STATE FUNERAL

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by

Pai Hsien-yung

translated by Patia Isaku and the Author
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One early morning in December, the sky somber and overcast, the air raw and piercing, squall upon squall of cold wind swept past. In front of the Taipei Metropolitan Funeral Hall row on row of white wreaths stretched all the way from the gate to the sidewalk. A combined honor guard, in two columns, metal helmets shining, at order arms stood at attention on both sides of the main entrance. The avenue had been closed to normal traffic; every now and then one or two official limousines drove slowly in. Now an old man, leaning on his staff, walked up to the gate of the funeral hall. The hair on his head was white as snow; his beard and eyebrows were all white; he was outfitted in a worn Tibetan-blue serge Sun Yat-sen tunic and a pair of soft-soled black cloth shoes. Stopping before the memorial arch at the entrance, he raised his head, squinting his eyes
and took a look at the plaque on the arch: MEMORIAL CEREMONY FOR THE LATE FOUR-STAR GENERAL LI HAO-JAN. The old man stood there for a moment, then, leaning on his staff, his back bent like a bow, his steps faltering, he made his way into the hall, with faltering steps.

A table stood by the door; on it lay an ink-slab, writing brushes and a folding guestbook. As the old man drew near, from behind the table a young aide in a brand new uniform quickly motioned to him, inviting him to sign his name.

"I am Ch'in I-fang, Ch'in, the aide-de-camp," said the old man.

Very politely, the young aide handed him an ink-soaked brush.

"I was General Li's old aide-de-camp," Ch'in I-fang insisted, his face solemn, his voice trembling. Without waiting for the young aide's reply, his staff rapping on the floor, step by step he proceeded into the hall. Early mourners.

There was only a scattering of government officials inside,
arrived early to mourn. The walls were covered with memorial scrolls bearing elegiac couplets; they hung side by side, many of them down to the floor. When the wind rose, they fluttered. In the center of the altar hung a portrait of General Li in full-dress uniform arrayed with medals and decorations; on the wall to the left of the altar was spread a green banner with the insignia of a four-star general. The altar was covered with offerings of fruit and fresh flowers; smoke already ascended from the sandalwood incense in the cylindrical burner.

Above the altar hung a horizontal plaque; on it huge characters: IN ETERNAL COMMENORATION OF AN EMINENT HERO.

As Ch'in I-fang trudged to the altar and, with great effort, straightened to attention, to the right of the altar the Master of Ceremonies intoned:

"First bow — — "

Ignoring the appropriate ritual, Ch'in I-fang threw his staff to the floor, struggled down on his knees, prostrated himself and struck his forehead against the ground
several times. Shaking with the effort, he rose to his feet and rested himself on his staff, panting heavily. There he stood and gazed at the late General’s portrait; he pulled out his handkerchief, blowing his nose and wiping away his tears. There was a line of government officials behind him already, waiting their turns to pay tribute. A young aide hurried over and gently took him by the arm to lead him away. Brusquely Ch’iin I-fang wrenched himself free and gave the young fellow a dirty look, staff thumping, he withdrew to a corner. As he kept staring at those young aides shuttling to and fro about the hall, sleek and clean-cut every one of them, anger flared up inside him like fire in a pan. If you ask me, why, the General was murder by those little bastards, he growled furiously to himself. Those little creeps, they eat shit they wouldn’t know the stink from perfume, how would they know how to take care of him? Only he, Ch’iin I-fang, only he who had followed the General for decades was the one who knew all about his headstrong ways. The moment you

Not the kind of word likely to be in Ch’iin’s vocabulary!
asked him, "General, are you sure you're all right?" his face would go dark. When he got sick you weren't supposed to ask him about it; the only thing you could do was keep an eye on him on the quiet. This bunch of S.O.B.'s wouldn't understand. The year before last, when the General went to hunt wild boar in Hualien and slipped climbing a mountain and broke his leg, he rushed back from Tainan to see him. There he was, leg in a cast, sitting back on a couch in the living room, all by himself. "General, Sir, at your age, you should take better care of yourself," he remonstrated with him. You should have seen the way he scowled! you wouldn't believe how grouchy he looked. These years when there were no more wars, he'd go mountain-climbing and hunting. He was well past seventy, but you'd never hear him admit it.

