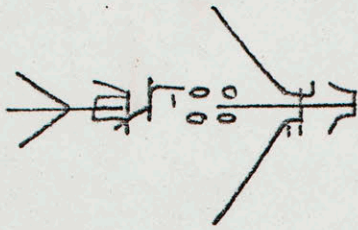


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A TOUCH OF GREEN

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A TOUCH OF GREEN

by
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TRANSLATED BY PATIA ISAKU AND THE AUTHOR

PART ONE

It was that year, the year we won the Anti-Japanese

War and moved back to the old capital Nanking. ^{We lived in Ta-fang Alley}
^{in East Benevolence Village,} ~~in~~ one of the housing complexes for the dependents of
middle- and lower-rank Air ~~Forcemen~~, East Benevolence
Village on Universal Way Alley. ^{To think that, after enduring,}
^{After going through all}
that misery for so many years in the hinterlands in an
^{backwaters of Szechwan,}
~~out-of-the-way spot like Szechwan, before we knew it~~
^{We should suddenly return to the "Painted Capital" of,}

~~there we were, back in the Capital of the Six Dynasties fame!~~
^{and the hustle} ^{and bustle} ~~of Gold Dust!~~ ^{Triumphant} ^{we were greeted by relics of ancient splendors,}
~~everywhere ruins of antiquity, everywhere~~
~~ancient splendors, so full of Imperial grandeur; we went~~
^{of the moment, = all enveloped in an atmosphere of,}
^{our eyes were continually}
~~around looking at everything, dazzled.~~

At that time Wei-ch'eng was serving as ^{commanding officer} ~~head~~ of
the Eleventh Group. Two of the squadrons under him had
just come back from training in America, so the pilots
in his Group were rather highly thought of, and ~~they~~
^{kept busy with many assignments.}
~~were given very heavy responsibilities.~~ Whenever
there was an ^{important} ~~urgent~~ mission to fly he'd take the boys out
himself. ^{Sometimes,} ^{in a} Three or four days ~~out of the week,~~ ~~I didn't~~ ^{would not}
get to see so much as the back of his head. Every time
he went ~~out~~ on a mission he'd take Kuo Chen along.

^{This} ~~Kuo Chen~~ was his favorite student; even when Kuo ~~Chen~~
^{Kuo Chen} ^{he}

✓

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was a cadet at the Airforce academy in Kuanhsien, in Szechwan, Wei-ch'eng used to say to me, "That kid is smart as a whip! For sure he's got a great future ahead of him." Sure enough, Kuo Chen outdid everybody; in just a few short years, ^{Kuo Chen had} he worked himself up to head of a squadron ^(leader) and got ^x went off to America for training.

Kuo Chen was an ^{Air Force} orphan; his father was an Airforce man, too, a schoolmate of Wei-ch'eng's; ^{who was} he'd got killed in a plane crash when Kuo Chen was very small, ^{and} his mother had fallen ill and ^{died} passed away soon after. While he was at the academy, whenever New Year's and the other festivals rolled around I'd invite him over to our home for the family dinner. Wei-ch'eng and I had nor chick nor child, ^{and} ^{when} we saw Kuo Chen was all by his lonesome so we just ^{sort of} took him under our wing. He had his head shaved green and shiny then, ^{and} wore ^{the} that mud-yellow cotton cadet uniform; ^{of the Air Force cadet.} he was such a bright boy, ^{that} you could tell from every little thing, ^{he did and from} even the way he carried himself, ^B but he was still shy with words, ^{just} he was still a kid after all, ^{It sure gave me a surprise the day} wet behind the ears. But when he got back from America and came rushing over to our home in Nanking and gave me ^{He} a salute ^{and me smartly} and called me "School Mother!" ^{"Shih-niang"!} I was stunned! I simply couldn't believe my eyes. He was equipped ^{all dressed up} head to foot in an American-style gabardine Airforce uniform,

* Literally, teacher mother, a term of affection and esteem used by students to address the wife of their teacher. The commonly used term for teacher is lao-shih (old or venerable teacher).

a leather jacket with a turn-down fur collar, ^{and} belt buckled tight with his Ray-Ban goggles-case fastened to it. He wore his high-peaked service cap with the brim pulled down to just above his eyebrows; ^{he had let his hair grow,} his hair had grown out, black and shiny, brushed back neatly over his ears. Only a couple of years. Who would have expected Kuo Chen to turn out to be such a dashing young ^{officer} fellow!

"Well, well, young man!" I said to him with a laugh.

"You must have brought back some good news this time, huh?"

"Oh, nothing special, ^{Shih-niang} School Mother; I just saved up a few hundred ^{dollars} bucks U. S.," ^{that's all.}

"Aha! Enough to get yourself an ^{wife with} old woman now!" I chuckled.

^{"That's right, Shih-niang"}

"You bet, School Mother!" He grinned. "As a matter of fact, I'm looking around right now."

Our young pilots practically stole the whole show in postwar Nanking. No matter where you went, in the highways and the byways, you were bound to run into some cocky ^{flyboy} young pilot parading around with a fashionably-dressed young doll on his arm. Romance was in the air — every single pilot ^{who was single talked about falling in love,} was ready for romance. Every month ~~we'd be sure to~~ get wedding invitations from some of Wei-ch'eng's students. But it was more than a year

since Kuo Chen was back from America, and I hadn't gotten the good word from him yet. ^{14. once in a while} Oh, he'd brought some stylish young ladies ^{or other to our house to} over for my hot-beanpaste carp, ^{(bring) sample my famous dish,} all right.

carp cooked in bean-sauce.

Afterwards, though, when I asked him what was what he'd just shake his head ^{and laugh} with a smile.

"Nothing of the kind, School Mother; I'm just having fun."

Then, one day, he came running in and told me; ^{the news:}

This time it's serious. He'd fallen in love with a student at the ^GChinling Middle School for Girls, her name was Verdancy Chu.

This was the actual Eng. sp. for the name of 金陵女子大学

^{Shih-niang}"School Mother," he told me, full of excitement,

"I know you'll like her! I want to bring her over to meet you. ^{Shih-niang,} School Mother, I never ^{thought} dreamed I could get be so serious about a girl!"

^{By this time} Now, I must say I understood Kuo Chen pretty well.

