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VICTIMS

In 1926 Mao Zedong had declared that "A revolution is not a dinner party." Even after the victory in 1949, Mao insisted, vigilance against class enemies had to be maintained. Struggling against them was needed to mobilize the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses. In the period of land reform millions of landlords and their families suffered from being labeled class enemies. In the 1951 campaign against those who had been affiliated with Nationalist organizations or served in its army, tens of thousands were executed and many more sent to labor reform camps. During the anti-Rightist campaign of 1957, about half a million educated people lost their jobs and often their freedom, usually because something they had said during the "Hundred Flowers" period had been construed as anti-party. Even more educated people were singled out for persecution during the Cultural Revolution. College professors, middle school teachers, newspaper writers, musicians, party cadres, factory managers, and others who could be classed as educated suffered a wide variety of brutal treatment. Men and women were tortured, imprisoned, starved, denied medical treatment, or forced to leave their children unsupervised when they were sent out to labor camps. Tens of thousands were killed or committed suicide.

For years victims of these campaigns could not write or talk about their experiences for fear that they or their children would suffer even more. After the Cultural Revolution was discredited and blame placed on the "Gang of Four," (which included Mao's wife Jiang Qing), writers were encouraged to expose the harm the "gang" had caused. Often the most effective way they found to do this was through fiction. Below is a story, titled "Melody in Dreams," written in 1978 by Zong Pu (b. 1928), the daughter of a well-known professor of philosophy Feng Youlan, who was the object of severe criticism in both the anti-Rightist campaign and the Cultural Revolution.

1

The cello music sounded through the air. It was deep and sad like the late autumn wind sweeping leaves off the ground or the grey clouds gathering in the cold winter sky. Gradually the music became thinner and thinner as if it would be lost, never to be found. Suddenly, it burst into a loud, stirring sound which seemed to express hope and desire.

"It's Murong Yuejun playing!" Many people were familiar with her music.

Murong Yuejun, a teacher of cello at a music college, was wedded to her instrument. She and her cello were as one; through it she expressed all her feelings. Today, however, she could not finish a single piece. Putting the cello aside, she walked out onto the balcony and gazed into the distance.

It was September of 1975. Strands of her white hair gleamed in the setting sun. Her attractive face belied her age of more than fifty years. She gazed down the end of the street expectantly, but no one came. She was waiting for the daughter of her close friend Liang Feng, a man she had nearly married. He had since died, but she always remembered his daughter.

At the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War in 1937, Liang Feng and other youths had gone to the revolutionary base of Yan'an. Yuejun, however, at the time a music student at Yanjing University in Beijing, had been taken by her parents to the south. Then she had won a scholarship to study abroad and had not returned until after Liberation in 1949. After the death of her parents, she had immersed herself in teaching music.

Now it was growing dark. She went back into her room, deep in thought. During the first years after Liberation, Liang Feng had worked abroad. In the sixties he had been recalled to China to do cultural exchange work. Yuejun had heard him speak at some meetings. She had been impressed by his way of expounding the party's policies and moved by his devotion to the party. She even met his wife, a respectable comrade and good mother. Yuejun had also met their daughter, but the girl had not left a deep impression on her, except on one unforgettable occasion. It was during the

Cultural Revolution, when all sorts of bad characters emerged to slander celebrated artists and intellectuals. Yuejun, because she had studied abroad, was attacked. At a meeting, she and some others were lined up on stage. Some famous musicians were pushed to the microphone to denounce themselves as reactionaries. Suddenly three or four youngsters beat and kicked a middle-aged man onto the stage shouting, "Down with the revisionist monster Liang Feng!"

Stealing a glance at him, Yuejun was surprised to see her friend being forced to the microphone. Facing the crowd, he said, "I'm Liang Feng, a Chinese Communist!" No sooner had he said this when some thugs leapt onto the platform and punched him. Blood poured from his mouth. Then a girl's clear voice was heard shouting, "Father! Father!" There was an uproar as some protested against the beating, while others rushed to the girl and knocked her out of the hall. Though Yuejun's head was lowered, she saw the whole scene, except the girl's face. Whenever she thought of her, she felt a mixture of sadness and warmth. Now she was going to see her for the first time since the incident.

There was a voice outside. Yuejun asked, "Is that you, Pei?" A plump woman of Yuejun's age entered. She was a party member who had been party secretary of the cello section since the 1960s.

"I just popped in to see if Liang Feng's daughter was coming to see you today."

"She's supposed to, but she hasn't turned up yet."

"Do you remember . . .?" Pei looked out of the window.

"I haven't forgotten all those slanders." Yuejun's mild glance rested on her. After each criticism meeting, Pei had whispered in her ear, "Chin up! It's a test." Or, "Never mind. Don't let it upset you too much!" This had encouraged Yuejun enormously.

