
Camel Xiangzi

LAO SHE

Translated by Shi Xiaoqing

Published in Association with Foreign Languages Press Beijing

Indiana University Press Bloomington

Copyright © 1981 by Indiana University Press and Foreign Languages Press.
Other translations have used the title *Rickshaw Boy*.

All rights reserved

No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. The Association of American University Presses' Resolution on Permissions constitutes the only exception to this prohibition.

Manufactured in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Lao, She, 1898-1966.

Camel Xiangzi.

Translation of: Lo t 'o Hsiang-tzu.

I. Shi, Xiaoqing. II. Title.

PL2804.C5L613 1981 895.1'35 81-47584

ISBN 0-253-31296-5 AACR2

ISBN 0-253-20275-2 (pbk.)

1 2 3 4 5 85 84 83 82 81

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LAO She (1899-1966) is the pen-name of the writer Shu Sheyu, who was born in Beijing. In 1924 he went to England, where he was a lecturer in Chinese at the School of Oriental Studies, London University. It was in London that he wrote his first three novels. After his return to China in 1930 he taught at Qilu (Cheeloo) University in Jinan and Shandong University in Qingdao. He continued to write and during the war against Japan (1937-45), when he was in Chongqing, he took an active part in organizing the National Writers' and Artists' Resistance Association. Later he left China for the United States, where he gave lectures and continued to write until his return in 1949. He threw himself into the work of New China as a member of the Cultural and Educational Committee in the Government Administration Council, a deputy to the National People's Congress, a member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Vice-Chairman of the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, Vice-Chairman of the Union of Chinese Writers and Chairman of the Beijing Federation of Writers and Artists.

Before Liberation he wrote many works of literature, including his best novel *Camel Xiangzi* (or *Rickshaw Boy*) to expose and denounce the old society. After the founding of New China he wrote the plays *Dragon Beard Ditch*, *Spring Flowers and Autumn Fruit*, *Fang Zhenzhu*, *Teahouse* and many other works which are loved by the people. He enjoys great prestige in China and was named a "People's Artist" and a "Great Master of Language".

L AO She came from a very poor family. His father, a member of the Imperial Manchu guards, was killed by imperialist troops of the Eight Allied Armies in 1900 when Lao She was just a year old. From then on, his mother and elder sister made a living washing and mending soldiers' clothes. Later, his mother became a charwoman in a primary school. The whole family was illiterate. Lao She studied in schools which did not charge for tuition, finally graduating from normal school, and so was the only one in his family who could read and write. While he was studying, he would often come home at lunchtime to find the cooking-pot empty. He would ask, "Is there anything to eat?" and when told there was not would go pluckily back to school to listen to the afternoon lessons on an empty stomach.

Lao She's neighbours were all poor people. He understood them and knew all about them. They worked at different jobs: some pulled rickshaws, others were coolies, scrap-collectors, artists, servants or peddlers. . . . Lao She himself was never a rickshaw puller, but he had friends who were and whom he had grown up with. In Chapter Sixteen of *Camel Xiangzi*, he describes at great length the tenement courtyard where Xiangzi and Tigress lived. He describes how the old people lay hungry on the cold brick-beds, how the women waited till old and young had gone to bed before washing, making and mending clothes for other people by the light of a small kerosene lamp, how the young girls had no trousers and stayed indoors, their natural prison, wrapped in torn pieces of cloth, helping their mothers. All these people were modelled on ones Lao She had known in his childhood. In a short essay, he men-

tioned how he never felt happy at the prospect of the New Year festivities because they reminded him of the many times in his childhood when, having nothing to eat, he had gone early to bed to the sound of other people's fire-crackers.

Lao She never went to university. His knowledge was acquired by diligent study after graduating from normal school. Very early he took on the heavy task of providing for the entire family. One of his close friends remembers seeing him thinly clad in the dead of winter, working hard in a draughty room. Lao She told him with a bitter smile that he had pawned his fur gown to get some extra money for his old mother. Undoubtedly, these experiences were the rich, substantial material upon which he drew for his *Camel Xiangzi*. But Lao She was not satisfied with this alone. While writing the book, he spent a great deal of time collecting other material, and also asked many friends to jot down regularly or from time to time what they knew of the customs and ways of Beijing. He collected all this carefully, regardless of whether it was useful or not.