He was a very proud boy; he'd made his mark early, so naturally he ^{thought rather highly of himself.} was a bit swell-headed. Whenever we ^{his future plans he'd tell} had a talk ^{in every way of} chat about ^{very} it he'd told me he would never marry unless he found a girl who met his standards ^{all good-looking} thoroughly. The young ladies he'd brought over before were ^{had come up to his expectations.} extraordinarily pretty, every one of them, but none of them satisfied him.

I thought to myself, This girl Verdancy must be some ^{fairy maiden sent} kind of goddess flown down from Heaven for Kuo Chen to be so smitten.

When I ~~really~~ did meet Verdancy, she ~~was~~ ^{turned out to be} a total surprise ~~to me~~. That day Kuo Chen brought her to our house for lunch. ~~Turned out~~ she was ~~a~~ rather ~~thin~~, frail, ~~young~~ ^{a slip of a} ~~maiden~~, ^{girl of} eighteen or nineteen years old, even though she'd come ~~for a visit~~ she ~~was~~ just ~~wearing~~ a plain blue cotton frock, ~~rather old~~, with an ordinary white silk handkerchief ~~tucked under~~ ^{below} ~~sticking out of~~ the flap ~~near~~ her collar. She didn't have a permanent ~~set~~; her hair was combed back tidily behind her ears. She ~~was in~~ ^{wore plain} black leather ~~Mary Janes~~, ^{shoes and} a pair of ~~white~~ cotton ankle-socks, spotless, ^{by white.} I gave her a good look; her body ~~wasn't~~ ^{hadn't quite filled out} in full bloom yet, she seemed a bit flat-chested, ^{and her complexion was on the pale side.} She looked a little pale. ^{about her eyes that, this was no ordinary girl.} But ~~her eyes~~, ^{there was} something ^{and} limpid, graceful, made you feel ~~so purified~~. When she saw me, ^{she kept} her head ~~was~~ half-lowered ~~all the time~~, so bashful, with a timid air ~~about her~~ that ^{somehow reached out to you,} ~~really melted your heart~~.

All during lunch no matter how hard I tried to get her to talking ~~all~~ she did ~~was~~ ^{no more than} mumble a word or two in reply. ~~My~~, did Kuo Chen ~~get into a state~~! ^{kept himself busy, though,} now he ~~put food on her~~ ^{helping her with the food} ~~plate; now he~~ ^{at} poured her tea, ~~he kept prodding her to say~~ ^{ing the next all the while trying to prod her} something, into some kind of conversation.

"You see? ~~Look~~ how ^{difficult this young lady} disagreeable ~~she~~ can be!" Finally Kuo Chen lost patience ^{with} and ~~pointed at Verdancy~~. "At least she's got something to talk about when she's with me, but

neither ~~of~~ ^{new} nor old,

the minute she sees people she clams up ^{Shih-mang is} School Mother's [^]
 no stranger, and still she acts like ^{the} a "fraidy cat!" [^] "s got her tongue!"
 Kuo Chen was ^{being} a little ^{rough on her,} too hasty, really! Verdancy
 turned away, her face red with embarrassment.

"That's ^{all right,} enough, now." I felt ^{rather =} pretty sorry for ^{the girl}
Verdancy and stopped Kuo Chen. "This is Miss Chu's first
 visit; of course she's a little shy. Now ^{don't you} you're not to
 pick on her any more. After lunch ^{why don't} you two better go ^{for an outing} see
 on Lake Hsuanwu. The lotus flowers there are just blooming.
 It's ^a gorgeous!" ^{sight."}

Kuo Chen had come on his flashy new motorcycle.
 When they left after lunch he put Verdancy on the pillion
 and helped her tie her black silk scarf around her hair;
 then he leaped into the saddle and started to rev up;
 he gave me a jaunty wave and was off in a flash, carrying
Verdancy with him. ^{She} Verdancy snuggled up against Kuo
 Chen's back, her scarf flapping high in the wind. Well,
~~that clinched it,~~ from the way he treated her I knew
 he was serious this time, ^{all right,}

^{One day} Once Wei-ch'eng came ^{home with a frown on his face;} back looking fit to be tied;
 the minute he walked in the door he started to fume.
^{"That kid} Kuo Chen, that miserable kid! now he's gone way too far!
 I didn't expect him to turn out like this!"

"Now, now," what's the matter?" I was astonished;
^{STET} why! I'd never heard Wei-ch'eng say so much as an unpleasant word about Kuo Chen before.

"You ^{should} ~~re~~ asking me! Didn't you know he's been running around with a ^G Chinling ^{middle} schoolgirl? ~~The way I look at it,~~ he must have lost his head over her! ^{would think nothing of} He ~~kept~~ breaking ^{any time of the day} into her school ~~all the time~~, and trying to get her out, ~~didn't matter~~ whether she was in class or not. And ~~if~~ ^{that's not all!} ~~that wasn't bad enough,~~ ^{The other day} when he was up on a training flight, ~~guess what that nut did,~~ ^{actually} he ^{the G} flew over ^{campus} Chinling and kept circling the school building! All the schoolgirls got all excited and stuck their heads out of their classroom windows to see what was going on. The principal himself reported it to our Headquarters — now I ask you, what ~~the~~ ^{impression does that create for the outfit? One of us} ~~hell~~ kind of ~~idiotic behavior is this?~~ ^{my pilot to carry on} like a lunatic, ^{I'll have to punish him — but good!} ~~So help me I'm going to throw the book~~ ~~at him!"~~

Kuo Chen got a letter of reprimand in his record and was demoted from squadron leader. When I saw him, he tried to explain to me. ^{"Shih-miang, I didn't mean} "School Mother, ~~it's not as if~~ ^{to violate any} ~~I was planning to bend~~ ^{Las Shih} Regulations and get Teacher mad at me. It's Verdancy, she's stolen my heart away. Honest, ^{Shih-miang,} to God, School Mother, when I was flying up there

in the sky, my heart was down here on the ground, following
 around.
 her. Verdancy's such a sweet kid, maybe a little bit shy, and
 doesn't know how to mingle. ^{mix with people mucho} Now ^{I've} she got ^{her} expelled from
 school; her folks have wired her from Chungking to ^{come} go straight
back home. She'd rather die than go back! She got into
 a fight with her parents and broke off with them. She
 says she'll follow me to the ends of the earth, no matter
 what, for the rest of her life! and now she's staying
 all by herself in a little hotel and she doesn't know
 what to do next."

"Oh, you idiot," I sighed, shaking my head. I had
 no idea even a smart ^{people} person would ^{turn} get so foolish when they
 fell in love. "Since you two are so mad about each other
 why don't you just go and get married?"

