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CHINESE STORY WITH A HAPPY ENDING

by

Agnes Smedley

The hero of this tale is Mr. Koo Tso-hsi. He is a Chinese gentleman of power and influence in business and official circles of Shanghai, and when he speaks men listen. As with so many other business ~~men~~ ^{men} and officials, ^c the major part of his life is spent in that vast labyrinth of underground reality wherein the destiny of millions of men and women is determined, and in which gangster and General, banker and thug meet in perfect understanding.

Down in this labyrinth one may meet not only Mr. Koo Tso-hsi, the hero of our tale, but also Tu Yueh-seng, the most powerful figure in Shanghai, chief of the Green Gang of underworld gunmen and crooks; and also Tu's two associates, now old from ~~exhausting~~ debauchery,--the Messrs. Whang Ching-yung (sometimes irreverently called "Mohbi" Ching-yung, or just "Old Fox-marks"), and also Chiang Siao-ling. These three gentlemen are known as the "Big Three", but of the three, Tu Yueh-seng is now the chief by virtue of his younger years and greater ruthlessness.

Down in this underworld labyrinth we also meet one Loh Ling-hwei, and one Mr. Koo Sung-mow, our hero's brother. There are also others-- shadowy sundry ~~officials~~ officials, judges, Generals, gunmen, foreign and Chinese detectives, and a screaming woman. Since the story is a real one, with real names used, there is little room for art. But if anyone feels that the art should ~~put~~ be put in, let him or her do it as the spirit prompts. Chinese gangsters and gentlemen are often bird connoisseurs, so the art could be expressed in a bird's song now and then. Old Fox-marks Ching-yung has retired and for the good of his soul ~~opened~~ ^{opened} a public garden that he might be known as a public benefactor: so let a breeze rustle through a tree now and then if this seems necessary. General

Chiang Kai-shek and his wife advocate the New Life Movement, or Confucian feudalism, as a solution of China's sufferings--so put in the art by having a child slave bow happily before her owner, uttering a silvery stream of laughter. All ~~of~~ ^{may} this ~~make~~ make the story seem a work of art and give it a mysterious Chinese atmosphere.

In the meantime, take our hero Koo Tso-hsi, and his sufferings. If you peruse the press carefully, you will have learned that he is a gentleman held up as a model. He is a philanthropist and a pillar of law and order. He is a director of the Chinese Red Cross, an active member of the ~~Chinese~~ Goods Roads Association, and a director of the Chapei Volunteer Corps--the latter an organization of armed merchants and loafers whose duty it is to maintain law and order by shooting down striking workers, student demonstrators, and Communists in general. Mr. Koo, by dint of hard labor--so we are told--is known as a theatre magnate and promoter, owner of a chain of theatres, ~~and~~ hotels and amusement resorts. He has broad and powerful connections with the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, with Nanking officials, and Generals, with police officers, military men, and with foreign policemen.

The press never mentions that Mr. Koo also owns usury shops, tenement houses, deals in Chinese Government Monopoly opium and Japanese drugs. Nor that he has many concubines lodged in hotel suites or little semi-foreign houses in alley-ways, nor that he is densely illiterate and a Gang leader of ruthless character. Certainly not--he is a respectable business man possessing "civil rights"--that is, he has the right to sit in the Chinese Ratepayers Association and vote as to who shall represent the Chinese people in the Shanghai Municipal Council.

The recent tragedy which almost threatened Mr. Koo's life was really most unfortunate. It began like this: One night a certain Mr. Tang Chia-pen, General-manager of the Great World "Amusement Resort" ^{of Shanghai} and a Gang leader in his own right, was shot dead. The two murderers who shot him were later captured and one sentenced to twenty years

imprisonment and one to life. One of them had formerly been a police inspector in the Chinese Bureau of Public Safety, but ~~he~~ had ~~been~~ promoted ^{himself} to apprenticeship under our hero Mr. Koo.

