

THE BROKEN HAIRPIN

From *Hsin ch'ing-nien*

TRANSLATED BY LIU WU-CHI

On the fifth day of my arrival at the West Lake, I went up immediately after breakfast to the southern verandah of the inn. As I paced back and forth, the sound of the monastery bell wafted across; it lingered, then vanished. The West Lake from a distance looked as beautiful as ever, but the friends who accompanied me there were different at different times. This was my thirteenth visit. I came alone nine times; on other occasions, I came once with the Buddhist monk T'an-ti, once with the Ch'an master Fa-jen, and at another time with Teng Sheng-hou and the recluse Tu-hsiu.¹ This time I was with Chuang Chih.

A dark, gloomy day—rain threatened but didn't fall. There were no sightseers at the lake, only a few lotus-gathering boats that emerged and disappeared. Suddenly, I noticed a light boat sailing toward the shore across the blue waters and red lotus flowers under a long line of drooping willows. Taking a closer look, I saw a casually dressed young woman in the boat. I thought to myself: she was certainly in good spirits to be on the lake all by herself. Soon the boat was an-

chored by the stone jetty in front of the inn. As she walked up, she looked so uncommonly beautiful that she seemed like a fairy.

The young woman came straight to the inn and asked the doorkeeper for me; he took her upstairs. Before my astonishment had subsided, she was already in front of me; she curtsied graciously and said, blushing, "Sir, please excuse my intrusion. I've heard that you are here with Mr. Chuang. Is that true?"

"Yes," I replied casually.

"I'm a friend of his and have come here expressly to visit him. May I ask if Mr. Chuang is around?"

"He left on horseback early this morning," I replied, "perhaps for a trip to the Ling-yin and T'ien-chu mountains. He could be back this evening, but I'm not sure. Is there any message I could give him?"

The young woman pondered for a moment, and then she said, "My name is Tu Ling-fang. I'm staying at the Lakeside Hotel, room 6. Kindly ask Mr. Chuang to visit me tomorrow morning. I'm sorry to have disturbed you."

"I'll be glad to deliver the message."

Blushing again, she thanked me and left by the same boat.

The young woman's visit had left me in a state

¹ Ch'en Tu-hsiu (editor of the *Hsin Ch'ing-nien* and later one of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party) and Teng Sheng-hou were respectively dean and principal of the Anhwei High School, An-ch'ing, Anhwei, where Su Man-shu, the author of this story, taught in 1912-1913.

of bewilderment. First of all, my friend Chuang Chih was a man of integrity. He was respectable, prudent, and studious. I had never heard of his being the romantic sort. Then where did this girl come from? Second, since I had never met her before, how would she know my name? And how did she come to know that I was with Chuang? Third, the girl was in her teens; why did she want to invite Chuang over to her hotel? One would suspect that she came from the pleasure houses, like female entertainers and musicians, but that could not be the case because she had proper manners and looked so *distinguée*. On the other hand, if she were Chuang's family friend, why did she come alone to see him? Would she not fear gossip? Sitting quietly, I pondered these matters for a long time before I said fearfully to myself: "All women in this world are a source of calamity!"

Since I had made up my mind, when Chuang returned in the evening, I did not mention the girl's visit to him, at least for the time being. The next day, I called up the Lakeside Hotel and inquired, "How many people are there in room 6?"

"Three: a young lady, her mother, and a maid."

"Where did they come from?"

"Shanghai."

"How long are they staying?"

"They're leaving by express train after lunch."

It would be too late, I thought, for Chuang to keep the appointment. This was, after all, a trifling matter. It would not be a betrayal of a friend's trust if I didn't inform him of the girl's visit. A day later, on the eighteenth, friends asked us to go to the head of the [Ch'ien-t'ang] River to watch the tides and to see how three oxen would pull a boat downstream against the onrushing bore. Chuang was tired and did not go. When I returned in the evening, I couldn't find him in the room. The doorkeeper told me, "He got a letter at six o'clock. When supper was served, he simply sat there without eating. He soon left the inn as if he had something urgent on his mind."

I went at once to look for him. I walked along the embankment and located him at the Broken Bridge. He was all by himself, gazing vacantly into the wind.

"The dew is heavy and the wind gusty. You'd better go back," I said.

Without replying, Chuang merely held my hand and followed me back to the inn. After we got there, I was completely exhausted and went to bed right away without telling him of the girl's visit.

I woke up suddenly at midnight and found the moonlight seeping through the curtain. Putting on my clothes, I peered out. A splendid moonlit scene of the lake and the mountain came to my view. I wanted to wake Chuang to join me. Adjusting my clothes, I walked over to his bed. It was empty. I went out to look for him and found him standing dejectedly and motionlessly before the railings. As I tapped his shoulder from behind, I discerned in the moonlight tear stains on his face.

"Why are you so deep in thought?" I asked.

Chuang gave no reply, but quietly wiped away his tears with a handkerchief. Deeply disturbed, I knew not how to comfort him and could only urge him to go back to bed. I had no way of finding out whether he actually went to sleep; I myself was only half asleep.

The next morning, I noticed that Chuang's face was ashen gray, his eyes slightly reddened, and his appetite gone. These could have been the thoughts in his mind: "There's just no end to my sorrow. I have little chance of recovering sufficiently to enjoy with my friend the beauty of the lake and mountains, the wind and moon."

After lunch, I said to him earnestly, "You have changed a great deal since yesterday. Perhaps you have some hidden grief that has been touched off by something I don't know about. Why don't you tell me? We are good friends, and if you were in my place, what would you feel if you had seen me like that last night?"

Even though I tried over and again, I could not

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coax any answer from him. Not wishing to upset him further, I took him for a boat ride in the hope that it would relieve his distress. Still, he would not open his heart to me. I figured that for such a sincere and trusting person as Chuang Chih, something truly unspeakable must have happened to keep him from confiding in me. The letter mentioned by the doorkeeper—could it have come from the girl? I did not want to talk to him about her because I knew that he had an affectionate nature, and at such an impressionable age, he could have easily stumbled if once he took the wrong step. I do not mean that people shouldn't talk about love. But, judging from his present state of mind, I could readily see that there must have been a close relationship between Chuang and the casually dressed girl. I myself had long been nurtured in affliction. Why should I let myself be reminded of the agony of love on account of Chuang?

