張恨水：啼笑因緣

Fate in Tears and Laughter

By Chang Hen-shui

Translated by Sally Borthwick

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

IN 1959, Chang Hen-shui recalled:

> When I started to write for publication, *Saturday (Lipailiu)* had been all the rage for quite a while; by the time I was getting money for my novels, the Saturday School had been swept away by the great wave of the May Fourth New Culture movement.[1] I held fast to the linked-chapter novel because I had some ideas of my own. In those days I believed that the new school of novels would not be accepted by the ordinary people. I wanted to write for them, to reform the linked-chapter novel. I would not write stories of roving fighters whose mouths shot out white light, or talented scholars taking the first place in the examinations, or beauties secretly plighting their troth in the back flower garden . . . so most of my material takes society as its warp and love as its weft.[2]

It is evident from this passage that two traditions competed to claim Chang Hen-shui for their own: the home-grown "linked-chapter" novel, whose great products were *Water Margin (Shui-hu chuan)* and *Dream of the Red*

[1] *Saturday (Lipailiu)* appeared weekly for a hundred issues between 1914 and 1916. Its pages were graced by several of the most famous writers of light fiction, so that "the Saturday school" came to be a synonym for the romanticism otherwise denoted by the term "Mandarin ducks and butterflies". The magazine opened once more in 1921 but was again closed down after a hundred issues. See Wei Shao-ch'ang, ed., *Yüan-yang hu-tieh p'ai yen-chiu tzu-liao*, Shanghai, Shang-hai wen-yi ch'u-pan-she, 1962 (hereafter referred to as *Tzu-liao*), pp. 290-293.

[2] Chang Hen-shui, "Wo-te sheng-huo ho ch'uang-tso", quoted in Chang Ming-ming, *Hui-yi wo-te fu-ch'in Chang Hen-shui*, Hong Kong, Wide Angle Press, 1979, p. 67.

Chamber (Hung-lou meng), but which often degenerated into clichéd love or vengeance; and its bastard offspring, the romantic "Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies" school, whose great exponents were Hsü Chen-ya and Wu Shuang-je. In the apologia above, Chang does a deft job of escaping the embraces of both stereotypic traditional fiction and the defunct Saturday school (a synonym for the Butterfly writers). In general, however, neither his contemporaries nor literary historians have been willing to let him off so lightly: with a little expansion of definitions, Chang is regarded as a representative writer of the Butterfly school, with *Fate in Tears and Laughter (T'i-hsiao yin-yüan)*—not his own favourite—as his representative work.[3]

What combination of elements best represents Chang Hen-shui? How far is he the inheritor of a native novelistic tradition which he undoubtedly took seriously (he returned repeatedly to studies of *Water Margin* over a period of nearly thirty years)? How far is it correct to group him with men like Hsü and Wu, how far has he absorbed the lessons—or the lifestyle —of the May Fourth generation? In the transition which Perry Link and Leo Ou-fan Lee see between the journalist-littérateur and the professional writer, on which side does Chang Hen-shui fall?[4] A complete answer to these questions would involve a full-scale study of Chang's life and works beginning with the rambling revelations of *Romance of the Imperial City (Ch'un-ming wai-shih)* through the patriotically tinged novels of the 1930s to the satire of official corruption in the 1940s and the retellings of old tales in the 1950s. Here I have space only to look at one of Chang's most popular novels, *Fate in Tears and Laughter*. *Fate in Tears and Laughter* was written in 1929 for the literary supplement of Shanghai's *Sin Wan Pao*. Chang was at that time in Peking, where he had made his name by writing serialized novels for the two literary supplements of which he was the editor, *Shih-chieh wan-pao*'s "Night Shining" *(Yeh kuang)* and *Shih-chieh jih-pao*'s "Pearl" *(Ming chu)*. According to a friend of the author's, the plot was conceived in only two days on the basis of a mélange of real and imagined episodes and types; the first installment appeared ten days later.[5] Chang Hen-shui was famous for the speed and ease of his composition. At one stage he was writing seven serials at once, and one anecdote has him dashing off the day's installment in the middle of a mahjong game.[6]

From the first episode on, *Fate in Tears and Laughter* was immensely popular. Throughout the course of its serialization in 1929-1930 and after its publication in a single volume in 1930, letters poured in to the author enquiring after its characters as if they were real people.[7] Numerous sequels

[3]See Perry Link, "Traditional-Style Popular Urban Fiction in the Teens and Twenties", in Merle Goldman, ed., *Modern Chinese Literature in the May Fourth Era*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1977, p. 337; Chang Ming-ming, *Hui-yi*, p. 45.

[4]See Link, "Traditional-Style Popular Urban Fiction", p. 336; Leo Ou-fan Lee, *The Romantic Generation of Modern Chinese Writers*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1973, pp. 28-40.

[5]Chang Ming-ming, *Hui-yi*, pp. 23-27.

[6]See Wei Shao-ch'ang, *Tzu-liao*, p. 515, Chang Ming-ming, *Hui-yi*, p. 67.

[7]Chang Hen-shui, "Tso-wan *T'i-hsiao yin-yüan* hou te shuo-hua", *T'i-hsiao yin-yüan*, Hong Kong, San-yu shu-she, n.d., p. 363.

written by imitators purported to continue the story, forcing the author, against his better judgement, to write his own sequel three years later.[8] The warmth of the novel's popular reception may have done something to console Chang for the hostility of critics who were disgusted by the frivolity of his work and deplored his lack of social consciousness; he confessed in 1945 (after the united front had received him to its bosom) that he had felt beleaguered on the literary scene, with only the remnants of the Saturday school for support.[9]

Popular enthusiasm for *Fate in Tears and Laughter* did not end with the printed word. It was, as Perry Link puts it, a multi-media craze: it was filmed in 1932 (after a copyright fight involving tens of thousands of dollars in settlements), in 1945, in 1956, and twice (in Hong Kong) in 1963; there was also a Cantonese version. In addition to films the story was performed as a play, a dialect play, an opera, a folk recitation (in Peking's *ch'ü-yi*) and as a drum-song. Although the Cultural Revolution brought an end to performances within China, the 1956 film version was shown on Hong Kong television in the late 1970s.[10] The novel was reprinted in the People's Republic in 1980 by Che-chiang jen-min ch'u-pan she, and in 1981 by Bei-jing ch'u-pan she (illustrated edition).

What accounted for its immense popularity? As far as the novel is concerned, part of the answer lies in form and style. For the reader of the 1930s, the linked-chapter novel was familiar, not intimidatingly Western and intellectual. Many people could read traditional novels who could not cope with the Westernized vocabulary and structures of newspapers and modern fiction (though it would appear that even the traditional novel was not the customary reading material of the lowest stratum of the literate: the hero of *Fate in Tears and Laughter*, an educated young man, lends its simple unschooled heroine his own copy of *The Gallant Maid* (兒女英雄傳) a work with which she was hitherto unfamiliar.[11] Her own reading was confined to an occasional struggle with a popular paper). Even Hsiu-ku, however, could have understood *Fate in Tears and Laughter*, for Chang's most commonly used vocabulary amounts to only a few hundred characters. That the result is a natural, unfettered if rather matter-of-fact style and not a kind of Basic Chinese is a tribute to the author's mastery of his medium.

Jaroslav Průšek, who says of the linked-chapter novel that it is " . . . conceived as the tales of one specific story-teller and . . . divided very unnaturally into sections, stages *(hui)* at the point of greatest suspense", holds that the linked-chapter form had outlived its usefulness by the twentieth century.[12] The form had its uses in serialization, for the writer of serials, like

[8]Chang Hen-shui, Tso-che tzu-hsü, *T'i-hsiao yin-yüan (hsü-chi)*, p. 371.

[9]Chang Hen-shui, "Yi-tuan lü-t'u hui-yi", in Wei Shao-ch'ang, *Tzu-liao*, pp. 163-164.

[10]Chang Ming-ming, *Hui-yi*, p. 33; Link, "Traditional-Style Popular Urban Fiction", p. 335.

[11]Chang Hen-shui, *T'i-hsiao yin-yüan*, Ch. 4, p. 59.

[12]Jaroslav Průšek, introduction to *Studies in Modern Chinese Literature*, Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1964, p. 17.

the marketplace story-teller, needs to keep his readers till the next episode; the modern reader, however, finds the constant breaking teacups and noises off curiously anti-climactic. In other respects Průšek's characterization of the traditional linked-chapter novel is in general a fairly accurate reflection of Chang Hen-shui's early style (his later novels modified the convention). *Fate in Tears and Laughter* has "the lengthy, slow style of a folk tale in which the story-teller's thoughts, descriptions, dialogues and monologues were blended into one unit . . . the narrator . . . could not move freely to the scene of action or into his heroes' minds and describe things through their eyes, perception and experiences. The reproduction of their spoken words was always presented as direct speech. . . . "[13] Here again, the story-teller and the serial-writer appear to have had interests in common: novelists were paid by the thousand words (from two *yüan* for a beginner to ten for a Shanghai celebrity)[14] and therefore lengthy step-by-step narration was lucrative as well as familiar. Most May Fourth writers—if one may so distinguish those who saw themselves as writing for principles and self-expression rather than money and entertainment—concurred with Průšek's judgement on the passing of the linked-chapter novel, though Mao Tun observed apropos of *Fate in Tears and Laughter* that he believed it could be a useful instrument of popular education if reformed.[15] Ordinary readers, however, were not interested in literary debate; their reading tastes had often been formed on a diet of the old fiction, and Chang Hen-shui's peppering of modern scandal provided a dish blended exactly to their taste.

Aficionados of butterfly fiction credited the popularity of *Fate in Tears and Laughter* to its ingenious plot or unusual (for Shanghai readers) setting. The story provides a pleasant mix of the predictable and unexpected: a hero who falls in love with a poor song-girl, Feng-hsi, and finds she has a rich double; a villainous general who perverts the course of true love and, in a dramatic scene, whips Feng-hsi into insanity; and an avenging knight-errantess, Hsiu-ku, who kills the general, rescues the hero from kidnapping, and reunites him with his true love's look-alike. Characterization is not Chang's strong point: the hero, Fan Chia-shu, is weak and passive, a pawn in the plot's development, who spends most of the book lying about his involvement with Feng-hsi or trying to make sure he himself comes unscathed out of her afflictions. His only positive trait is emphatic good-fellowship with Hsiu-ku's father, a martial arts performer whose rough and ready lifestyle appeals to Chia-shu more than the gilded artifice of his own social circle. The women in the novel are more carefully delineated; in Feng-hsi, in particular, the stock type comes into delicate and pathetic life. The main function of the rich girl, Ho Li-na, appears to be to boss Chia-shu around and spend money—the epitome of the high society he prefers to avoid—though towards the end of the novel she reforms and bids farewell to her old companions in a hula dance complete with grass skirt. In contrast to the other two, Hsiu-ku is a model of both virtue and

[13] Průšek, ibid.

[14] Chang Ming-ming, *Hui-yi*, p. 170.

[15] Chang Hen-shui, "Yi-tuan lu-t'u hui-yi", p. 164.

vigour, intended to rival the dashing heroine of *The Gallant Maid*. Her heroism tends to overshadow her humanity, but she too comes to life in the musings of her unrequited love for Chia-shu. Other characters—Feng-hsi's mother, her uncle—live in a few lines of natural, lively dialogue.

FOR A TRUE APPRECIATION of the reasons for the success of *Fate in Tears and Laughter* one must look beyond the book itself to its audience. What satisfaction did they find in reading of the general's comeuppance or Ho Li-na's reform? What concerns and anxieties of theirs did the novel answer? In the twenties and thirties, the audience for butterfly fiction increased from the educated leisure classes and petty clerkdom to include elements of the proletariat: "the families of factory workers, rickshaw pullers and manual labourers of several sorts". Any literate person who could afford the price of a paper, and even some who could not, could follow the installments of *Fate in Tears and Laughter* (newspapers could be got second-hand, borrowed, or read when pasted on a wall).[16] Similarly, the popular editions could either be purchased outright or borrowed from a circulating library. It seems evident, however, that the backbone of Chang Hen-shui's readership was the urban petty bourgeiosie, since after all most of the proletariat was still illiterate. Mao Tun, writing in 1932, placed *Fate in Tears and Laughter* and sword-fighting novels in the context of China's semi-feudal state, and defines their readers as small townspeople or petty bourgeoisie. Its younger members, students and shop assistants, are attracted to stories of revenge and violence, while the older ones become devoted readers of Chang Hen-shui.[17]

The bulk of Chang's readers thus stood between the two extremes in which his characters move. They did not go dancing at the Peking Hotel, but nor did they sing at tea-houses for a living. Reading the novel gave them the comfortable feeling of being in the know—unlike many of their countrymen, they knew what telephones and gramophones were for, and a ride in a car was not for them, as it was for Feng-hsi's uncle, an untasted marvel—while at the same time they were presented with undreamed-of echelons of higher expenditure: people who tipped cloakroom attendants two dollars (Chia-shu had stunned Feng-hsi by giving her one) and had seed pearls sewn on their slippers.[18] Above them again is a second order of wealth: the general, like an ogre in his castle, whose brother controls Peking and who disposes not of tens but of tens of thousands of dollars to his favourites.

