

THE GREEN CHRYSANTHEMUM

by An Su-Gil

I

“An airplane! An airplane! It’s just like a dragonfly, isn’t it?” Under the clear high dome of the sky, over the clear-cut line of the distant peaks, an airplane appeared with a loud roar of engines. Bunyi paused in her corn harvesting and dropped her hands to her side. With a happy expression on her face, as if she were a child seeing an airplane for the first time, she cried in a clear voice, “So it is!”

Her mother-in-law looked up in the same direction as Bunyi, and the dragonfly shape of the airplane soon grew larger and it came flying over the willows on the river bank.

“How fast it is! It must have our soldiers in it. Oh, it’s too dazzling!”

Bunyi shaded her eyes with one hand and, stretching the other upwards, waved and looked up at the airplane, as it flew above her head, its wings glistening in the sunshine.

“If we were in it, we would get to Seoul in no time at all, wouldn’t we?” said her mother-in-law, who always longing to go to Seoul, as she looked up at the airplane. The thought struck Bunyi that she would like to fly round in the clear, cloudless, vast, and lofty sky in the airplane with Mr. Yi, who had urged her to run away with him when they had met a few nights previously.

The airplane vanished, and the sky and the field once more became quiet, and all that could be heard was the unceasing sound of Bunyi and her mother-in-law gathering corn.

“What are they doing in Seoul? Surely we should hear today,” said her mother-in-law, imagining that the airplane must have reached Seoul by this time, but Bunyi answered in a tone of annoyance, “Mother, are you still thinking of Seoul?”

“Why not? What else is there?”

“Haven’t we escaped from Seoul? What’s the use of brooding on it all the time?”

Her mother-in-law was silent.

“I like this place very much. They talk about caged birds being released. That’s me. I really hate Seoul very much.”

So Bunyi said, but she meant that what she really disliked was not Seoul but her husband’s family there.

“Thin bones grow big even when they quarrel with one another.

Don’t you miss them? It happens that they are your relations. There’s nothing that you can do about that, is there?”

Her mother-in-law answered thus because she realized that Bunyi was not referring to the place. When they had started farming here in the country, she had seen Bunyi become gay and lively, and she remembered her own past life. She felt sympathy for Bunyi, who had spent her youth confined within the Ilgag Gate in Seoul.

“I heard that they were going to move tomorrow. But if we don’t hear today, perhaps they won’t come just yet. Anyhow they have sold their house in Seoul, and I expect that they will come here sooner or later.”

“If they come here, won’t it be just the same as being in Seoul Mother, do you like the idea of their coming here, or do you like it better with only us two farming here?”

Bunyi had come to this family when she was eight years old and had been brought up to be the daughter-in-law. Thus the relationship between her and her mother-in-law was not the usual one. The son, too, had been adopted, and had been brought from the country when he was five years old. So the son and daughter-in-law had both grown up in the same house, but the mother-in-law was naturally fonder of her daughter-in-law, who was strong and healthy, than she was of her foster son, who was a eunuch and had a peculiar character. She thought of Bunyi as her real daughter, and Bunyi thought of her as her real mother and felt very affectionate toward her.

“It won’t be the same as in Seoul. In the first place we can go out and work in the fields as often as we wish. Isn’t that emancipation, the word that’s so popular nowadays?”

“Emancipation? But if grandfather come here from Seoul and sits inside curled up like a cat, holding forth interminably and tapping with his pipe, how will we be any better off than we were inside the Ilgag Gate in Seoul? The old man’s not going to die just yet, is he?”

Bunyi knew that her mother-in-law shared her dislike of her grandfather, and so she could speak her mind without restraint, but the last sentence of her complaint seemed to be aimed at her own husband rather than at her grandfather.

“Nonsense!” Her mother-in-law rebuked her to maintain her own dignity as her elder and even glared at her, but she quite realised what Bunyi meant.

