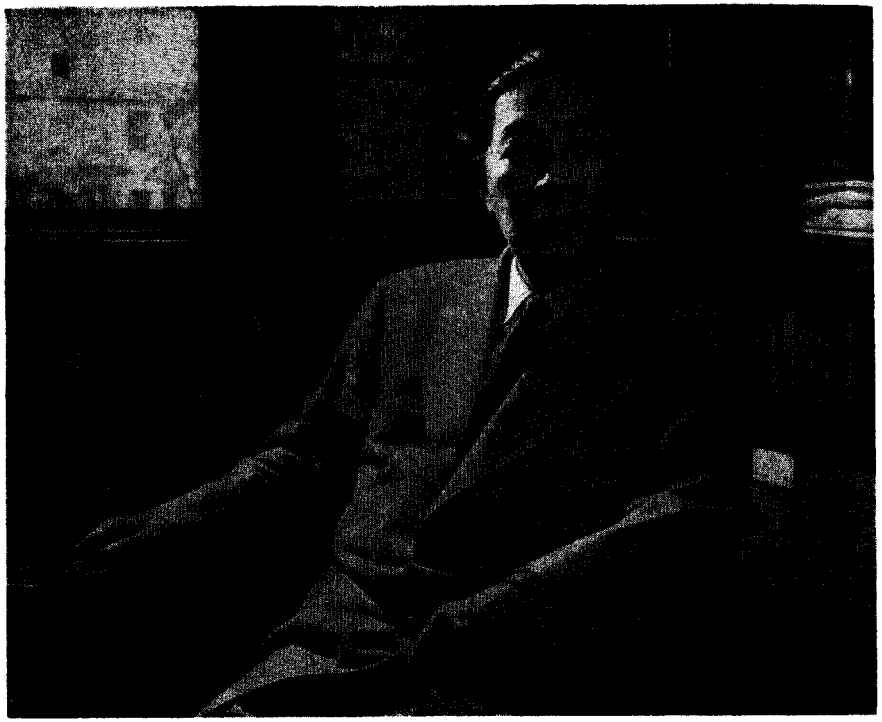

茅盾

Shên, Yen-ping.

MIDNIGHT

MAO TUN (pseud.)

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS
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JACKET DESIGN AND ILLUSTRATIONS

BY YEH CHIEN-YU

Printed in the People's Republic of China

ABOUT "MIDNIGHT"*

In 1928, finding my freedom of movement restricted in Shanghai, I left quietly for Japan. After more than a year in Japan I returned to Shanghai in the spring of 1930. It was just about this time that the Kuomintang politician Wang Ching-wei and the various warlords who were opposing Chiang Kai-shek held their Enlarged Conference in Peking to challenge the Chiang Kai-shek regime in Nanking. At that time the civil war between the North and the South was in progress and the labour movement in Shanghai and other cities was at its peak.

During this period I was suffering from severe eye-trouble, and my doctor had ordered me a rest from reading for eight months or even a year. Apart from the eye-trouble I was suffering from neurasthenia, and so decided on a complete rest. Among my friends in Shanghai at that time were active revolutionaries and liberals, while old acquaintances from my home town included industrialists, civil servants, businessmen and bankers. Having little else to do then, I passed much of my time among them and learned from them much that had been unknown to me before and began to understand a little of what went on "behind the scenes." It struck me that all this new information might be put into a novel. When my eyes were better, and I could read once more, I went through some of the articles and essays which were being written then on the characteristics of Chinese society. When I compared my own observations with the theories put forward in these articles, I became even more attracted to the idea of writing my novel.

The active revolutionaries of Shanghai were at this time busily engaged in launching a full-scale revolutionary movement, and fierce struggles were being waged on all fronts. I did not actively participate in all this work for the revolution at that time, but I had had some experience of similar work before 1927. Although the situation in 1930 was quite different from that in 1927, I was still able to appreciate most of the problems and difficulties with which the revolutionaries were faced.

* This is an excerpt from a talk given by the author in 1939 to a group of students at a school in Sinkiang.

In the spring of 1930 Shanghai began to feel the repercussions of the world depression. China's own capitalists, bowed under the yoke of imperialist economic aggression, their growth hindered by the existence of the feudal forces, now tried to escape the crisis which confronted them by intensifying their exploitation of the working class: hours of work were increased, wages were cut, and workers were dismissed wholesale. This evoked fierce resistance from the workers, and an economic struggle broke out, in which every economic battle soon turned into a political battle, so that conditions at the time were favourable to the progress of the mass movement.

I decided that my novel should deal with three aspects of the current situation: (1) how Chinese industrialists, groaning under foreign economic aggression, were hindered on the one hand by the feudal forces and threatened on the other by the control of the money-market by compradore-capitalists, and how they tried to save themselves by employing even more brutal methods and intensifying their exploitation of the working class; (2) how, as a result, the working class was obliged to put up a fierce resistance; and (3) how the national capitalists, at enmity alike with the Communist Party and the people as a whole, were finally reduced to the only alternative of capitulating to the compradores (the tools of the imperialists), or becoming compradores themselves.

A novel of such content, of course, would offer scope for dealing with quite a number of problems, but I decided to restrict myself to a refutation of the Trotskyite fallacy. I would use my facts to prove that China, far from becoming a capitalist country, was being reduced to the status of a colony under the pressure of imperialism. There were a number of people among China's bourgeoisie, it is true, who had much in common with the old French bourgeoisie; nevertheless the China of 1930, unlike eighteenth-century France, was a semi-colony, which meant that the outlook for China's bourgeoisie was particularly bleak—it was, in fact, utterly hopeless. Such were the circumstances which gave rise to the attitude of vacillation in the national bourgeoisie. I intended also to refute some of the fanciful theories advanced by bourgeois scholars in those days. Typical of these theories was the following: China's bourgeoisie could save itself — by which they meant developing industry and setting up a bourgeois regime — by opposing the national, democratic revolutionary movement led by the Communist Party and at the same time opposing feudalism and compradore-capitalism. As it turned out, Chinese capitalists like Wu Sun-fu, who opposed both the working class and the national, democratic revolution led by the workers' party, were left with no alternative but to become compradores themselves.

I set to work on the novel before the summer of 1931 had really begun. I was rather ambitious then, and planned to cover both town and country at the same time. I had only completed the first few chapters when summer came — an exceptionally hot summer, with the temperature in the nineties every day for more than a month. The attic which served me for a study became unbearably hot, and there was nothing for it but to stop writing for the time being. Later, I was taken ill again and the book had to be put aside until the summer of 1932, when I came back to it. It was not until that December that I finally had the manuscript completed. During the break in writing my interest had waned and with it my courage. When I came back to it and ran my eye over what I had written I felt dissatisfied, for I realized that my original plan had been too ambitious and that I was attempting something beyond my abilities. Accordingly, I decided to abandon half my original plan — the part dealing with the country — and restrict myself to the city. To do this, I attempted to interweave three strands, represented by compradore-capitalists, reactionary industrial capitalists, and the revolutionaries and the working masses. The reactionary government of the time subjected all publications to an extremely severe censorship, and if I had given a full, frank account of the activities of the revolutionaries I would never have got the book published; so, to ensure that it would see the light, I had to be satisfied in places with slipping in hints and indirect allusions. Among the book's many shortcomings one of the more regrettable is that it was not possible to portray the revolutionaries as the principal characters.

