

MAN'S  
FATE

MALRAUX



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# MAN'S FATE

(LA CONDITION HUMAINE)

BY *Fick*  
ANDRÉ MALRAUX *M29mf*

TRANSLATED BY

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# Principal Characters

CH'EN TA ERH, a Chinese terrorist.

KYO GISORS, half French and half Japanese, one of the organizers of the Shanghai insurrection.

OLD GISORS, Kyo's father, one-time Professor of Sociology at the University of Peking.

MAY GISORS, Kyo's wife.

BARON DE CLAPPIQUE, a Frenchman, a dealer in antiques, opium and smuggled wares.

KATOV, a Russian, one of the organizers of the insurrection.

HEMMELRICH, a German, a phonograph-dealer.

LU YU HSÜAN, his partner.

KAMA, a Japanese painter, Old Gisors' brother-in-law.

FERRAL, President of the French Chamber of Commerce and head of the Franco-Asiatic Consortium.

VALÉRIE, Ferral's mistress.

MARTIAL, Chief of the Shanghai Police.

KÖNIG, Chief of Chiang Kai-shek's Police.

VOLOGIN } Communist officials at Hankow.  
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March 21, 1927

*Twelve-thirty midnight*

**S**HOULD he try to raise the mosquito-netting? Or should he strike through it? Ch'en was torn by anguish: he was sure of himself, yet at the moment he could feel nothing but bewilderment—his eyes riveted to the mass of white gauze that hung from the ceiling over a body less visible than a shadow, and from which emerged only that foot half-turned in sleep, yet living—human flesh.

The only light came from the neighboring building—a great rectangle of wan electric light cut by window-bars, one of which streaked the bed just below the foot as if to stress its solidity and life.

Four or five klaxons screamed at once. Was he discovered?

Oh, what a relief to fight, to fight enemies who defend themselves, enemies who are awake!

The wave of uproar subsided: some traffic jam (there were still traffic jams out there in the world of men—). He found himself again facing the great soft smudge of gauze and the rectangle of light, both motionless in this night in which time no longer existed.

He repeated to himself that this man must die—stupidly, for he knew that he would kill him. Whether he was caught or not, executed or not, did not matter. Nothing existed but this foot, this man whom he must strike without letting him defend himself—for if he defended himself, he would cry out.

Ch'en was becoming aware, with a revulsion verging on nausea, that he stood here, not as a fighter, but as a sacrificial priest. He was serving the gods of his choice; but beneath his sacrifice to the Revolution lay a world of depths beside which this night of crushing anguish was bright as day. "To assassinate is not only to kill, alas. . ." In his pockets, his fumbling right hand clutched a folded razor, his left a short dagger. He thrust them as deeply as possible, as though the night did not suffice to hide his actions. The razor was surer, but Ch'en felt that he could never use it; the dagger disgusted him less. He let go the razor, the back of which pressed against his clenched fingers; the dagger was naked in his pocket. As he passed it over to his right hand, his left hand dropped against the wool of his sweater and remained glued to it. He raised his right arm slightly, petrified by the continued silence that surrounded him, as though he expected some unseen thing to topple over. But no—nothing happened: it was still up to him to act.

That foot lived like a sleeping animal. Was it attached to a body? "Am I going mad?" He had to see that body—see it, see that head. In order to do that—enter the area of light, let his squat shadow fall upon the bed.

What was the resistance of flesh? Convulsively, Ch'en pressed the point of the dagger into his left arm. The pain (he was no longer aware that it was his own arm), the certainty of torture if the sleeper were to awaken, released him for an instant: torture was better than this atmosphere of madness. He drew close. Yes, this was the man he had seen, two hours before, in broad daylight. The foot, which nearly touched Ch'en's trousers, suddenly turned like a key, then turned back to its position in the silent night. Perhaps the sleeper felt his presence, but not enough to wake up. . . . Ch'en shuddered: an

insect was running over his skin! No!—blood trickling down his arm. And still that seasick feeling.

One single motion, and the man would be dead. To kill him was nothing: touching him was the impossible. And it was imperative to stab with precision.

The sleeper, lying on his back in the European-style bed, was wearing only a pair of short drawers, but his ribs were not visible under the full flesh. Ch'en had to take the nipples as gauging points. He tried holding the dagger with the blade up. But the left breast was the one away from him: he would have to strike at arm's length through the mosquito-netting. He changed the position of the dagger: blade down. To touch this motionless body was as difficult as to stab a corpse, perhaps for the same reason. As if called forth by this notion of a corpse, a grating sound suddenly issued from the man's throat. Ch'en could no longer even draw back, for his legs and arms had gone completely limp. But the rattle became regular: the man was not dying, he was snoring. He again became living, vulnerable; and at the same time, Ch'en felt himself ridiculed. The body turned gently towards the right. Was he going to wake up now? With a blow that would have split a plank Ch'en struck through the gauze. Sensitive to the very tip of the blade, he felt the body rebound towards him, flung up by the springs of the bed. He stiffened his arm furiously to hold it down: like severed halves drawn to each other, the legs sprang together towards the chest; then they jerked out, straight and stiff. Ch'en should have struck again—but how was he to withdraw the dagger? The body, still on its side, was unstable, and instead of being reassured by the convulsion which had just shaken it, Ch'en had the impression of pinning it down to the bed with this short blade on which his whole weight rested.

Although Ch'en did not believe in spirits, he was paralyzed, unable to turn round. He jumped: mewing! Half relieved, he dared to look: it was an alley-cat. Its eyes riveted on him, it stalked through the window on noiseless paws. As the shadow advanced, an uncontrollable rage shook Ch'en—not against the creature itself, but against its presence. Nothing living must venture into the wild region where he was thrown: whatever had seen him hold this dagger prevented him from returning to the world of men. He opened the razor, took a step forward: the creature fled by way of the balcony. Ch'en pursued it . . . He found himself suddenly facing Shanghai.

In his anguish the night seemed to whirl like an enormous smoke-cloud shot with sparks; slowly it settled into immobility, as his breathing grew less violent in the cooler outside air. Between the tattered clouds, the stars resumed their endless course. A siren moaned, and then became lost in the poignant serenity. Below, far down, the midnight lights, reflected through a yellow mist by the wet macadam, by the pale streaks of rails, shimmered with the life of men who do not kill. Those were millions of lives, and all now rejected his; but what was their wretched condemnation beside death, which was withdrawing from him, which seemed to flow away from his body in long draughts, like the other's blood? All that expanse of darkness, now motionless, now quivering with sparks, was life, like the river, like the invisible sea in the distance—the sea. . . .

Breathing at last to the very depth of his lungs, he seemed to be returning to that life with infinite gratitude—ready to weep, as much upset as he had been a few moments before. “I must get away. . . .” He remained, watching the stir of the cars, of the passers-by running

beneath him in the lighted street, as a blind man who has recovered his sight looks, as a starved man eats. Avidly, with an unquenchable thirst for life, he would have liked to touch those bodies. A siren filled the whole horizon, beyond the river: the relief of the night workers, at the arsenal. Stupid workers, coming to manufacture the fire-arms destined to kill those who were fighting for them! Would this illuminated city remain possessed like a field of battle, its millions hired for death, like a herd of cattle, to the war-lords and to Western commerce? His act of murder was equal to incalculable hours of work in the arsenals of China. The insurrection which would give Shanghai over to the revolutionary troops was imminent. Yet the insurrectionists did not possess two hundred guns. Their first act was to be the disarming of the police for the purpose of arming their own troops. But if they obtained the guns (almost three hundred) which this go-between, the dead man, had negotiated to sell to the government, they doubled their chances of success. In the last ten minutes, however, Ch'en had not even given it a thought.

And he had not yet taken the paper for which he had killed this man. He went back into the room, as he would have returned to a prison. The clothes were hanging at the foot of the bed, under the mosquito-netting. He searched the pockets. A handkerchief, cigarettes . . . No wallet. The room remained the same: the mosquito-net, the blank walls, the clear rectangle of light; murder changes nothing. . . . He slipped his hand under the pillow, shutting his eyes. He felt the wallet, very small, like a purse. In shame or horror—for the light weight of the head through the pillow was even more disturbing—he opened his eyes: no blood on the bolster, and the man did not look at all dead. Would he have to kill him again

then? But already his glance, encountering the white eyes, the blood on the sheets, reassured him. To ransack the wallet he withdrew towards the light, which came from a restaurant filled with gamblers. He found the document, kept the wallet, crossed the room almost on the run, locked the door with a double turn, put the key in his pocket. At the end of the hotel corridor—he made an effort to slow his pace—no lift. Should he ring? He walked down. On the floor below, that of the dance-hall, the bar and the billiard-room, ten or more persons were waiting for the lift which was just stopping. He followed them in. “The dancing-girl in red is damned good-looking!” said the man next to him in English, a slightly drunk Burman or Siamese. Ch'en had the simultaneous impulse to hit him in the face to make him stop, and to hug him because he was alive. Instead of answering he mumbled incoherently; the other tapped him on the shoulder with a knowing air. “He thinks I’m drunk too. . . .” But the man started to open his mouth again. “I don’t know any foreign languages,” said Ch'en in Pekingese. The other kept silent and, intrigued, looked at this young man who had no collar, but who was wearing a sweater of fine wool. Ch'en was facing the mirror in the lift. The murderer left no trace upon his face. . . . His features—more Mongolian than Chinese, sharp cheek-bones, a very flat nose but with a slight ridge, like a beak—had not changed, expressed nothing but fatigue; even to his solid shoulders, his thick good-natured lips, on which nothing unusual seemed to weigh; only his arm, sticky when he bent it, and hot. . . . The lift stopped. He went out with the group.

He bought a bottle of mineral water, and called a taxi, a closed car, in which he bathed his arm and bandaged

it with a handkerchief. The deserted rails and the puddles from the afternoon showers shone feebly. They reflected the glowing sky. Without knowing why, Ch'en looked up: how much nearer the sky had been a while back, when he had discovered the stars! He was getting farther away from it as his anguish subsided, as he returned to the world of men. . . . At the end of the street the machine-gun cars, almost as gray as the puddles, the bright streaks of bayonets carried by silent shadows: the post, the boundary of the French concession; the taxi went no farther. Ch'en showed his false passport identifying him as an electrician employed on the concession. The inspector looked at the paper casually ("What I have just done obviously doesn't show") and let him pass. Before him, at a right angle, the Avenue of the Two Republics, the limit of the Chinese city.

Isolation and silence. From here the rumbling waves carrying all the noises of the greatest city of China sounded infinitely remote, like sounds issuing from the bottom of a well—all the turmoil of war, and the last nervous agitations of a multitude that will not sleep. But it was far in the distance that men lived; here nothing remained of the world but night, to which Ch'en instinctively attuned himself as to a sudden friendship: this nocturnal, anxious world was not opposed to murder. A world from which men had disappeared, a world without end; would daylight ever return upon those crumbling tiles, upon all those narrow streets at the end of which a lantern lighted a windowless wall, a nest of telegraph wires? There was a world of murder, and it held him with a kind of warmth. No life, no presence, no nearby sound, not even the cry of the petty merchants, not even the stray dogs.

At last, a squalid shop: *Lu Yu Hsüan & Hemmelrich*,

*Phonographs*. Now to return among men. . . . He waited a few minutes without freeing himself entirely, knocked finally at a shutter. The door opened almost immediately: a shop full of records arranged with care, having vaguely the look of a poor library; the room back of the shop, large, bare, and four comrades in shirt-sleeves.

The shutting of the door caused the lamp to swing back and forth: the faces disappeared, reappeared: to the left, quite round, Lu Yu Hsüan; Hemmelrich, who looked like a boxer gone to seed, with his shaved head, broken nose, and protruding shoulders. In back, in the shadow, Katov. To the right, Kyo Gisors; in passing over his head the lamp accentuated the drooping corners of his mouth; as it swung away it displaced the shadows and his half-breed face appeared almost European. The oscillations of the lamp became shorter and shorter: Kyo's two faces reappeared by turns, less and less different from each other.

Gripped to their very stomachs by the need to question him, all looked at Ch'en with an idiotic intensity, but said nothing; he looked at the flagstones sprinkled with sunflower seeds. He could give these men the information they wanted, but he could never convey to them what he felt. The resistance of the body to the knife obsessed him—so much greater than that of his arm: but for the unexpected rebound, the weapon would not have penetrated it deeply. "I should never have thought it was so hard. . . ."

"It's done," he said.

In the room, before the body, once the spell of unconsciousness was over, he had not doubted: he had *felt* death.

He handed over the order for the delivery of the firearms. Its text was lengthy. Kyo was reading it:

"Yes, but . . ."

They were all waiting. Kyo was neither impatient nor irritated; he had not moved; his face was scarcely contracted. But all felt that he was dumbfounded by what he had just discovered. He spoke at last:

"The arms are not paid for. *Payment on delivery.*"

Ch'en felt anger fall upon him, as if he had allowed himself stupidly to be robbed. He had assured himself that the paper was the one he wanted, but had not had time to read it. For that matter, he could have done nothing about it. He drew the wallet from his pocket, gave it to Kyo: photos, receipts; no other items.

"We can manage it with men of the combat-sections, I guess," said Kyo.

"Provided we can climb aboard," answered Katov, "it'll be all right."

Silence. Their presence tore Ch'en from his terrible solitude, gently, like a plant that one pulls from the earth to which its finest roots still hold it fast. And at the same time that he was getting nearer to them, little by little, it seemed as if he were discovering them—like his sister the first time he had come back from a brothel. There was the tension of gambling-halls at the end of the night.

"Did everything go all right?" asked Katov, at last putting down the record that he had been holding all this time and advancing into the light.

Without answering, Ch'en looked at the kindly face which suggested a Russian Pierrot—little mischievous eyes and an upturned nose which even this light could not make dramatic; yet he knew what death was. He got up; he went to look at the cricket asleep in its tiny cage;

Ch'en might have his reasons for keeping quiet. The latter watched the motion of the light, which enabled him to keep from thinking: the tremulous cry of the cricket awakened by Katov's approach mingled with the last vibrations of the shadow on the faces. Always that obsession of the hardness of flesh, that desire to press his arm violently against the nearest object. Words could do nothing but disturb the familiarity with death which had established itself in his being.

"At what time did you leave the hotel?" asked Kyo.

"Twenty minutes ago."

Kyo looked at his watch: ten minutes past one.

"Good. Let's get through here, and get out."

"I want to see your father, Kyo."

"You know that IT will undoubtedly be tomorrow."

"So much the better."

They all knew what IT was: the arrival of the revolutionary troops at the last railroad stations, which was to determine the insurrection.

"So much the better," repeated Ch'en. Like all intense sensations, those of murder and of danger, as they withdrew, left him empty; he longed to recover them.

"Just the same, I want to see him."

"Go there tonight; he never sleeps before dawn."

"I shall go there about four."

Instinctively, when he felt a need to communicate his innermost feelings, Ch'en turned to old Gisors. He knew that his attitude was painful to Kyo—all the more painful in that no vanity was involved—but he could not help it: Kyo was one of the organizers of the insurrection, the Central Committee had confidence in him; so did Ch'en; but Kyo would never kill, except in battle. Katov was nearer to him—Katov who had been condemned to five years of hard labor in 1905 when, as a medical student,

he had tried to blow up the gate of the Odessa prison. And yet . . .

The Russian was eating little sugar candies, one by one, without taking his eyes off Ch'en who suddenly understood the meaning of gluttony. Now that he had killed, he had the right to crave anything he wished. The right. Even if it were childish. He held out his square hand. Katov thought he wanted to leave and shook it. Ch'en got up. It was perhaps just as well: he had nothing more to do here; Kyo was informed, it was up to him to act. As for himself, he knew what he wanted to do now. He reached the door, returned, however.

"Pass me some candy."

Katov gave him the bag. He wanted to divide the contents: no paper. He filled his cupped hand, took a mouthful, and went out.

"Can't've been so easy," said Katov.

He had been a refugee in Switzerland from 1905 to 1912, the date of his clandestine return to Russia, and he spoke French without the slightest Russian accent, but he slurred some of his vowels, as though he wanted to compensate for the necessity of articulating carefully when he spoke Chinese. As he now stood almost directly under the lamp, very little light fell on his face. Kyo preferred it so: the expression of ironic ingenuousness which the small eyes and especially the upturned nose (a sly sparrow, said Hemmelrich) gave to Katov's face, was all the more pronounced as it jarred with his essential character.

"Let's get through," said Kyo. "You have the records, Lu?"

Lu Yu Hsüan, all smiles and as if ready for a thousand little curtseys, placed the two records examined by

"Good. Are they still coming to fetch the records tonight?"

"The boats will leave tomorrow at daybreak for Hankow. . . ."

The hissing records were shipped by one boat, the records with the text by another. The latter were French or English, according to whether the mission of the region was Catholic or Protestant. The revolutionaries sometimes used real language-teaching records, sometimes records recorded by themselves.

"At daybreak," thought Kyo. "How many things before daybreak. . . ." He rose:

"We need volunteers, for the firearms. And a few Europeans, if possible."

Hemmelrich stepped up to him. The child, up there, cried out anew.

"The kid is answering you," said Hemmelrich. "Is that enough? What in hell would you do with the kid who's going to croak and the woman who is moaning up there—not too loud, so as not to disturb us? . . ."

The almost hateful voice was indeed that of the face with the broken nose, the deep-set eyes which the vertical light replaced by two black stains.

"Each one has his job," answered Kyo. "The records also are necessary. . . . Katov and I will do. Let's go and get some fellows (we'll find out on the way whether we attack tomorrow or not) and I . . ."

"They may discover the corpse at the hotel, you see," said Katov.

"Not before dawn. Ch'en locked the door. They don't make the rounds."

"P'rhaps he had made an engagement."

"At this hour? Not very likely. Whatever happens, the essential thing is to have the ship change its anchor-

returning to the warships, passed over the dismal electric bulbs at the ends of blind alleys and lanes; around them crumbling walls emerged from empty darkness, revealed with all their blemishes by that unflinching light from which a sordid eternity seemed to emanate. Hidden by those walls, half a million men: those of the spinning-mills, those who had worked sixteen hours a day since childhood, the people of ulcers, of scoliosis, of famine. The globes which protected the electric bulbs became misty, and in a few minutes the great rain of China, furious, headlong, took possession of the city.

"A good district," thought Kyo. Since he had started to prepare the insurrection, over a month ago, working from committee to committee, he had ceased to see the streets: he no longer walked in the mud, but on a map. The scratching of millions of small daily lives disappeared, crushed by another life. The concessions, the rich quarters, with their rain-washed gratings at the ends of the streets, existed now only as menaces, barriers, long prison walls without windows; these atrocious quarters, on the contrary—the ones in which the shock troops were the most numerous, were alive with the quivering of a multitude lying in wait. At the turn of a lane his eyes were suddenly flooded by the lights of a wide street; veiled by the beating rain it preserved nevertheless in his mind a horizontal perspective, for it would be necessary to attack it against rifles, machine guns that fire horizontally. After the failure of the February uprisings, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party had intrusted Kyo with the coördination of the insurrectional forces. In each of these silent streets in which the outline of the houses disappeared under the downpour that carried a smell of smoke, the number of the militants had been doubled. Kyo had asked that it be increased from

2,000 to 5,000, and the military direction had succeeded within the month. But they did not possess two hundred rifles. (And there were three hundred rifles on the *Shantung* that slept with one eye out there on the choppy river.) Kyo had organized one hundred and ninety-two combat groups of about twenty-five men each, all provided with leaders; these leaders alone were armed. . . .

They passed in front of a public garage full of old trucks transformed into buses. All the garages were "marked." The military direction had constituted a staff, the assembly of the party had elected a central committee; from the moment the insurrection broke out, it would be necessary to keep them in contact with the shock groups. Kyo had created a first liaison detachment of a hundred and twenty cyclists; at the firing of the first shots, eight groups were to occupy the garages, take possession of the autos. The leaders of these groups had already visited the garages and would have no trouble finding them. Each of the other leaders, for the last ten days, had been studying the quarter where he was to fight. How many visitors, this very day, had entered the principal buildings, asked to see a friend who was unknown there, chatted, offered tea before leaving? How many workers, in spite of the beating downpour, were repairing roofs? All positions of any value for the street-fighting had been reconnoitered; the best firing-positions marked in red on the plans, in the headquarters of the shock groups. What Kyo knew of the underground life of the insurrection helped him to guess what he did not know; something which was infinitely beyond him was coming from the great slashed wings of Chapei and Pootung, covered with factories and wretchedness, to make the enormous ganglia of the center burst; an invisible horde animated the night.

ders. . . . He read the paper he was bringing, his head lighted from below, almost glued to one of the lamps. It was a report of the military organization which was working with the railroad-workers. The reënforcements which were defending Shanghai against the revolutionaries were coming from Nanking: the railroad-workers had declared a strike; the White Guards and the soldiers of the governmental army were forcing those whom they could seize to run the military trains under penalty of death.

"One of the workers arrested caused the train he was running to be derailed," read the Chinaman. "Dead. Three other military trains were derailed yesterday, the rails having been torn up."

"Have the sabotaging generalized and note on the same reports the manner in which repairs may be made with the least delay," said Kyo.

"For every act of sabotage the White Guards shoot. . . ."

"The Committee knows it. We'll shoot too. Something else: no trains with firearms?"

"No."

"Any news about when our troops will be in Ch'êng Ch'ou?"<sup>1</sup>

"I have no midnight news yet. The delegate of the Syndicate thinks it will be tonight or tomorrow. . . ."

The insurrection would therefore begin the next day or the day following. They would have to await the instructions of the Central Committee. Kyo was thirsty. They went out.

They were now near the spot where they were to separate. Another ship's siren called three times, in jerks, then once again in a long-drawn moan. Its cry seemed to

<sup>1</sup> The last station before Shanghai.

expand in the rain-saturated night; it died out at last, like a rocket. "Could they be getting anxious aboard the *Shantung*?" Absurd. The captain was not expecting his customers before eight o'clock. They resumed their walk, their thoughts magnetized by the ship with its cases of guns, anchored out there in the cold and greenish water. It was no longer raining.

"And now to find my man," said Kyo. "I'd feel more easy, just the same, if the *Shantung* would change anchorage."

Their ways were no longer the same; they fixed a meeting, and separated. Katov was going to get the men.

Kyo finally reached the grilled gate of the concessions. Two Annamite sharpshooters and a colonial sergeant came to examine his papers: he had his French passport. To tempt the post, a Chinese merchant had hung little cakes on the barbs of the wires. ("A good idea for poisoning a post, later on," thought Kyo.) The sergeant gave him back his passport. He soon found a taxi and gave the driver the address of the *Black Cat*.

The car, which the chauffeur drove at full speed, met a few patrols of European volunteers. "The troops of eight nations are on guard here," said the newspapers. This did not matter much: it did not enter into the plans of the Kuomintang to attack the concessions. Deserted boulevards, indistinct figures of petty merchants whose shops consisted of a pair of scales on their shoulders. . . . The car stopped at the entrance to a tiny garden lighted by the luminous sign of the *Black Cat*. In passing by the cloak-room, Kyo noticed the hour: two o'clock in the morning. "Fortunately one can wear what one pleases here." Under his dark-gray sport-jacket of rough material he was wearing a pull-over.

The jazz-orchestra had reached the point of ex-

a pell-mell of backs and bosoms in a mass of silky garments, a Punchinello, thin and humpless, but who resembled his voice, was making a buffoonish speech to a Russian girl and a half-breed Filipino girl seated at his table. Standing, his elbows glued to his sides and his hands gesticulating, he spoke with all the muscles of his razor-edged face, hampered by the square of black silk which covered his right eye, injured no doubt. No matter what he wore—this evening he had on a dinner-jacket—Baron de Clappique gave the impression of being in disguise. Kyo had decided not to accost him here, to wait until he went out.

"Absolutely, my dear girl, absolutely! Chiang Kai-shek will come in here with his revolutionaries and shout—in classic style, I tell you, clas-sic! as when he takes cities: 'Dress these merchants up like monkeys, these soldiers like leopards (as when they sit down on freshly painted benches)! Like the last prince of the Liang dynasty, absolutely, my dear, let's climb on board the imperial junks, let's contemplate our subjects dressed, for our distraction, each in the color of his profession, blue, red, green, with pigtails and top-knots; not a word, my dear girl, not a word I tell you!'"

