

Taiwan, she had heard of government raids on campuses. Students suspected of subversive activities or Communist sympathies often disappeared and were never seen again.

Annua avoided such dangers and did her best to plod through the undergraduate law program. She was completely uninspired, forced to study a subject she disliked. But it was her means to an end, she kept reminding herself: She needed the college degree to apply to graduate school, to get away from this suffocating island. She went through her college years in a daze, as though she had shut down the better part of herself.

Annua had started at Tai Da when she was almost eighteen. Her bus trips to reach the distant campus took hours each day, and her father's stifling rules from her middle school years still applied: no bicycle riding, no visiting friends, no trips away, no dating, no boyfriends. Although boys were forbidden, she was also warned that she could marry only an engineer or a scientist. How will I ever meet anyone to marry? Annua fretted. Maybe my father's old condemnation is right—no one will want to marry me.

By the time she was ready to graduate, Annua felt more lonely and isolated than ever. At twenty-two, she didn't have many girlfriends and wouldn't dare to try to meet boys. She was squelching her dreams—just as her mother had done with hers—to satisfy the demands of her father. It dawned on Annua that she was becoming the person she never wanted to be. She had to get away.

## CHAPTER

25

HO

*Age 26*

NEW YORK, 1950

THE CLOUD OVER HO'S LIFE BEGAN TO LIFT AFTER THE INS HAD decided that he could work without fear of deportation. Meanwhile, the political storms affecting the lives of all the stranded Chinese had only intensified from the anti-Communist and isolationist whirlwinds emanating from Washington.

In 1950, a former State Department official and suspected Communist named Alger Hiss was convicted of perjury and imprisoned. American scientist Harry Gold, along with engineer Julius Rosenberg and his wife, Ethel, were charged with spying for the Soviet Union. While Senator Joseph McCarthy launched a hunt for Communists in the State Department, Congress considered ways to limit admission of all immigrants except for those from Northern Europe. The proposals before the American public included the exclusion and deportation of potential Communists and subversives, "psychopathic personalities," and "homosexuals and other sex perverts."

The spreading phobia of foreigners and Communists included suspicions that all Chinese were threats to national security, leading Ho and his fellow students to question their long-term prospects in America. Every three months, Ho was required to report in person to the INS regional office at 70 Columbus Avenue in Manhattan to surrender his passport and confirm that his immigration status was unchanged.

Other Chinese students across the United States faced more onerous monthly personal appearances before the INS. Ho was more fortunate than the students in Buffalo or other distant locations who had to travel several hours each way by bus with school chaperones for the brief appearance. Once the INS bureaucracy reviewed each case, the passports were returned by mail with the new extensions. Then the process would begin again.

Unlike Ho, many of his compatriots were still barred from working. Unexpectedly, a window of possible relief appeared in 1950 when more politicians in Washington realized that they could not coerce Chinese students to stay in the United States while at the same time forbidding them to support themselves—especially when those policies were being used as propaganda by the Chinese Communists. Congress passed the China Area Aid Act of 1950, providing six million dollars to assist the stranded students. In addition, the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 and later the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 allowed for a few thousand Chinese and “Far Eastern” refugees to apply for visas and for permanent residence status—similar to provisions that had allowed some two hundred thousand Europeans to enter America as refugees under the Displaced Persons Act, though in far fewer numbers.

Unsure of what to do, many students were hesitant to apply for assistance. After all, they had come to the United States as students, not refugees. Some refused to apply because they objected to the refugee label, which conjured images of impoverished beggars, White Russians, and Ashkenazi Jews in Shanghai.

After weighing the options, Ho warily applied for refugee status. However, global events once again threw the Chinese students and their families, wherever they might be, into turmoil. When North Korea invaded South Korea in June 1950 with support from the Soviet Union, America entered the war two days later, to prevent the spread of Communism. As the new global crisis exploded, Ho and the other stranded Chinese watched closely, unsure how this new war would affect their families, the region, or their own tenuous positions.

When Communist China entered the war, sending two million troops to aid North Korea, Washington’s spotlight was back on China.