Pei had high blood pressure and was easily excited. Controlling herself she said, "You must teach her well, Yuejun."

"Of course. I want to, but can I supplement the musical scores and materials?"

"I think one should, but who has the authority? The harmful members of society aren't only trying to destroy the usual ones, but our whole civilization and socialism." Pei's voice quivered.

"But what can we do?" Yuejun muttered.

"Wait until . . ." Pei slapped the arm of the chair. After a while she said she was going to see her paralyzed husband in the hospital. Smiling bitterly, she left.

It was night as Yuejun gazed out of the window at the maple tree illuminated by neighboring lights. Thinking of the girl, she supposed she would not come that night. Then there was a knock at the door. Before she could answer it, a girl came in saying loudly, "Are you Aunt Yuejun? I had such trouble finding your home. I must have asked about a dozen people along the way. Your room's dark but I spotted your cello when I came in, so I guessed this must be the right place. I'm Liang Xia."

Switching on the lights, Yuejun saw that Liang Xia was a pretty girl, with her hair cut short. She was wearing a cream-colored jacket over a black woolen jersey and deep grey trousers. With large eyes, slender eyebrows, and rosy cheeks, she was smiling quizzically at Yuejun.

"So she's sizing me up too," thought Yuejun, who shook hands with her, saying, "I've been waiting for you. . . ."

2

Liang Xia was ten years old in 1966 when the Cultural Revolution began, a marked turning point in her life. Until then she had been the pride of her parents, but her happiness dissipated with the start of the Cultural Revolution. Her father, a leader in his office, was dragged one night by people who broke into their home. Then her mother was separated from her. Liang Xia, bewildered, was left alone at home, cooking meals to take to her parents. Her father liked eating noodles and flapjacks, while her mother liked sweet food. Sometimes Liang Xia herself went hungry in order to give her parents their meals. She did this

until one day a man told her not to prepare any more for her father, since he had died five days earlier.

After her parents were detained, some of their comrades invited Liang Xia to live with them, but certain people objected saying that she could only live with a relative. She had an aunt, her mother's sister, but she had refused to take Liang Xia, only allowing the girl to visit her and help her with various chores. At that time Liang Xia was in the fourth-grade. Because of her parents, she too was criticized from time to time.

In those unhappy days, Liang Xia often dreamed that she was being weighed down by a heavy stone. Unable to remove it, she would cry herself awake. But in time she became accustomed to the sneers, and she accompanied her mother to a cadre school to do manual labor in the countryside. Then her mother was transferred to work in a small town in south China, where she met a cello teacher, who had been dismissed from his school. So that Liang Xia would not idle away her time, her mother arranged for her to have cello lessons.

Just two months ago, Liang Xia's mother had died of illness. The death was particularly tragic because she had heard that shortly there would be a meeting to clear her husband's name. So Liang Xia came to Beijing and stayed with her aunt. She hoped that Yuejun could give her cello lessons. That was the reason for her visit.

"I'm sorry for being late, but I had to help my aunt with the washing up." She glanced round the room in which Yuejun had lived for many years. Against the window was a marble-topped mahogany desk left to Yuejun by her parents. In one corner stood a piano against which leaned a cello. In front of her bed was a folding screen painted with flowers and birds. Two armchairs flanked a stand and behind it was a lamp with an orange shade. The gentle light gave an atmosphere of tranquility.

"It's nice and cozy here," Liang Xia said as she followed Yuejun to the kitchen, where she took the thermos flask from her and poured herself a cup of tea. Yuejun told her that several years previously, a couple intruded into her family's home.

Dividing the room was a screen and bookcases, they lived there a few months before they moved out.

"We were driven out of our home and had to leave everything," Liang Xia said matter-of-factly. "When my parents were detained, I stayed in the attic. It seemed quite cozy at the time. But mother was ill after her release and whenever she used the stairs I had to carry her on my back."

Yuejun wondered how Liang Xia, with her delicate build, had managed that. Curious to know about her mother's illness, Yuejun nevertheless said nothing for fear of opening old wounds.

But as if she had read her thoughts, Liang Xia continued, "Mother had all sorts of complaints. I was like her doctor. I knew every medicine she took. In the end she died of pneumonia. I thought many times she would die, but she always survived. So I thought she'd recover that last time." Her tone seemed detached. Yuejun, however, was very sad.

"How many years have you been playing the cello?" Yuejun looked at her cello. "You love music, don't you?"

"No, I don't." Her reply surprised Yuejun, who stared fascinated at her thick lashes and dark eyes. "I have to learn something to get myself a job. I've been playing since I was fourteen, but I'm not interested in it. I really preferred working in the countryside, but since my mother was too ill to join me, I went with her."

