

A BAD NIGHT

by Gim Gwang-Zu

I opened my eyes. My bed felt a little uncomfortable. I opened both my eyes, surprised, as if I were waking from a horrible dream. I clearly heard, a clock somewhere strike three, "Dong, dong, dong." Next I heard, I was sure, the sound of rain falling heavily.

How strange! It did not seem to be my house at all. In the first place, I had never woken up in my room at home at three in the morning and I had never heard a clock striking like that,

But there I was, still lying down, with all my limbs stretched out to their full length, like the Chinese Character "to be big." The first thing that struck my eyes was the ceiling, which was wide, high square, and painted a clean white. However hard I stared at it, looking straight up as I lay flat on my back, I could not make it into the ceiling of my own room.

If it had been the ceiling of my own room at home, it would not have been so high and regularly square as this one, and there would have been the bloody spots of squashed bed-bugs, the droppings of flies, ugly traces here and there of repairs, soil plastered on it, and pieces of paper pasted on it wherever it had leaked in the rainy seasons. But the ceiling at which I was looking as I lay there was a neat, regular, white one, far different from the one of my room.

Then where was I lying? I turned my head slowly to the right, my mind full of doubt. The colour of the wall too, was not the colour of that of my room. The way the wall was covered with flowery wallpaper and the delicate panes of the low windows of the Japanese style 'syoozi' which occupied the whole space from the middle to the corner of the wall near my head—all this showed me that this was not my room.

Where was I lying? In a hotel? In a friend's house? But it could not be that.

There was the wall on the right at which I went on staring, still lying quietly: and there, between me and the wall, a small quilt was spread, and a little child of about four or five was sleeping on it.

Might it be my own daughter, four years old, sleeping beside me?

But it could not be she! My daughter would have been sleeping with her hair dishevelled, but this child had her pretty bobbed hair neatly combed. What was more, though her eyes were closed, her snub nose and tightly shut mouth—these showed that she was prettier and cleaner than my own child.

Further, there was a big toy-box in good order near her head, and in it a western doll with two bright blue eyes, and plates and dishes for playing house, and all the other sorts of toys which any small girl would like to have, were all piled up.

I myself had three children, but I could not afford to buy, as I wished, even a toy truck for my two-year old son, however much he might urge me to do so.

Then where on earth was I lying? And whose child was sleeping beside me? I found it hard to answer these questions.

Now, still lying down as I had been, with my limbs fully stretched out, I turned my head to the left. There an even greater surprise awaited me.

A young woman whom I could not recognize, however hard I tried to recall

who she was, wearing pyjamas made of white satin as light as the wing of the White Cocktail, was lying on her side, half facing me, with one hand holding her chin and a slight smile dimpling her two cheeks, watching me as though amused at my foolish attitude.

I saw at one glance that she was a beautiful woman. Though she had not painted her face thickly at night, her pretty lips, not too wide nor too thin, but protruding a little, were still reddish, for whatever she might have put on during the day had not all vanished. The lovely frame of her face was long but rounded; her high nose was not too sharp and looked completely in place; her hair was divided in the back and braided round in front in the style which used to be called "Woman's Union"; her two large round eyes were fresh and bright, but not too sharp and clever.

My eyes traced the flowing lines of her figure as it appeared through her soft satin pyjamas, until they stopped at the end of her feet. Her feet were rather long but well-formed. She was without stockings and her toe-nails shone like enamel with their red varnish.

The woman painted even her toe-nails! Who could she be? I could not remember.

How many seconds did the silence last between us? She looked at me with impatience, and at last she opened her mouth, and a hysterical laugh broke from her face on which a quiet smile had lain.

"Ha, ha, ha My friend You mustn't be afraid! Really, don't be afraid ha, ha, ha"

I was completely lost. I could not recall what this was all about. "Who on earth are you? Where is this place?"

"Ob, my friend, don't you know me? You don't understand, I suppose. You were so drunk. I'm Sonia. Don't you know Sonia? This is where my apartment is, that I told you about once."

