駱駝祥子

End of the Rickshaw Boy

A NEW TRANSLATION OF THE LAST TWO CHAPTERS OF "CAMEL HSIANG-TZU" AS WRITTEN BY LAO SHE

Translated by **Perry Link**

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COVER DESIGN of Lo-t'o Hsiang-tzu 駱駝祥子, *published by Nam Wah Book Company, Hong Kong.*

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AS HSIANG-TZU wandered disconsolately through the streets, he happened across Hsiao Ma's grandfather. The old man no longer pulled rickshaws, and his clothes were thinner and more ragged than ever. A pole of willow lay across his shoulder; from its front end he had hung a large earthenware pot, and from the back suspended a tattered round wicker basket containing a few sesame buns, fritters, and a great big brick. He still remembered Hsiang-tzu.

When they began talking Hsiang-tzu learned that Hsiao Ma had died more than half a year ago. The old man, having sold their broken-down rickshaw, showed up every day with a pot of tea and a few cakes and fruits to sell at the rickshaw stands. The old fellow was as friendly and loveable as ever, but his back was considerably more bent now, and his eyes were watery against the wind. His eyelids were always red, as if he'd just been weeping.

Hsiang-tzu took a bowl of his tea, and said a few words about the troubles on his own mind.

"You think you can make it by yourself?" The old man was evaluating what Hsiang-tzu had said. "Everybody thinks so, of course, but who ever gets anywhere? Me, I started out with a strong body and honest intentions—I've fended for myself right up until now, and look where I ended

up! Strong body? Even an iron man couldn't get out of the dragnet we're in! And honest intentions? What's the use?! It's a crock of nonsense to say 'good deeds are rewarded and evil deeds punished.' I was a real do-gooder in my youth: I worked as hard for others as for myself. Did it get me anywhere? No! I've even saved people's lives—people who were jumping into rivers, hanging themselves—I saved them! Was there any 'reward'? None! I don't even know when I'm going to freeze to death, I'm telling you! But at least I've caught on to something: people who think they're going to make it through their own hard work might as well try walking to the moon.

"How much spunk can there be in one man? You've seen grasshoppers, haven't you? A grasshopper can leap mighty far by itself; but have some kid catch one and tie a string to it, and it can't even get off the ground! Just wait, though, till it bands together with others and forms ranks . . . ha! . . . in a flash they can eat a whole field of crops clean, and nobody can stop them! Am I right?

"Me and my good intentions, they couldn't even keep a grandson going. He got sick, and I had no money for medicine. I watched him die in my arms. Oh well, no use talking about it! Tea here! Who's for a bowl of hot tea?"

Hsiang-tzu saw his point: Liu Ssu, Mrs. Yang, Detective Sun—they didn't suffer for all his cursings and railings; he, on the other hand, gained nothing from all his striving. Relying on oneself was, just as the old man said, like being a grasshopper tied down by a little boy's string. What good are wings in such a case?

He had no desire to return to the Ts'ao's residence. If he did he'd just have to start striving again, and where would that get him? Why not just muddle along and take things as they come? When there's no food, haul out the rickshaw; when there's enough for one day, then rest that day and leave tomorrow for tomorrow. This was not just a way of getting by—it was the *only* way. Why bother to save money and buy a rickshaw simply to make it easy for someone else to steal it from you? Why not just enjoy things as they come?

Besides, if he could find Hsiao Fu-tzu he'd still have reason to struggle along, not for himself but for her. Since he couldn't find her, though—it was just like the old man losing his grandson—why hack it? He told the story of Hsiao Fu-tzu to the old man, whom he now regarded as a real friend.

"Who's for a bowl of tea?" the old man droned out, before turning to Hsiang-tzu's problem. "I would probably guess that only two things could have happened. Erh Ch'iang-tzu either sold her to be somebody's concubine or pawned her into the brothels. Yeah, most likely she was sent down to the 'white cottages'! How come? Because Hsiao Fu-tzu—you just told me so—has already been married, and it's unlikely anybody'd want her. When people buy concubines they want their goods intact. So the chance is about eighty per cent she was sent down to the brothels. I'm almost sixty, and I've seen all kinds of things. If one of those strong young guys who pull rickshaws doesn't show up on the street for a day or two, just try to find him: unless he's got a monthly job somewhere, you're going to find him prone in the brothels for sure. And if it's the wives or daughters of us rickshaw pullers who suddenly disappear, there's always a seventy to eighty per cent chance they've ended up there too. We sell our sweat, our women sell their flesh. That's the way it is. Believe me! You go there and have a look around for her . . . don't hope she's really there, but . . . Tea here! Who's for a bowl of hot tea?"

Hsiang-tzu ran straight to the area outside West Gate.

When he passed outside the city gate he was immediately struck by a feeling of wide open space. The trees lining the road had been pruned bare, and not a single bird graced their branches. The grey trees, grey earth, and grey buildings all stood in silence beneath the grey-brown sky; as he peered across this expanse of grey, he could see the stark, desolate Western Hills. To the north of the railway tracks lay a strip of woods, and beyond the woods were a few stubby huts. Those, Hsiang-tzu reckoned, must be the "white cottages". He noticed that the woods were perfectly motionless. Turning northward, he could see the swamps around the Zoological Garden, where only a few stalks of reeds and rushes remained.

