

夏衍：上海屋簷下

# Under the Eaves of Shanghai

By Hsia Yen

Translated by Yao Hsin-nung

## ACT I

*Place:* A tenement house in the eastern district of Shanghai.

*Time:* One day in the Ripe Plum Season of 1937.

*Characters:*

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG, the tenant. Age 36.

TS'AI-YU, his wife. Age 32.

PAO-CHEN, TS'AI-YU's daughter. Age 12.

K'UANG FU, TS'AI-YU's former husband. Age 34.

HUANG CHIA-MEI, sub-tenant of the pavilion room. Age 28.

KUEI-FEN, his wife. Age 24.

MI-MI, their infant son.

HUANG'S FATHER. Age 58.

LITTLE GEM, sub-tenant of the second floor room. Age 27-28.

TIENTSIN KID, her boy friend. Age about 30.

CHAO CHEN-YU, sub-tenant of the kitchen. Age 48.

MRS. CHAO. Age 42.

AH NIU, their son. Age 13.

AH HSIANG, their daughter. Age 5.

THE MONUMENT (LI LING PEI), sub-tenant of the cockloft. Age 54.

Walk-on parts: YOUNG CH'EN, FOREMAN, WORKER, VEGETABLE VENDOR, RICKSHAW PULLERS, CATERER'S DELIVERY MAN.

The scene represents a cross-section of a typical "alley tenement house" commonly seen in the squalid eastern district of Shanghai. At the right is the back door, through which one may see pedestrians come and go in the alley outside. Adjacent to the door is the kitchen with a water faucet and cement sink standing in front. The window of the mezzanine cubicle, which the natives euphemistically refer to as the "pavilion room", yawns above the kitchen. A few inches

below its sill there is a sloping rain-shelter made of tin sheet, in order that woman tenants may launder clothes and rinse out rice around the sink even on a rainy day. A bamboo rice basket hangs from the window sill together with a bamboo food-steamer and a few diapers, washed but not yet dry. To the left of the kitchen, a flight of narrow stairs leads precipitously to the mezzanine floor. The treads have been trodden to a hollow in the mid-section and the lower two steps have been repaired with

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SHANGHAI  
By Paul  
Hogarth, 1959.

new boards. The door of the pavilion room is on the right-hand side of the mezzanine landing, above which a five-watt electric bulb hangs like a bat under the remaining half of a broken shade. To the left of the landing, a short flight of stairs—out of the sight line except the lower end of its handrail—gives access to the “front upstairs-room” on the second floor. The space to the right of the lower stairs is partitioned off with unvarnished thin boards into a “rear annex” which is so dark inside that one cannot see anything without turning on the light. Further left, on the other side of the partition, is the “visitor’s room”, or parlor, with a row of double sash-doors which open onto a small “sky well” courtyard and the half-hidden front door at extreme left. Like the backyard, this sky well also has a sloping tin sheet on its wall to serve as a rain-shelter for the odds and ends haphazardly jumbled together underneath, including a briquet stove, a table board and pieces of broken furniture.

This single-room two-storey tenement houses a total of five families. The parlor, occupied by LIN CHIH-CH'ENG, the principal tenant—or the “second landlord” in Shanghai parlance—and his family, is comparatively more sprucely fitted up with furniture which includes, among other things, a desk and a glass-paneled bookshelf now serving as a wardrobe. From these pieces of *meubles de luxe* one may infer that their owner was perhaps once a “writing-brush wielder” of the intellectual class.

The kitchen is taken by a primary school teacher CHAO CHEN-YU. Through its open door and window, one may see an iron bedstead set at a right angle to the latter, a square table right below the window sill, a collapsible canvas cot against the back wall opposite the table, and a portable cupboard and a bamboo chopstick-holder hanging on the left wall behind the door. Outside there is a briquet stove resting on a pedestal of broken bricks

as well as a cone-shaped frying pan and other kitchen utensils.

HUANG CHIA-MEI, an unemployed ex-clerk of a foreign trading firm, lives in the pavilion room on the mezzanine floor. A kerosene stove in the corner of the stair landing indicates the spot where his family's daily rice is cooked.

The single room on the second floor has only one sub-tenant, Shih Hsiao-pao, the LITTLE GEM. For her there is no need "to light the cook-stove", so to speak. Her lunches and dinners are regularly delivered to her by a petty caterer in the vicinity on a monthly payment basis.

The out-of-sight cockloft under the upper staircase provides a roost for an aged newspaper hawker who happens to be a habitual alcoholic and a little "abnormal" at that. Everyone calls him LI LING PEI, that is, "THE LI LING MONUMENT", because he is fond of humming an aria from a Peking opera of that title which begins with the line "Longing for my beloved dears / I can't withhold my pearly tears" etc.

It is the rainy Ripe Plum Season<sup>1</sup>, stifling and oppressively humid. There is a continual drizzle throughout the play. When it thickens into a down-pour one may hear a spattering on the tin shelter and a gurgling in the drain pipes. Yet a moment later a heavy-lidded sun may peep through the clouds. The air is muggy. It goes without saying the low atmospheric pressure affects the mood of the tenants. Indeed, from their behavior and conversations, it is perceivable that they are sorely depressed, irascible and impatient, so much so that their pent-up surliness is likely to explode at the slightest provocation.

The time is a little before eight o'clock in the morning. It is raining. Intermittent street noises and hawkers' calls are heard from both the front and the back alleys. Outside the back door MRS. CHAO is buying some vegetables from a VENDOR, with AH HSIANG clinging to her side. CHAO CHEN-YU is poring intently over the morning paper with his reading glasses astride his nose. His son AH NIU is getting ready to go to school, packing up his satchel.

<sup>1</sup>The rainy season in East China lasts approximately from early June to early July.

<sup>2</sup>The author uses the pronoun to stand for "the

In the murky parlor YANG TS'AI-YU is cleaning up the breakfast table and putting things in order. Her daughter PAO-CHEN is playing a toy piano on the table with her eyes riveted on a song book, and humming a tune.

PAO-CHEN: (*Humming*)

"But let me ask you,  
How much can you earn  
From selling a bolt of cloth?"

[*Catching herself off key, she repeats the tune.*]

"But let me ask you,  
How much can you earn  
From selling a bolt of cloth?  
Mind you, when they<sup>2</sup> get your money  
It at once turns into bullets. . . ."

TS'AI-YU: Pao-chen, it's getting late!

PAO-CHEN: (*Puckers her lips but continues to sing.*)

"Mind you, when they get your money  
It at once turns into bullets;  
And each bullet, every bullet,  
Will hit you right through your heart  
. . . ."

TS'AI-YU: I said, it's getting late!

PAO-CHEN: I haven't learned to sing it yet. I have to teach other kids to sing it after school today.

TS'AI-YU: If you haven't yet learned it yourself, how can you teach others? (*Picks up a dress from the bed.*) Look! you took it off without bothering to hang it up properly. Just tossing it on the bed! You're twelve already. You cannot even account for yourself and yet you want to teach others and act like a little teacher!

PAO-CHEN: (*Collects her books.*) This dress needs to be washed anyway.

TS'AI-YU: To be washed? You make it sound so easy. On a rainy day like this, it simply won't dry. (*Hangs up the dress.*)

PAO-CHEN: (*Runs across, snatches the dress off the hanger and tosses it in the wash basin.*) It's not hygienic to wear dirty clothes.

TS'AI-YU: (*More amused than angry.*) Don't I know! Need you remind me? (*Takes the basin into the courtyard.*)

Japanese" because in the mid-1930s the Chinese Nationalist government would ban any literary work that was overtly anti-Japanese.

*Hsia Yen was the pen name of Shen Tuan-hsien (沈端先), born in Chekiang in 1900. He was prominent in left-wing literary circles and scored his first success as a dramatist with two plays, Under the Eaves of Shanghai, staged in 1935, and Sai Chin-hua (賽金花), a historical drama about late Ch'ing politics, staged in 1936. The thirties was a fruitful period for the modern Chinese theatre, with the emergence of Ts'ao Yu, T'ien Han (田漢), Hung Shen (洪深) and others. Many of their plays were performed around the country by travelling troupes. In Shanghai, in 1937, the Union of Dramatic Groups (上海劇團聯合會) was established to strengthen the theatre movement by creating a patriotic united front against the growing threat of Japanese militarism. It was in this spirit that Hsia Yen wrote Under the Eaves of Shanghai. In plain, realistic fashion, he depicted the life of tenement dwellers of the lower social strata in all its dullness and melancholy, but the tone of the play, though gloomy, is not pessimistic. The liveliness of the little girl Lin Pao-chen symbolizes hope for the future, and this realization gave the revolutionary weighed down by long years of imprisonment the strength to live. This hopeful tone, of great significance to the public during the war years, and the local color of the setting, account for the play's contemporary popularity.*

PAO-CHEN: (*Closes her satchel and calls.*) Ah Niu!  
(*Carries the satchel by the strap and goes toward the kitchen.*)

MRS. CHAO: (*Outside the back door*) Either you sell or bust up! (*Enters agitatedly, carrying her market basket, while the VENDOR is counting the coppers in his hand.*)

VENDOR: (*Desperately tries to squeeze himself in through the door crack as if he has suffered a great injustice.*) Even on your terms of two and a half coppers per ounce, it's three coppers short. Altogether one pound and two ounces—less seven ounces for the basket, it's eleven ounces. That comes to two hundred and seventy-five—

MRS. CHAO: Who says the basket weighs only seven ounces? (*Violently dumps the chiao-pai<sup>3</sup> stalks on the ground and weighs the empty basket on a hand scale.*) I say, it's eight and a half ounces.