In 1936, Lao She's last paragraph of *Camel Xiangzi* read like this, "Xiangzi, honorable, enterprising, dreamy, selfish, unconfiding, strong, great Xiangzi had been a mourner at countless funerals, without knowing where or when he would end up burying himself, degenerate, self-centred, unfortunate victim that he was of that individualistic sick society." At that time, Lao She made Xiangzi's life end in tragedy. It was just as the lovable old man, Little Horse's grandfather said, "To try to make a go of it all by oneself is the hardest thing on earth. When a single grasshopper is caught and tied up by a child, it can do nothing. But wait until they swarm, then no one can stop them!" The only way out would have been for hundreds and thousands of Xiangzis to unite and struggle together, and this is precisely the social lesson of Xiangzi's tragedy.

After Liberation, Lao She very much wished to write a sequel to *Camel Xiangzi*. I remember he used to invite his old friends, the rickshaw men, the Xiangzis, to a meal with him, for he maintained close ties with his old neighbours. All these people were now liberated and very happy, and full of wonder

at the great changes in their life. At their request, Lao She readily agreed to write a sequel which would describe Xiangzi's rebirth, his revolt, his happiness. This new *Camel Xiangzi* would have a happy ending. Unfortunately, due to Lin Biao and the Gang of Four, Lao She died too early and this wish can never be fulfilled. But *Camel Xiangzi* lives on to spur everyone, today just as yesterday, to strive for a brighter future. Surely this is the happiest ending of all!

Hu Jieqing (Lao She's widow)

February 2nd, 1979

THIS story is about Xiangzi, not about Camel, because "Camel" was only his nickname. So let us start with Xiangzi, just mentioning in passing how he became linked with camels.

The rickshaw pullers of Beiping fall into many different categories. There are strong, fleet-footed young men who rent smart rickshaws and work round the clock, starting work or knocking off whenever they please. They pull their rickshaws to a rickshaw-stand or the gate of some big house and wait for fares who want a fast runner. With luck, a single trip can net one or two silver dollars; but it may happen to that they spend the whole day idle, not even recouping their rickshaw rent. Still, they take this all in their stride. These fellows generally have two ambitions. One is to get a job on a monthly basis, the other is to buy their own rickshaw. For with their own vehicle, it doesn't matter whether they have a monthly job or take odd fares, the rickshaw is their own property anyway.

Then there is a category of slightly older men, and others who for health reasons run not quite as fast, or who for family reasons cannot afford to let a day go by without earning anything. Most of them pull fairly new rickshaws, and because both puller and rickshaw are quite smart-looking they can still demand a respectable price. Some of them work round the clock, some only half days. Of these latter, the more energetic take the night-shift* all the year round. At night more care and skill are needed, so naturally the fee is higher.

The pullers over forty and under twenty find it hard to join either of these categories. Their rickshaws are ramshackle and

* The night-shift starts at four in the afternoon and continues until daybreak.

they dare not take on the night-shift. So they have to make a very early start in the hope that, by three or four in the afternoon, they will have earned enough for the rickshaw rent as well as their daily needs. Their broken-down vehicles and lack of speed mean they must make longer trips for lower payment. They are the ones who haul merchandise to the melon, fruit or vegetable markets; for this they earn less, but at least they can take their time.

The under twenties — some of whom have been plying this trade since they were eleven or twelve — rarely become crack pullers later on, because as boys they over-taxed their strength. They may pull all their lives and never make the grade, not even in this trade. As for the over-forties, some have strained their muscles by pulling for eight or ten years and are content now to take second place, in the growing awareness that sooner or later they will topple over and die in the road. Their pulling posture, their adroit bargaining, their shrewd use of short-cuts or circuitous routes are enough to make them relive past glories and turn up their noses at the younger generation. But these shades of past glories can in no way diminish their dismal prospects, and so they often sigh as they mop their sweat.

However, compared to another group of over-forties, they seem not to have reached rock-bottom yet. This group is composed of men who had never associated themselves with rickshaws but were forced to take up the trade, having reached the end of their tether. When policemen, school janitors and cleaners are dismissed and bankrupt peddlers or unemployed artisans have nothing more to sell or pawn, they grit their teeth and with tears in their eyes take this last desperate step, knowing it to be a dead end. These men have already sold the best years of their lives, and now the maize muffins on which they subsist are transformed into blood and sweat which drip on to the road. Weak, inexperienced and friendless, they are eyed askance by even their fellow pullers. Their rickshaws are the most wretched of all and their tyres are always having punctures. Even as they run they beg their fares to excuse them and consider a mere fifteen coppers a very good fee indeed.