No person, and no activity, appeared near the little huts. Everything far and near was so still that Hsiang-tzu began to wonder if these really were the renowned brothels he sought. He plucked up his courage and strode off in their direction. In

the doorways of the little huts hung reed curtains, the newer ones all a shiny bright tan color. He had heard from seasoned observers that the women here—in the summertime—would bare their backs and sit outside the huts to beckon passersby. And the men who came to patronize them felt they, too—in order to make themselves out as old hands at the game—had to start singing bawdy songs long before they drew near. So why was it so quiet this time? Could it be they did no business in the winter?

While he was hesitating over the matter, the reed curtain on the last door in the row suddenly moved and a woman's head appeared. At first glance it looked exactly like Tiger Girl's head, and Hsiang-tzu jumped in alarm. "Hsiao Fu-tzu is who I'm looking for," he thought to himself. "It would be spooky indeed to find Tiger Girl instead!"

"Come on in, you silly little thing!" The head had said something, but the voice wasn't Tiger Girl's. It was raspy, much like that of the old wild-herb dealer at the Bridge of Heaven—raspy and a bit urgent.

The room was entirely bare inside except for this woman and a small *k'ang*. The *k'ang* had no mat, but a small fire was burning inside it. The fetid air was thick and quite revolting. Across the *k'ang* there lay a strip of old bedding, the edges of which, in addition to the *k'ang*'s top layer of bricks, wore a shiny coat of dirt and grease. The woman was forty or more, with disheveled hair and an unwashed face. She wore lined trousers and a blue padded jacket whose buttons were unfastened. Hsiang-tzu had to stoop to get through the door, and as soon as he did she hugged him. Her unbuttoned jacket spread apart to reveal up front a pair of huge, long breasts.

Hsiang-tzu perched himself on the edge of the *k'ang*, since he couldn't straighten his neck if he stood up. Secretly he was happy to meet this woman: he had long heard of someone in the brothels called "Flour Bags", and this had to be her. The nickname came from those two big breasts of hers—which with one flip she could rest atop her shoulders. When customers came to visit her, this act was always part of the show. Yet her fame derived not only from this unusual pair of big breasts. She was also the only unbonded person in the place; it was by choice that she came to scrape a living here. She had married five times, and in each case the man had soon died on her like a wizened bedbug. So she gave up marrying people and came here to enjoy life. Beholden to no one, she dared to talk. If you had something you wanted to find out about the goings-on in the pleasure quarters, you had to get it from her, because no other woman would dare divulge the slightest detail. Hence "Flour Bags" was known everywhere, and there was a constant stream of people coming to ask her questions. In order to learn something, of course, it was necessary to give her some "tea money". So her business was better and work lighter than anybody else's. Hsiang-tzu had heard of all this and began by paying his tea money. Flour Bags, perceiving his intentions, ceased her cuddling advances. With no beating around the bush Hsiang-tzu asked if she'd seen Hsiao Fu-tzu.

She had no impression of the name. Hsiang-tzu then described Hsiao Fu-tzu's appearance in some detail, and the recollections began arriving.

"Yeah! Yeah, she was here . . . not very old . . . with those nice white teeth showing . . . yeah, we all called her 'The Tidbit' ".

"What room is she in?" Hsiang-tzu's eyes suddenly opened wide in violent urgency.

"Her? Long since done for!" Flour Bags pointed outside. "Hanged herself in the woods!"

"What?!"

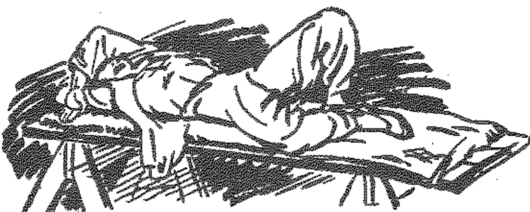
"The Tidbit got along very well with the people here. But she couldn't really take this kind of life, with that weak little body of hers. One day around dusk . . . I can still remember just what it was like, because I was sitting out front with two or three of the women. Yeah . . . right about then this customer shows up and charges straight into her room. She never liked to sit with us by the door —in fact she was at first beaten for this. Later, when she had a name going for her, we all just let her stay inside by herself. Fortunately her customers wouldn't even look at anybody else.

"After an hour or so the guest left and ran straight toward those woods. We didn't notice anything funny, and nobody went inside to check on her. It wasn't until Old Pitchfork went in to collect from her that we found a man in there, completely naked and snoring away. He'd been drinking too much. The Tidbit had peeled off his clothes, put them on herself, and sneaked out. She was no dummy. If it hadn't been dark, there's no

way on earth she could have got out. But in the dark, and dressed up in a man's clothes, she fooled us all. Old Pitchfork immediately sent people all over the place looking for her . . . *hng!* . . . as soon as they looked in the woods, there she was, hanging there. When we plucked her down she'd already stopped breathing, but her tongue wasn't sticking out, and her face wasn't scary. Even when she was dead you couldn't help liking the girl. And these past few months there's been no trouble at all in the woods. She never comes out to frighten or bully anybody . . . so kind-hearted! . . . "

Before she could finish, Hsiang-tzu had stumbled out the door in a daze. He walked to a graveyard, around which pine trees had been planted in a square. Ten or more gravestones were enclosed by the trees. The sunlight was rather faint that day, and things were even gloomier inside the pine grove. He sat down on the ground among some dry grass and pine cones. Everything was silent save the long mournful cooing of a few mountain magpies in the trees. He knew, of course, that this couldn't possibly be Hsiao Fu-tzu's grave, yet his tears gushed forth in fits. There was nothing left . . . even Hsiao Fu-tzu lay buried in the earth! He had been ambitious, and so had Hsiao Fu-tzu; now he was left with nothing but some useless tears, and she was the ghost of a hanging! A rattan sheath and a pauper's grave—this was the result of her lifetime of striving!

