NANJING 1937

A Love Story

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Ye Zhaoyan

Translated with an Introduction by Michael Berry

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NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All Chinese names have been romanized in accordance with the pinyin system. Exceptions to this rule have been made for historical figures known in the West by alternate or nonstandard systems of romanization, such as Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) and Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan), and western-educated figures who preferred anglicized abbreviations, such as T. V. Soong (Song Ziwen) and H. H. K'ung (Kong Xiangxi).

As a work of historical fiction, the novel features appearances by and references to several dozen military, political, and cultural figures who were prominent in Republican China. For the convenience of the western reader, a comprehensive Glossary of Historical Figures has been appended at the end of this volume. This translation was based on the 1996 Jiangsu wenyi edition of the novel. Some minor textual changes were made with the author's permission.

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who provided extensive comments and insightful suggestions; and to Wen-yi Chang, who read the manuscript in its entirety against the original. Special thanks also go to Leslie Kriesel, whose literary and editorial sensibilities helped the true voice of this novel shine through. Thanks to Emily Mahon for the beautiful jacket design. I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my family, Chenke Zhou, Joshua Tanzer, my classmates and colleagues at Columbia University, and Professors John Balcom, Howard Goldblatt, Tomi Suzuki, and Xudong Zhang. Finally, I would like to thank Jennifer Crewe at Columbia University Press and especially Professor David Der-wei Wang. It is thanks to their interest and support of this novel that Ye Zhaoyan's vision may be shared with a new group of readers.

M.B.

NANJING 1937

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

The year 1937 is but a cloud of mist passing before my eyes. My gaze is caught lingering on this particular era of the past, but, as a writer, I find myself unable to truly understand that history that historians call history. I see only shattered pieces, broken fragments, and a handful of melancholic stories destined to come to naught, all quietly playing out upon the grand stage of history.

—Ye Zhaoyan[1]

Since his appearance on the literary scene in the early 1980s,[2] Ye Zhaoyan (b. 1957) has established himself as one of contemporary China's most creative, daring, and imaginative practitioners of literary art. A prolific writer, he has created a body of work difficult to categorize due to his chameleonlike versatility and tireless experimentation with different literary forms and genres. From the tradition of *The Scholars* (c. 1750) to the legacy of Qian Zhongshu; from May Fourth to Mandarin Ducks; from roman à clef to postmodernist collage; and from

hard-boiled detective fiction to the avant-garde, Ye's literary field of vision seems to know no boundaries. The addictive storylines and the stunning visuality of Ye's work have won the Nanjing-based writer a loyal readership in Chinese-speaking communities and led to foreign translations and film adaptations.[3] At the same time, Ye Zhaoyan has been actively involved in a larger project of rewriting and reimagining the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly tradition, a popular romantic literary genre that flourished in Republican China.[4] Ye's fascination with this page in (literary) history is perhaps best demonstrated by his masterpiece *Evening Moor on the Qinhuai*,[5] a collection of historical novellas set in Republican-era Nanjing.

One key to Ye Zhaoyan's attachment to preliberation China is the literary family from which he hails. His father, Ye Zhicheng (1926–1992), was a noted writer, as was his grandfather, Ye Shengtao (1894–1988), also an influential educator and editor and the author of the 1928 classic *Ni Huanzhi*,[6] one of the first full-length modern vernacular novels.[7] Ye Zhaoyan is one of the few contemporary Chinese writers to hold a graduate degree in Chinese literature; he earned his M.A. from Nanjing University in 1986, writing his thesis on one of the crowning achievements of preliberation literature, Qian Zhongshu's *Fortress Besieged*.[8] After graduation, Ye worked as an editor for the Jiangsu Arts and Literature Publishing House. In 1991, he left the publishing world to pursue writing full time; he has since produced an astounding twenty-seven books, including a seven-volume set of collected works.

First published in 1996, *Nanjing 1937: A Love Story* is perhaps Ye Zhaoyan's most ambitious project to date. Individually embodying the genre-crossing complexity that characterizes his body of work, the novel also captures Ye's nostalgic passion for rewriting missing pages from Republican China's past. *Nanjing 1937* is the tale of a man seemingly incapable of love who falls for the most unlikely woman during the most inconceivable of times. Ding Wenyu, the only son of a powerful Shanghai banker, is smitten with a young married woman, Ren Yuchan, and is sent abroad by his father as a cure for his lovesickness. Some seventeen years later, Ding returns to China only to fall even harder for Yuchan's younger sister, Yuyuan—on her wedding day. Progressing at an unhurried pace, *Nanjing 1937* traces the development of this unlikely love story, subtly juxtaposing Ding's romantic advancements with the mili-

tary advancements of the Japanese army, to which the city would fall in December 1937.

This connection between love and war is not only made through Ye's meticulously crafted narrative structure but also enhanced by his clever use of language. Militaristic terminology describing Ding's pursuit of Yuyuan, as well as other romantic subplots in the text, permeates the novel:

> He [Ding Wenyu] continuously sought out different types of women, and once he *achieved his target*, he would immediately *initiate his next campaign*. He was like a *general* who endured a *hundred battles*, *charging forward* amid a sea of women, time after time facing setbacks, time after time losing face for all to see. Even though he usually came off as *the glorious victor in his battles*, his soul had already long been covered with scars. (32)

> Running from the *battlefield defeated* made it look as if she [Yuyuan] were guilty of some wrongdoing. (114)

> She [Qu Manli] began her little talk as if she were *launching an attack*. (266)

> Ding Wenyu decided to *strengthen his romantic offensive* on Yuyuan. (307) (MY ITALICS)

Such passages reinforce the link between the novel's two seemingly contradictory and mutually exclusive narrative lines, which are signaled even in the book's title, *Nanjing 1937: A Love Story*.[9] In a time and place inextricably connected with horrific images of violence and war, on the eve of what historians would later deem the "Rape of Nanjing," how could there be room for love or romance?

One answer to this question lies in the pages of Chinese literary history and the tradition of fictional romance set in times of national calamity. *Nanjing 1937* inevitably invites comparisons to earlier works in the Chinese literary tradition, from the Qing drama *The Peach Blossom Fan* (1699) to Eileen Chang's modern classic, "Love in a Fallen City" (1943), both of which have left their marks on Ye's novel.[10] But the true intertextual skeleton key can be found in Qian Zhongshu's

classic *Fortress Besieged* (1946). The similarities between the two novels are stunning—from the temporal framework of 1937 and the protagonists' respective educational and career backgrounds as dilettante foreign students who return to China to become college professors, to their detached aloofness toward the times in which they live. Indeed, it would not be a stretch to read *Nanjing 1937* as a contemporary rejoinder to Qian Zhongshu's landmark novel.

