

## 18. A Crazy Fellow

The two inquisitors took turns to go to the toilet but did not bother to invite Youde to go along. They appeared angry. Youde did not need to go, in any case, it was as if all his waste matter had been wrung out like body oil. The two also took out cigarettes and smoked without offering Youde any. On his part, Youde did not beg for one either, not out of stubbornness but because he sensed that by begging for a single cigarette, a corner of his psychological defense levee could start to crumble.

Switching directions, Wang said, "O.K. Let's hear about Cheng Wen-bang."

Anybody who had known Wen-bang could not possibly speak of him without shedding tears. It was no overstatement to say that Wen-bang was the world's most honorable and most innocent soul who had ever lived, who seemed to not realize that evil exists in this world.

He was born the first son of the wealthiest family of Putzu. Unlike Youde and the others, he went to the school reserved for the Japanese children. His parents showered him with everything under the sun. They subscribed for him directly from Japan the pictorials 'Children's Club,' 'Youth Club,' etc. He also wore leather shoes even when he was just a young child, quite different from the public school kids who attended school barefoot. The image of Wen-bang riding around in his own child-sized bicycle was no less than a symbol of royalty. Yet he never prided himself on being a rich kid even when he was little. His books were lent out to whoever wanted to read them and his bicycle shared with whoever who

wished to ride. As he grew older, Wen-bang resembled a royal even more, what with a great build and fine facial features classier than a movie star's. And such a person perished at the execution yard at just age twenty! All because he was introduced to Marxism in the economics class at the university.

Flipping though Youde's statement, Wang remarked, "You did not write very much about Wen-bang."

It was true that Youde only wrote about Wen-bang in connection with the Student Friendship Association.

"What do you think of Wen-bang?"

"It's a pity." Youde let his true feelings slip.

"Why is that so?"

"....."

"The fellow was an utterly despicable Communist. What's there to be sorry about?"

"....."

"He was a rebel, you know. He was our enemy, everybody's enemy. Why are you sympathetic?"

The two inquisitors pressed on.

How Youde wanted to scream: "I don't think so! The truth is he was a pristine flower amidst the muddy field!" But this would be suicidal. On the other hand, for him to concur with 'You are right about him' was absolutely out of the question. It would have been blasphemy.

Youde replied, "I meant it's a pity that he did not join the Kuomintang Party instead. He would have gone far."

T'ien put down his pen and offered, "I witnessed the fellow's interrogation in Taipei. It was crazy. Imagine! He sang the praise

of Communism right in front of us and tried to enlighten us on Communism. Not only did he show no remorse, he acted like he felt sorry for our ignorance. I felt like slapping him."

"But he did admit to everything, didn't he?" Wang asked.

"He did. He admitted to all, straightforwardly. His interrogation was the shortest."

T'ien faced Youde anew and said sarcastically, "How about it? How about being a man like Wen-bang and admitting what you have done."

Maybe Wen-bang was but a 'crazy guy' to them but they couldn't help but recognize his manliness!

T'ien cut in sharply, "Seeing that he even tried to sell Communism to us, he must have tried to persuade his friends. Now, let's have the place, the time and what transpired."

To a certain degree Tien was right. Wen-bang talked about Marx and Engles constantly but he never forced it on anybody. The Wen-bang Youde knew was a serious young man who got along well with others, who was a sympathizer of Communist ideology but was not a Party member. It was likely that he remained so until Shui-ching got to him. He was the one person who should have been left alone in this turbulent world.

Youde allowed that he knew Wen-bang was sympathetic to Communism and that they had talked about it from time to time, but insisted that Youde himself had always argued against it.

Alas. The answer only invited further trouble. Now Wang wanted to know when and what was discussed and how Youde had refuted the Communist ideology. Even if time and place could be fixed in some degree, to recreate the conversation was not so

easy. First of all, 'refutation' was not exactly the accurate term to describe Youde's role because most of the time he just listened.

"I can't remember too well."

The answer did not fare well. Youde almost wished that he had studied more about Marx.

Finding no other way out, Youde had to make up his own Marxism and then offered its refutation in a one-man show.

If Marx were listening he would surely have rolled his eyes.

## 19. About Books

General Hu and GI-cut Chen entered the room.

Wang glanced at his watch and rose from his seat.

T'ien said, "Is everything you have said so far all true?"

"Yes, all true."

T'ien penned in the last two lines and pushed the investigation report over to Youde. T'ien took out the ink paste and instructed Youde to sign his name then press his thumb print at the side of the last line of the report.

The report numbered about ten pages. There was no time to even scan through it. Youde picked out the part about Mao's collective work and insisted that Li Shui-ching never showed him the book. After a brief argument, T'ien reluctantly added small circles over the three characters, 'Mao-wen-chi.' Youde felt some unease at this as he himself would have drawn two vertical lines over the words instead. But in any event Youde was relieved that the words were scratched. He signed his name and put his thumb print on

the document.

General Hu signaled GI-cut Chen with his eyes to take Youde out to the toilet. Youde sat on the toilet seat unable to move his bowels. Constipation perhaps. Only a pitiful trickle of urine came out which turned the water in the toilet bowl the color of reddish brown. This was Youde's last memory of using the facility there.

For this round General Hu did the questioning and GI-cut Chen took notes. General Hu had a cold expression on his face, quite different from the General Hu around the mahjong table. He started off with 'Mao-wen-chi.' It seemed that instead of deleting the words, those small circles had the opposite effect of attracting attention.

"It seems that you first mentioned 'Mao-wen-chi' then later recanted."

"No. That's not what I remember. My answer was slow in coming because I was not sure what 'Mao-wen-chi' was."

"I don't think so. You were hesitating between admitting and denying. Weren't you?"

"The truth is that because the book title 'Mao-wen-chi' was said in unfamiliar mandarin Chinese that I did not comprehend it at first."

"Unfamiliar? Not a likely story. Everybody knows the book."

"Must be because I had nothing to do with it that I just did not get it right away."

"But you had the book in your house." General Hu said with confidence.

Youde immediately denied it.

"Think carefully. You need to remember who gave you the

book or who lent you the book as the case may be."

As hard as he searched his memory Youde did not come up with the image of the book in his house.

"Listen. It's karma that you and I were acquainted. Isn't there a saying, 'To be acquainted imparts sympathy'? I will not be unreasonable with you. But if you keep denying it, it's a different matter."

GI-cut Chen interjected, "General Hu is listening to you with a lot of courtesy since he has known you for a while. He is trying to make it as favorable to you as he can. I won't give you bad advice, but you should admit your doing quickly and go home sooner rather than later. Save us both some trouble!"

"I don't remember anything about the book."

Hu stood up and said, "All right. In that case, tell us about the books you had at home at the time."

What an awkward turn of events! But Youde had no choice but to comply. Just when Youde opened his mouth Hu gestured irritably, "Write. Write them down," then added, "Write down the authors too."

Youde started with Natsume Soseki's 'Young Boy' followed by the books by Japanese authors he could remember and ended the Japanese section with the poetry by Takuboku. It was easier to categorize them by nationality. Next, he listed the Russian works, from Dostoevsky to Chekhov. General Hu, who had been pacing the room, approached the desk and scanned the list. It appeared he did not know any of the titles. Youde sensed General Hu's mounting irritation.