Her husband was a most peculiar character. His body smelt foul, and he used to eat onions and garlic to strengthen his energies and thoughtlessly breathed the strong smell out of his mouth. He used to bite and scratch Bunyi every night with his hands and legs as thin as the whitened bones of a skeleton. When Bunyi thought of this husband of hers and that he would come up here and treat her in the same way, her feelings of gaiety turned at once to gloom.

II

Bunyi was the daughter of a peasant. Her father had seven children, but as a tenant farmer he made scarcely enough to live on, and in the end he was obliged to sell Bunyi to a former palace eunuch in Seoul, one Gim Dong-Zi, to be his granddaughter-in-law. Then he left for North Gando in Manchuria. Bunyi was eight years old, and did not realise that Gim Dong-Zi was a eunuch. She did not even know what a eunuch was. She was just unhappy and sad to leave her parents and to be parted from her younger brother and sisters. At first she refused to go, and her mother wept, but the water had already run out of the overturned pot. Bunyi and her mother had barely time enough to embrace and shed tears, and then she was led away to the residence of Gim Dong-Zi in Seoul, followed by his tenants, and was confined within the Great Gate of his house.

When Bunyi came to live with the eunuch he was living in a mansion of fifty gan in Waryong-dong. The house was built on rather a small scale on a special plan as the houses of eunuchs used to be. It had many gates, the Outer Great Gate, the Inner Great Gate, the Ilgag Gate, the Inner-Middle Gate and the Innermost Gate; the women’s quarters were in the innermost place of all within all these gates.

As was usual in the house of eunuchs in the old days no other male was allowed to come into the house and even the mother of a girl sold to such a house to become the daughter-in-law was not allowed to pass the Ilgag Gate. And when once a girl had passed inside the Ilgag Gate, she was obliged to stay within for the rest of her life, as if she were confined to prison.

Under the strict watch of Mr. and Mrs. Gim Dong-zi, Bunyi was not allowed to go even one foot outside this Ilgag Gate. She spent every day within and grew in the affection of her mother-in-law. When the eunuch bridegroom reached the age of nine years and Bunyi was twelve, a betrothal ceremony was held for them. One night in the inner room within the firmly locked Ilgag Gate, where not even a kitten could attend, the tragic marriage had taken place.

Though as yet an awareness of sex had not yet stirred in Bunyi, she seemed dissatisfied with her husband from the time they got into bed on their wedding night. As she grew older, her feelings of hate and contempt for him gradually grew stronger and she became unhappy and frustrated. And moreover, as she grew more mature physically, she could not but feel her impulses more and more pent up because she could not freely go out into the outside world as she wished, and she could not find any pleasure in life without doing so. Of course, as he grew up, her husband, the eunuch Bag, tried to treat his wife more considerately. But she felt as great an aversion to her husband coming close to her as if he had been a snake. Sometimes in the darkened room she kicked her husband's scraggy chest roughly. Sometimes she twisted his skinny arms and cast them from her violently. And she often sighted and wept bitterly at her unhappy lot. Some-times she felt pity for the miserable wretch who was her husband as she felt pity for the miserable wretch who was her husband as he lay pale and panting, having fallen or having been knocked down.

Perhaps his parents had been driven by poverty to sell him for a small sum of money, or perhaps they had sent him to the then wealthy home of Gim Dong-Zi, so that he could live in luxury, despite his miserable state-s-he did not know how he had become the old eunuch's foster-son. At all events he too was a fatally accursed eunuch. He had come to this house at the age of five. When he had finished his primary schooling, he had gone to a high school just like other boys, but his fellow pupils used to despise and mock him, shouting "Eunuch, eunuch!", so that he became a laughing-stock. He was as weak in character as Jn physique. He went right through the primary school while he was still a child, but he could not endure the high school. He left school when he was in the third year class, and then in his disappointment he usually stayed confined to the house. The only person he could love and trust with his heart was his wife, Bunyi. But she was a vigorous woman, while he was an incapable man, so that there lay a great barrier between them which he found utterly unsurmountable. He could not but bemoan his unhappy fate and sympathise with his wife. That he should torment his wife was due to his feelings of inadequacy towards a healthy woman, but to his wife it caused nothing but pain. So she used to kick him and twist his arms.

