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A. Synopsis - A. Smedley with L. Ehrlich - 15 pages

Synopsis

A Chinese Play

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The play begins on the Central China front in the early winter of 1940, just as the Chinese armies are opening an offensive against the Japanese who ~~xxx~~ have a string of ~~mountain~~ defences ~~works~~ in the mountains. Twenty miles this side of the Japanese defences is the general headquarters of General Wang, commander-in-chief of all the Chinese armies on this front. Near the group of peasant buildings in which his headquarters is located is a small market-town, existing precariously.

The first scene shows a shabby street of this village, with typical vendors of food, shoes, peanuts, miserable ~~match~~ cigarettes, matches that do not light unless a dozen are struck at one time together. These small vendors have their wares laid out directly on the ground at the side of the street, or on crude boards or boxes which they carry with them. For instance, the "wandering restaurant", set up on the street, is simply two long boxes which the owner carries from the end of a bamboo carrying pole. He comes in, deposits the boxes near together, and takes from their insides a variety of small cheap things to sell: fly-specked bread rolls, some eggs boiled hard in soya sauce, and some strips of fried fish. The shoe vendor carries two bundles of straw sandals and cloth shoes, hung from a string across his shoulder, and hawks them off: 50 cents for a pair of cloth shoes; 15 coppers for a pair of grass sandals. Soldiers in shabby blue-gray uniform, without belts, meander on and off, halting to bargain with ~~xxxxxx~~ vendors, but buying seldom. They buy a handful of peanuts for 2 coppers, divide the peanuts, and eat them, talking a few words. Civilians wander past, leisurely, spreading news, trying to learn new gossip, some of it about the main ~~xxxxxxxstreetxxxxxx~~ theme of the play.

The first and most pronounced character that enters from the very first is a Little Old Man, a civilian dressed in a long shabby, faded ~~xxxxxxx~~ coat belted with a twisted cloth, much the worse for dirt and years of ~~work~~. On his head is a little round black skull cap. He is about 60, with a wrinkled, humorous face. He's curious, interested in ~~everything~~ every shred of gossip, his tongue free in spreading tall tales. He's philosophic and objective about everything, for he is the eternal Chinese people. His talk, at other places in the play, reveals that he has a wife and a daughter--and he's a little afraid of his wife and of all women, preferring to give them a wide berth. He has a son in the guerrilla forces that are fighting over there behind the Japanese defence lines and this son, his "first born", sometimes comes home on some mission to the headquarters of General Wang. He has just come on this day, ~~bringingxxxx~~ a member of a platoon of guerrillas who have brought in some Japanese prisoners of war. This is fleeting talk by the old man. He has great respect for soldiers, especially for guerrilla soldiers, for they all are carriers of new ideas set loose since the war began. Some of these ideas concern democracy, women, etc. This little Old Man always stands with his hands clasped behind him, ~~and~~ holding a little switch which is for use on his donkey. His donkey might appear, loaded with hay or with two big bamboo baskets swung across its back, filled with new-garnered rice or beans. ~~atypical~~

This Little Old Man appears often in the play, and is the last character on the stage when the play ends. In this first scene he ~~again~~ gossips with a soldier, telling the soldier that he is a "travelled man" and a "national hero", who must "advise the people". Example:

Little Old Man: . . . now advise me! What do you think about these new women. . . you know, they've got a Woman's Salvation Assn. . . . ~~and~~ they say their husbands can't oppress them anymore. Advise me.

Soldier: The new women are all right, if you ask me. .

L.O.M.: Now advise me--do you think my daughter ought to join that Student Anti-Japanese Theatre and stand on a ~~stage~~ platform in public. . . before everybody. . . and even sing songs. . . Advise me.

Soldier: I'd advise you to let her.

L.O.M.: She's already done it! Didn't ask me a thing! Her mother told her to. . . didn't ask me a thing! ~~My mother told her to~~ Just asked the Woman's National Salvation Association! . . . Do you think ~~my neighbor's old woman~~ my Old Woman should run around with that Women's Assn. Advise me.

Soldier: I'd advise you to let her.

L.O.M.: ~~She's~~ She's done it already! . . . didn't ask me a thing. . . my neighbor's old woman joined too. My neighbor found it out and gave her a good beating. . .

Soldier: That's not right! I'd advise you not to beat your ~~wife~~ old woman.

L.O.M.: I didn't beat her! My neighbor beat his ~~wife~~. . . and see what happened to him!

Soldier: What happened?

L.O.M.: He had her down on the floor, . . . giving her a good hammering. . . she turned her head and bit him right here between the legs (indicating the inner part of the thigh) . . . he's been sick ever since. . . and the women's association arrested him and locked him up in one of their houses. . . for oppressing his wife.