"Enough of those. It's no use to keep writing about books of

no consequences. List the Chinese books first."

Youde listed: 'History of Eastern Chou,' 'General History of China,' 'Story of Ah Q,' 'New Treatise on the Three People's Principles' ...

GI-cut who had been quiet sputtered, "Doing it again! Avoiding the serious and touching upon the insignificant. Do you take us for fools?"

General Hu walked over and patted Youde's shoulders from behind and said, "You are to write down the leftist books, Chinese or Japanese. It's not that any given book is of particular importance but that we just want to test your truthfulness."

Youde included Fujiwara Korehito's 'Treatise on Art' even though it wasn't a leftist book. He included several books by Chinese authors that he had burned- all read before they were banned. They were banned not necessarily because the contents were left wing, but rather because the authors had later turned Communists. These were innocent books. Nevertheless, out of caution, Youde burned them.

General Hu returned to his seat then asked, "You are forgetting an important book, are you not?"

"....."

"A plainly Communist book, not one easily forgotten."

"Was there such a book?" Youde pondered to no avail. General Hu prompted again with irritation. Youde was not able to say anything.

"It's obvious, he is not going to lay it all out," GI-cut muttered.

Hu said, "All right. Let me give you a hint. Its title starts with the character 'wei' and ends with the character 'pen.'"

"Oh, yes. I remember now. It's 'A Reader in Materialist Dialectics' in Japanese."

"That's right. Why didn't you say so honestly in the first place?"

"That was not my book. It was borrowed from the library. I thought I was to list the books I own so I was concentrating on my bookcase."

Youde fumed: One can't possibly remember all the books he had borrowed from the library. Besides, how can one be criminally liable by reading books from the library! The book in question was but a basic reader and was not pertinent to Communism, but they seemed to equate Communism with materialism.

With a cynical grin, General Hu said, "The fact was the book was in your bookcase, together with the rest of the Communist books. Now, come clean with the rest of them."

Now Youde had to list the books he had checked out from the library that were considered left wing. The Normal University had inherited the former Taipei High School including its library, which had fortunately escaped war damage. The books in the library were 80% Japanese. Since the Japanese authorities also exercised rather strict thought control, there were no outright leftist books in the library - Kawakami Hajime's 'The Story of Poverty' was about the limit. Youde included 'The Story of Poverty' and a few proletarian books then put down his pen. Hu and GI-cut knew about Kobayashi Takiji's 'Crab Boat'; maybe there was a Chinese translation of it. GI-cut was pleased to find the title and promptly entered it into the record.

They dwelled on 'A Reader in Materialist Dialectics': about

whether it belonged to Youde or was it a library book, a fact that can no longer be verified by checking with the library, as the book was already gotten rid of when it was banned. Finally, they settled on the scenario that the book belonged to the library but Youde had it on his bookshelf for a time. A small relief.

A new anxiety soon developed. In front of Youde's very eyes, General Hu noisily tore up the sheets of papers filled with book titles Youde had written down. This left only four book titles in the investigative report, giving the impression that Youde had read just the four books while in fact, the four did not constitute 1%, not even 0.5%, of what he had read. Youde politely pointed out this fact to General Hu but was ignored entirely.

Mere commonplace books they may be to people today, but reading them was a serious offense - punishable by 'thought reform' in accordance with Article 9 of the Law on Sedition - the sad truth of life under the regime of the so called white terror. A term of three years of 'thought reform' may be repeated with no limit, per chance turning into a life sentence. It appeared that Youde was not going to be let go scot-free.

In any event the questioning about the books ended. One question remained in Youde's mind. How did they know that 'A Reader in Materialist Dialectics' was among the books in Youde's bookcase?

## 20. Wires Around His Neck

The two inquisitors walked around the sofa as they quietly

whispered to each other. Maybe they intended to take a rest with a cup of tea. Youde leaned back against the chair and closed his eyes. His eyes were tired after days and nights of continuous questioning. Fortunately, he was still in complete control of his faculties. He reasoned:

How did they learn about the existence of the book? Of course, somebody who frequented my home had informed on me, and that person could be no other than Yu-kun. How did Yu-kun tell them about me? And when did he do that?

At the time of Yu-kun's arrest in February, there couldn't be any need for him to inform about books in somebody else's bookcase. He had a lot of people to talk about: the person who recruited him into the Party, the ones he in turn recruited, his fellow fugitives, people who hid him and aided him, about twenty in all. Enough material to fill a fat, impressive investigative report. Therefore, the most likely time that Yu-kun informed on me, a word I reluctantly used here, was after he had been sent to the Retention Facility of the Military Court. In that case, Yu-kun was no doubt seeking help through the Self-Renewal Policy, the rationale of which was to redeem one's wrong doings through the 'merit' of uncovering others' criminal activities. If a so-far unknown Communist cell was uncovered as a result, the informer was granted additional reduction in sentencing. Did Yu-kun inform on me because he was afraid of death?

Let's assume Yu-kun had said, "Tsai Youde had joined a different branch of the Communist organization." The intelligence agency would probably panic, because they had given the big fish a passport to go abroad. They would have recalled Yu-kun and

pressed for more details.

"How are you so sure that Tsai Youde is a Communist? On what evidence? Or was there something for you to suspect so?"

Whereupon Yu-kun must have offered, as evidence or rationale, "I have seen the book 'A Reader in Materialist Dialectics' on his bookcase." But just one book would not suffice. Suppose Yu-kun had added, "I also saw 'Mao-wen-chi.'" Then, the accusation would be hard to ignore and a thorough investigation would be called for, for 'Mao-wen-chi' had been a favorite tool of recruitment.

If Yu-kun had further volunteered, "Li Shui-ching said Tsai Youde was a comrade," the consequences were obvious – Youde would have no chance of getting out alive since he played leadership roles in many student activities. Yu-kun's every word, every sentence, hung around Youde's neck like rings of wire. Youde must now untie the wires, one by one, with his own strength.

But, this reasoning contained a big question mark, "Is Yu-kun such a base man?"

## 21. A Childhood Chum

The two inquisitors returned. A cup of water was placed on the desk.

"You wrote a lot about Chang Yu-kun." General Hu said while flipping through the written statement. "But, what do you think of Yu-kun?"

"Well, he is a strong person, in both body and mind," Youde

answered carefully.

"You've known him since kindergarten days, right?"

"Yes."

"That's a long time. So you are childhood chums."

"Yes."

"At the Putzu Student Friendship Association, you were the president and he was your vice president?"

"Yes."

"That's odd. He is a year ahead of you in school."

"Yes. I nominated and recommended him and he recommended me, but his idea prevailed."

General Hu smirked, "So you respect each other."

"....."

"I wonder in what way do you respect him, not merely about his strong body and mind, I think."

"He has a strong sense of justice."

"Is that so? On what basis?"

Youde gave a few more examples that were not included in his written statement, of Yu-kun's habit of 'standing up for the meek' when he was a child. As a grown-up he also was unable to keep silent in the face of any unfairness. Youde cited a few of these examples.

"When did you know that he was a Communist?"

"After the April 6th incident when I heard that he had gone into hiding."

Article 9 of the Statutes for Denunciation and Punishment of Bandit Spies states: One is guilty if he knowingly conceals the whereabouts of a Communist and fails to report it to the authori-

ties.

