

THE
LONG
MARCH

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LIST OF CHARACTERS

CHAO CHIH-FANG *aged 21, Commander, First Company, First Battalion of the Red Army; later Acting Battalion Commander, and Battalion Political Instructor.*

LO SHUN-CHENG *aged 31, Deputy Commander, later Commander, First Battalion.*

LI YU-KUO *aged 27, Political Instructor, First Battalion.*

HUANG *aged 27, Commander, First Regiment.*

WANG TEH-CHIANG *aged 21, Commander, Second Company.*

WU *aged 18, Propaganda Group Leader, First Division.*

LI FENG-LIEN *aged 18, member of Propaganda Group, LI YU-KUO's younger sister, betrothed to CHAO CHIH-FANG.*

CHENG LI *aged 16, member of Propaganda Group.*

TIGER CUB *aged 18, runner, First Battalion; later Squad Leader.*

LITTLE WAN *aged 17, HUANG's bodyguard.*

LITTLE CHIN *aged 17, runner, First Company.*

LITTLE TANG *aged 17, runner, First Battalion.*

CHANG TEH-MING *aged 21, organizer, Political Department, First Division.*

PEASANTS' ASSOCIATION CHAIRMAN

WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION CHAIRMAN

CHIEN KUEI-HSI *aged 21, Red Guard; later scout, First Battalion.*

YOUNG CHOU *aged 16, peasant lad; later runner, First Battalion.*

MOTHER CHOU *over 50.*

AN OLD PEASANT

POLITICAL INSTRUCTOR HSIEH

NURSE CHANG *aged 16, chief nurse of a Red Army field hospital.*

CHU *Commander, Third Company, First Battalion.*

A YI *aged 25, local Yi leader (Yi—one of China's minority peoples).*

FIVE OTHER RED ARMY OFFICERS OF COMPANY RANK

A SCORE OF RED ARMY MEN

PEASANT MEN AND WOMEN *young and middle-aged.*

AN OLD BOATMAN

AN OLD TIBETAN *member of one of the committees of the district government.*

HIS WIFE *over 50.*

SHANA WURSE *aged 16, his daughter.*

SHALU CHODENG *aged 18, his son.*

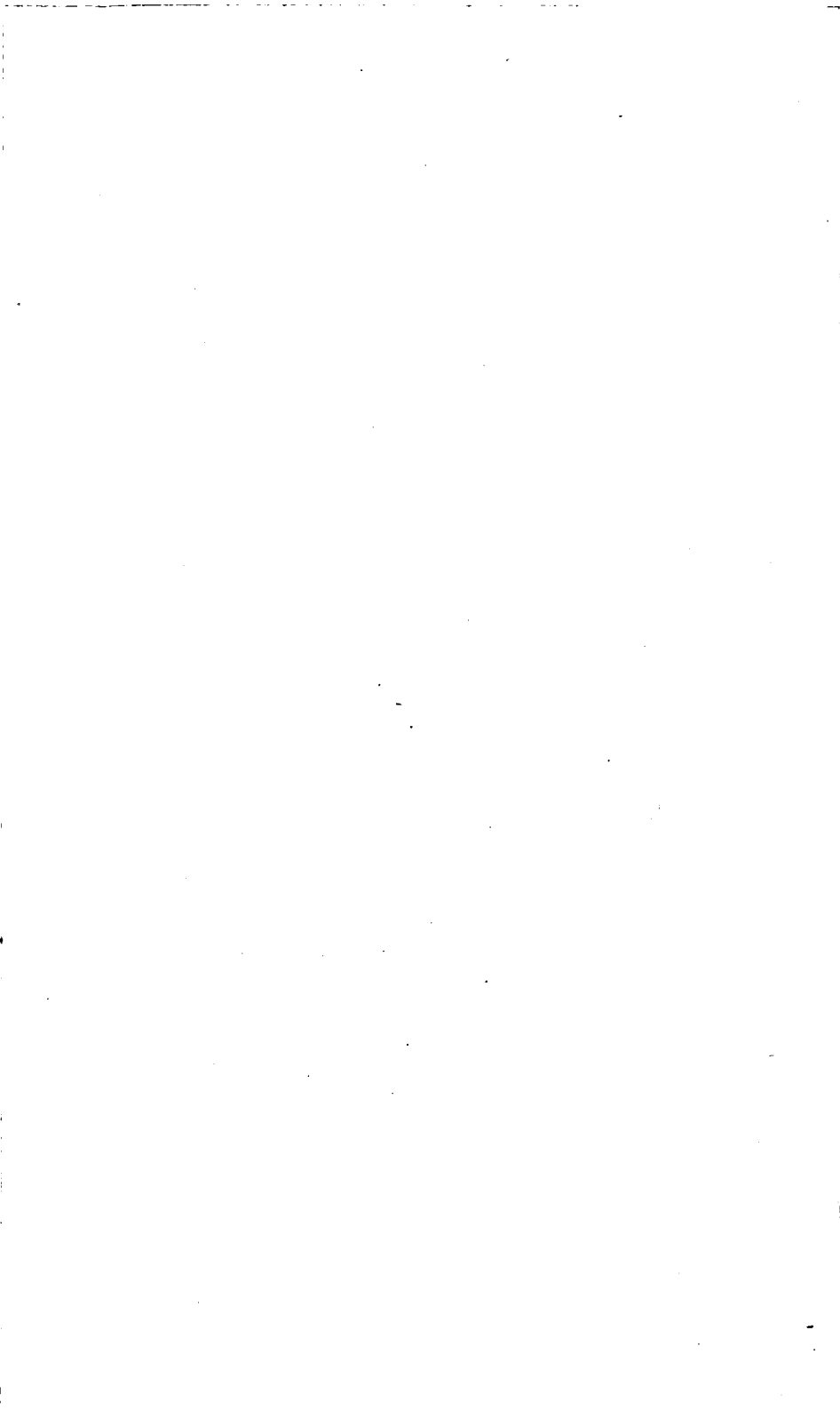
TIBETANS AND LAMAS

On the enemy side: COMPANY COMMANDER NIU
SQUAD LEADER HU
A DEPUTY SQUAD LEADER
SOLDIERS

PROLOGUE

In October 1934, the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army started out on the world-famous Long March from Juichin, Kiangsi, in South China, to come to grips with the Japanese invaders in the north and defend their country. They marched 25,000 *li*, swept across eleven provinces, smashed 410 enemy regiments—mainly Chiang Kai-shek troops, who ceaselessly pursued and attempted to encircle and intercept them—and temporarily occupied 54 important cities on the way. After overcoming incredible difficulties, and making their way over mountain passes where no human foot had ever trod, they finally reached northern Shensi—where they could fight against Japanese aggression—in October 1935.

