

# STRUGGLE AGAINST COUNTER-STRUGGLE

Li Chih-hua



Cultural Press

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**Struggle Against Counter-Struggle**  
**A one-act play**

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CHARACTERS (In the order of their appearance)

Sun Lin-ko, *a treacherous landlord*, 50.

Liu Ma, *wife of Liu Chen-tung*, 26.

Liu Chen-tung, *Chairman of the village Peasants' Union*, 29.

Chao Kuang-ming, 62.

Ma Kuei-wu, *Vice-Chairman of the village Peasants' Union, landlord Sun's agent*, 35.

Fan Yung-ho, *captain of the village Self-Defense Corps*, 26.

Chen Teh-fu, 59.

Wang Chan-kuei, 32.

Yin Kuan, 40.

Yang Fu, 30.

Chang Feng-shan, 26.

Comrade Fang, 32.

Peasants A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, . . .

} Villagers

TIME: *Autumn of 1946. After dusk.*

PLACE: *Liberated Area of the Northeastern Provinces. Action takes place in a certain village.*

SCENE: *At left a small cottage peeps out so that the audience can see two sides of it. Its side wall has a door and a window. Behind, at the right corner of the house a chimney passes under the wall to the outside and from there rises above the eaves. A pile of firewood is in the front of the house, with a harrow on it. Some green vegetables are hanging*

*on ropes tied from the chimney to the window. Hanging at the door are some stringed red peppers. It is obviously the time of autumn harvest.*

*A sorghum stalk fence is seen far off at right. Behind it is another house.*

*The sky is as clear as water, with a bright moon shining.*

*When the curtain rises, a dim light is seen through the window of the cottage, and the barking of dogs is heard from a distance. Sun Lin-ko enters furtively from behind left. When he gets to the chimney, he stops to listen to the room inside. Suddenly the light in the room goes out, and the door opens. Liu Ma enters the stage with a winnowing-fan in her hand. Because she comes out of the cottage so suddenly, Sun cannot conceal himself. Sun pretends to be taking a walk and goes toward her.*

Sun Lin-ko. Where are you going?

Liu Ma. I've just ground some corn, and am coming back for the winnowing-fan. *(She sees the broken rope).* Who's broken the rope? *(She locks the door, puts the winnowing-fan on the ground, and walks over to knot together the broken ends of the rope).*

Sun. It's good to grind corn in such bright moonlight. Is your husband in?

Liu Ma. He goes out every morning when there are still stars in the sky, and doesn't come home till late at night. So he's never in.

Sun. Does the chairman of the Peasants' Union neglect his own home?

Liu Ma. Yes.



Sun. Do you grind for immediate use?

Liu Ma. That's right. I have to do all the work in and out of the house: carrying water, cooking, harvesting, and looking after a baby who crawls all over the *kang*\*. How can I have time to grind much?

Sun. Pardon me for criticising you, but you really don't know how to enjoy life. Your husband is the Chairman of the Peasants' Union. Why don't you order some one to reap the grain, and get some one's wagons to bring back your crops, and some one's animal to thresh for you? You have only to open your mouth and then let your upper lip touch your nether lip. Who'll dare say no? Why don't you open your mouth instead of doing everything yourself?

Liu Ma. No, that's the sort of thing my husband refuses to do; the more so because he is the Chairman of the Union. When I told him I was going to use the wagon which Wang Chuan was through with, my husband said, "Let others use it first."

Sun. The bright moonlight invites people to bring home the crops. My two wagons went to the provincial capital. Damn the drivers, who never wish to come back whenever they're away. If they were home now, I'd be awfully glad to get back your crops. And I could do it at any time. But now, I've no wagons myself to carry back my own crops from the land left me after the "liquidation". All my crops are still in the field.

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\* A brick bed warmed by a fire.



*[He exits front right while speaking.]*

Liu Ma (answers him with a stare, as she picks up the cabbages from the ground, and hangs them on the rope. Sun is already out of hearing). Who appreciates your lip service! (She goes and returns when she hears the baby crying in the side cottage. With her hands on the window-sill, she speaks to the child.) Wait a while. I'll feed you with the potatoes baking in the ashes of the stove, when I get back. (The baby stops crying). What a little nuisance he is!

*[She exits rear left.]*

Sun (comes back from the way he went. When he gets to the chimney and sees Liu Ma is gone, he takes out from his bosom something wrapped in white cloth. Being nervous, he drops something out of the wrapper — it is some bullets. He looks around and seeing no one in sight, he picks them up, and wraps them up again. Suddenly the baby inside the cottage begins crying again and gives him a fright. He hides the bullets in the pile of firewood in a hurry. Then he gnashes his teeth by the window). Son of a bitch, I'll cut you into eight pieces!

