

## Chapter 67

Beneath a Fallen Nest, How Can There Be Unbroken Eggs?  
Norbu Goes in Search of a Classmate

By the time they reached the Square Norbu was gasping, his naked upper body shining with sweat, the sweat all mingled with Baoyu's blood, with which he and the other two were covered. Peanut Wang was near collapse. The students at the encampment around the Goddess of Liberty gaped horror-struck at the staggering, blood-drenched little party.

"Help us," cried Margaret. "Help us to carry him."

"Is he dead?" asked a boy, wide-eyed.

"Yes. We want to take him back to our group, down by the Monument. Please, please help us."

Two of the boys took Baoyu between them, draping his arms over their shoulders as Norbu and Peanut had done. They set off for the botanists' camp at the east of the Monument. Students were calling out all the time, all around them.

"What happened? Is he dead? Did the soldiers shoot him? What happened?"

"The soldiers are shooting the people at Muxidi," called back Norbu, when he had found his breath. "At Muxidi and along Changan—shooting, shooting."

This set up an angry murmur among the students. "Who would have thought," said one, "that the People's Army would shoot at the people!"

"How many soldiers?"

“Have they got tanks?”

“Did they use tear gas?”

“When will they be here?”

Margaret led them first towards the Monument, from which she thought she could get bearings to the botanists' camp. Nearer the Monument students were standing and sitting closer together. They moved aside to make a path for Margaret's party, staring and calling out questions. As Margaret neared the Monument, the student leader Wang Jun came over to them.

“What happened, Elder Sister? Oh, Heaven!”—putting a hand over her mouth at seeing so much blood. “What happened?”

Margaret told her as briefly as she could, scanning for landmarks to help her find the botanists' camp over to the east.

“How long before the soldiers get here?”

“I don't know, I don't know,” said Margaret, too distracted to concentrate on the question, tired of the questions.

“A while,” said Peanut Wang. “There are a lot of barricades. The people have made barricades all along Changan to the west. When we left the soldiers were just breaking through the barricade at Muxidi. It will take them some time to break through. And the people are fighting them. Fighting them! Without real weapons! It's glorious, glorious! When they saw that the barricade would fall, they set fire to it. They do anything to obstruct the soldiers.”

Wang Jun went with them over to the botanists. The twins screamed in unison when they saw Margaret and her group. Everyone clustered round, eyes wide, mouths open loose in horror. The two students who had been carrying Baoyu let him down onto the flagstones and laid him out neatly. They tried to fold his hands across his chest, but some condition of the muscles—a preliminary stiffening, perhaps—prevented the hands staying in place, and at last they let the arms lie straight at his sides. Students from other groups round about came to look, gathering in a wide circle around the botanists, looking down at Baoyu and murmuring among themselves.

“Yuehan,” called out two or three of the botanists. “Where is Yuehan?”

“Yuehan is dead,” said Margaret. “We couldn't bring him.”

The twins screamed again, clutching at each other. Xiaohong pressed

a hand to her mouth. Someone else made a great sobbing shout. The botanists passed it from one to the other, though they must all have heard Margaret say it. *Yuehan dead . . . Yuehan dead . . . Is it true? Yes, she said so, Yuehan is dead . . .* It got out to the wider circle of spectators. *Two dead . . . Two of this botany group are dead . . . They had to leave one behind . . .* Hearing the voices, looking at the visitors now with attention, Margaret could see that some of those who had come to look were workers from the camp further over to the east.

Meanwhile one of the new hunger strikers, a famous political scientist, had taken to the loudspeakers.

“Classmates! Many of you are angry at what we are seeing and hearing. Now we know there is real fighting going on. But still I believe the People’s Army will only use force to respond to force. So long as we uphold the peaceful aims of our demonstration, they will not attack us. Classmates! Don’t let your anger get the better of you! There can still be a peaceful resolution, if we hold fast to our principles! Our demand now should be that the soldiers leave Beijing peacefully. That must be our demand! If the soldiers leave Beijing, we can forget the rest of what they’ve done.”

