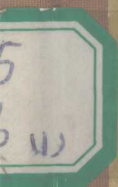


REGISTRATION  
AND  
OTHER STORIES



# *Registration And Other Stories*

*BY CONTEMPORARY CHINESE WRITERS*

*Foreign Languages Press  
Peking 1956*

**First Edition May 1954**  
**Reprinted 1956**

***Printed in the People's Republic of China***

# Contents

<i>My Two Hosts</i>	
KANG CHUO . . . . .	1
<i>New Times, New Methods</i>	
KU YU . . . . .	29
<i>Registration</i>	
CHAO SHU-LI . . . . .	39
<i>Yin Ching-chun</i>	
HAN FENG . . . . .	77
<i>On the Kholchin Grasslands</i>	
MALCHINKU . . . . .	105
<i>Ahmad and Pakya</i>	
WANG YU-HU . . . . .	127
<i>I Want to Study!</i>	
KAO YU-PAO . . . . .	153
<i>Ehdun Maole and Snow White</i>	
HUO CHIEN . . . . .	179
<i>Sacrifice to the Kitchen God</i>	
CHIN CHAO-YANG . . . . .	201

# My Two Hosts

by Kang Chuo

*Kang Chuo, a native of Hsiangyin County in Hunan Province, was born in 1920. His father was an intellectual, who early influenced his son's love for new literature.*

*In 1937, after the outbreak of the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression, Kang Chuo went to the countryside to mobilize the people. In 1938, he enrolled at the Literature Department of Lu Hsun Arts' Institute in Yen-an, the then revolutionary centre. Later he went to Shansi as a war correspondent and worked for many years among peasants in the liberated areas. He started writing in 1941. Among his published works are collections of short stories like "My Two Hosts," "A Young Intellectual in the Countryside," and "Worker Chang Fei-hu." In addition to short stories, tales for children, essays and adaptations of folk tales, he has also written a novel "A Tale of the Hehshihpo Mine."*

I was preparing to move from Lower Village to Upper Village. On the eve, I had been to Upper Village to take a look at my new lodging. The room allotted to me was in a roadside house in the western part of the village. The owner of the house was an old man named Chen Yun-nien.

On my return to Lower Village, Shuan-chu, from whom I was moving, asked me how I had liked the new place and offered to accompany me there on the morrow. I thanked him for his offer, but declined it:

"I haven't got many things, and a cadre like you is a busy man. Since the winter school has just opened, you had better go about your own work."

But he insisted, "It's only about five *li*<sup>1</sup> away! I'm

---

<sup>1</sup> One *li* is equal to 0.3107 mile.

going to the fair tomorrow so we can go together. I've practically got everybody to agree to attend the winter school. So it doesn't matter if I go away for a while." Shuan-chu would not listen to my objections.

The next day, he helped me put my things on his donkey and we started out along the river bank.

It was early winter and the day was fine. It was warm in the sun. The shallow river was crusted with a thin layer of ice. Where the ice had melted, the water flowed gently and its babbling reminded one of the tinkling of tiny brass bells. We were not the only ones on the way to the fair, but the others had all gone ahead of us. Shuan-chu and I were walking slowly, chatting away. He was not paying much attention to the donkey. The animal, a she-ass, was quite clever. She was walking slowly in front of us. Sometimes she would stick out her muzzle to gnaw at the withered grass by the roadside, sometimes she would turn her head to stare at us, as if to tell us she was waiting for us. It was only when Shuan-chu shouted "gee-up, gee-up" that the donkey would quicken her step, although before long she would again slow down her pace.

My former host talked almost all the time about his studies. He said he was very unhappy about my moving away from him.

"From now on, it will be really hard for me to study. Where can I find such a good teacher like you?"

"In studies, it's the pupil himself that counts," I replied, "besides, you're on your feet now, you'll be able to make out all right by yourself."

Then he said he would come and visit me, and asked me not to forget him and to teach him just as patiently as I had done in the past. He told me that he still found it difficult to read the *Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Daily*, and reminded me of the request he had made some time back.

