

ON GUARD BENEATH THE NEON LIGHTS

Shen Hsi-meng, Mo Yen
and Lu Hsing-chen



ON GUARD BENEATH THE NEON LIGHTS

A Play in Nine Scenes

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AND LU HSING-CHEN

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS
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Red Storm

—A historical play in three acts

by Chin Shan

26-70

Drawing its theme from the February 7, 1923 strike, a great event in the annals of China's working-class movement, *Red Storm* tells how the Peking-Hankow Railway workers, led by the Chinese Communist Party, fought against their oppression by imperialists and warlords. It takes the reader back to the days when Chinese workers were condemned to terrible suffering and shows what they were capable of doing once awakened. In this fast-moving play the author introduces us to two revolutionary martyrs, and lays bare the craftiness, cruelty and hypocrisy of their enemies. The play has also been made into a film.

Illustrated with stage photographs

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THE CHARACTERS

LU HUA, political instructor of a company of the Chinese People's Liberation Army

LU TA-CHENG, company commander

CHEN HSI, Third Platoon leader

CHAO TA-TA, Eighth Squad leader

HUNG MAN-TANG, old mess officer

TUNG AH-NAN, young recruit, formerly a student

MESSENGER

LIBERATION ARMY FIGHTERS

CHUN-NI, wife of Chen Hsi; model peasant who carries supplies of grain to the front

AH-HSIANG, flower girl, Ah-nan's elder sister

MAMA TUNG, mother of Ah-hsiang and Ah-nan

CHOU TEH-KUEI, veteran worker in a power plant; member of the Communist Party

AH-JUNG, son of Chou Teh-kuei; a boy who sells evening papers

LIN YUAN-YUAN, a girl student; schoolmate of Ah-nan and his girl friend

LO KE-WEN, Lin Yuan-yuan's cousin

MRS. LIN, Lin Yuan-yuan's mother

FAT MA, maid of the Lin family

CHU MAN-LI, Lin Yuan-yuan's classmate; a Kuomintang secret agent disguised as a student

FEIFEI, a hooligan

OLD K, head of the Kuomintang secret agents on the Nanking Road

OLD SEVEN, Old K's right-hand man

NURSES

THUGS

AMERICAN REPORTER

NUNS

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN and HER HUSBAND

A CAPITALIST and WIFE

MAN WEARING GLASSES and WIFE

ICE-CREAM VENDOR

MEAT-DUMPLING VENDOR

DANCE-HALL HOSTESS

BROKER

SHOE-SHINE BOY

PASSERS-BY

BRITISH, AMERICAN and JAPANESE SOLDIERS

GIRL STUDENTS

AH-NAN'S FATHER

DEMONSTRATORS

SCENE ONE

A misty night in mid-summer.

The Nanking Road in Shanghai.

Guns boom sporadically.

TUNG AH-NAN, cautiously rising from behind a barricade in the street, turns and whistles. LIN YUAN-YUAN dashes over to him, looking very worried.

AH-NAN: Lin Yuan-yuan!

YUAN-YUAN: Tung Ah-nan!

AH-NAN: Why are you so late?

YUAN-YUAN: Mother locked me in. Fortunately, the maid helped me to escape. Where are the others from the Students' Union?

AH-NAN: They left some time ago and went with Uncle Chou to welcome the Liberation Army. I stayed behind to wait for you.

YUAN-YUAN: Then let's hurry!

AH-NAN (*stopping*): Someone's coming.

YUAN-YUAN: Is it the Liberation Army?

AH-NAN: I can't see.

YUAN-YUAN: Is it my mother or my cousin?

AH-NAN: It doesn't look like them.

(They drop out of sight behind the barricade. A little later they look out again.)

YUAN-YUAN: I'm scared, Tung Ah-nan....

AH-NAN: What? You're sorry you've come?
YUAN-YUAN: No, but I'm afraid if I run into mother she'll force me to go to America.
AH-NAN: Then go to my house and hide there.
YUAN-YUAN: No. See these gifts; I want to give them to the Liberation Army men myself.
(*Rifle shots off-stage.*)
AH-NAN: Ssh! Get down!
(*Three thugs, escorting OLD K who is dressed in a Kuomintang military uniform, move furtively along the street.*)
OLD K: Keep an eye open to see if someone's following us!
(*OLD SEVEN comes out of a tall building to greet them.*)
OLD SEVEN: Director Ma!
OLD K: Ssh! From now on I'm to be known as Mr. K.
OLD SEVEN: This way please, Mr. K. A sampan's waiting for you on the Huangpu River.
OLD K: Plans have been changed. The Americans want us to go underground.
OLD SEVEN: Go underground?
OLD K: We're to see that within three months the Reds turn black and rot right here on the Nanking Road. (*Goes into the building.*)
OLD SEVEN: Very good!
(*The thugs follow OLD K into the building. AH-NAN bounds over the barricade and shadows them. LIN YUAN-YUAN follows him.*)
YUAN-YUAN: Let's hurry!
AH-NAN: No! I don't know where those fellows come from! Yuan-yuan, go and get in touch with the Liberation Army; I'll keep an eye on those men.