There was much shouting and cat-calling at this, especially from the workers’ camp over to the east.

Margaret sat down next to Baoyu. She could not bear to look at him, lying there so still, so emphatically dead; yet it did not seem right to leave him. She felt a terrible physical exhaustion, and wanted more than anything to lie down and sleep. Norbu actually was lying down, knees up, back flat on the ground, his bare chest shining with sweat and blood, one hand over his Dalai Lama pendant. Next to him Peanut Wang was sitting, massaging his calves. The other botanists were in various stages of distraction. The twins were leaning on each other, sobbing.

Xiaohong was standing five yards away staring fixedly at Baoyu, her hand still over her mouth. “Who could believe it?” she whispered. “That the People’s Liberation Army would fire on the people! Who could believe it? Where is the sense in it? Elder Brother,” (addressing Norbu) “how can this have happened?”

“It’s my fault,” said Norbu dully, not lifting his head. “I misread the

situation. Really didn't think . . . Oh, Heaven!" He flung an arm up over his face, apparently unable to speak further.

"Don't blame yourself, Elder Brother," said Peanut. "Nobody really thought the army would fire on the people, right here in Beijing."

An argument started up among the botanists. Two of them, the very tall girl and the dark-skinned boy called Jingqiang, wanted to leave the Square. They came to put the case for evacuation to Norbu.

"Norbu, Norbu, come on! We must leave, we must get out of here."

Norbu straightened his legs and raised himself on one elbow, bringing out the thick, smooth muscles of his arms and torso, streaked and spattered with Baoyu's blood. "How exactly do we do that?" he asked calmly.

"South, south. The soldiers will come from the north. If we go south we can escape."

He shook his head. "They wouldn't just send soldiers from one direction. If there are soldiers at Muxidi you can be sure there are soldiers all round. This is probably the safest place to be."

"Perhaps not," said the very tall girl, an edge of panic in her voice. "If we go south, perhaps we can get away. But we must go *quickly*."

"There will be troops to the south. Deng Xiaoping isn't stupid."

"But what about the saying: 'Don't pursue the beaten foe,'" put in the dark-skinned boy. "That's Sunzi, isn't it? Those old generals all read Sunzi. They will follow his precepts, won't they? They will leave us a path of escape." [Sunzi was a famous military strategist in ancient times.]

One of the visitors in the circle around them laughed. He was a rough-looking fellow, perhaps one of the workers. "Don't you remember? Chairman Mao reversed that one: 'Use the last of your strength to pursue the beaten foe!' Them old devils will follow Mao, and fuck what Sunzi said." He laughed again.

Another one of the botanists, an earnest, studious-looking boy, shook his head. "All this talk about Sunzi and strategy really isn't appropriate. This is not warfare, this is political work. They don't want to win a victory, then dictate a treaty. They want to teach people a lesson, show them what happens to those who oppose the authorities. Don't worry, classmates. At worst they will arrest a few of the leaders, then send the rest

of us home to do self-criticism. We're not going to offer any resistance. We're not setting barricades on fire. We're just sitting here. Don't worry."

"Don't worry? They've killed our comrades! Look!" The tall girl was getting agitated. "There must be a way out. There *must* be. To the south! That main force is coming from the north, to protect Zhongnanhai. We can escape to the south! But we must hurry!"

Norbu lay back down, throwing up an arm over his eyes again to shut them out. "We can take a vote on it if you like," he said tiredly. "But so long as we give no provocation, we'll be safe here. Where the people are putting up barricades, of course there'll be fighting. But we here are peaceful. There's no resistance here. They have no reason to kill us."

"All right," said the girl, "let's take a vote. Who thinks we should try to escape to the south? Xiaohong, Xiaohong, what do you think?"

Xiaohong was still standing there looking down at Baoyu. Her face was wet with tears, shining wet in the lights of the Square.