Congressional hawks, joined by American commander in chief of the United Nations Command, General Douglas MacArthur, seemed intent on total war with the Communists. MacArthur sent U.S. warplanes to rain napalm on nearly every town and hamlet in North Korea and notoriously declared his willingness to use nuclear warheads to create a radioactive wasteland along China’s border with North Korea.

Truman rejected MacArthur’s bravado, fearing that such an attack against China would draw the Soviet bloc into a nuclear world war, but the possibility of employing nuclear weapons horrified Ho and his friends. With the images of the nuclear holocaust in Hiroshima and Nagasaki fresh in their minds, they knew that a single atom bomb over China’s densely populated cities would be deadlier yet, incinerating millions of people, including, perhaps, many of their families.

The exiles met in private, worried huddles, well aware that they had no voice in America. On the one hand, if they opposed an attack against Communist China, they might be labeled as pro-Communist and face arrest and imprisonment by the U.S. government—or by the Nationalists, if they ended up in Taiwan one day. But if they criticized the Communists, their families in China could be harmed in retaliation. Several dozen stranded Chinese students became so frustrated by what they viewed as a forcible detention in the United States that they appealed to Communist China’s premier Zhou Enlai to intervene; it is not known if Zhou took action, but their letter and the names of the student signatories immediately entered FBI files. Others posted anonymous letters to American officials, complaining of the detentions as well as the prohibitions against returning home. All such activities became subject to FBI investigation.

Already, it was whispered through the Jiao Tong student-alumni network that one of the school’s most prominent graduates living in America was accused of being a Communist. Qian Xuesen, renowned as a leading rocket scientist, had served with the U.S. military during World War II, holding the rank of colonel, after his training at MIT and California Institute of Technology. Qian helped create the U.S. missile program and, after the war, became a professor at Caltech. Qian had sought permission to visit his aging parents in China, but the U.S. government blocked his request, stripped him of his security

clearance, and forbade him to leave the country, in spite of the insistence of Qian and many of his American colleagues that he was not a Communist. Then came the shocking news that the INS had arrested the esteemed scientist in September 1950 and imprisoned him on Terminal Island in Los Angeles. Ho and other stranded Chinese scholars were stung by Qian's mistreatment. If a world-famous scientist with a history of loyal service in the U.S. military could be accused and jailed, what could save them from the same treatment or worse?

Qian was the most distinguished Chinese in America to be so accused, but the FBI used harsher tactics against the working-class Chinese in Chinatown and other "downtown" neighborhoods. The INS conducted three "lightning raids" in Brooklyn, arresting eighty-three Chinese suspected to be "aliens," imprisoning them on Ellis Island. Newspaper articles declared that "a great amount of Chinese Communist literature" was seized. A "Confession Program" was being prepared for Chinatown, promising amnesty to anyone who admitted their own illegal entry—and who would snitch on others. The INS and FBI investigated groups like the Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance, which had been critical of Chiang Kai-shek. Chinese as young as eleven years old were being detained for up to a year on Ellis Island.

In defense of such actions against the Chinese in America, John F. Boyd, district director of the Seattle INS branch, later wrote in a memo to the INS Central Office:

One of the most alarming aspects of the situation . . . is the danger to national security. Most of China is Communist dominated. Some of the Chinese . . . show evidence of indoctrination. These persons will be potentially dangerous in the event of outright war with China. Certainly this is no time to relax the control over them as they seek to enter the United States. The Service would likely be censured by Congress should such relaxation come to attention.

WITH THE KOREAN WAR under way and the angry talk of using nuclear weapons against China, Ho was in for another shock: He re-

ceived a draft notice for military service from his draft board in Elizabeth, New Jersey. He had registered with the Selective Service System when he went to work for China Motors, as was required of all males in the United States between eighteen and twenty-six. In July 1950, the Selective Service had classified Ho as 1-A. He would be among the first in line to be drafted to fight in Korea. Ho was in disbelief. How could he possibly fight against China? He prepared a letter to his draft board informing them of his impending refugee status and inquiring if that would change his draft classification. After posting his letter, there was nothing to do but wait. Young American men around him were being pressed into military service and sent to Korea. Ho wondered if he might be joining them soon.