There is yet another category of pullers distinguished by their

special beats and know-how. Those living in the western suburbs around Xiyuan and Haidian naturally prefer to take fares to the Western Hills or the universities of Yanjing and Qinghua; those from the northern suburbs outside Andingmen Gate ply the Qingho and Beiyuan route, while those in the south outside Yongdingmen Gate will go as far as Nanyuan. . . . These long-distance runners will only make trips which pay and scoff at the paltry three or five coppers which is all that one gets for short distances. But they still lose their wind sooner than the rickshawmen of Dongjiaominxiang, the "Legation Quarter".

These are real long-distance runners who cater solely for the foreign trade and pride themselves on being able to run non-stop from the diplomatic quarter all the way out to the Jade Fountain, the Summer Palace or the Western Hills. And, stamina apart, these men have a special skill which makes it impossible for rivals to snatch away their clientele: they all speak foreign languages. They can understand when English and French soldiers ask for the Summer Palace, the Yongho Lamasery or the "Eight Alleys" red-light district, and they will not teach their foreign lingo to others. Their way of running is special too. Going at a fair speed, head lowered, looking neither to right nor left, they hug the side of the road, seemingly indifferent to the world yet supremely self-assured. Because they serve foreigners, they do not have to wear the numbered jacket compulsory for other rickshaw pullers. Instead they all wear long-sleeved white shirts, baggy black or white trousers bound at the ankles with tapes and black cloth-soled shoes with a rib sewn up the middle. They are clean, smart and alert. Other rickshaw men, seeing this outfit, will not compete with them for customers or race with them, and in fact they seem to belong to a completely different trade.

After this brief analysis, let us come back to Xiangzi's status so as to place him as accurately — we hope — as a specific screw in a machine. Before Xiangzi became linked with the nickname "Camel", he was a relatively independent rickshaw puller; in other words, he was young and strong and owned his own rickshaw. Belonging to the category of those who

owned their vehicles, he was master of his own fate, a high-class puller.

But this was certainly not easy to come by. It had taken him at least three or four years and untold tens of thousands of drops of sweat to acquire that rickshaw of his. He had earned it by gritting his teeth in the wind and rain, by skimping his food and drink. That rickshaw represented the fruit and reward of all his struggles and hardships, like the single medal of a warrior who has fought a hundred battles. In the days when he rented a rickshaw, he was like a top sent spinning north, south, east and west from dawn to dusk, at the beck and call of others. But this spinning never made him so dizzy that he lost sight of his objective.

In his mind's eye he could picture that distant rickshaw which was going to bring him freedom and independence, becoming a part of him like his hands and feet. With his own rickshaw he would no longer be bullied by the rickshaw owners, would no longer have to humour anyone else. With his strength and his own vehicle, earning his living would be mere child's play.

Xiangzi was not afraid of hardships, nor did he have the excusable but deplorable bad habits of most other pullers. He was clever and hard-working enough to make his dream come true. If his situation had been a little better, or if he had had a bit more education he would certainly not have fallen among the "Tyre Brigade". And no matter what his trade, he would have made the most of every opportunity. Unluckily, he had no choice but to be a rickshaw puller. Very well then, even in this job he would prove his ability and intelligence. Had he been a spirit in hell, he would probably have made the best of his surroundings.

Xiangzi was country born and bred. At eighteen, having lost his parents and their few *mu* of poor land, he fled to the city. He brought with him his country boy's sturdiness and simplicity, and tried his hand at most jobs that called only for brawn. However, he soon realised that pulling a rickshaw was an easier way to earn money. The pay for other hard manual jobs was limited whereas pulling a rickshaw offered more

variety and opportunities, as there was no telling when and where one might earn more than one had expected. Of course he also knew that this would not be entirely a matter of chance, that the rickshaw had to be smart and the puller brisk-looking to attract discriminating customers.

But after consideration, Xiangzi felt that he had the requisite qualities, for he was young and strong. Though his lack of experience meant that he could not begin with a new rickshaw, this was not an insurmountable difficulty; and with his fine physique he was sure that after ten days or two weeks he would be running quite presentably. Then he would rent a brand-new rickshaw, and might very soon land himself a monthly job; after which by skimping and saving for a few years he was bound to be able to buy himself a really beautiful rickshaw. Gazing at his young muscles, he felt sure it was just a matter of time. This goal he had set himself could definitely be reached — it was no pipe-dream.

Though hardly twenty, he was tall and robust. Time had not yet moulded his body into any set form but he already looked like a full-grown man — a man with an ingenuous face and a hint of mischief about him. Watching those high-class pullers, he planned how to tighten his belt to show off his sturdy chest and straight back to better advantage. He craned his neck to look at his shoulders: how impressively broad they were! His slender waist, baggy white trousers and ankles bound with thin black bands would set off his “outsize” feet. Yes, he was surely going to be the most outstanding rickshaw puller in town. In his simplicity, he chuckled to himself.

