exception of Ding. He wondered who had been the speaker. When he saw it was Tang Zhaolin, his eyes flashed with excitement.

Since Jiang had only recently come back, he did not know much about the changes among the leading personnel in the university during the past few years. But he had some impression of Tang. It was on the third day after his return that Ding had submitted an application to him for examination and approval, for the importation of a monocrystal furnace. This embarrassed Jiang, for he did not know its use or cost. As he was about to ask some comrades in the Science Department for details, in came a slim



and frail-looking woman in blue overalls. She claimed that the Party committee had made a mistake in the application. What their department wanted was an energy spectrum apparatus and not a monocrystal furnace, which they had already successfully trial-produced and which would have cost one million yuan to import. Jiang broke out in a cold sweat. Had he casually signed the form, the state would have wasted all that money. Before the woman left, she suggested seriously, "All leading comrades in the Party committee should study the rudiments of the natural sciences so that they can become more professional. This way they can avoid such confusions." The woman was Tang, secretary of the Party branch of the Physics Department. She seemed to have a lot of complaints about the leading cadres, who, for a long time, had lived in a blissful state of ignorance.

Shen entered again. Pointing at the notes of the discussions Jiang asked, "Why didn't you enter Comrade Tang Zhaolin's opinions in the report?"

His cheek muscles twitching, Shen replied, "She's always complaining about our old comrades. Better not spread her views."

"Nonsense!" Giving Shen a stern look, Jiang said nothing more.

Noticing the change in Jiang's expression, Shen walked out and, in no time, returned with a picture, which he put on Jiang's desk.

"Have a look at this," he said.

It was a cartoon of a man who looked like a leading cadre lounging in an armchair. A pen in one hand, he was signing papers, while his eyes were glued to the *Reference News*.

"Who did this?" Jiang asked, gazing at the picture.

"A young lecturer in the Physics Department. Probably he was influenced by the secretary of their Party branch!"

Jiang made no response.

Blinking, Shen added, "The Physics Department lecturers' Party branch didn't do a good job this time. Professor Shao Kaifan was nominated as a candidate, but he still hasn't accepted the nomination. The old fellow said he wasn't suitable for the job and asked the Party committee to reconsider the matter."

"You didn't mention this in your report either," Jiang remarked, looking into Shen's eyes.

The director was silent, but the muscles on his cheeks suddenly tensed.

Jiang said no more. Having gone through some of the papers, he left the office.

## 2

In front of the Party committee offices, the neatly planted holly and tall poplars made clear shadows in the moonlight and the street lamps. The faint fragrance of winter jasmine and a late-blossoming red plum tree was carried over by the breeze. All sounds were hushed on the campus. However, from the lights which shone through the windows of the buildings, Jiang imagined the people studying hard, eagerly trying to realize China's modernization. As he walked past the old lecture hall behind a row of pine trees, he heard a woman's clear, mellow voice coming from it.

She was saying, "Achievements like the high-speed electronic computer and remote control in guided missiles and in space flights are based on research into solid-state physics. The solid energy spectrum Comrade Mei Guoren now working on is basic to understanding the secret of solidity."

Who could it be? Jiang halted, puzzled. There were usually no evening lectures. Making his way round the pines he came closer to the lecture theatre and looked through a window. The auditorium was full. Many in the audience were from the university administration. The lecturer in the blue overalls standing on the rostrum was none other than Tang! From her pretty face, with its long brows, her dark eyes flashed with a soft, fervent light. Jiang recalled Tang's suggestion at the group discussion on the work report of the Party committee that a basic course on science should be arranged for the Party and administrative cadres. He had not realized it had already started. For fear of interrupting her lecture, he did not enter, but leaned against the window listening. Tang was good at connecting her

subject with everyday phenomena, explaining the profound in such simple terms that even Jiang could understand most of the contents. This lecture gave him a clear picture of the significance and value of Mei Guoren's work.

Jiang had not expected that he would have been diverted by Tang's lecture on his way to visit Professor Shao. As soon as it was over, he quickly skirted round the row of pines and hastened there.

Professor Shao lived in a two-storeyed building at the east end of the living quarters for staff and workers. In front of the door was a small plot of paprika. As Jiang passed the plot he heard a loud crash coming from upstairs. He hurriedly entered and ran upstairs, where he found the professor standing on the desk trying to reach some books on the top shelf of the bookcase. A copy of *Solid-state Physics*, as thick as a brick, had slipped from his hand and smashed the thermos flask on the floor. Mrs Shao, having heard the sound, rushed into the room and scolded him while sweeping up the fragments, "You're crazy climbing up and down like that! Don't you know you're no longer young!"

Chuckling Shao smoothed back his few hairs. With a boyish look, he countered, "You think I'm old? My seventy-three years are like thirty-seven to me!" When he raised his eyes to find the secretary of the Party committee standing smiling by the door, he immediately blushed like a primary schoolchild. As he was about to step on the chair, Jiang approached the desk and helped him down lightly.

"Professor Shao," Jiang teased him, "your mountaineering activities are no joke!"

Shao laughed, "A false alarm! Just a false alarm!"

"He's not often so happy," his quiet and refined wife explained. "He heard from the broadcast that Guoren's research had caught the attention of physicists. He's too happy for words."

Bending down to pick up the book, Shao said jubilantly, "I'm so happy because Mei Guoren's work is a breakthrough in research on solid-state physics!"

"Also because his teacher has taught him well!" Jiang laughed.

The old professor offered Jiang a seat and then, taking his,

sighed, "I'm ashamed to say that as his tutor I didn't do much. Zhaolin played the key role."

"You mean Tang Zhaolin?"

Turning to face Jiang, Shao continued, "Yes. She borrowed in her own name a great amount of materials Mei Guoren needed for his research."

"Why did she have to do that?" Jiang wondered.

"Because Mei Guoren was once labelled as a Rightist," replied Shao, checking his anger.

"But it's absurd!" Jiang exploded. "When his case was cleared it meant he was never a Rightist."

"Comrade Jiang Hao," Shao said sincerely, "it wasn't too difficult to implement the circular the Central Party Committee issued to clear the names of the misjudged Rightists, though there were some obstructions. But it is really hard to change ideas already formed in people's minds. Excuse my frankness, but in our university there are some people who like to start political campaigns, criticizing and denouncing others, separating them into left, right and centre and labelling lecturers as bourgeois intellectuals. Otherwise they'd feel life dull, they'd be out of work!"

Jiang gravely waited for Shao to go on.

The old professor took a sip of tea and continued, "Long before the Cultural Revolution, Mei Guoren's Rightist label was removed,\* but he was transferred to the reference room. He worked very hard there. Apart from doing his work methodically, he chose himself a subject on which he wrote an article and brought it to me for comments. It happened that Zhaolin was elected secretary of the Party branch, so I asked for her opinion. She laughed at my fears and said that since his Rightist label had been removed, he was certainly no longer a Rightist. She sent the article I had checked to an academic journal. But before it came out, I was already under severe criticism. They said I had ganged up with the Rightists to overthrow the Communist leadership. Zhaolin also suffered much. But a person's strength of character is tested in a crisis..." Shao broke off, suddenly

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\* Meaning he was officially considered as having mended his ways.

changing the topic, "Jiang, many comrades in our department nominated Tang Zhaolin for a Party committee member, so why put me on the list just to make up the number?"

"You shouldn't talk like that," Jiang corrected him. "Your actions in the Cultural Revolution, your achievements in teaching and research are known to all."

"Well, I'm seventy-three and I can't ignore the law that the new will replace the old. Better to use my limited time doing something worthwhile than being a committee member only in name." At that moment a meteor shot across the sky outside the window. The sight struck a chord in his heart. "Look," he added, "it blazed before it perished. I hope I can shed my light once again — revising this *Solid-state Physics* of mine."

Seized by a wave of warmth, Jiang declared, "Professor Shao, you've so much energy, you'll certainly complete it!"

"You approve my request?" Shao was as delighted as a child. "To be honest, a man like me isn't cut out for committee work. They put me on the list merely because they want my name. In my opinion, those who know nothing about teaching or research work and feel proud of their ignorance are not qualified to be leading cadres either. We should add one more modernization to the present four, that is, the modernization of our cadres! Promote those who have both professional knowledge and the ability to lead. In fact, Zhaolin isn't so young now. She's forty-one. I became a professor at the age of thirty." He turned to look at Jiang. "How old were you when you entered the city as the army representative to lead our university in 1949? Barely thirty?"

Jiang left Shao's home, his mind in a turmoil. He walked slowly, gazing thoughtfully ahead. As the lights in the classroom building and the library were put out one after another, the campus gradually grew dim. The night breeze felt a little chilly. He thought he had made a considered judgement on the different aspects of the nomination, but now he was challenged by Tang's opinions and Shao's sincere remarks. The problem tugged at his heart like a hook, forcing him to reconsider the matter.

A tricycle pulling a trailer with an oxygen cylinder passed him

from behind. The rider ringing the bell was a woman. At the sight of her frail figure, Jiang could not help calling out, "Tang Zhaolin!"

She stopped as Jiang hurried forward and asked with concern, "Why haven't you turned in yet?"

"After hearing the news over the broadcast," replied Tang, "our comrades are full of enthusiasm. Another night and we'll do away with our outdated process for silicon slice polishing. By the way, we've been criticized by the organization department for having made too much use of Mei Guoren. But we don't agree with that. We've approved by four votes to one at the Party branch committee to recommend Comrade Mei to be the director of the energy spectrum teaching and research group. Here is our formal report." With that she fished out a paper from her pocket and handed it to Jiang.

### 3

As Jiang went into his home, his daughter was still up, watching television. Another woman was sitting beside her.

"Oh, Guohua, it's you!" Jiang hailed her.

"I've been waiting for you for ages," said Li Guohua sharply. She was Ding Shancheng's wife and the director of the organization department. The couple were Jiang's old friends, and so Li always acted patronizingly towards Jiang. From the disturbed look of his visitor who had come at such a late hour, Jiang guessed that she must have something urgent to discuss with him. So he poured out a cup of tea and placed it before her.

Sure enough, after taking a sip of tea, Li became serious. Straightening her back, she began in an official tone, "For tomorrow's election, I've checked everything once more, including the meeting place and the ballot boxes. It's all ready, except for one thing that I want to report to you."

Jiang looked attentive.

"Someone's inciting people not to vote for Ding!"

"Who?" asked Jiang, eyeing Li sceptically.

"She's not an ordinary Party member." Li began to lose her temper. "She's Tang Zhaolin, the Party branch secretary!"

Remaining calm, Jiang cast another glance at her, then said, "I've heard that. Tang spoke out her views at the group discussion over the candidates. But there's nothing wrong in that."

Jiang's composure annoyed Li. Her eyes flamed as she straightened up again and raged, "But it's terrible to whip up public opinion. In the past, the 'gang of four' got rid of veteran cadres by labelling them as 'capitalist roaders'. Now some people want to throw them out through elections!" Staring at Jiang she warned, "Jiang, you've only just come back. Don't underestimate the bad influence of the 'gang of four'!"

Jiang glanced at her coolly and said, "No, we mustn't. All the comrades, to varying degrees, have been influenced."

Li resumed, "Don't think she's only got complaints about Ding. She's also aiming at you. Didn't she mount the platform and criticize you at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution?"

"So what?" Jiang laughed, completely unruffled. "Didn't I make mistakes? Should we bring up old scores?"

"Why do you have such a good impression of her?" Li retorted, her thin brows frowning. "Don't you know she can't even find herself a man?"

Jiang immediately looked stern and then said abruptly, "Guo-hua, you're in charge of the organizational work. How can you speak about a comrade like that?"

"Jiang," she pouted in anger, "why can't you listen to what I'm saying?"

"I heard everything you said," Jiang replied, turning his penetrating, serious eyes on her. "I'll find out what you've told me about Comrade Tang Zhaolin. But don't talk as if she has no good points just because she's made some sharp criticisms of Ding."

Feeling wronged, Li sneered and remarked, "You know, Jiang, we waited for you to come back day and night. Now you're here at last. But you, you don't care about us. You simply turn a deaf ear to your old comrades-in-arms!" She stood up, gave Jiang a look and left in a huff.

Silently Jiang watched her figure receding. After some time, he rose to his feet and strolled to the window. A breath of cool air blew against his burning face. Within him there seemed to be a storm gathering momentum. He paced up and down the room with his hands in his pockets. Suddenly he touched a piece of paper, reminding him of Tang's report. Drawing it out, he was amazed at the neat, delicate handwriting. Wasn't it like that of the comrade for whom he had been looking? An unforgettable scene flashed back in his mind...

One day during the Cultural Revolution he had been taken to the university to be criticized. The campus was enveloped in a curtain of darkness when the "repudiation meeting" ended. Many of the leaders of the various factions presiding over the meeting started to beat up Jiang, punching and kicking him, until he became unconscious. The man, who was supposed to take Jiang home, pushed him out of the jeep barely two hundred metres from the university. Jiang came round to find himself lying in bed at home. All was quiet. In the pale light of the lamp, he saw by his pillows a strip of paper torn from a notebook, on which was written: "Correct your mistakes, uphold the truth and you'll still be our good leader!" Obviously it was left by someone who had brought him home. Though he was a mass of bruises, he felt the warmth of that brief note. He neither complained nor grieved, but felt he had gained strength and confidence after that ordeal.

Shortly after the downfall of the "gang of four" he was appointed director of the department of culture and education under the municipal Party committee. At once his courtyard was as crowded as a market-place; visitors came in an endless stream, including those who had repudiated him most mercilessly and those who had shouted slogans most vociferously to oust him from office. Only the one who had rescued him never showed up.

Now this familiar handwriting suddenly appeared before his eyes. He hurried to his desk, opened the drawer and fumbled for a blue-covered notebook from which he took out the strip of paper he had treasured since then. After carefully identifying the handwriting as the same as that of the report Tang had given

him, he thumped the desk and cried out, "It was Tang Zhaolin and no mistake!"

#### 4

At five o'clock in the afternoon on the following day, the result of the election was posted up in the auditorium. On a large sheet of red paper, the name of Jiang Hao occupied the first place on the list with 315 votes, only three less than unanimous. The last name was Ding Shancheng's, with 159 votes, just half the total number. On the right side of the paper were the names of those comrades not on the list who had been voted for. The first name belonged to Tang Zhaolin, who coincidentally had the same number of votes as Ding.

Jiang, chairing the meeting, turned to face Ding, but his seat was empty and only a glass of water was left on the table.

No sooner had Jiang returned to his office than the door banged open and in came Ding with heavy footsteps. His face grim, his fleshy jaw quivering, he slumped into the sofa silently puffing on his pipe. Jiang poured him a glass of water and said gently, "You've got to face up to the election results."

Ding pulled the pipe out of his mouth and snorted, "They've made a fool of me!"

But Jiang felt quite the contrary. He had not expected that, instead of just ticking the names on the set list, the voters would express their own wishes and fully exercise their democratic rights. But it was such an amazing change in the university that he was delighted. He pointed out to Ding, "You should consider the reason why so many comrades didn't vote for you."

"The reason?" Ding breathed hard. "I joined the revolution in 1938 and became the deputy secretary of this Party committee in 1958. The 'gang of four' persecuted me and dismissed me from office. Now the gang's been overthrown. Aren't I qualified to be a Party committee member?"

Meanwhile Jiang's eyes fixed on the portrait of the late Premier Zhou on the wall. Suddenly he turned to Ding. "Aren't you ashamed to talk like that, Ding? Why did you join the rev-

olution? To be a Party committee member or a deputy Party secretary?"

This stung Ding and he was at a loss for words for some time.

In a louder voice, Jiang continued, "In those days you were a brave and capable company commander. But these past years, how well have you done your work in the university? You're in charge of the organizational work and personnel, but how well do you know your staff? We Communists mustn't occupy a post without doing a stroke of work. Carry on if you are fit for the job but if you aren't, be sensible and let those who are more capable take your post. Otherwise we'll never modernize our country. The people have the right to decide in electing the leading body. An official post isn't something you can ask for. The gang's thinking has infected us all, so even we old fellows don't have a natural immunity!"

Ding drew on his pipe for a while, before he quietened down and answered, "Some people have certainly been infected by the gang and Tang Zhaolin's one of them! This unusual election is the result of her doings!"

Pacing up and down the room, Jiang bit his lower lip trying to keep calm. After a long time, partly in reply to Ding and partly talking to himself, he said, "If Tang has really stirred up things, it's like a cool fresh breeze which will blow away our stale ideas."

"Jiang!" Ding shouted. "You trust her so much, but do you know her character?"

Casting Ding a glance, Jiang waited for him to go on.

At that moment Professor Shao came in. He had come to go with Jiang to a banquet.

As if preparing for a new assault, Ding filled his pipe, lit it and took two long draws. Then with a twitch of his nose he said, "She even turned against her boyfriend at the critical moment!"