VENDOR: (*Moves closer to examine her hand scale.*) Now, now, you look.

MRS. CHAO: (*Makes a perfunctory gesture of weighing, then goes toward the kitchen.*) Either you sell it or take it away!

VENDOR: All right, all right. Throw in two more coppers, please.

[MRS. CHAO turns round and fumbles in her pocket with studied hesitation. Reluctantly

she produces the extra two coppers for the VENDOR. The latter now puts his baskets back onto his shoulder pole and starts to move on.]

MRS. CHAO: (*Nimblely snatches a stalk of chiao-pai from his basket.*) Now you throw in one more stalk!

VENDOR: (*Exasperated*) How could you—!

[MRS. CHAO frantically pushes the back door close and, together with AH HSIANG, they jointly throw their weight against the door.]

MRS. CHAO: (*To the VENDOR outside*) My, you're a tight-fisted haggler, green vendor. (*Turns her back against the door and mutters to herself.*) Really, after a fortnight of rain, one can't even afford to buy cabbages and chiao-pai stalks!

VENDOR: (*Out of sight*) Hey, ma'am. . . ! (*Pushes against the door several times without avail. He has to give up and resume his long-drawn-out call.*) Ai . . . chiao-pai ho . . . pai-ts'ai<sup>4</sup> . . .

[Casting a glance at his wife, CHAO CHEN-YU wrinkles up a faint smile, then quickly turns his eyes to the newspaper.]

PAO-CHEN: (*Emerges from the rear entrance of the parlor and calls out.*) Ah Niu, have you learned the song I taught you yesterday?

AH NIU: (*Sticks out his head from the kitchen.*) I forbid you to call me that. You should call

<sup>3</sup>Zizania latifolia.

<sup>4</sup>Chinese cabbages (*Brassica chinensis*).

me Chao Ch'en.

PAO-CHEN: (*Deliberately*) I insist on calling you Ah Niu, Ah Niu, calf—

AH NIU: Are you really serious?

PAO-CHEN: You're a Taurus, aren't you?

AH NIU: Then I'll also call you 'tag-along', 'tag-along oil'<sup>5</sup>—

PAO-CHEN: (*Stung to the quick*) Chao Ch'en!

AH NIU: Ha-ha-ha. . . . (*Returns to the kitchen to fetch his satchel.*)

[TS'AI-YU steps out from the rear door of the parlor with a market basket in hand. PAO-CHEN puckers up her lips and glares at her.]

TS'AI-YU: What is it now? You—

PAO-CHEN: (*Points toward the kitchen.*) Ah Niu's harping on it again. He calls me—

TS'AI-YU: (*A shadow flashes across her face. She speaks in a low voice but emphatically.*) Don't mind him. Go to school now. Have you got any snack money?

[PAO-CHEN shakes her head. TS'AI-YU promptly returns to the parlor to fetch some money and gives it to her. At this juncture, LIN CHIH-CH'ENG enters through the front door with a long face that betrays a bellyful of grievances. Without saying a word, he puts the front door key back in his pocket. Then he takes a glass of boiled water from the table, gulps it down and flings himself carelessly on the bed.]

TS'AI-YU: (*Surprised*) What's the matter? Aren't you feeling well?

[LIN does not answer.]

TS'AI-YU: You haven't even changed your clothes. (*Takes his pyjamas from a wall peg and hands them to him.*)

[LIN remains incommunicative.]

TS'AI-YU: (*Chafed*) What now? You're always picking on me. I'm not your blow-hole!

[Seeing that TS'AI-YU has taken offense, LIN sits up to change his clothes. He wants to say something but words fail him. Without minding him, TS'AI-YU picks up her market basket and goes out with PAO-CHEN, closing the annex door behind her. LIN puts on his pyjamas and lies down to sleep.]

AH NIU: (*To PAO-CHEN, as she passes by the*

*kitchen*) Wait a minute, Pao-chen. (*Turns to his mother.*) Ma, please give me five coppers. I want to buy a pencil.

MRS. CHAO: No.

AH NIU: Teacher says I need it.

MRS. CHAO: Teacher may say you need it, I say you don't.

[*With a smile, CHAO CHEN-YU produces five coppers from his pocket and gives the money to AH NIU.*]

AH NIU: (*To PAO-CHEN*) I still can't sing the last two lines.

PAO-CHEN: Now listen. (*Hums the line.*) "And each bullet, every bullet. . . ."

AH NIU: Well, once again please.

[*As they reach the back door, TS'AI-YU catches up from behind.*]

TS'AI-YU: Pao-chen, be sure to come back right after school. If you run wild, your father would know and—

PAO-CHEN: (*Annoyed*) "Father, father!" What do you mean by "father" anyway? (*Exits with AH NIU.*)

[*Meantime KUEI-FEN has come back with her groceries. She nearly bumps into TS'AI-YU. MRS. CHAO casts a stealthy glance at the latter.*]

TS'AI-YU: (*To cover up her discomposure.*) Oh, good morning! (*Exits.*)

MRS. CHAO: (*Quickly to KUEI-FEN*) Did you hear that?

KUEI-FEN: What was it?

MRS. CHAO: (*Points her puckered lips at the back door; sotto voce.*) Everytime somebody mentioned her father, Pao-chen would show annoyance and pucker up her lips. (*Imitates PAO-CHEN.*) "What do you mean by 'father'?" Well, times have certainly changed. Children now catch on to these things so early. You can't fool them about anything anymore.

KUEI-FEN: (*With a smile*) After all, she's twelve or thirteen years old now. How could she still be innocent? (*She takes out groceries from her basket one after another beside the sink.*)

MRS. CHAO: (*Coeks-up-her-ears-in-the-direction-of-the-parlor-and-whispers-to-KUEI-FEN.*) But I have heard that she was very little when Lin married her mother.

<sup>5</sup>"Tag-along-oil-bottle" (*t'o yu p'ing*) is a Shanghai

slang for a step-child who lives in its step-father's house.

KUEI-FEN: In all fairness, Lin treats the girl very well. I'd say, there aren't many step-fathers like him.

MRS. CHAO: Right you are. It's almost one year now since we moved to this place yet I've never heard him either beat or scold her. Sometimes he would take it out on her mother and blow his top but as soon as he saw her, he'd shut up.

KUEI-FEN: Well, it's human nature to treat a child not your own a bit differently. Besides, her playmates like to tease her and call her 'tag-along oil bottle'. (*Laughs.*) Children don't like to eat humble pie, you know.

MRS. CHAO: (*After a pause*) There's something you don't know. When she chats with Ah Niu, she always refers to her step-father as Uncle Lin. I've never heard her call him father.

KUEI-FEN: They knew each other before, didn't they?

MRS. CHAO: Didn't they indeed! I've heard that Lin and Pao-chen's father used to be the closest pals.

KUEI-FEN: Well, then, how come—?

[*Suddenly big drops of rain come splashing down.*]

MRS. CHAO: Tsk-tsk! This rainy season is really tiresome. It's so humid and stifling, one almost smothers!

KUEI-FEN: Mm-m-m. It keeps on raining, even the galoshes become leaky!

MRS. CHAO: (*Noticing that KUEI-FEN is washing both fish and pork.*) Ah, you've bought a lot today, haven't you?

[*HUANG'S FATHER coughs loudly in the pavilion room.*]

KUEI-FEN: (*Forces a smile.*) Well, my father-in-law has come from the countryside, of course I have to buy a little something.

MRS. CHAO: Ah, I've forgotten. He's never been to Shanghai before, has he? (*Starts to peel off the outer leaves of the chiao-pai stalks.*)

KUEI-FEN: No. Originally he planned to visit us last autumn. . . .

MRS. CHAO: Ah! (*As if the idea has just occurred to her*) To see his new-born grandson, right?

KUEI-FEN: (*Smiles with an effort.*) Yes, but also because my husband hasn't been back for five or six years now.

MRS. CHAO: The old gentleman seems very hale and hearty. Have you taken him to the three big department stores<sup>6</sup> and Nanking Road to see the sights?

KUEI-FEN: More or less. That's the usual round for a newcomer.

MRS. CHAO: Came home rather late last night too. I suppose Mr. Huang took him to see the Great World Amusement Park?

KUEI-FEN: No, just went nearby to the East Sea Theater to see a picture. (*Laughs.*) But he didn't like it in spite of the money we had to pay for admission. He complained that the human head on the screen was big in one instant and small in another. And just when he was beginning to make some sense of a scene, pop! it would 'jump' to something else.

MRS. CHAO: (*Concurring*) I don't like movies either. The flashing and shifting of the lights make my head dizzy. Old folk, as a rule, love to see the Peking opera. You'd better take him to see *The Burning of the Red Lotus Monastery*<sup>7</sup>. At the end of last year, my elder brother took me to see one part of that show. Why, it was really wonderful! The costumes were so beautiful, the sets were so novel. The light went out for no more than the twinkling of an eye, and the setting on the stage had completely changed! Upon my word, let him see it before he goes back to the countryside. (*Laughs.*) I bet you, he won't stop talking about it for days and nights on end.

KUEI-FEN: Uh-huh, Chia-mei also said that.

MRS. CHAO: The old gentleman will stay over for a few more days, I suppose?

KUEI-FEN: (*Her eyes fall.*) I don't know. Probably a few more days.