Soldier: That ain't right. We mustn't fight each other. . . we must fight the Japanese.

L.O.M. That's what I ~~said~~ told my ~~neighbor~~ ^{old woman}. "If you want to fight, I ^{told} in from the guerrillas today. . . captured a lot of Japanese devils. ^{her} My own ~~neighbor~~ ^{said} advised me. "don't fight each other. . . fight the Japanese," ~~said~~.

Soldier: ~~That's right~~ I'd advise you to. . .

L.O.M. It's the women you've got to advise! Let them fight the Japanese! ~~if they want to fight. . . let them fight the Japanese.~~ I told my neighbor "let them fight the Japanese if they want to fight."

As these men talk a barber is busy shaving people, ~~and talking~~. This barber is typical of Chinese village barbers. He carries all his tools in a little wooden box in his hands. He has come on, carrying the box in one hand and a low, three-legged stool in the other. Places the stool on the ground and bargains with a soldier. The soldier sits on the stool and the barber takes out his heavy black razor and shaves his entire head and face, including his forehead, his eyelids, and his neck. Then takes out a long ear-swab, tilts the

soldiers first one way and then the other, inserts the ear swab, twirls it (to the grinning pleasure of the soldier).

This brief scene is interrupted by the entrance of two peasant carriers carrying big bundles of bedding and Red Cross boxes hung from the end of carrying poles. They drop them on the stage, go off to the "Wandering restaurant" and buy ~~2~~ cups of boiling hot water, drink, then sit down on the earth near their burdens, take out long thin pipes and smoke, gossiping with the Little Old Man who turns on them, avid with curiosity. We learn from their talk that these carriers have come from the Han River 20 miles away, carrying the bedding and boxes of two women, one a Chinese woman doctor, and the other an American woman nurse. The American woman ^{abounds} the Little Old Man, who learns that she's a real ~~foreigner~~ ^{foreigner} with "pale hair and eyes. . . eyes like a cat. . . a high nose and eyes sunk deeper in her head than any Chinese eyes." These two women are going to the field headquarters of General Wang, commander-in-chief of this front, and the Chinese woman doctor is the wife of a Col. Wu, General Wang's chief-of-staff. "Book-learning women" they are. . . ~~they~~ kept halting to take care of the wounded. . . the Japs were so near back there at the Han River that you could hear the machine-guns and the rifles going put-put-put. ~~xxxxxxx~~ The Chinese ^{soldier} drove the Japanese devils from one ~~town~~ town, and the two women went right in with them and took care of the wounded. . . the streets of the town were filthy with Japanese shit. . . the place stank for miles. Dead dogs and horses and men lying ~~around~~ ^{around}, and ~~xxxxxxx~~ fighting everywhere. The Little Old Man finds this very interesting.

The two women soon enter. They are dressed just like the soldiers, but neater, and beat the dust from their uniforms, take off their caps, wipe their faces and heads with the small handtowels tied to their belts, from which hang enamel drinking cups. They take off the drinking cups, buy some hot water, and sit on their boxes or bedding sipping the water and talking about their weariness, air-raids. . . wonder how much further they have to go to reach General Wang's field headquarters. Little Old Man stares at the foreign woman, asking her age, if she is married and why not at her age--if she had no father and mother or elder brother to arrange a marriage for her; asks how far she can see with those eyes. . . as far as a Chinese? Doesn't seem possible to him. Learns that America is far away and that you have to go by a boat for weeks. Finds out that the two women are medical workers.

The women learn from the Little Old Man that General Wang's headquarters is only half a mile further ~~on~~ on. He and the carriers gossip about General Wang. The Little Old Man says General Wang is taller than a horse and ~~xxxx~~ so strong he can throw a horse across a river. . . but he himself does not see any use of trying to throw a horse across a river, etc., etc. But General Wang goes right up to the front and kills Japanese with his own hands and, "they" say, the old General is not afraid of death. . . even that he wants to die maybe.

~~Some~~ ^{Come} As they talk the tapping of a drum is heard and on the stage a group of 5-6 thin, dusty students. The first carries a little drum, the second a double standard with a red banner, rolled up; the others a flute and a hu-chin (Chinese violin) and one carries bamboo bastanets to keep time, when singing or speaking in rythm. They unfurl the standards with the banner attached and we see the words: "Student's Anti-Japanese Theatre" across it. Everyone gathers around.

We learn that these students will give a play after sunset, down at the drum tower this evening, and everybody must come. Urged to give it now, they say they are too tired; ~~xxxxxxwixxixxixx~~ urged to sing and dance, they refuse to dance but agree to sing a song giving news of the war. One of them clicks the castanets to keep the rhythm and sings a song of a ~~xxxxxx~~ battle: Example:

First, look at the battle of Lukuoochiao,
The ancient bridge was ten spans high,
On July 7th the enemy came,
Our northern soldiers fought and died!
All: Ega-yoh, ega ai-yoh,
Our northern soldiers fought and died.