Mao Tun
May 1939

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN "MIDNIGHT"

Wu Sun-fu — *industrial capitalist, owner of the Yu Hua Silk Factory*

Lin Pei-yao — *Wu Sun-fu's wife*

Lin Pei-shan — *Lin Pei-yao's younger sister*

Old Mr. Wu — *Wu Sun-fu's father*

Wu Huei-fang — *Wu Sun-fu's younger sister*

Wu Ah-hsuan — *Wu Sun-fu's younger brother*

Wu Chih-sheng — *Wu Sun-fu's cousin, a sociology student*

Fan Po-wen — *Wu Sun-fu's cousin, a poet*

Chang Su-su — *Wu Sun-fu's cousin (a girl)*

Tu Chu-chai — *Wu Sun-fu's brother-in-law, a banker*

Wu Fu-fang — *Tu Chu-chai's wife, Wu Sun-fu's elder sister*

Tu Hsueh-shih — *Tu Chu-chai's younger brother, an engineering student*

Tu Hsin-to — *Tu Chu-chai's son, who has studied in France*

Li Yu-ting — *a professor of economics, a frequent visitor to Wu Sun-fu's home*.

Hsu Man-li — *a society girl*

Lei Ming — *a staff officer in Chiang Kai-shek's army, Lin Pei-yao's former suitor*

Huang Fen — *a petty politician in the Wang Ching-wei clique*

Chiu Chun — *a lawyer, Wu Sun-fu's legal adviser*

Dr. Ting — *Wu Sun-fu's family doctor*

Fei Hsiao-sheng — *Wu Sun-fu's bailiff in his home town*

Tseng Tsang-hai — *Wu Sun-fu's uncle, a despotic landlord in the town of Shuangchiao*

Tseng Chia-chu — *Tseng Tsang-hai's son*

Tu Wei-yueh — *manager of Wu Sun-fu's silk factory*

Mo Kan-cheng — *chief clerk in the same factory*

Kuei Chang-lin — *a trade union official in Wu Sun-fu's service, a tool of the Wang Ching-wei clique black-legs in the pay of the management*

Pockmarked Li — *an overseer (blacklegs in the pay of the management)*

Wang Chin-chen — *a forewoman (blacklegs in the pay of the management)*

Yao Chin-feng — *a factory girl (blacklegs in the pay of the management)*

Chien Pao-sheng — *a Kuomintang trade union official in Wu Sun-fu's factory*

Chien Chiao-lin — *a factory girl, Chien Pao-sheng's underling*

Chou Erh-chieh — *a factory girl, Chien Pao-sheng's underling*

Hsueh Pao-chu — *a forewoman, Chien Pao-sheng's underling*

Ho Hsiu-mei, Chang Ah-hsin, Chen Yueh-ngo, Chu Kuei-ying — *factory girls who led a strike organized by the Communist Party*

Tang Yun-shan — *general manager of the Yi Chung Trust Company, a politician in the Wang Ching-wei clique, Wu Sun-fu's partner*

Wang Ho-fu — *owner of a coal-mining company, and acting general manager of the Yi Chung Trust Company, Wu Sun-fu's partner*

Sun Chi-jen — *owner of a shipping company, Wu Sun-fu's partner*

Chu Yin-chiu — *owner of a silk factory*

Chen Chun-yi — *owner of a silk goods factory*

Chou Chung-wei — *owner of a match factory*

Chao Po-tao — *a powerful speculator in government bonds, a compradore-capitalist*

Shang Chung-li — *Chao Po-tao's confidant*

Feng Yun-ching — *a speculator in government bonds*

Han Meng-hsiang, Lu Kuang-shih — *stockbrokers*

Liu Yu-ying — *Chao Po-tao's mistress, Lu Kuang-shih's daughter-in-law*

Feng Mei-ching — *Chao Po-tao's mistress, Feng Yun-ching's daughter*

Ke Tso-fu — *a Communist, a leader of the labour movement*

Tsai Chen, Ma Chin — *labour-movement workers*

Su Lun — *a Trotskyite*

I

THE sun had just sunk below the horizon and a gentle breeze caressed one's face. The muddy water of Soochow Creek, transformed to a golden green, flowed quietly westward. The evening tide from the Whangpoo had turned imperceptibly, and now the assortment of boats along both sides of the creek were riding high, their decks some six inches above the landing-stages. Faint strains of music were borne on the wind from the park across the river, punctuated by the sharp, cheerful patter of kettle-drums. Under a sunset-mottled sky, the towering framework of Garden Bridge was mantled in a gathering mist. Whenever a tram passed over the bridge, the overhead cable suspended below the top of the steel frame threw off bright, greenish sparks. Looking east, one could see the warehouses on the waterfront of Pootung like huge monsters crouching in the gloom, their lights twinkling like countless tiny eyes. To the west, one saw with a shock of wonder on the roof of a building a gigantic neon sign in flaming red and phosphorescent green: LIGHT, HEAT, POWER.

It was a perfect May evening. Three 1930-model Citroens flashed over the bridge, turned westward, and headed straight along the North Soochow Road. Passing a block west of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce Building on the corner of North Honan Road, where the creek below was usually thronged with steam-launches plying upriver, the three cars slowed down. The driver of the first car said in a low voice to the hulking fellow sitting beside him in black silk:

"The Tai Sheng Chang Company, isn't it, Kuan?"

"Of course it is," replied his companion, also in a low voice. "Surely you haven't forgotten already? That bitch must be making you soft in the head."

Pockmarked Li — *an overseer (blacklegs in the pay of the management)*

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"The Tai Sheng Chang Company, isn't it, Kuan?"

"Of course it is," replied his companion, also in a low voice. "Surely you haven't forgotten already? That bitch must be making you soft in the head."

As the bodyguard, for such he was, spoke, he showed large, strong teeth. The car jarred to a stop and Kuan quickly scrambled out, placing his hand on the Browning at his side as he did so and glancing all round. Then he went round and opened the other door and stood holding it, looking stern and forbidding. A head stuck out cautiously — a square, pimply, purplish face with thick eyebrows and round eyes. Spotting the signboard over the gate with the name "The Tai Sheng Chang Shipping Company," the man emerged completely and quickly made for the building with his bodyguard close behind him.

"Is the *Flying Cloud* arriving soon?" the purplish-faced man asked in a loud and arrogant voice. About forty, powerfully built and imposing, he struck you at once as a solid and prosperous businessman, accustomed to giving orders. Before the words were out of his mouth, the clerks sitting there in the office jumped up as one man, and a tall, thin young man, smiling broadly, stepped forward.

"Yes, Mr. Wu, very soon," he answered respectfully. "Please take a seat." He turned to a boy: "Go and get some tea."