"He persuaded you to join the Party, did he not?"

"No. Not even once."

"I can't believe that. He has no reason not to recruit a childhood friend who reads Communist books."

But the truth was that Yu-kun had never tried to absorb Youde into the Communist Party. Maybe he assumed Youde was already a Party member since Youde lived with Li Shui-ching under the same roof.

Over and over, General Hu and GI-cut continued to press Youde on whether Youde had known that Yu-kun was a Communist and if Yu-kun had recruited him. Youde defended himself desperately, not giving in an inch. The battle ended in a draw, both sides in utter exhaustion.

After a brief pause, General Hu inquired light-headedly, "You both entered National Taiwan University, didn't you?"

"Yes." Youde did not include this fact in his statement. Their background check was thorough all right.

"Why did you switch to the Normal University?"

"Because of the huge inflation, we used up our funds in no time and had nowhere to turn."

It was a sad day when they quit school and returned to Putzu. But, fortunately, the founding of the Normal University was soon announced. Youde passed the difficult examination and again left Putzu to study in Taipei. Six months later, Youde's elder brother returned from Japan to teach at Taipei Chien-kuo Middle School and secured faculty housing. Youde's livelihood was thus solved.

"I see. You went there because the Normal University is a gov-

ernment funded school. But Yu-kun stayed on with National Taiwan University. I didn't think his family was well off to that extent."

"He is the eldest son. His parents had said that they would send him to college even if they had to live on grass."

Momentarily, Youde saw in his mind's eye, the faces of Yu-kun's parents, ever honest and industrious, who had untiringly sacrificed for their son. They must be washing their faces with tears nowadays, Youde's heart ached.

"Did you see each other much during college years?"

"Yes."

"Did he visit you often in your house?"

"Yes."

"For what business did he visit you?"

"Nothing special."

"For instance."

"To go to the movies or to borrow or exchange books."

"What books did you lend each other?"

"I can't remember exactly."

"It's strange that you want to evade these things. There were some unmentionable books, weren't there?"

"No. There weren't books like that."

"Then, why don't you tell us about them?"

It was hard to remember. Youde gave four or five book titles.

"There were a lot of Communist books at his place. It wouldn't be unusual if he had lent you one or two of them."

"He did not lend me books of that nature, because he knew I was not interested in books like that."

Now back to books again, after all!

"Then, what kind of books are you interested in?"

"Books on literature and theater. For example, Herman Hesse's books. Speaking of Hesse, I did borrow Hesse's collective works from the library and lent a couple of volumes to Yu-kun."

"Who? Hesse?"

"Yes. A German writer. He was called the 'conscience of the 20th century.'"

"....."

"Contrary to materialism, his work depicts the world of idealism, such as young people agonizing over the search for truth."

"That's enough."

Youde wanted to impress upon them that a person with interest in Hesse could not possibly be sympathetic to materialism, but it was not possible. Not a single book of Hesse's had been translated into Chinese.

Still, judging from the line of questioning, Youde gathered that Yu-kun had only mentioned the books and nothing else in connection with his childhood chum, and felt somewhat relieved.

General Hu singled out Youde's friends one by one and questioned Youde for his thoughts about them and the nature of his association with them. He questioned about Shui-ching, Wen-bang and Shen-yuan repeatedly, going back and forth over the inconsistencies and sometimes, surreptitiously pop the question, "When did you join the Party?"

The tiresome questioning went on and on, endlessly.

GI-cut, who had stopped taking notes by now, couldn't stop yawning.

The only point they had was, "Admit it now. It's about time. We can all go home and rest."

## 22. Undershirt

Youde then noticed that Detective Ho was sitting on the sofa. Could it be that my head is getting muddled somewhat - not paying attention to people's movements anymore? When General Hu and GI-cut finished their questioning and left the room after acquiring Youde's pro-forma thumb print, Ho invited Youde to the sofa, "Come here. It's more comfortable."

Youde stood up but couldn't lift his legs. Pain shot through his knees.

"Oh, that's right." Ho came over and led Youde by his wrist.

"I went to your house." Ho said as he helped Youde to the sofa. Ho's sidekick Big Shan-tung was nowhere in sight.

"How did it go?" Youde asked.

"They were worried. But after listening to me, they seemed somewhat relieved. I consoled them that you would be allowed to come home once the investigation is over."

"I don't know how to thank you. Thank you so much."

"Nah, we being both 'sweet potatoes', this is nothing. So, how old is your child?"

"She is a year and nine months old."

"That's about the same age as mine. She sure talks well for her age. She was holding incense in her hands and was praying to the gods that her Papa would come home soon."



Youde came dangerously close to tears. 'I am weakening emotionally,' he thought.

On the coffee table sat a bundle, wrapped in a scarf.

"Your family asked me to bring you a pillow and some underwear. They told me that you can't get to sleep on a strange pillow." Ho put his hand on the bundle.

"Why don't you have yourself a change of clothes?" Ho handed Youde a set of underwear.

Youde changed the top then the bottom. He had difficulty putting his feet through the leg openings. The pungent sweaty smell assaulted his nostrils.

Just as Youde finished changing, Big Shan-tung entered the room. He laid on the coffee table some steamed buns and soymilk contained in an aluminum carrying pot.

How long has it been since I was brought in here, how many hours? How many days? The drapes remained drawn. There was no clock in the room; rather, there were signs that a wall clock had been removed, a deliberate act to deny the detainee knowledge of time. Youde felt the urge to ask Ho for the time but refrained, for fear of putting this kind person in a difficult position. Knowing the time wasn't going to change things one way or the other.

Youde's mouth and throat were parched, his lips scaly dry. He would rather have water, but Ho picked up a steamed bun and pressed it on Youde to eat. Youde had no appetite.

"You must eat. It's been a long time since you last ate." Ho advised.

Youde put a piece of bread in his mouth. Instantly, his tongue was on fire. He spat it out reflexively.

"What's wrong?' Ho asked.

"It hurts terribly."

Youde felt like his tongue was covered with blisters. He gingerly stuck out his tongue. Ho peeked at Youde's tongue, "Ya, I see a lot of red blisters."

Youde pulled his tongue back. The back of his tongue was stiff.

"Well, drink this. It will help."

Ho poured a cup of soymilk. It was too hot to drink.

"Water please." Youde pleaded.

"O.K. Water."

Big Shan-tung left the room to fetch water.

Youde closed his eyes and leaned back on the sofa. The blisters were a new phenomenon. It was not particularly unusual for Youde to stay up two straight days and nights. Before he was married, he was frequently quite reckless, staying up all night to do his writing, then playing GO or mahjong through the next night. As a matter of fact, Youde had quite a reputation as an all-nighter. But never once had his tongue turned into a mess of blisters. This must mean that it had been more than two days.

Big Shan-tung came back with a water pitcher. A kind man. Youde poured himself a cup of water and sipped it gingerly. Luckily, his tongue received the water eagerly. He downed four or five in a row.

Sweat drenched his underwear, the ones he had just taken the trouble to change into.

### 23. Big Shan-tung

"I will be doing the questioning now. You can answer with your eyes closed." Ho laid out the investigation papers on the coffee table. Youde leaned back comfortably while Ho had to lean forward over the coffee table to do his writing. Doing his own recording, Ho asked, "In your student days, did you join any political party?"