Then becoming confidential:

"The only music permitted will be Chinese bells."

"And you, what will you do in all that?"

His voice became plaintive, sobbing.

"What, my dear girl, you can't guess? I shall be the court astrologer, I shall die trying to pluck the moon out of a pond, one night when I am drunk-tonight?"

Scientific:

". . . like the poet Tu Fu, whose works *certainly* enchant your idle days—not a word, I'm sure of it! Moreover . . ."

Chinese

demned after the Odessa affair to detention in one of the less severe prisons, had voluntarily asked to accompany the wretches sent to the lead-mines, in order to instruct them. They had confidence in him, but they were still uneasy. They were afraid neither of rifles nor of machine-guns, but they were afraid of the tanks: they felt powerless against them. Even in this room to which only volunteers had come, almost all of them relatives of men who had died by torture, the tank inspired blind terror, like a supernatural monster.

"If the tanks come, don't worry, we'll be there," Katov went on.

How could he leave with such feebly reassuring words? In the afternoon he had inspected some fifteen sections, but he had not encountered fear. These men were not less brave than the others, merely more precise. He knew he would not be able to dispel their fear, that save for the specialists under his own command the revolutionary formations would run before the tanks. It was probable that the tanks would be unable to leave the front; but if they reached the city, it would be impossible to stop them all with ditches, in these quarters where there was such a criss-cross of small streets.

"The tanks will absolutely not leave the front," he said.

"How are we to attach the grenades?" asked the youngest Chinaman.

Katov showed him. The atmosphere became a little less heavy, as if this manipulation were a token of future action. Katov, very uneasy, took the opportunity to leave. Half the men would not know how to use their arms. At least he could count on those whom he had organized into combat groups charged with disarming the police. Tomorrow. But the day after tomorrow?

"Yes. The army is at Ch'êng Ch'ou. General strike at noon."

Although nothing in the shadow had changed, although the dealer drowsing in his cell had made no motion, the phosphorescent surface of all the bowls began to stir feebly: soft, black, concentric waves rose in silence. The sound of the voices was awakening the fishes. A siren, once again, became lost in the distance.

They went out, resumed their walk. The Avenue of the Two Republics again.

A taxi. The car set off at reckless speed. Katov, sitting at the left, leaned over, looked at the driver closely.

"He is *nguyen*.<sup>1</sup> Too bad. I'd abs'lutely like not to be killed before tomorrow night. Easy, old chap!"

"So Clappique is having the ship moved," said Kyo. "The comrades in the government outfitting-shop can supply us with cops' uniforms. . . ."

"No need. I have more than fifteen of them at the post."

"Let's take the launch with your twelve men."

"It would be better without you. . . ."

Kyo looked at him without speaking.

"It's not very dangerous, but it's not exactly child's play either, you know. It's more dangerous than this idiot of a driver who's starting to speed again. And it's not the moment to ask you to get out."

"Nor you either."

"It's not the same thing. *I* can be replaced, now, you see. . . . I'd rather you would take care of the truck which will be waiting, and the distribution."

He hesitated, embarrassed, his hand on his chest. "I have to give him a chance to think it over," he was thinking. Kyo said nothing. The car continued to speed

<sup>1</sup> In a state of craving (of opium addicts).

"Why does he spend all his money in one night, then, if not to give himself the illusion of being rich?"

Gisors blinked, threw back his longish white hair; his old man's voice, in spite of its weakened tone, took on the sharpness of a line.

"His mythomania is a means of denying life, don't you see, of denying, and not of forgetting. Beware of logic in these matters. . . ."

He extended his hand uncertainly; his restrained gestures hardly ever went sideways but straight before him: his motions, when he resorted to them to round out a sentence, did not seem to push aside, but to seize something.

"Everything has happened as though he wanted to prove to himself this evening that, although he lived for two hours like a rich man, wealth does not exist. Because then *poverty does not exist either*. Which is essential. Nothing exists: all is dream. Don't forget the alcohol, which helps him. . . ."

Gisors smiled. The smile of his thin lips, drooping at the corners, expressed his idea with more complexity than his words. For twenty years he had used his intelligence to win the affections of men by justifying them, and they were grateful to him for a kindness which they did not suspect had its roots in opium. People attributed to him the patience of a Buddhist: it was the patience of an addict.

"No man lives by denying life," answered Kyo.

"One lives inadequately by it. . . . He feels a need to live inadequately."

"And he is forced to."

"He chooses a way of life that *makes* it necessary—his dealings in antiques, perhaps drugs, and the traffic of firearms. . . . In conjunction with the police whom he

no doubt detests, but whom he coöperates with in such deals for a fair remuneration. . . ."

It didn't make much difference: the police knew the Communists didn't have enough money to buy firearms from the clandestine importers.

"Every man is like his affliction," said Kyo: "what does he suffer from?"

"His affliction, don't you see, has no more importance, no more sense, touches nothing deeper than his lies, or his pleasures; he really has no depth, and that is perhaps what describes him best, because it's rare. He does what he can to make up for it, but that requires certain gifts. . . . When you're not tied to a man, Kyo, you think of him in order to foresee his actions. Clappique's actions . . ."

He pointed to the aquarium in which the black carps, soft and lacy like streamers, rose and fell.

"There you have them. . . . He drinks, but he was made for opium: it's also possible to choose the wrong vice; many men never strike the one that might save them. Too bad, for he is far from being without worth. But his field doesn't interest you."

It was true. If Kyo was unable to think in terms of action this evening, neither could he become interested in ideas: he could think only of himself. The heat was penetrating him little by little, as at the *Black Cat* a while ago; and once more the obsession of the records went through him like the weariness tingling through his legs. He told of his astonishment at the records, but as though he were referring merely to one of the voice-recordings which had been made in the English shops. Gisors listened, caressing his angular chin with his left hand: his hands, with their slender fingers, were very beautiful. He had bent his head forward: his hair fell

over his eyes, though his forehead was bald. He threw it back with a toss of the head, but his eyes had a faraway look:

"I've had the experience of finding myself unexpectedly before a mirror and not recognizing myself. . . ."

His thumb was gently rubbing the other fingers of his right hand, as though he were sprinkling a powder of memories. He was speaking for himself, pursuing a line of thought which excluded his son:

"It's undoubtedly a question of means: we hear the voices of others with our ears."

"And our own?"

"With our throats: for you can hear your own voice with your ears stopped. Opium is also a world we do not hear with our ears. . . ."

Kyo got up. His father scarcely saw him.

"I have to go out again soon."

"Can I be of any use to you with Clappique?"

"No. Thanks. Good night."

"Good night."

Kyo, lying down in an attempt to reduce his weariness, was waiting. He had not turned on the light; he did not move. It was not *he* who was thinking of the insurrection, it was the insurrection, living in so many brains like sleep in so many others, which weighed upon him to such a point that there was nothing left in him but anxiety and expectation. Less than four hundred guns in all. Victory—or the firing-squad, with some refinements. Tomorrow. No: by and by. A matter of speed: everywhere disarm the police and, with the five hundred Mausers, arm the combat groups before the soldiers of the governmental armored train entered into action. The masses were ready. Half the police, who

were dying of starvation, would undoubtedly pass over to the insurgents. Which left the other half. But the insurrection was to begin at one o'clock—the general strike, therefore, at noon—and most of the combat groups had to be armed before five o'clock. "Soviet China," he thought. To conquer here the dignity of his people. And the U.S.S.R. increased to six hundred million men. Victory or defeat, the destiny of the world hovered here close by. Unless the Kuomintang, once Shanghai was taken, tried to crush its Communist allies. . . . He started: the garden door was being opened. Recollection buried anxiety: his wife? He listened: the door of the house shut. May entered. Her blue leather coat, of an almost military cut, accentuated what was virile in her gait and even in her face—a large mouth, a short nose, the prominent cheek-bones of the Germans of the North.

"It's really going to start very shortly, Kyo?"

"Yes."

She was a doctor in one of the Chinese hospitals, but she had just come from the section of revolutionary women whose clandestine hospital she directed:

"Always the same story, you know. I've just left a kid of eighteen who tried to commit suicide with a razor blade in her wedding palanquin. She was being forced to marry a respectable brute. . . . They brought her in her red wedding gown, all covered with blood. The mother behind, a little stunted shadow, that was sobbing, of course. . . . When I told her the kid wouldn't die, she said to me: 'Poor little thing! she would almost have been lucky to die. . . .' Lucky. . . . That tells more than all our speeches about the condition of women here. . . ."

German, but born in Shanghai, a doctor of Heidel-

more of them are arriving. They say the army is very near. And that there are many killed. . . .”

“And half the wounded will die. . . . Suffering can have meaning only when it does not lead to death, and that’s where it almost always leads.”

May pondered:

“Yes,” she said at last. “And yet that’s perhaps a man’s idea. For me, for a woman, suffering—it’s strange—makes me think of life rather than of death. . . . Because of child-birth, perhaps. . . .”

She reflected again:

“The more wounded there are, the nearer the insurrection is, the more people go to bed together.”

“Yes, it’s natural.”

“I have something to tell you which is perhaps going to annoy you a little. . . .”

Leaning on his elbow, he gave her a questioning look. She was intelligent and brave, but often clumsy.

“I finally yielded to Langlen and went to bed with ~~X~~ him, this afternoon.”

He shrugged his shoulder, as if to say: “That’s your affair.” But his gesture, the tense expression of his face, contrasted sharply with this indifference. She was watching him, haggard, her cheek-bones emphasized by the vertical light. He too was watching her eyes, expressionless in the shadow, and said nothing. He was wondering if the expression of sensuality in her face was not due to the fact that the obliterated eyes and the slight swelling of her lips, in contrast to her features, violently accentuated her femininity. . . . She sat down on the bed, took his hand. He nearly withdrew it, but yielded it. She felt the impulse however:

“Are you hurt?”

ords: "We hear the voices of others with our ears, our own voices with our throats." Yes. One hears his own life, too, with his throat, and those of others? . . . First of all there was solitude, the inescapable aloneness behind the living multitude like the great primitive night behind the dense, low night under which this city of deserted streets was expectantly waiting, full of hope and hatred. "But I, to myself, to my throat, what am I? A kind of absolute, the affirmation of an idiot: an intensity greater than that of all the rest. To others, I am what I have done." To May alone, he was not what he had done; to him alone, she was something altogether different from her biography. The embrace by which love holds beings together against solitude did not bring its relief to man; it brought relief only to the madman, to the incomparable monster, dear above all things, that every being is to himself and that he cherishes in his heart. Since his mother had died, May was the only being for whom he was not Kyo Gisors, but an intimate partner. "A partnership consented, conquered, chosen," he thought, extraordinarily in harmony with the night, as if his thoughts were no longer made for light. "Men are not my kind, they are those who look at me and judge me; my kind are those who love me and do not look at me, who love me in spite of everything, degradation, baseness, treason—me and not what I have done or shall do—who would love me as long as I would love myself—even to suicide. . . . With her alone I have this love in common, injured or not, as others have children who are ill and in danger of dying. . . ." It was not happiness, certainly. It was something primitive which was at one with the darkness and caused a warmth to rise in him, resolving itself into a motionless embrace, as

of cheek against cheek—the only thing in him that was as strong as death.

On the roofs there were already shadows at their posts.

#### *Four o'clock in the morning*

Old Gisors crumpled the badly torn scrap of paper on which Ch'en had written his name in pencil, and put it in his pocket. He was impatient to see his former pupil again. His eyes fell once more upon the man he was conversing with, a very old Chinaman with the head of a mandarin of the India Company, wearing the robe; he was moving towards the door, with little steps, his forefinger raised, and was speaking English: "It is well that the absolute submission of woman, concubinage and the institution of courtesans exist. I shall continue to publish my articles. It is because our ancestors thought thus that those beautiful paintings exist (he indicated the blue phoenix with his eyes, without moving his face, as though he were ogling it)—you are proud of them, and I too. Woman is subject to man as man is subject to the State; and it is less hard to serve man than to serve the State. Do we live for ourselves? We are nothing. We live for the State in the present, for the order of the dead through the centuries . . ."

Was he ever going to leave? This man clutching to his past, even today (didn't the sirens of the battleships suffice to fill the night? . . .) in the face of China corroded by blood like its sacrificial bronzes, was invested with a certain poetic quality, like some lunatics. Order! Crowds of skeletons in embroidered robes, lost in the depth of time in motionless assemblies: facing them, Ch'en, the two hundred thousand workers of the spin-

ning mills without embroideries, the crushing horde of the coolies. The submission of women? Every evening May brought back accounts of suicides of fiancées. . . . The old man left, his forefinger raised: "Order, Mr. Gisors! . . ." after a last bouncing nod of his head and shoulders.

As soon as he had heard the door shut, Gisors called Ch'en and returned with him to the room with the phoenixes.

Ch'en began to pace back and forth. Each time he passed before him, at a slight angle, Gisors seated on one of the divans was reminded of an Egyptian bronze hawk of which Kyo had kept a photograph through fondness for Ch'en, "because of the resemblance." It was true, in spite of the kindness which the thick lips seemed to express. "In short, a hawk converted by Saint Francis of Assisi," he thought.

Ch'en stopped in front of him:

"It's I who killed Tang Yen Ta," he said.

He had seen in Gisors' look something almost affectionate. He despised affection, and was afraid of it. His head which was sunk between his shoulders and pushed forward when he walked, and the curved ridge of his nose, accentuated the resemblance to the hawk, in spite of his squat figure; and even his narrow eyes, almost without lashes, made one think of a bird.

"Is that what you wanted to talk to me about?"

"Yes."

"Does Kyo know?"

"Yes."

Gisors pondered. Since he would not respond with prejudices, he could only approve. He had nevertheless some difficulty in doing so. "I'm getting old," he thought.

Ch'en gave up walking.

"I'm terribly alone," he said, looking straight at Gisors at last.

The latter was upset. That Ch'en fastened himself to him did not astonish him: for years he had been his teacher in the Chinese sense of the word—a little less than his father, more than his mother; since they had both died, Gisors was without doubt the only man Ch'en needed. What he did not understand was that Ch'en, who had undoubtedly met some terrorists again that night, since he had just seen Kyo, seemed so remote from them.

"But the others?" he asked.

Ch'en saw them again, in the back-shop of the record-dealer, plunging into the shadow or emerging from it with the swinging of the lamp, while the cricket chirped.

"They don't know."

"That you did it?"

"They know that: no importance."

He again fell into silence. Gisors avoided questioning him. Ch'en finally went on:

". . . That it's the first time."

Gisors suddenly had the impression that he understood; Ch'en felt this:

"No. You don't understand."

He spoke French with a guttural accentuation of one-syllable words, which combined startlingly with certain idioms he had picked up from Kyo. He was instinctively holding his arm close to his side: once more he felt the stabbed body which the spring-mattress had caused to rebound against the knife. That meant nothing. He would do it again. In the meantime, however, he yearned for a refuge. But it was only for Kyo that Gisors could feel that deep affection which needs no explanation. Ch'en knew it. How should he express himself?

"You have never killed a man before, have you?"  
"You know I haven't."

That seemed obvious to Ch'en, but today he had begun to distrust such impressions. Yet it seemed to him suddenly that Gisors lacked something. He raised his eyes. The latter was looking up at him, his white hair seeming longer because of the backward toss of his head. Gisors was puzzled by his lack of gestures. This was due to his wound which Ch'en had not mentioned; not that he was suffering from it (a chum of his, an orderly, had disinfected and bound it) but it hampered him. As always when he was reflecting, Gisors was rolling an invisible cigarette between his fingers:

"Perhaps. . . ."

He stopped, his bright eyes steady. Ch'en waited. Gisors went on, almost brutally:

"I don't think the memory of a murder is enough to upset you so."

"It's clear that he doesn't know what he's talking about," Ch'en tried to tell himself; but Gisors had hit the mark. Ch'en sat down, looked at his feet:

"No," he said, "I don't think the memory is enough either. There's something else, the essential. I'd like to know what."

Was that why he had come?

"The first woman you ever slept with was a prostitute, of course?" asked Gisors.

"I'm a Chinaman," answered Ch'en with rancor.

No, thought Gisors. Except, perhaps, for his sexuality, Ch'en was not Chinese. The emigrants from all countries with which Shanghai overflowed had shown Gisors to what extent a man becomes separated from his nation in a national way, but Ch'en no longer belonged to

China, not even in the way he had left it: a complete liberty gave him over completely to his mind.

"What did you feel, afterwards?" asked Gisors.

Ch'en clenched his fists.

"Pride."

"At being a man?"

"At not being a woman."

His voice no longer expressed rancor, but a complex contempt.

"I think you mean," he went on, "that I must have felt myself . . . apart?"

Gisors avoided an answer.

". . . Yes. Terribly. And you are right to speak of women. Perhaps one thoroughly despises the man one kills. But less than the others."

"Than the ones who don't kill?"

"Than the ones who don't kill: the weaklings."

He was pacing again. The two last words had fallen like a load that one drops, and the silence spread around them; Gisors was beginning to feel, not without melancholy, the isolation that Ch'en was speaking of. He suddenly remembered that Ch'en had told him he had a horror of hunting.

"Didn't you feel horror at the blood?"

"Yes. But not *only* horror."

He had spoken these words while pacing away from Gisors. He turned round on a sudden and, considering the phoenix, but as directly as though he were looking Gisors straight in the eyes, he asked:

"So what? I know what one does with women when they want to continue to possess you: one lives with them. What about death?"

Even more bitterly, but without taking his eyes off the phoenix:

"Live with it?"

The bent of Gisors' mind made him inclined always to help out those who came to him; and he felt affection for Ch'en. But he was beginning to see the thing clearly: action in the shock groups was no longer enough for the young man, terrorism was beginning to fascinate him. Still rolling his imaginary cigarette, his head bent forward as though he were studying the carpet, a white shock of hair beating against his slender nose, he said, trying to give his voice a tone of detachment:

"You think you won't get away from it . . ."

But his nerves getting the better of him, he spluttered in conclusion:

". . . and it's against that . . . torment that you've come to . . . me for help."

Silence.

"A torment? No." Ch'en finally said, between his teeth, "A fatality?"

Again silence. Gisors felt that no gesture was possible, that he could not take his hand, as he used to. In his turn he made a decision, and said with weariness, as though he had suddenly acquired the habit of anguish:

"Then, you must think it through, and carry it to the extreme. And if you want to live with it. . . ."

"I shall soon be killed."

Isn't that what he wants above all? Gisors wondered. He aspires to no glory, to no happiness. Capable of winning, but not of living in his victory, what can he appeal to if not to death? No doubt he wants to give it the meaning that others give to life. To die on the highest possible plane. An ambitious soul, sufficiently lucid, sufficiently separated from men or sufficiently afflicted to despise all the objects of his ambition, and his ambition itself?

"If you want to live with this . . . fatality, there is only one recourse: to pass it on."

"Who would be worthy of it?" asked Ch'en, still between his teeth.

The air was becoming more and more weighted, as if everything murderous that these words called forth were present there. Gisors could say nothing more: words would have sounded false, frivolous, stupid.

"Thank you," said Ch'en. He bowed before him, with his whole upper body, Chinese fashion (which he never did) as though he preferred not to touch him, and left.

Gisors went back and sat down, began again to roll his cigarette. For the first time he found himself face to face, not with fighting, but with blood. And as always, he thought of Kyo. Kyo would have found the universe in which Ch'en moved unbreathable. . . . Was he really sure of this? Ch'en also detested hunting, Ch'en also had a horror of blood—before. How well did he know his son at this depth? Whenever his love played no rôle, whenever he could not refer to many memories, he fully realized that he did not know Kyo. He was seized with an intense desire to see him again—the desire one has to see one's dead a last time. He knew he had gone.

Where? Ch'en's presence still animated the room. He had thrown himself into the world of murder, from which he would never emerge: with his passion, he was entering upon the life of a terrorist as into a prison. Before ten years he would be caught—tortured or killed; until then he would live like a man willfully obsessed, in a world of decision and death. He had lived by his ideas; now they would kill him.

And it was indeed this that made Gisors suffer. If Kyo went in for killing, that was his rôle. And if not, it didn't matter: what Kyo did was well done. But he was

well-defined limits, and there was nothing about men that he knew better than what he had given to them.

No sooner had he observed Ch'en than he had understood that this adolescent was incapable of living by an ideology which did not immediately become transformed into action. As he was devoid of charity, a religious calling could lead him only to contemplation or the inner life; but he hated contemplation, and would only have dreamt of an apostleship, for which precisely his absence of charity disqualified him. In order to live he therefore needed first of all to escape from his Christianity. (From half-confidences, it seemed that the acquaintance of prostitutes and students had made him overcome the only sin that had always been stronger than Ch'en's will-power, masturbation; and with it, a constantly recurring feeling of anxiety and degradation.) When his new master had opposed Christianity, not with arguments, but with other forms of greatness, faith had sifted through Ch'en's fingers, imperceptibly, without crisis, like sand. His faith had detached him from China, accustomed him to isolate himself from the world instead of submitting to it; and he had understood through Gisors that everything had happened as if this period of his life had been merely an initiation in the sense of heroism: what good is a soul, if there is neither God nor Christ?

At this point Gisors' train of thought brought him back to his son, who had never been exposed to Christianity but whose Japanese education (Kyo had lived in Japan from his eighth to his seventeenth year) had also imposed the conviction that ideas were not to be thought, but lived. Kyo had chosen action, in a grave and premeditated way, as others choose a military career, or the sea: he left his father, lived in Canton, in Tientsin,

the life of day-laborers and coolies, in order to organize the syndicates. Ch'en—his uncle, taken as hostage at the capture of Swatow, and unable to pay his ransom, had been executed—had found himself without money, provided only with worthless diplomas, with his twenty-four years and with China before him. He was a truck-driver when the Northern routes were dangerous, then an assistant chemist, then nothing. Everything had pushed him into political activity: the hope of a different world, the possibility of eating, though wretchedly (he was naturally austere, perhaps through pride), the gratification of his hatreds, his mind, his character. This activity gave a meaning to his solitude.

But with Kyo everything was simpler. The heroic sense had given him a kind of discipline, not a kind of justification of life. He was not restless. His life had a meaning, and he knew what it was: to give to each of these men whom famine, at this very moment, was killing off like a slow plague, the sense of his own dignity. He belonged with them: they had the same enemies. A half-breed, an outcast, despised by the white men and even more by the white women, Kyo had not tried to win them: he had sought and had found his own kind. "There is no possible dignity, no real life for a man who works twelve hours a day without knowing why he works." That work would have to take on a meaning, become a faith. Individual problems existed for Kyo only in his private life.

All this Gisors knew. "And yet, if Kyo were to enter and tell me, like Ch'en a while ago: 'It is I who killed Tang Yen Ta,' I would think, 'I knew it.' All the possibilities within him echo in me with such force that, whatever he might tell me, I would think, 'I knew it . . .'" Through the window he looked out at the

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motionless and indifferent night. "But if I really knew it, and not in this uncertain and appalling fashion, I would save him." A painful affirmation, of which he did not believe a word. What confidence did he have in his own mind?

Since Kyo's departure his mind had served only to justify his son's activity, an activity which at that time was obscurely beginning somewhere in Central China or in the Southern provinces (often, for three months on end, he did not even know where). If the restless students felt his intelligence ready to help them, reaching out to them with so much warmth and insight, it was not, as the idiots of Peking then believed, because he found amusement in living vicariously in lives from which his age separated him: it was because in all those dramas that were so much alike he recognized that of his son. When he showed his students, almost all of them petty bourgeois, that they must ally themselves either with the military chiefs or with the proletariat, when he told those who had chosen: "Marxism is not a doctrine, it is a will. For the proletariat and those who belong with them—you—it is the will to know themselves, to feel themselves as proletarians, and to conquer as such; you must be Marxists not in order to be right, but in order to conquer without betraying yourselves,"—when he told them this he was talking to Kyo, he was defending him. And, if he knew that it was not Kyo's incisive mind answering him when, after those lectures, he found his room filled with white flowers from the students, according to the Chinese custom, at least he knew that these hands that were preparing to kill by bringing him camellias would tomorrow press those of his son, who would need them. That was why strength of character attracted him so much, why he had become at-

"What news of the relations between the Communists and Chiang Kai-shek?"

