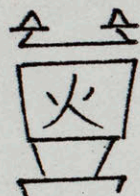


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# THE FINAL NIGHT OF TAIPAN CHIN

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The Final Night of Taipan Chin

by

Pai Hsienyung

Translated by Patia Isaku





As the bright lights went up in Taipei's live Westgate Square, a staccato of high heels rang on the staircase of the ballroom Nuits de Paris. Taipan Chin in the lead, a troupe of ten or so snazzily-outfitted taxi dancers came strutting up to the second floor. Just as she got to the entrance, Taipan Chin saw T'ung Tehuai, the manager of Nuits de Paris come scurrying out from inside, his face yellow with anxiety, wringing his hands.

"Taipan Chin!" he yelled at her. "By the time all of you have had dinner it'll be broad daylight! The guests won't wait; some have left already!"

"So? What's the big hurry? Aren't we here now?" Taipan Chin retorted, all smiles. "The girls wanted to pay me their respects; every one of them was fighting to drink a toast with me; would I dare to turn them down?" Cheongsammed in tightfitting black chiffon shot through with gold thread, her sleek black hair in an enormous bun on top of her head, like a Taoist monk; earrings, necklace, bracelets, hairpins, she was gold and emerald from head to foot. Her face already glowed from wine; even her eyelids had turned red.

"How can I stop you girls if you want to party hearty? But after all, we gotta take care of business here, don't we!" T'ung was still grouching.



Taipan Chin stopped short at the door. She let the chattering girls file past her into the ballroom. Poised with one hand against the doorpost, her alligator bag flung over her other shoulder, she pinned the manager down with a glance.

"Mister Big Manager," she commenced <sup>rapid fire</sup> with an assumed smile, "Do you really mean to hand me this whole crock of hot air, or are you just pulling my leg? If you are just pulling my leg I'll let it pass. If you're for real, tonight I'm going to give you my bill, item by item. So you want to take care of business here, huh?" Taipan Chin sniffed. "Don't blame me if I say a few words to my own credit: if it weren't for me being around these past five or six years, me, Chin Chaoli, the Jade Goddess of Mercy, your old trademark, could Nuits de Paris put on this spectacular today? Who stole Little Sweetie,

the hottest star at the Capital? And that pair of sisters, Green Peony and Pink Peony, from the Overseas? Did you haul them in here, Mister Big Manager? At least half the big spenders that check in here every day are my old buddies; they come to Nuits de Paris to shell out their dough; think they come here to clap for you, Mr. So-and-so? Besides, you've only paid me till yesterday. I'm doing you a favor coming tonight; if I don't show up, it's on the legit. Now I'm going to



say something you won't love to hear: when I, Chin Chaoli, first dived in at the Paramount in Shanghai, I'm afraid, Mr. So-and-so, you hadn't even got past a ballroom door yet. Who are you, Mr. Big Manager of Nuits de Paris, to teach me how to behave in a ballroom?"

~~Taipan Chin shot off a rapid fire of words,~~ Without giving T'ung a chance to talk back, she threw open the glass door to the ballroom and stalked in, three-inch stilettos striking the floor. Once she was inside, all around the guests began to cheer and beckon to her. "Taipan Chin! Taipan Chin!" Not even trying to make out who they were, she tossed them a smile and a couple of waves of her alligator bag and vanished into the dressing-room.

Up his mother's! She flung her bag onto the dressing table as soon as she entered the room. Spitting a curse, she parked her ass on the chair in front of the large mirror. What a cheap creep! Nuits de Paris this, Nuits de Paris that. It may not sound polite, but I'm afraid even the john at the Paramount took up more room than the Nuits de Paris dance floor! Why, anybody with a mug like T'ung's couldn't get a job cleaning toilet bowls at the Paramount. She opened a bottle of Evening in Paris and sprinkled a few drops over her head and body. As she gazed into the mirror she became lost in thought. What a hell of a note!



Tomorrow she's going to be Mrs. Bigshot herself, but she'd had to take that crap from that stinking dead-beat. Taipan Chin couldn't help shaking her head and letting out a somewhat regretful sigh. She wouldn't call Chin Chaoli so smart just because she landed a bank account after twenty years of ups and downs in the pleasure gardens.