He returned to the rickshaw shed and spent two days in a depressed sleep. He had no desire at all to return to the Ts'ao residence—not even to send them a letter. Hsiang-tzu was beyond Mr. Ts'ao's rescue. After the two days' sleep he hauled out a rickshaw, but his heart and mind were a total blank. He thought of nothing and hoped for nothing—it was only for his stomach that he troubled himself to emerge. When his stomach was full, he would go right to sleep. What else was there to think about, or to hope for? He saw an emaciated dog, its bones protruding, standing beside a load of sweet potatoes in a vendor's basket and waiting to eat bits of peel or dangling root; he realized he himself was the same as that dog—a day's activity was only for picking up a few skins and roots to eat. To scrape along and survive was the whole story; there was no need to think of anything else.



Humankind raised itself from among the wild beasts, but even now people drive their fellows back into the ranks of the beasts. Hsiang-tzu was still within the great city of culture, yet had become a wandering beast. And this was by no means his own fault. His mental activity having ceased, he could hardly be held responsible even for murder. He no longer had hopes, but just kept on sinking, sinking into a bottomless pit of muddle-headed waste. He ate, he drank, he whored, he gambled. He became lazy and cunning, because he no longer had a heart in him. His heart had been plucked away by others. All he had left was that hulking frame of flesh, waiting for its day of dissolution, when it would be ready for the pauper's graveyard.

Winter passed away, and with the spring sunshine, which is nature's gift of clothing to everyone, Hsiang-tzu rolled up all his padded garments and sold them. He just wanted a nice bite of food, a nice nip of wine, and felt no need to save winter clothing—in fact gave no thought to ever seeing wintertime again. Why not be happy today—since tomorrow we die! Who cares about the winter! If by unlucky chance he were still alive next winter, worry about it then. In the past, whenever he had pondered something, he had taken account of his life as a whole; now he cared only for what lay before his nose. Experience had taught him that tomorrow was only a continuation of today, an inheriting of today's woes. Having sold his warm clothes, he felt pretty good: he could do whatever he liked with the cash in his hands. Why hang around for old man winter, who could choke you to death with one blast of cold wind?

As time went on he was ready to sell not only his clothes but just about everything else. Whatever items had no immediate use he sold straightway. He enjoyed seeing his things turn into money he could use. If he spent the money himself, at least it couldn't fall into anyone else's hands—that was at least sure. Sell off your things, and

when you come to need them, go buy them back. If you don't have the money then just do without. Don't wash the face, or brush the teeth—these things hardly matter anyway—and you save not only money but trouble, too. For whom was he to present respectable appearances, anyway? He wore tattered clothes, but filled up on biscuits and seasoned meat—*they* were real! With good things in his stomach, even if he died there'd be some grease on his bones. And this was better than ending up like a starved rat.

Hsiang-tzu, the ever-so-proud Hsiang-tzu, had become a dirty, scrawny, low-grade rickshaw puller. His face, his body, and his clothes all went unwashed, and he sometimes went more than a month without shaving his head. He was no longer particular about his rickshaw—be it new, old, or whatever—so long as he didn't have to pay much rental, nothing else mattered. He would dump a customer already in his rickshaw if another customer made a slightly better offer. When riders took exception to this, Hsiang-tzu would glare back. If he started a fight and landed in jail for a couple of days, what of it?

When he pulled rickshaws singly, he went very slowly, jealous of every little expenditure of sweat. When he pulled as part of a group, he still could, if he felt like it, run for a stint, but only in order to make others fall behind. At times like this he could pull some nasty tricks: things like cutting in front of other rickshaws, like turning needlessly sharp corners, like stalling in front of a rickshaw or all of a sudden poking into one from behind—he'd mastered them all. In the past he had felt that pulling a rickshaw was pulling a human life: with one careless move you might smash someone to death. But now he deliberately stirred up trouble. And it didn't really matter if anybody got killed—all human beings deserved to die anyway.

His habit of sombre silence returned. He did his eating, his drinking, and his trouble-making without a sound. Speech is for the exchange of opinion and the communication of feeling among human beings. Having no more opinions, or hopes, why should he talk? Except to haggle over prices he went from dawn to dusk with his mouth shut. His mouth seemed like something exclusively intended for eating, drinking tea and smoking. Even when drunk he made no sound, but would sit in a secluded spot and weep. Nearly every time he drank he made it a point to go shed some tears in the woods where Hsiao Fu-tzu had hanged herself. The weeping finished, he would spend a night in the "white cottages". When he recovered from drunkenness his hands were penniless and his body diseased. But he regretted nothing; if he did have a regret, it was only that he had ever been as ambitious, as careful, and as honest as once he was. Everything regrettable lay in the past; there was nothing to regret about the present.

For the present he would take advantage of whatever little thing he could. He would bum cigarettes, pass counterfeit coins, and eat a few extra salted vegetables when he drank bean-milk. He took it a bit easier pulling rickshaws, but haggled for an extra penny or two of fare. All this gave him a kind of satisfaction; every small gain of his was a small loss to somebody else. This was, sure enough, a kind of revenge! Gradually he enlarged upon this somewhat, learning to borrow money from friends without a thought of returning it. If they pressed him he could always make crazy excuses. The first time around no one had the slightest doubts about him. They all knew what an honorable and trustworthy person he was, so he got money as soon as he opened his mouth. He went everywhere trading this last vestige of character for loans. Borrowing was like picking something up for free, and money left his hands about as fast as it got there. When people came to collect, he would put on a most pitiable expression and ask for more time. Even worse, he would borrow twenty cents to pay a debt of fifteen, and then go straight to spend the extra five cents on wine.