"No."

"Were you invited to join the Communist Party?"

"No. I was not."

"There were many Communist believers around you."

"Yes, there were."

"Didn't you know that they were Communist Party members?"

"I did not know that any of them were."

Ho recorded the answers word by word. He did not refute or pressure.

"Among the plays you produced, were any of them banned?"

"Only Ts'ao Yu's 'The Sun Rise.' But it was banned after our production. At the time, we could have been commended for introducing well-known plays of the motherland."

"Where did you perform the plays?"

"In Taipei, Chia-yi and Putzu."

"Did you obtain permits?"

"Yes. In Taipei, from the school authority; in Chia-yi and Putzu, from the police."

"And the scripts were submitted for review ahead of time, also?"

"Yes."

It was obvious that Ho was composing a favorable investigative report.

"Ah -" Youde gave out a big yawn uncontrollably, the first one since he entered this building – most likely from a sense of relief that it was all right to let his guard down in front of Ho. For the past three days and nights, Youde had been under such strain, not knowing what a wrong word could bring, that he had no time for a yawn.

"If you can fall asleep, go ahead." Ho said with understanding.

Youde thanked Ho and tried but couldn't fall asleep. When he tried to open his eyes, he felt faint pain, perhaps from the tobacco smoke, or the light or from sheer fatigue. 'My eyes are probably blood shot now,' Youde imagined. Youde shut his eyes and catnapped, but he was aware that Ho stood up; he could also hear Ho and Big Shan-tung talking.

A thump. Something was set down on the table. Reflexively Youde opened his eyes. Big Shan-tung had refilled the water pitcher. Youde straightened up and said thanks.

"Would you like a drink of water?" Big Shan-tung kindly solicited.

Without waiting for the answer, Big Shan-tung filled the glass to the brim with water. Youde thanked him again and drank the water.

"The sooner you confess, the sooner you go home. It's the right thing to do," Big Shan-tung said with understanding. Ho put his hand on Youde's shoulder and said, "Mr. Fan here is a nice fellow, a totally kind person."

Yet, when Big Shan-tung left the room, Ho put his mouth to Youde's ears and related, "Nobody can stand up to this big fella from Shan-tung province as far as the number of people he has killed. You see, he was an executioner in his youth. They said he used to decapitate the criminals with blue dragon knives." Youde imagined a blood-splattered Big Shan-tung.

Shame. Just when Big Shan-tung had seemed a kind man, now he turned into a creepy figure.

## 24. Ho's Complaints

'How long was I allowed to sleep? Maybe about ten minutes.' Youde was not sure as his sense of time was all screwed up. He was thankful for the ten minutes of sleep and the re-supply of water to his body, a significant matter. He was able to regain his strength somewhat, thanks to Ho and Big Shan-tung.

Ho continued with the questioning. He asked some non-essential questions and finished up the three-page report.

The next shift had yet to arrive, so the three chatted, although Youde just listened. Big Shan-tung again brought up the subject of Communist cruelty on the mainland, much to Ho's impatience who had apparently heard the story many times already. Knowing Big Shan-tung was once an executioner, Youde found the stories of killings taking on more reality. Big Shan-tung was not able to monopolize the conversation, however.

Ho asked casually, "What is the name of Wen-bang's sister?"

"It is Su-yun."

"Quite a beauty. I saw her once."

"....."

"I heard that she is not yet married."

"No. She is not."

"I understand that a lot of college students had chased after her."

"Yes."

The expression, chase after, was somewhat distasteful to Youde. But it was true that a lot of college students had admired her like a flower on a tall fence.

"I wonder why she is so late in marrying?"

"I don't know. I don't think it is so late." Youde replied.

If she was late in marrying, the reason was obvious. It was because almost all the idealistic, elite young men had been arrested. The ones remained were far from her fancy. They were all weak, materialistic and lacking in a sense of justice.

"Did Yu-kun chase after her?"

"Well, ..."

"That's not enough. What's the story?"

For what started out as an informal chat, Ho was unexpectedly persistent.

"I don't know." Youde replied. But Youde knew for a fact that Yu-kun had loved her. Whether Yu-kun had confided his love to her Youde did not know. It was not an age that a young man confided lightly of love, even if he had expressed his love in some other way.

Ho glanced at his wristwatch and stood up. He also gestured Youde to return to his seat at the desk. Ho himself also returned to

the desk and started to review the report. When he finished, Ho faced Youde and muttered, out of Big Shan-tung's earshot, "I too, have complaints about the government."

"....."

"Take government housing, for instance. They all got good housing, but I had a hard time getting one. It's because I am a 'sweet potato.' I applied for it again and again. Finally, I got this tiny apartment with a leaky roof, only recently too."

"....."

"It also bugs me that they change their birth dates to suit the occasions. Taking advantage of the lack of residency registration on the mainland, they can just gather three friends and testify for each other. Take the police chief. He is supposed to be in charge of residency registration and he changed his own first! Some of them even changed two or three times. The chief himself, an older man over fifty, changed his birthday to pass as forty-ish, then duped a thirty-ish woman to marry him."

Ho's complaints were run of the mill, nothing new. Nevertheless, they were a little out of place. Youde shrank from chiming in.

Somehow, Ho's talks always ended up with women.

## 25. A Friend Named Francesco

The duo of Wang and T'ien came back into the room. Wang took Ho's place. Like a knife cutting through to the bone, Wang immediately started the questioning.

"When did you learn of Chang Yu-kun's capture?"

"When I was in America."

Wang's eyes showed incomprehension.

"You mean you didn't learn about it after your return?"

"No. I knew about it several months before I came home."

"How did you know?"

"My wife touched upon it in her letter."

"That's strange."

Wang and T'ien exchanged glances.

It was strange all right. Letters from Youde's wife were opened and read by the secret police from some time back. The letter that mentioned Yu-kun's capture was either sent before that date, or, the one-line sentence was overlooked by the examiner. On the other hand, Panto's letter had referred to Yu-kun as Ghandi, a nickname due to his dark skin.

"Why was there a need to let you know about such things?"

"Not that there was a need, but my wife wrote me once a week. She wrote about the smallest things, such as the old man next door falling and spraining his ankle, or that the Zamboa tree was about to bear fruit, or the chicken had hatched ..."

"Do you still have the letters?"

"Yes. I brought home all of my wife's letters. They are in my house."

Youde rejoiced, this may turn out to be a good defensive evidence. If Youde were a Communist Party member, he wouldn't have returned to Taiwan after learning about Yu-kun's capture, for fear of being exposed. Instead, he could have gone to the mainland, or asked for political asylum in another country. Only a fool

would jump into his own grave knowingly. It was common sense.

But Wang saw it differently.

"So you returned, even after learning about Yu-kun's capture."

"Yes. That is correct."

"I see. So you returned to Taiwan with the new directives from Communist Central."

Wang elaborated a farfetched theory, "The Communists' channel of communication to Taiwan has been terminated for some time now. They can't use the wireless transmission because it would be like providing us with intelligence directly. You see, you would be the most suitable conduit to transmit the directives from overseas. Besides, you speak both English and Japanese, quite convenient when it comes to contacting foreigners."