Xiangzi was not handsome. What made him engaging was the expression on his face. He had a small head, round eyes, a fleshy nose, and thick, short eyebrows. His scalp was always shaved clean. There was no spare flesh on his cheeks, yet his neck was virtually as thick as his head. In those days he had a ruddy complexion, and running from his cheekbone to his right ear was a large, bright, shiny scar — legacy of a donkey bite received while napping under a tree in his childhood. He did not pay much attention to his appearance, liking his face just as he liked his body because both were strong and sturdy;

in fact, to him, his face was another limb and its strength was all that mattered. Even after coming to the city, he could still do long hand-stands and, holding this position, he felt like a tree upright from top to toe.

Xiangzi was indeed rather like a tree, sturdy, silent yet full of life. He was canny and had his own plans, but did not like to disclose them. Among rickshaw pullers, personal wrongs and difficulties are food for common talk, and whether at rickshaw-stands, in little teahouses or in the large crowded courtyards, everyone reports, describes or bawls out his troubles. These then pass from mouth to mouth like folksongs, becoming public property. Xiangzi, being a country boy, was not as glib as city-dwellers. If volubility is a natural gift, then he was clearly not endowed with it, so he did not try to imitate the townsfolk's spiteful talk. He minded his own business and held his tongue, which gave him more time to think, as if his eyes were always directed inwards. His mind made up, he embarked upon the course he had mapped out; and if he made no headway, he would lapse into silence for a couple of days, gritting his teeth as if gnawing at his own heart.

Once he had decided to be a rickshaw puller he went straight into action. First he rented an old, broken-down rickshaw in order to get some practice. The first day he made practically nothing: the second, business was quite good. But then he was flat out on his back for two days because his ankles had swollen up so badly. He put up with the pain because he knew that this was inevitable, and unless he passed this test he would never be able to really let himself go.

His feet better, he could run freely and he gloated that now he had nothing else to fear. For he knew the city well, and even if he happened to take the long way round it did not matter, as he had strength and to spare. When it came to learning how to pull that was not too difficult either, with all his previous experience of pushing, pulling and carrying loads. Besides, he figured that by taking care and not competing for fares he could keep out of trouble.

When it came to bargaining over the price of a fare, he was too slow of speech and too easily flustered to compete with

his slick colleagues. So he rarely went to the rickshaw-stands but waited around where there were no other rickshaws. In some quiet spot he could take his time over fixing the price, and sometimes he would just say, "Get on, and pay what you please!" His honest, simple, likeable face made it hard not to trust him, for it seemed impossible that such a country bumpkin could ever cheat anyone. People might suspect that he was a newcomer from the countryside who did not know the way and so had no idea of rates. But if asked "Do you know that address?" he would grin knowingly, as if playing the buffoon, leaving his fare quite perplexed.

After two or three weeks, he had really run his legs into condition and he knew his running was a pleasure to watch. The style of running is what indicates a rickshaw man's skill and status. Those who run with their toes turned out, slapping their feet down like palm-leaf fans, are sure to be green-horns fresh from the countryside. Those who lower their heads and shuffle along, in what only looks like a run are men over fifty. Other old hands drained of strength have a different method: they strain forward, raise their legs high and thrust up their heads at each step, as if pulling with might and main; but in fact they are no faster than the others, and put on this act to retain their self-respect.

Xiangzi naturally did not adopt any of these styles. With his long stride, steady back and silent, springy step, his shafts did not rock about and his passenger was borne along smoothly and safely. No matter how fast he was running he could stop in a trice just by lightly scraping his large feet on the ground for a step or two. Back slightly bent, hands loosely holding the shafts, he was lithe, smooth and precise, and though he never looked hurried he ran fast and sure-footedly. All these were rare qualities, even among rickshawmen hired on a monthly basis.

He switched to a new rickshaw. The same day, after inquiry, he found out that a vehicle such as his — with soft springs, fine brass work, tarpaulin rain-hood and curtain in front, two lamps and long-throated brass horn — was worth something over one hundred silver dollars. If the paint and brass work

were not in such good condition then one hundred would be enough to buy his own rickshaw. If every day he could put aside ten cents, one hundred dollars would take one thousand days. One thousand days! Why, he could hardly reckon how long that would be. But he was determined to buy his own rickshaw, if it took one thousand, even ten thousand days.