Ch'in I-fang looked up at the General's portrait again. Still the same stubborn look on his face! He sighed, shaking his head. He carried himself like a hero all his life,
Would he give up and lie down like this so easily?

But say what you like, he should never have sent him away. "Ch'in I-fang, it's warmer down in Tainan. You'll get better there," he said to him. So he thought he was too old, did he? Grown useless, had he? Was it because he'd gotten asthma? Since the master had spoken of the Northern Expedition, when he followed the General with his thermos on his back from Canton, fighting all the way up to the Shanghái Pass, for so many decades, who but Ch'in I-fang through war and through storm, was the one who always stood by him? Well, after all those years he had served him, all he got was "Ch'in I-fang, it's for your own good!" Whenever people referred to him as "General Li Hao-ji'an's aide-de-camp," he was enough to make him glow with pride. A fine thing, a weather-beaten old white-haired retainer to be thrown out like this, just like that! And by his own General too. Just think about it, is that something you can hold your head up about?

When he was in the Veterans Hospital, if anybody asked him about himself, he'd simply ignore them and pretend to be asleep. That very night he saw him, clearly, with his galloping up to him on his charger, Black-Cloud-Over-White-Snow, shouting "Ch'in! I've lost my sword!"

There are different conventions governing naming of horses (and other things) in Chinese and in English. A literal transl. of the perfectly good 春風雪 classic sounds dumb (if you'll pardon my saying so) and will baffle the reader.
He fell out of bed in his fright, all over cold sweat. Breaking out all over, which could mean only one thing:

he knew it: the General is done for! Don't think just because he led a million troops he even knew when to keep himself warm. All those years after Madame passed away, often on winter nights, he was the one who got up and put the covers back on him. This time, if he, Ch'in I-fang, had still been by the General's side, this would never have happened to him. He would have seen he wasn't feeling well; he would have seen he was ill, he would have watched over him, right beside him. These Johnny-come-lateliers!

These young whipper-snappers! Do they have a heart?

People say the night the General had his heart-attack, he fell on the floor, and not a soul was around. He wasn't even able to leave a last word behind.

"Third bow --- " the Master of Ceremonies intoned.

Since Gen. Li was stricken with a heart-attack, be not to confuse the issue by using the word "heart" in other (clinical) senses. See also pp. 9.
A bespectacled middle-aged man in the traditional white hemp-woven mourning had appeared and was on his knees by the altar, bowing over and over to acknowledge the condolences of the guests.

"Young Master"

Unsteadily Ch'in I-fang rushed over to the middle-aged man and called him gently. "Young Master, it's me, Ch'in, the aide-de-camp."

Suddenly Ch'in I-fang's wizened old face broke into a smile. He remembered how once when Young Master was still little he helped him into a child-size complete Army uniform with a pair of jodhpurs and a small pair of riding-boots. He even tried to fasten his small military cape for him. He had taken him by the hand and they ran to the parade-ground.

There the General was, mounted on his great black charger,
waiting. Behind the charger stood a little white colt. He saw the two of them, one big, one little, rise and fall on the horses’ backs, Young Master’s cape flying high in the air. When Young Master, shamming ill health and dropped out of military academy to run off to America the General was so enraged his face turned iron-black: he pointed at Young Master, and roared, "From now on you need no longer come and look upon my face!"

"The General —— he —— " Ch’in I-fang stretched out his hand; he wanted to pat the middle-aged man on the shoulder, he wanted to tell him: Father and son are still father and son, after all. He wanted to tell him:

In his last years, the General’s heart was not really at peace. He wanted so much to tell him: Once Madame was gone, the General was all by himself in Taiwan; he felt very lonely, too. But Ch’in I-fang withdrew his hand; the middle-aged
man had raised his head and given him a stare, his face expressionless, as if he had not quite recognized him.

