

PRIZE-WINNING STORIES
FROM CHINA
1978-1979

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THE TEACHER

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How would you like to get to know a young hooligan, moreover put up with him every day? I doubt you would like it. You probably find the very question ridiculous.

But Zhang Junshi, the teacher of a third-year junior high school class, did not find it so odd when Old Cao put this question to him in the Party branch office. As the tanned and fit Old Cao, Party Secretary of Guangming Middle School, peered at him with a trustful eye, Zhang reflected seriously for a moment before answering curtly: "All right. I'll meet him. . . ."

A few days earlier, Song Baoqi, a juvenile delinquent, had been released from detention. He had been arrested for involvement in criminal gang activities. During questioning, he sat drenched in sweat, facing the authorities, his quivering lips making a full confession. The confession included information about the crimes committed by the leader of the gang. Because of the specifics of his case—the fact that he had willingly confessed, that the crimes were not terribly serious, and that he was not yet 16 years old—the Public Security Bureau let him go on the stipulation that he be re-educated. His parents felt they could not face their neighbors

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any more so they moved. It so happened the closest school near their new home was the Guangming Middle School, and according to the new regulation, "enrollment by proximity", it was this school that he should attend.

Song was of age to enroll in the third year, and one of the third-year classes with Zhang as the teacher had a vacancy. Zhang had more than ten years of experience in teaching in addition to being the only Party member among the third-year teachers. After evaluating the situation, the Party branch committee finally agreed to accept the boy's request for enrollment. So Old Cao now asked Zhang what he thought, "What do you say? Will you take him?" Zhang's eyes met Cao's and found encouragement in them. He agreed.

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What was this Zhang like? Let's have a closer look at him as he cycles towards the Public Security Bureau in the dusty spring wind to find out more about his new pupil.

He is 36 years old this year, quite ordinary-looking, of medium height and slightly overweight. His clothes are obviously old, but clean and tidy. Every button is buttoned up to the collar. His face is oval-shaped, his forehead creased, and his eyes, though not large, can flash when he is angry. Students who tell lies are very afraid of that look. What the students respect most, however, is Zhang Junshi's mouth. It is popularly held that people with thin lips are very knowledgeable, but Zhang's lips are thick, and in the spring and winter months they are usually dried and chapped from the wind. But what is issued from between these lips is always full of passion and verve, sharp and fluent like a seeding machine planting in the minds of the students seeds of revolutionary thought. It is also like a broom, tirelessly and mercilessly sweeping out the dust that collects in their minds.

On the ride over, Zhang wore a rather impassive face. It was only after he arrived at the bureau, heard the details about young Song's case from the public security official, and looked over the case file that he became animated. His feelings were hard to identify, but they bordered on indignation, disgust and scorn. Later, these would give way to determination, worry and a strong feeling of responsibility.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon by the time Zhang got back to school. He wiped the sweat from his brow with a neatly folded handkerchief as he walked into the teachers' staffroom. Everyone knew that young Song was to join Zhang's class the next day. Yin Dalei, the math teacher, confronted Zhang immediately, and thus initiated the first skirmish of the Song Baoqi affair.

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Yin and Zhang were the same age, graduated from the same teachers' training college, both joined the staff of the Guangming Middle School, and often taught the same classes. They always confided in each other about everything. Even when they argued, they did so without tip-toeing around each other's feelings. Between them, there was nothing left unsaid.

Yin Dalei was tall and slender, but his facial features were very tight-knit so that he could not escape the nickname "baby-face". It was a good thing that he had a pair of thick glasses perched on the bridge of his nose for it helped him command respect from the students.

In the spring of 1977, Yin was in good spirits and had high hopes for the future of education in the country, his school and his classes. He felt that all injustices should and could be righted since the "Gang of Four" had been

overthrown the previous October. Education was moving ahead rapidly. It was what he had longed for as a teacher.

But the imminent arrival of Song Baoqi infuriated him and as soon as Zhang entered the room Yin attacked him. "Why the hell did you agree to admit that punk?" he blasted forth. "You know damn well all our third-year classes are trying to improve their work and study harder. If we teachers have to cope with that little delinquent as well, we'll have our hands full just keeping an eye on him. How can we pay attention to improving our teaching methods as well? A rotten apple spoils the basket as the saying goes. Why didn't you consider this before you agreed to take him? Really, I can't fathom it!"

Some of the other teachers agreed with Yin's point but not with his severe attitude. Others felt Yin meant well but disagreed with him. A few had not formed any opinions on the subject and merely sympathized with Zhang for his extra burden. But all of them, whether standing or sitting, stared at him without uttering a sound. Even a model of the ear used in biology class which rested on top of a bookshelf seemed to be waiting expectantly for Zhang's reply.

Zhang felt there was some truth to what Yin was saying but that it was extreme. Zhang thought for a moment before answering, "Well, we can hardly send him back into detention or to his former school. I'm his teacher, so it's my responsibility to help him. . . ."

His words were cool. If they had been harsh and defensive, it might have led to a violent argument. But Zhang's mild response caught Yin off guard and he could not react. Other teachers were also moved, many of them thinking to themselves, "If Song Baoqi were to end up in my class, what would I do?"

Zhang was preparing to begin work at once when suddenly Xie Huimin, the young secretary of his class' Youth League branch, came to see him.

Xie Huimin was a good head taller than most of the boys in her class. She carried herself very erect, and had a healthy athletic look. Once when the basketball coach saw her walk past the gymnasium, he thought he had discovered the makings of a promising player. Imagine his disappointment when this oval-faced, wide-eyed girl turned out to be stiff and un-coordinated and had no interest in sports whatsoever.

In fact, she had few outside interests besides going to the movies or singing popular songs she had picked up from the radio. Her studies were mediocre and sometimes she didn't finish her homework but her teachers and classmates excused her for they knew she was busy with activities for the Youth League.

The first year Zhang taught the class, Xie was already the secretary of the Youth League branch. Soon after that, it was the class' turn to go to the countryside to work and live with the peasants for a short period. On the day they headed back home, they had traveled over two kilometers when Xie noticed a boy waving a stalk of wheat in his hand. She angrily demanded of him, "Why did you take wheat from the peasants? Give it to me. It must be returned." The boy defended himself, "I want to show my parents how well the wheat is growing." An argument ensued among the students. Most of them thought that Xie was making a mountain out of a molehill. In the end, it was naturally up to Zhang to settle the matter. Holding the wheat in her hand, Xie looked at Zhang, her lips parted expectantly.

To everyone's surprise, Zhang supported Xie. Heated arguments and whispered conversations buzzed around as Zhang watched Xie's solitary figure race back along the muddy dirt track to the village. Zhang was strangely moved. Perhaps Xie could have handled the situation differently, but

she had had only three months' experience in the Youth League and her determination to let the peasants lose not a single grain of wheat revealed her pure and lofty feelings.