The first step, he decided, was to find a job on a monthly basis. If he could land himself a convivial employer with many friends, it would mean about ten banquets a month and an extra two or three dollars for him in tips. Plus the one dollar odd he could save from his monthly pay that would come to three to five dollars a month, and fifty to sixty dollars a year! This would bring him much, much closer to his goal. And since he did not smoke or drink or gamble and had no family, all he needed was to grit his teeth and everything was sure to work out. He swore to himself that in a year and a half, he, Xiangzi, was going to have his own rickshaw. And it had to be a brand-new one, not an old one overhauled.

He really did manage to get a monthly job. But reality does not completely accord with hopes, and though he gritted his teeth for a year and a half his wish was still unfulfilled. Though he landed monthly jobs and took great pains in his work, there are two sides to everything in this world and his cautiousness did not prevent his employers from sacking him. Sometimes after two or three months, sometimes after only a week or ten days, he had to look around for a new job. Naturally while doing so he had to return to pulling fares, which was like riding one horse while looking for another, for he couldn't afford to remain idle.

This was when things would go wrong. He drove himself hard, not just to earn his keep but to go on saving for his rickshaw too. However, forcing oneself is always risky and he found it difficult to concentrate when he ran. His mind kept wandering and the more he thought, the more panicky and upset he became. At this rate, when would he ever get his own rickshaw? Why were things like this? Wasn't he trying hard enough? While so preoccupied, he forgot his usual cautiousness. His tyres picked up bits of scrap metal and

punctured, and there was nothing for it but to knock off for the day. Worse still, he sometimes ran into people and once he even lost a hub cap as he was squeezing hurriedly over a crossing. None of this would have happened if he had a monthly job, but now disappointment made him clumsy and awkward. Of course, he had to pay for the damages, increasing his desperation; so that, to avoid even greater calamities, he sometimes slept for a whole day at a stretch. Then, when he woke up he would hate himself for wasting so much time.

During such periods, too, the more worried he was the more he stunted himself, under the illusion that he was made of iron. But he discovered that he too could fall ill, yet begrudged spending money on medicine. As a result, he grew worse and not only had to buy medicine but also rest for several days in a row. These setbacks made him grit his teeth and try harder, but the money didn't come in any faster.

He finally managed to scrape together one hundred silver dollars. It had taken him three whole years.

He couldn't wait any longer. Originally he had set his heart on buying the newest, best equipped rickshaw, but now he would have to make do with one within the hundred dollar range. No, he definitely could not wait any more, for suppose something happened to make him lose a few dollars! By chance he heard of a custom-built rickshaw, practically like the one he had in mind, which its would-be purchaser had been unable to pay for. As he had forfeited his deposit on it, the rickshaw shop was willing to let it go for less than its original cost — more than a hundred.

Xiangzi, red in the face, his hands shaking, clapped down ninety-six dollars and said, "I want this rickshaw!"

The shop-owner, hoping to raise the price to a round figure, pulled the rickshaw in and out of the shed, folded and unfolded the hood and sounded the horn, singing the vehicle's praises all the time. Finally he kicked the steel spokes.

"Listen to that!" he said. "Clear as a bell! You can pull it till it falls to pieces, but if one of those spokes buckles, you come back and throw it in my face! Not a cent less than a hundred and it's yours!"

Xiangzi counted his money again. "I want this rickshaw. Ninety-six!"

The shop-owner knew he was up against someone with a one-track mind. He glanced from the money to Xiangzi and finally sighed, "All right, for friendship's sake, I'll let you have it. It's guaranteed for six months and, short of smashing the whole works, I'll do all the repairs free of charge. Here, take the guarantee!"

Xiangzi's hands were shaking even more violently as he tucked the guarantee away and pulled his rickshaw out, feeling ready to burst into tears. He made for a quiet out-of-the-way place and stopped to scrutinize this precious possession. He saw his own reflection in the shiny paint work, and the more he gazed at the rickshaw the more he loved it. Even those parts that hadn't quite come up to his expectations could be overlooked now that the vehicle was his very own. After gazing his fill, he sat down on the new carpeted foot-rest, his eyes fixed on the shiny brass horn attached to the shaft. Suddenly he remembered that he was now twenty-two. As his parents had died when he was very young, he had forgotten the actual date of his birthday and since coming to town he had never celebrated it. Well, today he had bought his own rickshaw, why not make it his birthday too? That would make it easier to remember; and anyway, since the rickshaw was the fruit of his sweat and blood why shouldn't they share the same birthday?