"That is ..."

"Don't panic. Hear me out."

Youde's sometimes-groggy mind snapped to full attention.

"You were with a foreigner from Honolulu on. You arrived in Tokyo by the same plane, stayed in the same hotel for four days and hung around together the whole time. You parted from him at Haneda airport. Am I wrong?"

Wang stared into Youde's bloodshot eyes.

"No. Just as you said. But the foreigner was not a suspicious person."

"Where did you meet him?"

"In September of 1953. I met him in Washington D.C., at the orientation for the foreign trainees that the State Department sponsored. We spent about a week together."

"What's his name?"

"Carlos Francesco, a Filipino doctor. He is in the field of public health."

Wang turned the pages in his file to check on the name.

Indeed, they had done some investigation.

Youde ran into Dr. Francesco, that's how Youde addressed him, again on the Pan Am flight to Tokyo from Honolulu. The plane was a propeller plane and had only a few passengers. Dr. Francesco was so glad to see the Japanese-speaking Youde that he changed his original itinerary, which was to leave for the Philippines the next day, and decided to tour Tokyo with Youde instead. Youde booked rooms in a Japanese style hotel in Ueno and gave Dr. Francesco a guided tour: Ginza, Shinjuku, Yurakkucho, Asakusa, Kanda, even Yoshiwara. Everyday, Dr. Francesco exclaimed, "I am a lucky man" and he was one satisfied customer when he departed for home.

There was nothing of a suspicious nature in their activities. They were too busy sight-seeing to talk politics. Their conversations were bright and happy, full of laughter and friendship, no room for boring political topics. Consequently, even though Youde knew Dr. Francesco was of good character, he did not know anything about Dr. Francesco's political beliefs. There was one worrisome incident, however. At one point, when the big Red-hunter Senator McCarthy appeared on the TV screen, Dr. Francesco said, "He is mistaken." and laughed loudly.

Suppose Dr. Francesco was a Communist? Then what? These intelligence people are suspicious about little or nothing to start with; it is probably of no use to try to explain it away.

Wang asked, "What did you do in Tokyo?"

"We saw sights."

"Where did you go and what did you see? Do you remember?"

"I think so."

"Write them all down for us."

T'ien pushed the paper over to Youde. Youde put down ten or so famous place names and gave it back.

Wang stood up and in a loud voice and berated unsparingly.

"Don't take us for fools. There are twenty-four hours to a day. Write down, in order, the places you went to. Begin from the time you arrived till you left Tokyo. And, be truthful."

Youde started from noon of Aug.27,1954 when the plane arrived at Haneda Airport. The arrival scene was rather dramatic. As soon as the plane touched down, a red carpet was rolled out from the plane toward the waiting room. At the other end stood several girls, dressed in Japanese kimonos and carrying flowers in their hands. Youde remembered spotting a 'Santori' banner among a sea of flags and thinking that they must be welcoming some VIP. But among the ten or so passengers, no VIP-like person existed. Later, Youde learned that the welcome was for the two professional wrestlers, one of them by the name of Newman whom Francesco had suspected of being a smuggler. Youde and Dr. Francesco had a good laugh at the waiting room about that. The wrestling champion, Rikidosan, was among the welcoming party also.

Youde had to detail, in time sequence, the time they left the airport, when they arrived at the hotel in Ueno, when and where they took their dinners, where they took their walk and how they spent the evening and what time they went to bed.

When a person is starting his fourth day without sleep, his brain intermittently falls into a gray world for a second or two at a time. Driving such a brain to its limits, Youde filled in the 24 x 4 hours with appropriate activities though he had no confidence that they were all accurate. He was exhausted when he put down his pen.

Wang was perusing a document. A moment of silence prevailed. All of a sudden, Youde heard a voice from inside his head, "There are limits to my tolerance. Fight back."

When Wang raised his head from the reading, Youde, without missing a beat, said in a somewhat elevated voice, "Mr. Wang."

"Yes."

"I am not a member of the Communist Party. Therefore, I did not receive any directives from the Communist Party. If Francesco were the person to pass on to me the directives, he would have disappeared as soon as he did so. Why would he spend four days with me? Furthermore, suppose I did return with the directives, I should have gone into hiding right away. Why would I spend a leisurely month at home to await the arrest? Isn't it because I have nothing to be afraid of?"

Wang looked at Youde with a startled expression.

Youde's refutation was perhaps rather common in other countries, but under the reign of white terror, this kind of argument carried a high degree of risk. It also seldom paid off. If the refutation was not well argued, it could result in a heavier sentence, the act of refutation taken as a lack of remorse. If the argument was well reasoned, it could anger the opposing party. After all, 'shame turning into anger' is a known personality trait of the Chinese people.

"That's for us to decide." Wang frowned.

Yet it might have been the success of the counter attack, or maybe that they decided to wait for investigations from Tokyo or the Phillipines, but Wang cut short the talk about new directives.

## 26. Su's Violence

T'ien went to open the door and returned leaving the door ajar. The room had been locked from inside the whole time since Youde was brought in. Could it be that they now realized that Youde was but a small fry and decided to relax the security? Or, was it because they knew the suspect was too weak from days and nights of questioning to escape? Or, maybe, merely because they couldn't stand the tobacco smoke anymore and opened the door for fresh air? Whatever the reason, the open door rid the room of the appearance of a secret chamber and the atmosphere in the room lightened somewhat.

Alas, it was short-lived. Soon, five men swaggered into the room and again the door was closed.

Wang brought up 'Mao-wen-chi' again.

"About the book 'Mao-wen-chi' at your house, who brought it there? Can you remember now?"

"The book was never in my house." Youde denied it for the hundredth time.

"We are certain that it was there. A fact is a fact, no matter how much you deny it."

"If it were there, I am sure I would have noticed it, but I have

no memory of it at all."

Suddenly a sharp voice sounded above Youde's head, "Bastard!"

Youde looked up. With his blurry eyes, he saw Fat Su's fleshy, red face.

"This one is not going to talk unless we show him some pain. Hey, Wang, No use asking him any more. Leave it to me."

Fat Su grabbed Youde by his shirtfront and picked him up from the chair. Youde felt his body float like a balloon.

"All right, Tsai, since you seem to prefer penalty drinks to the celebratory ones, we will just have to take you downstairs and let you have plenty of that."

T'ien said, as if comforting a young child, "You will suffer a lot downstairs. It's going to end up the same anyway, you are better off telling us now."

Fat Su tightened his hold further and barked, "Who brought the book to you? Are you going to tell us?"

"On the subject of 'Mao-wen-chi', I don't have any more to say."

"Bastard!" Cursing aloud, Fat Su pushed Youde away.

His numbed legs and feet already too weak to support his weight, the push propelled Youde's body to the floor, overturning the chair as he went down. Sparks shot up inside his blood-shot eyes.

Fat Su turned to give the order. "Take this one downstairs."

Two men in Sun Yet-sen suits immediately approached. They each took Youde's wrist and pulled him up from the floor. Maybe the sudden jerk had injured the muscles, but Youde was not able to

stand. The two men dragged Youde toward the door.

To believe Ho's words – there will be no torture – was to engage in wishful thinking, after all.

"Wait!"

Just as they were about to cross the threshold, came General Hu's voice.