Just when matters couldn't get worse, the FBI contacted Ho. They wanted to interview him. Would he be shipped to Ellis Island like his former roommate, or imprisoned like rocket scientist Qian? On the appointed day, he nervously entered the FBI office in downtown Manhattan. The FBI agent asked him to explain his involvement with the Chinese Students' Christian Association. Ho's answers were straightforward and without hesitation: He had only attended the group's social events. He had never been part of any political activity and had no information about it. The FBI agent let him go, but Ho was unnerved by the experience. In the past, he had listed the group on his résumé. Never again.

With Senator McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee widening their witch hunt to target almost anyone, no one in America seemed safe. Like many others in the United States during the 1950s, Ho and the Chinese exiles just wanted to blend in and stay out of trouble.

AFTER A YEAR'S WAIT, in 1951 Ho was approved for refugee status. The new designation came with a bonus: He'd receive a stipend of \$150 per month in government assistance for as long as he remained a student. The money couldn't have come at a more critical time. His project to engineer a Chinese typewriter was being shelved, and he would have to find another job.

The newly enacted federal assistance turned visa holders like Ho into "professional students," as they jokingly called themselves. In order to receive the refugee stipend, they had to continue their studies, whether or not they cared to. Because most had entered the United States as graduate students, they had to stay enrolled in a university program. There was another compelling reason to maintain their status: Every Chinese student was well aware that most American companies would not hire a Chinese, regardless of education, skills, or talents. There were plenty of stories of Chinese American graduates with advanced degrees who could find work only as waiters or laundry workers. Ho's \$150-per-month refugee stipend was definitely better than the pay at a menial job.

Luckily for Ho, he was still a graduate student at NYU. To get his doctorate, he would have to complete a dissertation. Ho accepted the topic suggested by his adviser—attempting to prove a theory about the effects of vibration on material plasticity. The subject intrigued him, and he'd collect his stipend for as long as it took him to complete his thesis.

Later that year, Ho learned of a small engineering company that was looking for a draftsman. He applied and was offered the low-paying drafting job. As a mechanical engineer, Ho was qualified to do far more advanced work. But knowing that few, if any, American companies were hiring Chinese engineers, he took the job. Fortunately, Ho's new boss soon recognized his talents and encouraged him to adjust his immigration status and obtain a security clearance that would allow him to work on more challenging projects. His company provided Ho with a letter of recommendation to the INS:

MR. CHOW IS AN ESPECIALLY TRAINED MECHANICAL ENGINEER AND HIS SERVICES WITH OUR COMPANY WILL BE OF GREAT BENEFIT TO OUR NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM TODAY. . . . OUR FIRM HAS MADE EVERY EFFORT TO ACQUIRE AND TRAIN PERSONNEL OF MR. CHOW'S CALIBER, BUT WE FIND THAT IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE, IN VIEW OF TODAY'S CONDITIONS, TO DO SO AS QUICKLY OR EFFICIENTLY AS HIRING MR. CHOW TO DO THIS WORK. . . . WE REQUEST THAT

MR. CHOW'S APPLICATION BE PROCESSED WITH UTMOST SPEED SO THAT OUR COUNTRY CAN BENEFIT IN SOME MEASURE FROM HIS ABILITIES.

The company's efforts paid off. By the end of the year, Ho received approval to work on military projects classified as "confidential" and undoubtedly bound for use in the Korean War. Nevertheless, the INS was never far away, as Ho was reminded each time he reported in person.

By the fall of 1951, new government procedures allowed Chinese scholars and students to apply for a special immigration status as "displaced persons." Such a status was almost as good as a green card and would remove the constant threat of deportation that his temporary status as a refugee student carried. Only a relatively small number of the "most desirable" stranded Chinese scholars would be admitted as displaced persons. In September 1951, Ho applied for displaced person status.

THAT SAME YEAR, by sheer happenstance, Ho met a remarkable woman. One of his friends wanted to drop something off at another friend's apartment on Riverside Drive. Ho tagged along. The location was a pleasant walk to the Hudson River from Ho's place near Columbia. The building was fancier than anything he knew in the student ghetto where he lived. While the friends chatted by the door of the apartment, a young woman came out of another room to meet the visitors.