^{"Shih-niang,}
"School Mother, that's just what I've come to talk
 to you about, and ^{to} ask you and ^{Fao Shih} Teacher to preside at the
 wedding." Kuo Chen beamed.

After Kuo Chen and Verdancy ^{were} got married they moved
 into our East Benevolence Village, too. Kuo Chen had
 two weeks' leave to get married; originally he and Verdancy
^{scenic West Lake in} had planned to go to Hangchow on their honeymoon, but
^{were to leave} just before they left, the Civil War broke out. Wei-ch'eng
 and his group were ordered to Manchuria. The morning

STET
 ORIG.

they took off, in the early dawn, Kuo Chen stole into my kitchen; I was just ^{starting} making a fire to cook Wei-ch'eng his porridge. Kuo Chen, his jacket over his shoulders, his hair all mussed, eyes bloodshot, unshaven, grabbed my hand.

^{"Shih-niang,"}
"School Mother," he said hoarsely, "This time, ^{to take care of} no matter what, I've got to rely on you, Ma'am — "

"I ^{know,} get you," I interrupted him. "While you're ^{look after} gone, of course I'm the one who's going to take care of that little wife of yours."

^{"Shih-niang"}
"School Mother — " Kuo Chen was still worrying.

"Verdancy's still too young; there's a lot she still doesn't understand about the way we do things in the Air Force. You've just got to treat her like one of the family, try to get her to learn how to cope."

"All right, all right," I laughed. "Your School ^{shih-niang} ^{has} ^{with} ^{Jao Shih} Mamma's already been following your Teacher around for ^{I guess there's nothing} a dozen years, or more in the Air Force, you tell me what ^{Air Force wives have} I haven't seen? I don't know how many people have gotten

^{learned their ropes} ^{to me, and} ^{tips} from me. ^{not dumb;} Verdancy's certainly no fool; ^{I'll see that she gets adjusted — all in good time.} just you leave it wait, I'll open her eyes, little by little."

After Wei-ch'eng and Kuo Chen and some of the other boys left, I got my housework done and went over to see

"Ma'am" is too much of an Americanism to go with either "Sch. Mother" or "Shih-niang".



Verdancy. ^{housing allotted to them} The ~~place they got from the Government~~ was a neat little ^{bungalow} wooden house. Before they moved in, Kuo Chen had gotten the place ^(spic and span, put up) all painted, ^{and made it} all new drapes, quite ^{an attractive} a pleasant little home for them. When I walked in, I saw they still had the wedding decorations up in the living room. The table and chairs were piled high with the wedding presents, all in their red and green wrappings, ^{some of the packages not yet} they hadn't even opened some of them yet. The table was surrounded by baskets of flowers; the roses and the gladioli were still fresh; even the phoenix-tail ferns had remained stayed green. The wedding scrolls hadn't been taken down ~~from the wall~~ yet; on the central livingroom wall hung a the wedding ^{an affair} plaque presented by Kuo Chen's schoolmates, of ebony, with gold inlaid characters:

TOGETHER INTO WHITEHAIRD OLD AGE

Verdancy was in her room; she hadn't even heard me when I came in. She was lying on her side, her face buried in the quilt, sobbing. She was still in her bright-colored silk bridal gown, her new permanent ^{was} all mussed up, her hair-ends ^{a bunch of} were all sticking out like twigs. She'd rumbled up the ⁱⁿ silk quilt-cover, ^{the traditional nuptial bedding embroidered} decorated with pairs of mandarin ducks embroidered in all the colors of the rainbow, ^{now} on the ^{showing} quilt-cover near her face was a tearstain as big as a bowl. When she heard me come in, she started ^{-||-} and sat up; the only words she got out were ^{Shih-mang} 'School Mother,' and then all she could do was sob. Her face was ^{her} peagreen, eyes swollen,

I'm not very happy about this phrase - but can't think of anything better for the time being!

she looked more fragile than ever. I went over to smooth her hair ^{down, and} ~~for her~~, then I ~~went and~~ wrung out a hot towel ^{and handed} ~~to give~~ her. Verdancy took the ~~hot~~ towel, covered her face, ^{with it,} and broke down again. Outside the house ~~the~~ military trucks and jeeps were ^{(loading and) off} ~~hauling~~ the men's baggage, the ear-^{shattering} ~~piercing~~ clanging of their iron rods and chains went on and on. ^{One after another} The men in the Village were ~~still going off~~ ^{leaving for} to the ~~war~~; ^{front; there was a general hubbub of} the women were screaming, the children were crying, ~~there was a whole commotion going on.~~ I waited until Verdancy had cried herself out. Then I patted her ~~on the~~ shoulder.

^{these sudden partings — the first time around,} "Well, it's ~~your first time~~, and they did leave ~~so suddenly~~; ^{hits you} it's always like this. ~~Don't~~ ^{and} cook tonight. ~~Come~~ ^{and} have dinner with me, ^{keep me company.}"

* * * * *

Once Wei-ch'eng and Kuo Chen were gone, we didn't have the vaguest notion where they were. One ^{day} ~~minute~~ we heard they were sent to ^{the} North China, the next ^{day} ~~minute~~ they wrote us they'd flown to Central China, ~~for~~ several months ^{passed,} ~~and~~ they didn't come home once. During this time Verdancy was with me constantly. Sometimes I ~~taught~~ ^{showed her how to} her cooking, sometimes I taught her knitting, and ~~sometimes~~ ^{once in a while I even,} I taught her ~~how~~ to play a little mahjong.

"Now this little gismo ^{game (or pastime)} is a real cure-all," I told her, laughingly.. "Whenever you've got something on your mind, just sit down at the table and Red Dragon, White Dragon [!] before you know it, [!] all your worries will be forgotten!"

After she got married Verdancy had become much more outgoing, but she was still a little ^{timid with} shy of strangers, ^{E (coming to)} except for ^{my} place she didn't ^{make friends with} go to visit any other families in the Village. I knew ^(the background of) practically everybody ^{of} there, all ^{of} about them, so by and by I ^{started telling Verdancy} picked some of their histories ^{to tell Verdancy} to tell Verdancy so she'd ^{know something of} become familiar with [!] the kind of life we lived.