For the title of his novel, Qian Zhongshu borrowed Trollope's conception of the fortress besieged. In Qian's hands, the phrase quickly became a brilliantly understated allegory for the contradictions in our everyday lives; the saying can perhaps be no better articulated than by Qian's wife, writer Yang Jiang:

> Those trapped in a fortress besieged long to escape,
> Those outside want to charge in.
> Such is one's marriage, and one's career,
> Such is the way of most human desires.[11]

Exactly half a century later, in 1996, Ye Zhaoyan echoes this philosophy in his novel *Nanjing 1937*, where characters seem to be eternally trapped in a fortress of desires and discontent. Ye Zhaoyan's brilliance, however, lies in the fact that he does not merely rearticulate Qian's allegory but develops it in an ironically tragic way. As the Japanese army descends on the capital and the curtain of history falls, the fortress (or, rather, city) besieged is lifted from the allegorical to the literal level and the reader realizes that Ye Zhaoyan has constructed a true "fortress beseiged."

Ye Zhaoyan's literary and historical vision is complex and marked by a penchant for the unexpected. Indeed, the strategies of representation employed by the author could not be more different from those of previous works of historical fiction set against the Rape of Nanjing, such as A Long's *Nanjing* (1939)[12] or Zhou Erfu's *The Fall of Nanjing* (1987). The massacre that commenced on December 13 seems to have permanently stained the spatial-temporal coordinate of Nanjing in 1937 with images of rape and murder, even though during the previous eleven and a half months of that year the city saw virtually unprecedented prosperity. Though the indelible December tragedy constantly lurks just beyond the horizon of his novel, Ye Zhaoyan's repeated descriptions of the grandeur

of the budding capital—its booming real estate market, rapid development, flourishing economy, and political dynamism—all remind us of its lost splendor, bearing testament to a side of Nanjing's past often obscured by the shadow of calamity.

Popular culture of the day also plays a key role in *Nanjing 1937*, from descriptions of the popular music and stage performances to depictions of the latest gossip and fashions. The meticulous attention paid to everything from cultural pastimes like mahjong to cultural icons like Mei Yanfang points to a deconstruction of the grand and sublime discourses that have dominated so many historical and even literary representations of the era. Ye's Nanjing is a world where notions of popular culture are (re)inscribed onto, and sometimes in place of, more traditional historical narratives. Monumental figures like Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping are relegated to minor characters who appear fleetingly on the streets of Paris. Chinese fighter pilots are remembered not for their heroic deeds in the air but for their superstitious bedside manners. Even the Rape of Nanjing, the purported subject of the novel, is subverted. However, Ye's inability to depict the massacre at year's end should not be seen as an failure to face the vicissitudes of a blood-stained past but rather as a passionate attempt to remember what was lost.

That is not to say that Ye Zhaoyan does not leave us with questions to ponder. For although he shies away from graphic illustrations of the Rape of Nanjing, he does not exercise the same restraint when depicting acts of violence committed by Chinese characters against their compatriots. What does it mean when the most vicious and cold-blooded acts portrayed in a novel set in 1937 Nanjing are not committed by the Japanese (or even against the Japanese) but are, rather, indigenous acts of Chinese violence? Ye's understated criticism points back, however subtly, to a Lu Xunian critique of the Chinese national character. Ye Zhaoyan, however, is not one for moralizing, and *Nanjing 1937*'s complex combination of satire and sentimentality may very well leave many readers poised between loving and loathing his characters.

Returning to our earlier question, as the city falls, how can we reconcile this "love story" born of the ashes of war? Then again, perhaps we would be better off asking whether Ding Wenyu's driving passion is love at all—or merely a twisted obsession.[13] In the world of Ye Zhaoyan's 1937 Nanjing, there is, indeed, a fine line between love and obsession, satire

and sentimentality, comedy and tragedy, splendor and decadence, history and allegory. These thematic coordinates intersect and blur, creating a sophisticated and stirring fictional pastische. The year 1937 saw not only the fall of the ancient capital of Nanjing but also the pinnacle of its development; in his novel, Ye Zhaoyan captures both. And although the novel comes to an end on December 13, 1937, the day the massacre begins, the reader knows all too well how the story ends. Ye Zhaoyan, admittedly, may not understand "that history that historians call history," but in the end, what he leaves us with is precisely the melancholic power and unbearable weight of History.

NOTES

1. Ye Zhaoyan, "Preface" (*Xie zai qianmian*) in *Yijiusanqi nian de aiqing* (Nanjing: Jiangsu wenyi, 1996), 5.

2. Ye Zhaoyan's first published short stories appeared in 1980, but he did not begin to gain wide recognition until the publication of his 1988 work, *Tale of the Date Tree* (*Zaoshu de gushi*).

3. One case in point is Ye's 1994 novel, *Flower Shadows* (*Hua Ying*), which was adapted by Fifth Generation director Chen Kaige (along with Wang Anyi, who co-wrote the screenplay) for his 1995 motion picture, *Temptress Moon* (*Fengyue*). The following year the novel was translated into French under the title *La Jeune Maîtresse* (Paris: Philippe Picquier, 1996). Film rights for *Nanjing 1937: A Love Story* have been purchased by actor/director Jiang Wen.

4. Tragic romances are just one fictional strain that falls under the umbrella of Mandarin Duck fiction; others include scandal fiction, detective stories, and chivalrous martial arts tales. For more on Mandarin Duck and Butterfly literature, see Perry Link's influential study, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Cities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

5. The four award-winning novellas that make up *Evening Moor on the Qinhuai* (*Ye bo Qinhuai*) were serialized in three PRC literary journals between 1987 and 1990 before being collected in a single volume in 1991.

6. *Ni Huanzhi* was translated by A. C. Barnes as *Schoolmaster Ni Huan-chih* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1958).

7. The Ye family can now claim four generations of published writers. In 2001, Ye Zhaoyan's seventeen-year-old daughter published her first book, a collection of essays on America.

8. *Fortress Besieged* (*Wei cheng*) was first serialized in *Literary Renaissance* and appeared in book form in 1947. The work is generally considered the last great literary masterpiece of the preliberation era. It is a satiric novel that traces the romantic and professional misadventures of Fang Hongjian, who after several years of foreign study abroad returns to China, bogus degree in hand, to teach at a provincial university. An English edition translated by Jeanne Kelly and Nathan K. Mao appeared in 1979 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).