"This is my younger sister, Junlin Wong," said the host. "She's new to New York—just graduated from Meredith College in Raleigh, North Carolina."

Ho gave her a respectful nod and murmured some congratulatory words. She had a ready smile that dimpled her cheeks like Shirley Temple's. Her eyes, bright and inquisitive, sparkled with friendliness. She was fashionably dressed, and she had an educated and sophisticated demeanor. He sensed at once that she was from Shanghai. When she greeted them in the dialect of the Shanghai region, he was happy

that he'd guessed right. Then, in English, she said that in America, she went by the name Theresa.

Ho instinctively smoothed out his shirt and slacks, straightening his back to look taller. He introduced himself, hoping not to sound foolish.

"I'm Ho Chow, and I'm very pleased to meet you. I'm a doctoral student at NYU. Mechanical engineering." He wanted her to know that he was in a desirable field. "How long have you been in New York?" Ho avoided any sensitive subjects, such as when and how she managed to leave China. "You're from Shanghai? My family lives in the former International Settlement on Medhurst Road," he offered. She replied that her family was in Hong Kong but had once lived not far from his home, on Jessfield Road.

Smiling, she answered his questions without a trace of shyness. Ho liked Junlin immediately and knew that he wanted to spend more time with her. But his friend's business with her brother was done, and Ho could think of no good excuse to linger.

"Nice to meet you," Ho heard himself say. "And welcome to New York."

Afraid she would find his comments awkward, he stole a glance as he exited and thought he saw a smile on her face.

Back outside, Ho peppered his friend with questions about the young woman and her family. Her father was a high-level businessman with the Bank of China. He had left China for Hong Kong when the Communists took over. Her father had managed to send his children, including a son, a physician daughter, and Junlin, to school in the States. That was all Ho could learn.

But he was in luck, as he soon ran into her at the China Institute in its building donated by the Luce family at 125 East Sixty-fifth Street. High-society Americans like the Luces supported the institute's programs—and the China lobby to aid the Nationalists. Sometimes the stranded Chinese students held social activities in the organization's basement. Junlin was a volunteer there. As she helped serve tea and cookies, Ho reintroduced himself to her.

Laughing, she said, "I remember you very well, Mr. Chow. I saw you only a few days ago!" Then she turned to greet the other guests.

There were several other bachelors like himself at the event that afternoon. Ho knew he was bound to have competition for Junlin's attention. He would have to be bold. Going back for another cookie, he asked, "Would you like to join me for a walk or at least allow me to escort you home after this party?"

She looked at him quizzically for a moment, then met his gaze. Tilting her head, she said, "I'll have to let my brother know, but yes, that would be lovely."

Ho grinned as he sipped his tea and waited for the event to end. One of his friends noted his buoyant mood and asked, "Did Junlin add something to your tea?"

On their way home, Junlin and Ho went to the park and talked all afternoon. He learned that she had lived at the Bank of China's compound on Jessfield Road in Shanghai, next to the notorious 76. She had been there when the dreaded puppet police from 76 shot three accountants to death in the driveway because of the bank's affiliation with the Nationalists. Afterward, her family had fled with the rest of the bank staff to Kunming. There, she'd had to be ready to run to an air-raid shelter at any moment. Often, she could see the bombs fall from the sky as she ran. When the war was over, her family had returned to Shanghai, and she had attended Aurora College for Women, run by the French Sisters of the Sacred Heart. When the Communists came, she'd fled with her family to Hong Kong. After trying for six months to get a visa to study in America, she had finally entered the United States a year before, in June 1950.

Ho was entranced by this bright and beautiful twenty-two-year-old woman. He told her of his family home in Changshu and his harrowing escape to Shanghai during the war. He was not one to brag, but he wanted her to know that he was a top student, a country kid who had worked his way up to being the number one mechanical engineer at Jiao Tong, and that his prospects were good. Ho tried to sound casual in mentioning that he had a good job—and that, one day, he intended to provide financial help to his family in Shanghai and Taiwan. Shyly, he even shared with her his dream to build cars in China and that he had several inventions in mind.

To Ho's delight, they hit it off. Junlin wasn't put off by his commit-

ment to his family. Although her family in Hong Kong didn't need her to send money, she was determined to support herself by looking for work and was soon hired as a file clerk at Oxford University Press.