Reactionaries of every type looked forward with diabolical glee to the Red Army—locked as it was in a bitter struggle against the elements—either perishing in the eternal snows of the mountains or dying of starvation on the barren steppelands. But the Red Army came through the test triumphantly. They not only brought the Long March to a successful conclusion, but carried the revolution forward to the great victory of today.



ACT I

TIME: *A moonlit night in mid-February 1935.*

PLACE: *The Shens' ancestral temple, at the foot of Loushankuan Pass, which commands the gateway to Tsunyi in Kweichow Province. The large room, at the rear of the temple, had been, for the last four weeks or so, the township government centre set up by the Red Army. Then it had been retaken by a battalion of Chiang Kai-shek's militia.*

SCENE: *There is a large round window, centre, back. Left, a gate opens on to a covered path leading to the main hall. Right, a door opens on to a small path that runs up the hill. Through the round window can be seen stone steps, leading to the Pass, dotted with clumps of bamboo and banana plants here and there. On the wall are two pictures, the God of Culture and the God of War, pasted on either side of a maxim: "A good parent must teach his sons the classics." There is some furniture—an old square table with an oil lamp, tea-cups and long tobacco pipes on it, two big chairs, and a bamboo settee and tea-table, but all is in disorder, following the Kuomintang's panic-stricken flight.*

There are signs of the recent changes. Kuomintang slogans "Down with the Communists!" and "Wipe out the Reds!" are still on the wall, roughly pasted across the Communist slogans: "Long live

the Chinese Communist Party!" and "Long live Chairman Mao!" Below, the words "Propaganda Department, First Division, Red Army, 6/1/35" can just be seen.

The moonlight is bright. The oil lamp in the room flickers from time to time, and shows us a peasant, CHIEN KUEI-HSI, roped up to an overhead beam, struggling to free himself. Shots are heard offstage in rapid succession. A shell whines overhead and explodes. Then the Deputy Commander of First Battalion, LO SHUN-CHENG, is seen running up the stone steps.