Different attitudes are taken to the two types of wealth and power. The general, who abuses his position by seizing Feng-hsi, evokes a tradition of "remedial protest",[19] whereas Ho Li-na and Chia-shu's rich cousins attract a

[16]See Link, "Traditional-Style Popular Urban Fiction", p. 334.

[17]Shen Yen-ping (Mao Tun), "Feng-chien-te hsiao-shih-min wen-yi", in Wei Shao-ch'ang, *Tzu-liao*, p. 28.

[18]See translation below (second passage).

[19]Shen Yen-ping, "Feng-chien-te hsiao-shih-min wen-yi", p. 25; Link, "Traditional-Style Popular Urban Fiction", pp. 340-342.

mixture of envy and censoriousness. Chia-shu represents the common man: generous within his means, he is uncomfortable with the lifestyle of the Westernized rich and seeks his friends among the simple but good-hearted entertainers of the T'ien-ch'iao area. The novel's proto-democratic leanings appear most clearly in Chia-shu's taking up Kuan Shou-feng, a bluff ex-bandit and father of Hsiu-ku, who evinces the greatest measure of social discontent shown in the novel. In an episode entirely extraneous to the structure of the plot, Shou-feng and Hsiu-ku redistribute a portion of the general's ill-gotten gains to their courtyard neighbours.[20] The same redistribution does not befall the wealth of the upper bourgeoisie, to which Chang's readers themselves might aspire: when a group of robbers attempt it by kidnapping Chia-shu and demanding a ransom from his banker relatives, Shou-feng and Hsiu-ku intervene on behalf of the rich. As a stringent left-wing critique of 1935 points out, the novel is quite deficient in true social consciousness; even its democratic tendencies are tinged with feudal backwardness.[21]

A similar ambiguity is evident in the novel's stance on issues of sexual morality and proper behaviour. Here again, the opium-smoking, womanizing general, inheritor of everything that was evil in the China of the past and that weakens the China of the present, is unequivocally condemned. Towards the behaviour of Ho Li-na and her set there is again a combination of fascination and conscious rectitude: with Chia-shu, the reader has the simultaneous pleasure of staring at and mentally reproving Ho Li-na's uncovered knees.[22] The English phrases her group affects—Mi-ssu Ho, Mi-ssu-t'o Fan—are the verbal equivalents of other status-filled Western trappings like private cars and gramophones. The reader's sympathy is directed towards the decorous modesty of Hsiu-ku and poor Feng-hsi's attempts to acquire the decent sobriety of a schoolgirl. Ho Li-na, who starts the novel attending dances on her own and drinking beer, has to give up this dissipation before Chia-shu is finally delivered into her hands. The novel does not however simply represent restraint and respectability as the norm, or hand the palm to the old-fashioned conception of womanhood: Feng-hsi's affair with Chia-shu is not censured, and he is even willing to take her back, with modern liberality, after she has been besmirched by the general. The reader sympathizes too with Hsiu-ku's dream of walking openly arm-in-arm with Chia-shu in a park, to which, as a "reformed" man, he would surely take her (the words "reform" and "civilisation" appear to have lost their political and cultural content, referring chiefly to a degree of Westernization in the conduct of relations between men and women).[23] Hsiu-ku herself is modelled on Thirteenth Sister in *The Gallant Maid*, but the author deliberately rejects the Confucian propriety of a second-string marriage for her, or indeed any marriage; she is to remain independent.

[20]Chang Hen-shui, *T'i-hsiao yin-yüan*, Ch. 19, p. 294.

[21]Hsia Cheng-nung, "Tu *T'i-hsiao yin-yüan*", in Wei Shao-ch'ang, *Tzu-liao*, p. 67.

[22]Chang Hen-shui, *T'i-hsiao yin-yüan*, Ch. 2, p. 24.

[23]Ibid., p. 63.

Chang Hen-shui was not given to literary debate and expressed his aims in modest terms. In the kind of phrase which infuriated both reformers and revolutionaries, he declared that his novels should be taken along with tea or wine, to fill an idle moment.[24] He did however pride himself on two things: a popular style and a realistic story.[25] He deliberately adopted a low style to reach the common reader, and could claim in his way to be a forerunner among those who sought to abandon "the new classical language" used by Westernized intellectuals for a simpler and more easily intelligible medium.[26] Chang's claim to realism may appear more doubtful: "realism" in the European sense is not the term one would think of for a plot in which a female knight-errant murders a general to avenge the sufferings of a beautiful young girl who has been lured away from her true love. For Chang, however, the term appears to mean verisimilitude, and more particularly the absence of the supernatural or miraculous. He wrote not of the representative but of the possible; the background to the kind of dramatic story his readers might find in the pages of the papers for which he worked. Hsiu-ku's slaying of the general is indeed presented to the reader in the form of a newspaper report, in a rare departure from the author's usual step-by-step narration. The background supplied is not such as to illustrate the social or economic workings of society, but is more in the nature of circumstantial detail: what was said, what was worn, on this occasion, at what time did an event take place, and where. A surface illusion of reality is thus created, beneath which Chang does not probe.

Chang Hen-shui wrote at least sixty novels. *Fate in Tears and Laughter*, at 370 pages, is among the shorter ones, but it is nonetheless difficult to know where to start in making excerpts which will give the reader an idea of Chang's work. The first two passages have been chosen to give a picture of the two worlds he described: on the one hand, the bustling street scenes of T'ien-ch'iao and its denizens, on the other the decadence of wealth and Westernization.

The two chapters which follow cover the climactic episode of the plot, Hsiu-ku's assassination of the warlord Liu Te-chu to avenge his brutal treatment of Feng-hsi. They exhibit many of the characteristic features of the novel: the gloss of Buddhist philosophy of an evanescent world; the use of rather transparent irony and double meanings (in, for example, Hsiu-ku's pretended affection for General Liu, and Chia-shu's with Ho Li-na at the opera); and the bathetic effect caused by the need to provide the serial reader with a climax at the end of each day's episode.

—SALLY BORTHWICK

[24]Chang Hen-shui, Tzu-hsu, *Chin-fen shih-chia*, Shanghai, Shih-chieh shu-chü, 1935.

[25]Ibid.; Chang Hen-shui, Tzu-hsu, *Shui-hu hsin chuan*, Hong Kong, Pai-hsin shu-tien, 1947.

[26]See Link, "Traditional-Style Popular Urban Fiction", p. 347.


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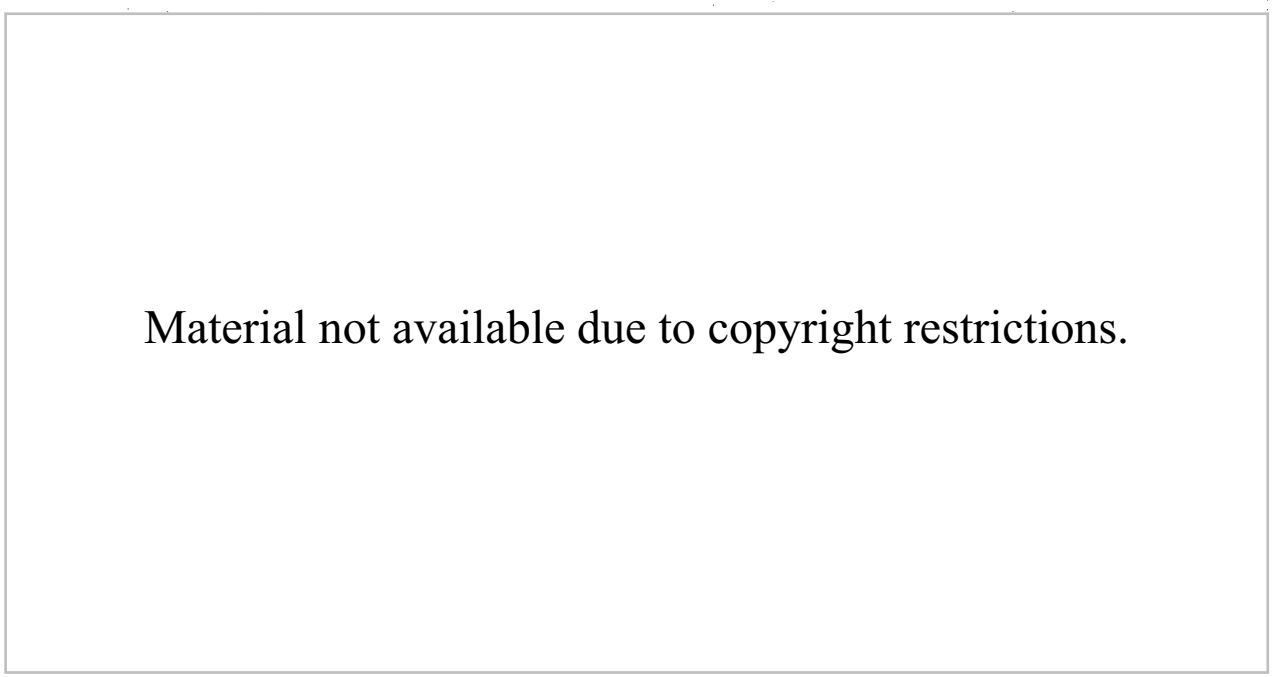
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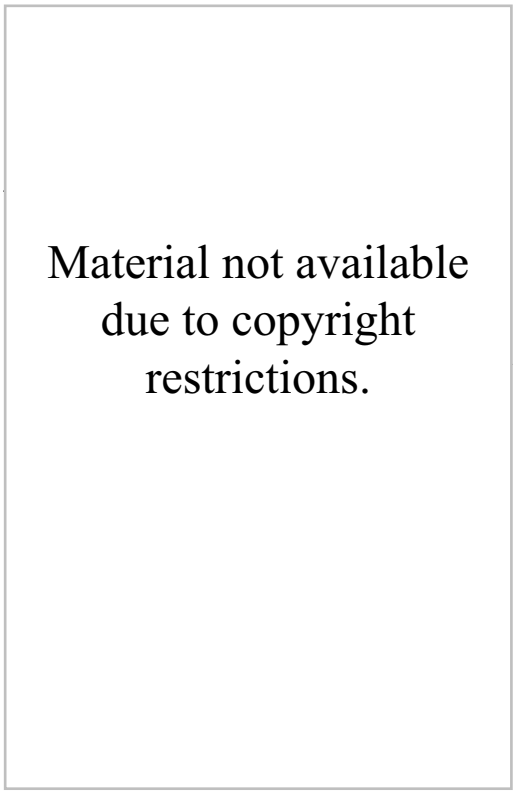


CH'IAO HUNG 喬宏 (Roy Ch'iao) in the part of General Liu.

From the first chapter

The opening extract describes Fan Chia-shu's first visit to Peking's entertainment district and his meeting with Kuan Shou-feng, a martial arts performer and father of Hsiu-ku.