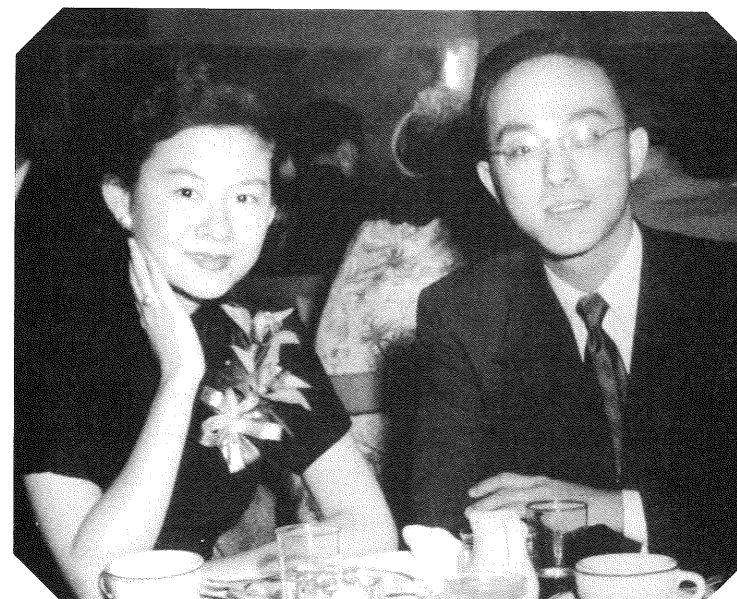
They met again. Ho told her how his five housemates at Michigan had rented one cap-and-gown set and taken turns wearing it for the all-important photos to send home. She laughed at herself while recounting her first night at Meredith College, where she had arrived after a long train ride. The housemistress had handed her some sheets for her bed—and Junlin had had no idea what to do with them. She had never made a bed before. He shared his amazement at seeing so much food wasted in America, while Junlin described the dismay she felt about racial discrimination. She'd seen segregated restrooms and water fountains marked "Whites Only" and "Coloreds" while attending college in North Carolina. Being Chinese, she hadn't known which to use.

In late 1951 his draft board wrote to him stating that, because he had turned twenty-seven, he was over the draft age. To his tremendous relief, he would be reclassified as Class 5-A and was unlikely to be called to duty for the war in Korea.

But then came some disappointing news. Ho's doctoral adviser informed him that a PhD candidate at another school had submitted a dissertation solving the exact problem Ho was focusing on. His work had been for naught. If he wanted a doctorate, he'd have to find a new dissertation topic—and to start again. Ho had set his sights on getting a PhD ever since his vocational school teachers had encouraged him. But at his age, he didn't want to start again, especially not when he had a more important goal—he had met the woman he wanted to marry.

Determined to show Junlin that he was such a good catch that she couldn't possibly want to marry anyone else, Ho searched for a better job. He got a driver's license. But his biggest challenge was learning to dance. Junlin was a wonderful dancer, while Ho had never ventured a single step. He took a few lessons and dared to ask her to go dancing, hoping she'd overlook his clumsy feet. In August 1952, he was offered an engineering position with the Celanese Corporation of America at more than four times his draftsman's salary.

Ho's campaign to charm Junlin was a success. He telephoned her



*With a corsage and dinner at a restaurant proffering white tablecloths, its own photographer, and no Chinese food, Ho tries to sweep Theresa Junlin Wong off her feet.*

father in Hong Kong at considerable expense for permission to marry his daughter. She had already told her family all about Ho in the two years they'd been dating, and her father approved. But with the continued embargo against Communist China, Ho was unable to call his own mother in Shanghai. Still, he was sure that she would be happy for him.

On April 5, 1953, Ho Chow and Theresa Junlin Wong were married. About two hundred guests celebrated with them at the Hotel Greystone on Broadway and Ninety-first Street, a popular venue for Columbia students. At the simple reception, they served sandwiches of chopped egg, chopped liver, ham, and sardines. On Ho's happiest day, his only regret was that no one from his family attended his wedding. His life in America would be perfect if only his family could be together.