"What do you mean?" Jiang queried, staring at him.

"During the Cultural Revolution she made a clean break with her boyfriend because he had written a big-character poster to

criticize Zhang Chunqiao\* and was labelled as a counter-revolutionary.”

Amazed and furious at this distortion, the old professor looked at Ding seriously and declared, “Deputy Secretary Ding, you’ve slandered her.”

Ding was struck dumb by the form of the address. Forcing a hollow laugh he countered, “Professor Shao, I know Tang Zhaolin is one of your favourites, but you shouldn’t conceal her faults!”

“What? On the contrary, I’ve talked too little about her good points.”

Then the professor simply seated himself on the armchair next to Ding and, turning to Jiang, added, “I’ll tell you, Zhaolin’s fiancé was Shen Risheng. The reason why she broke with him is quite a different story from the one Ding has told.”

What made Tang break with Shen the day after the poster? Many people were still in the dark. Shao also had not known what was behind it at first, because Shen spread the rumour in favour of himself, while Tang refused to say a word about the matter. But one unforgettable, joyful evening in October 1976 after the downfall of the “gang of four”, back from the celebration parade, Tang accompanied Shao home, where they talked to their hearts’ content. There, unable to refuse Shao’s repeated request, Tang finally told him the truth.

“You see, Professor Shao,” Tang began, “he signed the poster with me, but the next day when those who had criticized Zhang Chunqiao were being interrogated he came and whispered to me, ‘Write a self-criticism quick! People who have been misled will not be punished. When this has blown over, I guarantee that nothing will happen to you.’ I asked him how he could be so sure. He said mysteriously, ‘I’ve made preparations and already sent Zhang an announcement.’ I didn’t get the meaning of it at first. Later he told me he had sent a letter to Zhang Chunqiao, warning him of the ‘new tendency in the class struggle’ — that some people were plotting a massive action directed against Zhang. No wonder Shen did not let me do the actual writing of

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\* One of the “gang of four”.

the poster, nor did he help to copy it. He had made a plan for both of us to escape trouble by a cunning manoeuvre. Imagine it, Professor Shao! How could I spend my life with someone like that? The very thought of it makes me vomit!”

So Shen and Tang had parted with each other and gone their different ways. Tang and those who had criticized Zhang Chunqiao had a rough time of it, while Shen, after making a show of criticizing himself, was still kept on the revolutionary committee — then the leading body of the university. . . .

As Shao was narrating, Ding looked more glum amidst the tobacco smoke. Jiang paced the room again, his indignation rising. After his return several months ago, Ding had recommended Shen to be the director of the Party committee office, saying that he was the outstanding hero against the “gang of four” in the whole university. Jiang suddenly halted and, looking at Ding with his sharp eyes, said, “Ding, I don’t think we should get too involved in the past, but you ought to have told me the facts. Didn’t you know something about them?”

“Deputy Secretary Ding was out of his post then,” Shao put in. “Perhaps he didn’t know everything. Perhaps —” He suddenly checked himself.

Jiang seemed to have read the professor’s mind. Relentlessly he took up the thread of his words, “Ding, perhaps it was because Shen recommended you as the vice-director of the revolutionary committee of the Foreign Languages Department after your release from detention?” Not waiting for Ding to reply, he continued, “We mustn’t just consider our own advantages and cast all our principles to the winds. Why report on someone in such a one-sided way? You weighed up all the advantages and disadvantages before you spoke!”

His head drooping, Ding kept puffing on his pipe, as if it could help him out of a tight corner.

“Ding,” Jiang went on earnestly, “Tang whom you despise has got as many votes as you! Which one of you do you think should be elected?”

“You’re the secretary of the Party committee. You’ve the right

to decide," Ding replied in a huff. Then he shoved the pipe in his pocket, rose and left.

Ding's remarks set Jiang thinking: As the secretary of the Party committee, should he regard the election as a mere formality? In Ding's eyes there were no representatives, no masses. Everything was decided by the person in power. Why was this erroneous view so deeply embedded in his mind? The outcome of the election and Ding's strong reaction had suggested very serious problems.

## 5

After Ding's departure, Shao said apologetically, "Comrade Jiang, I was a bit too outspoken. Perhaps because I'm partial towards Zhaolin."

"No." Jiang leaned slightly forward, his eyes sparkling. "This evening you've helped me remove some veils from my eyes so that I can see a really good comrade. When we re-elect the committee members tomorrow, I'll shift my vote from Ding to Tang!"

The car parked by the office building honked to remind them it was waiting. Taking a look at his watch, Shao told Jiang, "It's nearly time to go."

"I'm ready," Jiang said. "Let's take the way round by the Physics Department."

That morning a delegation of physicists from Europe had visited the university and were to be given a banquet that evening by their hosts in the municipality. Jiang and Shao were naturally invited. As Mei Guoren was away attending a meeting in Beijing, they had to go without him. The guests, greatly impressed by Tang's treatise on the energy spectrum, had made a special request to exchange views with her.

The car stopped at the gate of the lab in the Physics Department. Both Jiang and Shao got out. Just then the small figure of Tang in blue overalls appeared at the gate. She rushed over to greet them excitedly, "Professor Shao, Comrade Jiang, we've succeeded in improving our silicon slice polishing technique!"

Shao laughed delightedly, "I only suggested that the other day, and you've done it so soon!"

Jiang said nothing at first, noticing some grease and sweat on Tang's face and a speck of blood on her left cheekbone. Suddenly he asked, "Comrade Tang, have you read Engels' article about Carl Schorlemmer?"

"Yes," she answered with flashing eyes, stroking back her hair with one hand. "Schorlemmer was a loyal German Marxist and a fine chemist. He often went to see Engels with blood or cuts on his face."

Nodding thoughtfully Jiang said, "Yes, in order to modernize our country, we need a large number of such talents and cadres."

Tang hurried to wash and change her clothes and then got in the car. Beside the driver, she stared silently ahead, pondering over what Jiang had said as the car started and moved off.

Jiang gently drew a slip of paper out of his breast pocket and looked at it for several seconds before handing it to her in the front seat. "Have you ever seen this, Comrade Tang?" he asked.

At the sight of her own handwriting, the scene of that terrible night when Jiang was beaten black and blue reappeared in her mind. She felt her old anger rising. With an effort she controlled her feelings, turned round and said as calmly as she could, "You still keep it, Comrade Jiang. You're certainly a good collector!"

Shao could no longer remain silent. "What are you two talking about?" he asked.

Giving him a nudge, Jiang told him the story. Then the old professor said to Tang, "Zhaolin, you never mentioned it to me."

"It wasn't worth mentioning," she said smiling. "As it happened, I was riding a tricycle with a trailer to fetch an oxygen cylinder because all the others in the lab had stopped work to join in the political struggle. Not far from the gate of the university, I spotted someone lying at the roadside. It was Secretary Jiang, so I took him home." She paused, before adding with an uneasy look, "Fancy, Comrade Jiang, you still keep it!"

A warm wave came over Jiang's heart. The more she took it

as nothing important, the more he treasured it. His thoughts turned back to the election. Who should be finally elected?

Contrary to what Ding had said, Jiang felt he had no right to make the decision. At the meeting, the representatives would make their clear and unmistakable choice.

*Illustrated by Chen Yuxian*



*Huang Fei*

## Emergency Notice

**F**AGGED out after a day's hard work, Ren Lin was dropping off when suddenly a loud knocking on his door woke him. "Emergency notice!" called the voice of Old Li, the elderly caretaker of the Party committee office.

Ren dared not delay. He hurriedly turned on the light, draped a coat over his shoulders and opened the door. Following a blast of cold air, Old Li stepped in and handed him the note, on which were some lines written with a fountain-pen in a bold, vigorous hand.

### *Emergency Notice*

All Party committee members on the day shift (except the old, weak and sick) must assemble at the gate of the plant to maintain the roads at 6 a.m.

Note: 1. Do not wear plastic-soled shoes. 2. Better not come by bicycle. If you do, see that your tyres are not too hard and use the brakes as little as possible.

Gao Hao

January 10, 1979

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This story (« 紧急通知 ») by Huang Fei (黄飞) has been translated from *People's Literature* (« 人民文学 ») No. 11, 1979. Huang Fei, 32, is a factory worker of Luoyang, Henan.

"To maintain the roads?" Ren grumbled in bewilderment. He had expected some new task issued from the higher authorities. He turned to glance at the clock. It was 2:30 a.m. Surprised, he asked, "Hasn't Gao turned in yet?"

"No."

"Tell him, I want him to go straight to bed," Ren said as he took out his pen and signed his name on the sheet. Then he read it over carefully once again before he asked sceptically, "To maintain what roads?"

"Don't know," the old man answered coldly. Taking the paper, he left.

"You old fogey!" Ren swore, well aware that Old Li harboured a grudge against him.

Old Li was not in good health and his wife worked in another province. He had requested several times that one or other be transferred so that they could look after each other. Ren had promised to take the matter into consideration. But since both work units were reluctant to part with an experienced worker, a year had passed and nothing had been done.

"You must make allowances for our difficulties," Ren thought to himself. "We leaders are very concerned about production. What time have we to attend to small things like that?" He closed the door angrily, then set the alarm clock for 5 a.m. and slipped into bed, while turning off the light.

It was the depth of winter; the north wind was howling outside. There was no denying what a joy it was to be warm and snug in bed. Ren yawned wearily, hoping to get back to sleep immediately, but in vain, for the question lingered in his mind: "What roads need maintaining so urgently? Those inside and outside the plant are asphalt. Do they need maintaining? Even if they do, why can't we wear plastic soles and keep our bicycle tyres soft? A queer old codger, Gao, disturbing people at this ungodly hour! Anyway, better try to catch some sleep." He made a futile effort, for he could not drive Gao from his mind. An incident which had happened two days before troubled him.

That afternoon Ren, on his way to attend a meeting, had been stopped by his secretary in front of the office building. Pointing

to a small, slight old man, she had said, "That's Party Secretary Gao Hao." If it had not been for the official notification of his appointment Ren could hardly have believed that this was the long awaited first secretary of the plant Party committee, the veteran cadre persecuted for more than ten years by Lin Biao and the "gang of four". Clad in faded overalls, he was pushing an old bicycle without a chain guard, a string bag hanging from the handlebars and a bedding roll on the carrier. He seemed like an honest man of action. Ren was beside himself with joy.

At the meeting of the Party committee, Gao suggested a few points to be observed by all concerned. First, they could call him whatever they liked except by his official title; second, no personal privileges for him whatsoever; and third, comrades who wanted to discuss something or make suggestions were always welcome. He would be pleased to hear them out and seriously attend to their problems. Ren took the floor then, calling on everyone to learn from Comrade Gao Hao. However, he said to himself, "It's possible a leading cadre new to a unit pretends to be better than he is. But hasn't he gone a bit too far? I've been trying by every means to avoid complaints, yet he invites them! There are more than three thousand workers in the plant including quite a few trouble-makers. If each of them raises one problem, he'll be swamped! As Party secretary, he has to attend to daily business, hasn't he? So it's just impossible!" But some events forced Ren to admit he was being rather subjective.

According to the rules, the housing section allocated a two-roomed flat to Gao, but he stubbornly refused to move into it. Instead, he suggested that the section should give first consideration to Sun, a turner in the machine-repairing workshop. How could Gao, a newcomer, know that Sun's seven-member family of three generations lived in a very small flat? In fact, the arrangement for Gao was not a special privilege; all the plant leaders were similarly treated. But Gao said that since he was not with his family, he could make do with any room. He insisted on moving into a small one, of eight square metres, in the plant area.

Yesterday during the lunch break, the plant orderly had want-

ed to buy his food for him, but Gao had pointed to his legs and laughed, "I've also got a pair!" Lining up, he chatted with the other workers and staff members. This move of his proved very effective. Those department and section chiefs, who were fond of good food, were too scared to get special meals prepared by the kitchen. Grumbling and muttering behind his back, one of them said, "So the new Party committee secretary lines up to buy his food. Well, I never!"

That afternoon Ren had accompanied Gao to inspect the residential section. Gao asked suddenly, "Is glass difficult to buy?" Assuming that someone had asked Gao to buy glass, Ren said, "It's in short supply in town, but we have plenty in our plant. How many squares do you want?" Unexpectedly Gao said smiling, "I've counted sixty-seven windows pasted with paper. It's pretty cold these days, you know!" Ren thought in embarrassment, "I walk past here every day. Why didn't I think of this? Gao, you really can stir up things!"

Things like these had happened several times. Ren believed that Gao not only liked fussing about small things, but also going into details. For instance, when they had walked past a worker's house, Gao halted hearing a baby crying and a man cursing. Every baby cries. That's natural. But after listening for a while, Gao pushed the door open and went in. Unable to say anything, Ren followed suit. Inside, a young man was in a frantic rush, frying vegetables while scolding, "Carry on! Carry on! I'll be late in a minute, and you're still crying!" On the bed there was a child, no more than a year old, wailing its head off. Gao looked round. There was nobody else there. He walked to the bed and picked up the child, cleaning his face with his handkerchief and comforting him. The child stopped crying, looking through his tearful eyes at the unfamiliar but kind old man. The young father was dumbfounded, staring blankly at the stranger. Then noticing that the director of the plant had come with him, he guessed he was the new Party secretary people were talking about. He did not know what to do.

It was Gao who first opened his mouth. "Hey! Your vegetables have burned!"

The young man hastily took the lid off the pot and exclaimed, "Damn! So they have! Oh shit!"

"Where's his mother?" asked Gao.

"At work."

"Who looks after the baby?"

"The bed."

"Why don't you put him in the nursery?" chipped in Ren.

This was like a red rag to a bull. The young father hit back at Ren, "According to the rules of the plant, the nursery won't enroll a child unless his mother works here. And there's no nursery in my wife's unit. When both of us go to work, we have to lock up our son at home. Of course we worry about him and can't keep our minds on our work. We workers have made many criticisms about this, but the plant authorities haven't solved the problem. In future simply make the rule that a worker can only marry a girl from his own plant, otherwise he should remain a bachelor all his life! That way we can save many houses as well as a lot of trouble!"

Ren remembered the problem had been raised before. He muttered, "It's not that the authorities don't want to solve it. There are some difficulties..."

"Such as?" asked Gao.

"We don't have enough beds and nurses," replied Ren.

Glancing at his watch Gao said to the young man, "We've many problems to handle at present. But we'll try our best to solve yours. Today let's do it like this. Leave the kid to me, and you get something to eat and go to work. We'll wait here until his mother comes back."

Thus in an ordinary worker's home, Gao, the baby in his arms, had a meeting with Ren, the chief of the general affairs section and the director of the nursery. They discussed such urgent problems as the work of the nursery and canteen, putting in the windowpanes and decided to take some emergency measures. Finally Gao said seriously, "Don't overlook small things. We leading members must care for the life of our workers. Only if they are free of problems at home can they devote all their energies to the Four Modernizations."

Ren dropped asleep after he had recalled one incident after another.

He was awakened once more by the ringing of the alarm clock. In a hurry he dressed, washed and went out.

It was dark outside. The whistling northwester cut into his face like a razor. After descending a flight of steps he slipped and fell. "Damn it!" he swore as he hastily rose to his feet and looked around. He took another step forward and slipped again. It took him longer to get up this time. Without his heavy padded winter clothes, he would have broken something. Examining the ground carefully he found that the road surface was glittering in the lamplight as if paved with a layer of glass. Ice! He was taken aback. If he walked to the plant along it he'd surely break his neck. Suddenly the emergency notice came to his mind. So it was probably this icy road that Gao wanted to attend to. But how could he know about it? Ren was moved. Didn't the notice say not to wear plastic-soled shoes? Hell! He had worn-down plastic soles. He hurried home and changed into a pair of cloth-soled ones. Then he went out again, treading cautiously. Sure enough, with these shoes he walked more steadily. He felt grateful to Gao. "He really thought of everything," thought Ren. "He was quite right. If your bicycle tyres were too hard or if you jammed on the brakes here, you would certainly fall off."

It usually took him about ten minutes to go to work, but today it took half an hour. When he reached the slope before the gate of the plant, it was nearly twenty to six. The slope at the gate reminded him of the ice the year before. It was such a dangerous place that the workers called it a "minefield". You could not avoid slipping here even if you walked very carefully, let alone if you rode a bicycle. When this was reported to him, he had regarded it as a highway, not belonging to the plant. Moreover, the situation only occurred once a year and the ice melted when the sun shone. So he had not bothered about the matter. As a result, several workers had fallen off their bicycles and injured themselves. They had been absent on sick leave for quite a long time. Yet Ren had blamed them for risking their necks. They ought to have dismounted when they had reached the slope. Now

he realized it was his own fault and that he should have dealt with the problem.