9. A more literal translation of the book's title, *Yijiusanqi nian de aiqing*, would read "The Romance of 1937."

10. Even the subplot involving Ding Wenyu's rickshaw puller Monk's involvement with an overbearing older woman will remind readers of the protagonist of Lao She's *Rickshaw* or, to an even greater degree, of Ding Erhe from Zhang Henshui's *Deep in the Night* (*Shen ye chen*).

11. Quoted in Zhang Wenjiang, *Yingzao babita de zhizhe: Qian Zhongshu zhuan* (Shanghai: Shanghai Arts and Literature Publishing House, 1993), 57.

12. Although completed in 1939, A Long's novel was only published posthumously in 1987, under the revised title *Nanjing Blood Sacrifice* (*Nanjing xueji*).

13. A parallel to Ding Wenyu's obsession can be found in his rickshaw puller and sometime companion, Monk. The twisted love triangle in which Monk finds himself caught constitutes the most significant subplot of the novel and represents a darker alternative outcome to obsessive love. The obsessions that drive both Ding and Monk are fundamentally the same—Ding's fanatical letter writing represents the manifestation of a "cultured obsession," while Monk's social and educational background leaves him with no alternative but to express his obsession through violence.

Chapter One

I

January 1, 1937 was a Friday. It was a clear, cool day; the northern cold front had just passed and the temperature had begun to warm up a bit. Although the Nationalist government had already declared the lunar calendar obsolete, the atmosphere among the people during the western New Year celebration fell short of the anticipated excitement. All over the country, conferences were being held for New Year's Day. From the central government all the way down, auditoriums were packed with high-sounding stately meetings. It seemed as if anyone who didn't attend a conference wasn't really celebrating the new year. The year 1937 arrived amid a wave of strong anti-Japanese sentiment. The Xi'an Incident* and its peaceful resolution not long before had raised Chiang Kai-shek's

*An episode that occurred in December 1936 when a former warlord, General Zhang Xueliang, kidnapped Chiang Kai-shek in an effort to force Chiang to take a more anti-Japanese stance and join with the CCP in a second united Chinese front against Japan.

prestige to an unprecedented level. Nationwide, there were magnificent fireworks displays in celebration of the Republic of China's auspicious turn for the better. Initially, the most widespread fear among the people had been that the Xi'an Incident would incite a large-scale civil war. They were also worried that for the Japanese, who had long set their sights on Chinese soil, the Incident would provide the perfect opportunity to strike in a time of weakness. Amid the grand rejoicing of the soldiers and citizens of China, Chiang Kai-shek safely returned to the capital, Nanjing. With his promise never again to bow down to the power of Japan, the long-anticipated initial stages of a democratic and unified anti-Japanese campaign had finally begun. The desperation in the hearts of the Chinese people seemed to have been replaced with a newfound hope.

On New Year's Day 1937 there was a virtual flood of government bigwigs in Nanjing who, after rushing to a never-ending series of meetings, came down with colds. Attending conferences became a heavy burden for those party and government VIPs. But there were at least three that couldn't be missed. First was paying homage at Sun Yat-sen's mausoleum. This was also the most utterly exhausting. Each year on the first day of the new year, one had to respectfully take part in this ritual. Of the visitors who climbed the steps to the mausoleum, there wasn't a soul who didn't come down panting for air and reeking with sweat. After that, one had to rush to the Central Party Headquarters on Hunan Road to hear Yu Youren deliver his New Year's speech. Finally, one had to go to the Nationalist Government Building to listen to Chairman Lin Sen's address. Every word uttered would be printed in the newspapers the next day, but attending these three events in person observed a kind of official decorum and indicated an individual's status in the government hierarchy—and this was something no one was willing to give up. Rushing back and forth, many of the people in attendance ended up with the chills and broke out into a series of feverish sweats. Those older gentlemen a bit on the frail side were sneezing before Lin Sen's address was even finished.

Ding Wenyu also caught a cold on New Year's Day, but it certainly had nothing to do with attending conferences or speeches. Except for a single wedding ceremony, he didn't go anywhere. He had long since thrown all those large red invitations with golden trim into the wastepaper basket. Although Ding Wenyu had already earned quite a name for himself, what really set him apart was his peculiar character. What other

people went out of their way for he was always slow to take to heart. It was as if he couldn't even understand what there was worth celebrating on New Year's Day. We know that he caught a cold because he recorded this tidbit in his diary. Ding Wenyu habitually recorded his whereabouts and personal experiences in his diary; on New Year's Day, he surprisingly added the following passage:

> Today is a special day. I have a terrible cold and a runny nose, which toward the evening has grown especially acute. It is a good thing that the day wasn't a complete waste, because during an annoying wedding banquet, I ran into the beautiful Miss B. Instantly, my heart was thrown into disarray by this exquisite young girl. Here I describe her as a lovely and attractive girl, but actually today was her wedding day. As I write these words, it is very possible that she is already no longer a girl at all. Ah, why must women marry such vulgar creatures as men? I have no extravagant or ulterior motive; I desire only to be her eternal friend. This shall be the greatest happiness of my life. I shall do my utmost to carry this out.

It was the first day of 1937 when Ding Wenyu, already a middle-aged married man, in the strong cursive writing of his diary, first conveyed his fanatical feelings of love at first sight for Yuyuan. Because his diary was written only for himself, not to mention the fact that it was written in English, his wording and phrasing came across as a bit brazen. From simply looking at that day's diary entry, one would never guess that any kind of noteworthy story would unfold between him and Ren Yuyuan—the woman referred to as Miss B. Since it was written for his eyes only, inordinate comments about bold and beautiful women repeatedly appeared in Ding Wenyu's diary.

In actuality, only a fraction of his nearly one-thousand-word journal entry that day was devoted to Yuyuan and his cold. Most of the entry recorded vile remarks about another woman, a certain Miss Chen. For Ding Wenyu, the first day of 1937 was an abnormally difficult day. He had stayed up all night playing mah-jongg with Miss Chen at the Morning Cloud House near the Temple of Confucius. This was indeed a bitter task; Ding Wenyu truly despised the game that has been hailed as the quintessence of Chinese culture. Just one month before, he had made the

acquaintance of this already passé pop singer, a single woman with a passable appearance. Besides singing, Miss Chen's biggest source of entertainment was playing mah-jongg. If Ding Wenyu wanted to get close to her, his only means would be to accompany her at the mah-jongg table. The night before, Ding Wenyu had lost miserably. By the time the sun rose and he saw Miss Chen home to rest, his eyelids were fighting to stay open. He had been yawning all night, his sole desire being to rush home and get some sleep. Yet the moment he lay down in bed, all he could do was toss and turn, unable to sleep.