"Beneath a fallen nest how can there be unbroken eggs?" she whispered. This was an idiom everybody knew, words spoken by a doomed child eighteen centuries before.

### **Beneath a Fallen Nest How Can There be Unbroken Eggs?**

In the last years of the Han dynasty, while the Emperor was still on the throne but without authority, the northern part of the Empire was controlled by the warlord Cao Cao. One of Cao's advisors was a very wise and upright man called Kong Rong, a descendant of Confucius himself. Kong Rong had two sons, aged seven and nine, who showed every sign of inheriting their father's character and sagacity.

When Cao Cao decided to raise an army against rival warlords in the south, Kong Rong advised against it on grounds of morality, two of the warlords being of the Imperial line. Cao ignored his advice. Kong Rong complained to Heaven, saying: "The unrighteous make war against the righteous!" This complaint came to the ears of the historian Xi Lü, who had long

held a grudge against Kong. Xi Lü reported it to Cao Cao, and added many embellishments of his own, saying that various acts of disrespect towards Cao in the past had been incited by Kong. Cao Cao was furious. He ordered that Kong Rong and all his family be put to death.

When the news of Kong Rong's arrest reached his home, no-one knew what to do. The servants and womenfolk ran hither and thither shrieking and tearing their hair. In the midst of all the consternation, Kong Rong's two sons sat quietly at a table playing chess. "Flee, flee!" urged a servant to the two little boys. "Flee for your lives!" Replied the older boy: "What use to flee? Beneath a fallen nest, how can there be unbroken eggs?"

Sure enough, the soldiers soon arrived and dragged the boys away. They were executed, and their bodies displayed in the marketplace with their father's.

Margaret tuned out the debate, too exhausted in spirit to care what they decided. The sweat drying on her body felt cold. She worried about Norbu, lying there barechested on the flagstones. She got up and went to the botanists' baggage pile to find his backpack. Just as she got it open, people began calling out all round. Looking up, she saw a profusion of bright orange threads shooting across the dark sky, crossing and re-crossing each other.

"What is it?" called several voices. "Is it fireworks?"

"Tracer rounds," said one of the non-botanists. "To guide a unit's fire to a target, to get concentrated fire. But probably just for effect here. To scare us."

Margaret got the jackets out and put her own on. Then she went over to Norbu.

"Norbu, Norbu, come on. Put this on. You will catch a chill."

Peanut, finished with his massage, was sitting next to Norbu with his arms round his knees.

"Elder Brother Norbu, do you think the army will kill us all?" he asked, as Norbu was putting on the jacket.

Norbu laughed easily. “No, Peanut, I’m sure they won’t do that.”

“I don’t care,” declared Peanut without a trace of fear in his voice. “I don’t care if they do. It’s an honorable thing to die for your country, isn’t it?”

“Certainly,” replied Norbu. “But you must weigh the advantage of making an honorable death or surviving to continue the fight. After all, if nobody survives, the enemy has won.”

“Oh, that’s just fate. You just fight your best and trust to fate to decide whether or not you survive. That’s what I think!” Peanut’s innocent juvenile face all lit up with excitement. All the horrors of the evening seemed only to have made him exultant.

“Calm down, Peanut,” soothed Norbu. “Trust to Lord Buddha to see you safely through tonight.”

“I want to go back and see what the soldiers are doing. I don’t want to just sit here and wait for them. Come on, Elder Brother Norbu. Let’s go and take a look!” He jumped to his feet and pointed over to the northwest of the Square.

“Oh, Norbu, don’t go!” Margaret clung to him. “Oh, don’t go there, Norbu! Peanut, you’re crazy. What do you want to go there for?”

“Oh, just until we can see the soldiers. Come on, Elder Brother Norbu.”

“No,” said Norbu. “I must stay here with Yuezhu and the group.”

“Well, I’m going.”

“Be careful. Just take a look then come back to us here and report. If you see the soldiers shooting, just keep low and run.”