"Here's his last speech," answered Martial. "For my part, you know, I don't believe much in speeches. . . ."

"I believe in them. In these at least. It doesn't matter."

The telephone bell. Martial took the receiver.

"It's for you, Monsieur Ferral."

Ferral sat down on the table.

"Hello? Yes."

". . ."

"He's holding out a club to hit you with. He is hostile to intervention, that's obvious. It's only a question of deciding whether it's better to attack him as a pederast or accuse him of being bought. That's all."

". . ."

"It being perfectly understood that he is neither. Moreover, I don't like to have one of my collaborators believe me capable of attacking a man for a sexual deviation which he might really have. Do you take me for a moralist? Good-by."

Martial did not dare to question him. That Ferral did not keep him posted on his plans, did not tell him what he expected about his secret conferences with the most active members of the International Chamber of Commerce, with the heads of the great associations of Chinese merchants, appeared to him both insulting and short-sighted. On the other hand, if it is annoying for a Chief of Police not to know what he is doing, it is even more annoying to lose his post. Now Ferral, born in the Republic as in the bosom of a family, his memory full of kindly faces of old gentlemen—Renan, Berthelot, Victor Hugo—the son of a great counselor-at-law, an *agrégé* in history at twenty-seven, at twenty-nine the editor of the first collective history of France, a deputy at a very

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early age (favored by the epoch that had made Poincaré and Barthou ministers before forty), and now President of the Franco-Asiatic Consortium—Ferral, in spite of his political downfall, possessed in Shanghai a power and a prestige at least equal to those of the French Consul-General with whom, moreover, he was on friendly terms. The Chief was therefore respectfully cordial. He handed him the speech:

*"I have spent eighteen million dollars in all, and taken six provinces, in five months. Let the malcontents look for another general-in-chief, if they wish, who spends as little and accomplishes as much as I. . . ."*

"Obviously the money question would be settled by the taking of Shanghai," said Ferral. "The customs would give him seven million dollars a month, just about what is needed to make up the army deficit. . . ."

"Yes. But they say that Moscow has given the political commissars orders to have their own troops beaten before Shanghai. In that case the insurrection here might end badly. . . ."

"Why those orders?"

"So that Chiang Kai-shek would be beaten, to destroy his prestige, and to replace him by a Communist general to whom the honor of taking Shanghai would then go. It's almost certain that the campaign against Shanghai has been undertaken without the assent of the Central Committee of Hankow. The same informers claim that the Red staff is protesting against this policy. . . ."

Ferral was interested, though skeptical. He continued to read the speech:

*"Deserted by a considerable number of its members, the Central Executive Committee of Hankow nevertheless is determined to remain the supreme authority of the Kuomintang Party. . . . I know that Sun Yat-sen ad-*

*mitted the Communists as auxiliaries of the Party. I have done nothing against them, and I have often admired their energy. But now, instead of being content to remain auxiliaries, they set themselves up as masters and violently and insolently aspire to govern the Party. I warn them that I shall oppose these excessive pretensions, which go beyond what was stipulated at the time of their admission. . . .*

It was becoming possible to employ Chiang Kai-shek. The present government signified nothing, except by its strength (which it lost by the defeat of its army) and by the fear which the Communists of the revolutionary army inspired in the bourgeoisie. Very few people had any interest in its maintenance. Behind Chiang there was a victorious army, and the whole Chinese petty bourgeoisie.

"Nothing else?" he asked aloud.

"Nothing, Monsieur Ferral."

"Thank you."

He went down the stairs, met half-way down an auburn-haired Minerva in a tailored sport-suit, with superb immobile features. She was a Russian from the Caucasus who was reputed to be Martial's occasional mistress. "I'd like to see the expression on your face when you're making love," he thought.

"Pardon me, Madam."

He passed her with a bow, climbed into his car which began to be swallowed up in the crowd, against the current this time. The horn shrieked in vain, powerless against the force of the exodus, against the seething thousands which invasions stir before them. Petty merchants with their two trays dangling like scales from beams that caught and swung wildly, carts, barrows worthy of the T'ang emperors, invalids, cages. . . . Fer-

ral was advancing in the opposite direction to all those eyes which fear caused to look inward: if his checkered life was to be destroyed, let it be in this uproar, amid this frantic despair that came beating against the windows of his car! Just as he would have meditated upon the meaning of his life had he been wounded, so now that his enterprises were menaced he was meditating upon them. He realized, moreover, where he was vulnerable. He had had too little choice in this combat; he had been obliged to undertake his Chinese affairs to give new outlets to his production in Indo-China. He was playing a waiting game here: he was aiming at France. And he could not wait much longer.

His greatest weakness lay in the absence of a State. The development of such vast affairs was inseparable from governments. Since his youth he had always worked for them: while still in Parliament he had been president of the Society of Electrical Energy and Appliances, which manufactured the electrical equipment of the French State; he had next organized the reconstruction of the port of Buenos Ayres. Possessing the kind of arrogant integrity which refuses commissions and accepts orders, he had looked to the French possessions in Asia for the money he needed after his fall: for he did not intend to play the same game again; he was going to change the rules. In a position to utilize his brother's personal standing, which was superior to his office as director of the *Mouvement Général des Fonds*,<sup>1</sup> Ferral—who had remained at the head of one of the powerful French financial groups—succeeded in getting the General Government of Indo-China to undertake a pro-

<sup>1</sup> A department in the Ministry of Finance charged with the distribution of State funds.

*revolution*

Havas<sup>1</sup> or to negotiate with it; to get back into the political game and, having cautiously reached the cabinet, to pit the combined forces of the cabinet and a bought public opinion against the Parliament. There lay the power. But today his dreams were out of the question: the rapid growth of his Indo-Chinese enterprises had involved the entire Ferral group in the commercial penetration of the Yangtze basin, Chiang Kai-shek was marching on Shanghai with the revolutionary army, the crowd, more and more dense, was pressing against his doors. There was not a single company owned or controlled in China by the Franco-Asiatic Consortium which was not affected: those for naval constructions, at Hong Kong, by the insecurity of navigation; all the others—public works, constructions, electricity, insurance, banks—by war and the Communist menace. What they imported remained in their warehouses in Hong Kong or Shanghai; what they exported, in their Hankow warehouses, sometimes on the wharves.

The car stopped. The silence—Chinese crowds are usually among the noisiest—seemed to forebode the end of the world. A cannon-shot. The revolutionary army, so near? No: it was the noon-day cannon. The crowd scattered: the car did not move. Ferral seized the speaking-tube. No answer: the chauffeur, the valet were gone.

He remained motionless—stupefied—in the motionless car which the crowd circled clumsily. The nearest shopkeeper came out, carrying on his shoulder an enormous shutter; he turned round, nearly smashed one of the glass panes of the car: he was closing his shop. To the right, to the left, ahead of him, other shopkeepers, other artisans came out, with shutters covered with characters on their shoulders. The general strike was beginning.

<sup>1</sup> The leading French news-gathering and publicity syndicate.

This time it was not the Hong Kong strike, slowly set under way, epic, dismal: it was an army maneuver. As far as his eye could reach there was not a shop remaining open. He must leave as quickly as possible; he got out, called a rickshaw. The coolie did not answer him: he was running at top speed for shelter, almost alone on the street, now, with the abandoned car: the crowd had just surged back towards the sidewalks. "They're afraid of the machine-guns," thought Ferral. The children, no longer playing, were scurrying between legs, through the swarming agitation of the sidewalks. A silence full of lives at once remote and very near, like that of a forest saturated with insects; the siren of a cruiser rose, then became lost. Ferral walked towards his house as fast as he could, hands in pockets, shoulders and chin thrust forward. Two sirens took up in unison, an octave higher, the cry of the one that had just died down, as if some enormous creature, enveloped in this silence, were thus announcing its coming. The entire city was on guard.

#### *One o'clock in the afternoon*

"Five minutes to," said Ch'en.

The men of his group were waiting. They were all spinning-mill workers, clad in blue denim; he wore their garb. All of them shaved, all lean, all vigorous: before Ch'en, death had made its selection. Two were holding rifles under one arm, the barrels towards the ground. Seven carried revolvers from the *Shantung*; one, a grenade; a few others had some hidden in their pockets. About thirty held knives, clubs, bayonets; eight or ten, without weapons, were crouched beside piles of rags, kerosene cans, rolls of wire. An adolescent was examin-

ing large broad-headed tacks which he pulled out of a sack as though they were seeds: "Surely longer than horse-shoes. . . ." A Court of Miracles,<sup>1</sup> but composed of men united by a bond of hatred and decision.

He was not one of them. In spite of the murder, in spite of his presence. If he were to die today, he would die alone. For them everything was simple: they were going forth to conquer their bread and their dignity. For him . . . he did not even know how to speak to them, except of their pain and of their common battle. At least he knew that the strongest of bonds is battle. And the battle was here.

They got up, sacks on their backs, cans in their hands, wire under their arms. It was not yet raining; the gloom of this empty street which a dog crossed in two leaps, as if some instinct had warned him of what was impending, was as deep as the silence. Five shots went off in a nearby street: three together, another, still another. "It's starting," said Ch'en. The silence returned, but it no longer seemed to be the same. Suddenly it was filled by the clatter of horses' hoofs, hurried, coming nearer and nearer. And, like the vertical laceration of lightning after a prolonged thunder, while they still saw nothing, a tumult suddenly filled the street, composed of mingled cries, shots, furious whinnyings, the falling of bodies; then, as the subsiding clamor was heavily choking under the indestructible silence, there rose a cry as of a dog howling lugubriously, cut short: a man with his throat slashed.

At a run they quickly reached a more important street. All the shops were closed. On the ground, three

<sup>1</sup> A quarter of old Paris, between the rue Réaumur and rue du Caire; it served as a retreat for beggars, vagabonds and outlaws who filled the capital in the Middle Ages.

"But if they're beaten, perhaps we'll be accused of treason."

"What could we have done? We yielded to force. We are all witnesses that we did not betray."

They were reflecting, their necks drawn in—cormorants crushed by thought.

"We are not responsible," said one.

All approved. They got up nevertheless and went to continue their game in a neighboring shop, the proprietor not daring to put them out. Only a pile of uniforms remained in the center of the station.

Elated and wary, Ch'en, followed by his men, was walking towards one of the central posts: "All is well," he was thinking, "but those men are almost as poor as we . . ." The White Russians and the soldiers of the armored train would certainly fight. The officers too. Distant explosions, muffled as though the low sky had weakened them, were beating the air near the center of the city.

At a street-crossing, the troop—all the men armed now, even those carrying the cans—hesitated a moment, looked about. From the cruisers and the steamships unable to discharge their cargoes rose the oblique masses of smoke which the heavy wind scattered in the direction of the insurgents' path, as if the sky were participating in the insurrection. The next station was an old red brick building, two stories high; there were two sentinels, one on each side of the door, bayonets fixed to their rifles. Ch'en knew that the special police had been on the alert for three days, and that their men were worn out by the uninterrupted vigil. There were officers here, some fifty Mauserists of the police—well paid—and ten soldiers. To live, to live at least through

peated the order. The men held one another by the hand, the top one taking a strong hold with his left arm on a solid roof-ornament. The throwing of the grenades was resumed. The besieged could not fire back.

Within five minutes, three grenades entered through two of the windows aimed at; another blew up the iron-plate screen. Only the center one had not been hit. "Now to the center one!" shouted the cadet. Ch'en looked at him. For him commanding was a sport, and he gave himself over to it with a joyous enthusiasm. He scarcely protected himself. He was brave, beyond a doubt, but he was not attached to his men. Ch'en was attached to his, but not enough.

Not enough.

He left the cadet, crossed the street beyond the range of the police fire. He climbed up on the roof. The man who was holding on to the ridge was weakening: Ch'en took his place. Even there, with his wounded arm locked round the cement and plaster ornament, his right hand holding the hand of the first man on the chain, he did not escape his solitude. The weight of three sliding men was suspended from his arm; it passed through his chest like an iron bar. The grenades were bursting inside the station, which had ceased firing. "We are protected by the attic," he thought to himself, "but not for long. The roof will blow up." In spite of the intimacy of death, in spite of that fraternal weight which was pulling him apart, he was not one of them. "Is even blood futile?"

The cadet, down there, was looking at him without understanding. One of the men who had come up behind Ch'en offered to take his place.

"All right. I'll throw the grenades myself."

He passed him the chain of bodies. In his stretched muscles rose a limitless despair. His hawk-like face with

collaborate together, and that the social question would be put forward only when China was united. And already they are putting it forward. They do not respect our contract. They do not want to build up China, but the Soviets. The army's dead did not die for the Soviets, but for China. The Communists are capable of anything. And that is why I must ask you, Monsieur le Directeur, if the French police would have any objection to thinking of the personal safety of the General."

It was clear that he had asked the same service of the international police.

"Gladly," answered Martial. "Send the chief of your police to me. Is it still König?"

"Still. Tell me, Monsieur le Directeur: have you studied Roman history?"

"Naturally."

"At night-school," thought Ferral.

The telephone again. Martial took the receiver.

"*The bridges have been taken,*" he said as he put it back. "In a quarter of an hour the insurrection will be occupying the city."

"My opinion," the Chinaman went on as if he had not heard, "is that the Roman Empire was destroyed through moral corruption. Don't you believe that a technical organization of prostitution, an occidental organization, like that of the police, would make it possible to get the better of the Hankow chiefs, who are not comparable to those of the Roman Empire?"

"It's an idea . . . but I don't think it's practical. It requires a good deal of thought. . . ."

"Europeans never understand anything of China that does not resemble themselves."

A silence. Ferral was amused. The Chinaman intrigued him: that head thrown back, almost disdainful, and at

the same time, that embarrassment. . . . "Hankow flooded by streams of prostitutes . . ." he thought. "And he knows the Communists. And the possibility that he may have some knowledge of political economy is not excluded. Astonishing!" While soviets were perhaps being organized in the city, this fellow was dreaming of the artful precepts of the Roman Empire. "Gisors is right, they're always trying to find tricks."

Again the telephone:

"*The barracks are surrounded,*" said Martial. "The reinforcements from the government have stopped coming."

"The North Station?" asked Ferral.

"Not yet taken."

"Then the government can recall troops from the front?"

"Perhaps, sir," said the Chinaman; "its troops and tanks are falling back on Nanking. It may send some here. The armored train can still give serious battle."

"Yes, it will hold its own in the vicinity of the train and the station," Martial went on. "Everything they have taken is immediately organized; the insurrection surely has Russian or European cadres; the revolutionary employees of each administration guide the insurgents. There is a military committee directing the whole thing. The entire police is disarmed now. The Reds have rallying points, from which the troops are directed against the barracks."

"The Chinese have a great sense of organization," said the officer.

"How is Chiang Kai-shek protected?"

"His car is always preceded by that of his personal guard. And we have our secret agents."

Ferral at last understood the reason for the disdainful

"That's in the fut're," he said finally. "At present they're killing our comrades. Yes. And yet, Kyo, I'm not sure I agree with you, you know. At the b'ginning of the Rev'lution, when I was still a socialist-rev'lutionary, we were all against Lenin's tactics in Ukraine. Antonov, the comm'ssar down there, had arrested the mine-owners and had given them ten years of hard labor for sab'tage. Without trial. On his own authority as Comm'ssar of the Cheka Lenin congrat'lated him; we all pr'tested. They were real exploiters, y'know, the owners, and several of us had gone into the mines as convicts; that's why we thought we should be p'rticularly fair with them, to give the example. However, if we had let them go, the prol'tariat would not have understood. Lenin was right. Justice was on our side, but Lenin was right. And we were also against the extr'ordinary powers of the Cheka. We've got to think carefully. The present slogan is good: extend the Rev'lution, and afterwards deepen it. Lenin didn't say right away: 'The whole power to the Soviets.'"

"But he never said: Power to the mensheviks. No situation can force us to surrender our arms to the Blues. None. Because then that means that the Revolution is lost, and we have only to . . ."

An officer of the Kuomintang entered, small, stiff, almost Japanese. Bows.

"The army will be here in half an hour," he said. "We're short of arms. How many can you let us have?"

Ch'en was walking back and forth. Katov was waiting.

"The workers' militias must remain armed," said Kyo.

"My request is made in agreement with the Hankow government," the officer answered.

Kyo and Ch'en smiled.

"I beg you to find out for yourselves," he went on. Kyo worked the telephone.

"Even if the order . . ." Ch'en began, in a rage.

"I've got them," Kyo exclaimed.

He was listening. Katov seized the second receiver. They hung up.

"Very well," said Kyo. "But the men are still on the firing-line."

"The artillery will be here shortly," said the officer. "We'll clean up these things . . ."

He pointed to the armored train, grounded in the sunlight.

". . . ourselves. Can you hand over arms to the troops tomorrow evening? We need them urgently. We are continuing to march on Nanking."

"I doubt if it will be possible to recover more than half the arms."

"Why?"

"All the Communists won't be willing to give them up."

"Even on orders from Hankow?"

"Even on orders from Moscow. At least, not immediately."

They felt the officer's exasperation, although he did not show it.

"See what you can do," he said. "I shall send someone about seven."

He went out.

"Are you willing that we should give up the arms?" Kyo asked Katov.

"I'm trying to understand. Before anything else, we must go to Hankow, you see. What does the Int'rnational want? First of all, use the army of the Kuomintang to

unify China. After that develop the Revolution by propaganda and the rest. It must change of its own accord from a democratic Revolution into a socialist Revolution."

"Chiang Kai-shek must be killed," said Ch'en.

"Chiang Kai-shek will no longer allow us to go as far as that," answered Kyo, ignoring Ch'en's remark. "He cannot. He can maintain himself here only by drawing on the customs and the contributions of the bourgeoisie, and the bourgeoisie won't pay for nothing: he will have to pay them back with the corpses of Communists."

"All that," said Ch'en, "means nothing."

"Leave us alone," said Katov. "You don't think you're going to try to kill Chiang Kai-shek without the consent of the Central Committee, or at least the delegate of the International?"

A distant rumble gradually filled the silence.

"You're going to Hankow?" Ch'en asked Kyo.

"Naturally."

Ch'en was pacing back and forth in the room, beneath all the pendulums and balance-wheels of the various time-pieces which went on ticking their measure.

"What I have said is very simple," he said at last.

"The essential. The only thing to do. Let them know."

"Will you wait?"

Kyo knew that if Ch'en hesitated instead of answering, it was not because Katov had convinced him. It was because none of the present orders of the International satisfied the profound passion which had made him a revolutionary; if he accepted them, through discipline, he would no longer be able to act. Kyo watched that hostile figure beneath the clocks: he had made the sacrifice of himself and of others to the Revolution, and now the Revolution would perhaps throw him back into

a yard filled with enormous stone blocks: those of the walls, leveled to the ground in sign of the liberation of China. The ferry was close by.

Another fifteen minutes on the river, watching the city rise into the evening sky. At last, Hankow.

Rickshaws were waiting on the quay, but Kyo's anxiety was too great to allow him to remain idle. He preferred to walk. The British concession which England had abandoned in January, the great world banks shut down, but not occupied. . . . "Anguish—a strange sensation: you feel by your heart-beats that you're not breathing easily, as if you were breathing with your heart. . . ." It was becoming stronger than lucidity. At the corner of a street, in the clearing of a large garden full of trees in bloom, gray in the evening mist, the chimneys of the Western manufactures appeared. No smoke. Of all the chimneys he saw, only the ones of the Arsenal were operating. Was it possible that Hankow, the city to which the Communists of the entire world were looking to save China, was on strike? The Arsenal was working; could they at least count on the Red army? He no longer dared to run. If Hankow was not what everyone believed it was, all his people were already condemned to death. May too. And himself.

At last, the building of the International Delegation.

The entire villa was lighted up. Kyo knew that Borodin was working on the top story; on the ground-floor the printing-press was running at full speed, with the clatter of an enormous ventilator in bad condition.

A guard in a rough-neck sweater examined Kyo. Taking him for a Japanese he was already pointing out to him the orderly in charge of directing strangers, when his eye fell upon the papers Kyo was handing him; he immediately led him through the crowded entrance to

the section of the International in charge of Shanghai. Of the secretary who received him Kyo only knew that he had organized the first insurrections in Finland; a comrade, his hand held out across his desk, while he gave his name: Vologin. He had the plumpness of a ripe woman rather than of a man; was this impression due to the delicacy of his features, both full and ruddy, slightly Levantine in spite of his fair complexion, or to the long strands of hair, turning gray, cut to be brushed back but which fell over his cheeks like stiff bands?

"Things look very bad in Shanghai," said Kyo abruptly. "We're headed in the wrong direction."

His own words surprised him: his thoughts were running ahead of him. Yet his words said what he would have wanted to say: if Hankow could not bring the help that the sections were expecting from it, to give up their arms would be suicide.

Vologin, ensconced in his armchair, drew his hands up into the khaki sleeves of his uniform and bent his head a little forward.

"Still! . . ." he muttered.

"First of all, what's going on here?"

"Go on: in what respect are we pursuing the wrong policy in Shanghai?"

"But why, why aren't the manufactures running?"

"Wait a minute. Who are the comrades who're protesting?"

"Those of the combat groups. The terrorists too."

"To hell with the terrorists. The others . . ."

He looked at Kyo.

"What do they want?"

"To leave the Kuomintang. Organize an independent Communist Party. Give the power to the Unions. And above all, not surrender their arms. Above all."

"Always the same thing."

Vologin got up, looked through the window towards the river and the hills. His face was expressionless except for a fixed intensity like that of a somnambulist, which alone gave it life. He was short, and his plump back, almost as round as his stomach, made him appear hunch-backed.

"I'll tell you. Suppose we leave the Kuomintang. What will we do then?"

"To begin with, a militia for every workers' union, for every syndicate."

"With what firearms? Here the Arsenal is in the hands of the generals. Chiang Kai-shek now holds the one in Shanghai. And we're cut off from Mongolia: consequently, no Russian arms."

"In Shanghai it was we who took the arsenal."

"With the revolutionary army behind you. Not in front of you. Whom can we arm here? Ten thousand workers, perhaps. In addition to the Communist nucleus of the 'Iron Army'; another ten thousand. Ten bullets per man! Against them, more than seventy-five thousand men here alone. Without mentioning, of course—Chiang Kai-shek, or the others. All too eager to make an alliance against us, upon our first really Communist move. And with what would we provision our troops?"

"What about the foundries, the manufactures?"

"Raw materials have stopped coming."

Standing motionless by the window, against the deepening night, Vologin continued—his face turned away:

"Hankow is not the capital of the workers, it's the capital of the unemployed. There are no arms; that's all the better perhaps. There are moments when I think: if we armed them they would fire on us. And yet, there are all those who work fifteen hours a day with-

out presenting any claims, because 'our revolution is menaced' . . ."

Kyo was sinking, as one plunges in a dream, lower and ever lower.

"We don't have the power," Vologin continued; "it's in the hands of the generals of the 'Left Kuomintang,' as they call it. They would no more accept the soviets than Chiang Kai-shek does. That's sure. We can use them, that's all. By being very careful."

If Hankow was only a blood-stained setting. . . . Kyo dared think no further. "I must see Possoz on my way out," he said to himself. He was the only comrade in Hankow in whom he had confidence. "I must see Possoz. . . ."

". . . Don't hold your mouth open with that—er—stupid expression," said Vologin. "The world thinks Hankow is Communist—so much the better. That does credit to our propaganda. It's no reason for it to be true."

"What are the instructions right now?"

"To reënforce the Communist nucleus of the Iron Army. We can weight one tray of the scale against the other. We are not a force by ourselves. The generals who are fighting with us here hate the soviets and Communism as much as Chiang Kai-shek does. I know it, I see it, in fact . . . every day. Every Communist slogan will bring them down on us. And no doubt will lead them into an alliance with Chiang. The only thing we can do is to destroy Chiang by using them. Then Fêng Yü Hsiang in the same way, if necessary. As in fact we have destroyed the generals we have fought up to now by using Chiang. Because our propaganda brings us as many men as victory brings to them. We rise with them. That's why it's essential to gain time. The Revolution cannot maintain itself, in short, under its democratic

form. By its very nature it must become socialist. We must let it find its own way. Our job is to safeguard its birth. And not to abort it."

