

曹禺：北京人

Peking Man

By Ts'ao Yu

Translated by Lily Winters

Characters:

TSENG HAO:	The Old Master of an old and once wealthy family of Peking, age 63
TSENG WEN-CH'ING:	His eldest son, age 36
TSENG SSU-YI:	His eldest daughter-in-law, age 38 or 39
TSENG WEN-TS'AI:	His daughter, age 33
CHIANG T'AI:	His son-in-law, the husband of Wen-ts'ai, has previously studied abroad, age 37 or 38
TSENG T'ING:	His grandson, the son of Wen-ch'ing and Ssu-yi, age 17
TSENG JUI-CHEN:	His granddaughter-in-law, wife of T'ing, age 18
SU-FANG:	His niece, 30 years old
WET-NURSE CH'EN:	Formerly wet-nurse for Tseng Wen-ch'ing, about 60
HSIAO CHU-ERH:	The wet-nurse's grandson, age 15
CHANG SHUN:	The Tseng family servant
YUAN JEN-KAN:	A scholar in anthropology, age 38
YUAN YUAN:	His only daughter, age 16
"PEKING MAN":	A huge man, the motor car mechanic for Yuan's anthropological expedition
FOUR COFFIN MERCHANTS	
POLICEMEN	

Setting:

ACT I: *The Mid-Autumn Festival, a small parlor in the Tseng family home in Peking.*

ACT II: *The same night, about eleven o'clock in the parlor.*

ACT III: *Still in the parlor of the Tseng residence.*

Scene I: *About one month after ACT I, a certain day at sunset.*

Scene II: *Next day about five o'clock in the morning, just before dawn.*

ACT I

The Mid-Autumn Festival, almost noon, in the small parlor of the Tseng family in Peking. Silence prevails everywhere. There is no one in the room. The only sound is the feeble, mournful ticking of an old Soochow clock on the long table placed against the right wall. Outside the room the master's white pigeons cluster together, circling in the clouds. Now and then, when the autumn winds blow, they make an extremely clear, pleasing, whistling sound. This heavenly music, like that of a silver flute, makes invalids confined in dark rooms uncontrollably lift their heads and look out into the distance. In the back is a large parlor, made spacious and bright by a row of large windows. In the blue sky, a few clusters of white clouds slowly pass by.

The small parlor serves as a foyer for the big reception hall and the eastward-facing side rooms of the front and back courtyards. There are altogether four entrances leading in and out of the parlor. The door on the right leads to the bedroom of the daughter-in-law. In front of her door is an incomparably exquisite jade-green curtain of the finest gauze. The door on the left leads to the bedroom of the daughter, TSENG WEN-TS'AI, who is married to CHIANG T'AI, a student who has studied abroad. There is nothing hanging in front of her door, which is somewhat smaller and dirtier, suggesting that the room inside is not kept in particularly elegant fashion. The back wall of the small parlor is completely covered by rows of long, narrow paper panels and a small, wall-cabinet style study. These rows of paper panels, which occupy about two-thirds of the back wall of the small parlor, actually form the side door of the Master's quarters. The doorsill rises a foot above the ground, and with one stride over the stone steps one can enter the big reception hall. When the weather is good, these narrow panels are pushed completely open. One can then see that the atmosphere of the inner living quarters is truly elegant and spacious, reflecting that this is an established, once affluent family. Inside, the doors and the windows of the big reception hall are all opened on the right. The door that faces the front courtyard is wide open, throwing into view the courtyard's green shade of prune trees, wisteria vines and white poplar. Sunlight is pouring into this big room through a row of bright, sparkling windows. The light bathes the whole floor and is reflected upwards, making the dust particles in the air look as if they are floating in water, and bringing out a bright lustre even from the gold polish on the pale and faded beams as well as the shabby decorations on the ceiling. By comparison, the small parlor, which is closer to the audience, certainly seems a little dark. Whenever the weather of Indian summer comes, the master has this over half a wall of panels adjoining the big reception hall all closed, so that only a little light is let in through the moon-shaped gauze window in the small study by the back wall. Then the partially darkened small parlor seems cool and pleasant. The old master of the house usually does not care to leave his bedroom in the back courtyard, but at times he does not refrain from coming in here to

rest. This little study has its own name. Above the door there is a horizontal panel inscribed with three characters written in the Master's own hand in seal script style, which says, "The Studio of Meditation." Actually, this is only a small wall-cabinet within the parlor, occupying less than one-third of its back wall, and can at most be considered a private den. Through its single window, which is in the centre, one can see the branches of the old locust tree in the back courtyard. On the right side there is a door (which can barely be seen) leading to the back courtyard and Old Mister Tseng's bedroom. Along the wall of this den are rows of book cabinets, filled with books bound in the traditional Chinese style. In front of the window are the Master's favorite cedar desk and teakwood table, on which are writing brushes, ink sticks, ink stones, porcelain ware and curios, all elegant, exquisite *objets d'art*. The masters of this generation would occasionally paint or compose poetry here or they might just read the classics and chat. Sometimes they would cast fortune and when bored simply doze off.

In the old days, originally, the small parlor was a meeting place for private conversations. When the Tseng family was at its height of glory and prosperity there were many guests everyday. The ancestor, Lord Ching-te, the man who began amassing the family fortune, established a rule: only close friends and relatives were invited here to wait for him. When he returned at noon from the imperial court, he would either invite them to the Studio of Meditation to talk privately, or lead them around through the Studio to his private study for a long chat. By doing so, he could separate them from the young men in the big reception hall. At that time the old man who is now white at the temples was still young and in his prime. He was generous and proud, and everyday sought pleasure in the company of women, raised pet birds, listened to songs, and passed his happy days in princely fashion.

Now, after several decades, this room is still the meeting place for the children and grandchildren of the Tseng family. This is firstly because all the glory and lingering love of the ancestors seem to be concentrated here, and the descendants, though unable to recapture those glorious days of Lord Ching-te, still cherish the memory and knowledge that this was the place where princes, dukes and



"PEKING MAN" IN BOOK FORM
 Cover-design of one of the many
 editions of the play first published by
 Cultural Life Press (文化生活出版社),
 Shanghai, 1941.

great men once gathered; so, lingering with lowered heads, they cannot bear to break with the past. Secondly, the daughter-in-law who manages the family affairs (Lord Ching-te's granddaughter-in-law) lives with her husband on the right side of this room, and they can't avoid using this place for issuing orders or holding discussions. Furthermore, this room offers access to all the other rooms of the house. It was constructed in very elegant fashion, and even now we can see on the pillars faint traces of gold and colored paint from earlier days. Consequently, although the family fortunes have now dwindled to the extent that even the big reception hall and the west chambers have to be rented to an anthropologist, the family is unwilling to relinquish this side of the house for outsiders to live in. It is the last fortress of the Tseng family. Although the plants in the garden are withered, the paint on the pillars and beams faded, the plaster on the walls crumbling and everywhere is evident of the last fading of breath, still the Master does his best to put up a last fight, in spite of all the adversities.