On Solitary Hill, where I had taken Chuang Chih, we saw a group of foreigners strolling about in the Crane-Releasing Pavilion. Suddenly, a blue-eyed girl sang out aloud: "*Love is enough. Why should we ask for more?*"²

At the end of her song there was an echo from the valley: "*Love is enough. Why should we ask for more?*"

Then a young man added: "*Oh, you kid! Sorrow is the depth of love.*" And the valley echoed as before. All the visitors laughed heartily. Chuang also smiled, but it was a forced smile that merely increased my concern for him.

Afterward, a succession of fine days followed. The sky was clear and the lake placid. I urged Chuang Chih to come with me whenever I went out. Gradually, the swelling grief in his heart sub-

sided and peace was once more restored to him. But he looked weak and fragile as if after a long illness. As for myself, I felt adrift in a vast sea and could only hope that the waves would subside and my friend would regain the equanimity of his heart.

Unexpectedly, Chuang asked me one day, "That day when I went horseback riding, did an old man come to see me?"

"No," I answered right away. "It was a young lady who came looking for you." Chuang was greatly astonished. "A young woman?" he asked. "What did she say?"

Only then did I tell him of the girl's visit. "Who is she?" It was my turn to inquire.

"I know her but have never met her before," Chuang replied after a brief pause.

"At that time," I said, "I didn't want to distract you from your trip with such trivial matters. So, I didn't tell you. Now, I can't help asking what made your face change that day when you read the letter. It must have come from the girl, didn't it?"

"No," Chuang answered hastily. "The letter was from my uncle."

"So, there is little relationship between the letter's content and the girl's visit?" I pursued the question further.

"I never expected that she'd come to see me," Chuang said. "I had no knowledge of her visit until you told me just now."

I asked again, "Would you have been willing to see her if you had been here?"

"No," Chuang replied.

"Why is it then that you wanted to know whether an old man had come to see you, and who is he anyway?"

"I was afraid I might have missed my uncle if he had showed up here."

Not long afterward, about late autumn or early winter, Chuang packed his luggage and left the place. I had to stay on to recuperate from a recurring intestinal trouble. I read and fished. Oc-

² This and all the subsequent sentences and phrases printed in italics in this story are in the original Chinese text. It marks perhaps the first time a Chinese novelist incorporated a number of English sentences and phrases in his fictional writings. No sources have been found for the English "quotations" in this story; quite probably they were composed by Man-shu.

casionally, I smoked a Manila cigar, though in fact that was no way to cure my sickness.

One day, another girl came and wanted to know if Chuang was here.

"He left long ago," I told her.

As I spoke, I watched her closely and was impressed by her beauty and grace. She was a girl in her mid-teens. When she learned that Chuang had gone, she was disappointed and left immediately in her carriage.

After she left, I thought for a while and sighed: "This girl and the earlier one, who came to see Chuang, are both unusually beautiful. Even putting aside the question of their relationship with Chuang, you could readily conclude from their disappointment at failing to see him that he must have been the object of their affection. One wonders, however, to whom is Chuang's heart attached?"

I also wondered why Chuang had expressed reluctance to see the first girl. Would he be willing to meet the one who had just come? Unfortunately, I had no way of finding out. Alas! Love is the hardest knot to untie. When he hid his tears late that night, I knew that he must have been entangled in love. Yet, for all I knew, he had never been involved with any women. I was also sure that Chuang was not a fickle man. True, as an old saying goes, "Once the thread of love is fastened, even death cannot untie it." This could be said of Chuang Chih. Now two beautiful girls had called on him; so Chuang's misery could well be imagined! Sad it was indeed, for I was afraid that my good friend would not live out the allotted span of his life! That's why I was so convinced that "All women in this world are a source of calamity!"

Half a month later, I also returned to Shanghai. After I had unpacked my things, I went straight to see Chuang. His aunt met me and said, "He had a sudden attack of fever a few days ago and is now staying in the French hospital."

I went there immediately to look for him.

Seeing me, Chuang held my hand silently without smiling.

"Are you better now?" I asked.

Chuang merely nodded his head. I felt his forehead and was assured that he didn't have a high fever. In such a situation, I thought, he was not ready for the news of the second girl's visit. So I kept quiet and sat silently in the room for almost half an hour as Chuang closed his eyes and dozed off. Just then, the doctor came in. I asked him in a hushed voice about his patient's condition. He told me that Chuang's case was not dangerous, but his nerves had been badly affected. Thus he warned me not to mention to Chuang anything in the past that would upset him. After the doctor had left, I looked at my watch: it was already ten past eight in the evening. Chuang was still comfortably asleep. I stood up and was about to leave when he suddenly opened his eyes and said to me, "Please don't go so soon. I'd like to have a long talk with you."

"You should rest quietly," I said. "I'll come to see you tomorrow morning."

"I'd like to tell you something tonight," Chuang insisted. "Please sit down. I want to bare my heart to you—that will surely work better than medicine. As a matter of fact, I felt better as soon as I saw you. Well, this is the situation: today I got a letter from Tu Ling-fang. She's coming here at nine o'clock. I've told the doctor about the visit and gotten his permission to talk to her for an hour. You saw her at the lake, but this is our first meeting. So I beg you to stay with me, and if I fail to communicate my feelings to her, you'll have to help me out. You're my dearest friend, and so is she even though I've never seen her before. At our meeting tonight, you'll render me a great service if you testify to her my sincere feelings for her; later you could also help by telling my uncle about her virtuous conduct and gracious manner when I plead my case with him."

Chuang became quite animated as he talked. I was relieved that he did not appear sick at all.

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Still, in all my life I had never found myself in the kind of situation I was in tonight. It is well known that love between man and woman can result only in anxiety, grief, and pain. So how could I put in a word between him and the girl? But Chuang was sincere in his request, and I could not very well refuse him. Silently, I sat down again.