"Look out!" Suddenly Old Li shouted from the foot of the slope, but it was too late. At the top even cloth-soled shoes proved ineffective. Ren landed on his bottom and slid down to where Old Li was spreading ash.

"Over fifty and still slipping like a child!" Blushing, Ren ridiculed and reviled himself as Li helped him up.

"You're good at that, director," Li mocked.

Ren got even redder at Old Li's dig. There was a jingle the workers had composed to satirize him:

Melon peel underfoot and trowels in both hands,  
He'll smooth things over when impossible to slip away.

He used to dismiss it with a laugh, but now he said emotionally, "No, I won't do that any more. Look," he pointed to the ash, "Gao's stopped that."

"*Aiyaya!* Wonders will never cease! It's amazing!" Old Li exclaimed in delight.

"Hold on, after we've spread the ash, I'll never slip away again. Old Li, I'll deal with your problem today. You won't criticize me again, will you?"

The two men laughed.

"Where's Gao?" asked Ren.

"He's gone to get some ashes from the boiler room to spread on the roads."

Looking at the ash-covered road from the gate of the plant to the lower part of the slope, Ren asked with concern, "So he didn't sleep a wink all night?"

"He took a nap in the caretaker's room, but as soon as he noticed the ice, he rushed to issue the emergency notice and look for spades."

"Did you tell him what I said?" Ren anxiously looked at Old Li.

"You think I'm a piece of wood?" Old Li retorted. "I told him a hundred times, but it was no use!"

Ren said nothing. He was very excited. "He's a good 'un!

He's just arrived and already he's so concerned about others."

"Look, here he comes," Old Li broke into Ren's thoughts. Throwing away his spade he rushed towards Gao.

Raising his eyes Ren saw Gao, his head down hauling a cart like an old ox in the biting wind. He immediately took off his overcoat and shouted, "Gao, here I am!" as he hurried forward.



*Jin Jin*

## The Yellow Croaker and the Plate

(A parody of a children's story)

**T**HIS is a story about three old men.

First let me introduce fat Old Wang. His shiny bald pate is so smooth that a leaf could slide off it. He is apt to doze off and snore as soon as he sits down, but he has a good appetite. Then there is Old Ma, who is the opposite of Old Wang. Thin as a rake and white-haired, he is lively and talkative. When you are with them, you can't get a word in edgewise, but just listen to them talking without stopping. The third one is Old Zhang. He is tall, neither fat nor thin, and with a grey beard. A taciturn fellow, he likes to think. If you say something, he mulls it over for a long time; if you ask his opinion on something, you have to wait for at least five minutes before he answers you.

The three old men have all retired and live in the same street.

They don't like going to the parks, playing chess or doing Chi-

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"The Yellow Croaker and the Plate" (《黄鱼和盘子》) by Jin Jin (金近) has been taken from the *People's Daily* (《人民日报》) December 19, 1979. Jin Jin, 64, is a well-known writer of children's stories.

nese boxing. They regard such activities as useless. They prefer to sit down and hold meetings. They explain to others that though they have retired, they wish to continue to hold meetings as before. They call their meeting a small meeting, since there are only three participants. They think meetings are advantageous. For example, if Wang wants to buy a shirt, should he go to the general store near by or to the department store downtown? What colour to choose? What material, cotton or dacron? So he'll invite Ma and Zhang to a meeting to decide these things. If Zhang and Ma want to buy toys for the children, they'll also call on Wang to hold a small meeting to discuss it. Sometimes such meetings start at sunrise and continue till sunset, without any decision having been reached. They enjoy meetings that last ages. Missing meals is of no consequence, but if they miss a meeting for a day, they feel unhappy. Why are these three old men such good friends? Because they are all meeting-addicts!

One day at ten o'clock in the morning, the three sat under a parasol tree to hold a small meeting. What was on the agenda? A plate of fried yellow croaker lay on the stone table in front of them. They had bought the fish according to a decision reached at a previous meeting. Today's problem was what to eat first: the head, tail or belly? How could they start until this was settled?

Old Ma made the opening speech. He talked for a long time about why they were holding this meeting and then he gave his opinion. In conclusion, he proposed that Wang and Zhang should be careful when they ate the fish, in case the fishbones stuck in their throats. "Remember we're all old men!" he warned. He rambled on for more than an hour until the fish became cold. In fact the gist of what he had said was simply that they should eat the head first.

Old Wang always liked to listen to Old Ma speaking, punctuating his speech with nods, as if beating time to music. Old Ma spoke in a high pitch, each of his sentences ending with a long "Ah—". Paying great attention to rhythm, his speech was pleasant to the ear. It almost sent Old Wang off to sleep. Then Ma finished and patted Wang's shoulder, urging him to take the floor. First Wang said he didn't agree with Ma's suggestion to eat

the head first. Then he explained why, giving ten reasons. Finally, he talked about the differences between eating meat and fish. As he had false teeth, he proposed that they should eat the belly first, leaving the head and tail for soup.

It was now one o'clock in the afternoon. Old Zhang hadn't yet spoken. He said, "We'd better eat it first. I've nothing particular to say."

But Ma and Wang said in chorus, "We gave our opinions. You must do the same. Your opinion is very important. Please tell us it, then we can make our decision."

Old Zhang started to speak. "Let me think it over. Let me think. . . ."

He lowered his head and put his right hand on his forehead. He thought and thought. About ten minutes passed before he ventured, "My opinion is that we should only start eating when we three agree."

Then he lowered his head again, deep in thought. He is always very careful when he does something. When he speaks, he always thinks more and talks less. Sometimes, afraid of giving the wrong impression, he'll explain his words over and over again. After he made the above remarks he continued, "Perhaps what I said just now is wrong. You can oppose and criticize me. I only speak for myself, and personal opinions are bound to be subjective."

Then he lowered his head again, pondering over what to say next.

Time passed. It was almost two o'clock in the afternoon. Wang's snoring broke the silence. His snores, which had been low and short, now became loud and long, like a lullaby, coaxing the hungry Ma into sleep too. When Zhang broke his meditation and lifted his head, he saw the other two dozing. Not wishing to disturb them, he let them rest. After all it was time for a nap. So he leaned back against the chair to rest awhile, but he fell asleep too.

It is said that if someone is thinking about something when awake, he will continue thinking about it in his dreams. The three old men were like that. While they slept they dreamt of eating the fish. They continued to hold the meeting in their dreams.

But the three had different dreams. In Wang's dream, the other two agreed with him that they should eat the belly first. They cheerfully ate the fish, talking and laughing. Old Wang liked to eat yellow croaker very much. He put a piece into his mouth, chewed it slowly to savour it, reluctant to swallow. Ma changed his mind in his dream and accepted Wang's suggestion that they should eat the belly first. When he picked up the chopsticks he removed the head and tail, saying these would make a good soup. He liked to eat the roe, but he couldn't find any. Zhang in his dream proposed that they should eat half of the fish for lunch and leave the other half for supper, to which the other two agreed.

While the old men were enjoying the fish in their dreams, a striped kitten suddenly appeared from the shade of the tree and saw the three old men fast asleep. The plate of yellow croaker lay there untouched. Overjoyed, the kitten with one leap was on the stone table wolfing down the fish. He ate up everything, including the bones. When he stuck out his tongue to lick himself, Wang also licked his lips in his dream, while loudly praising the fish, "How delicious! Delicious!"

The noise frightened the kitten, which fled, overturning the plate with a loud crash. The three old men were awakened by the sound.

As Wang woke up, he still tasted the delicious fish. "Mmm! How delicious!"

When Ma opened his eyes he cried, "Oh! Where's the plate? Where are the head and tail?"

Zhang lowered his head and thought over the first words he wanted to say. Suddenly he saw the broken plate on the ground. He shouted, "Who broke the plate? Where is the other half of the fish? I remember clearly there was still half the fish on the plate."

But they couldn't remember who broke the plate. They made all kinds of guesses but still couldn't find the culprit. They decided to hold a meeting to discuss it. As usual, Wang made the opening speech. He said, "Just now, when I ate the fish, I didn't see the plate fall to the ground. What happened? Did a big gust of wind blow it down? That's not likely. The leaves on the

tree above us aren't moving at all. So where could the wind come from?"

Ma said, "Didn't I say we should leave the head and tail for soup? I especially used chopsticks to remove them. I remember it clearly. But where are the head and tail? Why was the plate broken? I think there are several possible reasons. First..."

And he gave five reasons.

Then Old Zhang spoke. Again he lowered his head and then put his right hand on his forehead, sighing, "It's very strange! Very strange! Where's the other half of the fish? Let me think it over. Let me think..."

When he began to speak the sun was just setting. When he finished, it was practically dark. The trees along the street were dark shadows. A street lamp suddenly lit up above their heads. But Zhang hadn't finished what he had wanted to say. He wanted to find out how the plate had been broken. He rambled on for a long time, but couldn't explain himself.

A group of boys and girls ran over to them, shouting and jumping.

"Grandpa! Grandpa! It's supper time! Why didn't you come back for lunch?" shouted Old Zhang's granddaughter.

The three old men stood up slowly, rather reluctant to break off their meeting. Old Zhang scolded his granddaughter for interrupting his speech. Then he said, "We haven't finished our meeting yet. Let's continue tomorrow. Do you agree?"

"Of course!" the other two replied.

In order to eat a yellow croaker, the three old men had held a meeting lasting all day, which still wasn't finished. They thought they had eaten the fish, but they had to hold another meeting to get to the bottom of the mystery of the broken plate.

They regard such meetings as a great pleasure. After a meeting like this, they feel very happy and have a good night's sleep. They have heard the bad news that some trouble-makers now favour short meetings. They prefer people who like long meetings and hope that one day a fourth person will join in their meetings and enjoy himself too.

Guo Yizong

## In Memory of My Father Guo Weiqu

**M**Y father Guo Weiqu was the head of the Flower-and-Bird Section in the Traditional Chinese Painting Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. His life was devoted to Chinese art and its study. Nine years ago he died of persecution during the Cultural Revolution. Now he has been posthumously rehabilitated and an exhibition of his works was recently sponsored in Beijing. An embodiment of the spirit of our times and our national style, his paintings left a deep impression on visitors.

Guo Weiqu was born in 1908 in the ancient town of Weixian, Shandong Province. Weixian County has been known as an artistic centre ever since Zheng Banqiao (1698-1765), a celebrated painter and one of the "eight Yangzhou eccentrics", became its magistrate and exercised a great influence on local culture. Many people vied to imitate both his calligraphy and painting. My family, several generations ago, were close friends of Zheng Banqiao. In addition, in Weixian, there was a famous connoisseur Chen Fuzhai, who kept many fine classical art works in his house. My mother was a

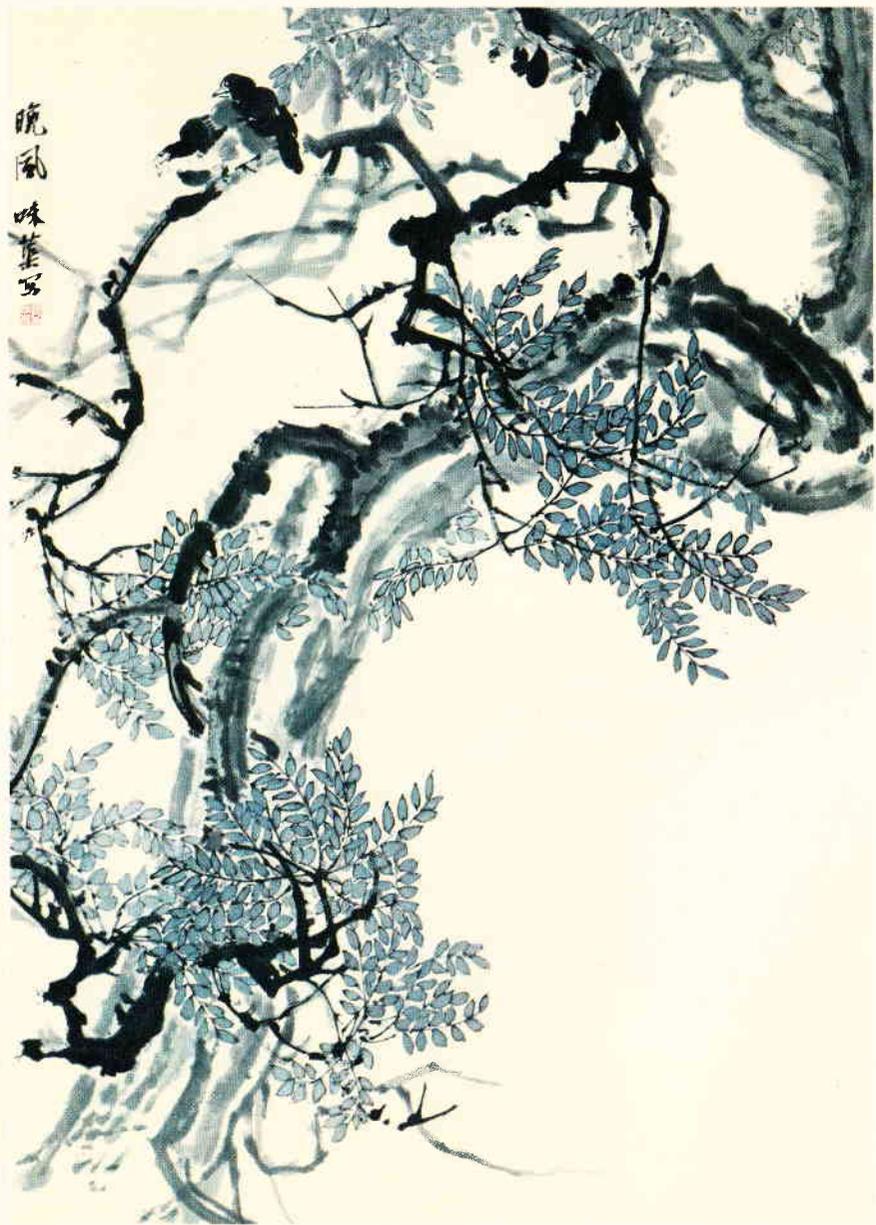
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Guo Yizong, an artist, teaches in the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing.



Day Lily

## Paintings by Guo Weiqu



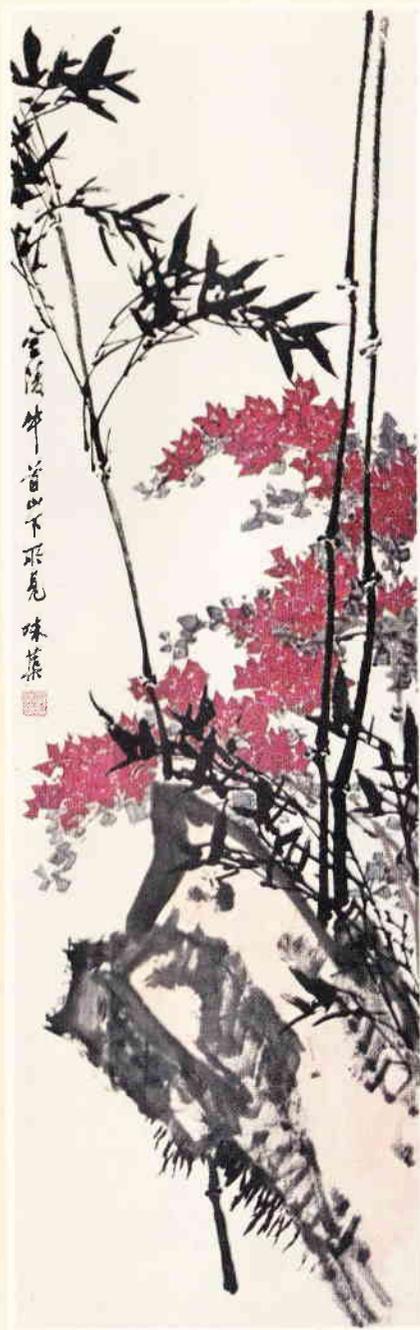
Wistaria



Hydrangea



Sago Cycas and Cactus



Bougainvillea and Bamboo



Guo Weiqu in 1965

descendant of the Chen family. All this directly influenced my father's artistic development.

But my father's childhood was not without misfortune as his father had died before he was born. He therefore began his art studies under the strict eye of his mother. As a young boy, he already showed keen interest in art. In middle school, he took a correspondence course run by the Shanghai Art Academy, which later helped him to pass the entrance examination for the academy's Western Painting Department. Completing all his courses with flying colours, he became one of his class's top students. But this did not satisfy him. In order to study Western art further, he decided to go abroad and endeavoured to learn French in his spare

time. But as his mother was strongly opposed to this plan, it failed. Later he was admitted to the newly established class on traditional painting run by the Palace Museum in Beijing, where many fine artists have studied. My father started systematically copying the classical paintings by celebrated artists and learning their painting techniques. As he said, through copying he got a deeper understanding of Chinese painting and found it as interesting as Western art.