At first glance this room does not give any impression of poverty or shabbiness. We have already mentioned the heavy Soochow clock, ex-

travagantly decorated, and behind it the brightly polished octagonal glass panel (traditional-style homes in Peking have glass panels between the rooms), as well as the heavy curtain of apricot-colored material inside—the daughter-in-law does not like people to know what she is doing in the room—which seems to be hiding an immense store of mystery. Lying before the clock is a jade *juyi*,* wrapped in brocade, passed down to the descendants of the family for use in betrothal ceremonies. On both sides are arranged pots of orchids and a pair of old ruby-colored vases, which were part of the daughter-in-law's trousseau when she was married twenty years ago. In front of the long table is a square teak table, somewhat old and damaged, covered with a violet-colored cloth. At mealtime, it is pulled out and used as a dining table. Now on it is a large platter of candied fruits—crab apples, red grapes, fresh water chestnuts, walnuts, small yams, prunes, sliced pears, and large red sections of oranges, so pleasing in color that those who look upon them can hardly help but drool. Next to the square table are two or three chairs and a low stool, all wiped very clean. On the left side, against the wall, there is a half-moon

*An ornament scepter, a symbol of good luck.

shaped sandalwood table, placed at the right side of the daughter's doorway. On this table are a bowl of citrus fruit (called Buddha's Hand), a few snuff bottles wrapped in green silk and two or three old books. In the midst of these things stands a glass bowl in which some goldfish are slowly swimming. In front of the table are two or three small sofas and a low end table arranged in a rather unusual manner—probably the idea of CHIANG T'AI, the returned student from abroad. On the wall here is a calligraphy scroll of cursive script written by Tung Ch'i-chang, the mounting of which is now quite old. Near the corner of the wall next to the Studio of Meditation hangs, inverted, a seven-string lute in a plain color brocade holder with heavy, orange tassels. Behind, on the bare white wall between the Studio of Meditation and the panels leading to the big reception hall, hangs an ink painting of bamboo, the mounting of which appears to be more contemporary. On the right side of this bamboo scroll stands a five-foot dragon lampstand, carved of dark wood; the dragon's mouth holds a square lamp, with deep blue gauze lamp shade painted with colored flowers and birds. On the left is an imitation Ming white porcelain

urn, decorated with blue flowers, in which are stacked more than ten scrolls of painting. On the side of the urn are two square stools, on the top of which is laid a slightly-opened leather suitcase.

The room is quiet. In the sky, intermittently disturbing the silence, comes the sharp whistling sound of doves. Outside, one can barely make out the distant sound of someone laboriously pushing one of Peking's unusual, one-wheeled watercarts, cumbersomely rolling along the uneven cobblestone surface of the long lane—*chi-liu-liu, chi-liu-liu*. This melancholy sound is first heard far away, then it grows nearer and retreats again, mixing sometimes with the vibrating metallic sound made by a travelling barber striking a big nail between huge tongs of wrought iron, which somewhat resembles the drone of a humming bird. Occasionally, too, the blast—*wu-wa-hu-ha*—made from the battered trumpet of the knife and scissors sharpener, breaks the monotonous silence.

There is no one in the room. In a pale amber-colored porcelain pot a purple orchid silently gives off its pure fragrance. From outside the window, the sweet smell of cassia flowers drifts in. A long pause. . . .

The best of Tsao Yu's dramas deals with the decay of the traditional Chinese family and seeks to point the way to regeneration. Peking Man has been called "one of the most fierce frontal attacks upon the 'ineffectual' and parasitic existence of Chinese gentility". Peking residents and descendants of a once-prosperous family, the Tsengs lead a respectable but anaemic existence. Dominated by a ruthless woman, daughter-in-law Ssu-yi, they bicker endlessly over the family's declining fortune. Everyone is stunned on hearing Yuan Jen-kan, their anthropologist tenant, describe the life of the prehistoric Peking Man, whose skull was discovered by palaeontologists in 1928 near Peking. "Living life to the full, they had no fear of death. Strangers to the excesses of civilization, they had no need to resort to hypocrisy, frauds, scheming and oppression."

The disturbing presence of someone in the house who resembles such a primitive being proves to be a redeeming force for some. Jui-chen, the granddaughter-in-law, makes good her escape. Su-fang, the spinster cousin, tears herself away from her duties to Tseng Hao, the ageing head of the family, and her silent love for Wen-ch'ing, the weakling scion. Despair then closes in on the rest of the family, and the end comes when Tseng Hao's richly-painted coffin, his life-long obsession, is carried off by his creditors, and Wen-ch'ing ends his own life by swallowing opium. Unfortunately, the length of the play makes it impossible for us to present more than just portions of the first act. These consist of the cast of characters and the detailed setting, as given above, and the last part of Act I, translated in full in the following pages, in which all take part in the action and the "Peking Man" is first introduced.

TSENG HAO, supported by JUI-CHEN, SU-FANG and NURSE CH'EN, enters from the study. He is a man of about sixty-five with white hair, a weak frame, a yellow swollen face, a sparse grayish moustache and a pair of dull eyes. His eyes are always watering.

It is only when he is engaged in a spirited discussion that the unique, gentle elegance characteristic of the Tseng family is manifested. He is miserly, selfish, and extremely afraid of death, taking medicine every day in the hope of prolonging his life. He has enjoyed the family inheritance and has had a very comfortable life. The few official positions he has taken he abandoned only after short terms of service, and each time after resignation he would return to enjoy the comforts of his prosperous home. Only now does he gradually begin to feel the effects of the diminishing family wealth, and the children are his great disappointment. Nor is there much left of the family estate. Not having any special skill or ability by which he could improve their livelihood, he feels frustrated and worried. Yet he continues to cling to the superficial niceties of aristocratic tradition, which he considers absolutely essential for a family of scholar-officials. He would often magnify his own dignity as head of the family, but actually he is very much afraid of his daughter-in-law; though outwardly she seems to display obedience, he is never quite sure what she is thinking of. He is also very tired of his son-in-law's incessant outbursts, his uncontrollable boastfulness and magnificent ideas about profitable business. He has never said that he was rich, but he doesn't dare say now that he is badly off. The family is almost completely in the hands of his daughter-in-law. To tell about his own poverty would ward off his son-in-law, but if he overdid it the daughter-in-law's resentment would be imaginable, although up to now she has not yet publicly spited him. He is very much afraid that one day, because he is not leaving behind much property, his children would show him to the face how spiteful they are of him.

Of course, we may attribute this concern to his overly sensitive nature, but he really

feels that poverty has become a great threat to his own position as head of this scholar-official family. Sometimes he almost cannot believe that the traditional values have had any influence on his children. He thought the safest solution would be to be "patient", but patience long-endured makes him so frustrated that at times he loses control and grumbles. Most of the time he still pretends to be deaf and dumb.

His needs are actually very simple. Except for his unremitting concern over the painting of his coffin and taking medicine, he is content to stay in his own room, writing and reading sutras, trying with all his might not to be a burden on his progeny. In such a way he avoids expending money as well as energy. Even when troubles find their way to him and he vents his long-controlled temper, his rage lacks the force it had in his youthful days. Resentful of everything, he is spurred by his feeling of injustice to protest, to shout at his children for being so incapable and unfilial, to criticize the family for their financial ineptitude, to blast the neighbours for their rudeness, and to lament the decline of manners and taste in the family. The only bit of pride that remains in him is beginning to disappear.