But the sinister influence of the "Gang of Four", which so oppressed and damaged all of China, also affected the everyday life of teachers and students. The municipal Youth League, which was controlled by the "Gang of Four" had sent liaison personnel to Guangming Middle School and hoped to make a "model" out of one of the third-year classes. Xie was often summoned to meetings about this plan. Being very naive and sincere, however, she failed to see their motives. It was not her habit to speculate about politics. She found, however, that some kind of unexplained contradiction arose between herself and her teacher.

For instance, once Xie reported that two of the five members dozed off at a Youth League meeting. Zhang, instead of criticizing them, suggested, "Perhaps it's because all you do is read the newspaper. Why not do something different for a change? What about a mountain-climbing competition. I guarantee they won't fall asleep." Xie blinked in astonishment. She could hardly believe her ears. "A mountain-climbing competition! What kind of activity is that?" she protested. "We were reading articles of mass criticism. . . ."

Another time, after class, all the girls hovered by the window to get a breath of fresh air in the suffocating heat. Zhang called Xie over to one side. Looking her up and down, he said, "Why are you wearing a long-sleeved blouse in this hot weather? You should set an example by wearing short sleeves. Besides, you girls should all be wearing skirts." Xie, suffocating as she was from the heat, blushed with annoyance. For the life of her, Xie could not understand what he was driving at. There was only one girl in the whole class who dared to wear a colorful, short-sleeved blouse and skirt, and she was Shi Hong, the Youth League branch mem-

ber in charge of propaganda. In Xie's eyes, she was under the influence of the corrupt style.

After the fall of the "Gang of Four", some, but not all of the differences between her and Zhang were bridged. This time, Xie looked for Zhang to report, "We hear that Song is going to join our class. The boys say that he used to be part of the block gang. Some of the girls are scared and say that if he comes, they won't attend the school any more."

Zhang was stunned. He had not expected this. He decided he had to solicit the help of the Youth League committee. "Are you yourself scared?" he asked Xie Huimin. "What do you think we should do?"

Tossing back her two short braids, Xie replied, "Afraid of what? It's a question of class struggle. If he makes trouble, we'll take care of him."

Zhang was stirred and flashed back to the figure darting along the dirt track with the stalk of wheat. In a softened tone he suggested, "Let's call a meeting of the Youth League branch and the class monitors."

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At about twenty past four the meeting ended. Everyone had left except for Zhang, Xie and Shi Hong.

Shi sat facing the window. The afternoon sun shining on her round cheeks made them appear even rosier than usual. Her chin rested in the palm of her hand as the pupils of her eyes rolled about. This was the look she adopted when she was thinking of a particularly ingenious way to solve a math problem, a look to which her teacher had become quite accustomed. This time, however, it was not a math problem she was working on, but rather the lines of a poem that she was preparing to read to everyone in the class including Song Baoqi, entitled "A Call to Arms".

Meanwhile, Zhang and Xie were engaged in conversation. Preparations for young Song's arrival were already under way. The male League members had the job of explaining to the other boys that Song was not so much a "hero" of the Cai-shikou gang but a person who had done wrong and so needed a lot of help. Instead of isolating him by making him the object of either curiosity or worship, they should all do their best to help him. The girls were sent to the homes of those who refused to attend school the next day, whether it be out of fear or disgust. They promised to protect them from Song's bullying. They pointed out that avoiding him would only make things worse. They should all attempt to educate him and transform him into a useful member of the society.

Zhang would later visit Song and talk to him and his parents. Shi Hong, in her poem, was encouraging her classmates to help China advance under the guiding principles of order and discipline.

Zhang and Xie had ended their discussion just as Shi Hong was touching up her poem. Zhang gathered up the objects on the table. They were all the things found after Song had been arrested and had just been brought back from the Public Security Bureau for inspection by the League members and monitors. There was a long bicycle chain which he used as a weapon in fights, a pack of worn-out playing cards, a stylish metal-plated cigarette case with a lighter attached and a novel with the cover torn off. When the students saw the items, they turned their noses in disgust. Xie proposed, "Tomorrow we'll call a meeting of the Youth League members and activists among the classmates and show them these things and criticize them." Shi supported the idea. Zhang also agreed, saying, "O.K. We'll use this opportunity to educate the students against corruption."

But an unexpected argument arose as Zhang was packing the things in his bag. It was the last object, the coverless novel, which he had not had time to examine carefully before.

He was astonished to find it was a book published before the Cultural Revolution by the China Youth Publishing House, a translation of the work *The Gadfly*.

Xie quickly grabbed the book, having never read or even heard of it before. An illustration of a foreign man and woman embracing made her cry out in horror, "Ugh! How obscene! We must condemn this piece of trash tomorrow."

Zhang knitted his brows in thought. He remembered when he had been a Youth League member in middle school, and the book had been recommended to him. Once, around a bonfire, they had taken turns reading it aloud with much youthful passion. During an outing to the Great Wall they had heatedly discussed Gadfly's merits and faults. The novel, written by a British woman, Ethel Boole Voynich, had greatly moved Zhang and his peers. They especially derived inspiration from the protagonist of the novel. It was possible they had underestimated the book's weak points, or perhaps failed to fully understand its true meaning. Still. . . . He turned to Xie and replied sharply, "The book is not obscene."

Xie frowned in indignation. Glaring at him, she demanded angrily, "Not obscene? If this isn't, then what is?"

Xie was totally convinced that all books obtained outside of bookstores and libraries were automatically subversive or pornographic. How could she think otherwise, having grown up during the time when the "Gang of Four" exercised a fascist dictatorship over culture? Xie had naively and trustingly swallowed all that had been printed, devoutly reading the newspapers and magazines which were full of the gang's tainted writings. If only someone very close to Xie could have pointed out at that time that the "important articles on theories of proletarian dictatorship" by members of the "Gang of Four" like Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan were dubious and not authoritative Marxist-Leninist writings. But for various reasons no one ever did. Her parents urged their children to follow Chairman Mao, listen to the broadcasts,

read newspapers, be disciplined, respect their teachers and study hard.

She grew up a daughter of workers with strong proletarian feelings. Yet when the bourgeoisie and revisionists appeared in a revolutionary disguise, people with simple proletarian feelings were prone to be duped. Young and inexperienced, aspiring to be a good revolutionary, Xie had become narrow-minded and confused under the influence and restrictions of the "Gang of Four". To her, *The Gadfly* was a poisonous book. Not only that, even people who talked about a newly-revived film or a new song on the radio were "bourgeois".