Lo: Come on, comrades! Charge! Capture the Pass!
(*A group of Red Army men rush up the steps.*)

Lo (*shouting*): Company Commander Wang! Company Commander Wang! Tiger Cub!

TIGER CUB (*offstage*): Coming!

Lo: Tell Company Commander Wang to hurry up, quick.

TIGER CUB (*offstage*): Right!

Lo: Comrades, charge! Capture the Pass! We've got the enemy on the run!

(*They follow him up the steps, out of sight.*)

CHIEN (*shouting*): Get them! Comrades, get the brutes!

(*LI YU-KUO, Political Instructor of First Battalion, TIGER CUB, a runner, and WANG TEH-CHIANG, Commander of Second Company, First Battalion, rush up the hill following the group of Red Army men. COMMANDER CHAO CHIH-FANG of First Company and LITTLE CHIN, a runner, enter, guns in hand.*)

CHAO (*to CHIEN*): Hands up!

CHIEN: I can't move. Get these ropes off me, can't you? It's all right, comrades, we're all on the same side.

CHAO: Who are you?

CHIEN: A Red Guard. Chien Kuei-hsi's my name. Look, Company Commander Chao, you know me really. It's not a month since you put up at my house for a week.

CHAO (*untying the ropes*): Well! Chien Kuei-hsi! How did you get in this fix?

CHIEN: Oh, it's a long story. . . .

CHAO: Where's the enemy got to now?

(CHIEN is freed.)

CHIEN: They've all fled, to Loushankuan Pass. Hey, lend me your bayonet! (*Grabs CHAO's bayonet without waiting for an answer and dashes out of the room.*) Forward, comrades!

LITTLE CHIN: Phew! What a firebrand!

CHAO (*calling after CHIEN*): Chien Kuei-hsi, hold on there, what. . . .

(LI FENG-LIEN, a girl worker in the Propaganda Group, comes on stage.)

FENG-LIEN (*interrupting*): Who are you talking to?

CHAO (*surprised*): What on earth are you doing here? Go away!

FENG-LIEN: I've come to see what I can do, of course.

CHAO: Where's your group leader?

FENG-LIEN: He's gone off with the Chairman of the Peasants' Association to get hold of some stretcher-bearers. There you are! That's the Peasant Chairman talking now.

(*Offstage, distant shouting "Come on, everybody, come on . . ." can be heard, as the PEASANT CHAIRMAN and the peasants spread the news that the Red Army is back.*)

CHAO: Oho! So you've already found the Chairman of the Peasants' Association! And you're getting hold of stretchers?

TIGER CUB (*runs in*): Company Commander Chao! Deputy Battalion Commander Lo and Third Company are attacking the Pass, but they've been surrounded. The supporting Second Company got there a bit late.

CHAO: H'm. What can we do now, I wonder. Our orders are to stand by, really. Where's the Political Instructor?

TIGER CUB: He's fallen back. He's coming down now with one of the platoons.

CHAO: Go and tell him that I'm coming with reinforcements. (*Shouting out of the window.*) First Platoon there! Fix bayonets! Follow me! (*Just as CHAO is leaving, POLITICAL INSTRUCTOR LI YU-KUO comes on.*)

LI: I say, Lao Chao, Second Company were much too slow off the mark today. Lo and his men are surrounded up there. We tried to get the platoon up the hill but we couldn't make it. Second, Third and Fourth Regiments are mounting an all-out attack on the Pass now.

(*Shooting is heard in the distance.*)

CHAO: I propose to take First Company up, and make a frontal attack, while you attack the flanks with Second.

LI: Thought you were reserves?

CHAO: Not much sense in calling ourselves reserves, when our main force is right behind us.

LI: But who'll look after the prisoners?

CHAO: The Propaganda Group can do it, can't they? (*The runner LITTLE TANG runs in.*)

LITTLE TANG: Political Instructor! Second, Third and Fourth Regiments have come up, and a frontal attack's starting. Commander Lo's men are fighting hand-to-hand now, with bayonets.

CHAO: D'you agree, Political Instructor?

LI: All right. I agree.

CHAO (*runs out, right, and is seen on the stone steps*):
First Company! Follow me!

(CHAO and Red Army men dash off, followed by LITTLE TANG. WU, the Propaganda Group Leader, the Chairman of the Peasants' Association, and a dozen or so young peasants with stretchers enter.)