At first Bunyi had tried to understand her husband's feelings and had felt sorry for him, but as the days passed he gave himself up more and more to unpleasant practices and caused his wife ever greater pain, so that he alienated her sympathy and understanding and she came to feel only hatred and horror towards him. When he vexed her and she became angry, she not only kicked him and twisted his arms, but she also pinched him and squeezed his neck as he lay prostrate. As time passed he became quite accustomed to this wife's ill-treatment of himself, and to be amused

by her attacks. He would go out of his way to irritate her so that he could enjoy her assaults upon him. Bunyi did not like his purposely annoying her. She hated him with the horror she felt for a snake which would still drag itself along though cut in two.

So as well as the wide sky beyond the Ilgag Gate Bunyi longed for a vigorous man—a man strong in mind and body, a man who could carry her on his back across high mountains and who would beat her when she erred and would afterwards make things up with her again.

When she came to the village, Bunyi found such a man in the person of one of Bag's employees, one Yi. She got to know Yi and felt all the more that her husband was a worthless and hateful person. She used to go and meet Yi secretly. When she heard the news that their father-in-law and husband were going to come down from Seoul to live there she became gloomy and dispirited.

III

Dense clouds of steam billowed out of a Japanese style kettle which stood on the stove made of a petrol tin with holes in it. An appetising smell of boiling corn filled the air. Bunyi tossed a handful of the husks and awns of corn on the fire and stood up. She asked her mother-in-law to look after the fire and went out to the well, carrying a water-jar on her head.

The well was situated near Yi's field. It might almost have been arranged to let her meet Yi privately that the well had been dug in that place. Almost every time she went there, she could see Yi working in his field. Of course she could not speak to him near the well, for she was afraid someone might see them. But when she saw the sturdy and vigorous Yi squatting there like a great rock as he tore out weeds by the roots she felt really happy. Though the well was rather a long way from the house and she had to cross a small hill to get to it, she always went gladly to fetch water because of this.

This time however she could not see Yi. She thought that perhaps he had gone down to the rice-field. So she had to go home again, dragging disappointed steps over the hill with the water-jar on her head.

"I've just heard they are coming tomorrow," said her mother-in-law, ladling the boiled corn from the kettle to a bowl.

"Oh, they are really coming?"

Bunyi stood a few minutes in a daze with her water-jar on her head and seemed to have forgotten all about it, under the shock of this bitter disappointment and surprise.

"Ri has been to Seoul, and he just dropped in with the news."

"Oh, whatever shall I do?"

Her mother-in-law took no notice and went on ladling out the honed corn, but Bunyi was greatly puzzled.

The eighth eunuch ancestor of her grandfather-in-law had held a title of the highest honour, "Right Honorable Gentleman of Happiness and Goodness, Second Rank, Second Grade." He had acquired great wealth by arranging official appointments, such as county-magistrate, for those who aspired to them. All this wealth had been dissipated by his adopted son and grandson, who were eunuchs too and lived in idleness, having no particular duties. By the time it came to Bunyi's grandfather, all that remained were the farm fields at Yongin, which produced a couple of hundred sog, and large residence with an area of 80 gan in Gahwoe-Dong.

The eunuch Gim stood in high favour with King Sun-Zong and lived in luxury on the fortune he had inherited from his predecessors, and this not only in the old days but also after the system of palace eunuchs had been abolished. He held the same honourable title, Dong-Zi, which had been bestowed on his eighth predecessor. So he was known as Gim Dong-Zi, and he was as influential as a fairly rich man. But as the years passed by his fortune gradually dwindled, primarily because of his adopted son, though the eunuch Czoë, the husband of Bunyi's mother-in-law, was a man of some importance. He persuaded his father, who was proud of the honorable title bestowed on his eighth predecessor and who used to sit in an attitude of arrogant dignity, to agree to his mortgaging the farmland at Yon-In, then he set up in business. He opened a big dried-fish shop in the market place at Dong De-Mun, the Eastern Great Gate, and soon became well known among the traders on such commodities. He had branches in the ports of Inczon, Wonsan, Pohang and Busan which kept him busy. But in the end he failed. He fell ill with nephritis and was confined to bed, and when his business failed completely he died. Gim Dong-Zi ignored the Bank's demands on the grounds that his son's venture was no concern of his, but in the end he had to sell more than half the mortgaged land to settle the debt.