Yuejun was disappointed and wondered whom Liang Xia would follow now.

The girl added, "My parents were always talking about you, so I feel as if I've known you for ages. Mother said you could help me become a musician." A flicker of hope came into her eyes veiling the indifference which seemed to say, "But it doesn't matter if you refuse."

"Why bother learning to play the cello if you don't like it?"

"To make a living, of course," Liang Xia said with a giggle.

If she had heard such a reply ten years earlier, Yuejun would have been insulted. Now nothing astonished her.

"Play me something," she said after a pause.

When Liang Xia went to get the cello, she found a curtained-off alcove that stored Yuejun's junk. Lifting the curtain, Liang Xia exclaimed, "Goodness! Why do you store all your things here, auntie? One day I'll help you sort them out." Then holding the cello she began to play.

She played the second movement of a concerto by Saint-Saëns. In spite of her poor technique, there was something in her playing which moved Yuejun. Although she failed to grasp the meaning of the music, she expressed her own feelings. She was making music.

"She has a good musical sense," Yuejun thought.

She soon finished, but the room retained the atmosphere she had created. Putting the cello aside, Liang Xia searched Yuejun's face.

"To have a feeling for the music is very important," Yuejun said warmly. "But you don't handle your bow correctly yet. Look, it should be like this," and so saying she took the bow and gave the girl her first lesson.

3

After that, Liang Xia came once a week. When she was not studying, she would chat or help Yuejun with something. She was bright and seemed to know a lot, though sometimes she was ignorant of the most common things. For example, once a colleague was discussing some classical novels with Yuejun, when Liang Xia interrupted them saying she had read many of them. It seemed she had read whatever she could lay her hands on, but there were still large gaps in her education. She would often ask simple questions like when was the Opium War and what was it about. She may have seemed self-centered, confident of how to take care of herself, because since the death of her parents no one else had. Sometimes, however, she was also eager to help others.

One day Yuejun was learning to give injections. Liang Xia offered her arm because she said

she was not afraid of pain. Then she added coolly, "The trouble is, you're afraid because you haven't been beaten up enough!" She seemed to have seen through everything and scorned the glowing revolutionary jargon in the newspapers. She would say, "All lies! Even Premier Zhou was slandered as a reactionary. Who's foolish enough to swallow that!" Her only belief was that Premier Zhou would triumph over those "bastards." Yuejun hoped the same. When she referred to Jiang Qing, she called her a "she-devil" who had created so many scandals and who still tried to fool the people. "She praises a novel about vengeance, while she really intends to attack us. One day I'll take my revenge out on her!" Her words puzzled Yuejun. She spoke freely, not caring what people thought. At times Yuejun was afraid one day she would get into trouble.

Pei, a frequent visitor, soon got to know Liang Xia well enough to make her drop her flippant tone and talk seriously. One day Pei came to hear Liang Xia play. After listening to her, she asked Yuejun, "If you want to supplement your teaching materials, why not use some Western études? You're probably too timid."

Bow in hand, Liang Xia protested, "Of course she's timid, but what about you?"

"I never said I was bold," Pei smiled, "but we've each got a head on our shoulders, and we should use it to improve things."

"My head's too heavy for me. I don't like it. If you want, Aunt Pei, I'll give it to you. Then you'll be bold enough to start a revolution. Only don't get scared because you'll have to turn everything upside-down." She burst out laughing. "Revolution sounds fine but they murdered my father under that name also!"

"No, that was counterrevolution," Pei burst out. "Stop playing dumb and remember what your mother said to you. Remember those who hounded your father to death. You must think seriously about your future."

Liang Xia immediately became grave, bit her lip and stared at Pei. After a moment she lapsed into her usual flippancy and sneered, "I don't give a shit about them! What about dinner? Let's go

and make it. I'm very good in the kitchen. . . ." She laughed.

That was always how she reacted.

Once when Yuejun asked about her future plans, she answered as briefly as before, adding with raised eyebrows, "I'll fool around until my aunt throws me out, but that won't be immediately. She knows that my father's name may be cleared and that she stands to gain." Then she went to the alcove and lifting the curtain looked at it again.

Before long her aunt threw her out. It was on an early winter day, when Liang Xia should have arrived for her lesson. At sunset she still had not come. Yuejun worried about what might have happened to her.

Suddenly Liang Xia burst in, a bulky satchel over her shoulder and a string bag in her hand. With a face flushed with rage, she cried, "Sorry to keep you waiting, but I've just had a hell of a row with my aunt." Then putting her bags in a corner, she sat down, fanning herself with a handkerchief. Her eyes burned with resentment as she jeered and laughed, "It's just ridiculous!"