WU: Political Instructor, here's the Chairman of the Peasants' Association, and his stretcher-bearers.

LI (*greeting them with great warmth*): You're a welcome sight—all of you. (To PEASANT CHAIRMAN.) How's life been treating you since I saw you last?

PEASANT CHAIRMAN: No time to tell you all that now! I've got more than twenty men here with me. We can give you a hand—act as guides, stretcher-bearers, guard the prisoners. . . . We're at your disposal, Political Instructor!

(LITTLE WAN *runs on*.)

LITTLE WAN: Political Instructor, the Regimental C.O. wants you immediately.

LI (to PEASANT CHAIRMAN): Will you come with me? (*Goes off with LITTLE WAN*.)

PEASANT CHAIRMAN: Right you are! (*To the peasants*.) Come on, mates.

(*All follow*.)

WU: Aiya! I remember we put up in this room four weeks ago. Didn't we stick some slogans up here? (*Strips off the Kuomintang slogans*.) I thought so! Here they are still.

(A distressed woman's voice is heard offstage: "Oh, comrades! Comrades!")

WU: Sounds like a woman. (To FENG-LIEN.) Can you organize some cooked food for all of us? If enough people turn up, we can get the township

government set up again right away. I'm going to see who that is calling. (*Goes off.*)

FENG-LIEN: All right. (*Goes off.*)

(TIGER CUB, *coming down the steps outside, meets*
REGIMENTAL COMMANDER HUANG *climbing up.*)

TIGER CUB: Regimental Commander! Company Commander Chao has taken the hill. His men've got the enemy licked! They're on the run.

HUANG (*on the stone steps*): Fine! Little Wan! Tell Third Battalion to get ahead quick and cut off their retreat. Tell Regimental HQ to move up. (*Goes off.*)

LITTLE WAN (*offstage*): Right!

(*The shooting dies down. WU comes back, helping the WOMEN'S CHAIRMAN along. She is dishevelled and exhausted.*)

WU: There you are—rest here, now.

(FENG-LIEN *returns on stage.*)

FENG-LIEN: Comrade Wu, the township turned up to greet us directly they heard the shooting! (*Sees the WOMEN'S CHAIRMAN.*) Oh, my dear comrade! Whatever have they done to you?

WOMEN'S CHAIRMAN (*bursting into tears*): We had a terrible time after you went away. All the local bullies and the landlords came back. They hunted us night and day. We tried to hide, of course, and fled from place to place. We got our clothes torn to shreds, lost our shoes and had no food most of the time. I'd made up my mind to go and get hold of Chien Kuei-hsi, and join our village guerillas. But I've no experience in this sort of thing and walked straight into their hands the moment I entered Chien's house. They dragged me up to the temple here, and they've been at me, beating me and bullying, to make me give our Chairman away. But I didn't tell them a thing. Oh, comrades, we'd all

have been done for if you hadn't come now! (*Breaks down into a storm of tears.*)

FENG-LIEN: What sort of outfit occupied this place after we went?

WOMEN'S CHAIRMAN: They had a regimental headquarters here. They only fled when your attack started.

(CHENG LI, one of the Propaganda Group, enters, beaming, and greets WU and the WOMEN'S CHAIRMAN.)

WOMEN'S CHAIRMAN: Oh, Cheng Li! I've had a terribly narrow escape!

WU: What is it, Cheng Li? Tell me quickly.

CHENG LI: As soon as they heard the shooting the villagers came back. They're all out in force to welcome us. They've brought us no end of gifts—not forgetting to send up half a dozen captured landlords! They're demanding a public trial for the beasts!

WU (*with deep feeling*): The people have risen!

(*A crowd of excited peasants swarm in, left. Greetings to WU are shouted as they see him. "Comrades, you're back!" "We have had a bad time since we saw you last!" etc., etc. The hubbub dies down as an old peasant comes forward carrying a bottle of Maotai.*)

OLD PEASANT: Comrade Wu, do you remember me? Your Political Instructor Li once stayed at my house. In the land distribution, when you were here last month, we settled accounts with our local bullies and confiscated their things. You gave me clothes and rice, and two rooms to live in. I went out then to buy a bottle of Maotai to give all of you a drink, in gratitude. But when I got back with it, you'd gone! (*Wipes away a tear.*) Oh, you don't know how the White army fiends beat me up. Oh, comrades!

But I managed to keep the Maotai, all right. Here it is—it's for you.