YUAN-YUAN: All alone?

AH-NAN: I can cope with them. You run along now.

(Off-stage, LO KE-WEN calls: "Yuan-yuan!")

YUAN-YUAN: My cousin's coming!

(They hide behind the barricade.)

(Dressed in a neatly pressed Western suit, LO KE-WEN appears carrying a violin case in one hand and a suitcase in the other. MRS. LIN, a plump middle-aged woman, wearing a long gown and high-heeled shoes, follows him.)

MRS. LIN: Can you see her anywhere, Ke-wen?

LO *(sbrugging)*: She disappeared right in front of my eyes.

MRS. LIN *(sobbing)*: ... If I don't find my daughter, I'm done for!

LO: Stop snivelling, Aunt! Your crying upsets me.

MRS. LIN: You really are hopeless, Ke-wen! You can't even keep watch on a young girl.

LO: I refuse to believe my cousin has the courage to abandon us and go over to the Communists. Her singing is nearly as good as Western vocalists. Success in her art is already in sight. It's unimaginable that she'll give up like this and waste her life! Absolutely unimaginable!

MRS. LIN: Instead of talking nonsense, you had better hurry up and look for her!

(AH-NAN pops out from behind the barricade.)

AH-NAN: Hey! No thoroughfare!

MRS. LIN *(startled)*: Oh! How you scared me!

LO *(regaining his composure)*: So it's you!

MRS. LIN: Who's he?

LO: One of those poor students from the Students' Union. He used to work as a docker and a shoe-shine boy on the Nanking Road.

AH-NAN: D'you want your shoes shined?

MRS. LIN: He looks like one of Yuan-yuan's classmates.

AH-NAN: I'm not good enough to be her classmate; we're not even in the same school. (*He vaults over the barricade.*)

MRS. LIN: That's right, but you belong to the same Students' Union. You were the one who took Yuan-yuan to the hunger demonstration that time!

AH-NAN: But when we were almost there, you came and brought her back.

MRS. LIN: Of course I did, because she wasn't hungry. The truth is, Ah-nan, that just in these difficult days my daughter has disappeared again.

AH-NAN: Is that so?

MRS. LIN: Yes. If you happen to see her....

AH-NAN: I'm sorry, but I haven't seen her.

LO: We'll gain nothing from a man like this, Aunt.

AH-NAN: It's safer for you at home, Madame! The Communists won't touch you when they come!

MRS. LIN: From the way you talk, you sound like a Communist yourself.

AH-NAN: I'm not qualified. (*Jumps back behind the barricade.*)

LO: How could the Communists want anyone like him? Let's go, Aunt!

(*LO KE-WEN continues towards the barricade.*)

AH-NAN: Hey! Be careful you aren't stopped by a stray bullet!

(*LIN YUAN-YUAN takes this opportunity to escape.*

LO KE-WEN sees her and gives chase. The thugs

come out of the tall building.... They have changed into Liberation Army uniforms.)

THUG A: Who goes there? Put your hands up!

LO: Don't shoot! We're just ordinary people.

THUG A: Don't panic! We're Liberation Army men.

LO
MRS. LIN } (*flabbergasted*): Huh! Liberation Army men!

(*Turns to run.*)

THUG A: Why are you running away? Come back here! (*Moving towards them*) One of you wears glasses and the other high-heeled shoes. Both of you look like bad elements!

(*OLD K and OLD SEVEN appear in the doorway of the building.*)

MRS. LIN: We know how to mind our own business, Sir.... (*Recognizing OLD SEVEN*) Oh! Aren't you the owner of the Lili Dance Hall? Please put in a good word for me!

OLD SEVEN: Ah, Madame Lin! (*To OLD K*) She's an ordinary citizen who knows how to mind her own business, Comrade.

OLD K: Madame Lin? Why, it's this very kind of person the revolution is meant to be against. (*Signals with his eyes to the others.*)

THUG B (*pointing to the suitcase*): What's this?