When the Paramount's Lilac Beauty, Jen Taitai, was about to marry old man P'an, Taipan Chin had dropped a catty remark or two. "Isn't our little Lilac the sharp one! She's hooked herself a great big thousand-year-old *gold* turtle!" Actually, old man P'an had heaped so much attention on Chin Chaoli herself he'd spent enough money to build a mountain of gold. She was being picky in those days; he was old, had one hell of a B. O., too, so she booted him over to Jen Taitai. She'd shot off her mouth in front of her sworn sisters. "I'm not as starved for holy matrimony as you lot — all ready to grab some old bird with one foot in the grave!" But then one day she'd run into Jen Taitai in T'aipei sitting in her old man's Rich Spring Pavilion silk emporium, waving a sandalwood fan, looking very high and mighty, just like a bonafide Mrs. Bigshot. The former lilac beauty was now so fullblown the flesh on her upper arms hung down to the counter. "*Mercy!*" she purred. "My dear, are you still out there on that Sea of Bitterness redeeming those poor souls?" What could she say?



All she could do was grit her teeth and let that bitch get even with her. You couldn't call it so sensational, after all, to walk twenty years' worth of miles to end up like this. Only those little tarts just off the boat like Little Sweetie would come bustling over to drink to her. "Let's face it: our big sister's the head of the class after all, first to hit the jackpot. Boss Ch'en must have ten million at least, no?" A while ago when they were in the Top Marks Pavilion every one of that batch of little whores from the Nuits de Paris was so greeneyed they were practically drooling. To hear them talk about Boss Ch'en he was God knows what kind of rare object. Couldn't blame 'em, though. How would that lot of little whores have seen those days, that kind of style?

(same P) ← When she was in Shanghai, she had to use her toes, let alone her fingers, to add up the number of bigwigs who worshipped the hem of her skirt, men who had ~~x~~ nice little fortunes just like Ch'en's. Well, *fact is*, it's nothing like ten million. She'd asked somebody in Singapore to make a thorough investigation: a small rubber factory, two old houses. And his late wife's two kids had already gotten their share. According to her own private estimate, the whole fortune couldn't be worth less than four million. More than that: last month she'd



tried him on for size; except for his age and that he was bald on top, a bit of a penny-pincher, he was a decent joe. How could you blame somebody who left the T'aishan countryside and worked his ass off all over Southeast Asia all his life for treating a nickel like it was five bucks? But as soon as he'd bought that \$800,000 estate on Mount Yangming, he'd put it in her name. Really you had to give the old boy credit! A hillbilly who was willing to throw around a thousand pieces of gold just for her. As for age, honeychile! Taipan Chin drew up to the mirror and grimaced; suddenly a few crow's feet appeared on her heavily powdered face. Does a forty-year-old dame have any right to talk about other people's age? Even for a sixty-year-old bird like Ch'en she'd had to pull out God knows how many tricks; this past month or so Heaven knows how much money she'd wasted at the Soothing Fragrance Beauty Salon alone. Face-lifting, eyebrow-plucking — there wasn't an inch of meat on her face that hadn't suffered. Every time she went out with the old bird it was like she was headed for the execution grounds loaded down with chains and shackles; belly fastened, waist secured, falsies front and rear, she was fully armed with all the trappings, right in the middle of July, too — Taipan Chin gave her belly a couple of good scratches — it gave her prickly heat all over, itched like hell. And that wasn't all! When old man Ch'en



asked her right to her face, "May I enquire your age, Madam?" she'd had to act the coy ingenue, mewling back at him, "Gue - ess!" "Thirty?" Up his mother's! Only a man could be that blind. Taipan Chin couldn't ~~help~~ a chuckle. Thirty-five ~~she~~ flimflammed him; he was so startled his mouth popped open like a clam, as if he'd run into a ghost! The way he looked he'd never got close to any woman but that frumpy granmaw of a wife of his. The minute he'd clapped eyes on her in Taipei three of his seven souls had left. He was so bewitched he forgot how to say no. Anyway, let's face it, whatever he had on his mind he was way over the hill already. Taipan Chin drew herself up, breasts cocked. She wouldn't have to lift so much as a finger to fix that old boy.