"Don't laugh like that," Yuejun said patting Liang Xia's shoulder. "Tell me what happened."

"My aunt said that my father's name can't be cleared because he was a reactionary and that he had killed himself to escape punishment. As for me, since I'm his daughter, there's no future for me. My staying with her has caused her a lot of trouble. Since her husband has just been promoted to be a deputy minister and their block of flats is for ministers, ordinary people like me shouldn't be living there. We're a security risk. What nonsense."

Yuejun sympathized with her and wondered what she would do next.

"I'll stay with you, if I may? Are you afraid?" she asked standing up.

Yuejun was silent. Of course she was afraid! To let Liang Xia stay with her could mean she too would be labeled as a counterrevolutionary. But how could she push her out? After all, she was Liang Feng's daughter.

Seeing Yuejun's hesitation, Liang Xia smiled

with scorn. Then she noticed that she had reached a decision. Before Yuejun could say anything, Liang Xia walked over to the curtained alcove and put her things by it. "I've thought about it before. We can put a bed here." As she spoke she began pulling out the junk. "You sit over there, auntie." She sneezed. "So much dust! I always said I'd help you with spring cleaning one day. Now my words have come true!" She laughed delightedly.

Amidst the dust, she hummed a tune as she worked. Having finished cleaning, she arranged the things in two piles of boxes and cases, on which she placed some planks for a bed. Then she made it up with sheets and a quilt lent to her by Yuejun. With a board from the kitchen she made herself a desk. Among the junk she had found a tattered scroll with a poem on it. It read,

Coming from your old home
You should know what is happening there;
Leaning against the window,
Did you see the plums in blossom?

Holding it in her hands, Liang Xia softly read it twice.

"Who wrote it?" she asked. "Both the poem and the calligraphy are good. Why don't you hang it up?"

"Wouldn't it be criticized?" Yuejun replied joking. "It was only this year that I put my screen here. Honestly I'm afraid of courting trouble."

"Well, I'm not." Examining it, Liang Xia noticed the inscription, "A poem by Wang Wei copied by Yuejun in G. city." The girl exclaimed, "So you wrote it! No wonder the calligraphy's so good." Immediately she hung it above her bed. Stepping back she gazed at it and then, clapping her hands, asked, "But where's G. city?"

"Geneva, in Switzerland." Yuejun looked at the old writing with some emotion. "I was there alone studying music and I felt very homesick. Once I listened to Dvorak's *New World Symphony* a dozen times nonstop. Whenever it reached the second movement I was deeply moved. So I wrote that poem on the scroll. What a awful calligraphy!"

"There's patriotism in your words." Liang Xia gave a bitter smile. "Now even patriotism is getting criticized."

"I didn't have any clear ideas." Yuejun sat down at the table. "But I truly missed China then. My ancestors and I were born here. I was proud to be Chinese. That's why I appreciated that short poem. But if that is all wrong now, what's left?" Moodily she turned to the window. "Of course I learned Western music, but only so that I could serve my country better."

"Your country?" Liang Xia mocked. "Today that means individualism, egotism, and counter-revolutionary revisionism!" Then she laughed, "Any way you're all right as a musician. Isn't singing and acting coming into fashion?"

Yuejun did not want to comment on her sarcastic words.

At last Liang Xia had finished tidying up. "My bed's rather like a raft, isn't it?" Going over to it she said, "I'll stay on my raft. I'll be as quiet as a mouse in the day." Having climbed on her "raft," she suddenly popped her head out of the curtain and quipped, "Carefree on my raft, I don't mind whether the seasons come or go." Then she was quiet.

"Now there's no need to act like that," Yuejun laughed. Drawing back the curtain, she found that Liang Xia was lying back on her quilt, her eyes closed. On her rosy cheeks were streaks of dirt. "Get up and wash your face, Liang Xia. We'll have a lesson. Since you'll be staying here for a while, you mustn't waste your time."

On hearing her say "for a while," Liang Xia smiled faintly and glanced sadly at her.

At half past eight that evening they had a lesson. Liang Xia played first. Her technique was improving. As Yuejun was correcting her, there was a knock at the door.

A youngster in a green uniform without any insignia entered. The expression on his regular-featured face was troubled. Seeing Liang Xia sitting with the cello in her hands, he said to Yuejun, "Excuse me, are you Aunt Yuejun? I'd like to have a word with her." Then he smiled at Liang Xia.

Ignoring him, Liang Xia concentrated on her

music, but after a while she explained, "This is Mao Tou, a friend of my cousin. Let's continue our lesson."

"Mao Tou? Is that a nickname?" asked Yuejun casually, wondering about their relationship.

