

THE MEMORIAL SERVICE ON THE MOUNTAIN

by Czoe Zong-Hûi

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“Oh! How it hurts!” Zzogan could no longer stand the terrible pain that was eating out her Inside and almost suffocating her. She jerked open her eyes, pushed off her husband, who pressed on her breast as heavy as a big rock, and rushed forward from her bed completely unconscious of what she was doing, striking, pushing, and shaking whatever she came across. Time and time again she struck, pushed, and shook the door, until her fists were as painful as if she had been beating them against iron. The door would not move. The pains spread from her fists through her whole body, and she stopped and sat down for a while staring at her fists.

The door became a wall before her breast, stretching so far that she could not see the ends of it, however she might try, and so high that with her head twisted right back she could not see the top of it. She dropped her head again, and murmured “Where am I?”

She suddenly felt herself coming to her senses, turned a little, and felt her husband stretched out in front of her, like a statue at a mile post. But it was not the terrible room where her husband had lain so ponderously. Around her the pale faces of her companions in distress, sleeping under their cotton quilts, peered out at her. The dream was over, and as she looked around, she wiped the cold sweat from her forehead and breathed out a long sigh.

She took a step or two backwards and regarded the hard concrete wall dark now at night, against which she had been beating with all her strength, and the dim electric light, like a light in a distant village, as it hung in the centre of the high ceiling and glared down on the long, high wall. She lowered her gaze to the heavy-looking door which was kept closed day and night, the small, square watchhole for the warders nearby, the large, shining toilet-pot in the corner, and the rest of the grim scene. So when she was sure that it was not that terrible room, but the comfortable jail, she breathed out a long sigh of relief. “It was only a dream after all!”, Zzogan murmured, and slipped back under the quilt, from which she had just jumped out. It was midnight, and her friends were still sleeping like corpses. She could only hear the noise of the warders’ opening and shutting the stove doors, away beyond the high wall, borne in on the wildly singing wind.

She covered her head completely with the quilt for a while, as if to shut out the terrible figure of her husband, which she could never forget even in her sleep, and curled up like a snail. After the footsteps of the warders had passed by once or twice, she stretched herself out, and, putting her two cold feet into the breast of the friend who lay opposite, she fell quietly asleep, as if she were quite happy.

She used to think of the fortress-like red-brick walls, the dark, high wall within the heavy iron gate, and the constant watches of the warders—the whole jail with its concrete walls and massive doors—not as a prison of pain and sorrow, but as a sure defence against the outside world.

She had first been brought to the jail three months ago on an evening in late Autumn, and she had at first trembled like a frightened rabbit every time the warders’

footsteps were heard approaching down the corridor. She had refused to relieve herself for so long that she had once released all that she was holding back in her bed, and for this she was ill-treated by a warder. But as time went on, she made friends in the jail and learnt the rules and regulations. First, one of the wardresses, a widow herself with a daughter of fourteen, took pity on her. Then the worst young woman prisoner turned very kind to her. And on the whole she came to enjoy the life of the prison, except for an occasional beating from a warder or criticism from one of the prisoners who had been there longer.

On her twentieth day in jail, the judge sentenced her to six years imprisonment.

Her warder friend said sympathetically, "My poor dear! But you will be going home when you are nineteen."

But Zzogan surprised her by answering, "I want to stay here a long, long time."

This was true. She would be happy to stay there for a very long time. Before she was sentenced, some had said to the warders that one so young could not have done anything serious, and that she would probably be released at once under a suspended sentence; and others thought that she would get a year or two—perhaps three at the most. But when the worst young woman prisoner said that she had got six years for the same crime at the same age, and that Zzogan would get the same, Zzogan prayed that she would be proved right. Least of all did she want to be released at once under a suspended sentence.

She felt that if she returned straightaway, there would be the shame of her acts, which would still be in people's minds, and, what was worse, she would have to go back again to that hateful house of her husband's, unless her parents could return to the bridegroom's house the unhulled rice and barley which they had received as the price of the match.

So she wished to stay in jail for—many years—years in which her parents could have good harvests—then she could go back to the house in Kûnmaûl—The Big Village—where her dear father and mother and younger brothers and sisters were living.

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On the morning of the tenth day after the unhulled rice and barley had been delivered to her house, Zzogan had left her parents' home in a palanquin. On the day before the wedding, the expected attendance of the bridegroom at the bride's house was abruptly cancelled, and a palanquin was called for the bride instead. Mr. Yi, the bride's father, had said that it was poverty alone which had caused him to have the bride carried out of his house, while the dusk of dawn was still on the village, as if she were a cat straying from home, and before Mr. and Mrs. Yun could attend. This was what he had told the villagers, his wife, and even Zzogan, that he was too poor to receive the bridegroom, but this was not the truth. It was something that Mr. Yun had told him a few days before as he was on his way home from the market, where he had gone to buy things in preparation for his daughter's wedding.

