

## Chapter 66

Who'd Miss Out on a Revolution?  
Yuehan Attains His Heart's Desire

Norbu was in a state of great excitement.

“They’re trying to move troops in again! The people are stopping them! There are troops in Changan Avenue, in trucks and buses. But the people have surrounded them and stopped them. Just like before! Come on! Let’s go to the Square.”

He grinned at Baoyu. “Come on, Younger Brother! We’ll show you how the people face down the army!”

Margaret felt the same shiver of fear she had felt two weeks before, when he had come home with the martial law proclamation. This time she bit her tongue.

Norbu grabbed the backpack from its resting-place in a corner and went to the kitchen. Margaret heard the refrigerator door open. “It will be a replay of the last time,” he called back. “The soldiers are stalled. They can’t move. They’ve even retreated in some places. Come on, let’s go. We’ll take food, you can eat your lunch on the way. Bring jackets and a blanket, may be another all-nighter. Baoyu, are you with us?”

Baoyu laughed. “Who’d miss out on a revolution?”

Norbu had come from the Botanical Institute without waiting for the Nationalities truck, but they found a southbound bus without difficulty. However, the bus would go no further than the Children’s Hospital. The driver made everybody get off at that point, though it was not a terminus.

“E don’t want ’is bus turned into a barricade,” explained an old man who’d been riding with them. “The ’ole city’s gorn mad today.”

They walked to Changan Avenue. The street they walked on was unnaturally free of motor traffic, though there were plenty of cyclists and pedestrians. They stopped to buy scallion pancakes from a street vendor, a scrawny character with varicolored teeth framed in gray beard stubble. Norbu quizzed the vendor about the situation in the Square.

“The Square? I en’t heard nothin’. But Changan Avenue’s all closed orf. The people bin puttin’ up barricades all mornin’. Don’t you worry, you students, the people are all wiv you. I lorst me old dad in the fuckin’ Land Reform. I lorst me wife and me job in the fuckin’ Cultural Revolution. Wot this country needs is democracy, like Japan an’ America. Them buggers ’ave made us eat shit for forty years. Let’s ’ave a change! Never mind yer money, comrade, no charge fer students.”

Coming to Changan Avenue they saw a great crowd of people spilling back up the street. Norbu shouldered his way through, Margaret and Baoyu close behind.

Changan itself was fairly clear. On the eastern side of the intersection several vehicles had been set across the Avenue as a barricade. There were two city buses, a blue truck—spanking new from the Changchun factory—and a back hoe from a nearby construction site. The spaces between the vehicles were being filled by metal traffic dividers and construction debris. This work was being done by twenty or thirty young men, workers by the look of them. West of the barricade, across the intersection itself, was a military unit, two hundred unhappy-looking soldiers sitting cross-legged on the asphalt. Some citizens were shouting at the soldiers; some were in among them, trying without success to engage them in conversation. Most were watching from the side.

“They have guns,” said Margaret. “The ones we saw two weeks ago didn’t have guns.”

“They’ve been sitting there all day. If they were going to use their guns, they would have used them by now. Come on.”

They passed through the barricade, still open at the northern end, and continued east along Changan Avenue toward the Square.

A few hundred yards along were two army buses, both surrounded by

shouting citizens. Beyond that the Avenue was clear for a mile. At the Xidan intersection there were crowds again, and the beginnings of another barricade. There was another army bus full of soldiers, too. People were shouting angrily into the windows. The soldiers looked scared. "Look, we're only following orders," one of them called back at the crowd. There were a lot of tough-looking young workers standing around, some of them holding staves or lengths of metal pipe. When they were past the bus and two hundred meters or so east of it, Margaret heard the sound of breaking glass, followed by a great shout.

"There were guns in the bus, too," observed Baoyu. "Did you see?"

Norbu laughed. "Don't worry, if they meant business, they would have started something by now."

There were more buses outside Zhongnanhai, the big walled park where the country's leaders lived. These buses were empty, and their windows had all been broken. A line of soldiers carrying clubs was standing outside the Xinhai gate. From a few yards away, a crowd of young workers was taunting them. The soldiers' faces were grim. Something was in the air here, a faint ammonia tang.

"There were a big fight earlier," one of the bystanders told Norbu as they pushed through the back of the crowd. "Yer should 'ave seen it! The soldiers used tear gas. Tear gas! On their own people! Fucking swine!"

Beyond Zhongnanhai all was calm. The crowds thinned out, the shouting fell away behind them. The Square itself was serene. The only traffic in sight was some bicycles at the north end. Groups of citizens were sitting under the trees at the northwest corner. Some of them looked like family groups: an old granny in black pajamas fanning herself, some children standing around rather irritably, as children do when taken across town to see something which doesn't look to them like anything at all. Down the Square a way the Goddess stood dazzling white in the afternoon sunlight. Beyond her were lines of tents all around the Monument. Among the tents, and on the Monument itself, was a forest of flags and banners, moving gently in the warm breeze.

