## Chapter 62

Seventeen-Arch Bridge leads to a Temple Ghost
An Appearance on Stage Brings Old Friends Together

On the day after the May Fourth demonstration *People's Daily*, the main Party newspaper, actually carried a photograph of the event, accompanied by a report which was almost factual. It did not declare the students to be criminals, did not describe them in the customary manner as "swollen with counter-revolutionary arrogance", did not even make the usual obligatory references—Chinese newspapers have them permanently set up in type (those who run their affairs in the style of a criminal conspiracy naturally assume that the rest of the world operates in the same manner)—to hidden forces manipulating events from behind the scenes.

Norbu got the newspaper from some students in the street, when he went out for breakfast that morning. He brought it back to Margaret with the food, and read it to her.

"I can't believe it," said Margaret. "On the front page! Perhaps China can be a normal country after all."

"Would it be reported like this in America, on the front page of the newspaper?" wondered Norbu.

"Of course! If it's news, they report it, whether it's favorable to the leaders or not. That's democracy."

"Who could believe it?" said Norbu, unable to take his eyes from the newspaper. "Who could believe it?"

Next day he went off to a meeting at Beijing University. It was the

most contentious yet. A lot of the students wanted to end the class boycotts. They felt that the movement had made its point.

"The national leaders are standing up one by one to make conciliatory speeches," said the student who headed this faction. "Even the General Secretary of the Party has admitted that our demonstrations are patriotic. Look at what we've accomplished! The reform faction in the leadership has been strengthened, the press has been opened up, we have aired our grievances to the people. We can't hope for more than that, it's not realistic."

Erkin, the Turkish boy, wanted to go on demonstrating. "What have the leaders really conceded?" he asked. "Nothing! What guarantees do we have that if we go back to class now the leaders won't renege on everything and go back to being despots? None! We've got to engage them in dialog, public dialog—make them promise in the face of all the world that they'll change this corrupt stinking system of theirs."

The arguments went back and forth all afternoon and evening. At last a compromise was struck. The demonstrations would end and students would return to class; but a petition asking for talks with the leaders would be submitted. A committee would be formed: the Beijing Students' Union Dialog Representative Group. This group would be authorized to talk to the country's leaders, if and when they agreed to talks. Erkin got himself elected to the group, but was still disgruntled that the class boycott and demonstrations had been called off.

Norbu learned this on the way home. Erkin was a student at the Education Institute, but was staying with friends at Qinghua for the convenience of meetings. Norbu walked part way home with him in the darkness. It was the night of the new moon, beginning of the fourth lunar month.

"The leaders will smash us if we show any weakness," said Erkin. "We must press our advantage while the reform faction is in control. I don't think we should be calling off demos. That's just us giving concessions to them."

"If we're going to have democracy," said Norbu mildly, "you have to go along with the will of the majority."

"Fuck democracy." Erkin laughed. "I'll soon have them marching again."

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Sunday was exceptionally fine, even by the standards of Beijing in springtime. Norbu took Margaret to the Summer Palace. He had never been there before. Nyima had not cared to go with him anywhere her colleagues or students might see them, and there had never seemed any point in going on his own.

They climbed Longevity Hill and gazed down over the lake and gardens below.

"So beautiful," sighed Margaret. "How awful to think that it was only for the enjoyment of a privileged few."

"You could say that about anything. Most people aren't allowed to live in Beijing. We are. Does that make us a privileged few? Is that awful, too?"

Norbu never let her get away with this Chinese hypocrisy about class and privilege. The stories of his mother and her relatives about class struggle in Tibet—peasants who had had the temerity to buy a couple of acres of their own clubbed to death in public as "landlords", aristocrats like Kesang Duoji, proprietors of whole counties, praised as "progressive" and given high positions in the Chinese administration as soon as they turned coat for the conquerors—had inoculated him very thoroughly against socialism. None of that was Margaret's fault, of course, and he was not going to allow politics to be personal between them. He grinned at her, and pinched her bottom.

"Oh, Norbu! Why do you always have to be so argumentative? Of course it's different. If everybody tried to come to Beijing, there wouldn't be enough food and shelter for them all. They'd starve. So it's reasonable to restrict who can live here. But it wasn't reasonable to keep the common people out of the Summer Palace. It wasn't reasonable to save all this beauty just for a few eyes. How can you say that was reasonable?"