"Yes. But in Marxism there is the sense of a fatality, and also the exaltation of a will. Every time fatality comes before will I'm suspicious."

"A purely Communist slogan, today, would bring about the immediate coalition of all the generals against us: two hundred thousand against twenty thousand. That's why you must arrange to get along with Chiang Kai-shek in Shanghai. If there is no way, give up the arms."

"According to that, it was a mistake to start the Revolution of October: how many Bolsheviks were there?"

"The slogan 'Peace' gave us the masses."

"There are other slogans."

"Premature ones. What would they be?"

"Complete, immediate cancellation of farm-rents and credits. The peasant revolution, without conditions or restrictions."

The six days he had spent coming up the river had confirmed Kyo in his idea: in those clay cities that had squatted on the river-junctions for thousands of years the poor would be as ready to follow the peasant as to follow the worker.

"The peasant always follows," said Vologin. "Either the worker or the bourgeois. But he follows."

"No. A peasant movement *lasts* only by attaching itself to the cities, and the peasantry by itself can only produce a Jacquerie,<sup>1</sup> that's understood. But there is no question of separating it from the proletariat: the suppression of credits is a fighting slogan, the only one which can mobilize the peasants."

<sup>1</sup> A spontaneous, unorganized peasant uprising.

"In short, the parceling of lands," said Vologin.

"More concretely: many very poor peasants are land-owners, but work for the usurer. They all know it. Moreover, in Shanghai we must train the guards of the Workers' Unions as quickly as possible. Allow them to disarm under no pretext. Make of them *our force*, against Chiang Kai-shek."

"As soon as that slogan is known, we shall be crushed."

"Then we shall be crushed in any case. The Communist slogans are making headway, even when we give them up. Speeches are enough to make the peasants want the land, speeches won't be enough to make them stop wanting it. Either we must be willing to participate in the repression with the troops of Chiang Kai-shek—does that suit you?—to compromise ourselves *irrevocably*, or they will have to crush us, whether they want to or not."

"Everyone in Moscow is agreed that it will be necessary—in short, to make the break. But not so soon."

"Then, if it's above all a matter of being crafty, don't give up the arms. Giving them up means sacrificing the comrades."

"If they follow instructions, Chiang won't make a move."

"Whether they follow them or not will make no difference. The Committee, Katov, myself, have organized the Workers' Guard. If you try to dissolve it the whole proletariat in Shanghai will cry treason."

"Let them be disarmed, then."

"The Workers' Unions are organizing of their own accord in all the poor quarters. Are you going to prohibit the syndicates in the name of the International?"

Vologin had returned to the window. He dropped his head to his chest, his double chin forming a cushion between them. Night was coming on, full of pale stars.

"To break means certain defeat. Moscow will not tolerate our leaving the Kuomintang at this time. And the Chinese Communist Party is even more favorable to an understanding with Chiang than Moscow."

"The men at the top only: below, the comrades will not give up all their arms even if you order it. You will sacrifice us, without giving Chiang Kai-shek tranquillity. Borodin can tell that to Moscow."

"Moscow knows it: the order to give up the arms was given the day before yesterday."

Stupefied, Kyo did not answer immediately.

"And the sections have given them up?"

"Half of them—barely. . . ."

Just two days ago, while he was meditating or sleeping, on the boat. . . . He knew, too, that Moscow would maintain its line. His realization of the situation suddenly invested Ch'en's plan with an obscure value:

"Something else—perhaps the same thing: Ch'en Ta Erh, of Shanghai, wants to execute Chiang."

"Oh! It's for that!"

"What?"

"He sent word, to ask to see me when you were here."

He picked up a message from the table. Kyo had not yet noticed his ecclesiastical hands. "Why didn't he have him come up right away?" he wondered.

"*A very serious matter* . . . (Vologin was reading the message.) They all say 'a very serious matter' . . ."

"Is he here?"

"Wasn't he supposed to come? They're all the same. They almost always change their minds. He's been here for—in fact—two or three hours: your boat was delayed considerably."

He telephoned the order to have Ch'en sent up. He didn't like interviews with terrorists, whom he con-

sidered narrow, arrogant and lacking in political sense.

"Matters were even worse in Leningrad," he said, "when Yudenich was before the city, and we managed to pull through just the same. . . ."

Ch'en entered, also wearing a sweater, passed before Kyo, sat down facing Vologin. The noise of the printing-press alone filled the silence. In the large window at a right angle to the desk the darkness, now complete, separated the profiles of the two men. Ch'en, his elbows on the desk, his chin in his hands—stubborn, tense—did not move. "Man's complete impenetrability takes on something inhuman," thought Kyo as he looked at him. "Is it because we easily feel a sense of contact through our weaknesses? . . ." Once he had got past his surprise he judged it inevitable that Ch'en should be here, that he should have come to affirm his decision himself (for he did not imagine that he would argue). On the other side of the rectangle of starry night stood Vologin, strands of his forelock falling over his face, his fat hands crossed on his chest, also waiting.

"Did he tell you?" asked Ch'en, indicating Kyo with a motion of his head.

"You know what the International thinks of terrorist acts," Vologin answered. "I'm not going to make you—in short, a speech on that subject."

"The present case is special. Chiang Kai-shek alone is sufficiently popular and sufficiently strong to hold the bourgeoisie united against us. Do you oppose this execution, yes or no?"

He remained motionless, leaning on the desk with his elbows, his chin in his hands. Kyo knew the argument had no essential validity for Ch'en, even though he had come here. Destruction alone could put him in accord with himself.

"It's not up to the International to approve your plan." Vologin spoke in a matter of fact tone. "Moreover, even from your point of view . . ." Ch'en still did not move ". . . is the moment, in short, well chosen?"

"You prefer to wait until Chiang has had our people murdered?"

"He will make decrees and nothing more. His son is in Moscow, don't forget. And there's also this: a number of Galen's Russian officers have not been able to leave Chiang's staff. They will be tortured if he is killed. Neither Galen nor the Russian staff will countenance it. . . ."

The question has apparently been discussed right here, thought Kyo. There was something indescribably futile and hollow in this discussion, which made him uneasy: he found Vologin singularly more determined when he ordered the arms to be given up than when he spoke of the murder of Chiang Kai-shek.

"If the Russian officers are tortured," said Ch'en, "it can't be helped. I also will be tortured. Of no interest. The millions of Chinese are surely worth fifteen Russian officers. Good. And Chiang will abandon his son."

"What do you know about it?"

"And you? You undoubtedly won't even dare to kill him."

"Undoubtedly he loves his son less than himself," said Kyo. "And if he does not try to crush us he is lost. If he does not stop peasant activity his own officers will leave him. So I'm afraid he'll abandon the boy, after obtaining a few promises from the European consuls or some other such farce. And the whole petty bourgeoisie which you want to rally, Vologin, will follow him the day he disarms us: it will be on the side of force. I know them."

"Remains to be proved. And there isn't only Shanghai."

"You say you're dying of starvation. Once Shanghai has been lost, where will you get provisions? Fēng Yù Hsiang separates you from Mongolia, and he will betray you if we are crushed. Therefore, nothing by the Yangtze, nothing from Russia. Do you think the peasants to whom you've promised the program of the Kuomintang (twenty-five per cent reduction in farm-rents, no joking— Oh, but really, no joking!) will die of hunger in order to feed the Red army? You'll put yourself in the power of the Kuomintang even more completely than you are now. To undertake to fight against Chiang now, with real revolutionary slogans, with the backing of the peasants and the Shanghai proletariat, is risky but not impossible: the First Division is almost entirely Communist, from the general down, and will fight with us. And you say we've kept half the arms. Not to try is simply to wait placidly to have our throats cut."

"The Kuomintang is there. We haven't made it. It's there. And stronger than we are, for the time being. We can destroy it from below by introducing into it all the Communist elements we have at our disposal. An immense majority of its members are extremists."

"You know as well as I do that numbers are nothing in a democracy against the ruling apparatus."

"We are demonstrating that the Kuomintang can be used by using it. Not by argument. For two years we have used it unceasingly. Every month, every day."

"As long as you have accepted its aims; not once when it was a question of its accepting yours. You have led it to accept gifts which it was dying to get: officers, volunteers, money, propaganda. The soldiers' soviets, the peasant unions—that's another matter."

"What about the exclusion of the anti-Communist elements?"

"Chiang Kai-shek didn't yet have Shanghai in his power."

"Before a month is up we'll have him outlawed by the Central Committee of the Kuomintang."

"After he has crushed us. What difference can it make to those generals of the Central Committee whether the Communist militants are killed or not? They'll be just that much ahead! Don't you think—really—that the obsession with economic fatality is preventing the Chinese Communist Party, and perhaps Moscow, from seeing the elementary necessity which is under our very noses?"

"That is opportunism."

"Very well! According to you Lenin shouldn't have used the parceling of lands as a slogan (for that matter it was featured much more prominently in the program of the socialist-revolutionaries, who didn't have the remotest idea of how to apply it, than in the program of the bolsheviks). The parceling of lands was the establishment of petty property; therefore he should have advocated, not parceling, but immediate collectivization—the sovkhozes. Since he was successful you can see that it was a question of tactics. For us also it's only a question of tactics! You're losing control of the masses. . . ."

"Do you imagine Lenin kept it from February to October?"

"He lost it *at moments*. But he was always *with them*, moving in the same direction. As for you, your slogans go against the current. It's not a matter of a mere sidestep, but of directions which will become more and more divergent. To act on the masses as you expect to

do, you would have to be in power. That doesn't happen to be the case."

"All this is beside the point," said Ch'en.

"You won't stop the activity of the peasants," Kyo answered. "At the present moment we Communists are issuing to the masses orders which they can consider only as betrayals. Do you think they will understand your waiting slogans?"

"Even if I were a coolie in the Shanghai port I would think that obedience to the Party is the only logical attitude—in short—of a militant Communist. And that all the arms must be given up."

Ch'en got up:

"It's not through obedience that men go out of their way to get killed—nor through obedience that they kill. . . . Except cowards."

Vologin shrugged his shoulders.

"We mustn't consider assassination—after all—as the chief path to political truth."

Ch'en was leaving.

"At the first meeting of the Central Committee I shall propose the immediate parceling of lands," said Kyo, holding out his hand to Vologin, "the cancellation of credits."

"The Committee won't vote them," answered Vologin, smiling for the first time.

Ch'en, a squat shadow on the sidewalk, was waiting. Kyo joined him after having obtained the address of his friend Possoz: he was in charge of the harbor commission.

"Listen . . ." said Ch'en.

The vibration of the printing-presses, transmitted by the ground, controlled and regular like that of a ship's

engine, went right through them: in the sleeping city the delegation building was awake with all its lighted windows, across which black figures moved back and forth. They walked, their two similar shadows before them: the same figures, the same effect of their sweater-necks. The straw-huts glimpsed through the perspective of the streets, with their purgatory silhouettes, disappeared in the depth of the calm and almost solemn night, in the smell of fish and burnt grease; Kyo could not free himself from that reverberation of machines transmitted by the soil to his muscles—as if those machines for manufacturing truth were encountering, within himself, Vologin's hesitations and affirmations. During his journey up the river he had constantly felt how poorly informed he really was, how difficult it was for him to get a solid basis for his activity if he no longer consented purely and simply to obey the instructions of the International. But the International was wrong. It was no longer possible to gain time. The Communist propaganda had reached the masses like a flood, because it was what they wanted, because it was their own. However cautious Moscow might be, this propaganda could no longer be stopped; Chiang knew it and was henceforth committed to crushing the Communists. There lay the only certainty. Perhaps the Revolution could have been conducted in some other way; but it was too late. The Communist peasants would take over the lands, the Communist workers would demand a different labor system, the Communist soldiers would no longer fight unless they knew why they were fighting—whether Moscow wanted it or not.

Moscow and the enemy capitals of the West could organize their opposing passions over there in the night and attempt to mold them into a world. The Revolution,

so long in parturition, had reached the moment of its delivery: now it would have to give birth or die. At the same time that the fellowship of the night brought Ch'en closer to him, Kyo was seized by a feeling of dependence, the anguish of being nothing more than a man, than himself; there came back to him the memory of Chinese Mohammedans he had seen, on nights just like this, prostrate on the plains covered with sun-scorched lavender, howling those songs that for thousands of years have torn the man who suffers and who knows he is to die. Why had he come to Hankow? To inform the International of the situation in Shanghai. The International was as determined as he had become. What he had heard, much more distinctly than the arguments of Vologin, was the silence of the factories, the distress of the dying city, bedecked with revolutionary glory, but dying none the less. They might as well bequeath this cadaver to the next insurrectional wave, instead of letting it dissolve in crafty schemes. No doubt they were all condemned: the essential was that it should not be in vain. It was certain that Ch'en also felt bound to him by a prisoner's friendship:

X. X  
“It's not knowing . . . ” said the latter. “If it's a question of killing Chiang Kai-shek, I know. As for this fellow Vologin, it's all the same to him I guess; but for him, instead of murder, it's obedience. For people who live as we do there must be a certainty. For him, carrying out orders is sure, I suppose, as killing is for me. Something *must* be sure. Must be.”

He was silent.

“Do you dream much?” he went on.

“No. Or at least I don't remember my dreams much.”

“I dream almost every night. There is also distraction—day-dreaming. When I let myself go, I sometimes

"You find it important that it should be you who carry out the plot against Chiang?"

"No. . . . And yet I wouldn't want to leave it to another."

"Because you wouldn't trust anyone else?"

"Because I don't like the women I love to be kissed by others."

The words opened the flood-gates to all the suffering Kyo had forgotten: he suddenly felt himself separated from Ch'en. They had reached the river. Ch'en cut the rope of one of the skiffs moored to the wharf, and pushed off. Already he was out of sight, but Kyo could hear the splashing of the oars at regular intervals above the lapping of water against the banks. He knew some terrorists. They asked no questions. They composed a group: murderous insects, they lived by their bond of union in a tragic narrow group. But Ch'en . . .

Pursuing his thoughts without changing his pace Kyo was heading towards the Harbor Commission. "His boat will be stopped at the very start. . . ." He reached some large buildings guarded by army soldiers, almost empty compared to those of the International. In the hallways soldiers were sleeping or playing "thirty-six." He found his friend without any trouble. A kindly apple-round face—the ruddy cheeks of a vine-grower, the gray drooping mustache of a Gaul warrior—khaki civilian garb. Possoz had been an anarchist-syndicalist worker in Switzerland, had gone to Russia after the war and become a Bolshevik. Kyo had known him in Peking and had confidence in him. They shook hands quietly: in Hankow any ghost was a normal visitor.

"The stevedores are there," said a soldier.

"Have them come in."

The soldier went out. Possoz turned to Kyo:

fight. What do you want to do with them? Gamble for them at 'thirty-six'?"

"Give them to everyone."

"Already there isn't enough for a few. The government is determined to use the greatest leniency towards the proletarians, even when they are mistaken. If the Red Guard were everywhere killed off, the generals and foreigners would seize the power again as before—come, now, you know that perfectly well. Well, then? Is that what you want?"

"Before, we used to eat."

"No," said Kyo to the workers: "before, we didn't eat. I know—I've been a docker. And to die just for the sake of dying—well, it might as well be in order to become men."

The whites of all those eyes which caught the feeble light grew imperceptibly larger; they tried to get a better look at this fellow in the sweater who had a Japanese air, who spoke with the accent of the Northern provinces, and who claimed to have been a coolie.

"Promises," answered one of them in a muffled voice.

"Yes," said another. "We have especially the right to go on strike and to die of starvation. My brother is in the army. Why did they kick out of his division all those who demanded the formation of soldiers' Unions?"

~~X~~ He was raising his voice.

"Do you think the Russian Revolution was accomplished in a day?" asked Possoz.

"The Russians did what they wanted."

Useless to argue: all they could do was to try to determine the depth of the revolt.

"The attack on the Red Guard is a counter-revolutionary act, punishable by death. You know it."

A pause.

"No, my dear chap, not at all: it's a set I got in Changsha. Dentists don't seem to have been affected by the Revolution. And you? You're a delegate? What in the world are you doing here?"

Kyo explained to him, without speaking of Ch'en. Possoz was listening to him, more and more uneasy.

"All that, my dear chap, is very possible, and all the more pity. Listen—I have worked with watches for fifteen years: I know what gears are, the way they depend on one another. If you don't have confidence in the International, mustn't belong to the Party."

X "Half the International believes we should create the soviets."

"There is a general line that directs us—must follow it."

"And give up our arms! A line that leads us to fire on the proletariat is necessarily bad. When the peasants take the lands, the generals now arrange to involve a few Communist troops in the repression. Would you be willing to fire on the peasants, yes or no?"

"My dear chap, one isn't perfect: I'd fire in the air, and that's probably what the fellows are doing. I'd prefer it not to happen. But that's not the main thing."

"Try to understand, old man: it's as if I saw a fellow aiming at you, there, and we should be discussing the danger of revolver bullets. . . . Chiang Kai-shek cannot do otherwise than massacre us. And afterwards it'll be the same thing with the generals out here, our 'allies'! And they will be logical. We'll all be massacred, without even maintaining the dignity of the Party, which we lead every day to the whorehouse with a gang of generals, as if it were the place where it belonged. . . ."

"If each one is going to act according to his taste, it's

to leave for Shanghai as soon as possible, to maintain the sections at any price? The officer came back, which gave him an opportunity to leave.

The peace of the night once more. Not a siren, nothing but the lapping of the water. Along the banks, near the street-lamps crackling with insects, coolies lay sleeping in postures of people afflicted with the plague. Here and there, little round red posters; on them was figured a single character: HUNGER. He felt, as he had a while ago with Ch'en, that on this very night, in all China, and throughout the West, including half of Europe, men were hesitating as he was, torn by the same torment between their discipline and the massacre of their own kind. Those stevedores who were protesting did not understand. But, even when one understood, how choose the sacrifice, here, in this city to which the West looked for the destiny of four hundred million men and perhaps its own, and which was sleeping on the edge of the river in the uneasy sleep of the famished—in impotence, in wretchedness, in hatred?

# April 11

*Twelve-thirty noon*

**A**LMOST alone in the bar-room of the little Grosvenor Hotel—polished walnut, bottles, nickel, flags—Clappique was revolving an ash-tray on his out-stretched forefinger. Count Shpilevski, for whom he was waiting, entered. Clappique crumpled a piece of paper on which he had just been making an imaginary gift to each of his friends.

“Does this l-little sun-bathed village behold your affairs prospering, my good man?”

“Hardly. But they’ll be all right at the end of the month. I’m taking orders for foodstuffs. Only from Europeans, of course.”

Shpilevski’s curved slender nose, his bald forehead, his brushed-back gray hair and his cheek-bones all created the odd impression that he habitually disguised himself as an eagle. This in spite of his very simple white clothes. A monocle accentuated the caricature.

“The question, you see, my dear friend, would naturally be to find some twenty thousand francs. With this sum one can make a very honorable place for himself in the food business.”

“Into my arms, my good fellow! You want a l-little, no, an *honorable* place in the food business? Bravo! . . .”

“I didn’t know you had so many . . . what’d’you-call’ems . . . prejudices.”

Clappique regarded the eagle out of the corner of his

eye: a former saber-champion in Cracow, officers' section.

"Me? I'm full of them, riddled with them! I burst with them! Just imagine—if I had that money, I would use it to imitate a Dutch high official in Sumatra who every year, on his way home to caress his tulips in Holland, used to pass along the coast of Arabia; my dear fellow, he got it into his head (I must tell you that this happened in about 1860) to go and loot the treasures of Mecca. It appears that they are considerable, and all gold, in great black cellars where the pilgrims have thrown them since the beginning of time. Well, it's in that cellar that I would like to live. . . . Anyway, my tulip-fancier gets an inheritance and goes to the Antilles to gather a crew of freebooters, to take Mecca by surprise, with a lot of modern arms—double-barreled guns, detachable bayonets, and what not. Embarks these fellows—not a word!—takes them there. . . ."

He put his forefinger to his lips, enjoying the Pole's curiosity, which resembled a participation in the conspiracy.

"Good! They mutiny, meticulously murder him, and with the ship they go in for an unimaginative piracy, in any kind of an ocean. It's a true story—a moral one, what's more. But, as I was saying, if you count on me to find the twenty thousand francs—madness . . . madness, I tell you! Do you want me to go around and see people, or something of that kind? I'll do that. Besides, since I have to pay your confounded police for every deal I make, I'd rather it should be you than someone else. But while the houses are going up in flames these fellows are about as interested in opium and cocaine as *that!*"

He began once more to revolve the ash-tray.

"I am speaking about it to you," said Shpilevski, "be-

cause if I expect to succeed I naturally have to speak to everyone. I should have, at least . . . waited. But . . ." changing his manner ". . . I just wanted to render you a service when I begged you to come and offer me this alcohol (it's synthetic). Listen: leave Shanghai tomorrow."

"Ah! Ah! Ah!" said Clappique, in a rising scale. An automobile horn outside sounded an arpeggio like an echo. "Because?"

"Because. My police, as you say, have their virtues. Get out."

Clappique knew he could not insist. For a second he wondered if perhaps there was not in this a hidden maneuver to obtain the twenty thousand francs? O folly!

"And I would have to get out tomorrow?"

He looked at the bar, its shakers, its nickel rail, as at old friendly objects.

"At the latest. But you won't leave. I see it. At least I have warned you."

A hesitant gratitude (counteracted less by suspicion than by the nature of the advice which was being given him, by his ignorance of what threatened him) slowly worked its way into Clappique's consciousness.

"What? Better luck than I had expected?" the Pole went on, noticing the change; he took his arm: "Leave! There's some story about a ship. . . ."

"But I had nothing to do with it!"

"Leave."

"Can you tell me if Old Gisors is implicated?"

"I don't think so. Young Gisors, more likely."

The Pole was obviously well informed. Clappique placed his hand on the one before him on the table.

"I'm terribly sorry not to have that money to pay for

enough money to buy toys for my little boy. It's very painful. All the more as I'm only fond of the kid when I make him—whatd'youcallit—happy. And I don't know how to make him happy in any other way. It's difficult."

"But look here—do take my statues. You don't need to take everything, if you don't want to."

"I beg you, I beg you. . . . So I go into the shops, and I say . . . (He threw back his head, contracting the muscles of his forehead and his left cheek around his monocle, in all seriousness.) 'I am an inventor. An inventor and manufacturer, naturally. I've come to see your models.' They let me look. I take one of them, never more. Sometimes they watch me, but it's rare."

"And if you were found out?"

He pulled out his pocket-book and opened it in front of Clappique, showing his policeman's card. He shut it again, and his hand described a curiously vague gesture:

"I occasionally have the money. . . . I could also lose my job. . . . But anything may happen. . . ."

Highly astonished, Clappique suddenly discovered himself to be a man of seriousness and weight. As he had never regarded himself as responsible for his own actions, he was surprised.

"I must warn young Gisors," he thought to himself.

### *One o'clock in the afternoon*

Ch'en, who was ahead of time, walked along the quay, a brief-case under one arm. He encountered many Europeans whom he knew by sight: at this hour almost all of them were going to the bars of the Shanghai Club or of one of the neighboring hotels for a drink and a

chat. A hand fell gently on his shoulder, from behind. He started, put his hand to his inside pocket where his revolver was hidden.

"It's been a long time since we've met, Ch'en. . . . Do you want to . . . ?"

He turned round; it was the pastor Smithson, his first teacher. He immediately recognized the handsome—now badly ravaged—face of the American, which betrayed a strain of Sioux blood.

". . . to walk along with me?"

Ch'en preferred to walk in the company of a white man. It was safer, and it was ironic: he had a bomb in his brief-case. The correct coat he was wearing gave him the feeling that his very mind was under constraint; the presence of a companion completed the disguise—and, through an obscure superstition, he did not want to hurt the pastor's feelings. He had counted the vehicles for a minute, a little while before, to find out (odd or even) whether he would succeed: the answer was favorable. He was exasperated with himself. He might as well chat with Smithson, free himself in this way from his irritation.

This irritation did not escape the pastor, but he misinterpreted it:

"Are you suffering, Ch'en?"

"No."

He still kept his affection for his former master, but not without rancor.

The old man took Ch'en's arm in his own.

"I pray for you every day, Ch'en. What have you found in place of the faith you have abandoned?"