As she said this, she broke out into violent laughter as if her sides would burst.

"Sonia! Sonia! Oh, I know who you are!"

A thought flashed through my brain like lightning. It must have been a month ago. A woman named Sonia had been introduced to me in the street by a friend of mine. The woman whom he had introduced to me was a new poetess who had been writing poems since graduating from the English Literature Faculty of a woman's college that spring. But the Sonia who had been introduced to me in the street looked exactly the typical modest girl student, neatly wearing a short black velvet skirt and a jacket.

However I only knew one Sonia, and this must be she, though my recollection of her was dim. But how could I have come to be in the house of that woman whom I had only met once in the street?

I was able gradually to trace in my mind all that had happened to me that day, as if the tangle were being unravelled knot by knot.

It was pay day at the magazine company where I worked. When I had left home in the morning, my wife had grumbled her complaints once again, as she used to every month.

"What will you do on pay day? You'll be staggering home again! Now you had better leave the magazine company and give up literature! Please try to feed the young children by driving a cart or becoming a pack-carrier."

As I had expected, the magazine company which employed me and which

was hardly able to publish the magazine once every three months did not pay any salary. So, when I left the company towards sun-set, I was feeling rather sorry for myself. I met some of my friends, and we drank together until late at night, and then it started to rain.

I recalled more. We were waiting under the eaves of a shop in M Street while it rained; it seemed very late at night, and my friends sent me off in a car. I could dimly remember having got into the car, but I could not trace clearly what had happened after that,

Perhaps I might have been reluctant to go back home, and, being drunk that rainy night, I might not have planned anything deliberately, but unconsciously, I might have had the car park in front of the apartment where Sonia lived because of a sort of curiosity in her since she was a poetess.

Anyway, it was a horrible night. If it had not been pay day, if my wife had not complained so much, if the magazine company had paid out even a few pence, or if it had not rained, such things as this would not have happened.

I half lifted myself up quickly.

“Oh, I shouldn’t. Really, I am very sorry for what I’ve done in my drunkenness!”

It sounded a stupid excuse. I was quite lost, and scratched my head to no avail.

Sonia broke into a laugh again, lit a cigarette from a packet of Lucky Strikes, and smoked it, still lying there sideways with her chin in her hands, she showed no sign of getting angry or complaining, as if it did not matter to her at all. She said, quite naturally,

“Oh no, you have no need to apologize at all now. Don’t be silly! There are many experiences in a human life. Must something always happen whenever a man and a woman sleep in the same room? Don’t worry about anything, just relax. It has just struck three. What would you do if you got up now? Just listen to the rain outside! Please don’t worry! Isn’t there a line drawn between us there? You sleep there, and I’ll sleep here like this. So, forget all your worries, and let me hear some interesting stories!”

The pelting rain outside, together with the wind, struck the glass in a storm. Often thunder was heard, or lightening flashed, to make the night more chaotic and horrible than ever.

It seemed a very strange thing to me. Two people who had never been fated to lie down in the same place were now talking in the same room. I could not understand how Sonia was as calm as could be, showing no sign of anything unusual taking place, while I was thinking how foolish and strange the whole thing was.

“Well, have you written many poems lately?”

Though I seemed not to have the gift of speech, this foolish remark of mine started our conversation.

“Do I write poems? That’s a lie! Someone may have carelessly said that when they were introducing me as a singer to those who care for music or as a stage dancer to those who appreciate dancing! That would describe me well, wouldn’t it?”

“Well, then, tell me about yourself!”

“Me? Are you really interested in that? I am a woman, living here along with the child.”

“Is she your daughter?”

"Millie. Isn't it a charming name? Yes, she's my daughter. She's the only thing which is as dear to me as my life."

"Then, who's her father?"

"Oh, her father? Oh, would you be her father, would you?"

"What? I? I, who can hardly manage the burden of my own three children? Ha, ha!"

"It's alright, I was only joking!"

"How old are you?"