"Don't sell these people short," I ^{said to} told her. "They've all ^{been} gone through a hell of a lot, [!] let me tell you. Take Mrs. Chou, for example, the lady who lives ^{in back of} behind you, she's been married four times. Her present husband and the three before him were ^{— they were all good friends to begin with,} all in the same squadron. ^{One} died ^{and soon,} and the next took over, one by one, ^{Sort of an under-} in turn. Her ^{standing, you see, so that there was always someone to take care of her,} husbands were all good friends to begin with, so they were ^{all very nice to her, mind you,} all very nice to her, mind you. And Mrs. Hsu across the ^{street} way from you, her husband used to be her younger brother-in-law; [!] the Hsu brothers were both in the Thirteenth Group. The older brother got killed, and the younger brother took his place. To ^{the children by} her first husband's kids he's Uncle,

and at the same time he's Papa; for a long time they just didn't know what to call him."

"But how can they still talk and laugh like that?" Verdancy looked at me in bewilderment.

"My dear girl!" I laughed. "If they don't laugh, what do you want them to do, cry? If they wanted to cry, ~~believe you me~~ they wouldn't have waited till now."

Ever since Kuo Chen left, Verdancy didn't want to go far from the Village; she just stayed close to home ^{every day} and waited. Sometimes a whole bunch of us went off to the Confucius Temple District to listen to the singsong girls, ^{but} ~~even then,~~ Verdancy wouldn't join us. She said she was afraid of missing a telephone call from Headquarters about Kuo Chen. One day, a message came from Headquarters: Wei-ch'eng's group was stopping over ~~at~~ ⁱⁿ Shanghai for a day or so; they might get a chance to make a quick sidetrip to Nanking. ^{Verdancy was up} Bright and early, ~~Verdancy~~ ^{ing} dashed in and ~~dashed~~ ^{from market} out, and came back with two basketfuls of groceries. In the afternoon I passed by her door and saw her in a blue cotton worksuit, an old kerchief around her hair, standing on a stool washing the windows. She was so small that even on tiptoe she couldn't reach the window-tops; she ^{had in her hand} ~~was holding~~ a big

was
washrag and swinging left and right across the window-
pane, with ^{all her} might and main.

"Verdancy!" I called out, "Kuo Chen isn't going to
^{see the} inspect for dust all the way up there!"

Verdancy looked round and saw me; her face ^{flushed when} turned
^{she saw me,} crimson. "I don't know what's happened," she mumbled.
^{"We've lived in this house only,} ^{it's} ^{much the worse}
"It's only a few months and the house is already in bad
^{for wear,} shape, I just can't get it clean."

In the evening, Verdancy came by to invite me to ^{go with}
^{her to} the Village gatehouse where the military telephone was,
to wait for the phone call. ^{The people on duty at} Headquarters had promised to
call us around six or seven. ^{to give us any news,} Verdancy had washed and
changed. ^{wore} She'd put on an apricot-colored frock of light
silk, ^{as an additional touch, a pale,} and she wore a silk apple-green ribbon in her
hair. ^{some} she even had a little lipstick on, ^{— all in all} looking very
fresh and lovely. At first she was ^{quite} very gay, talking
and laughing with me, ^{but} when it got ^{to} a little past six she
became tense, her face taut; ^{drawn, and she stopped her chattering,} her voice grew hushed;
^{and} she was knitting as she kept looking up at the telephone
on the table. We waited and waited, ^{and it was not until after} until past nine
^{when} o'clock; the telephone rang. Verdancy leaped up and
rushed to the phone, the balls of wool in her lap fell
to the floor and rolled all around, but when she got

to the table she turned ^{around} to me.
 "School Mother — " ^{she said,} her voice trembling, "it's the
 phone."

I went over to answer the phone; the people at Headquarters said Wei-ch'eng and his group had only stopped ^{for only} two hours in Shanghai; they flew on to Northern Kiangsu at five in the afternoon. When I relayed the news to Verdancy, she went pale, ^{stunned, without} she stood there in silence ^{uttering a sound while,} ^{for a moment,} her face twitching, ^{as she tried not to cry.}

"Let's go home," I said to her.

We went back into the Village, Verdancy walking behind me quietly. ^W When we reached my door I said, "Don't feel bad, ^I in their business you never know what's going to happen next."

Verdancy turned her head away and touched her sleeve to her eyes. "I'm not complaining, really," her voice shook, "it's only, waiting all day, in vain — "

I put my arm around her shoulders and hugged her.
 "Verdancy, ^{my dear, Shih-niang's} honey, School Mom's got something to tell you; I hope you'll listen. It ^{is} not easy to be ^{the wife of} a Flying Warrior, ^s wife, you know. Twenty-four long hours a day your heart is trailing up there in the air after him. You ^{can gaze} ~~keep looking~~ at the sky, ^{and} looking and looking, until your eyes shed blood, ^{but your man} the ones up there ^{won't} ~~may not~~ even know.

They're just like ^{so many} those iron birds, ^{moment} one minute, they fly to the east, the next ^{moment} minute, they fly to the west, you just can't catch them. Since you're married into our Village, Verdancy, ^{please} honey, don't ^{mind} blame me if I speak frankly to you: you've just got to ~~steel yourself and harden your heart~~ in order to ^{endure} bear all the ^{storm and stress that is} turbulence and storms to come."

Verdancy stared at me through her tears, nodding her head, ^{as though only} half understanding.

"You go home now." I lifted her chin and smiled at her with a sigh. "Go to bed early tonight."

* * * * *

In the winter of the ^{37th} ~~thirty-seventh~~ year of the Republic, our side began to lose ground everywhere in the Civil War; ^A as the battles in the North grew more ominous, quite a few families in our Village got the bad news. Some of the wives ^{took to going} ran off to the temples ~~all the~~ ^{every} ~~time~~ ^{day} to plead with the gods and pester the Boddhisatvas; ^{others} those who went to fortune-tellers ^{to learn what} went and got their ^{future} fortunes told; ^{would} ^{still others} those who went to ^{physiognomists to have} bone-feelers went and ~~got~~ their bones felt. I've never believed in all that mumbo-jumbo myself. ^{I had no word from Wei-ch'eng over} Whenever ~~Wei-ch'eng's letters were~~ ^{a long spell} ~~not arriving~~ I'd invite my neighbors in for a game of mahjong to ^{last} ~~stew~~ through the night and calm myself down.