How to celebrate this "double birthday"? Xiangzi decided that his first fare must be a well-dressed gentleman, on no account a woman, and the destination should be Qianmen Gate or the Dongan Market. There he would have a meal at the best food-stall, hot sesame cakes with grilled mutton; then if he could pick up another good fare or two, so much the better; if not, he would knock off for the day. After all, this was his birthday!

Now that he had his own rickshaw, things began looking up for him. Whether hiring himself out on a monthly basis or taking odd fares, he need no longer worry about the rental, all he earned was his own. Contentment made him even more amiable, and his business thrived. After six months he was full

of confidence that, at this rate, in another two years at most he would be able to buy another rickshaw, and then another. Why, he would be able to start his own rickshaw business!

But most hopes come to nothing, and Xiangzi's were no exception.

THIS new happiness brought greater courage and, with his own rickshaw, Xiangzi ran even faster. Of course he was extra careful with his own property, but looking at himself and at it he felt it would be a come-down not to do his very best.

Since coming to the city, he had grown another inch. And instinct told him that he would keep on growing, for though more robust than before and already sprouting a small moustache he wanted to grow still taller. Every time he had to duck through a low street-gate or door, his heart would swell with silent satisfaction at the knowledge that he was still growing. It tickled him to feel already an adult and yet still a child.

With his brawn and his beautiful rickshaw — springs so flexible that the shafts seemed to vibrate; bright chassis, clean, white cushion and loud horn — he owed it to them both to run really fast. This was not out of vanity but a sense of duty. For after six months this lovable rickshaw of his seemed alive to what he was doing: every time he swerved, bent a leg or straightened his back, its response was immediate and most satisfactory. They were never at cross-purposes in the least. Whenever they came to a flat open stretch, Xiangzi would run with only one hand steadying the shaft, the soft swish of rubber tyres behind spurring him on to run swiftly and steadily. On reaching their destination, his clothes would be wringing wet, as if just fished out of water, and he would feel tired but happy and proud, as if he had ridden a pedigree horse for many tens of *li*.

Daring is not the same as foolhardiness, and Xiangzi though daring was never foolhardy. If dawdling would be unfair to his passenger, speeding so that he damaged his rickshaw would

be unfair to himself. This rickshaw was his life, and he knew how to take good care of it. Combined daring and caution increased his confidence and convinced him that they were both indestructible.

And so, he not only ran with might and main but did not mind what hours he kept. To him, pulling a rickshaw for a living was the most manly thing in the world and, if he wanted to work, no one was going to stop him. He paid scant attention to the rumours flying about town — the appearance of soldiers at Xiyuan, renewed fighting at Changxindian, forced conscription again outside Xizhimen Gate, Qihuamen Gate already closed for half a day — none of this bothered him. Of course, when shopkeepers boarded up their shops and armed police and security forces filled the streets, he did not go looking for trouble and would hurriedly stop work like everyone else. But he didn't believe the rumours. He knew how to be careful, especially as the rickshaw was his own; however, coming from the country, he was not as alert to danger as city-folk. Besides, he had confidence in his own strength, and believed that even if landed in a tight corner he would be able to extricate himself. After all, a tall, broad-shouldered fellow like himself was not that easily bullied.

Nearly every year, rumours and news of war sprang up with the spring wheat. For Northerners, ears of wheat and bayonets could be said to symbolize their hopes and fears.

Xiangzi's rickshaw was just six months old when the wheat needed a fall of spring rain. Though rain does not always fall when it is most hoped for, war always comes, whether one wants it or not. But whether the news this time was false or true, Xiangzi seemed to have forgotten that he had once tilled the fields and did not much care if war devastated the crops or if there were no spring rain. His sole concern was his rickshaw. This could provide griddle cakes and all sorts of food; it was a horn of plenty which followed him meekly around. Xiangzi knew that lack of rain and news of war boosted the price of grain; but like all city people he could merely complain, he had no remedy. If grain was dear, what could anyone do about it? This attitude of his made him think only of his own livelihood.

He pushed all thought of calamities out of his mind.

City people may be powerless in other ways but they know how to spread rumours — some total fabrications, others with only a grain of truth in them — to prove that they are neither fools nor idlers. Like tiddlers when they have nothing else to do, they swim to the surface of the water and complacently blow completely useless bubbles. Their most interesting rumours are the ones about war. Others are often out-and-out fabrications, as in the case of tales of ghosts or fox-spirits which you can be sure will never materialize. But precisely because there is no reliable war news, war rumours prove most prophetic. On minor details they are often far out, but as to whether or not there will be fighting they are accurate eight or nine times out of ten. "There's going to be a show-down!" Once these words have been spoken fighting is sure to break out sooner or later. As for which armies will contend and how they will fight, each one has his own version.