MRS. CHAO: He is certainly in Fortune's good graces. With a son setting up a home in Shanghai and the birth of a grandson—

KUEI-FEN: But . . . if only Chia-mei had a job. . . . (*Glances at the pavilion room, then continues softly.*) As the saying goes, one family may not

<sup>6</sup>The three big department stores in Shanghai are The Sincere, Wing On and Sun Sun.

<sup>7</sup>A serialized 'modern' Peking opera featuring elaborate

setting and quick scene-shifting which created a sensation in Shanghai in the 1930s.

know the affairs of another. In my father-in-law's eyes, the kind of life we have here is probably rather disappointing. For a peasant family to raise a boy till he graduates from the university, it is not easy. Country people's view of the world is very limited. Back in the village everybody says that Chia-mei has struck it rich in Shanghai and has got a big job. But . . . (*gloomily*) . . . when the old father comes here and sees with his own eyes that our whole family is merely living in a pavilion room— (*She breaks off and stands up, having finished washing her groceries.*)

MRS. CHAO: Does Mr. Huang have any brothers living in the countryside?

KUEI-FEN: It would have been better if he had, but he's the only son.

MRS. CHAO: (*Tries to comfort her.*) All the same, Mr. Huang has high aspirations. Someday he certainly will—

KUEI-FEN: (*Interrupts.*) What's the use of having high aspirations in this hellhole of Shanghai? People with no high aspirations have managed to get along, but he—with his ingrained bad temper, he is unwilling to take things as they come. . . .

CHAO CHEN-YU: (*Having put down his newspaper and removed his glasses, he rubs his eyes with the back of his hand.*) No, no. On the contrary, it is those who take things as they come, whose disposition is to be deplored. The society is corrupt because people are corrupt. A decent society must begin with individual decency. If everyone would follow Mr. Huang's example and refuse to be complacent and slipshod—

KUEI-FEN: (*Interposes before going upstairs.*) That is to say, if he would resign himself to the lot of living in a pavilion room. Right?

CHAO CHEN-YU: No, that's not the way to put it. To be a man one should be able to examine his own conscience without qualms. For instance—

MRS. CHAO: (*Harshly*) No more instances, please! If you don't go now, you'll miss the class again. You make only a few dimes for each hour of teaching. Don't you give them a reason to short-measure the chicken feed once more!

CHAO CHEN-YU: No fear. It's quarter to eight now and it takes only four and a half minutes to get there. (*He turns to KUEI-FEN earnestly.*) For instance—(*Only then he discovers that KUEI-*

FEN *has already gone upstairs.*)

MRS. CHAO: (*Sarcastically*) How people love to listen to you! You had better save this kind of talk for the classroom, to hoodwink the children.

CHAO CHEN-YU: (*Unruffled*) Whether people like to listen or not, it's their business. But to speak out or not, it's my business. I . . . I . . . .

MRS. CHAO: That will do. Get along now. In a moment that Mr. Lin will come over and you'll tattle on with him over the sea and beyond the horizon. There'll be no end to it.

CHAO CHEN-YU: (*Casts a glance toward the parlor.*) Has he been working on the night shift again these few days?

MRS. CHAO: Day shift or night shift, what business is it of yours?

[*At this juncture, the off-stage cry of a steaming rice-roll peddler rouses AH HSIANG from the kitchen.*]

AH HSIANG: (*To MRS. CHAO*) Ma, I want a rice-roll.

MRS. CHAO: (*Promptly fumbles in her pocket, but chides her when she realizes that there is no money left.*) Haven't you just eaten rice porridge?

AH HSIANG: Yes, but I want—

MRS. CHAO: (*Sternly*) Your father hasn't made a fortune yet!

[*Thus thwarted, AH HSIANG gazes avidly beyond the back door as the peddler continues his cry.*

*In the second floor room, Shih Hsiao-pao, the LITTLE GEM, has just got up. It is very dark inside. She stretches herself . . . draws open the curtain to let in the day light . . . lights a cigarette . . . opens the window and surveys the rain . . . knits her brows into a scowl of despair . . . Then she takes a thermos bottle . . . languidly goes downstairs. . . . Upon reaching the mezzanine landing she peeps into the pavilion room through the door crack and stifles a snigger with her hand as though she has seen something funny.*

*The LITTLE GEM is one of the so-called modern young ladies fixed up at a moderate price. Her hair is fashionably set in permanent wave. Though her eyes are still drowsy, the makeup on her face has not yet completely faded away. She wears a ch'i-p'ao of bright red print, tailored in the style of a modified*

version of the Manchu banner-woman's robe currently in vogue. At the moment, her high collar is indecorously ajar under her chin with its two buttons unfastened. She is not breathtakingly pretty but there is a natural charm about her eyes and brows and a sexy suppleness in the swaying of her hips as she shuffles about barefooted in a pair of flat-soled Chinese slippers.

As she reaches the kitchen door, she casually throws away the remaining greater half of her cigarette. MRS. CHAO flashes a withering glance at her as soon as she hears her foot-steps, then deliberately turns away and fans her briquet stove so vigorously that a cloud of white smoke bursts straight up into the space above.]

LITTLE GEM: (Glances at MRS. CHAO.) Ah, how early you people are up and about. (Stretches and yawns.) It's raining again. The pitter-patter was so tiresome, I'd rather lie in bed and not get up. (Yawns again.)

MRS. CHAO: (Not without malice) Surely you're born under a lucky star!

LITTLE GEM: (Responds with a smile before turning to CHAO CHEN-YU.) Ah, Mr. Chao, you have no class today?

[CHAO CHEN-YU is too engrossed in his newspaper to answer.]

LITTLE GEM: (Somewhat disconcerted) What's happened to you today? There're times when I was not in a mood to talk with you, yet you were so engagingly chatty and jolly. Now I'm talking to you, but you don't even answer me.

CHAO CHEN-YU: (Hastens to put down his newspaper.) Oh, oh, it's you! Look, the paper says

....

LITTLE GEM: What does the paper say? (Casually empties her thermos bottle and unintentionally splashes a little water on MRS. CHAO who instantly stares at her fiercely.) Oh, I'm sorry. (She opens the back door and goes out breezily to buy boiling water for her thermos bottle.)

[LIN CHIH-CH'ENG has been tossing and turning in his bed without sleep. Now he sits up.]

CHAO CHEN-YU: (Unable to suppress a guffaw at his wife's manifest indignation) Ha-ha . . . ha-ha . . . !

MRS. CHAO: (Turns round abruptly.) What are you laughing at?

CHAO CHEN-YU: Why are you always picking on her? We all live in the same house yet you are at loggerheads with each other on sight. What kind of manners is that?

MRS. CHAO: I simply can't bear her bizarre sight—a street-walker without walking the street, a misfit with the looks of a siren and the airs of a witch. During her husband's absence, she's brought back all sorts of men to her room, one after another. . . .

[Violent coughing is heard in the pavilion room. HUANG CHIA-MEI leans out from the window, his thin pallid face haggard with worry. He waves his hands to fan away the uprolling smoke from below and closes the window. His infant son is heard crying.]

CHAO CHEN-YU: Ugh! What on earth does that concern you, eh? Besides, she is not to blame. Didn't I tell you it's only another way of making a living? Her husband is working on an ocean liner sailing all over the world. Japan today, the South Seas tomorrow, the United States another day. He can't come home more than two or three times a year. She has neither property nor any skill to earn money with. Yet you expect her to live up to the ideals of the chaste and the ascetic. Isn't this too . . . too . . . ?

MRS. CHAO: If you want to preach, go to the Christian church. Whatever the case is, you are sure to give a big lecture on moral principles. Well, it seems to me the only thing you are good at is tongue-wagging. You may be learned but can you make money from it? H'm! I do pick on her. But what business is it of yours? Mind you—when I talk with someone else, don't you cut in again!

CHAO CHEN-YU: What? I . . . what nonsense . . . ! (He gesticulates emphatically as he crosses over to his wife. But before he completes his sentence, he is interrupted by a sponge cake hawker's call and the running footsteps of AH HSIANG.)

AH HSIANG: (Re-enters from the back door.) Ma, I want to buy a sponge cake.

MRS. CHAO: You never get your fill! You've just—

[LITTLE GEM returns with her refilled thermos bottle. She pushes the back door open.]

LITTLE GEM: (Facing outside) Hey, sponge cake! (Pays the hawker for a few pieces. When she wheels round and sees the avid look on AH HSIANG's face, she turns again to the hawker.)

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TENANTS UNDER SAME ROOF: Scene showing an "alley tenement house" with a "pavilion room" above the kitchen, a common housing design in Shanghai in the Thirties. From a production of the play staged by the Chinese Youth Drama Company (中國青年藝術劇院) of Shanghai.