The schools were closed for vacation, and children with nothing better to do set off firecrackers left over from the celebration of Chiang Kai-shek's return from Xi'an—right under the window of Ding Wenyu's faculty apartment. As if they were intentionally trying to antagonize Ding Wenyu, the children used an extremely economical method when lighting the firecrackers—separating long strings of them into single units so they could light them one at a time. Curled up beneath his comforter, Ding Wenyu had just slipped into a groggy slumber when he was awakened by the explosive sound. He was about to lose his temper but figured that there was no reason for him to act rashly with the kids. And so, between the periodic blasts, he would capriciously think of Miss Chen. She seemed a prize prey that could be taken at any moment. As far as winning the hearts of women went, Ding Wenyu considered himself an expert. Getting Miss Chen into bed was but a matter of time. With much difficulty, he finally got some sleep. It was already past noon and the annoying kids outside were gone when Ding Wenyu awoke, suddenly remembering an afternoon wedding ceremony that he was supposed to attend.

Monk, the rickshaw puller, had arrived early and set his three-wheeled rickshaw down near the university gate. He basked in the sun napping as he waited for Ding Wenyu to arrive. These days Monk's rickshaw had practically become Ding Wenyu's private chariot. Ding Wenyu was already quite late and there was still no sign of him. The longer he waited, the hungrier Monk got. Finally he rushed to the small stall across the street and bought four large pork buns to fill himself up. The plentiful warmth of the sun shone down, and Monk's face looked carefree and content. At the campus gate, the university intercom system was relaying a recording of Government Chairman Lin Sen's radio address from the Central New Year's Day Celebration Meeting. The topic of his speech

was self-reliance, and the quality of the recording was pitiful, as screeches of electronic feedback periodically came through the speakers. Male and female university students emerged through the campus gates in dribs and drabs. One student wearing a long blue cloth gown and pulling a female student by the hand approached Monk and requested his services in a thick Manchurian accent. Monk had already passed up several customers that morning. He opened his eyes, lazily sized up this young couple, and then quickly closed his eyes again.

The university student said, "What's wrong with you? Are you going to take us or not? Say something!" Monk was a reckless fellow with a leisurely attitude who paid no heed to others. One look at him in his unbuttoned semi-new cotton jacket and you knew he was someone who took his sweet time. He was not an easy fellow to deal with. Monk intentionally didn't make a sound, continuing to rest his eyes. The student repeated his question, but Monk simply went on ignoring him. The university student's temper started to burn. He scolded Monk while his girlfriend standing beside him chimed in. The student indignantly snorted: "What the hell is going on these days? You're nothing but a lousy rickshaw puller! So what's with the stinking attitude?"

When Ding Wenyu arrived at the campus gate, that pair of young students were still harassing Monk. Monk was indeed bored, so he took advantage of the argument to help pass the time. He paid no heed to the guy, spending all of his energy arguing with the girl, holding on to her every word and not letting go. That girl was a student in the department of foreign languages. She wasn't especially good at arguing, and as soon as she became anxious she'd stutter; once she started stammering she became increasingly nervous. Suddenly she caught sight of Ding Wenyu, who had already walked up beside her. She hastily shut her trap and grabbed hold of her boyfriend's sleeve, signaling him to stop arguing. No matter how you look at it, carrying on with an incoherent rickshaw puller in front of a professor is out of character for two university students. Not complying, the guy wanted to continue his battle of the tongues. His girlfriend, seeing that her efforts were to no avail, began to turn red. It was a good thing that Ding Wenyu wasn't paying attention to what happened. He looked a bit ridiculous, wearing a red nightcap, a trim western suit, a large red tie, and an oversized gray wool overcoat, and carrying a cane in his right hand. He looked like he was still half-asleep.

When Monk tilted his head and caught sight of Ding Wenyu, he made as if nothing had happened. Smiling, Monk greeted him: "Mr. Ding, did you get enough rest?"

Ding Wenyu muttered an irrelevant answer and climbed into the rickshaw. The male university student glared angrily at him, but Ding didn't sense a thing. Turning around, he stared in the direction of the girl student. Her face turned even redder and she looked away. Finally she couldn't help it and burst out with a snicker. The female student had once taken his class. Ding Wenyu always had a somewhat indecent look in his eyes. There wasn't a single girl in the school who didn't know about him. He was the star professor of the department of foreign languages, and all the girls enjoyed his classes. The jokes about him were too numerous to mention—and most of them had to do with his interest in female students. Whenever Ding Wenyu's gaze fell upon a pretty student, his eyes shimmered without even the slightest hint of shame. Once, after walking into the classroom, Ding Wenyu suddenly refused to teach. The reason? Too few girls, so he wasn't in the mood. As soon as girls from the department of foreign languages mentioned Ding Wenyu in the dormitory, they would instantly cover their mouths to hold in the laughter.

As the rickshaw passed The House for Reciting Classics, Ding Wenyu dug his gold watch out of his jacket pocket, looked at the time, and asked Monk if he could speed it up. Monk, who was obviously already quite close with Ding Wenyu, turned his head, displaying a set of snow-white teeth, and uttered laughingly, "Don't tell me that Mr. Ding has his days when he is in a rush. Everyone says that you're not even afraid to be late for class!" Ding felt he had a point, so he calmed down, made himself more comfortable, and let Monk slow down. Since the Nationalist government had established its capital in Nanjing, the streets of the city had changed quite a bit. Sun Yat-sen Avenue stretched out from the heart of the city with one road after another linked together. All over they were breaking ground on new construction projects, and new stores were opening almost every day. No wonder people who had departed Nanjing just a few years ago said that they could barely recognize the place when they returned. A rickshaw-puller friend of Monk's approached and said something to Monk. Naturally it was some dirty joke, after which the two of them snickered and jokingly cursed each other.

Monk's mouth didn't get a moment of rest the whole trip. The glaring sunlight was brilliant, and the rickshaw happened to be headed south. The radiance of the sun made it difficult for Ding Wenyu to open his eyes, so he simply shut them. He couldn't help but open his mouth and let out an enormous yawn. The exaggerated yawning sound caused Monk to turn around. Monk knew that Ding Wenyu still hadn't gotten enough sleep. That morning at dawn it had been he who rushed to the Morning Cloud House at the Temple of Confucius to pick up Ding Wenyu after his morning tea and take him back to campus. At the time, they had agreed that Ding would ride Monk's rickshaw again at noon. Ding Wenyu had grown accustomed to Monk's rickshaw, and Monk disliked running up and down the street looking for business. He liked customers like Ding Wenyu—liberal with money and pleasant to chat with on the road.