In a short while, the visitor arrived. She stopped outside the room. Chuang managed to sit up and invited her to enter. I bowed to her in greeting.

Chuang said solemnly to the girl, "My admiration for you has grown with time. How happy I am to have a chance to meet you at last!" Hearing this, the girl blushed. She was shy, embarrassed, and did not know how to answer.

"This is my friend Man-shu," continued Chuang. "He is a kind and understanding person. Please don't stand on ceremony with him."

"All right." Only then did the girl answer in a low voice.

"All this time, my thoughts have been constantly with you," Chuang said. "But unfortunately, things often went wrong and I was prevented from seeing you on several occasions. I suppose your brother must have relayed my message to you in his letters."

"Yes, he did," answered the girl, as tense as before.

"While I was visiting the West Lake," Chuang said, "My uncle wrote me that you were engaged to a Mr. Lin and that the date of your marriage had been set. Is that true?"

"No," said the girl in a tremulous voice as her face paled.

"If what I just said were true," pursued Chuang, "what would you do—?"

Before he could finish, the girl interrupted him. "By the blue sea and the azure sky, I swear that even death could not change my heart!"

Upon hearing these words, Chuang was extremely moved and didn't utter a word for a long time.

Suddenly, the girl asked, "Did your uncle know that I went with my mother to watch the tides at Ch'ien-t'ang in mid-autumn?"

"I suppose he did," said Chuang.

"Did he know that I tried to see you at the lake?"

"Only Man-shu and I knew it."

"Your uncle left for T'ung-chou³ today. When will he be back?"

"I have no idea."

At this point, the girl was about to ask another question but refrained. Finally, she said timidly, "Have you ever met Lien-p'ei before? She and I came from the same village and we went to school together. Her tenderness and modesty are indeed commendable."

"When I was in Tsingtao," said Chuang, "I met her three times. My aunt introduced us."

"It was she who told me about your visiting the West Lake with Mr. Man-shu. She is now in Hangchow.⁴ Didn't you meet her at the lake?"

"I had no idea she was there," said Chuang.

It was only then that I had a chance to put in a word. "After you left," I said to Chuang, "there was indeed another young lady who came."

The girl was surprised and said to me, "Please, sir, did she put up her fine dark hair in a bun, and carry herself most gracefully?"

"That's she," I said.

Hearing these words, Chuang was deeply affected; tears welled up in his eyes. Equally affected, the girl went over to Chuang's couch and, holding his hand, said weeping, "You know where my heart lies, and I know yours!" While speaking, she took from her hair a jade hairpin and gave it to Chuang, saying, "If Heaven should thwart our desires, break it!"

These were dark, ominous words. I could not bear to listen any further. I took out my watch. It

³ In Kiangsu Province.

⁴ The Chinese text has "Wu-lin," an old name for Hangchow.

was already ten o'clock. I urged the girl to leave early so that Chuang could have a good night's rest. She silently shook hands with me and departed in grief. Alas! This was my friend's first meeting with Ling-fang, and it was also to be their last!

Upon returning home that night after having witnessed the meeting between Chuang Chih and Ling-fang, I pondered over it time and again but failed to make out the exact relationship between the two. I had personally observed Chuang's sudden emotional disturbance when he learned from his uncle's letter of Ling-fang's impending marriage to another man. This proved that Chuang truly loved Ling-fang. I also perceived that during the short time they were together, the girl had displayed deep feelings of love for him beyond the few words they exchanged with each other. When she shook my hand, I recalled, her palm was extremely hot—an indication of the excitement she had felt in her first visit with Chuang. From their conversation one could also make out that it was the uncle who stood in the way of their love. According to Chuang, it was through his aunt that he had met Lien-p'ei three times. Apparently, she was the choice of his uncle and aunt. When Ling-fang asked me about the girl with the pretty coiffure and graceful bearing, the description could fit only the second girl who came to look for Chuang on the lake. So actually I had also seen her, with her fresh, sprightly looks. But I didn't know whether Chuang loved Lien-p'ei as much as he loved Ling-fang, and whether Lien-p'ei also loved Chuang as much as Ling-fang did. As I pondered these questions, I suddenly realized how absurd I had become! Certainly, it was an emotional affair for my friend, a crisis in his life, but it was none of my business. Why should I speculate on other people's love affairs in my own fantasy? I took off my clothes and went to bed. Soon, I came to a dream land that bore great resemblance to reality. Indeed, the things I dreamed were even more intriguing than what

had actually transpired. So let me relate to you my dream:

Together with Chuang Chih, Ling-fang, and Lien-p'ei, I took a boatripe from the Brocade Ribbon Bridge on the Inner [West] Lake. As we paddled along, I saw some withered, decaying lotus leaves trembling in the wind. Often, they shed their watery tears as if to complain sadly to the Creator. I took pity on them and watched them closely. One of the leaves shook its head and said, "Don't be so conceited as to think that I am begging for your pity."

When we were under the West Freshet Bridge, Ling-fang, pointing to the bank, said to Lien-p'ei, "Those tiny flowers are rather pretty in their red petals, almost like the color of goldfish. Earlier, I saw them bloom, and now with my own eyes I see them wither. What kind of flowers are these?"

"I don't know," said Lien-p'ei.

"Could they be duckweed flowers?" Chuang then asked me. I told him, "This plant is of the same species as the duckweed but of a different variety. Its common name is 'ghost lantern.' It is used sometimes as medicine." Just then, the boat emerged from under the West Freshet Bridge, and Ling-fang and Lien-p'ei broke into a song, singing in unison:

Together with female companions we tread on green grass.

Avoiding Su Hsiao-hsiao's grave³ on the roadside."

Gradually, the sound of singing died away in the distance and I found myself in a small armchair as the morning sun shone on the trees outside. Fresh from my dream, I lost myself in the dawn breeze.