I remember how for a period he devoted himself to the study of painting bamboos. He painted many each day and did not go to bed until he had covered all the walls of his studio with

*Oleanders*

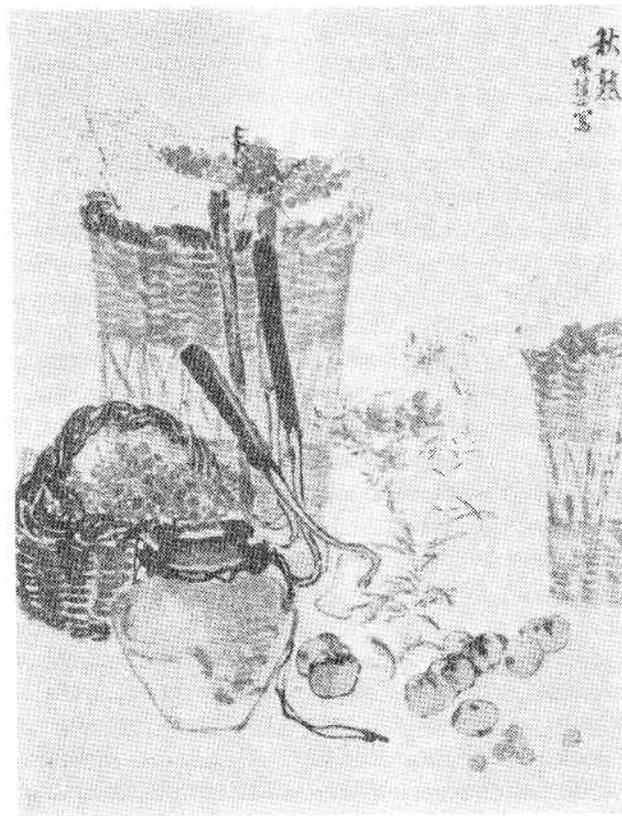


paintings. Then he slept in his studio which looked like a bamboo grove. The following day he covered the walls with his new productions. After ten years of hard work he had completely mastered the techniques of Chinese painting. Qi Baishi (1863-1957), the great artist, was delighted when at 92 he saw my father's works. He admired his remarkable brushwork and skill, saying that he had not seen such good paintings for years.

My father was also interested in folk art and began to study wood-block reproductions of New-Year pictures.

After the founding of New China in 1949, by recommendation of the noted artist Xu Beihong, my father came to work at the

*Autumn Harvest*





*Orchids, Bamboos and Rock*

Central Academy of Fine Arts. Then he went to the Nationalities' Research Institute and Xu Beihong's Memorial Hall until his transfer in 1959 back to the Central Academy. As head of the Flower-and-Bird Section, he worked hard teaching, painting and engaging in research.

My father sought to find new subject-matter for his painting and opposed mechanically copying ancient masters. He felt that an artist must paint what has impressed him most, based on the old traditions but with a fresh vision. In order to achieve this, he visited many scenic spots all over China, sketching and taking notes wherever he went. If conditions permitted, he sketched on the spot; if not, he would begin as soon as he got back to his hotel.

He also often visited parks and the countryside to study flowers and plants in conservatories, nurseries and vegetable plots. His hobby was growing flowers and trees. In our small courtyard, he had more than a hundred plants. This passion had a decisive influence on his painting.

My father's purpose was to capture the spirit and charm of nature. His works have all the features of freehand flower-and-bird painting, aiming at a composite expression of the scenery, mood and idea, without too close resemblance nor a meticulous portrayal of a single flower or leaf. This is seen in many of his paintings such as *Moonflowers*, *Lotus Flowers*, *Wistaria*, *Hydrangea*



and *Gladioli*.

*Moonflowers* shows the flowers bathed in shimmering silver moonlight, presenting a vivid scene of a summer night. In *Lotus Flowers*, the lotuses and misty pond in early morning present a tranquil beautiful picture. In *Wistaria* two mynas are nestling among the flowers and trees in the evening summer breeze. The fresh conception and ingenious composition make this a very interesting and delightful painting.

My father wanted his works to reflect the times, so that art could help to promote social progress. His paintings *The Hundred Flowers*, *Flowers and Rock*, *Gladioli* and *Bamboos* served this purpose. The azaleas, camellias and bamboos he painted are symbols of the new life in our socialist society.

He also sought to establish new techniques or employ those used in other art forms. For example, he combined flower-and-bird painting with landscape methods, meticulous style with freehand, colour with splash-ink.

By incorporating flower-and-bird with landscape methods, he painted not just a single branch or flower but a panorama of distant mountain peaks, rocks, river banks or streams. From the tenth to fourteenth centuries, some artists had tried to combine flower-and-bird paintings with landscapes. But their paintings were restricted to the portrayal of scenery and lacked emotional appeal. My father

successfully drew on their experiences. In the foreground he painted detailed scenery while for the background he used freehand techniques, creating a sense of atmosphere. In many of his works there is a distant mountain peak or one or two rocks at the banks of a stream, which set off the flowers as the main subject.

The meticulous style uses lines, with colours filled in, to express the form and mood of a subject, while freehand uses the "boneless" and splash-ink methods to present the artist's impression of a subject. My father combined the good points of these two styles, using the techniques of the meticulous style for flowers and leaves to depict their beauty in great detail, and employing bolder freehand strokes for branches and rocks.

In the handling of colours, my father tried to combine splash-ink and heavy colouring. Splash-ink means using ink and wash to achieve a watery effect. Heavy colouring uses such pigments as azurite blue, malachite green and vermilion. My father contrasted bright colours with ink. So gay, bright and luxuriant colours became typical of his paintings, and this also suited his purpose of reflecting the flourishing new society.

My father made a significant contribution to the development of contemporary flower-and-bird painting. Under his brush, the flowers and birds were full of vitality, the mountains and rivers imposing and magnificent. Whether a large painting or a simple sketch, all showed his love for life and work, for his country and people. Many of his paintings were based on his experiences when he went to work in the countryside. The farm tools, vegetables, fruit, wild grass and flowers which he painted seem to give forth the fragrance of the earth. He treated traditional subjects, such as plums, orchids, bamboos and chrysanthemums, in a quite different way from that of his predecessors, showing no sign of the aloofness of scholars who retired from politics.

In his later years, however, my father stopped painting in colours, because the "gang of four" had usurped leadership in the cultural field. He changed to paint in ink, mostly plums, orchids, bamboos and rocks. He concentrated on studying brushwork, applying each stroke carefully, striving to achieve the unity of form and spirit. His bamboos in these years were executed with perfect ease and

bold, vigorous strokes, giving an impression of simplicity and tranquillity. They symbolize his integrity.

My father was a versatile artist, as well as an art historian. It took him nearly twenty years to complete his book *An Account of the Lives of the Calligraphers and Painters of the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties*, in which he introduced in detail the lives of several thousand calligraphers and artists since the seventh century, including their dates of birth and death, education, official positions, paintings and writings. This book is fundamental to the study of Chinese art history. He also loved to collect paintings, rare books, seals and stone rubbings, and was quite a connoisseur. He was also interested in literature, poetry and calligraphy. Like many other artists, he often inscribed poems on his paintings, which were an integral part of his work. His facile and graceful calligraphy was another of his artistic achievements.

Shi Changyu

## Fiction in the Qing Dynasty

THE Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) saw the decline of the feudal system in China, but it marked the maturity of Chinese fiction. After oral literature had developed and been artistically improved by scholars, there came a period when Chinese fiction was completely written by individual scholars. Carrying forward the fine traditions of the "records of marvels" in the Wei and Jin Dynasties, the Tang-dynasty "prose romances", the story-tellers' "prompt-books" and "imitation prompt-books" in the Song and Yuan Dynasties and the "novels divided into chapters" in the Ming Dynasty, Qing-dynasty fiction not only surpassed those earlier works in quantity, but achieved a higher quality, reflecting social life more fully and more artistically. The *Strange Tales of Liao-zhai* in classical Chinese, *The Scholars*, a novel of social satire, and *A Dream of Red Mansions*, a novel of manners, may be considered as milestones in the fiction of this period.

Qing-dynasty fiction is uneven. The above-mentioned three works all appeared in a period of 135 years, during the reigns of

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Kang Xi (1662-1722), Yong Zheng (1723-1735) and Qian Long (1736-1795). So the early Qing Dynasty is the golden age in the development of fiction. After the reign of Jia Qing (1796-1820), fiction declined and was dominated by novels about prostitution, adventure and detection which displayed the worst features of feudalism. A new breakthrough was made in the reign of Guang Xu (1875-1908), when novels of exposure came into vogue along with the development of the bourgeois reform movement.

Obviously there were also social reasons which account for this uneven development. During the reigns of Kang Xi, Yong Zheng and Qian Long, Chinese society became stable after the upheavals towards the end of the Ming Dynasty, and so the economy revived and expanded. At the same time, cultural circles, experiencing a radical change ideologically, violently attacked autocratic monarchy and its ideology, "discarding the classics and rebelling against orthodoxy". Though this trend was suppressed by the Qing ruling class, it influenced several generations of the intelligentsia. The *Strange Tales of Liao-zhai*, *The Scholars* and *A Dream of Red Mansions* all embody certain democratic ideas. After the reign of Jia Qing, the social contradictions became increasingly acute. Since the reign of Kang Xi, "literary inquisitions" muzzled writers. In order to avoid persecution, many scholars turned to studying the classics and historical records, so that this became a great period for textual research but a bad time for fiction. The general trend was obviously backward and reactionary.

The Opium War (1840-1842) turned China into a semi-colony, and the defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 further awoke the people to the decadence and incompetence of the Qing empire. Intellectuals of the newly emerging bourgeoisie launched a political reform movement to explore ways of saving the nation. The forerunners of this movement paid great attention to the social function of fiction and advocated stories with a political message. Moreover, popular feeling against feudal bureaucrats was running high. Hence a large number of novels exposed social abuses and the malpractices of official circles.

Qing-dynasty fiction can be roughly divided into short stories in classical Chinese, romances about heroes, novels of social satire,

novels of manners, novels of adventure and detection and novels of exposure. Let us comment briefly on each category.

Stories in classical Chinese originated with the myths and fables of ancient times, which later evolved into the "records of marvels" of the Wei and Jin Dynasties and the "prose romances" of the Tang Dynasty. During the Song and Yuan Dynasties, the prosperity of the urban economy gave rise to oral literature among the townsfolk, and stories written in the vernacular began to replace those in the classical language. Though there appeared in the Ming Dynasty some collections of short stories in classical Chinese such as Qu You's *New Anecdotes Under the Lamplight* and Li Changqi's *More Tales Under the Lamplight*, they are of no literary importance. But the Qing-dynasty *Strange Tales of Liaozhai* brought about the revival of stories written in classical Chinese.

Pu Songling (1640-1715), author of the *Strange Tales of Liaozhai*, was a native of Zichuan County, Shandong Province. Born in an impoverished landlord-merchant family, he hoped to win an official post by passing the imperial examinations. Because he failed in the examinations, he had to lead a poor life in the countryside, which enabled him to deepen his understanding of society and collect much strange folklore from the labouring people and other unsuccessful scholars. He put all his energies into his writing and by the age of forty had virtually completed the *Strange Tales of Liaozhai*. But only some handwritten copies circulated in his lifetime, and the collection was not published until about fifty years later after his death.

This collection, as it has come down to us, consists of 491 tales, mostly stories about the love between men and supernatural beings — foxes, ghosts and goblins, which reflected young people's eagerness to smash feudal shibboleths and portrayed many young men and girls of fine moral character. Some tales exposed social abuses and corrupt officials. An example is "The Cricket" (see *Chinese Literature*, No. 6, 1959) which portrays the suffering caused to a common family by the emperor's fondness for cricket fights. Though the episodes are fictitious, they reflected real life. Some other tales exposed the fraudulent nature of the imperial examination system, and vividly portrayed the mentality of

the scholars who set all their hopes on it.

Many of these stories are allegorical, expressing the author's outlook on life. For example, "The Taoist Priest of Laoshan" featured in this issue tells the story of a certain Wang who fails to attain magic powers. The moral is that if a man will not study seriously, just trying to show off his cleverness, he will run his head against a brick wall. Other stories, in praise of disinterested friendship, describe flower-spirits and fox-fairies who are always ready to help mankind. "Jiaona" is distinctive in this category. For, instead of a love affair, it portrays the pure and innocent friendship between the fox-fairy Jiaona and the scholar Kong Xueli. Stories of this kind expressed the author's hatred of the cruel feudal ethics and his appreciation of the finer human feelings.

The *Strange Tales of Liaozhai* inherited and developed the tradition of the "records of marvels" and the "prose romances". Pu Songling describes ghosts and monsters on the basis of the life of men, so that his fantastic plots reflect reality and the supernatural appear like human beings. Adopting a feature of story-tellers' scripts, he also makes effective use of exaggeration and the dialogue is succinct and vividly written. Notable among his wide range of characters are the lovable flower-spirits and fox-fairies who, taking the form of beautiful girls, are kind-hearted and full of tender affection.

The *Strange Tales of Liaozhai* was a much greater achievement than any earlier work in classical Chinese and it had a far-reaching influence. Many scholars tried to imitate it, but their works lacked profundity and their style was less polished than Pu Songling's. Thus such imitations had not much significance and the school declined gradually. The only work worth mentioning is the *Notes of the Yuewei Hermitage* which appeared between the reigns of Qian Long and Jia Qing. The author, Ji Yun (1724-1805), had been in charge of the compilation of the Imperial Manuscript Library and had a good reputation as a writer. Being dissatisfied with the *Strange Tales of Liaozhai*, he claimed to model his anecdotes on the early stories of marvels in the Wei and Jin Dynasties. He was against embellishment and for a simple, unsophisticated style. But not content to write straight stories he added moralizing

passages. Therefore, although the narration is skilful, the *Notes of the Yuewei Hermitage* reads more like a textbook of feudal ethics than a collection of stories.

The early Qing romances about heroes followed the tradition of the Ming novels *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *Outlaws of the Marsh*, and also broke fresh ground. Three worthy of note are the *Sequel to Outlaws of the Marsh*, *The Complete Story of Yue Fei* and *The Romance of the Tang Dynasty*. There were historical reasons for the flourishing of romances about heroes between the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties. Chen Chen (c. 1613-?), the writer of the *Sequel to Outlaws of the Marsh*, was an adherent of the Ming Dynasty and his novel indirectly expressed his loyalty to the Ming and antagonism towards the rule of the Qing. This sequel tells how, after Song Jiang's death, the thirty-two leaders of the peasant insurgent army survive by sheer luck, rise in revolt again, join the resistance against the Tartar invaders and finally go out to sea and settled in another country. The story is imbued with a rebellious spirit and strong national consciousness.

During the period between the reigns of Kang Xi and Yong Zheng, there appeared *The Complete Story of Yue Fei*, said to be "compiled by Qian Cai and revised and enlarged by Jin Feng", which deals directly with resistance to aggression. The novel gives a vivid portrayal of the life and struggle of Yue Fei (1103-1142), a famous anti-Tartar general in the Southern Song Dynasty. Because it used past personages and events to disparage the present and advocated national consciousness, it was banned and burned by the Qian Long government.

Another noteworthy novel is *The Romance of the Tang Dynasty* published in the Qian Long period. Enlarged on the basis of earlier story-cycles, this novel depicts a galaxy of heroes at the end of the Sui Dynasty in the seventh century, devoting special attention to the exploits of the outlaws from Wagang Fortress.

These romances about heroes not only exerted an influence on the novels of the same type in later periods, but were also adapted for opera items, some of which are still being staged today.

Fiction containing elements of social satire appeared early in China. But *The Scholars* was the first novel of social satire.

Wu Jingzi (1701-1754), author of *The Scholars*, was a native of Quanjiao County in the Province of Anhui. Born in a distinguished family, he led a leisurely life and spent his money freely when young. Then, reduced to relative poverty and failing to pass the imperial examination, he came to despise the world and its ways. The novel was probably written during the 30s or 40s of the 18th century when the writer was in Nanjing. He led a wretched life in his later years and died in Yangzhou at the age of fifty-four.

Although *The Scholars* is known as a novel, it is in fact a series of short stories, with no main character throughout the whole book. Various characters are introduced in succession, and their stories can be read independently. Owing to his keen observation of life, especially of scholars of every kind, Wu Jingzi brought out with his trenchant pen the ugly features of the literati towards the end of feudal society, exposing the vicious examination system, the evils of the bureaucracy and the corrupted morals.

The main target of *The Scholars* is the criminal social system, and as the material is taken from the everyday life of the literati, the satire is especially powerful. The author adopted a serious attitude towards life and he did not oversimplify his characters but combined a sense of pity with the satire, which made it doubly effective.