Second, look at the battle of Ping-hsing-kwan,
Our Eighth Route Army, fierce and free
Slew three thousand enemy dwarfs,
Men without souls, men without souls.
All: Ega-yoh, ega ai-yoh,
Men without souls, men without souls.

Then look at the battle of brave Nanking,
With many big camps and many brave men,
Chiang Kai-shek like a burning flame
Daily reviewed the many big troops.
All: Ega-yoh, ega ai-yoh,
Daily reviewed the many big troops.

Etc., etc. The song ends, the little drum taps, the standards are wound up, and the students ~~xxxxx~~ march off, telling everyone to tell everyone to come to drum tower tonight to see the play. Most of the people follow them, marching to the tapping drum. The Little Old Man, the two women and the carriers are left. The Little Old Man tells them the direction to take to General Wang's headquarters and they go. He remains, watching them go, shaking his head in excitement. All sorts of things are happening in this war, he says. . . "foreigners coming to the front. . . students getting on a stage and giving plays, women arresting their husbands and locking them up for oppressing their wives. . . his son talking about something called democracy and ~~xxxxxxixxixx~~ everybody fighting and everything. "

"I must go tell my neighbor," he says.

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The second scene introduces all the main characters. The chief of these is General Wang, commander-in-chief of this front. A tall, heavily-built man of 60 or more; morose, gloomy, tormented by the mistakes he has made in his past. From two headquarters guards who patrol before a low group of buildings, and from a little boy orderly ^(Little Deal) of 10, a war-orphan who has been "adopted" by one of the Army officers, we see the new China in birth. The little boy is learning to read and write, sitting under an overhanging tree, near a long table on the stage, where all the action in this scene and most of the others take place. The table is covered with papers, documents, maps, surrounded by benches. One of the guards has no use for reading and writing. A soldier needs only to know how to shoot straight, he says. The distant roar of battle comes intermittently as they talk. The dull guard, with no use for learning, says only rich men need to learn from books. Even then they can become traitors, so what's the use. This remark about

"traitors" causes an angry dispute and scene between the ~~three boys~~, ^{two men + the boy} and in the midst of it the Little Old Man comes in and watches and listens placidly, his hands folded behind his back. We learn that in the past General Wang was accused of being a traitor, or, anyway, a puppet of the Japanese. He had been in command, with his army, of Peiping, but when the war began and the Japanese opened fire, he did not fight. His army, outside Peiping in the province of the north, began to fight at once, commanded by a young officer, named Chou, who is ~~the~~ General Wang's foster-son. Chou had a bitter quarrel with General Wang and even called him a traitor to his face because the old General surrendered the city to the Japanese without firing a shot; and the Japanese proclaimed him as head of a new puppet government, without his permission, and practically held him prisoner. The old General's justification for this ^{was} that the Chinese Government had not given him orders to fight the Japanese, and he thought the Government would negotiate with the Japanese, as it has done since 1931 in Manchuria, and settle the fighting merely as another "local incident". But his Army, commanded by his foster-son, fought to the death all around the city, over the wheat fields. Inside the city students broke open the prison and released the political prisoners and they slipped out to the fighting army, joined it, fought, and died. The old General, tormented by national accusations that he was a traitor because he surrendered Peiping and did not fight, was finally prevailed upon by a Col. Wu (his second foster son) to escape from the Japanese and join ~~the~~ the young Commander Chou. The old General then took command of his army again and began to fight the Japanese. He had, by now fought for ~~three and a half years~~ three and a half years on every battlefield of the country. ~~The~~

The whole play is built around this old General Wang, who is haunted by the ghost of his past mistakes. He sprang from the old China, with its Confucian virtues of obedience and loyalty to superiors. His two foster-sons, Commander Chou and Col. Wu, are young men, modern ~~young men and~~ militant democrats ~~upon whom~~ upon whom he leans for support in all he does and thinks. They talk with him, read with him. Commander Chou, one of these foster-sons, is his harsh, watchful critic, sparing no words, ~~quite~~ direct, frank, ~~uncompromising~~ uncompromising in both military and political faith. Chou sprang from the common people, was once a common soldier, and the old General Wang, ~~having~~ having no children of his own, had "adopted" him and sent him to school. For the old General himself had once been a common soldier and had arisen from the ranks in the midst of national turmoil. The second foster-son, Col. Wu, is now the old General's chief-of-staff and general aid in headquarters. Wu is an intellectual, thin, tubercular, a gentle but keen-minded man. He always supports the old man ~~and~~ and prevails upon him by kindness and love instead of by criticism. Col. Wu's wife is the Chinese woman doctor, Dr. Lin, who has just come up to the front, and who passed through the village in the first scene, together with the American woman nurse. Commander Chou, the second foster-son, ~~was~~ was once married but his wife was killed in an air-raid. He has never gotten over this.