Taipan Chin opened her bag and fished out a pack of Camels. She lit one, took a couple of good puffs and nodded: now she got it. No wonder all her sworn sisters were out to grab themselves some old bird with one foot in the grave; ~~that's~~ it: it had its advantages; saved a lot of trouble. Would a younger guy be so well-behaved? Was there a single time when Manny Ch'in came ashore she didn't ache all over? She'd told him frankly: she was pushing forty, six or seven years older than he was, too; where would she get the energy to tangle with him all the time? Sonofabitch he said that's exactly what he liked, an older woman! understanding. Tender. What'd he want, anyway? a mother? He'd told her,



though, he was just a kid when his mother died; he'd drifted around over the ocean all his life; never been loved by anybody. To tell the truth, he devoted himself to her more than if she were his own mother; no matter what far-off corner of the world he went to, he'd always send her some gift, a cashmere sweater from Hong Kong; an embroidered night kimono from Japan; Thai silks; this and that; there was no stopping him; and on top of it all a letter every week; ten or so jampacked pages copied from God alone knows what Compleat Letter-Writer: "Chaoli, My Belovéd!" — gave you the heebie-jeebies! Actually, he was a faithful fellow, he just didn't know how to show his feelings. Once he came back somewhat the worse for drink; threw his arms around her and burst into tears; a tiger of a man laid his head on her bosom and cried like a baby. You know why? Truth was, when he was in Japan he got lonely and slept with some Japanese broad; he felt he done her wrong; he felt bad. Really! What was all this? What the hell did he take her for, a highschool girl fallen in love for the first time? All excited he pulled out his bank book for her to look at; he'd saved <sup>NT</sup>\$70,000 already; just five more years — five years, mamma mia! — five more years of him working as a first mate, then he'd come back to Taipei, buy a house and make her his old lady.



She gave him a sad smile, but she didn't tell him that when she was a redhot number at the Paramount, probably one night of table-taxi money would come to more than that little bit. Five years — five more years and she might as well be his grandma! If it had been ten years ago ——— Taipan Chin took a good drag on her cigarette, wistfully thinking to herself ——— If she had met a faithful fellow like Manny Ch'in ten years ago, she might have gotten married. Ten years ago she still had a great big pile of gold and silver; she was still planning to find someone devoted to her, heart and soul. Last time when Manny was about to sail she suddenly got it into her head to go see him off at Keelung. The pier was packed with seamen's wives; as soon as the ship pulled away every last one of them started to cry her eyes out; they were all staring out to sea as if their souls had gotten lost. That gave her a cold shiver inside; now she was about to marry old man Ch'en and she hadn't even sent Manny a letter. He couldn't possibly blame her for cutting off her feelings; could she wait until her soul was lost, like those women? A forty-year-old woman can't afford to wait. A forty-year-old woman just hasn't got the time for romancing. A forty-year-old woman ——— can even make do without a real man. So? what does a forty-year-old woman want after all?



Taipan Chin stubbed out her cigarette butt in the ashtray, mulling it over for a while; she suddenly raised her head and grinned maliciously into the mirror. She wants a silk emporium like Jen Taitai's! twice as big, of course, right opposite her Rich Spring Pavilion; first slash the prices to eighty percent; let that loudmouthed sharptongued blimp of a bitch have a real taste of my sting, then she'll know the Jade Goddess of Mercy Chin Chaoli is not somebody you can just push around so easily.