II

When Ding Wenyu arrived at the Officers' Moral Endeavor Association compound, Yuyuan and Yu Kerun's wedding was already approaching its end. In the Nanjing of 1937, the OMEA compound was an almost mystical place. It was located on East Sun Yat-sen Road; if you were on the eastern side of the Central Hospital and continued straight over the Sun Yat-sen Bridge, you'd run into it in no time. Usually it was only the handful of personages with some degree of status who showed their faces there. Designed by a well-known architect, the compound was the paradigm synthesis of Chinese and western architectural styles. It was composed of several complementary palace-style halls; from the outside its upturned eaves looked typically Chinese, but the internal structure was completely western. In Nanjing in 1937, getting through the door at the OMEA compound was decisive in determining who you were. The fashionable topic of conversation among Nanjing citizens was the never-ending gossip about government and party big shots, which is not all that different from what we see today in Beijing. As if he were a famous movie star, Chiang Kai-shek could twitch and it would instantly become the talk of the town. For example, gossip articles such as YU YOUREN INJURED FOOT, VICE-COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN FENG COMES DOWN

WITH MINOR AILMENT, OR YESTERDAY WELL-KNOWN FIGURE ENTERED HOSPITAL FOR HERNIA OPERATION repeatedly appeared on the front pages of local newspapers. People carried on endlessly about those political celebrities. Even long after Nanjing fell, this habit stubbornly held on.

It was rare that anyone rode up to the OMEA compound in a rickshaw; the majority of visitors came in automobiles. The unique quality of the compound was that all of the employees wore military uniforms, from the doorman to the attendants in the compound dining hall. It was almost impossible for someone without background to get in—the doorman would often admit people only after close scrutiny of their clothing and manners; usually it only took one glance to pick out someone with influence. Naturally, there was the occasional exception—for example, the senior statesman Wu Zhihui. Wu never rode in automobiles, nor did he take rickshaws; though advanced in years, he simply walked to the compound on his own two feet. There are many jokes about Wu Zhihui. In 1938 during a cocktail party in Wuhan—by then Nanjing had already fallen and the Japanese forces were closing in on Wuhan—Wu Zhihui, holding a glass of wine, approached Wang Jingwei and dropped to his knees with a loud thud. Wu pleaded: "Mr. Wang, the country is already in dire straits. You must take a stand and clean up this terrible situation." All of the high-level leaders at the party stood there stupefied, and even Wang Jingwei was clueless as to how to react. Finally, with a painful look on his face, Wang also knelt and pleaded: "Elder Wu, please, if you have something to say, let's stand up and talk!" Wu Zhihui was unwilling to get up, so Wang Jingwei was forced to kneel with him. Once they got down on their knees, they were there for quite some time. The people at the party didn't know whether to laugh or cry. It wouldn't be right for them to pick the kneeling men up, yet they couldn't just leave them like that. In the end, affairs of state became a trifling matter. Wu Zhihui was a veteran member of the Revolutionary Alliance, but he was also an odd character who liked to flaunt his seniority. When mixing with the upper classes of society, he frequently grabbed attention for his unorthodox behavior. On one occasion, the doorman at the OMEA compound came a hair's breadth away from losing his meal ticket on account of Wu Zhihui's strange manners: he stopped Wu Zhihui at the door as if driving away a beggar. In the end, even Chiang Kai-shek lost his temper over the incident.

At the entrance to the compound, Ding Wenyu didn't run into any kind of difficulty. Apparently the doorman, still remembering the Wu Zhihui incident, took him for some big shot like Wu. Those who would dare strut past the compound gates were by no means common citizens; moreover, it was obvious from the way Ding Wenyu was decked out that he was *not* your average Joe. Gathered in the main hall were celebrities of all shapes and sizes. Strutting straight in with an imposing air, Ding Wenyu looked like a character in a movie. It was not his first time there. Ding walked confidently straight to the buffet table and picked up a glass of wine. The hall was heated, and a waiter approached Ding, politely requesting that he remove his coat. The waiter was also prepared to take Ding's cane and red nightcap to the coatroom. Only after the waiter's approach did Ding Wenyu realize just how uncultured he must have appeared by rushing straight to the buffet. Although his mannerisms were a bit ridiculous, Ding never lost his gentlemanlike demeanor. Carrying a cane around with him was a fashionable habit he had picked up while studying in Europe. He handed his cane to the waiter but refused to remove the nightcap from his head. Wearing a nightcap was Ding Wenyu's trademark. Sometimes he would wear a sharp western suit, at other times a long mandarin jacket, but only on the hottest summer days would he remove his red woolen nightcap.

After Ding Wenyu's eye-catching appearance at the tail end of the wedding reception, everyone who knew him nodded in succession. Both the bride's and the groom's families were quite close to Ding Wenyu. The groom's elder brother Yu Kexia was a friend of Ding's from his days as a foreign student in Germany. At that time the Yu family's economic situation was not very good, and Yu Kexia would often fret over where his next meal was coming from. It was during this time that Ding Wenyu became his "parental provider." Whenever Yu was in bad straits, he would seek out Ding's help—he knew that Ding Wenyu's father was a wealthy boss in the banking industry. There was even a period when Yu Kexia told everyone he bumped into that Ding and he were blood brothers, often citing an infamous event that occurred while they were vacationing in France. One night during their vacation, Ding brought a blonde prostitute back to their hotel, and that night the three of them slept in the same room. There was nothing better than this particularly unusual relationship to illustrate their close friendship. Naturally, each time this

story was told, a footnote had to be added. Yu Kexia was a man who kept his body pure as a pearl. His ulterior motive for telling this tale was to express his lofty ideals. For only someone with phenomenal willpower could on a long, lonely night in a foreign land remain unmoved by the moans of carnal pleasure beside him.

At the time of the wedding, Yu Kexia was the vice-director of the Provincial Education Office, and there was a rumor that the presidency of a certain national university had already been reserved for him. During 1937 in the capital of Nanjing, the treasured seat of university president was a prerequisite for a post as a high-level cadre in the Ministry of Education. It was his younger brother's wedding day, so of course Yu Kexia solemnly played the role of host, presiding over the wedding with full airs. He looked like a windup toy duck swaggering all around, spreading inside information about his imminent promotion. He was hoping that people would express their opinion on whether he should stoop to take the job. Even though he consistently maintained that he never had his eye on the position and repeatedly expressed how difficult the job was, to be undertaken only by someone willing to sacrifice himself for his work, in actuality, it was Yu Kexia himself who invented these rumors and let them out—he released them like a flock of pigeons. When Ding Wenyu appeared before him, Yu Kexia, who had been in a state of happiness, jumped as if he had been electrocuted. Smiling ear to ear, Yu rushed over to Ding Wenyu and admonished him for arriving so late.