He was looking at him with a deep affection, which however was in no way paternal. Ch'en hesitated:

"I am not of those whom happiness has any concern with. . . ."

"Happiness is not the only thing, Ch'en—there is peace."

"No. Not for me."

"For all. . . ."

The pastor shut his eyes, and Ch'en had the impression of leading a blind man by the arm.

"I'm not looking for peace. I'm looking for . . . the opposite."

Smithson looked at him:

"Beware of pride."

"Who tells you that I have not found my faith?"

"What political faith can account for the world's suffering?"

"I am more anxious to diminish it than to account for it. The tone of your voice is full of . . . of humaneness. I don't like a humaneness which comes from the contemplation of suffering."

"Are you sure there is any other, Ch'en?"

"Wait—difficult to explain. . . . There is another, at least, which is not composed *only* of that. . . ."

"What political faith will destroy death. . . ."

The pastor's tone was not one of interrogation, but rather of sadness. Ch'en remembered his conversation with Gisors, whom he had not seen since the night of the murder. Gisors used his intelligence in his own service, not in God's.

"I've told you that I wasn't looking for peace."

"Peace. . . ."

The pastor was silent. They continued walking.

"My poor little fellow," he went on at last, "each of us knows only his own unhappiness." His arm pressed

Ch'en's. "Do you think every really religious life is not a daily conversion? . . ."

They were both looking at the sidewalk, and seemed to have contact only through their interlocked arms. ". . . a daily conversion . . ." the pastor repeated with a weary emphasis, as though those words were merely the echo of an obsession. Ch'en did not answer. This man was speaking of himself and he was telling the truth. Like Ch'en, this man *lived his idea*: he was something more than a restless bundle of flesh. Under his left arm, the brief-case and the bomb; under his right arm, that arm tightly pressing his: ". . . a daily conversion. . . ." This confidence spoken in a tone of secrecy made the pastor suddenly appear in a pathetic light. So near to murder, Ch'en was attuned to every kind of suffering.

"Each night, Ch'en, I shall pray God to deliver you from pride. (I pray especially at night: it is favorable to prayer.) If He grant you humility, you will be saved. Now at last I can read in your eyes and understand, as I could not a while ago. . . ."

It was with his suffering, and not with his words, that Ch'en had entered into communion. Those last words, those words of a fisherman who thinks he feels the pull of a fish, stirred in him an anger which rose painfully, without altogether banishing a furtive pity. He was completely baffled by his own feelings.

"Listen," he said. "Listen to this. In two hours I shall kill a man."

He looked straight into the eyes of his companion, this time. Without reason, he raised a trembling hand to his face, crumpled the lapel of his coat:

"Can you still read in my eyes?"

No. He was alone. Still alone. His hand released his

coat, attached itself to the pastor's coat-lapel as though he were going to shake him; the latter placed his hand on Ch'en's. They remained thus, in the middle of the sidewalk, motionless, as if ready to struggle; a passer-by stopped. He was a white man, and he thought they were quarreling.

"It's a horrible lie," said the pastor in a muffled voice.

Ch'en's arm fell to his side. He could not even laugh. "A lie!" he shouted to the passer-by. The latter shrugged his shoulders and went off. Ch'en made a sudden about-face and left almost at a run.

He finally found his two companions, more than a kilometer away. "All dolled up," with their creased hats, their business-suits, which had been picked out to avoid attracting attention to the brief-cases, one containing a bomb, and the other some grenades. Suan—a redskin type of Chinaman, with an aquiline nose—was musing, looking into space; Pei . . . Ch'en had never noticed before how extremely adolescent his face seemed. The round shell-rimmed glasses perhaps accentuated his youth. They started off, reached the Avenue of the Two Republics; with all its shops open, it was returning to everyday life.

Chiang Kai-shek's car would reach the avenue by a narrow street that came into it at a right angle. It would slow down to make the turn. They would have to see it come, and throw the bomb as it slowed down. The general passed every day between one and one-fifteen on his way to lunch. The one who was watching the little street would have to signal to the other two as soon as he saw the car. An antique-dealer's shop just across the street was a good vantage-point; if only the man did not belong to the police. Ch'en himself would be the look-out. He stationed Pei in the avenue, close to the

"To Hemmelrich's," said Ch'en finally.

They started off, picking their way through back-streets.

"What happened?" asked Suan.

Ch'en explained. As for Pei, he had been uneasy when he saw that Ch'en did not leave the antiquarian's shop alone. He had betaken himself to the spot where he was to throw his bomb, a few meters from the corner. The cars in Shanghai drive on the left side of the street; ordinarily they make a short turn, and Pei had taken his post on the left sidewalk, in order to throw his bomb at close range. As it happened, the car was going fast; there were no carriages in the Avenue of the Two Republics. The chauffeur had made a wide turn, thus skirting the opposite sidewalk, and Pei had found himself separated from it by a rickshaw.

"So much the worse for the rickshaw," said Ch'en. "There are thousands of other coolies who can live only by Chiang Kai-shek's death."

"I would have missed my aim."

Suan had not thrown his grenades because neither of the bombs had gone off—he had supposed that something was wrong, that perhaps the general was not in the car.

They were advancing in silence between walls turned to a sickly pale shade by the yellowish sky, in a wretched solitude littered with rubbish and telegraph wires.

"The bombs are intact," said Ch'en in a muffled voice. "We'll try again in a little while."

But his two companions were crushed; those who have failed in an attempted suicide rarely try it again. As they went on, their bewilderment gave way to despair.

"It's my fault," said Suan.

Pei repeated:

was the pain he could inflict upon this woman: to abandon her by dying. Like that starving Russian, down the street, who had become a laborer and then, one day when his misery was too great, had committed suicide; his crazed wife, in a blind rage, had beaten the corpse that was abandoning her, with four youngsters in the corners of the room, one of them asking: "Why do you fight?" . . . He kept his wife, his kid, from dying. That was nothing. Less than nothing. If he had had money, if he could have left it to them, he would have been free to go and get killed. As if the universe had not treated him all his life with kicks in the belly, it now despoiled him of the only dignity he could ever possess—his death. The smell of corpses was blown in upon the motionless sunbeams by every gust of wind. He saturated himself in it with a sense of gratified horror, obsessed by Ch'en as by a friend in the throes of death, and seeking—as though it were of any consequence—whether the feeling uppermost in him was shame, fraternity or an atrocious craving.

Once more Ch'en and his companions had left the avenue. The courts and the side-streets were not closely watched, as the general's car did not pass through them. "We must get a new plan," Ch'en was thinking as he walked with bowed head, looking down at his smug shoes as they advanced one after the other. Run into Chiang Kai-shek's car with another car driven in the opposite direction? But every car might be requisitioned by the army. To try to use the fanion of a legation to protect the car—in case they were able to get one—was risky, for the police knew the chauffeurs of the foreign ministers. Bar the way with a cart? Chiang Kai-shek was always preceded by the Ford with his bodyguard. Be-

fore a suspicious obstruction both guards and the police on the running-boards would open fire on whoever attempted to approach. Ch'en listened: his companions had begun to talk.

"Many generals will abandon Chiang Kai-shek if they know he's in danger of being assassinated," said Pei. "There is faith only among us."

"Yes," said Suan, "the sons of torture-victims make good terrorists."

They both were.

"And as for the generals who remain," added Pei, "even if they build up a China that is opposed to us, they will make a great nation, because they will have built it with their blood."

"No!" said Ch'en and Suan, both at once. Neither of them ignored how great the number of nationalists among the Communists had grown, especially among the intellectuals.

Pei wrote, for periodicals that were quickly suppressed, stories that revealed a painfully self-satisfied bitterness, and articles—the last of which began in this fashion: "Imperialism being sorely pressed, China plans to solicit its benevolence once more and ask it to substitute a nickel ring for the gold ring that it has fastened to her nose. . . ." He was also preparing an ideology of terrorism. For him Communism was merely the one true way to bring about the revival of China.

"I don't want to create China," said Suan, "I want to create my people, with or without her. The poor. It's for them that I'm willing to die, to kill. For them only. . . ."

It was Ch'en who answered:

"As long as we try to throw the bomb we'll have bad

"It's not a promise that I expect. I expect you to feel—a need."

The reflections on the lamps were disappearing. It was growing darker in the windowless room—no doubt the clouds were piling up outside. Ch'en remembered Gisors: "Close to death, such a passion aspires to be passed on. . ." Suddenly he understood. Suan also was beginning to understand:

"You want to make a kind of religion of terrorism?"

Ch'en's exaltation was growing. All words were hollow, absurd, too feeble to express what he wanted of them.

"Not a religion. The meaning of life. The . . ."

His hand made the convulsive gesture of molding something, and his idea seemed to pulsate.

... the complete possession of oneself. Total. Absolute. To know. Not to be looking, looking, always, for ideas, for duties. In the last hour I have felt nothing of what used to weigh on me. Do you hear? Nothing."

He was so completely carried away by his exaltation that he was no longer trying to convince them otherwise than by speaking about himself:

"I possess myself. But I don't feel a menace, an anguish, as always before. Possessed, held tight, tight, as this hand holds the other . . . (he was pressing it with all his might) . . . it's not enough—like . . ."

He picked up one of the pieces of glass from the broken lamp. A large triangular fragment full of reflections. With one stroke he drove it into his thigh. His tense voice was charged with a savage certainty, but he seemed much more to possess his exaltation than to be possessed by it. Not at all mad. Now the other two could barely see him, and yet he filled the room. Suan began to be afraid:

"I am less intelligent than you, Ch'en, but for me . . . for me, no. I saw my father hung by his hands, beaten on the belly with a rattan-stick to make him tell where his master had hidden the money which he didn't have. It's for those to whom we belong that I'm fighting, not for myself."

"For them, you can't do better than to make up your mind to die. No other man can be so effective as the man who has chosen that. If we had made up our minds to it, we should not have missed Chiang Kai-shek a while back. You know it."

"You—perhaps you need that. I don't know. . ." He was struggling with himself. "If I agreed, you see, it would seem to me that I was not dying for all the others, but . . ."

"But?"

Almost completely obliterated, the feeble afternoon light lingered without completely disappearing.

"For you."

A strong smell of kerosene recalled to Ch'en the oil cans for the burning of the station, the first day of the insurrection. But everything was plunging into the past, even Suan, since he would not follow him. Yet the only thing which his present state of mind did not transform into nothingness was the idea of creating those doomed Executioners, that race of avengers. This birth was taking place in him, like all births, with agony and exaltation—he was not master of it. He could no longer endure any presence. He got up.

"You who write," he said to Pei, "you will explain."

They picked up their brief-cases. Pei was wiping his glasses. Ch'en pulled up his trouser-leg, bandaged his thigh without washing the wound—what was the use? It would not have time to get infected—before going out.

"You haven't any bright idea about how to earn or find four or five hundred dollars immediately?"

Gisors smiled sadly. Clappique knew he was poor: and his works of art, even if he were to consent to sell them . . .

"Well, let's earn our few cents," the Baron thought to himself. He came closer, looked at the wash-drawings scattered on the divan. Although he was sufficiently discriminating not to judge the traditional Japanese art in terms of its relation to Cézanne or Picasso, he detested it today: the taste for serenity is weak in hunted men. Dim lights over a mountain, village streets dissolved by rain, flights of wading-birds across the snow—that whole world in which melancholy prepared one for happiness. . . . Clappique imagined without difficulty, alas, the paradises at whose gates he should remain, but was irritated by their existence.

"The most beautiful woman in the world," he said, "naked, aroused, but with a chastity belt. For Ferral, not for me."

He chose four, dictated the address to the disciple.

"Because you're thinking of our art," said Gisors; "this does not serve the same purpose."

"Why do you paint, Kama-San?"

The old master was looking at Clappique with curiosity, the light emphasizing his bald head. He too was wearing a kimono. (As Gisors was still in his dressing-gown, Clappique was the only one in trousers.)

The disciple left the sketch, translated, answered:

"The master says: first, for my wife, because I love her. . . ."

"I don't say for whom, but for what?"

"The master says it is difficult to explain to you. He says: 'When I went to Europe, I saw the museums. The

more your painters paint apples, and even lines which do not represent objects, the more they talk about themselves. For me it is the world that counts.' "

Kama spoke another phrase; an expression of gentleness, barely perceptible, flitted across his face, which resembled an indulgent old lady's.

"The master says: 'With us, painting is what charity would be with you.' "

A second disciple, a cook, brought bowls of sake, and immediately withdrew. Kama spoke again.

"The master says that if he were no longer to paint, it would seem to him that he had become blind. And more than blind: alone."

"Wait a minute!" said the Baron, one eye open, the other shut, his forefinger pointed. "If a doctor were to say to you: 'You have an incurable illness, and you will die in three months,' would you still paint?"

"The master says that if he knew he was going to die, he thinks he would paint better, but not differently."

"Why better?" asked Gisors.

He did not cease thinking of Kyo. What Clappique had said upon coming in was sufficient to worry him: today serenity was almost an insult.

Kama answered. Gisors himself translated:

"He says: 'There are two smiles—my wife's and my daughter's—which I should then know I would never see again, and I should be even more inclined to melancholy. The world is like the characters of our writing. What the symbol is to the flower, the flower itself—this one (he pointed to one of the drawings)—is to something. Everything is a symbol. To go from the symbol to the thing symbolized is to explore the depth and meaning of the world, it is to seek God.' He thinks that the approach of death . . . Wait. . . ."

He questioned Kama again, resumed his translation:

"Yes, that's it. He thinks that the approach of death would perhaps permit him to put into all things sufficient fervor and melancholy, so that all the forms he would paint would become comprehensible symbols, so that what they symbolize—what they hide, also—would be revealed."

Clappique experienced the atrocious sensation of suffering in the presence of a creature who denied suffering. He was listening with attention, without taking his eyes from Kama's face, while Gisors was translating. With his absorbed look, his elbows against his sides, his hands joined, Clappique resembled a forlorn monkey.

"Perhaps you're not asking the question in the right way," said Gisors.

He spoke a very short phrase in Japanese. Up to this point Kama had answered almost immediately. He pondered.

"What question did you just ask him?" Clappique asked in a low voice.

"What he would do if the doctor condemned his wife."

"The master says he would not believe the doctor."

The cook-disciple came back and took away the bowls on a tray. His European garb, his smile, his deference, and his gestures which betrayed an extravagant gayety—everything about him seemed strange, even to Gisors. Kama said something under his breath which the other disciple did not translate.

"In Japan these young men never drink wine," said Gisors. "He feels hurt because this disciple is drunk."

His eyes looked away into space: the outside door opened. A sound of steps. But it was not Kyo. His look once more became precise, and met Kama's firmly:

filled his youth, that youth itself and all its vanished happiness, upset him too.

Once more the sound of a foot-step: already Kyo was in the doorway.

He led Clappique into his room. A divan, a desk, a chair, blank walls: a deliberate austerity. It was hot in there; Kyo threw his coat on the divan.

"Listen," said Clappique. "I've just been given a l-little tip—you'll be making a big mistake if you don't take it seriously: if we don't clear out of here by tomorrow night, we're as good as dead."

"What's the source of this tip? The police?"

"Bravo. Useless to tell you that I can't say anything more about it. But it's serious. The affair of the ship is known. Lay low, and get out within forty-eight hours."

Kyo was about to say: it's no longer an offense since we have triumphed. He said nothing. He was too well prepared for the repression of the workers' movement to be surprised. This meant that the break had come, which Clappique could not guess; and if the latter was being prosecuted it was because, the *Shantung* having been taken by the Communists, he was believed to be allied with them.

"What do you expect to do?" Clappique went on.

"To think, first of all."

"Profound idea! And have you the cash to get out?"

Kyo shrugged his shoulders with a smile.

"I have no intention of getting out. . . . Your information is none the less of the greatest importance to me," he continued after a moment.

"No intention of getting out! You prefer to be killed?"

"Perhaps. But you want to leave, don't you?"

"Why should I stay?"

minent. And the last troops of the First Division have left the city."

It was the only division on which the Communists could count. Chiang Kai-shek knew it: he had ordered its general to join the front with his troops. The latter had proposed to the Communist Central Committee the arrest of Chiang Kai-shek. He had been advised to temporize, to pretend illness; he had quickly found himself faced with an ultimatum. And, not daring to fight without the consent of the Party, he had left the city, trying only to leave a few troops there. They in their turn had just left.

"They're not yet far off," Kyo continued; "and the division may even return if we hold the city long enough."

The door opened again, a nose was stuck in, and a cavernous voice said: "Baron de Clappique does not exist."

The door shut.

"Nothing from Hankow?" asked Kyo.

"Nothing."

Since his return he had secretly been organizing combat groups against Chiang Kai-shek, like the ones he had organized against the Northerners. The International had rejected all the slogans of opposition, but accepted the maintenance of the Communist shock groups; Kyo wanted to make the new groups of militants the organizers of the masses which were now every day joining the Unions; but the official speeches of the Chinese Communist Party, the whole propaganda of union with the Kuomintang, were paralyzing him. The Military Committee alone had joined him; all the arms had not been given up, but Chiang Kai-shek was demanding this very day that the Communists surrender those still in

shoulders at his childishness: it was indeed the order to hide or to bury the arms.

"I have to go over there right away."

"Over there," was the Central Committee. This meant that he had to leave the concessions. Gisors knew that he could say nothing. Perhaps his son was going to his death; it was not the first time: it was the justification of his life. He had only to suffer and be silent. He took the information given by Clappique very seriously: the latter had saved König's life—the German who was now directing the police of Chiang Kai-shek—by warning him that the corps of cadets in Peking to which he belonged, was to be massacred. Gisors did not know Shpilevski. As Kyo's glance met his he tried to smile; Kyo also, and they did not turn their eyes away: both knew they were lying, and that this lie was perhaps their most affectionate communion.

Kyo returned to his room, where he had left his jacket. May was putting on her coat.

"Where are you going?"

"With you, Kyo."

"What for?"

She did not answer.

"It is easier to recognize us together," he said.

"I don't see why. If you're spotted, it doesn't matter. . . ."

"You'll do no good."

"What good will I do here, during that time? Men don't know what it is to wait. . . ."

He took a few steps, stopped, turned towards her:

"Listen, May: when your freedom was in question, I granted it."

She understood what he alluded to and was afraid: she had forgotten it. Indeed, he added in a duller tone:

Kyo felt some familiar demons stirring within him, which rather thoroughly disgusted him. He had an urge to strike her, to strike directly at her love. She was right: if he had not loved her, what would it matter to him that she should die? Perhaps it was the fact that she was forcing this realization upon him at this moment that he resented most.

Did she feel like crying? She had shut her eyes, and the constant, silent trembling of her shoulders, in contrast with her motionless features, seemed the complete expression of human distress. It was no longer his will alone which separated them, but grief. And, since the sight of grief brings together as much as grief itself separates, he was thrown towards her once more by the expression of her face, in which the eyelids were slowly lifting—as when she was struck with surprise. . . . Above her closed eyes, the movement of her brow ended, and that tense face in which the eyelids remained lowered became suddenly a dead woman's face.

Many of May's expressions had no effect on him: he knew them, he always had the feeling that she was copying herself. But he had never seen this death mask—pain, and not sleep, on closed eyes—and death was so near that this illusion acquired the force of a sinister prefiguration. She opened her eyes without looking at him: her glance remained lost on the blank wall of the room; without a single muscle moving, a tear rolled down her nose, remained suspended at the corner of her mouth, betraying by its inexpressive animation, poignant as pain in animals, a mask which was as inhuman, as dead as it had been a moment ago.

“Open your eyes.”

She looked at him.

“They are open.”

which did not exist—to close in its turn. With her mouth open and quivering, drunk with grief, she was becoming aware that, if she had given him the sign to leave alone, it was because she thought she was making in this way the last, the only move which might have made him decide to take her along.

Kyo had scarcely taken a hundred steps, when he met Katov.

"Isn't Ch'en there?"

He pointed to Kyo's house.

"No."

"You abs'lutely don't know where he is?"

"No. Why?"

Katov was calm, but his face was contracted and pale as though he were suffering from a violent headache. . . .

"There are several cars like Chiang Kai-shek's. Ch'en doesn't know it. Either the police have been tipped off, or they're s'spicious. If he isn't warned he's going to get caught and throw his bombs for nothing. I've been chasing him for a long time, you see. The bombs were to have been thrown at one o'clock. Nothing has happened—we would have known."

"He was to do it near the Avenue of the Two Republics. The best thing to do would be to go to Hemmelrich's."

Katov started off immediately.

"You have your cyanide?" Kyo asked him as he turned to go.

"Yes."

Both of them, and several other revolutionary leaders, carried cyanide in the flat buckle of their belts, which opened like a box.

"Things still bad, upstairs?"

"Not quite so bad. But bad enough. Poor kid! . . . With his skinny body and his big head, he looks like a skinned rabbit. . . . Leave me. . . ."

The Belgian freed himself savagely, stopped, then walked to the other end of the room with a curiously childish movement, as if he were sulking.

"And that's not the worst of it," he said. "No, don't act like a fellow who's got flea-bites and stands squirming and looking embarrassed: I haven't tipped off the police about Ch'en. It's all right. Not yet, at least. . . ."

Katov shrugged his shoulders gloomily.

"You'd better tell me all about it."

"I wanted to go with him."

"With Ch'en?"

Katov was sure, now, that he would no longer be able to find him. He spoke with the calm, weary voice of someone who has been beaten. Chiang Kai-shek would not return before night-fall, and Ch'en could attempt nothing until then.

Hemmelrich pointed with his thumb, over his shoulder, in the direction from which the child's cry had come:

"And there you are. There you are. What do you expect me to do?"

"Wait. . . ."

"Because the kid will die, I suppose? Listen: half the day I wish for it. And if it happens, I shall wish him to remain, *not to die*, even sick, even an invalid. . . ."

"I know. . . ."

"What?" said Hemmelrich, as if he were being robbed. "What do you know about it? You're not even married!"

"I've been married."

"I'd like to have seen that. With your looks. . . . No,

"Becomes a sadist," answered Katov, looking at him quietly.

"Sadism with pins," he went on, "is rare; with words, far from rare. But if the woman is absolutely submissive, if she can survive it . . . I knew a fellow who took and gambled the money which his woman had saved up for years to go to the san'torium. A matter of life or death. He lost it. (In such cases you always lose.) He came home all in pieces, absolutely broken up like you now. She watched him come over to her bed. She understood right away, you see. And then, what? She tried to console him. . . ."

"Easier," said Hemmelrich slowly, "to console others than to console yourself. . . ." And, suddenly raising his eyes:

"Were you the fellow?"

"That'll do!" Katov banged the counter with his fist. "If it was me, I'd say so." But his anger fell immediately. "I haven't gone that far, and it isn't necess'ry to go that far. . . . If you believe in nothing, especially because you believe in nothing, you're forced to believe in the virtues of the heart when you come across them, no doubt about it. And that's what you're doing. If it hadn't been for the woman and the kid you would have gone, I know you would. Well, then?"

"And as we live only for those virtues of the heart, they get the better of you. Well, if you've always got to be licked, it might as well be them. . . . But all that's absurd. It's not a matter of being right. I can't stand the idea of having put Ch'en out, and I couldn't have stood to have kept him."

"We can only ask the comrades to do what they can. I want comrades, and not saints. No confidence in saints. . . ."

"Is it true that you voluntarily went with the fellows to the lead-mines?"

"I was in the camp," said Katov, embarrassed: "the mines or the camp, it's all the same thing. . . ."

"All the same thing! That's not true."

"What do you know about it?"

"It's not true! And you would have kept Ch'en."

"I have no children. . . ."

"I have a feeling it would be less . . . hard for me, even the idea that they'll kill him, if he wasn't sick. . . . I . . . I'm dumb. It's true I'm dumb. And I guess I'm not much of a worker either. I feel like a lamp-post that everything free in the world comes and pisses on."