He is quite unaware of his selfishness. For instance, his attitude towards SU-FANG—though he sees himself as supporting and protecting an orphan girl, it is actually SU-FANG who pities and protects him silently, hiding the countless trials and tribulations, large and small, that would otherwise beset him. Whenever he senses that she is wavering, he would all of a sudden feel helplessly lost and, almost subconsciously, show his fear deliberately and overly expose the many weaknesses and sufferings of a helpless old man, hoping thus to touch her feelings further and make her his eternal slave. He never for a moment stops brooding and feeling sorry for himself, with the result that he is unaware of the suffering of others around him.

He is wearing a long gown the color of old bronze, loose and comfortable. Over it he wears a soft, warm jacket that SU-FANG made—he is extremely sensitive to cold.

The top button is loose. On his feet is a pair of Western suede shoes and in his hand he carries an elegant Buddhist rosary.

SU-FANG and JUI-CHEN are supporting him. NURSE CH'EN, holding a covered tea cup, stands by one side.

TSENG HAO: (*Eyes closed as if listening, he nods his head.*) Hm, hm.

WEN-CH'ING: (*Uneasy*) Father!

(*TSENG HAO seems to be in such deep thought that he does not hear.*)

NURSE CH'EN: (*Laughing as she talks; everyone stands still momentarily as they listen to her say to SU-FANG excitedly*) I figure it's over fifteen years! (*To TSENG HAO*) This coffin has been painted time and again for fifteen years! (*Admiringly*) How many layers of lacquer have you had on it?

TSENG HAO: (*Happily and comforted*) Over a hundred layers! (*He is being helped toward the altar table.*)

NURSE CH'EN: (*Sighing, praising*) No wonder the paint (*measures with her hand*) is about two or three inches thick. (*She puts down the cup.*) (*SSU-YI comes out of the bedroom, seemingly having forgotten all about the recent suicide threat.*)

SSU-YI: Oh, father is here! (*She hurries over and supports TSENG HAO.*) Please come over here and sit down, father. It's more comfortable. (*Helps TSENG HAO over to the sofa and talks to JUI-CHEN.*) Move the other lounge straight. (*Makes him comfortable with the lounge, then to WEN-CH'ING*) Aren't you going to bring some cushions over?

WEN-CH'ING: Why yes, of course! (*Goes to the study to get the cushions and JUI-CHEN follows.*)

TSENG HAO: (*Eyes closed, fingering the rosary.*) Let them paint it slowly. Paint for another four or five years and then probably it will be fit for me to sleep in. (*JUI-CHEN enters from the study with some cushions.*)

SSU-YI: (*Pointing in a friendly manner*) Put the cushions behind him, young lady! (*As if dissatisfied with the way JUI-CHEN places the cushions, she bends down herself to fix them.*) Let me do it! (*To JUI-CHEN*) Go get a blanket for grandfather!

TSENG HAO: (*Opening his eyes*) That isn't neces-

sary. (*Closes his eyes again to rest.*)

SSU-YI: (*Humbly*) Do you feel better now?

TSENG HAO: Much better!

WEN-CH'ING: (*Walking forward*) Father!

TSENG HAO: (*Nods his head*) Hm. (*Almost intentionally showing surprise*) Oh, you haven't gone yet?

SSU-YI: (*Casting a glance at WEN-CH'ING*) Wen-ch'ing's leaving by train in just a while.

TSENG HAO: (*To WEN-CH'ING*) Have you kowtowed to the ancestors?

WEN-CH'ING: No, father.

TSENG HAO: (*Displeased*) Go! Go! Hurry up. Go and pay your respects to the ancestors. Then we'll talk. (*Coughs.*)

WEN-CH'ING: Yes, father. (*Walks towards study door.*)

NURSE CHEN: (*Has another opportunity to talk to WEN-CH'ING.*) Master Ch'ing, let me keep you company. (*WEN-CH'ING and NURSE CH'EN leave the stage via the study door.*)

TSENG HAO: Su-fang, go fetch my spittoon.

(*SU-FANG is about to leave when SSU-YI speaks.*)

SSU-YI: (*Smiling*) Don't trouble cousin Su! I have one in my room. Jui-chen, go get it for your grandfather. (*Hands a cup of tea to TSENG HAO.*) Father, drink your tea. (*JUI-CHEN enters SSU-YI's bedroom.*)

TSENG HAO: (*Rinsing his mouth with tea, and spitting into the spittoon which SSU-YI has brought over*) I have a bitter taste in my mouth. (*Closes his eyes.*)

SU-FANG: Do you still feel dizzy?

TSENG HAO: (*Looking at her, closes his eyes and half talks to himself.*) I feel dizzy, and I have a bitter taste in my mouth; that's because I don't have any more fire in my liver—so my chest is congested and full of phlegm. (*Rubs his chest with his wrinkled, dried-up hands.*)

SSU-YI: (*Attentively*) I think we'd better ask a Western doctor to look at you.

TSENG HAO: (*Opens his eyes, irritated.*) Who says so?

SSU-YI: Or, shall I send Chang Shun for Dr. Lo the Imperial Physician to come?

TSENG HAO: (*Opening his eyes, shaking his head*) Definitely not! Dr. Lo likes to use prescriptions of the T'ang Dynasty—such hard and strong medicine—at my age and in this condition . . .

(Sighs and closes his eyes and coughs lightly.)
SSU-YI: The Tu's next door have sent their house-keeper over to ask for the fifty thousand dollars again.

(JUI-CHEN brings TSENG HAO a small spittoon from the bedroom; he spits into it and holds it.)

TSENG HAO: Oh!

SSU-YI: And also the cost of painting the coffin this year—

TSENG HAO: (Irritated) Money, money, money! I'm a work horse! All my life I've been nothing but a work horse. Even when I'm sick I still have to worry about money. That's all I am—a work horse!

(SSU-YI also pulls a long face; a pause.)

SU-FANG: (Trying to comfort him) This year they did a good job of painting the coffin.

TSENG HAO: (Letting his face light up a bit in order not to embarrass the Young Mistress of the house too much) Yes, yes! Let's wait, wait until next year to add a couple more layers of Szechwan lacquer, then we can settle the debt with the Tu's. My life's troubles will then be over. (Looks at JUI-CHEN and sighs.) If my luck is good, I'll live to see my great-grandchild.

SSU-YI: (Happily smiling) That's right. Just now when we were worshipping, I told Jui-chen to pray to the ancestors to bless her with a boy so that you'll have a chance to hold your great-grandson in your arms.

TSENG HAO: (On his puffed face show wrinkles of joy.) Jui-chen, did you really pray like that? (JUI-CHEN lowers her head and remains silent.)

SSU-YI: (Nudging JUI-CHEN) Grandfather asks you if you prayed like that. (JUI-CHEN turns her back on them.)

SU-FANG: (Comforting her) Jui-chen!

JUI-CHEN: (Turns around.) I did, Grandfather.