In ~~the~~ ^{this} scene appears a dapper General, General Li, commander of three divisions under the general command of the old General Wang. He is a big landlord, formerly governor of a province, feudal-minded, reactionary. A Confucian, believing in the ancient virtues of obedience, loyalty, benevolence to inferiors such as the common people. He despises the new ideas of the younger generation, with their talk of equality of the sexes, equality, fraternity of the new world. General Li condemns

the younger generation which, he says, despises their own ancient virtues but are submissive before foreign ideas. Democracy, he says, is nothing but the "outer defence works of Communism", and to allow democratic equality to the people is "like inviting a burglar into your own house and committing suicide with your own hands."

General Li is supported by a young officer in his headquarters, a Col. Chen, a mysterious character supposed to be his political director, but in reality a man who represents the Chinese secret service, which is trying to ferret out all "dangerous thoughts" in the various armies, and destroying them. This officer has a secret radio which he and General Li use to send confidential reports to the national capital, though they are supposed to send all messages through the Army radio in the old General Wang's headquarters. This Col. Chen is also in touch with the Japanese, having been one of the followers of the puppet chief, Wang Ching-wei, in Nanking. He and General Li agree that if the war goes on, the country will be so impoverished that there will be a social revolution in which they will be washed out of existence. General Li believes all this, but does not know that Col. Chen is in touch with the Japanese. Col. Chen merely tries to use the dapper General Li as a tool to demoralize this front, to make peace with the Japanese and bring the war to an end. For the Japs have big things in the future--against the western powers, and wish to settle the "China incident" through a fake peace. Col. Chen plays upon the dapper General Li's ~~ambitious~~ pompous pride, and ~~ambition~~ and his ambition to become commander-in-chief of this front instead of the Old General Wang. General Li, ~~however~~ a wily, cunning politician who has but recently come to the front, despises the slow-moving old northern General, Wang. He thinks the old General is not only too old, but too ~~too~~ stupid to command; he ~~therefore~~ uses every opportunity to let the old General Wang feel this, and never misses a chance to make indirect references ~~to~~ about General Wang's ~~unclear~~ unclear past when he collaborated with the Japanese and surrendered Peiping ~~without fighting~~. He studies and uses every method to split the Old General Wang off from his two main supporters, his foster-sons. He tries to use Col. Wu's tuberculosis to have him transferred from the front, knowing the old General depends upon Wu, and that the second foster-son, Chou, is always in the field. General Li learns that the guerrillas have just brought in some Japanese prisoners of war, and learns from Chen, the secret-service man, that some of the commanders of these guerrillas are Communists. They send reports to the national capital that the old General Wang is working with the ~~Communist~~ guerrillas, and Chungking ~~orders~~ orders the old General Wang to dispatch troops to "liquidate" these guerrillas. The Old General refuses to turn his guns on his own countrymen in the very midst of an offensive. The dapper, wily southern General, Li, says and believes that since the old northern General Wang had been a traitor once, he could be one again. He uses this idea to its full, and Col. Chen, the spy, instigates him, but hopes it is true; hopes that the old General will make peace with the Japanese and help bring the war to an end. He holds out the possibility that the dapper General Li may become commander-in-chief in his place. ~~and so~~

(Note: I am not yet certain if we should ~~leave out~~ ^{use} this spy, Col. Chen, or not. It is a true picture of the confusion in China, and I do not yet know how to develop General Li's ambitious, intriguing character without his help. The conversation between the two men must bring this out, for General Li has no support in the headquarters of

the commander-in-chief. We must consider this problem.)

General Li is hostile to all the new ideas in the armies. Soldiers being taught to read and write, take part in ~~xxxx~~ discussions, attend mass meetings, when "a soldier's sole duty is to die on the field of battle". He thinks the new ideas are disintegrating China and its ancient social system. The guerrillas in the rear of the Japanese not only talk about democracy, he says, but have even ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxx~~ "forced" the people to hold elections for new officials to take the place of the old officials who fled before the Japanese. He considers the medical care of the wounded as a waste of money and time, for "China is too poor" to bother with such trivialities.