Norbu thought the contingent from the Botanical Institute should be on the east side of the Monument. The three of them headed over

there. Soon they were in among the flags and pennants. For the most part these served just to identify the colleges and cities students had come from. A few carried slogans: DISMISS LI PENG, END MARTIAL LAW, IMPLEMENT DEMOCRACY. The students' loudspeakers were playing a martial tune Margaret didn't recognize. From inside one of the tents came the sound of a guitar, very inexpertly played. There was litter everywhere.

The Botanical Institute students had no tent. They were sitting around in a circle thirty yards east of the Monument. Peanut Wang was there, and Yuehan the Christian boy from Tianjin, and the twins, and a dozen others. Peanut jumped up when he saw them.

"Elder Brother Norbu! Miss Han! Comrade Baoyu—welcome to our delegation again!"

"Where's Xiaohong?"

"She got sick! Couldn't come! We have no leader. Elder Brother Norbu, you can be our leader again! We'll elect you!" Peanut looked round at the others for support.

One of the botanists, a very tall girl dressed rather stylishly in flared jeans and a windbreaker jacket, came forward. "Did you have any trouble getting here?" she asked.

Norbu told them about Changan Avenue. "But I think the citizens have it under control. The soldiers can't move, just like before."

"Did you know they used tear gas outside Zhongnanhai? Some of the students here are soaking rags to put over their faces."

"They used tear gas because the citizens attacked them," piped up one of the twins. "Ours is a peaceful demonstration, we shouldn't attack the soldiers."

"If we don't attack them, they have no reason to use tear gas," concluded the other twin.

"They say the best defense is to soak a rag with urine and hold it to your face," contributed a big dark-skinned boy called Jingqiang—Margaret couldn't remember his family name. At this, the twins broke into a fit of giggles. "Disgusting!" they chimed.

"I'd like to get a better idea what's going on," said Norbu. "Talk to the leaders."

With Margaret in tow he made his way over to the Monument, leaving Baoyu with the botanists. Across the top of the steps leading up to the first level of the plinth a rope barrier had been strung. Student marshals were guarding it. Norbu argued with them at some length, and at last was let through. On the upper level was a green canvas tent. This housed a new hunger strike, begun the previous day by four notables in the Movement, including a well-known pop singer. Standing just outside the tent, staring thoughtfully into the middle distance, was the frail young woman organizer, Wang Jun. Norbu skipped up the steps to her.

“Wang Jun! I’m Norbu from the Botanical Institute.”

She gave them her attention, and a drawn smile. “Norbu? I don’t remember . . .”

“We just wanted to know the situation. We passed a lot of soldiers on Changan when we were coming here.”

Wang Jun shook her head. “Oh, there are soldiers everywhere. The Great Hall’s full of them.” She pointed at the Hall, over on the west side of the Square. “There were some nasty incidents earlier, but things seem to have quietened down this last couple of hours. I think we’re all right for this evening. The important thing is to keep it peaceful. Even if the troops come into the Square they’ll probably just send us all back to our colleges. So long as we don’t provoke them.”

“They used tear gas outside Zhongnanhai, I heard.”

“Yes. And there was some fighting on the other side of the Great Hall. But it was because people provoked them. We have to keep good order. I don’t think they’ll just wantonly attack us. Not with the foreign TV here.” She waved behind her at a couple of foreigners sitting leaning back against the Monument, smoking cigarettes. This was not the Dutch crew Margaret had sung for. They were older and looked tired and frazzled. One of them—a middle-aged man with gray hair and beard all trimmed down to a short bristle—had a portable TV camera propped next to him.

Margaret had hoped to see Wei Yingrui, the pop singer, but he was nowhere in sight. She supposed he was in the green tent. A little disappointed, she followed Norbu back to his charges.

The botanists had some cold tea and buns. Norbu and Margaret shared this with them, and passed around pieces of scallion pancake, and

apples they had brought from the Xings' refrigerator. Norbu related what he had heard, and they took a vote on remaining in the square. All of them voted to remain. Nobody was afraid. Indeed, Wang Jun's opinion—that they had successfully held off the troops once again—seemed to be general, and the mood around them was all optimism. Norbu made a brief spirited speech to much applause. A girl student Margaret didn't know jumped up and proposed that Norbu be elected their leader. This was voted through, to more applause. No sooner was this accomplished than Xiaohong appeared, to everyone's surprise. "We thought you were ill," chorused the twins.

"Surmount all weakness and defy all diseases to make revolution," said Xiaohong earnestly, making everyone groan. They told her what they knew. She took the news of Norbu's usurpation philosophically, and asked about the deployment of the soldiers.

"The People's Liberation Army will never fire on the people," said Xiaohong in her best applying-for-Party-membership manner. "I think it's a bad element in the leadership sending these soldiers to scare us. We must stand firm to strengthen the Party."

As the light was fading, news came that the troops who had emerged from the western side of the Hall earlier in the day had gone back in. This was generally regarded as a good sign. People's spirits rose. The Christian boy jumped up and announced that he was going to see what was happening on Changan. He disappeared to the northwest.