When Gim's son died and he lost more than half his land he was forced to effect economies in his household. The house of eighty gan in Gahwoe-Dong where the family had lived for generations he exchanged for one of fifty gan. And now the eunuch Yun, whom he had adopted to be his grandson, and the husband of Bunyi, stole money and ran away. This was immediately after the Sino-Japanese hostilities in Manchuria, and he ran off to Manchuria with the money. A widespread search was undertaken, and after a month he was caught and taken back home, but he had spent all the money. So he was sent back to his parents, and the eunuch Bag, the present husband of Bunyi, was adopted in his place. It was now that Bunyi was brought to the house. His was not a large family, but they spent money freely, just like eating dried persimmons one by one, and lived in idleness. They had to pay rates and taxes to the government, and their Living expenses mounted daily. Their fortune decreased considerably after Bag was sent to high school. The house of fifty gan in Waryong-Dong was sold and they moved to one of thirty gan in Gye-Dong. Then they lived on the profit they had made by selling the house and on the income from their land. But when the Second World War began the government collected all agricultural produce, and so the household of Giro Dong-Zi was seriously threatened. So they sold half of the land that was left, and then the next year half of the remainder, but even so he could not support his family properly. After the Liberation he had a short breathing space, but new regulations were brought in whereby the tenant took seventy percent of the produce of a farm and the landlord thirty percent. On top of this came inflation, so that he found it impossible to support his family. Bunyi's husband found a post in the administration, enlarged in the post-war Liberation period, but it was only on a very low grade, and his salary was not high. And so they were obliged to leave the house of thirty gan in Gye-Dong and move to a thatched house of only ten gan.

In this way Gim Dong-Zi, now more than seventy years of age, who had proudly borne an honorable title, at last lost the final shreds of his former dignity and was reduced to the status of a common eunuch in plain clothes. He became a garrulous old man who plagued his daughter-in-law and his granddaughter-in-law with talk, squatting like a cat in his room.

But he could not live by talking and keeping watch on his family, and so he sent his women-folk to Yong-In, parting from them with tears and sighs. He meant them to work the farm for themselves. About this time the new government was planning a new agricultural system whereby landlords might keep their land if they worked it themselves. It was for this reason that he sent the women of his family to the country. He appealed to his tenants to let him have some of his land back, and the previous spring Bunyi and her mother-in-law had started farming there. Gim Dong-Zi felt uneasy about sending only the women on their own, but his son still had his post. Moreover in the country a eunuch would only be something of a curiosity, whereas in Seoul there would still be some people who would respect his title. Furthermore he had now fallen to the level of a beggar, and he feared that he might be a laughing-stock as well as a curiosity. In times gone by he had owned much land in the village, and he was well known to the villagers, and so he feared that if he went and lived there he would feel a sense of shame. So he tried to remain in Seoul as long as possible, but when the government reduced its staff and threw his grandson out of a job, it became impossible for him to stay in Seoul. Therefore he now sold his house in Seoul and decided to move to the country permanently.

IV

The moon was high in the sky and the fields were silvered in its light, but all was dark in the shadows of a cleft in the hillside made by a landslide. Concealed by the darkness Bunyi and Yi sat talking side by side.

“Can you come away with me tomorrow?” “Let me think.”

“Is there anything not settled?”

“I don’t mean that, but “

“What then?”