"Bring him back. I'll give it another try."

Even though he knew this could be just a temporary relief, Youde felt a sense of being rescued. The normally impatient voice of General Hu's sounded rather kind.

'No matter what, I don't want to be taken to the torture room', Youde wished.

## 27. Compromise

General Hu came over and whispered.

"Trust me. I would not make it bad for you."

Youde, hanging onto the two men in Sun Yat-sen suits, returned to his seat. Fat Su sat down a short distance away, propped his shoed feet on the desk and started to smoke. General Hu took Wang's place across from Youde. T'ien remained the scribe.

General Hu said, "All right. We have concrete evidence with regard to 'Mao-wen-chi'. It's no use for you to go on denying it."

What could it be, the so called concrete evidence?

"Like you forgot to mention 'A Reader in Materialist Dialectics' we can treat the matter of 'Mao-wen-chi' the same way – We

would not put down that you had evaded that on purpose."

General Hu seemed to be begging Youde to understand his good intentions. 'Was General Hu friend or foe?' Youde could not be certain any more. The so-called concrete evidence must be Yu-kun's testament. Youde could no longer evade it. Yu-kun must have realized that the possession of 'A Reader in Materialist Dialectics' alone was not enough to convince the authorities that Youde was a Communist, so he added 'Mao-wen-chi' to the story. The authorities take everything a Self-Renewal person says as evidence.

Whether with good will or malice, General Hu began the questioning.

"In your house, wasn't there a book with a missing cover?"

"Several."

In the era right after the war, many books were printed without covers. Youde himself had bound quite a few books with plain, thick paper for covers.

"Wasn't 'Mao-wen-chi' one of them?"

"I don't know."

"It's important. You must recall."

Alas, the mind which was instructed to recall kept falling into ever lengthening periods of gray with ever shortening intervals in between.

"I don't know ... I don't know ..."

"So, you are not saying it wasn't one of them?"

"....."

"Maybe it was there. Is it possible that because you did not read it, you had little impression of it?"



"No. I absolutely did not read the book."

"Well, maybe somebody brought it over, already in white paper cover?"

"If I had it, it must have happened the way you described."

"Suppose somebody brought it to you. Who could he be?"

"Maybe Yu-kun."

"Not possible." General Hu disputed instantly.

Youde noted: Just as I reasoned, Yu-kun must have testified that he saw the book. If Yu-kun had said that he himself had brought the book to Youde, General Hu would not be pursuing the identity of the book bearer with such intensity.

Suppose at this juncture, in his groggy state of mind, Youde had irresponsibly offered somebody else's name. That person, suspected of attempting to recruit Youde, would no doubt be arrested and taken into investigation. Even if Youde had named a person already in jail, this could cause the person to be subjected to further investigation and face untold troubles for having covered up some facts.

'A dead person has no mouth,' the proverb says.

"It could have been Chou Shen-yuan," Youde replied.

"O.K. Other possibilities?"

"Can't think of anybody else."

"How about Yeh Chin-kuei?"

"Yeh never visited my place in Taipei. It had to be either Yu-kun or Shen-yuan."

"All right. But that's odd. You are a person who does a lot of reading. You had to be curious about what Chou Shen-yuan brought to you. Didn't you at least flip through it?"

"I don't have any memory about the book."

Back to the futile back-and-forth again.

"So, you mean, when Chou brought you a book, you did not even ask what it was or take a look at it?"

"No. I do not have any memory about it. Maybe he came when I was out."

"Hum. He came when you were not home and left the book there. Is this your story?"

"....."

"But, isn't it strange that he would leave such an important book without saying something to you?"

"I wouldn't know."

"When you saw him again at school, didn't he mention the book to you?"

"Maybe we didn't have an opportunity to see each other again after that, because he became a fugitive soon after."

"What happened to the book after that?"

"I don't know."

"Did it remain in your bookcase?"

"No. The book was not there."

"The book would not disappear by itself."

"Chou could have taken it back."

"So he took it back during his flight from authority?"

"I don't know. If it was after he was in flight, I think I would have remembered. It had to be before he went into hiding."

"Why did he take back the book?"

"Must be because I did not respond."

"So he just took it back without a word."

"Yes. He never mentioned the book. It's possible that he tried to put his possessions in order before taking flight."

"We are supposed to think that he gave up recruiting you because he was rushed into flight."

"Yes. I think that might be what happened."

General Hu gave a lot of affirmative 'um's' today, quite different from the last round. In places, he even seemed to match Youde's steps. 'Did he harbor good or ill will towards me?' Youde was not certain.

In any case, the endless questioning about 'Mao-wen-chi' seemed to have reached a point of compromise.

## 28. Long Whiskers

Out of Yu-kun's fabrication, yet another fabrication was born -- the investigative report was placed in front of Youde. Reluctant as he was, Youde had to put down his thumb print.

Youde looked steadily into General Hu's eyes and said, "May I have a word?"

"What is it?"

"I had many associations with many Communists, so I don't blame you for suspecting me to be one. But, taking a different angle, isn't it possible that because I was strongly anti-Communist in my thinking that I was not absorbed into the Communist clique, despite being surrounded by them? I should have been commended for it, but instead I am being punished. This is unexpected."

General Hu did not 'Um' this time, but he did not refute either.

"It's not that I don't understand your complaint, but I would be laughed at if I included that kind of argument in the report. We are not lawyers after all. Let's wrap it up. Put your thumb print down."

With some reservation, Youde pressed his thumb print down as told.

General Hu offered cigarettes to Youde and then left the room with T'ien in tow. The others had already left the room, except for the two men in Sun Yat-sen suits. The two helped Youde to the sofa. On the coffee table still sat the bundle from home that Ho had brought. Youde untied the bundle and found a hand towel. As he took out the towel and was about to wipe his brow, one of the Sun Yat-sen suits ordered him to hand over the towel. Youde handed over the towel and took out a set of underwear. His body was sticky with grease and sweat, more accurately, sweat mixed with body oil, not in a condition to get into a clean set of underwear without toweling off first. In a short time, the Sun Yat-sen suit returned with the towel, freshly wrung out in cold water.

Youde put the towel to his face immediately. It felt cool and pleasant. Great help in dissipating the body heat! His eyelids could use the wet towel the most because his eyeballs were on fire. For several minutes, Youde could not bear to remove the towel from his eyelids. He forgot all about toweling off his body. As he was pressing the towel down on his face, his hands brushed against his whiskers. Youde had only scant facial hair, save for the mustache and a stringy goatee. He could easily go without shaving for two or three days.

'How many days has it been?' Youde measured the whiskers

with his fingertips. Longer than the three-day whiskers. 'It must have been at least four days then. This means that for four or five days straight, I have tackled the marathon-like interrogation by seven or eight inquisitors, who worked in relay.' Feeling the length of whiskers on his fingertips, Youde felt sorry for himself. 'If my mother were to learn about this, she would be in such sorrow!'

Somebody opened the door and said, "Oops!" The Sun Yat-sen suit whispered something about meeting. 'They must be holding a meeting to come to a conclusion about my investigation, just like they have done many times before to discuss the various strategies during the interrogation. There is nothing else to do but to leave it to fate and wait for the meeting to end. One more thing, I must quickly cool off my head and make it regain some normalcy before facing their next move.'