TSENG HAO: (Satisfied) That's good.

(TSENG WEN-TS'AI'S VOICE is heard calling "Chiang T'ai! Chiang T'ai!")

SSU-YI: (Mumbling) Just look at this! You, child, what are you crying about?

(Enter WEN-TS'AI and CHIANG T'AI, from the door that links the reception hall to the front courtyard, pulling and tugging.)

WEN-TS'AI: (Pleading) Chiang T'ai, Chiang T'ai! (Dragging him in.)

CHIANG T'AI: All right! All right! Don't drag me. I'm coming!

(Everyone turns around to look at them; they come closer.)

TSENG HAO: What's the matter?

WEN-TS'AI: Father! (Turning to CHIANG T'AI and speaking under her breath) Just kowtow as you are—you don't have to change clothes.

SSU-YI: (Smiling artificially) The son-in-law is here to wish the father-in-law a happy Moon Festival.

TSENG HAO: (Tries to sit up while putting his hand out as if someone is about to kowtow to him.) Oh, you needn't do that! Please—why all this fuss? (CHIANG T'AI looks at SSU-YI with a scowl and hesitantly makes a half bow to the old man, then sits down first.)

CHIANG T'AI: (Waits till TSENG HAO has settled, looks around at everyone, then immediately) All right, I have something to say! (Pointing) The wall in my room is about to fall. Are you people going to fix it?

WEN-TS'AI: (Softly, nervously) What's the matter now?

CHIANG T'AI: (To WEN-TS'AI) Don't interfere! (To SSU-YI and TSENG HAO) Are you going to fix it? Because if you're not, I'm going to roll up my bedding and get out of here.

TSENG HAO: (Mystified) What's this?

SSU-YI: (Gently but firmly) You shouldn't talk this way, dear brother-in-law. I didn't say I wasn't going to have it fixed. It's just that Father was going to sell the house and open up a business, so—

TSENG HAO: (Shocked and unhappy) Sell the house?

SSU-YI: Sell the house to the Tu family next door.

TSENG HAO: (Slightly angry) Who said that? Who could have said that?

SSU-YI: (Glancing at CHIANG T'AI with a sardonic smile) Who knows who said it?

CHIANG T'AI: (Bursting out) I said it. (Looking at TSENG HAO with disrespect) But I can't remember who the irresponsible person was who gave me the idea.

TSENG HAO: (Unable to tolerate all this snapping in his own home) Chiang T'ai, you shouldn't speak this way to your elders.

CHIANG T'AI: All right—then I'm leaving! (Starts walking off.)

WEN-TS'AI: (Softly, almost crying) Chiang T'ai,

sit down.

SU-FANG: (*Pleading*) Oh, cousin!

(*The others pull at CHIANG T'AI and he reluctantly sits down. WEN-CH'ING comes quietly from the study, and stands to one side.*)

TSENG HAO: (*Looking at WEN-CHING and trembling*) All right... so it was my idea. It's all because of my good-for-nothing children. The family's finances aren't good. No one is earning any money. (*He looks at WEN-CHING.*) The eldest son is useless. Our next-door neighbors, the Tu's, are nouveau-riche and they're pressing us to pay our debts every day. They want to buy our house. Can we just sit by and let them have the house for ten or twenty thousand? (*The more he speaks, the angrier he gets.*) That nouveau-riche textile factory owner is taking advantage of us; he thinks money can buy anything. He even wants to buy this coffin that I've been painting for fifteen years. (*Trembling with anger*) How utterly uncultured some people can be! How can I let them have the very coffin I'm going to be laid to rest in? (*Looking at WEN-TS'AI*) Wen Ts'ai, tell me... (*Looking at WEN-CH'ING*) Wen-Ch'ing... being the eldest son, you should say something. (*WEN-CH'ING lowers his head.*) You children...

(*NURSE CH'EN comes in from the study.*)

NURSE CH'EN: (*Excitedly*) Oh, Master Ch'ing! (*When she sees SSU-YI point at TSENG HAO and wave disapprovingly, she is frightened, turns back and sneaks out through the door of the living room.*)

TSENG HAO: This house was left to us by our ancestors. Every blade of grass, every tree, is the result of the blood and sweat of our forefather Lord Ching-te. We live here, we eat here from childhood until adulthood, and we depend on this little blessing our ancestors gave us so that we don't have to worry about food and shelter. (*Pounds the arm of the sofa.*) Granted that you don't care about this house, how can I bear to sell it to this nouveau-riche family, sell it to this kind of—

CHIANG T'AI: (*Raises his hand.*) I want to make it clear that I don't want to be involved in this. I have never given a thought to whether you will sell the house or not.

TSENG HAO: (*Dumbfounded, then continues an-*

grily.) This kind of nouveau-riche factory owner, this scoundrel who would even buy another man's coffin, this—

(*There is a sudden noise of firecrackers from next door.*)

TSENG HAO: (*Frightened*) What's this—(*About to jump up, unable to stand the excitement.*) What is it... What's this noise?

SU-FANG: (*Shouting to be heard over the fireworks*) Nothing important, it's firecrackers!

TSENG HAO: (*Covers his ears, nervously*) Shut the door! Shut the door! (*WEN-CH'ING and JUI-CHEN hurry to close the door leading to the reception hall; the firecrackers are still audible and continue for a long while before dying down.*)

WEN-TS'AI: (*A long sigh*) Who is it setting off so many firecrackers?

CHIANG T'AI: (*Laughing satirically*) It's that nouveau-riche family, the Tu's.

TSENG HAO: (*Shakes his head.*) Look at that family. Even at the Moon Festival they set off firecrackers as if they were marrying off their daughter.

(*NURSE CH'EN enters from the reception hall door.*)

NURSE CH'EN: (*Clapping her hands*) Oh, Miss Su, that's an interesting family. The daughter calls the father Old Monkey and the father calls the daughter Little Monkey. There's a wild gorilla-like animal sitting in their room. While the Old Monkey draws pictures the Little Monkey almost crawls on the Old Monkey's head and turns somersaults. (*Laughing her sides off*) The whole house is topsy-turvy—

TSENG HAO: (*Not understanding what it is all about*) Who?

NURSE CH'EN: Who else but Mr. Yuan and that Miss Yuan. I think Mr. Yuan is a nice person. He laughs all day long for no reason at all!

SSU-YI: Nurse Ch'en, go to the kitchen and see if dinner is ready. Today the Old Master is inviting Mr. Yuan to dinner for Miss Su's sake.