WU (*doesn't know how to refuse*): Well. . . .

(YOUNG CHOU, a young peasant lad, pushes through the crowd, manhandling a 50-year-old landlord in front of him.)

YOUNG CHOU (*edging his way in*): Make way, please! (*To the landlord.*) Keep still, you! Group Leader Wu!

WU: Who's this?

YOUNG CHOU: My name's Chou. When you were here before, my dad was put on the district government, and when you left he didn't get away in time. And then this old bastard (*shakes the landlord*) came back and beat my dad till he died. When I heard the shooting this evening, I rushed straight round to his house with a meat chopper and got him. I demand a trial for him quick—My dad's death must be avenged!

WU: Right! We'll see to it for you when we hold the public trial.

(*The crowd stirs and murmurs. "That's fine." "Let's try him now." "Good." "Justice will be done!" etc., etc. A young lad comes forward with a bundle, followed by a girl.*)

YOUNG LAD (*to WU*): Comrade, this is for you!

YOUNG GIRL: This, too!

WU: Comrades, the army thanks you for your gifts. We'll hold a trial, but first we have to set up the township government again.

CROWD: That's right. Where're the people we elected last month?

(*The old peasant sees the WOMEN'S CHAIRMAN, and pulls her forward.*)

OLD PEASANT: Here's one, surely. Wasn't she the Chairman of the Women's Association?

(Crowd murmurs in sympathy at her distraught appearance.)

WOMEN'S CHAIRMAN: Neighbours, this room's too small for us to hold a meeting in. Let's go to the main hall. I've got a lot to tell you and our Red Army comrades.

(Peasants shout agreement, and start to move off.)

WOMEN'S CHAIRMAN: Come on, comrades.

WU: All right. *(To FENG-LIEN.)* Can you take these gifts over to Battalion HQ? *(Turns to CHENG LI.)* You can come along, too.

(All go off except FENG-LIEN. Stretcher-bearers are seen on the stone steps, carrying the wounded down. Offstage, Lo's voice is heard addressing his men. His words are punctuated with shouts of approval. "Comrades!" he says, "we've fought a good battle this evening. Now get a bite quick and snatch a bit of rest. We've got another battle ahead of us, to do as well in!" With another roar of approval the men are heard marching off, laughing and cheering. Lo comes on stage.)

Lo: Phew, I'm dead beat.

FENG-LIEN *(picking up the gifts):* Deputy Battalion Commander Lo, is it all over?

Lo: Just about. We've knocked out a militia detachment, and two and a half regiments of Wang Chia-lieh's regulars—and three more of his regiments are on the run. *(His voice rises with enthusiasm.)* I can tell you, the men did a magnificent job tonight. And a quick one—it only took us about twenty minutes.

FENG-LIEN: Our Artillery Company did their stuff, too.

Lo: You're right. They got their two rounds bang on, and smashed the fortifications to smithereens just when we wanted it. *(Sees the eggs and wine*

on the table.) What's this? Gifts from the peasants? Can I have some?

FENG-LIEN (*passing over the wine*): Of course—here you are. (*In a changed tone.*) Are there many stretcher cases this time?

Lo: Only a few. (*Drinks.*) That goes down well! Feng-lien, one more big victory like this will turn the situation completely in our favour. (*Wistfully.*) This area seems to me to have everything we need for a revolutionary base.

FENG-LIEN (*sticking to her enquiries*): Were any of the officers wounded?

Lo (*in his dream of a base right here*): M'm! (*Has another drink.*) This Maotai smells wonderful!

FENG-LIEN (*alarmed and impatient*): What's that?

Lo: I said, if we win another victory we'll probably settle down right here and turn it into a base. Or perhaps we can even go back to our old base in Kiangsi. Don't you want to go back, too?

FENG-LIEN: Can't you answer my question? I asked if any of the officers were wounded?

Lo: I think so—some.

FENG-LIEN: Have you seen my brother since?

Lo: Yes, he's gone to see the wounded. He'll be back in a minute.

FENG-LIEN: Company Commander Chao was in quite a state about you, you know, when he heard you were surrounded.

Lo: Chao's fine, I can tell you. He was fine. . . . He makes up his mind quickly and acts on it. If he hadn't brought his men up, I don't know what would have happened to us. He's as brave as a tiger, too, when it comes to actual fighting.

FENG-LIEN: D'you know where he is now?

Lo (*playing dumb*): Where who is?