After lunch I went back to the hospital, taking with me a dozen white and purple flowers for Chuang. He was lying quietly on the bed. As I had no desire to mention the events of the night before, I chattered away about our last visit to the West Lake. There was little else I could do, though I knew full well he was not in the least interested in what I was saying.

I saw the hairpin the girl had left by his bedside last night and I told him, "You'd better keep it in

³ Su Hsiao-hsiao was a renowned courtesan in the late fifth century.

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a safe place." His eyes half open, Chuang merely shook his head. I took a handkerchief from him, wrapped the hairpin in it, and placed it under his pillow.

After a while he said to me, "This morning, my aunt came to tell me that uncle is about to return and would like to have me stay with them at their country residence."

"How old is your uncle?" I asked.

"Sixty-one," he replied. Then he continued, "Even now I can hardly make out why he always prevented me from seeing Ling-fang. But I love Ling-fang as much as I love my uncle."

"Who is Ling-fang's elder brother?" I asked.

"My schoolmate, a wonderful friend."

"Where is he?"

"Switzerland."

"Has he written to you?"

"Yes, always about Ling-fang and me."

"What did he say?"

"He urged me to ask my aunt's permission for an early engagement with Ling-fang, but my aunt still has her heart set on my marrying Lien-p'ei."

"What kind of person is Lien-p'ei?" I asked.

"She is my aunt's maternal niece. Even early in her childhood she was already skillful in embroidery; she was also well read in the classics and history. Aunt loves her dearly."

"Do you love her as much as you love Ling-fang?" I asked.

Sighing slightly, Chuang answered, "I love her as much as I love my aunt."

"So you are in love with two beautiful girls at the same time," I concluded.

"You'll understand my feelings better if you know what is implied in the saying that 'plentiful is the water in the Jo,⁶ but all one wants is a dipperful.'"

"May I ask then," I said, "on whom did you first set your heart?"

"Ling-fang."

⁶Jo-shui, a fluid between air and water, found in fairyland.

"You saw Lien-p'ei before Ling-fang, and yet you came to love Ling-fang first. How could this be?" I asked.

"In the year whe... Yüan⁷ was about to declare himself emperor, I happened to be in Peking for a visit. A friend of mine, who was a high official under Yüan, summoned me to his residence. After a few drinks, he took out a document and asked me to translate it into French. I read that thing—a diplomatic message for distribution in foreign countries. It was full of high-sounding passages from memoranda sent to the government by representatives of the various provinces as testimony of the nation's support for Yüan as emperor. That kind of obsequious writing was hard to bear. Worse still, it would become all the more absurd and ludicrous once rendered into a foreign language. So I declined. The man said, 'If you don't do it, that's all right. But how about signing your name there?' I told him, I am neither a diplomat nor an official of the former dynasty, so why bother to have the signature of a nobody on a document such as this? After that, I said good-bye to him immediately. Three days later, the police came. I was arrested and taken to an unknown destination. At that time Tu Ling-yün [Ling-fang's brother] was a secretary in one of the government bureaus. When he learned that I had been implicated by some corrupt official, he did his best to get me released. Afterward, he resigned his position and traveled around the world until he finally settled in Switzerland. Ling-yün was orphaned when he lost his father at twenty. He studied in Rome for four years with Ling-fang and both made names for themselves.

"Right after I returned to Shanghai from Peking, Ling-yün came to live with me at Bubbling Well Road. We shared everything from sleek

⁷Yüan Shih-k'ai (1859-1916), a powerful warlord in Peking, succeeded Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) as president of the Chinese Republic in 1912. Later, he attempted to establish a constitutional monarchy with himself as the emperor. He died shortly after the failure of his attempt.

horses to light fur coats. When he was about to take the trip abroad, we had a picture taken as a souvenir. A few days later, he gave me some intimation of his sister's feelings for me. Tapping me on the shoulder, he asked, 'What do you say, my friend?' I was so happy and grateful that I almost wept. At that moment, even though I did not say it openly, I secretly pledged my heart to her. After I had thought it over for three days, I told my uncle and aunt about this matter. But they remained noncommittal and I didn't want to push it further. Then one day, Ling-yün quietly left. Since then, I have always cherished in my heart what he did for me. Thus, although I never had any occasion to meet his sister face to face, I've given my heart to her, and no lapse of time can make me change my mind."

"Since you love her, why is it that you refuse to see her?" I asked.

"Because I dare not go against the wish of my uncle," Chuang replied.

"That's fine," I said, "and proper for a nephew. Now I understand why your uncle didn't want you to meet Ling-fang. It was because he feared that with your honest and trusting nature, you could fall under the spell of her lovely gazes. This clearly indicates your uncle's loving concern for you rather than his displeasure at Ling-fang. I wonder if you would mind a bit of advice from me? It seems obvious that your uncle and aunt plan to arrange a proper marriage for you. Even though you refuse to change your mind, you are bound to marry Lien-p'ei in the end. Moreover, if in time you could reverse your position and shift your love from Ling-fang to Lien-p'ei, your problem would be resolved most satisfactorily for everyone concerned. Ling-fang, too, I believe, will eventually come to forgive you. Otherwise, sorrow will pursue you endlessly even unto your grave, and remorse will come too late for you."

After listening to my talk, Chuang's face suddenly turned livid and his body shivered as though suffering from ague. I regretted my

words but there was little else I could say under the circumstances. I waited until he had calmed down before I left.

A few days later, as he had said, his uncle and aunt came to take him to their country residence at Chiang-wan.⁸ I went to visit him. His uncle was sitting on a rattan chair, holding a volume of the *Tung-lai po-i* (Critical Writings of Tung-lai),⁹ swaying his knees back and forth as he read. Chuang introduced me to him: "Uncle, this is my friend Man-shu, who went to Hangchow with me."

Hearing these words, his uncle slowly took down his big tortoiseshell spectacles, stood up, and nodding slightly to me, asked, "Did you come from Shanghai?"

Upon hearing my answer in the affirmative, he continued, "I've heard that you've traveled a lot around the country. That's fine! That's fine! The weather is nice today, so just walk around and take a look at this place."