The most outstanding novel of manners in the Qing Dynasty is Cao Xueqin's *A Dream of Red Mansions*. The author, who lived during the first half of the 18th century, was born in a Han family which had joined the "Plain White Banner" instituted by Manchus. His ancestors, from his great-grandfather down to his father and uncle, had been in charge of the silk manufacture in Nanjing for three generations, specially favoured and trusted by the emperor. But this powerful noble family declined after its property was confiscated early in the reign of Yong Zheng. Cao Xueqin and his family then moved to Beijing, and in his later years the writer moved out to the western suburbs and lived there in dire poverty till his death. It was probably during this period that he wrote *A Dream of Red Mansions*. The Cao family's wide social connections with the peasants who worked in its manors, the merchants and artisans involved in the silk manufacture

in Nanjing and the different factions of the ruling clique, as well as the patriarchal clan relationship within the family, enabled the author to grasp the nature of the society and provided him with rich material.

*A Dream of Red Mansions* tells the story of the decline of a big noble family which had been highly influential for about one hundred years. The Jia family consists of many people and the daily household routine is very complex. As most of the men of the family are profligates, even in the heyday of its prosperity there is the danger of downfall. Young Jia Baoyu is considered as a promising successor who should be able to carry on the family line in the future. But, because he is born with a piece of magical jade in his mouth and shows exceptional intelligence, his grandmother dotes on him and will not let his father discipline him. Detesting the social conventions and Confucian morality of his time, he has no desire to win fame and likes to amuse himself with his sisters, cousins and slave girls. The Grand View Garden, built to entertain his sister Yuanchun when she visits home as an imperial consort, becomes his pleasure-ground. He falls in love with his cousin Lin Daiyu who comes to live in the Jia family when she is left an orphan. Kindred spirits, they grow deeply attached to each other in spite of many misunderstandings and heartaches. A series of accidents and misfortunes show that the Jia family is on the decline, and some of the household are hounded to death by the feudal family. Baoyu sympathizes with the weak, and their tragedies open his eyes to the corruption and cruelty of the family. His way of life and his love for Daiyu come into increasing conflict with the family's interests.

The novel has 120 chapters. Only 80 of these are based on Cao Xueqin's manuscript, the concluding 40 having been written by another writer, who appears to have tried to follow the original plan. The sequel depicts how Daiyu dies of a broken heart while Baoyu is forced by the family to marry another cousin of his, Xue Baochai. Then Baoyu runs away from home to become a monk after he has passed the imperial examination. Although the writer of this sequel makes the love of Baoyu and Daiyu end in tragedy, he restores the fortunes of the Jia family and concludes the novel

with a happy reunion, which is obviously counter to Cao Xueqin's original plan. However, through the tragedy of Baoyu and Daiyu *A Dream of Red Mansions* denounced feudal society and feudal ethics, and made it clear that this society was doomed.

With *A Dream of Red Mansions* Chinese classical novels reached their zenith. The Jia family epitomizes Chinese feudal society on the decline and Jia Baoyu, who rebels against his noble family and breaks with feudal conventions to find a better way of life, is a product of that historical period when a new era was replacing the old. The love of Baoyu and Daiyu is based on their unorthodox concepts and common ideals. It contravenes the feudal marriage system and feudal ethics, and therefore has a much greater significance than any previous tragic love story. The novel depicts daily life realistically, presenting about four hundred characters, scores of whom are unforgettable, having distinctive features. Cao Xueqin broke with the old method of characterization which tended to make all positive characters perfect and negative ones completely bad. All the characters in his novel are lifelike and complex. He also went against the tradition that a novel or opera, no matter how tragic its theme, must have a happy ending. As Lu Xun pointed out, "The appearance of *A Dream of Red Mansions* smashed the traditional concepts and ways of writing."

Since this novel exerted a tremendous influence, many sequels to it were written for scores of years, all of them insisting on a happy ending. By the later half of the 19th century, many imitations had appeared. Three examples are Chen Sen's *A Mirror of Theatrical Life*, Wei Xiuren's *Stains of the Flower and Moon* and Yu Da's *A Dream of the Green Chamber*. These novels deal with the life of singsong girls and prostitutes, and, much inferior both ideologically and artistically to *A Dream of Red Mansions*, they are stuffed with the stereotyped descriptions of gifted scholars and beautiful girls criticized by Cao Xueqin.

There was an offshoot of the novels of manners which aimed at displaying the talent and erudition of the writer. This originated in the Tang Dynasty. Because the Tang prose romances included all kinds of literary forms, many scholars who were out for official posts used them as vehicles to flaunt their brilliance.

Therefore there were novels which gave pride of place to discussions of the classics and history and the composition of poems, relegating the motif, characters and plot to a secondary position. This had a harmful effect on Qing-dynasty fiction in the vernacular. Representative of this branch of writing is *A Rustic's Idle Talk*, a large work which appeared in the last years of the reign of Qian Long. It contains dissertations on the classics and history, exhortations to loyalty and filial piety and disquisitions on military science, prosody, medicine and mathematics.

Another prominent novel of this genre is *Flowers in the Mirror* by Li Ruzhen (c. 1763-c. 1830). Although the second half of the novel is dull with its show of erudition and literary talent, the first half is quite praiseworthy. It tells the story of Tang Ao, who goes on a voyage in the course of which he sees many strange people and curious things and customs. Through descriptions of these the author satirizes certain bad features of feudal society. The most interesting part is the description of the Women's Kingdom, which, while romanticizing, touches on the problem of women. This was rare at that time, hence commendable.

Examples of novels of adventure and detection, which were in vogue after the Opium War, are *The Gallant Maid* and *Three Heroes and Five Gallants*. The former appeared in the reign of Dao Guang (1821-1850) and was written in fluent Beijing dialect. Although there are some reflections of social abuses, the basic aim of the novel was to defend the feudal system. The latter, adapted from *The Cases of Magistrate Bao* by Shi Yukun, a Beijing story-teller, deals with the chivalrous conduct of certain brave men who champion the good and kill tyrants. Thus it exposes some dark aspects of feudal society. This novel was widely read and many sequels to it appeared.

By the last years of the Qing Dynasty, more and more social problems emerged and there was a growing desire for reform and modernization. Conforming to the reformist trend of thought, numerous novels exposed the decadent bureaucratic system and reactionary feudal politics of the Qing Dynasty. Though their proclaimed aim was to "rectify the world", the authors had only a superficial understanding of social problems, and therefore their

works are inferior both ideologically and artistically.

The sixty-chapter novel *The Exposure of the Official World* by Li Boyuan (1867-1906) deals with scandals and abuses in high places. Written in a rough and careless style, it is little more than a collection of gossip and ridicule. The episodes are largely identical, with only minor differences, and there is not much artistry in the descriptions. It was only because the people hated the feudal bureaucrats so bitterly that this novel was well received at that time. It was followed by many imitations which dealt with various social evils. The *Strange Events of the Last Twenty Years* by Wu Jianren (1866-1910) exposes mainly the official world but also deals with merchants and foreign adventurers in China's big cities. Unlike *The Exposure of the Official World*, it attributes social evils to the breakdown of the old morality. *The Travels of Mr Derelict* by Liu E (1857-1909) reflects some social phenomena of the late Qing Dynasty through the adventures of an itinerant physician. The significant part of the novel is its trenchant exposure of oppressive officials.

*A Flower in an Ocean of Sin* by Zeng Pu (1871-1935) depicts upper-class life in Beijing and some other places in the later half of the 19th century, unfolding a panorama of the society including politics, the economy, diplomacy and daily life. It is a cut above other novels of exposure because it describes bourgeois-democratic revolutionary activities and displays some anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolutionary feeling.

There are numerous other books of this genre, but the most influential ones are the above-mentioned four. Later, there appeared some inferior imitations aimed at attacking private individuals and filled with invective. Gradually this type of literature degenerated into mere material for gossip-columns.

This review of Qing-dynasty fiction shows that, although despised by the orthodox literati, this genre of literature prevailed over the old-style poetry and prose, occupying a more and more important position in the literary field. Its achievements laid a solid foundation for modern Chinese fiction after the new cultural movement which began in 1919.

*Pu Songling*

## Selections from the "Strange Tales of Liaozhai"

### The Taoist Priest of Laoshan

IN our county there was a young scholar named Wang, the seventh scion of an old family, who had admired Taoism from childhood. Hearing that there were many immortals on Mount Laoshan, he packed his bags and set off to make a trip there.

Climbing up a peak of the mountain he saw a secluded temple, in which sat a vigorous-looking Taoist priest on a rush cushion, his grey hair hanging down his neck. Wang kowtowed and talked to the priest. He found the latter's instruction very profound and asked the priest to be his teacher.

"I'm afraid you're too pampered to be able to stand all the hardships," the priest observed.

"I can," Wang asserted.

The priest had quite a number of disciples, who gathered together at dusk. Wang bowed deeply, greeting all of them, and stayed

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The two stories by Pu Songling (蒲松龄) published in this issue are "The Taoist Priest of Laoshan" (《劳山道士》) and "Jiaona" (《娇娜》).

with them in the temple. Early next morning the priest sent for Wang, gave him an axe and told him to go and cut firewood with the others. Wang respectfully obeyed.

After more than a month, Wang's hands and feet were covered with thick calluses. Unable to bear this any more, he secretly thought of leaving.

One evening when he came back he found two guests drinking with his master. Though it was already dark, no lamp or candles were lit. So the priest cut a piece of white paper in the shape of a round mirror and stuck it up on the wall. Presently the whole room was filled with bright moonshine, by which even a hair was discernible. The disciples were waiting on their master and the guests.

"On a festive evening like this," said one guest, "everyone present should enjoy himself." So saying he took a jug of wine from the table and gave it to the disciples, telling them to drink their fill. Wang wondered to himself: How could one jug of wine be enough to go round seven or eight people? They all rushed about to look for bowls, eager to get the first drink, afraid that the wine would run out. But Wang was surprised to see that the amount of the wine did not diminish even after several rounds.

A moment later one guest said, "Thank you for giving us the moonlight, but it's rather dull drinking quietly like this. Why not invite the moon goddess to join us?"

Then he threw a chopstick at the moon. A beauty descended from it. Less than a foot tall at first, she assumed the size of a human being upon landing in the room.

She had a slender waist and elegant neck, and danced gracefully *The Rainbow Cloak Dance*. When this was finished she sang:

You immortals! You have all returned home!

Why do you leave me alone in the Palace of Vast Coldness?

Her voice was clear and stirring, ringing like the notes of a flute. Having finished, she swirled round and jumped on to the table. In the twinkling of an eye, she again became a chopstick before the amazed beholders. The three men laughed heartily.

"It's been a very pleasant evening," said the other guest, "but



His wife saw a big bump on his forehead.

I can't drink any more. Before we part, can you drink another glass with me in the Moon Palace?"

So the three men moved their table into the moon. As they sat drinking there, the disciples saw them clearly, even their brows and beards, just like an image in a mirror.

After a while the moon slowly dimmed. When the disciples brought lighted candles they found the two guests gone and the priest sitting there alone. However, the remains of the meal were still on the table and the moon on the wall was once more a piece of paper, like a mirror.

"Have you all had enough to drink?" the priest asked his disciples.

"Yes," they answered.

"In that case, you'd better go to bed early, so you won't be late for your wood-cutting tomorrow," he told them.

Assenting, the disciples withdrew. Full of admiration, Wang gave up his idea of leaving.

Another month passed. Wang could stand the life no longer, especially as the priest had not taught him any magic. Unwilling to remain there, he took his leave.

"I travelled several hundred *li* to seek instruction from you, my immortal master," he said. "Even if I couldn't learn the secret of longevity, some small magic trick would appease my hunger for learning. For two or three months, all I've been doing is getting up at daybreak to cut firewood and returning at sunset. I never experienced such hardships when I was at home."

"I predicted you would be unable to stand them," said the priest, smiling. "And so it turned out. All right, you can leave tomorrow morning."

"Sir," Wang pleaded, "I've been working here for some time. Please teach me just one small trick so that my coming here may not have been in vain."

"Which one then?" asked the priest.

"I've noticed you can go anywhere, even through walls," said Wang. "I'll be content to know how to do that."

The priest smiled and agreed. He taught Wang a spell which he bade him to repeat. This done he commanded Wang, who was

facing a wall, to walk through it. Wang, however, dared not.

"Just try," the priest encouraged him.

Wang strolled towards the wall but was stopped.

"Lower your head and dash through it. Don't dawdle," the priest instructed him.

Wang backed away a few steps from the wall, then charged it. He passed through unhindered. Turning round, sure enough, he found himself outside.

Overjoyed, he went in to thank the priest, who enjoined him, "When you go home, be serious, or it won't work!" He gave Wang some travelling expenses and sent him home.

On his return, Wang boasted he had met an immortal and learnt the art of passing through walls, which his wife refused to believe. So Wang, following the priest's instructions, backed away a few feet from the wall and ran at it, only to bang his head against it and collapse on the ground. His wife, helping him to his feet, saw a big bump the size of an egg swelling up on his forehead. She laughed at her husband, who, feeling ashamed and angry, cursed the old priest for being so heartless.

The Recorder of Marvels\* comments, "Hearing this, who can help laughing? But not everyone realizes that there are quite a few people like Wang in the world. Nowadays some shameless men indulge in carnal desires, refusing to accept honest advice. Pandering to them are flatterers, who recommend the arts for playing the bully and deceive them by saying that with these arts they can do whatever they like. The arts may prove effective at first. Then they think they can act in this way wherever they please. They will not stop until they bump their heads against a brick wall and fall down!"

## Jiaona

Kong Xueli was a descendant of Confucius. A scholar with refined manners, he wrote good poetry.

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\* Here Pu Songling referred to himself.

His friend, who became the magistrate of Tiantai, sent Kong a letter inviting him for a visit. When Kong arrived, however, the magistrate had just died. This put Kong in difficulties, for he had not enough money to make his way home. So he took up his abode in Putuo Temple, where he was hired to do clerical work by the monks.

About a hundred paces west of the temple was a mansion belonging to a Mr Shan, who had come from a prominent family. Since he had lost his fortune in a heavy lawsuit, he had moved with his small family to the country, leaving the mansion deserted.

One day, it was snowing heavily and there were no travellers in sight. Kong happened to be walking past the gate of the mansion when a handsome young man came out. Seeing Kong, he ran up to greet him and, after a brief exchange of compliments, invited him in. Kong admired the young man and gladly followed him inside. The rooms were not large, but lavishly decorated with satin hangings, and from the walls hung many scrolls of calligraphy and paintings by celebrated artists. On the table was a book entitled *A Miscellaneous Account of Langbuan Fairyland*. Thumb-ing through its pages, Kong found it full of strange things.

Thinking that since the young man was living in the mansion he must be the owner, Kong did not inquire about his family status. The young man, however, asked many questions about Kong's misfortune, took pity on him and advised him to get some pupils and start a school.

"Being a wanderer, I have no one to recommend me," Kong said with a sigh.

The young man replied, "If you don't reject me for my lack of ability, I'd like to be your pupil."

Kong was overjoyed, but not presuming to be the young man's tutor, he begged to be considered as his friend.

"Why has the mansion been locked up for so long?" Kong then asked.

"This is Shan's mansion," the young man replied, "and he has been living in the country for so long that this place has been neglected. My family name is Huangfu and I'm from Shaanxi.

Our house was burnt down in a fire so we're putting up here temporarily."

Only then did Kong learn that the young man was not a Shan. That evening they talked cheerfully and Kong stayed for the night. At dawn a houseboy brought in a charcoal brazier. Young Huangfu had got up first and gone to the back of the house while Kong was still sitting in bed with a quilt around him.

The houseboy then came in to announce, "The master is here!" Astonished, Kong got up.

An old man with grey hair entered and said graciously, "Thank you for being so kind as to teach my son. He is only beginning to learn. Though you are friends, I hope you'll be strict with him."

He then presented Kong with a set of silk clothes, a marten hat, a pair of socks and shoes. And, after Kong had washed and dressed, he gave him a banquet. The table, the bed and the clothes, the names of which were unknown to Kong, dazzled his eyes. After several toasts, the old man took his leave leaning on his walking-stick.

After breakfast the young man brought in his textbooks, which were all classical writings, with no essays written in the modern style. When asked the reason for this, he explained with a smile, "I don't want to sit for an official examination."

That evening young Huangfu invited Kong to another drinking bout, saying, "Let's enjoy ourselves tonight, but no more tomorrow." He called the houseboy and told him, "Go and see if my father is asleep. If so, get Xiangnu here quietly."

The houseboy left and soon returned with a *pipa* in an embroidered case. A moment later, in came a beautiful servant-girl, magnificently arrayed. The young man bade her play the *Lament of the Xiang Ladies*. As she plucked the strings with an ivory plectrum, a very moving and plaintive tune poured forth, which Kong had never heard before. Then the young man ordered her to serve them wine in huge goblets. Their revels did not stop until midnight.