One night, when I was in the middle of a game, that Mrs. Hsu who lived across the way from Verdancy came rushing in and pulled me right out of there; in between gasps she told me Headquarters had just sent word, ~~it was all over~~ ^{— something terrible had happened to} with Kuo Chen; ~~in Hsüchou~~ ^{— it was over} he and his plane were dashed to pieces. When I rushed to Verdancy's ~~the~~ ^{it} house was ~~black~~ ^{packed} with people. Verdancy was slumped backward on a chair; ^{a woman} on either side of her ~~a woman had~~ grabbed her arms ~~trying~~ to hold her down; a white towel was tied around her head; on the towel ~~was a dark red~~ ^{you could see a} bloodstain as big as your hand. As soon as I came in everybody ~~inside~~ started talking at once: ^{A while ago when} ~~the moment~~ Verdancy got the ~~notice~~ ^{news} she ^{immediately} ran to the edge of the Village, Kuo Chen's uniform in her arms, howling as she ran; she kept ~~insisting~~ ^{yelling} she ~~was~~ wanted to ~~go~~ ~~out~~ to search for Kuo Chen. Whenever people ~~tried~~ to stop ~~her~~ she started kicking and hitting out ~~like~~ ^{like} as though ^{she'd gone mad} ~~crazy~~; ~~the~~ instant she was outside the Village entrance she dashed her head against an iron telephone pole and drove a big hole into her forehead; when she was carried back, she couldn't ~~even~~ ^{hardly} utter a sound ~~any more~~.

I went over to Verdancy, took a bowl of hot ginger broth from somebody, ~~and~~ forced a brass spoon between her teeth; ^{and} I got a couple of spoonfuls down her throat.

Her face was like a gashed open fish's belly, ^{splotches of red} red spot,
 and white spot, blood and sweat all over. Her eyes stared
 wide open, unseeing. She didn't cry, but her ^{pale} blue lips
^{were} kept opening and ^{closing} shutting, a shrill, small noise kept
 coming from her throat, as if somebody had stepped on a
 blind mole and it was letting out a dying shriek. It
 wasn't until I had force-fed her the whole bowl of broth
 that her eyes regained their sight, and, gradually, she
 came to herself.

Verdancy was ill in bed a long time. I moved her
 to my house and watched over her day and night; there
 were even times when I was playing mahjong I put her
 where I could keep an eye on her. I was afraid if I
 let her out of my sight she'd try to cut it all short
 again. She lay in bed all day, wouldn't talk, ^{and} wouldn't
 eat anything. Every day I had to force her to swallow
 some soup or something. In a few weeks, she was just
 skin and bones, her face ashen, her eyes sunk into two
 big holes. One day after I finished feeding her I sat
 on her bedside.

"Verdancy, dear, you mustn't waste yourself away
 like this and think you're doing it for Kuo Chen. If
 Kuo Chen is there and knows about it, he won't be able
 to rest in peace."

An un-
 fortunate
 juxtaposition
 of red, white
 & blue!

Verdancy listened to me; all of a sudden she sat up, shaking; she nodded at me and laughed coldly.

"What does he know? He fell ^{and} his body ^{was dashed} is dust, his bones are in ^{to} pieces; how can he feel now? So much the better for him: bang and he's no more ~~I died~~ I died, too, but I can still feel."

As she spoke, her face was distorted, ^{half} like crying, ^{and} ^{half} like laughing, ^a horrible sight.

After watching over Verdancy for a month or so I almost broke down myself. Fortunately, just in time her folks came from Chungking. When her old man saw her he didn't say a word, but her mother spat, "Serves her right! Serves her right! I ^{told} never wanted her ^{not} to marry an airman, she wouldn't listen to me, now see what a mess she's in!"

They just ^{carried} plucked Verdancy ^{and} right out of the bed as she was, hair all tangled, ^{the rest of us} face unwashed, called a cart and hauled her off, bedding and all. Only a few days after Verdancy was gone, we, too, started to flee the

STET
ORIG. [Civil War] and left Nanking.

PART TWO

Ever since we came to Taipei years ago I've been living on Evergreen Road, ^{by} sheer coincidence ~~our~~ ^{this} dependents' housing complex is also called East Benevolence

for Air Force families

Village, but there's no connection whatsoever with the one we lived in in Nanking; ^{we} we've got people living here who've migrated from all over China; as for the people I knew in Nanking, I have no idea where they've ended up. Fortunately, ⁱⁿ these years, the times have been peaceful, ^{and the days go by easily} life has been ^{for me.} so easy, besides, our Airforce Recreational Activities are go on all the time, and they're just as good as the ones in the Nanking days, ^{one day,} today a Peking opera, ^{the next} tomorrow a dance ^{they present} performance ^{novel} show; every time ^{join in the} something fresh comes along I like to go ^{have} out to an evening show and ^{fun.}

One year, on New Year's Day, the Airforce New Life Club put on a ^{an evening of entertainment.} carnival. People said it was the ^{most elaborate} grandest ^{went, and} in years. Somebody sent me two tickets, so I ^{Li's} took along ^{teen} the Li girl, my neighbor's ^{program} middle-school-age daughter. When we arrived at the New Life Club the ^{program} carnival had already been going on for quite a while. There was a whole crowd of people grabbing for tickets ⁱⁿ around the raffle; in the New Life Hall the band had already struck up the ^{music} dance. The whole place was so jammed you could hardly move an inch: men, women, young people, mostly everybody laughing it up, ^{my,} ^{mercy!} what a racket! In the main hall the balloons, red and green, drifted overhead; some young Airforcemen in blue uniforms were popping them

with their cigarette butts, and the women jumped at the chance and shrieked. Let me tell you, being ^{pushed this way and} whirled around ^{and} by a mob of screaming howling youngsters is enough to make your head spin! I ^{took us some time, me and (to work our way)} took the Li girl ~~and fled~~ into the New Life Hall; we rested ourselves against a pillar and watched the people dancing. That night they had a big band from the Air Force, over twenty members. Quite a few singers, too, coming on one after the other, all snazzily dressed; they'd sing a hit song or two, come down on the floor and start tripping the light fantastic with their buddies.

Just as the band was at its hottest, a ^{particularly striking woman} voluptuous, ^{dressed in a} seductively-dressed woman ^{gown} ^{went on the stage,} came up. The moment she appeared ^{on stage} the audience gave a roar of ^{approval,} applause, ^{signifying} obviously this had to be the hottest number. She stood on stage, ^{her face wreathed in smiles,} smiling radiantly, without the slightest ^{embarrassment,} trace ^{sign} of shyness, and coolly adjusted the microphone. ^{Then} she nodded to the bandleader and began to sing.