"Don't forget to buy me a pocket dictionary, Lao Kang! Please keep that in mind!"

"I won't forget it!"

"Ah, if I could only have a dictionary!" he murmured as if to himself, and, looking at me, patted me on the shoulder.

Shuan-chu and other young villagers had once seen a pocket dictionary in the director's office of the district branch of the National Salvation Youth League and heard the director dwell on the usefulness of such a dictionary. Since then, almost all the villagers taking part in the literacy courses were always talking about this dictionary. But we were then blockaded by the enemy. To help my pupils, I did everything to find such a dictionary, but in vain. I could not find an old copy of the dictionary even in government organizations. Some of my colleagues once had such dictionaries, but they had either lost them in the counter-attack against the Japanese or given them to cadres of peasant origin.

On the way we met a man with a jackass. Our donkey and the jackass evidently felt attracted by each other, and began to jostle each other. Pulled aside by his owner, the jackass craned his neck and began to bray. Shuan-chu also rushed to lead his donkey away, and we continued our journey. For a long while, we both remained silent. Suddenly, Shuan-chu chuckled. Nudging me gently, his eyes gleaming slyly, he asked me,

"Lao Kang, have you a girl friend?"

"I...I.... What makes you ask this?" Realizing what he meant, I felt blood rushing to my face. I hastened to add, "I suppose you have a sweetheart?"

"No, no, not yet!" Shuan-chu turned crimson and avoided my eyes, although he smiled. Then he geehawed playfully at the donkey. It was then that I noticed he was wearing a new cotton-padded jacket and a pair

of lined trousers instead of the worn-out cotton-padded pants. On his legs were trimly wound puttees and around his waist a belt which he had received when fighting at the front with the regular army in the Hundred-Regiment Campaign;<sup>1</sup> his head was tied with a new white towel. There must have been a special reason for him to dress his best. He was twenty-two, one year my senior. And according to rural customs, he had reached the marriageable age. He was probably going to meet his sweetheart. With these thoughts flashing in my mind, I seized him by the shoulder,

"Shuan-chu, you have a sweetheart, and you are keeping me in the dark!..."

"No, no, nothing of the kind!" He blushed.

Cracking his whip, he drove the donkey far ahead of us. "Hurry up, hurry up..." he mumbled. "Look, we've almost arrived! Let's walk faster!"

We were soon in Upper Village. I set about putting my room in order. When I came out to take my things from the back of the donkey, I saw that Shuan-chu was fidgeting. He was about to bring my things in, but was hesitating. Yet when I tried to do this myself, he anticipated me. It looked as though he had been struggling with himself whether or not to enter the house. Stealing a glance at the house, he finally helped me bring the things in.

"Oh, you are here!" exclaimed my new host's old wife. Her feet were bound and she hobbled into my room with a broom in her hand, quickly climbed on to the *kang*<sup>2</sup> and kneeled down to sweep it for me. Her

---

<sup>1</sup> Hundred-Regiment Campaign—a famous counter-offensive against the Japanese troops simultaneously launched by the Communist Eighth Route Army in the five provinces of North China in the autumn of 1940.

<sup>2</sup> *Kang* is the raised platform-like brick bed of North China villages. In winter, it can be heated from outside the house.



boy stood timidly at the door, looking in. Seeing a dark-red enamelled cup tied to my knapsack, he slipped into the room and looked at me. I smiled at the boy and this encouraged him and he began to play with the cup. Shuan-chu and I lit our pipes. Shuan-chu was the only person in the room who looked ill at ease. After a couple of puffs, he put out his pipe. He kept on taking the towel off his head to wipe away the sweat on his face, would suddenly address me only to lapse into silence.... I happened to turn my head and saw two women standing at the door.

The one standing outside the room was the young woman I had seen the previous day when I came to see the room. As she saw me looking at her, she lowered her head. Fingering the corner of her dress, she said in a low voice, "You've moved already?" The woman inside the room looked older. She smiled at me and continued stitching a cloth sole. I turned to look at Shuan-chu. He threw the towel on his shoulder and said, "I...I must be going now...."