"Actually I don't know his real name." With this Liang Xia continued playing.

Snubbed, the young man turned to Yuejun for help. She suggested, looking at Liang Xia, that they go for a walk in the fresh air. Then she went to her desk and switched on the lamp. Pouting, Liang Xia walked out with her friend.

The next day at school, Yuejun told Pei about her decision. Pei was delighted. "I agree with you. She should live in your home." Some colleagues who sympathized with Liang Xia felt that in this way she could have an opportunity to study, as she'd become an orphan and a loafer. Those who objected said, "What if the police start making inquiries? And if Liang Xia does something illegal, Yuejun will be implicated." Yuejun was worried, but decided that if the authorities insisted that girl should leave, then she must let her go. Otherwise Liang Xia could stay as long as she liked.

Time passed, and the two of them got along well together. Liang Xia was able, diligent, and considerate. Always in high spirits, she reminded Yuejun of an elf from a dance by Grieg. But Liang Xia claimed to be a very down-to-earth sort of person. "If you were me," she argued, "you'd be just as practical."

Once, when the weather was already chilly, Yuejun bought Liang Xia some cloth for a jacket to be made at the tailor's. But Liang Xia claimed she could make it herself and went off to Pei's home where there was a sewing machine. When she came back, she seemed very melancholy.

"What's the matter?" Yuejun asked.

"Oh, nothing!" Liang Xia fidgeted with the remnants of the cloth. "Aunt Pei's husband's been paralyzed for three years, and she goes to the hospital every day to take care of him. Her high blood pressure doesn't keep her from going to the office and studying the works of Marx and Lenin either. She told me that in the Yan'an days, people

trudged in straw sandals, but each step seemed all the more significant. And one of her friends used to say that everyone at that time had a strong sense of responsibility. Life was so full of hope." After a moment her face brightened and she continued. "Aunt Pei said my father helped to reclaim the wasteland and that my mother spun yarn. I'd like to live such a life, but now it seems that just playing my cello or breathing is illegal." Scissors in hand, she shredded the cloth.

Her usual apathetic and scornful expression returned, her tender heart seemed to have hardened. As Yuejun stroked her silky black hair, there was a knock at the door. Two young men with high sheepskin hats and fashionable trousers entered. Seeing them, Liang Xia sprang forward and told them to get out, banging the door shut. Yuejun did not know where Liang Xia picked up such friends. If she was home, Liang Xia would take them out, but as long as she was teaching or busy elsewhere, Yuejun was quite oblivious as to what went on in her home. As most of them were boys, she once tentatively warned Liang Xia against falling in love too early.

Hearing this, Liang Xia burst out laughing. "Don't worry! I won't be such a fool! I don't respect those boys. When I marry, my husband will be a high official!" She grinned mockingly, as if in her eyes high officials were toys for amusement. Then with forced seriousness, she added, "Or perhaps I'll be a spinster like you. By the way, why didn't you marry, auntie?"

"You tell me," Yuejun countered, trying to avoid the question.

"It isn't that you believe in being single, but that you've never met a man you loved." She was sharp.

Since her arrival, Yuejun had been strict in making her practice various pieces every day. Though she did not assign any Western music scores, Liang Xia often played some to amuse herself. One day when Yuejun returned, she overheard Liang Xia playing a plaintive melody by Massenet. It was so melancholy that she waited till Liang Xia had finished before entering. Yuejun often wished that Liang Xia could attend a prop-

school, since she had real musical talent. But it all depended on when her father's name would be cleared. If that happened, then the girl would be in a better position to study.

Meanwhile Liang Xia led a seemingly carefree life. Apart from playing the cello and seeing friends, she often read some books on her "raft." One day Yuejun was shocked to find her reading a hand-written copy of an "underground" book. "Why are you reading that?" she asked.

"Why not?" Liang Xia retorted.

"The cover alone scares me."

"You wouldn't even say boo to a goose!" Liang Xia giggled. "When my parents were detained I was often criticized and beaten. Later I fought the boys back. They beat me and I punched them. I loved it!"

Not knowing what to say, Yuejun stared at her pretty, youthful face. Despite the merry, contemptuous expression, she sensed hidden apathy and misery.

"Since I'm older now, I've grown out of fighting. It bores me." Then she tried to reassure Yuejun, "Please don't worry, auntie. Since I can't play the cello all day long, I have to read once in a while too. But I can't find any good books, so I'm reading these, even though they're dirty. It's like food. When there's nothing yummy to eat you eat anything. So there!" She glanced at the cabinet where she had some good books.

"You're wrong." Yuejun tried to argue with her.

"I know." Smiling she added, "Now I just exist. If one day I can't go on like this, then I'll change my world outlook. That's how Mao Tou puts it."