These two murderers sat in prison for a year, and then became so angry that they sent out word to Tu Yueh-seng, king of the underworld of Shanghai and told him how they had been betrayed. Mr. Tu had suspected the truth but now he had proof against Koo Tso-hsi. He had had enough of this ~~presumptuous~~ subordinate gangster who for the past few years had become most presumptuous. For Mr. Koo had promised the two murderers ten thousand dollars if they would kill Mr. Tang, ~~for him~~ and, if captured, he had promised to influence the Court and have them declared innocent. But after they had done their work, Mr. Koo had paid them but sixty dollars, and when captured he had refused to pay the Judges one cent of money to have them declared innocent. Such unethical conduct was enough to shock not only the murderers, but also Mr. Tu Yueh-seng, and even if ^{the murdered} Mr. Tang had not been his friend, still he would have used the case to teach Koo Tso-hsi a lesson he never would forget.

So, about one year after the murder, the Chinese court in the French Concession, where the murder had taken ~~xxx~~ place, arrested Mr. Koo, our hero, for instigating murder. The Gangsters instructed the Chinese press censorship bureau to publish nothing of the arrest of such an important business man, and ~~they did not~~ ^{it obeyed.} Still, despite this, one foreign newspaper got hold of the story when Mr. Koo was brought to trial a few weeks later. It published a short respectable account of the case.

Along with the report appeared Mr. Koo's photograph. People looked at the photograph and then ~~looked~~ ^{turned} away and exclaimed: "That's impossible--there ain't no such human being!" For the picture was like the face of a well-fed hog if ~~xxx~~ the hog's face were pushed in and made flat. The jowls hung down in fat slabs, there was no neck at all, and tiny eyes peered out from between ~~fat~~ rolls of fat. The expression on

the face was cruel and crafty. It was the face of an over-indulgent slug, a creature of advanced years. The mind groped back over past decades and thought: "What kind of society is it that could produce a creature like that?"

But men, Chinese who knew Mr. Koo, gazed at the photograph thoughtfully and then remarked: "The picture flatters him--it must have been taken long ago."

They then discussed the case further. "The story," they said, "has left out the most important facts. Koo is a member of the Gang, and was once a 'disciple' of old Fox-marks. But in recent years he became a Gang leader on his own account in the International Settlement. He has thousands of followers--Chinese detectives in the Shanghai Municipal Police, and in S'haipei, street loafers, some clerks--I know one in the Postoffice,--servants and cooks, waiters in teahouses and ~~Shanghai~~ hotels, chauffeurs, factory foremen, and some small business men. His friends are big business men, bankers, Generals, officials. He entertains his friends to banquets, opium, and prostitutes, in the big rooms back stage in his Sangsing Theatre on Newchang Road. "

You could naively protest that Mr. Koo was a director of the Chinese Red Cross if you wished, but Chinese who know the reality of Shanghai would explain that to you most patiently, until you wondered why there are writers of criminal detective novels who had to exercise their imagination at all. For reality is much more devious and cruel. The Chinese Red Cross, they remarked, like other charities, lives by picking up crumbs from the tables of the rich. Rich men like Mr. Koo or like Tu Yueh-seng, will give twenty-five or fifty dollars to get their names in the papers. For they want "face", prestige. It is profitable. And charitable organizations smirk in servility and ask such men to go on their Board of Directors.

The Red Cross often "rescues" victims of famines and floods and brings thousands of children and young people to the cities to be

"adopted". You must pay the Red Cross twenty-five dollars for a child. Thousands of these young slaves are to be found in the kitchens of the rich, and even of the lower middle-class in Shanghai. Factory owners can "adopt" dozens of such children.

Directors of the Red Cross do not have to pay for children they "adopt". Such men as Koo can take dozens without pay and sell them to factories or workshops through his loafer gangsters. The pretty girls he can sell as concubines or prostitutes. The most beautiful he looks over, takes an aphrodisiac and tries them out, and when tired of them sells them to brothels or presents them to his gang followers.