TAKING A RICKSHAW, he went straight to T'ien-ch'iao. When he got there, the rickshaw stopped, and he was surrounded by a hubbub of noise from bamboo clappers, strings and cymbals. In front of him extended three or four tall wooden buildings with red paper signs announcing, in gold or black lettering, "Dog-meat Crock", "Young Doll", or "Narcissus and Little Peony in 'Mending the Cooking-pot' " and so on. Paying the fare, Chia-shu walked over to have a look. A string of stalls ran along by the gates. The one right in front of him was a big flat-topped wheelbarrow covered with black lumps as large as ricebowls. It had a million flies buzzing round it. In the middle of the lumps were two shiny knives; a man standing by the barrow was chopping away furiously on a wooden board, cutting the lumps into thin purple slices which he wrapped up in small sheets of filthy old newspaper and handed to people. He was probably selling soya beef or cooked donkey meat. Another stall consisted of a big iron pot set on the ground; the pot was filled with long writhing pitch-black coils of something that looked remarkably like scaled dead snakes and gave off a rank unpleasant odour. It was actually boiled sheep gut, a favourite dish among Northerners. Chia-shu frowned and turned to look in the other direction towards several unpaved lanes lined with matting sheds. He could make out brightly coloured clothing hanging in the sheds in the first two lanes, and guessed that this must be the famous second-hand clothes street. A small lane near him was filled with people coming and going. At its mouth a pile of old shoes was heaped on the bare ground. There were also several stalls selling retail goods, so that the ground was covered with kerosene lamps and enamel basins and iron and copper-ware. Going on from here, Chia-shu had the matting shops to the south of him and a broad ditch of black mud through which blue water ran on his north. It stank to high heaven. Chia-shu thought: the Water-heart Pavilion is supposed to be a beauty-spot, so obviously it can't be here. He turned round and walked back on to the main street to ask a policeman. The policeman told him to go southwards, and the Water-heart Pavilion would be to the west of him. The city of Peking is composed of squares, and all the streets and side-streets run from north to south or east to west. People's housing is also square, the four-sided courtyard. So everybody who comes here, old and young, knows the cardinal points and speaks not of up and down or left and right but of north, south, east and west. Chia-shu listened to his instructions and walked straight ahead past all the matting stalls and street sellers until he came to an open piece of untended ground. To the west of the road was a ditch which, if not clear, at least did not smell; beyond the ditch a few ten-foot willows were

sparsely scattered. One could not keep going across the ditch. At its north and south ends were two wooden plank bridges; at the head of each was a little matting shed with a small table in it and a policeman keeping watch. Everybody who crossed bought a little red piece of paper on this side of the bridge for four coppers; this was like an entry ticket. When Chia-shu reached there his curiosity got the better of him, so pulling out four coppers he bought a ticket and crossed the bridge. On the other side he saw some type of water-taro growing in ponds dug in the ground, but no garden. Beyond them were five or six matting shelters set up with places for tea-drinkers; each had a stage with entertainers performing. Fortunately those present came from the upper and middle classes, so the atmosphere was not insalubrious. Threading though the shelters he crossed another ditch; but here there was a shallow pond with a few young lotus leaves in it. On the other side of the pond stood a wooden structure with four or five green trees beside it growing aslant into a low frame from which trailed a few small marrows and creepers. The wooden building was painted blue and hung with two bamboo blinds. The distant sound of musical instruments was borne towards Chia-shu on the wind. He thought, "This place has something to be said for it after all", and walked along the path for a look. The building opened southward towards a clump of old cypresses in front of the red wall of the Temple of Agriculture. Within it ten odd places were set up. Due north was a low platform adorned by seven or eight seated drum-song girls, each performing in turn. Chia-shu had intended to sit down and rest for a minute, but unfortunately all the seats were taken, so he turned back. So this was all the "Water-heart Pavilion" consisted of! Scenes like these were hardly worth pining for. He'd come in by the east, but went out westwards. On this side there was a whole row of tea-houses from which rose a hubbub of voices. From a distance he could see drum-song story-tellers, tumblers, ventriloquists, and cross-talk actors. A group of people stood round a tent stall on his left, another group round a wooden shed on his right. This really was a club for the lower classes! The loudest laughter was coming from a group of people standing round an earthen mound to the north. When Chia-shu went up to have a look, all he could see was a bamboo rod holding up a torn blue cloth which was as dirty as a child's nappy. Round a little table below the blue cloth were three or four children clashing cymbals and playing the two-stringed violin. When the cloth rose, a dark fellow of forty-odd came out. He was wearing a half-length grey cotton robe and a hat made of cigarette boxes, and had a grass rope looped round his waist and a black beard (really just a hank of horse-hair) at his chin. He came up to the table and stared fixedly at the crowd, which started to applaud. "I haven't sung yet," he said, plucking off his beard, "why are you all applauding? The violins started up too quickly, I didn't have time to say anything." Thereupon he put his beard back on and began to sing, to the accompaniment of a burst of laughter from the crowd. Chia-shu was rather entertained, and stood there watching for quite a while until he began to feel a bit tired. Looking round, he saw a reasonably clean tea-house; he went in, and found himself a seat. On a slip of red paper stuck to a pillar was written in bold letters "Penny per person for water." Chia-shu felt this price beat any other tea-house he had ever come across. A waiter walked over and placed a white china pot on the table, asking "Have you brought tea-leaves, sir?" Chia-shu replied that he had not. The waiter said "Then I'll make you up a four hundred packet! Fragrant tea or Dragon-well?" This is how Peking people drink tea; they don't order it by weight, but by "packets". A packet weighs about a tenth of an ounce. One usually buys a packet for so many coppers, or so many hundred for short. A "hundred" is one copper. The tea is not divided into types: it is called "fragrant tea" if jasmine flowers are added to brewed tea, and all tea which has not been brewed and to which no flowers are added is called Dragon-well. Although Chia-shu was from Chekiang, he had been in Peking quite a while and knew all this quite well. He said he would have Dragon-well, and asked: "You say it's only one copper for water, but then why do you sell tea-leaves at four times that price?"

The waiter laughed. "You're a southerner and wouldn't understand. If you bring your own tea-leaves, we only charge a penny. If you used our leaves and we still only charged a penny, we'd

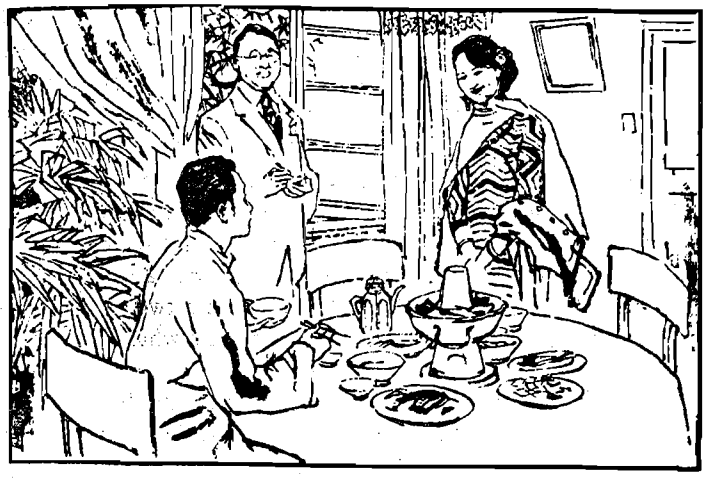
be up the creek."

Chia-shu listened and said with a smile, "If all your guests brought their own leaves and all you got from them was a penny for water, wouldn't you lose a lot?"

When the waiter heard this he pointed to the back courtyard and said smilingly, "Look—our place doesn't depend on selling water."

Chia-shu looked and saw two wooden racks in which were stuck all kinds of weapons. A few heavy stone weights lay around, and there was also a pair of dumb-bells. In another room at the back of the yard a group of people were sipping tea and talking idly. Above the lintel was stuck an inscription: "Friends meet through martial arts". Just then someone walked out and taking a weapon from the rack began to go through martial exercises. Chia-shu realised that this was a club for martial arts practitioners. He had been interested in martial arts ever since he had done some under a teacher at school, so he was delighted to come across this club and be able to watch their martial displays. He moved his seat nearer to the railings of the back courtyard. First he saw several men in their prime practising sword- and cudgel-play for a while, then finally an old chap of fifty or so came out. He was wearing a purple print cotton undershirt and around his waist was tied a big belt from which hung a small pouch for tobacco. On the lower half of his body he wore dark cotton trousers with leggings up to his knees. While still far away he rubbed his arms, then walked up ready for action. As he came closer one could see his long face and high-bridged nose and the few hairs that formed his beard. When he reached the yard he rolled up his sleeves, steadied himself, and lifted one of the stone weights in each hand. After testing the weight a few times, he raised them into the air, then lowered them, then raised them again. Each must have weighed seventy or eighty pounds, so that the two together would have been well over a hundred. This was nothing remarkable in itself, but then he dropped both hands, then raised the right again, releasing the weight so that it flew up past the ridge of the roof. Chia-shu was taken aback at first, but to his surprise as the weight passed the ridge and fell back towards the old man's crown he moved his head slightly to the left and caught it square on his right shoulder, without having moved a step. At the same time he threw up the weight in his left hand and caught it on his left shoulder. When Chia-shu saw this he could not help exclaiming to himself. But the old man appeared quite unperturbed, and threw the two weights lightly to the ground. The young men watching gave a roar of approval, and two called out "Bravo! Bravo!" The old man just smiled faintly at the praise. A middle-aged fellow sitting on the cross-bar of the dumb-bells said with a smile, "Uncle, you're in a good mood today, have a go at the big one." The old man said, "You go first and I'll watch." So the man turned and picking up the dumb-bells with both hands slowly lifted them, with gritted teeth and reddening face, as high as his shoulders; then hurriedly bent over and put them down, saying with a smile, "I'm worse than usual today because I'm tired." The old man said, "Watch me." Putting his hands out palm upwards he raised the dumb-bells as high as his belly, paused, reversed his grip, and raised them level with his chin. Another pause, and he stretched out both arms and raised them above his head. At either end were two big stone plates like millstones; the pole which went through their centre was as wide across as a tea-cup. Each millstone would have weighed at least two hundred pounds, and their being at either end of the pole made the task even harder. One would have needed sufficient strength to lift five or six hundred pounds to raise it as he did. Chia-shu couldn't restrain himself, he banged the table and called out "Bravo!" The old man put down the dumb-bells and looked at Chia-shu. A lined blue robe of Huchow silk, a clip for a fountain pen on his lapel, a white face and a round pair of spectacles with tortoise-shell frames, hair that though parted curled up with a tousled look—this was plainly an aristocratic university student, what could he be doing here?

From the second chapter



The "aristocratic" lifestyle from which Chia-shu is escaping is described in more detail in the second extract. The cousin with whom Chia-shu is staying has just invited him to go dancing:

Chia-shu said, "I can't go, I don't have a Western suit."

Po-ho said, "What do you need a Western suit for? Just wear something smart." He gave a laugh and continued, "As long as your clothes are neatly pressed and your hair's sleek and shiny you'll please your girlfriend just as much."

Chia-shu smiled and said, "To hear you talk, it's not a matter of women dressing up for men, but of gentlemen dressing up for women."

Po-ho said, "We may dress up for them, but I'll have you know they go to even greater pains to please us. If you don't believe me, take a look at the odd outfits women wear to dances. Why do they do it? Is it so they can look at themselves in the mirror?"

Chia-shu smiled and said, "You'd better not talk too much—if your wife hears you you'll have a bit of explaining to do."

Po-ho said, "What I said isn't to be taken as insulting. Women don't necessarily dress up out of a desire to attract the opposite sex; it's just vanity, they want other people's admiration and praise for the way they look. So foreign men can praise a woman's beauty to her face. If someone said how beautiful my wife was at a dance, I'd not only not be jealous, I'd be very pleased; though she may not have the looks to win such compliments."

As they spoke, the two of them were walking to the main sitting-room. On a round table in the middle of the room was a square glass box. The corners of the box were bordered with printed silk, and the bottom of the box was also lined with red silk. Chia-shu said, "Cousin, who gave you this silver shield? The case is very finely wrought, but where's the shield?"

Po-ho had a half-smoked cigar in his mouth. Moving it aside with his lips, he laughed and said, "Have a closer look, this isn't a case for a shield!"

Chia-shu said, "Even if it isn't—it's large for its height, but the bottom isn't raised much —is it for putting jade pieces in?"

Po-ho laughed and said: "You're getting colder. I'm not going to tell you now; you'll understand in a little while."

Chia-shu laughed and said, "But I want to get to the bottom of it: just what goes into that box?"

Not long after, Mrs T'ao [Po-ho's wife] came out. She was wearing a gown of silvery-grey

silk which only came down to her knees, edged with a wide peach-coloured border set off in the middle with fine blue flowers and sparkling diamonds. Her neck was bare except for a circlet of pearls which looked all the richer for the simplicity of her attire. Before Chia-shu could say anything, Mrs T'ao smiled and said, "Cousin, do you like my new dress?"

Chia-shu said, "You're very artistic—how could a dress made to your design not be pretty?"

Mrs T'ao said, "I do think Chinese silk looks best for women's dresses. So when I have clothes made, no matter what season they're for, I always make most of them with Chinese material. I do the same even with shoes: I'm not a believer in those Indian satins and silks."

As she spoke, she raised a white leg and rested it on a round stool. Chia-shu could see the white silk of her stocking clinging to her thigh. On her feet she wore a pair of silvery-grey satin dancing shoes, likewise edged with thin red braid set with tiny diamonds of dazzling brightness. Across the back of the foot ran a tiny chain with a row of pearls on it, and on the tip of each toe was a finely wrought butterfly whose eyes were two pearls. Chia-shu smiled and said, "With such a fine pair of shoes you'd better not walk anywhere that isn't carpeted, otherwise you'll ruin them."