Mr. Yun had called to him as he was hurrying home late in the afternoon with his bag on his shoulder, full of dried pollacks, eggs, and many sweets and fruits besides.

"Hey! Mr. Yi! I've something to tell you."

“What is it?”

Mr. Yun seemed to be in some difficulty, as he said with much hesitation, “As the proverb says, ‘The true crystal may have some dirt in it’, and, er, he, er, I am sorry but he “

“Mr. Yun, what are you trying to say?”

“Mr. Yi, you won’t blame me, since I did not mean to cheat you. The bridegroom, though lacking some quality, may still take good care of his wife, may he not?”

Mr. Yi, who had been walking ahead, stopped and turned back to Mr. Yun, who had been following right behind him. Mr. Yun stopped too on seeing the changed colour of Mr. Yi’s face and said in a lower tone, “I’m speaking of the bridegroom. His health was affected by the cursed measles.”

At these words, Mr. Yi felt as if he had been struck by thunder roaring from the skies, and he was unable to go on a step further. Mr. Yun continued, “I would not take an incapable man myself, so I was very careful from the beginning, and went to his house and saw him. Everything seemed to be all right, except for his one eye. . . . As I said before, he is very diligent indeed, and honest. He farms not only his own field, but others as well. He gets on well with the other villagers, and they think highly of him. I should have told you about this earlier, but “

As Mr. Yun was saying this he had to keep going more and more slowly to stay by Mr. Yi, who had been striding ahead so happily a moment before. Now as he looked on Mr. Yi’s paled face, he faltered, and he mumbled into silence.

Mr. Yi kept silent, his hollowed eyes full of tears. It was plain to see what a blow this had been to him. Mr. Yun, trying to help him a little, repeated the words which he had used when he first began to act as go-between in the match. “It’s better for her than starving at home. She can be well off and make it easier for her parents and brothers to live at home, can’t she?”

Mr. Yi plodded on in silence, just occasionally opening his mouth unconsciously to swallow his tears. He thought first of cancelling the wedding, but this would be very difficult, since he would have to return the rice and barley which had been delivered to his house, and some of which had already been used, partly for his own family’s food, and partly to repay debts which he had owed—at least half of the five sôm of unhulled rice and ten sôm of barley. He simply could not repay this, and even if he could, he could not cause Mr. Yun to lose face by cancelling the arrangements which he had made. He knew that Mr. Yun was his closest and best friend and that he had made the arrangement only for the sake of Mr. Yi’s family. If it had been anyone else, he had excuse enough to cancel the whole thing. It was for his daughter Zzogan’s sake that he grieved most, and he felt that he might be guilty before God for having sold her in this way.

Only two days after Mr. Yun had completed the arrangements, the rice and barley had been delivered from the bridegroom’s house in Bangzu-ggol on two oxen, and his fellow-villagers had come to his house and told him enviously that now he had no need to worry until the next barley harvest, and Mr. Yi had almost cried with relief as he sat on front of his house, smoking dried pumpkin leaves and gazing at the dark mountains. Now, having learnt of the bridegroom’s disability, in this sudden way, he felt as if his whole world had gone black. But when Mr. Yun turned to him again, concerned at the way his steps were faltering, he straightened up his neck like a wild goose and answered, “Don’t worry about it, Mr. Yun! He may be one-eyed, but he can still run things all right, can’t he?”

His voice was so indistinct and trembling that he could not believe that they were his own, but Mr. Yun, relieved to hear him speak in this cheerful way after his long silence, said with a laugh, "Quite right! I'm glad to see you looking at it in that way."

Mr. Yi responded with a pretended laugh, out of feeling for Mr. Yun, and regretted having caused him even a moment's anxiety. They had been the closest of friends, almost like brothers, for forty years, seeing each other through all difficulties.

They were of the same age and had always led very much the same sort of life. When Mr. Yi was eleven both his parents had died of influenza. Later he had been employed by the Kûndêmun-zib or "Big Gate House" as a cowherd. At that time Mr. Yun was living with his parents, who were also employed at the House in a happier position than Mr. Yi. Mr. Yi's child name was Czun-Dûg, and Mr. Yun's Ûl-Ssoe; they were friends in their quarrels, at their ball games, and as they tended the cows, until they were thirteen. Then in the spring of their fourteenth year, Ûl-Ssoe's father took sick and died suddenly. His mother lived on in poverty with her children for about half a year, before running away one night while Ûl-Ssoe was sleeping. Ûl-Ssoe missed his mother very much, and his sadness made Czun-Dûg sad too. They lived together in the same room where Ûl-Ssoe had lived happily with his parents.