NURSE CH'EN: Oh! Good, good. (*Exits happily through the door that leads to the reception hall.*)

SSU-YI: (*Seriously*) I heard that Mr. Yuan is going to leave in a few days. I don't know how father feels about Miss Su's marriage—

TSENG HAO: (*Shaking his head, sneering*) This man, in my opinion—

- (CHIANG T'AI—who catches TSENG HAO's thought—grunts contemptuously. TSENG HAO turns around, looks at him and speaks angrily to SU-FANG who is just about to leave.)
- TSENG HAO: All right, Su-fang. Don't go yet! Let's talk this over while you are here.
- SU-FANG: I just wanted to cook some medicine for you . . .
- CHIANG T'AI: (*With good-natured sarcasm*) Ah, Miss Su, haven't you cooked enough medicine? (*Speaking fast*) Sit down, sit down, sit down, sit down. (*She sits down reluctantly.*)
- TSENG HAO: Su-fang, what do you think? (SU-FANG lowers her head and remains silent.) How do you feel about it yourself? Don't worry about me—you should think of yourself. Your uncle probably won't be able to take care of you much longer. However, according to my idea, I think Mr. Yuan is—
- SSU-YI: (*Cutting in*) Yes! Yes, cousin Su, you must think it over. Don't overlook your uncle's good intentions—you might be making a mistake . . .
- TSENG HAO: (*Also cutting in*) Ssu-yi, let her think it over. This is a life-long business. The decision is up to her. (*Forcing a smile*) We can only offer advice. Su-fang, speak up. What do you think?
- CHIANG T'AI: (*Cannot control himself any longer.*) What problem is there? Mr. Yuan isn't a monster, you know . . . he's an anthropologist. In the first place, he's a good man; secondly, a well-educated man; and thirdly, he has an income. Naturally, this is—
- TSENG HAO: (*Calm and controlled*) No, no, no! Let her think it over herself. (*Turning to SU-FANG anxiously*) You must know that I have only one niece like you. I've always treated you like my own daughter. If a daughter refuses to get married, wouldn't I take care of her all the same?
- SSU-YI: (*Cutting in*) Exactly! Cousin Su—an unmarried daughter certainly isn't—(WEN-CH'ING can't stand it any longer and walks off toward the study.)
- SSU-YI: (*Looking askance at WEN-CH'ING*) Look here! Where do you think you're going? (*Heedless of her, WEN CH'ING exits through the side door of the study.*)
- TSENG HAO: What's the matter with Wen-ch'ing?
- SSU-YI: (*Sarcastically*) Probably he also wants to cook some medicine for you. (*Turning towards SU-FANG most affectionately*) Don't worry, cousin Su. We want to talk this over because we're concerned about you. Even if you should stay with the Tsengs for the rest of your life, no one could criticize you. (*Poisonously*) Hasn't an unmarried daughter got to be supported all the same? Especially when you don't have a mother or father of your own, and there's no one to turn to—
- TSENG HAO: (*Understands her insinuation—cuts her short.*) Enough! Enough! Young Mistress, your apparent solicitude is overwhelming. (SSU-YI's face suddenly turns frosty—TSENG HAO turns to SU-FANG.) Well, Su-fang, will you decide for yourself?
- SSU-YI: (*Anxiously to SU-FANG*) Come on—speak up!
- WEN TS'AI: (*After listening all this time, nodding all along, suddenly says warmly*) Come on, cousin Su. It seems to me—
- CHIANG T'AI: (*To his wife*) Oh, shut up! (*WEN TS'AI stops talking; SU-FANG rises silently, stands there with her head bowed, then walks toward the reception hall door.*)
- TSENG HAO: Su-fang, say something, don't you want to give your opinion?
- SU-FANG: (*Shaking her head*) I—I have no opinion. (*Exits through the reception hall door.*)
- TSENG HAO: How can one have no opinion on a matter like this?
- CHIANG T'AI: (*Can't stand it any longer.*) Do you people mind if I say something?
- TSENG HAO: What?
- CHIANG T'AI: If you let me, I'll say it. If you don't, I'll go off.
- TSENG HAO: Sure, say it. Tell us what you think.
- CHIANG T'AI: (*Frankly, directly*) Then I will ask you not to make it difficult for Su-fang. Don't you people understand Su-fang's feelings? Why are you all picking on a poor old maid? Why?
- SSU-YI: Picking on her?
- WEN-TS'AI: Chiang T'ai!
- CHIANG T'AI: (*Angrily*) That's right! I say you people are picking on her. All these years she's served you all, old and young; living and dead; grandfather and grandmother; young mistress and young master—she's taken care of every-

- one! She's already past thirty. Why do you people keep hanging on to her and not let her go—what's it all about?
- TSENG HAO: You—
- WEN-TS'AI: Chiang T'ai!
- CHIANG T'AI: Do you mean you want her to keep you company in the coffin? To have her burned into ashes to offer to the ancestors? Show some conscience! It's what anyone should have. I'm leaving. Here's a letter. *(Puts the letter on TSENG HAO's knee.)* You people read it.
- WEN-TS'AI: Chiang T'ai!
- (CHIANG T'AI angrily leaves through the reception hall door.)*
- TSENG HAO: *(Displeased)* What's this all about? I've never heard such wild talk. *(Trembling, he opens the envelope and reveals a brief note and some money. As he reads CHANG SHUN quietly brings in bowls and chopsticks and JUI-CHEN helps set the table.)*
- TSENG HAO: *(Face pale after reading the letter.)* What's the meaning of this? *(Holding up the money)* He wants to pay the rent. Ssu-yi, what's all this about?
- SSU-YI: *(Smiles sarcastically.)* I don't know what kind of mental problem he's suffering from?
- WEN-TS'AI: *(Has stood up, looks at the letter; nervously pleading.)* Father, don't be angry with him. He has been very unhappy. These few years—
- TSENG HAO: *(In an outburst)* I won't talk about Chiang T'ai. Even though a son-in-law is supposed to be half a son, still he has a different family name from us. *(Faces WEN-TS'AI.)* You're my daughter. Of course you know our family's foremost concern is culture. We never talk about money. Very well, if you two want to stay on here, you may—or, it's up to you if you don't want to. There's no need to pay your father for room and board—
- WEN-TS'AI: *(Sobbing)* Oh, Father, please, it was a mistake for you to have a daughter like me.
- TSENG HAO: *(Angrily trembling)* Do we have to put up with this kind of humiliation from our rich son-in-law?
- WEN-TS'AI: *(Crying)* Oh, Mother! Why did you leave me behind! Oh, Mother!
- SSU-YI: Sister-in-law. *(Crying, WEN-TS'AI runs into her bedroom.)*
- TSENG HAO: *(A long sigh)* Oh, these troublesome children! You can't tell them anything. . . . Let's have dinner! Chang Shun, go ask Mr. Yuan to come.
- (CHANG SHUN exits through the reception hall door, and WEN CH'ING enters from the study.)*
- WEN-CH'ING: Father!
- TSENG HAO: Are you leaving?
- WEN-CH'ING: I'm going to board the train at one o'clock.
- TSENG HAO: Have you stopped smoking?
- WEN-CH'ING: *(Lowering his head)* I have.
- TSENG HAO: You mean it?
- WEN-CH'ING: *(Ashamed)* Yes.
- TSENG HAO: How about cigarettes?
- WEN-CH'ING: *(Lowers his head)* That also.
- TSENG HAO: *(Noticing WEN-CH'ING's nicotine-stained fingers, begins to lecture him.)* Now you're lying again. Look at the yellow stains on your fingers. *(Shakes his head and sighs.)* In your shape how can you face people and get a job?
- WEN-CH'ING: *(Looking at his own fingers)* I—I'll do something about it . . .
- TSENG HAO: Where is T'ing-erh?
- SSU-YI: *(Runs towards the door calling.)* T'ing! Your grandfather is calling you.
- TSENG HAO: What is he doing?
- WEN-CH'ING: He's probably flying kites with Miss Yuan.
- TSENG HAO: Flying kites! Why isn't he reading the *Chao Ming Anthology* instead of flying kites?
- WEN-CH'ING: T'ing-erh!
- (T'ING runs in nervously from the reception hall door.)*
- TSENG HAO: *(Sternly)* Must you run? Where have you learned such unruly manners?
- T'ING: *(Now walks properly.)* Grandfather, Uncle Yuan is drawing the *Peking Man*. He says he'll be over right away.
- TSENG HAO: Oh! *(To JUI-CHEN)* Pour the wine!
- T'ING: Uncle Yuan says he would like to bring a friend over for dinner.
- TSENG HAO: That's fine. You go and tell him we're just having a family dinner—nothing fancy. If he doesn't mind, then come on over.
- T'ING: Yes. *(T'ING starts to leave, but half-way turns around and says thoughtfully)* But Grandfather, it's the *Peking Man*!
- TSENG HAO: Well, if he's a Peking man, all the better! *(To WEN-CH'ING rebukingly)* Look at