Mrs T'ao said, "Peking people have a saying, haven't you heard it? 'Wash your hands and clean your nails, to make a pair of shoes which'll go through the mud'. Leaving aside the shoes, this glass shoe-box isn't at all bad."

As she spoke, she pointed to the table. Chia-shu said, "The shoes are very nice, but how much did they cost?" Mrs T'ao had just put on her shoes and was half twirling, half gliding over the slippery floor, bending her head to examine her appearance. Only when she heard Chia-shu ask how much the shoes had cost did she turn and say with a smile, "I don't know how much they cost, because I got them from a shoemaker I know. I've introduced two or three thousand dollars of business to him, so he gave me a pair to thank me."

Chia-shu said, "Two or three thousand dollars? How many pairs of shoes would that be?" Mrs T'ao said, "Don't show your lack of sophistication by saying things like that. Dancing shoes are never a few dollars a pair. Thirty or forty dollars for a pair of the better sort—that's very common, not at all out of the ordinary."

Chia-shu said, "So that's how it is. A pair of shoes like yours, even if the pearls aren't real, should cost a few score dollars."

Mrs T'ao said, "Small pearls don't cost anything, of course they're real."

Chia-shu smiled and said, "You're wearing such fine new clothes and shoes, you must be going to a dance at the Peking Hotel tonight."

Chapter 18

One's fright turns to madness: a fall downstairs, and grief over past events.
Another goes from doubt to daydreams;
leaving the gathering, she excuses herself to her new acquaintance.

WE HAVE HEARD how General Liu forced Feng-hsi to sing one song after another, until finally he forced out of her the one song she had not wanted to sing [because Chia-shu had taught it to her]. Feng-hsi could endure it no longer and fell to the ground in a faint. When Hsiu-ku saw her fall, she hurried forward and raised her. Feng-hsi's face was ashen, her two hands icy cold; all her strength had gone, and she was quite unable to keep on her feet. Hsiu-ku carried her cradled

General Liu whips Feng-hsi (Ch. 17).

in her arms to a long sofa where she put her down gently. General Liu had put down his opium pipe and stood up on the floor. When he saw how effortlessly Hsiu-ku carried Feng-hsi, he said smilingly, "For someone your size, you have great strength." As he spoke, he stretched out his hand and grasped Hsiu-ku's right arm. "Good solid flesh, no two ways about it." Hsiu-ku drew back her hand and said stiffly, "Here she is on the verge of death, and you still have the heart to play jokes." General Liu laughed. "She's only fainted, she'll be all right after lying down for a while." As he was speaking, he felt Feng-hsi's hand and let out a cry, "This child's really sick, quick, get a doctor." Pressing the bell for an attendant, he ordered the man to telephone for the doctor; he himself stroked Feng-hsi for a while, saying to himself, "Liu Te-chu! You acted too violently. How could you have beaten her till she was a mass of welts and bruises? And to want her to sing in that condition—no wonder she couldn't take it." As he spoke he pressed his face to Feng-hsi's arm and kissed it repeatedly.

By this time the room was thronged with people come to wait on their mistress. Then a doctor of Western medicine came in; one look at Feng-hsi's wounds told him most of the story. After he had examined her symptoms he said, "This is not a serious illness, she is simply rather over-stimulated. All she needs is a couple of days' good rest. But all these people here aren't helping." As he spoke, he looked round the room. General Liu dismissed everybody with a wave of his hand: "Who asked you here? If you all knew medicine I could have saved myself some

money and not called a doctor. Out, out, out!" Pushing and kicking, he drove out all the male and female servants. Hsiu-ku, who had been kept back by General Liu and was unable to get away, took this opportunity of leaving the room and slipped away when everybody else was driven out. She had originally thought of slipping home that night, but if she went she couldn't come back again; then how could she get news of what happened to Feng-hsi, who was hanging between life and death? So she went upstairs quietly and telephoned Chia-shu to say that something very important had happened here and she would have to stay on the watch another night; could he give her father the message? She hung up the phone without waiting for Chia-shu to ask questions.

That night Feng-hsi was indeed very ill. They moved her into a bedroom upstairs. For the first half of the night she remained unconscious. General Liu did as the doctor ordered and let her rest quietly; he himself reserved a room at a hotel and asked a few friends over for a good time.

By two o'clock all the maidservants had gone off to bed and only Hsiu-ku and an old amah named Yang were left in the room together to wait on Feng-hsi and pour her tea. Hsiu-ku had nothing to do and was talking to Mrs Yang to pass the time. When she mentioned Feng-hsi's injuries, Mrs Yang leaned forward and said softly, "You think this is bad? You've seen nothing. Before, we had both his wife and a concubine here. The wife was getting on in years, of course; she couldn't take his constant bullying, and went home to her family. Not long after she died there. With the wife dead, the concubine was in clover; out in the car all day, going to the opera, strolling in the park. People said she'd acquired a boyfriend outside. One night she didn't get back from a night opera performance till after twelve. As it happened, our general hadn't gone out that particular day; he was smoking opium and waiting: looking at his watch, then pulling on his pipe; pulling on his pipe, then sitting up again. When twelve had struck, he called for a glass of brandy and drank it down, just him in the room, jumping up and down and swearing to himself. In a little while, the concubine returned. She had just come up the stairs when the general came forward and knocked her to the ground with a single kick. Grabbing her hair with his left hand, he pulled a pistol from his vest pocket with his right and, holding the pistol to her face, interrogated her on where she'd been. The concubine was frightened and said in tears, begging for pardon: 'All I did was have a couple of meals out with my cousin; I lied about going to the opera'. We were standing far off, not daring to come forward. We heard two pistol shots, and then the general picked her up and threw her over the banisters. . . . "

Mrs Yang had not finished talking when they heard a cry from the bed. When they looked round, they saw that Feng-hsi had rolled over in bed and fallen on to the floor. Hsiu-ku and old Mrs Yang got quite a fright; they hurried forward and helped her back into bed. She hadn't been asleep after all. Holding on to Hsiu-ku's dress, she said tearfully, "I'm frightened to death, you must save me!" Old Mrs Yang seemed to have lost her wits. She stood stock-still staring at the girl and not making a sound. But Hsiu-ku patted Feng-hsi and told her, "Don't be afraid, Mrs Yang thought you were asleep, she was just having a little joke with me. Of course there was no such thing." Feng-hsi said, "Yes there was. I'm not frightened—what good would it do me if I were?" She gave a sigh. Hsiu-ku was about to try and comfort her again when they heard a din downstairs; General Liu must have returned. Shaking all over, old Mrs Yang said to Feng-hsi, "Mistress, whatever you do, don't let out a word of our conversation just now. If you do, my life's in danger." Feng-hsi said, "Don't worry, I won't say a word."

At that moment they heard General Liu shouting, "How is she now? Better than before?" outside the window. Feng-hsi rolled over and faced the wall, while Hsiu-ku and old Mrs Yang turned quickly and went to the door to meet him. General Liu came into the room and said smilingly to Hsiu-ku, "How is she?" Hsiu-ku said, "Asleep and hasn't woken. Let's go away so that we don't disturb her." With these words, she hurried away.

Hsiu-ku had not brought any baggage or any of her things with her, but General Liu had very thoughtfully provided her with a little iron bed and a set of bedding. Moreover she didn't have to sleep with the old amahs, but had a very clean room off the corridor downstairs in the

western wing. As Hsiu-ku came downstairs, old Mrs Yang seemed to have forgotten her fear, and smiled at her under the electric light. As she smiled, she looked towards the room Hsiu-ku was in. Hsiu-ku knew what the old woman was getting at. She snorted and gave a short laugh, then crept noiselessly into her room, shut the door tight, put out the light, and went to sleep in her clothes.

When she awoke, the sun shining in beneath the eaves had already lit up a large square of white light. She heard General Liu swearing in the corridor, "The hell with it, she carried on so that I didn't get to sleep all night. She can't stay at home, better send her to hospital." When Hsiu-ku heard this, she feared that Feng-hsi was no better. Opening the door, she hurried straight upstairs. Feng-hsi's hair hung matted over her face. She wore a little pink jacket which did up down the front; she had misfastened two of the buttons, so that the jacket was awry. She was sitting up straight on a hard wooden chair, not uttering a sound, with her two eyes peering through her dishevelled hair. Only her legs, bare below her knee-length trousers, swung to and fro as though she were on a swing. When she saw Hsiu-ku come in, she showed her white teeth in a smile which had something unnerving about it. Hsiu-ku hesitated at the door, then went in and asked, "Mistress, what's the matter with you?" Feng-hsi smiled. "He says I'm mad, he threatened me with a pistol and wouldn't let me talk, so I didn't talk. I haven't committed any great crime to be shot for. Isn't that so? I haven't gone out to the opera with anyone, I don't have a cousin, he can't shoot me and throw me downstairs. I still have fifty thousand dollars in the bank, and my jewellery's worth several thousand—and I'm so young, I don't want to die yet. Aren't I right, elder sister?" Hsiu-ku put one hand over Feng-hsi's mouth and clasped her hand in the other, then shook her finger at the girl.

Just then two bodyguards entered and said to Feng-hsi, "Madam, you're not well, please. . . ." They hadn't finished speaking when Feng-hsi burst into loud sobs and springing up in her bare feet threw her arms around Hsiu-ku's neck. She clung to Hsiu-ku and screamed, "It's awful, it's awful! They want to drag me away and shoot me." The bodyguards said, "Madam, don't be so suspicious, we're here to accompany you to hospital." Feng-hsi stamped her foot and said, "I'm not going, I'm not going, you're tricking me." When the two bodyguards saw the state she was in they stared at her dumbfounded, at a loss for what to do. General Liu was waiting for her in the corridor. When he saw how unwilling she was to leave, he stamped in: "You two good-for-nothings! You're going to do what *she* says? Why not drag her out?" The bodyguards were afraid of General Liu's anger; there was nothing for it but to go forward bravely and drag Feng-hsi off, one to each arm. Of course Feng-hsi didn't want to go: she cried and screamed, kicked and fell about, and finally fell writhing on the floor. Hsiu-ku's heart ached at the sight; she wanted to suggest to General Liu that Feng-hsi need not go to hospital right away, but just then two more bodyguards came in and the four of them carried Feng-hsi downstairs by main force. Feng-hsi stretched one hand through the knot of people and waved frantically behind her, crying out non-stop, "Hsiu-ku, save me!" Her cries could still be heard as she was carried out of the inner courtyard.

Hsiu-ku had been angry with Feng-hsi ever since the girl broke faith with Chia-shu, but now, seeing her possessed by insanity, she felt it was a shame; Feng-hsi was so young, she had been deceived, she had been ill-treated. Leaning on the banister, Hsiu-ku shed a few tears. General Liu, who was standing behind her, laughed, "What's up with you? Women's hearts are always so soft! Look, I'm not crying, and you are." Hsiu-ku took advantage of this opportunity to dry her tears and say to General Liu with a smile, "True enough, I always cry easily. Which hospital is the mistress in? Could I go and see her later on?" General Liu smiled. "Of course—that's a kind thought, why shouldn't you go? If you always take such good care of each other, and don't get jealous, things will be easy. I didn't know which hospital would be best, so I sent her to the Salvation-for-All Hospital. It's very expensive, so it can't be too bad. I'll have the car take you later. This morning, how about having a meal with me?" Hsiu-ku said, "That wouldn't do at all.

The four of them carried Feng-hsi downstairs by main force.

For one of the servants to sit down with the general—it would be ridiculous." General Liu smiled and said, "What's ridiculous about it? I choose to raise you up, and I'll do as I please. Your mistress herself started off even lower than you." Hsiu-ku said, "It really isn't convenient, let's talk about it another time." With these words, she went downstairs. General Liu was very pleased with her modest demeanour; he slapped the railings with his hand and laughed heartily.

When lunch-time came, General Liu ate by himself, but the table was laden with food. He drove all the serving men and amahs out of the dining-room and kept only Hsiu-ku to wait on him. All the servants were on tenterhooks for her, but she took the whole thing calmly. After helping the general to rice and placing it on the table, she took two steps back and said with a serious expression, "General, I know why you are treating me with such generosity. Who wouldn't want to marry a general? But there is something I want to say first. If you do as I wish, I'd be quite happy to be your third or fourth concubine; but if you don't, I wouldn't venture even to work here." General Liu stared at Hsiu-ku with his bowl and chopsticks in his hand. He laughed and said, "This girl goes straight to the point, and that's to my liking." Hsiu-ku stood still with her arms clasped in front of her and half-averted face. She said, "Although I'm a servant, I'm still a young girl; to play around with you heedlessly would ruin me for life. If you were to overlook my humble background and make me your second concubine, I would still want to have a proper wedding. For one thing, I still have parents at home; for another, you have a wife, and all your

household—they would look down on me. I'm more than willing, but I don't know whether you really like me or are just pretending. If you really like me, I'm sure you'll understand why I'm going to such trouble." As she spoke, she dropped her hands and lowered her head; her voice fell, and she looked a picture of unease.