This whole scene brings in all the main characters: the old morose northern General, Wang; his two foster sons, Dr. Lin the woman doctor, and the American woman nurse, her assistant. Commander Chou, one of the foster-sons, commands a division and is moving up to the battle field the next night to relieve another division. ~~xxxx~~ The Japanese are ~~xxxx~~ throwing in re-enforcements on this front and the guerrillas are trying to prevent it by destroying their rear lines of communications. But the Japanese have trucks, airplanes, and all necessary weapons and ammunition; gasoline and other supplies. The Chinese have not one truck, not one airplane, and only a field guns to stop the Japanese. All Chinese supplies have to be carried up by men. The common people help in this, and bring back the wounded on stretchers carried on their shoulders. ~~xxxx~~

The Chinese capture prisoners, but they are their own countrymen fighting as puppets in the Japanese army. They are, to the old General Wang's horror, not their soldiers who had once been a part of his own northern army before the war began. But when he surrendered Peiping without fighting, when he did not fight, some of his troops hesitated to fight also and the Japanese surrounded and took them prisoner, then retrained them and inducted them into the Japanese Army as puppets. A battalion of them are now on this ^{central} China front, fighting their own brothers. This fact arouses the ^{sense of guilt} old General Wang. He thinks of them as ghosts of his own past sins, and he is obsessed with the idea of winning them over. They are the concrete reflection of his past sins, and add to his spiritual torment. (General Li plays upon this fact, deepening his sense of guilt. More and more the old General knows that he must wipe out his sins in every way, win the puppet soldier over; he says he cannot die, ~~until~~ can never retreat a step, lest his very memory become a leer upon the face of Chinese history. He is old, he says, his head is white; he cannot tarry, for regrets will be too late. "Until I gain my aim, my name is no more than dust and sand; the moon and winds my companion."

In the play there is one scene, a farewell evening dinner, around the table under the tree before general headquarters. The food is simple, there is wine, and the young people ~~xxxxxx~~ merry and at times silent. ~~Because~~ Commander Chou, the old man's foster-son, is leaving for the front at midnight, to command his crack division against the enemy. As they talk, the old morose General sits like a ghost at the banquet table, listening to all their new ideas about a future democratic China. He sometimes stands up, walks behind them, ~~xxxxxx~~, listening, saying nothing; but generally he sits in silence. The silences fall like omens of portent. [In this scene we see the new and deep attraction which has sprung up between this young Commander Chou and the American woman nurse. They both hesitate; she shrinks back

→ [The unspoken love between them must be built up gradually - from earliest scenes - Or perhaps they have already met and the time covered by the play will project them as an hour or other

This relation-
Ship must
be delicately
handled - it
must be
rather muted,
tender, with
the meanings
more felt
than expressed.
It must be
a scene of
great warmth
and poignancy
- yet restrained.

before the growing consciousness of this attraction; he becomes thoughtful, also speculating. The old General Wang sees what is happening and disapproves. He does not believe that Chinese and foreigners should mix; the problems too great, for ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~, as he says later, "this is not her country". But the young commander Chou is a direct, frank, political man. He sees no problem for modern men and women. He knows ~~that~~ that "my life belongs to the nation". Yet he hopes. The American woman is the first woman he has been able to talk to since the war began. She awakens his loneliness, arouses speculations, possibilities. . . but hesitates.

This scene is played out under the candle light at night. The student theatrical group, returning from giving a play in the village, come to sing a song of farewell to the young Commander Chou. As they sing, soldiers and guards come on and stand in the shadows, listening. Just before they leave they sing a new song of victory, one which the American woman nurse has just taught them. They sing it at their play this night, before the people and soldiers, and they sing it now ~~as they stand before the stage~~ as a farewell to Commander Chou. They have their little drum, their flute, and Chinese violin--their orchestra. As they sing, the melody of ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ the Victory Chorus of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is heard. This the American nurse has taught them, as also the words, which go:

Arise, arise, you common people,
Common people throughout the world!
Tomorrow dawns the day of vict'ry,
Dawn of the people's sovereignty.
When the enemy's defeated,
Motherland is liberated,
Victory shines everywhere!
Arise, arise, you common people,
Common people throughout the world!

To this simplified, magnificent melody, played on simple Chinese instruments, they finally move off into the darkness and their voices come fitfully ~~xxxx~~ as they return to their barracks.

General Wang and his foster-son and chief-of-staff, Wu, are called inside the building by telegraphic orders from the national capital about the guerrillas, whom they are ordered to liquidate. ~~because they are called Communists.~~ General Wang is also leaving for a brief trip to the front this night, with Commander Chou. Chou will be on a front directly facing the battalion of northern puppet troops, and the old morose General believes that he can talk with their sentries and induce them to desert the Japanese and come over to him. He hopes that they will recognize his voice as ~~xxxxxx~~ of old and will come over. Often Chinese soldiers right at the front have spoken through the night with the puppet sentries, and he hopes to do the same, win them over, and wipe out one sin on his conscience. Eventually Commander Chou and the American woman nurse are left alone on the stage, under the tree. Chou must leave for the front in half an hour. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ A shy silence falls between them. Through this silence, lit by only one guttering candle, comes the distant wierd tapping ~~xxx~~ of wood on hollow bamboo. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ The American woman turns, ~~and~~ listens, saying:

~~That sound~~
When I hear that. . . it is like the warning of death."