While he was speaking he drew up a chair and placed it behind the visitor, whose fleshy face twitched in what could have been a smile as he glanced at the young man, and then looked out towards the street. By now the visitor's car had moved on to make room for the second, out of which a man and a woman appeared and came into the hall. The man was short and stoutish with a bland and pallid face, while the woman was much taller, and bore a certain resemblance to the other man with her square face, although her skin was smooth and fair. Both she and her husband were in their forties, but in her fashionable dress she did not look more than thirty. The husband greeted the first arrival:

"Why, hello, Sun-fu! Are we all waiting here?"

Before the purplish-faced man could answer, the spindly youth quickly chimed in with a broad smile:

"Yes, here, Mr. Tu. I've just heard her hooter and sent someone to keep a look-out at the landing-stage. He'll run back as soon as the boat arrives. I don't think we'll have to wait more than five minutes. Only five more minutes."

"Ah, Fu Sheng! I'm very glad to see you're still here. Yes, the best way to learn a trade is to stick to it. Father has often said you're very keen. How long is it since you saw the old man last?"

"I paid a visit to Old Mr. Wu only a month ago while I was home on leave," babbled the spindly youth Fu Sheng in reply, dazzled by Mrs. Tu's compliments; then, placing a chair behind her and another behind her husband, he begged her to take a seat.

Then he bustled about serving tea and offering cigarettes round. This young man was the son of an old servant of the Wu family. He had always been a nimble-witted lad, so Old Mr. Wu had asked his son Sun-fu to put him in this shipping office as an employee. The two men and the woman remained standing, looking every now and then towards the entrance. There at the gate another hefty fellow was standing with his back to the door, looking vigilantly right and left — Mr. Tu's bodyguard.

Mrs. Tu sat down first with a sigh of relief. She dabbed her lips with a print silk handkerchief, then said over her shoulder to Mr. Wu:

"When I went home with Chu-chai last year to visit the ancestral graves, we travelled on this same *Flying Cloud*. It's a fast boat and didn't stop on the way, and we did the journey in half a day, but it did roll terribly, and made my joints ache. I'm sure father must be having an awful time of it today. Of course, being paralysed like that, he can hardly move a muscle." She turned to her husband: "Chu-chai, do you remember how father complained of feeling giddy last year when he had been sitting down too long . . . ?"

Mrs. Tu paused and sighed slightly, her eyes reddening at the edges. She was going to say something more when a steam-whistle screeched, and a boy dashed in announcing excitedly:

"The boat's drawing level with the landing-stage!"

Mrs. Tu instantly rose, laying a hand on Mr. Tu's shoulder. Fu Sheng dashed out, at the same time looking back to say:

"Mr. Wu, Mr. Tu, Mrs. Tu, there's no need to hurry. Wait till I've seen to things before you come out."

All the clerks in the office began to bustle about. Somebody summoned two stout porters who had been standing by, and

who immediately ran in, took up a cane-chair, and carried it off. Wu Sun-fu, looking out on the street, said to Mrs. Tu:

"On our way home you'll sit with father in the first car — No. 1889. I'll keep Huei-fang company in the second, and Chu-chai'll have Ah-hsuan in the third."

Mrs. Tu nodded and looked towards the entrance, moving her lips as she silently recited Buddhist sutras. A cigar in his mouth and a smile on his lips, Tu Chu-chai glanced at Wu Sun-fu as much as to say: Let's go now. Just then Fu Sheng came back frowning with annoyance.

"What a nuisance!" he said. "There is a Soochow Line tug occupying the landing-stage."

"That doesn't matter: let's go and see," Wu Sun-fu interrupted and made off with his bodyguard. Tu Chu-chai and his wife followed; Fu Sheng and the other bodyguard, who had been standing at the door, brought up the rear.

The *Flying Cloud* was moored alongside a tug, commonly known as a "company boat." The large cane-chair was placed in readiness on the foredeck, the two bearers waiting on either side. Along the wharf there was not the usual bustle and din. On the landing-stage several men from the shipping company were shouting and trying to shoo off the rickshawmen and hawkers, who kept pushing forward. While Wu Sun-fu and the Tu couple were picking their way across the deck of the tug, a cabin boy helped Old Mr. Wu out on deck and sat him down in the cane-chair. Fu Sheng ran up and made signs to the bearers to hoist up the old man and carry him carefully on to the "company boat." The old man was met by his son, daughter, and son-in-law, who were relieved to find him none the worse for the voyage, except for red blotches on his temples. But he did not speak; he merely glanced at them, nodded his head slightly, and closed his eyes.

Huei-fang, the old man's fourth daughter, and Ah-hsuan, his seventh son, also came aboard the tug from the *Flying Cloud*.

"How did father feel on the journey, Huei-fang?" Mrs. Tu asked her younger sister in a whisper.

"Pretty well, though he kept saying that he felt giddy."

"Let's hurry up and get to the cars," said Wu Sun-fu impatiently. "Fu Sheng, go and tell the chauffeur to bring the new car round first."

Leaving the old gentleman in the care of the ladies, Wu Sun-fu, Tu Chu-chai, and the lad Ah-hsuan went ashore first. The new car drove up, while the bearers landed the cane-chair with its occupant. They got the old man settled in the car, and Mrs. Tu took her place beside him. Her perfume seemed to wake him, and he opened his eyes to see who it was and said in a slow and quavering voice:

"Is that you, Fu-fang? I also want Huei-fang to come with me — and Ah-hsuan as well."

Wu Sun-fu, who was in the second car, heard this and frowned slightly, but said nothing. He knew how eccentric and obstinate his father was — so did Chu-chai. So Huei-fang and Ah-hsuan squeezed into the car beside their father. Fu-fang, who couldn't bear to leave her father, remained where she was, so that the old man was now sandwiched between his two daughters. The engine started up but as the car moved forward the old man suddenly cried in a shrill voice:

*"The Supreme Book of Rewards and Punishments."**

It was a strange, strident cry — a flare of light in an old flickering life. His old eyes gleamed, the faint reddish patches on his temples turned a deep red, and his lips trembled.

The driver immediately braked and cast a startled glance over his shoulder. The other two cars also stopped. Nobody knew what had happened. Only Huei-fang understood what it was her father wanted. Fu Sheng had come up, and she told him:

"Fu Sheng, run back to the cabin and look for a book in a yellow damask-covered case."

Twenty-five years before Old Mr. Wu had had a fall from a horse, and an injury to his leg had led to partial paralysis. He had since developed a strong faith in the religious book on virtue rewarded and vice punished. Every year he had given free copies of the book to fellow-believers as a practice of virtue. He had also copied the whole book in his own neat and pious hand, and

* An ancient book based on the belief in divine retribution.

this transcript had become for him a talisman against vice, with which he could never part for a moment.

Very soon Fu Sheng was back with the book. Old Mr. Wu took it and laid it reverently on his lap. He closed his eyes again, a faint smile of peace on his shrivelled lips.

"Carry on now, driver," Mrs. Tu ordered quietly. With a sigh of relief, she sank back into her seat and rested her head against the cushioned back, smiling with satisfaction. The cars were gathering speed, turning east along the North Soochow Road, crossing Hongkew Bridge, turning south, then racing along at half a mile a minute, the record speed for the 1930 model.