"It seemed reasonable to the Empress. She *lived* here, at least part of the time. How could she be secure here, if the common people were let

in? Somebody would have murdered the old sow. Of course it's all right to let people in *now*. Nobody uses it any more. Now the leaders use Zhongnanhai. Try getting in there."

"The American President uses the White House. He lives there. Still, people can go in and look around. You just buy a ticket and go in."

"Nonsense! How can that be? Someone would shoot him!"

"When he's not there, stupid."

"I don't believe it."

"It's true."

"Well, I don't believe it."

They were standing face to face on the terrace at the top of Longevity Hill. To dispel the disagreement, and also for the pleasure of it, Norbu reached both hands round her and gave her bottom a comprehensive squeeze.

"Oh! Disgraceful! Everybody will see!" She slapped his hands away, blushing to give the lie to her words.

They decided to walk the three miles or so round the lake. The crowds were all at the northern end, by Longevity Hill and the stone boat. After a few hundred yards Norbu and Margaret were alone among the willows by the lakeside. A narrow path threaded its way among tall grasses. Further back from the water margin, plum trees were in blossom.

"One of your relatives," Norbu said when a small bird flew up from the path at their approach. In the Xings' apartment, in their languorous hours of play, he had awarded her the nickname "nightingale", on account of her art.

"A pretty little creature," she replied.

"But a sharp little beak." They were strolling very slowly, his arm round her waist. Where they turned onto the causeway, a fisherman was seated among the rushes. He turned his head to watch them. Norbu threw him a greeting.

"Caught any big ones?"

The fisherman shook his head.

"Caught any little ones?" added Margaret, feeling frivolous. The fisherman stared at her for a few seconds, then turned silently back to his hobby.

"Not very communicative," observed Norbu.

"You should have asked: 'Caught any medium-sized ones?' We Chinese are very literal-minded, you know." This set them both giggling.

From the center point of the causeway they could look back at Longevity Hill with its temples. In the middle distance to their right was the seventeen-arch bridge. They stopped to enjoy the scene, the beauty and serenity of it.

"I wish I were one of the old poets," said Margaret. "I'd compose an ode."

"Oh, I know how to write classical poetry!" Norbu stepped to the water's edge and struck a pose. "Let me see.

> On the surface of the lake the bright moon shines.
> From the temple on the hill sounds the midnight bell . . ."

[Garbling two famous classical poems.] "Come on, you must help me harmonize it."

Margaret was in fits. "Call *that* a poem? Sounds more like a dog barking. Or a yak braying, I should say."

"What? Huh! Li Bai himself couldn't do better. But let me finish.

> The dew is fresh on the moss by my door,
> And the fisherman's lamp flickers through the trees."

Norbu roared with laughter at his own wit. "What about that, ha?" He swung round and grabbed her, knocking her off balance. They fell down together, into the rushes. He was on top of her. His lips were on her neck, his hand inside her blouse. Margaret struggled away.

"You're crazy. Right here by the path? Anyone coming by would see us."

He let her go. She got to her feet and brushed herself.

"When we get off the causeway then," he said.

"You're crazy." But Margaret longed for him, he could see. "Come on." She set off, fast. Norbu got up and followed.

The area at the end of the causeway was too open, and visible from the road. Norbu pointed to the seventeen-arch bridge.

"Over the bridge," he said, pointing. "There's an old temple on the island. And you can see there's nobody there."

So they crossed the seventeen-arch bridge and wandered among the pavilions of the dusty, rotting old temple, and embraced in a frenzy on a little plot of rough grass between some bushes under one of the terraces at the rear. When they were finished, Norbu rolled off to lie beside her. He let his head fall right back into the grass, bringing the terrace behind them into his field of vision, all upside-down. On the terrace, standing perfectly still, was an old man wearing a robe. He was bald like a monk, and the robe was like a monk's robe, only the wrong color, or else incredibly dirty. He was regarding them with a gentle smile. A bald old man in a maroon robe watching in silence as two lovers performed their act of joy. The caretaker, presumably, or a ghost; or possibly a complete mirage.

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Norbu went back to class on the Monday. Margaret ached without him, but she knew he was quite intent on his studies, so let him go. His study schedule was not, in any case, very arduous. On the first day he was home at three; on the second, at twelve-thirty.