Xiangzi was not unaware of this. But while those who sell their brawn — rickshaw pullers included — never welcome war, they need not be ruined by it either. The most panic-stricken are the rich. As soon as they get wind that the situation is deteriorating, they start thinking of flight. Money paves their way and hastens their departure. But they cannot run away themselves, being too weighted down by their wealth, so they must hire many other people's legs. There are cases to be carried, old and young to be carted off. It is then that those who sell their brawn find that it will fetch a good price.

"Qianmen Gate, the East Station!"

"Where?"

"The East — Station!"

"Right, just give me a dollar forty cents. No need to haggle, with troops on the rampage!"

It was in such circumstances that Xiangzi took his rickshaw outside the city gates. Rumours had been flying about for over ten days and prices had risen, but for the time being war still seemed remote from Beiping. Xiangzi plied his trade as usual, not considering the rumours an excuse for taking time off. One day, he went to the western city and noticed something unusual.

At the western end of Huguo Monastery Road and at Xinjiekou, there were no rickshaws offering to run to Xiyuan or Qinghua University. He strolled about the district a while and heard that no vehicle dared leave the city, for whether carts or rickshaws all were being seized just outside Xizhimen Gate. He decided to drink a bowl of tea then head south. The lack of activity around the rickshaw stand spelled real danger, and though no coward he saw no reason to put his head in a noose. Just at that moment, two rickshaws heading north appeared. The passengers looked like two students and the pullers were shouting as they ran, "Anyone going to Qinghua, to Qinghua?"

The few pullers at the rickshaw stand did not reply. Some of them looked on with indifferent grins, others sat there with small pipes between their lips and did not even bother to raise their heads.

"Are you all deaf? To Qinghua!" the two pullers kept on calling.

"I'd go for two dollars!" A short, shaven-headed youngster said jokingly into the silence.

"Come on then, find another one!" The two rickshaws stopped.

The young fellow was nonplussed. Still no one moved. Xiangzi could see that leaving the city was really dangerous; otherwise why did no one snap up the chance to make two dollars just by going to Qinghua, a trip which normally cost only twenty to thirty cents? He did not want to go either. But the shaven-headed youngster had apparently decided that if someone else went with him he was willing to take the risk. He eyed Xiangzi and said, "How about it, tall one?"

"Tall one." Xiangzi was tickled, this was praise. He considered the proposition. After receiving that kind of compliment he should back up this daring, shaven-headed shorty. And besides, two dollars was quite a sum, not to be picked up every day. As for danger, was he sure to run into it? Just two days ago he had heard that the gardens of the Temple of Heaven were crammed with soldiers, but he hadn't seen hide or hair of one himself. Reasoning this way, he pulled his rickshaw forward.

When they reached Xizhimen Gate, there was hardly any traffic on the road. Xiangzi's heart misgave him. Even the other puller was uneasy, but he said with a grin, "Let's go, buddy! If your luck is out it's out, this is it!" Xiangzi knew they were in for trouble, but after all these years knocking about in town he couldn't back out now like an old woman.

Beyond the city gate there was not a single cart in sight. Xiangzi lowered his head, not daring to look right or left, his heart thumping against his ribs. When they reached Gaoliang Bridge, he glanced about but to his relief there was not a soldier in sight. He thought to himself: After all, two dollars is two dollars and it takes guts to find a windfall like this. The road was alarmingly quiet and, though normally never one for speech, he suddenly felt like saying something to his companion.

"How about taking a short cut on the dirt track? The road..."

"Of course." The other understood at once. "That way is safer."

But before they had branched off the main road, both pullers, their rickshaws and passengers all fell into the hands of about a dozen soldiers.

Although it was already the time of year for pilgrims to offer incense at the temple on Fantasy Peak, a single thin shirt was not enough to keep out the night chill. Xiangzi was unencumbered, being clad only in a grey army tunic and blue cloth trousers reeking of sweat — they had been like this before he put them on. He thought of his white cotton shirt and indigo blue lined suit. How smart and clean they had been! Of course in this world there are many things smarter than indigo blue cloth, but Xiangzi knew how difficult it had been for him to reach even that level of cleanliness and spruceness. Now the rancid smell of his clothes made his previous struggles and successes seem ten times more noble. The more he recalled the past, the more he hated those soldiers. Everything had been snatched from him, his clothes, shoes and hat, his rickshaw, even his cloth girdle, leaving him nothing but a body bruised black and blue and feet covered with blisters. How-

ever, his clothes were nothing, his bruises would heal, but his rickshaw, that precious rickshaw for which he had sweated years of blood and tears, had vanished! After pulling it to the barracks it had clean disappeared. All his other trials he could dismiss and forget, but how could he ever forget that rickshaw?