"Granny Ch'in, what's the name of this song?" asked the Li girl, ^{who is not up on the pop tunes as I am,} compared to me, she doesn't know the first ^{usually} thing about pop songs. I leave my radio on ~~all the time,~~ from morning till ~~bedtime.~~ ^{I am ready for bed.}

"'A Touch of Green,'" I answered.

~~Of course~~ I knew that song; ~~I know it very well;~~ as a matter of fact, I hear White Light's recording of it

Radiance Pai's

Blaze,
Radiance

Can we think of a name to suggest that this is a person + not some recording label?

on the radio all the time. ^{Actually, this} Well, that woman wasn't bad at all, ^{captured} ~~actually;~~ she ^{She sang in the same lazy, sexy} quite a bit of White Light's ^{style of the popular recording artist.} nonchalant, alluring air herself. Mike in one hand, her other hand toying with her ^{elaborate coiffure with an air of} enormous ~~beehive~~ ^{in a devil-} ~~insouciance,~~ she thrust forward her chin and intoned ^{may-care gesture,} chin in the air, the words ^{distinctly} ~~of the~~ she sang: ^{the words}

On East Hill, a touch of green.
 On West Hill, a touch of green.
 If you've got the fancy,
 your fancy is mine,
 Darling! we two would make
 a pair so fine ———

As she ^{her body slightly backwards,} ~~leaned back,~~ ^(this way and) swaying this way, swaying that way, ^{she belted out the key-line} suddenly the lines burst from her, ^{with a burst of energy that seemed to come} as if they came ^{refrain} from the bottom of her heart:

Aiya, ai, aiya,
 Darling! we two would make
 a pair so fine ———

While the band ^{continued with} ~~took over~~ the song, she put down the mike, ^{took over from} went up to one of the musicians, ^{a pair of} got hold of his maracas, ^{was off} and chi-chi-cha-cha! ^{she was off into a rumba} ~~she was off~~ into a rumba ^{steps,} on the stage; a shimmy ^{ing} here, a shake there, she did her ^{in a manner I would say} number with a flare. ^{quite daring.}

number with a flare.
 (flair)

~~She was off into a rumba~~ → call

She was dressed in a purple see-through gauze cheongsam ^{of} sprinkled with gold ^{sequins, and} spangles, three-inch stiletto heels; one wiggle and all the gold ^{sequins} spangles flashed. When she finished her song there was no end to the applause, ^{whereupon} ~~with that,~~ she tossed off an encore before ^{coming} ~~she came down~~ off the stage to be snatched away at once by a group of young pilots. I wanted to hear more of the singing, but the Li girl kept ^{after} trying to pull me ^{to go} off to the raffle, ^{in another} room. As we were pushing our way through the crowd, somebody caught hold of my arm from behind and called, "School ^{Shih-niang!} Mother!"

I turned around; I was amazed to see it was the woman who ^(was on the stage a moment ago singing) sung "A Touch of Green": Ever since I came to Taipei, nobody calls me "School Mother" any more; ^{over here} everybody ^{I am} calls me "Granny Ch'in"; ^{"to one and all,} It was so long since I'd heard anybody ^{address by} call me ^{old-fashioned term} that; it was so unexpected that for a second it just didn't register. ^{Shih-niang,} "School Mom, it's me, Verdancy Chu," said the woman, all smiles.

I kept staring up and down at her; before I could say anything a bunch of young pilots came charging up and started ^{yelling} howling and yowling for her to go dance with them. She shooed them away and whispered in my ear, ^{"please} "Why don't you give me your address, ^{Shih-niang} School Mom;

In a day or two I'll ^{invite} try and fetch you to my place for a game of mahjong. I'm ^{pretty} really good at the game now; I've had a lot of practice, you know."

Before she turned to leave, she smiled at me and said in a low voice, "^{Shih-niang} School Mom, it took me a good long time to recognize you, too, ^{just now.} a while ago."

^{I used to go to} When I first went to see the Peking opera ^(and in the story) "Wu Tzu-hsü Escapes through the Chao Pass," ^{remember I} in which General Wu's hair turns ^{only} all white overnight from anxiety, ^{a play} I used to think that kind of thing ^{just} happens in the theater; in real life, how could people's looks change so dramatically?

That night, ^{at} I went home, and as I was washing my face I took a good look in the mirror; I was startled to see my own hair ^{was} covered with frost, too. ^{No} wonder ^{even} Verdancy Chu did not recognize me any more. When we were ^{refugees} fleeing, ^{come out alive; we hardly} our only concern was to ^{save our lives;}

^{from} the ^{SIET} Civil War, ^{had time to think of} anything else ^{was just small beer;} the days and nights could turn themselves upside down for all we cared.

^{By the time we were evacuated} When we retreated to Hainan Island Wei-ch'eng ^{had fallen} fell ill and died. ^{It was ironical that he had flown in} What a laugh, he flew all around the sky

^{off just like that, while} all his life and nothing ^{had} happened to him, ^{that he should have kicked} and there we ^{were} sitting in a ship, ^{and he died in such a shitty way.}

He ^{got} dysentery; there were too many sick people on board

^{had come down with}

and not enough medicine. I watched him letting loose all that muck until his face turned black. The minute he stopped breathing the sailors wrapped him up in a ~~sandbag~~ ^{junny-sack} and dumped him into the ocean along with a few others ^{bodies.}

All I heard was a splash, and he was gone. From the day I married Wei-ch'eng I knew I'd have to plan how I was going to collect his body someday. I knew from the start that people like Wei-ch'eng wouldn't outlive me. I didn't expect that in the end I wasn't even able to claim his remains. Ever since we came to Taiwan I've been so busy ^{with daily} living that memories of things that happened on the Mainland gradually faded away. To tell you the truth, if I hadn't run into Verdancy Chu at the New Life Club I'm not sure I'd ever have thought about her again.

Original trans. sounds a little like this old lady wants to "live it up"!

Two or three days later Verdancy Chu did send a taxicab with a note to bring me over to ^{her house for} have dinner. She lives in another Airforce dependents' complex on the ^{Hsin Yi Road} ~~fourth~~ ^{4. Faith-and-} section of Justice Road. There were some other guests that night, three young pilots, probably in Taipei ^{the Taoyuan} on weekend leave from Peachgarden Airforce Base. ^{followed} they all took a leaf out of Verdancy Chu's ^{example} book and ^{started} calling me "School Mother."