A few days earlier, she had confiscated a thick novel that Shi was reading. Xie's heart pounded as she leafed through *The Song of Youth* published in 1959, and she was determined to hand in the "obscene" book to her teacher. Shi, however, snatched it away and told her, "It's a great book. You should read it." A quarrel ensued. Xie forgot to report the matter to Zhang because she had rushed off to attend a Youth League meeting. Little did she know that he, in defending a foreign book, was even worse than Shi. Foreign decadent literature was of course far more dreadful than anything Chinese. She began to think of other disagreements she had had with him in the past and suddenly her respect for him diminished. She pursed her lips and frowned in stubbornness.

Shi, having finished her poem, was about to recite it to Zhang and Xie when she heard Zhang say, "The book is not obscene. . . ." She quickly went over to have a look at what book it was. Seeing Xie so angry, Shi shook her arm and urged, "Don't talk like that. You know, my parents said that this book is worth reading. I'm now in the middle of *How the Steel Was Tempered*. Its hero, Pavel Korchagin, a proletarian, was a great admirer of *Gadfly*." Shi had wanted to read *The Gadfly* but had not been able to get hold of a copy. Taking the book from Xie, she flipped through it and her desire to



read it grew even stronger. What was the book about? Who was this Gadfly? Was he really a hero to admire? Handing it back to Zhang, she could not help asking, "What can we learn from this book? What should we note?" Xie looked at her friend, feeling irritated.

Zhang thumbed through the pages of the worn book, wishing he could explain that it was not a decadent book, but he checked his impulse to do so because in Song's copy, all pictures of women had a mustache drawn savagely on the face. Had Song thought it decadent also? The book had been through some strange experiences. It would take time and a suitable opportunity to explain to a naive child like Xie the very complicated phenomena of life, and how both the good and bad can co-exist in literature.

Putting the novel into his bag, he said kindly to Xie, "Let's discuss this another time. It's almost five. Recite your poem to us, Shi, before we leave."

Xie didn't hear a word of the poem, she stared instead at the flickering shadows of trees on her desk. She wanted with all her might to respect Zhang, yet his attitude about this book distressed her. She wondered to herself, "He's still a teacher. How could he act this way . . . ?"

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Shortly after five o'clock, Zhang arrived by bike at Song's new home. The two rooms in the east wing of a small courtyard were in great disarray. For instance, a pot of flowers was oddly placed on a sheet of plastic covering the sewing-machine table.

Having swopped her rest day to move house, Song's mother, a shop assistant, was busily putting things in order. Zhang's appearance both comforted and embarrassed her. She

summoned her son from the inner room to greet his teacher and serve tea.

Her husband, who worked regular hours in a tree nursery, got off at six but usually did not come home until eight or nine o'clock each evening. His wife told Zhang in a sad voice that in the past few years he had gotten into the habit of playing cards. He would pass Yuetan Park on his way home from work, park his bicycle, then relax in the shadow of the trees to play cards with his friends. When it became too dark to see, they moved to the light of a street lamp and continued until one of them had to leave to go on night shift. Without any spiritual meaning in life, it was no wonder that he had not educated and handled his son well. As for the mother, her words made evident her deep bitterness for the years of suffering because of all the pampering she gave her only son.

But the family was not all bad. The rooms required a lot of work before they would be clean, but already portraits of Chairman Mao and Chairman Hua were neatly hung side by side on the northern wall. A smaller one of Premier Zhou, in a home-made frame of silver plum blossoms, was carefully hung above the cabinet. This ordinary, middle-aged couple shared the feelings of their countrymen. They had their faults, of course, but who was really responsible for their barren inner life?

At a quarter to six, Zhang suggested that the mother continue her work while he went into another room to have his first talk with young Song.

What was Song like? His muscular, well-fed body was revealed through his nylon vest. He was lucky to be part of a society where there was sufficient food and clothing. Zhang, who was accustomed to studying the faces of his students, shuddered when he looked at Song. It was not that he was ugly. But the muscles on his face, his scarred upper lip, torn and stitched after a fight, the nervous quivering of his nostrils and particularly the vacant, numbed expression in

his eyes were evidence of a perverse and twisted youth. Zhang was depressed.

After about thirty questions, Zhang had summed up young Song. The young man had no sense of political consciousness whatsoever; his educational level was that of a first-year junior high school student; though muscular, he was terrible at sports. People who were content to label a person and then forget about him might have said he was "full of bourgeois ideas". This was not only an inadequate definition of him, it would not help him start a new life at all.

Song was, of course, bourgeois in his thinking. But what specifically were bourgeois ideas?

The bourgeoisie uphold "freedom, equality and fraternity" and then they strive to be independent and famous. They cloak their exploitation and oppression of others with their "humanism". But what of Song? Well, he merely obeyed the strict rules of his gang. Bigger hooligans had bullied him, tortured him, burning his scalp with cigarette butts. This did not enrage him or make him retaliate. Nor did it ever occur to him to be independent or demand "freedom, equality and fraternity". He was blindly loyal to his gang and obeyed the older hooligans. And he, in turn, bullied the younger ones.

To be an expert in something or be famous had never once occurred to Song. After all, he had grown up at a time when all scientists, engineers, writers, professors and others were attacked as decadent intellectuals by Lin Biao and the "Gang of Four". The status of intellectuals was even lower than that of hooligans like young Song. So why should he emulate them and strive to be one? To hell with knowledge!

You had to understand young Song's problems in order to help him. It was not enough to dismiss him as being "full of bourgeois ideas". Those bourgeois concepts played little, if any part at all, in his thinking. What was wrong with him was his blind attachment to the so-called "brotherhood" of

feudalism and the reactionary hedonism of the bourgeoisie in their decline. To some extent, young Song's problems were quite common.

Zhang took out the worn novel from his bag. "Do you remember the title of this book?" he inquired.

The sympathetic questions of this teacher were much better than those posed by the Public Security Bureau. Song replied meekly, "It's Gad . . . something."

"*The Gadfly*. Do you know what that means?"

Staring at a butterfly, the boy frankly said he did not.

"Have you read it?"

"Oh, I probably flipped through it before, but I'm sure I didn't understand it."

"Why do you have it then? Where did you get it from?"

"We stole it."

"Where and why did you steal it?"

"It was in the room where our teachers kept forbidden books. We broke in and stole two bundles of them. We planned to sell them."

"Which ones? Do you remember their names?"

"Of course!" Song was pleased that he could show he was not a complete ignoramus. His eyes blinked for the first time in concentration, as he tried to recall the list. "There was *Red Crag*, and . . . *Peace and War*. Or was it *War and Peace*?"

Zhang was distressed as he listened, not by the theft, but by the list of harmless and valuable books that had been hidden away and prohibited. Song and his gang had not committed the crime of reading bad books, as was generally supposed. They had enjoyed creating havoc and profiting by it. But their behavior had not been influenced by their reading.