the way you've brought up your son! Even at this age he's all muddled about things.

T'ING: (*Hesitantly*) Uncle Yuan asks should he change clothes?

TSENG HAO: (*Irritated*) Change what clothes! Just ask them to come over right away. Your father has to catch the train in an hour. (*T'ING exits through the reception hall door.*)

TSENG HAO: That's strange . . . where did Su-fang go?

SSU-YI: She's probably making some dishes for Mr. Yuan.

TSENG HAO: Oh!

(*T'ING, calling from outside: "My grandfather's in the room! My grandfather is in the room!"*)

YUAN YUAN'S VOICE: "Go ahead, run! run!"
At this moment the door bursts open and T'ING, yelling, runs in. Behind him is YUAN YUAN, her face all dripping wet, holding an empty bucket in one hand, a string of lighted firecrackers in the other. Behind her is HSIAO CHU-ERH with a lighted punk for the firecrackers in one hand, and his dove in the other.)

T'ING: Grandfather, grandfather, she—

YUAN YUAN: (*Laughing*) Go ahead, run! See if you can get away!

(*T'ING tries to hide himself behind the sofa where TSENG HAO is sitting. YUAN YUAN throws the firecrackers at TSENG HAO and T'ING. As they go off, T'ING and TSENG HAO are frightened and yell; YUAN YUAN laughs loudly. HSIAO CHU-ERH, standing by the door, also laughs.*)

TSENG HAO: What's the matter with this girl?

YUAN YUAN: Grandpa Tseng!

TSENG HAO: Why are you so naughty?

YUAN YUAN: (*Coyly*) Look, Grandpa Tseng. (*Shows him her wet hair and points to T'ING.*) He poured water all over me first.

(*MR. YUAN calls laughingly from outside:*

"Where are you, you Little Monkey?")

YUAN YUAN: (*Playfully*) I'm here, Old Monkey. (*Laughing and jumping, she exits through the reception hall door; HSIAO CHU-ERH follows her.*)

TSENG HAO: (*To SSU-YI*) Just look—how can we match Su-fang with this kind of family? (*Turns to T'ING.*) Just now did you pour a bucket of

water on her?

T'ING: (*Frightened*) She—she told me to pour it on her.

TSENG HAO: Kneel down!

SSU-YI: Well, Father—

TSENG HAO: Kneel down! (*T'ING kneels.*) We have to show the Yuans how the Tseng family disciplines their children.

YUAN YUAN, dragging her "Old Monkey", YUAN JEN-KAN, the scholar of anthropology, enters in high spirits. The "Old Monkey" is actually not very old. He looks only about forty, although his head is prematurely bald, leaving only a few streaks of hair that have been combed sideways. He is not very tall, but his complexion is healthy and ruddy; his chest is broad and his waist round. Wearing a pair of old beige *jodhpurs*, a brown shirt with the collar open, and a pair of muddy black riding-boots, he looks like an automobile mechanic. But his humorous, intelligent eyes often sparkle with a sort of cynicism, and at times they also betray the brooding thoughtfulness which scholars usually have. The faint smile on his lips gives one the impression that he is not only studying mankind's ancestors, but also mocking at mankind for having degenerated into its present state. He has large ears, a broad forehead and a large flat nose, which sometimes make him look like a clown.

There is much speculation about his personal life. Some people say he has been married before, but some say he has always been a bachelor and that YUAN YUAN is his illegitimate daughter. Asked about this, he would without exception smile mysteriously. He has spent all his life studying the skull of the *Peking Man* and organizing expeditions to Tibet and Mongolia to excavate fossils. The rest of his time he keeps company with his daughter and horses around with her as if she were also some strange creature discovered in an excavation. To look at him, it seems that he is of a type that really doesn't know much about relationships between man and woman.

MR. YUAN: (*Nodding his head and smiling*) Yes, yes. (*Seeing that TSENG HAO has already stood up to welcome him*) Ah, Mr. Tseng, you are so

very kind. Here we are coming over to eat again.
 TSENG HAO: Well, it's just a little something to celebrate the festival. Please, Mr. Yuan, please take the seat of honor.

YUAN YUAN: (*Seeing that T'ING suddenly seems to have shrunk, bursts out crying.*) Oh, daddy, daddy. Look, he's kneeling on the floor!

TSENG HAO: Never mind him. Please be seated.

MR. YUAN: (*Looking down at T'ING, astonished.*) What—?

TSENG HAO: This grandson of mine is young and foolish. He poured a bucket of water on your daughter's head—

MR. YUAN: (*Apologetically smiling*) Oh, dear. Get up, get up! It was I who gave him that bucket of water to pour.

TSENG HAO: (*Surprised*) You?

SSU-YI: (*Can't stand it any longer.*) Oh, get up, T'ing—and thank Uncle Yuan!

T'ING: (*Stands up immediately.*) Thank you, Uncle Yuan.

MR. YUAN: Forgive me, forgive me—next time you pour water on me!

TSENG HAO: Where is your friend, Mr. Yuan?

YUAN YUAN: (*Excited*) Father, the *Peking Man* is still in the room.

MR. YUAN: (*Roughly*) Why, I thought he had already come. (*YUAN YUAN runs out.*)

TSENG HAO: (*Very courteously*) Please come in! (*Stands and walks toward the reception hall door.*)

MR. YUAN: When you called us, I was drawing. I told him to change clothes before coming, but he (*pointing to T'ING*) said that you—

TSENG HAO: (*Very politely*) Oh, it's a simple family dinner. You don't have to change clothes. You're really too polite, too polite!