A formidable-looking general in full regalia came up to preside over the ceremony. In an instant the hall was thick with people. Ch'in I-fang retreated in haste to his corner; he saw rows and rows of generals in the crowd, all standing there, solemn, all at attention. The presiding general raised the scroll high in both hands and began to pronounce the eulogy in a sonorous Kiangsu-Chekiang-accented voice, in a rhythmical manner:

1. Titan of warriors!
2. So the General was who like an eagle did himself with the age blind.
3. To the Revolution he gave his life.
4. Keen-minded and great, how noble his war-craft!
5. In the Northern Expedition, like clouds men followed him in the battle-field.
6. His command held sway, supreme.
7. As one the country sought the Japanese foe, our pen in hand he planned, helped and counselled the Chief.

With the close of the eulogy, the memorial ceremony began. The first delegation to approach was that from the Army Headquarters Command, headed by a three-star general bearing a wreath. Behind him stood three rows of generals in full-dress uniforms all emblazoned with splendidous decorations. His eyes narrowed, Ch'in I-fang took a good look,
only to find that among these newly-made generals, there wasn't even one he recognized. Then followed representatives from the three Forces Headquarters, the government ministries, and the Legislature, who came forward one after another to pay their respects. Ch'in I-fang stood on tiptoe and craned his neck looking all over for old acquaintances in the crowd. Finally he caught sight of two old men walking up side by side. The one in a Tibetan-blue satin long gown with a mandarin jacket, white beard, and white moustache, broadnosed, that's Commander Chang, isn't it? Ch'in I-fang moved forward one step, his eyes narrowed to a thin line. He's been living in seclusion in Hong Kong; so he's come, too. Then the one next to him, who keeps wiping his eyes with a handkerchief, so ill and feeble, supported by an old orderly, he must be Deputy Commander Yeh. He's been bedridden in the Taipei Veterans Hospital for so many years, why he's still in the land of the living! During the Northern Expedition the two of them were big stars on the General's staff; everybody called them "Commanders of the Steel Army." When they were together they were just like the Sung Dynasty inseparables Chiao Tsan and Meng Liang, for years on end they made an invincible team. Just a while ago he had seen their memorial scrolls hanging side by side next to the door:
Pillar of the State! your Genius will be remembered a thousand Autumnns; upon your Strategy Victory followed ever; your one Regret; the Yellow Turbans were still yet not yet destroyed; Champion of the Han! another Chu-ke Liang you swore never to share the same Ground with the Enemy; lofty in Justice, your Loyalty never failed, and shall we let your History be burned to Ashes?

Chang Chien, in Reverent Memory

In Passes and on Rivers you fought a hundred Battles; forever shall it live Immortal! your honorable Name; too suddenly it rose, the mortal Wuchang autumn Wind; the World Entire mourns a True Hero. Our Country, our Nation is split in two; how can we bear to see the unending Tragedy and Woe?

When I hear how you went hunting by night, like Li Kuang at Pa Ling, I ask, Was there anyone willing to call back the Old General?

Yeh Hui, in Reverent Memory

"I've got myself three fierce warriors," the General once said with obvious pride, three fingers raised.
"Chang Chien, Yeh Hui, Liu Hsing-ch'i." But who can this old Buddhist monk be, with such a sorrowful look on his face? Ch'in I-fang, staff in his hand, took two steps forward. The old monk was robed in a black cassock, a pair of straw sandals on his feet; around his neck hung a string of russet rosary beads. Standing before the altar, palms together, he bowed three times, swung round and walked out.

"Lieutenant-General——" Ch'in I-fang uttered an involuntary cry. He had caught sight of the palm-sized scar on the back of the old monk's neck. He remembered vividly how in the battle at Lungt'an against the warlord Sun Ch'uan-fang during the Northern Expedition Liu Hsing-ch'i got a grapeshot wound on the back of the neck. He was taken to the Nanking Sanatorium; the General had sent Ch'in I-fang specially to take care of him. Hadn't he?