Waiting for him, Margaret began thinking about the future. If she stayed out of America for more than six months she would lose her Green Card, she knew. If, by that time, her divorce was final, she might not be able to get a renewal of the card. She had no wish to live in China permanently. Would Norbu be willing to go to America? If so, would he be able to survive there? He spoke no more than twenty words of English, with almost no grasp of phonetics. She would not be able to sponsor him until she had her divorce, anyway. How long would that take? And in the meantime, how was she going to live without him?

She raised the issue. Norbu watched her face gravely as she listed her points. He knew her situation: she had told him everything on their second day together.

When she was through he went on watching her for a time, then dropped his eyes. At last he just said: "Of course we should get married.

As soon as possible." Then he looked up at her again with his wide, world-defying grin.

"But, Norbu, are you sure you will be able to live in America?"

"*Me*? Ha! I'll be a millionaire in no time!"

"But you can't speak English."

He waved this away. "I've coped quite well in China, haven't I? How can America be more difficult? You told me yourself, in America even the officials are kind. In such a country, who can fail?"

Looking at his strong, proud face, his fearless white grin, she could not doubt him. She fell against him and hugged him. They were in bed; she sitting up, he lying. "Oh, Norbu! We shall be together for ever!"

"Yes, my little nightingale. But first you must get your divorce from Mister Jewish Guy. How long do you have the apartment for?"

"I don't know. Until Teacher Zou comes back from the southwest. She'll write and tell me, she said. Maybe days, maybe weeks. Who knows?" Margaret thought Teacher Zou would let her stay even after she came back; but of course there would be no question of having Norbu in the apartment too. She could move out to a hotel; but there would be all sorts of inconveniences and embarrassments attendant on pursuing the affair in a hotel. The thought of being able to see him, speak with him, touch him, yet not be able to be *with* him was not to be borne, not after these few days together. When Teacher Zou came back she would return to New York at once, Margaret decided. Norbu read the thought.

"Well, when she comes back you must go home and start arranging things."

"Yes. I'll go back right away. You must wait to hear from me. You will wait to hear from me, won't you?"

He surrounded her with his long brown arms, and pressed his lips against her forehead. "Never doubt it, little nightingale. Send your letters to the Institute. That will find me."

Margaret clung to him. Thinking of life in a hotel, the impersonality of it, facing the scrutiny of the desk clerks, had thrown her back somehow into her old fears. Still so many complicated things to accomplish! Still no straight path to happiness! And would Heaven really grant her that

happiness? Or was it her fate always to be cherishing false hopes? She clung to him, her face against his neck.

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Erkin's determination became clear that Friday, at another meeting in the University. The petitions to the leaders asking for talks had all been ignored. In response, Erkin and some other students had decided to stage a hunger strike right in the middle of the Square, at the Martyrs' Monument. The strike was being organized by Erkin himself and a girl called Wang Jun, another Education Institute student. Norbu relayed all this to Margaret when he came home on Friday evening.

"It seems silly to me," said Margaret. "I mean, hunger strike. They're 'trying to break a stone with an egg'. What if the leaders just go on ignoring them? Then the students will starve to death."

"Well, they're willing to face that. They're quite determined. One of our lot wanted to join them. Zhu Yuehan, the Christian boy from Tianjin, do you remember him? With the wild hair and thick glasses. He said he wanted to die for democracy. However, we dissuaded him."

"How did you do that?"

"I told him if he tried to hunger strike I'd force food down his throat with my hands." Norbu held them out in front of him, spread out, and laughed. "The others all supported me. So he backed down. He's very eccentric."

"But really, what do these hunger strikers hope to achieve?"

"Why, they want the government to talk to them. Gorbachev's coming on Monday, you know. Maybe the government will agree to talk before Monday, to avoid embarrassment."

"Do you really think so?"

Norbu chuckled. "Not a hope. But they're such idealists, we shall have to support them somehow."

Norbu's classmates had decided against marching to the Square. Since there was no mass march planned, they would have been a small group on their own, not strong enough to resist the attentions of any police they

might meet. So it had been arranged that they would assemble informally the next day under the trees at the northwest corner of the Square.

In the event, only ten students from the Botanical Institute showed up. All of Norbu's committee were there, except for Xiaohong, the bony girl, who had argued that there was no point in going if there was no general march. The only placard was one carried by Peanut Wang. It said: DOWN WITH OFFICIAL CORRUPTION! Margaret remembered that he had carried a placard at the May Fourth march. She couldn't remember what it had said, but thought it had been less militant than this one.