It's the same with the Anti-Kidnapping Society, a philanthropic organization run by kidnapers. Children "rescued" by this Society are sent to factories to work, and their wages paid back to the Society which was good enough to "rescue" them. The directors of this Society are themselves nearly all gangsters and kidnapers.

But when the highly-respectable Mr. Koo Tso-hsi was arrested for instigating the murder of a rival business man, even the foreign press would say no more than that he was a "theatrical magnate, owner of a chain of theatres, hotels, amusement resorts and various other undertakings not known to the public." If you ask them why they do not write the truth, they will tell you that they are in China to make a living and not to be reformers. If you inform them that they rule Shanghai and that their police force and business men know all this and support it, they will call you a Communist who ought to be in jail.

But in view of all this, how could such a man as Koo Tso-hsi be arrested for murder? Murder is not unusual in Shanghai; in truth it is an industry in which the Gang has specialized for decades. Gangsters boast of the number of men they have killed. Koo and his followers, and Tu Yueh-seng the Gang king boast of the thousands of Communists ~~xxxx~~ they have murdered, tortured, maimed for life and killed since 1927. Their victims include not only workers, but prominent men and women.

Yet no gangster was ever arrested for these murders. If gangsters were ever accidentally arrested for killing a man, it was because the victim was the rival or enemy of some powerful politician; and then the release of the murderer ~~was~~ depends entirely on the weight of silver held under the nose of the judges.

Then why was Koo Tso-hsi faced with such a fearful charge as murder?

Well, many are the people who know that. There were many reasons. In the first place, ^{Koo} ~~he~~ murdered the wrong man--he ~~was~~ poached on the territory of the Gang king, Tu Yueh-seng. Tang was a friend of the Gang king and he lived in the French Concession, which is ~~his~~ Tu's domain. It did not matter that the murdered man had killed a friend of Koo's a short time before. ^{Also,} ~~And then~~ Koo Tso-hsi had become too proud and presumptuous, and altogether too rich. No only did he have extensive wealth in the Settlement, but he ruled two hsien, or counties, north of the Yangtze River, where he was born. A million people lived in those two counties, and all the officials and policemen were relatives or followers of Koo. Public revenues poured into Koo's coffers, and though Tu Yueh-seng was supposed to control the entire opium traffic in the provinces surrounding Shanghai, still there had been double-dealing in those two counties. The murdered man Tang had contemptuously referred to Koo as the "King of Kiangpei"--that is, King of North of the River. That is a term of contempt in Shanghai; for some reason or other men from "Kiangpei" are looked down upon. This is perhaps they are so poor and illiterate that they can't be anything but factory workers, wharf coolies, or street loafers. And our hero Koo was a "Kiangpei" man.

Koo suffered much from such humiliations, and he suffered deep spiritual anguish because Tu Yueh-seng had risen to great power in Shanghai and had become an official invited to Chinese and foreign official and ~~state~~ diplomatic receptions, ^{while} ~~and~~ Koo had to content himself with petty philanthropies like the Red Cross, the Good Roads Association,

and the Anti-kidnapping Society.