He fell deeper into debt, until he couldn't even borrow a penny. It was then he began to get his spending money by swindling. Making the rounds at all the big houses he had ever worked for, he would present people, be they master or servant, with some preposterous yarn to cheat them of a bit of money. If the person had no money, he would beg him to donate some scrap of clothing. Clothing in his hands immediately turned to money, and money turned to smoke and wine. Then he would lower his head and dream up still nastier schemes. When he'd figured one out, he could get more income out of it than was possible from a whole day's rickshaw-pulling. Thus he saved his energy while raking in money; he felt

he was getting the best of the bargain.

He went even so far as to approach Kao Ma of the Ts'ao household. He waited at a distance for her to come out to do the shopping, and when she appeared he hurried over almost at one bound. He called to her in a most moving and respectful tone of voice.

"Ooh! You scared me to death! Coming out of nowhere! Hsiang-tzu, what's happened to you?" Kao Ma's eyes were round with wonder, as if beholding a monster.

"Let's not talk about it!" Hsiang-tzu lowered his head.

"Didn't you get everything arranged with the master? How come you just went off and never came back? I even went to Old Ch'eng to find out about you, and he said he hadn't seen you . . . so where've you been, anyway? The master and the lady have been worrying all this time!"

"I was sick a long time . . . I almost died." In a simple, pitiable voice Hsiang-tzu began to relate his pre-fabricated tale. "Go speak to the master for me. If he helps me out I'll come back to work when I feel good and healthy!"

"The master's not home. Why don't you go in and see the lady?"

"What's the use . . . the way I look? Better if you say it for me!"

Kao Ma went in and got him two dollars. "This is from the lady. She tells you to take some medicine quick!"

"Yes! My thanks to the lady!" As Hsiang-tzu reached over for the money, he was already thinking of how he would spend it. No sooner had Kao Ma turned to go than he raced off to the Bridge of Heaven and had his fill of pleasure for a day.

Gradually he completed the rounds at all the great houses and set about on a second go-round. But this time his effectiveness had fallen off considerably. He could see that this avenue would not work much longer, that he would have to think of something else. It would have to be some way of making money easier than pulling rickshaws. In the past his only hope lay in pulling rickshaws; now he detested rickshaws. He could not, of course, suddenly and completely break off all involvement with rickshaws. But as long as there was some way to manage three meals a day, he wouldn't want to touch a rickshaw.

His body was lazy, but his ears sharp. Whenever a piece of news broke, he was right up front listening. He was ready to march in any kind of demonstration or parade, or do anything people would pay for. Thirty cents would do, or twenty cents—he was always happy to wave anybody's flag for a day or parade around with any crowd. He felt that this, however one looked at it, was still better than pulling rickshaws. There wasn't much money in it, but neither was there much work. Holding up a little banner, he would bend his neck, clench a cigarette between his teeth, and with a sneer accompany the crowd on its way. He uttered not a sound. When it came to a point at which a few cheers were unavoidable, he would open wide his great mouth, but still make no sound. He cherished his vocal cords. He cared not to exert himself in anything, having expended energies in the past and seen not a whit of benefit arise from them. Whenever it happened, in these situations where he paraded and cheered, that any bit of danger arose, he was the first to run away. And he ran very fast indeed. It was permissible that he ruin his life by his own hand, but never again would he sacrifice anything for any other person. It is the beginning of true individualism when one who strives for himself also learns to destroy himself.

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IT WAS AGAIN the season for pilgrimage to the hilltops to offer incense, and a heat wave had arrived.

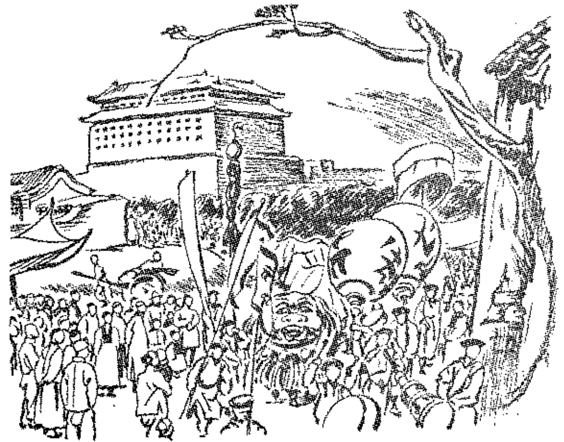
Hawkers of paper fans, their boxes slung over their arms, seemed to pop out of nowhere. Strings of bells on the boxes clanged *hua-lang, hua-lang* to attract people's attention. At the roadsides green apricots were being sold in piles, and cherries dazzled the eye with their bright red. Swarms of yellow bees descended upon bowls of rose-flavored dates, and the translucent gelatins in the bottoms of great porcelain bowls emitted their milky light.

Dark-flour cakes and green lentil gelatins were arranged with extraordinary neatness on platters at either end of carrying poles. Condiments of every color and variety were on display.