"Thank you, sir," I replied.

At that time a maidservant came in and laid on the rattan side table a tea service. Chuang invited me to sit down as his uncle urged me solicitously to eat some of the pastry. He took into his own hand some pieces of hill-haw cake and candied lotus seeds to offer me and Chuang. I took a furtive glance at his long, blackened fingernails and told myself that he must have been an expert in finger calligraphy.¹⁰

After tea, Chuang Chih took me to the western part of the garden. As we walked, I said to him, "Your uncle seems to be a kind and reasonable person. If you opened your heart to him, you might find him sympathetic."

"Uncle has been most benevolent and gracious to me," said Chuang. "I'll do whatever he wishes, but this affair is different. I'm afraid I'll have to

⁸ On the outskirts of Shanghai.

⁹ *Tung-lai po-i*, by the Southern Sung scholar Lü Tsu-ch'ien (1137-1181), styled Tung-lai, is a collection of Lü's opinions on the early historical work *Tso-chuan* (The Tso Commentary).

¹⁰ He wrote with his right index finger (dipped it in the black ink) instead of using the brush.

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disobey him one day. That's why I've been in a state of anxiety all this time. My uncle, I think, must have also realized it. Lately, he has been showing special consideration for me. But he still regards this kind of independence in love and marriage as something uncivilized, and hence not to be tolerated."

At that moment we heard the rumbling sound of a carriage. Chuang and I went to the garden gate to take a look. As the carriage door opened, a young woman stepped down, her shoes small and dainty. I stood there quietly to look at her; she was none other than the second girl who had come to see Chuang at the lake.

After a sidelong glance at me, the girl turned her gaze on Chuang. Half blushing and half smiling, she was about to say something. I knew Chuang must have been trembling inside though he appeared to be calm outwardly. Finally, the girl said, "I hear that you've been unwell. Are you all right now?"

"It's kind of you to ask, but I've recovered now," replied Chuang.

"As soon as I returned from Tsingtao," the girl said, "I went to Hangchow to see you but you were already back in Shanghai." She stopped after these words; then casting her lovely glance at me, she asked, "Mr. Man-shu, how long have you been back here?"

"Six days," I answered.

After a short pause, the girl turned to Chuang again and said, "Did you see Ling-fang at the lake?"

"I happened to be out, and didn't see her."

Immediately the girl continued, "So you haven't seen her even now?" It seemed that she had been ready with the question for some time. Chuang Chih found it difficult to answer, so he remained silent. The girl stared at him as if to communicate with her eyes: "I know very well she gave you her hairpin at your bedside in the hospital."

Shortly afterward, a maid came to invite the girl inside while Chuang and I continued our stroll on

the lawn, looking around as we walked. Momentarily, Chuang's face paled and he stood where he was, frozen. To my questions, he answered, "I feel badly whenever I think of Lien-p'ei's affection for me and my aunt's kindness, especially because the direction of my love runs counter to their wish. I also recall your admonishment the other day. I feel torn."

Realizing that his sorrow must have been deep, though his words were mild, I comforted him. "Don't feel so upset. Someday, I'll plead your case with your uncle, and who knows, it might turn out well!" I had little confidence in what I said. But those who are blinded by love are like children—these words appealed to him as much as talk of sweets to a child. How could Chuang know the worry in my heart?

On my way back after I left Chuang, I caught sight of a carriage passing by. The rider inside was none other than Lien-p'ei; her eyes were red from crying. I sighed in my heart that this was a girl so totally given to love that she didn't know how to control her passions.

Nowadays, people's mores and morals change with the times. Womenfolk of a questionable and seductive nature vie with one another in pursuit of lust and luxury. They appear to be obsessed by the idea of women's emancipation, but what they do is to commit excesses and transgressions in the name of liberation, just like men who scheme for profit and gain in the name of patriotism. These so-called liberated women and patriotic men, indeed, are even worse than depraved females and deceitful shopkeepers, and I cannot imagine where their souls are, if they have any.

When I came back to Shanghai this time, none of the things I heard and saw pleased me. True, I have quite a few old friends who continue to be optimistic, and I will readily admit that they have intelligence and talent, though they lack the opportunity to display them. In this modern age, their words cannot save the world and their knowledge is useless for the times. However, in

view of the infinity of the universe, they can only put on a cheerful countenance. While their true feelings are roiling within them, they pretend to be optimistic outwardly. If we can realize how they feel, we will certainly disagree that only the elderly statesmen are concerned with the affairs of the state and the welfare of the people.

When I got to the Huangpu riverbank, it was already 10 o'clock in the evening. I fumbled in my pocket and found only nine coppers inside. It was too late to find overnight lodging with friends. Years ago, when I stayed abroad and had no place to spend the night, I often went to the waiting room in the station and waited for dawn as I smoked. But I could not do that in Shanghai, so I went straight to a friend in his newspaper office. His head was buried in a confused pile of papers and he was writing madly. When he saw me, he laughed and said, "Don't accuse me of being the kind of person who writes a thousand words in one sitting but hasn't a single idea in his head."

"That's exactly what I think you are," I said. "What concerns me is that I have no place to go at such a late hour. So I've come here to impose on you."

"That's all right," he said. "I have a day couch here where you can rest for a while. As soon as I finish writing, I'll come chat with you. I get tired of writing every day about 'nobility,' 'cabinet ministers,' and the like, and would love to have a chance for some heart-to-heart talk with an old friend."

"When will you go to bed?" I asked.

"About five or six in the morning," he said.

"Don't you know that we in the newspaper business generally get up and go to bed at about the same time the Americans do on the other side of the globe?"

"Well, let me sleep here," I said. "At five or six tomorrow—that's the time I'll get up."

"In that case," he said, "go on to bed and I'll continue with my writing."

So I went to bed with my clothes on.

The next morning, I got up early and went to another friend's house. Seeing me, he said, "You don't have your winter clothes on. By the way, when are you going back to the West Lake?"

"I don't know yet," I replied.

The friend handed me a hundred-dollar bill¹¹ and said, "Take it and buy something with it."