•

It is one of life's little ironies that someone should be driving through the wide streets of Shanghai—that great city of the East with a population of three million—in such a modern conveyance as a motorcar, yet holding the *Supreme Scriptures* in his hands, his mind intent upon one text: "Of all the vices sexual indulgence is the cardinal; of all the virtues filial piety is the supreme." In the case of Old Mr. Wu, the irony was all the more remarkable because he genuinely believed in the *Supreme Scriptures*, unlike those "virtuous fellows" of Shanghai who swindle money out of the public under the cloak of religion. Thirty years back, Old Mr. Wu had been a member of a political party which had agitated for reforms. In spite of the fact that his father and grandfather had been high-ranking officials enjoying the Emperor's generosity in no small degree, he was full of the revolutionary ideas of the time, and as a young man had been a leading light in the universal conflict between fathers and sons of those days. He would probably not now be buried all day in his *Supreme Scriptures* but for the fact that he had fallen from his horse in a cavalry exercise and received an injury to his leg which had since brought on paralysis. Soon afterwards he suffered a further blow in the death of his wife. He lost all his youthful vigour, which seemed to have run out of him when he fell off his horse. For twenty-five years he had not set foot outside his study, had not read anything except the *Book of Rewards and Punishments*, nor had anything to do with the world outside. The conflict between father and son had now become an inescapable reality for him and his son Sun-fu, and

he now seemed as cantankerous and eccentric to his son as his father had once seemed to him. His study had been his castle; his scriptures his coat of mail. For ten years he had stubbornly refused to make peace with his son.

Now, although he was riding in a motorcar of the latest design, it did not mean that he was relenting towards his son. On the contrary, he had repeatedly declared that he would rather die than see his son living a life completely deviating from the path of righteousness. He had never really wanted to come to Shanghai, nor had his son tried to insist that he should. Lately, however, local bandits had been very active and in the neighbouring province the Reds had been gaining ground like a prairie fire. Wu Sun-fu had thought it no longer safe for his father to remain in his country home. It was, in fact, an expression of filial piety. It had never occurred to the old man that bandits or Reds would harm a pious old man like him, but invalid as he was, unable to move and unable to sit up or lie down without help, what else could he do but let them haul him out of his castle, load him on board a boat, and finally thrust him into this monster of a motorcar. Just as, twenty-five years ago, his paralysis had ended his career as a reformist and forced him to surrender to his vice-minister father, so now this same accursed infirmity was threatening to cut short his religious life and force him to stoop to his modern industrialist son. Could there be no end to his tragedy?

Nevertheless, he still had his *Book of Rewards and Punishments* to afford him its precious protection. He had also his two precious children, his son Ah-hsuan and his daughter Huei-fang, to be at his side, so that although he was now plunging into the "sinners' paradise" of Shanghai, he was strong in the belief that he could keep himself morally intact. He had closed his eyes long enough to regain his mental composure and now he opened them calmly and confidently to look once more at the world.

The car was racing along like mad. He peered through the wind-screen. Good Heavens! the towering skyscrapers, their countless lighted windows gleaming like the eyes of devils, seemed to be rushing down on him like an avalanche at one moment and vanishing at the next. The smooth road stretched

before him, and street-lamps flashed past on either side, springing up and vanishing in endless succession. A snake-like stream of black monsters, each with a pair of blinding lights for eyes, their horns blaring, bore down upon him, nearer and nearer! He closed his eyes tight in terror, trembling all over. He felt as if his head were spinning and his eyes swam before a kaleidoscope of red, yellow, green, black, shiny, square, cylindrical, leaping, dancing shapes, while his ears rang in a pandemonium of honking, hooting and jarring, till his heart was in his mouth.

When some time had passed without mishap, the old man slowly recovered his breath and became conscious of voices humming about his ears:

"Shanghai is not so peaceful nowadays either, Huei-fang. Last month the buses went on strike, and now the trams are out. Not long ago there was a big Communist demonstration in Peking Road. Hundreds of them were arrested, and one of them was shot dead on the spot. Some of the Communists were armed, too! Sun-fu says the factory workers are restless and might make trouble or riot at any moment. And the walls of his factory and house have often had Communist slogans chalked all over them. . . ."

"Haven't the police ever caught them?"

"They have caught some, but they cannot catch all of them. Oh, dear! I really don't know where all these desperate characters come from. . . . But my dear, you do make me laugh with your get-up. Your dress might have been in fashion ten years ago but now you're in Shanghai you must follow the fashion. You must get yourself a new outfit first thing tomorrow morning."

Old Mr. Wu opened his eyes again and saw that he was surrounded by a sea of little box-like motorcars like the one he was sitting in, all standing quiet and motionless, while not far ahead a stream of cars and vehicles of all kinds was rushing higgledy-piggledy in one direction and another stream the other way. Among the cars men and women of all sorts and conditions were dashing along as if the devil was on their tail. From somewhere above a shaft of crimson light fell upon him.

Here, at the crossing of Nanking Road and Honan Road, the cars going across were being held up by the traffic lights.

"I haven't met Sun-fu's wife yet, Fu-fang," whispered Huei-fang. "I'm afraid she'll die laughing when she sees what a countrified girl I am."

She cast a furtive glance at her father, then gazed out at all the fashionable women sitting in the cars all round them. Fu-fang giggled, and took out her handkerchief to dab her lips. A whiff of perfume assailed the old fellow's nostrils, and it seemed to upset him.

"I really can't get over you, Huei-fang. When I went home to the country last year, I didn't see any of the country girls wearing such old-fashioned clothes as yours."

"That's true. Even country girls like to look pretty and smart nowadays. But father won't let me. . . ."

All this talk about fashion acted like a needle on the atrophied nerves of the old man. His heart fluttered, and his eyes fell instinctively upon Fu-fang and he saw now for the first time how she was decked out. Though it was still only May, the weather was unusually warm and she was already in the lightest of summer clothing. Her vital young body was sheathed in close-fitting light-blue chiffon, her full, firm breasts jutting out prominently, her snowy forearms bared. Old Mr. Wu felt his heart constricting with disgust and quickly averted his eyes, which, however, fell straight away upon a half-naked young woman sitting up in a rickshaw, fashionably dressed in a transparent, sleeveless voile blouse, displaying her bare legs and thighs. The old man thought for one horrible moment that she had nothing else on. The text "Of all the vices sexual indulgence is the cardinal" drummed on his mind, and he shuddered. But the worst was yet to come, for he quickly withdrew his gaze, only to find his youngest son Ah-hsuan gaping with avid admiration at the same half-naked young woman. The old man felt his heart pounding wildly as if it would burst, and his throat burning as if choked with chillies.

The lights changed to green, and the car moved forward in a motley sea of traffic and humanity. On and on they went, while the din of the traffic, the stench of petrol-fumes, the women's perfume and the glare of neon signs pressed down like a nightmare on his frail spirit until his eyes blurred, his ears sang and

his head swam; until his over-wrought nerves ached as if they would snap and his pounding heart could beat no faster.

His breathing became wheezy, but amid the roar of the metropolis neither Fu-fang nor Huei-fang nor Ah-hsuan could hear it. His face turned ashen, but in the red and green glare nobody noticed the difference.