"My age? What a rude question! Why do you ask a lady's age? A woman can cheat the years in many ways with make-up. I probably looked very young when you met me for the first time in the street, didn't I? Are you worried about my age? Should I tell you frankly? Don't be surprised! Thirty-two this year!"

"What? I can't believe it possible!"

"Oh, don't be so surprised! Perhaps you're worried about what sort of a woman I am? Well, isn't it enough just to think of me as a woman making my living as best I can?"

"Where do you come from?"

"So, you want to know where I come from? Shall I tell you all about myself? I was born in Vladivostock. You've heard of Vladivostock, haven't you? I was brought up quietly there by my widowed mother, but I don't know who my father was. My mother didn't tell me anything about him before she died, when I was fifteen years of age. Some told me vaguely that he was an exile who had run away to Vladivostock because he was engaged in an Independence Movement. However that may be, I began to get to know the world at the age of fifteen, working in a restaurant owned by a Russian, carrying the dishes there. How can I tell you in one short night all that has happened to me since then? When I got tired of that, I moved from bar to bar, and when I got tired of them, I worked in cabarets and then in dance halls. As I drifted to Tientsin, Peking, Nanking, and Shanghai, my youth almost faded away. Then I met with the Liberation at Shanghai. So I came back to Korea as my mother country with my child, who was just one year old at the time.

"Millie's father! Because of that penniless rake, my youth and my ideals were destroyed together! That fellow took advantage of the burning love which I offered him, the last passion of my life. He had a lawful wife in Korea, but he deceived me and made me suffer in every possible way until he took to gambling and then to the opium which killed him. I am a refugee. You will not be wrong if you take me for a refugee, repatriated from abroad, embracing a young child, a clot of blood, with my empty hands."

"A refugee?"

"Yes, am I not a refugee? What else? It is only because of my body, which is not yet grown old, and my face, which others can still bear to look upon, that I am not carrying around a begging-box, or living in an abandoned air raid shelter."

"Oh, it's not too late yet. You had better get married again if there is a suitable man."

"Get married again? Get married, I think you mean. No, it's ridiculous, and how could I get married? I hate men so much that I would be violently sick! I don't include you, of course. Ugh, I say of Millie's father that he should have died, Yes, that he should have died! The longer a fellow like that lived, the more women are ill-treated and sacrificed. I have neither hope nor regret. If I think of her father, I cannot throw off the heavy weight of my sorrow, no matter how strongly I curse him. But

when I think of her, the only gift my blood has given to life to live on after it, I think that I would gladly do anything, even dissolve my flesh and break my bones, if only it is for the sake of my only daughter, my Millie! I want to bring her up splendidly: whatever I have to do to do it; I want to have her educated in a high school and at a College too, as much as she may wish, so that she may not even be criticized as the child without a father. It is my only purpose to bring up the child properly, by doing anything I can, so that I may not make her tread the same path as her mother did. Do you understand all now, what sort of a woman I am?

“Well, I’m sorry that I’ve done nothing but pour out my own story without stopping. Now let me hear your story. How many children have you? And if you drink wine like that every day before you go home, isn’t your wife annoyed at it? Shall I tell you how you came to my house? Don’t get angry, please! It was well past eleven o’clock. I heard noisy voices at the door, so I jumped up, and went out there. There was a taxi parked before the door. I peeped into it and found you there, drunk, in despair, and desperately calling my name, ‘Sonia, Sonia!’ How did you come to be so terribly drunk?”

“Ah, did I do that? Then why didn’t you send me home by the same taxi?”

“How could I do that? It was nearly twelve o’clock. How could I tell the drunken gentleman to go away? I was afraid that anything might happen to you on the way. So I led you to my room with-difficulty, and you can have no idea how I had to take your drunken frenzy until I could slip off your jacket and make you lie down. I could put up with it, but you should not have such a drunken frenzy when you go to any other woman. Please don’t be angry! Oh, I’m quite used to the way men behave when they’re drunk, so I can understand the same in you. Please don’t be annoyed at what I have said, and be easy until dawn. What does it matter? It would be childish to imagine that just because a man and a woman sleep in the same place, they must inevitably behave improperly, wouldn’t it now?”