“Don’t worry, Elder Brother Norbu. I’ll be careful.” Peanut ran off.

Her sweat had chilled her, in spite of the jacket. Margaret felt herself shivering. The botanists were still arguing, the very tall girl close to tears. *Why don’t you just go, if you want to go?* Margaret wanted to say; but she had seen enough of the student movement now to know how earnest they were about their little democracy, about argument and persuasion and joint action. Able to reflect now, she found that she had no opinion about leaving or staying, except for the nagging feeling that she ought not leave poor Baoyu. She would do whatever Norbu did, she decided. She would suffer and die with him if that was her fate. Now she

sat next to him, somewhat awkwardly on the hard ground, and rested her head on his shoulder.

“Norbu! Norbu! Don’t leave me! Stay here with me!”

Norbu put an arm round her and pulled her to him. “Don’t worry, little nightingale. I won’t leave you.”

Just then there was a great shout to the northeast. Students were running over there.

“It’s a tank!” someone shouted. “They’ve stopped a tank.”

Norbu jumped up and began to run toward the shouting, Margaret following close behind.

It was not a tank but an armored personnel carrier. The number 003 was painted on the side in white, over the camouflage paint. Several hundred were gathered around it already, most from the workers’ camp. Margaret could not see how it had been stopped. One boy had climbed up on top of the thing and was beating at the hatch with a wooden stave.

“Burn it! Burn it!” voices were shouting. Men from the workers’ camp were banging on the sides of the vehicle with sticks. People began passing up blankets and sheets of oilcloth. After a few false starts, the worker on top got this stuff burning. People began throwing garbage on to the fire, and the flames rose.

“Let the soldiers out!” called some from the crowd. “Don’t let them burn.”

“Burn them! Burn them!” shouted others. In the end nobody did anything, and the vehicle was soon a shapeless mass of flame. People were cheering and jumping up and down.

“It’s terrible,” said Margaret. “The soldiers inside must be suffocating.”

“Let the bastards burn,” said someone close by. Norbu said nothing. They made their way back to their group. There were only half a dozen of the botanists there, guarding the baggage pile. As Norbu stood looking around for his scattered charges, the twins came running up from the south, hand in hand.

“The Mausoleum!” gasped the lead twin. “There are troops in the bushes round the Mausoleum!”

“People are shouting at them and throwing things,” added the other. “I thought we were not to provoke the soldiers?”

“That’s right,” said Norbu. He looked worried now. “If you see things like that, get away.”

Over to the northeast there was still a crowd round the burning vehicle. They had made a great bonfire of it, and the flames were very bright. The twins were looking over at the flames.

“What happened, Norbu?”

Norbu told them.

In unison the twins lifted up a hand each to put over their mouths. “Oh, terrible!” said one. “I do hope they let the soldiers out.”

As she spoke there came the sound of small arms fire from the north. There was tracer fire all over the Square now. Somewhere at the east an ambulance siren wailed. The general noise level was rising. There seemed to be far more people in the Square than there had been half an hour before. All the loudspeakers were going at full volume, but it was difficult to make out what they were saying. The public speakers were more powerful, but the students’ own speakers were closer. The two systems together conducted a mad deaf dialogue, drowned out intermittently by the roar of the people and the screech of feedback.

“ . . . a serious counter-revolutionary rebellion has broken out in our capital this evening . . . ”

“ . . . the People’s Army should love the people . . . ”

“ . . . have furiously attacked soldiers and burned military vehicles . . . ”

“ . . . we are all Chinese. Soldiers! Comrades! Follow your conscience . . . ”

“ . . . citizens should strictly abide by the martial law regulations . . . ”

“ . . . Don’t harm the people! Don’t harm the people! . . . ”

“ . . . hooligans . . . ”

“ . . . Comrades! . . . ”

“ . . . counter-revolutionary . . . ”

“ . . . We are all Chinese . . . ”

Margaret felt numb, and very tired. Her fatalism was now total. She no longer had any will to do anything, either to stay or to fly. She only wanted whatever was to happen to happen with Norbu at her side. She sat

down on an empty stretch of canvas a few yards from Baoyu's body. Norbu now seemed rather at a loss. He was standing, looking over to the northwest.