The car raced on at top speed. Their lighted windows gleaming through the trees, the flats at the roadside rushed up one after another and were gone in a flash. The cool evening breeze set the wind-screen rattling. Huei-fang drew a sigh of relief as if a great weight had been lifted from her mind and said to Ah-hsuan:

"This time we've really come to stay in Shanghai, I suppose. But what is it that's so attractive about Shanghai that people keep pouring in? If you ask me, I rather hate the bustle and noise. It gives me such a headache."

"You'll like it when you get used to it," said Fu-fang. "Everybody's running away from the countryside now that the bandits are on the increase, and settling in Shanghai. Look at these new houses on either side of the road; they've sprung up during the last two years. No matter how many new houses are built, there are always people waiting to move in."

She opened her red handbag, took out a powder-puff, and began making up her face in the little mirror fixed inside the bag:

"I think it's quite peaceful in the country. Seems there are less rumours of trouble there. Isn't that so, Ah-hsuan?"

"Peaceful? I can't agree. Why, only two weeks ago a company of troops arrived in our town and demanded that the Chamber of Commerce should supply them with fifty young women — to darn and wash for them, they said. When the Chamber of Commerce said that they couldn't help them, the soldiers set out themselves to find them. The fruiterer's wife next door was grabbed, don't you remember? And our maid didn't dare set foot outside the house for several days. . . ."

"But that's outrageous! Of course, here in Shanghai we never know what's actually happening down in the country. We have heard that the Communists kidnap women and communize them."

"But I've never seen a Communist in our parts. Anyway, that company of soldiers made enough trouble as it is."

"Oh, Ah-hsuan, what a fool you are!" said Fu-fang with a sigh. "Of course you've never seen a Communist! If you had done, you wouldn't be here now! Chu-chai says they're up to all sorts of tricks now. They're everywhere. You'll find them in all walks of life, and there's no stopping them. And you don't even know they're there until they strike like a bolt from the blue."

Huei-fang shivered inwardly at this, but Ah-hsuan, who did not quite understand what it was all about, just threw back his head and laughed. He was immensely tickled by Fu-fang's account of the elusive, will-o'-the-wisp Communists. He thought to himself: So the Communists pounce on you like a bolt from the blue, do they? Why, that's magic. He was the baby of the family and, although now a good-looking lad of nineteen, he was still rather naive, having always been his father's blue-eyed boy.

The chauffeur sounded the horn and the car turned into a quiet, shady side-street, where the lamplight filtered through a dense screen of leaves and splashed Fu-fang and the others with flecks of light. The car began to slow down as it approached the house. Gathering up her things, Fu-fang turned to her father and said quietly:

"Father, we're there."

"He's asleep."

"Don't shout so, Ah-hsuan. You know, Fu-fang, while father's resting with his eyes closed, he allows no one to disturb him."

The chauffeur gave three blasts on the horn, holding on to toots, trailing the last one to announce their presence. The black iron gate in front of the big foreign-style building immediately swung open, and the car glided into the drive. Ah-hsuan jumped up from his seat and, looking round, saw that the other two cars were following behind and that several servants and an armed policeman were standing by the entrance. Then the iron gate clanged shut and the cars swished on up the asphalt drive, through a tunnel of dark, overhanging trees through which occasional lights twinkled. The car swung sharply and there in front of them was a large, brightly-lit, three-storeyed build-

ing. The car lurched to a stop amid radio music which floated through an open window.

A maid's clear voice announced:

"Madame! Mr. Wu and his father and the others are here."

Old Mr. Wu, who had only just recovered from his attack of dizziness, opened his eyes with a start of surprise. The first things that his returning consciousness seized upon were the ravenous way his son Ah-hsuan had gazed at the half-naked woman in the street and his daughter Huei-fang's voice as she had complained: "Even country girls like to look pretty and smart nowadays, but father won't let me. . . ."

So his precious children had undergone a change the moment they had entered the "Sinners' Paradise"!

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The radio was switched off, and the sound of women's laughter carried through the windows. Then a bustling clickety-clack of high-heeled shoes was heard as three dark figures loomed up. One of them proved to be a tallish, svelte young woman in a pink dress. She hurried up to the first car, her hips swaying as she walked, pulled open the door and greeted them gaily:

"How did you enjoy your journey, father? Fu-fang, is this Huei-fang? And Ah-hsuan?"

Old Mr. Wu was immediately enveloped in an overpowering gust of rich, heady perfume, and through the fragrant haze saw a round, clear-skinned face beneath an unruly mop of wavy hair, with bright, sparkling eyes, and startlingly red lips parted in a ready smile. She tilted her curly head slightly and said in a tinkling, silvery voice:

"Sun-fu, you and the others go in first. Fu-fang and I'll help father out of the car. Huei-fang, will you get out first?"

Old Mr. Wu summoned up his last ounce of strength to shake his head, but nobody noticed it. Huei-fang stepped out brushing against the wavy hair of the young lady. Fu-fang put her right arm under the old man's left arm to support him while Ah-hsuan also lent a hand. Thus he was propelled out of the car willy-nilly and passed to the wavy-haired lady, whose smooth arm immediately encircled his waist. In a swirl of enticing laughter and overwhelmingly fragrant scent, Old Mr. Wu could only shudder and clutch against his breast the *Book of Rewards*

and Punishments. A thought flashed through his tortured mind: "They must be demons or evil spirits, these people!"

Extreme disgust and anger seemed to infuse the old man with unwonted strength, which enabled him to mount the stone steps quite easily on the arms of his daughter and daughter-in-law. The big drawing-room was flooded with light and filled with people. When Old Mr. Wu stepped into the room, he was met by his son and son-in-law. Then two wavy-haired young girls rushed up to him. They asked him how he was and, laughing and chattering, hustled him into a high-backed armchair.

The old man looked around him, his wide eyes burning with disgust, anger and excitement, and his face purpling. He saw the room whirling with lights and colours, whirling more and more swiftly. Near by him a queer-looking, round and shiny thing stood on a small table whirring and turning from side to side, making a wind which took his breath away, like a golden-faced witch swaying her head and casting a spell over him. And the more this golden, flashing disc swayed, the bigger it became, until it filled the whole room, until it filled all space. All the red and green lights, all the geometrical shapes of the furniture and all the men and women were dancing and spinning together, bathed in the golden light. Mrs. Wu Sun-fu in pink, a girl in apple-green, and another in light yellow were frantically leaping and whirling around him. Their light silk dresses barely concealed their curves, their full, pink-tipped breasts and the shadow under their arms. The room was filled with countless swelling bosoms, bosoms that bobbed and quivered and danced around him. Wu Sun-fu's pimply face grinned and Ah-hsuan's lustful eyes shone among the dancing breasts. Suddenly, all these quivering, dancing breasts swept at Old Mr. Wu like a hail of arrows, piling up on his chest and smothering him, piling up on the *Book of Rewards and Punishments* on his lap. He heard wild, seductive laughter and the room rocked and swayed as if it would collapse.