When they grew up, they were promoted from cow-herds to farm workers, and worked honestly in that position until they were over thirty, when Ûl-Ssoe married the daughter of a man who worked at the next house and moved out of the place he shared with Czun-Dûg. The autumn after his marriage he acted as go-between and arranged a marriage for his friend too, and Czun-Dûg also moved into a new house nearby.

They rented a field belonging to the "Big Gate House" and farmed it as servants of that house. Gradually, as they lived in the comfortable atmosphere of their own homes with their wives, the unhappiness of their former lives passed away like winter's snow melting in the spring sunshine. First a son was born to Ûl-Ssoe, and then, in the following year, a daughter, as charming as a cotton-flower, to Czun-Dûg. The two men seemed never to tire of work, and though they had no land of their own to till and no cattle of their own to tend, they would pile up in their gardens huge harvests of barley, soy-beans, red beans, and rice.

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They were now much better off, their children were growing up to be fine and healthy, and the pair seemed as happy as if they had thrown off the bonds of farm workers, so that their fellow-villagers began to refer to them with titles of more respect. Everybody called Ûl-Ssoe Mr. Yun, and Czun-Dûg Mr. Yi, though no-one knew who had first conferred these titles upon them. For some years after their change of style, they continued to prosper, but as the years passed by, things began to change. In common with most farmers, they found the duties that beset a small farmer beginning to overwhelm them, and soon they fell into debt and had their grain seized in the fields when they were unable to repay. They had never known such a catastrophe before the harvest for which they had given their blood and sweat to be turned straight into the hands of their creditors instead of being reaped by those who had planted it. Then, in the years that followed, drought and floods often spoiled their annual crops and reduced them to poverty. Their happy home lives gradually became a misery, but though all else changed, the friendship between the two men never changed. Even when they were reduced to keeping themselves alive on the

roots of grasses and the bark of trees, forgetting completely the days when they had had rice to eat, they used to meet every day to help each other and to discuss their day-to-day problems.

It was this regular friendship which led to Mr. Yun's arranging Zzogan's wedding.

Mr. Yun was as poor as Mr. Yi, but he could not bear to see the faces of his friend's family, so swelled up and a sickly yellow like rotten fruit with maggots in it, the result of constipation caused by eating stodgy cakes after days of fasting. So he came to the conclusion that the only way in which they could improve their lot was to get Zzogan married, and he remembered what his wife's elder sister had told him about an honest, diligent, and quite well-off man who lived in her village of Bangzu-ggol, who had never been accepted in marriage because he was one-eyed. One day, early in the morning, he had gone over to Bangzu-ggol, and he had seen the prospective bridegroom and arranged that he should marry Zzogan, at a price of five sôm of unhulled rice, and ten sôm of barley.

He told Mr. Yi about it, and Mr. Yi and Mrs. Yi agreed reluctantly that if they did not get their child married they might die of hunger together.

"In olden times a girl of fourteen could give birth to a baby! She's better off there than starving at home, and by doing this, she can save her parents and brothers. You can keep your family for some time on five bags of rice and ten bags of barley, can't you?"

So he succeeded in persuading Mr. and Mrs. Yi, and they were obliged to accept his word gratefully, without checking up for themselves on the bridegroom's house, and when the rice and barley was delivered the next day, they accepted it.

Since this was the way things had been arranged, how could Mr. Yi possibly cancel his daughter's marriage or complain of the arrangement, even though he had first heard of the bridegroom's disability as he and Mr. Yun were walking back from the market? So he thought the thing over and over and decided that it would be better for him to take Zzogan to the bridegroom's house for the wedding, regardless of what might happen afterwards, than to wait for him to attend at the bride's house, only to be laughed at by others and cause disappointment to Zzogan and his wife. The day before the marriage, Mr. Yi sent word to the bridegroom's house that he could not afford to receive his son-in-law in his house, and, as the journey was too long to be done there and back in one day, he would rather have a palanquin sent, for the bride early on the day of the wedding than have the bridegroom attend at the bride's house. Even so, Mr. Yi did not feel easy in his mind and he spent the whole day vacantly smoking dried pumpkin leaves. Late in the evening, when the guests had gone home, and his wife was preparing the big dining table for the bridegroom and pulling out the downy hairs of Zzogan's forehead with a cotton thread, making her kneel down, he went over to his wife and said, as if it were a matter of course, "I have told the bridegroom not to attend here."

This surprised his wife very much; she stopped what she was doing, and asked, "Why on earth did you do that?"

Mr. Yi had not expected his wife to be so shocked by his news, and he stammered out his excuse about his house not being good enough to receive the bridegroom.

"What will people say?" His wife clucked her tongue in dismay. "What can people say, since it was our poverty which forced this arrangement upon us?"