General Liu put down his chopsticks and stroked his face. He gave a hesitating laugh. "You're right, but you'd better not be deceiving me!" Hsiu-ku said, "Certainly not. I'm the child of poor people; if I turned down someone like you, who would be left? Do I look like the kind of girl who would trick someone?" General Liu laughed. "Enough! We'll do it this way. But make it as soon as possible." Hsiu-ku said, "As long as it isn't today, and you can manage it in time, tomorrow would be fine. But you'd better not fool around with me before then, or the household would see it and say I wasn't respectable." General Liu smiled and said, "Allowing that what you say is right, tomorrow would be rather a rush—let's make it the day after, that's a lucky day. Aren't you going to the hospital today? Call in at home on the way and let your parents know—I don't suppose they'll have any objections." Hsiu-ku said, "This is my decision, they don't have any say in it. Anyway, this is something they never dreamed of, how could they possibly object?" This speech tickled the general pink. He said, "Don't eat with the amahs; I'm going out when I've finished, you can eat at this table." Hsiu-ku giggled and nodded her head in agreement. The general thought: there's not a woman who doesn't love flattery. Look how pleased this girl is at my little mark of favour. The thought put him in high spirits, and he laughed too. But he had wasted the whole morning on Feng-hsi, so now he went out in his car on business.

When Hsiu-ku knew he was far away, she called several of the old amahs to the table with her and they all had a hearty meal. When she'd had enough, she got into the household car, saying it was at the general's orders, and went to the Salvation-for-All hospital to see Feng-hsi.

Feng-hsi was in the first class ward, and had a very elegant, clean room to herself. She was lying on an iron bedstead, wrapped round with white sheets; only a head of dishevelled hair showed above them, deep in a soft pillow. As she entered the room, Hsiu-ku heard her murmuring on and on: something about being struck with a pistol, and he'll throw me downstairs. Her words were sometimes very clear, sometimes a mere babble. But one name she called ceaselessly: Master Fan. There was a low sofa in front of the bed, and on it sat her mother, Aunt Shen, crying with her face averted. When she raised her head and saw Hsiu-ku, she stood up and said with a nod, "Look, elder sister, what will be the end of it?" With this one sentence, two rows of tears gushed from her eyes as though she'd had sand thrown in them. Hsiu-ku looked at Feng-hsi lying on the bed. Her cheeks were a deep red, her eyes tight shut, and she was mumbling confusedly, "Thrown downstairs, thrown downstairs." Hsiu-ku said, "She seems to be delirious—what does the doctor say?" Aunt Shen said, "When I first came, it was really alarming. She had the strength to cry and scream. Now I suppose she's tired, she's been lying like that for two hours. I think she's done for." As she spoke, she leaned on the back of the sofa and sobbed, her shoulders heaving.

Hsiu-ku was about to give her a few words of encouragement when Feng-hsi twisted round on the bed and burst into a gurgling laugh. She laughed louder and louder, saying with her eyes shut, "You are lying! You'll give me more than a million dollars worth of things all for myself? It'll be enough if you don't beat me again. Look, I'm bruised and sore all over!" With these words she started crying again. Aunt Shen wrung her hands. "That's the way she is, a fit of laughing then a fit of crying, what do you think will become of her?" Feng-hsi answered from the bed, "You'd better not let people know about this; if Master Fan got to hear of it, you'd be in a pickle." Saying this, she opened her eyes. When she saw Hsiu-ku, she stretched out one hand from the bedclothes and shook it at Hsiu-ku, saying with a smile, "Aren't you elder sister? When you see Master Fan, give him my regards. Tell him I'm sorry. I shall die soon. Ask him to forgive my youth and foolishness." With these words, she burst into loud sobs. Hsiu-ku hurried forward and clasped her hand; Feng-hsi then rubbed her tears dry on the back of Hsiu-ku's hand. With her other hand, Hsiu-ku patted her back through the bedclothes, saying only, "I'm sure Master Fan will forgive you, maybe

he'll come to see you."

Feng-hsi's burst of crying had aroused the hospital nurse, who hurried in and said, "Young lady, please leave quickly, visitors make the patient over-excited." Hsiu-ku knew that one of the rules of the hospital was not to disobey the nurses, so she left the room. This visit had moved her deeply. She felt that people's relationships were indeed fixed by destiny; although Feng-hsi and Chia-shu had been sundered so completely, a thread still connected them. It could be seen in Feng-hsi's ceaseless repetition of "Master Fan" as she lay on the bed. Master Fan can't know of this, she thought, I'll pass the news on. So she rang Chia-shu from the hospital and asked him to go to Central Park as she had something to tell him. Chia-shu was delighted by her call and agreed to meet her immediately.

Hsiu-ku at once ordered the car to go back to the general's mansion and herself hired a rickshaw to take her to the park. When she reached the entrance, she suddenly remembered something: while she had been looking after her father in hospital, she'd had a dream in which she and Chia-shu were strolling through the park together arm in arm. Who would have thought that today she would indeed have the opportunity to stroll round with him? That was how things were in this world: reality seemed like a dream, and dreams could come true some day; wasn't this an example?

But my telephone call was made in too much of a hurry, she thought. I said we'd meet in the park, but forgot to say where in the park. Deep in thought, she stepped into the gallery inside the main gate, when suddenly the puzzle was solved: Chia-shu was sitting on a low railing at the gallery's main entrance, and had been waiting for her all along. When he saw her he came up and smiled: "I took a rickshaw and hurried over immediately I got your call. I guessed that you couldn't have arrived yet, so I sat and waited for you here. Otherwise the park's so large, we'd never find each other. You've had to put up with a lot because of me; I must apologize. You must be my guest, so I can show my thanks." Hsiu-ku said, "To be frank with you, my father and I have the same disposition: we're always poking our noses into other people's business. As long as we enjoy it, we don't care whether we're thanked or not."

As they talked, they walked eastward along the gallery. They passed the Lai-chin-yü Pavilion, then went along the outer wall of the old imperial palace—a secluded spot where few people walked. It was the first time in her life that Hsiu-ku had walked alone with a young man. In front of crowds of people, she unconsciously hung her head; where there were no people, she hung it even lower. She, who had never before hesitated to meet people's eyes, was today inexplicably ill-at-ease.

They walked together to a thicket of cypress trees at the back of the park and Chia-shu said, "Shall we sit down somewhere here and look at the lotuses?" Hsiu-ku agreed. At the western corner of the cypresses was a row of teahouse seats, with the expanse of the imperial moat beyond them. On the other side of the moat, a thin row of palace willows half concealed the wall of the imperial city; it was like a picture, especially to the west where the wall turned a corner and four or five tall willows clustered around a watch-tower beneath it. But Chia-shu had asked Hsiu-ku to look at the lotuses, not at the tower. She found a place, sat down, and looked at the lotus leaves in the moat. Half of them were brown; their stalks were all bent, and they lay flat on the surface of the water. A few lotus stalks rose up above the lotus leaves; there wasn't a lotus flower in sight. Chia-shu sat opposite her. The teahouse attendant brought over tea and melon seeds. Chia-shu poured out the tea and offered her the melon seeds, then, not knowing what she wanted to discuss and not liking to question her, gave a laugh. Hsiu-ku looked around and said with a smile, "The view here is lovely." Chia-shu said, "It is lovely." Hsiu-ku said, "A few days earlier when we were at Shih-cha Lake, the lotus leaves were still green. In just a few days, the leaves have withered." In the midst of speaking, Hsiu-ku's heart contracted; this was just small talk, I hope he didn't think I meant anything by it. Looking serious, she said, "Mr Fan, my phone call to you today was not because I have anything to discuss with you myself; it's about the Shen lass, she's in a

wretched state." Chia-shu laughed out loud. "My dear young woman, why bring her up? It's nothing to do with me what state she's in." Hsiu-ku said, "What she did earlier on was certainly not quite right, but. . . . " Chia-shu shook his finger at her. "It's enough that you know she did wrong. After our parting that day at the Temple of Agriculture, I made up my mind not to mention her name again. Each to his own—why fight over it? You're a very direct person, I don't need to go on about it. In a word, while I draw breath I don't wish to hear her name again."

When Hsiu-ku heard the note of determination in his voice, she realized it was the wrong time to tell him about Feng-hsi. But how he felt about Feng-hsi was one thing, and whether he should know about her present miserable state was another; so she smiled and said, "If she were to die now, Mr Fan, what would your feelings be?" Chia-shu gave a cold laugh. "She brought it on herself, why should I feel anything? You'd better not mention her, it upsets me." Hsiu-ku said, "Since you feel that way about it, I'll drop the subject for the present; let's bring it up again later." Chia-shu said, " 'Bringing it up again later' is something I'm all in favour of. No matter what's involved, we never really appreciate a thing when it's right in front of us. The old saying goes, "Gold is tried in the furnace", and it's only in a crisis that the good stand out. But it's too late then to recognize their merit. And the truly good will certainly not wish disaster on others just in order to show their true colours. Take your revered father, for example—he's a believer in the long tradition of knight-errants. But the task of knight-errants is to right wrongs and avenge injustice. When there are no oppressors and no injustice, there is no need for knight-errants. One would hardly expect knight-errants to wish for injustices just to display their valour. So now I've learned a lesson, and know more than I did before. I realize now that previously I did not recognize good when I saw it."

It was clear to Hsiu-ku from Chia-shu's tone that he was referring to her. She recalled how ever since she had met Chia-shu, her heart had belonged to him. But whether she had been attentive or aloof, he had always been completely indifferent, so she had bowed out and become a disinterested third party. Who would have thought that after she bowed out there would come this sudden and unprecedented avowal—this was something she had never imagined. So she smiled and said, "That is a very penetrating observation, Mr Fan. Even a completely uneducated person like myself can see that." Chia-shu smiled and went on cracking melon seeds. He poured himself another cup of tea, drank it, and asked, "Your father used to have great faith in me, but I suppose he knows now that I've played the fool a bit." Hsiu-ku said, "No. Whatever he has to say, he'll say to your face." Chia-shu said, "Of course, the old gentleman is very direct. But one thing has been weighing on my mind. Two months ago, it seemed as though he wanted to raise something with me, but didn't know how to go about it. I didn't like to ask, and so I never found out what it was."

Hsiu-ku was looking at the lotus leaves in the moat. A large red dragon-fly was hovering near a small leaf, dipping and raising his tail over the surface of the water; a long time passed, and he was still there. Her mind wandered as she gazed, and Chia-shu couldn't tell whether she had not caught what he'd been saying, or whether she'd heard perfectly clearly but had been reluctant to answer. One thing follows another; there was no point in repeating himself, so he fell silent. Hsiu-ku looked at the palace wall and said, "Part of the wall goes past the mouth of the lane where we live. It blocks the way when we want to go out, so we think it's a real nuisance. There's a wall here too, but we think of it only as part of a beautiful scene." Chia-shu said, "Quite right. I find this wall intriguing too." The two of them went on talking, but always about the view.

The conversation was just getting animated when suddenly a waiter called from the thicket of trees, "Is there a Mr Fan here?" Chia-shu nodded and asked, "Who wants me?" A waiter came up and handed a namecard to Hsiu-ku saying, "Excuse me, is your name Fan? I'm the waiter from the Lai-chin-yü Pavilion; a Miss Ho would like to have a word with you." Hsiu-ku looked at the inscription on the card: Li-na Ho. She said hesitantly, "I don't know this person. Is she a friend of yours, Mr Fan?" Chia-shu said, "Yes, she is—you must meet her. I'll introduce you

soon." To the waiter he said, "Tell Miss Ho we'll be over in a minute." The waiter went off with the message. Chia-shu said, "Let's go and sit in the Lai-chin-yü Pavilion for a while. That Miss Ho is a friend of my cousin's wife; she's very easy to get on with." Hsiu-ku smiled and said, "If I sat with the young lady looking like this I'd feel very embarrassed and so would she." Chia-shu smiled. "Surely someone as straightforward as yourself doesn't feel bound by these commonplace formalities?" Hsiu-ku hated to be thought narrow-minded so she nodded and said: "Very well, I'll meet her, but I won't stay for long." Chia-shu said, "That's up to you. I just want you to meet her." So Chia-shu paid the bill and went with Hsiu-ku to Lai-chih-yü Pavilion.