"Big Sister — "

The dressing-room door opened and in walked a young taxi-dancer. Taipan Chin was dusting her face with a powder-puff; in the mirror, not even turning her head, she saw Vermilion Phoenix. Only a half a year ago Vermilion Phoenix had come from Miaoli to Taipei; she'd once been a tea-picker; her old man was a drunken bum; her stepmother was hard on her; she'd just had to get out. When she first came to the Nuits de Paris and put on high heels, Vermilion Phoenix reeled around as if she were walking on stilts. In less than a week she'd burned up a guest. T'ung really bawled her out; he would have given her the sack on the spot. Taipan Chin saw her shaking with fear, cowering in a corner like a little hare, unable to utter a word. How she loathed that mean snarling son-of-a-bitch. She stepped in just to show him up. Striking her chest, she guaranteed



T'ung: if Vermilion Phoenix wasn't hot within one month she, Chin Chaoli, would pay her from her own pocket. She'd really gone all out for Vermilion Phoenix, taught her all the manoeuvres of the ballroom trade, did everything to net guests for her. Vermilion Phoenix didn't let her down, either; within half a year, although she hadn't quite made it to the top yet, she pulled in over ten table-tickets every night.

"What's up, Hot Number? How many tables you taxi stet so far?" Vermilion Phoenix came over and sat down quietly beside Taipan Chin. A while ago at the banquet at the Top Marks Pavilion Vermilion Phoenix hadn't said a word; her eyelids were red all the time. Taipan Chin understood; Vermilion Phoenix had depended on her all along, naturally she'd feel jittery now she was going to leave.

"Big Sister — " Vermilion Phoenix called again, her voice quivering. Only now Taipan Chin realized there was something wrong with her. She turned around swiftly and took a good hard look at Vermilion Phoenix' body; in a flash she got the message.

"Got stuck, huh?" Taipan Chin coldly inquired. For the past two or three months an overseas student from Hong Kong studying at Taiwan University had shown up every night to give Vermilion Phoenix a big hand,



and that Cantonese laddie was some lady-killer, too. From where Taipan Chin saw it Vermilion Phoenix was quite smitten. She'd warned her time and again: those rich young playboys hang around ballrooms they're just not for real; if you get serious, it's the taxi-dancer who always gets it in the neck. Vermilion Phoenix just laughed; she didn't own up; So! they'd been up to the old hanky-panky behind her back, had they. Taipan Chin took another look at Vermilion Phoenix' belly. No wonder the little whore couldn't get it back in shape even with her girdle on.

"Where is he?"

"He's gone back to Hong Kong," Vermilion Phoenix mumbled, head lowered.

"Did he leave anything behind?" Taipan Chin insisted. Vermilion Phoenix shook her head vigorously and said nothing. Suddenly Taipan Chin felt a flare of rage shoot up in her breast. A featherbrained little tart like this, of course she'd be gobbled up in no time. She didn't feel sorry for her; she was furious; all that trouble she'd taken over Vermilion Phoenix had gone right down the drain. Believe you me it hadn't been easy to turn a hayseed into a greenhouse plant from the core out; you could see with your own eyes she was just about to bloom gloriously. Even Fatty Ch'en, the Taipan from the International, had run over to ask about her price. Taipan Chin had taken Vermilion Phoenix



by the ear. You hold out for another moment, she had hissed at her between clenched teeth. Your day of glory is almost here. Fun's fun, a game's a game. But the number one no-no for a taxi-dancer is to get knocked up. Can you name me one guest who isn't a wolf or a dog? No matter how big a star you are, the minute they know you're in trouble they'll run like hell, one after the other, holding their noses as if you were smeared all over with chickenshit.

"Oh?" With an icy smile, Taipan Chin slammed the powder-puff down on the dressing-table. "Big-hearted, aren't you! He's got you knocked up, he's hauled ass, and you didn't even grab half a hair off his cock!"

"He said he'll send money as soon as he's found a job in Hong Kong." Head lowered, wringing her handkerchief, Vermilion Phoenix started to sob.

Taipan Chin sprang up and went round to her. "You're still dreaming your mother's fairy-tale dreams!" she spat. "Anybody can see you've let the big fish off the hook! Think you're going to get him back? Since you couldn't catch a man with your cunt tricks, you should have kept your belt fastened! Now you've let him plant the seed of disaster in you, and here you come, blowing your nose and dropping your tears all over the place —



is there any reason I should look up to you, tell me? All the things I've taught you — you heard them, all right, and then where did they go? That little schmuck wanted to hit and run, huh?" Taipan Chin lunged forward and shouted in Vermilion Phoenix' ear. "Couldn't you just pick up a bottle of Lysol and gulp it down right in front of his nose?"