They got up early the following morning and studied together. The young man was so intelligent that he could remember every-

thing after reading it once. In two or three months he wrote beautifully.

Then they agreed that they would have an evening drinking every five days, and Xiangnu was summoned on each occasion. One evening, when the wine had gone to Kong's head, he kept gazing at the servant-girl.

The young man said understandingly, "She was trained by my father. Since you are single and far away from home, I've long been trying to find a fine wife for you."

"Then she must be as good as Xiangnu," said Kong.

"You consider something remarkable," said the young man, laughing, "simply because you haven't seen it before. If you think her good, you're certainly easy to satisfy!"

Half a year passed. One day Kong decided to go for a walk out of the grounds, but he found the gate locked from the outside.

The young man explained to him, "My father does not wish to have visitors, for fear they would disturb my studies." Kong did not press the matter further.

Now, as it was the height of summer and very sultry, they moved their study to a pavilion in the garden.

One day Kong found a swelling on his chest, which was as big as a peach, but overnight it grew to the size of a bowl. He lay groaning in pain, while the young man waited on him day and night, not eating or sleeping. After several days Kong was worse, unable to eat or drink. The old man also came to see him and could do nothing but sigh together with his son.

"The day before yesterday," said the son, "I was thinking that my sister Jiaona could cure my teacher's illness. So I sent to my grandmother's for her. Why isn't she here yet?"

Just then the houseboy came in and announced, "Jiaona is here together with your aunt and cousin A-song."

The father and the son went quickly to the reception-room and presently brought Jiaona to examine Kong. Jiaona, thirteen or fourteen years old, had beautiful, intelligent eyes and a slender graceful body. Seeing this lovely girl, Kong instantly forgot to groan and felt better.

The young man said to his sister, "He's my good friend, closer than a brother to me. Please try to cure him."

Overcoming her shyness, the girl rolled up her long sleeves, and approached the bed to feel Kong's pulse. As she was touching his wrist, Kong smelt a fragrance sweeter than orchids.

The girl said with a smile, "No wonder you are seriously ill, for your heart is affected! The disease is critical but curable. The swelling, however, must be removed."

She took off her gold bracelet, placed it over the lump and pressed it down slowly. The swelling rose about an inch higher than the bracelet and the inflamed outlying parts also passed under. Thus the swelling became considerably smaller. With one hand she opened her cloak and took out a sharp knife with an edge as thin as paper and, pressing the bracelet down all the time with her other hand, began to cut lightly near the root of the tumour. Dark blood gushed forth, staining the mat on the bed. But Kong, glad to be near such a beauty, not only felt no pain but, on the contrary, feared she would finish too quickly and leave him.

Soon the rotten flesh was cut out like knots from wood. She then asked for some water and washed the cut. After that she spat out a red pellet, put it on the flesh and turned it round and round. At the first twist, Kong felt the wound burning hot; at the second, itching; and at the third, his whole body felt a pleasant coolness that penetrated his bones. The girl put the pellet back into her mouth and said, "You're cured!" Then she left the room.

Kong jumped up and went to thank her and found he had been cured of his long illness. But the memory of her beauty distracted him. From that moment he forgot his studies and sat staring aimlessly, feeling most unhappy.

The young man noticed this and said to him, "I've found a nice girl for you."

"Who is she?" asked Kong.

"Also a relative of mine."

Kong sat thinking a long while, before answering briefly, "Don't bother!" Then turning his face to the wall, he recited:

Don't mention streams to him who has seen a great ocean;

The clouds over Mount Wushan are the only true clouds.

The young man, knowing what he meant, said, "My father admires your talents very much and would like you to marry into our family. But I have only one sister, and she is too young. My aunt has a daughter named A-song. She is eighteen and not at all bad-looking. If you don't believe me, you can wait in the front chamber and see her when she comes to the garden for her daily stroll."

Kong did as he was told and, true enough, saw Jiaona come out with a beauty, with thin, painted brows and graceful tiny feet. She was as lovely as Jiaona! Kong was delighted and asked the young man to act as his matchmaker.

The young man came the next day and congratulated Kong, exclaiming, "It's settled!"

A separate courtyard was made ready for Kong, and his wedding ceremony was held there that very evening, with plenty of music and bustle. To Kong, it was as if a fairy he had been dreaming of was now suddenly in his own room, and he wondered if the Moon Palace might not be on earth after all. The marriage left him totally contented.

One day the young man told Kong, "I will never forget your kindness in teaching me, but Master Shan has recently wound up his lawsuit and he wants the mansion back rather urgently. We're thinking of leaving this place and going west. I know it will be difficult for us to meet again and our parting saddens me."

Kong expressed his willingness to accompany him, but was advised to return home. Kong feared this would be difficult.

"Don't worry," the young man said. "I will see you home."

The father entered with A-song and presented Kong with one hundred taels of gold. Then the young man grasped the hands of the married couple and told them to close their eyes. They were high in the air in no time and heard the wind whistling by. After a long while, the young man said, "Here we are!"

Opening his eyes, Kong found he was back at his old home and

so realized that the young man was no ordinary mortal. Happily, he knocked at his door and his mother came out. She was most surprised and, when she saw his beautiful wife, she was overcome with joy. By the time Kong turned round again, his friend had disappeared.

A-song was a very good daughter-in-law and was soon renowned both near and far for her beauty and virtue. Later Kong became a successful candidate in the highest imperial examination and was appointed Judge of Yanan. He took his family there, but his mother did not go on the grounds that it was too far. A-song gave birth to a boy, who was named Xiaohuan.

Then Kong was dismissed for offending the assizes judge, but was obliged to stay there until further notice.

One day he went hunting and saw a handsome young man riding a black foal, who kept looking back. A closer scrutiny revealed that it was Master Huangfu. They pulled up their horses, filled with mixed feelings.

Master Huangfu invited Kong to join him. They came to a village so thickly shaded by trees that the sky was shut out of view, and entered a splendid mansion that seemed to belong to some noble family. Kong asked after Jiaona and learnt that she had married and that his mother-in-law had died, much to his grief. After staying overnight he left but returned again with his wife. Jiaona also came out to meet them. Taking their baby in her arms and fondling it, she said, "My cousin has mixed the blood of our race."

Kong again thanked her for her kindness in curing his illness.

"So you have become an official! Your wound has healed but have you forgotten the pain?" she asked smiling.

Kong was introduced to Jiaona's husband Wu, who left two days later.

One day young Huangfu looked worried. He said to Kong, "We're threatened by disaster. Can you help us?"

Kong did not know what he meant, but he gave his promise readily.

The young man went out and called the whole family in to kowtow to Kong in the hall. Greatly alarmed, Kong asked why.

"We are foxes, not human beings," the young man explained. "Today we are to be scourged by thunder. If you will help us at the risk of your life, my family maybe saved. Or you may take your son and leave, without involving yourself."

Vowing he would share life and death with them, Kong was told to take a sword and guard the gate and not move even when a thunderbolt struck him. He did as he was told.

Soon thick clouds gathered, turning the sky dark. Looking back, he saw that the house had disappeared and that in its place was a big mound, beneath it a bottomless pit. Before he could recover from his bewilderment, a thunderclap shook the mountains, accompanied by pelting rain and a strong wind, which uprooted the huge trees. Although dazed and deafened, Kong stood stock-still.

Suddenly a monster with a sharp beak and long claws appeared in a column of dense black smoke. It snatched someone from the pit and went up in the smoke. Catching a glimpse of the dress and shoes of the victim, Kong thought it looked like Jiaona. Quickly he jumped high off the ground and attacked the monster with his sword. It let go of her, but suddenly came another thunderbolt, and Kong fell dead.

A moment later the sky cleared. Jiaona, having regained consciousness, saw Kong lying dead beside her. She sobbed, "Kong died for me! Why was I spared?"

A-song came out and together they carried Kong's body back to the house. Jiaona told A-song to hold Kong's head, and her brother to force open his mouth with a gold hairpin. She held his chin and with her tongue placed the red pellet in his mouth. Their lips touched and she blew the pellet down his throat. Presently a gurgling sound was heard and he came to. Seeing the whole family before him, Kong felt as if waking from a dream. As they were reunited, they soon got over their shock and rejoiced. Kong said that they should leave the desolate place, suggesting they all go with him to his native village. Everyone agreed, only Jiaona showing reluctance. When Kong proposed bringing along Wu, she wondered if his parents would agree to part with their young son. So no decision was made that day.

Later a young servant from Wu's family rushed in, sweating

and panting. Surprised, they questioned him closely and found that Wu and his family had been stricken with a calamity and had perished that same day. Jiaona wept bitterly while everyone tried to console her. That subsequently solved their dilemma about leaving.

Kong went to Yanan for a few days to wind up his affairs there. They then set about packing day and night. Having reached their destination, young Huangfu was settled in an empty courtyard. He always kept the gate bolted from inside, only opening it when Kong and A-song called.

Kong spent his time together with the young man and his sister Jiaona, playing chess, drinking and talking, as if they had been one family. Xiaohuan grew up to be a very handsome young man, with some traces of a fox. When he went to the city, everyone knew he was the son of a fox.

The Recorder of Marvels comments, "Personally, I don't admire Kong's beautiful wife as much as his wonderful girlfriend. Looking at her, one can forget hunger; hearing her voice one feels happy. To often talk and dine with a good friend like this, and be so touched by her beauty that one's soul joins hers, is far better than indulging in sensual pleasures!"

*Illustrated by Gu Gan*

## INTRODUCING A CLASSICAL PAINTING

*Rui Xue*

### Chen Juzhong's "Four Goats"

ENTITLED *Four Goats*, this small painting presents a charming pastoral scene. On a slope, below a tree in the warm autumn sunlight, two goats are gambolling about, while two others observe them impassively. The action in the foreground, with the young goat butting the other which rears up, is in contrast to the quiet contemplation of the other two goats, especially the black-faced one, who stands apart higher up the slope, dominating the picture. The fluid lines of the goats sporting are beautifully executed.

Though painted with simple brush strokes and in mellow colours, light and shade are still quite distinct. The light ink of the sky gives a feeling of space, while the slope is painted in a thicker ink to give an impression of solidity. The scenery is natural and simple — a few tufts of grass, a bush and a gnarled old tree, with its leaves falling. On its trunk are perched two birds, whose presence add much to the mood of tranquillity. The artist has skilfully used various techniques to depict the withered tree, the hard rock, the wispy beards and soft fleece of the goats.

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\* Rui Xue is a staff writer for *Chinese Literature*.

Little is known about the painter Chen Juzhong. According to some, during the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127) he worked in the palace academy at Bianliang, now Kaifeng, Henan, and after the collapse of the dynasty, was transferred to the Southern Song capital of Hangzhou, Zhejiang. Another version places him a century later, during the reign of the Southern Song Emperor Ningzong (1195-1224), who is said to have appointed him a *daizhao*, or an artist of the highest rank.

Another of his works still extant is *Wenji Returns to the Han*, based on the story of Cai Wenji, a noted poetess who married a Hun king and later returned to her people and homeland. Apparently Chen Juzhong liked to paint scenes of national minority life and rural themes.

*Four Goats*, 22.5 cm × 24 cm, is painted on silk and is housed in the Beijing Palace Museum.



**Four Goats** by *Chen Juzhong*

Chen Bochui

## Some Notes on Fables

THE fable is a form of literature which has its roots in folklore. In subject-matter or presentation, fables have something in common with legends, folk-songs, folk-tales, children's stories, animal stories, proverbs and jokes.

Take for example the story told by the ancient Chinese fabulist Zhuang Zhou (c. 369-286 BC) in his essay "Xiao Yao You". He wrote, "In the northern ocean there was a fish called *kun*, which was a thousand *li* long; it changed into a bird called the roc, whose back was thousands of *li* broad. When in flight, it spread its wings obscuring the sky like clouds." This was obviously taken from a legend. Using this, Zhuang Zhou proceeded to write a fable. "There was a bird called the roc, whose back was as vast as Mount Tai and whose wings were like clouds that overcast the sky. When it wheeled into the air a cyclone arose, and it would soar aloft ninety thousand *li*. A quail jeered at it, 'Where can it be going? When I flit and make a leap, I rise some dozens of feet, then come down and fly about among the bushes, and that is as high as anyone can fly. Where can it be going?'" Thus the author ridiculed this subjectivity and gave a moral teaching.

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Chen Bochui is a well-known writer of children's stories.

There are some folk-songs and proverbs which resemble fables or are the basis of fables. For instance, in the *Records of the Historian*, a work of the second century BC, was quoted a folk-song which says, "The bitter fleabane growing among hemp is naturally straight; white sand mixed with mud surely becomes black." These lines indicate the importance of environment to men. The Eastern Han-dynasty (AD 25-220) writer Mu Yong quoted a proverb, "A man who has seen little regards many things as strange; he calls a camel a horse with a hunchback." There are other popular sayings, such as, "The cheekbones and the jaws are mutually dependent; if the lips are gone, the teeth will be cold." All these could be elaborated into fables.

Many folk-tales are similar to fables. "The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains" from *Lie Zi* can either be called a folk-tale or a fable.

In *Russian Folk-tales* edited by Alexei Tolstoy, there is a story, "The Farmer and the Bear". A farmer and a bear grew carrots together. When the time came for gathering them, the greedy but ignorant bear asked for all leaves, giving the carrots to his partner the farmer. Later he found out that the carrots were sweet and edible, while the leaves were useless. When their wheat crop was ripe, the bear, having learned his lesson, demanded the roots and left the stalks and wheat ears to the farmer. He thus suffered twice. This tale contains satire as well as a moral. However, unlike most fables, the moral is not explicit.

Most fables are about animals, while a few are about men and animals, plants, minerals or even germs. Why do most fables have animals as their characters?

In the past, men lived in an environment in which there were more animals than now. Leading a nomadic or pastoral life, they had close contact with animals. Since literature is a reflection of life, the description of animals, their habits and behaviour naturally became an important part, first of oral and later of written literature. The many cave paintings discovered in modern times lend credence to this.

In mirroring life, literature reflected not only events but also people's ideas and feelings, which were expressed indirectly

through the animal stories. After much retelling and refining, they gradually became fables. They both educated the people and were a weapon in the struggle between classes. The toilers used them to mock their oppressors, while the ruling classes advocated through them fatalism, superstition and slave morality, in order to dupe the people and protect themselves.

It is generally believed that, around the sixth century BC, there appeared in India the *Panchatantra*, a Sanskrit collection of animal fables in five prose books. Each with a moral or philosophical instruction, the fables appealed to both educated and popular tastes. Many scholars regard the *Panchatantra* as the world's earliest collection of fables, maintaining that these originated from India rather than Greece. This, however, is not conclusive.

The characters in these Indian fables are mostly birds and beasts which behave and speak like human beings. Through the mouths of the animals, the fabulist conveyed his philosophy to his audience.

These Indian fables were circulated widely orally before they were written down. The influence of the *Panchatantra* was felt in ancient Greece, producing the *Fables of Aesop*, which in turn gave rise to La Fontaine's verse fables in France. Later the German *Fabeln* by Gotthold Lessing appeared. In Russia, Ivan Krylov's verse fables, the fables of M. Saltykov-Shchedrin and of V.M. Doroshevich were produced. The *Fables of Aesop*, however, was of paramount historical significance.

Indeed, many later fables remind us of Aesop's. Writers have borrowed freely from Aesop either in subject-matter or in the way of presentation. For instance, the well-known fables of Aesop, such as "The Hare and the Tortoise", "The Fox and the Grapes", and "The Crow and the Fox" were retold in La Fontaine's verse fables, in an elaborated way, of course.

Lessing regarded Aesop's works as the ideal and scorned those written in an ornate style by later authors, with their refinements and elaborations.

Aesop's influence on Krylov is obvious from the fact that the latter retold Aesop's fables such as "The Wolf and the Kid" and "The Farmer and the Snake" in verse. While Aesop often appended a moral tag line to his fables, Krylov added an introductory

monograph at the beginning of his and also didactic remarks at the end. Saltykov-Shchedrin's fables served as a sharp weapon attacking the old social order. However, while being allegorical like Aesop's, his works lost their simplicity and terseness.

Doroshevich's works are sharp and profound like those of his predecessor Saltykov-Shchedrin, who was forty years his senior. Instead of using animals as his characters, he introduced into his fables the oriental life of Baghdad, Damascus and Beijing, to expose the social injustices under Tsarist tyranny. Thus he created a unique style in fable-writing, bringing his works closer to reality.

In China during the fifth and fourth centuries BC, the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States periods marked a golden age of Chinese culture. Academic debates and prose flourished. To back up their arguments and to attract popular interest, scholars used many folk-songs, proverbs, myths and legends in their essays. They also created a number of allegorical fables, which were simply written.