He pointed once again to the floor above with a movement of his flat face, for the child was crying again. Katov did not dare to say: "Death will free you." It was death that had freed him. Since Hemmelrich had begun to speak, the memory of his wife stood between them. Having returned from Siberia without hope, beaten, his medical studies shattered, and having become a factory worker, convinced that he would die before seeing the Revolution, he had sadly proved to himself that he still possessed a remnant of life by treating a little working-girl who loved him with deliberate brutality. But hardly had she become resigned to the pains he inflicted on her than he had been suddenly struck by the overwhelming quality of the tenderness of a creature who could share his suffering in spite of his brutality. From that moment he had lived only for her, continuing his revolutionary activity through habit, but carrying into it the obsession of the limitless tenderness hidden in the heart of that slightly feeble-minded girl: for hours he would caress her hair, and they would lie in bed together for days on

end. She had died, and since then . . . That, in any case, stood between Hemmelrich and himself. Not enough.

Through words, he could do almost nothing; but beyond words there were the things which gestures, looks, mere presence were capable of expressing. He knew from experience that the worst suffering is in the solitude which accompanies it. To express it also gives relief; but few words come less readily to men's tongues than those of their deep griefs. To express himself badly, or to lie, would give Hemmelrich a fresh impulse to despise himself: he suffered above all from himself. Katov looked at him without focusing his eyes on him, sadly—it struck him once more how few and awkward the expressions of manly affection are :

"You must understand without my saying anything," he said. "There is nothing to say."

Hemmelrich raised his hand, let it fall again heavily, as though he had to choose only between the distress and the absurdity of his life. But he remained standing before Katov, deeply moved.

"Soon I shall be able to leave and continue looking for Ch'en," Katov was thinking.

#### *Six o'clock in the evening*

"The money was delivered yesterday," said Ferral to the colonel, who this time was wearing a uniform. "How do we stand?"

"The Military Governor has sent a lengthy note to General Chiang Kai-shek to ask what he should do in the eventuality of an uprising."

"He wants to be covered?"

The colonel looked at Ferral over the white spot in

all too safe. . . . He could be saved only for moral reasons; hence, by the French government.

The threat of bankruptcy brings to financial groups an intense national consciousness. When their enterprises in distant corners of the world are suddenly threatened with disaster they remember with mingled pride and gratitude the heritage of civilization which their country has given them and which they in turn have helped to pass on to colonial peoples.

It was Ferral's experience that governments are indulgent task-masters, that they treat their favorite children, the big financial groups, with commendable leniency. But while governments are accustomed to seeing the treasury robbed, they do not like to see it robbed of all hope. A treasury that expects, with the tenacious hope of a gambler, to recoup its losses some day is a treasury half consoled. France had suffered a severe loss by refusing aid to the Industrial Bank of China. It was not likely that France, so soon after, would in turn abandon the Consortium and risk the wrath of a whole new army of investors.

But if Ferral were to ask her for help it was essential that his position should not appear hopeless; it was essential first of all that Communism should be crushed in China. Chiang Kai-shek as master of the Provinces meant the construction of the Chinese Railway; the anticipated loan amounted to three billion gold francs, which equaled many million paper francs. To be sure, he would not be the only one to receive orders for materials, any more than he was alone today in defending Chiang Kai-shek; but he would be in on the game. Moreover, the American banks feared the triumph of Communism in China; its fall would modify their policy. As a Frenchman, Ferral enjoyed privileges in China; "it was an ac-

cepted fact that the Consortium would participate in the construction of the railroad." To maintain himself he was justified in asking the government for a loan which it would prefer to a new crash; while his credits were American, his deposits and his stocks were French. All his cards could not win during a period of acute crisis in China; but, just as the Stevenson Plan had in its time assured the life of the Consortium, so the victory of the Kuomintang was to assure it today. The stabilization of the franc had worked against him; the fall of Communism would work for him. . . .

Would he, all his life, never be able to do more than wait, in order to take advantage of them, for the passage of those great tidal sweeps of world economy that began like offerings and ended like blows below the belt? Tonight, in case of either resistance, victory or defeat, he felt himself dependent upon all the forces of the world. But there was this woman upon whom he did not depend, who would presently depend on him; the avowal of submission on her face at the moment of possession, like a hand plastered over his eyes, would conceal from him the network of constraints on which his life rested. He had seen her again in several drawing-rooms (she had just returned from Kyoto three days before), and each time he had been thwarted and irritated by her refusal of all submissiveness, whereby she stimulated his desire, though she had consented to go to bed with him tonight.

In his limitless craving to be preferred—one admires more easily, more completely, from one sex to the other—he called upon eroticism to revive a wavering admiration. That was why he had looked at Valérie while he was lying with her: there is a great deal of certainty in lips swollen with pleasure. He detested the coquettishness without which she would not even have existed in

*have gone to touching lengths to set off my follies, but who have never failed to go straight to their men-friends whenever it was a question of something really human (except of course to be consoled). I must have my whims, not only to please you, but even to make you listen when I speak; I want you to know what my charming folly is worth: it resembles your affection. If any unhappiness could have resulted from the hold you wanted to have on me, you would not even have noticed it. . . .*

*"I have met enough men to know how to regard a passing affair: nothing is without importance to a man the moment it involves his pride, and pleasure allows him to gratify it most quickly and most often. I refuse to be regarded as a body, just as you refuse to be regarded as a check-book. You act with me as the prostitutes do with you: 'Talk, but pay. . . .' I am also that body which you want me to be wholly; I know it. It is not always easy for me to protect myself from the idea people have of me. Your presence brings me close to my body with disgust, as springtime brings me close to it with joy. Speaking of spring, have a good time with the birds. And, by the way, the next time do leave the electric switches alone.*

"V."

He told himself that he had built roads, transformed a country, torn from their straw-huts the thousands of peasants now housed in the cabins of corrugated iron-sheets around his factories—like a feudal lord, like a delegate of empire; in its cage, the blackbird seemed to be making fun of him. Ferral's energy, his lucidity, the audacity which had transformed Indo-China and whose crushing weight he had just felt upon reading the letter from America, led to nothing but this ridiculous bird—

able to use it—with anyone. But he wanted to leave no trace of anger here.

"Take away the empty cages," he said to the "boy."  
"Have them burned."

"If Madame Serge should ask who sent the birds," said the manager, looking at Ferral with admiration, "is she to be told?"

"Won't ask. It's signed."

He went out. He must have a woman tonight. However, he had no desire to go to the Chinese restaurant immediately. It was enough—for the time being—that he was sure there were bodies at his disposal. Often, when he was awakened with a start from a nightmare, he would feel the desire to continue his sleep in spite of the nightmare which would seize him again, and at the same time, the desire to escape it by becoming completely awake; sleep was the nightmare, but it was *himself*; awakening was peace, but the world. Tonight lust was the nightmare. He finally made up his mind to awaken from it, and had himself driven to the French Club: to talk, to enter into relation again with a human being, if only through conversation, was the surest awakening.

The bar was crowded: troubled times. Close to the half-open window, a beige cape of rough wool over his shoulders, alone and almost isolated, Gisors was seated with a sweet cocktail before him; Kyo had telephoned him that all was well and his father had come to the bar to pick up the rumors of the day, often absurd but at times significant: they were not so tonight. Ferral went up to him amid the greetings. He knew the nature of his lectures, but attached no importance to them; and he did not know that Kyo was in Shanghai at the present time. He considered it beneath his dignity to question Martial

"Time occasionally causes this anguish to disappear, time alone. One never knows a human being, but one occasionally ceases to feel that one does not know him (I am thinking of my son, of course, and also of . . . another lad.) To know with one's intelligence is the futile attempt to dispense with time. . . ."

"The function of intelligence is not to dispense with things."

Gisors looked at him:

"What do you mean by 'intelligence'?"

"In general?"

"Yes."

Ferral reflected:

"The possession of the means of coercing things or men."

Gisors smiled imperceptibly. Each time he asked this question the other person, no matter who he was, would answer by producing the image of his desire. But Ferral suddenly became more intense.

"Do you know what was the torture inflicted on women for infidelity to their masters in this country during the first empires?" he asked.

"Well, there were several, weren't there? The most common one, apparently, consisted in tying them to a raft, their hands cut off at the wrists, eyes gouged, and in . . ."

While he was speaking, Gisors noticed the growing attention and, it seemed, the satisfaction with which Ferral listened.

". . . letting them drift down those endless rivers till they died of hunger or exhaustion, their lover bound beside them on the same raft. . . ."

"Their lover?"

How was it possible to reconcile such a slip with his

made a great proclamation of union. Things seem to be straightening out."

"He lies," thought Gisors: "he is at least as well informed as I am."

"Red or Blue," said Ferral, "the coolies will continue to be coolies just the same; unless they have been killed off. Don't you consider it a stupidity characteristic of the human race that a man who has only one life should be willing to lose it for an idea?"

"It is very rare for a man to be able to endure—how shall I say it?—his condition, his fate as a man. . . ."

He thought of one of Kyo's ideas: all that men are willing to die for, beyond self-interest, tends more or less obscurely to justify that fate by giving it a foundation in dignity: Christianity for the slave, the nation for the citizen, Communism for the worker. But he had no desire to discuss Kyo's ideas with Ferral. He came back to the latter:

"There is always a need for intoxication: this country has opium, Islam has hashish, the West has woman. . . . Perhaps love is above all the means which the Occidental uses to free himself from man's fate. . . ."

Under his words flowed an obscure and hidden counter-current of figures: Ch'en and murder, Clappique and his madness, Katov and the Revolution, May and love, himself and opium. . . . Kyo alone, in his eyes, resisted these categories.

"Far fewer women would indulge in copulation," answered Ferral, "if they could obtain in the vertical posture the words of admiration which they need and which demand a bed."

"And how many men?"

"But man can and must deny woman: action, action

alone justifies life and satisfies the white man. What would we think if we were told of a painter who makes no paintings? A man is the sum of his actions, of what he has done, of what he can do. Nothing else. I am not what such and such an encounter with a man or woman may have done to shape my life; I am my roads, my . . .”

“The roads had to be built.”

Since the last shots, Gisors had resolved to play the justifier no longer.

“If not by you, then by someone else. It’s as if a general were to say: ‘with my soldiers I can shoot the town.’ But if he were capable of shooting it, he would not be a general. . . . For that matter, men are perhaps indifferent to power. . . . What fascinates them in this idea, you see, is not real power, it’s the illusion of being able to do exactly as they please. The king’s power is the power to govern, isn’t it? But man has no urge to govern: he has an urge to compel, as you said. To be more than a man, in a world of men. To escape man’s fate, I was saying. Not powerful: all-powerful. The visionary disease, of which the will to power is only the intellectual justification, is the will to god-head: every man dreams of being god.”

What Gisors was saying disturbed Ferral, but his mind was not prepared to welcome it. If the old man did not justify him, he ceased to free him from his obsession:

“In your opinion, why do the gods possess mortal women only in human or bestial forms?”

As if he had seen it, Gisors felt a shadow settling next to them; Ferral had got up.

“You need to involve what is most essential in yourself in order to feel its existence more violently,” said Gisors without looking at him.

Ferral did not guess that Gisors’ penetration had its source in the fact that he recognized elements of his own personality in those he spoke to, and that one could have made the most subtle portrait of him by piecing together his examples of perspicacity.

“A god can possess,” the old man went on with a knowing smile, “but he cannot conquer. The ideal of a god, I believe, is to become a man while knowing that he can recover his power; and the dream of man, to become god without losing his personality. . . .”

Ferral absolutely had to have a woman. He left.

“A curious case of elaborate self-deception,” Gisors was thinking: “It’s as if he were looking at himself through the eyes of a romantic petty bourgeois.” When, shortly after the war, Gisors had come into contact with the economic powers of Shanghai, he had been not a little astonished to discover that the idea he had always had of a capitalist corresponded to nothing. Almost all those whom he met at that time had regulated their love-life according to one pattern or another—and almost always the pattern was marriage: the obsession which makes the great business-man, unless he is just another heir, can rarely adjust itself to the dispersion of irregular sexual experiences. “Modern capitalism,” he would explain to his students, “is much more a will to organization than to power. . . .”

Ferral, in the car, was thinking that his relations with women were always the same, and always absurd. Perhaps he had loved, once. Once. What dead-drunk psychologist had had the idea of giving the name of love to the feeling which now poisoned his life? Love is an exalted obsession; his women obsessed him, yes—like a desire of vengeance. He went to women to be judged, he

he stopped her with a gesture. A distant shot shook the needles on the tray.

"Do you want me to sing?"

"Not now."

He looked at her body, both suggested and hidden by the sheath of mauve silk. He knew she was stupefied: it is not the custom to embrace a courtesan before she has sung, chatted, served food, or prepared pipes. Otherwise, why not choose a prostitute?

"Don't you want to smoke either?"

"No. Get undressed."

He denied her dignity, and he knew it. He had an urge to demand that she take off all her clothes, to make her stand completely naked, but she would have refused. He had left only the night-lamp turned on. "Lust," he thought, "is the humiliation of oneself or of the other person, perhaps of both. An idea, obviously. . . ." She was, for that matter, more exciting as she was, with her clinging Chinese chemise; but he was barely aroused, or perhaps he was aroused only by the submission of this body that was awaiting him, while he did not move. He derived his pleasure from putting himself in the place of the other, that was clear: of the other, compelled; compelled by him. In reality he never went to bed with anyone but himself, but he could do this only if he were not alone. He understood now what Gisors had only suspected: yes, his will to power never achieved its object, lived only by renewing it; but if he had never in his life possessed a single woman, he had possessed, he would possess through this Chinese woman who was awaiting him, the only thing he was eager for: himself. He needed the eyes of others to see himself, the senses of another to feel himself. He looked at the Thibetan painting, placed there without his quite knowing why: on a discolored

world over which travelers were wandering, two exactly similar skeletons were embracing each other in a trance.

He went toward the woman.

*Half past ten at night*

"If only the car doesn't delay much longer," thought Ch'en. In the complete darkness he would not be so sure of his act, and the last street-lights would soon go out. The desolate night of the China of rice-fields and marshes had reached the almost deserted avenue. Dim in the mist, the lights that passed between the slits of the partly open shutters, went out one by one; the last reflections clung to the wet rails, to the telegraph insulators; they gradually grew fainter; soon Ch'en could see them only on the vertical sign-boards covered with gilt characters. This misty night was his last night, and he was satisfied. He would blow up with the machine, in a blinding flash that would illuminate this hideous avenue for a second and cover a wall with a sheaf of blood. The oldest Chinese legend came to his mind: men are the vermin of the earth. It was necessary that terrorism become a mystic cult. Solitude, first of all: let the terrorist decide alone, execute alone; the police derive their whole strength from informers; the murderer who operates alone does not risk giving himself away. The ultimate solitude, for it is difficult for one who lives isolated from the everyday world not to seek others like himself.

Ch'en knew the objections that are made to terrorism: police repression of the workers, the appeal to fascism. But the repression could not be more violent than it was already, nor fascism more obvious. And perhaps Kyo and he were not thinking of the same men. The problem was not to maintain the best elements among the op-

pressed masses in their class in order to liberate it, but to give a meaning to their very oppression: let each one assume a responsibility and appoint himself the judge of an oppressor's life. Give an immediate meaning to the individual without hope and multiply the attempts, not by an organization, but by an idea: revive the martyrs. Pei, writing, would be listened to because he, Ch'en, was going to die: he knew how much weight an idea acquires through the blood that is shed in its name.

Everything that was not identified with his resolute gesture was decomposing in the night in which the car that would soon arrive remained hidden. The mist, fed by the smoke from the ships, was gradually obliterating the streets at the end of the avenue: bustling passers-by were walking one behind the other, rarely passing each other, as if war had imposed an all-powerful order upon the city. The prevailing silence made their movements almost fantastic. They did not carry parcels or baskets, did not push carts; tonight it seemed as if their activity had no purpose. Ch'en looked at all those shadows flowing noiselessly towards the river, with an inexplicable and constant movement; was not Destiny itself the force that was pushing them towards the end of the avenue where the archway on the edge of the shadowy river, illuminated by indistinguishable signs, was like the very gates of death? The enormous characters disappeared in confused perspective, into that blurred and tragic world as if into the centuries; and, as if it, too, were coming, not from general headquarters but from a remote past, the military horn of Chiang Kai-shek's car began to sound faintly at the end of the almost deserted street.

Ch'en gratefully pressed the bomb under his arm. The headlights alone emerged from the mist. And almost immediately, preceded by the Ford of the guard,

PLOWING through the mist, the car entered the long sandy driveway that led to a gambling-house. "I have time to go up," Clappique thought, "before going to the *Black Cat*." He was determined not to miss Kyo, because of the money he expected from him and because this time, perhaps, he would not only warn him, but save his life. He had had no trouble obtaining the information Kyo had asked him for: the spies knew that a movement of Chiang Kai-shek's special troops was planned for eleven o'clock, and that all the Communist Committees would be surrounded. It was too late now to say: "The reaction is imminent." The order must be: "Don't go to any of the Committees tonight." He had not forgotten that Kyo was to leave at eleven-thirty. Some Communist meeting, then, was planned for tonight, which Chiang Kai-shek intended to crush. What the police knew was occasionally inaccurate, but the coincidence was too obvious. If Kyo were warned he could put off the meeting, or, if it was too late, not go there.

"If he gives me one hundred dollars, I will perhaps have enough money: a hundred, and the hundred and seventeen I collected this afternoon in congenial and uniformly illegal ways, two hundred and seventeen. . . . But perhaps he won't have anything. This time there aren't any firearms to turn the trick. Let's first try to manage by ourselves." The car stopped. Clappique, who

governed. What did that ball, hesitating on the edges of the compartments like a dog's muzzle, have to do with money? Through its agency he was embracing his own destiny—the only means he had ever found of possessing himself! To win, no longer in order to take flight, but to remain, to risk more, so that the stake of his conquered liberty would render the gesture even more absurd! Leaning on his forearm, no longer even looking at the ball which continued to roll, more and more slowly, the muscles of his calves and shoulders trembling, he was discovering the very meaning of gambling, the frenzy of losing.

5.

Almost everyone was losing; smoke filled the room together with a dismal relaxation of nerves and the shuffle of counters gathered by the rake. Clappique knew he was not through. Why keep his seventeen dollars? He pulled out the ten-dollar bill and staked it again on even.

He was so sure he would lose that he had not played everything—as if to prolong the sensation of losing. As soon as the ball began to hesitate, his right hand followed it, but the left one remained attached to the table. He understood now the intense aliveness of gambling instruments: that ball was not a ball like any other—like those that are not used for gambling; the very hesitancy of its movement lived: that movement, both inevitable and passive, wavered thus because lives were linked to it. While the ball turned none of the players puffed at his lighted cigarette. The ball entered a red compartment, left it, strayed again, entered that of the 9. With his left hand resting on the table, Clappique made an imperceptible gesture of pulling it away. Once more he had lost.

Five dollars on even: the last counter again.

The ball was describing wide circles, not yet alive. The watch, however, distracted Clappique's eyes from it. He did not wear it on top of his wrist, but underneath, where the pulse is taken. He placed his hand flat on the table and managed to concentrate on the ball. He was discovering that gambling is a suicide without death: all he had to do was to place his money there, to look at the ball and wait, as he would have waited after having swallowed poison; a poison endlessly renewed, together with the pride of taking it. The ball stopped on the 4. Won.

Winning hardly mattered. Yet, if he had lost . . . He won once more, lost once. Again he had forty dollars left, but he wanted to recover the sensation of turmoil of the last play. The stakes were piling up on the red which had not come out in a long time. This compartment, on which almost all eyes were converging, fascinated him too; but to quit the even numbers would be like giving up the battle. He stuck to even, staked the forty dollars. No stake would ever be worth this one: Kyo had perhaps not yet left: in ten minutes he would surely no longer be able to catch him; but now perhaps he could. Now, now he was playing his last cent, his life and that of another, especially that of another. He knew he was sacrificing Kyo; it was Kyo who was chained to that ball, to that table, and it was he, Clappique, who was that ball, which was master of everyone and of himself—of himself who was nevertheless looking at it, living as he had never lived, outside of himself, held spellbound and breathless by an overpowering shame.

He went out at one o'clock: the "club" was closing. He had twenty-four dollars left. The outside air soothed

him like that of a forest. The mist was much lighter than at eleven. Perhaps it had rained: everything was wet. Although he could see neither the boxwood nor the spindle-trees in the darkness, he guessed their dark foliage by their bitter fragrance. "It is r-remarkable," he thought, "how people can say that the player's sensation is caused by his hope of winning! It's as if they said that men fight duels to become fencing champions. . . ." But the serenity of the night seemed to have put to flight, together with the fog, all the anxieties, all the griefs of men. And yet . . . volleys in the distance. "They've begun firing again. . . ."

He left the garden, making an effort not to think of Kyo, began to walk. Already there were fewer trees. Suddenly, through what was left of the mist, a lusterless moonlight appeared upon the surface of things. Clap-pique raised his eyes. The moon had just emerged from a tattered bank of dead clouds and was slowly drifting into an immense, dark and transparent hole like a lake with its depths full of stars. Its light, growing more intense, gave to all those sealed houses, to the complete desertion of the city, an extra-terrestrial life as if the moon's atmosphere had come and settled in the great sudden silence together with its light. Yet behind that scene of a dead planet there were men. Almost all were asleep, and the disquieting life of sleep was in harmony with the desolation of a buried city, as if this life too had belonged to another planet.

"In the *Arabian Nights* there are l-little cities full of sleepers, abandoned for centuries with their mosques under the moon, sleeping-cities-of-the-desert. . . . Which doesn't alter the fact I'm perhaps going to die." Death, even his own death, was not very real in this

where truth no longer existed. It was neither true nor false, but real. And since neither his past which he had just invented, nor the elementary gesture, presumably so close, upon which his relation to this woman was based—since neither of these existed, nothing existed. The world had ceased to weigh upon him. Liberated, he lived now only in the romantic universe which he had just created, strengthened by the bond which all humanity establishes before death. His intoxication was so strong that his hand trembled. The woman felt it and thought it was due to anguish:

"Isn't there a way of—fixing it?"

"No."

The hat, poised on the corner of the table, seemed to be looking at him ironically. He pushed it over on the bench so as not to see it.

"A love affair?" she went on asking.

A volley of shots burst in the distance. "As if there weren't enough who are going to die tonight," she thought.

He got up without answering. She thought her question brought up memories in him. In spite of her curiosity, she felt like begging his pardon, but did not dare. She got up, too. Slipping her hand under the bar, she pulled out a parcel (a syringe, towels) from between two glass jars. They went upstairs.

When he went out—he did not turn round, but knew she was following him with her eyes through the window—neither his mind nor his sensuality had been quenched. The mist had returned. After walking fifteen minutes (the cool night air did not calm him) he stopped before a Portuguese bar. Its windows had not lost their polish. Standing apart from the clients, a slim brunette with very large eyes, her hands on her breasts as if to

protect them, was looking out into the night. Clappique looked at her without moving. "I am like a woman who doesn't know what a new lover is going to get out of her. . . . Let's go and commit suicide with this one."

### Half past eleven at night

In the din of the *Black Cat*, Kyo and May had waited.

The five last minutes. Already they should have left. It astonished Kyo that Clappique had not come (he had collected almost two hundred dollars for him), although he had half expected it: each time Clappique behaved in this way he was so much himself that he only half surprised those who knew him. Kyo had at first considered him a rather picturesque eccentric, but he was grateful to him for having warned him, and was beginning little by little to feel a real friendship for him. However, he was beginning to doubt the value of the information the Baron had given him, and his failure to keep his appointment made him doubt it all the more.

Although the fox-trot was not over, there was a great stir in the direction of one of Chiang Kai-shek's officers who had just come in: couples left the dance, drew near, and, although Kyo could hear nothing, he guessed that some important event had occurred. Already May was moving in the direction of the group: at the *Black Cat* a woman was suspected of everything, and therefore of nothing. She returned very quickly.

"A bomb has been thrown at Chiang Kai-shek's car," she told him in a low voice. "He was not in the car."

"And the murderer?" asked Kyo.

She returned towards the group, came back followed by a fellow who insisted on her dancing with him, but who left her as soon as he saw she was not alone.

volunteers armed with European weapons and having the advantage of attack?