*[Hearing some one coming, he exits quickly front left. The child stops crying, and Liu Chen-tung enters rear right, with an empty bag on his back. Chao Kuang-ming follows him.]*

Chao Kuang-ming. Chairman Liu, do you think Sun Lin-ko behaves himself like a man? I cultivated his land. We agreed with each other that the crops should be divided equally between us. He agreed to supplying me with animals and wagons. But he won't let me use them now that the grain is reaped.

Liu Chen-tung. No hurry. Let's go in and talk it over. There are ways enough to reason with him. (*He tries to open the door*). Eh? It's locked. My wife's gone out. Where's she gone so late? We'd better talk it over right now in the moonlight, before my wife comes back.

Chao. Today's the fourteenth, tomorrow, the fifteenth, and the day after tomorrow will be the Fall of Hoar Frost. Although the moon's so bright to-night, the weather'll change fast when the north wind blows. If the snow covers the crops in the field, what'll I do?

Liu. What did he say when you talked with him?

Chao. What he said is nothing but nonsense. (*He imitates Sun's voice*). "My two wagons went to the provincial capital. I haven't yet gathered all my own crops. Why do you worry so much about yours? Don't you think it's rather tiring to rattle on about it all the time?" Wasn't he being unreasonable?

Liu. What did you say then?

Chao. I came back angry without saying anything. I can't do anything by myself.

Liu. What a fellow! He still cheats us poor people! Everybody spoke vigorously against Chou Wan-fang in the "liquidation", when the Political Working Group was here last time. But when we came to Sun Lin-ko, not more than ten people accused him. Although he made fat promises with his lips, we haven't yet really brought him under control.

Chao. Because all the Chou family had run away, every one was brave enough to speak up. But it's different with the case of Sun. He was in the village at the time of the "liquidation." Don't forget the saying: "Though the tiger is dead, people still dare not approach its corpse." Sun had been too malicious and cruel. My boy used to cry whenever he heard Sun's coughing and the rattling of his guards' swords.

Liu. Even small children knew that the village head with his guards meant *misfortune*.

Chao. Sun's business was either to hit us, curse us or to strip us of our possessions.

Liu. He didn't treat us like men. Once I hired myself out to him. It was the time of autumn harvest. We'd threshed all the grain and piled it on the threshing ground. We couldn't winnow it without wind. The foreman and all the workmen were collecting the grain stalks when Sun came with Wang, the chief of police. . . .

Chao. I know that fiend Wang, the chief of police. He was a big fellow and he knew how to hit a man hard!

Liu. As soon as Sun got there he called out: "Why don't you winnow the grain that you've threshed? You're idling." "No wind," said the foreman. What'd you think landlord Sun then said?

Chao. I can't imagine.

Liu. I haven't dared tell anybody before. Even an old man like you will be surprised at what I'm going to tell. Sun said, "All of you fell on your knees, face east, and pray to the gods for wind."

Chao. Pray for wind? That devil knew how to make use of man!

Liu. The chief of police also came over and shouted, "Kneel, kneel, Line up and kneel, or I'll hit you!" The foreman was the first one to kneel when he realised that the police fellow was not just using empty words. The others followed his example. I didn't. The police fellow asked me WHY NOT. I didn't answer. He slapped me hard twice across the face. The pain made me hold my face with my hands. "Stand up straight with your hands down!" shouted the police fellow. No sooner were my hands down than I received two more vicious slaps. Still striking he shouted, "Kneel or not?" and kept on striking me.

"I'll die before I kneel," I said to myself. He took out his sword and struck me with its back. I put up my arm to protect myself, and that's why this arm of mine is still maimed, as you can see.

Chao. Did you kneel at last?

Liu. No. You'll know I'm not lying if you ask any of those who worked for Sun that year.

Chao. Yes, when my son came home from the "liquidation" meeting he said Sun Lin-ko had punished his workers by making them kneel on the threshing ground. So that's how it all happened.

Liu. Your son didn't say anything against Sun in the meeting. Or Sun wouldn't dare make a fool of you now.

Chao. What shall I do with Sun, then?

Liu. I've got some wagons for the poor farmers to take home the grain which Sun promised to give

up to them. It'll be easy to keep the thing going, if there is some one who dares to make a start.

Chao. No one in our street dare offend Sun by himself. But whenever we are together, we never fall short of cursing him.

Liu. Yes, if you get together, everything'll be all right.

Chao. All right? But he sent his wagons out of the village and won't bring them back.

Liu. No, he didn't send'em very far. His two wagons, one with the *designed* wheels, one with large felloes, his three mules, and four horses with his colt, all are in his brother-in-law's home. We must make him get them back. He'll have to carry home for you the crops he promised you, and also give up three of his animals.

Chao. I hear he's trying to cheat us. He plans to give us neither the three animals nor the land deeds.

Liu. He handed over to us only the 500 *mou* deed, but the other deed of the 600 *mou* he's still keeping. I met Comrade Fang at Hsiao Village the other day. He said we must hold a general meeting soon and demand Sun to hand over the other deed.