"You never got rid of those bad habits you picked up in Europe!" After this line of Chinese, Yu Kexia instantly added a flurry of German. This kind of artificial act was unquestionably intended to remind those around them that he had once studied in Europe. It was too bad that his German was never truly fluent; it was, however, good enough to pull the wool over the eyes of everyone that night. Ignoring the puzzled look on Ding Wenyu's face, Yu Kexia continued to milk his shoddy German for all it was worth. When Ding Wenyu finally responded with a line of German, Yu Kexia was virtually tongue-tied. Laughing, he switched back to Chinese and teased Ding: "So what kind of trouble have you been getting yourself into these days?"

Yu Kexia's voice was especially loud, and almost all eyes in the hall instantly fell on Ding Wenyu. Yu Kexia's question left Ding somewhat at a loss as to how to respond. Not far from the main hall, a dance was being

held. Ding Wenyu scanned the area and, not seeing any stunning beauties, lacked the inspiration to continue his perfunctory conversation with Yu. He turned and headed for the dance hall. Yu Kexia chased after to prevent Ding from escaping. Grabbing hold of him, he asked Ding to pay his respects to Yuyuan's father, Old Ren Bojin. Since he was indeed attending a wedding, Ding couldn't completely escape these kinds of formalities. Having been dragged before Ren Bojin, he reluctantly expressed his best wishes to the old man. Old Ren Bojin was a senior figure in the military and had been a classmate of Ding's cousin Ding Gongqia at the Japanese Military Academy. The relationship between the Ding and Ren clans spanned several generations. Ren Bojin and Ding Wenyu's father were especially close, but Ding Wenyu did not have much of an impression of the elder military statesman. What little he did have wasn't very good. Twenty years earlier, a barely seventeen-year-old Ding Wenyu had absurdly pursued Ren Bojin's eldest daughter, Yuchan. Yuchan was Old Ren Bojin's daughter by his deceased first wife—she was a full twenty-four years older than her youngest sister Yuyuan, the bride that day. This love story, which ended in naught, didn't destroy the solid relationship between the Ren and Ding families, but it did make things a bit awkward.

It was obvious that Ren Bojin was not terribly fond of Ding Wenyu. One look at Ding's indecent mannerisms was enough to make Old Ren frown. Ding Wenyu stiffened up and sat down with Old Ren for a while but didn't really have anything to say; he just respectfully answered all of Lady Miyako's questions. Miyako wasn't as stiff as her husband and didn't want to make Ding Wenyu feel uncomfortable. She not only had no ill feeling toward Ding, but, seeing him so uncomfortable, was even led, out of the goodness of her heart, to make some conversation with the poor fellow. Although Ding Wenyu was almost forty years old, in front of Old Ren Bojin he became an inexperienced child all over again.

III

At the wedding ceremony that night, the biggest embarrassment Ding Wenyu caused stemmed from the way he wantonly stared at the bride Yuyuan. Everyone felt that his actions were quite inappropriate.

That red woolen nightcap was already enough to make him look like a ridiculous clown. Moreover, the guests had long since caught wind of the various rumors about his absurd behavior. And so, when he lustily stared at Yuyuan, there were more than a few people who couldn't help but laugh. Ding Wenyu, however, wasn't afraid of making a fool of himself. The place was in an uproar, with groups of people chatting and laughing. Like a mischievous child trying to hide from a strict teacher, Ding Wenyu took advantage of the chaos to slip away from Old Ren Bojin. Because he had not slept well the night before, Ding drank glass after glass of wine to drive away his exhaustion. By the time he entered the dance hall the music was just ending. People were walking off the dance floor and the pit musicians had just set down their instruments, preparing to take a rest before their next set. Ding Wenyu downed the glass of wine in his hand and upon turning around—saw Yuyuan. When he first laid eyes on Yuyuan he only caught sight of her profile. He had only intended to drop a casual glance; never did he imagine that his eyes would freeze on her like that. Holding the empty glass in his hand, he stood like a wooden column, completely captivated.

Then from God knows where appeared a rather rash young man with a dirty white scarf around his neck who sped down toward the music pit. He pushed aside a resting musician and climbed up onto his chair; then, waving his fist in the air, he began delivering a lecture. The patrons of the dance hall were quite surprised. Those outside also noticed that something strange was going on and rushed over to see what all the excitement was about. The young lecturer was obviously a student, but because he was a bit too excited, his speech was not terribly successful. For the people of Nanjing in 1937, speeches were already a commonplace—"resist Japan and save our dying nation" was a lecture topic already known to everyone. As if he were reciting from a textbook, the young man enumerated the various instances of Japanese invasion and provocation against China from the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 on up. Tears rolled down his cheeks as he spoke, and when he came to a pause everyone responded with thunderous applause.

There were a few other young people there who had the appearance of students peddling that day's newspaper. It was a small, privately run paper, and on the front page there was nothing but a single colossal exclamation point. Only on the second page was there a boldface headline

stating that since the Mukden Incident,* five years and three months had passed, during which four Manchurian provinces had already fallen into Japanese hands. Because all of Ding Wenyu's attention was focused on Yuyuan, he didn't have the slightest reaction when a female student waved a newspaper in front of his face. Because most of the people attending the wedding were pillars of upper-class society, they were all generous when it came to helping people out with money and had no qualms about buying a copy of that small, crude, unevenly printed newspaper. The stubborn student interpreted Ding Wenyu's blank stare as an intentional refusal to purchase the paper and wouldn't leave him alone. It was as if she wanted to test just how shameless this unpatriotic chap was.

The young lecturer announced that he wasn't against everyone having a good time, he just hoped that amid their pleasure they would not forget the Chinese soil that had already fallen into the hands of the Japanese. Our imminent national calamity must be our priority, and to forget our national humiliation is a contemptible action, he declared. Since the Mukden Incident, people had grown accustomed to various organized marches, people shouting slogans, and an array of fund-raising campaigns. The selling of the newspaper in itself had a kind of fund-raising quality, as each of the students had a small strawboard box hanging from their neck. Written in a forceful hand on each donation box were the words: COME TOGETHER IN A TIME OF NATIONAL CALAMITY / DONATE IN THE NAME OF NATIONALISM. To barge into the OMEA compound like that, those students must have had some connections. It was obvious that they were the children of some bigwigs. Nanjing was the capital city and it had all kinds of princes and missies whose parents were in the upper government ranks. There were rich dandies who lived for the day, eating, drinking, gambling, and whoring their way through their befuddled and decadent lives. There were also earnest youths who were sincerely patriotic and worked for the "resist Japan and save our dying nation" campaign, ready at any time to rush to the battlefield and courageously fight the enemy. Someone had already recognized the girl in the student uniform as the daughter of a certain special committee member of the

*A conflict that broke out between Japanese and Chinese troops on September 18, 1931. The Mukden Incident, also known as the Manchurian Incident, occurred just outside modern-day Shenyang and became the pretext for the Japanese to mobilize its troops and occupy Manchuria.