He wasn't afraid of hardships, but it would take him several years at least to buy another rickshaw. All his previous efforts had gone down the drain, he would have to start from scratch all over again. At the thought, Xiangzi wept. He hated those soldiers, hated the whole world. What right had they to bully and humiliate people like this? What right?

"What right?" he shouted.

The sound of his own voice — though it brought some relief — reminded him abruptly of his danger. Everything else could wait for the time being, the important thing was to flee for his life.

But where was he? He couldn't say for sure. These last days he had followed the retreating soldiers, bathed in sweat from head to foot. When on the move, he had to carry, push or pull their equipment; when they halted, he had to fetch water, light the cooking fires and feed the pack animals. From morning till night, he forced the last vestiges of his strength into his hands and feet, his mind an utter blank. When he lay down finally, he went out like a light the moment his head touched the ground, and he felt it wouldn't be such a bad thing if he never woke again.

He had a vague recollection of the troops retreating first towards Fantasy Peak; later, when they reached the north side of the mountain, his whole attention had been focussed on climbing, for he was obsessed by fear of falling to the bottom of the valley and having his bones picked clean by birds of prey. They had wound their way through the mountains for several days, till the terrain became less hilly, and one evening as the sun was setting behind them he made out a distant plain. When the bugle for supper sounded, several soldiers returned with rifles on their shoulders and leading some camels.

Camels! Xiangzi's heart missed a beat and suddenly his mind started working again, just as when a familiar landmark reorientates a man who has lost his way. Camels cannot climb, which meant that they had reached the plains. As far as he knew, camels were raised in villages west of Beiping. Could it be that all these detours had brought them to Moshi Pass? What strategy this was he did not know, if these soldiers able only to loot and retreat had any strategy at all. But of one thing he was certain, and that was that if they had really reached Moshi Pass, the troops had discovered there was no way out through the mountains and were heading for the plains to get away. Moshi Pass was a strategic link between the Western Hills to the northeast and Changxindian or Fengtai to the south, while due west lay another way out. As he considered the troops' possible movements he plotted his own route too, for now was the time to make his get-away. Should the soldiers retreat to the mountains once more, he might starve even if he managed to escape from them. So now was his chance if he was going to run for it. Once out of their clutches, he believed he could dash straight back to Haidian! For he knew all the places in between.

Why, he had only to close his eyes to see a map before him: here was Moshi Pass, — Merciful Heavens, make it Moshi Pass! If he headed northeast past Gold Peak Mountain and Prince Li's Grave he would get to Badachu; then turning due east at Sipingtai would take him to Apricot Pass and Nanxinzhuang. In order to have more cover, he had better hug the hills and head north from Beixinzhuang, through Weijiazhuang, north again to Nanhetan, still north again to Red Hilltop and Prince Jie's Palace and finally to Jingyi Gardens. Once there, he could find his way blindfolded back to Haidian. His heart was pounding in his chest. These last days, it had seemed as if all his blood had been drained into his four limbs, but now it was flowing back into his chest so that his heart was burning hot while his arms and legs were icy cold. Feverish hope made him tremble from head to foot.

At midnight, he was still wide-awake. Hope buoyed up his spirits, but fear made him nervous. He wanted to sleep but

- [**download online Vegetarian Cooking: Enjoying fresh ingredients \(Delicious recipes for the summer\) pdf, azw \(kindle\), epub**](#)
- [download online How to Write a Hit Song: The Complete Guide to Writing and Marketing Chart-Topping Lyrics & Music \(4th Edition\) pdf, azw \(kindle\), epub, doc, mobi](#)
- [read online I've Got Your Number](#)
- [**Gin & Tonic: The Complete Guide for the Perfect Mix pdf, azw \(kindle\)**](#)

- <http://thermco.pl/library/Supreme-Court-Justices-in-the-Post-Bork-Era--Confirmation-Politics-and-Judicial-Performance.pdf>
- <http://econtact.webschaefer.com/?books/How-to-Write-a-Hit-Song--The-Complete-Guide-to-Writing-and-Marketing-Chart-Topping-Lyrics---Music--4th-Edition->
- <http://rodrigocaporal.com/library/More-Word-Smart.pdf>
- <http://test.markblaustein.com/library/Music-In-A-Foreign-Language.pdf>