Chao. This fiend, I can do nothing with him by myself.

[*Liu Ma re-enters with a bag on her back, a broom and a winnowing-fan in her hands.*]

Liu (to his wife). What've you been doing? Why've you come back so late?

Liu Ma. If you have eyes you have no need to ask. (*To Chao*). Have you had your supper, old uncle?

Chao. Yes, I've already eaten.

Liu Ma. Uncle Chao, who did you say you can do nothing with?

Liu (*answers for Chao*). The landlord Sun Lin-ko.

Liu Ma. You don't have to shout! When I came back just now for the winnowing-fan, I saw Sun taking a leisurely walk towards that direction. Possibly he's on his way back. If he hears us, he'll say we backbite him.

Liu. It doesn't matter if he does hear us. Why should we fear him now?

Liu Ma. Only a moment ago he tried to make me believe he was generous. He said that if his wagons had not gone to the capital, he would have helped us to take home our crops.

Liu. What cheek! When a weasel says Happy New Year to the cock, it hasn't any good intentions. Is that ground corn there in your bag? All right, put it right here. How much in there?

Liu Ma. Just enough for the time being. I didn't measure it.

Chao. About four sheng, I guess, or measure it and find out how right I was.

Liu. Go in and get the *sheng* measure.

Liu Ma. It is not worth measuring. Let it go as it is.

Liu. Go in and get the *sheng* measure.

*[Liu Ma exits into the cottage.]*

Chao. You really want to measure it? You'll make your old uncle lose face?

Liu. How can I do that! I want to send two sheng of ground corn to Lao Lu-tou. Don't you see the bag here which I took from him?

*[Liu Ma enters with a sheng measure.]*

Liu Ma. I'm worn out with grinding the corn. Why should we give it to others before we eat any ourselves?

Chao. This is an example of forgetting oneself in the interests of others. That's why everybody likes him.

Liu. Old uncle, you praise me too much. It's not because I forget myself, but because it happens that I have some ground corn right now; or I'd have to borrow some from others.

Liu Ma. You better go and grind it yourself if you want to lend it to others.

Liu. I am going to do it tomorrow.

Liu Ma. Then you can wait and lend your corn tomorrow.

Liu. Tomorrow will be too late. Lao Lu-tou has finished all the food he had, and the new corn is still in the field. He'll have nothing to eat tomorrow. His second son has joined the Garrison Corps, and his first son is sick. And the father is too old to work. What do you expect him to do? What is the Peasants' Union for? Can we still let poor people starve?



Liu Ma. Look, you've dropped some corn, let me do it. You'd better go in and eat. There is still some corn meal gruel in the cooking pot. It's still warm.

Liu. Wait a minute. This bag is torn. Get a needle and stitch it up.

*[Liu Ma goes into the cottage.]*

Chao. I heard Lao Lu-tou's second son, Lu Kuei, wrote home from the Garrison Corps the other day.

Liu. He wrote the letter himself. When the letter was read to his father, the old man was so happy that he could not keep his mouth closed. He could not help stroking his beard all the time. Lu Kuei used to be just like me, knowing nothing about writing, but now. . . .

*[Liu Ma enters with needle and thread and begins patching the bag.]*

Liu Ma. You were much worse than Lu Kuei. There was no comparison.

Liu. The Garrison Corps gives people a good education. Don't make fun of me. I'm going to study next winter. We poor men shall have education too.

*[Ma Kuei-wu enters left, with an overcoat on.]*

Ma Kuei-wu. What were you saying? You want to study? That's easy! You're better than I in everything except learning. When I was young, I went to school for several years, because I still had some property inherited from my ancestors, I can't teach school, but I can teach you.

Liu. Good, you're not joking, are you? I'm serious myself. I'll start learning from you next winter.

Ma. Certainly, I'll coach you if you study hard.

Liu Ma. How can you teach others with your learning which is so little?

Ma. Don't despise my learning. When I was a copist I wrote a land deed for 1,000 mou. I've been invited to dinners by both the land seller and the buyer. When "Manchukuo" wanted to make me into a coolie, I ran away to the Mu Tan River, and there I managed to get along, helped by my learning. I didn't become prosperous, but didn't starve away from home, either.

Chao. A little learning can be a dangerous thing.

Ma. Don't talk that way, old uncle. I have never written a bill of divorce.

Liu. Old uncle, let's return to business. Call all the members of your group to come to your neighbour Wang's. Ma and I'll go to get Sun, and meet you there. We'll reason with Sun before all the members. He must bring back his wagons and carry the crops for us.

Chao. All right. (*He is about to go and mutters*). It's most unlucky to cultivate his land! My son and I have wasted a whole year on it; It's no better than working for others as hired labour. Damn it! he is too hard on us poor people.

Ma. Excuse me, old uncle, don't go yet. (*He pretends ignorance*). Who're you talking about?

Chao. That landlord of ours.