Then there was bad news from further east in the square, where a group of workers had camped. Apparently they had all armed themselves with clubs and sharpened bamboo sticks. Student organizers had tried to disarm them, but failed. Someone got on the loudspeakers and made a speech about this.

As darkness fell, there were more speeches from the Monument. The Director of the Political Science Institute announced the establishment of a University of Democracy in a tent near the Goddess. At the end of his speech, firecrackers were set off and people applauded and cheered. Margaret pushed through the crowd with Norbu to see the University of Democracy, but it was only a tent with some banners and loudspeakers set up outside, smoke from the firecrackers lingering in the air. At Norbu's

request they made the trek over to the latrines on the east side of the Square. The latrines were very foul; the stink made Margaret's head spin and she thought for a while she might throw up again, but did not. By the time they got back the sky was completely dark.

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At nine thirty one of Norbu's Tibetan friends from the Nationalities Institute came by. He spotted Norbu and they had a long conversation in their own language. Norbu gave Margaret a précis.

"The Nationalities students have the truck, parked on east Changan Avenue near Beijing Hotel. They came down through the back streets. Now they're going to try to get over to Muxidi to confront the soldiers. Yexi here is looking for some more volunteers to join them."

Margaret sighed. She had got herself comfortable, as comfortable as she could be on the hard flagstones of the Square, and had been contemplating a doze, using Norbu's backpack as a pillow, since it seemed likely that nothing of consequence would happen.

"I guess we shall have to go," she said.

"Not so much to confront the soldiers," added Norbu, "as to hold back the Nationalities students. Some of them are very anti-Chinese. They'll start throwing rocks if there's no-one there to restrain them."

Baoyu insisted on coming with them. Among the botanists, Peanut Wang was the only other volunteer. Norbu handed over his command to Xiaohong, accepted many warnings from everybody about not provoking the soldiers, and the Tibetan, whose name was Yexi, led the way northeast to the Nationalities truck, where ten or twelve assorted minorities were already on board, waiting for them.

To avoid barricades the truck drove in a wide circle north and then west of the Forbidden City, heading south at last back to Changan through the streets west of Moon Temple Park. Away from the city center the streets were empty and dark. They met only an occasional cyclist and, once, an army jeep. The army jeep pulled them over and questioned their driver. The driver said they were returning to their Institute to comply with the martial law decree. Since the truck happened to be heading in

the direction of the Nationalities Institute at the time, this was believed, and the jeep drove off.

As they neared Changan Avenue there were more and more people, coming and going in all directions, though more towards the great boulevard than away from it. Here there was no avoiding the barricades. Every side road had a barricade, to seal off the Avenue. At last the truck could go no further and they all had to get out and walk.

The Avenue itself was crowded with people. There were hundreds to be seen in both directions, but there seemed to be no organization or coherence to their movements. It was like a crowd on a beach: people standing in groups talking, loose individuals or couples drifting to and fro with no apparent purpose, a rowdy element, perhaps drunk, boasting and shouting. Margaret thought there were not many students here. These were ordinary citizens, workers mostly by appearance, far more men than women, a surprising number of quite old people.

There were also some foreigners, and twice Margaret saw camera crews. One, seen at a distance on the other side of the Avenue, she felt sure was the Dutch crew who had prompted her to sing three weeks before. Thinking of this, Margaret felt the tug of guilt again. In the excitement of the student movement and the rapture of love, she had neglected all her exercises. She wondered if she would be able to sing now, and how long it would take her to be fit for the stage again.

The little group headed westwards towards the Muxidi intersection. Norbu was deep in conversation with Yexi and another Tibetan; Margaret walked with Baoyu and Peanut. They passed the place where Margaret remembered the lead army buses having been that morning. Now they had gone. Nor was there any sign of the soldiers.

“It seems they’ve retreated already,” she said to Baoyu.

“I guess they were just sent to intimidate the people,” said Baoyu.

“When they saw the people had no fear  
What was the point their being here?”

The barricade at the Muxidi intersection was much bigger than Margaret remembered. This, in fact, was where one of the army buses had

gone—it could be seen there, in among piles of other material with the two city buses and the back hoe from the construction site.

It was as the barricade came in sight that they encountered the second camera crew. This had the BBC logo on its equipment. A tall, plain, thirtyish woman with stringy hair, wearing a peculiar outfit somewhere between a jogging suit and a soldier's fatigue dress, was standing in the middle of the Avenue talking into the camera. “. . . Here in Tiananmen Avenue,” she was saying as they passed. “Bugger it, start again, Charlie.”

Up by the barricade the crowd was dense, and they did not seem very good-natured. A lot of them were carrying crude weapons: wooden staves, ax handles, bamboo shoulder poles, iron bars. Broken glass was everywhere underfoot.