"I wish I hadn't let Peanut go off like that," he muttered, apparently to himself.

"Never mind. Peanut can look after himself. Come and sit down."

Reluctantly, Norbu sat on the canvas, still looking over to the northwest. Margaret nestled herself under his arm, her head on his shoulder, her free arm flung across him to rest on his other shoulder. She closed her eyes. Norbu rocked her gently.

Soon there was a mighty roar from the northwest of the Square. A thousand guns went off simultaneously, and the sky filled with tracer lines. For a second, in her half-doze, Margaret forgot where she was. The idea of a celebration had lodged itself in her mind, and she said: "Oh! Let's go and see the fireworks!" She looked up, expecting the gay exploding globes of light she had seen over the East River one July Fourth with Johnny Liu, on a different planet, but then at once knew where she was. The happy illusion fell away, and she was in the Square again, among noise and smoke and chaos and death.

Norbu stood up again. Margaret wanted to stay on the canvas, but when he stepped away, she at once jumped up to follow him, over to a group being addressed by a boy and a girl, just come from the north of the Square.

"They're shooting people at Heavenly Peace Gate," the boy was saying. "A big troop convoy has come along Changan from the west. Now they're trying to clear the north of the Square. There were a lot of people under the gate and by the wall of the Forbidden City. The soldiers just started shooting at them. Aiming and shooting! We saw twenty or thirty fall, then we just ran." He stared around wildly. "How can we get out of here? Is it clear to the south?"

"No," said Norbu. "There are troops all around the Mausoleum."

The boy stared at him in silence for a few beats, then dropped his head wearily. He had his arm round his girl's shoulders now. "Then we are all dead," he said quietly. "We are all dead." Abruptly, he sat down.

Norbu and Margaret sat down again, as before. There seemed nothing else to do. All around them exhausted students were standing in

quiet groups, or sitting like themselves. Some were even lying on the ground at full length, apparently asleep. The twins were a few yards away, sitting hugging each other. Margaret was very hungry. She was going to reach behind Norbu to open the backpack when Peanut appeared out of nowhere. Norbu jumped up to greet him.

“What’s happening? Where have you been?”

Peanut gestured over to the northeast. “Among the bushes by the Museum there. I went over to see the burning truck. Then I got with some workers, throwing stones at the soldiers. I got one of them right on his neck! He tried to shoot me. Took three shots and didn’t even come close! As soldiers, they’re a disgrace to the People’s Republic!” Peanut laughed gaily.

Norbu frowned and shook his head. “That wasn’t very smart, Peanut. We’re not supposed to be provoking the soldiers.”

“Oh, nonsense. Who’s provoking whom? We’re just sitting here having a peaceful demonstration. The soldiers have no right to attack us! Oh, Elder Brother Norbu! It was so exciting! I’m going back there!”

Before either of them could say or do anything, Peanut was running off again, back to the northeast. Norbu shouted after him, ran a few paces after him, shouting, but Peanut was gone.

He was going against the tide. From all over the Square, people were drifting in towards the Monument. The people coming in looked scared, but from the Monument itself could be heard the sound of singing. Norbu busied himself with a roll call of the botanists, most of whom had now come back. When he was satisfied he made a little speech to them, telling them to keep together and stay calm. Then, after some discussion and voting, they moved their camp in closer to the Monument, pulling Baoyu along with them on a blanket.

Margaret and Norbu shared a pancake, then an apple. An ambulance roared past to their right, going north. The singing at the Monument stopped, and Wang Jun began a speech, pleading with the troops not to use violence. Margaret pressed herself close against Norbu. It was very crowded near the Monument now, students standing and sitting all around them.

Up on the plinth of the Monument, Wang Jun began telling a folk tale. Several students who had been sitting stood up to listen.