Koo could recall, it is true, when he ^{himself} had been arrested three times in ~~1920~~ 1920 and 1921 for picking pockets, for receiving stolen property, and for fighting with another street loafer. He had three jail sentences for these accidents, but after that he was more successful. But was Chiang Kai-shek any better? Hadn't ^{Chiang} ~~he~~ been a petty speculator who was rescued from jail only by the influence of the Gang of which he also was a member the same as Koo? And was Tu Yueh-seng any better? ^{Tu} ~~he~~ used to be a simple policemen peddling opium which he carried in his pockets. ~~But now look at Tu!~~ Hadn't both he and Tu helped Chiang Kai-shek murder thousands of workers and intellectuals in Shanghai because they threatened the absolute rule of the bankers, factory owners and gangsters of Shanghai? But now look at Tu! Tu was the opium king of all the regions around Shanghai. He was ~~the~~ ^{the} chief of the Government Opium Monopoly in that region and in the past couple of years had bought his own steamers to transport opium from Chiang's opium headquarters in Hankow, to Shanghai. At one time Chiang had given Tu a million dollars to perfect the Gang organization against the Communists of Shanghai. Tu was a member of the French Municipal Council, he was on many Government committees, he was one of Chiang Kai-shek's close colleagues and advisers, he was always appointed official arbiter in strikes or labor disputes, and his word could send a man to the torture chamber or death, or it could set him free. On his birthday, and when he built his ancestral temple, Chiang Kai-shek and all the government officials sent Tu Yueh-seng expensive presents and congratulatory scrolls. Thousands upon thousands of gangsters paraded the streets of Shanghai on such occasions, carrying these scrolls, while all Koo could do when his mother died was to have a vast procession guarded by police--and no scrolls at all!

Where was the justice in all this! Where was the justice when ~~Koo~~ Tu Yueh-seng got his pictures in the papers, side by side with

the highest Government officials and foreign diplomats? Koo nearly lost consciousness when the Nanking Government conferred its highest order, the Order of the Brilliant Jade, on Tu Yuesheng and his two Gang associates, old Fox-marks and old Chiang Siao-ling. Their pictures appeared in the press of the whole world and they had become famous--and rich. Heavens how rich! Not a gangster but laughed until he nearly burst because the Orders were given for "philanthropic" work in connection with ~~the~~ flood relief.

Nor was that all. Tu Yuesheng and his gangsters had become part and parcel of the Blue Shirts. They talked Fascism all the time and the Gang and the Blue Shirts became so intermingled that you could not tell one from the other. The Blue Shirt chiefs and Tu together polished off ~~XXXX~~ the most powerful newspaper owner and editor of Shanghai and chased another from the country. Then Tu got those newspapers and news agencies and was now becoming the newspaper king of Shanghai--moulder of public opinion. Tu knew all the inside on the Stock Exchange and when the Finance Minister had once tried to double-cross him, he had brought that Gentleman to book in short order.

Koo became contemptuous and sarcastic when he talked to his brother Sung-mow and his friend Loh Ling-hwei, in particular. Tu, Gang chief, might even become ambassador to the United States or England one of these days! And how did he know? He knew, that's how! He knew because Tu had hired some American women missionaries to teach his concubines English. One of these teachers, from St. John's University, taught his favorite concubine. Hadn't they heard how scared the teacher was of the rats that romped playfully along the rafters? The concubine had twittered that Mr. Tu was so tender-hearted that he could kill nothing. But the truth was that Tu was born in the year of the rat, and the beasts were sacred to him. Then why didn't he say so instead of talking about his tender heart. Tender-heart! The men ^{shrieked} ~~XXXXXX~~ with laughter. Before long Tu's concubines would be talking English to the wives of ambassadors and leading the New

Life Movement ^{along} with Chiang Kai-shek's fifth wife.

Koo Sung-mow and Loh Ling-hwei sympathized with their friend Koo. Their fate was bound up with his, though Loh was more independent. Loh was a Gang member and chief Chinese detective in the Shanghai Municipal Police of the Settlement. His salary was only about four hundred dollars a month and this gave him a little pocket money. But he owned two big Chinese hotels and other property in the Settlement. He was a man who could rescue rich men kidnapped by the Gang. The Gang kidnapped rich men who would not "cooperate" or who kept their wealth secret and would not pay tribute. When their families paid the ransom money, Loh was then told by the Gang to "rescue" the victims. He did so. And he profited mightily, got his rake-off, and was made chief Chinese detective. He also got so much per head for the Communists he got hold of.

