

## The Beast in the Woods

Olivia SHAN

Mr. Yang's six or seven-year-old girl, Little Yang, was lost tonight. Almost everyone in the small and poor Chinese rural village was looking for her, except her father Mr. Yang. He was sleeping after getting drunk.

"Poor girl," I thought, "Maybe it is good for her to run away from her parents who are always quarreling."

I could not search the girl because of my painful legs. Gazing the warm stove fire, I thought about a girl in red hat and clothes I saw at this dusk. She was talking with a stranger near my house. However, the lights of street lamp were too dim to recognize their face clearly, only a bottle in the stranger's hand was glittery. He seemed forcing the girl to go to the forests. I could not go outside because of my sore legs and only warned the girl "Come back girl! The wolves in the woods



will hurt you!" The strong wind swallowed my words and they disappeared in the woods.

The knocking interrupted my pondering. Surprisingly, a people with a hat stood in my small yard.

"George?" I asked.

"Old sport," George said and stepped into my house, "It is real a bad weather. Have you ever gone outside today?"

"No. My legs were in pain for a day. Have you found your niece Little Yang?"

"No. But I think you may know something" George said.

"Actually, tonight I saw a girl talk with a man and then they went to the woods." I said, "I wanted to call her back but she didn't hear me."

"Who's the man? Do you know him?" George asked.

"No, I have not seen his face clearly."

"That's strange. Someone saw Little Yang went in the direction of the woods. Later, somebody saw a lame man walk out of woods. I think only one person lives in this area and has injured legs. That is you, my old sport." George smiled, "And we all know that you had raped a girl when you were young."

"Did the person look clearly the lame man's face?" I asked.

"Not exactly. But who else could appear at that time near the woods?" George said with smile "My old sport, we are old friends for many years. No need to lie to me."

"Hold on" I just thought of one thing and said, "Tonight I did go out to the public toilet. The toilet is near the woods. I saw Mr. Yang walked out of the woods and seeming like drunk and a little lame."

"Oh, that's strange." George said.

"I asked him 'what's the problem with your legs'. He didn't answer me but invited me to eat a beast. He just killed a beast in the woods and he will cook the meat into the Chinese sausage for the New Year's dinner."

"I will think about it, old sport. Can you lend me your shepherd dog?"

"Sure." I said. At the moment I closed the door, I saw George looking around seeming to search something.

Next morning I got up early and went to the grass on the edge of the woods. The grass is the place where I usually herd the sheep. Maybe some clues were still in the woods, I thought. In the bushes there was a body of dead dog, which is similar to Little Yang's. I brought the dog to George's house.

George's house built in a big tobacco field on the top of the hill, and he has a big yard paving with tobacco leaves. Making cigarette and detecting are both his hobbies. Actually, his job is an English professor and the only professor in the poor village. Every woman in the village liked him because he behaved like a gentle man, but George was still single and lived with an old maid.

The maid came out and told me that George was sleeping. "He stayed up all night to look for Little Yang."

"Did he find her?" I asked.

"No."

I waited until George waked up and I told him I found a dead dog on the edge of the woods.

"It is Little Yang's dog!" George said and checked dog "It seems that the dog was drunk."

George smelled the dog for a while. He has a sensitive nose benefiting by distinguishing different odors of tobacco leaves for many years.

"It smells like the wine which I sent to Mr. Yang as a gift! The wine is from England and has English letters on the bottle. I don't think you can find another one in the village." George said, "I must go to Mr. Yang's house now! By the way, I'm sorry for suspecting you, old sport."

We went to Mr. Yang's house together, and Mr. Yang was arguing with his wife. Our visiting interrupted their quarrel.

His wife saw the dog first and asked George, "Do you find Little Yang? How do you find the dog? Did the dog die?"

"The dog is dead." George comforted her and said to Mr. Yang, "I come here to borrow the bottle of the wine which I gave you. I want to buy a new one but I forget the name of the wine."

"I have already drunk up it and threw the bottle." Mr. Yang said.

"You are lying!" his wife said, "You did not drink the wine at all and I saw you take the wine out yesterday."

We were all silent waiting for Mr. Yang's answer. Mr. Yang took the bottle out of the corner. A little heart with blood lay in the bottle.

"Yes. I killed her in the woods, because she is my wife's illegitimate child, and she shouldn't be born in the world. I will cook her meat into sausage." Mr. Yang said.

His words shocked her wife and she went to the yard and saw the sausage dry in the sun. "She shouldn't have such father like you." she said angrily, "you

killed her because she saw your secret of your mistress, am I right?”

“You are right!” Mr. Yang shouted and he smashed the bottle onto the floor. The heart of the kid broke into pieces, and the blood dripped down the clothes, like pure snowflakes.