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爲奴隸的母親

USHIH: SLAVE MOTHER

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爲奴隸的母親

她底丈夫是一個皮販，就是收集鄉間各獵戶底獸皮和牛皮，販到大埠上出賣的人。但有時也兼做點農作，忙種的時節，便幫人家插秧，他能將每行插得非常直，假如有五人同在一坵水田內，他們一定叫他站在第一個做標準。然而境況總是不佳，債是年年積起來了。他大約就因爲境況的不佳，烟也吸了，酒也喝了，博也賭起來了。這樣，竟使他變做一個非常兇狠而暴躁的男子，但也就更貧窮下去，連小小的移借，別人也不敢答應了。

SLAVE MOTHER

Her husband dealt in skins—that is to say, he collected cow-hides and the skins of wild animals from hunters all over the countryside, and took them to the larger towns to sell. Sometimes he supplemented this occupation with a little farm labour. During the busy planting season he used to assist the farmers in transplanting the young sprouts. He knew just how to set out each row perfectly straight, and for that reason if there were five working together in a paddy-field he was always put in the head position to act as a marker. Circumstances were against him, nevertheless, and his debts mounted year after year. Probably it was the hard times that made him take to smoking, drinking, and gambling. Soon he had become a surly, hot-tempered fellow, continuing to grow poorer and poorer until people were afraid to make him even the smallest loans.

在窮底結果的病以後，全身便變成枯黃色，臉孔黃的和銅鼓一樣，連眼白也黃了。別人說他是黃臉洞，孩子們也就叫他『黃胖』了。有一天，他向他底妻說：

『再沒有辦法了，這樣下去，連小鍋子也要賣去了。我想，還是從你底身上設法罷。你跟着我挨餓，有什麼辦法呢？』

『我底身上？……』
他底妻坐在灶後，懷裏抱着她底剛滿三週的男小孩——孩子還在吸着奶，她訥訥地低聲地問。

『你，是呀，』她底丈夫病後的無力的聲音：『我已經將你出典了……』

『什麼呀！』他底妻幾乎昏去似的。
屋內是稍稍靜寂了一息。他氣喘着說：

Illness followed in the wake of poverty, and his body turned a withered yellow colour. His face grew as yellow as a small brass drum. Even the whites of his eyes changed colour. People said that he had the jaundice, and children began calling him "Yellow-belly." One day he said to his wife:

"There's nothing more I can do. If we on like this we'll soon have to part with the kettle. I think it would be better to let you save us with your body. If you stay and go hungry with me what can I do for you?"

"With my body?"

His wife sat behind the mud oven, holding her three year-old son on her lap, nursing him at her breast. She spoke in a subdued tone, haltingly.

"Yes, yours!" replied her husband, his voice weak from illness. "I've already leased you——"

"What's that?" she asked, seeming almost to faint.

The room was silent for a moment, and then he spoke, breathing hard.

「三天前，王狼來坐討了半天的債回去以後，我也跟着他去，走到了九畝潭邊，我很不想要做人了。但是坐在那株爬上去一縱身就可落在潭底裏的樹下，想來想去，總沒有力氣跳了。貓頭鷹耳朵邊不住地囁，我底心被牠叫寒起來，我只得回轉身，但在路上遇見了沈家婆，她問我，晚也晚了，在外邊做什麼。我就告訴她，請她代我借一筆款，或向什麼人家的小姐借些衣服或首飾去暫時當一當，免得王狼底狠一般的綠眼睛天天在家裏閃爍。可是沈家婆向我笑道：

「你還將妻養在家裏做什麼呢，你自己黃也黃到這個地步了？」

我低頭站在她面前沒有答，她又說：

「兒子呢，你只有一個，捨不得。但妻——」

"Three days ago Wolf Wang sat here for hours demanding his money. When he left I went out too. When I got to Nine-Acre Pool I felt I didn't want to live any longer. I sat down under a tree. All I needed to do was to climb it and let myself drop off into the pool. I kept thinking about it, but I hadn't the courage to jump. All the time there was an owl screeching in my ear. It turned my heart cold and I came away. But on the road I met the Sun woman. She asked me what I was doing out so late, and I told her. I asked her to try and raise me a loan, or to borrow some girl's clothes or jewellery that I could pawn, so that I wouldn't have to see Wang's wolfish green eyes glittering in my house every day. But the Sun woman laughed at me, and said:

"Why do you keep on, then, supporting that wife of yours at home, and you as yellow as you are?"