The people, too, had changed into lighter and snappier summer clothes. This added a number of new colors to the street's appearance, as if so many long rainbows had disintegrated into the human scene. The street sweepers worked more intensely, sprinkling the streets constantly with fresh water. But the fine dust flew up anyway and continued to wear people's tempers thin. Within the pale of fine dust, though, were also long sprigs of willow and graceful, darting swallows which made one feel good in spite of it all. It was the type of weather that made people wonder what to do with themselves: everybody was yawning long and lazily, tired yet happy.

All kinds of processions—of the rice-planting songs, the lion dances, prong dances, the acrobatic fight, and others—proceeded in turn toward the hills. Beating gongs and drums, carrying wooden chests and holding aloft banners of apricot-yellow, these groups followed close upon one another, infusing the whole city with an unusual liveliness, its people with an indescribable yet quite intimate sensation, and its air with lingering noise and a pall of fine dust. Those who participated, as well as those who just watched, were touched by passion, by piety, and by excitement. The carryings-on of a troubled world are born of superstition; only self-deceit comforts the stupid. All these colors and sounds—billows rising into the clear sky and dust all over the streets—renewed people's energies and gave them things to do: some headed for the mountains, others strolled the temple grounds, and yet others went looking at flowers. Those who couldn't manage such things still could watch the activity from the roadsides and intone the Buddha's name a time or two.

When the weather turned hot like this it seemed to rouse the old capital from its springtime slumber. People everywhere began to think of things to do to amuse themselves, and the heat seemed to buoy spirits in nature together with those of human beings. The green willows and new rushes in the Nan-hai and Pei-hai parks attracted young harmonica players, as well as boys and girls who situated their little boats in the willow shadows, or rocked them among the tender



lotuses, whistling love songs and exchanging kisses with their eyes. The parks' peonies beckoned poets and connoisseurs who sauntered back and forth waving precious paper fans; when tired of walking they would sit next to red walls, under green pines, drink a few cups of the kind of green tea which induces tranquil melancholy, and steal glances at the great-family demoiselles and celebrated courtesans who happened by. Even the city's deserted spots were now presented, by the gentle wind and clear skies, with wanderers like so many butterflies. The peonies at the Temple of Devotion, the green reeds at the Pavilion of Cheer, the mulberry groves and paddy fields at the Nature Museum—they all attracted murmuring parades of people. Even the austere atmospheres of the Altar of Heaven, the Confucian Temple, and the Palace of Harmony were tinged with revelry.

Those who preferred longer excursions joined the students who went to the Western Hills, the Warm Springs, or the Summer Palace. There they traveled about, running hither and yon, collecting specimens, and marking the mountain rocks with their graffiti. There were places the impecunious could go, too, such as the Temple of National Preservation, the Temple of Prosperity, the White Tower Temple, the Earth-God Shrine, and the Flower Market, all of which were livelier than usual. All kinds of plants and flowers were laid out along the roadsides, and for a penny or two one could bring "beauty" home with one. At the bean-milk stalls, the pickled vegetables shone prettily like great blossoms, topped off with chillies of a scorched-red. Eggs were as cheap as

could be, and the scrambled-egg turnovers were crisp and tender enough to make one's mouth water.

At the Bridge of Heaven things were more feverish yet. Tea-booths made of fresh straw, touching one another in rows, all with pure white tablecloths and seductive singing-girls, stood in distant parallel to the tops of the old pine trees which rose above the Altar of Heaven. The gongs and drums lasted seven or eight hours, while the brisk dryness of the weather made these sounds especially crisp and agitating to one's feelings. For the prostitutes, dressing up was easy, since a single piece of patterned print material was enough to present oneself quite prettily while at the same time clearly showing the curves of one's body.

There were also places for lovers of tranquillity to go, such as the front of the Reservoir Bank, or around the Eternal Life Temple, or the clay pits of the eastern suburbs, or the White Stone Bridge of the western suburbs. All of these were fishing spots, where continual bumping by little fish caused tender reeds to quiver. After fishing, the rustic teahouses offered one's fill of pig's head, beancurd in gravy, *kaoliang* wine, and salted beans; then, fishing pole and little fish in hand, anglers would wend their way along the willowed banks, treading on the rays of the setting sun, and pass with light hearts through the gates of the ancient city.

Fun was everywhere. Bustle was everywhere. Noise and color were everywhere. The early summer heat wave was like a magic charm which brought glamour to every corner of the old city. Ignoring death, ignoring disaster, ignoring hardship, when the time came she had shown her strength. She had captivated the hearts of a million people who, as if in a dream, were singing her praises. She was grimy, she was beautiful, she was run-down, she was lively, she was motley, she was relaxed, she was loveable. She was the magnificent early-summer Peiping.

It was precisely at this time of year that people began to look for some bit of news to dispel boredom, news one could read two or three times and not grow weary of, news which one could, having read the paper, go and observe with one's own eyes. The days were so long and bright!

This sort of news had come! No sooner had a streetcar emerged from its terminal than little paperboys set upon it from every direction, vocal cords drawn back, chasing people and shouting, "Juan Ming to be shot! Read all about it! Parades the street at 9 o'clock!"

One penny, then another, then another were taken in by dirty little hands. On the streetcars, in the shops, and in the hands of pedestrians, sheet after sheet told of nothing but Juan Ming: Juan Ming's photograph, Juan Ming's life story, an interview with Juan Ming. In characters large and small, with illustrations and captions, whole pages were entirely Juan Ming. Juan Ming was on the streetcars, in the eyes of pedestrians, in the mouths of conversers. It seemed there was only Juan Ming, and no one else, in the ancient city. Juan Ming would parade the streets today, and today he would be shot!