Just then, someone knocked at the locked door by our feet. We almost missed it because of our reminiscing, or perhaps because of the storm we had not heard the man coming outside. It reminded me of the proverb about the “sudden sound of a big mallet striking unexpectedly in the night.”

Together with the knocking sounds, Bang, Bang, Bang, we could hear a man’s voice calling, ‘Sonia, Sonia!’ a voice that trembled slightly.

Sonia, who had been quite calm until then, went pale, and got up quickly. She threw a long Western coat over her pyjamas and stared at me, closing her mouth with her hand to indicate that I should not make a sound. I also got up quickly, and went and sat on a low desk holding my head in my hands and quite at a loss as to what I should do.

Sonia gradually grew puzzled and nervous. She was flurried, wondering whether to open the closed door or not, and she whispered to me, in a small voice, like a mosquito’s,

“I don’t like that fellow, but he is chasing me to marry me. What shall I do? How could the crazy fellow come here like this in the middle of the night?”

The man was chasing her to marry her! The man who was knocking at a woman’s door, paying her an unexpected visit, so late at night, after three o’clock, while the rain pelted down and the lightning flashed!

From the way he was knocking on the door and from the worried attitude of Sonia, I guessed that there must be some serious relationship between them—What, then, would my position be? An adulterer with Sonia, or her lover? I had goose-flesh

all over. What excuse could I make to him? It was an undeniable fact that we two, Sonia and I, had been in that room alone late at night, and what would this mean to him?

Bang, Bang, Bang!

He knocked at the door a second time, more loudly and more frighteningly.

“Sonia, please open the door and listen to me!”

His voice was not pleading so much as commanding and threatening. Sonia became more perplexed and worried, and now she came over to me and stood there trembling, as if she wanted to hang onto me.

“If you run away through the window, you can reach the gate through the back yard. Please take me too. I can’t stand the sight of his face. It makes me feel sick to look at it.”

But how could I run away by the window with a woman named Sonia in the middle of a night of pelting rain? That would surely make me be taken as an adulterer or her lover. One minute, two minutes, a very short period of time but a strange, long, painful period for the man who was knocking outside, passed in a terrible silence.

“So, you won’t open the door? It won’t do you any good, I tell you.” Now his third knock sounded as if it would break the door down.

I had to be bold. I almost ordered Sonia, as I shouted, still sitting there firmly on the desk with my head on my hands,

“There’s nothing to be done! Open the door to him!”

I decided to meet any challenge properly if it was made to me. A knife blade might attack me from outside, or a fist might hurl itself in—It seemed that one of the two must happen. In any case, I thought that to open the door was the manly thing to do, and the man might understand if I explained all to him, for he was a man, after all.

Sonia seemed to have resigned herself to the crisis and to have abandoned herself to despair. She rushed jerkily to the door, biting her lips and with poison in her large round eyes, and unlocking the bar-ring, she opened wide the sliding door.

My eyes met those of the man standing outside like flashes of lightning. The man, who was wearing clean Western clothes and had a small camera hanging from his shoulder, a strange sight on such a rainy night, was a middle-aged gentleman of near forty. He did not even give me a glance, as if he would ignore the likes of me, and, without trying to walk even a step into the room, he suddenly stretched out his arm and took Sonia by the sleeve.

“Get out of here, I say!”

After Sonia had been dragged outside, apparently having fallen down, the sleeve of her Western suit torn, the sliding door was closed quickly again.

“Sonia, you have no manners! Think of my position! I’ve just come up from Degu.”

“What? Think of your position! You were thinking a lot about your position when you visited a woman’s house like that at midnight!”

“What did you say? What? You are still going to be obstinate, are you? You cunning woman!”

“Let go of my sleeve, I say! Won’t you let go? Now you are insulting me, are you?”

“Think of this, if you are a human being! Because of you, I’m trying to get a divorce from my wife and have sold my house to set up a home with you. Now you

don't care! What am I to do then?"

"What do I care whether you get a divorce or sell a house?"