- Give me another piece. (To AH HSIANG.) Come, come. (AH HSIANG goes over to take the cake.)
- MRS. CHAO: (Shouts.) Don't take it!
- LITTLE GEM: (With a smile) What does it matter? Children all like to eat, don't they?
- MRS. CHAO: (To AH HSIANG, loudly) I forbid you! Hear me?
- [AH HSIANG looks at her mother but stretches out her hand nevertheless.]
- LITTLE GEM: Never mind. You may take it.
- MRS. CHAO: (Pulls AH HSIANG away.) You spineless brat! Have you never eaten sponge cake before? (Stares angrily at LITTLE GEM.)
- LITTLE GEM: Oyo! dear me. . . .
- MRS. CHAO: What are you oyo-ing for?
- LITTLE GEM: This is merely a child's fancy. Why take it so seriously?
- MRS. CHAO: But the child is mine. You don't want to take it seriously but I do. Let me tell you—we are poor, yes, but we never allow our children to eat anything bought with unclean money.
- LITTLE GEM: (Also flares up.) What? Whose money do you say is unclean?
- MRS. CHAO: (Sneers.) You're asking me?
- LITTLE GEM: Hey, why are you so unreasonable, eh? You don't even know what is good and what is bad. I have the best intentions—
- MRS. CHAO: (Ejaculates every word as if spitting.) I—don't—want—your—best—intentions!
- LITTLE GEM: That settles it! (Sneers.) Unreasonable! (Starts to go upstairs.)
- MRS. CHAO: (Advances toward her.) Whom do you call unreasonable?
- LITTLE GEM: (Several steps up the stairs, she turns

round and makes a disparaging gesture, though still wearing a mocking smile.) You! (Goes up, light as a breeze.)

[Before MRS. CHAO can retort, HUANG'S FATHER appears on the mezzanine landing with the two-year-old grandson in his arms. He comes down the stairs, followed by KUEI-FEN with her laundry. The interruption puts an end to the squabbling between LITTLE GEM and MRS. CHAO.]

MRS. CHAO: (Vents her anger by spitting on the ground.) Shameless wench!

[HUANG'S FATHER is every inch a country bumpkin. He wears a discolored blue jacket of homespun cloth with a work apron round his waist. There are streaks of gray in his hair and mustache. He holds his grandchild with a proper grandfatherly pride and watches his steps carefully as he comes down, being unaccustomed to the narrow steep stairs. KUEI-FEN casts an inquisitive glance at LITTLE GEM, then shouts a caution to the old man.]

KUEI-FEN: (Loudly) Just take a walk in the alley, grandpa. Please don't take him to the street. There are motor cars—

HUANG'S FATHER: (Not hearing her, he greets CHAO CHEN-YU at his neighborly best, pointing at his grandchild.) He wants me to take him to the street. Ha-ha. . . . In this here Shanghai, one is hard put to it to get around. If it's in the countryside—

CHAO CHEN-YU: (Interposes.) Venerable elder, you have more fun here than in the countryside?

HUANG'S FATHER: (Not getting the question) A few days before, he was still fighting shy of me. But he became familiar with me in no time. See, now he cries for me to carry him about in my arms. Huh. . . .

CHAO CHEN-YU: (Puzzled) Eh?

KUEI-FEN: (To CHAO) He didn't get you. Hard of hearing, you know.

CHAO CHEN-YU: (Nods, then addresses the old man loudly.) Venerable elder, how do you like Shanghai? You have more fun here than in the countryside?

HUANG'S FATHER: Countryside? Well, I'll stay a few days longer. (Indicating KUEI-FEN) She and Ah-mei won't let me go. Luckily, the silkworm season is over. We don't spin silk at home, so after selling the cocoons there's nothing else to

do. . . .

CHAO CHEN-YU: Well, that's very nice indeed. (To KUEI-FEN) How do you talk to him? Does he hear you at all?

KUEI-FEN: (Grins.) We have to shout or make gestures to him.

[HUANG'S FATHER pushes the back door open and goes out with the infant in his arms. AH HSIANG seizes the opportunity to sneak out.]

KUEI-FEN: (Hastens to follow up.) Hey! (At the top of her lungs.) Don't buy any edibles for him. You'll upset his stomach. (Comes back in and mutters to herself.) Doting on him and giving him all sorts of things to eat. It's no use talking to him! (To MRS. CHAO.) But his hard-of-hearing is not without its compensation. You can keep him in the dark from anything you don't want him to know about. So far he doesn't know yet that Chia-mei is out of a job. I told him the school is giving examinations and there are no classes these few days. Anyway, he wouldn't know. . . .

CHAO CHEN-YU: You told him that Mr. Huang is teaching? Well, we're in the same profession then.

KUEI-FEN: (Smiles disconsolately.) Chia-mei told him he was teaching evening school at the Y.M.C.A. My, how he has taken it for real! Day before yesterday we happened to pass by the Y.M.C.A. in a tramcar and he yelled, "Ah, there's Ah Mei's school!" He sounded as if the whole building belonged to him, to the amusement of all the other passengers in the car. (Starts to launder the clothes.)

CHAO CHEN-YU: Ha-ha-ha. That's not a bad point of view at all to look at things. The big building is all mine! Ha-ha-ha. . . .

[Suddenly, the sun peeps through. LIN CHIH-CH'ENG is pacing the parlor floor back and forth. Now he pushes the sash doors open.]

MRS. CHAO: (Exasperated by her husband's voice) Time is up and you haven't gone yet! Lin has got up. In a moment he'll come over to engage you in a chat and there'll be no getting away for you!

CHAO CHEN-YU: Never mind.

MRS. CHAO: What do you mean by never mind? Hurry! He's already up and about.

CHAO CHEN-YU: Why should you fear? He's no

- tiger. Besides, he's not likely to ask you for the rent at this moment.
- MRS. CHAO: I just don't like that face of his—cold like ice, as if we've owed him too much and paid him too little. When one tries to be neighborly with him, he'd merely let a little breath escape from his throat—just enough to groan out mm-m-m. Even kids are scared of him. (*Seeking KUEI-FEN's concurrence.*) Am I right?
- [KUEI-FEN *nods assent.*]
- CHAO CHEN-YU: (*A little perked up*) For all that, he likes to talk with *me*. Whenever he sees me, he'd—
- MRS. CHAO: (*Cuts him short, indignantly.*) I loathe to hear you talk with him. Idle fancies up in the clouds and over the seas! You can't even manage your own affairs. What's the use of talking about the country, the society—(*Breaks off, to KUEI-FEN.*) Such idle tittle-tattle! I couldn't talk like that even if I wanted to.
- [KUEI-FEN *reciprocates with a faint smile.*
- LITTLE GEM *comes down the stairs to the mezzanine landing.*]
- LITTLE GEM: (*Calls softly.*) Mr. Huang . . . Mr. Huang!
- HUANG CHIA-MEI: (*Comes out from the pavilion room.*) What can I do for you? (*LITTLE GEM draws near him; HUANG feels a little embarrassed.*) I . . . these days . . . er . . . your money. . . .
- LITTLE GEM: (*With a charming smile*) Don't mention it. Such a small amount, what does it matter? . . . By the way, Mr. Huang, will you please do something for me?
- HUANG CHIA-MEI: What is it?
- [KUEI-FEN *cocks an ear.*]
- LITTLE GEM: (*Produces a letter from her pocket.*) Will you read it to me, please?
- HUANG CHIA-MEI: (*Peruses the letter.*) It's from your . . . your venerable father. Well, . . . he says all is well in the family.
- LITTLE GEM: (*Without waiting to hear the rest.*) But he's in need of money. Right?
- HUANG CHIA-MEI: Uh-huh . . . the typhoon has blown down the wall. So it is necessary. . . .
- LITTLE GEM: It's the same thing, one way or the other. You don't have to read on. Just tell me how much he wants.
- HUANG CHIA-MEI: Er . . . at least fifteen dollars. Besides that—
- LITTLE GEM: (*Snatches the letter back.*) Hum!
- Once again—fifteen dollars! Surely his daughter has made a fortune and is a rich lady now! (*On the point of leaving.*)
- HUANG CHIA-MEI: Oh, about the five dollars I still owe you, by the end of the month—
- LITTLE GEM: (*Ogling him.*) You're taking it too seriously, man. What does it amount to? (*Laughs.*) The pity is—there aren't many men in this world as honest as you. (*Chucks him playfully under the chin with her rose painted fingers, then wafts away like a breeze.*)
- [*Somewhat out of countenance, HUANG CHIA-MEI feels the spot touched by her fingers, then slowly withdraws into the pavilion room.*]
- LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: (*Goes to the tap in the backyard to gargle, muttering to himself.*) Not back yet! I wonder what kind of groceries she's buying.
- CHAO CHEN-YU: Morning. Working nightshift?
- LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: (*Without even the shadow of a smile.*) Mm-m-m.
- CHAO CHEN-YU: (*Almost like talking to himself.*) Busy, eh? It's a good year for the cotton mills. . . .
- LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: H'm! Good year or bad, it's all the same to us. When business was slack we worried every single day about closing down, about layoff. Now, at long last, business is on the upswing, we're putting on three shifts a day and the mill is going at full blast round the clock. Whether one can survive the strain or not, it's nobody's business. In any case there is an endless swarm of people willing and ready to work like oxen. . . .
- CHAO CHEN-YU: Anyway, it's always better to have good business than to have bad business. For instance. . . .
- LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: Not for us. At present the mill is going full steam ahead day and night to fulfil orders already lined up to March next year. In those consecutive years of recession, our big boss ran up a debt of more than ten million. Now within one year's time he has paid back the amount to the last cent. At present he owns five mills in all and makes an average profit of thirty-five thousand dollars per day. That is to say, he nets—let me see—three times five is fifteen, three times three is nine . . . he makes a net profit of more than one million every month. That comes to twelve million a year. Right?

It's we, the employees, who suffer. A worker may take on an extra shift if he can't make both ends meet, but an office employee doesn't have even this advantage. For a measly salary of thirty to fifty dollars per month, a supervisor must be able to write, keep accounts and must do the dirty work of swearing at the workers or beat them up on behalf of the big boss. That's selling oneself pretty cheap indeed!