Fingering the book, Zhang demanded, "Why did you draw a mustache on all the pictures with a woman in them? What was the point?"

Ashamed, Song lowered his eyes and replied, "It was a competition. We each took a book and drew a mustache on every woman in the pictures. The one who drew the most was to have good luck. . . ."

Zhang was outraged and speechless. Song stole a glance at him. Ashamed, he quickly added, "I know it was wrong. We shouldn't have read those pornographic books. . . . We were just trying to find out who would be the first to get a girl friend. . . . I . . . I won't do it again." He thought of the Public Security Bureau and his mother's tearful eyes, showing a mixture of love and hate, as she took him home.

"We shouldn't have read those pornographic books. . . ." This upset Zhang. After all there was a world of difference between "good" girls like Xie and "bad" boys like Song. Yet both had one thing in common. They had reached the same conclusion that *The Gadget* was an obscene book without ever having read it. What a shocking social phenomenon! What was the reason?

Zhang's disgust with the "Gang of Four" burst forth more violently than ever. Never before had so many people been fooled by reactionary policies disguised as true revolutionary "logic", as during the period of their reign.

With his chin on his chest, Song sat propped up by his strong arms on his bed. He gazed aimlessly at his feet which he was rubbing together. This poor boy was rejecting knowledge and culture. Zhang almost cried out in despair: How to save the children ruined by the "Gang of Four"?

7

Spring days are short and dusk was already descending as the clock on the Telegraph Building struck seven.

Wheeling his bicycle into a small park, Zhang found an empty bench in a quiet spot. Parking his bike beside it, he

sat down and lit a cigarette. He frowned as he tried to channel his feelings into some positive plan of action.

The long willow branches swept over the bench in the breeze. Elm seeds fell gently down on him. The fragrance of lilac flowers drifted from some unknown place.

His first contact with Song and his family had evoked in him such strong feelings of both love and hate that he had almost lost control of himself. He wanted to call a meeting with his class right then and there, convey his impassioned ideas, give stern criticism, guide and encourage them. He was certain that if he could speak to them at that moment, when he was so filled with inspiration he could make them accept his words.

He felt his affection for China deepened, and he was even more optimistic about its future. The nation's goal and unity made him more anxious to defend China from those who would insult, ridicule, or try to impede her progress. He thought of his responsibilities as a teacher of his class. He was not just teaching students, he was nurturing China's future, so that the Chinese people could live in prosperity among the nations of the world.

He had never been filled with so much disdain for the "Gang of Four" as then. It was not just so much the economic damage they had inflicted upon the country as the harm done to the mind. The so-called "rebels" like Zhang Tiesheng were not the only freaks brought about by the gang. Remember that delinquent youths like Song and good children like Xie had all been confused in their thinking by the "Gang of Four". The gang had not only trampled on China's present, but also on her future.

Zhang's hatred for these wrongs intensified his love for his people and vice versa. When love mingled with hate, it gave people courage to fight for the truth and even to sacrifice their lives for it.

Abruptly he rose and looked at his watch. A quarter past seven! Suppertime! He had almost forgotten it until he was reminded by his rumbling stomach. He still wanted to see a few of his pupils and find out their feelings about Song. But suppertime was not a good hour to go. He strolled about slowly, hands behind his back, planning to leave the park after half past seven.

The scent of the lilac flowers, growing stronger all the time, brought pleasant thoughts to his mind. With the "Gang of Four" overthrown and the Party Central Committee leading the nation, the new situation gave the country hope in the present and for the future. He suddenly felt confident that young Song was not a hopeless case beyond hope and that Xie's misunderstanding of and anger with him could be removed. That girl, despite her confusion, was basically good and committed to socialism.

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Pushing his bicycle out of the park, Zhang ran into Yin who was carrying a bulging bag.

Flabbergasted to see him, Yin asked, "How is it, Zhang, that you're still able to relax and enjoy a walk in the park?"

Zhang answered with a smile. He did not ask Yin where he had been or where he was going. He knew that for the past month Yin had been holding remedial classes at school as well as tutoring individuals at their homes afterwards. He knew Yin very well. During the time of the "Gang of Four", Yin was always complaining about the Ministry of Education, the school administration, the pupils and their parents. To hear him, you would have expected him to quit. But in fact he had worked very hard. Despite his complaining, he never slackened in his efforts even in the face of setbacks and difficulties. When the students, incited by anarchist ideas at

the height of the "Gang of Four", had created hell in his classroom, he began teaching as soon as the bell rang, despite his threats to quit. He continued to persuade, scold and cajole the students, urging them to listen attentively while he rapped on the blackboard with a piece of chalk.

Zhang knew that Yin was heading for the bus stop, on his way home after some individual tutoring. His day's work done, he would start complaining when something triggered him off. Sure enough, Yin patted Zhang's bicycle seat, let out a deep sigh and launched into his grumbling before Zhang could say a word. "Look what a bunch of dummies the 'Gang of Four' has presented us with. I had to explain a simple mathematical theorem again and again to two of my students. . . . You're even luckier with Song on your hands. Really I don't understand you. There's so much to be done, and you waste a whole afternoon on him. Was it worth it? Why can't he go back to his old school if the Public Security Bureau has finished with him? And if they won't take him back, then he can stay at home. . . ."

Zhang began to explain earnestly, "After today, I realize it's not a question of whether or not we accept him. Perhaps we should have special schools or classes for juvenile delinquents. Perhaps he should start at grade one, which is his level. But these questions aren't the crux of the matter. The crux is that the 'Gang of Four' has had a bad influence on the younger generation. That was made clear this afternoon. It hadn't struck me so deeply before. You know, Yin, this spring is beautiful, people are feeling good. But we must fight harder. We must think of the future."

Zhang did not say all that he felt in those few words, but when Yin saw in his friend's eyes his new confidence and strength, all his complaints vanished. The spring breeze blew gently as the two teachers fell into silent thought.

Zhang was planning to have a talk with Yin soon, to point out to him that he sometimes rashly oversimplified

things. Emotions should never be a substitute for sound policy, and impetuous behavior and complaints did not help the revolutionary cause to advance. It required persistence and patience. Hatred for young delinquents like Song could be transformed into sympathy and love for the young people who had been warped by the "Gang of Four". So he wanted to talk to him about philosophy, dialectics, the present and future, love and hate, life and work, as well as about books like *Red Crag* and *The Gadget*.

The clock struck half past seven. Patting Yin on the shoulder, Zhang said, "We must have another talk soon. But now I must be off to see some of my students."

"Oh," said Yin, suddenly remembering. "First go immediately to Shi Hong. One of my students told me that she and Xie had a quarrel. I think you'd better go and sort things out."