Close up the barricade looked even more tremendous. There were at least a dozen vehicles in it, including in fact both the army buses, one of which had been pushed over on its side. The space between the vehicles had been comprehensively filled with junk: lengths of the low metal fencing used at roadsides in the capital, bamboo scaffolding poles from the construction site, traffic signs, tree branches, miscellaneous wooden and metallic debris of every sort. There was a strong smell of fuel everywhere. Margaret at first thought this was just leakage from the overturned bus, but then saw one of the workers up on the barricade at the right with a huge fuel can, splashing the can's contents over the piled debris, lurching to keep his balance on the tangled pile each time he swung the can.

Twenty or more people were up on top of the barricade, on the roofs of the vehicles. They were all looking out at the other side, though it was impossible to see what they were looking at. Most were sitting; but one youth was standing with feet apart, hands on hips, in a bold, defiant posture, up on top of one of the army buses, the upright one. He had long hair and glasses, and Margaret thought he might be a student; then he half-turned to speak to someone seated next to him, and Margaret saw that he was Yuehan, the Christian boy from Tianjin. She called up to him: “Yuehan! Yuehan!”

Yuehan saw them and waved down. “Come on up here!” he shouted, cupping his hands. “You can see the enemy clearly!”

Some of the Nationalities were already climbing up. Debris was stacked against the side of the bus to the level of the windows, from where the outstretched arms of those on the roof could reach to lift. Norbu helped Margaret up over the loose-piled debris, then pulled himself onto the roof and gave her his arm to lift herself up. Yuehan was grinning with pride, as if the barricade were his own construction. “The enemy!” he said, pointing west.

West of the barricade was an empty space, a no man’s land thirty yards wide. The whole space was littered with fragments of brick and concrete, pieces of metal fencing, lengths of wood, bricks. Beyond were the soldiers.

These soldiers did not look at all like the confused peasant boys Margaret had confronted in the suburbs two weeks previously. They were standing in a line across the whole width of the Avenue, spaced at precisely equal distances from each other. They wore metal helmets instead of the forage caps Margaret had always seen before. Each one had a gun held at the port across his body, all at exactly the same angle. They were standing quite still, watching the barricade. Behind them were others, though not in formation, only standing together in a loose mass. Behind and at the side were armored vehicles. Not tanks, just personnel carriers, Margaret thought. There were no weapons to be seen anywhere larger than a rifle. Still, the sight was chilling. A phrase came up in Margaret’s mind, a phrase she had heard Father utter sometime in her childhood: *They ran like chickens when they saw the People’s Liberation Army.*

“Have they been like that all day?” Norbu asked Yuehan, when he had scanned the line of soldiers.

Yuehan laughed. “They’ve been attacking us, didn’t you know? They charged the barricade twice! That’s why there’s so much rubbish down there. We were throwing stones, bricks, anything we could find at them. See!” He pointed down to a pile of brick and concrete fragments next to him. “They had to retreat both times.” He laughed again, and raised a fist and shook it at the motionless line of soldiers. “The army is no match for the people!”

“I thought everyone understood that we weren’t to provoke them,” said Norbu.

Yuehan laughed. “‘A revolution is not a dinner party.’” [Quoting Mao Zedong.]

“Why is everybody talking about revolution?” asked Margaret, beginning to feel uneasy at seeing the silent line of troops thirty yards away. *They ran like chickens when they saw the People’s Liberation Army.* The soldiers were standing directly beneath street lamps on each side, so that their faces were in shadow under their helmets and no expressions could be made out. They looked, in fact, identical—like wood-block prints stamped out in a row from a single block.

Yexi and one of the other Nationalities had climbed up to join them. Now Yexi spoke some words to Norbu in their language, softly. Norbu shook his head, looking grave, but said nothing.

“What did he say?”

He said: “They mean business.”

“I can’t believe it,” said Margaret. “The People’s Liberation Army . . .”

“ . . . will never open fire on the people’.” Yexi, speaking Chinese now, finished the cant phrase for her. “If I hear that again I shall shit. You *gyanak* don’t know what kind of army you have. In Tibet they wiped out whole villages, whole towns—men, women and children.” [“*Gyanak*”, Margaret knew from Norbu’s talk, was an insulting word Tibetans used for Chinese people, a pun on the Tibetan words for “black pig”.]

“Then it’s not very smart to be sitting here, is it?” said Margaret. From across the littered stretch of no man’s land the silent soldiers watched—motionless, guns at the port. In their shadowed faces only the whites of their eyes could be seen clearly. She felt a shiver of fear. *They ran like chickens when they saw the People’s Liberation Army.*

“I think we should go down,” she said, pulling at Norbu.

“Yes,” said Norbu, without any show of reluctance. “Come on, Yuehan. I don’t think it’s safe up here.”

“They have bullhorns,” said Yuehan. “They yell at us before they do anything. Don’t worry, there’ll be plenty of warning before they attack. You can get down and run if you don’t want to fight them. It will take them a while to get through the barricade, you can get away. We’ve sprinkled fuel everywhere. Not diesel fuel, real gasoline. If it looks like they’re going to overwhelm us, we’ll torch the barricade.”