CHAO CHEN-YU: Let me see, thirty-five thousand per day, that makes twelve million a year. If this goes on for ten years, it will come to one hundred and twenty million. Right?

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: Without mentioning other things—to speak of my job of doling out wages alone—I pay out no less than several thousand dollars every half-month. Countless banknotes in different colors and denominations have passed through my hands. Other people may regard doling out wages as a good job, but I can't bear the shabbiness of its routine practice. If one works at the bidding of one's conscience, one'll have to pay out of his own pocket. Today, for instance, I withheld from wage payment thirty-five cents less than I was supposed to and, for that, I was taken to task by the Director of Labor Affairs. H'm! taking *me* to task! He joined the staff two years after me. But dancing attendance upon his superiors and currying their favor, he soon became the head of the department. That's the way the world goes. How can you appeal to reason any more? (*Overcome with indignation.*)

CHAO CHEN-YU: (*Nods.*) Well, as the old saying goes, every trade has its own grievances. Yet, on the other hand, anyone who can hold on to a job at the mill for five or six years as you have done is not doing badly indeed. Of course, when it comes to living, if you and I compare with the rich there is much to be desired, but compared with the underdogs we do have some to spare. (*Points at a story in the newspaper.*) There are tens of thousands of people in Shanghai who haven't got any rice to eat. In comparison with them—

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: (*Interposes.*) I beg to differ. To my mind, one should either be a topdog or an underdog. The worst lot is to be one of us. If one is rich, one lives in a Western-style house and rides in motor-cars. That's good, of course,

If one is destitute, then he lives in a cockloft under the stairs, as our Li Ling Monument does. That simplifies everything. When he has food, he eats his fill. When he has nothing to eat, he simply tightens his belt and crawls into the cockloft to sleep. There is no face to lose, nor need of an empty good name. He has neither wife nor children to worry about, nor social reciprocations. If his clothes are worn out, he gets an alley seamstress to patch them up for three coppers. He can walk in the street just as we do, yet no one will laugh at him. Now, consider ourselves. If there's a patch on my coat, can I go to the mill without hiding my face in shame? The damned 'long-robe class'! That's what we are. We have to put up a front even if we have to borrow money to do it!

[KUEI-FEN *steals a glance at him.*]

CHAO CHEN-YU: However, from the Li Ling Monument's point of view, he may think that our livelihood is better than his. Man will never be content. Discontent will give rise to fretfulness; fretfulness will result in pessimism; and pessimism will impair the health of the human body. Now, this carcass of ours is the only thing we can really call our own. So I ask myself, why on earth should I wage war against my own physical self? This being the way I look at it, whenever I was dissatisfied with anything, I'd compare my livelihood with that of those who were worse off than I, then my heart would calm down. For instance—

MRS. CHAO: (*Cuts in like an unexpected explosion of a firecracker.*) For instance, for instance! You're the only one who hasn't been able to make good. You have gone farther and farther down in the world. Why don't you compare yourself with the wealthy and mighty for a change?

CHAO CHEN-YU: (*Turning a deaf ear to her, he sits himself down in readiness for a lengthy talk.*) For instance—

MRS. CHAO: No more 'for instance', please. Aren't you going to your class today at all?

CHAO CHEN-YU: (*Pretends not to hear.*) For instance, we have the advantage of an education and are, therefore, capable of understanding things in general and surveying this blooming world as we do now. Sometimes we may even vent our opinions as we please. This, at least, is

also a sort of privilege. (*Loudly*) Ha ha ha. . . !  
 LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: (*Disagrees strongly.*) Uh-uh! This kind of privilege I certainly don't presume to have!

CHAO CHEN-YU: But, Mr. Lin, objectively speaking, society has been very kind to us intellectuals. How many people in China can afford to go to school or compare with us in—

MRS. CHAO: (*Itily*) Very kind to you, eh? Why don't you go begging, then?

CHAO CHEN-YU: I say, at present all the people in the world are suffering alike. Everyone has his individual grievances. Look at this story in the paper. (*Hands LIN the newspaper.*) When we see them<sup>8</sup> in the street, every single one of them looks swashbuckling and bold-spirited. They ride in armored cars, their faces brazened with a bloodthirsty look, their eyes gleaming with a murderous glint under their helmets, as if they are going to eat you alive. But, if they're stripped of their tiger skin, don't they look just the same as we do?

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: (*Reads the newspaper, then seems to be shocked.*) What. . . !

[HUANG CHIA-MEI pushes open the pavilion window and looks down.]

MRS. CHAO: (*Taking it that there is some exciting news*) What is it?

CHAO CHEN-YU: You don't understand!

MRS. CHAO: That's why I'm asking you.

CHAO CHEN-YU: Well, then, I'll tell you—(*Inadvertently assumes the attitude of a teacher telling a story to primary school students.*) The paper says, in a . . . in a neighboring country<sup>9</sup> of ours, there was a private who had fought in many battles and won medals. You understand? Medals, that is, metal disks worn on a soldier's breast. (*Continues.*) After his retirement, however, he couldn't support his wife and parents. One night he secretly rented a hotel room and took opium—(*Corrects himself.*) No, no. . . (*hastens to refer to the newspaper*) he committed suicide by swallowing poison. In his suicide letter, he said, "I have sold everything sellable. All that remains now is the body that my parents have given me. I have heard that the

medical college wants to buy corpses. So, let me sell my corpse to support my family." And as a result, his corpse was sold according to his will, at the price of thirty-six dollars. Minus one dollar and twenty cents for the hotel room, his father tearfully received the balance of thirty-four dollars and eighty cents. The editor of the newspaper puts a caption on this story. Do you know what it says? "One brave warrior—Price: \$34.80 net."

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: (*Indignantly*) Blast it! (*Tosses the newspaper down.*) The man who subtracted one dollar and twenty cents from the sale is a downright highway robber!

CHAO CHEN-YU: So he is. For money, that's all there is to it. And for such a measly pittance at that. (*Turns about to poke fun at his wife.*)

That's why I feel sick at the sight of money.  
 HUANG CHIA-MEI: (*Off-scene—calls with a whimper in his voice.*) Kuei-fen!

[KUEI-FEN is too engrossed in the story to hear him.]

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: H'm, in this country of ours, there are plenty of corpses drifting in the rivers and lakes, only none of them can get that price.

CHAO CHEN-YU: (*Snatches at the new topic for conversation.*) Well, speaking of floating corpses, the paper says. . . .

[*The TIENTSIN KID—a young underworld 'merry loafer' who looks his type—enters through the back door. He scans the tattlers in the backyard, then goes straight upstairs. MRS. CHAO whispers to KUEI-FEN with a disdainful expression on her face and a certain malicious satisfaction in her demeanor.*]

KUEI-FEN: (*Her eyes dilating with curiosity*) Really?

MRS. CHAO: (*Points at her own eyes.*) I saw it with my own eyes. The night before last, he took her out on the sly and they didn't come back till nearly daybreak. Last night I saw him hanging around here (*points at the sink*) demanding a kickback from that woman!

KUEI-FEN: (*Covers her mouth.*) What shame!

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: Blast it! This has really become a world of robbers and whores—and all for

<sup>8</sup>The author uses the pronoun instead of "the Japanese soldiers" in order to satisfy the Chinese government censorship.

<sup>9</sup>That is, Japan. Under a government ban, the author had to avoid any overt reference to Japan at the time of writing.

money! For money, man will do all kinds of shameless things!

[He is interrupted by what is happening in the second-floor room. LITTLE GEM, upon seeing the TIENSIN KID, shouts bitterly, "Get out!"

Those in the backyard all look up and prick up their ears.]

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: (Continues from where he left off.) If one day I should be in power, I would certainly (with venom) put those. . . . (Once again he is interrupted.)

CHAO CHEN-YU: (Suddenly jumps to his feet.) Ah! I've only three minutes! (Snatches his books from the table and runs out.)

MRS. CHAO: (Stares after him angrily.) He will not live to mend his bad habits!

HUANG CHIA-MEI: (At the pavilion window) Kuei-fen! Kuei-fen!

KUEI-FEN: (Looks up.) What is it?

CHAO CHEN-YU: (Pushes open the back door and re-enters in haste.) I forgot my hat! (Runs into the kitchen, snatches his hat, jams it on his head and scurries off again.)

MRS. CHAO: (Runs after him to the door and calls.) Hey, why don't you change into your galoshes?

[Unable to recall him, she comes back in, muttering something to herself.

KUEI-FEN is wringing her laundered clothes beside the sink.

His fellow interlocutor having left, LIN CHIH-CH'ENG has to return to the parlor.]

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: (Mutters to himself as he goes.) What kind of groceries is she buying? It's nine o'clock already and she is not back yet!

HUANG CHIA-MEI: (Issues from the pavilion room and comes down just as KUEI-FEN reaches the stairs, wiping her hands and starting to go up.) Come.

KUEI-FEN: What is it? There're a few pieces not done yet.

[MRS. CHAO now starts to clean the kitchen room while LIN CHIH-CH'ENG draws some water to wash his face.]

HUANG CHIA-MEI: (Stops halfway down the stairs.) What's the hurry? In this weather, it'll be raining again in a moment. The clothes won't dry after washing.

KUEI-FEN: (Looking at him.) What do you want?

HUANG CHIA-MEI: (After a slight hesitation) Is

there still any left?

KUEI-FEN: (At a loss) What?