Worried, Zhang pedaled away at once.

9

Shi Hong's father worked in the district committee, and her mother taught in a primary school. Not long before the start of the Cultural Revolution, both had joined the Party. They had made it a habit to study Marxism-Leninism. The books on their shelves were dog-eared, underlined and marked for future study. Their edges were covered with finger prints. Shi had become a bookworm too.

She was lucky. In her family, after supertime meant sitting round the table reading. Her father pored over the books of history he so loved; her mother corrected homework; Shi labored over a physics or math problem. Sometimes they discussed the news or a literary work. They all debated furiously. Even during the time of the "Gang of Four's" suppression of culture, they had on their bookshelves

"forbidden" Chinese and foreign literature — works like *The Hurricane*, *Selected Works of Mao Dun*, *Red Crag*, *Eugenie Grandet* and *Three Hundred Poems from the Tang Dynasty*.

Zhang had once asked Shi Hong to bring the works by Marx and Lenin, the *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* and two of her notebooks to class and to parent-teacher meetings to show others. Her ability to analyze according to the principles of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought pleased Zhang very much.

Zhang knocked at her door and entered to find a room full of people. Shi sat in the middle of the room at the table, reading a book. Five of her classmates were listening. One, chin propped on hand and wide-eyed, stared at Shi. Another leaned back in her chair. One played absent-mindedly with her pigtails. These were the girls who had sworn not to attend school if Song did.

Shi was so absorbed in her book, she was oblivious to Zhang's presence; some of the girls, however, looked up and smiled shyly at him. Not wishing to interrupt Shi's moving story, they did not greet him aloud.

Just then Shi's mother appeared at the door and led Zhang into another room, asking him to sit down while she softly explained, "They are listening to Lu Xun's translation of *The Watch*."

The Watch was a children's story written by the Russian writer Pantalejev soon after the October Revolution. It described the transformation of a young offender in a reformatory. Lu Xun had translated it with great enthusiasm. Zhang having read it years before remembered some of the episodes and characters. He knew at once why the girls were reading the book. Shi's mother confirmed, "Shi Hong told me about young Song when she came home. During supper she didn't say much as she was thinking so hard. While we were washing up she spoke to me about inviting Xie and the

other girls over here to listen to *The Watch*. I agreed and so here they all are except Xie."

Having just finished a paragraph, Shi popped into the room, book in hand, and exclaimed happily to Zhang, "You're just the person I want to see. Please come and talk to us about this book."

The girls all rose to greet him and then bombarded him with questions.

"May we read this book, Teacher?"

"Xie said it was a bad book. Is that true?"

"Did you go and see Song? Was he better or worse than the boy in this book?"

In reply, Zhang simply said, "Why isn't Xie here? Did you have an argument with her, Shi? You should all try to talk to her."

As all the girls spoke at once, Zhang could not understand a word they were saying. Shi told them to be quiet and then explained, "She refused to come until the newspaper published an article stating *The Watch* is a good book."

Shi's initiative had pleased Xie when she had seen her approaching, but her feelings immediately changed to disgust when she heard about the plan to read *The Watch*. Shi felt the book was good and would help the girls. Xie cut her short by asking if it had been recommended in the papers. Shi was taken aback. After a while she could only reply it had not been.

"So you're willing to read a book that hasn't been approved," Xie inquired. "How can we set an example that would corrupt others?" Xie earnestly warned Shi against making mistakes. Shi then shouted at her out of frustration. As she left, she took Xie's hand and begged her to come. Xie brushed her hand away and stubbornly refused. After Shi had left, Xie was still very upset. She went outside biting her lower lip, and let the night breeze caress her flushed cheeks.

Zhang sat down and talked to the girls about *The Watch*,

the transformation of the Soviet Union, the misguided youth in the book and then about Song. He spoke about the education of delinquents and his confidence in transforming most of them into useful citizens. Then Zhang asked them, "So will you stay away from school now?"

Exchanging glances all the girls cried in unison, "No!"

Zhang left. The starry sky was a deep blue.

Zhang could not get Xie off his mind all the time he spoke to the girls. He cared for her like a doctor for a healthy child who had caught some infectious disease. The germs spread by the "Gang of Four" on an upright and simple girl with a strong sense of justice could be gotten rid of with careful treatment.

He felt melancholy as he rode. Although he could hardly be held responsible for Xie's present ideas, he did blame himself for not having fought against the reactionary lies of the "Gang of Four" in a stronger and more determined way before their overthrow. Soon after he had become their class teacher, he had subtly suggested to her that instead of memorizing quotations and blindly accepting articles explaining Chairman Mao's thinking, she should study for herself the original writings of Marxism-Leninism and have an independent mind. Xie had failed to see what he was driving at. Perhaps he should have talked more directly with her to help her to open her eyes and be more discriminating in judging fallacy and truth.

He had an idea. He would leave *The Gadfly* with her and try to persuade her to read it and tell him her opinions of the book. She could analyze it from a Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought standpoint and try to find answers to certain questions. How should we understand life and history? How should we look at literary and artistic work? How should we criticize what is bad and assimilate what is good from our own cultural heritage? How do we view questions in their entirety and dialectically? How do we distinguish between

true and false Marxism-Leninism? What kind of a woman does she hope to become? How can we fight for the modernization of our country and the bright future of communism?

Feeling moved, Zhang stopped at Xie's gate. His idea had crystallized. He would organize extensive study activities to repudiate the "Gang of Four" and educate the class, including young Song. He would talk to the Party branch the next day and get their support. He pictured Old Cao, the Party secretary, saying, "Now is the time to run education according to Chairman Mao's thinking."

Zhang sought hard work, and he would get the support he needed. But the doubts of some of the teachers passed through his mind also. He must speak at the teachers' meeting. Apart from teaching sciences and liberal arts subjects in class, and giving the students an overall education, developing their morality, intelligence and physical health, a teacher must not only take them to farm and factories but also broaden their horizons and interest them in world culture. They must develop their analytical abilities, so as to be better successors of the socialist revolution and construction.

The sweet fragrance of flowers and the twinkling stars overhead seemed to offer approval and encouragement. . . .

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Illustrated by Li Peige

神圣的使命 王亚平

SACRED DUTY

Wang Yaping

1

August 1975. The transfer card from the Provincial "May 7th" Cadre School read:

Name: Wang Gongbo

Age: 59

Political Standing: Chinese Communist Party Member

Beginning Time of Participation in Revolution: Autumn 1938

With hands customarily entrenched in his pockets, Wang Gongbo, an elderly policeman, paced up and down the corridor of the Provincial Public Security Bureau. Each door, each corner, was both very familiar, yet very strange.