Sung-mow, ^{Koo's} brother, also was a Gang member. He was also a man of property, for he was chairman of the Ricksha Owners' Association of the Settlement. That's a racket on its own and this racket is sacred to the Shanghai Municipal Council. The Council issues ten thousand ricksha licenses a year. They cost but two dollars each, but the Gangsters buy them year after year, attach a license to a ricksha and then rent the vehicle to two coolie pullers ^{- day and night shift -} for a rental of from eighty to ninety cents each, or nearly two dollars for a day and night shift. So one ricksha license will bring ~~xxxxx~~ the license owner in around seven hundred dollars a year. Multiply this by a hundred or a few hundred or thousand, and an owner can sit back on his tail and draw down a cool few thousand a year and not do a stroke of work. Of course ^{if} the ricksha puller ~~doesn't~~ ^{his rent} always make the rental money. If he makes anything beyond ~~it~~ ^{then} that is his and he can eat. But if he doesn't ~~like this~~, if he doesn't like his rags and the pavement ^{for} a bed, let him go back to his village and work for the landlord and die in six months from starvation. The Council knows well that it had better give the licenses to the owners only, and

if they try selling them to the ricksha pullers directly they had ^{ve} "Chinese public opinion" to face in the shape of the Chinese members on the Council who have been elected by such gentlemen as Mr. Koo Tso-hsi and Mr. Koo Sung-mow. And there ~~was~~ ^{isn't} a "Councillor" amongst them but that was either a member of the Gang or a close friend and "cooperator" with ~~them~~ it.

Koo used to lie on his opium lounge in the rooms back stage in the Sangsing Theatre and cruse his fate. All of this influence, this power, this wealth ^{of himself and his brother} and still he had not been given the Order of the Brilliant Jade! Tu Yush-seng got everything. But ^{Koo} ~~he~~ had his moments of pride. He was always able to get face by referring to the time he shot the actor in ^{his} ~~the~~ Shanghai Theatre on Foochow Road. He was acquitted on a non-proven verdict, but he always boasted that he shot the man. He could always boast of his other exploits and get a lot of face, but still there were men who called him the "King of Kiangpei". And then the dog Tang Chia-pen had thought he could get away with murdering his friend Zung.

Koo had been willing to talk the matter over ^{with}. He invited Tang to the Sangsing theatre for dinner. Tang refused contemptuously. Think he was a fool to go to dinner with Koo? Koo issued the invitation three times, and when Tang refused it for the third time with the contemptuous reference to Koo's place of birth, Koo took action. He called two of his "disciples"--one a former police inspector--to the Asia Hotel. He handed them the two shining pistols and told them he would pay them ten thousand if they would bump off Tang, and then ^{he would} use his influence with the Court to have them declared innocent if they were caught. The men did their work ^{as} efficiently as usual. But then Koo, always stingy and narrow-visioned, said Tang ^{is life} ~~was~~ never worth more than ~~sixty~~ sixty dollars. He paid them that, and when they were caught, he did not pay a cent to have them declared innocent.

^{A year later} ~~then~~ came Koo's cruel arrest. That was in early September, 1935. He didn't take it seriously at first, and when he said he had had a nervous breakdown and could not endure prison life like a common criminal, ~~the~~

and the Court allowed him to take rooms in the St. Marie's Hospital, he was all the more convinced that his case was not serious. So he took rooms in the Catholic St. Marie's Hospital, and there received his lawyers, brother, and friends, and had his opium and meals sent in. Nice thing, being a rich man and a Gang leader--didn't have to wear shackles and sit in a filthy jail like a Communist.

Only after he was arrested did Koo learn how many people there were in high ~~positions~~ positions who were his friends and were willing to "do something for him". Hardly a day passed but that his lawyers or one of his concubines came to inform him that this or that relative or ^{of some high official} wife had been to see them and offered to use their influence--for so much per. It was a great opportunity for people with influence and they did not let their shirt tails touch them until they got busy. For Koo was a rich man.