In those days you wouldn't believe with what flamboyance Liu Hsing-ch'i carried himself! He was young, capable, and high in the General's favor; too, his troops had practically won every single battle; you could say that of all the General's subordinates he was the most successful. 'The Commander of the Iron Forces' — at the very mention of his nom-de-guerre soldiers would gasp with awe. But what on earth had made this change in him?
Why was he dressed like this? Hobbling with his staff, Ch'in I-fang pushed his way through the crowd and rushed outside after the monk.

"Lieutenant-General, it's me, Ch'in I-fang." His back bowed, leaning on his staff, Ch'in I-fang addressed the old monk; he was panting so hard he could scarcely draw a breath.

The old monk halted, surprise written all over his face. For a moment he looked at him intently, from head to foot, he hesitated.

"Is it really you? Ch'in I-fang?"

"Ch'in I-fang, Lieutenant-General, wishing Your Honor the best of health." He folded his hands in a salute and bowed. Palms together, the old monk quickly returned Ch'in I-fang's salute. That sorrowful look was slowly reappearing on his face; after a long moment he uttered a sigh.

"Ch'in I-fang——ah, the General——" As he spoke, the old monk's voice choked, and his tears began to fall; hastily he touched the wide sleeve of his cassock to his eyes. Ch'in I-fang pulled out his handkerchief and blew his nose vigorously. How many years it had been since he had seen Liu Hsing-ch'i last. Not since Liu Hsing-ch'i had escaped all alone from Kwangtung to Taiwan. He had just been stripped of his military rank and had come to the Li residence to pay his respects to the General.
After having been held captive for a year by the Eighth Route Army, Liu Hsing-ch'i's whole person had changed beyond recognition; his face seared, livid; his hair almost all fallen out; he was so emaciated there was almost nothing left of his body but the skeleton. The moment he saw the General he called out in a trembling voice, "Your Excellency Hao—" and broke down, overwhelmed.

"Hsing-ch'i, how you must have suffered — " The General's eyes reddened; he kept patting Liu Hsing-ch'i on the shoulder.

"Your Excellency — I feel so ashamed," Liu Hsing-ch'i sobbed, shaking his head.

"The whole situation was totally irretrievable; it could not be blamed on any one person. You really can't blame yourself alone," The General let out a deep sigh. The two sat facing each other wistfully, at a loss for words.

"When we retreated to Kwangtung, I thought we could still put up a last-ditch fight." His voice low and mournful, the General spoke at last. "Chang Chien, Yeh Hui and you — your divisions were all our own Kwangtung boys; they'd been following me all these years; now that we had returned to Kwangtung we'd be defending our own homes and villages; if we fought to the death, may be we could still turn back the tide. We never dreamed we would meet with
such a shattering defeat — " The General's voice shook. "Tens of thousands of our Kwangtung boys, all lost to the enemy; just to talk about it — ah — it really makes your heart ache." And at last two streams of tears started to flow down the General's face.

"Your Excellency — " His own face covered with tears, Liu Hsing-ch'i cried out painfully, "I've followed Your Excellency a good thirty years, ever since we first campaigned out from our home province on campaign, on the Northern Expedition and in the War of Resistance against Japan as well. I may say the exploits performed by my troops were by no means trifling ones. And now, my entire force is destroyed, as the commander of a defeated army, I myself deserve to die ten thousand deaths! And more, I had to suffer insults and humiliations at the hands of the enemy. Your Excellency, indeed, I cannot bear to face the homeland fathers and elders again — " Abandoning all restraint, Liu Hsing-ch'i loosed a storm of wails.

During the final retreat from the mainland the General, Commander Chang and Deputy Commander Yeh had waited three full days on board the battleship Pa Kuei at Lungmen Harbor on Hainan Island for Liu Hsing-ch'i and his troops to withdraw from Kwangtung. Every day the three of them stood side by side on the deck looking to see him come out.