Chia-shu led Hsiu-ku to the railings round the open stand. A fashionably dressed young woman with a wide smile got up from one of the teahouse seats and nodded in their direction. When Hsiu-ku caught sight of her she gave an involuntary start. Feng-hsi was definitely ill in hospital, so how did she get here? She stood staring at a distance. Chia-shu realized what had happened and stepped in with a hurried introduction; "Miss Ho," he explained, "Miss Kuan." Li-na saw that Hsiu-ku was just dressed in a loose-fitting blue cotton gown; she had not cut her hair short [as was fashionable among Westernized young women], but wore her plait in an S-shaped bun. With her well-proportioned body and her round face, she seemed a simple, healthy, old-fashioned girl. Stretching out her hand to shake Hsiu-ku's, Li-na smiled and said, "Please, sit down, sit down. I've heard Mr Fan speak of Miss Kuan before as a very forthright person. I'm pleased to meet you." It was only when Li-na had spoken that Hsiu-ku was convinced that she was not indeed Feng-hsi. Chia-shu had never mentioned that he knew a Miss Ho, so how could he have talked about me to her? They must be more than casual acquaintances. Since she's been so cordial, Hsiu-ku thought, I should be polite; so she smiled and said, "When you invited Mr Fan over just now I didn't feel easy about venturing to make your acquaintance. Mr Fan insisted on introducing us, so I had no choice but to come." Li-na smiled and said, "Don't be so formal. The important thing about making friends is whether people get on well; one shouldn't observe formal distinctions." She pulled out a chair and made Hsiu-ku sit down. Chia-shu also sat down opposite Li-na.

Hsiu-ku looked Li-na up and down carefully. Her face was basically very like Feng-hsi's, but a little plumper; and there was a restraint in her voice and manner lacking in Feng-hsi's wilful ways. If the two of them had been out walking together, everyone would have taken them for sisters. Li-na certainly looked attractive, her social position went without saying, and she was doubtless well-educated; apart from age, Feng-hsi fell behind her on every point. Chia-shu evidently felt no regrets over having lost a Feng-hsi and gained a Miss Ho—it was no wonder he had been so indifferent to Feng-hsi's affairs. Lost in her own thoughts, she paid no heed to Miss Ho's beaming hospitality, and replied to her remarks with an abstracted air and faint smile. Li-na said, "I have been sitting here for a while. When I saw Miss Kuan and Mr Fan go by, I guessed the half of it." Chia-shu said, "Oh, you saw us walk past. And did you also guess that we'd be drinking tea there?" Li-na said, "Not that. Just now I was taking a turn around the grounds and I saw the two of you beyond the thicket." Chia-shu listened in silence. Li-na said, "Meeting Miss Kuan is a rare opportunity; might I ask you to have a drink with me?" Hsiu-ku said, "Today I really do have things to do, I can't accept your hospitality. If you would like to make it another day, I would certainly come." Li-na laughed and said, "Perhaps Miss Kuan is put off by our high society ways. If you are really busy, how do you have time to come to the park today?" Chia-shu said, "She really does have things to do. If I hadn't said I wanted to introduce her to you, she would have left long ago." Li-na looked at them both and smiled, then said, "If that's the case I don't need to look for a place to eat outside the park. But the Western food here is really not bad, why not have a bite to eat here?" Hsiu-ku began to feel restless. She didn't feel like eating, so pushed her chair back, stood up, and said with a smile, "You must excuse me, I have to go." Li-na and Chia-shu rose and urged her to stay for a while longer even if she didn't want a meal. Hsiu-ku smiled and said, "It's not that I don't want to. To tell the truth, I came to the park today to discuss an

important matter with Mr Fan. Although nothing was decided, I must bear a message back to the person concerned." With these words she left the teahouse. When Li-na saw that Hsiu-ku didn't wish to stay, she did not detain her, but took her by the hand and accompanied her to the path. With a light laugh she said, "You must excuse me today; I will certainly seek the pleasure of your company another time. Mr Fan and I meet almost every day, so if you have any messages for me please ask him to pass them on." As she spoke she clasped Hsiu-ku's hand and shook it several times, then said good-bye and went back to her seat.

Hsiu-ku walked along the path with lowered head, thinking, "She noticed us when we passed the Lai-chin-yü Pavilion: while we were drinking tea by the cypresses, she watched us from behind the trees. She seems to be very suspicious of me. In reality I came today because of Feng-hsi; it was nothing to do with me personally. She said she saw Mr Fan every day. She was telling the truth, and moreover, when Mr Fan got to the Lai-chin-yü Pavilion, he didn't have to look for her among all those tables and chairs, but found her immediately; they must meet there often. Feng-hsi is just water under the bridge; he has another sweetheart, so why pine over him? As for me, I have even less reason to worry about other people's problems." Deep in thought, she wandered she knew not where. Seeing a bench, she sat down quietly by herself. Suddenly she thought, "Chia-shu must have had some reason for talking about true gold being tried by the fire and so on; perhaps I've drawn the wrong conclusions." She lay back against the park bench, thinking to herself and watching the people in the gallery walking to and fro in the distance; half of them were young couples. This turned her mind to the dream she had had in the hospital and then to what Chia-shu had said about her father wanting to raise something but not doing so. All these signs seemed to augur a happy future. As she came to this conclusion, her heart expanded. She raised her head suddenly and saw Chia-shu and Li-na walking side-by-side, going out through the gallery. At the same time a man beside her pointed to the couple and asked his companion, "Isn't that Chia-shu? Who's the girl?" The other man replied, "I know, that's his fiancée Miss Shen—he's introduced her to me." As luck would have it, Hsiu-ku did not hear the word "Shen" clearly. Her illusions were shattered. She smiled to herself, rose, and left the park. Her departure heralded an earth-shaking act. Do you wish to know what it was? Wait until the next chapter.

Chapter 19

Noble departure from a humble home; parting at a wineshop.
Traces of blood left behind; a villain mown down at a mountain temple.

WE WERE SAYING that Hsiu-ku had seen Chia-shu and Li-na walking side-by-side in the park and had just heard someone say they were engaged. Her illusions were shattered; she realized that no matter what the circumstances, it was looks that drew a man to a woman. She had no ties; why be drawn into the whirlpool of emotion? Her wild imaginings of a moment ago merely showed her inexperience. As her thoughts reached this point, she began to laugh. General Liu, Master Fan, Miss Shen—what concern of mine are they? I'll go home and keep my father company. Having made up her mind, she left the park. She did not take a rickshaw, but walked out on to the stone-paved imperial way in front of the Gate of Heavenly Peace. The green scholar-trees which fringed it left two paths of cool shade in the clear sunlight. She walked slowly along in the shadow, intent on her own thoughts, until she reached a spot near the Salvation-for-All Hospital. When she realized where she was, she thought she might as well go and see Feng-hsi

again. It would be her final meeting with the poor child. Thinking thus, she turned and took the road leading to the hospital. She was just about to go in when she saw General Liu's car blocking the main gate. She froze and prepared to flee, but the general had opened the car door and was beckoning her with a smile. "You've come once already, what do you want to see her again for? Come back home with me!" He got out of the car as he spoke and tried to put his arms round her. Hsiu-ku feared that refusal to go would lead to an unseemly tussle in the street. Fortunately her mind was made up; and her own skills were sufficient to remove any cause for fear even if she did go with him. So, smiling slightly, she drove with General Liu to his mansion.

The general brought her straight upstairs and pressed her hand, saying with a smile, "The woman in the hospital won't recover. If you stay with me, I may even make you my main wife." The words made Hsiu-ku's blood boil; she flushed violently, and trembled all over. Seeing the colour flood into her face, General Liu laughed and said, "There are no strangers here, why so bashful? Tell me, would you really like that?" Hsiu-ku smiled and said, "Of course I would! I'm just afraid such good fortune may not be for me." General Liu grasped her hand and shook it twice, saying with smile, "You look such a simple soul, but you've got a quick tongue. Our wedding date is set for the day after tomorrow, how does that suit you? Have you told your father yet?" Hsiu-ku said, "Yes, and he was all in favour of it. He says he'd like to see you after the wedding and ask you to get him a post of some kind." General Liu clapped his hands and laughed. "That goes without saying. If you don't give jobs to your father-in-law, who do you give them to? Tonight you simply must eat with me, to let the servants see I've already singled you out —otherwise they'll think the wedding ceremony the day after tomorrow a bit sudden." Hsiu-ku said, "You talk about nothing but the wedding. How do you propose to celebrate it?" The general scratched his head and laughed. "I don't really know what to do. With that first one I married everything was pretty casual, so it'll be hard to justify making more of a splash marrying you, if we did make big thing of it; and the date's so close we probably couldn't get things done in time. But I'm afraid you wouldn't want to be married without ceremony." Hsiu-ku said, "I don't care either way, but it would make your household look down on me. I've got an idea which would solve both our problems." General Liu laughed. "I'd have no objection to that. Tell me, what's your plan?" Hsiu-ku said, "I couldn't have thought of it myself. I remember somebody else before wanted to save trouble: what happened was the bride and groom went off to the Western Hills for a while. When they came back, they said they'd had their wedding, and didn't even hold a reception. That'd be the thing for us."

General Liu pulled her by the hand and leaped up laughing. "My precious! If you're willing to do things that way, it would save me a lot of effort. Also I'm an impatient man, and once I've decided on something I like to do it at once. If we do things in style, two days will never be enough for the preparations. Now all we have to do is go to the Western Hills, and that's no trouble. There's no shortage of cars, we can go any time, and once we're out of town there's no need to come back. Let's go today." Hsiu-ku laughed and said, "Didn't you say a day or two didn't matter?" General Liu shrugged his shoulders and took a sideways look at her. He laughed and said, "I don't know what it is, but I get more and more attracted to you. Right this minute I'd like to. . . ." He gave a rumble of laughter. Hsiu-ku said, "Today's too late. Tomorrow!" The general laughed. "Enough, my new wife! Let it be today. Tell me anything you need and I'll have somebody fix it up, and then we can leave town together." As he spoke, he clasped Hsiu-ku's hand again. She smiled. "For such a big event, you're in an awful hurry." The general laughed and said "You don't know, I've had my eye on you from the start. I've had enough of waiting; every day the wedding's put off tries my patience more. And anyway, isn't it inconvenient that though we're in the one house I'm upstairs and you're down?" He shrugged as he spoke.

Hsiu-ku raised her brows and looked at him, then nodded, biting her lower lip. If her nod was accompanied by a slight nasal "hrumphh", General Liu did not hear it; he smiled and said, "How about it? You agree?" Hsiu-ku gave a smile. "All right, let it be today. You've been very

frank; I'll give you what you're asking for." General Liu shook with laughter. Raising clasped hands in a polite salute, he said, "Thank you for consenting. Tell me what you want so I can get it ready for you." Hsiu-ku said, "I don't want anything unless you do. But I do have one request: please send me home in a car with four bodyguards so I can say goodbye to my father. And if you have any spare cash on hand, give me a little to give my father for a wedding feast for our friends and relatives—after all he brought me up." General Liu said, "Of course, of course! That's nothing. I should give him a little betrothal gift anyway. I'm afraid I don't have much ready cash here—as I remember there's two thousand or so dollars, take the lot. Anyway if your father's short of anything I can fix him up." Hsiu-ku counted on her fingers. "We don't need much," she said with a smile. "Sudden riches in a poor home only lead to trouble. Fourteen hundred dollars will be enough." General Liu said, "How do you work that out?" Hsiu-ku said, "Don't ask. Maybe you'll understand later." With these words she doubled up with laughter. General Liu laughed too and said, "What a naughty child, laughing so just because I can't guess your riddle. All right, I'll do as you say." He took twelve hundred dollars in notes and two hundred in silver coins from a chest and gave them to Hsiu-ku, saying, "I'm sure your father likes the shine of solid cash, so I got out a few silver dollars for him." Hsiu-ku laughed and said, "You certainly know what's what. I was just thinking the same thing myself, but the words hadn't reached my lips." The general laughed. "I've wormed my way right into your heart; I can guess whatever's in your mind." His words caused Hsiu-ku a strange shudder of delight; she burst out laughing, and had to lean on the table. General Liu patted her on the shoulder and said, "Don't be naughty. The car's been ready for ages, so hurry home. I'll be waiting for you to come back so we can leave town."

Hsiu-ku looked up at the clock on the wall. It was already after four; she had no time to waste, so drove home immediately. Two guards on each side of the car formed a protective wall. When Hsiu-ku saw them she was very pleased, and smiled to herself.