"Stuff like that — " Vermilion Phoenix recoiled, her lips trembling. "I'm afraid of the pain — "

"I see — afraid of the pain, huh!" This time Taipan Chin couldn't take it any more. She jerked Vermilion Phoenix' chin up with one hand and with the other jabbed her right between the eyebrows. "Afraid of the pain? If you're afraid of the pain, why don't you get your tail back to Miaoli and make like a young lady? Why do you have to hang around a joint like this and let the men grab you and feel your ass? Afraid of the pain? One of these days for sure you'll get your share of it; you'll be on the street selling your wares!"

Covering her face with her hands, Vermilion Phoenix broke down and cried. Taipan Chin simply ignored her; she lit herself a cigarette and took a hard drag; she paced around and around the room; *all at once* she went up to Vermilion Phoenix.



"Come to my place tomorrow; I'll take you to go get rid of that lump in your belly."

"Oh, no — " Vermilion Phoenix looked up and uttered a cry.

Taipan Chin saw her desperately protect her slightly protruding belly, her face distorted, paper-white. Taken aback, Taipan Chin began to scrutinize her in silence. Vermilion Phoenix' eyes flashed fiercely, filled with venom, like a young brooding hen pitting her life against somebody out to steal her eggs. She's fallen in love with him, Taipan Chin sighed to herself; If this little tart has really fallen in love with that young putz, there isn't one damn thing you can do about it. These little sluts who've never had a taste of Life with a capital L, you can talk till your tongue falls out, they won't hear a single word. Even she, herself, ~~the~~ *time* she was carrying Moon Boy's child, Momma and Brother grabbed her by the arms and tried to haul her off to get it removed. She hugged her belly and rolled all around crying to Heaven and Earth for rescue: Want to cut out the living flesh in her body? Not unless they find a cord and strangle her first. Momma was real cruel; she slipped some herb in the noodles and aborted the already-formed male foetus. Her whole life that was the only time she got the idea of cutting it all short. Swallowing gold, stretching her neck, taking rat poison, jumping into the Soochow River



As she spoke, she flung open the dressing-room door and stalked off, ignoring Vermilion Phoenix, who was calling after her. Outside, the floor was already jammed with people; in the air-cooled mist the lights shimmered red and green; the orchestra was pounding out hot swing; couples swayed this way and that, stuck together like two twists of salt-water taffy. Taipan Chin was caught by a guest as she passed a table; she turned her head; it was Tycoon Chou, Chairman of the Board of the Great China Textile Company, who came specially to sugar-daddy Little Sweetie.

"Taipan Chin, would you be kind enough to do me a big favor? You see, she's in a rotten mood tonight; I'm afraid she won't come over unless you take the trouble to bring her round." Tycoon Chou held on tight to Taipan Chin's arm, an anxious look on his face.

"That all depends on what kind of tips I get from the Chairman of the Board," Taipan Chin smiled.

"Ten tables for the banquet when you and Boss Ch'en get spliced, how about that?"

"You got a deal!" Taipan Chin stuck her hand out, gave Tycoon Chou a big handshake, sauntered off to Little Sweetie's table and sat down beside her.

"After this table, you'd better get over there," she whispered. "He's already lost his soul waiting."



"What the hell," Little Sweetie retorted, not even turning her head as she continued to flirt with the guests. "Is his cabbage greener than anybody else's? Go tell him Mona from the Singapore is waiting for him for a midnight snack."

"Aha. So the grapes have turned sour." Taipan Chin laughed.

"Ptuh. Is he worth it?" Her nose in the air, Little Sweetie sniffed. Taipan Chin drew closer to her ear.

"Do it for Big Sister's rep; the gentleman's going to lay on ten banquet tables for me."

"So, you've been wheeling and dealing behind my back," Little Sweetie remarked snidely. "Why don't you go keep him company yourself?"