MR. YUAN: Yes, that's why I haven't—

(*YUAN YUAN enters skipping in through the reception hall door.*)

YUAN YUAN: (*Calling aloud, as if announcing an honored guest.*) The *Peking Man* has arrived! (*Mystified, everyone stands and stares.*)

TSENG HAO: (*By the door, beaming with smiles*) Welcome, welcome—(before finishing his sentence)—

In a flash the door opens and, like a giant spirit descending from Heaven, an "ape-like wild thing" abruptly comes into sight. He is

over seven feet tall, with a bear-like waist and a tiger-like back, half naked and half-covered with a piece of animal hide. His body is hairy all over. His fiery eyes flash brightly deep in the sockets. His nose is flat and his mouth large, and his lower jaw protrudes heavily like that of an anthropoid ape. Also in ape-like fashion, his coarse, short hair nearly covers his black, bushy eyebrows. Bulging in ripples beneath his dark brown skin, his muscles look like coffee-colored chestnuts. His huge hands seem able to break any enemy's neck with a minimum of effort. He is the very personification of strength, primitive and fearful. All the potentials for a full and rich life and mankind's unfailing hopes for the future seem to be amassed within the body of this man.

All the members of the Tseng family are somewhat shaken—except JUI-CHIEN.

TSENG HAO: (*Unprepared, almost startled out of his wits.*) Ah! (*Backs up.*)

MR. YUAN: (*Hurries forward to make introductions.*) This is Mr. Tseng.

PEKING MAN: (*Nods.*)

TSENG HAO: This is—

MR. YUAN: (*Smiling*) This is my colleague. He will be accompanying us to Mongolia soon. (*The PEKING MAN walks to the middle of the stage and stares at TSENG HAO and his family coldly.*)

YUAN YUAN: (*Pointing*) Grandpa Tseng, he's the ancestor of mankind. Grandpa Tseng, your ancestor was just like this.

MR. YUAN: (*Laughing*) Don't talk nonsense, daughter! (*To TSENG HAO*) Don't mind her, Mr. Tseng. Actually this is what the *Peking Man* of four hundred thousand years ago was like. When he felt like killing, he killed. When he felt like fighting, he fought. He drank fresh blood, ate raw flesh—not quite so civilized as our Peking contemporaries.

TSENG HAO: (*Frightened*) But... how can this be a Peking man?

MR. YUAN: (*Forcefully*) This is a genuine *Peking Man*, all right! (*Suddenly laughing*) Don't be disconcerted, Mr. Tseng—this is just make-up. We've asked him to pose for drawings by our research team. His real identity is a mechanic, the best in our team. We chose him for a model

because his skeleton and physique are somewhat like the earliest *Peking Man*.

TSENG HAO: (*A bit clearer*) Oh, oh, I see! Well, please be seated! (*Forces himself to address the PEKING MAN.*) Ah—please be seated.

MR. YUAN: Forgive me, he's dumb, can't talk. (*At this point everyone takes his seat at the table; lowering his voice he continues.*) He's a bit short-tempered—fights at the least provocation—its better you don't pay any attention to him.

TSENG HAO: (*Scared to the bones*) Oh, yes, of course! (*Hurriedly tells JUI-CHEN and T'ING.*) You two come and sit over here.

(*The PEKING MAN, without the faintest smile on his face, sits down at the head of the table, facing the audience.*)

CHANG SHUN *brings in a hot bowl, puts it on the table, then exits.*)

TSENG HAO: (*Lifting a cup of wine*) Today, we have a festival; and also my elder son is leaving home. We've never had a chance to benefit from Mr. Yuan's company, so now we're making use of this opportunity to get together. Come, Mr. Yuan. Let's have some wine! A toast! (*Looking at the PEKING MAN*)—and your friend—

MR. YUAN: Thank you!

(*The PEKING MAN looks around and gulps down the wine in one swallow. All are surprised.*)

MR. YUAN: I've heard that Mr. Tseng is quite a connoisseur of tea.

(*Noise of quarreling outside.*)

TSENG HAO: Jui-chen, go see who that is and why the noise.

YUAN YUAN: (*To JUI-CHEN*) I'll go for you!

(*SSU-YI whispers something in WEN-CH'ING's ear. WEN-CH'ING stands up and takes the wine kettle; SSU-YI follows and walks to TSENG HAO's side. YUAN YUAN has already put down her chopsticks and run off through the door that leads to the reception hall.*)

SSU-YI: (*Holding the cup*) Here's to my venerable father-in-law.

TSENG HAO: (*Remains sitting.*) Oh, it's not necessary.

SSU-YI: (*Very reverently*) Wen-ch'ing wants to say goodbye to his father.

WEN-CH'ING: (*Softly*) Father, I'm saying goodbye. (*WEN-CH'ING kneels and kowtows three*

times. JUI-CHEN and T'ING both stand up. The PEKING MAN and MR. YUAN roll their eyes at each other. As one sits and another kowtows, from outside come the noise of three or four people jeeringly shouting abuses.

VOICES of three or four men consecutively:

"Are you going to pay or not! This is the Moon Festival! We've been waiting all morning! Such a big house—you couldn't have built it for nothing. You have money yet you owe debts. What if you have no money—what debts can you owe then? You should be ashamed!"

TSENG HAO: What's this?

SSU-YI: Maybe quarreling among the neighbors.

TSENG HAO: (*Becomes calm and talks to all.*)

Please—(*The PEKING MAN quaffs another cup of wine. TSENG HAO turns to T'ING and JUI-CHEN warmly.*) You should both make a toast to your father's trip. (*JUI-CHEN and T'ING stand up, and, carrying the wine kettle, walk over to WEN-CH'ING and pour out the wine.*)

SSU-YI: (*Instructing them very efficiently*) Say 'Have a nice trip, Father.'

JUI-CHEN and T'ING: (*In unison, mechanically*) Have a nice trip, Father.

SSU-YI: Say 'Please write to us often!'

JUI-CHEN and T'ING: (*In unison, mechanically*) Please write to us often.

SSU-YI: (*Still instructing*) 'The son and daughter-in-law can no longer serve you!'

JUI-CHEN and T'ING: (*Still the words flow mechanically.*) The son and daughter-in-law can no longer serve you. (*About to return to their seats.*)

SSU-YI: (*At once*) Kowtow, you stupid children! Hurry up and kowtow! (*Proudly looking at MR. YUAN.*)

(*JUI-CHEN and T'ING kowtow, bowing three times. WEN-CH'ING stands up. The PEKING MAN and MR. YUAN stare at each other. The PEKING MAN swills down another cup of wine; MR. YUAN refills the cup for him and again he empties it, as the solemn kowtow goes on. More quarreling and cursing outside. It becomes louder and angrier.*)

VOICES: "What kind of festival is this you people are celebrating? When you've got money, celebrate all you like. But when

you don't you'd better not make monkey business with small businessmen like us. You haven't even cleared your debts from the Dragon Festival. You haven't paid us a single cent. What's so hard about that—it isn't even a thousand dollars!"

CHANG SHUN'S VOICE: "Don't shout here.

Away, go away! The Old Master is here—"

VOICE *sarcastically cursing*: "Who's afraid of your Old Master? Who's he, putting on these airs? If he has no money, he's no better than us—just a bankrupt household!" *They continue to yell.*

MR. YUAN *turns his head to listen.*)

TSENG HAO: What's this all about?