Last month the whole city was for the united revolutionary army; the dictator had represented the foreigner, and the city hated foreigners; the immense petty bourgeoisie was democratic, but not Communist; this time the army was there, menacing, not in flight towards Nanking; Chiang Kai-shek was not the executioner of February, but a national hero, except among Communists. All against the police last month; the Communists against the army today. The city would be neutral, rather favorable to the general. Scarcely would they be able to defend the workers' quarters; Chapei perhaps? And then? . . . If Clappique had been misinformed, if the reaction delayed a month, the Military Committee, Kyo, Katov would organize two hundred thousand men. The new shock groups, composed of thoroughgoing Communists, were taking the Unions in hand; but at least a month would be necessary to create an organization sufficiently strong to maneuver the masses.

And the problem of firearms remained unsolved. What he wanted to know was not whether the two or three thousand guns they possessed ought to be surrendered, but how the masses were to be armed in case of an attack by Chiang Kai-shek. As long as discussions continued, the men would be disarmed. And if the Military Committee, on the one hand, insisted on being given arms, no matter what happened, the Central Committee, knowing that the Trotskyist theses were attacking the union with the Kuomintang, was terrified by any attitude which might, rightly or wrongly, seem to be linked to that of the Russian Opposition.

Now Kyo could just make out the dim lights of the Military Committee headquarters, through the fog that

had not yet lifted, and that obliged him to walk on the sidewalk to avoid the passing cars. Opaque mist and night: he had to light his cigarette-lighter to see his watch. He was a few minutes late. Deciding to hurry, he slipped his arm into May's; she pressed gently against him. After a few steps, he felt in May's body a jerk and a sudden limpness: she was falling, slipping in front of him. "May!" He stumbled, fell on all fours, and, the moment he was starting to get up, received a violent blow from a bludgeon in the nape of the neck. He fell forward on top of her, full length.

Three policemen stepped out from a building and joined the one who had struck the blow. An empty car stood parked a short distance away. They bundled Kyo into it and drove off, binding him only after they were under way.

When May came to (the jerk that Kyo had felt had been caused by a blow below the ribs) a picket of Chiang Kai-shek's soldiers was guarding the entrance to the Military Committee headquarters; because of the mist, she perceived them only when she was almost up to them. She continued to walk in the same direction (she was breathing with difficulty, and was suffering from the blow), and hurried back to Gisors' house.

### *Midnight*

As soon as he had learned that a bomb had been thrown at Chiang Kai-shek, Hemmelrich had run to get news. He had been told that the general was killed and that the murderer had gotten away; but, before the overturned car, the torn-off hood, he had seen Ch'en's corpse on the sidewalk—small and bloody, already drenched

by and watch a slow death, powerless, only able to suffer, as usual—more afraid even than of those cases rid-dled with grenade fragments and spattered with red spots. Through his shoe-soles he could feel the stickiness of the floor. "Their blood." He remained motionless, no longer daring to stir, looking, looking. . . . He discov-ered at last the body of the child, near the door which hid it. He was scarcely breathing, overwhelmed by the smell of the spilt blood. In the distance, two grenades exploded. "No question of burying them. . . ." He locked the door with a key, stood there before the shop. "If they come and recognize me, I'm done for." But he could not leave.

He knew he was suffering, but a halo of indifference surrounded his grief, the indifference which follows upon an illness or a blow in the head. No grief would have surprised him: on the whole, fate this time had dealt him a better blow than usual. Death did not astonish him: it was no worse than life. The thing that appalled him was the thought that behind this door there had been as much suffering as there was blood. This time, however, destiny had played badly: by tearing from him everything he still possessed, it freed him.

He entered the shop again, shut the door. In spite of the catastrophe, of the sensation of having the ground give way under his feet, leaving nothing but empty space, he could not banish from his mind the atrocious, weighty, profound joy of liberation. With horror and satisfaction he felt it rumble within him like a subter-ranean river, grow nearer; the corpses were there, his feet which were stuck to the floor were glued by their blood, nothing could be more of a mockery than these murders—especially that of the sick child: he seemed even more innocent than the dead woman;—but now,

he was no longer impotent. Now, *he too could kill*. It came to him suddenly that life was not the only mode of contact between human beings, that it was not even the best; that he could know them, love them, possess them more completely in vengeance than in life. Again he became aware of his shoe-soles, stuck to the floor, and tottered: muscles were not aided by thought. But an intense exaltation was overwhelming him, the most powerful that he had ever known; he abandoned himself to this frightful intoxication with entire consent. "One can kill with love. With love, by God!" he re-peated, striking the counter with his fist—against the universe, perhaps. . . . He immediately withdrew his hand, his throat tight, on the verge of sobbing: the counter was also bloody. He looked at the brown blot on his hand which was trembling, as if shaken by an attack of nerves: little flakes were falling from it. He wanted to laugh, to weep, to find relief from the awful pressure on his chest. . . . Nothing stirred, and the im-mense indifference of the world settled, together with the unwavering light, upon the records, the dead, the blood. The sentence: "They wrenched off the members of the victims with red-hot tongs," rose and fell in his brain; it was the first time it came back to him since he had read it at school; but he felt that it somehow meant that he must leave, that he too must tear himself away.

At last, without his knowing how, departure became possible. He was able to go out, and began to walk in a state of oppressive well-being which covered over eddies of limitless hatred. When he had gone thirty meters he stopped. "I left the door open on them." He retraced his steps. As he drew near, he felt sobs rising, becoming knotted in his chest below his throat, and remaining

his face, he withdrew with horror and sat down, panting. There was a pad of paper and a pencil on the arm-chair. If he went on in this way he would really go mad. To protect himself from the frightful mirror he began writing to himself:

*You would end up as a king, my old Toto. King: good and warm in a cozy insane-asylum, thanks to delirium tremens, your only friend, if you keep on drinking. But at this moment, are you drunk or sober? . . . You who imagine so many things, what are you waiting for to imagine yourself happy? Do you think . . .*

Someone knocked.

He tumbled down to earth. Rescued but dumbfounded. The knocking was repeated.

"Come in."

A wool cloak, a black felt hat, a head of white hair: old Gisors.

"But I . . . I . . ." Clappique spluttered.

"Kyo has just been arrested," said Gisors. "You know König, don't you?"

"I . . . But I've got nothing to do with it. . . ."

Gisors studied him carefully. "If only he isn't too drunk," he thought.

"You know König," he repeated.

"Yes, I, I . . . know him. I have . . . done him a service. Great service."

"Can you ask him to return it?"

"Why not? But what?"

"As the chief of Chiang Kai-shek's secret police he can have Kyo released. Or, at least, prevent his being shot: you understand it's most urgent. . . ."

"Y-yes. . . . All right."

He had so little confidence in König's gratitude, however, that he had considered it useless and perhaps im-

prudent to go and see him, even after Shpilevski's warning. He sat down on the bed, his nose pointed straight down to the floor. He did not dare to speak. The tone of Gisors' voice convinced him that the latter did not suspect that he was responsible for Kyo's arrest: Gisors saw in him the friend who had come to warn Kyo that afternoon, not the man who was gambling at the hour of his appointment. But Clappique could not convince himself of this. He did not dare to look at him and could not calm himself. Gisors was wondering from what drama or what extravagance he was emerging, not guessing that his presence was one of the causes of his panting breath. It seemed to Clappique that Gisors was accusing him:

"You know, old man, that I'm not . . . anyway that I'm not as mad as all that; I, I . . ."

He could not stop stammering; it seemed to him at times that Gisors was the only man who understood him; and at times that he took him for a buffoon. The old man was looking at him without speaking.

"I . . . What do you think of me?"

Gisors was more inclined to take him by the shoulders and lead him to König's than to talk to him; but beneath what he took to be his intoxication he discerned such a turmoil that he did not dare to refuse to enter into the game.

"There are those who need to write, those who need to dream, those who need to talk. . . . It's all the same thing. The theater is not serious, but the bull-fight is; novels aren't serious, but mythomania is."

Clappique got up.

"Have you hurt your arm?" asked Gisors.

"A twist. Not a word. . . ."

Clappique had awkwardly turned his arm to hide his

how voluptuous it is to live in another person's eyes an altogether different life from his own. Especially a woman's. . . ."

"What woman has not invented a life-history for at least one of the men who have accosted her on the street?"

"You . . . think everyone is a mythomaniac?"

Clappique's eyelids flickered nervously; he walked more slowly.

"No, listen," he said, "tell me frankly: why do you think they aren't?"

He now felt an urge, curiously foreign to himself but very strong, to ask Gisors what he thought of gambling; and yet, if he spoke of gambling he would surely confess everything. Was he going to speak? Silence would have forced him to; luckily Gisors answered:

"Perhaps I'm the person least capable of answering you. . . . Opium teaches only one thing, which is that aside from physical suffering, there is nothing real."

"Suffering, yes. . . . And . . . fear."

"Fear?"

"You are never afraid, with o-opium?"

"No. Why?"

"Ah. . . ."

In truth, Gisors believed that if the world was without reality, men—even those who are most opposed to the world—have an intense reality; but that Clappique, precisely, was one of the rare beings who had none. And this conviction tormented him, for it was into those unsubstantial hands that he was giving over Kyo's fate. Beneath the attitudes of every man there is a base that can be touched, and thinking of his affliction enables one to have an inkling of its nature. Clappique's affliction was independent of him, like that of a child: he was not re-

*that I will surely be able to repay you, within a year, with objects of the same kind, and finer. The food business, in this city . . .*

There followed four pages of explanation.

"It doesn't look very good," thought Clappique, "not good at all. . . ." But an orderly was coming for him.

König was waiting for him, seated on his desk, facing the door. Thick-set, dark, a crooked nose in a square face. He came towards him, shook his hand in a brisk, firm manner that separated rather than united them.

"How are you? Good. I knew I would see you today. I'm glad I was able to be of use to you in my turn."

"You are for-r-midable," answered Clappique, half playing the buffoon. "I'm only wondering if there isn't a misunderstanding: you know I'm not interested in politics. . . ."

"There's no misunderstanding."

"His gratitude is rather condescending," thought Clappique.

"You have two days to get out. You did me a service once. Today I've warned you."

"Wh-what? You? . . ."

"Do you think Shpilevski would have dared? You're dealing with the Chinese Secret Service, but the Chinese are no longer directing it. Enough of nonsense."

Clappique was beginning to admire Shpilevski, but not without irritation.

"Well," he went on, "since you are good enough to remember me, allow me to ask you something else."

"What?"

Clappique no longer had much hope: each new response of König's showed him that the fellowship on which he counted did not exist, or no longer existed.

If König had warned him, he no longer owed him anything. It was more to relieve his conscience than with any hope of success that he said:

"Couldn't something be done for young Gisors? I don't suppose you give a damn about all that. . . ."

"What is he?"

"A Communist. Important, I believe."

"First of all, why is that fellow a Communist? His father? A half-breed? No job? That a worker should be a Communist is idiotic enough, but he! Well, what?"

"It's not easy to summarize. . . ."

Clappique was reflecting:

"Because he's a half-breed, perhaps. . . . But he could have adjusted himself: his mother was Japanese. He didn't try. He says something like this: a will to dignity. . . ."

"Dignity!"

Clappique was stupefied: König was yelling at him. He did not expect that one word to produce such a violent effect. "Have I made a blunder?" he wondered.

"First of all, what does that mean?" König asked, shaking his forefinger as though he had been talking without being understood. "Dignity," he repeated. Clappique could not mistake the tone of his voice: it was that of hatred. He stood a little to the right of Clappique, and his nose, which had a sharp curve at this angle, strongly accentuated his face.

"Tell me, my little Toto, do you believe in dignity?"

"In others. . . ."

"Yes?"

His tone said: "Is this going to go on much longer?"

"You know what the Reds did to the officers who were taken prisoners?"

Clappique was careful not to answer. This was getting

serious. And he felt that this question was a preparation—a help which König was giving himself: he expected no answer.

"In Siberia, I was an interpreter in a prisoner's camp. I was able to get away by serving in the White army, with Semenoff. Whites or Reds—they were all the same to me: I wanted to return to Germany. I was caught by the Reds. I was half dead of cold. They beat me with their fists, calling me captain (I was a lieutenant), till I fell. They lifted me up. I was not wearing Semenoff's uniform with little skulls and cross-bones. I had a star on each epaulette."

He stopped. "He might refuse without making so much fuss," thought Clappique. Breathless, heavy, the voice implied a need which he nevertheless was seeking to understand.

"They drove a nail into each shoulder, through each star. Long as a finger. Listen carefully, little Toto."

He took him by the arm, looking steadily into his eyes, with the look of a man in love.

"I wept like a woman, like a calf. . . . I wept before them. You understand, don't you? Let's leave it at that. No one will lose anything by it."

That lustful look enlightened Clappique. The confidence was not surprising: it was not a confidence, it was a revenge. Beyond a doubt he told this story—or told it to himself—each time he had a chance to kill, as if this tale could rub into the limitless humiliation which tortured him until it bled.

"Listen, little fellow, it would be better not to talk to me too much about dignity. . . . My dignity is to kill them. Do you think I give a damn about China! Yeah! China, no fooling! I'm in the Kuomintang only to kill them off. I live as I used to—like a man, like anybody

such gloating satisfaction at the revelation he had just made that Clappique had no longer any other desire than to leave. Although Kyo had kept his promises, he had made him risk his life without telling him. Would he have risked it? No. Kyo had been right to prefer his cause to him: *he* would now be right to disinterest himself in Kyo. All the more so since in truth he could do nothing. He simply shrugged his shoulder.

"So I have forty-eight hours to get out?"

"Yes. You don't insist. You are right. Good-by."

He says he hasn't had a woman in a year, thought Clappique as he went down the stairs. Impotence? Or what? I would have thought that kind of . . . experience . . . would make a man an erotomaniac. He must make such confidences, as a rule, to those who are about to die: in any case I'd better get out. He could not get over the tone in which König had said: "To live as a man, as anybody . . ." He remained dazed by that complete intoxication, which only blood could satisfy: he had seen enough wrecks from the civil wars of China and Siberia to know that a deep humiliation calls for a violent negation of the world; only drugs, neuroses, and blood insistently shed, can feed such solitudes. He understood now why König had liked his company, as he was not unaware that in his presence all reality vanished. He was walking slowly, and was startled to find Gisors waiting for him on the other side of the barbed wires. What should he tell him? . . . Too late: goaded by impatience, Gisors was advancing to meet him, was emerging from the mist two meters away. He was staring at him with a madman's haggard intensity. Clappique became frightened, stopped. Gisors was already seizing his arm:

"Nothing to be done?" he asked, in a voice that was gloomy but calm.

Clappique shook his head and said nothing.  
“Well. I’ll try to get another friend to do something.”

Upon seeing Clappique come out of the mist, he had realized his own folly. The whole dialogue he had imagined between them on the Baron’s return was absurd: Clappique was neither an interpreter nor a messenger—he was a card. The card had been played—he had lost, as Clappique’s face showed. He would have to find another. Gorged with anxiety, with distress, he remained lucid beneath his desolation. He had thought of Ferral; but Ferral would not intervene in a conflict of this nature. He would try to get two friends to intercede in his behalf. . . .

König had called a secretary.

“Tomorrow.—Young Gisors—here. As soon as the councils are over.”

### *Five o’clock in the morning*

Above the short flashes of the gun-shots, yellowish in the fading night, Katov and Hemmelrich, through the windows of the second story, saw the first leaden reflections of dawn on the neighboring roofs. The outlines of the buildings were becoming distinct. Pale, with their hair disheveled, they could begin to distinguish each other’s features, and each knew what the other was thinking. The last day. Hardly any ammunition left. No popular movement had come to their rescue. Volleys, in the direction of Chapei: comrades besieged like themselves. Katov had explained to Hemmelrich why there was no hope: at any moment Chiang Kai-shek’s men would be bringing the small-caliber guns which the general’s guard had at their disposal, as soon as one of those

cannons could be set up in one of the houses facing the post, mattresses and walls would fall as at a country-fair. The Communists’ machine-gun still commanded the door of that house; when it ran out of ammunition it would cease to command it. Which would be very soon.

For hours they had been firing furiously, egged on by the anticipated vengeance. They knew they were doomed, and killing was the only means of making their last hours count. But they were beginning to be weary of that too. Their adversaries, better and better sheltered, now appeared only at rare intervals. It seemed as if the battle were weakening with the night—and, absurdly, as if the dawning day, which did not reveal a single enemy shadow, were bringing their freedom, as the night had brought their imprisonment.

The reflection of dawn, on the roofs, was turning pale gray; above the suspended battle the light seemed to be inhaling large segments of the night, leaving only black rectangles in front of the buildings. The shadows grew shorter: looking at them helped to avoid thinking of the men who were about to die here. The shadows were contracting as on any other day, with their eternal movement, which today had a savage majesty because they would never see it again. Suddenly all the windows across the street were lighted up, and bullets came beating about the doorway like a volley of pebbles: one of their men had swung out a coat at the end of a stick. The enemy were satisfied to remain on the watch.

“Eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen . . .” said Hemmelrich. He was counting the corpses now visible in the street.

“All that’s a joke,” answered Katov almost in a whisper. “All they have to do is to wait. Daylight is in their favor.”

outside, a kind of bear: a man facing in his direction, his back stooped; he began to climb through the barbed wires.

Hemmelrich had no more bullets. He was watching that mass passing from one wire to another. The wires stood out sharp against the light, but without perspective, so that he was unable to gauge the progress it was making. Like an enormous insect, it hung to a wire, fell back, attached itself again. Hemmelrich drew nearer, along the wall. It was clear that the man would pass; at this moment, however, he was entangled, and was trying with a strange grunting to free himself from the barbs that had caught his clothes, and it seemed to Hemmelrich that the monstrous insect might remain there forever, enormous and knotted, suspended against the gray light. But one hand reached out, black and sharp, to seize another wire, and the body resumed its movement.

This was the end. Behind, the street and the machine-gun. Up there, Katov and his men, on the floor. The deserted house, opposite, was certainly occupied, no doubt by machine-gunners who still had cartridges. If he went out, the enemy would aim at his knees, to make him a prisoner (he suddenly felt the fragility of those small bones, the knee-caps . . .). At least he would perhaps kill this one.

The monster-man, bear and spider combined—continued to disentangle itself from the wires. Alongside of the black mass a line of light marked the ridge of his large pistol. Hemmelrich felt himself at the bottom of a hole, fascinated less by the creature that was moving so slowly, approaching like death itself, than by everything that followed it, everything that was once more going to crush him, like a coffin-lid screwed down over a living person; it was everything that had choked his everyday

*Ten o'clock in the morning*

**T**EMPORARY," said the guard.

Kyo understood that he was being incarcerated in the common-law prison.

As soon as he entered the prison, even before he was able to look around, he was stunned by the frightful smell: slaughter-house, dog-kennel, excrements. The door through which he had just passed opened on a corridor similar to the one he was leaving; right and left, up to the ceiling, enormous wooden bars. Within the wooden cages, men. In the center, the warder seated before a small table, on which lay a whip: a short handle, a flat thong, broad as a hand, thick as a finger—a weapon.

"Stay there, son of a pig," he said.

The man, accustomed to the dim light, was writing out a description of the prisoner. Kyo's head still ached, and standing still made him feel faint; he leaned against the bars.

"How, how, how are you?" someone called behind him.

A disturbing voice, like that of a parrot, but a human voice. The place was too dark for Kyo to make out his face; he could see only enormous fingers clutching the bars—not very far from his neck. Behind, lying down or standing, swarmed shadows that were too elongated for human proportions: men, like worms.

"Could be better," he answered, moving away.

"Beat him up good and plenty," said a voice, "so he'll leave us in peace!"

"Put a stop to it," said four or five voices, "we want to sleep!"

The mandarin, with his hands still stopping up his ears, leaned towards Kyo:

"It's the eleventh time he has beat him in seven days, it seems. I've been here two days—it's the fourth time. And in spite of everything, you can't help hearing it a little. . . . I can't shut my eyes, you see: it seems to me that by looking at him I'm helping him, that I'm not deserting him. . . ."

Kyo was also looking, hardly able to see anything. . . . "Compassion or cruelty?" he wondered, terrified. What is base, and also what is susceptible to fascination in every man was being appealed to with the most savage vehemence, and Kyo was struggling with his whole mind against human ignominy—he remembered the effort it had always required of him to get away from tortured bodies seen by chance: he had literally had to tear himself away. That men could stand by and watch the flogging of a harmless lunatic, who, judging by his voice, was probably old, and approve such torture, called forth in him the same terror as Ch'en's confidences, the night in Hankow—"the octopuses. . . ." Katov had told him what a constraint the medical student must exercise upon himself the first time he sees an abdomen cut open and the living organs exposed. It was the same paralyzing horror, quite different from fear, an all-powerful horror even before the mind had appraised it, and all the more upsetting as Kyo was excruciatingly aware of his own helplessness. And yet his eyes, much less accustomed to the gloom than those of his companion, could make out

"Come in!"

One of the Chinese guards pushed Kyo by the shoulder, but gently; whenever they had to deal with foreigners (and to a Chinaman, Kyo was Japanese or European, but certainly a foreigner) the guards were afraid of the brutality to which they considered themselves obliged. Upon a signal from König the guards remained outside. Kyo stepped forward to the desk, hiding his swollen left hand in his pocket, and looking at this man who was also looking him straight in the eye—an angular face, clean-shaved, nose awry, hair close-cropped. "A man who is no doubt about to have you put to death looks quite like any other." König extended his hand towards his revolver lying on the table: no, he was taking a box of cigarettes. He held it out to Kyo.

"Thanks. I don't smoke."

"The prison-fare is vile, as it should be. Will you have lunch with me?"

On the table, coffee, milk, two cups, slices of bread.

"Only bread. Thanks."

König smiled:

"It's the same coffee-pot for you and for me, you know. . . ."

Kyo was determined to be cautious; for that matter, König did not insist. Kyo remained standing in front of the desk (there was no seat), biting into his bread like a child. After the abjectness of the prison everything had an unreal lightness. He knew that his life was at stake, but even dying was easy for one who returned from the place where he had been. The humaneness of a chief of police inspired him with little confidence, and König remained distant, as though he were separate from his cordiality—the latter held, as it were, at arm's length before him. However, it was not impossible that this man was

"I don't know. And you?"

"I've been told that you are a Communist through dignity. Is that true?"

Kyo at first did not understand. Tense in the expectation of the phone-call, he was wondering what this strange examination meant. Finally:

"Does it really interest you?" he asked.

"More than you can imagine."

There was a menace in the tone, if not in the words themselves. Kyo answered:

"I think that Communism will make dignity possible for those with whom I am fighting. What is against it, at any rate, forces them to have none, unless they possess a wisdom as rare among them as among the others—more perhaps, for the very reason that they are poor, and that their work separates them from their lives. Why do you ask me this question, since you aren't even listening to my answer?"

"What do you call dignity? It doesn't mean anything."

The telephone rang. "My life," thought Kyo. König did not pick up the receiver.

"The opposite of humiliation," said Kyo. "When one comes from where I come, that means something."

The phone was ringing amid the silence. König put his hand on the instrument.

"Where are the arms hidden?" he asked.

"You can leave the phone alone. At last I understand. That call is merely stage-business for my benefit."

Kyo ducked his head: König had been on the point of throwing one of the two revolvers—no doubt empty—in his face; but he put it back on the table.

"I've got something better," he said. "As for the tele-

phone, you will soon see if it was a fake, little fellow. I take it you've seen men tortured?"

In his pocket, Kyo was trying to press his swollen fingers together. The cyanide was in this left pocket, and he was afraid of dropping it if he were to lift it to his mouth.

"At least I've seen men who had been tortured: I've been in the civil war. What puzzles me is why you asked me where the arms are. You know where they are, or you will know it. So what?"

"The Communists have been crushed everywhere."

"It's possible."

"They have been. Think carefully: if you work for us, you are saved, and no one will know it. I'll help you to get away. . . ."

"That's how he should begin," thought Kyo. Nervousness gave him wit, in spite of himself. But he knew that the police did not content itself with vague promises. However, the proposal surprised him as though, by being conventional, it ceased to be true.

"Only I will know it," König went on. "That's all that's necessary. . . ."

Why, Kyo wondered, did he seem to gloat over the words: "That's all that's necessary"?

"I shall not enter your service," he said, almost absent-mindedly.

"Look out: I can lock you up with a dozen innocent men, telling them that their fate depends on you, that they will remain in prison if you don't speak and that they are free to choose their own means. . . ."

"It's simpler with executioners."