In a little while, the car reached home. As it happened, Kuan Shou-feng was at the doorway looking out for her. She got out of the car and drew her father into the house, saying with a smile, "Good! You're home. If you hadn't been I would have had to go and look for one of your senior pupils, and that would have been an effort." As she spoke, she drew a big bundle from under her arm and put it on the table. Shou-feng was surprised at the sight, but after Hsiu-ku had explained things in detail, he stroked his beard and nodded. "You've done the right thing. I'm getting a bit bored with teaching martial arts; General Liu gives me a means of getting out of it all. Don't keep him waiting, you'd better go soon." Smiling slightly, Hsiu-ku came out of the house and bade farewell to the three other families in the courtyard, telling them she had a way out of this life and wouldn't be coming back. The neighbours were very surprised to see Hsiu-ku arrive in a car surrounded by soldiers after being away for a few days, but knowing the temperament of father and daughter and their dislike of being questioned about their affairs they thought it best not to ask, simply guessing that it must be something to do with Hsiu-ku's getting married.

As she went out, they all prepared to see her into the car, but Shou-feng barred the way out of the courtyard saying, "There are soldiers there; it's more than you're worth to go and see them." The neighbours knew Shou-feng had a temper and did not care to cross him, so they stayed put. When Shou-feng heard from a burst of honking that the car was already far away he clasped his hands in a respectful gesture and said, "We've been together for a long time. Now I have something I wish to entrust to all of you: are you willing?" The neighbours answered that they'd certainly help if it was within their power. Shou-feng said, "My daughter has someone now. She has to leave Peking tonight, I'm loath to part with her, and want to see her off, but I've just obtained a sum of money; I'm afraid it wouldn't be safe at home, so I want to divide it up and keep it in your three homes, will that do?" When everybody heard that was all it was they all agreed. So Shou-feng divided up the twelve hundred dollars in notes into three lots of four hundred dollars and wrapped them up in pieces of cloth; the two hundred dollars in coins,

however, he put in a belt which he fastened round his waist. Then he placed one of the three cloth packages in each neighbour's house, and said "If I'm not home by two in the morning, please open these packages and have a look; but if I do come back before two, I must ask you to give me back the original packages." Having spoken, he didn't wait for any further comments but clasped his hands in salutation and left at once.

Once he reached the street he telephoned Chia-shu from a familiar shop. As it happened Chia-shu had just come home. When he took the call, Shou-feng said "I have a couple of important things to talk over with you face to face. I'll be waiting for you at a little eating house called "Well-met" at Ssu-p'ai-lou. Don't come with an empty stomach; we'll drain a few cups together." Chia-shu at once thought Hsiu-ku must have gone home and told her father what he'd said in the park; the old man being impatient by nature had wanted to act immediately, and so had called for him to talk things over face to face. This was an expression of sincerity which he could hardly knock back, so he agreed to come immediately. At Ssu-p'ai-lou there was indeed a little tavern with the sign "Well-met" hanging at the door. Shou-feng was standing with his hands on the railings of the balcony, looking all around him. When he saw Chia-shu he waved and shouted, "Here, here." Chia-shu went upstairs and saw a table set up by the balcony with wine and food. There were two cups and two pairs of chopsticks; evidently Shou-feng had kept a place for him. Shou-feng sat Chia-shu across the table from him and asked, "Younger brother, did you bring any money?" Chia-shu said, "I brought some, but not much. If you're short of money, uncle, I'll fetch some from home at once." Shou-feng waved his hand and said, "No, no. I've come into a little money today, it's not a question of borrowing any. I asked whether you had any on you because I want you to pay for today's meal." Chia-shu smiled and said, "Of course, of course." Shou-feng said, "Isn't your answer rather rash? You shouldn't have to host me just because you're a little better off than I am, or a little younger. That wasn't my meaning. I shall tell you frankly: after this meal, we meet no more. We have been good friends for several months, so surely you ought to give me a send-off." Chia-shu was taken by surprise, and asked, "Where are you going so suddenly, uncle? And Miss Kuan?" Shou-feng said, "We've never settled down anywhere. If we feel like going somewhere today we up and go, and if tomorrow we're tired of it we move again. We have no encumbrances, so it's not a question of "suddenness". There are only the two of us, so of course we'll stay together." Chia-shu said, "Uncle, you're a gallant man in a troubled world, and it's not for me to question you overmuch. But may I know when you are setting off, and whether we'll meet again later on?" Shou-feng said, "I'm leaving when we've finished drinking. As for when we'll meet again, who knows? After all, our becoming friends at T'ien-ch'iao in the first place was quite unexpected." As he spoke he raised the jug of wine and poured a cup first for Chia-shu and then for himself. Raising his cup, he held it to Chia-shu's and said with a smile, "Brother, let's drink our fill—no more idle talk!" They drained their cups together and compared the amount drunk. Chia-shu said, "Since I'm sending you off, I should be the one to pour the wine!" He took the wine jug and poured Kuan Shou-feng a cup which he drank without demur, as was his custom.

In a little while, after drinking more than a catty of wine, Shou-feng put his hand over his cup and stood up, saying with a smile, "I've had enough to drink, I must be on my way. But first I have a few words to say." Chia-shu said, "Say whatever you have to say. I'll do anything within my power." Shou-feng said, "It is something you probably still don't know. Somebody has got into a lot of trouble because of you." He went on to tell Chia-shu all about how Feng-hsi had fallen ill after being beaten and was now lying in hospital. "According to my daughter, she begs your forgiveness ceaselessly in her delirium. The child was simply young and inexperienced, and did not mean to be false or ungrateful. You'd better think of what can be done for her." Chia-shu was silent for a while, then said, "Even if I don't hold her faults against her, I'm just a student. How can I take on a powerful warlord? Isn't she in his hands at this moment?" Shou-feng raised his head and laughed. "The powerful can't just grab anything they take a fancy to. The hegemon

of Ch'u was victorious in a hundred battles, but he couldn't keep his concubine Yu.[27] This is just an observation. I'm not saying you should snatch her back at this moment; just don't bear a grudge when the time comes." Chia-shu said, "If she really has had a change of heart, and I do get the opportunity, of course I'll be ready to set her on the right track again. But she has wounded me deeply. The person I trust most now is another and not her." Shou-feng laughed. "My daughter's told me you also know a Miss Ho who looks very like the Shen lass. But today's rich young ladies are no easier to handle! Which one you put your trust in is up to you, and no matter for outsiders to talk about. But this child may need someone to look after her in the near future. If you have the chance, take care of her. It's already late and I have to leave town—I must have something to eat." So he called for rice, tipped the soup and other dishes into his bowl, and drained several bowlfuls in quick succession before laying down his eating implements. Rising, he said, "We'll meet again." The waiter brought towels, and Shou-feng walked out, wiping his hands as he went. Chia-shu had not asked him where he was going or why. As if transfixed, he watched him go downstairs, then turned and leaned out of the window. Shou-feng had a small bag on his shoulder. He was already in the middle of the road. He looked back and saw Chia-shu, nodded and smiled, and strode off.

Chia-shu was left thinking what a strange affair it was. Although the old man is very forthright, he reflected, he's sentimental enough—when he brought Hsiu-ku to see me off to Feng-t'ai,[28] he was quite reluctant to part from me—yet this time he's saying his farewell with the utmost firmness. His composure suggests that he has urgent work on hand, and that's why he left so suddenly. Ten or fifteen years ago he was a gentleman of the road—who knows but he's returned to his old trade? And then the last couple of days there's been Hsiu-ku pretending to be a servant and getting into the Liu household that way—a very dangerous affair—perhaps something's gone wrong there?" Turning these alternatives over in his mind, Chia-shu leaned over the railings and looked out for a while, then paid the bill and went home.

When he reached home, a foreign-style envelope with mauve writing on it lay on the table. One look at it told him it was Ho Li-na's hand. He picked it up, tore it open, and read: "Chia-shu, there are two very good operas on at the Ch'ün-ying Theatre tonight: the complete *Neng-jen Temple*[29] and also *The Faithful Concubine*[30]. I've reserved Box Number Three—please accept my invitation. Your good friend, Li-na."

Chia-shu was feeling very depressed, and this seemed like a pleasant diversion. After dinner, he went to the theatre box. Li-na was indeed there alone. When she saw Chia-shu she quickly took her cape from the place next to her to let him sit down. He did so. After *The Faithful Concubine* came *Neng-jen Temple*. Chia-shu nodded in approval as he watched. Li-na smiled and said, "I

[27]The Hegemon of Ch'u, Hsiang Yu, had to part with his loyal concubine Lady Yü on the eve of his defeat by Liu Pang, founder of the Han Dynasty. The episode is the subject of a popular opera.

[28]Feng-t'ai, a small railway-station village in the suburbs of Peking.

[29]*Neng-jen Temple* ("Neng-jen ssu 能仁寺") is taken from an episode in the Ch'ing novel *The Gallant Maid (Er-nü ying-hsiung chuan)*, by the Manchu Wen K'ang. Its hero, the timorous young scholar An Lung-mei, is kidnapped by the lawless monks of Neng-jen Temple. Thirteenth Sister, its fearless heroine, frees him after slaughtering his kidnappers single-handed. She also rescues a young woman named Chang Chin-feng, and acts as matchmaker between her and An. The author appears to have had some trouble deciding on a suitable fate for so independent a heroine; she ends rather anticlimactically as An's second wife. Chang Hen-shui presents Hsiu-ku as a latter-day Thirteenth Sister, even going to the extent of setting up a kidnapping scene towards the end of the novel whose only function is to allow Hsiu-ku to rescue Chia-shu in the same way as Thirteenth Sister rescues An Lung-mei.

[30]*The Faithful Concubine* ("Shen-t'ou tz'u-t'ang 審頭刺湯") tells the story of Hsüeh-yen, who kills her would-be seducer after feigning compliance with his wish to marry her and making him helplessly drunk during the wedding festivities. Fearing that her capture and interrogation will involve others, she then commits suicide.

thought you knew nothing about opera? How is it you're so appreciative tonight?" Chia-shu smiled. "It's not the opera as such—I just find the character of the heroine of this play very admirable." Li-na said, "Seeing *The Faithful Concubine* and *Neng-jen Temple* together gives one plenty of food for thought. If Hsüeh-yen had had Thirteenth Sister's ability, she wouldn't have needed to give up her life to take revenge." Chia-shu said, "Well, things can't be perfect. Thirteenth Sister is certainly a dragon or tiger incarnate in *Neng-jen Temple*. It's a pity that the author of *The Gallant Maid* married her off to An Lung-mei, so she ended up a second wife in charge of the household." Li-na said, "Of course there are really no such people as Thirteenth Sister. When the Chinese talk of knight-errants, then's always a tinge of the supernatural to it. A few days ago I saw a performance of *Hung-hsien Steals the Casket* here.[31] Hung-hsien was really a supernatural being, and it was all rather overdone." Chia-shu said, "Of course. Anything that comes from a writer's pen or is acted on stage is larger than life. But that's not to say that no knight-errants exist." Li-na said, "Seeing is believing. No matter how marvellous something sounds, I'll believe it when I see it. You say there are such swordsmen—have you seen one?" Chia-shu said, "I may not have seen anyone with supernatural powers, but I've certainly seen a warrior with the old knightly spirit. Not only have I done so, you may have too. Because people like this will never reveal themselves, but look quite ordinary when you meet them, you had no way of knowing." Li-na said, "That sounds rather hard to prove. If you've seen them but don't know who they are, isn't that just the same as not having seen them at all?" Chia-shu smiled and said, "Don't argue, listen to the opera."

On the stage, Thirteenth Sister was just raising her sword as matchmaker for Young An and Chang Chin-feng. Chia-shu gazed at the scene abstractedly; it was only when they left the theatre that he gave a sigh. Li-na smiled and said, "What are you sighing over?" Chia-shu said, "Miss Ho is rather foolish." Li-na reddened and asked with a smile, "What's foolish about me?" Chia-shu said, "I don't mean you. I was saying that the Miss Ho on stage—Thirteenth Sister, Ho Yü-feng —was rather foolish. She was a free spirit, going where she pleased, but she went and acted as matchmaker for other people and in the end was drawn into the whirlpool of passion herself—wasn't that foolish?" Having misunderstood him, Li-na did not feel like debating the question further, and they left together. When they reached the door, she said smilingly to Chia-shu, "I'm afraid your cousin's wife will tease us, so I can only drop you at the mouth of the lane." Chia-shu said, "You don't need to, I'll take a rickshaw and get myself home." So saying, he bade her farewell and went home.