Yi clasped Bunyi tightly in his strong arms. Bunyi buried her face in his breast which made her think of a rocky cliff, and at the smell of his sweat she tingled with excitement that transported her to the heights of ecstasy.

Yi now expected to get a job in Pazu from old Bag’s uncle who was in need of men to work for him. The next day was market day and a propitious day for his journey, so it was arranged that he should start the following morning. Yi did not want to leave old Bag, of whom he was very fond, but his uncle, who often came to the house, seemed to be a good man and persuaded Yi to accept his offer of employment. He even offered to find him a wife. And this was why he was so anxious to find out what Bunyi wanted, for he could be married without difficulty in his new place.

“If I go there, he may start talking about my marriage, and you haven’t made up your mind yet. That’s what’s troubling me, can’t you see?”

“You can get yourself a wife there, if you like.”

Bunyi was much displeased to hear him talk of marrying someone else, and she pushed herself away from him and sat down. She still could not make up her mind to leave with him the next morning. She was worried about what might happen to her mother-in-law if she were not there.

The eunuch Czoë, her mother-in-law’s husband, was quite different from Gim Dong-Zi and was fond of his wife, and sympathised with her in her misfortune at becoming the wife of a man like himself. He used to ponder on ways to make his wife as happy as lay in his power. He often went to the country and used to bring her

back seaweed and fruits in season. At the supper table he would tell her all the experiences of his day one after the other. Moreover he was generous towards his wife's family. He gave her parents a sum of money and bought a house for them without the knowledge of Gim Dong-Zi. He put up capital, too, for her brother to open a dried fish shop in Yang-Zu. In such ways he made it possible for his wife to endure her wearisome life within the Ilgag Gate, for her family benefited by it. But after his death, life was not so easy for her parents, and though she gained a certain relief from becoming a widow, it became almost unbearable for her to think of her parents. She tried to forget all these things, lavishing her love on Bunyi, until she reached the age of sixty-three, and through all these years she preserved her chastity. If she had lost her daughter-in-law, she would have put an end to her life.

Bunyi understood the depth of her mother-in-law's affection, and she felt obliged to hesitate in the face of Yi's urgent demands. But he did not feel the same delicacy in the matter and pressed her for an answer.

"Are you coming with me in the morning?" Bunyi was silent.

"Since we will be leaving this place for good and not coming back again, we won't have to run away at night. Old Dong-Zi will come down from Seoul when we are gone Let us go courageously in the daytime."

"You sound like an ignorant fellow, you know."

"What? Ignorant? He's just a eunuch and a beggar. Are you still so afraid of old Dong-Zi? He's still got a stronger influence over you than anyone else, hasn't he?"

"That will be enough!" snapped Bunyi and glared at him, but Yi's foolhardy yet self-reliant nature exercised too powerful an attraction on her, and she gave in and forgot her mother-in-law's affection.

They sat in silence for a few moments. Then, with a serious expression on his face, Yi began, "Well, they expect me to go in the morning. I shall leave as arranged, and then you can follow me at night. There is a cold-noodle restaurant in the town by the street of the cattle market. Go there and ask for Zang-Swoe, and they will tell you where I am. Do you understand? I will wait for you."

v

The corn Bunyi ate for lunch gave her indigestion, and she had pains in her stomach. Her parting from Yi had given her a headache on top of her stomach ache. She went to the toilet for a while and then went back to the house.

"Where have you been?" her mother-in-law asked her when she opened the door. She had apparently been waiting for her.

"To the toilet, Mother," she replied, as she came into the room.

Her mother-in-law did not like her to go outside at night. She had gone to bed early, but these days she seemed to keep an eye on Bunyi's going out of doors at night.

"It's a bad habit to get into, to go to the toilet at night, I say!" said her mother-in-law. She seemed to mean that going to the toilet was not a good excuse.

"I think I've got indigestion from the corn I had for lunch, Mother. I've still got a sharp pain in my stomach," Bunyi replied. By the faint moonlight that came in through the window her mother-in-law saw her clutching her stomach and she said with worried look, "Let me see. Is it very painful?" She came over to Bunyi and stroked her stomach with her hand.