It was worthy news, ideal news. Juan Ming was not only being spoken about—soon he could also be seen. Women rushed to dress themselves. The elderly set out for an early start, afraid their slower legs would leave them at the rear. Even schoolchildren thought of skipping half a day of classes for the experience. At eight-thirty the streets were already packed with people—excited, eager, crowding, clamoring—waiting to view this real-life news. Rickshaw pullers forgot to hustle for fares, procedures in the shops went haywire, and hawkers were suddenly too busy to hawk—everyone was looking forward to the jail wagon and Juan Ming.

History told of Huang Ch'ao, Chang Hsien-chung, and the people of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, all of whom could endure being killed and all of whom liked to watch killings. The firing squad was almost too easy. People would prefer to listen to dismemberments, beheadings, skinnings, and buryings alive. The listening was like eating ice cream: it sent chills up and down one's spine. But this time, in addition to the actual shooting, there would be a parade around the streets. They were almost ready to thank the person who had come up with this idea which allowed them to feast their eyes on a half-dead man tied to a wagon. They may not have been the official executioner, but were close to it.

There was no good or evil in the hearts of these people. They didn't understand virtue or vice, nor could they distinguish right from wrong. They could cling to a few moral rules handed down to

them and were willing to be called civilized people, yet they loved to watch the slicing and carving of their own kind—just as cruelly and enthusiastically as a little boy might chop up a puppy. Were power ever to fall into their hands, any one of them would be capable of slaughtering whole cities and of piling the severed breasts and feet of women into little mountains. They would do it with zest. But lacking such power, they saw no harm in assuaging their cravings through the frequent observation of animal slaughters and human killings. If they couldn't manage to view things like this, they could still vent their malice by yelling at a child that he should be sliced to tens of thousands of bits.

The round, red sun rose high in the east of a cloudless blue sky. Some puffs of eastern breeze made the willow boughs by the roadside sway gently. A great dark shadow covered the east side of the road, where people of every size, shape, kind and description were crowding together. Some were dressed up in smart, stylish outfits; others wore simple short jackets. Everyone was laughing and chatting—and anticipating, as they peered from time to time up or down the road. Whenever someone peered, everybody else did too, their heartbeats quickening as one. In so doing they squirmed continually forward, and gradually the whole bunch had crowded down to the road's edge. There they formed a solid wall of flesh, where human heads at unequal heights were all that moved.

Teams of policemen came out to maintain order. They made barricades and barked commands. Occasionally they grabbed some mud ball of a little kid and smacked him up, bringing delighted laughter from the crowd. As they waited, patiently waited, people's legs began to ache; but no one would go home empty-handed. Those in front wouldn't leave, and newcomers in the back pressed forward. This gave rise to squabbles—though strictly oral ones, as all hands and feet stayed put; the two sides would just scream insults back and forth while the crowd egged them on. When children grew impatient, their parents boxed their ears; when pickpockets turned a trick, their victims burst out cursing. The whole din and dither swelled into one, and nobody was willing to budge. The more people there were, the less were they willing to move, thereby demonstrating the unanimity of their wish to see the half-dead prisoner.

Suddenly everybody fell still. In the distance a group of armed police was approaching.

"He's coming!" someone shouted. A clamor of voices ensued. The whole crowd, like a machine, pressed forward one inch, then another. He's coming! He's coming! Every eye was gleaming, every tongue wagging. A hubbub of voices, a streetful of body odors: how passionately do the sons of this ancient ethical kingdom love to watch people being killed!

Juan Ming was short and slight of build. He was sitting on a wagon, his hands bound behind him, and looked like a small sick monkey. His head was bowed, and a white signboard more than two feet long had been stuck on his back. Human voices rose like the tides, one wave pursuing the next. Everyone was pursing his lips in disdain; everyone was disappointed. Only a little monkey like this? As teeny-weeny as this? As namby-pamby as this? With bowed head and ashen face—as stark silent as this? Someone came up with the idea of taunting him.

"Hey guys! Let's give him a cheer!" Immediately, from all corners and every direction, everybody shouted "Bravo!" as if applauding an actress on the stage. They went on shouting, contemptuously, malevolently, disgustingly. Juan Ming remained silent, not even raising his head. Some people got really restless—they really couldn't stand such a softie of a prisoner. They crowded to the edge of the road and *p'ei! p'ei!* spat on him a few times. Juan Ming still didn't move, or make a response of any kind. The more everybody watched the more they lost interest, yet the more they were still unwilling to leave. What if he were suddenly to come out saying, "Another hero'll be along in twenty years!"? What if he wanted to order a dish of soymeat and a couple of pots of *kaoliang* from a wineshop? No one would move until they'd seen what would actually happen. When the wagon had passed by they of course followed. He might have nothing to say right now, but who could tell that when he got to the Single Arch of Celebration he wouldn't regain his breath and sing out a few lines from the opera *Fourth Son Visits His Mother*? Follow!

Some followed all the way to the Bridge of Heaven execution grounds. Even though he did

nothing the whole way to command people's respect, or bring them satisfaction, just seeing him get it with a rifle bullet was enough for people to feel their excursion had not, after all, been in vain.

During this festive occasion, Hsiang-tzu was all alone, head bowed, ambling alongside the city wall at the Gate of Surpassing Virtue. When he reached the Reservoir Bank, he looked all around him. Seeing no one, he slowly and quietly stole his way toward the water's edge. When he got there he found an old tree and stood for a moment leaning his back against its trunk. Hearing no voice from any direction, he quietly sat down. Yet the quiver of a reed, or the sudden call of a little bird, sent him leaping to his feet, forehead perspiring. He would look around, listen, and, assured that nothing was afoot, again slowly sit down.