When he reached home he looked at his watch: it was one o'clock. He undressed at once and went to bed. In bed he thought about the dream-like nature of life. An hour ago he had been watching Thirteenth Sister despatch the doughty monks on Black Wind Ridge to the clashing of cymbals—what excitement! And now he was lying in bed, and it was all merely froth and bubble. If there had once really been a Neng-jen Temple, it would have been no more than this, gone in a flash. But man's view of life is clouded by his passions, and who can see the reality? You might say that Shou-feng and his daughter had seen through everything, but in reality people with their love of righting wrongs were precisely those most blinded. Their parting today—what had the two of them been going to do? Were they too resting now? Hsiu-ku's vantage point was of course not that of Thirteenth Sister, but her generosity was even greater than that which Thirteenth Sister had shown to Young An and Miss Chang. Disturbed by these fancies, he lay awake the whole night.

When he got up the next day it was already late. The results of his university entrance examinations were being posted that day, so he went to look. Fortunately he'd taken the examination seriously and was well up on the list of entrants. Several of his friends had heard the

[31] Based upon a T'ang dynasty short-story "The Story of Hung-hsien." Cf. E.D. Edwards, *Chinese Prose Literature of the T'ang Period*, Vol. II, London, Arthur Probsthain, 1938, pp. 323-27.

I dealt him a deadly blow, in order to remove an enemy of our society and nation.

news and, telling him that his troubles were over, they carried him off to see a film and have a meal out. Chia-shu too felt he had a weight off his mind and could afford to enjoy himself, so he joined in the merriment and temporarily laid aside the affairs of the Kuans and the Shens.

The following day he rose early. He had nothing on his mind and no need to cram, so it occurred to him that since Li-na had invited him to the opera several times, now that he had nothing to do he should find a good show and invite her in return. With this in mind, he picked up two newspapers and lay back on the sofa to read them. As he turned the pages idly, his eye was caught by a headline in extra large type: GENERAL LIU TE-CHU ASSASSINATED TWO NIGHTS AGO AT THE WESTERN HILLS. Below were three lines of subheading in large type: **Murderer a Young Girl. Vanished, Leaving Message on Wall. Crime Complex; Motivation Not Known.** When Chia-shu saw these lines, his heart started pounding violently despite himself. He read through the report once hurriedly, then again in more detail, then a third time going over each word. His emotions were tempestuous, alternately excited and downcast, but he lay completely motionless on the sofa. Where his neck rested there was a large wet patch, and his vest was sticking to his back. The news report ran:

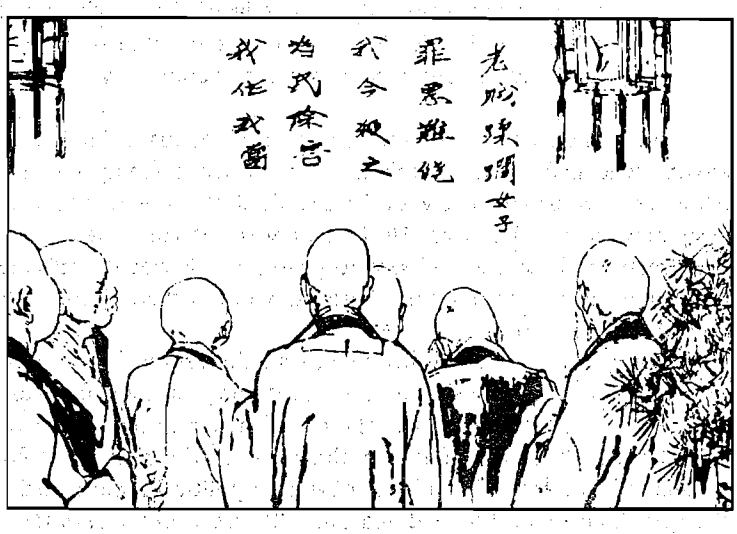
> The younger brother of Inspector General Liu, General Liu Te-chu, presently Supervisor of Tax Collection in the Five Provinces and concurrently Head of the Peking Bureau, was an important figure in

political circles. He had recently married again, and wished to find a capable maid to wait on his new wife. A young woman sent by an employment agency applied for the job; she made a satisfactory first impression and was appointed. She called herself Wu and said that her father was a farmer and her mother a servant in the household of Minister Chang. She herself had gone into service because of poverty. General Liu saw nothing out of the ordinary in these circumstances and did not inquire further. However, suspicious elements in the case subsequently emerged. No one called at the Liu residence to collect the employment agency's fee after she began work, she never brought her bedding from home, and the so-called Minister Chang could not be traced.

In the course of several days work at the Liu residence, the young woman became a favourite with her employer. At that time his new wife became seriously ill and had to enter hospital for treatment. The young woman was often in and out of the upper apartments alone. Three days ago, General Liu suddenly announced that he intended to make her his concubine. Her delight was evident. Not wishing to disturb friends and relatives with the wedding festivities, they left for the Pa-ta-ch'u in the Western Hills at five in the afternoon two days ago, accompanied by two attendants, to celebrate this joyous occasion.

When they reached the Western Hills, Liu wished to stay at the Western Hills Hotel, but the young woman objected. They therefore dismissed their attendants and went up in sedan chairs to spend the night in the mountain-side Heights-of-Happiness Temple. The temple has several clean bedrooms which serve as overnight accommodation for Chinese and Western sightseers. When the monks heard that General Liu was coming, they bent over backwards to ensure his comfort, sending people to the Western Hills Hotel for bedding and arranging for food and wine to be brought up the mountain. In the evening, Liu ordered the monks to light two red candles. He and the girl drank together, talking and laughing with every appearance of happiness. When the general was tipsy, the young woman helped him off to bed with the monks leading the way carrying the two candles. When the monks left, fearing that someone might disturb their happy dreams, they pulled to the door of the inner courtyard.

The next day the sun rose above the hills but the general did not get up. The monks dared not call him and simply waited. Morning turned to noon and noon to the setting of the sun, but still the sleepers did not wake. The monks thought this odd and began to make a loud noise in the courtyard to arouse them. When the room was silent as before, they called out and pushed the door open. Liu was lying up on the bed, and the young woman was not there. The monks imagined he was sleeping soundly and the young woman had gone out for a minute. They were about to withdraw when they chanced to look up and see blood splattered on the whitewashed wall forming a scrawled message which ran: "(portion omitted).... Now he is trampling on womanhood yet again. When he forced his attentions on me, I concocted a story to lure him into the mountains. There I aimed at one of his vital spots, and dealt him a deadly blow, in order to remove an enemy of



They saw blood spattered on the whitewashed wall, forming a scrawled message . . . .

our society and nation. Slashing his arm, I dipped cotton wadding in his blood and wrote on the wall, to make it clear that I and I alone am responsible for this act. The Republic of China, X year, X month, X day at midnight. (Signed) A Friend of Justice." The style was crude but clear, and the tone definitely that of a woman. The monks were much alarmed. They looked at the figure on the bed, and found it already stiff and lifeless. They immediately raced down the mountainside to inform the police, who telephoned the city and sent out search parties.

Military and police organs gave the matter top priority, and took swift and secret measures to search out clues. According to the guards at the Liu residence, the young woman had made a visit home before leaving the city. A search was made of the premises, and it was discovered that not only was the house vacant, but all the neighbouring families had moved out of the courtyard that morning. When inquiries were made further down the street, it was found that the house had been occupied by a father and daughter named Kuan, not Wu. Kuan had been a martial arts teacher by trade, a law-abiding person; it was a mystery why he had had his daughter do this. People from the employment agency were also detained. Its owner said that the young woman had not in fact been introduced by them. The female servant (commonly known as a runaround) who had let the young woman into the Liu residence said she had met her outside the house and been offered two dollars as inducement to let her in so that she could see a relative. She had never thought that General Liu would employ her, thus bringing about this disaster. She was unable to account for the young woman's present whereabouts.

It appears from the above that the murder of Liu by Kuan and his daughter was premediated. Military and police organs are continuing

> to track down the culprits; details of the search cannot be divulged at present. It is said, however, that some threads of evidence are being followed up, and a complete explanation may soon be forthcoming.

As if the first part of the report wasn't enough, the second part appeared to suggest that anyone who had had any dealings with the Kuan family might be brought in for questioning. Although few people knew of Chia-shu's dealings with the Kuans, that was not the same as absolutely no one knowing. He himself was not concerned at the prospect of being pulled off the streets by detectives and sent to prison, but it would implicate his cousin and greatly distress his mother in the south. He had better stay out of the way for a while, and start classes only when everything was secure.

Once he had made up his mind, Chia-shu assumed a careless expression and sauntered into the north room. His cousin Po-ho too was lying on the sofa reading a paper. He put it down and asked Chia-shu, "Have you seen the paper? There's been an assassination." Chia-shu replied with a light laugh, "I saw it. That's nothing out of the ordinary." Po-ho said, "Nothing out of the ordinary? Nonsense. This affair is obviously politically motivated." As he spoke he looked up in thought, then shook his head and said, "It was a pretty devastating ploy! What a pity that their methods were a little crude—that old trick of a seductress." Chia-shu said, "It doesn't seem politically motivated to me." Po-ho said, "You haven't entered officialdom yet—how could you know the ins and outs of political manoeuvring? I happen to know that this woman was bought from Mount E-mei[32]—she would have got at least a hundred thousand for her pains." Po-ho had talked himself into a good humour; he lit a cigar and reviewed current events for the thousandth time. Chia-shu had a book in his hand; he was smiling slightly. He waited until Po-ho stopped, then said, "I was thinking of going to see Uncle in Tientsin today, and coming back after the university opens. I should have gone long ago, but I put it off because the results weren't out and I had a slight illness." Mrs T'ao smiled. "I think you should go too. I was talking about you on the phone to Second Aunt only two days ago. But why rush off today?" Chia-shu smiled and said, "I've nothing to do in Peking, I'm just quietly waiting for the university to open. And I have an impatient nature; when I say I'll do something, I like to do it at once." Mrs T'ao said, "You could go today. If you take the 4.30 train it won't be such a rush." Chia-shu said, "Aren't there any trains before four?" Mrs T'ao said, "What are you in such a hurry for? There is one at two, but it's a slow train; if you took it, you'd be even more impatient." Chia-shu was afraid of arousing the T'ao's suspicions, so said no more. He went back to his room to put a few things together. For no reason that he could think of, his external calm concealed an extraordinary agitation within.

After lunch he paced up and down the corridor, looking frequently at his watch to see whether it was yet three. After a few turns up and down, he became aware that the servants were watching and began to be afraid that they would find him out. He went to his room and lay down on the bed. He managed to survive the hours of waiting, and at three o'clock said farewell to Mrs T'ao and went to the station. It was not until he was sitting in a second class carriage that he felt easier in his mind; but he heard a burst of noise on the platform, and saw several policeman moving down surrounded by a throng of people. He heard the words, "They've caught two more, they've caught two more." When Chia-shu heard this, his heart leaped into his mouth. He hurriedly took a book out of his travelling bag, and, putting on an air of naturalness, turned away slightly to read it. Beside him, he heard a fellow passenger say, "They've caught some pick-pockets." Chia-shu realized he had been mistaken again. A cold sweat dried on him, and his only wish was that the train might start quicker.

[32] In Szechuan province, traditionally known as a centre of Taoist activities.

At three o'clock he said farewell to Mrs T'ao and went to the station.

In a little while, the train's wheels started turning, and with the bliss of one who has rid himself of a heavy burden Chia-shu was carried out of the Tung-pien Gate. Only then did he have time to enjoy the scenery outside the train window. He thought to himself, "One's fortunes are a matter of great uncertainty. Who would have thought I would suddenly be going to Tientsin today? When old Shou-feng said goodbye to me yesterday, why didn't he let me know what was going on? It would have saved me today's needless alarm." He turned to other thoughts. He had been over-anxious; in the past few months, he had visited the Kuan's house only four or five times; who did not have some friends in society? If one's friends committed a crime, everybody else did not necessarily fall under suspicion; and in any case, his dealings with Kuan Shou-feng were not sufficient to attract attention. As for his connection with Liu Te-chu, no one knew about that apart from the Kuans. Except for Feng-hsi—she knew that Hsiu-ku went on my account, but if she named me she herself would be implicated. Looked at this way, his flight had been lacking in courage. Shou-feng had mentioned Feng-hsi repeatedly, and said I would have the opportunity to meet her again. Surely she hadn't been a party to the secret? But she couldn't have been—she was a madwoman in hospital now, and her mother and uncle were unbearable; it would be impossible to discuss questions of this importance with them. . . . Lost in thought, he was unconscious of the passing of time until the train arrived in Tientsin.

[*The remaining page of this chapter is an obvious filler, describing Chia-shu's arrival at his uncle's house in rather vacuous detail. It has no relevance to the plot and is therefore omitted in this translation.*]