"Did you come with him?" the young woman standing outside asked before I had a chance to say anything. She pushed the other woman forward and both were now in the room.

"I...I am going to the fair. As we were going the same way, I helped him bring his things here!" stammered Shuan-chu.

"You know each other?" I asked.

The two women smiled, but said nothing. Shuan-chu once again removed the towel to wipe away his sweat. At that moment, the boy turned round and, pointing at him, said,

"I know he's the director of the National Salvation Youth League in Lower Village. Isn't he, sister?"

"Yes, he is," the older woman replied casually.

The old woman, having swept clean the *kang*, got

down to the floor. Dusting off her dress, she exchanged a few words with me. And then she bombarded Shuan-chu with questions: "From Lower Village? Who is your family? Did you accompany this comrade here? ..."

"He's a high-ranking cadre in Lower Village—director of the National Salvation Youth League and captain of the Anti-Japanese Youth Pioneers," the younger woman at the door answered her mother for Shuan-chu. Then, lifting her face and looking out into the courtyard, she continued, "Mother, do you need anything from the fair?"

"Your father is already at the fair. He will buy everything we need."

"But he's going to the fair, too!"

"Yes, I...I must be going now...." mumbled Shuan-chu and turned abruptly to look at the young woman. As he approached the door, the girl dropped her head and blushed. I saw Shuan-chu looking back again from the courtyard and noticed that the girl was looking stealthily in his direction. The older woman saw this too and pushed her out of the room.

Left alone, I slowly untied my luggage and took out some stationery. There was not even a desk in the room. The boy brought me a low-legged table and put it on the *kang*. A moment later, the old woman came in with a handful of dried dates, offered them to me and began to chat.

I learned that there were five persons in the Chen family. The old man was fifty and his wife was three years older. Their boy was called Chin-so and the two women were their daughters, the younger named Chin-feng. The old woman had gray hair and was rather tall. Her sallownish face was quite round, and there was a rosy tinge on her cheeks. She struck me as a capable housewife—energetic if garrulous. The boy was

about eleven. He was curious about everything in my room—my stationery, my toilet articles, my coat....

That afternoon, I came back from a meeting and sat down on the threshold to read a newspaper. My room was in the eastern wing of the house. The two Chen sisters were sitting on the stone steps leading to the northern rooms, doing some needlework. Chin-feng looked, at most, twenty. She had a slender figure and an oval face. Her dark brown eyes sparkled. As the villagers were rather poor, they could not afford calico and floral prints for their dresses. Like other women in the village, Chin-feng wore a black cotton jacket and trousers, with the latter even patched in some places. But she looked neat and clean. She was mending a pair of her brother's trousers. Her sister looked about thirty. She had a healthy complexion, though there were many wrinkles on her forehead and around the corners of her eyes. Her cotton-padded trousers were tied closely at the ankles. She was still stitching the cloth sole. I was reading the newspaper, but several times I raised my eyes and looked at the women and I saw that Chin-feng was peeking at me. This embarrassed me and I went to my room.

After supper, I busied myself with making rounds of the living quarters assigned to my colleagues, and was issued with sundry articles. It was dark when I got back. I lit the lamp, intending to take a rest. We were then still using kerosene lamps in the villages. The light attracted the attention of the Chens. The old woman, holding Chin-so by the hand, came in. Her elder daughter remained standing at the door, busy with the cloth sole. Chin-feng brought a bowl with two millet cakes stuffed with dates. She put it on the *kang* and asked me to eat. At the same time, she peeped at what I had written. I was feeling rather uneasy when the old man came in, nodding and smiling. He pointed

with his pipe at the cakes and said, "Help yourself, comrade. That's the best we can offer you. This is the only village around here that produces dates, quite a rarity, eh?"

I thanked him and then asked, "Just back from the fair? What have you bought?"

"Yes, I've just returned. I've bought some millet and cloth."