"What? You sharp woman! So you prefer to be a yang-galbo? You are kicking away the chance of good fortune to be a yang-galbo?"

There seemed to be a wooden floor outside. Sonia's voice, as she argued with him and stamped her feet, could be heard very loudly.

"A yang-galbo? Well, what does it matter to you? Now, it's you who are being rude, you devil. When did I promise to marry you, eh?"

"All right then, give me back my money! Spit out the money you sucked in and swallowed!"

"You filthy, stingy fellow! I don't even want to look at the face of a man in this country! Do you mean that a man should get back the money that he has squandered in wantonness?"

"Who on earth was the bounder you were lying with in that room?"

"Why? Why do you want to know that? Well, he's my lover! I like him! He is my sweetheart! Why, what does it matter to you?"

It was a puzzle. My position was getting more and more uncomfortable.

"Your lover? Your sweetheart? You like him? Alright! Anyway, we shall go to my hotel to-night. To live or to die—we shall decide!"

"Let me go, I say! Let go of my arm, won't you?"

"I can't, I can't! Let's go! We shall settle this thing before daybreak."

It seemed that Sonia could do nothing against the force of the strong man, and their voices gradually moved away in the direction of the door until they died away.

Now only quiet lay heavily on the house. The storm outside the window seemed to stop. I was sure that I heard the clock strike four.

When would dawn come? I could not help feeling uneasy. They might be halted by the police station while walking along the street quarrelling. Then the man would tell them all he had seen—that the woman who had promised to marry him was lying in bed with another fellow, and all the rest. Then the police would order that fellow to be brought.

The more I thought of this, the more embarrassed I felt. But I could only leave things as they were, for there was nothing to be done before daybreak. I lay down again, stretching my limbs as before, and I smoked a cigarette to soothe myself.

But what a strange and odd night it was going to turn out to be! Now the little girl, Millie, Sonia's daughter, who had been sleeping, quietly snoring, opened her eyes wide suddenly, perhaps out of some fear or other, looked round, and then woke up, calling "Mummy! Mummy." Then she began to cry.

"Nice girl! Don't cry! Mummy has gone to the toilet, and she'll be back soon. Shall I carry you on my back?"

I did not like carrying even my own son or daughter on my back. but I had to caress her by getting her onto my back, putting my back close up to her, but it was no use. The child would not listen to me, and her cries became louder and louder, piercing my ears.

It was really more painful and unbearable to have to listen to the crying of the child until daybreak than to have the police come to call for me as Sonia's sweetheart. There was nothing for it but to soothe the child.

I just remembered that I had put two apples into my bag that night for my daughter and son, while I had been drinking at a bar. So I quickly opened my bag,

which lay nearby, took out the two apples, and placed them in front of the child to soothe her.

“Well now, here you are! Some apples for you! There’s a good girl! Take them. Mummy will be back soon. All right? Please eat them! Uncle wi’l send you to sleep with a lullaby.”

But the young child just threw away the apples, as if she disliked them and kept on crying for her mother.

“Well then, shall I give you money? Money? You can keep it, and then get sweets with it in the morning, can’t you? There’s good girl, Millie! Won’t you listen to your uncle?”

But I did not seem to have any money with me. I searched through all the pockets in my trousers and my jacket, and fortunately a crumpled ten won note fell out. It was my saviour, and made me very happy. I placed it on my palm, and, smoothing out its wrinkles, I stretched out my hand towards the child, but she kept on crying, and threw the money away, whining, “A hundred won, a hundred won!”

It seemed that the lowest denomination of note used in that room was a hundred won. Neither my offer to carry her on my back nor my gifts of apples and a ten won note seemed to please the child, so there was nothing more I could do.

Should I leave her alone and not bother any more? What else? I wondered what I should do. For a while, I didn’t know whether to lie down or stand up. Then the child pointed her finger to a cupboard in the wall, near where I had been lying, and said, crying, “Chocolae! Chocolae!”

I guessed that she must mean “Chocolate” when she said “Chocolae,” and wished me to get some from the cupboard, so I got up quickly and opened the door of the cupboard.