"I hung my head and said nothing.

"Of course you can't spare the son," she said, "having only one. But the wife . . ."

我當時想，「莫非叫我賣去妻麼？」而她繼續道：

「但妻——雖然是結髮的，窮了，也沒有法。還養在家裏做什麼呢？」

這樣，她就直說出：有一個秀才，因爲沒有兒子，年紀已五十歲了，想買一個妾；又因他底大妻不允許，只準他典一個，典三年或五年，叫我物色相當的女人：年紀約三十歲左右，養過兩三個兒子的，人要穩重老誠，又肯做事，還要對他底大妻肯低眉下首。這次是秀才娘子向我說的，假如條件合，肯出八十元或一百元的身價。我代她尋了好幾天，總沒有相當的女人，她說：現在碰到我，想起了你來，樣樣都對的。當時問我底意見怎樣，我一邊掉了幾滴淚，一邊却被她說的答應她了。」

說到這里，他垂下頭，聲音很低弱，停止了。她

"I said to myself, 'Surely she isn't telling me to sell my wife!'

"'But the wife,' she went on, 'even though she is your proper wife—you're poor, you can't help it—what's the use in keeping her at home?'

"Then she came straight to the point and said:

"'There's a *hsiu-ts'ai* who has no son, although he's already fifty. He has had in mind to buy himself a secondary wife, but his first wife won't let him. She'll allow him only to lease one for three years or five years, and he has asked me to look out for a woman who might suit him; one somewhere around thirty, who has had two or three sons already, who is quiet and honest and willing to work, and who will be submissive to his major wife. Recently the *hsiu-ts'ai's* wife spoke to me about it herself, and said that if the conditions were satisfied they would be willing to pay eighty or a hundred dollars purchase price. I've been searching for a suitable woman a good many days, but haven't located one.'

"Then she said that as soon as she met me she thought of you, and that you were just the

底妻簡直癡似的。話一句沒有。又靜寂了一息，他繼續說，

『昨天，沈家婆到過秀才底家裏，她說秀才很高興，秀才娘子也喜歡，錢是一百元，年數呢，假如三年養不出兒子是五年。沈家婆并將日子也揀定了——本月十八，五天後。今天，她寫典契去了。』

這時，他底妻簡直連腑臟都顫抖，吞吐着問：

『你爲什麼早不對我說？』

『昨天在你底面前旋了三個圈子，可是對你說不出，不過我仔細想，除出將你底身子設法外，再也沒有辦法了。』

『決定了麼？』婦人戰着牙齒問。

right one. So she asked me straight away what I thought, and after I had cried a little I let myself be persuaded. At this point his head dropped, while his voice trailed off until it stopped completely. His wife said not a word. She seemed wholly stupefied. After a moment's silence he went on:

"Yesterday the Sun woman went to the *hseu-ts'ai's* house, and she says he is quite keen, and that his wife is pleased too. The price is a hundred dollars, and the lease is for three years if there is a son in that time. If not, for five years. The Sun woman has set the date too. It's the eighteenth - five days yet. To-day she's sending the lease agreement."

The wife was quivering in every limb. "Why didn't you—tell me earlier?" she stammered out.

"I walked a circle in front of you three different times yesterday, but I couldn't get it out. Really and truly, apart from using you as a means, there is absolutely nothing we can do."

"You've decided on it?" she asked, with trembling lips.