Yuehan could not be persuaded to leave, but Norbu and the Tibetans climbed down and helped Margaret down. Baoyu and Peanut were waiting in the street below, in conversation with a group of workers all wearing white headbands and armed with staves.

“The soldiers are lined up opposite,” Margaret told them. “They’ve charged twice but the people threw stones and forced them back.”

“We know,” said Baoyu. “They’ve been telling us.” He nodded at the workers. “These are the West Straight Gate Fear Nothing Brigade.” [West Straight Gate is a district of Beijing.] “They’re terrifically militant. Some soldiers actually got up on the barricade and there was hand-to-hand fighting. One of the Fear Nothings was badly hurt and had to be taken away.”

“Smashed ’is jaw wiv a club,” said the nearest worker, nodding. “The sodjers ’ad clubs that time, but no ’elmets. I were right there wiv me mate. Knocked ’alf ’is fuckin’ teef out on one side! I beaned the sodjer wiv a fuckin’ great piece of concrete, an’ that’s the last we saw of ’im! Me mate was ’urt bad, though. Run ’im orf to the ’orspital, we did.”

“I don’t think this is the right way at all,” said Margaret. “This is not what the movement’s about. Shouldn’t we go and talk to them?”

The workers all laughed. “Yeah, go an’ talk to ’em,” said one. “They’ll knock yer down an’ drag yer orf quicker’n spit on a griddle. They took a couple from the barricade last charge, beat the livin’ daylight out of ’em wiv their clubs an’ took ’em away, we ain’t seen ’em since.”

“Perhaps if we sent out a party under a flag of truce,” said Margaret.

One of the workers, an older man with black stubble all over his face, shook his head. “They ain’t in the mood for talkin’,” he growled. “They’ll make another charge soon, a big one. Chances are we’ll have to torch the barricade an’ retreat. We’ll give ’em a fight, though. You students best go back to the Square. We all respect you an’ what you’ve done to support the people, but this is rough work ’ere.”

Yéxi had been in a huddle with the other Nationalities. Now he came over to them and spoke to Norbu in Tibetan. There was a long conversation in that tongue, the Fear Nothing Brigade first squinting in puzzlement at hearing a foreign language, then losing interest, moving off as a body back to the barricade.

At the end of the conversation Norbu translated, Yexi standing by him looking around anxiously.

"The Nationalities don't like it," said Norbu. "They think the army will shoot their way through. They want to leave."

"I thought you were worried that your Nationalities were too militant." Margaret could not resist tweaking him on this.

"Yes," said Norbu. "When they thought the troops were just there for a show, they were happy to throw rocks at them. But we minorities have all seen atrocities in our own countries. We know what the Chinese army is capable of when their commanders let them loose. Now they're worried that's what's going to happen."

"So am I," said Margaret. "Let's go!"

Norbu nodded. "Yes, you go back with them. Go back to the Square. I'm going to stay here."

"*Here?* You're crazy! Didn't your friends say the soldiers will shoot?"

Norbu shook his head. "I don't agree with these guys. Sure, your army massacres people in Tibet and Turkestan where nobody can see them; but I don't believe they'd dare do that here in the capital, with foreign diplomats watching from the windows of Beijing Hotel and foreign camera crews all over. Against their own people, Chinese people. No, I don't believe it. There'll be a fight, some rock throwing, but they won't shoot. I'll stay here and fight. But you go back."

"Don't be stupid, Norbu! What if they arrest you? Do you want to do another five years in a camp? This time you'll be a counter-revolutionary! You told me yourself how badly they are treated in the camps. Please, Norbu, don't be stupid."

Norbu shook his head, lips pressed together in determination. "No, I'm going to stay and fight. What's the point of being in a movement if you back down when the fighting starts? You talked me out of it once, Yuezhu. I knew I was wrong to listen to you then, and I'd be wrong now."

"If Elder Brother stays, then I'm staying too," put in Peanut Wang.

"You're both crazy!" cried Margaret. "Where's the sense in it? You'll just get beaten up, maybe arrested. You can't defeat the army."

"No," said Norbu, "but we can give them a fight. If they start coming

through the barricade we'll set it alight. That will hold them long enough for us to retreat to the Square."

The Nationalities were all moving away, eastward back down the Avenue. They were fifty yards off, seventy, a hundred.

"You're mad! Come on! Let's go! The truck will leave without us!"

"Yes, Yuezhu, you go. I'm staying."

Margaret appealed to Baoyu. "Don't tell me you want to stay here too? Please, Baoyu, talk some sense into these idiots."

Baoyu nodded. "Yuezhu is right. We should go back to the Square. I don't like the look of this at all. It's all very well to say the soldiers won't shoot while foreigners are watching. I'm not sure that's how the government leaders think. I've often heard my father say the foreigners made a lot of noise when Comrade Deng Xiaoping cracked down in '79, but they didn't actually *do* anything." [Referring to the crushing of the "Beijing Spring" movement in 1979.] "The foreigners don't really care what happens in China. The authorities know that. If they're determined to crush your movement, they won't worry about what foreigners think."