After receiving the money, I went straight to a store in the British Concession to buy a watch, for which I paid seventy dollars. I figured that when I was about to leave Shanghai I would return my friend's favor by giving the watch as a present to his son for use at school. After I made the purchase, I bought twenty dollars' worth of Manila cigars and then returned to where I had been lodging with my friend.

The next day, I got a letter from Chuang inviting me to go to his place right away. When I arrived, he took me to his bedroom and whispered to me, "Tomorrow, my aunt is going to ask Lien-p'ei to stay with us. I just don't know what to do. It'd be wonderful if you could come here to keep me company so we could chat together in the morning and at night. If I were alone, she'd often come in to disturb me. The other day, I treated her coldly and she left in a flurry. I know she must have complained to my aunt."

"What else did your aunt say to you?" I asked.

"I learned the news of Lien-p'ei's visit from the maid, not from my aunt," he said.

"In a week's time I'm going back to the West Lake with a friend from Szechwan. Sorry I can't oblige you."

"It would be fine if you just stayed here for a week," pleaded Chuang. "Otherwise, I'll have to flee from her to somewhere else."

"Where will you go?" I asked him immediately.

"I've considered the matter carefully," he said.

"If things get bad, I'll take Ling-fang with me to Soochow or any other city along the Yangtze."

"Does Ling-fang know anything about this?"

¹¹ This equaled about 500 1978 U.S. dollars in terms of buying power.

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"I haven't seen her since our meeting in the hospital."

"All right," I said. "I'll come to keep you company. Then we can talk it over carefully. It would be rash of you to take off like that. I don't think you should do it."

I moved over to stay with Chuang Chih the same day. His uncle and aunt treated me kindly and I was grateful to them.

The next day, Lien-p'ei also moved in, to a room on the south side of the garden. From the simple baggage she brought with her, one could see that she did not plan to stay long. Every time Chuang met Lien-p'ei, I noticed, he said nothing to her but merely greeted her with a nod. Sometimes when he saw Lien-p'ei alone in front of the hall, he would walk away to avoid her. Lien-p'ei, of course, was aware of it but there was little she could do.

One cold, gloomy day, while I was talking idly with Chuang in the study, a maid came in with a "hundred-layer crystal cake" and said to Chuang, "This is from Miss Yen. She made it herself for you and your friend." Chuang accepted it.

Not long after the maid had gone, Lien-p'ei herself came smiling into the study, in her easy, graceful way, to inquire after Chuang's health. He showed little surprise at the visit but also little attentiveness to the visitor. He said casually, "Thanks for the cake, Miss Yen. Please sit down by the stove where it's warm. It is cold today."

Lien-p'ei waited until Chuang Chih and I had returned to our seats. Then, adjusting her skirt, she sat down in front of the fire. She was dressed in a western outfit: a snow-white woolen blouse, its collar fastened by a large pink necktie like a scarf; a short dark-green velveteen skirt; long black stockings; a pair of dark velvet shoes with a pink ribbon bow on the top, like the kind fashionable in eighteenth-century Europe. She did not wear a hat. Her hair was tied up in a bun and her ears were adorned with two diamond pendants, each like a shiny star piercing through the dark

clouds of her hair. Seeing that Chuang sat there nonchalantly without saying a word, I tried to make a little conversation: "Miss Yen, have you ever been to Europe or America?"

"No," answered Lien-p'ei, lowering her head. "I would like to go to Europe in two or three years to visit the recent battlefields. But I have little desire to go to America, where there are few historical sites worth visiting. Moreover, the Americans believe that to *make money* is their most important business, as shown in the saying, '*Two dollars is always better than one dollar.*' They look down upon us Chinese as if we were dogs. How could I have the face to go to their country? People speak highly of the materialistic civilization in America, but they do not know that American millionaires are just misers who take advantage of their industrial technology to make the common people even poorer every day. Some advocates of humanitarianism have said, 'If the atmosphere on this great earth could be had for a price, it would be completely taken over by the Americans.' How painfully true are these words!"

After she had finished speaking, she stretched out her white hand to put some coal into the stove. In the meantime, Chuang had taken up a book to read. After she had put in some coal, Lien-p'ei said good-bye to us and, adjusting her skirt, went away.

"Such a nice girl," I said to Chuang; "so amiable and courteous!"

Chuang heaved a deep sigh without uttering a word. I took out a Manila cigar and began to puff away. Before I had smoked half of it, he suddenly threw down his book and said to me, "This girl is quite conversant with English and French literature. For five and half years she learned phonology from Charles, a Scotch gentleman. So she is not only beautiful in looks but could be my mentor as well. I regret I met her too soon and now I have no desire even for her company. Alas! How unpredictable is fate!" As he spoke, Chuang's eyes were moist with tears.

Later, he said to me, "Let's both go and visit Ling-fang. I've been worried about her brother, as I haven't heard from him for a long time."

"That's a good idea," I said.

So we went together to Rue Batz to call upon Ling-fang, but learned from the maid that Ling-fang and her mother had gone to K'un-shan¹² several days earlier. We left in disappointment. When we returned to the house, Lien-p'ei greeted us outside the garden gate. She took a letter from her pocket and showed it to Chuang: "This is from Ling-fang. She wrote that she had gone to K'un-shan but would return soon."

The next day, the weather was gorgeous. After breakfast, Chuang's aunt took us for a ride. They had two [single-horse] shays on the estate. For that occasion, a second horse was harnessed to each vehicle to make two two-horse carriages. When we drove out, the passersby on the street all raised their heads to stare at us, dazzled by Lien-p'ei's beauty. She was most attractive in the purple suit which she had put on for the occasion.

It was already noon when we got to Nanking Road. We rested and had lunch in the Shanghai Restaurant. As I looked down from the balcony of the restaurant, I saw Ling-fang drive by in a carriage. Apparently she had also seen us, but Chuang was engaged in a conversation with Lien-p'ei and did not see her; nor did I mention it to him.