Out came the smell of toilet-powder, toilet-cream, and other stinking odours at the same time, which made my nose twitch. Inside the cupboard was chaos, representing the life, heart, and mind of its owner. All the confused heap of things looked as if they were about to leap out at me one by one, transformed into goblins or ghosts. I drew back a step at this silly thought, and then, bringing over the electric light to shine inside, I began to look in for chocolate.

The narrow cupboard was divided into two shelves. On the top one, was a small toilet case which was fitted with a small oblong mirror. Underneath, there were toilet-cream, powder-case, lipsticks, a compact, and other things, all jammed together, some lying on their sides, some standing up, all a hotch-potch, and besides these, expensive bottles of foreign whisky and brandy rolled about. In the corner hundreds of ladies’ dresses, jackets and skirts, the material striped red, white, and blue, or with a cheap design of flowers, and in all sorts of styles, were thrown in disorder. Among them peeped out the edge of a spivish tie, and the yellow trousers of a soldier’s uniform seemed to be there too.

In the lower part, it was just the same. Butter, jam, and some tins of meat were heaped up, while all sorts of shoes, high heeled, low heeled, pointed toed, round toed, uppers with holes or made of snake-skin-all were so mixed up that they could never be sorted into pairs.

With some difficulty, by shining the electric light among the hotch-potch of toilet materials, I finally found some chocolate and gave some of it to the child; then I quickly closed the sliding doors of the cupboard as if I had been looking at things which I should not have seen. It would have made my head spin to look in the cupboard any more, as if I were being haunted by ghosts.

The child, Sonia's daughter, seemed to like chocolate best of all.

No sooner had she eaten up one of the three bars I had given her than she fell asleep again, holding the other two, one in each hand. I was lucky to have got out of the difficult situation.

So now I forgot my worries, and lay down, stretching my limbs right out again, and looking up at the ceiling. But I could not get to sleep at all. I wished that the night would pass into dawn as quickly as possible. The day should arrive after one short hour. I felt my eyes sinking in to form hollows; my whole body was tired, and, my head was confused and dizzy, as if something were running round inside it.

But still the night did not seem to be passing away. Now I heard the desperate voice of a woman from just outside the sliding door near my feet, the one which had been shut before, and I woke up with surprise.

"Ow, it hurts, Auntie! I'll not do it again. I'll do what you say." It seemed to be the voice of a girl of possibly sixteen or seventeen and must have been coming from the room across the corridor from this room. Then followed the rough, fierce voice of a middle-aged woman of about forty:

"You wretched girl! You pauper! You are human in shape, so you should realize how good others are to you. Do you know that I picked you up, a homeless creature, in the ship coming back to Korea and fed you for four or five years for nothing? There's nothing in the world that you shouldn't do! Just look at Millie's mother in the room opposite! She eats well and dresses well. She rides in a Jeep every day. How wonderful it is! You are throwing off the good luck which comes your way, aren't you? Just you bring in one fellow! You can get plenty of money and Western goods. Well then, you wretch, will you do as I say, or not?"

It seemed that the woman was beating the girl ruthlessly with a whip. The sound of something suddenly being broken, followed by the desperate sobbing of the girl, seemed to shake the night air pathetically.

"Oh, the pains! But I-I can't do it! I won't do it! It makes me shake with fright only to look at those men, with their big noses and blue eyes: It's horrible, and, Auntie, I'd rather choose death!"

"What's that you say, what? You wretch!"

The mingled sound of the whip and voices crying with pain could be heard for a while longer; then the rough voice of a man fell on my ears, like a clap of thunder, seeming to be about to burst them.

"Curse you, woman! Ruining others' sleep in the middle of the night with your ill-treating of the poor orphan girl!"

"Hum! When did you start being so sympathetic? Hum! Alf right, then, you should earn some money! Money, I tell you! If you are a man, you should earn money. I'm tired of the job of selling Western cigarettes—I'll stay quietly at home. Then you'll have to make the money! You still don't realize who you've got to thank for this; since we came back to Korea, we haven't been living in an air-raid shelter or begging with tins, have we?"