The building, during wartime, had served as the Kuomintang army headquarters. Now memories of his years as an underground Party member welled up inside him, touching off a series of mixed emotions, pleasure and pain, tragedy and fortune. If his experiences then had been carefully recorded, it would undoubtedly have made a suspenseful and moving book. How many endless days, months, years, had he worked there, fighting the enemy, protecting the people?

伤痕
卢新华

THE SCAR

Lu Xinhua

Chinese New Year's Eve, early spring 1978. From the speeding train nothing could be seen in the pitch dark outside, save red and white lights.

Xiaohua averted her eyes from the window to look at her watch. One minute past midnight. She smoothed her untidy fringe, tossed her long black pigtails behind her and rubbed her slightly swollen eyes. Then she took out a small square mirror from her old shoulder bag which was hanging on a peg. She looked at herself, in the dim light, at her plump cheeks, straight nose, small mouth, slightly protruding chin, square jaw and fair complexion. Her calm, melancholy eyes that sometimes gleamed stared back at her in the mirror.

Never before had she so carefully examined her face. Noticing her eyes moistening, she automatically pressed the mirror to her heart, looking around nervously in case she was being watched. Fortunately everyone was asleep in the car within its misted windows. She sighed softly with relief, then put the mirror back into her bag.

She felt drowsy, but was unable to sleep. She leaned forward, her arms and head resting on the small table in front of her. But after only a few minutes she sat up again unable to sleep.

On the opposite seat were a young unmarried couple on their way to Shanghai to visit their parents. During the day they had chatted animatedly about their work, study and current events. Now they leaned against each other, fast asleep. At the other end of the car was a young mother of about thirty, obviously from the city, her head resting on a small table; her young daughter, about four or five, lay beside her. All of a sudden the child stretched her legs and cried in her sleep: "Mommy!" The woman awoke at once and, kissing her daughter, asked: "What's the matter, my little pet?" The child said nothing, but with a movement of her hand turned over and slept.

There was quietness again, broken only by the train's rhythmic chugging, a lullaby rocking the train like a large cradle. All the passengers were lulled to sleep.

Xiaohua no longer felt sleepy. The young couple and the mother and child intensified her feelings of loneliness and sadness. Her heart had ached hearing the child cry out "mommy". The word seemed strange to her after so long, yet it gave her hope. By now, her own mother's hair must be grey and her face lined. How she longed to throw herself into her arms and beg forgiveness. But . . . she shook her head sadly, tears filling her eyes. Fighting them back, she let out a deep sigh. With her elbows on the table, she cupped her jaw in her hands and turned her eyes once more to stare out the window. . . .

Nine long years, she thought remorsefully.

Nine years ago, she first learned that her mother was a traitor to the revolution. In desperation and anguish she applied to work in a remote rural area, although she had not yet completed her schooling. She could not bear to think that her own mother, an old revolutionary, was a renegade.

She hoped that the accusation was false. Her father,



while he was still alive, had told her how her mother had many times risked her life on the battlefields to rescue the wounded. How could such a person break down before the enemy in prison?

Because her mother was labelled a renegade, Xiaohua began to lose her closest friends and be shunned by her classmates. She and her mother were forced to move into a small dark room. Xiaohua was deprived of her Red Guard membership and was treated with a contempt she had never experienced before. Naturally she blamed her mother for all this, despising her for having to suffer disgrace. She knew that her mother loved her dearly; being the only child she was doted on by both her parents. All that love, however, was now contaminating her innocent life. She felt deeply wronged. The contempt others showed her and her own sense of shame made her criticize herself for her petty bourgeois thoughts and feelings. So she decided to break with her mother and have nothing more to do with her.

Young and hurt, she boarded a train and left her home in Shanghai, aged only sixteen.

Alone in a corner of the car, she stared out the window. No one talked to her and she did not talk to anyone. Only when the train entered a tunnel did she turn to look at her luggage on the rack, a canvas suitcase and some bedding, which she had packed without her mother's knowledge. Even then her mother was unaware that she and some school drop-outs were on the train. When her mother returned home she would find a note:

June 6th, 1969

I've decided to break off all ties with you. Don't try to find me.

Xiaohua

Her mother would weep and be desolate. Xiaohua thought of the love her mother had for her. But why had she become a renegade? There was no room for sympathy.

The noise in the train died down. Only then did she become aware of the others. Some were asleep in their seats; others read. A boy about her age sat opposite her, gazing at her questioningly. Feeling his eyes on her, she shyly lowered her head. He, however, asked in a friendly tone, "Which year did you graduate?"

"It would have been this fall," she replied, looking up.

The boy was puzzled. "How come . . . ?"

"I left school a bit early." When she finished, her flashing eyes shone for the first time, warmed by his concern. At the same time she plucked up enough courage to steal a glance at the boy. He was of medium height, with an oval-shaped face, fair complexion and lively eyes. "What's your name?" she asked.

"Su Xiaolin. And yours?"

"Wang Xiaohua," she answered shyly and blushed.

Others joined in the conversation. "Why did you leave school early?"

She was at a loss for words for the moment. Too innocent to tell a lie, she blushed and told them everything. As usual, she lowered her head, expecting their contempt. To her surprise they comforted her.

"You're all right," Su Xiaolin said. "Don't worry. When we get to the village, we'll help you." Xiaohua nodded gratefully.

Living in the countryside with so many young people to support and help her, Xiaohua began to feel secure and happy. The bad memories faded and became remote. Together with the other young people from Shanghai, she settled down in a village by Bohai Bay in Liaoning Province in the northeast.

She worked well and so the following year applied to join the Youth League. To her surprise, the county committee

refused to admit her on the grounds that her mother was a renegade.

She told the village branch secretary with tears in her eyes: "Listen, I've broken off all relations with my mother. You know all this. . . ."

Su Xiaolin and the other youngsters supported her. "When her mother found out last year that she was here, she sent her a big parcel of clothes and food. But Xiaohua returned it unopened, like all the letters she has received from her mother."

"Well," the man shrugged his shoulders apologetically, "Shanghai replied to the committee's inquiry, saying that your mother's case was serious. And nowadays, the provincial committee insists that the Youth League members must have a good class background. . . ." His voice trailed off as he smiled wryly.

Xiaohua was at a loss for what to do.

It was not until the fourth spring that she was allowed to join the Youth League. By then her enthusiasm had waned.

Chinese New Year was always a miserable time for her, as all her friends went to their homes in Shanghai for the holiday. Now it was the New Year again, and she was left alone in her little room. Outside was the noise of fire-crackers, their strong, pungent smell filling the air. Children were running about, shouting and laughing, amid the beating of drums and gongs.

In the day, she visited some local peasants' families and shared in their festivities. But as soon as she came home again, she felt very depressed.