『只得典契寫好。』

『倒霉的事情呀，我！一點也沒有別的方法了麼？春寶底爸呀！』春寶是她懷裏的孩子底名字。

『倒霉，我也想到過，可是窮了，我們又不肯死，有什麼辦法？今年，我怕連插秧也不能插了。』

『你也想到過春寶麼？春寶還只有五歲，沒有娘，他怎麼好呢？』

『我領他便了。本來是已經斷了奶的孩子。』

他似乎漸漸發怒了。也就走出門外去了。她，却嗚嗚咽咽地哭起來。

這時，在她過去的回憶裏，却想起恰恰一年前的事：那時她生下了一個女兒，她簡直如死去一般地臥在牀上。死還是整個的，她那時却肢體分作四碎與五裂。剛落地的女嬰，在地上的乾草堆上叫，一呱

"Just waiting for the agreement to be written out."

"Oh, what a shameful thing! Isn't there any other way at all, my own Spring Treasure's father?" That was the name of the boy in her arms.

"Shameful? Yes, I've thought about it. But we're poor, and we don't want to die. What else can we do? I'm afraid I'm not going to be able to do any transplanting this year."

"Have you thought about Spring Treasure? He's only three. What will he do without a mother?"

"I can look after him, can't I? He's ready to be weaned, anyway."

Little by little he seemed to have grown angry. He now strode out through the door. He began to sob, brokenly.

Out of her memories of the past emerged the thing which had happened just a year ago. She had borne a daughter then, and she lay on the bed like one who had died. No, the dead die whole, but her body was shattered into fragments. On a heap of dry grass on the floor the new-born

『呀，呱呀，』聲音很重的，手脚揪縮。臍帶繞在她底身上，胎盤落在一邊，她很想掙扎起來給她洗好，可是她底頭昂起來，身子凝滯在床^上。這樣，她看見她底丈夫，這個兇狠的男子，飛紅着臉，提了一桶沸水到女嬰的旁邊。她簡直用了她一生底最後的力向他喊：『慢！慢……』但這個病前極兇狠的男子，沒有一分鐘商量的餘地，也不答半句話，就將『呱呀，呱呀，』聲音很重地在叫着的女兒，剛出世的新生命，用他底粗暴的兩手捧起來，如屠戶捧了將殺的小羊一般，撲通，投下在沸水裏了！除出沸水的潑聲和皮肉吸收沸水的嘶聲以外，女孩一聲也不喊——她疑問地想，爲什麼也不重重地哭一聲呢？竟這樣不響地願意的冤枉的死去麼？啊！——她轉念，那是因爲她自己當時昏過去的緣故，她當時似剝去了心一般地昏去了。想到這里，似乎淚竟乾涸了。『唉！苦命呀！』

baby was crying loudly. "Caa, caa!" and perking its arms and legs. The navel string was twisted about it. She made a supreme effort to rise and wash the child, but only her head would lift; her body remained inert on the bed. It was then she had seen that brutal husband of hers, with flaming red face, take a pail of boiling water beside the infant. She had put forth a final effort to shout at him, "Wait! Wait!" But the brute had not allowed a moment's discussion, nor had he returned any answer. Like a butcher holding the lamb he was about to slaughter, he had taken in his hard rough hands the new-born life, the little daughter with the cries of "Caa, caa!" and, *plop!* dropped her into the water. She had heard nothing but a splash and the hiss of steaming water. The little girl made no sound. She wondered now why it had not uttered one loud cry. Had it been content to go silently to this undeserved death? Ah, yes! She remembered why she had heard nothing! She had fainted away then, fainted as she would have done if her heart had been cut out.

When she thought of this it seemed as though

她低低地嘆息了一聲。這時春寶拔去了奶頭，向他底母親的臉上看，一邊叫『媽媽！媽媽！』

在她將離別底前一晚，她揀了房子底最黑暗處坐着。一盞油燈點在灶前，螢火那麼的光亮。她，手裏抱着春寶，將她底頭貼在他底頭髮上。她底思想似乎浮漂在極遠，可是她自己捉摸不定遠在那裏。終於是牠慢慢地跑回來，跑到眼前，跑到她底孩子底身上。

她向她底孩子低聲叫：

『春寶，寶寶！』

『媽媽，』孩子含着奶頭答。

『媽媽明天要去了……！』

『唔，』孩子似不十分懂得，本能地將頭鑽進他

母親底胸膛。