The towel was the only thing he could depend on.

## 29. Ho's True Nature

Youde was awakened by somebody shaking him by the shoulders. He had fallen asleep. Hurriedly, he removed the towel from his eyes. Ho's face came into view. The moisture from the towel had mostly evaporated; the towel felt somewhat warm to the touch now. Ho took the towel from Youde, handed it over to the Sun Yat-sen suit. Seeing Ho, Youde felt at ease.

"I am impressed by your stamina," Ho said as he sat down next to Youde.

"You've got physical endurance. Moreover, you were clear

headed from beginning to end. Quite remarkable."

"Is it over?"

Since it was Ho, Youde felt he could ask freely.

"Not entirely. They are in a meeting now. It should end soon "

"What's going to happen to me?"

Ho drew a long one on his cigarette and said matter-of-factly, "You will probably be sent to Taipei."

"What?"

"You will be sent to a higher level intelligence agency and they will re-investigate you all over again."

One more fatigue -interrogation, an even harsher one!

"How did it turn out this way?"

"Because the investigation here is stuck in a rut."

The Sun Yat-sen suit brought back a freshly wrung damp towel. Youde had no time for damp towels now.

"Isn't the investigation detailed and thorough enough?"

"No. The important points are not matching up. Even the most crucial point was not nailed down."

"What's that?"

"The person who tried to recruit you. Without knowing this fact, the matter cannot end."

"Aside from the question of recruiting, the report should have said that I thought Chou Shen-yuan probably had brought the book 'Mao-wen-chi' to my house."

"But that's not very credible."

"....."

"Even General Hu does not have much confidence in that story."

Ho suddenly clammed up, as if regretting something he had said unnecessarily. He leaned over slightly and said, "The truth is, it's best for you to solve the whole matter right here. I can be of help somehow, and General Hu is rather sympathetic toward you. Rather rare, you know. I, for one, can not bear to see you sent to Taipei."

"What should I do?"

"There is a way."

Ho slid close to Youde and whispered.

"I will take the responsibility to do something about it, so just tell me, tell me the truth about the book."

"What do you mean?"

"The name of the person who handed you the 'Mao-wen-chi.'"

Youde couldn't believe his ears. He repeated Ho's words in his head. 'The name of the person who handed you the Mao-wen-chi.'

Ho was holding his breath waiting for the answer. All of a sudden, Youde understood it all.

Youde said decidedly, "The truth is that there wasn't such a person. You couldn't have found Mao-wen-chi in my bookcase even if you had searched it."

Ho feigned surprise, "Is that true?"

"Yes. I can swear."

Ten seconds of hard-to-bear silence passed.

"Even to me, you will not give out the name. Too bad. I just wanted to help you."

"....."

Another long pause.

At last, Ho said, 'Huh!' and stood up. Youde tried to get up

too but his knees buckled and he fell back into the sofa.

Ho did not look back. His mission was now completed. It seemed that his assignment was to ask that last question.

Youde stole glances at Ho's profile; he was lighting a cigarette. There wasn't a speck of the kind 'fellow sweet potato' to be found. Instead, his face was as cruel and unfeeling as that of Fat Su's when Su pushed Youde away with full force. No, Ho's face appeared even more fearsome than Su's.

Ho turned his back to Youde and walked out the room without a word, slamming the door behind him. He must be heading to the meeting to submit his latest report.

Youde leaned back on the sofa and closed his eyes. Tears flowed into his eyes, unstoppable tears, which he wiped with the towel vigorously.

The tears were not tears of lament for his fate to be sent to Taipei, but rather, they were tears of human indignation. The indignant tears born of his rights trampled and his humanity further insulted.

### **30. Toward An Unknown World**

Youde wiped his body with the tear-soaked hand towel, changed into a set of fresh underwear and sat back down in the sofa. He was rolling and exercising his stiffened neck when General Hu came into the room alone. Hu peered into Youde's eyes and said, "You still have strength left." These veterans of fatigue interrogation seemed to judge a person's condition by look-

ing into the eyes.

"We lost to your tenacity." General Hu grinned sardonically. Youde looked up and saw an unshaven General Hu with swollen eyes. General Hu's tone of voice, accompanied by a thin smile, was unexpectedly gentle. In front of others, he spoke bluntly, but now, just between the two of them, his speech was calm and comforting. 'Probably a more humane person than Ho,' Youde for the first time felt something akin to friendliness toward General Hu.

"What is going to happen to me?" Youde made up his mind and asked.

"Well ..." General Hu started, then interrupted himself.

In the corner of his eyes, Youde saw Captain Tao enter the room with a few of his men. Tao is here to check on his prisoner no doubt. Youde decided to close his eyes and ignore them. There's no more to say, even less reason to greet them. Captain Tao whispered in General Hu's ear and left the room.

General Hu ordered the two Sun Yat-sen suits, "Take this man downstairs."

'Downstairs? The torture room?' Youde shrank.

Perhaps sensing Youde's trepidation, General Hu again grinned sardonically and said, "Go downstairs and have a good rest."

The two Sun Yat-sen suits approached and lent their hands to Youde who stood up warily and walked toward the door. Youde was capable of walking by his own power but, nevertheless, was held by the wrists by the two men. General Hu followed with Youde's bundle of clothes.

They walked along a long hallway before descending the

steps. Here and there hung naked light bulbs. Nobody was in sight. The quietude of a deep night was broken only by the eerie echoes of the footsteps. They passed in front of a room marked by a plaque 'Interrogation Room.' Youde assumed: That must be the notorious torture room.

Walking returned Youde's feet to their normal condition. He no longer needed the help of the Sun Yat-sen suits.

Facing the end of the hallway, stood a ceiling-high, black-painted iron gate, outside of which a man working the graveyard shift was sitting at the desk. After completing the admissions procedures, the man at the desk unlocked the gate and let the party in. They walked some more, made a 90 degree turn then stopped at another iron gate. This time, at one about a man's height. The guard who was expecting them pulled the gate open, making a screeching sound.

Having completed their mission, the Sun Yat-sen suits turned their heels around and left.

General Hu handed the bundle to Youde and said, "You may be sent to Taipei." His answer to Youde's earlier question. "For now, just take it easy and have yourself a good rest."

"Thank you for your troubles," Youde bowed and thanked him.

"Um." General Hu nodded, gently patted Youde's shoulder, turned around and left.

Watching General Hu's receding figure from the back, Youde, for a moment, felt dizzy and almost fell down.

"Come on. Get in." The guard urged.

Youde held the bundle closer to his chest and passed through

the iron gate, setting foot into a new, unknown world.

The guard took out a paper bag from the large desk and said, "Put everything you have in your pockets in this bag."

A wallet and a handkerchief were the only items. The wallet went into the bag while the handkerchief was handed back to Youde.

"Watch?"

"I don't have one."

"Take off your belt."

Into the bag went the belt. From this point on, whenever standing, Youde had to hold on to his pants with one hand. A realization that he was a prisoner hit him in the head.

On the wall behind the guard's station hung an electric clock, an item Youde hadn't seen for a while. The time was a little past twelve thirty. The place was dimly lit and smelled dank. Youde could hear snoring and rustling sounds. Some inmates got out of bed and were looking with curiosity. Youde was dizzy again, more severe than last time.