"Well, that will be a funny wedding, without a bridegroom!"

“Don’t worry too much about it! Now, the palanquin will be here early in the morning, so you had better be getting Zzogan ready.”

“I don’t like this at all. Why can’t we do the same as others do? The house may be small, but the bridegroom’s party can go back on the same day, so why not...”

“Don’t make such a fuss about it, woman!”, Mr. Yi interrupted, angered by this continued discussion of the marriage rather than by his wife’s complaining voice.

The rough tone her husband had used hurt Mrs. Yi, and this on top of the sadness which had been growing on her as the day of her daughter’s wedding approached made her burst out crying like a child. Zzogan, kneeling down in front of her mother, wept with her. Mr. Yi wanted to take them both in his arms and weep with them to relieve his feelings, but he went out of the room without a word.

After he had left, Mrs. Yi caressed her daughter, trying to soothe her, “There now, don’t cry! If the bridegroom had to attend here first, it would be very late before the wedding was over, and our house is disgracefully small, isn’t it? Don’t cry now, or your eyes will be a terrible sight tomorrow. In the olden days, the bride was always carried to the bridegroom’s house for the marriage, and he never came to fetch her.”

But Zzogan went on crying, as if she had not heard her mother’s words. She was not crying because she hated the thought of a wedding without a bridegroom. Ever since the rice and barley had been delivered, a sadness which she could not explain had filled her heart. Often she had slipped away behind the house to cry her heart out. She was still crying now.

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Her mother did not understand what Zzogan was feeling and still thought that her daughter was sad because the bridegroom had not come to their house for the wedding. She had managed to stop her weeping, but she said to the villagers who came to visit her after the palanquin had slipped out early in the morning with her husband following behind, “It is dreadful that our cursed poverty would not allow me to prepare things here for her as others do, and it breaks my heart to think that she may be weeping all the way because she has not been called for by her husband!” If her mother was feeling so bad, what about her father who was walking slowly behind the palanquin, dreading the moment when the dreadful truth about her husband was revealed to her?

As the sunlight reached down into the valleys, the palanquin passed by the fields of Kûnmaûl and the hill of Zarumog and climbed up to the pass of Bugzzog. Now that the autumn harvest was in, there was no-one about in the fields, and there was only the noisy cries of the magpies to be heard, among the dark compost heaps, built up like houses. The palanquin-bearers were breathing heavily and sweating as they toiled up the hill. Mr. Yi was gasping for breath too as he made the effort to keep up the pace of the young bearers, trying too to support the back of the palanquin, with the sharp stones of the road tearing at his feet and his sweat-soaked shirt clinging to his back. He was anxious too about his daughter, who might be feeling dizzy inside the palanquin, he gasped out, “Zzogan, are you feeling all right?”

His voice sounded very sad, but what could have happened to her that she did not answer?

“Zzogan, are you sure you’re not feeling dizzy?”, he asked again, but Zzogan still kept silent, and there was nothing to be heard but his gasping breath. He thought that her not replying meant that she was weeping, and when he thought that he

heard her sobbing, he felt like sitting down by the road side himself and crying. He had a pain in his heart and noises in his ears; the earth seemed to shake under him, and he would have fallen to the ground if he had not clung onto the palanquin. His hollowed eyes were full of tears. He wanted to speak to his daughter again, but he just kept on walking, fearful that his voice might tremble if he spoke. As he walked along; he was full of regret that he spoke. As he walked along, he was full of regret that he had not been able to cancel the match on hearing from Mr. Yun that the bridegroom was one-eyed. As soon as the palanquin was over the pass and the village of Bangzu-ggol appeared, he wiped away his sweat and tears and spoke to his daughter, since she might want to relieve herself, and, in any case, he wanted to caress her once more before they reached the bridegroom's house.

"Zzogan, do you want to get out for anything?"

His daughter did not reply, and so he went up to the palanquin and, putting his head inside, he asked her, as though he were speaking to a baby, "My dear child, don't you need to peewee?"

But still Zzogan did not answer. The bearers themselves, on hearing what Mr. Yi said, felt the call of nature, and, realizing that the bride would probably be feeling the same, put down the palanquin and cleared off. Mr. Yi, glad of the opportunity presented by their absence, quickly opened the door of the palanquin and shouted as loudly as he could, "Zzogan!"

His daughter, whom he expected to find weeping, was sleeping soundly.

At first he was terribly surprised and worried, in case she had been crying so much that she had lost her senses, but he was relieved when she opened her dry eyes, as the autumn wind rushed in through the open door of the palanquin.

"Zzogan, have you been sleeping?"