### The Fire in the Ant Hill

There was once a colony of ants, living in an ant-hill. There were more than a billion of them. One day the ant-hill caught fire. The ants knew they could only save themselves by leaving the hill, so they made themselves into a ball and rolled down the hill all together. Those ants on the outside of the ball were burned to death, but the majority were saved.

Margaret was very moved by this. Some of the students near her were crying. Norbu, however, was not crying. He was just looking to the northeast with a worried expression.

The students around them had started to sing the *Internationale*. They were linking arms as they sang. One of the nearest reached down his hand to Margaret and Norbu. They stood and joined with the others, Norbu holding hands but not singing the *Internationale*, nor the National Anthem, which came next. Afterwards they sat down again. Wang Jun announced that anyone who wanted to go could go. This brought some catcalls: “Go where? Go to get shot!” Then Wei Yingrui, the pop singer, took the microphone and pleaded with the crowd to give up any weapons they had. A student came to the east side, where Margaret and Norbu were sitting, and asked if they had any weapons. Others were moving among the crowd with the same question. A fight broke out to their right: some workers had weapons, and didn’t want to give them up. This caught Norbu’s interest. With Margaret in tow, he went over to listen to the argument.

It was a group of workers with warrior headbands on, in the style of the Fear Nothing Brigade at Muxidi. Somehow they had got themselves a machine-gun. One of them was holding on to the thing for all he was worth, brandishing a stick at anyone who came close. His comrades were shouting in his defense, while two student organizers pleaded with them to give up the gun.

“I ain’t gonna to give it up! No fuckin’ way! If I’m gonna to get killed, I wanna take a dozen of them bastards wiv me!”

“That’s all very well, friend, but they’ll take revenge on the rest of us.”

“Well, what’s the odds? They’re gonna kill us anyway. Let’s take a few of the fuckers wiv us!”

“Yes, but you can only kill a dozen of them. They’d kill a hundred of us in revenge. Maybe they’ll shoot us anyway, but there’s no point in giving them a *reason* to shoot us.”

The crowd was more or less with the organizers, and the boy at last surrendered his weapon. Only then did anybody notice that it had no clip in it. This made people laugh. They laughed wildly, hysterically, by way of release. Margaret and Norbu shuffled back to the Monument with the others. It was very crowded now, with hardly room to sit. The singing seemed to have raised people’s spirits, though. The weapons that had been collected—sticks, mostly, it seemed—were being piled on the top terrace of the Monument. People were watching this. Some of them applauded. Meanwhile another one of the hunger strikers, a well-known businessman, was making a speech, telling people to keep calm and do nothing to provoke the troops.

There was another round of singing. Still Norbu kept his mouth closed. He seemed distracted, looking round the Square, sometime lifting himself on tiptoe to see above the heads. He was concerned for Peanut Wang, Margaret knew. In between songs she tried to soothe him.

“I’m sure Peanut’s all right. There are plenty of buildings and trees up there to hide among.”

“I don’t know,” said Norbu, lifting himself on tiptoe again. “There’s a lot of noise from over there. They must be fighting.”

There was a long spell of quiet. People’s faces relaxed back into fear and tiredness. The din at the north of the Square seemed to have abated somewhat, though there was still shooting. It emerged at last that the student leaders had had a meeting. Nothing had been settled at the meeting, of course, but the pop singer and the businessman had taken it on themselves to try to negotiate an orderly withdrawal from the Square. They were driven off in an ambulance from the other side of the Monument.

Suddenly the lights went out. All the lights around the Square went

off together. Several students screamed. From the north rose a great howl of voices. Margaret flung her spare arm around Norbu and clung tight, in the darkness.

“Oh, Norbu! What will happen to us?”

She felt his hand stroking her hair. His voice sounded calm, confident, close to her ear. “Don’t cry, my little nightingale. We must wait, that’s all. Wait and see what will happen.”