"You see? Baoyu's father is a Division Head in Public Security. He knows how the leaders think. It's too dangerous, Norbu. Come on, let's go. Oh, please, please, let's go!"

"You go," said Norbu firmly. "I'm staying. My father fought and died for freedom. Now I'm ready to do the same."

"I won't go without you, Norbu."

Norbu laughed, a little embarrassed, as if some private thing between them was being aired here in front of the others.

"Yuezhu, I really don't want you to be here. You may get hurt."

"Why is it all right for you to be hurt but not all right for me to be hurt?"

"I think we should either all go or all stay," said Baoyu. Margaret thought he was a little shamefaced at his own hesitation by comparison with the boldness of the other two men.

"We could take a democratic vote," said Peanut eagerly. "That's the way we do things in the movement."

"That's no good," said Baoyu. "There are two for staying and two for going."

“Oh, Heaven!” moaned Margaret in exasperation. “This is like one of those damn meetings in the Square, where nothing gets decided! We’ll still be here arguing when the soldiers come!”

“What about Yuehan?” Peanut pointed at his classmate up on top of the bus. “He’s one of our party. He just came ahead of us, that’s all. I’m sure you won’t persuade him to go! So it’s three to two for staying.”

“No,” said Norbu. “I don’t want Yuezhu here.” He was looking at her steadily, his eyes on her face.

“I won’t go,” Margaret repeated. “I’ll stay with you. What you do, I will do. Where you go, I will go.”

Norbu contemplated her for a long moment. The others were silent, waiting for him. At last he grimaced in exasperation.

“All right, damn it to hell. We’ll go back to the Square. Let’s get Yuehan.”

“He’ll never go. Look at him up there, he’s crazy. Wants to be a martyr. Come on, let’s go without him. The truck will be gone if we don’t hurry.”

“We can’t leave Yuehan. I’m the leader, I’m responsible for all of them. Hey, Yuehan!” Norbu shouted over at Yuehan, perched on top of the bus; but there was too much noise around for him to be heard. Norbu loped over and began scrambling up the debris toward the roof of the bus.

Someone at the barricade, one of the workers, yelled: “Here they come!” The shout was taken up by others: “They’re advancing! Here they come!” People were running to the barricade, grabbing pieces of rock and concrete from little piles at the roadside. Up on the bus, Yuehan had knelt down to take a missile from his own pile. People were clambering up on the barricades and yelling at each other. There was a shout from across no man’s land, someone giving an order, words Margaret could not make out.

A rattle of firecrackers sounded from the other side of the barricade. So it seemed to Margaret. The students had been letting off firecrackers in the Square earlier in the evening to celebrate the establishment of the University of Democracy, and firecrackers were the first thing that came to her mind when she heard the sound. It seemed that there was an instant of perfect silence; then a great shout went up on the other side of the

barricade, followed by the pounding of a hundred feet crossing no man's land.

Norbu was balanced up on the debris piled against the bus, looking sideways and downwards at something. Others were running away from the barricade, towards her. Their eyes were wild. One was running with an arm limp at his side, the arm swinging grotesquely out of sync with his pace, his face twisted in pain, blood running down his arm and side. "They're shooting!" he screamed. "They're shooting!" Another firecracker-rattle sounded from beyond the barricade, then more shouting and running feet.

Peanut was up on the barricade with Norbu. Baoyu was standing on the roadway paralyzed, his mouth hanging open. Yuehan had disappeared from his perch, was nowhere to be seen. Another firecracker-rattle, seeming closer, and the loud *pang! pang!* of bullets going into sheet metal. People were running in all directions, though more towards the barricade than away. The Fear Nothing Brigade over to Margaret's right were lobbing pieces of concrete and brick as hard as they could, lofting them over the barricade onto the soldiers beyond.

"Norbu!" Margaret screamed and began running towards him. He was standing on the tangled fencing with his right hand pressed against the side of the bus, pulling at the piled metal. By the time she reached him Peanut was there, too, and they were both pulling away pieces of fencing and throwing them aside.

"It's Yuehan," said Peanut. "Fell off the roof. Down here. Damn it!"—as the loose-stacked debris shifted under their weight.

Now Margaret was with them up on the barricade by the bus. She could see Yuehan. He had fallen into a space—or, falling, made a space—between the bus and the piled fencing, and was lying face down beneath them. he was quite still and there were four black spreading circular stains on his T-shirt.

Another, more ragged burst of fire, *pang! pang!* into metal somewhere to their left, and the squeal of a ricochet. There was wild hoarse shouting all around, and missiles were flying through the air, some of them falling short against the bus.

"He's dead!" she screamed, pulling at Norbu. "They shot him! He's dead! Come away! Oh, please, please, come away both of you!"