LO (*refusing to surrender it*): A suitcase.

THUG A: You scoundrell! You're carrying ammunition in it!

LO: Nothing of the sort. It's money!

(*THUG A snatches the suitcase.*)

THUG A (*pointing to the violin case*): What's this?

LO: A violin.

THUG A: What?

LO: A fiddle.

THUG A: I bet it's a machine-gun. (*Snatches it.*)

LO: You barbarians!

MRS. LIN: Forget it, Ke-wen. Let's go. (*Pulls LO KE-WEN along by the arm.*)

(*OLD K leads the thugs off.*)

(*AH-NAN suddenly stands in OLD K's way.*)

AH-NAN (*arms outstretched*): Oh, Liberation Army men. You've done a good job! I've come to welcome you.

OLD K: You're...

AH-NAN: From the Students' Scout Team.

OLD K: So now we join forces.

AH-NAN: Right! Won't you come to our office for a rest?

OLD K: Sorry, I can't! We've other tasks.

OLD SEVEN: The comrades still have other affairs to attend to.

(*The thugs start to leave.*)

AH-NAN: Hey, be careful! Mines are planted over there!

(*OLD K and the others turn to go in another direction.*)

AH-NAN: There're mines over there too!

OLD K: Then will you please lead the way!

(*As AH-NAN turns to lead the way, OLD K strikes him with his fist. THUG A rushes up and beats AH-NAN unconscious.*)

OLD K: Finish him off and throw him in the gutter. Otherwise our plans for the Nanking Road will fall through and all the work we've done will be a waste of time.

(OLD K and OLD SEVEN run off. THUGS A and B drag AH-NAN away. LIN YUAN-YUAN shouts off-stage: "Ah-nan! Tung Ah-nan!")

YUAN-YUAN: Tung Ah-nan! Ah-nan!... (She goes into the tall building.)

(Third Platoon Leader CHEN HSI enters with Squad Leader CHAO TA-TA and several other fighters. LIN YUAN-YUAN comes out of the building.)

YUAN-YUAN: Comrades of the Liberation Army, some reactionaries have escaped and I can't find my classmate Tung Ah-nan!

CHEN: Give chase to the enemy, Eighth Squad Leader! (Goes to search the building.)

CHAO: Yes.

YUAN-YUAN: I'm coming along too.

CHAO (motioning for her to stay back): Bullets don't have eyes. I can't save you if you are hit. (Stamping his foot) Stay back! (Exit.)

CHEN (comes out of the building): Come back! Hey you, come back!

(LIN YUAN-YUAN runs off into the distance. Off-stage LU TA-CHENG calls: "Third Platoon Leader, Chen Hsi!" Underground Party member CHOU TEH-KUEI comes in with Company Commander LU TA-CHENG and Political Instructor LU HUA.)

LU TA-CHENG: Have you caught them?

CHEN: No. They've fled!

LU TA-CHENG: So the bandits want to fight guerrilla warfare with us right here on the Nanking Road, eh? (Takes out his Mauser.) Watch me bring them back alive, Uncle Chou. (Exit.)

LU HUA: Where are those students?

CHEN: That girl left with the Eighth Squad Leader.
I can't find Tung Ah-nan.

CHOU: Can't find him? Let's go. Quick!

LU HUA: Uncle Chou, the underground Party here has done a good job. Leading the workers and students, you protected the factories and schools and welcomed the Liberation Army into Shanghai, and now you're helping us to ferret out the bandits. You've done a great deal of work. Take a rest.

CHOU: What? Do you think because I'm old I'm useless? Comrade, I'm still as much a soldier now as I was twenty-five years ago when I fought and charged the British on this same street. But let's get down to business. (*Motioning*) Follow me!

LU HUA (*to CHEN HSI*): Let's go!

(*A MESSENGER enters.*)

MESSENGER: Reporting! An urgent order!

LU HUA (*taking the order*): Go quickly and fetch back the Company Commander.

(*The MESSENGER runs out.*)

(*CHAO TA-TA enters at a trot.*)

CHAO: Reporting! I met a woman. She was afraid of me at first, but then she asked me about a suitcase. Said someone had taken it from her.

LU HUA (*surprised*): What suitcase? Who took it? Ask her to come here. (*CHAO TA-TA yells at the woman.*) Don't shout so rudely! You'll frighten these Shanghai people.

CHAO: Very good. (*In a soft gentle voice*) Hey, don't be afraid. Please come here; our Instructor wants to see you. Come here!