Zzogan nodded with a smile in reply. She had fallen asleep as soon as she had got into the palanquin, since she had not slept for several nights before, and now she felt refreshed and managed to bring out a smile when she saw her father's face, red with tears.

Mr. Yi was relieved to find that his daughter was all right, and his voice altered as he said,

"My child. We are getting near. Are you sure that you don't want to relieve yourself?"

Zzogan showed that she did not wish to by turning her head.

"You won't be able to go to the toilet in the house for a whole day, you know."

"I know, father."

Zzogan was still in good spirits as she answered this, and Mr. Yi was glad to find his daughter, whom he had thought still a child, behaving so happily, as if she knew all she had to know, even smiling instead of weeping, and he asked her with some surprise,

"How do you know it all so well?"

"My mother told me!"

"And did your mother tell you everything else as well?" Zzogan nodded. Mr Yi, who had imagined that his wife had done nothing but weep when sending her daughter off to the bridegroom's, was glad to discover that she had taken care to instruct her fully, and even more glad to know that his daughter could remember what her mother had told her, and now he asked her in a low voice?"

"Are you happy at being married?"

He had wanted to ask her before, but had not been able to bring himself to do

it because he did not expect her to answer, Zzogan tried to answer with a smile, but suddenly her eyelids felt warm and her nose sour, so she dropped her head quickly. Mr. Yi's happiness turned to gloom again. He recalled the case of a few months earlier of the bride of the house of the rolling-mortar. The bride came from Zinan and committed suicide by hanging herself on a pine tree on the hill behind the village on the terrible dark night of the third day of her marriage to the eldest son of the house, a cripple, because she found him horrible and hated him. Her mother had visited the house after the tragedy and lamented, as she held her daughter, whose tongue hung out and whose eyes had turned right over and showed white.

"I made my daughter die because of our poverty!"

Mr. Yi could see the scene as if on a lantern slide; he felt his backbone go rigid, and a frost fall over his body. It looked as if the same sort of thing would soon be happening to him too. He felt dizzy, and his long, drawn-out shadow, swinging in front of him, seemed to be like a goblin haunting him and his daughter as they went on he could only keep walking by holding on to the palanquin with his eyes closed.

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The bearers brought them to the, bridegroom's house at noon as the shadows under their feet were reduced to their smallest size. The bridegroom's house was fairly crowded. Zzogan passed the rest of the day as though in a dream, playing the unfamiliar part of a bride as her mother had instructed her. Meanwhile, she did not forget to find out what her bridegroom would look like, and she often dropped her head and took a side-glance at him.

She had first imagined that her bridegroom would look like the bridegroom of the Big-Gate House, a short man with a round, clever face, usually smiling, who wore a thin blue robe and black shoes. She had not had that idea since she had first seen that bridegroom, but only from the evening of the day when the rice and barley had been delivered from the bridegroom's house, while she had been feeling so sad, lonely, terrified, and fearful.

When the rest of the day had passed, those guests who were attending in the bride's room went home, saying that the bride must be tired. After a while, her bridegroom entered the room, opening the door carelessly. He was not at all the sort of bridegroom Zzogan had imagined, but a giant of about nine feet, with a broad chest, and a wide face in which she struck at once by one dark, hollowed eye, and a horrible big mouth like a tiger's. She was especially frightened at the abrupt way he tried to take off her clothes without a word. She wanted to be excused, but he grasped her tightly in his strong hands, as if he had caught a baby sparrow, and slipped off her clothes; gasping, he blew out the dim lamp-light in the farther corner of the room and got under the quilt alone. Zzogan was unable to move at all, like a rat in front of a cat, and stood trembling in the darkness, half out of her mind. She passed the whole night in this state of paralysis and only came to her senses when the light of dawn began to show in the window. The bridegroom was most surprised at this.

As if she had been awakened from a dream, Zzogan opened her eyes suddenly and looked around. When she found her husband lying beside her, she kicked off the quilt and leapt out of it. She tried to put on her clothes, but her waist and hips felt as if they did not belong to her, and she could not move them; she cried out in horror.

She thought she might be dead. The bridegroom was awakened from his

sound sleep by her cries and her hurried dressing. He realized that something was wrong by her cries and her way of dressing, and he tried to caress his bride in many ways. The more he touched her, the more horrified she was; her eyes opened wide, as if she were trying to keep off a terrible, awful worm, and she turned her face aside.

It was quite natural that she should feel so since she had not yet even reached the age of puberty, and of course she was trembling, horrified by the sudden contact with a man. Never before had she had such an experience. Her mother had instructed her about everything, right up to the time when she got into the palanquin, being worried about her tender age, but she had never told her about the accident which would happen to her at night in the bridal chamber. Everyone knew that such things were not proper subject for discussion, so Zzogan's mother could not tell her about this, though she told her about everything else.