"Have you suffered from official corruption, Peanut Wang?" she asked, to make conversation while Norbu conferred with the twins.

Peanut Wang twisted his boyish pink face into a temporary grimace of distaste. "Who hasn't? My father complains all the time. Whenever a peasant starts to make any money the officials come along and pull it out of his pocket. 'Like flies to meat they come,' that's what my father says. I don't think it's right." His brows furrowed and he angled his head to one side, some original thought having just occurred to him. "Is it like that in America?"

"I don't know. I don't think so. But to tell you the truth, I really don't know any American peasants. I'm not even sure that America *has* peasants."

The Square and its hunger strikers were a disappointment. Some tens of thousands of people were present; but when Margaret had last seen the Square it had held hundreds of thousands, so that this day's turnout seemed little more exciting than an ordinary holiday weekend. The hunger strikers were lying around in the open at the north side of the Martyrs' Monument, under a banner saying HUNGER STRIKE. Margaret caught glimpses of them only, from behind several ranks of spectators. None seemed to be in any condition of distress. The only one she saw clearly was sitting on a tarpaulin on the ground, his arms around his knees, smoking a cigarette.

"Are they allowed to smoke?" she asked Norbu when they had retreated to a more open area. "Surely that counts as food, doesn't it?"

"Depends whether they inhale the smoke or swallow it," replied Norbu. Margaret thought this not in very good taste.



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Disillusioned by this rather flat experience, Margaret was reluctant to go to the Square again the following Monday, but Norbu insisted. It was important (he said) for there to be as many students in the Square as possible. Michael Gorbachev, the leader of Russia, was to arrive in Beijing for a visit. He would be taken to the Great Hall of the People, on the west side of the Square. The country's leaders would be there to greet him, and would hear the voice of the Movement at first hand. There had been a rumor that the Square would be cleared the previous night, but nothing had happened. *People's Daily* had called directly for democracy, human rights and government by the balance of powers. "Perhaps we've got them on the run after all," Norbu said wonderingly.

Now the Square was a sight to behold. It was thronged, as it had been on May Fourth. All of Norbu's committee were present, with some other botanists Margaret had not met before. The hunger strikers had moved their camp to the east side of the Monument, and it seemed to be much bigger, though it was impossible to get anywhere near it. There was a forest of flags and banners, concentrated particularly around the hunger strikers. Loudspeakers had been set up around the Monument to broadcast speeches by the student leaders standing on the upper terrace. One of these leaders—a small, frail woman with one of those faces that seem permanently anxious—Norbu identified as Wang Jun, the girl from the Education Institute who had thought up the hunger strike with Erkin. The steady croak of the loudspeakers and rumble of the crowd were pierced occasionally by an ambulance's whine: Norbu said the strikers were beginning to faint from heat and malnutrition.

The hunger strikers themselves were something of an abstraction to Margaret, who had never got a close look at any of them; but she was stirred nonetheless that afternoon by the great crowds, by the brave banners, by the frail young woman at the Monument calling out challenges to the leaders of the nation even as they sat assembled in the Great Hall two hundred yards away. At one point the occupants of the Square all faced the Hall and sang the *Internationale* (Norbu, she noticed, moving his lips to some different words; either faking it because he didn't know the real words—nearly incon-

ceivable, for anyone with a Chinese education—or singing some words of his own devising, or perhaps singing in Tibetan). At this point she felt a surge of emotion, for the first time since she had joined in the Movement. It was a rather Chinese emotion: patriotism—sadly out of fashion in the plump democracies of the West, which can afford to practice fashion in such things—and solidarity, and racial pride, and satisfaction at the thought of the leaders of Nation and Party having for once to sit still and listen to the people, instead of the more usual, contrariwise, state of affairs.

The Botanical Institute students were in a group a hundred yards northwest of the Monument. Twenty yards further in was a foreign news crew: two tall young men in sports clothes, one of them toting a large camcorder on his shoulder, and a woman carrying a long pole with a microphone on it. As everyone was settling down after the *Internationale*, the unencumbered young man happened to look at Margaret, and did a double-take. He spoke to his colleagues and they came over.

"You're Margaret Han, aren't you?" The young man was handsome, in a lanky sort of way, and sported a close-cut red beard. His English had a slight accent.