"What's that you say? Do you want me to break into a bank? I just said that you shouldn't make such a noise and interrupt others' sleep, and you go on muttering excuses!"

Now the man seemed to be beating the woman, who was probably his wife, throwing her down or turning her upside down; the noise of it went on a while longer.

"You devil! You made me sell Western cigarettes-deal in the black market-you took all the back-bone out of me, and now you are beating me!"

The middle-aged woman, who had been beating the girl, was now being beaten by her husband, and she began to cry loudly and to beat the floor with her hands. Noises, shouts, and cries! Mutterings and complaints! I did not want to hear any more, so I lay down again, looking up at the ceiling, with my legs fully stretched out.

The cries and murmurs gradually became quieter—either at somebody else's request or because she had herself grown tired of her temper—until they stopped completely. I tried closing my eyes; but I could not sleep. I tried opening them, but my head became dizzier, and the ceiling, at which I was looking up, became hazier; the night would not pass away. I opened and closed my eyes hundreds of times; I lay down, though I was awake. I sat down and stood up.

Then at last the cursed night began to change into the dim light of dawn outside the window. Now I should be saved!

So I got my tie at once, and put it round my neck to tie it, but it seemed that the house was not going to let me go yet, for I heard noises coming from up the high stairs, and people seemed to be gathering together from all the rooms.

"Thief! Thief!"

"Get him! Pull him down here!"

"Catch him! Catch him! Don't lose him!"

I too rushed out of the door, without fastening my tie properly. There was the entrance, where the taxi was said to have parked the day before when I was drunk, at the end of the long corridor, not more than six feet wide, and a high staircase leading to the second storey on the left, coming down almost at the entrance. Right under the staircase, was a young man of thirty, holding a pair of women's shoes in one hand; his face was as black as a chimney-sweep's, and he was trembling, as he was tightly caught by his coat tails by another young man; the occupants of all the apartments of this building had come out of their rooms, young and old, men and women, and were standing round them, making a great noise.

"That fellow must be man who stole our bag!"

"He might have stolen that pot from my place!"

The man who was holding him by the back made the black-faced, trembling man kneel down on the floor; gave him a good smack, perhaps twice, and a rough kick.

"You devil! How many times have you got in here? You are the thief who stole a watch and some Western clothes from the corner room of the second floor a few days ago, aren't you?"

The fellow who had the pair of shoes in his hand just fell on his face, and, with blood pouring from his nose, he sobbed,

"No, Sir! This is the first time I have stolen. And the first time I have been here! I—I am a refugee, living in an air-raid shelter on the side of Mount Nam-san. I came back to Korea from Japan with my old, sick mother, but I couldn't get a job, and I didn't want to starve, It was only this morning that I plucked up the courage to do this, only early to-day!"

"You devil! Don't tell us your cunning lies! You're probably an opium-eater, aren't you?"

"No, sir! Never!"

He was hit and kicked again.

"Put him to death! People like him should be severely punished!" "Take him to the police-station!"

Everybody seemed finally to be agreed. The fellow who had stolen the shoes, caught by the neck by the man who had beaten him, was dragged off to the police-station like a dog, through the very same entrance where Sonia must have been taken away a few hours ago, with her varnished toe-nails all bare.

I did not want to see any more. While this unpleasant scene had been going on, the dreary night had ended, and day had broken clearly. I entered the room quickly, and, picking up my bag, went to go out. But as the child was still sleeping, I was not too keen to leave the empty room. As it was, so I thought I had better knock at the other room in front of me. When the door opened, a good-natured old woman thrust her head out.

"I'm sorry to trouble you, but that room is being left empty, and the child is sleeping alone. Would you take care of it, please?"

The old woman answered calmly, as if nothing had happened, "That often happens in that room. Don't worry, you can go home. The child can be left alone, if it is given plenty of chocolate and a hundred won note."