“I’m not afraid to die,” whispered Margaret, “if only you are with me. If we can die together, I won’t be afraid.”

Norbu laughed softly. “Don’t speak of dying, little Moon Pearl. You will only make yourself afraid. Perhaps, after all, they will let us go. You must wait patiently. Let’s wait and see what Wei Yingrui can do.”

They huddled together in the darkness. It was not actually pitch dark. Some floodlights were on in the parking lot in front of the Hall. Beneath the floodlights, so the rumor came round, soldiers could be seen emerging from the front doors. To the north there were some bright white lights shining down the Square—headlights of vehicles, perhaps. A vehicle was burning up there, too—perhaps the APC that had been fired earlier, perhaps some other one. At the northwest corner of the Square some trees were on fire. Beyond them, to the west, out of sight, something very large was burning, lighting up the sky. Away from the Monument some students were torching piles of rubbish. The student loudspeakers began to play the *Internationale*. A few students joined in singing it, but it was a ragged effort.

“Norbu, suppose we have to die. Do you think it will hurt?”

“Don’t think of it, little nightingale. We shall be all right.”

There was commotion at the command post on the Monument. The emissaries had returned. The loudspeakers crackedled.

“We can leave. We can leave. They’re going to make a corridor in the southeast of the Square for us to leave through. The officer said we have to leave immediately. To the southeast. Go to the southeast.”

“I’m not leaving!” shouted Fang Duo, another one of the hunger strikers. “If we’re going to be martyrs, let’s be martyrs! Let’s stick it out to the end!” Several other voices joined him. “No surrender! See it through to the end!”

The pop singer Wei Yingrui was waving for attention. “No, that’s not right! We must all leave! If some leave and some stay, that will provoke the soldiers. They’re in a very harsh mood! They’ll shoot the ones who stay, then they’ll shoot at the ones leaving, too! We can’t afford disagreement! We must all go, or all stay!”

“Then let’s all stay!” yelled Fang Duo. Others echoed him. “Let’s show them our movement is not afraid of death!”

The other emissary, the businessman, spoke up. “Believe me, classmates, they are in no mood for compromise. Their attitude is very harsh. They are shooting people at the marble bridges. We saw it. Dead bodies are piled three deep there. The ground is slippery with their blood. They will shoot us, too.”

“Then let’s die bravely!” Fang Duo turned to appeal to the others. “Better to die on our feet than live on our knees!” This got a yell of approval from half-a-dozen around him; but the voices were less than before, Margaret thought.

Lu Fengyin, the boy with the mole on his lip, took the megaphone from Wei Yingrui. “Classmates, you have the right to sacrifice yourselves. But you don’t have the right to sacrifice those who don’t want to die. Be reasonable! Come on, let’s leave. Time is short.”

Fang Duo would not be moved. “That’s not how we’ve been doing things. Last week, when we discussed leaving the Square, the majority yielded to the minority. That was our decision then, that should be our decision now.”

“But then it wasn’t life or death. Now it is,” shouted back Wei Yingrui, his voice hoarse. “You’ve no right to ask people to die against their will!”

Now someone else spoke up. “All right, go! We’ll be the martyrs! Those who want to go, go. Those who want to stay, stay!”

“*Give me liberty, or give me death!*” somebody shouted in English. There were scattered yells of approval. But further away from the Monument Margaret could see people gathering up their things and moving away. There was already a cluster of students disappearing in the darkness to the south. She clung to Norbu, who was intent on the debate.

There was a voice vote; but nobody could decide who had won it. Wei Yingrui, his voice cracking with despair, agreed to go back to the

officers and beg for more time. Together with the businessman he ran off into the darkness to the north. Some of the students sat down to wait; but many more were drifting away to the southeast.

The lights came on again. Almost immediately there was a great burst of gunfire. It sounded very close. From the north somewhere came a roar of voices. Margaret looked at the students around her, at their faces. They were wide-eyed with fear. Everybody was standing now. The air seemed dense and still. A great fear—a massive, silent fear—seemed suddenly, belatedly, to have gripped them all. “Come on,” she heard from behind. Then someone else: “Come on, let’s go.” The voices were quiet, almost whispering. “Let’s go, let’s go.” People were picking things up and walking away.