"Margaret Robbins, properly. But yes. Are you an Opera fan?"

"Oh, yes. I have both your CDs. I saw you sing Gilda in Amsterdam last year. Your 'Caro nome'—marvelous! I wonder . . . would you mind?" The young man had pulled a small notebook from his shirt pocket and was holding it out to her for an autograph. "And please, would you mind adding: Beijing, 15th May 1989? No, *Tiananmen Square*, Beijing, then the date. Would you? Thank you so much."

Margaret made the autograph and handed it back. "That's where you're from, Amsterdam?"

They all nodded. "Netherlands national TV," said the man with the camcorder. He was shorter, with a black beard. The girl with the pole was thin and freckled.

"You are really an opera singer?" asked the girl, same faint misplacement of pitch and vowel. "You should sing for the students."

"Oh, I don't know if the organizers would allow that."

The tall young man's face had lit up. "Oh, yes! Sing for the people here! We'll make a film of it!"

"What are they saying?" Norbu wanted to know. Margaret explained to him.

"Yes, it's a good idea. Show some international culture. It will advertise our movement to the foreign countries."

Margaret was doubtful. "Practically everybody here is Chinese. They don't know anything about foreign opera. They won't be able to understand it. Besides, it's not easy to sing without an orchestra."

The botanists had clustered round while this exchange was going on—not understanding the first part, as none of them had sufficient English. "Are you really an opera singer?" asked Peanut Wang, a new dimension of awe forming on his face.

"Foreign style," said Margaret. "Not really suitable . . ."

"Comrade Norbu, you should speak to the organizers," said Xiaohong. "This will be very good for our movement. Show our culture and our international support together."

Everybody was looking at her: the foreigners, who seemed not to have understood the Chinese conversations, Norbu and his classmates, some students she did not know who had been eavesdropping. They were all looking at her, expectant.

"All right," sighed Margaret. "If they will let me." Mentally flicking through her repertoire for something that might be suitable, and not too unmanageable a cappella.

They made their way to the Monument: all the botanists in a body, and the Dutch camera crew. After some negotiation between Norbu and the student guards at the Monument, he and Margaret were led up onto the upper terrace, where the girl called Wang Jun was giving a speech into the microphone. From here Margaret could look out over the whole northern part of the Square, all the way to Heavenly Peace Gate. The sight was more stirring even than the massed singing of the *Internationale* had been. North of the monument, and to the east where the hunger strikers were, there were thickets of banners, mostly red, stirring gently in the breezy remnants of the *chunfeng*. They brought to mind the illustrations in children's story books, of armies massed for battle under the great leaders of ancient times—Liu Bang, who defeated the armies of Chu to establish the mighty Han dynasty; Cao Cao the warlord King of Wei,

who vanquished that dynasty; the women of the Yang family, marching to avenge their menfolk killed by the Xixia barbarians; Wu Sangui leading the Three Feudatories in hopeless revolt against the Manchu power. And everywhere, among the flags and between them, filling the whole square to the sheer vermilion walls of the Forbidden City, the heads of the black-haired people—*her* people, her *race*, irrepressible and indomitable—in endless movement; as restless, as ancient as the sea.

Standing on that plinth gazing out across the Square, Margaret grasped the scale of the movement for the first time. She had been in the Square before with the students, of course; but down at ground level you could see only your immediate neighbors, and except for the moment when everyone had sung the *Internationale,* there had been no strong impression of being part of a multitude. The Square itself was so vast that even when full of humanity one was never crushed, nor even jostled. You could always stroll around at leisure without feeling pressed upon by a great mass of people. Norbu had said there were 200,000 people in the Square on May 4th, but Margaret had no sense of number and the statistic had skipped off her consciousness like a stone from the surface of a pond. Now—there were at least as many in the Square today as there had been on the Fourth—the number, or a large part of it, was present to her eye. Twenty ten-thousands! Twice the entire population of Seven Kill Stele! And all the leaders of the nation within earshot! Of course, there was some point to politics after all. These people had no voice, and that was not right. If this was really a People's Republic, then the people had a right to be heard. Nothing would ever make a political animal out of Margaret, much less a dissident. She had accepted what she had been told by her parents and teachers. She believed that the new society, with all its faults, was better than the old. She had loved Chairman Mao with all her heart, and grieved true grief when he died. Still she knew now that his revolution was not complete, not while the people had no voice.