The friendliness of the peasants had been a consolation to her. They looked after and helped her whenever there were problems. They had even sent a petition to back her Youth League application. And there was Xiaolin, who often came to see her. Their friendship had developed during those four years they had worked and lived together in the same

village. Xiaolin loved Xiaohua because she was innocent, hard-working and practical. She regarded him as her boyfriend, the only person on whom she could really depend, so she often told him about her unhappiness.

On the eve of the Moon Festival, strolling along the beach, they had confided in each other what was in their hearts. Since then they had become even closer. They had sat down side by side on the sand after a long walk along the shore. In the moonlight, the wind whipped the waves beating against the shore. There was a salty sea smell in the air.

They sat in silence for a while. Then Xiaolin asked unexpectedly, "Are you homesick, Xiaohua?"

She looked up, surprised. "No. Why do you ask that?"

The boy lowered his head and said slowly, "I think you should write a letter and find out if it was all a mistake. You know, Lin Biao persecuted many old revolutionaries these last years. Perhaps your mother was one of them."

"No. Not possible." She toyed with her coat edge, shaking her head sadly. "I wondered about it before, but you see it was Zhang Chunqiao¹ who finally approved the verdict. So it's impossible. . . ." She shook her head again.

Sighing, Xiaolin said as if speaking to himself, "Chairman Mao says that we should consider a person's class origin, but that that should not be the only criterion for judgment. Words and actions are what count. But the reality is that a hero's child is always considered good and a reactionary's always bad."

The wind was chilly. "Are you feeling cold?" Xiaolin asked looking at Xiaohua's thin clothes.

"No. Are you?" She looked at him in concern.

"I'm O.K." Again he lowered his head, staring at the

¹One of the "Gang of Four", formerly the head of Shanghai Revolutionary Committee.

moonlit sea and asked thoughtfully: "Is it correct that a revolutionary should have no personal feelings?"

She said nothing, but thought of her own sad life.

Seeing the tears in her eyes, Xiaolin tried to console her: "Please, Xiaohua, don't always look on the dark side of life." He himself was wiping the tears from his own eyes. "Xiaohua," he stammered, at last telling her what had been in his heart for a long time, "you've no one to turn to. If you believe in me, shall we . . . become engaged? . . ."

"Do you really mean it? You won't . . . ?" Her heart beat faster. Her eyes shone.

"I mean it." He nodded and stretched out his hands. "Trust me, Xiaohua."

She was so excited that she threw herself into his arms. . . .

Since that moment, smiles returned to her face and her happy voice could often be heard coming from the fields or her room. Even her cheeks turned rosy, adding beauty to her youth.

The following autumn, she was transferred to be a teacher in the village primary school. She was not strong enough to work in the fields, and the school needed a teacher. Xiaolin was also transferred to work in the commune's administrative office.

One afternoon after an education meeting in the commune, Xiaohua went to see him. Although the door of his room was ajar, no one was there. She went in and picked up his dirty clothes to wash. Then she spotted a diary on the bedside table, which lay open. She could not help herself from reading it as a few words caught her eye. It was an entry from the previous day.

". . . My head aches. Secretary Li told me this morning that the County Party Committee had been considering asking me to work in their propaganda department, but he insisted that I must give up Xiaohua. He said I should also try to

understand the political importance of class background. If we remain engaged, the Party committee will withdraw its offer. I can't understand. . . ."

Xiaohua felt numb. Closing the diary she immediately left the room. As she walked back to her school, her mind was in a turmoil. Later lying on her bed, she could no longer control herself as tears, bitter tears, poured down her face.

The next morning, as she combed her hair, her head ached. Her eyes were swollen. After breakfast she asked for leave and went to the commune to talk to the Party secretary. "Secretary Li," she began calmly, "from today on I shall have nothing more to do with Xiaolin. I don't want him to ruin his future because of me."

Suddenly she became like another person. She was more introverted, spoke little, her face expressionless. Xiaolin refused to be transferred and was still in love with her, but she deliberately avoided all contact with him.

She came to understand her position at last. Though she had broken with her mother, she was unable to free herself from the stigma of being a renegade's daughter. Whoever loved her would be contaminated too. As she truly loved Xiaolin, she had to avoid him and she determined never again to open her heart to another man.

What remained of her love she devoted to her pupils. She lived frugally, spending most of her salary on necessities for the children's education. In the evenings, she often visited their homes and helped them with their homework. The warm bond that developed between her and the children helped her temporarily forget her unhappiness.

Another two years passed. Her oval face became rather square as she matured into a young woman. After the downfall of the "Gang of Four" in October 1976, she was more relaxed and shadows of smiles flickered across her mouth; when she participated in celebration of the downfall she experienced an excitement she had not known for a long

time. But whenever she was alone and thought of the past she again felt sad.

One day, as she was grading her pupils' exercise books, one of her colleagues handed her a postmarked letter from Jiangsu Province. She opened it hesitatingly, only to find it was from her mother, though the address was new to her. In the past she would have destroyed it, but now she could not help but read it.

My dear Xiaohua,

For eight years we have lost touch with each other. Don't think I blame you.

I want to tell you that the verdict on me has been reversed. I owe this to Chairman Hua. The "Gang of Four" and their followers falsely accused me of being a renegade. Now my case has been cleared.

I'm again the head of a school. Unfortunately I've been in poor health all these years, with serious heart trouble and arthritis. However, I've resolved to work hard for the Party as long as I live.

My dear Xiaohua, it's been eight years since I saw you and I long to visit you, but my health won't allow it. So I hope you will come to me so that I can see you again. Please visit as soon as you can.

I'm so looking forward to seeing you.

All my love,

Mother

Xiaohua was stunned. Could this be true? She trembled violently.

Ten o'clock that night, the letter still in her hand, she tossed and turned. She had read it again and again, thinking about its contents. Finally she slept and dreamed that she had gone home. Pushing open the door, she saw her mother writing at her desk. Her mother called out her name and rushed to her. With a mixture of joy and sorrow, Xiaohua

buried her head in her mother's arms. After a long time she lifted her head and asked: "What were you writing, mother?"

"Oh, nothing important." She looked frightened and quickly covered the paper with her hands.

The girl's suspicions were aroused. Snatching the paper from her mother she read: "Supplementary Confession". Staring at her mother, she cursed her: "You renegade!"

As she turned to leave, her mother asked: "Where are you going?"

"None of your business!"

Then her mother, her hair dishevelled, ran to the door to try and stop her.

At this, Xiaohua awoke from her nightmare and got up, her heart pounding. She began to wonder if she should go and see her mother. Two days before New Year's Eve, she received an official letter from her mother's school telling her the truth about her mother's case. She hurriedly packed a bag and bought a train ticket home.

Now sitting in the train bound for Shanghai, her mind was racing. Mixed with her excitement and happiness were feelings of sadness. . . .