Taipan Chin didn't say a word; she stared sideways at Little Sweetie; one swoop and her hands were on Little Sweetie's tits. Little Sweetie let out a shriek like a wet cat and tried to pull away; the guests cracked up. Little Sweetie hollered uncle fast!

"In that case," she whispered in Taipan Chin's ear, "you better make it crystal clear to that Chou Whozis that tonight he's riding <sup>in</sup> on your coattail; I haven't let him off. You've been there, Sister Chin; don't tell me you don't understand the saying 'Strike while the iron is hot!' 'Cause when it gets cold, can you still bend it?"



Taipan Chin leaned back against <sup>a pillar</sup> and picked her teeth with a toothpick while she watched Little Sweetie, dolled up in a pomegranate-red sheer gauze cheongsam, her arms well-rounded, snow-white, her shoulders partly bare, flesh quivering, wiggle saucily on over to Chou's table. Her whole body sparkled with glamour. She not only lights a fire in any man who looks at her, but women's hearts will throb just a little bit as well. What's more, she's a first-class hard-to-handle bitch, blackhearted and coldblooded; in all the years she's been playing the field she hasn't slipped up once. That guy Chou must have thrown away \$200,000 more or less on her; and maybe he hasn't even had a chance to lick her ass yet. That's the perfect material for a top taxi-dancer! Taipan Chin thought to herself admiringly; That softy Vermilion Phoenix — the only thing she's good for is picking up after Little Sweetie. Although she was still miles away from the popularity Chin Chaoli the Jade Goddess of Mercy enjoyed when she was at the Paramount in Shanghai, you could rank Little Sweetie one of the Number Ones around the Taipei ballrooms. You count all of them in the Cosmopolis Shanghai in those days; only Joy Wu, the oldest of the Five Tigresses at the MGM Ballroom could rival *Chin Chaoli*. Everybody said the two of them were the Fairy Princess from the Ninth Heaven and the White Tiger Star incarnate,



come to Whangpoo Beach to turn the world topsy-turvy. Somehow or other she and that striped she-critter had become sworn sisters; at night, after the two of them were done table-taxi-ing, they'd go over to the Welcome and eat fried spring chicken; they'd compete with each other, count on their fingers to see who'd cleaned up on more big spenders more mercilessly, more stylishly. Flouting custom, corrupting morals, what have you, she had to admit she'd done quite a bit of that in her time. God knows how many men had ruined themselves on the Jade Goddess of Mercy's account, deserted their wives and children, broken their homes, wrecked their lives. Joy left that world early and married a businessman, on the quiet. Taipan Chin had been bewildered then; she'd felt pretty lonesome. After she got to Taipei she went to Chung Ho to look Joy up; who could have thought that saber-toothed claw-flashing she-critter would have converted into a full-fledged Buddhist matron. Joy'd set up a Buddhist chapel in her house and enshrined two emerald jade Lo-hans. Her family said all year round all she did was eat vegetarian and chant sutras; she wouldn't even set foot outside the chapel. When Joy saw her, she wouldn't so much as raise her eyes; she shook her head and sighed, "Tsk, tsk, Li, honey, are you still in that kind of place, going astray and making trouble?" That sent a chill through her heart. Well, well,



they were smart, weren't they; as if driven by a ghost every last one of them went out to catch a husband and attained salvation. She, the Jade Goddess of Mercy, was the only soul left to wander to and fro over the Sea of Desire. One mischance and twenty years were gone. Damn it all, she simply didn't have Joy's vocation for Buddhahood. No way she could get to the Western Paradise; now really! would she actually set up a Buddhist chapel like Joy and enshrine an authentic Jade Kuanyin? She'd spent a whole life in sin; enough to muck up all those nice old Bodhi-sattvas! She had made her mind up, all right: the minute she turned up her toes she was going to head straight down for the eighteenth floor of Hell and take a good whack at climbing the Knife Mountain and diving into the Boiling Oilpot.

"Taipan Chin —"

Taipan Chin turned; the group of young sprigs who had just taken a table by the orchestra were waving to her and yelling. She knew them; a whole crew of whippersnappers working for foreign companies; they had some dough and one and all they thought they were hot shit. Just the same Taipan Chin grinned and sashayed on over.