"Oh, well, if that's so ... "

I had just turned to the entrance to go, as I had been advised, when Millie, Sonia's daughter, who, I assumed, was asleep, ran out with a smile on her pretty face, quite different from the time when she had annoyed me with all her crying.

"Uncle! Come again, won't you? Come again when Mummy's home, and have a good time, won't you? Bye-bye!"

The child shook my hand in hers ..

"Yes, yes, yes!"

I rushed out of the door of the building without pausing for breath or turning back, not knowing whether I answered her or not.

A few days passed by in uneasiness and anxiety. I was afraid that I would hear something some day or that a policeman might come from the police-station or a detective from police headquarters. I could not settle down at my office at the magazine company to my work because of worry that I might be referred to in Sonia's quarrel and sent for. I put the blame for my situation onto my superior who had introduced Sonia to me so carelessly as a poetess and I spent the next few days making up my mind to complain to him when I met him again.

A week or ten days passed, but I heard nothing. I relaxed at last, guessing that they would settle their own affairs for themselves, and I tried to completely forget the whole foolish affair, all that had happened to me with Sonia because I had been drunk that night. The very memory of it seemed to vanish of its own accord as the days went by.

So five or six more days passed by. I was busy at my office one day, and at about seven in the evening, when the evening sun was shining in the west and twilight was drawing on, I was going home along the broad pavement of H. Street.

I was surprised to hear the sharp voice of a woman calling from behind me, "Hello there!", and a Jeep screech to a sudden halt near me. I turned to it in surprise and found in it a foreign officer of high rank with many medals on his chest and a very uneven face, with bluish eyes. He was holding the steering wheel and pretending ignorance of the affair. The woman beside him jumped out, and it was Sonia, wearing a white evening dress and high heeled shoes. She began to chatter like a twittering sparrow, as if she were being chased, before I could even open my mouth.

"Hello! I haven't time to talk to you for long now; I'm going to a dance-party. I

am very sorry about what happened the other night. I called you, carelessly, my lover, my sweetheart, or something like that. It was the only way I could make him give up. Don't you worry about anything! How could I be so unreasonable, though you know what sort of a woman I am, as to give you any trouble? You just happened to be drunk, and come to my house without really meaning to. I'll talk to you some more when I see you again. Well then, goodbye, good-bye!"

As soon as she had finished what she had to say, she jumped onto the Jeep again, waving her hand to me, as if she did not need to hear my reply. The way she waved her hand was just like her daughter Millie as she said, "Uncle, come again!", when I had left the apartment some time ago. There was no hesitation or fear, just their clear, open feelings expressed.

After about a month, I had completely forgotten Sonia and the experiences of that night. The warm weather passed its height, and cool winds began to blow in the mornings and evenings.

The magazine company where I worked was on the second floor of a building, and the next building was the K. newspaper company. The tall, four-storied building opposite the newspaper company was an organization called something like "X" or "P", occupied by the foreigners.

One afternoon, about three or four o'clock, I was busy with the re-adjustment of a manuscript. Suddenly Mr. A., who was working at the next desk to me, hit me on the back with his hand and said.

"Just look at that!"

I was surprised and looked down into the street through the window, which was wide open. I saw the crowd of news-boys waiting for the evening papers to come out in front of the K. newspaper company.

They had sand or gravel in their hands and were crowding around a woman, pelting her with what they had and shouting all together, abusing her, "Yang-galbo! Yang-galbo!"

According to Mr. A., she was a woman who had just come out of the organization, and these idle boys used to tease any Korean girl coming out of there, either out of curiosity or just for fun.

The woman who had been pelted with sand and gravel, turned towards them as she protested and chased them away. The woman wearing a pink piece of cloth tied tightly round her waist! She was, I was sure, that very woman, Sonia, who had disappeared from in front of me with a wave of her hand a month earlier.

It seemed that a woman alone could not stop the mischievous behaviour of the rough louts who were gathered around her, like rolling waves.

She covered her face with her hands to protect it from the flying gravel and sand and ran away down a side street opposite, out of sight.

(September, 1949)