(Stupefied with terror, MRS. LIN comes towards him. When she sees the squad of Liberation Army soldiers standing before her, she hastily turns to run.)

CHAO: Come back! What are you afraid of? We're Liberation Army men!

MRS. LIN: I'm not afraid. Don't bother — it was just a suitcase.

LU HUA: What kind of suitcase?

MRS. LIN *(making a gesture)*: So big. It had ... it had a little. ...

LU HUA: What sort of person took it? What was he wearing? What did he look like?

CHAO: Speak up! Was he wearing a uniform like mine?

MRS. LIN *(nodding)*: Yes. He said he was a Liberation Army man.

CHAO: A soldier in the Liberation Army took it? You — *(MRS. LIN winces.)*

LU HUA: Don't go away! We must get to the bottom of this.

MRS. LIN *(horrificed)*: Just forget about it. It's hard for a soldier not to take a little something. But if one of you officers happen to find that suitcase, please notify me. *(Opening her purse, she draws out a stack of banknotes and holds them out to the Political Instructor.)* Here, take this small token. You boys can buy a drink with it. *(Seeing the Political Instructor smile, she takes out two gold bars.)* Take this as my gift to you brave fighters.

LU HUA: Take back your money. I'd like you to know that we're Liberation Army men; we're Chairman Mao's soldiers. We've never so much as taken a piece of thread from the people!

MRS. LIN: Don't be ashamed. I've seen many soldiers in Shanghai — British, American, Japanese and Kuomintang. What difference does it make if you accept a little money!

CHAO (*angrily*): Go away! (*MRS. LIN draws back in fright.*) What do you think Liberation Army men are? (*Frightened, MRS. LIN goes away.*)

LU HUA: Now look what you've done, Chao Ta-ta!

CHAO: What kind of behaviour is this?

LU HUA: That's their way of doing things.

CHEN: It's just like seeing a ghost in broad daylight.

LU HUA: Since you're here, you must learn to be patient.

CHEN: I think she was deliberately trying to ruin the reputation of the Liberation Army!

CHAO: I'm going to drag her back!

LU HUA: Don't act so rashly! We'll spoil everything if we act before investigating. Didn't you study the Rules for Soldiers Entering the City before we came here? (*The MESSENGER comes in with LU TA-CHENG and CHOU TEH-KUEI.*)

LU TA-CHENG: What's up, Instructor?

LU HUA: We have a new task!

LU TA-CHENG: That's fine. I've just begun to long for the front again now that Shanghai's been liberated.

Are we to go to the Choushan Islands or Taiwan?

LU HUA: No, the Nanking Road!

LU TA-CHENG: What does this mean? (*As he reads the order the colour drains from his face.*) What? We're being based in a street?

LU HUA: That's the idea! We're to stand guard here and defend Shanghai.

CHOU (*stepping forward to shake the company commander's hand*): That's just fine! We welcome you!

LU TA-CHENG: Uncle Chou! Fighting battles is our job. This is the first time our Army has been asked to keep watch on a street.

CHEN: That's fine! We're the men who liberated Shanghai. It's only right we should walk up and down the streets for a while. We'll see what sort of a place Shanghai is!

LU TA-CHENG: No more of your silly talk! (*Holding up the order*) Do you think the order means sightseeing in Shanghai?

(*FIGHTER A enters running.*)

FIGHTER A: We have found a young student in the gutter!

LU HUA: Where is he?

FIGHTER A: He's being brought here.

(*AH-NAN is brought in on a stretcher. LIN YUAN-YUAN follows.*)

CHOU (*stepping up to the stretcher*): Ah-nan! Ah-nan!

AH-NAN (*coming to*): Uncle Chou!... That bandit, Director Ma . . . beat me up. . . . Now he's called. . . . (*Loses consciousness.*)

LU HUA: Hurry, take him to the hospital!

(*FIGHTERS A and B carry AH-NAN out. LIN YUAN-YUAN follows them.*)

CHOU: Company Commander! Political Instructor! That Director Ma is the same villain who killed Ah-nan's father right here on the Nanking Road. Now he's gone underground.

LU HUA: Comrades, it seems that standing guard here on the Nanking Road is not going to be so easy. We've

won the victory, but now we're faced with a new task in the class struggle!

LU TA-CHENG: As long as we have the leadership of the Party and the support of the working class, I don't mind. Let's go!

CHAO: Where are we going?

LU TA-CHENG: Just like me, you have no brains! We're going to keep watch on a street!

(They go off in the morning sun towards the beat of drums which is welcoming them.)

(The stage darkens for a change of scene.)