HUANG CHIA-MEI: From yesterday's—(Stops short.)

KUEI-FEN: (Catches on and bows her head.) After buying groceries, there're only a few dimes left.

HUANG CHIA-MEI: Then, today. . . .

KUEI-FEN: (Lifts her head.) Today?

HUANG CHIA-MEI: (Speechless for a moment, then puts on a wan smile to change the subject.) Kuei-fen, do you think . . . do you think Dad is disappointed in me? In view of his mood. . . .

KUEI-FEN: What's wrong? I'm not aware of anything.

HUANG CHIA-MEI: (Anguished) What's wrong? Well, he sold his paddy field and his land, mortgaged his house and contracted a loan at blood-sucking interest, in order to scrape up enough money for my education. But now—

KUEI-FEN: What's the use of harping on the same string? You have done nothing wrong, nor are you lazy and unwilling to get yourself a job. Yet you have not been able to land a job in such a great city as Shanghai. There is nothing you can do about it, is there?

HUANG CHIA-MEI: (Tears his hair, getting increasingly wrought up.) My troubles, you know, all started with a well-meaning but ill-advised remark made by my elementary school teacher Mr. Yao. He told my father, "This boy is a genius. We have never had such a brilliant student before. He will certainly make a success in the future and it would be a great pity to let him hide his light under a bushel in the countryside." But now, if he were still living, I would invite him to come here and see for himself. A genius in a pavilion room! (He coughs.)

KUEI-FEN: What's the matter with you? You're again—(Breaks off to help muffle his coughing for fear of being overheard.)

HUANG CHIA-MEI: (Holds his breath for a moment, then gasps and speaks softly.) It's quite an event for Dad to come to Shanghai. What a shame it would be, if he had to be cooped up in this pavilion room to baby-sit for us?

KUEI-FEN: I know, but—

HUANG CHIA-MEI: Well, Mi-mi still has a gold amulet, hasn't he? (Shuns KUEI-FEN's eyes.)

KUEI-FEN: (Raises her brows.) The other day I gave you three dollars and some change. That

was from the sale of the amulet, don't you remember?

HUANG CHIA-MEI: Uh-huh. (*Gloomily*) Pity on Mimi! He can't even keep something as slight as. . . .

[KUEI-FEN *looks at him but says nothing.*]

HUANG CHIA-MEI: Then, you—(*Breaks off, then comes down.*)

KUEI-FEN: What do you want? (*Looks intently at him.*)

[HUANG CHIA-MEI *bows his head without a word.*]

KUEI-FEN: (*Continues deliberately.*) It goes without saying, one must live in a style befitting one's pocket, whether he is rich or poor. I suppose your father won't stay here much longer?

[HUANG CHIA-MEI *does not answer.*]

KUEI-FEN: (*Unguardedly*) I'm worried about the days to come. To drudge along like this, day after day, borrowing three dollars here and five dollars there, sooner or later we'll come to—

HUANG CHIA-MEI: (*Suddenly raises his head and explodes.*) Do you suppose I'd never land a job again? (*Breaks off abruptly and droops his head again.*)

KUEI-FEN: (*Out of countenance.*) No, no. I don't mean that, of course. Oh, come now. (*Modulates to a pleading tone.*) Chia-mei, I'm sorry.

[HUANG CHIA-MEI *is speechless but touches her shoulders gently, then he turns round to go upstairs.*

*At this juncture, the back door creaks open.*

HUANG'S FATHER *enters with MI-MI in his arms, obviously in high spirits. The child holds a piece of cake in one hand and a skewer of peeled water chestnuts in the other.*

AH HSIANG *sneaks in on his heels with her hands behind her back and her eyes riveted on her mother.*]

HUANG'S FATHER: Ha ha, you're right. This is our house. You're a clever girl.

HUANG CHIA-MEI: (*On the stairs, to KUEI-FEN*) Dad has come back. (*He has hardly descended to greet the old man when suddenly he coughs again.*)

KUEI-FEN: You'd better go upstairs. It's very drafty here.

MRS. CHAO: (*Peering at her daughter's hidden hands.*) What is it? Who gave it you?

AH HSIANG: (*Comes out with a skewer of water chestnuts in her hand and puckers up her lips.*)

I said I didn't want it but he. . . . (*points at HUANG'S FATHER*) he won't hear of it.

MRS. CHAO: Stupid thing! Don't even know how to say "No, thank you!" (*She is on the point of remonstrating with HUANG'S FATHER when suddenly she recalls he is hard of hearing and resorts to a gesture of appreciation instead.*)

HUANG'S FATHER: Thanks to your daughter. Shanghai houses all look alike. Once you go out, you can't tell which one is yours when you come back. Ha ha ha. . . . (*Goes toward the stairs.*)

MRS. CHAO: (*Takes the water chestnuts from AH HSIANG and removes three from the skewer.*) You may eat one-half of these. (*Picks up the skirt of her apron and puts it to AH HSIANG'S nostrils.*) Blow!

[AH HSIANG *blows her nose hard, making considerable noise.*]

MRS. CHAO: Five years old now and yet you don't know how to blow your nose properly! (*Takes her into the kitchen.*)

[HUANG CHIA-MEI *holds back his coughing, puts on a smile and takes over MI-MI from his father.*]

HUANG CHIA-MEI: You little pest—always crying for Grandpa to take you in his arms. (*To his father*) Dad, you had better go upstairs and rest for a while. This evening we are going to see an opera, *The Burning of the Red Lotus Monastery.*

[KUEI-FEN *looks at the skewer of water chestnuts in MI-MI'S hand.*]

HUANG'S FATHER: (*His response indicates that he has not heard his son distinctly.*) Oh, never mind, never mind. This doesn't count for anything at all. Country kids eat thirty or fifty at one sitting and think nothing of it. He'll get used to eating like that soon enough. Ha ha. . . .

[HUANG CHIA-MEI *goes upstairs with his father, with MI-MI in his arms. Meantime, KUEI-FEN has returned to the sink with a long face. Another shower comes splashing down. She has to step back to the kitchen door.*

*Presently, HUANG CHIA-MEI issues from the pavilion room, covering his mouth with a handkerchief in order that his violent coughing may not be seen by his father.*

KUEI-FEN *pricks up her ears.*]

MRS. CHAO: (*Comes to the kitchen door to venture a piece of advice.*) Mr. Huang had better see a doctor about his condition. He coughs so frightfully in the early mornings.

KUEI-FEN: But he—

MRS. CHAO: Ah, come to think of it, I have a wonderful recipe which has cured many people already. Promptly at noonday on the fifth day of the fifth moon, you get forty-nine—that is, seven times seven—you get forty-nine bulbs of garlic without letting another pair of eyes see it. . . .

[*She is interrupted by an ear-splitting crash in LITTLE GEM's room, sounding like something has fallen to the floor. MRS. CHAO, KUEI-FEN and LIN CHIH-CH'ENG all look up and listen. Presently, the TIENTSIN KID issues from the second-floor room, whistling a tune—probably a hit song currently in vogue at the dance halls—as if nothing has happened. LITTLE GEM comes out after him, shouting savagely like a snarling cat.*]

LITTLE GEM: I won't go! I won't! Never!

[*The TIENTSIN KID halts on the stairs and turns to stare at her without saying a word or discontinuing his whistling.*]

LITTLE GEM: (*On the mezzanine landing*) Go and tell him I've done nothing wrong. He wants me to apologize to him! No fear! I slapped him, yes, it served him right. H'm! It's he who played foul. He barely invited me to a dinner and he wanted to make free with me at one jump! Tell him Johnnie's coming back in no time. If he has anything to say he can say it to Johnnie.

[*The TIENTSIN KID beckons her with a motion of his chin.*]

LITTLE GEM: (*Comes down a few steps.*) What do you want? (*Arches her eyebrows.*)

TIENTSIN KID: (*Pulls out a section of the handrail, breaks it effortlessly, throws the broken pieces away like burnt matches, brushes off the splinters from his hands, then he raps out his warning icily.*) Surely you still want to gad about in Shanghai. If you don't listen to me, do you suppose your legs are tougher than timber? (*Starts to whistle again, as he goes downstairs before the gaping onlookers. Then he crosses to the right, opens the back door and saunters off jauntily.*)

[*MRS. CHAO quickly follows up and looks out after him before she slams the door shut.*]

LITTLE GEM: (*Shaking with fear but striving to keep an unruffled countenance in front of the other tenants*) Filthy swine! Thug! (*Goes upstairs to her room and flings herself on the bed.*)

[*During the brawl, LIN CHIH-CH'ENG was looking on at the rear entrance of the parlor. Now that the quarrel is over, he goes to the foot of the stairs, picks up the broken pieces of the handrail, and mutters to himself indignantly.*]

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: What a blind fool I was! To have sub-let the room to such nice tenants!

[*At this juncture, there is a knock on the door. LIN CHIH-CH'ENG looks at the door with a prodding glance. Under the circumstances, the latter cannot but make bold to cross over and open the door.*]

The knocker turns out to be a middle-aged man with disheveled hair and a beard, wearing an ill-fitting Western suit, wet through on the shoulders. He has a pair of kindly eyes which are thinly drawn out at the corners, and a straight nose. One can perceive from his appearance that he is now in a state of physical and mental fatigue, probably as a result of protracted hardship. He is none other than K'UANG FU, that is, TS'AI-YU's ex-husband and PAO-CHEN's real father as well as LIN CHIH-CH'ENG's erstwhile good friend.]