“Norbu. Please. Please. Let’s go. Get someone to help with Baoyu.”

Norbu was scanning the northeast corner of the Square. “Where the hell is Peanut?” he muttered.

“Never mind. He’ll be all right. Come on. Oh, come on!” Margaret felt her bowels weakening. She had never known such fear; no, not when the Public Security man had banged his fist on the table that night, not even at Muxidi. The air was full of smoke. Even with the lights on it was difficult to see much. Above the distant, confused hubbub of voices, the rattle of gunfire was almost constant. There was a new sound, too; the low growl of tank engines to the north.

Abruptly Norbu turned to her. He held her arms again with his hands. “I must go and find Peanut. I’m sure he doesn’t know we’re evacuating.”

“*NO!* Oh, please, Norbu, please let’s go! Peanut will be all right, I know. Please don’t go.” Margaret began to sob, in frustration and fear.

He held her arms tight in his big hands. “Little nightingale.” He spoke softly, urgently. “Go with the others. Go to the southeast. I’ll follow you in just five minutes. I’m only going to run up to the corner for Peanut. I’ll just drag him away. Never mind Baoyu, Peanut and I will bring him.”

“No, no . . .” Margaret whimpered.

“Listen. I can’t leave my classmate. We’ll be right behind you. But don’t wait.”

He let go her arms. Feebly, uncertainly, she reached out and plucked

at his jacket, which he was wearing open over his bare chest, the Dalai Lama's mild countenance gazing out serenely at this world of appearances from his seat in Norbu's pendant. Gently, Norbu took her hand away.

"Don't wait for us. Get out of the Square quickly. We'll go straight to the Xings' apartment. I'll see you there."

Without another word Norbu turned and made off toward the northeast corner of the Square at a spacious, loping run.

Margaret found herself standing alone. There were no students near. The botanists had all gone. Baoyu was lying on his tarpaulin halfway between her and the Monument, awfully alone, awfully dead. She spun round and saw a line of retreating figures, vanishing in the smoky dimness. Caught by a sudden sucking terror of being left alone in the Square, she began to run after them. She caught up, and the little group of three or four students at the tail of the column turned to look at her. She didn't know any of them. Somehow, this fact stopped her. *She didn't know any of them.* And the one she did know, the one she should never have left, had gone in the other direction! She turned again, to the north. There were vehicle headlights there, and many figures running back and forth—capering, it seemed—in front of the lights, but too far away to make anybody out. She screamed his name.

*"Norbu! NOOOORBUIII!"*

She ran a few steps, then stopped. Where? In which direction, exactly, had he gone? Oh, why had she let him go? A cloud of smoke was drifting across the Square at the northeast. From the corner of her eye she saw something moving. She turned to the right. From the bushes in front of the Museum on the east side of the Square, men were emerging. They seemed to be carrying sticks. Further over, by the Red Cross tent, a nurse was standing with one arm uplifted: beckoning, or waving, or warning—it was impossible to say. Margaret saw her clearly in the distance, and could see her just as clearly in recollection, in that same murky orange light, for all the days of her life: a tiny figure in a white smock, wearing a white nurse's skull-cap, waving or beckoning to her, across the Square in which Baoyu lay dead and Norbu could not be seen, could not be seen, could not be seen.

Margaret turned to run, to the northeast, to Norbu. There was noth-

ing in her mind but to follow him, to go where he had gone, to find him or die seeking him.

A sudden firecracker-rattle sounded close at hand. An invisible unruly giant kicked her very hard in the shin. The pain was dreadful. Margaret howled, even as her feet flew out from under her. The sky, stitched with orange tracer rounds, whirled before her eyes. Then her head smacked down onto the smooth hard flagstones of Tiananmen Square.