The bridegroom did not know what to do when he saw the frightened eyes of his bride, and he really felt a little ashamed of himself, as he said rather scoldingly, "There's no need to cry, is there?"

At the same time, he repented deeply his behaviour during the night because she seemed so horrified by it. He had had no desire at all to do such a thing before he had met her.

He had realized the handicap under which he suffered by being one-eyed and had been ashamed of the way all arrangements for his marriage had failed because of this. So before he entered the bride's room that night, when he had an opportunity to do so without being noticed by the others, he had cleaned out the dirty liquid and waxes from his deformed eye, and as he went about the house, he felt a little nervous, as if he were embarking on a new adventure. He intended only to cover himself with the quilt as quickly as possible when he entered her room, and fall immediately into a sound sleep. But he must have been enchanted by the pretty little girl, like a cotton flower, and the awakened passion of a man of thirty years finally exploded.

"I'll not do it again! Please don't cry!"

But however hard he might try, he could not stop her crying. So, having said what he could, he left her alone in the room, for he was feeling nervous, uneasy, and weary.

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When the husband left the room, some people looked in, opening the door a little. Then a young woman brought in a basin of water and asked Zzogan to wash her face. When it was placed in front of her, she bent her head over it and applied water to her face with both hands because she did not want others to look at her weeping face. If she had been at home, she would have wept her heart out, but here, among strangers, she swilled her tears away in the basin, opening her eyes wide or splashing water on her closed lids trying hard to stop her tears. More tears could have flowed, but she could not allow herself to weep to her heart's content.

Before her tears had stopped, the breakfast was served. After repeatedly wiping away her tears, pretending to wash her face, she reluctantly sat at the dining-table, but the salted fish, pork, baked pollack, bean sprouts, and the rest of the meal were tasteless, and the cooked rice seemed as hard as grains of sand. She laid aside her spoon after eating only a little, and the young woman who had brought in the basin of water put it back into her hand, and asked her to eat together with her,

which might help her appetite. Zzogan was obliged to hold the spoon, but she had no appetite at all; the table appeared dimly through her tears, and the sound of the spoons seemed far away as in a dream.

The young woman was at a loss as to how to console her, and introducing herself as the bridegroom's sister, she explained that it was natural for the bride to weep at first, but she would soon get used to it and forget her parents' home. So the young woman prattled on, even praising the bridegroom, but soon the smiles on her face were replaced by grimaces, as if she were displeased by Zzogan's unwillingness to listen to her advice, and she complained,

"Come on, now, no more weeping, please!"

But what effect could the complaints of the husband's sister have on Zzogan? Tears were still dropping from her eyes as she held her spoon in her hand when she heard someone say,

"The bride's father has left!"

These words came to Zzogan, like an arrow, though other sounds did not reach her ears. She threw away the spoon, opened the door abruptly, and left the room. But when she rushed outside the gate into the wide street, those who had been seeing him off were coming back, and her father had already passed the farm fields and had reached the sloping path of Mount Gûmbong. Zzogan, held by the arms by the young woman, who had chased after her, and by others, stamped hard on the ground, and shouted,

"Father, let me go with you, let me go with you!"

Her voice sounded as tragic as if her throat would break and her breast choke. Her sorrowful words may or may not have reached her father's ears, but his white figure soon disappeared behind the other side of the hill. When her father's back had gone out of her sight, she felt left alone under the sky, and the world went dark about her.

"What's the matter with you? You should be ashamed!"

The young woman, tried to soothe her, but her ears were deaf.

She did not care about the whispering voices of the villagers, old and young, and as she was being taken back to the house, she went on weeping still, looking at the mountain path.

From that day on, that mountain path was a source of sadness to her. Right up to the evening when the memorial service was held on the mountain, by which time she had but a vague memory of what had happened, the path of the mountain remained in a corner of her mind as a souvenir of her sorrow.

The memorial service on the mountain was held on the fourth night after her marriage. Every year when the harvest was gathered in, the rents delivered, and all the other formalities carried out, all the thirty families of this small village of Bangzuggol used to hold without fail the annual memorial service on Mount Sem-ggol. Even though they might be holding their stomachs because of their hunger at the time, for the sake of their future happiness, they would make the full preparations for the services to the God of the Mountain, and all the villagers, men and women, young and old, would have to stay at home for a number of days before the service took place. All, whether farm renters or land-owners, as tough as tigers towards the farm renters, would solemnly stay at home together to ensure their prosperity, and on the actual day of the service, everyone would put on new clothes, as if it were a big festival, and hold the service in a most pious manner. They usually took turns with the various offerings each year; some, for instance, would make cakes, others offer

cooked rice; some houses would be responsible for the fruits, while others fried fish; so each was kept busy with its allotted share for the year.