After lunch, we went shopping at Whiteway and Weiss, since Lien-p'ei's things were all purchased in foreign department stores. Lien-p'ei was in especially good spirits that day, her charm increasing with her happiness. Chuang waited upon his aunt attentively, and it could not be said that he was unhappy. As for me, a satellite revolving round the constellations, I felt neither elated nor depressed. Lien-p'ei bought two silver pens-and-pencil sets and gave Chuang and me a set each; she also presented us each with a pair of binoculars.

¹² Near Soochow, in Kiangsu.

Shopping done, we visited the parks: the Hsü Garden, Zikawei,¹³ the Liang Garden, and the Ts'ui Orchard. Rather fatigued after these trips, Chuang suggested to his aunt, "Could we stay in the city overnight instead of going back to the country?"

"It's all right with me," said the aunt, "but the hotels are not clean."

"There is the St. George, operated by westerners," he said. "It is elegant and secluded. Later, if aunt wishes it, I'd like to invite you all to the opera."

"That will be grand," said the aunt, "but you have to ask Miss Yen to interpret for me."

"I'll ask her," he said.

In the evening we went to the Museum Theater. By the time we got there, the place was already crowded with westerners, both men and women, this being the night when a celebrated opera was to be performed. During the performance, Lien-p'ei translated the words of the arias so clearly that they seemed to be spoken by the singers themselves. Her extraordinary intelligence greatly impressed me. We had been in the theater for almost two hours, and yet she continued unceasingly her eloquent presentation. Suddenly, an actor dressed in a dark costume came onto the stage. Gazing angrily at the audience, he spoke in a refined but tremulous voice:

What the world calls love I neither know nor want. I know God's love, and that is not weak or mild. That is hard even unto the terror of death; it offers caresses which leave wounds. What did God answer in the olive grove when the Son lay sweating in agony, and prayed and prayed: "Let this cup pass from me!" Did He take the cup of pain from His mouth? No, child; He had to drain it to the depth.

At these words, Lien-p'ei paused and abruptly stopped her flowing stream of words. Chuang's aunt asked, "Why have you stopped translating?" She repeated the question several times without

¹³ Zikawei (also spelled Siccawei) is well known for the Jesuit Mission established there and its garden.

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getting an answer from Lien-p'ei, who looked wooden. Both Chuang and I knew what had so deeply moved Lien-p'ei, but Chuang's aunt thought that the actor was saying something obscene. Displeased, she ordered us to return to the hotel. Only then did I learn that it was Lien-p'ei's birthday.

Early the next morning, Lien-p'ei took Chuang and me for a walk on the lawn. After a while, she suddenly put her hand on Chuang's left arm. Her head lowered and her mouth closed, she looked tired and flushed. Chuang, on the other hand, was pale in countenance, but he continued to walk on.

When we got back to the porch, I went up the steps and led the others to a small sitting room. I said to Chuang, "It's still an hour and a half before breakfast. Let's rest here for a while. Just listen to the birds singing! They seem to say that the year is drawing to an end."

Hearing these words, Lien-p'ei craned her neck to look outside; then she said to Chuang, "Here, out in the country, the leaves are half fallen and the birds gone without a trace. Pretty soon we'll have a snow scene before our eyes." As she talked, she fixed her gaze on Chuang, but the latter appeared to be hard of hearing and merely played with his watch chain.

At that moment a hotel guest burst into the room, a tennis racket in hand. He was on his way out to the porch; so I followed him outside to watch him play. Two girls and a man were already waiting for him on the lawn. As they were expert players, I turned back to call Chuang and Lien-p'ei to come out and watch the game.

Who could have expected the scene I then witnessed? Chuang was still sitting there, silent and motionless, on a sofa, his eyes staring vacantly at the carpeted floor, while Lien-p'ei nestled her body toward Chuang's right side, her long hair flowing down over his shoulder, her cherry lips pouting, and her eyelashes tear-stained, while she folded her drenched handkerchief with both hands.

Apparently, they were both aware of my presence. But in Lien-p'ei's case, it seemed as if she were saying to herself, "My behavior is only proper—even God would approve of it. As for my love, my tender passion—there's no reason why I should hide it!" On his part, Chuang's heart was as cold as ice at that moment. He had his reason for being unmoved by the love of such a beautiful creature. But it was exactly this point that Lien-p'ei failed to understand, and the reader, probably, will come to sympathize with her. The fact was, Chuang could not have helped being affected by the display of such tenderness and affection. However, as he recalled the words, "With God looking down from above, be not fickle in thy heart," he became so firm in his resolution and so noble in his bearing that none dared to encroach upon his private feelings.

"Has your aunt awakened?" I ventured.

"I'll go and look," he murmured, and then excused himself and left.

By that time, Lien-p'ei had risen from the chair. While she was fixing her hair before the mirror, she wiped her cheeks with a silk handkerchief. I had great sympathy for Lien-p'ei but I also felt that this is the kind of frustration we can't do anything about.

Immediately after our return to Chiang-wan, Chuang Chih appeared terribly upset. He sighed over and again; he also questioned his maid several times.

That night when I went to the study to look for a book I found Chuang sitting there with his face to the lamp, weeping. I sat beside him, and as I was about to console him, he said suddenly to me in a mournful voice, "Ling-fang's hairpin is broken!"

Startled, I asked, "When was it broken? By whom?"

"I don't know," he replied. "I found it broken soon after returning home." He had barely finished his words before he burst into sobs.

Just at this juncture, Lien-p'ei came in and, standing in front of Chuang Chih, exclaimed,

"You are crying! Why? Did I do anything to offend you? Please tell me." But there was no reply from Chuang even though Lien-p'ei repeatedly pressed him with questions. Lien-p'ei knew, of course, that he was upset because of her; she, too, hid her face and cried as she sat beside Chuang. After a long while, a maid came in to help Lien-p'ei to her bedroom. Chuang was still trembling all over. I knew he must be terribly sick and urged him to go to bed right away.