Being fragments in essays, these tales were later singled out by great writers who rewrote them, turning them into separate fables. The best known ones are "Waiting for the Hare to Turn Up", "The Fox Who Profited by the Tiger's Might", "The Snipe and the Mussel" and "The Lord Who Loved Dragons". Fables therefore became an independent literary form, playing a prominent satirical role.

To illustrate an idea by parable or analogy has since become a favourite trick of many Chinese writers. Together with fairy-tales, nursery rhymes and stories, fables are particularly popular among children, teaching them general knowledge and how to be good citizens.

In the last few years fables have revived, after having been suppressed during the ten-year period of political disturbances from 1966. A number of fables have appeared in newspapers and magazines, dealing with a great variety of subjects and current life. This is very encouraging.

The purpose of a fable is first of all to expound a certain idea. The fable "The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains" explains the truth that if one is to be successful, one must perse-

vere and work unceasingly to surmount all difficulties. However, the story is told in a sarcastic way. The Foolish Old Man was actually a wise man with foresight, and the Wise Old Man was short-sighted. In the fable "The Fox Who Profited by the Tiger's Might", the fox, who pretended to be the king of the beasts, walked ahead of the tiger. Seeing that all the other beasts dashed away, the tiger thought they were afraid of the fox. This is a satire on certain mean people who take advantage of somebody else's power to throw their weight about. It also mocks stupidity, which is likely to be manipulated by others.

There is no essential difference between traditional and modern fables. All of them use allegorical methods to define a moral, usually with the help of animals or other natural objects. Giving free rein to his imagination, the fabulist resorts to exaggeration in order to make his point. Zhuang Zhou's description of a fish changing into a bird, which we mentioned earlier, is a fine example, which immediately captures the reader's interest.

Personification is a common usage in fables, both in China and abroad. The Chinese fables, "The Frog in a Well and the Sea Turtle" and "The Snipe and the Mussel", and the Aesopian fables, "The Crow and the Fox" and "The Fox and the Grapes", all endow animals with human characteristics. Of course, this cannot be done arbitrarily. The writers must pay attention to the animals' special traits and to the logic of their actions. These animals perform all sorts of human drama, tragedies, comedies and tragicomedies. A reader feels as if he sees his own shadow in them and, enlightened by the insinuations and admonitions of the writers, he heeds their warnings.

Growing out of oral tradition, the fable has absorbed the most lively and original speech of the common people, which was polished or refashioned by the fabulists into literary works, both plain and poignant, distinct and vivid, succinct and stimulating, witty and satirical. They have no over-elaborate structures and are free from tedious descriptions and long-winded discussions. The fabulist must make his point with pithy and incisive words.

## Five Old Chinese Fables

### The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains

**T**HE Taihang and Wangwu Mountains are seven hundred *li* around and hundreds of thousands of feet high.

The Foolish Old Man who lived north of the mountains was nearly ninety. His house faced these mountains, and finding it most inconvenient to have his entrance blocked by them so that he had to go round each time he went out or came back, he summoned his family to discuss the matter.

"Suppose we work together to level the mountains?" he suggested. "Then we can open a road through Yunan to Hanyin. How about it?"

They all agreed.

Only his wife was dubious and said, "You haven't the strength to raze a small hill like Kuifu. How can you move the Taihang and Wangwu Mountains? Besides, where will you dump all the earth and rocks?"

They answered, "We'll dump them in the sea."

Then the Foolish Old Man set out with his son and grandson, the three of them carrying poles. They dug up stones and earth and carried them in baskets to the tip of Bohai. A neighbour of theirs named Jingcheng left a widow with a son of seven or eight,

and this boy came bounding over to help them. It took them from winter to summer to make one trip.

The Wise Old Man living at the river bend laughed at them and tried to stop them.

"Enough of this folly!" he cried. "How stupid you are! A man as old and weak as you won't be able to move a fraction of these mountains. How can you dispose of so much earth and rocks?"

The Foolish Old Man from north of the mountains heaved a long sigh.

"How dull and dense you are," he said. "You haven't as much sense as the widow's young son. Though I die, I shall leave behind my son and my son's sons, and so on from generation to generation without end. Since the mountains can't grow any larger, why shouldn't we be able to level them?"

Then the Wise Old Man had nothing to say.

from *Lie Zi*\*

### The Lord Who Loved Dragons

Zi-gào the Lord of Ye\*\* was so fond of dragons that he had them painted and carved all over his house. The dragon in heaven, hearing of this, came down to thrust its head through the lord's door and put its tail through the window. At this sight, the Lord of Ye fled, frightened nearly out of his wits.

This shows that the Lord of Ye was not truly fond of dragons. He liked what looked like a dragon, not the real thing.

from *Shen Zi*\*\*\*

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\* Attributed to Lie Yukou, who lived between the fourth and fifth centuries BC at the end of the Spring and Autumn period and the beginning of the Warring States period. This book has also been ascribed to his disciples. Large sections at least are not by him.

\*\* Pronounced "she" in ancient times.

\*\*\* A book, no longer extant, attributed to Shen Buhai of the fourth century BC. All that is left is quotations in other books.

## Waiting for a Hare to Turn Up

There was a peasant in the land of Song who had a tree in his field. One day a hare dashed up, banged against the tree and fell dead with its neck broken. Then the peasant put down his hoe and waited by the tree for another hare to turn up. No more hares appeared, however, but he became the laughing-stock of the land.

from *Han Fei Zi*\*

## The Fox Who Profited by the Tiger's Might

A tiger, looking for some prey, caught a fox.

"Don't you dare eat me!" said the fox. "The Emperor of Heaven has appointed me king of the beasts. If you eat me, you will be disobeying his orders. If you don't believe me, let me walk ahead while you follow close behind. You'll see whether the other beasts run away at the sight of me or not."

Agreeing to this, the tiger accompanied him, and all other beasts who saw them coming dashed away. Not realizing that it was him they feared, the tiger thought they were afraid of the fox.

from *Anecdotes of the Warring States*\*\*

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\* The writings of Han Fei (c.280-233 BC). Part of this work was probably compiled by his pupils.

\*\* This consists mainly of the arguments and speeches of orators in the Warring States period. Some scholars believe that it was edited by Liu Xiang (78-6 BC). Another theory is that it was compiled by Kuai Tong who lived between the third and second centuries BC.

## The Snipe and the Mussel

A mussel was opening its shell to bask in the sun when a snipe took a peck at it. The mussel clamped down on the bird's beak and held it fast.

"If it doesn't rain today or tomorrow," said the snipe, "there will be a dead mussel lying here."

"If I don't set you free today or tomorrow," retorted the mussel, "there will be a dead snipe here too."

As neither would give way, a fisherman came and caught them both.

from *Anecdotes of the Warring States*

## Wang Ruilin

### Sculptures by Liu Zhengde

NOT a few Chinese sculptors have borrowed their subject-matter from popular ancient fables. Among them is Liu Zhengde, whose works have attracted considerable attention for their distinctive Chinese style, characterized by lifelike forms, rough simplicity and ornamental appeal.

Liu was born in 1931 in Tianmen County, Hubei Province, a centre for folk arts, particularly scissor-cuts and batik prints. Though his mother was illiterate, she cut some flowers and animals for him to play with. He later learned how to do them himself. In primary school, he showed an aptitude for drawing and was determined to be an artist when he grew up. At thirteen he was forced to discontinue his studies because his family were too poor to pay for his education. Fortunately a sympathetic former teacher helped him to join the painting class of Yucai School in Chongqing, which was run by the distinguished educationalist Tao Xingzhi, thus beginning his formal study of art.

This was during China's resistance war against Japan (1937-45), and school life was very hard. Students ate only two meals of porridge a day. But to Liu it was like a dream, with good teachers, Chinese and foreign art books and other facilities. His years in

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the school provided him with a solid foundation for his later artistic development.

In 1948, Liu went to Wuchang Art Academy in Wuhan to learn western painting. This was the time when the Chinese people's struggle for liberation was coming to an end. Liu played an active part in the students' democratic movement, organizing a woodcut society in the academy. Their many cartoons and posters against Chiang Kai-shek aroused the attention of Kuomintang secret agents.

When Liberation came in 1949, Liu was eighteen. He threw himself enthusiastically into his work, first as an editor for a pictorial magazine, later as a violinist in a cultural troupe, a designer of advertisements for a cinema and a member of a work team during the land reform in Honghu district. After the Central-South China Art Academy was set up in 1953, he taught in its sculpture department. Together with another artist, he painted a contemporary New-Year picture, which was later chosen to be included in an album, *Selected Paintings of New China (1949-58)*. He also made many sculptures, some of which were chosen for *A selection of Sculptures of New China*. His works of this period were

The sculptor Liu Zhengde



realistic, tackling new themes and expressing his love for the new society. Because of his achievements, Liu was admitted in 1954 to the Chinese Artists' Association, becoming its youngest member.

In 1960 Liu entered the postgraduate sculpture class of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing and studied there for three and a half years under the noted sculptors Liu Kaiqu and Fu Tianchou. His skill improved and, especially after a systematic study of classical Chinese sculpture, he changed his style from western to Chinese. He was particularly influenced by Han-dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) carved tiles and stone engravings as well as the small ornamental carvings on the Shang-dynasty (16th-11th century BC) bronze vessels, studying and copying them carefully. He was impressed first and foremost by the great emphasis placed on volume by ancient Chinese sculptors. With the basic form of a cube or rounded mass in mind, they ingeniously constructed within its confines fantastic animals or human figures. He was also attracted by their mastery of the treatment of lines. A great variety of highly decorative, elegant and vigorous lines added enormously to the beauty of their works. Liu was determined to carry forward these fine traditions.

When still a child, he had loved fables, with their interesting plots and moral wisdom. He thought it would be worthwhile to use sculpture to illustrate them. So he made *The Weasel Pays Respects to the Hen*. When it was shown to a kindergarten child, he understood it and told the story to his mother. This greatly encouraged Liu. He realized that while it was difficult to explain a moral principle to children, they could easily accept allegorical fables. So he continued to make more sculptures to illustrate them.

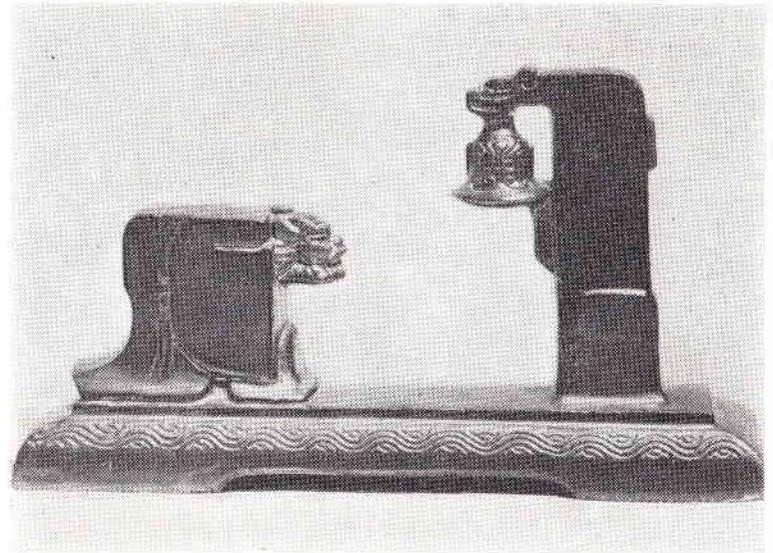
After the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, Liu was criticized for his work, but he was not convinced of his so-called errors. What he saw and heard made him think. It dawned upon him that the "gang of four" and their like were the same characters as those satirized in the classical fables. Shutting himself up in his small room, he soon completed many works such as *Plugging One's Ears While Stealing a Bell*, *The Lord Who Loved Dragons* and *The Fox Who Profited by the Tiger's Might*. The first of these tells how a man, afraid of being heard, plugs his ears while stealing

the bell. It is a satire on those who try to deceive themselves as well as others. Some who saw it suggested that the thief should be dressed in rags, as thieves were generally poor, but Liu held that they can also have power and influence.

In the last few years Liu finished *The Blind Men and the Elephant*, which criticizes people who take a one-sided approach to problems, *Bo Le Judging Horses*, praising those who are good at discovering talents, and other works.

Many factors have helped to form Liu's style. First, he pays great attention to characterization, which is particularly important in sculpture to bring out the hidden meaning of the fables. *The Fox Who Profited by the Tiger's Might* ridicules those servants who rely on their master's might to bully others. It was crucial to portray well the tiger's might, so that the hypocrisy of the fox could be successfully revealed. Here Liu used ancient stone-engraving and carved-tile techniques to sculpt the tiger's body in a quadrangular prism. With its head lowered and tail erect, the fierceness of the animal is conveyed. The tiger's eyes, mouth and

*Plugging One's Ears While Stealing a Bell* (porcelain)

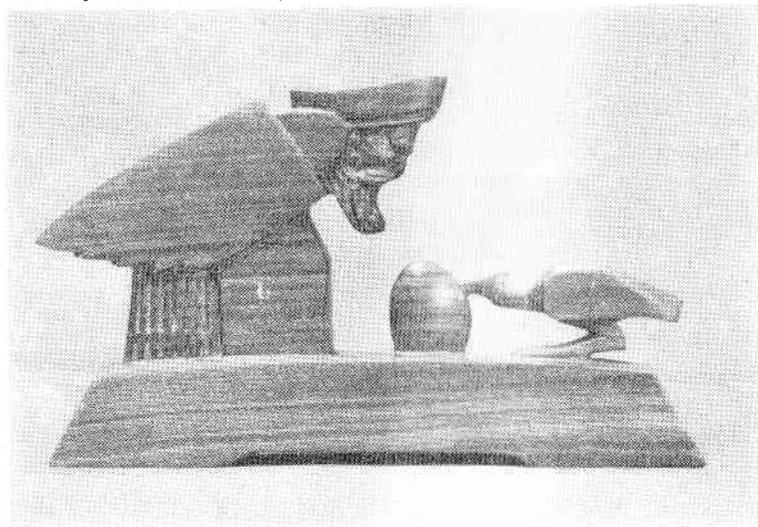


teeth are depicted by lines, which are of ornamental interest. The triumphant-looking, crafty fox, its muzzle pointing up and its eyes down, is riding near the tiger's tail. The relaxed fox is in sharp contrast to the tense tiger. Thus the different characters of the two beasts and the moral of the fable are wonderfully expressed.

Second, traditional Chinese sculpture did not strictly copy the natural form of the subject, but sought to capture its spirit. Liu has attempted to do the same, and his figures are deliberately not in proportion in order to emphasize their special characteristics, enhancing the artistic effect.

In *The Lord Who Loved Dragons*, he created a mythological dragon. The upturned head, the chest pushed out and the four strong claws accentuate the animal's strength. The elongated S-shaped tail gives an impression of elegance and motion. Its eyes, ears, mouth and scales are engraved with meticulous lines. The figure of the lord is like a caricature, the body being compressed into two quadrangular masses arranged like the letter "T", and decorated with simple lines. This is to give prominence to the lord's terror-stricken face and gaping mouth. It cleverly reveals

*The Snipe and the Mussel* (wood)



the ludicrous expression of the lord who claimed to be fond of dragons but who was scared out of his wits when a real one appeared.

Liu has shown great originality in designing the shape of his sculptures. In *The Fox Who Profited by the Tiger's Might*, he used a streamlined shape to stress the tiger's strength; in *The Lord Who Loved Dragons*, he used a spiral shape to express the dragon's motion; while in *The Blind Men and the Elephant*, an oval shape is used to achieve a humorous effect.

Liu's works impress people deeply, although they are all small in size, and he is still working hard to develop his style.

Niu Zhiqiang

## Wang Shusen, the Master Jade-Carver

IN this issue there is a colour plate of a large jadeite bowl, weighing 140 kilograms, entitled *Emerald Sea*. It took jade-carver Wang Shusen and about forty others one year to complete. Decorating its exterior are the Eight Immortals riding the waves. From the sea on the inside five raging dragons are spouting. It is an impressive and exquisite piece of work.