This year, Zzogam's husband had to offer a pig to the God of the Mountain, and after lunch, Zzogam climbed up and down the mountain several times, gasping for breath, with her husband's sister to take water to the big kettle which her husband had taken onto the mountain in the morning.

The mountain valley, Sern-ggol, was surrounded by hills, which hid it like screens, and from this place it was impossible to see the houses of the village or the mountain path where her father had crossed over. Zzogam, with the help of her husband's sister, filled the big cow-herd's kettle with six jars of water, and, looking round vacantly, she said, pointing to a mountain in the West,

"I wish I could climb that mountain!"

Whenever in the five days since her marriage she had seen the mountain path, over which her father had passed, she had thought that she could go back to her parents' house. Now, in the deep mountain valley, from which she could not locate the path, she looked at all the mountains around, and thought she saw the path on one of the mountains to the West, and thought, "If I cross that mountain, I shall get back home!"

Her husband's sister, who was four years older than her, felt that she should agree when Zzogam spoke to her, though she knew that on that day in particular she should prepare the supper earlier than usual, and so she answered,

"You may if you like!"

Usually a husband's sister, a sister-in-law, was not kind to her brother's wife; but this one was sympathetic to her brother's wife, who was younger than she.

Her husband was different, but her mother-in-law also took care of Zzogam as if she had been her own sister, quite unlike the usual mother-in-law. They were a very good-natured family and did their best to get her to be more interested in the house. If Zzogam had liked her husband the good-natured mother and sister-in-law might have been jealous or disliked her, but anyway, as things were, it was true that they took very good care of her. Since the first night of her marriage, Zzogam had not gone into her husband's room, but had tried to sleep in the stable or on the stack of barley straw, and her mother-in-law had never complained of this but had given Zzogam advice and ordered her own daughter to do the sewing, kitchen work, and so on, instead of her daughter-in-law.

This was quite natural on the mother-in-law's part because she had been widowed when forty years of age and since had had a great affection for her son and daughter, who, she hoped, would be made happy with a nice daughter-in-law and a good son-in-law, but her son had not married until over thirty, and her daughter-in-law wept every day in great sorrow. She was ashamed of this and, moreover: felt more pity for her son than she had before he was married, and for her daughter too, who had grown old, losing the chance of a good marriage because of her brother. At the same time, Zzogam's sister-in-law would have felt very sorry for her mother and brother if Zzogam had run away or returned to her parents' house and not come back, and the rumours might affect any marriage which she might arrange for herself later.

But Zzogam could not understand how they felt and was rather displeased by their kindness.

No sooner did she hear the answer of her sister-in-law, "You may if you like!", than as if she were jumping or flying she ran up the mountain in the direction which she had fixed in her mind, and was soon half-way to the top. Her figure grew smaller and smaller.

Then her sister-in-law, who was doing her best to follow her, gasping for breath and stretching out her neck in her eagerness, shouted "Sister! Let's go together!"

Zzogan did not look back at all, shuddering with fright and feeling sick, as on seeing a worm, at hearing her sister-in-law's voice, and she ran on fast, clenching her fists tighter. She was able to reach the top, much sooner than her sister-in-law, but then the dream which she had had in the valley was broken to pieces. She had expected, on reaching the top, to be able to see the big village of tangerines where her dear father, mother, and brothers lived, but there were only to be seen, swimming in her tears, many mountain slopes besides the one on which she was standing, and no village was to be seen. The wind was blowing through the pine trees. The mountain sparrows were twittering. She might have wandered on, crying, over all the mountain slopes trying to find the village of Kûn-maûl, if her sister-in-law had not followed her. But she was obliged to take her advice and come down again by the same road as she had gone up. When she got back to her husband's house, her mother-in-law had already prepared the supper, and her husband, who had many times looked out along the valley of Sem-ggol, was glad to see her coming back, and, with the rope which he had been preparing for carrying the pig up to the memorial service on the mountain in his hand, he crawled in and out of the kitchen like a child. He may have guessed whether Zzogan liked him or not, but he concentrated all the sight in his one eye on her lovely face and body because he wished to stroke her, to speak to her, or to embrace her as tightly as possible.

How different were their feelings towards each other! With his feelings, her husband went on ahead after supper up the mountain, carrying the pig and fire-wood on his back, and Zzogan, her mother-in-law, and sister-in-law followed with a big wooden box to put the pig in, a gourd bowl, and a pottery bowl to be filled with its blood, a sharp knife, and a chopping-board.