In later years, momentary forgetfulness caused Margaret to reproach herself for having been only a secondary participant in the Movement; for being there only because Norbu was; for having acquired her little glory by accident, so to speak. Then she would recall that moment on the

plinth of the Martyrs' Monument, recall her patriotism and pride, and acquit herself on all charges. At least then she was at one with all the students. She felt what they felt and sought what they sought. And what they sought—she never doubted it, then or later—was reasonable and just: while those who denied it to them were base, vile, vicious, cruel, corrupt and criminal, the enemies of all decency and worth.

Finished with her speech, Wang Jun listened for a moment to one of the guards, who had come up with Margaret and Norbu. Listening, she nodded, glancing at Margaret, then turned back to the microphone and spoke some words of introduction, mispronouncing Margaret's name.

"As you know, friends, many of our overseas compatriots from all fields of science and culture are here to show support to our movement. One of them is Han Yuanzhu, famous in the west as a singer of foreign-style opera. She is going to sing a song for us—I don't know what song, she will introduce it herself. Please show her your appreciation."

She stepped back, smiling a tired smile at Margaret; then, putting her hand over the microphone: "Thank you. I need a break." She handed the microphone to Margaret.

Margaret did not much care for microphones. When she was standing on a stage singing unassisted, she knew how to make her voice fill the hall. That was what she had been trained for. But with a microphone, unless you had taken time to know its particular quirks, and had a sound engineer to help you with the thing, you never knew what it would do to your voice. But she had resolved to sing for them, and some were applauding her and calling out from the endless mass of faces below. She therefore stood eyeing the microphone somewhat warily, eighteen inches from her face, and addressed the hundreds of thousands below.

**Margaret Han's Address from the Martyrs' Monument**

> My fellow Chinese! Our race endured five thousand years under kings and emperors, until at last we became a republic. Then we suffered forty more years under warlords and foreign invaders, before Chairman Mao united the country and drove out the invaders, and set up our People's Republic. Now we

> must take the next step forward—to democracy under law, with the people themselves freely choosing those who make the laws. We Chinese who live abroad are united with you, one heart and one soul, in this great enterprise of freedom. Each of us must do what he can. All that I can do is sing, and I am sorry to say that all my songs are in foreign languages. I will sing a song for you now—an Italian song, sung by a woman who wants to give heart to her people at a moment of national peril. She tells the people to have courage and to treat danger with contempt. He who has not courage, she says, gives grave offense to Heaven. Be daring, and Heaven will protect your high endeavor.

Margaret took breath and sang, as best she could without any accompaniment, "Coraggio, su coraggio" from Verdi's *I vespri siciliani*. The opera is set in the French occupation of Sicily during the thirteenth century. A drunken French officer sees Elena, the heroine, in the main square of the city. He commands her to sing for his amusement. Elena starts singing about a ship in a storm, the sailors crying to God to help them.

> Have courage, rise up and have courage,
> intrepid sons of the sea . . . .

God tells them to take their fate in their own hands, and the song becomes an open call to the Sicilians to overthrow their French oppressors. Margaret felt a tremor of shame at hearing herself compare the People's Government—so she still thought of it—to a foreign tyranny, but recovered with the reflection that there were surely very few in the Square who could understand sung Italian.

The aria was harder to do alone than she had thought, and much less effective without the chorus, whose verses she skipped. Still it was very well received, the students as far as she could see from the Monument clapping and smiling, looking up at her, some of them calling out to her. It occurred to Margaret that she had never, since leaving college, sung to

an audience of her own countrymen. She turned to step away. Norbu was a few paces behind her, applauding, smiling, his eyes on her. Some others, too, student leaders and organizers.

"Sing more!" called out Norbu. Wang Jun was nowhere in sight, and no-one seemed to want to take the microphone from her. Margaret struggled to think of suitable songs. "O patria mia" from *Aida* came to mind, but was wrong for the occasion, Aida having lost hope of ever seeing her country again. Isabella's "Pensa alla patria" was fitting enough; but Margaret knew Isabella as a comic heroine even if her audience didn't, and the knowledge would give her performance the wrong color, she felt sure. At last she decided to try the patriotic chorus from *Macbeth.*

> The nation betrayed
> Weeping, cries out.
> Comrades! we march
> To save the oppressed.
> The wrath of the skies
> Shall fall on the tyrant;
> For Heaven is weary
> Of his dreadful crimes.

