

6 Had that old man died during Songsam's absence? He had not seen him among the men he had met so far in the village. Hanging onto the tree, Songsam looked up at the clear autumn sky. Though he did not shake the branch, some of the remaining chestnut burrs burst open, and the nuts fell to the ground.

7 When he reached the house that was being used temporarily as the Public Peace Office, he found someone there bound tightly with rope. This was the first young man he had seen in the village. As Songsam drew closer and examined his face, he was taken aback. It was none other than his boyhood friend Tokjae.

8 Songsam asked one of the security guards from his detachment who had accompanied him from Ch'ont'ae what the situation was. The guard answered that the prisoner had been vice-chairman of the Communist Farmers' Alliance and that he had just been captured while hiding in his own house here in the village.

9 Songsam squatted by the house and lit a cigarette. Tokjae was to be escorted to Ch'ongdan by one of the young security guards.

10 After a while Songsam lit a cigarette from the one he had been smoking, then stood up.

11 "I'll take the guy myself."

12 Tokjae kept his face turned away; he did not even glance at Songsam.

13 They left the village.

14 Songsam kept smoking, but he could not taste the tobacco. He just sucked and puffed. He suddenly realized that Tokjae might like a smoke. He recalled when they were boys how they had shared a smoke of dried pumpkin leaves, hiding from the adults in the corner of the wall around the house. But how could he offer a guy like this a cigarette?

15 Once, when they were boys, he had gone with Tokjae to steal chestnuts from the old man with the wen. Songsam was taking his turn climbing the tree when suddenly they heard the old man shouting. Songsam slid down the tree and got chestnut burrs stuck in his rear end. Yet he dashed off without doing anything about them. Once they had run far enough that the old man could not catch them, he turned his backside toward Tokjae. It hurt even more to have the prickly chestnut spines pulled out. Tears ran freely down Songsam's face. Tokjae held out a fistful of his own chestnuts, then thrust them into Songsam's pocket.

16 Songsam had just lit a cigarette from the last one he had smoked, but he tossed it away. He made up his mind not to smoke anymore while he was escorting this bastard Tokjae.

17 They reached the mountain ridge road. He had often come to the ridge with Tokjae to cut fodder before Songsam moved to

the area around Ch'ont'ae, south of the thirty-eighth parallel, two years before the Liberation in 1945.

Songsam felt an inexplicable urge. He burst out shouting.

18 "You bastard, how many people have you killed?"

Tokjae glanced toward Songsam, then looked away again.

19 "How many people have you killed?"

20 Tokjae turned his face toward Songsam and glared. The light
21 in his eyes grew fierce and his mouth, which was surrounded by a
stubble beard, twitched.

"So, is that what you've been doing? Killing people?"

22 That bastard! Still, Songsam felt a clearing in the center of
23 his chest, as if something caught there had been released. But then
he said, "Why wouldn't someone like the vice-chairman of the
Farmers' Alliance try to escape? You must have been hiding out
because you had been given some assignment."

Tokjae did not respond.

24 "Well? Answer me. What kind of mission were you hiding
25 out to do?"

26 Silent, Tokjae just kept walking. The guy certainly seemed
cowed. At a time like this, it would be good to get a look at his face.
But Tokjae did not turn toward Songsam again.

27 Songsam took hold of the pistol in his belt.

28 "It's no use trying to explain your way out of it. You'll have to
be shot anyway, so go ahead and tell the truth."

29 Tokjae began to speak. "I'm not trying to get out of anything.
First and last, I'm the son of a dirt farmer. I was made vice-chairman
of the Farmers' Alliance because they said I was a hard worker. If
that's a crime worthy of death, there is nothing I can do. The only
skill I've got is tilling the ground." After a moment he continued.
"My father is sick in bed at home. It's been six months now."

30 Tokjae's father was a widower, a poor farmer who had grown
old with only his son by his side. Seven years ago his back had
already been bent, and his face had dark age spots.

31 "Are you married?"

32 "Yes," Tokjae answered after a moment.

33 "Who to?"

34 "To Shorty."

35 Not Shorty! Now that's interesting. Shorty, a fat little girl who
knew the breadth of the earth but not the height of the sky. Always
such a prig. Songsam and Tokjae had hated that about her. They
were always teasing and laughing at her. So that's who Tokjae had
married.

36 "And how many kids do you have?"

37 "Our first is due this fall."

38 Songsam tried to stifle a smile that rose to his lips in spite of
himself. Asking how many children Tokjae had and having him

answer that the first was due in autumn was so funny he could not stand it. Shorty—holding up her armload of a belly on that little body. But Songsam realized that this was not the place to laugh or joke about such things.