K'UANG FU: May I ask, please, if there is a Mr. Lin. . . . (*Impressed by the familiar features of LIN's face, he looks intently at him.*) Ah! You're Chih-ch'eng, aren't you? . . . Why, I've looked everywhere for you!

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: (*Completely taken by surprise, he opens wide his bloodshot eyes and steps back.*) You . . . you . . .

K'UANG FU: Don't you recognize me? I am. . . .

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: (*Takes a hard look at him, then turns pale.*) Ah, Fu-sheng! How—

K'UANG FU: (*Stretches out a warm passionate hand.*) So I've changed. If you had met me in the street, perhaps you wouldn't have recognized me. (*Smiles wanly.*)

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: (*Thunderstruck and dumbfounded, not knowing what to do*) Ah—

K'UANG FU: (*Holding LIN's hand tightly*) Chih-ch'eng!

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: *(For one fleeting moment the warmth of old friendship wells up from his heart.)* Fu-sheng! So you have come out at last! *(Almost hugs him but in a twinkling of an eye he turns pale again.)*

K'UANG FU: *(Looks around and is met with the gaze of MRS. CHAO and the others. He hastens to greet them with a nod. Then, to LIN)* Are they all your family...?

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: *(As if awakened from a dream)* Oh, no, no. Please come inside. *(Takes K'UANG into the parlor. The onlookers' eyes follow them curiously. LIN closes the door behind him.)*

K'UANG FU: *(Talks as he goes along.)* This neighborhood has completely changed. There is a trolley line running through now and most of the old buildings have been demolished and rebuilt. When I was living in this vicinity seven or eight years ago...

[LIN looks at him, inwardly ill at ease.]

K'UANG FU: What is it, Chih-ch'eng? Why do you look like that when you see me—

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: *(To cover up his inner confusion)* Uh, uh, take a seat... Cigarette? *(Looks for cigarettes in a drawer.)*

K'UANG FU: Why, you've forgotten that I don't smoke?

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: Oh, oh. Well, then... *(Picks up the thermos bottle and does the business of pouring regardless of the bottle being empty.)* have a drink of water. *(His hand trembles nervously.)*

K'UANG FU: *(Looking at LIN's hand, he begins to wonder at his confusion and nervousness.)* Well, Chih-ch'eng, I've come so abruptly, you must have been taken by surprise. How's your health? Are you feeling well?

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: *(All the more uneasy)* Yes, I'm all right.

K'UANG FU: Well then, old boy, aren't you happy to see that I've regained my freedom? It's exactly ten years now since we parted, if we count in the one year and a half before my imprisonment.

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: Uh-huh, Fu-sheng, I'm very happy for you indeed. But, this is not a dream, is it?

K'UANG FU: *(Laughs.)* Of course not. Hold my hand. You see, this is no dream. It's real!

[LIN CHIH-CH'ENG holds K'UANG's hand and

looks at him, then bows his head without a word.]

K'UANG FU: *(Sentimentally)* What I'd been dreaming about in that pigeonhole for eight years, has now come true. There, whenever it came to the exercise period—we call it "out-for-wind time"—I used to take a breath of fresh air and let the wind from afar blow on me. Then all at once I'd think of you, Chih-ch'eng. You're the first one I wanted to look for as soon as I had served my term, because if and when I saw you, I'd certainly be able to see my Ts'ai-yu and my Pao-chen. Chih-ch'eng, they... they...

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: *(His eyes shimmer with fear.)* They... mm-m-m, they...

K'UANG FU: Are they all right? They... *(Grasps LIN's hand firmly.)* Oh, Chih-ch'eng, I don't know how to thank you. Tell me, how have they managed to get along all these years...

[LIN CHIH-CH'ENG is speechless.]

K'UANG FU: They are safe and sound, aren't they? Chih-ch'eng, tell me, please...

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: *(With a lump in his throat)* They... *(Visibly anguished.)*

K'UANG FU: *(Growing apprehensive.)* What's the matter? What's happened to them?

[LIN does not answer.]

K'UANG FU: *(Rises.)* Chih-ch'eng, out with it. What's happened to them? They—don't keep me in the dark. Have they... *(Heartbroken.)*

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: No, no. They are very well... After a while...

K'UANG FU: *(Heaves a sigh of relief.)* Ah, they're very well, eh? Chih-ch'eng, had it not been for a friend like you, probably they'd have been dead or tramping in the street...

[Meantime, AH HSIANG has crossed over to the parlor door on tiptoes to eavesdrop on LIN and K'UANG. MRS. CHAO is frying some vegetables over a small clay stove when she catches a glimpse of what her daughter is up to. She promptly scurries across to drag her away, threatening her with an uplifted fist till she reluctantly shuffles off.]

K'UANG FU: *(Continues.)* I've had many dreadful dreams. Once I dreamt of Ts'ai-yu asking for alms in the street with Pao-chen tagging along like a pair of beggars. Oh...!

[In spite of MRS. CHAO's scrupulousness in chasing her daughter away, she cannot resist

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*Ts'ai-yu meets her former husband, K'uang Fu, after his release from prison. A later scene from the play as staged by the Chinese Youth Drama Company.*

*the same temptation when she overhears K'UANG FU mentioning TS'AI-YU. Instantly stopping herself short, she sticks her ear to the door crack in the same manner as AH HSIANG did. The latter, now standing beside the stairs, puckers up her lips and stares at her mother with indignation.*

*K'UANG FU has hardly finished his sentence when a knock on the front door is heard. Ill at ease, LIN CHIH-CH'ENG rises but does not answer the door. After an inner struggle, he finally makes up his mind to make a clean breast of it.]*

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: She—

OFF-STAGE VOICE of an odds-and-ends collector: *(From outside of the front door)* Boss lady<sup>10</sup>, got any bottles and newspapers?

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: *(His nervousness having subsided, he shouts at the unseen hawker.)* No!

OFF-STAGE VOICE: *(In the familiar call of an odds-*

<sup>10</sup>Shanghai people's polite address for married woman; originally it refers to the wife of a shopkeeper only.

*and-ends collector)* Got any scrap brass, scrap iron, old clothes, wornout leather shoes...? *(The cry trails away.)*

*[The conversation having been interrupted, K'UANG FU picks up a cup from the table but puts it down again when he realizes that the thermos bottle is empty. Then he scans the room till he catches sight of a ch'i-p'ao hanging in a corner.]*

K'UANG FU: Well, Chih-ch'eng, *(with affected ardor)* I haven't yet been told—are you married already?

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: *(In aggravated agony)* Mm-m-m.

K'UANG FU: Since when? And where is your honorable missus?

*[LIN says nothing.]*

K'UANG FU: What's the matter? . . . In there, I had the feeling that it took ages for every day to pass by. But, come to think of it now, time does fly, nevertheless. My old partner in dining-room riots in the school days is already a middle-aged man now! *(Nostalgically, after a pause)* Chih-ch'eng, you're thirty-five, aren't you?

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: *(Unable to bear it any longer, he stands up abruptly.)* Fu-sheng, why didn't you write me at all—all these years? Was it absolutely impossible even to send me a message saying you are safe and sound?

K'UANG FU: How do you mean?

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: Since that letter from Lung-hwa<sup>11</sup>, I haven't heard one word from you. At that time your case was at such a critical juncture.

K'UANG FU: I'm sorry, old pal, I didn't know then what the outside world had come to. A letter to you might probably put you to inconvenience.

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: *(His voice breaks almost into tears.)* But—but, Fu-sheng, it's precisely this blank unknownness on your part that has caused me to commit an offense. It's a sin for which I can't hold my face up in your presence! Fu-sheng, please rail at me, spit at me. I'm despicable. I have betrayed you! . . .

K'UANG FU: *(Astonished)* What is it? Tell me—

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: I'm not a man. I have no face to

<sup>11</sup>A suburban town south of Shanghai where the Shanghai-Woosung Garrison Commander used to keep a dungeon for political prisoners.

see you. I—*(Covers his face with both hands.)*

K'UANG FU: What's the matter? Chih-ch'eng, I haven't the slightest inkling. Tell me—speak out.

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: Fu-sheng!

K'UANG FU: What now?

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: I—*(Breaks off.)*

K'UANG FU: What, please? Tell me now.

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: Ts'ai-yu and I—

[K'UANG FU is taken by surprise as the truth begins to dawn on him.]

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: *(Between clenched teeth)* Ts'ai-yu and I have been living together!

K'UANG FU: *(Utterly nonplussed; vacantly)* En-n-n. *(Slumps into a chair, then articulates staccato like a child learning to speak.)* Liv-ing to-gether!

[Presently, the scene is being interrupted.]

KUEI-FEN: *(At the sink, shouts.)* Aiya! Mrs. Chao, your vegetable is burning!

[MRS. CHAO shamefacedly hurries back.

KUEI-FEN collects her laundry and goes upstairs.]

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: *(Sotto voce but emphatically)*

The letter you wrote from Luehwa was relayed to me through several hands. On receipt, I immediately set out to look for Ts'ai-yu. At that time she and Pao-chen were stranded in a slum cockloft, practically everything in your home having been seized after your unfortunate incident. I—*(pauses to gasp)* I did everything within my power to look after them but one year, and then two years, passed by, yet I couldn't get any information about you. Those who shared your fate in the same case had either been executed or become turncoats. I waited for you for three solid years—*(gradually becoming excited and speaking at a higher pitch)*—without the slightest inkling of whether you were dead or alive. . . . *(Quickly changes his tone.)* But, no, no, that's no defence for my sin. I have sinned against you. I have betrayed your trust. . . . However, Fu-sheng, I'm a human being with human feelings. Because I wanted to bring them happiness, I had—

K'UANG FU: *(His voice betrays agitation.)* You wanted to bring them happiness! . . . *(Recovers from his emotional confusion after an inner struggle.)* Mm-m-m. . . . Wait a moment. I—let me think. . . .