She got through the song without vocal mishap, but the applause was less ardent than for "Coraggio". This could hardly have been a musical judgment—of the tens of thousands in the Square, probably no more than a few dozen even knew the name Verdi. Perhaps she had lost their attention while trying to think of what song to give them. Or perhaps they had just had enough opera. Margaret stepped away, bowing. Well, she had given what she could give. That was enough. Norbu took her hand as they stepped down from the upper terrace.

"So beautiful!" said Norbu. "Just like on the mountainside at Nakri."

But Margaret's name was being called. They both heard it at the same time. "Han Yuezhu! Han Yuezhu!" A man about her own age was pushing through the crowd at the Monument's base. She could not see him clearly until he had almost reached her. He grasped her hand, and with exquisite grace fell on one knee and pressed his lips to her fingers.

"Baoyu! Oh, get up, you fool! Is it really you? Oh, Baoyu!"

They embraced, his body large and strong, possessed of some faint sweet fragrance. Baoyu was wearing baggy slacks in undyed cotton and an open-necked pastel shirt.

"Yuezhu! I couldn't believe it when I saw you up there! Oh! You sang so beautifully!

> A voice from Heaven has stirred my heart.
> Too long, too long we've been apart!"

Norbu was frowning at them both. Margaret made introductions.

"Baoyu and I studied dancing together in—oh, it sounds so long ago!—seventy-six. Then he went to Europe and became a big ballet star. We've hardly had the opportunity to meet since then."

Margaret glanced around for the sullen Jan, hoping not to see him. "Your friend . . ." she said.

"We split up." Baoyu shrugged. "He was so jealous. I felt like a prisoner. I'm not living with anyone right now. Free spirit!" He laughed. "And I wouldn't have brought anyone, anyway. I'm staying with my family here in Beijing. I don't want them to know anything about that side of my life. They wouldn't be able to handle it. But Yuezhu, what's this I heard about people breaking up your performances in Europe?"

It was a moment before Margaret could understand what he meant. Those things seemed so far away. She laughed.

"Oh, it's nothing. Just some professional rivalry. Come and meet our group."

Baoyu was introduced around the Botanical Institute students, and accepted as an honorary member of the contingent. Norbu at first displayed some reserve. Baoyu's reference to his breakup with Jan had given nothing away, "he" and "she" being the same word in spoken Chinese. Then, while Baoyu was telling the tale of Margaret's efforts to be a dancer and their tragic outcome, Margaret took her lover on one side and explained about Baoyu's lifestyle. Norbu relaxed, and from that point on treated Baoyu as a brother. Margaret knew by now that Tibetans were much more easy-going about sex than the Han Chinese. Norbu had

told her about his people's old customs, still practiced in country districts: brothers sharing a wife, the courteous host offering his wife's services to an overnight guest, the very casual style of male bonding that sometimes went on in the old monasteries.

She also told Norbu about Baoyu's father being a high official in the Public Security Bureau. This was much more interesting to Norbu.

"We should tap him for information," he said. "If the leaders are going to make any move against us, it would be smart to know it in advance."

Baoyu was indeed well-informed, though with no clue about the likely response of the authorities.

"My father thinks it's all a power play," he said.

This was in the evening, when the three of them had wandered out of the Square into the Front Gate district and settled themselves in a small southwestern-style restaurant with bowls of crisped rice and spicy beancurd, a stack of pancakes and bottles of beer.

"The General Secretary," Baoyu went on, "is encouraging the students, because he wants more reform. The Prime Minister and the army are all opposed."

"Which faction does your father think is stronger?" asked Norbu.

"He doesn't know. Nobody knows. These things are played out behind the scenes. But he says the same thing happened ten years ago, when Deng Xiaoping used the Democracy Wall demonstrations to push his own reforms."

"But the Democracy Wall was closed down at last, and Wei Jingsheng is still in jail," said Margaret. "Ai! No matter what the people do, they're just pawns for these leadership struggles at last!"

"There was reform, though," pointed out Norbu. "The eighties were better than the seventies. If Baoyu's father is right, perhaps the nineties will be better yet. Did you see how many workers came out to support us? That was the best sign so far. We shall get something out of the leaders, I'm sure of it."