Nationalist Government Construction Committee. The post of special committee member was a exceptional appointment. Among those on the committee were T. V. Soong, H. H. K'ung, Examination President Dai Chuanxian, and the former mayor of the Nanjing municipality, Liu Jiwen, all renowned during their time.

Ding Wenyu remained unmoved. His hesitation to donate a little money, under these conditions, attracted even more attention. His eyes were like nails, staring deep and unwavering at the bride Yuyuan. Even when Yuyuan had turned around and become conscious of Ding's ill-intentioned gaze, he still rudely stared without the slightest flutter.

Several people noticed Ding Wenyu's lack of propriety; one person almost got up to tell him about it but was afraid he would embarrass Ding if he said anything. Under the harassment of his gaze, Yuyuan couldn't help but blush. She was embarrassed to look directly at him but couldn't help feeling curious—more than once she pretended to look at some other area of the hall just to steal a quick glance at Ding Wenyu. Finally, Ding Wenyu snapped out of his trance. Removing his wallet from his jacket pocket, he pulled out a bill and ran after that female student, who had already left him in great disappointment. Under the watchful eyes of the crowd, Ding diligently stuffed the bill into the paper box attached to the girl's torso.

The young lad delivering the lecture waved his fist again and called for the band to play "March of the Volunteer Army." Because this song was banned from being performed in most public venues, the conductor was unsure whether to carry out this order. Then Ding Wenyu began to applaud, seeming unquestionably in support of the song being performed. Following Ding's lead, all the young people in the hall joined in with cheers and applause. By this point, the orchestra had virtually no choice but to play the song. In Nanjing in 1937, because of diplomatic considerations, all openly anti-Japanese lyrics were banned; however, this ban had the opposite effect. In reality, songs in the vain of "resist Japan and save our dying nation" could not only be heard everywhere but during this specific period, they also became the most popular form of entertainment. At any given time you could hear people in the streets and alleyways humming these songs. It didn't matter if it was a old man with snowy hair or a child first learning how to speak, whether they sang with perfect melody or completely out of tune; one thing was for sure—everyone was singing

those songs. When the solemn and stirring melody of "March of the Volunteer Army" struck up at the wedding of Yuyuan and Yu Kerun, there was not a soul in attendance left unmoved. As the tune approached the halfway point, several people began to quietly hum along, ultimately joining in heartfelt song. War between China and Japan would not formally erupt until July 7, 1937, but the vast majority of Chinese with high morale had long been spiritually prepared for battle.

While everyone was wrapped up in song, Ding Wenyu continued stealing furtive glances at the bride Yuyuan. This wasn't actually the first time he had laid eyes on her; it was simply that in the past she hadn't left any particular impression on him. Old Ren Bojin had six precious daughters but was never able to father a son. This would have been a major issue for any traditional Chinese patriarch, but Old Ren didn't seem to be too concerned. However, as a career military man and an elder figure in military circles, Old Ren did seem to somewhat regret not having a son to carry on his unfinished work. Most of the sons-in-law he selected served in the military. Yuyuan, his youngest and most adored daughter, threw herself into military work immediately after her middle-school graduation to become a soldier. At the wedding that day, Yuyuan in her brand-new army uniform came as a breath of fresh air to everyone in attendance. People had already grown tired of brides with heavy make-up wearing long white gowns, and the pleasant simplicity of Yuyuan's unadorned uniform won everyone over. Ding Wenyu had never imagined that a beautiful girl could look so extraordinary in a military uniform. Yuyuan's gorgeous face and slender body were enhanced to a level of the utmost beauty.

"The bride is truly stunning," a female student uttered with admiration. Her hand clasped the small paper box that hung around her neck, rocking the clanking money inside in sync with the melody. At the wedding that day, there indeed couldn't have been any other woman more spectacular than Yuyuan.

After singing "March of the Volunteer Army," the young people still hadn't gotten enough and quickly followed up with a rendition of "Anthem of the Great Road," another song composed by Nie Er. Because it was the theme song of a popular film, it was quite the rage for a time, known to virtually every household in Nanjing. Already in the early 1930s, going to motion pictures had become an extremely fashionable

pastime; anything that had any connection with films was an immediate attention-grabber. After that, they sang the melancholy "On the Songhua River," followed by "Fighting Back to My Hometown," another song ordered banned from all public events. More than once, its passionate lyrics had been cited by the Japanese as proof that the Chinese government encouraged anti-Japanese sentiment.

Yuyuan, who was obviously no singer, stood not far from Ding Wenyu slightly humming along, afraid that she would embarrass herself if she sang off-key. Ding Wenyu saw her lips moving but couldn't hear her voice. By this point, what Yuyuan was singing and whether or not she could even carry a tune were already of infinitesimal importance to Ding Wenyu. He hoped she would go on singing like that for all eternity—that way he could forever feast his eyes on Yuyuan's beauty.

By comparison, Yu Kerun, who was also wearing his military uniform, appeared somewhat inferior to his new bride. Yu Kerun was a recognized airplane pilot and a prominent drillmaster at the Aviation Academy. His most outstanding flight in recent memory had been on October 29 of the preceding year, when he took part in Chiang Kai-shek's birthday celebration. He led students from the Aviation Academy as they flew in a hedge-hopping exercise over the reviewing stand while changing their formation. Their performance won a citation from Chiang Kai-shek, whose lecture, delivered in his characteristic thick Ningbo, left quite an impression on the lively students of the Aviation Academy. From then on, during their tense training sessions they would often imitate Chiang's pronunciation in an affected manner, not forgetting to put new words in the Generalissimo's mouth. Afterward they would all joke among themselves. That day at the wedding, Yu Kerun didn't look too much like a groom; it was a shame that although his spanking-new uniform fit him snugly, it looked a bit out of place given the present circumstances. Yuyuan's military outfit, on the other hand, brought out her prominence even more—while smug young male officers decked out in uniforms could be seen crawling all over the streets of Nanjing, female soldiers remained relatively rare creatures.