39 “Anyway, don’t you think it looks suspicious that you stayed behind and didn’t flee?”

40 “I tried to go. They said if there was an invasion from the south, every last man who was a man would be captured and killed, so all the men between seventeen and forty were forced to head north. I really didn’t have any choice. I thought I would carry my father on my back and go. But he wouldn’t stand for it. He said if a farmer leaves the fields he has already tilled and planted, where can he go? My father has always depended on me alone. He’s grown old farming all these years, and I have to be the one to close his eyes when the end comes. The truth is, people like us who just till the ground wouldn’t be any better off even if we *did* flee...”

41 Songsam himself had fled the past June. One night he secretly spoke to his father about escaping, but his father had said the same thing as Tokjae’s. How could a farmer flee and leave his work behind? Songsam fled alone. As he wandered along the strange roads through strange towns in the south, he never stopped thinking of the farm work he had left to his old parents and his wife and children. Fortunately, then as now, his family was healthy.

42 They crossed the ridge. Now, somehow, Songsam was the one who kept his eyes averted. The autumn sun was hot on his forehead. What a perfect day this would be for harvesting, he thought.

43 After they had gone down the far side of the ridge, Songsam hesitated.

44 It looked like a group of people wearing white clothes were stooped over working in the middle of the field. It was actually a flock of cranes, here in the so-called Demilitarized Zone at the thirty-eighth parallel. Even though people were no longer living here, the cranes remained as before.

45 Once when Songsam and Tokjae were about twelve years old, they had secretly set a snare and caught a crane. They even bound its wings with a straw rope. The two boys came out to the place they kept the crane almost every day; they would hold the crane around the neck and raise a ruckus trying to ride on its back. Then one day they heard the adults in the village talking in whispers. Some people had come from Seoul to hunt cranes. They had special permission from the Japanese governor-general to collect

specimens of some kind. When they heard this, the two boys raced off to the field. They were not worried about being caught by the adults and scolded. Now they had only one thought: their crane must not die. Without stopping to catch their breath, they scrambled through the weeds. They took the snare off the crane's leg and loosened the straw rope from its wings. But the crane could hardly walk, probably because it had been tied up for so long. The boys held the crane up between them and tossed it into the air. They heard a gunshot. The bird flapped its wings two, three, four times, but fell back to the ground. It was hit! But in the next instant, another crane in the grass nearby spread its wings. Their own crane, which had been lying on the ground, stretched out its long neck, gave a cry, and rose into the sky, too. They circled over the boys' heads, then flew off into the distance. The boys could not take their eyes off the spot in the blue sky where the cranes had disappeared.

"Let's go catch a crane." Songsam said abruptly.

Tokjae was bewildered. He did not know what was going on.

"I'll make a snare out of this, and you drive the cranes this way." Songsam untied Tokjae's bonds and took the cord. Before Tokjae knew it, Songsam was crawling through the grass.

At once, Tokjae's face went white. The words "you'll have to be shot" flashed through his mind. At any moment a bullet would come from wherever Songsam had crawled.

Some distance away, Songsam rose and turned toward Tokjae. "What do you mean standing there like an idiot! Go drive some cranes this way!"

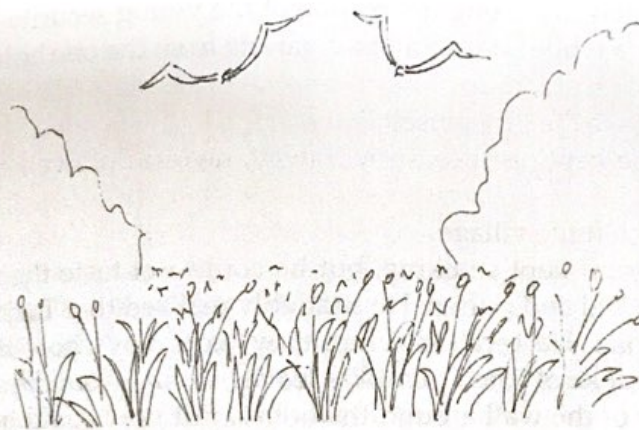
Only then did Tokjae realize what was happening. He started crawling through the weeds.

Above, two cranes were soaring, their vast wings spread against the high, blue autumn sky.