"You can read what he's read, I think." Yuejun had found that Mao Tou was a thoughtful young man who had seriously studied some books on philosophy, literature, and history. Although known as a "scholar" in his factory, he refused to join any writing teams run by the authorities. His father was an old cadre who had often shown concern for Liang Xia.

Yuejun's suggestion made Liang Xia smile again. After a moment, Yuejun opened the cabi-

net to let her choose whatever books she wanted. Happily Liang Xia looked through it until she suddenly murmured, "My father had many books. However late he worked, he never went to bed without reading a little. What a pity I was so young! I . . . I hate. . . ." Turning round she clutched hold of the cabinet, her eyes blazing. "Oh father, father!" Her voice was as clear and pained as a few years before. "I don't believe that my father, a Communist full of enthusiasm, committed suicide. They killed him, but insist that he killed himself." She did not choose a book, but stood there gazing wistfully at Yuejun. "Do you think the day I long for will come? Mother told me I must live to see it."

Yuejun could not bear to see her expression. Wanting Liang Xia to have a good cry, tears began pouring down her own face. Even if her father had killed himself, he would never have done so unless driven to it. He must have been in a desperate situation. She wanted to cry with Liang Xia, hoping the girl's tears would wash away her cynicism. Instead Liang Xia rushed to her bed, leaving on the cabinet two nicks from her nails.

4

It was 1976 and the Spring Festival was approaching. Despite the festival, everyone was grieving. Where was the spring? People were profoundly anxious about their future since the death of Premier Zhou. There was a dreadful abyss in their hearts, which could not be filled by their tears and thoughts.

Before she went to the cadre school in January to do some manual labor, Yuejun entrusted Liang Xia to Pei's care. When she heard the sad news of the premier's death, she felt desolate. Worried that something might happen to Liang Xia, she wrote asking how she was. After she had mailed the letter, Yuejun was afraid Liang Xia's reply would get her in trouble, so she quickly sent a message telling her not to answer. However, her reply did come. It said, "I'm prepared to shoulder my responsibilities now." Though cryptic, it signified that a storm was imminent.

On her return home Yuejun found Liang Xia had changed. In the past Liang Xia's laughter made Yuejun sad. Now Liang Xia expressed her suffering in another way—by remaining silent. She thought more about her responsibilities. Sometimes Yuejun told her to play her cello to find peace in the music, but thinking about Premier Zhou disturbed her playing. In the past three weeks she had suddenly matured. Her flippancy was gone. In her dark eyes was a clouded expression, as if her thoughts seemed too heavy to convey. Some of her friends stopped coming; she was in no mood to play and that was all they were good for. When Yuejun asked her where her friends were, Liang Xia blinked as if she had never known them.

She got rid of the frivolous books but she was not interested in serious literature either. To Yuejun's surprise, Liang Xia sometimes read works of Marx and Lenin. On the eve of the Spring Festival, Pei found her reading an article by Chairman Mao, a notebook by her side. Leafing through its pages, Pei was astonished to find a heading, "Crimes perpetrated by Jiang Qing." The charges listed were logical and cogent. Pei grasped Liang Xia's hand and said admiringly, "I always knew you were a smart girl, Xia!"

Liang Xia smiled a genuine smile. "I thought a long time about your advice. I shouldn't fritter away my life and youth. Especially at this time."

Most of the notes had been made by Liang Xia and some by Mao Tou. As Yuejun read them, she felt they were telling the truth. But the truth meant trouble. She searched Pei's face wanting to know what to do. Pei smiled at her. "It's correct to expose them for what they are. These notes are what we've been wanting to say ourselves."

Liang Xia told Yuejun, "I know that's the way you feel too. But you are too timid, auntie."

Yuejun sighed, "Who can we talk to?"

"We're only allowed to parrot the editorials," Pei added.

Liang Xia was silent. Her smile faded into contempt and pessimism.

Yuejun anxiously looked at the girl, while Pei warned, "It isn't just a question of daring to strug-

gle. It's also knowing how and when to strike."

When they were having supper, Yuejun wanted to ask Liang Xia why she and Mao Tou had written the notes, but she did not press her. After a long silence, Liang Xia said while eating, "On my way to the grain shop, I overheard two old women talking. One of them said, 'Since our premier died, we have no heart to do New Year shopping.'" Then Liang Xia put down her bowl and walked away.

Suddenly there were three knocks at the door. Liang Xia immediately darted to open it and Mao Tou entered. Although he looked tense, he did not forget his manners, greeting Yuejun before turning to Liang Xia. "Let's go out," he suggested.

"What's the matter?"

"Please sit down," Yuejun urged. "It's so cold outside. Don't go out. Tell us what's happened."