A different guard who carried a bunch of keys opened the middle prison cell and gestured Youde to enter. Youde stooped past the barely meter-high doorway into a room with wooden floors. The room was oddly shaped with narrow front and widening back. One prior guest was already there, sleeping, so soundly that he was not disturbed by Youde's presence. Next to the sleeping person, was spread a thin blanket. 'A place for me,' Youde gathered.

Without bothering to take out his pillow from the bundle, Youde dropped to the pallet. Right away a black curtain came

down in front of his eyes. There was nothing, unknown world or not.

### 31. A Lad in the Same Cell

As he was coming out of deep slumber, voices of people talking started to intrude, but Youde continued to sleep while the voices streamed into his ears.

The pallet is hard. 'I am not sleeping on tatami but on a board floor. The board floor of a prison cell!' Youde was abruptly brought back to reality. He realized that the voices were from the inmates in the adjoining cells. He opened his eyes. The innocent face of a teenage boy hovered above.

Hurriedly, Youde tried to sit up. But his body, perhaps still craving repose, would not move with agility.

"Ojisan, so you are finally awake." The teenager smiled.

'So this young man is the early guest I noticed last night.' Youde's legs felt extremely tired, his thighs and calves about to fall off the bones. Forsaking sitting up, Youde closed his eyes again, his hand unconsciously pounded his thighs.

"What time is it?"

"Half past two in the afternoon," the teenager answered and moved over to Youde's side then started to massage Youde's thighs.

"Thanks. It feels very good."

Again, Youde drifted off to sleep.

"Ojisan, are you going to eat your food?" The teenager's voice floated into Youde's dreamy consciousness. Too tired, Youde shook

his head as a reply.

The teenager must have continued on with the massage, because when Youde woke up two hours later, his body felt much rested. Youde sat up and took the still massaging hands of the teenager and said his thanks. "Thank you. Thanks to you I am completely revived."

The teenager couldn't hide his joy, as if he had brought back an unconscious man.

"Ojisan, I am so glad that you are all right. You moaned a lot."

"I am sorry. But your massage really put me back in shape. Thank you again."

The clock was in plain view from Youde's cell. It said four thirty.

"What's your name?" Youde asked the teenager.

"Ah-fu. Li Ah-fu."

Youde stood up, stretched, and exercised a bit by swaying his upper body back and forth.

"How old are you?"

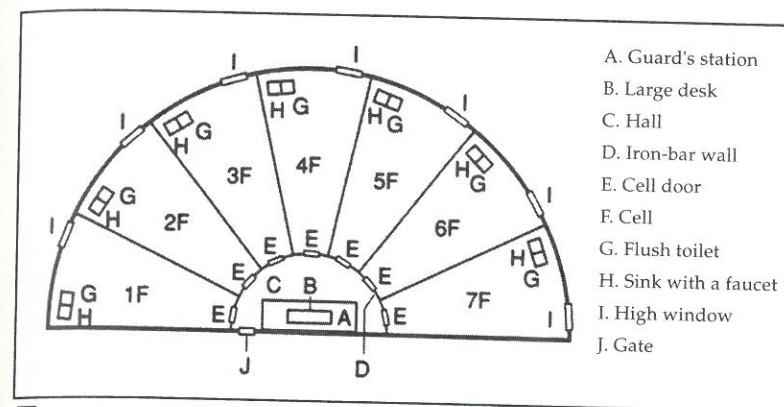
"Twenty."

That was a little surprising. The innocent, boyish face appeared to be no more than fifteen or sixteen years old. His frame was small too.

"I am Tsai Youde. I am ten years older than you."

Ordinarily, one does not address somebody reverentially who is only ten years older as Ojisan or literally 'uncle.' But, maybe it was not so strange that the lad addressed the unshaven and long-haired Youde as Ojisan.

Youde met the guard's eyes who was sitting at the desk by the



■ Diagram of chia-yi Police prison

guard's station; a different guard from last night's. Youde nodded and the guard returned the nod.

This place was a temporary holding facility for unsentenced suspects. The fan-shaped space was divided into seven prison cells with the raised guard's station occupying the fan's pivot. From that vantage point, the guard was able to watch all seven cells simultaneously. Each cell measured about 1.5 meters in front and three times that deep. Because the cells fanned out, their entrances lay in an arc. Youde's cell was bright, had good ventilation and one could see the sky through the window high up on the back wall. In one back corner, there was a flush toilet and a sink with a faucet. The cell was big enough for twelve or thirteen people, lying head to toe.

Youde paced around the cell. An untouched food tray was still by the barred entrance. Youde offered the food to Ah-fu who shook his head. He turned on the faucet and guzzled thirstily. Not yet any sign of a bowel movement, a matter that bothered Youde.

This would make it five days without a bowel movement, a first in his entire life.

"Cut the voices down!" The guard admonished. The people in the cell immediately to the right were talking about gambling in a loud voice.

On the barred entrance of each cell hung a wooden frame in which the inmates' name plates were inserted. Because the entrances were in an arc, even when one could not read the names of the very next cell, he was able to read the names on the cells further down. The cell down further from the next cell had two name plates: 'Gambling xxx' and 'Burglary xxx.' The name on the very end on the left caught Youde's attention – 'Sedition Chuang Shui-ch'ing.' A man accused of sedition, in other words, a political prisoner. Another unfortunate soul snared by the Sedition Law. His sentence would not compare with that of the gamblers and burglars. 'What kind of person is he?' Youde wondered. Youde looked inside the cell but the inmate was not at the entrance to be seen.

Youde's cell also carried nameplates that faced outside. Youde imagined that one of them must say 'Sedition Tsai Youde' but what about the other, Ah-fu's? Thinking it must be something trivial, Youde decided to inquire.

"Ah-fu. I am here as a political prisoner. What are you in for?"

"Killing."

"What?"

Ah-fu stuck out two fingers in front of a startled Youde.

"Two?" Youde was too dumbfounded to continue.

"Ya," Ah-fu nodded, unembarrassed. His face was so utterly

guileless and otherworldly that Youde was not able to dislike him.

## 32. A Killer

Another guard entered, carrying in each hand a grass-woven bag.

"Meal time!" somebody said, followed by noises of people getting up.

The clock on the wall pointed at five. The sun was still shining high outside – an early supper. Cell by cell, the guard first checked the names then distributed the aluminum food boxes along with the disposable chopsticks. After fifteen or sixteen hours of continuous sleep, reinforced by the effect of Ah-fu's massage, Youde felt hungry.

Ah-fu right away opened the aluminum lid and started to eat. Youde too opened the lid. Atop the white rice there were some green vegetables, sun-dried turnip strips and a piece of braised fish. 'How's my tongue?' Gingerly Youde put a lump of rice into his mouth. Nothing. The red blisters had gone away. First food in four days. Youde chewed each mouthful as much as possible, lest the enforced fast have weakened his digestive system. Frankly, milk would have been the food of choice, but he was not exactly in a position to order it. Next, he put some vegetables into his mouth. No taste at all. 'Could I have lost the sense of taste due to drastic drop of salt in my body?' Youde wondered. The braised fish had some flavor. Youde ate the fish in little bites, chewing each mouthful methodically. The sun-dried turnip strips were too tough to