"It is but the watchman telling the night," Chou replies.

Haltingly they speak of ~~his~~ the coming battle. . . of his danger. . . and one never knows what the end will be. He has fought in a hundred ~~in~~ battles and has always returned, he says. Whatever comes, he says, will not matter for. . . (he ~~hesitates~~ speaks slowly) "my life belongs to the nation. Men like me are only bridges to come distant future."

"You are the future. . . you must not. . . cannot. . . die," she says.

She speaks with horror of his death. For she, like the old General, is also haunted by a sense of guilt. The old General's sense of guilt is due to his own personal guilt in the past, with its far-reaching ^{national} consequences. The American woman's sense of guilt is national, because her country is furnishing Japan with the weapons of war to wage war on China. If Commander Chou falls in battle, ~~it would be~~ she says, he would be killed with weapons from her own country. Chou insists that no individual is responsible for the sins of his whole nation. She says that each individual must bear that responsibility-- especially in a democracy. Only people who are aware, he says, can be held responsible; ~~and~~ she replies that all people in a democracy must be aware; and if not, they ~~are~~ are covered with blood guilt. No one can escape the results of ~~their~~ their ~~actions~~ actions.

A guard with horses ^{is heard approaching} ~~comes~~ to take Commander Chou, for they must leave for the front. Just before ~~Chou~~ goes, he hesitates, then gives the American woman a jade ring, saying,

^{me . . . to} "Take it. It is of little value as value goes in this world. But to us it is a symbol . . . of hope. . . and faith."

The American woman extends her hand and he slips the ring on it, then stands stiffly. She tries to be nonchalant and cool, but turns suddenly and buries her face in her hands, ~~weeping~~. The guard stamps on the stage and Commander Chou turns and goes quickly with him. The Old General comes from the building, ready for the front, strides off stage and his voice is heard ^{in the distance} talking with sentries, and then ~~the sound of~~ horses hoofs sound as the commanders ride away into the night. The American woman listens, goes to the far side of the stage, straining to hear. ~~The~~ Silence settles and through it comes the distant ~~wierd~~ sound of wood tapping on hollow bamboo.

*Her emotion
ought to be
implied
rather
than
projected
in their
rather
mechanistic
terms.*

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There is one scene, very short, right at the front, with the shadows of soldiers in the dark trenches ~~before~~ around the base of a hill. The soldiers walk in a half-whisper. They have just taken over from another unit, and Commander Chou is their commander. ~~the old general~~ Right up the hill before them is one of the enemy strong points, manned by the puppet northern troops. ^{just a few sentries} Puppet sentries are always in the forest, and sometimes the Chinese in the past have talked with them through the night. Old General Wang, with Commander Chou and body-guards with Tommy-guns come through the trenches. In this short scene, old General Wang, with a few of the bodyguards, crawls up out of the trenches up the hill. Someone has heard Chinese voices from the enemy strong point above and the old General hopes to talk with them ~~through the night~~ and win them over. He is suddenly

will remove him from command and perhaps shoot him if he does not retreat and save the lives of his troops; or if General Wang does not release him and allow him to go to the rear, with Col. Chen.

The old General gives an order to call Col. Chen to his headquarters. He orders General Li inside the building while he talks with Chen. In this scene Chen is revealed as a man not only in the Chinese secret service, but in contact with the Japanese. General Wang has him searched, finds ~~xxxxxxx~~ proof of his suspicion, and orders him to be shot just outside headquarters. ~~xxxxx~~ In an attempt to save himself, Col. Chen tells the truth, but pleads that he merely works in the interests of peace and to save the nation from destruction. He ~~remindsxGeneral~~ pleads for his life, ~~xxx~~ saying that he will fight the Japanese if General Wang spares him. ~~xxxxreminds~~ General Wang ~~remindsxhimxxxx~~ calls him a traitor, and Col. Chen reminds him that he himself was once called that, and for doing just what he, Chen, has been doing--collaborating with the Japanese,--to save cities and armies from destruction. The old General has Chen taken out to be shot and the man's voice is heard screaming from off-stage calling General Wang a traitor, threatening him with destruction by the Japanese.

This whole scene has to be projected in such a way as to create suspense - perhaps as an uncertain up to the end as to whether the old man will weaken or be destroyed or trapped - and at the last minute have him thwart and overmaster the two "characters" who had thought the old General could be easily destroyed.