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: Come to think of it, what had caused me to suffer was no more than a smattering of the worthless so-called fraternal spirit. I wanted to help my friend and to help my friend's family. Every time I saw Pao-chen, I cherished a hidden thought that I must protect her and let her go to school so that she could fulfill your aspirations. . . . But that was also conducive to my sinning. I—

K'UANG FU: *(Mumbling absent-mindedly to himself as if he had not heard LIN's word.)* You wanted to bring them happiness. . . .

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: *(With a touch of hysteria)* I'm a man. I'm educated. Formerly you used to treat me like your own brother. How could I, then, betray your trust when you were undergoing trial and tribulation? . . . A couple of months later, I began to be aware of the latent peril. Time and again I made up my mind to tear myself away, to steer clear of the danger I had never come across before. I intended to scrape together a lump sum of money and give it to Ts'ai-yu so that I wouldn't have to make the daily rounds to keep her pot boiling. But—

K'UANG FU: *(Regains his composure after a tremendous effort.)* Well, then, how about Ts'ai-yu?

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: Probably she had the same experience as mine. Fate had blindfolded our eyes. The more we struggled against it the more inevitable it became. At last—

K'UANG FU: One moment. What's the situation now and—

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: *(Without waiting for him to finish)* Now? Isn't the whole thing as clear as noonday? I have committed a sin and am waiting for your judgment. No, before you come to put me on trial, I was already lying prostrate on the rack of my conscience. Whenever I had the slightest feeling of happiness, of basking in the warmth of my family life, an invisible instrument of torture would relentlessly press against my heart. Now—well and good—you have come. I confess. I will not try to cover up. I plead guilty in your presence. I am waiting for your judgment! *(Having unburdened himself of self-reproach in one outpour, he heaves a breath as if to relieve his heart of the strain, and is visibly spent.)*

K'UANG FU: No, that's not my intention. I only

want to know whether you and Ts'ai-yu are happy now.

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: (*In a retorting tone, but painfully*) Tell me, can happiness be founded on an agonized heart?

K'UANG FU: (*Gloomily*) Mm-m-m. . . .

[*A speechless suspense.*

KUEI-FEN *emerges from the pavilion room with a bottle in hand.*]

HUANG'S FATHER: (*Off scene*) Please don't buy any wine. I don't want to drink . . . ai-ai. . . .

[*KUEI-FEN has no sooner reached the back door than the LI LING MONUMENT, the sub-tenant of the cockloft, barges in with several copies of unsold newspapers under his arm. Obviously, he has had a few drinks. Reeking with booze and humming an aria, he staggers across the backyard without paying attention to anyone and makes straight for his pigeon-hole upstairs.*]

THE MONUMENT: (*Humming a well-known aria from the Peking opera The Li Ling Monument*)

"Longing for my beloved dears,  
I can't withhold my pearly tears  
From rolling down like beads.

(*Plaintively*) Oh, my dears! My dears!!

My boy No. Seven  
Repair'd to the Gate of Yenmen  
To plead for reinforcement.  
How is it, I pray,  
That long he's been away  
Yet comes not to aid me at bay?"

. . . .

[*K'UANG follows THE MONUMENT'S voice till his eyes reach the ceiling. Then he resumes his conversation from where he left off.*]

K'UANG FU: (*Dejectedly*) I shouldn't have come to see you. It's silly of me to make such a fuss of it.

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: Why, you say—

[*K'UANG FU keeps silent.*

*There is a knock on the front door. Now LIN rises without any hesitation.*]

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: Well, now she has come back, I—I'll be gone and leave you to talk it over with her. Whatever you may decide on I'll be willing to accept. My friend, I'm waiting for your decision.

[*He goes to answer the door but the incomer happens to be a young man in a worker's*

*outfit.*]

YOUNG WORKER: (*Excitedly*) Mr. Lin, hurry up.

The Director of Labor Affairs asks you to come at once. There's trouble at the mill. Please hurry.

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: (*Coldly*) This is the day-shift's headache. How does it concern me?

YOUNG WORKER: What's the difference? Things have gone out of hand. Please hurry. They're all waiting for you. (*Drags him along almost by compulsion.*)

LIN CHIH-CH'ENG: No, no. I'm busy—(*But under the circumstances he has no choice but to put on his jacket and go along with the YOUNG WORKER.*)

[*K'UANG FU now scans the room once again, then he goes to the desk, picks up the song-book left there by PAO-CHEN and examines it.*]

K'UANG FU: (*Aside*) Lin Pao-chen . . . mm-m-m. . .

Lin! (*Puts the song-book down and starts to count by the fingers.*) At that time she was five years old. (*Unconsciously touches a key on PAO-CHEN'S toy piano.*)

[*At this juncture the sun steals a wink behind the clouds. With MI-MI in his arms, HUANG'S FATHER thrusts his head out of the window of the pavilion room to cast a glance at the sky. Presently, HUANG CHIA-MEI scurries down the stairs with a bundle in hand wrapped in a piece of cloth. He has hardly passed by the sink when KUEI-FEN returns with the wine bottle refilled.*]

KUEI-FEN: (*Eyeing the bundle*) What is this?

HUANG CHIA-MEI: (*Shamefacedly*) Just some clothes—

KUEI-FEN: (*Plucks lightly an exposed corner of the clothes, then looks in his eyes.*) Chia-mei, this is the only decent dress I have left.

[*HUANG'S FATHER is looking on from the window above.*]

HUANG CHIA-MEI: (*Tries to gloss it over.*) But you have no social engagements anyway and you can't wear it in this warm season. In a few days' time—

[*Perceiving KUEI-FEN'S reluctance to part with the dress, he abruptly breaks off, steals himself to turn his back upon her and hurries toward the back door.*]

KUEI-FEN: Chia—!

[*HUANG CHIA-MEI bundles off without turn-*

ing his head. Staring after him, KUEI-FEN suddenly covers her face with the unoccupied hand and bursts into tears. Upon seeing what has happened, HUANG'S FATHER instantly turns pale. He hastens to come down and encounters KUEI-FEN beside the stairs. The latter, taken by surprise, abashedly forces a smile.]

KUEI-FEN: Venerable father. . . .

HUANG'S FATHER: (Looks at her contemplatively.)

Mm-m-m. . . .

[Presently, TS'AI-YU comes back through the back door with her grocery basket in hand and her eyes riveted upon them curiously. It starts to rain in earnest. Amid the children's noises in the alley, the curtain falls.]

### The Art of Rendering Dialogue

Yao Hsin-nung, who writes in Chinese under the name Yao K'e (姚克), is a playwright in his own right and translates from English into Chinese as well. His *Malice of Empire* (清宮怨) was first produced in 1941, filmed in 1949, and revived on stage a number of times. His authorized English version of Ts'ao Yu's *Thunderstorm* (雷雨) was presented at the University of Hong Kong in 1954 under his own direction. The following is taken from Prof. Yao's Preface to his Chinese translation of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (World Today Press, Hong Kong, 1971.)

Aside from the title of the play [*Death of a Salesman*], the dialogue has also been a headache to the translator. It has been the practice in Chinese translations of foreign plays to strive only after something plain and understandable in dialogue, without regard to whether or not it is easily delivered on the stage. For this reason, a "literary vernacular" (白話文) is generally employed, and not the colloquial of everyday speech. This kind of translation suffers from two possible defects: 1. Much of the liveliness and colloquialism of the original speeches will be lost. 2. This necessitates a process of adaptation when it comes to staging, from the literary-vernacular to everyday talk; but the director and his cast are not always proficient in the original language of the play and when they start tampering with the dialogue "a miss is as good as a mile". That's why when I started translating *Death of a Salesman*, I resolved to render its dialogue into colloquial Chinese. Miller was born and raised in the Brooklyn district of New York City, and in his play he used the everyday speech of the New York middle class, slangy and full of Americanisms. To convey the spirit of this dialogue, to get across the living speech and colloquial give-and-take of the original, one must employ the Peking dialect or the patois of some other Chinese locale. For this reason I used the Peking dialect to render the dialogue of this drama.

However, Chinese and American attitudes and customs, along with their ways of life, are widely divergent; it is virtually impossible to translate some American talk into down-to-earth Peking dialect. For example, in exclamation Americans often use such expressions as *My God* or *for Christ's sake*. If we were to render these into the Chinese "O-mi-to-fo" (阿彌陀佛) and "for the sake of Buddha's golden face" (看菩薩的金面) we would approximate the meaning but produce something that would, after all, be a case of "putting Mr. Chang's cap on Mr. Li"—not only ill-fitting but ludicrous in effect. Imagine a performance on the stage: should those purporting to be American characters suddenly break out in "O-mi-to-fo's" it would certainly bring down the house. When I encounter such instances I would rather translate the original speech literally, in order to preserve something of its local color and characteristics. For a forced attempt to come up with Chinese idiomatic equivalents would be like substituting vinegar for soya sauce—roughly the same in color but vastly different in taste.

—YAO HSIN-NUNG