Having done this a good many times he gradually grew accustomed to the sight of quivering reeds and the sound of chirping birds. He decided to stop panicking and stared dumbly into the aqueduct which surrounded the lake. Some minnows, their eyes shining like little pearls, were darting to and fro, forming groups and then dispersing. From time to time they would pull some floating weeds along with their heads, or spit some foam from their mouths. Near the edge of the ditch a few tadpoles which had already sprouted legs were stretched out wagging their big, black heads. When the water suddenly flowed faster, it washed away the minnows and tadpoles, sending their tails flying in the current. But with the flow came another batch, trying mightily to hold still. A water scorpion streaked across the surface. Gradually the flow subsided and the minnows re-grouped. They would open their mouths to munch on a floating green leaf, or part of a blade of grass. Fish of a larger size hid in the deep holes and occasionally would show their backs, only to turn hastily downward again, leaving a whirlpool and some scattered ripples on the water's surface. A kingfisher swept across the water like an arrow, and all fish both big and little disappeared. Only the floating duckweed remained on the surface. Hsiang-tzu stared absently at all this, seeming to see it but also seeming not to. He casually picked up a little rock and tossed it into the water, splashing up some bubbles and scattering several of the floating duckweeds. This gave him a sudden start, nearly frightening him to his feet again.

After sitting there quite a long time, he began stealthily probing under his belt with that big black hand of his. He nodded as the hand came to a halt. In a moment it emerged with a pile of banknotes. After counting them, he returned them with extreme caution to their original hiding place.

His mind lived for nothing but that bit of money: how to spend it, how to keep others from knowing about it, how to have fun with it and yet be safe. It was no longer for himself that he deliberated; he had already become the money's accessory, totally subservient to its direction.

Where this money came from had already determined where it would have to go. Money like this could not be spent openly and aboveboard. The money, as well as the person who possessed it, couldn't be seen in the open. This was why, with everybody else out in the streets looking at Juan Ming, Hsiang-tzu was huddled quietly at the base of the city wall wondering how to get somewhere that was even quieter and darker. The reason he dared not walk the streets was that he had sold Juan Ming out. He just sat by himself facing the gently flowing water, leaning against the base of a desolate city wall. As if pursued by some ghost, he feared even to raise his head. The Juan Ming who lay in a pool of blood at the Bridge of Heaven was still alive in the mind of Hsiang-tzu, in the banknotes tucked under his belt. He felt no regrets, but only fear—fear of that ghost who hounded him everywhere he went.

As an official, Juan Ming had enjoyed his share of the things which he had once thought should be abolished. Money has a way of drawing one into the disgusting side of society, causing one to set aside high ideals and happily enter hell. He wore fancy Western suits, went whoring and gambling, and even gave opium a try. When his conscience caught up with him he felt everything was due not to his own transgressions but to a thoroughly evil society's having deceived him. He admitted to misbehavior, but assigned blame to society's excessive powers of allurement, which he had no way of resisting. When his money had run out through overspending, his mind turned again toward radical ideology, but not with a view to implementing it. He just wanted to make a little money on it. Turning ideology into money was just like his turning of personal relationships with

teachers into undeserved grades at school. The ideologies of lazy people cannot survive their own characters; it is quite certain that anything exchangeable for money will sooner or later be sold.

So he accepted a "subsidy". An organization in a hurry to spread revolution cannot afford to be too particular about its choice of stalwarts. Whoever joins up is a comrade. But those who receive subsidies are supposed to show some results, regardless of the means by which these results are accomplished. The organization needed reports. Juan Ming couldn't just take money without doing anything. So he joined in the task of organizing rickshaw pullers. And Hsiang-tzu was already an accomplished specialist at shouting slogans and waving banners. That is how Juan Ming came to know Hsiang-tzu.

Juan Ming betrayed ideology for the sake of money; Hsiang-tzu accepted it for the sake of money. Juan Ming knew he could sacrifice Hsiang-tzu whenever he needed to. Hsiang-tzu had never actually made such a calculation, but when the time came, that is what he did—sold out Juan Ming. One must beware when those who labor for money happen upon more of it; loyalty is not built upon money. Juan Ming believed in his ideology, which, being a radical one, excused him all kinds of mean behavior. Hsiang-tzu was thoroughly persuaded by Juan Ming's arguments, but also thoroughly admired Juan Ming's comforts. "If I had more money, I could live it up for a few days, too! Just like this guy Juan!" Money had compromised Juan Ming's integrity; money had dazzled Hsiang-tzu's eyes. He had sold Juan Ming for sixty dollars. What Juan Ming had sought was the power of the masses; what Hsiang-tzu sought was a comfortable life like Juan Ming's. Juan Ming spilled his blood for a mere subsidy; Hsiang-tzu's banknotes were safely tucked under his belt.

Hsiang-tzu sat there until the sun set in the West and the rushes and willows by the lake were bedecked in glimmering gold and red. Then he finally stood up and ambled westward along the city wall. He was long accustomed to cheating people of their money, but this was the first time he had sold a life. (What's more, it was the life of Juan Ming, whose talk once sounded so persuasive to him!) The towering city walls and the vast spaces below made him increasingly fearful as he walked. Occasionally he would spy some crows atop piles of garbage, and he even went out of his way to skirt them, fearing that if startled they might direct a few inauspicious caws at him. When he reached the West City wall he quickened his pace, and, like a dog who has just swiped some food, slunk out the West Gate. His ideal destination was somewhere that would offer human companionship during the night, where his senses would be deadened and his fears assuaged. The "white cottages" offered just such an ideal place.