"Yes," put in the old woman, "we haven't made ourselves any new clothes for nearly three years. Now with the cloth we've bought, we're going to make a quilt, some shoes and socks. We'll replace some of our worn clothes and patch others. We're still hard up."

The old man squatted on the edge of the *kang* and urged me to eat the cakes. Striking the flint to light his pipe, he picked up where his wife had stopped and said, "Things are not bad this year. We had a democratic movement last autumn. The old village head has been replaced with a good one, and now the Peasants' Association is working well. My rent has been reduced, by twenty-five per cent, and the arrears have been cancelled. That's why I have been able to get more grain."

"You'll live better if you all work hard together," I said, eating a cake.

Chin-so asked his father for a pencil when Chin-feng took out a red-coloured one from her pocket, waved it and cried, "Chin-so, look!"

There was a scramble for the pencil. The old woman began to scold them. The elder sister leaning against the door shouted at them that they were disturbing me. The old man stood up and said,

"Chin-so, you've got one too, in mother's needle case. Stop scrambling!"

Chin-so ran away to get the pencil and the others followed him one after another. Chin-feng was the last

to leave. She took out a new writing-pad and asked me to write her name on it for her and whether I would teach her to read and write in my spare time. She stayed in my room for a while and then left. I walked to the door and saw that the Chens had all returned to their rooms. I was pleased at the thought that I was again fortunate to have good neighbours. To tell the truth, I had found it hard to part with my former host Shuan-chu!

Here, in Upper Village, my life differed little from my life in Lower Village. In the day, I was busy with my work, and no one came to disturb me. In the evening, Chin-feng and Chin-so often came to learn some Chinese characters from me or to write something. As I also lectured on politics at the village winter school, I gradually became acquainted with all the villagers. Sometimes, Chin-feng would bring other women along with her to learn Chinese characters from me. Once she said,

"Comrade Lao Kang, you should teach us patiently, as patiently as you did . . . as you did . . . when you were teaching Shuan-chu and his friends in Lower Village."

"How did you know that I had taught Shuan-chu and his friends in Lower Village?" I asked, surprised.

"Think I don't know?" she countered.

Two of the women began to whisper something to each other and then burst into laughter. Chin-feng jumped at them and playfully pummelled them. "Go to the devil!" she shouted laughingly, and they went out, jostling each other.

Shuan-chu turned up quite often. Once he came when the old man was away and the old woman and Chin-so had taken the donkey to turn the millstone. Shuan-chu came with the same belt around his waist and the same puttees around his legs. After exchang-

ing a few words with me and learning a few characters, he took out his diary and asked me to read it. It was a new writing-pad. It seemed to me that I had seen it somewhere. I made some corrections and explained them while reading it through. At the same time, I praised him for the progress he had made.

Just then, the two Chen sisters entered the room. Shuan-chu appeared uneasy, and it looked as if he were sitting on thorns.

The older sister, leaning against the red wardrobe, was sewing cloth socks. She was silent as usual and, her head down, was busy with her work. Chin-feng was stitching her father's cotton-padded shoes. She came smiling to the table on the *kang* and looked at Shuan-chu's diary, "Have you written all this, Shuan-chu?" she asked.

"Of course!"

"You've written so much already!"

Shuan-chu did not want to let Chin-feng read his diary and tried to cover it up with his hands, but could not stop me from showing it to Chin-feng. Rubbing his face in embarrassment, he walked away from the *kang*, and began pacing the room. I said to Chin-feng,

"Shuan-chu knows more than you!"

"He's a big cadre!" she retorted.

"No more of it, no more of it!" Shuan-chu snatched away his diary, and turned to Chin-feng, "How are you getting along with your studies? You should let me see your exercise book, too!"

"Don't worry about my studies. I'll catch up with you in no time, I learn three characters from Lao Kang every day."

"Shuan-chu, how do you know she also has an exercise book?"

My question made Shuan-chu blush. He tried to deviate from the topic. After talking aimlessly for a

while, he reminded me of his request—to buy him a dictionary. As he was walking out, Chin-feng ran after him, saying, “Shuan-chu, you may ask the National Salvation Women’s League in the village what they think about it. . . .”