The dapper, wily General Li has watched all this. Terrified he gives orders to his division fighting the guerrillas to cease and to turn their guns on the Japanese and help stem the tide of Japanese advance. The guerrilla messenger rides with this message through the mountains. The wily little General Li asks to command his one remaining regiment in battle against the enemy. The old General Wang tells him that his own regimental commanders will do that--have already asked ~~xxxxxxx~~ for battle orders and have left for the battlefield. "We need no fools here," General Wang tells the dapper little General. "Are you going to shoot me too?" asks the terrified little General. Instead, General Wang orders him to take his horse and some bodyguards and to leave the front for the rear at once. He turns General Li over to the opinion of the country, he says --thus condemning him as a ~~coward~~.

~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Walking wounded and wounded on stretchers carried by civilians cross the stage. The Chinese woman doctor and the American woman nurse are somewhere near headquarters, tending the wounded. They refuse to leave ~~xxxx~~ so long as the Army fights. The little boy, "Little Devil", 10 years of age, has been attached to the American woman nurse as ~~an~~ a little orderly and helper. He adores her ~~xxxxxxx~~. She wears a Japanese captured pistol given her by the young Commander Chou in an earlier scene, and the Little Devil has always had ~~xxxxx~~ one great ambition--also to get a captured Japanese pistol and to fight the Japanese. This theme runs throughout his talk, wherever he appears in the play.

No news comes from Commander Chou. Cut off, they can ~~neither~~ get word to him or receive a message. The Walking wounded have heard that their commander has been wounded or killed in battle, but they do not know which commander it is. The old General hears ^{but} their talk and is tormented by it. ~~Chou~~ Chou has been his harsh critic, he loves him as his own son. To the old man, ~~Chou~~ as to the American woman nurse, Chou represents the future. His second foster-son, Col. Wu, tries desperately to get runners through to Commander Chou but fails. Wounded soldiers coming in, and runners returning, in vain, tell of the puppet Chinese soldiers ~~fighting with the Japanese, against them~~. Some of these puppets have deserted to the Chinese and are brought in,

telling old General Wang that all of them are trying to desert. That the Japanese have shot some of them for their attempts and are driving the others forward against the headquarters. They have by now learned that General Wang, their former commander, is commander of this entire front. The battalion ~~xxxx~~ of puppets is being driven forward, side by side, toward headquarters, *still afraid to desert the Japanese.*

General Wang determines in desperation to win them over, to make them turn their guns on the Japanese. ~~They might turn the tide~~ With the division of General Li which has been fighting the guerrillas, with General Li's one remaining regiment, and with these puppets, the tide of battle might be turned against the enemy. Guided by the puppets, he takes his pistol in his hand and ~~xxxxxxx~~ leaves the stage for the battlefield, going along a river bed to be within ear-shot of the puppet battalion. It seems to the old General that this must be his last act on earth--to win them over, to wipe out his guilt, to turn the tide of battle. In vain Col. Wu argues with him. He goes, driven by a sense of mortal guilt which he must wipe out or die. Col. Wu prepares to follow him, arming himself.

~~While he is gone, General Wang is gone~~
~~xxxxxxx~~ soldiers bring in the body of Commander Chou, the old man's foster-son. He is dead. They scrape everything off the long table under the tree and lay the body there, outstretched. A messenger goes for Dr. Lin and Frances, though it is too late, and ~~then~~ the old General Wang is half carried on the stage by ~~the~~ puppet soldiers and Chinese soldiers. Mortally wounded, they lead him to the table, their voices in confusion. ~~xxxxxx~~ Col. Wu helps support him as they place benches together near the table and try to make him lie there. He refuses to lie down. ~~Then~~ Some of the puppet soldiers had seen him, heard his voice and, led by the puppet deserters, have begun to turn their guns on the Japanese about them. Messengers bring the news to the old ~~General~~. In a convulsive movement he stands up, holding onto Col. Wu, ~~xxxxxxx~~ overcome with joy. Then he sees the body of his foster-son, Chou, stares in ~~shocked~~ ~~stunned~~ horrified silence, touches him, ~~and~~ sinks and falls to the earth just as Dr. Lin, the doctor, and the American woman nurse, followed by the little boy, Little Devil, run on the stage. ~~Then~~ Dr. Lin and Col. Wu work over the old man. But he is dead and they kneel over his body in silence. The American woman nurse has stood transfixed, moving slowly toward the body of Commander Chou, on the table. "You... you have come back... ~~you belong to~~ ~~the future!~~" she says. ~~She stands upright staring before her.~~ ~~"And I..."~~ ~~she asks herself in despair, "where... do I... belong?"~~