Reaching down, Norbu had got hold of Yuehan's arm and with a heave pulled him partway out of the metal tangle. Now Margaret could see Yuehan's face. The eyes were closed, the glasses were gone, and a long pendant of thick bloody matter was hanging from the mouth. Norbu pulled again, but this time his effort dislodged the pile of debris. Peanut fell with both hands against the bus, Margaret threw out her arms to keep balance, and Yuehan was jammed against the bus by fragments of fencing, Norbu still holding on to his arm.

There was a roaring of voices all around them. Baoyu had come to the foot of the pile and was yelling at them frantically.

"They're going to torch it! Get down, get down! They're going to torch it!"

Further along at the right, two of the Fear Nothing Brigade were shouting and gesticulating at them. "Get down! Get down!" screamed Baoyu.

Straightening, Margaret found she was looking right through the bus. The glass in the windows was long gone, and she was looking across clear space right through to the other side. A few feet away on the other side was the back hoe blocking the view of no man's land; but as Margaret straightened herself for balance, a head came up in the far window, the head of a soldier, helmeted. He seemed to be trying to climb up the side of the bus, looking up for a hand-hold, not seeing her.

"NORBU!" she screamed, and grabbed wildly at his shirt, pulling it so hard all the buttons went. Norbu let go of Yuehan, gave her a wild, angry look, then caught the movement of the soldier on the other side of the bus. He let fly with a curse in his own language, turned, grabbed her arm, and scrambled down the pile of debris with her. Peanut was back on the road already. WHOOMP!—fire blossomed on their right, where the Fear Nothings had spread their gasoline. Margaret felt the heat flash on her face, strong enough to make her turn away instinctively, as they reached the road and started running.

Baoyu was already running fast ahead of them, his long-legged dancer's stride giving him the speed and grace of an antelope. Many others were running with them; but many were not. There had been no more gunfire since the last burst, the soldiers apparently having fired only to clear the barricade. People were standing there quite boldly,

looking toward the barricade, paying no attention to those fleeing past them. Their faces were lit now by the flames. Some were actually smiling at the blaze; most just looked angry.

They came to the side street where the Nationalities truck had been parked. A barricade had been set up here where the street joined the Avenue, but there was a commotion around it. People were clambering desperately over it from the street beyond, into the Avenue, falling over themselves, shouting. "Soldiers! Soldiers!" they shouted. "From the north! Heading for the Avenue!" And looking over the barricade north along the dark street, figures could be seen in the distance—round helmets, guns at the port, running towards the Avenue, with the head lamps of a vehicle bobbing and flickering somewhere behind them.

Gunfire sounded from the Avenue, from the direction of Muxidi. This was fire-at-will, not an organized volley, and in bursts, the weapons on automatic. It was mixed with screams and the sound of running feet. Everybody was running now, away from the Muxidi barricade, only the north part of which seemed to be burning.

"Come on!" Shouted Norbu. "Back to the Square!"

They began running again. Behind them the gunfire was a steady rattle now. From the corner of her eye Margaret saw one of the running people spin round, arms flying out, then fall and lie still. Peanut was lagging, his lungs no match for those of a singer, a dancer, and a lifetime breather of thin Tibetan air. Norbu fell back to run with him, to give him encouragement. Margaret and Baoyu ran on ahead. Even here, even in the face of the guns, not everyone was running. A party of three youths, one wheeling a bicycle, was standing gazing down the Avenue towards Muxidi, their faces grim with rage.

Looking round, Margaret saw that Norbu and Peanut were now fifty yards behind them. She stopped, shouting to encourage them. Just at that moment there was a concentrated crackle of gunfire. Entirely by instinct Margaret knelt down to lower her profile, as we do when walking into driving rain.

"Norbu! Norbu!" she screamed.

"Go on! Go!" yelled back Norbu.

She turned to run after Baoyu, but could not see him. "Baoyu!" she

shouted ahead. “Baoyu!” and began running, and then saw Baoyu, lying on the road, recognized him by his light cotton slacks and European sneakers.

There was a terrible wound in the back of Baoyu’s head. Part of his skull was gone, and his brain was visible. The brain was horribly injured, mashed up like porridge, and blood was pumping out all around the wound—actually pumping, she could count the pulses—and flowing thick and dark onto the road. Baoyu’s eyes were wide open, staring but not seeing her, and a sound like *kaaaa kaaaa kaaaa* was coming up from his throat. His arms, straight out in a cross at each side, were twitching in spasm.

“Baoyu!” Margaret screamed into his face. “Baoyu, oh, Baoyu! No no no no no, Baoyu!”

Norbu was kneeling next to her now, and Peanut at the other side, bent over with hands on his knees, gasping. Without saying anything, Norbu pulled off his shirt and began wrapping it round Baoyu’s head, using the sleeves to secure it. While he was doing this, *prak!* went something inches from Margaret’s neck, a terrible intimate sound, her own personal bullet, its shock wave flicking her hair, the heat of it kissing her neck, a smirking private messenger from the world of death.