As far as Ding Wenyu was concerned, the newlyweds resembled neither bride nor groom. The impression Yuyuan gave was of a fairy maiden descending to the mortal world, whereas Yu Kerun resembled some high official's adjutant or bodyguard. At places like the OMEA com-

pound it was all too common to see young officers in their sharp uniforms like Yu Kerun. They would always be following close behind those government VIPs, trying to come off as high honchos because of who they were with. These young graduates of the Military Academy were the cream of the crop, the future pillars of the Central Military.

Yu Kexia grinned as he introduced his younger brother to Ding Wenyu. Out of politeness Ding wanted to shake his hand, but Yu Kerun suddenly stood at attention and saluted Ding. As Yu raised his right hand to his forehead, his leather shoes lightly snapped together, scaring the living daylights out of Ding Wenyu.

"This is one of the bad habits he picked up at the Military Academy," Yu Kexia laughingly explained. "If he doesn't stand at attention and salute, it's as if he is not a real soldier."

Attempting to cover up his own embarrassment, Ding Wenyu returned a salute to Yu Kerun. He had learned this move from American movies. It was a bit exaggerated, but more than that, it was simply ridiculous.

Yu Kexia waved his hand, signaling Yu Kerun to go off and mingle somewhere else. "Besides thinking about knocking heads with the Japanese, young people today don't know what serious matters to take up." Yu Kexia grumbled. He felt that the wedding that day was a bit spoiled and couldn't help but complain a bit. "All young people know how to do is make noise. 'Resist Japan, resist Japan!' If simply mouthing high-minded slogans and singing songs could scare away the Japanese army and recover our four lost provinces in Manchuria, China would have reached salvation long ago! What is the use of an angry mouth against a superpower like Japan? If these youngsters keep on making trouble like this, I don't know how we are going to succeed in resisting the Japanese. Who knows, maybe we really will end up with a subjugated nation and party." Yu Kexia, who rattled on endlessly expressing his opinions, hoped that Ding Wenyu would get his point and realize the fact that his views actually represented those of most insightful party leaders. "I'm going to be frank with you. Not long ago I met with the Minister of the Board of Military Affairs, General He Yingqin. We had a broad discussion about both domestic and foreign issues, and what do you know? General He and myself had the same opinions. There is also Mr. Hu Shi; do you know what Hu Shi had to say?"

"Hu Shi, that guy is an expert in bullshitting." Ding Wenyu sarcastically responded. He didn't have the slightest interest in Yu Kexia's topic

of conversation; his comment was just a way of releasing his frustration. Hu Shi was a cultural celebrity, but not all intellectuals were fond of him. From the Mukden Incident until the eve of the war, Hu Shi consistently looked the other way when it came to Japan's aggression, echoing the government's policy of nonresistance. Because of this, he won the general scorn of the people. During that particular gathering, Ding Wenyu could not care less about whether or not China should resist Japan. The eager look in his eyes as he searched Yuyuan's alluring image had already surpassed what one normally refers to as lust.

Just as that flock of students who had barged in were leaving, the wedding ceremony, which was already beginning to wind down, reached another lull. Amid the gradually building strains of music, people danced to a final number. It was a long tango, and without the slightest thought, Ding Wenyu grabbed the chunky, rich woman standing beside him and dragged her out to the dance floor. The rich woman was a bit confused, because it was rare that anyone would invite a hefty lady like herself to dance. Her husband, who was busy launching consecutive attacks on a number of other women, was unwilling even out of politeness to dance a number with his own wife. Her anger at being continually ignored had long been brewing when she mistook Ding Wenyu's crude advance as evidence of her charm.

"How come you waited until now to finally ask me?" she asked. The rich woman wore heavy make-up and had thin black eyebrows, which looked like they were painted on. She gazed intently at Ding Wenyu's woolen nightcap and in a delicate voice that didn't seem to fit her appearance whispered, "My husband says that you are a very famous professor."

"Famous professor? I'm sure what your husband meant was that I am just a famous playboy," he answered. Feeling like he was pushing a mountain, Ding Wenyu tried to prod the rich lady over toward Yuyuan. And then, Ding and Yuyuan's eyes finally met—it was just for a fleeting moment, then Yuyuan quickly shifted her gaze. Because they were such a terrible match, Ding Wenyu and the rich woman's dance was a disaster. They stepped on each other's toes, and time and time again, the rich woman even felt that Ding was intentionally rubbing against her breasts. Her waist was so thick that for Ding Wenyu to place his hands on her hips he would have no choice but to press right up against her. It was a good thing that Ding Wenyu quickly figured out how to get close to

Yuyuan: since it was so difficult to lead "the mountain" forward, all he had to do was stand with his back to Yuyuan and let the fat lady push him closer to his target. The rich woman's enthusiasm exceeded what Ding had anticipated. She felt he was a bit aggressive, but on the other hand, she secretly hoped Ding would attempt to take some liberties with her. Perhaps it was simply because she was angry at her husband; then again, perhaps after all those years of loneliness she couldn't help but press her meat as tightly against Ding Wenyu as she could.

IV

After the dance was over, Ding Wenyu sharply pushed the chunky, rich lady aside and, with a couple of giant steps, rushed to Yuyuan's side. Then with the utmost sincerity, Ding Wenyu expressed to Yuyuan his desire to have the next dance. His request led everyone around to break out in hysterical sniggers. Yuyuan covered her mouth and turned red with laughter. It was obvious to everyone that the dancing was already over. The musicians had put away their music and the conductor had already placed his baton down on his music stand to gracefully run his fingers through his long, flowing hair. One after another, people swarmed out, taking their coats from the doorman as they got to the door. The distraught look on Ding Wenyu's face left an even more comical impression on everyone present. Ding reluctantly gazed at the backs of the newlyweds as they prepared to depart, and a feeling of jealousy welled up in his heart.

Yuyuan bade farewell to her parents and the other guests who were leaving the wedding ceremony. It was obvious that she felt this Ding Wenyu was quite an interesting character—even though all he seemed to do was make a fool of himself at the wedding, Yuyuan wasn't at all annoyed. Ding Wenyu had long before left a waggish impression on her, this bookworm who twenty years ago had pursued her oldest sister and made himself the secret object of laughter and ridicule among Yuyuan's family. Her oldest sister Yuchan was far off in America and couldn't attend the wedding; who knows what would have gone through *her* mind had she been able to witness Ding Wenyu's behavior. With perfect poise, Yuyuan walked over to Ding Wenyu and extended her hand. She was perhaps the only one in her family who had never pulled his leg.