~~can't die!~~ *(desperately)* ~~the losing combat!~~ *"But if it can't be! You are killed. you! the future! It can't be... we have... we have"*

set. A very short silence intervenes. The last scene is the same. The intermittent sound of guns comes from the mountain ranges in the far distance, as at first. Chinese soldiers, puppet soldiers, civilians in arms, stand massed on the right, their guns pointed to the earth, their heads uncovered and bowed. Two biers, draped with the national flag, lie on the left of the stage. Near them stand Col. Wu, the Chinese woman doctor and the American nurse. Little tables draped with red cloth are before the buildings in the back and near the covered biers. On them glow lighted candles and stacks of incense in jars. Small plates hold fruit as offerings to the spirits of the dead. (This funeral scene must be developed differently, perhaps with the bodies carried across the stage, following by soldiers marching, their guns pointed to the earth, with ~~muffled~~ *muffled* drums. Behind the

The Little Old Man has come on the stage watching. Suddenly Frances trembles or weeps in despair. The Little Old Man starts, cries! at her in amazement, saying: "A prisoner to..."

I think this sort of thing must be avoided - it is too melodramatic and explicit.

bodies, carried by soldiers, could come palanquins with food, and other ancient devices of a Chinese funeral. It could be a slow, solemn process ~~crossing~~^{crossing} crossing the stage. Col. Wu, as the foster-son of old General Wang, could wear white, the color of mourning; so could Dr. Lin, his wife. The "Little Devil", the adopted son of Commander Chou, could also wear mourning white.)

The American woman nurse is dressed to leave the front, as in the first scene. She is accompanying the dead to the rear, returning to her own country to tell her people how the Chinese fight and die. There could be a brief farewell to the dead, delivered by Col. Wu before ~~the~~ the troops which he now commands. By his side could stand two officers. At the left of the stage, front or right, could stand the Little Old Man, in his long faded coat, the little switch held in his hand as when he first appeared. He could view all this with interest, never moving from his place. He listens to the speech of Col. Wu, nodding his head in sympathy.

The ceremony and the speech to the troops ended, Col. Wu gives them the order to march off toward the new front. They could march off, and as they go the Volunteer Marching Song of the Chinese armies could be taken up militantly, as they go.

"Arise, you who refuse to be bond slaves,
With our flesh and blood ~~we~~
We will build a new Great Wall.
China's masses have met the day of danger,
Indignation fills the hearts of all our countrymen,
Arise! Arise! Arise!
Millions of hearts with one mind
Brave the enemy's gun-fire,
March on!
Brave the enemy's gun-fire,
March on! March on! On. . . on. . . on!"

~~She is dressed to leave the front.~~

The American woman nurse turns to Col. Wu and his wife, Dr. Lin, grasps their hands in farewell. Then she turns to the little boy, Little Devil, and asks him if he has thought over her talk with him. That is, that he should go with her and be her son, as he had been the adopted son of Commander Chou before. She would take him with her to America, she tells him. The little boy shakes his head and says: "No. Now every man is needed at the front to fight. But you can adopt me after the final victory."

The American nurse then quickly unstraps the Japanese pistol from her waist and slings it around the little boy's shoulder. *His one wish is gratified.*

"Then be a good soldier, my son," she tells him.

Once again she ^{and} Dr. Lin and Col. Wu ~~say farewell~~^{bid farewell}. She and Dr. Lin embrace. They ^{embrace} with the Little Devil, start off stage right, following the soldiers whose voices still sound from the distance. The American woman starts ~~to follow the bodies~~ off left, but turns and comes back to the table. She reaches down to the earth and lifts up a handful of earth, wraps it in her pocket and places it in her breast pocket. The Little Old Man, watching all this uncomprehendingly,

slowly walks up to where she lifted the earth, rubs the place with his foot curiously.

"What did you find there?" he asks her.

"Earth. . . earth. . . he fell. . . here", she says, making a vague motion about her.

"Ah," says the Little Old Man, ~~xxxx~~ with wondering comprehension, staring off stage, left, where the biers went. ~~It must tell my neighbor! Great things are happening! In this world!~~

The American woman and the Little Old Man stare after the ~~biers, left, then turn right~~ ^{troops} and listen to the distant sound of the singing soldiers. The ~~xxxxxxx~~ Little Old Man nods his head up and down.

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Song of the Chinese guerrillas
(crudely translated into English)

In all the thick forests
Are the many camps of our comrades,
On all high mountains
There are thousands of our brothers.
We have no food, we have no clothes,
But we'll capture these from the enemy.
We have no guns, we have no rifles,
But the enemy will make and bring these to us.
We were reared in this land,
Every inch of it belongs to us,
Whoever dares to take it from us,
We will find them to the death.