Norbu at first attempted to carry Baoyu himself, but a large adult male is a very heavy and unwieldy object even for a strong man to carry. After fifty yards and two changes of position he submitted to Peanut’s suggestion that they share the load. With Baoyu between them, one of his arms draped over each of their necks, they moved forward at a desperate, staggering run, Margaret behind them, unable to bear them being out of her sight.

The crowd of running people was thinning out now, and the gunfire had slowed and seemed more distant. Two hundred yards ahead was another big barricade, guarding the Xidan intersection. It was covered with people climbing over and through it, looking, at this distance (Margaret thought) like maggots crawling over a dead bird.

Peanut gave out fifty yards short of the barricade. Margaret took over, pulling Baoyu’s arm—now quite limp—over her shoulder awkwardly.

His blood had saturated the makeshift dressing and run down his body. Margaret could feel it warm and sticky where Baoyu's body touched hers.

Norbu was so much taller than she it was difficult for her to take much of the weight, but Norbu did not complain, only urged her forward to the barricade, Peanut limping along behind. This barricade, when they reached it, was more wood than metal: bamboo scaffolding poles, sheets of plywood, broad builder's planks. At Norbu's shout, people on top reached down and pulled Baoyu up and over by the arms, the others pushing as best they could.

There was a big crowd on the east side of the barricade, much more angry than fearful. Fragments of news and advice were flying from mouth to mouth: *Was it tear gas? No, real bullets . . . The swine, the swine . . . Look, people shot! Look at this one! . . . Fuck their mothers, those bastards . . . Get some gasoline, if you fire the barricade it holds them up . . . They're coming down the cross streets, too . . . Those bastards, those swine . . .*

"Please," called out Margaret, when they had got Baoyu down onto the roadway, safe behind the barricade. "Please, we need a doctor. Is there a doctor here? Please help our comrade. He's been shot."

"There are some ambulances down towards the telegraph office," someone said, pointing east along the Avenue.

"I'll go!" said Peanut, and ran off.

A middle-aged man, a worker by his appearance, came forward. "I were in the army meself," he said. "Did some medical training. Let's 'ave a look."

"Please, yes, yes, please help him," begged Margaret.

The man knelt by Baoyu and felt at his head through the dressing, which by now was completely soaked with blood. He found the wound and felt around it, not trying to remove the dressing. Then he bent right over and pressed his ear to Baoyu's chest. He lifted Baoyu's eyelids and held a hand over his mouth.

"Your comrade's beyond 'elp," he said. "'E's gone, I'm afraid."

"No, no, no, no!" wailed Margaret. "Baoyu, no!" It could not be, she would not believe it. She knelt astride Baoyu, took both his hands and shook them wildly. "Baoyu! Baoyu! Wake up! Oh, please, please, please wake up!" She shook and shook, and Baoyu's poor broken head

lollod from side to side; but when she let go the hands all movement stopped and the hands fell back limp on the roadway. She keened his name over and over, hardly knowing what sounds were coming out of her. “Baoyu! Baoyu! We danced together, Baoyu, don’t you remember? Oh, don’t you remember? You can’t die, you can’t! It’s not possible, not possible! Don’t you remember we skated together on the ice, at North Lake Park? Remember, remember, Baoyu! If you remember you will be awake! Only remember and you won’t die! Oh, Baoyu, Baoyu! You can’t go, you can’t. No no no no no!”

Norbu lifted her away, folding his arms round her, pressing her to his bare chest, all streaked with Baoyu’s blood, his Dalai Lama pendant sharp and hard against her neck. “Little nightingale, little nightingale, it’s all right, it’s all right.”

“No,” moaned Margaret, “no it’s not. It’s not all right at all. Baoyu! Baoyu! Ai, ai, ai, ai, Baoyu!”

A vehicle horn sounded, closer and closer. It was the ambulance, pushing its way through the crowd. It was, in fact, not a regular ambulance at all, but only a minibus requisitioned for this purpose by one of the students’ groups. However, the two medics inside had proper white smocks and skull caps. They knelt down by Baoyu, one listening with a stethoscope, the other feeling for a wrist pulse.

“*Si er yinmo*,” said the one with the stethoscope [dead and sunk into oblivion].

“Massive head trauma,” said the other, untying the dressing to look at the wound.

“Can’t you do resuscitation?” pleaded Margaret. “Kiss of life?”

Stethoscope shook his head, folding up his instrument. “With half his brain missing? Waste of time. He’s been dead a few minutes, I think. Starting to cool already.”

Someone was shouting for them, another casualty brought up over the barricade. They left. Margaret was standing in Norbu’s arms at one side of Baoyu’s body, Peanut at the other. Peanut was crying silently, without fuss, unfamiliar vertical lines furrowing his innocent boyish face with sadness, tears flowing steadily over his cheeks, dripping from his jaw onto his tunic, which was all stained with Baoyu’s blood.

“Two dead,” he whispered, as if to himself. “Classmate Yuehan, Comrade Baoyu. Both dead.”

“Don’t let’s leave him here,” sobbed Margaret. “Please don’t leave him here. The army will come. Please don’t leave him here.”