Bunyi remembered that before she had come to live with Gim Dong-Zi her own mother had soothed her by rubbing the painful place whenever she had fallen over or had stomach ache as a child. Her mother used to say, "I have a magic hand. The magic hand will make you better." So suddenly Bunyi missed her own family, of whom she had had no news since they had gone to North Gando in Manchuria. In her heart she was deeply appreciative of her mother-in-law's love for her, which was no less than that of her own mother.

"I'm all right, Mother," she said, as her mother-in-law rubbed her body both her stomach ache and her uneasiness of heart grew less. When after a few moments her mother-in-law left her and went back to bed, her worries returned, and she could not sleep. Which was it to be? Her mother-in-law or Yi? She found herself at the crossroads where she must choose one or the other of those she loved. She tossed this way and that in bed and sighed.

"Have you still got a pain in your stomach?" her mother-in-law asked. She too seemed to be unable to sleep, late as it was, so long as Bunyi was in pain.

"No, Mother," she replied. "Then why can't you sleep?" "I don't know."

"You don't know," said her mother-in-law and got out of bed. "you are worried about something, aren't you?"

"What would I be worried about?"

Her mother-in-law spat out of the window, and the moonlight stole silently into the room.

"How bright the moon is!"

"It's the seventeenth, isn't it, Mother?"

"I have often felt very lonesome, looking at the moon on an autumn night."

"You have too, Mother?"

Her mother-in-law closed the window without answering. "Mother, what would you do if I were not with you?" asked Bunyi.

She was not going to miss this chance now that her mother-in-law had become very sentimental. She wanted to pour out all the secrets of her aching heart. Her mother-in-law was astonished, and said, "What do you mean? Not with me?" And she came nearer. Her mother-in-law's firm attitude rather shook Bunyi's resolve, and she felt too ashamed to disclose her intimate relationship with Yi.

"I just meant. ..." she began and then shut her mouth tight. But Bunyi's recent behaviour had made her mother-in-law suspicious, and there were rumours going around. So she would not let the matter drop.

"What did you want to say to me" Bunyi did not reply.

"You won't try to deceive me, will you?" Still Bunyi would not reply.

"Is it true that you meet Yi often? Bunyi was silent.

Her mother-in-law grew impatient at Bunyi's refusal to answer, as if she were a Buddha made of stone. For a few moments neither spoke. Then her mother-in-law began, "I know everything. I've heard some strange rumours too. After your confinement behind the Ilgag Gate, it was rather to be expected that the freedom of this place should give you an idea like that. But what right have you or I to expect happiness in life. How could it come about that you were sold to this house unless you had been fated to a truly evil future? One cannot escape from one's fate, I tell you. I can understand what you intended to do and what you had in your mind. You might as well try to toss aside the Ilgag Gate and roam freely in the world. They say that the greatest pleasure is that of a man and a woman, and so you must wonder

how precious youth can be cast aside to no purpose. Yes, you will Jong for a happy married life, to find the most suitable man and to give birth to sons and daughters. But the world does not shape itself to suit our desires, does it? Do you think that if we throw open the Ilgag Gate there will be any who will welcome us with pleasure? You may find someone who will accept you, but he may mean to take you for his passing pleasure only. How can we trust the men of this world? There may be some man who will love you wholeheartedly for the moment, but how can you be sure of his everlasting devotion? There are so many young women in the world that to love a eunuch's wife can be no more than a passing whim, I tell you. Look here, it was fated that we should not be happy. How can you be sure he will not cast you aside some day? You lived so long within the Ilgag Gate, gazing up at a narrow strip of sky, so how can you know all about life? And yet you now want to embark upon a wild adventure, don't you? Bear in mind that the man who is pursuing you now may one day let you down. Will you be better off than you were within the Ilgag Gate? The Ilgag Gate is not what it was. We can now come out and work by ourselves in the open fields like this. Isn't this 'liberation?' And your grandfather and your husband may not treat us so badly now, since the great misfortune has befallen them on having to come and live in a thatched house in the country So you and I had better not have such wild ideas. We were fated to be unhappy, weren't we? We must rely on each other. I shall love you like daughter, or in a way, as my husband. Then you can rely on me as you would on our own mother as well as your mother-in-law. And when I die, you may arrange my funeral with your own hands, and you will observe the customary rites with all sincerity "

Her mother-in-law sighed deeply and went on, "If you leave me, on whom can I rely, how shall I live?"