"Taipan Chin — " Little Ch'ai caught her hand and giggled. "By tomorrow you'll be Mrs. Bigshot, and our — Little Horse here says he hasn't even eaten your steamed chicken yet!" They all started cackling.



"Oh ye-es?" Taipan Chin smiled coyly, landed right in Little Ch'ai's lap and ground it a couple of times, one arm around his neck. "I haven't even slaughtered you yet, you little spring chicken you! — Where'm I going to get a chicken to steam for him? " Her other hand crept stealthily down and gave his leg such a hard pinch he let out a loud squeal. Just as his hands were about to misbehave she leaped to her feet and pushed him away, still laughing. "Don't you get fresh with me, your old flames are here; I don't want them to make fun of me: 'The old cow eats tender grass.'"

A few table-hopping taxi-dancers had arrived; in a twinkling they were snapped up by the young sprouts, carried off to the floor and dancing cheek to cheek.

"Hey, cutie, what about your old flame?" Just as she was about to walk off, Taipan Chin saw one young man left with no partner.

"I can't dance very well; I just came to watch them," the young man murmured. Taipan Chin paused in spite of herself and gave him the good eye. Why, he's a young kid, maybe twenty or so; probably still a student at the university; clean and fresh; quite nicely dressed, all right, in a light gray sharkskin suit with a red tie; his whole bearing betrayed his greenness. One look and you know this is the first time this tenderfoot has ever strayed into a ballroom. Taipan Chin held out her hand to him with a charming smile.



"Now, now, we can't just let you watch for free. Why don't we make this my treat tonight." And she drew the self-conscious young man out onto the floor.

The orchestra was just playing "Little Darling," a slow foxtrot. On stage, the sisters Green Peony and Pink Peony, one in red and one in green, were holding each other round the waist crooning,

You, oh yes, you,  
you're my little darling.  
So why oh why  
must you be  
so cold and unfeeling?

Under the spotlights Taipan Chin, head back a bit, studied the young man carefully. Then she realized he had very fine features; his dark moustache was still soft; his long hair was nicely brushed, with a mild, sweet fragrance of Brylcreem. He didn't dare press up close to her, just barely held her waist, dancing clumsily. After a few steps he brushed against her high heels and lifted his head in alarm with a bashful smile, mumbling apologies, his snow-white face turned crimson. Taipan Chin smiled and gave him a loving look; probably only a tenderfoot who came to a ballroom for the first time would blush like that; come to a ballroom to make whoopee and blush like that ——— seems like she always falls for a man who blushes. That night, the first time Moon Boy came to the Paramount and danced with her,



he was so shy he couldn't even raise his head; wave after wave of crimson rose to his face. That very night she took him home with her; when she found out he was still a virgin, she held his head close on her bosom and pressed it against her naked breasts; two streams of hot tears welled up and flowed from her eyes. That moment her heart was filled with gratitude and tender love, that she should be rewarded with the virginity of such a shy man. In an instant she felt all the contamination and abuse she had taken from other men's bodies was washed away by her tears. She had always thought the male body was dirty, ugly, and stank; she had gone to bed with many men before; each time she had turned her head away and kept her eyes closed. But that night, after Moon Boy had fallen fast asleep, she got up, kneeled beside the bed; by the light of the moon she gazed entranced at the naked man on the bed. The moonlight shone on his pale chest and finedrawn waist; it was as if it was the first time she really saw a naked male body; only then did she realize that a woman, too, could be so ecstatically, so passionately enraptured with a man's body, a man's flesh. And as she gently caressed his ice-cool feet with her burning cheek, she couldn't help but start to weep silently again.

"I don't know how to do this dance," the young man said. He stopped, looking embarrassedly at Taipan Chin.



The orchestra had just switched numbers.

Taipan Chin looked at him for a moment; then she broke into a gentle smile.

"Don't you worry, this is a waltz; it's real easy; you just follow me, I'll keep the beat for you."

She embraced the young man, her cheek close to his ear, and counted, ever so softly and tenderly,

One, two, three —

One, two, three —