Koo did not take the ^{murder} charge seriously and so paid out only a few ten thousand dollars. And then he was brought to trial. Not a word was allowed to appear in the Chinese press, still the Court was filled ~~and~~ and surrounded by thousands of gangsters and their ^mfamilies who had profitted from Koo's activities in the past. It was rumored that they were going to rescue him by force and so the French had a lot of policemen there. For the French Concession is the happy hunting ground of Tu Yueh-seng who had determined to fleece Mr. Koo and teach him a lesson he would never forget.

But the trial went off peacefully. Only once was it disturbed. This was when the agonized screaming of a woman came from the prison cells back of the court. The judge retired at this rude interruption and a Chinese reporter who was in court secretly and did not want the Gang to know ^{it} became so scared that he leaped from the window and hurt himself. Later a foreign newspaper laconically reported that the screaming was nothing much--just a prison warden beating up a woman prison^{er} in the cells in the rear of the court. "The woman got the worst of the

altercation", the report concluded.

The trial lasted for a few days only, the gangster-murderers telling the whole story. ~~And~~^{Then}, to Mr. Koo's petrified horror, the Court declared him guilty, and shortly afterwards condemned him to fifteen years in prison and the loss of "civil rights" for ten years! Mr. Koo's lawyers protested, saying their client was suffering from mental disease, but a foreign alienist was called and denied it in a manner that indicated his scepticism about the very existence of a brain in Mr. Koo.

It was then that Mr. Koo and his brother Sung-mow began to disgorge their hard-earned money. They appealed to a Higher Court, and one foreign newspaper was able to report that "behind a thick veil of official secrecy" the case was being considered. It also reported that the guards in charge of Mr. Koo in St. Marie's Hospital had transferred fourteen thousand dollars to the gangster-murderers who had been the chief witnesses against Mr. Koo. And sure enough, when the case was heard again, still in semi-secret, one of the murderers appeared, a broad grin on his face. He declared ^{in Court} that he had lied at the first trial, and that Mr. Koo had nothing to do with instigating the murder. He had killed Mr. Tang because he didn't like his looks. A foreign newspaper again reported that the witness Chao "grinned as if the whole trial in court was just a joke."

The High Court continued to consider the case "behind a veil of official secrecy", and so long as Mr. Koo continued to pour out his life-time ^{loot} ~~earnings~~, this Court could reach no decision. Within three or four months, Mr. Koo had disgorged about ninety thousand dollars in cash, then began to sell property. It was rumored that he had sold his most beautiful concubine to a rich business man. And his brother, Sung-mow, ricksha king, sold his ricksha licenses to another gangster for around six hundred dollars a license.

The summer of 1936 came. The foreign press had forgotten Mr. Koo and the Chinese press dared not remember. ~~But~~ Mr. Koo was ^{now} poor.

and his trousers hung about him in festoons. And ^{only after his} ~~when the~~ money ceased to flow, ^{was} the High Court ~~was~~ able to reach a decision. A small notice appeared in a foreign newspaper in Shanghai ^{stating} that one Koo Tso-hsi, noted philanthropist and theatrical promoter, had been declared not guilty of a charge of instigating a murder of one Mr. Tang, a ~~business~~ business man. The verdict of the lower court was revoked, Mr. Koo was free and reinstated to civil rights.

Mr. Koo left St. Marie's Hospital "a shadow of his former self". And since form and not content is everything, he was an innocent man. Robbed of his money it is true, but still with "face". And outside were thousands of his followers who knew that things would be well for them again. There was always opium and drugs, even if everything else failed.

So the story ends happily and a threatened tragedy has been diverted by the majesty of Chinese law. And now that the bald recital of facts is finished, let birds sing, breezes rustle, and a child's laugh be raised in joy. Let Tu Yueh-seng's concubines learn English from American missionaries and let the Chinese Red Cross rejoice that one of its Directors has been vindicated by the Law. For lo, a man's life and happiness is safeguarded and he is returned to the peace and order of that great city, Shanghai.