Wang Shusen has been a jade-carver for half a century. Like many other Chinese craftsmen, he knew many hardships in his youth. He was born into a poor carver's family in Beijing in 1917. They lived on the southern outskirts of the city. When he was nine, their house was commandeered by the troops of a warlord and his mother was forced to take him to his father, who worked in a shop in Beijing. Wang acted as a door-keeper and did odd jobs in the shop. Influenced by his father, he began to take a great interest in painting. Too poor to buy paper and brushes, he scavenged the rubbish dumps for pencil stumps to practise drawing on scraps of wrapping paper or cigarette packets which littered the floor. When these could not be found, he would take a twig

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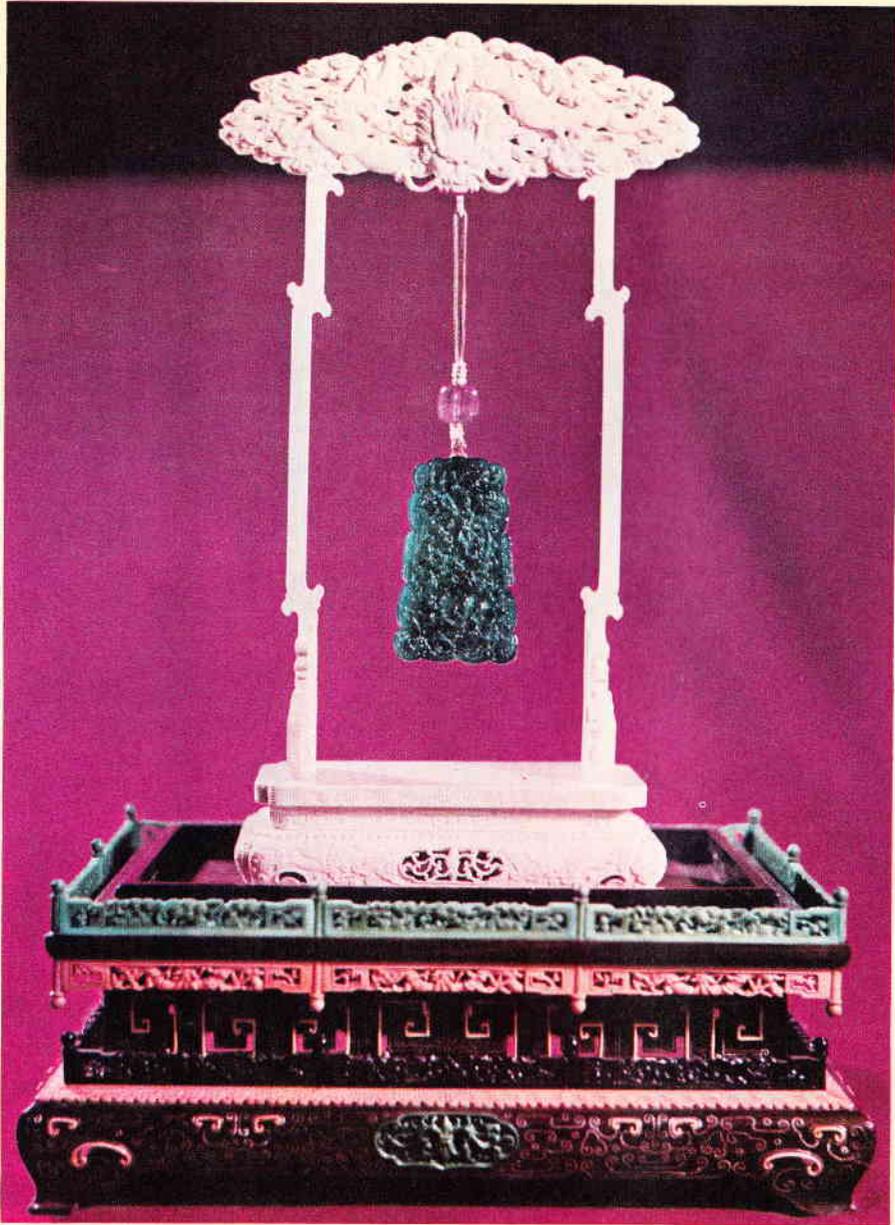
Niu Zhiqiang is a teacher in a pedagogical institute, Beijing.



A Jade Bowl

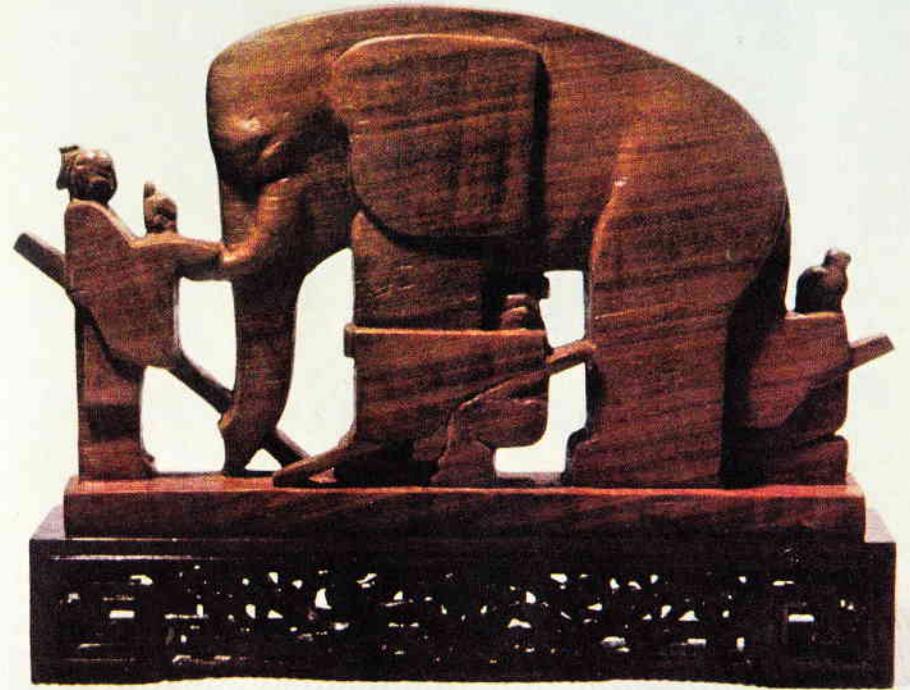
by Wang Shusen and others

# Jade Carvings



A Jade Pendant

by Wang Shusen



The Blind Men and the Elephant (wood)

## Sculptures by Liu Zhengde



The Fox Who Profited by the Tiger's Might (plaster)



The Lord Who Loved Dragons (glazed porcelain)

and draw on the ground. Gradually he acquired the basic techniques for painting flowers, birds, animals and figures. By chance, he helped his father carve a flat pendant with a peony pattern. This earned them a silver dollar and a good meal. His father praised him, "I never imagined you had the makings of a jade-carver!" From that day, he worked with his father and the other old carvers. Talented, clever and diligent, he soon surpassed his father's skill. Once Wang took one of his father's works to a shop. The owner asked if Wang knew anyone who could carve camels, because he was searching for someone skilful enough to accept an English customer's order for a string of camels. To his surprise, Wang offered his services. He quickly carved seven camels of different sizes and added to them an old camel driver. The customer so admired the work that he paid him much more than the original price. So, at the age of thirteen, Wang independently became a jade-carver like his father.

Jade-carving was not merely a way of earning his daily bread, for Wang loved his craft and studied it seriously. However,



The jade-carver  
Wang Shusen

craftsmen in the old society were very jealous of each other, so it was difficult for him to learn. Sometimes he would have to peep through a window at an experienced carver at work. If he was discovered, the curtain would be drawn immediately. Often he went to look at works of art displayed in the shop-windows. He learned history from the story-tellers in the teahouses and pored over Chinese literary classics. He always studied the expressions and movements of different types of people and drew much of his inspiration from nature. In his free time, he went to the outskirts of the city to watch the birds, horses, fish and insects. Through diligent study and hard work, he soon became a skilled craftsman, but this did not bring a better life. In winter time, he had not even a padded coat and in summer he could not afford to change his clothes. Life was precarious. During the War of Resistance Against Japan (1937-1945), he was out of work and turned to hawking vegetables or sweets in the streets. After the war, he resumed jade-carving, but still lived in poverty.

After the people's government was established in 1949, he and others formed a co-operative. This allowed him to fully develop his talents and skill. In 1955, he was given the title "Master Craftsman" and invited to be a member of the Beijing Research Institute of Arts and Crafts. He revived traditional themes, adding new meaning to historical anecdotes and legends, and originated his own style with modern themes. His works were highly valued both at home and abroad.

During the Cultural Revolution, however, Wang was wrongly criticized and became inactive for some years. A green jadeite pendant with a dragon-phoenix pattern cut by him was on sale at an exhibition held in Hongkong in February 1978. It was highly praised. Recently he carved a couple of green jadeite pendants entitled *A Group of Immortals* (see the plate in this issue), no bigger than a baby's palm. On either side are depicted over a dozen Taoist immortals, who are going to congratulate the Heavenly Empress on her birthday, bearing gifts of a longevity peach, precious beads, brocade cloth, flowers, gold coins, an S-shaped ornamental *ruyi* and a sword.

Jade-carving is an extremely difficult art. Unlike the painter

or sculptor, the jade-carver is not free to follow his own inclinations. He must shape his work according to the diverse natural forms and colours of his material. Wang is now a master of this and he can portray anything. No piece is reproduced; all are unique. He skilfully combines the agate's or jade's natural and artistic beauty into an organic whole. *Five Young Geese*, carved in 1975, is representative of this. It is of predominantly white agate with red, black and other colours. After much thought, he designed a pattern with five goslings scrambling for food. Their food dish was carved from the coloured agate. Round the dish are the white goslings. When he came to cut the fifth gosling, there was a black speck, which he ingeniously used for its eye, carving the young goose with its neck twisted round.

Wang Shusen often says, "I may not make use of all I've learned, but I'll never stop learning!" For many years he has been reading Chinese and foreign books. He also studies Beijing opera and classical Chinese paintings. Since the sixties, he has interested himself in physiology and Western paintings. Thus he assimilates the best from other forms of art to enrich his own.

Last year he was given the honorary title "Expert Craftsman" and praised as a model worker.

### Conference on Literary Periodicals

Last April and May, leading persons from over 100 literary journals throughout the country and of some publishing houses attended a national conference on the work of editing literary periodicals. It was sponsored by the Chinese Writers' Association.

According to incomplete statistics, there were as many as 108 old and new literary magazines published at the provincial and municipal levels. Over 6,000 novelettes and short stories had appeared in them. In addition, a survey of 76 magazines revealed a total circulation of 14,050,000 copies, among which *People's Literature* and *Stories Monthly* accounted for 1,000,000 copies each. Generally each magazine had a circulation of 100,000 to 300,000 copies. Some literary works were studied for discussion. It was concluded that a few were too depressing, did not accurately reflect the life they portrayed, or pursued provocative or bizarre plots and that some isolated works were crude. Such problems, it was felt, could be overcome through literary criticism.

The conference also discussed the training of editors and how to improve their working and living conditions.

### "Hundred Flowers" Film Awards Announced

The result of the third national "Hundred Flowers" poll organized by *Popular Cinema*, a monthly magazine, was announced in Beijing

last May. Awards for the best feature films went to *General Ji Hongchang*, about the life of a national resistance hero in the 1930s; *Tear Stain*, about a county Party secretary who clears his falsely accused predecessor; and *Xiao Hua*, about the reunion of a soldier with his two sisters during the Liberation War (1946-49).

The other 12 awards went to:

Best screenplay: Chen Lide, an army writer, for *General Ji Hongchang*; best direction: Xie Tian, for the comedy *Sweet Life*, about family planning; best actor: Li Rentang, for his role of county Party secretary in *Tear Stain*; best actress: Chen Chong, for the title role in *Xiao Hua*; best supporting actress: Liu Xiaoqing, for her role as a frivolous bookstore assistant in the comedy, *Look at This Family*; best photography: Chen Guoliang and Yun Wen-yao, for *Xiao Hua*; best film score: Wang Ming, for the music of *Xiao Hua*; best set designer: Huang Qiagui, for the sets in *After the Flash of Blue Light*, a story about orphans who survived the Tangshan earthquake in 1976; best documentaries: *Eternal Glory to Our Beloved Premier Zhou Enlai* and *Rhythmic Beauty*, about a Shanghai international gymnastics tournament; best science educational films: *The Weasel* and *Under the Red and Green Lights*; best animated films: *Nezha Conquers the Dragon King* and *The Effendi*; best opera film: *Romance of an Iron Bow*, a Beijing opera based on an ancient romance.

The third "Hundred Flowers" poll was resumed after 17 years of suspension. The first two were held in 1962 and 1963.

### French Comedy Staged in Beijing

To celebrate the 300th anniversary of the Comédie Française, the teachers of the Central Drama Academy presented Molière's *Tartuffe* in Beijing last April.

*Tartuffe*, a five-act comedy written three centuries ago, had been staged by the academy for the first time in 1959. Most of the actors in the current production were the middle-aged teachers of the academy, who gave a very successful and lively performance.

### **Collection of Huang Zhou's Paintings Published**

A collection of paintings by the well-known contemporary artist Huang Zhou has recently been published by Heilongjiang People's Publishing House.

This album includes 168 of Huang Zhou's works during the past 30 years. Half of them are traditional Chinese paintings, the others sketches. There are 47 colour plates.

Included in this collection are *The Eagle*, which was presented to President Tito by Premier Hua Guofeng during his visit to Yugoslavia in 1978 and *A Hundred Donkeys*, a gift to Emperor Hirohito by Vice-premier Deng Xiaoping during his visit to Japan later that year.

### **Selection of Taiwan Folk-songs Published**

A selection of folk-songs from Taiwan has been published by the Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House. Edited by the cultural bureau of Fujian Province, it consists of 158 Gaoshan and Han folk-songs. Most of the former are sung at festivals or describe their life and customs. Among the latter are well-known and much loved Taiwan and southern Fujian folk-songs in the southern Fujian and Kejia dialects.

Some of the songs in the selection are adapted by Gaoshan people living on the mainland and based on old tunes.

### **Anthology of Tian Han in Preparation**

A committee for editing and publishing an anthology of the works of the late famous playwright Tian Han (1898-1968) has been formed in Beijing.

Tian Han was a prolific writer. The planned ten to twelve-volume anthology will be published starting from 1982.

### **Society for the Study of Du Fu Founded**

A society for the study of Du Fu (712-770), the celebrated Tang-dynasty poet, was set up in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, and held its first meeting last April.

The first national academic society to study Du Fu and his works, it will organize research activities, edit and publish a quarterly, introduce the latest research on Du Fu at home and abroad and hold international academic exchanges.

### **Huge Scroll Painting on Display in Chengdu**

*Mountain Landscape at Jialing*, a huge painting in the traditional style by Wu Yifeng, was on display in Chengdu last April.

The scroll, 25.3 metres by 26.7 centimetres, is a panoramic landscape, full of grandeur.

In the mid-fifties, setting off from Baoji, Shaanxi Province, Wu Yifeng travelled along the Jialing River until he reached Chongqing, a journey of more than 1,400 *li*, making sketches and gathering material en route.

### **Ruins of Early Primitive Clan Village Found in Shaanxi**

Excavations have been carrying on for the past eight years on the ruins of an ancient culture dating back 6,000 to 7,000 years near Jiangzhai Village, Lintong County, Shaanxi Province.

The total accumulative area of excavation is over 16,000 square metres. It actually consists of five strata from the bottom to the top, spanning over 1,000 years. Some important finds are the sites of houses, kitchen ranges, kilns, tombs, production implements and daily utensils made of pottery, stone, bone, horn and shell, totalling over 10,000 pieces.

Most important is the discovery of the comprehensive and well-preserved ruins of a Neolithic patriarchal clan village of the early Yangshao Culture. Two ditches separated the living quarters from

the cemetery. In the centre of the living quarters was a square about 4,000 square metres in area, with houses built around it. There were five groups of buildings, each centred around one big building. From this we may conclude that the inhabitants probably belonged to several households or clans, forming one clan or tribe.

Among the numerous relics, the most precious is a brass plate. It was formerly believed that China's bronze-making began in the late Shang Dynasty over 3,000 years ago, but now it is evident the Yangshao Culture people engaged in brass-making 6,000 years ago.

Archaeologists have found beside a skeleton an inkstone, a stonystick, several pieces of black pigment — manganese dioxide — and a grey pottery cup. These constitute a complete set of tools for painting pottery. It is assumed that these were funeral objects for the dead person.

There are over 120 symbols of 39 kinds engraved on the pottery, some of which have never been seen before. Experts believe it to be a kind of hieroglyphics, an early source of the later written Chinese language. In addition, the discovery of shells shows that these Neolithic people in the Yellow River Basin exchanged goods.

### New Finds of Paleolithic Period in Tibet

Chinese scientists found 94 remains of stone implements dating from the Paleolithic Period in northern Tibet in 1976. Earlier, stone implements were discovered in Dingre County in southern Tibet. Another 266 stone artifacts from the Neolithic Period were found in twenty places 4,400 to 5,200 metres above sea-level.

These prove that 10,000 years ago from the late Paleolithic Period to the Mesolithic and Neolithic Periods, prehistoric man lived and hunted there. Analysis shows that the climate, water supply, grass and other natural conditions then were more favourable than now. The elevation was also much lower. Due to global climatic changes and the growth of the plateau, the climate there also gradually changed.



Lotus Flowers (traditional Chinese painting)

by Guo Weiqu



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