At the site of the service on the mountain, the elder of the village, old Mr. Czambong, with some young men, was erecting the altar. They were sweeping around the big 'pogi' tree and preparing the torchlights of fire-wood on both sides of the altar. Zzogan, standing near her husband, who was boiling the water for the pig-killing, kept looking at those young men as they walked about under the altar tree, to see if any of them were one-eyed. But all of them had eyes in the right places; they were not so tall, their faces were not so broad, and they were not so old. She compared these men with her husband, whose face shone like copper in the light of the bright-burning fire-wood, with which he had been busy along with the others. The young men seemed to be creatures of Heaven, and her husband looked to her like some horrible devil of a fairy story.

While Zzogan was thinking this, the evening became gradually dark, and the villagers, from the old men to the young children gathered at the site of the Memorial Service on the Mountain. Those who were responsible for the cakes, the cooked rice, the fried food, the fruits and so on, were in attendance too.

The torch-lights which were set up on either side of the service site, waved their flames, red like animals' tongues, and on the ground a bonfire of fire-wood was burning. The cakes, cooked rice, pollack, fried food, and fruits were offered to the

altar by the hands of old Czozi. Now, when the pig was killed, the service would begin. The pig was to be killed after the other offerings had been made in a solemn quiet, surrounded by the people, because it was the ancient custom of the village that the dying shriek of the pig should be heard by the God of the Mountain.

As had been expected, Zzogan's husband, squatting over the shrieking pig, which had been tied down with ropes and placed a little to one side, grasped its head tightly in his hand, and, stepping on its kicking four legs, plunged the sharp, shining knife into its neck, so that its dark crimson blood flowed out like a torrent. The pig shrieked loud enough to make the mountain tremble, and when its blood had filled the pottery jar, its limbs went stiff and it died. The people were standing in a strained, solemn attitude, watching the last moments of the pig, but only Zzogan was horrified by the dreadful scene, trembling and dragging herself backwards.

When she saw the blood flow, Zzogan was suddenly reminded of her dreadful experience on the first night of her marriage. The scene, as her husband sat on the pig, plunged the sharp knife into its neck to make the blood flow, and gasped for breath as the pig kicked and wriggled under his hip which was moving up and down, almost made her suffocate. Zzogan imagined that one day she too might be killed like the pig, her blood spurting forth. The experience of her first night of marriage had not been repeated because since then she had slept at night on the barley straw or in the stable or beside her mother-in-law. But it seemed a terrible thing to her, and she broke out in a sweat at the thought of living in the same house as her husband.

At last Zzogan made up her mind to leave that horrible husband, however dreadful the night may be. So when the torches and bonfire were burning up a fine bright red and everyone was standing in most pious mood in front of the altar, which shone in the red flames, she stole out of the crowd, unnoticed by anyone, and came to the entrance of Sem-ggol.

It was a starry night, and the wind was chilly. Night in the village, without the light of the torches and the bonfire was very dreadful, and the unlit houses seemed to be crawling towards her like fierce animals, but she reached the gate of her husband's house without stopping. The dogs barked noisily. This frightened her, and she opened the gate and quietly entered the kitchen. When the poker got in her way, or the soy-bean hulls cracked under her feet, she felt her breast go cold and drew back. But she went on looking for something in the darkness, groping with her hands. She heard the particular sounds of the gourd bowls, tin bowls, and crockery bowls as she touched them. Then at last she recognized the sound of the thing she was looking for, and she grasped it. She was not glad, but rather she felt her flesh creep.

She rushed out of the kitchen. The stars were still bright in the sky, and the wind was chilly so late at night. The dogs stopped barking. She brought several bundles of barley straw into her husband's room, and set a match to them. They began to burn well. She felt quite satisfied when the burning straws burned the dreadful room to about a skirt's width, but when the flames stretched to the ceiling, the material of which it was made began to burn with a crackling sound, and she grew frightened and rushed out to the yard, shouting and jumping about here and there. The dogs of the village came up in a pack, and barked with her.

The flames soon burned through the ceiling and stretched out onto the roof. Black smoke, ashes, red flames, the sounds of burning, the noise of the house falling down—all these made her shout the louder and start crying too. She had wanted to see the hateful house burned up, so that she might leave there for her parent's

house by the same mountain path over which her father had gone. But now she was threatened by the furious flames which were stretching towards the sky, and she finally fell down on the wide road, out of her senses, before the fire had finished burning.

After Zzogan swooned, more of the village burned. Then the villagers came down from the mountain.

Her mother-in-law, her sister-in-law, and the other villagers—those whose houses had been burned—rushed in and scolded her as violently as if they wished to kill her, shouting indignantly. But only Zzogan's husband tried to revive her before trying to put out the fire.

The following day, when Zzogan was arrested and tied up with a long rope by a policeman, in the midst of the villagers, and was pulled off behind the policeman's bicycle, her husband as he followed the couple rubbed his hands, begging the policeman to forgive her, Zzogan treading on trembling, with frightened eyes, dry because of her fear.