CRANES

HWANG SUNWON

Hwang Sunwon was born in northern Korea in 1915. The confusion of war and the love of literature are themes that entwine in Hwang Sunwon's life. When he was born, the Japanese occupied Korea, and his father was imprisoned as a resister. After World War II, Korea was divided at the 38th parallel into the Soviet-influenced North and the American-influenced South. With the coming of the Korean War, Hwang Sunwon left the North and moved to the South. During his youth and between open war, Hwang Sunwon was educated in Japanese and later attended the Waseda University in Tokyo, where he majored in English literature. He became an esteemed writer and a professor, and his writing reflects the isolation and disruption of war. His writings can be found in novels and short story collections.



The village just north of the thirty-eighth parallel was quiet beneath the clear, lofty autumn sky.

2 A white gourd lay where it had tumbled, leaning against another on the dirt-floored space between the rooms of an abandoned house.

3 An old man Songsam happened to meet put his long tobacco pipe behind his back. The children, as children would, had already fled from the street to keep their distance. Everyone's face was masked with fear.

4 Overall, the village showed few signs of the conflict that had just ended. Still, it did not seem to Songsam to be the same village where he had grown up.

5 He stopped walking at a grove of chestnut trees on the hill behind the village. He climbed one of the trees. In his mind, from far away, he could hear the shouts of the old man with a wen. Are you kids climbing my chestnut tree again?

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

JIALIN PENG

Jialin Peng was born in China in 1948. This story reflects some of the lighter tension felt by Jialin Peng as a result of the Cultural Revolution in China. After millennia of relatively stable rule under the dynastic system, China then experienced the continuing communist revolution. As in most revolutions, the heat of revolution produced victims, and those who did not support the revolution were often sent to prison or worse. Although today we may see the more stable, thermidor stage of the revolution, Jialin Peng's story offers insight into some social and political complications of the revolution while also offering insight into the Chinese name selection process. Other stories may be found in *Wild Cat: Stories of the Cultural Revolution*.



What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.

W. SHAKESPEARE

I adore Shakespeare, but in China a rose smells different when you give it another name. My names—family name, given name and adopted name—caused me no end of trouble.

My name was Chou Dexiao. Chou was my family name; Dexiao, the name given me by my father. De means "virtue" and xiao means "filial obedience." From the name you may deduce my father's high expectations. With this name I lived eighteen years

without mishap. When people used my name, they were not conscious of its literal meaning. A rose is a rose.

4 But a rose can decay. The Great Cultural Revolution began, and suddenly we found everything had the smell of social class: the girls' long braids stank of the capitalist class, so they had them cut short. My name reeked of the ruling class of feudal times. Virtue and filial obedience—the Revolutionary Proletariat did not like them. Therefore, I had to change my name to a revolutionary one. But that was more easily said than done, because for each revolutionary name, there might be thousands of people who wanted to use it. And it was inconvenient to share the same name with so many people, especially with your schoolmates.

5 In our class alone, there had already been two Zaofans (rebel), two Gemings (revolution), two Weibiaos (defenders of Lin Biao) and three Weidongs (defenders of Mao Zedong). I didn't want to share any of these names with my classmates. So I thought and thought, then I had an idea: why not call myself Weiqing (the defender of Jiang Qing)? Comrade Jiang Qing was the wife of our "great leader, great teacher, great commander and great helmsman" Chairman Mao Zedong. And she herself was the "standard-bearer of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution."

6 I was thrilled to have found a name so thoroughly revolutionary. I immediately started going through the name-changing procedures. All I had to do was to write a *dazibao* and put it on a wall at school. *Dazibao* literally meant a public poster handwritten in big fat characters. In the first days of the Cultural Revolution, millions upon millions of *dazibaos* appeared all over China, stuck to walls, pasted on doors and windows and hanging from wires. They denounced the enemies of the Revolution, criticized the corruption of Capitalism, Revisionism and Feudalism, and even made proclamations such as: A REVOLUTIONARY CROSSES THE STREET ON A RED LIGHT! and CAPITALIST SONS OF BITCHES ARE NOT SERVED IN THIS RESTAURANT!

7 I had hardly finished writing my new name for the first time when a voice thundered over my shoulder, "Do you want to be a counter-revolutionary?" I was astounded, and gazed in bewilderment at the speaker, Wang Zaofan, the head of a major Red Guard organization in our school. The name Zaofan meant "rebel" but his original name was Wenbin, meaning "gentle."

8 "Look," he said. "Your family name is Chou; it means 'hate.' What does 'Chou Weiqing' mean?"

9 I was so scared that I broke out in a cold sweat. My new name could imply that I hated Chairman Mao's wife! My God! If I had not shared the same desk all through school with Zaofan and if I had not let him copy from my papers in examinations, the consequences would have been too ghastly to contemplate!