"This is Smart ^{of} Cookie Liu." Verdancy Chu pointed

^{pasty-faced}
 at a short, ↑ fellow, puffed out like a loaf of bread.
 "School Mom,^{Shih-mang,} just wait until you see him playing mahjong
 later, the way he blows himself up! Then you'll know what
 I mean."

Liu sidled up to Verdancy Chu. "Big Sister!" he
 protested with a leer. "Don't tell me I got on your
 wrong side again today? Not one kind word ^{so far} to date."

^{Verdancy, chuckling to herself, simply ignored him}
 With her enticing chuckle Verdancy Chu passed him.
^{and pointed to another fellow who was dark and skinny,}
 "This one ~~runs an outfit for kids, let me tell you.~~
^{is a specialist in kid stuff.} Shih-mang,

She pointed to a dark, skinny fellow, "School Mom,
 you might as well call him ^{Wang,} ~~Wang~~ the Baby-doctor, ^{He}
~~always goes for the kid stuff;~~ In all the time he's played
 mahjong with us, ~~why!~~ he hasn't shown a ~~single~~ respectable
 hand once. He's our King of the Chicken Game."

Wang laughed out of the corner of his mouth. "Don't
 you go too far, Big Sister! ^{When} we get down to the table,
 Liu and I, we'll flank ^{you} left and right and get you sand-
 wичed in between; ^{Then} we'll really see how tough you
 can be!"

^{"Never mind}
 "Oh, yeah?" Chin up, Verdancy Chu sneered. "Bring
^{you two jokers. You can bring on two of your real}
~~on two bonafide tough cookies for reinforcements, let alone~~
~~tough cookies for back up, and~~
~~two precious articles like you,~~ I'll take the whole lot
^{So help me, I'll see that,}
 of you out to the cleaners, ^{none} of you ~~jokers~~ is leaving
 this place till you hock your pants!"

Verdancy Chu was costumed in a ^{stylish} sack, her arms bare, a red sweater around her shoulders, the sleeves danced ^{ing} up and down as she walked. Her body had filled out, too! — even her complexion had grown fine and delicate; her face was fashionably painted; her eyes, once bright and limpid, now ^{darted} coquetted this way and that, sending out ^{coquettish} amorous glances. Then she introduced me to a young man in his twenties, ^{Young} Little Ku. He was much nicer-looking than the other two, strongly-built, ^{with} thick eyebrows and a high nose; he seemed to be a lot more solid a fellow, not such a wise guy. He followed Verdancy Chu around as she took care of the guests, helped her move chairs and tables, taking orders from her, doing all the heavy work.

In a little while we all sat down at the dinner-table. Verdancy Chu came in bearing the first course, steamed chicken, a steaming-hot, big, fat hen, in a large amber-colored porcelain bowl; the minute she laid the bowl down Smart Cookie jumped to his feet and went around behind ^{Young} Little Ku.

^{Young man nudged} "Little Ku!" he pushed him and yelled. "You'd ^{hurry and} better eat a lot of this stuff, and fast! ^{your} Big Sister steamed this chicken ^{especially for you} to make you big and strong!"

As he said this,

He and Wang let out a squeal. ^(of delight.) ~~Little~~ ^{young} Ku laughed, too, but he looked rather embarrassed. Verdancy Chu snatched a ^{service} ~~garrison~~ cap from the teatable and hit Smart ~~Cookie~~ Liu over the head with it; Liu covered his head with his arms and fled around the table. Wang picked up a spoon and ladled a helping of chicken broth into his mouth.

"Wow, it sure makes a ~~whole lot of~~ difference when ^{young} ~~Little~~ ^{is} Ku's around!" He smacked his lips and sighed.

"Even Big Sister's chicken broth tastes sweet as honey!"

Verdancy Chu tossed the ^{service} ~~garrison~~ cap away and doubled over with laughter. "These two gallows-birds!" she swore between her teeth; ^{shaking} ~~she shook~~ her finger at Liu and Wang. "First you cop my chicken broth and then you have the nerve to ask me for honey!"

"Who else is Big Sister's honey for but us?"

Liu and Wang broke out laughing at the same time.

"If ^{Shih-mang} ~~School Mom~~ weren't here today, I'd ^{really give} ~~say something~~ ^{a piece of my mind} ~~you wouldn't like to hear~~!" Verdancy ~~Chu~~ ^{Shih-mang} came over and put a hand on my shoulder. "School Mom, please don't be offended, ^{young} ~~Ma'am~~. I meant to have these ~~little~~ ^{over} ~~baby~~ ^{so you'd have a foursome in eight rounds} brothers of mine ~~squire~~ ^{squirts so,} you in a game of mahjong, how ~~did~~ ^{would} I know I've ~~been~~ ^{spoiled} ~~spoil~~ing the little ~~devils~~ ^{rotten?} when they open their mouths, they have no respect for their elders!" She jabbed Liu's forehead with her forefinger. "You,

you Smart-^{you}Cookie, you're the biggest nuisance of them all!"

She walked into the kitchen. ^{young} Little Ku followed her to help bring out the food. All through dinner Wang and Liu kept ^{up their} wisecracking ^s with Verdancy Chu.

After that, every week or so Verdancy Chu would pick me up to go to her place. But in all the times I was there she never said one word about the past. When we got together we'd always be busy playing mahjong.

Verdancy Chu told me ^{Young} Little Ku didn't ^{care for} like any ^{other} games, he just liked to fiddle around with the tiles a bit.

Whenever he came from ^{Taoyuan} Peachgarden to Taipei on leave, Verdancy Chu would go ^{around} all over ^{ing} to find mahjong partners for him; very often she'd even pull in the boss-lady

~~of the~~ of the Supreme Fragrance ^{the} General Store ^{around the corner} at the head of the alley to make up a foursome. Whenever ^{Young} Little Ku played with us, Verdancy Chu wouldn't join in; she'd pull up a chair, sit right behind ^{him} Little Ku and give him directions.

Her legs crossed, one elbow resting on ^{Young} Little Ku's shoulder, she never stopped humming songs oh, like

"Ten Sighs," like "Ooh, I'm Scared of the Twilight," ^{knew them all} you name it, she would air you anything at all. Sometimes

no matter how long we were playing, she'd sit there and
- hum through the whole game. evening

"Tell me

"Just when did you get so good at singing, Verdancy?"

sure I couldn't ~~keep from~~ ^{help} asking her once; I remembered how in the past when she spoke ~~she~~ was afraid even to raise her voice.

"Well, when I first came to Taiwan I couldn't find a job, ^{so} I hung around with the Air Force entertainment troupe for quite a number of years and that's how I learned my business."