Then she blew her nose on the band of her skirt. Bunyi felt her eyelids hot with tears as she listened to her gentle and sorrowful words, so full of sincerity. Her tears fell fast, and her pillow was wet. In this way Bunyi suffered the whole night long. Her mother-in-law, Yi, the eunuch Bag, Gim Dong-zi, the Ilgag Gate, the village in Pazu, the girl who might become the wife of Yi—they all passed confusedly through her brain, and she worked herself almost into a frenzy.

VI

The next morning dawned bright and clear, a beautiful autumn day just like the previous one. Bunyi got up early as usual. She seemed quite calm and collected and betrayed 'no sign of the agonies she had suffered in the night. She went and fetched water, cooked the breakfast, and went out for a while into the fields as usual with a towel wrapped round her head. Then she came back to the house and rolled up the mat in the inner room. She sprinkled water on the floor and swept up all the dust. She beat the mat with a stick and put it back in its place. She wiped the wooden floor with a cloth. Then she swept every corner of the garden and put rows of stones around the flower beds to make them neat. She mended the holes in the kitchen floor neatly with mud.

Her mother-in-law was relieved to see her work so well. She thought that she must have taken her advice of the night before to heart and have settled down. This idea made her feel grateful to Bunyi, and at the same time she felt sorry for her.

After lunch a boy called Dolswoe, who lived in the next village, called at the house on this way back from an errand to the fishmonger. He had with him a parcel,

tied with straw string, containing two salted mackerel, and four dried polacks fastened with straw rope. They were to be offered at a service in the evening. He reported that he had met Gim Dong-Zi and the eunuch Bag resting near Yun Zang-I's shop in the fish market. They had a horse and cart loaded with all their furniture. Gim Dong-Zi asked the boy to tell this family that he would soon be there and what he wished them to come out to meet him.

"He said his leather bag was very heavy," the boy went on. "So I offered to carry it for him, but he said it was not the sort of thing for me to carry. It must have had something very important in it, I should say. If they started soon after I left them they should be near the Pear Village by now, however slow they might be walking. So you had better hurry off to meet them, or will take it out on me afterwards."

The boy was the son of one of Gim Dong-Zi's tenants and knew all about Gim, for he used to come down from Seoul and complain imperiously about the harvest. When he had delivered his message, he went on home.

Her mother-in-law would have liked to send Bunyi, but she went herself instead because Gim Dong-Zi would have reproached her if she had sent the young woman to meet them alone. So she said to Bunyi, "I will go and meet them, and you stay here." She tidied her clothes and went out.

Less than an hour later Gim Dong-Zi, his adopted grandson the eunuch Bag, and Bunyi's mother-in-law came into the house. The garden was swept so clean that not the slightest trace of steps was to be seen. The hoes, rakes and sickles were stacked in the place set aside for them. There was not a speck of dust on the wooden floor, so clean had it been wiped. The garden and the house stood silent. But there was no sign of Bunyi either in the garden or in the house. "Where has Bunyi gone?" Gim Dong-Zi screeched furiously, in a voice like a cat's. Her mother-in-law was greatly taken aback. The eunuch Bag crept stealthily to the back garden to find Bunyi, whom he had missed so much. "As!" he cried in great alarm when he got there and looked at the peach tree. "Bunyi's hanged herself!"

The flowers under the hedge were a fresh and vivid red, bathed in the bright sunshine of the autumn afternoon.

(September 29th, 1949.)