The rest of their conversation was inaudible. I heard them whispering for a long while in the courtyard. Chin-feng’s sister looked at me and then into the courtyard, and, sighing, turned to leave the room.

“Say, why don’t you learn to read?” I asked her. She sighed again,

“I’ve been very much upset all this time. I haven’t got patience. . . . Besides, I’m getting old!”

She smiled and left. Why was this woman upset? Her smile was so melancholy. . . . Did she really feel old? Since my arrival at this house, I had on many an occasion found her quite jolly in the company of her sister and other women of the village. She looked, at most, about twenty-five! She looked like a married woman. Was she, though?

It was 1940. Democratic elections had been held in the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region. The Eighth Route Army had just launched the Hundred-Regiment Campaign against the enemy. On August 13, the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Sub-bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China promulgated a twenty-article administrative programme for this border region. It was my job to explain the programme to the villagers and I began to do it during the political study hour at the winter school. The people of the border region were deeply interested in it. Although Chin-feng attended the explanations of the programme at the winter school, she would come to my room the following evening and would ask me to explain it again. Her father, mother and Chin-so would come together with her. Even her sister, who appeared indifferent

to studies, would occasionally drop in to listen. While I explained, they would raise a number of questions. They never seemed tired although they had to sit up late at night. Chin-so would sometimes doze off in his mother's arms. At other times, he would stand on the *kang*, throw his arms around my neck and bombard me with all sorts of questions: "What does a Communist look like? Have you ever seen a Communist? How is it that the Communist Party is so good? . . ." At such times, Chin-feng, who usually sat opposite me, would glower at her brother and would not look at me until her mother had led Chin-so away. Then her eyes would brighten up. After listening to me for some time, she would bend over the small table on the *kang* and jot down something in her notebook. . . .

The Chen family led a peaceful life. During the slack season in winter, the two sisters occupied themselves with needlework; the old man fed the pigs and raked manure; the boy went out with his father to cut firewood on the slope of the hill. The old woman's work consisted of cooking, watching the donkey turn the millstone and feeding the chickens. Life in the democratic region continued to improve. The land rent paid by the Chen family was further reduced. To tell the truth, they were pretty well off and could afford steamed bread several times a month.

But there was something wrong with the family. They were often quarrelling, although they did not raise much noise. They squabbled in their own rooms, so I was at a loss to figure out what was the matter. I asked every one of them about it, but no one would tell me anything, although Chin-so once remarked as if casually,

"It's all about my elder sister!"

"What about her?" I demanded.

"I don't know!"



Once, after a long squabble, the old man ran out into the courtyard, mad like a bull. Rushing out, I saw him facing the rooms where the Chens lived, stamping his feet and sputtering away,

"I . . . I'll have nothing to do with that! You . . . you decide it yourselves, I refuse to bother about it!"

Then he walked out, fuming. I asked him what it was all about, but he would not answer me. What had happened in the northern rooms? Who was it weeping convulsively there? I asked Chin-so, and he told me it was his elder sister. I decided it would be unfit to ask any more questions and retired to my own room, still wondering.

After a while, however, calm reigned again; life became normal. And I stopped worrying about it.

One day at noon, I went to the winter school to lecture on the administrative programme to women. In the evening, the Chens came to my room rather early. I was occupied with some work, so I suggested I would do the explaining the next day. Chin-feng's sister, unlike her usual self, smiled and insisted,

"Better today. After you've finished. We'll. . ."

"Please, Lao Kang!" urged Chin-feng. I was forced to give in. I saw the old man was not there and asked whether we should wait for him. They said, "Let's go ahead without him!" So I started.

That day I spoke about the fourteenth article of the programme. I explained one article every three or five days and thus many days had already passed since I began the explanations. It was early January, and the small village was hit by an extremely cold spell. It had snowed in the morning and the sky had been overcast the whole day. I shivered with cold. I removed the small table and told them to sit on the *kang* around a charcoal brazier. Chin-feng's sister put away her