"Devils," cried Old Mr. Wu, as golden sparks showered before his eyes. He felt his chest crushed under an enormous weight, and something seemed to explode inside his head. Suddenly there sprang out of the ground before him two women, Mrs. Wu Sun-fu and the girl in apple-green, both laughing with wide-

open, blood-red mouths as though they wanted to swallow him. Something seemed to snap in his head. He turned up his eyes, and knew no more.

"Uncle, don't you recognize me? I'm Su-su, Chang Su-su," the girl in apple-green Grafton silk asked him and giggled, while Mrs. Wu Sun-fu let out a startled scream and dropped the cup of tea which she was holding out for the old man. All the other people in the room started up in surprise. For a brief moment you could have heard a pin drop; then there was a rush of feet, and they thronged round Old Mr. Wu, all shouting and asking questions at once. He looked deathly pale, his head drooping to the side and his mouth frothing. The *Book of Rewards and Punishments* fell to the floor with a heavy thud.

"Father! What's the matter with you? Wake up! Wake up!" cried Mrs. Tu in a trembling voice, holding her father's head in her hands, while Tu Chu-chai, her husband, peered round her shoulder, frightened out of his wits.

Wu Sun-fu was gripping his father's hand. When he saw many servants pressing round, he flared up:

"Get out of the way, all of you. Hurry up and fetch an ice-bag."

"An ice-bag! Get an ice-bag!" the servants shouted as they scrambled out of the room to find one. "Old Mr. Wu's having a stroke!" The girl in light yellow grasped Chang Su-su's hand and asked:

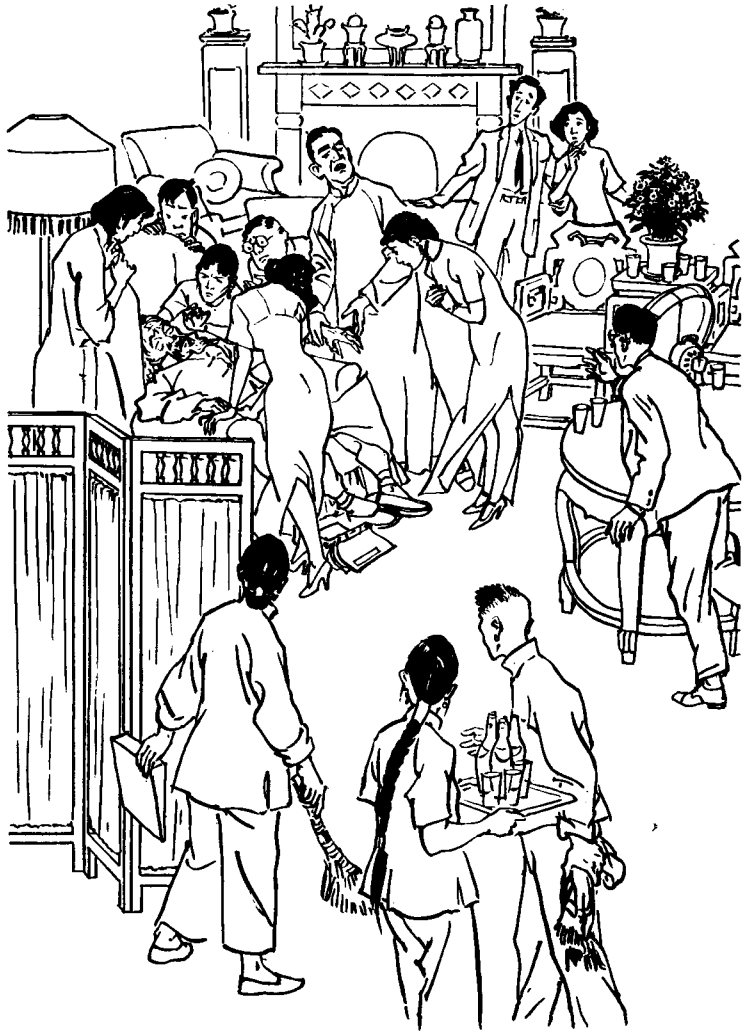
"Su-su, what happened? You saw the old man faint away, didn't you?"

Chang Su-su stood speechless, her eyes staring and her chest rising and falling. Mrs. Wu Sun-fu gasped:

"I was holding out a cup of tea for father . . . I saw, I saw him . . . saw his head drooping . . . his eyes closing . . . his mouth foaming . . . his face turning pale. Is it a stroke? Or asthma? Huei-fang, has father ever had attacks like this before?"

Fu-fang was pinching her father's upper lip. Huei-fang was standing in a daze with tears trickling down her cheeks. Fu-fang repeated Mrs. Wu Sun-fu's question:

"Huei-fang, has father ever had attacks like this before? Has he? Come on, you must tell me."



"An ice-bag! Get an ice-bag! Old Mr. Wu's having a stroke!"

"If it's an attack of phlegm, it isn't serious if only he can cough. After a cough or two, he'll come to."

This diagnosis came from Tu Chu-chai. He glanced at Wu Sun-fu, fumbled nervously for his snuff-box and gave it to him. Wu Sun-fu took it, then turned on the servants furiously: "There are too many people crowding round. The heat of your bodies alone's enough to suffocate the old man. . . . Where's that ice-bag got to? . . . Pei-yao, we don't need you here for the time being: go and ring up Dr. Ting . . . Wang Mah, you run and get an ice-bag." He turned to Fu-fang: "Don't worry, Fu-fang. Father's heart is still beating. But we shouldn't leave him sitting in this chair. Let's carry him over to the couch." He immediately put his arms round the old man to pick him up, and then the others came and lent him a hand. By the time Old Mr. Wu was lying on the velvet-cushioned couch, Mrs. Wu Sun-fu came back from the telephone to tell them that the doctor would be over in ten minutes and that in the meantime he should lie undisturbed in a quiet room. The maid brought in an ice-bag, and Wu Sun-fu quickly laid it on the old man's forehead. He shouted to another servant, who was standing in the doorway:

"Go and call two or three men to carry Old Mr. Wu into the small drawing-room. The doctor will be here any moment, so tell the porter to look out for him."

Suddenly the old man's hand twitched. He made a noise in his throat and a frothy mucus oozed out of his mouth. "Oh, good!" several voices exclaimed with some relief. Young Mrs. Wu pulled a white handkerchief from Chang Su-su's lapel and wiped the old man's lips with it. She cast a worried glance at her husband, who frowned. Fu-fang and Tu Chu-chai also looked worried. The blue veins on the old man's forehead now stood out like worms, the rasping in his throat became louder and quicker and the froth still oozed from his lips. Suddenly, his hand twitched again, and his eyelids fluttered a moment and then remained half closed.

"Oh! what's keeping Dr. Ting? Let's carry father into the other room now," muttered Wu Sun-fu, wringing his hands with impatience. He motioned to the four servants standing by to lift the couch on which the old man was lying and carry it

into the small drawing-room. He followed behind with his wife, Tu Chu-chai, Fu-fang, and Huei-fang. Ah-hsuan, who had been standing by gaping, came to, looked round in alarm, scampered into the parlour, and slammed the door behind him.

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An uneasy silence fell upon the people left in the large drawing-room. Chang Su-su, leaning against a big, luxurious radio-cabinet, was gazing pensively at the *Book of Rewards and Punishments* lying on the floor. Two young men were sitting on a sofa, resting their heads on their hands, drawing slowly at cigarettes and from time to time glancing nervously towards the door of the other room.