SSU-YI: Don't tell me it's next door's—

(In the midst of the shouting outdoors, SU-FANG hurriedly enters from the reception hall.)

TSENG HAO: Who is it?

SU-FANG: *(Panting and evasively)* Nobody.

SSU-YI: *(Smiling slyly)* Mr. Yuan, let me introduce you. This is Miss Su; *(YUAN YUAN stands up.)* this is Mr. Yuan.

(NURSE CH'EN, wearing an old apron, hurriedly enters with a big bowl of food. Following her is HSIAO CHU-ERH, holding his grandmother's skirt with one hand and carrying his dove in the other.)

NURSE CH'EN: *(Speaking nervously as she walks)*

Don't pull me, let go! *(Nearly burnt her hand putting the food in the middle of the table, she shakes her hand.)* Ow! It's hot!

SU-FANG: *(Whispering to SSU-YI)* Cousin Ssu!

SSU-YI: *(Lifting her chopsticks)* Mr. Yuan, this dish was prepared by Miss Su. *(SU-FANG pulls her skirt, and SSU-YI turns to look at her.)*

TSENG HAO: *(Lifting his chopsticks)* Help yourself. Help yourself!

SU-FANG: *(At the same time, bewilderedly)* The coffin painters, they—they—

(The door opens wide and a group of fat, short, fierce-looking small-businessmen A, B, C, and D rush in. CHANG SHUN tries to block them and YUAN YUAN tries to squeeze in from behind them.)

CHANG SHUN: Please! Don't! We have guests inside.

MERCHANTS: *(Rushing in, barking like wild dogs)* Never mind, all we want is money; we won't

kill him. Old Master—Madame! If you have money, produce it! If you don't—

TSENG HAO: Get out of here! This is outrageous! SSU-YI: *(Fiercely)* We'll talk about it later. Get out!

(WEN-TS'AI enters from the bedroom, is startled and watches.)

MERCHANTS A, B, C, D: *(Pressing on)* And why should we get out? If you owe people money, you should pay it. If you didn't have money, why did you hire us? We're just small merchants. You haven't even cleared your Dragon Festival bill. You don't need to put on stinking airs—give us the money! Pay us! *(TSENG HAO is angry and looks dumbfounded; SSU-YI smiles coldly; the whole Tseng family seems paralyzed; the merchants A and B press further.)* Don't play dumb!

MERCHANT A: If you have money, fine—paint your coffin.

MERCHANT B: If you don't have money, why hire us to paint your coffin?

MERCHANT C: We have fathers and mothers too, you know. If they die, we'll just have to roll them up in straw mats!

MERCHANT A: *(Yelling, pointing to the Tseng family)* And they won't sit there stiff like this old man!

(MR. YUAN and the PEKING MAN have been staring at them all along; now—)

MR. YUAN: *(Shouting)* Get out!

MERCHANT A: *(Startled)* What?

MR. YUAN: *(Smiling)* I'll give you the money.

MERCHANTS: We're looking for him—*(Pointing to TSENG HAO.)*

(The PEKING MAN slowly stands up, a giant gorilla. With a wild and angry look he slowly waves his hand outward.)

MERCHANTS: *(Holding their breath)* All right. Just so the bills are paid, that's good enough *(Back out. The PEKING MAN, with heavy steps, follows them in great strides; YUAN YUAN and MR. YUAN also follow out.)*

T'ING: *(Anxiously)* Uncle Yuan, Uncle Yuan!

MR. YUAN: *(Nods his head, smiling slightly, then waves with an air of confidence as he goes out.)*

TSENG HAO: What? What's going on?

(Suddenly they hear the sound of a fist smashing into human flesh.)

A VOICE: "Why do you hit me—"

Then comes the sound of things thrown and broken. Then yelling, cursing and fighting. Inside the house all are frightened.)

TSENG HAO: Shut the door, shut the door!

(SSU-YI runs to close the door.)

YUAN YUAN'S VOICE *from outside, as if watching a fight*: "Good! One more blow! Again! That's it—hit him! Hit him! Get him from behind! Kick him! Right! Bite him hard! Deal him another blow!" *She cries victoriously*: "Wonderful!"

Everything is quiet, TING walks toward the door, wanting to open it and take a look.)

SSU-YI: *(Softly, tensely)* Don't go out there! You want to be killed? All hold their breath and listen.

(MR. YUAN enters, his hair slightly disheveled, with a big smile on his face and his sleeves rolled up. He rolls down his sleeves. The PEKING MAN, his face streaked with blood,

looking even more primitive and wild, walks in with giant steps as if nothing has happened. He is followed by YUAN YUAN, who worships this frightful hero.)

TSENG HAO: *(Softly)* They're all, all gone.

MR. YUAN: We sent them scurrying.

YUAN-YUAN: *(Suddenly standing on a chair and raising the huge arm of the PEKING MAN)* Our *Peking Man* licked them!

(The PEKING MAN turns his head to YUAN YUAN. For the first time a warm animal smile appears on his face; everyone gazes at him fearfully. TSENG HAO sits as if paralyzed.)

SSU-YI: *(Breaking the silence)* Come on, let's eat. *(To MR. YUAN, indicating SU-FANG)* Miss Su cooked these two dishes especially for you, you know! *(Smiles involuntarily at WEN-CH'ING, while everyone goes back to his seat.)*



The short, unfulfilled course of modern Chinese drama in the Thirties produced one writer who, for artistic achievement and seriousness of purpose, stood head and shoulders above the rest. He is Wan Chia-pao (萬家寶), more popularly known by his pen name Ts'ao Yu (曹禺). Born in 1905, in a well-to-do family of Hupei, the future playwright was already active in dramatics during his student days at Nankai Middle School and Tsing Hua University. Besides immersing himself in the dramatic literature of the West, he worked backstage in student productions, took acting roles and once even appeared as Nora in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. Later, as instructor in the National Institute of Drama in wartime Chungking, he was again to indulge his penchant for acting when he appeared as Mozart in Béla Balazs' *Requiem*.

But the writing of plays became his true métier and, in 1936, his first two works, *Thunderstorm* (雷雨) and *Sunrise* (日出), shot him into prominence. They not only won him critical acclaim but also scored box-office successes in a number of cities. Though heavily influenced in technique by the Western theatre—from the Greeks to O'Neill and Chekhov—Ts'ao Yu fashioned plays that are thoroughly Chinese in manner and material. *Wilderness* (原野), *Peking Man* (北京人) and others that followed consolidated his position as the leading contributor to a new national art theatre which, as fate would have it, was shortlived and soon to be supplanted by the propagandistic offerings required by the war. Today, Ts'ao Yu's earlier plays are standard repertory fare wherever Chinese spoken drama (話劇) is produced, as witness the Hong Kong Urban Council's sponsoring of a Cantonese revival of *Wilderness* this year and its reported planning of a "Ts'ao Yu Festival" in 1975. In his critical study *Ts'ao Yu* (Hong Kong University Press, 1970), Joseph S. M. Lau considers *Peking Man* "the most mature product of the author" and one in which, "for the first time in his writing career, Ts'ao Yu has fully utilized the effectiveness of the art of 'showing'."