Eyeing them both, he said, "My father's been arrested!"

"What?" Yuejun was dismayed.

"On what charge?" Liang Xia asked.

"They can trump up anything," he replied, trying to control his anger. Then he continued, "A few days ago, my father told me they were concocting some charge against Premier Zhou. He said as long as he was alive he'd defend him and speak out. This morning your uncle told my father that they wanted him to attend a meeting. A neighbor reported that my father was tied up and driven away in a car. He wasn't even allowed to leave a note for the family."

"I was luckier. I saw my father being dragged away," Liang Xia murmured.

"When I went to their office to see my father, the man on duty told me coldly that he was going to stand trial and couldn't receive any visitors. Then he shoved me out of the door."

Yuejun was outraged, thinking how many families had been ruined by this gang, how many young people had been deprived of their right to work and study or even live. They would not even leave the premier alone. Our great hero had left nothing of himself after his death. Even his ashes had been scattered over the mountains and rivers. Now they intended to blacken his reputation.

Liang Xia trembled with rage. She suddenly laughed aloud. Yuejun took her hand which felt cold. "Xia!" she exclaimed.

"Those monsters are about to tear off their masks!" Brushing Yuejun aside, she put one hand on the table and the other to her breast.

"Yes, I think they are going to show their true intentions soon," said Mao Tou, looking coolly at Liang Xia. "We must continue collecting materials. The day's coming when the gang will be brought to trial and condemned."

Mao Tou paced the room and then said he was going to inform his friends about his father's arrest. He left after shaking hands with Yuejun and warning her to be careful.

At the door Liang Xia suddenly cried out, "But you haven't had your supper yet!" Mao Tou shook his head and left. Yuejun knew that his mother had died of a heart attack after an intense political meeting, and now no one was left to look after him.

Mao Tou's father was an old cadre. After he had been repudiated, he had nothing to do each day but read books, see the doctor, or visit friends. But this idle life could not keep him from fighting for the truth. The flames of truth had been burning in his heart and he was ready to sacrifice himself to defend it. If Liang Feng were alive, he would do as he did, as thousands of cadres, young people, and ordinary citizens were doing.

5

Through hell or high water, time marches on. Tempered by grief, doubt, and anxiety, the people will come to see the truth.

On the eve of the Spring Festival in April, 1976, tragedy enveloped Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Only the bright wreaths overlapping each other and the loyal hearts of the people challenged the somber surroundings. Some wreaths climbed high into the sky, while others were very small. They stretched from the Monument to the People's Heroes to the avenue. It was like a great mourning ceremony, unparalleled in history, dedicated by

the people to Premier Zhou. The pine trees, covered with white paper flowers of mourning, were like a bank of snow. Gaily decorated baskets hung from the lampposts. Balloons floated in the air trailing streamers inscribed with the words, "Premier Zhou Is Immortal!" The crowds in the square were like a vast moving sea. They were silent though indignant and at the end of their patience. The flames of truth in their hearts were at last about to blaze.

If the truth could be seen, Yuejun thought, it was in that square. The people were prepared to give their lives for it. She knew Liang Xia came every day to record poems and see the wreaths. Yuejun and Liang Xia were making their way to the monument in the middle of the square. They hung their basket on a pine tree. It contained pure white flowers entwined with silver paper that glistened like their tears.

Liang Xia remembered pacing in the quiet square in January after the premier's death when she heard people weeping. A middle aged woman had lurched towards the monument crying, "Oh premier, what are we going to do now? What? . . ." Her cries carried through the square and reverberated in Liang Xia's heart.

Suddenly Yuejun felt Liang Xia shudder. Looking in the same direction, she saw a streamer by the monument which read, "Even if the monsters spew out poisonous flames, the people will vanquish them!" The street lights were dim, but words seemed ablaze. This was the strength of the people! The people had begun to fight back!

Yuejun and Liang Xia walked among the crowds who were engrossed in copying poems. Some far away could not see clearly, so others who were nearer to the monument read them aloud. If some had no paper, others would tear out pages from their notebooks. People wrote leaning on others' backs. All the crowds shared one purpose and cherished a deep love for Premier Zhou.

Unexpectedly Mao Tou appeared. With a serious expression, he whispered something in Liang Xia's ear. She hurriedly pulled Yuejun away from the crowd. On their way home, Yuejun was filled

with grief and anxiety. She was not afraid for herself, but very worried about Liang Xia and Mao Tou and all the other young people in the square who were reciting poems. When she arrived home, she sat down at the desk in front of a photograph of Premier Zhou as a young man. Yuejun wished she could talk to Pei who had given her this photograph, but she had been in the hospital since March because of a heart attack. She had been working too hard.