The room was still softly lit and the golden disc of the electric fan continued to whir and turn slowly from side to side, sending a cool breeze over everybody and ruffling their clothes. These people, who had hitherto been used to comfort and pleasure, now felt a vague uneasiness.

The girl in light-yellow silk was sitting by the piano, idly turning the pages of a score. She bore a striking resemblance to Mrs. Wu Sun-fu and was, in fact, her younger sister, Lin Pei-shan.

Chang Su-su, who had been lost in thought, suddenly came to as if she had an idea. She looked up sharply and glanced round for somebody to speak to. Catching the eye of Lin Pei-shan, she ran over to her, struck her palms together, and whispered earnestly in an undertone:

"Pei-shan, I'm afraid it's all over with Old Mr. Wu! I've seen people—"

Hearing this, the two young men on the sofa jumped to their feet in surprise and looked at Chang Su-su with questioning eyes.

"How can you be so sure about it?" asked Lin Pei-shan hesitantly, standing up.

"How can I be sure? Well, this is not the first time I've seen somebody die!"

Several servants had gathered around Chang Su-su and when they heard her say this, they could not help bursting out laughing; but Chang Su-su kept a straight face. She lowered her voice and went on mysteriously:

"Do you think it was phlegm he was oozing out? Oh no! Not at all! He was foaming at the mouth. When people die in

hot weather, they usually foam at the mouth just as he did. I know: I've seen it. And wouldn't you call today hot? Eighty degrees, although it's only the sixteenth of May. Am I right, Yu-ting? Go on!"

Chang Su-su turned and looked at one of the two men as much as to say that he should nod his head to bear her out. The man, Li Yu-ting, was of medium height, had a sharply pointed face and wore thick-lensed glasses. He neither agreed nor disagreed with her, but merely smiled cryptically, which did not please her at all. She glanced at him resentfully, pursed her little scarlet lips and muttered crossly:

"I shan't forget this in a hurry! Teachers usually are pretty spineless, but you university professors are even worse. Your students don't hesitate to speak their mind, but you professors keep to the middle of the road. Then you have to take all the knocks and grin sheepishly. But we aren't in class now, Professor Li: we are in Mr. Wu's!"

Li Yu-ting stopped smiling and looked considerably chastened. The other man, Fan Po-wen, who was standing behind Lin Pei-shan, whispered something to her which made her snigger and flash an amused glance at Chang Su-su. The latter crimsoned, swung round, bore down on Lin Pei-shan, and said with mock annoyance: "What mischief are you two up to? Saying things behind my back, are you? Come on, say you're sorry."

Lin Pei-shan edged away, giggling and protecting herself with her hands in case Chang Su-su should tickle her, and appealed to the young man:

"Po-wen, you started the trouble; how can you just stand there and watch?"

Just then they heard the sound of a horn and a car drew up outside. A tall middle-aged man in foreign dress hurried in, followed by two nurses in white uniforms, one of them carrying a bulging Gladstone bag. Chang Su-su let go of Lin Pei-shan and rose to greet the man:

"How do you do, Dr. Ting? The patient's in the small drawing-room."

So saying, she tripped across to the door of the other room and opened it noiselessly for the doctor and nurses, then slipped in herself, closing it behind her.

Smoothing her tousled hair, Lin Pei-shan said to her cousin:

"Did you see how the doctor's car raced up to the door? Just like a fire-engine."

"Ah, but his job is to kindle a spark of life in the old man, not to put it out!"

"There you go again: poetry! Huh!"

Lin Pei-shan cast a saucy glance at Fan Po-wen and moved towards the door of the other room. The door opened and Chang Su-su tiptoed out. Then a nurse appeared in the doorway, motioned a servant to come over, and handed him an enamel basin for some water. She withdrew behind the door and closed it.

Everybody looked at Chang Su-su inquiringly. She gave a slight shake of her head and without a word walked glumly round a rosewood table. She stopped in front of Lin Pei-shan and the others and said quietly:

"Dr. Ting says it's cerebral haemorrhage and puts it down to over-excitement. He can't say yet whether he's going to live or not. Fancy it being over-excitement, though!"

They exchanged glances in silence. "Fancy that!" echoed Li Yu-ting lamely after a moment, as if trying to make up for upsetting Chang Su-su.

"Yet to my mind it doesn't really seem as strange as all that. It would be quite natural for Old Mr. Wu to become over-excited. Just think what it's been like for him living quietly down in the country. He hasn't set foot outside the house for the last twenty years or so. It's been nothing short of a living grave, that study of his that he's been cooped up in all this time. And now today he's suddenly been rushed off to Shanghai, where he sees and hears and smells so many strange, new things which cannot but over-excite him. He's getting on in years and his health isn't all that good; it would be strange if he *didn't* have an attack of cerebral haemorrhage."

Fan Po-wen spoke slowly with a feminine lilt in his voice, and his face beamed smugly. He sought Lin Pei-shan's eye, and she returned him a wry smile. Chang Su-su saw this. She deliberately kept a straight face and snorted:

"Poet laureate! You're even poetizing on someone's death now!"

"I may have chosen an unfortunate subject, Miss Chang, but I don't think I deserve such a dressing down."

"All right, then: would you rather it was your Lin Pei-shan telling you off?"

This time it was Lin Pei-shan's turn to blush. She snorted and walked off in a huff, followed by Fan Po-wen. Chang Su-su knitted her brows in a worried frown and paced round the rosewood table once more, while Li Yu-ting just stood there rubbing his chin. An oppressive silence fell on the room, broken only by the monotonous whir of the electric fan and the occasional hoot of a car in the street, though even these sounded dull and drowsy. A few servants stood motionless in the doorway, and Wang Mah and another maid were whispering with their heads together, their lips moving silently.

The door of the small drawing-room opened and the tall figure of Dr. Ting emerged. He took a cigar from a silver case on an oval brass table, lit up, and sank into an armchair.

"How is he?" asked Chang Su-su softly, going across to him.

"He's in a pretty bad way. I've just given him another injection."

"Don't you think he'll last the night?"

"There's no doubt about it!"

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Dr. Ting discarded his cigar and went back into the other room. Chang Su-su went softly across to the door and pulled it up behind him. She wheeled round, ran back to Lin Pei-shan, threw her arms around her waist, and pressed her face against hers. Stamping her feet, she whimpered:

"Oh, Pei-shan! I do feel upset! I can't bear to think about people dying, and dying so suddenly. I don't want to die — I *won't* die!"

"But we all have to go one day."

"No, not me! Pei-shan, I won't die!"

"Perhaps you're different from everyone else: when you get old, you can slough your skin like a snake and be young again! . . . Anyway, don't keep pawing me so. Look what a mess you're making of my hair! Oh, leave go of me, do!"

"Never mind. You can go to the beauty parlour again tomorrow. Listen, Pei-shan: if I must die, I'd rather die of over-excitement."

Lin Pei-shan started in surprise and looked into Chang Su-su's eyes, which were shining with an unusual excitement which she had never seen there before.