*A paraphrase of the famous quotation by Hsiao Yu (232-202 BC), an all-conquering general during the Warring Kingdoms period, who suffered a devastating defeat and ended his own life, too ashamed to face the „folks at home.”*
up to the very last moment when the order was given to sail, the General was still holding his binoculars, looking again and again toward the Bay of Canton. For three days and nights, he didn't close his eyes once; his face so haggard, as if in an instant he had aged ten years.

"The General, to me, he was so — "

Shaking his head, the old monk sighed deeply and turned to leave.

"Lieutenant-General, Sir, do take care of yourself!"

Ch'in I-fang followed him a few steps, calling after him. The old monk didn't even turn his head; his black cassock floating about in the bitter wind in a flash was a black spot, vanishing into the distance.

Inside the hall the funeral march sounded; it was time to bear the casket. The crowd outside the hall gate suddenly parted; rifles and bayonets raised, the Army Honor Guard stood to attention; General Li Hao-yan's casket, draped with the Blue Sky and White Sun, the national flag, was carried out from the hall, borne by eight Honor Guard officers. Outside an Honor Guard jeep was waiting; in it stood a standard-bearer holding aloft the four-star General's banner; the hearse followed, bearing General Li's portrait on its front. As soon as the casket was placed in the hearse, all the officials
who were to attend the graveside ceremonies entered their cars. The line of black official sedans stretched bumper to bumper along the avenue. Civil and military police, their whistles blowing, were busy directing traffic. In great haste Ch'in I-fang wrapped a white mourning sash around his waist; pushing aside the crowd with one hand, his staff in the other, he hobbled toward the hearse. Behind the hearse was parked an open-top military ten-wheeler; several of those young aides had already jumped on and were standing inside it. Ch'in I-fang went round to the rear and started to climb up the ladder, only to be stopped by an MP.

"I am General Li's old aide-de-camp," said Ch'in I-fang agitatedly, and started to climb on again.

"This vehicle, or aides only." The MP brushed him back down.

"You — you people — " Ch'in I-fang staggered backward, choking with rage; he pounded his staff furiously on the ground.

"When General Li was alive I followed him for thirty years!" he shouted, his voice quivering. "This is the last time I'm seeing him off; how dare you not allow me?"

The captain of the aides ran up to inquire what the matter was, and finally let Ch'in I-fang climb onto the truck. Ch'in I-fang clambered up before he could
find his footing the truck was pulling out; he lurched this way and rocked that way until a young aide caught him and helped him to one side. He grabbed the iron railing and hung on, doubled over, panting a long time before he recovered his breath. A chilly gust blew against his face, he hunched his shoulders. Soon the funeral procession turned onto East Nanking Avenue; at the intersection stood a giant arch of pine branches; across the top were large characters woven of white chrysanthemums: IN HONOR TRIBUTE OF THE FUNERAL OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE LATE FOUR-STAR GENERAL LI HAO-JAN. As the hearse was proceeding through the arch, an infantry company came marching along one side of the avenue. Seeing the hearse, their commanding officer barked at once shouted: "Salute!"

The soldiers in the company snapped to attention, eyes following the hearse, in a military salute.

At the sound of the order Ch'in I-fang, standing in the truck, straightened up in spite of himself, head high, chin in the air, his face most solemn, his white hair blown erect by the wind. All of a sudden he recalled the year the anti-Japanese war was won and they had moved back to Nanking, the former capital. The General went to the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum at Purple Cold Mountain to pay tribute to the Father of the Country; he had never seen so many
high-ranking generals together at once, they were all there, Commander Chang, Deputy Commander Yeh, Lieutenant-General Liu. That day he was the one who served as captain of the General's aides. He wore riding-boots, white gloves, a wide belt buckled so tight it held his back straight, and a shiny black revolver strapped to his side. The General was apparelled in a military cape, sword glistening at his side; he was right behind the General, their riding-boots clicked jauntily on the marble steps. In front of the Mausoleum the military guard stood in formation, waiting. As they approached, a thunderous shout burst out:

"Salute — "

Fifty-ninth Year of the Republic, Late Winter, California, USA.