The train arrived in Shanghai at six o'clock that morning. It was Chinese New Year's Day.

Getting out of the train, Xiaohua helped the mother with the child to the bus stop. Then, with her suitcase in one hand and her bag over her shoulder, she hurried to her own bus stop.

Seeing the familiar streets and buildings once more made her heart beat with joy. It was an indescribable pleasure being back in her home city. She wondered what her mother would be doing on such a morning? As she was always an early riser, she ought to be up. "Perhaps she will be having her breakfast, her back to the door, when I appear," Xiaohua thought. "I'll call 'mother' in a low voice, and she'll turn

round in surprise. She'll cry out my name, the tears pouring down her cheeks. . . ."

So thinking, she got off the bus and turned into Lane 954. She counted the numbers of the houses until she at last stopped before the grey door she knew so well. Her heart in her mouth, she raised her hand and knocked. No answer. Was her mother still asleep? She knocked louder. Still no answer. Anxiously she pounded on the door with her fist. Inside nothing stirred.

"Who are you looking for, auntie?" A little girl, holding a cake, spoke from behind her. She chewed her cake and blinked at Xiaohua.

"Where are the people who live here?"

"They moved out just two days ago," replied the girl, licking her lips.

"Where to?" Xiaohua asked anxiously.

"I. . . ." She hesitated before running to fetch a young woman.

"Are you looking for Principal Wang?" she asked. "Well, she's just moved to Number 1, Lane 816." Then she added: "I hope you won't mind my asking, but are you a relative of hers?"

Xiaohua thought for a moment before replying: "Well, it doesn't matter. I just dropped in to see her. Thanks for your help." Then she walked away.

Finding the new house, she noticed at once a potted winter plum tree in front of the gate. Since her mother was a lover of winter plums, she must have planted it. The brown gate was closed. Perhaps her mother was still in bed, her health being poor.

She was about to knock when a middle-aged man from the house next door asked her in a friendly tone: "Are you looking for Principal Wang? She's not at home. Yesterday she had a stroke and was taken to the hospital."

Xiaohua was shocked: "Where? Which ward?"

He shook his head: "I'm sorry but I don't know."

"Please can I leave my luggage with you while I go there?" she asked as she put down her bag and rushed to the hospital.

As it was New Year, the hospital only had a skeleton staff on duty, and she couldn't immediately find anyone at the reception desk. Seeing some doctors appear round the corner, she ran down the corridor towards them and asked: "Excuse me, but please could you tell me the room number of a patient, Principal Wang?"

A thin doctor, wearing spectacles, scrutinized her for a moment before saying: "So you're from her school. Good. Please send a telegram to her daughter to inform her that her mother died this morning. Ask her. . . ."

"What?" Xiaohua almost shouted, her eyes wide with horror. She began to run forward impulsively and then stopped abruptly stammering: "Which . . . room, please?"

The doctor gestured with his hand, saying: "Room 2, Internal Medicine. Go straight ahead and then take the first turn to the left."

Running madly she flung open the door with a bang. The people inside all stared at her in astonishment. Not caring, she pushed her way to the bed and with trembling hands lifted the white shroud.

Mother! She had not seen her for nine years!

Mother! She would never see again.

Her gaunt face was lined and scarred, her hair grey. Her eyes were half-closed as if waiting for something.

"Mother! Mother! Mother!" Xiaohua's heart-rending cries shook the room. Again and again she cried "mother", a word she hadn't spoken for years. "Mother, please open your eyes. . . . Look, I've come back. Mother!" She shook her mother's shoulders.

Finally after a long, long time, she pulled herself together and rose to her feet. Her face was blank. Everyone was weeping.

Unexpectedly Xiaohua saw a familiar face in the crowd. "Xiaolin!" she called out.

He stepped forward and said softly: "I'm so sorry, Xiaohua."

The next evening after the cremation, Xiaohua and Xiaolin, their eyes swollen from weeping, passed the Bund, where Xiaohua had often walked as a child. The night was dark. Cold gusts of wind blew from the river. As Xiaohua walked leaning against Xiaolin, for the first time she felt a warmth in her lonely, despairing heart. She was grateful to him. He had come to Shanghai for the holiday, and hearing about her mother's rehabilitation he had often visited her. On the Chinese New Year's Eve, despite the bitter cold, he had gone to see her at the hospital. It comforted Xiaohua to think that he had helped her mother, and that she could see Xiaolin before she died.

They walked silently under the street lamps. Xiaolin suddenly took out her mother's diary and turning to the last page showed it to Xiaohua. Under the pale light, she read:

" . . . Xiaohua's not back yet. Seeing Xiaolin has made me miss her even more. Though she hasn't been persecuted like me, I'm sure the wound in her heart is deeper than mine. I hope she will come as quickly as possible. I know I haven't much time left. But I've made up my mind to wait until I see her again. . . ."

Xiaohua's eyes were blinded with tears. She wrenched herself away from Xiaolin's arm and walked to the riverside where, leaning over the embankment, she gazed at the river lights and the dark water beneath them.

Time passed unnoticed. Xiaohua lifted her head and her grief-stricken expression was transformed into one of deep rage. Taking Xiaolin's hands, she said in a low voice:

"Mother, my dearest mother, rest in peace." She emphasized each word, her eyes burning with hatred. "Your daughter will never forget who inflicted those wounds on our hearts."

In the night, all was still. The river flowed to the east. Then in the distance was heard the loud angry hoot from a huge ship's siren. Xiaohua felt her rage coursing through her body. Then gripping Xiaolin's arm she started to walk down the stone steps in the direction of the brightly-lit Nanjing Road.

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Illustrated by Wang Weizhen

骑手为什么歌唱母亲

張承志

WHY HERDSMEN SING ABOUT "MOTHER"

Zhang Chengzhi

My friend, do you like Mongolian folk songs? There's, for instance, the light and fluid melody of "Hao Lai Bao". There's the wrestling song that sounds like a bugle call for battle, and the long and changeable tune of "Black Steed", as well as the "Ga Da Mei Lin", full of the grief and indignation people have suffered since time immemorial. Every herdsman of the grassland will tell you: "The music of the horse-head fiddle boils in our blood, and encourages us to go on."

I am especially fond of singing. Since coming to the grassland of Ujimqin from Beijing, I have grown to love these simple and unadorned tunes of Mongolia. As soon as I donned the gown of the herdsman, I translated the sounds of the songs into Han characters. I sang these songs from morning till night. When the herdsmen found how I loved to sing, they happily nick-named me "Ma Nai Dao Qin" which means "our singer".

Although I was quickly able to master many of these popular folk songs which had been passed down for generations, I was not able, however, to genuinely understand the emotions expressed in these songs. For instance I was puzzl-