Liang Xia was busy on her "raft." After a moment she emerged and poured herself a glass of water. She looked calm and happy, though pale. "Would you like some water, auntie?" she asked. There was no answer.

Then Yuejun said looking at her, "I want to say something to you. I guess you're going to put up some posters. It's too dangerous!" She paused before adding, "You're young. You must live to see the day. . . . You're the only survivor in your family."

Not in the least disturbed, Liang Xia replied, "I don't want to hide anything from you. But we must speak out and let those bastards know we are still alive. As you know, I'm not afraid of anything."

Yuejun said after a pause, tears streaming down her face, "Then let me go! I'm old, but I can do it as well as you!"

"You?" Amazed, Liang Xia gazed at her kind, attractive, tear-stained face. She too began to weep, though she tried to hold back her tears.

"Xia!" Yuejun hugged her tightly. Her tears dropped on the girl's hair, while Liang Xia's wet her breast.

Liang Xia soon dried her eyes. There was no time for a good cry. It was as if she heard the bugle call. Flames of love and hatred blazed in her heart, melting it. She had thought of telling Yuejun that she had already distributed some leaflets in the trolleys and parks. Some had expressed her views, while others contained only one sentence, "Down with the White Bone Demon—Jiang Qing, the cause of all disasters!" She was sure there would not be any trouble, but still it was better not to involve Yuejun. She decided to keep her in the

dark and so she changed the subject, "All right, I won't go out now. Where are you going, auntie?"

"I'm serious," Yuejun protested.

"So am I." She wiped away her tears. "You must rest. You're too excited." With this, she went to make up Yuejun's bed and quietly slipped two sleeping pills into a glass of water. Handing it to her, she persuaded Yuejun to lie down.

Soon Yuejun felt very sleepy so she lay down, while Liang Xia paced the floor, cheerfully. "You should put some more clothes on," Yuejun advised, noticing Liang Xia was wearing only one sweater. "You must take care of yourself!" Then she wondered if she was really getting old, as she was feeling so tired.

Yuejun fell asleep and was unaware that Liang Xia had tidied up the room. Before leaving she had fondled the cello and turned to gaze again and again at the screen which shielded Yuejun's bed. Finally she made up her mind and gingerly opening the door went out.

That night she did not return. Two, then three nights passed and she still did not come home.

One evening after her discharge from the hospital, Pei came to visit Yuejun. It was already summer. Through the window the stars shone. The two women sat facing each other in silence. After a while, Yuejun took a notebook out of a drawer, saying, "I found this yesterday. Xia took notes in it."

Pei was startled when she flipped through the pages to read, "I won't live under the same sky with the sworn enemy of my family and my country." She read the sentence again and again before saying confidently, "Don't be sad. I believe she'll come back one day."

Yuejun nodded, "I hope so. I know where Mao Tou is imprisoned. But I've no news about Xia."

"We'll try to locate her." The notebook was clenched tightly in Pei's hand.

Yuejun heaved a sigh, "Recently I feel as if we've been playing a piece of music interminably but it may break off any moment now."

"Don't worry. We'll end this symphony on a magnificent, triumphant note. To tell the truth, in the past half a year, we were worried about you.

Someone tried to blame Liang's mistakes on you. But we told them nothing. In the last two months, orders came from our ministry to investigate the relationship between you and Liang Xia, but we refused to do it."

Rising to her feet, Yuejun declared, "Tell them Liang Xia's my daughter. I'll adopt her as my own daughter." Her worn, sweet face brightened, and determination shone in her eyes. Pei grasped her hand firmly.

That night Yuejun dreamed that she was playing her cello at a concert. The music from the cello was splendid and triumphant. In the audience a pair of dark eyes danced to the melody. They belonged to Liang Xia.

Then suddenly it was Liang Xia and not she who was playing on stage. Her skillful playing was inspiring and encouraging. Happy tears poured down her cheeks. The stage lights shone on her white gauze and silver-threaded dress and on her glistening tears. The powerful music reverberated inside and outside the hall. She played

what was in her heart and in the hearts of the people. "Father! Dear father!" Liang Xia suddenly cried out. Her voice merged with the splendid music flying to the clouds. In the clouds appeared the Monument to the People's Heroes shining like the sun and the moon, with inscriptions personally made by Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou. Among the names of heroes was Liang Feng's. Some were known to everyone, some were ordinary people, while other heroes did not have their names mentioned. But they were all heroes of China nevertheless. They devoted their entire lives to the cause of liberation and communism. Though they have all died for one reason or another, they still live in our hearts. Their contributions are immortal and they will be forever remembered.

The dream of the people will be fulfilled. The reactionaries will be smashed. This is historically inevitable.

Translated by Song Shouquan