"Granny Ch'in, don't you know?" The Supreme Fragrance ^{of the general store} boss-lady ^{"We all"} laughed. "All of us here call her 'the Superior White Light.'" ^{Radiance Pai}

"Now, Boss-lady, you're putting me on again," said Verdancy Chu. "You'd better keep your eye on your game, ^{or else} ~~later~~ when you ^{get cleaned out} lose your shirt, you'll be ^{clamoring for} the one who wants another all-nighter." ^{sessions}

this is too much of a recent vogue expression

One day, barely three or four months after I'd met Verdancy, as I was buying some sautéed delicacies at the Eastgate Market on ^{Faith and} Justice Road, I ran into the Supreme Fragrance boss-lady; ^{doing some} she was ^{when} shopping for her store. ^{marinated}

"sautéed" is sometimes used for "shir-fry" 炒

"Granny Ch'in!" The minute she saw me she caught me by the arm. "Did you hear? It's all over with that ^{young friend} ~~Little~~ Ku of Miss Chu's. ^{was in an accident!} Last Saturday! They said

it was right there ^{over Taoyuan} at the Peachgarden Air Base. ^{He} He was in the air only a few minutes, and then he crashed."

"I didn't know a thing about it!" I said.

The boss-lady ^{hailed} called a pedicab, over, and the two of us went ^{over} to see Verdancy. All the way there the boss-lady kept ^{up her commentary,} on backbiting.

"Now how are you going to explain this? Such a strong, healthy fellow, and pfft! he's gone. That ^{Young} Little Ku had been in and out of Miss Chu's for ^{I guess} way over two years. At first Miss Chu said ^{Young} Little Ku was her foster-brother, but the way they kept eying each other, it didn't look like it at all. Everybody in our alley says Miss Chu ^{has a taste for} likes to eat 'spring chickens,' she only goes ^{particularly} for those young kids in the Air Force. Can you blame her, though? A man like ^{Young} Little Ku, with such a sweet temper, who would ^{ed} listen to everything Miss Chu said, where would you find another man like that? I feel so sorry for Miss Chu!"

When we arrived at Verdancy's home, we rang the bell for a long time; ^{but} nobody answered; ^{at} after a while we heard Verdancy calling to us through the window, ^{"Sub-niang,} "School Mom, Boss-lady, come on in, the door's ^{not} unlocked."

We pushed open the door and walked up to her living room. ^{There} There was Verdancy, sitting on the window-sill,

in pink silk pyjamas; she'd rolled up the cuffs of her pants and been doing her toenails with Cutex; her hair was still in curlers.

"I spotted you two right away." She looked up at us and laughed. "The nail polish isn't dry yet, I couldn't put my shoes on to go ~~out~~ and open the door, ^{for you} sorry to have kept you waiting — you picked the perfect time to come! ~~This afternoon~~ I've just cooked up a big ^{potful} of sweet-and-sour pigsfeet; ^{for dinner;} I was worried nobody'd show up ^{help me} to eat it. ~~Later, when~~ ^{ing over} Granny Yu ~~from~~ ^{my} across the street ^{and} comes to return ~~me~~ ^{just right} those knitting-needles, the four of us'll be all set for a game of mahjong."

As she was talking, Granny Yu came in. Verdancy jumped down off the window-sill in a hurry and picked up her nail polish. "Boss-lady," she told ~~the Supreme~~ ^{her neighbor} ~~from the general store,~~ ^{are} ~~Fragrance boss-lady,~~ "why don't you set the table for me. I'll go in the kitchen and get the food. This is ^a Ladies' Day today; we're all fast on the draw ^{and} after dinner we should be good for at least twenty-four rounds."

I followed Verdancy into the kitchen to give her a hand. She poured the sweet-and-sour pigsfeet out of the ~~wok~~ ^{pot}, set the ~~wok~~ ^{pot} back on the stove and started to fry a dish of ^{"Grandma's"} "Granny Ma's" beancurd." I stood by her, holding a plate, waiting for her to put the food on it.

Though "wok" has become an Am. word, particularly in cook books, to use it this way is still a bit far-far. Besides, pigsfeet are likely cooked in a deeper pot.

STET orig.

"^{Young} ~~Little~~ Ku got killed; you must have heard about it, Shih-mang School Mom?" Verdancy kept stir-frying the beancurd; she didn't even turn her head.

"The Supreme Fragrance boss-lady just told me, a little while ago."

"^{Young} ~~Little~~ Ku has no relatives here; it's his schoolmates and me who took care of his funeral. Yesterday afternoon I carried his ashes to the Green Lake Air Force Cemetery and buried them."

I stood behind Verdancy, looking at her, without saying anything. Verdancy had no makeup on ~~her face~~, but she still looked extraordinarily young and lively; she didn't look ^{at all} like a woman on the wrong side of thirty, at all; probably because her cheeks ^{are now} had grown full and blooming ^{and} her skin smooth and taut, ^{It seemed} the years were unable to carve any more lines ^{on her face}. Though I had a lot more years behind me than Verdancy, I felt ^{I could} ~~there was no longer any~~ ^{there was no need for me} ~~need for me to find~~ ^{any} ~~something to say to console her.~~ ^{some}

Verdancy gave the beancurd a few deft flips with spatula and tipped it out of the wok onto my plate; she scooped up a spoonful and put it in my mouth.

Shih-mang, "School Mom, have a taste of my hot-pepper beancurd," she laughed. "You think it's spicy enough now?"

After dinner, Verdancy set up the mahjong table

and brought out the Soochow bamboo tiles she ^{reserved} kept for guests. As soon as we sat down to the game, Verdancy ^{made} hit a Grand Three Dragons the ^{very} first hand.

"Miss Chu!" protested the ~~Supreme Fragrance~~ boss-lady. "Since ^{ay} you're so lucky, you should go buy ~~yourself~~ a Patriotic Lottery ticket!"

"You all had better look out!" Verdancy laughed. "Today ^{I'll have everything for me} ~~my luck is~~ going to rise again."

By the time the eighth round began, Verdancy ^{had} practically wiped out the three of us; the chips in front of her were piled all the way up to her nose. Verdancy kept laughing; ^{and humming} she kept rolling her favorite song, "A Touch of Green," around in her mouth. Every so often she would sing; ^{the words:}

Aiya, ai, aiya,

Darling! if you want to pick flowers,
do it ^{while there's time} now —