Next morning, when I went to see Chuang, he acted as if he did not know me at all but only stared at me fixedly without uttering a word. I hurriedly left him and asked for permission to see his uncle. I told him of Chuang's serious condition and hinted delicately about Chuang's love affair with Ling-fang in the hope that my intercession might be of some help to his nephew. His uncle, however, said angrily to me, "This young man has ignored my advice and acted most outrageously! Will you please tell him that it was I who broke the jade hairpin? Being young and licentious, he has failed to heed the instructions of the ancients that 'a coquette is without chastity and a libertine without loyalty.' " He then wrote out a prescription to give to me, saying, "This young man's illness comes from an attack of evil influences in the liver. Get three-tenths of a tael each of ginseng, white peony root, and *Pinellia tuberifera*; two-tenths of a tael each of *Arisaema japonicum* and *Coptis* root; one-tenth of a tael each of dried mandarin orange peel, liquorice root, and white mustard seeds. Boil them slowly in water and ask him to drink the medicine. He'll get well after two or three doses. Please take good care of him for me." As he spoke, he continuously heaved deep sighs.

I took the prescription, said "Yes, sir," and withdrew. When I called the waiting maid and asked her to go to the herbalist to fill the prescription, she told me in a hushed voice, "Miss Yen died last night in her bedroom. Such a strange incident! The mistress forbids me to tell the young master."

"Did you find out how Miss Yen died?" I asked.

"I only saw it this morning," the maid replied. "She cut her throat with a knife."

"By all means hide it from the young master. Go quickly and get the medicine," I told her.

When I got back to Chuang's bedroom, I found him lying there motionless. He stared vacantly at me; his face had become purplish and his lips ashen white. I asked him repeatedly how he felt, but he acted as if he had not heard me. I sat down quietly beside him, waiting for the maid to return. Suddenly, Chuang shook his head as if to say that he already knew about Lien-p'ei's death. I could not figure out how he had discovered it, as nobody could have told him about it.

Later, the maid returned with the medicine. At the same time, she handed Chuang a letter. After reading, he gave it to me, his face having turned leaden. I leaned toward him and laid my hand on his shoulder. Tears began to roll down his face. I knew the letter was from Ling-fang but I had no time to read it at present.

Half an hour later, the maid entered with the concoction. Chuang drank it in small sips and then rested quietly. Only then did I have a chance to read Ling-fang's letter:

Dear Mr. Chuang:

After our meeting in the hospital, we were like stars in opposite corners of the Milky Way on the distant horizon even though we were actually close to each other. Whenever I thought of your great kindnesses and the grace of your feelings, I could only nod my head and sigh.

The ties of our affection are now severed! The day before yesterday, I went to visit you at your residence—it was also the time you took Lien-p'ei out for a ride. Your uncle graciously exhorted me with his sincere advice. After listening to him, I asked your uncle to break the hairpin which I left you the other day in fulfillment of our pledge. Now that the hairpin has been broken into halves, I, too, have changed my mind.

I hope you will renounce your love for me, this humble one, and devote yourself to Lien-p'ei. May the eternal sun bear witness that henceforth I shall

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forswear my affection for you! I also hope you will comply with the wishes of your uncle and aunt so that you can enjoy the life of a happy and united family. If you do, even I, unfortunate as I am, will feel relieved and comforted. Alas! If only we could be united in wedlock in the next world, and cherish our conjugal happiness in a future existence!

At present, we are doomed to be parted in this life. What else could I say to you?

Once again, my respects to you.

Ling-fang

After I had finished reading the letter, I knew that Chuang Chih could never find happiness in his life again. It had left him like flowing water. I also mourned that Lien-p'ei could not be recalled to life. As to Ling-fang's future, for the present I had no time to think of it.

Chuang Chih suddenly woke up and vomited. I stroked his back gently. Soon afterward, he said to me, "Ling-fang has cut me off. This I understand, for I can well perceive her feelings. It's a pity that I'll have no chance to see her again, but—" When he came to these words, he was so choked with grief that he could hardly make himself heard. I quickly helped him to lie down, and he lay there without uttering a word.

I asked the maid to take good care of Chuang. I then left him to return to my room, hoping that someday we could again have good times together after he had recovered his senses and his spirit. But I myself was so greatly perturbed that I just sat there quietly and smoked. I chain-smoked more than ten cigars before I undressed and went to bed. It had become half past one by my watch without my realizing it.

As I was about to close my eyes, I heard someone opening my bedroom door. It was the maid. She was holding a candle in her hand, and sobbing uncontrollably, she said to me, "The young master has breathed his last."

I got up at once, ran to Chuang's room, and felt

his body, which was already ice cold. Soon his uncle and aunt came in. Except for long sighs, his uncle said not a word, but his aunt, crying in a trembling voice, tenderly stroked the dead body and said, "Why have you become so unfeeling as to involve us in such deep sorrow and trouble!" She cried again as she finished talking.

Immediately after dawn, I hurried out in a rickshaw to a pawnshop at the Rainbow Bridge to pawn my new watch which, after all, I did not have to give away as a present.

I got back forty dollars for the watch. As I left the shop, I met a girl whom I recognized as Ling-fang's maid by the red mole (as big as a watermelon seed) on her right cheek. So I asked her, "How is Miss Ling-fang?" The maid restrained her tears and gave no answer. I knew something must have gone wrong with Ling-fang.

The maid took me to a corner of the pawnshop and said, "The young lady hanged herself last night. Oh, how pitiable! Now there isn't even enough money in the house for her funeral. That's why the old mistress sent me here."

I was deeply saddened by these words, as much as Chuang would have been.

Three days later, Chuang Chih's funeral was held, but only a distant relative and a schoolmate of his came. Neither knew the cause of his premature death.

After he had been buried in the Cemetery of the Multiple Blessings, I gave a generous sum of money to the keeper and asked him to place fresh flowers before the grave in all seasons so that Chuang would be spared the sorrow of having to look at wilted blossoms. Now that the fated relationship between Chuang Chih, Ling-fang, and Lien-p'ei has come to an end, the three may yet get together one day in their next existence. But this is something about which I am unwilling to speculate.