"The alternate entreaties and tortures are worse. Don't talk about what you don't know—not yet, at least."

"I have just seen a lunatic practically tortured. A lunatic. You understand?"

"Do you fully realize what you are risking?"

"I have been in the civil war, I tell you. I know. Ours also have tortured: men will need a good many pleasures to compensate for all this. . . . Enough. I shall not serve you."

König was thinking that, in spite of what Kyo was saying, he had not understood his threat. "His youth helps him," he said to himself. Two hours before he had questioned a prisoner who had been a member of the Cheka; after ten minutes he had felt a bond of brotherhood: the world in which they both lived was no longer that of men; henceforth they belonged elsewhere. If Kyo was immune to fear through lack of imagination, patience . . .

"Aren't you wondering why I haven't yet sent this revolver flying into your face?"

"I think I am very close to death: that kills curiosity. And you have already said, 'I've got something better. . . .'"

König rang.

"Perhaps I'll come tonight and ask you what you think of human dignity. . . . To the prison-yard, series A," he said to the guards who were entering.

*Four o'clock in the afternoon*

Clappique mingled in the stir that was pushing the crowd of the concessions towards the barbed wires: in the Avenue of the Two Republics the executioner was passing, his short saber on his shoulder, followed by his escort of Mauserists. Clappique immediately turned

never heard anything else, sing it with reverence. . . . And just imagine, in the Sea of Celebes, ten years ago, I came across some Arabian caravels, adrift, sculptured like cocoanuts and full of corpses—victims of the plague—with their arms hanging like this over the bulwarks, under a whirling cloud of seagulls. . . . Absolutely. . . .”

“You’re lucky. I’ve been traveling for seven years, and I’ve never seen anything like that.”

“You must introduce the means of art into life, my g-good man, not in order to make art—God, no!—but to make more life. Not a word!”

He tapped him on the belly, and turned away prudently: a car which he recognized was stopping at the end of the gangplank—Ferral was returning to France.

A cabin-boy was beginning to pace the first-class deck, ringing the bell of departure. Each stroke resounded in Clappique’s chest.

“Europe,” he thought: “the feast is over. Now, Europe.” It seemed to be coming towards him with the bell that was approaching, no longer as one of liberation, but as of a prison. But for the menace of death he would have gone back on land.

“Is the third-class bar open?” he asked the Russian.

“Been open for an hour. Anyone can go there till we are at sea.”

Clappique took him by the arm:

“Let’s go and get drunk. . . .”

### *Six o’clock in the evening*

In the large hall—formerly a school-yard—two hundred wounded Communists were waiting to be taken out and shot. Katov, among the last ones brought in, was

over: although not a single word had been said, he sensed around him such a startling terror that it made him motionless. In the looks? He could scarcely make them out. In the attitudes? They were, above all, the attitudes of wounded men, absorbed in their own suffering. Yet, however it was transmitted, the dread was there—not fear, but terror, that of beasts, of men who are alone before the inhuman. Katov, without ceasing to lean against the wall, straddled the body of his neighbor.

"Are you crazy?" asked a voice from the level of the floor.

"Why?"

It was both a question and a command. But no one answered. And one of the guards, five meters away, instead of knocking him down, looked at him with stupefaction.

"Why?" he asked again, more fiercely.

"He doesn't know," said another voice, also from the ground, and at the same time, another, still lower: "He'll find out. . . ."

He had uttered the second question very loudly. The hesitancy of the crowd was terrifying—both in itself and because almost all these men knew him: the menace hanging over that wall weighed upon them all, but particularly upon him.

"Lie down again," said one of the wounded.

Why did no one call him by his name? And why did the sentry not interfere? He had seen him, awhile ago, knock down one of the wounded with the butt of his gun, when he had tried to change places. . . . He approached the last one who had spoken and lay down alongside of him.

"That's where they put those who are to be tortured," said the man in a low voice.

could feel each man stiffening. The officer, over there, incorporeal, a shadow between the flickering light of the lantern and the twilight behind him, was giving orders to a sentry. The latter approached, sought Katov, found him. Without touching him, without saying a word, with respect, he simply made Katov a sign to get up. He got to his feet with difficulty, faced the door, over there, where the officer continued to give orders. The soldier, with a gun on one arm, the lantern on the other, came and stood on his left. To his right, there was only the free space and the blank wall. The soldier pointed to the space with his gun. Katov smiled bitterly, with a despairing pride. But no one saw his face, and all those of the wounded who were not in the throes of death, followed him with their eyes. His shadow grew upon the wall of those who were to be tortured.

The officer went out. The door remained open.

The sentinels presented arms: a civilian entered. "Section A," shouted a voice from without, and thereupon the door was shut. One of the sentinels led the civilian towards the wall, grumbling as he went; when he was quite close, Katov, with stupefaction, recognized Kyo. As he was not wounded, the sentinels upon seeing him arrive between two officers had taken him for one of the foreign counselors of Chiang Kai-shek; now recognizing their mistake, they were abusing him from a distance. He lay down in the shadow beside Katov.

"You know what's ahead of us?" the latter asked.

"They've been careful to advise me—I don't care: I have my cyanide. Have you yours?"

"Yes."

"Are you wounded?"

"In the legs. But I can walk."

"Have you been here long?"

"No. When were you caught?"

"Last night. Any way of getting out of here?"

"Not a chance. Almost all are badly wounded. Soldiers everywhere outside. And you saw the machine-guns in front of the door?"

"Yes. Where did they get you?"

Both needed to get away from this death wake, to talk, to talk: Katov, of the taking of the Post; Kyo, of the prison, of his interview with König, of what he had learned since; even before he reached the temporary prison, he had found out that May had not been arrested.

Katov was lying on his side, right beside him, separated from him by the vast expanse of suffering—mouth half-open, lips swollen under his jovial nose, his eyes almost shut—but joined to him by that absolute friendship, without reticence, which death alone gives: a doomed life fallen next to his in the darkness full of menaces and wounds, among all those brothers in the mendicant order of the Revolution: each of these men had wildly seized as it stalked past him the only greatness that could be his.

The guards brought three Chinamen. Separated from the crowd of the wounded, but also from the men against the wall. They had been arrested before the fighting, summarily tried, and were now waiting to be shot.

"Katóv!" one of them called.

It was Lu Yu Hsüan, Hemmelrich's associate.

"What?"

"Do you know if they're shooting us far from here, or near by?"

"I don't know. We can't hear it, in any case."

A voice said, a little beyond:

"Seems that the executioner, afterwards, pilfers your gold teeth."

He had fought for what in his time was charged with the deepest meaning and the greatest hope; he was dying among those with whom he would have wanted to live; he was dying, like each of these men, because he had given a meaning to his life. What would have been the value of a life for which he would not have been willing to die? It is easy to die when one does not die alone. A death saturated with this brotherly quavering, an assembly of the vanquished in which multitudes would recognize their martyrs, a bloody legend of which the golden legends are made! How, already facing death, could he fail to hear this murmur of human sacrifice crying to him that the virile heart of men is for the dead as good a refuge as the mind?

He had opened the buckle of his belt and was holding the cyanide in his hand. He had often wondered if he would die easily. He knew that if he made up his mind to kill himself, he would kill himself; but knowing the savage indifference with which life unmasks us to ourselves, he had not been without anxiety about the moment when death would crush his mind with its whole weight and finality.

No, dying could be an exalted act, the supreme expression of a life which this death so much resembled; and it was an escape from those two soldiers who were approaching hesitantly. He crushed the poison between his teeth as he would have given a command, heard Katov still question him with anguish and touch him, and, at the moment when, suffocating, he wanted to cling to him, he felt his whole strength go outward, wrenched from him in an all-powerful convulsion.

The soldiers were coming to fetch two prisoners in the crowd who could not get up. No doubt being burned alive entitled one to special, although limited, honors:

terrible temptation in his life. In his turn he opened the buckle of his belt. Finally:

"Hey, there," he said in a very low voice. "Suan, put your hand on my chest, and close it as soon as I touch it: I'm going to give you my cyanide. There is abs'lutely enough only for two."

He had given up everything, except saying that there was only enough for two. Lying on his side, he broke the cyanide in two. The guards masked the light, which surrounded them with a dim halo; but would they not move? Impossible to see anything; Katov was making this gift of something that was more precious than his life not even to bodies, not even to voices, but to the warm hand resting upon him. It grew taut, like an animal, immediately separated from him. He waited, his whole body tense. And suddenly, he heard one of the two voices:

"It's lost. Fell."

A voice scarcely affected by anguish, as if such a catastrophe, so decisive, so tragic, were not possible, as if things were bound to arrange themselves. For Katov also it was impossible. A limitless anger rose in him, but fell again, defeated by this impossibility. And yet! To have given *that* only to have the idiot lose it!

"When?" he asked.

"Before my body. Could not hold it when Suan passed it: I'm wounded in the hand too."

"He dropped both of them," said Suan.

They were no doubt looking for it in the space between them. They next looked between Katov and Suan, on whom the other was probably almost lying, for Katov, without being able to see anything, could feel beside him the bulk of two bodies. He was looking too, trying to control his nervousness, to place his hand flat,

at regular intervals, wherever he could reach. Their hands brushed his. And suddenly one of them took his, pressed it, held it.

"Even if we don't find it . . ." said one of the voices.

Katov also pressed his hand, on the verge of tears, held by that pitiful fraternity, without a face, almost without a real voice (all whispers resemble one another), which was being offered him in this darkness in return for the greatest gift he had ever made, and which perhaps was made in vain. Although Suan continued to look, the two hands remained united. The grasp suddenly became a tight clutch:

"Here!"

O resurrection! . . . But:

"Are you sure they are not pebbles?" asked the other. There were many bits of plaster on the ground.

"Give it to me!" said Katov.

With his fingertips, he recognized the shapes.

He gave them back—gave them back—pressed more strongly the hand which again sought his, and waited, his shoulders trembling, his teeth chattering. "If only the cyanide has not decomposed, in spite of the silver paper," he thought. The hand he was holding suddenly twisted his, and, as though he were communicating through it with the body lost in the darkness, he felt that the latter was stiffening. He envied this convulsive suffocation. Almost at the same time, the other one: a choked cry which no one heeded. Then, nothing.

Katov felt himself deserted. He turned over on his belly and waited. The trembling of his shoulders did not cease.

In the middle of the night, the officer came back. In a clatter of rifles striking against one another, six soldiers were approaching the condemned men. All the prisoners

pressed tears, choked him. He picked up at random the first pamphlet which his hand fell on (he never touched Kyo's books, but he knew he would not read it). It was a copy of the *Peking Politics* which had fallen there when they had brought in the body and which contained the speech for which Gisors had been dismissed from the University. In the margin, in Kyo's handwriting: "This speech is *my father's* speech." Kyo had never even told him that he approved him. Gisors folded the pamphlet gently and looked at his dead hope.

He opened the door, threw the opium into the night and came back and sat down, his shoulders drooping, waiting for the dawn, waiting for his grief to be reduced to silence, to become exhausted in its dialogue with itself. . . . In spite of the suffering which half opened his mouth, which cast over his grave face a deforming expression of bewilderment, he did not lose all control. Tonight, his life was going to change: the power of thought is not great against the metamorphosis to which death can oblige a man. He was henceforth thrown back upon himself. The world no longer had any meaning, no longer existed: the irretrievable immobility, there, beside that body which had bound him to the universe, was like a suicide of God. He had expected of Kyo neither success, nor even happiness; but that the world should be without Kyo . . . "I am thrown outside of time"; the child was the submission to time, to the flow of things; no doubt, deep down, Gisors felt hope, as he felt anguish, hope of nothing, expectation, and his love had to be crushed in order that he should discover that. And yet! All that was destroying him found in him an avid welcome: "There is something beautiful in being dead," he thought. He felt the basic suffering trembling within him, not that which comes from creatures or

*Paris, July*

**F**ERRAL, fanning himself with the newspaper in which the Consortium was being most violently attacked, was the last to arrive in the waiting-room of the Minister of Finance: in groups were waiting the vice-director of the *Mouvement Général des Fonds*—Ferral's brother had wisely fallen ill the week before—the representative of the Bank of France, the representative of the principal French business-bank, and those of the credit establishments. Ferral knew them all: one son, one son-in-law, and former officials of the *Mouvement Général des Fonds*; the link between the State and the Establishments was too close for the latter not to consider it in their interest to attach to themselves officials who were favorably received by their former colleagues. Ferral observed their surprise: ordinarily he would have been the first one there; not seeing him there, they had thought he had not been invited to be present. That he should permit himself to come last surprised them. Everything separated them: what he thought of them, what they thought of him, their manner of dress: almost all were dressed with an impersonal carelessness, and Ferral was wearing his wrinkled tweed suit and the gray silk shirt with a soft collar from Shanghai. Two races.

They were almost immediately admitted.

Ferral knew the minister only slightly. Was that facial expression which recalled another age due to his white

the assets which no balance-sheet can indicate, and on the strength of which your aid is requested.

"The first is that the Consortium represents the only French enterprise of its kind in the Far East. Even though it showed a deficit, even though it were on the verge of bankruptcy, its structure would remain intact. Its network of agents, its trading-posts in the interior of China, the connections established between its Chinese buyers and its Indo-Chinese production companies, all that *exists* and can be maintained. I don't exaggerate in saying that, for half the merchants of the Yangtze, France means the Consortium, as Japan is the Mitsubishi Company; our organization, as you know, can be compared in its scope with the Standard Oil. Now, the Chinese Revolution will not be eternal.

"The second point: thanks to the bonds that unite the Consortium to a great part of Chinese commerce, I have participated in the most effective way in the seizure of power by General Chiang Kai-shek. It is now definitely settled that the share in the construction of the Chinese Railways promised to France by the treaties will be given to the Consortium. You know its importance. It is upon this point that I ask you to base your decision in granting to the Consortium the aid which it requests of you; it is because of its presence that it appears to me defensible to wish that the only powerful organization which represents our country in Asia should not disappear—even though it were to leave the hands of those who have founded it."

The representatives were carefully examining the balance-sheet, with which, for that matter, they were already familiar, and which could tell them nothing new: all were waiting for the minister to speak.

"It is not only to the interest of the State," said the

maintain himself in power. According to information we have received, his downfall is imminent."

"The Communists have been crushed everywhere," answered Ferral. "Borodin has just left Hankow and is returning to Moscow."

"The Communists, no doubt, but not Communism. China will never again become what she was, and, after Chiang Kai-shek's triumph, new Communist waves are to be feared. . . ."

"My opinion is that he will still be in power in ten years. But there is no business that does not involve risk."

(Only listen to your courage, he was thinking, which never tells you anything. And Turkey, when it did not reimburse you one cent and was buying war-implements with your money? You never have carried out a single great enterprise by yourselves. When you're through prostituting yourselves to the State, you take your cowardice for wisdom, and believe that to be a Venus de Milo all you need is to be armless—which is going a little far.)

"If Chiang Kai-shek maintains himself in the government," said the soft voice of a young representative with curly hair, "China will recover the autonomy of its customs. What is there to guarantee that, even granting M. Ferral all he assumes, his activity in China will not lose all its value on the day when Chinese laws will suffice to reduce it to nothing? Several answers can be made to that, I know. . . ."

"Several," said Ferral.

"None the less the fact remains," answered the representative who looked like an officer, "that this undertaking is uncertain, or, even admitting that it involves no risk, the fact remains that it involves a long-term credit,

and, in truth, a participation in the activity of an enterprise. . . . We all know that M. Germain nearly brought about the ruin of the *Crédit Lyonnais* through having become interested in Anilin Dyes, which was nevertheless one of the best French ventures. Our function is not to participate in business ventures, but to lend money on guarantees, on short terms. Anything else is outside our field, it's a matter for business banks."

Silence, again. A long silence.

Ferral was wondering why the minister did not intervene. All of them, including himself, spoke a conventional and ornate language, like the ritual languages of Asia: there was no doubt, for that matter, that all this had a considerable Chinese flavor. That the guarantees of the Consortium were insufficient was indeed obvious; otherwise, why was he here? Since the war, the losses suffered by the French Reserve which had subscribed to the stocks or obligations of commercial enterprises recommended by the Establishments and the great commercial banks, amounted to about forty billions—appreciably more than the cost of the Treaty of Frankfort. A bad venture paid a higher commission than a good one, that was all. But a bad venture, to be accepted, had to be submitted by *one of them*—not by an outsider.

They would not pay, unless the minister formally intervened, because Ferral was not one of them. Not married: stories about women that had become known. Suspected of smoking opium. He had turned down the Legion of Honor. Too much pride to be either a conformist or a hypocrite. Perhaps great individualism could be fully developed only on a dung-heap of hypocrisy: Borgia was not a pope by accident. . . . It was not at the end of the eighteenth century among the French revolutionaries, drunk with virtue, that the great in-

to maintain them artificially is the worst service one can render to all. What becomes of the efficacy of competition, which is the very life of French commerce, if doomed enterprises are automatically maintained?"

(My friend, thought Ferral, your Establishment demanded a thirty-two per cent raise in tariffs from the State, just last month; to facilitate free competition, no doubt.)

"... And so? Our business is to loan money on guarantees, as has very justly been observed. The guarantees which M. Ferral offers . . . You have heard M. Ferral himself. Will the State substitute for M. Ferral in this case and give us the guarantees against which we will grant the Consortium the funds it needs? In other words, is the State appealing to our loyalty without offering any compensation, or does it ask us—the State and not M. Ferral—to facilitate an operation of the Treasury, even on a long term? In the first case, of course, it can count on our loyalty, but after all we are bound to consider our stockholders' interests; in the second, what guarantees does it offer us?"

A complete ciphered language, Ferral was thinking. If we were not engaged in playing a comedy, the minister would answer: "I appreciate the comic value of the word 'devotion.' Your principal benefits come from your relations with the State. You live on commissions, which determine the importance of your establishment, and not on independent activities. The State has given you this year one hundred million, in one form or another; it is taking back twenty—bless its name, and calling it quits." But there is no danger of that.

The minister pulled out from a drawer of his desk a box of soft caramels, and passed it around. Each ate one, except Ferral. He knew now what the delegates of the

prises, which would be maintained, would become the affiliates of the Establishments; as for the rest . . . All that had happened in Shanghai was about to be dissolved, here, in a complete meaninglessness. He would have preferred to see himself despoiled, to see his work go on living completely out of his hands, conquered or stolen. But the minister would see only his own fear of the Chamber; he would tear no jackets today. In his place, Ferral would have begun by banishing himself from the Consortium, which would thereby have been rendered more healthy, and would then have maintained it at any price. As for the Establishments, he had always affirmed their incurable avarice. He remembered with pride a phrase of one of his adversaries: "He always wants a bank to be a gambling house."

The telephone rang, close by. One of the attachés entered:

"Monsieur le Ministre, the President of the Council on the private wire."

"Tell him matters are being satisfactorily arranged. . . . No, I'll go myself."

He went out, returned a moment later, gave the delegate of the principal commercial bank (the only one which was here represented) a questioning look. A straight mustache, parallel to his glasses, bald head, weariness. He had not yet said a word.

"The maintenance of the Consortium does not in any way interest us," he said slowly. "A share in the building of the Railways is assured to France by the treaties. If the Consortium falls, another enterprise will be formed, or will develop, and will succeed it. . . ."

"And this new corporation," said Ferral, "instead of having industrialized Indo-China, will distribute dividends. But, as it will have done nothing for Chiang Kai-

shek, it will find itself in the situation in which you would be here, if you had never done anything for the State; and the treaties will be manipulated by some American or British society with a French screen, obviously. To whom you will lend, for that matter, the money which you refuse me. We have created the Consortium because the policy of the French banks of Asia maintained a policy of guarantees that would have led them to make loans to the English in order to avoid making loans to the Chinese. We have followed a policy of risk, it is . . ."

"I did not dare to say so."

". . . obvious. It is natural that we should reap the consequences. The savings will be protected (he smiled with one corner of his mouth) to the extent of a fifty-eight billion franc loss, and not fifty-eight billion and a few hundred million. Let us now examine together, gentlemen, if you wish, the manner in which the Consortium will cease to exist."

### Kobe

In the full light of spring, May—too poor to hire a carriage—was walking up the hill towards Kama's house. If Gisors' baggage was heavy, they would have to borrow some money from the old painter to get back to the ship. Upon leaving Shanghai, Gisors had told her he would seek refuge with Kama; upon arriving he had sent her his address. Since then, nothing. Not even when she had informed him that he had been appointed professor in the Sun Yat-sen institute of Moscow. Fear of the Japanese police?

As she walked she was reading a letter from Pei which

had been delivered to her upon the arrival of the ship at Kobe, when she had had her passport visaed.

*"... and all those who were able to flee Shanghai are awaiting you. I have received the pamphlets. . . ."*

He had published two anonymous accounts of Ch'en's death, one according to his heart: "The murder of the dictator is the duty of the individual towards himself, and must be separate from political action, which is determined by collective forces . . . ,"<sup>11</sup> the other for the traditionalists: "Even as filial duty—the faith which our ancestors have in us—enjoins us to seek what is noblest in our lives, even so it requires of each of us the murder of the usurper." The clandestine presses were already publishing these pamphlets again.

*"... I saw Hemmelrich yesterday. He thinks of you. He is a mounter in the electric plant. He said to me: 'Before, I began to live when I left the factory; now, I begin to live when I enter it. It's the first time in my life that I work and know why I work, not merely waiting patiently to die. . . .' Tell Gisors that we are waiting for him. Since I have been here, I have been thinking of the lecture where he said:*

*"A civilization becomes transformed, you see, when its most oppressed element—the humiliation of the slave, the work of the modern worker—suddenly becomes a value, when the oppressed ceases to attempt to escape this humiliation, and seeks his salvation in it, when the worker ceases to attempt to escape this work, and seeks in it his reason for being. The factory, which is still only a kind of church of the catacombs,*

must become what the cathedral was, and men must see in it, instead of gods, human power struggling against the Earth. . . ."

Yes; no doubt the value of men lay only in what they had transformed. The Revolution had just passed through a terrible malady, but it was not dead. And it was Kyo and his men, living or not, vanquished or not, who had brought it into the world.

*"I am going to return to China as an agitator: I shall never be a pure Communist. Nothing is finished over there. Perhaps we shall meet; I have been told that your request has been granted. . . ."*

A newspaper clipping fell from the letter; she picked it up:

Work must become the principal weapon of the class-struggle. The vastest industrialization plan in the world is at present being studied: the aim is to transform the entire U.S.S.R. in five years to make it one of the leading industrial powers in Europe, and then to catch up with and surpass the United States. This gigantic enterprise . . .

Gisors was waiting for her, in the doorway. In a kimono. No baggage in the hallway.

"Did you receive my letter?" she asked, entering a bare room—mats and paper—whose panels were drawn aside, revealing the entire bay.

"Yes."

"Let's hurry. The ship is leaving again in two hours."  
"I'm not leaving, May."

She looked at him. "Useless to question him," she

thought; "he'll explain." But it was he who questioned her.

"What are you going to do?"

"Try to serve in one of the sections of women agitators. It's practically arranged, it appears. I shall be in Vladivostok the day after tomorrow, and I shall immediately leave for Moscow. If it can't be arranged, I shall serve as a doctor in Moscow or in Siberia. I hope the first thing succeeds. . . . I am so weary of nursing. . . . To live always with sick people, when it isn't for a combat, requires a kind of special grace—and there is no grace left in me of any sort. And besides, the sight of death has become almost intolerable to me now. . . . Well, if I must . . . It is still a way of avenging Kyo."

"Revenge is no longer possible at my age. . . ."

Indeed, something in him was changed. He was distant, isolated, as if only a part of himself were there in the room with her. He lay down on the floor: there were no seats. She lay down too, beside an opium tray.

"What are you going to do with yourself?" she asked.

He shrugged his shoulder with indifference.

"Thanks to Karna, I have been made professor of Occidental art. . . . I return to my first profession, as you see. . . ."

She sought his eyes, stupefied:

"Even now," she said, "when we are politically beaten, when our hospitals have been closed down, clandestine groups are forming again in all the provinces. Our people will never forget that they suffer because of other men, and not because of their previous lives. You used to say: 'They have awakened with a start from a sleep of thirty centuries, to which they will never return.' You also used to say that those who have given a consciousness of their revolt to three hundred million