Since autumn, Hsiang-tzu's illness had prevented him from pulling rickshaws, and his credit had sunk so low that he couldn't have rented one in any case. He served as watchman for a little shop. At night, with his couple of pennies of pay, he could lie down in the shop. During the day, he'd go somewhere and do just enough work to get a bowl of congee. He couldn't go beg in the streets; with a large frame like his, no one would show him compassion. He couldn't mark his body up and go beg at the temple, because he had never been taught the tricks of this trade, and did not know how to dress up his sores to demonstrate pathetic ill fortune. The special skills of thievery were also beyond him, thieves too having their organizations and trade secrets. Only he himself could feed himself; he lacked all other recourse and assistance. As he labored for himself, he accomplished also his own demise. He was waiting to draw his last breath, like a mere ghost who breathed, whose soul was individualism. This soul was destined to accompany his body when it rotted in the earth.

Ever since Peiping was declared the "former capital", her life-style, her handicrafts, her cuisine, her dialect, and her policemen gradually spread in every direction. These accoutrements of culture were transported to the centers of wealth, and placed at the service of people whose awesome authority equaled the Son of Heaven's. Thus the Westernized city of Tsingtao came to have Peiping's mutton hotpot; and in the bustling Tientsin, late at night, the sad low tones hawking Peiping's "hard flour . . . rolls!" could be heard. In Shanghai, Hankow, and Nanking policemen and office-boys turned up speaking Peking dialect and eating *shao-ping* with sesame paste. Jasmine tea came from south to north, underwent Peiping's double curing and headed south again. Even coffin-

bearers sometimes caught the train to Tientsin or Nanking in order to carry the coffins of high officials and other illustrious people.

Meanwhile Peiping herself gradually lost her original pageantry. Even after Double Ninth in September you could still buy Double Ninth flower cakes in the snack shops, and New Year's rice dumplings sometimes went on sale as early as the fall. Old shops of two or three hundred years standing suddenly thought of marking anniversaries and using these occasions to distribute handbills which announced a great sale. Economic pressures were obliging the fashionable style of the ancient capital to seek other outlets. You can't subsist on prestige.

Weddings and funerals, though, maintained for the most part their erstwhile pomp and ceremony. Marryings and buryings were, no matter what, still worth special note and at least a bit of pageantry. After all, the wedding sedan chairs, coffin covers, percussion instruments, and ceremony managers were all things which no other city could match. The pinewood cranes and lions, and all the other paper-and-paste people, goods, sedan chairs and horses which were used in funeral processions, as well as the masters of ceremony and the twenty-four percussion instruments which were used at weddings, continued to represent the grand style of the official class in the streets of the city and to recall the efflorescence and spirit of the city's days of splendor.

Hsiang-tzu's livelihood depended primarily on these vestigial ceremonies and customs. When somebody got married, he'd parade the banners; when somebody had a funeral, he'd hold up the wreaths and mourning scrolls. He didn't rejoice, nor did he weep. He just went along with somebody's parade for the sake of a dozen pennies or so. By donning the green clothes or blue gown provided by a funeral home or wedding outfitter, and by placing an ill-fitting black hat on his head, he could, for the time being, cover up his rags and look a bit more respectable. When he happened upon an assignment from one of the great families, who made whole troops of people shave their heads and put on boots, he then had the chance to get all spruced up both over head and under foot. Since his V.D. prevented him from marching properly, he would just hold up his banner, or a couple of scrolls, and shuffle quietly along the side of the road.

Even at something this simple, however, he wasn't worth his salt. He had passed his prime. Since he'd failed to build a family and a livelihood on his rickshaw-pulling, everything else vanished with his expectations as "just one of those things". Despite his large stature, he would fight to carry one of the little flying-tiger flags, or a pair of very short scrolls. He wanted no part of heavier things like the red umbrellas, or the signs which commanded silence. He would contest with an old man, or a child, or even a woman to get his way. He wouldn't give an inch to anybody.

And so, with lowered head and bent back, and with a cigarette butt which he'd picked up from the street hanging from his lips, he would hold up some little item and make a show of shuffling along. When everybody else came to a halt, he might keep going; when everybody started up again, he might stand rooted for a moment. He seemed unable to hear the sounds of the gong which directed and regulated the march. Still less did he ever look to see that he was properly spaced before and behind, or that his row was orderly. He just went his own way, his head lowered as if in a dream, or as if mulling over some profound idea. The gong man dressed in red and the parade marshal who held a silk streamer screeched almost every conceivable vulgarity at him: "You numbskull! I mean *you*, Camel! Eyes right, god damn it!" He still seemed not to hear.

When the gong man went over and slugged him with his mallet, he just rolled his eyes and gazed hazily around. He paid no attention to what the gong man said, but went on examining the ground for any cigarette butt worth picking up.

The honorable, ambitious, dream-filled, enterprising, egocentric, robust, magnificent Hsiang-tzu walked with other people on any number of funeral marches; who knows when and where he will eventually bury himself—this degenerate, selfish, unfortunate offspring of an ailing society, this hopeless wreck of an individualist!

(For Chinese text see page 164)