"To die of excitement! Yes, I think that would perhaps be the nicest way to die. But the sort of excitement I want is not the sort the old man had today. No, what I want is the excitement of some great upheaval like a storm, a volcanic eruption, an earthquake, or to see the whole universe in chaos. Ah . . . that would be wonderful, magnificent!"

After this outburst, Chang Su-su let go of Lin Pei-shan, stepped back, sank into a rocking-chair, and buried her face in her hands.

Li Yu-ting and Fan Po-wen, who had been standing by listening, broke into a laugh. It seemed that the way Chang Su-su had struck out and then retreated amused them greatly. Seeing that Lin Pei-shan was still standing there absorbed in her own thoughts, Fan Po-wen went over and took her hand. She started at the touch but, when she saw it was Fan Po-wen, gave him an arch look. He jerked his thumb in the direction of Chang Su-su and whispered:

"Now you can see what's wrong with Su-su. She is very much in need of excitement, but that dreary professor has none to offer. Anyway, what she just said shows she's got some poetic talent, I think."

Lin Pei-shan smiled at first, but, when she heard his last remark, she gave him an icy glare, snorted, and moved languidly away. Realizing that she had misunderstood him, he ran after her and caught her by the shoulder, but she angrily shrugged his hand off, ran through the back door, and slammed it in his face. He hesitated for a second, then dashed over, flung open the door and shouted, "Pei-shan!"

The slam startled Chang Su-su out of her reverie. She looked up, then dropped her eyes again. Her gaze fell on the *Book of Rewards and Punishments* in its yellow damask case lying on a low rectangular table before her, picked it up, and began turning over the pages of neat characters written on high-grade Chinese paper. She paused at an epilogue by Old Mr. Wu, which read:

I have had a hundred thousand copies of the *Book of Rewards and Punishments* reprinted for distribution among my fellow-believers, and also transcribed the whole text with my own hand. . . .

Chang Su-su burst out laughing and was about to read on when somebody spoke to her from behind:

"Now *there* was a man who may truly be said to have had a faith and to have been loyal to it all his life."

It was Li Yu-ting, leaning over the back of the chair, a cigarette between his fingers. Chang Su-su glanced at him over her shoulder, then looked down again at the book. After a while, she laid the book on her lap and asked abruptly:

"Tell me, Yu-ting: what sort of a society are we living in?"

Li Yu-ting was taken aback by this unexpected question, but, being a professor of economics, he did not find it difficult to say something:

"It's a tall order, your question. But you can find an answer in the next room. There you have a successful financier and a captain of industry. That little drawing-room is Chinese society in miniature."

"But there's also a pious old man — a believer in the *Book of Rewards and Punishments*."

"Yes, but the old man is — he's dying fast."

"But in our country there are heaven knows how many more like him."

"Never mind. They'll die directly they arrive in Shanghai. Shanghai is. . . ."

Li Yu-ting broke off when the door from the next room opened and Mrs. Wu Sun-fu came out. Except for a slight frown this beautiful young woman was as lively as ever. When she saw that Li Yu-ting and Chang Su-su were alone together here, she shot them a surprised glance, but immediately changed it to a hospitable smile. She called for the butler Kao Sheng and the maid Wang Mah. When they came in, she said:

"It seems the old master cannot be expected to last the night out. Kao Sheng, you telephone to the factory for Mr. Mo Kan-cheng to come round at once. Then draw up a list of relatives and friends of the family to be notified when he passes away. And have your men tidy up the garden and everywhere and get

the spare chairs and tables out of the attic. If you're short-handed, go and get some helpers from Mr. Tu Chu-chai's place. Now, Wang Mah, you take some maids to tidy up the guest-rooms on the second floor and change all the net curtains, table-cloths and loose covers."

"What about a shroud for the old master? And what kind of wood —?"

"You needn't bother about that. Anyway, it hasn't been decided yet. We shall probably call in the International Undertakers. You just tell Mr. Mo Kan-cheng to bring with him as many men from the factory as he can spare."

"By the way, the Tai Sheng Chang Shipping Company's just sent over the old master's luggage, twenty-eight pieces all told."

"All right, Wang Mah, you go and check them, and anything that isn't needed for the time being you can put in the attic."

Hearing someone in the next room call her name, Mrs. Wu Sun-fu hurried back to the small drawing-room. Before closing the door behind her, she stuck out her head and asked:

"Su-su, do you know where Pei-shan and Po-wen have vanished to? Will you fetch them for me, please?"

Chang Su-su nodded but did not move. She was still reflecting on her discussion with Li Yu-ting and was thinking of picking up the thread where they had left off. Li Yu-ting was pacing up and down and drawing on his cigarette in silence. By now it was nine o'clock, and out in the garden people were coming and going and bustling about. The lights among the trees, in the summerhouses and on the rockeries were switched on. Wang Mah led several stout women servants into the large drawing-room, where they began changing the crimson net curtains for white ones. There was a large bundle of loose covers on the floor, and even the carpets were taken out to be beaten.

There was a scuffle from the next room, and suddenly there came the sound of sobbing voices and cries of "Father!" Chang Su-su and Li Yu-ting looked tense. She rose and walked nervously up and down, then ran across the room and pushed open the door. As the door opened, the big room was filled with the sound of sobbing. Dr. Ting came out, rubbing his hands together, and said to Li Yu-ting, "It's all over."

Wu Sun-fu followed him out, his face gloomy. He told the servants to ring up Mr. Chiu Chun, a lawyer, and ask him to come round. He turned to Li Yu-ting:

"Yu-ting, I hope you can stay with us tonight and give us a hand. It's now gone nine and the newspapers may not be willing to accept our obituary notice as late as this, but it must appear tomorrow morning without fail, so I wonder if you'd be good enough to go and arrange it? Chu-chai is wording it now. It's to go to all the five leading papers, of course." He turned to the butler: "Kao Sheng! Why isn't Mr. Mo Kan-cheng here yet?"

The servant, who was standing on the steps outside, was just going to answer, when Fu-fang ran out and seized Wu Sun-fu by the arm and said:

"I've just talked things over with Pei-yao about the shrouding and we think we'd best put it off until the day after tomorrow in the morning. We need a little time for the preparation and, besides, we'd better wait until Uncle Tseng Tsang-hai has arrived. We can't afford to slight him: you know what a fuss he makes."

Wu Sun-fu paused for a moment and then said firmly:

"We'll send him a telegram tonight. He may or may not arrive in time for the shrouding, but we can't put it off simply because of him. If he complains of anything, I'll answer for it. The shrouding takes place at two o'clock tomorrow afternoon, come what may."

Fu-fang would have liked to say something more, but he had already rushed back to the next room. Fu-fang eventually followed him in.

Just then, Lin Pei-shan and Fan Po-wen, hand in hand, came out of the dining-room into the right-hand corner of the big room. They were taken aback at the din and bustle. Lin Pei-shan said:

"It looks as if the old man's gone."

"If so, I'm not in the least surprised. When he lived in the country he existed like a mummy. The country was his grave, in which he couldn't decompose easily. In this modern city of Shanghai he has done. He's gone, and good riddance. One mummy of old China the less. Old China herself is a mummy