

Size 12.5x10 cm

Original story by Li Jun

Adapted by He You-zhi

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1. Sun Xiwang was well known in the village as a good fellow; he had never caused anyone any embarrassment and everyone said he was a regular guy. On this day he was returning from the reservoir work site with Er Chun and some others and boasting about his old woman as they walked along.



2. Er Chun kidded him, "Elder Brother Xiwang, everybody knows your wife waits on you hand and foot!" Xiwang replied in a self-satisfied tone. "While the commune has been so busy repairing the irrigation works, I've worn out all my old shoes, but as soon as one pair wears out, she's already made a new pair. And there's nothing special about that. My wife and I have always been like that. I'm not joking."



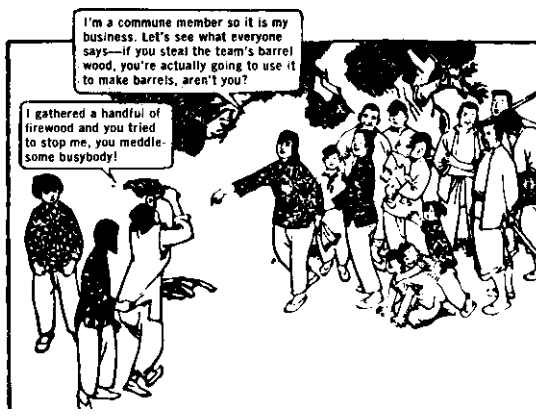
3. Er Chun quickly said, "That shows how capable your wife is and is nothing for you to boast about." Xiwang shook his head, "What do you understand! If a man can't get his wife to do what he wants, what sort of a fellow is that?" Er Chun snorted, "That's feudal thinking, it's no good!"



4. As they were talking, a child suddenly came dashing up and shouted. "Uncle Xiwang, your wife is having a shouting match with Sun Youpo in the street!"



5. "Huh." sighed Xiwang as he left Er Chun and ran off toward the village street.



6. There was a crowd of people gathered on the street. Sun Youpo was shouting and gesticulating and Li Shuangshuang, holding back her anger, was asking in an accusing tone why she wanted to steal the team's barrel wood.

That's not stealing! The day you walked off with a broom, that wasn't stealing either? As long as it's public property you can take it, is that it?



7. Xiwang brake into the group and tugged at Shuangshuang. "Enough said, stop getting an the bad side of people! Let's go home." Shuangshuang paid no attention but pointing at Sun Youpo continued to expose her, and the more she spoke, the more furious she became.



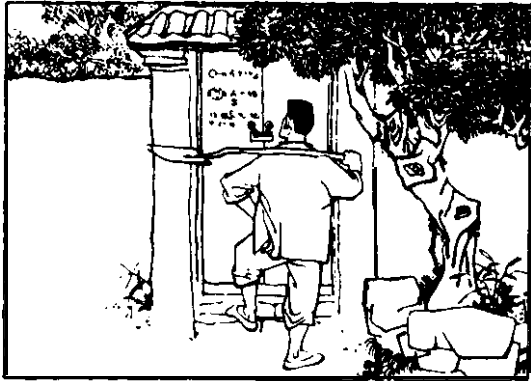
8. Sun Youpo was fairly hopping with rage and shouting, when by good fortune her husband Sun You came by and dragged his better half away. As she left, Sun Youpo continued to curse Li Shuangshuang over her shoulder.



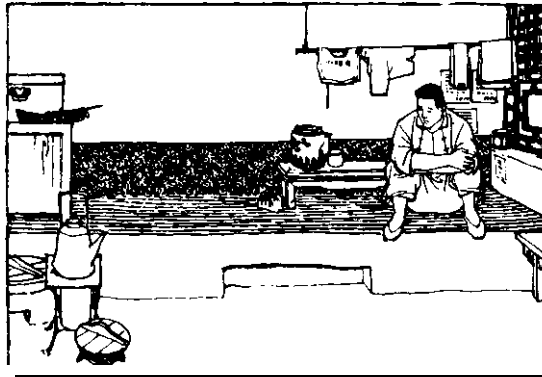
9. Shuangshuang wanted to go after her but Xiwang firmly held her back. "That's enough out of you. There aren't all that many pieces of barrel wood here?" Shuangshuang angrily replied. "That may sound reasonable, but if everyone stole like her, there would not be enough to go around."



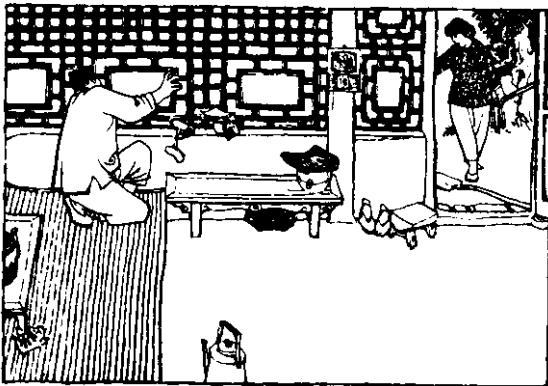
10. So saying, she gathered up the barrel slats and hurried off to the carpenter's team.



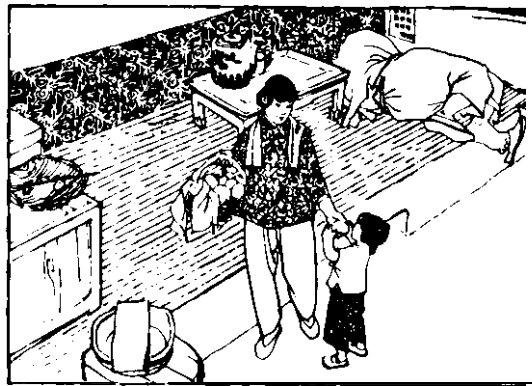
11. Xiwang quickly went back home. The door was pad-locked and there were **several** sentences chalked up on it: "Key is in usual place. Xiao Ju is at her auntie's home. When you get back, first light the fire."



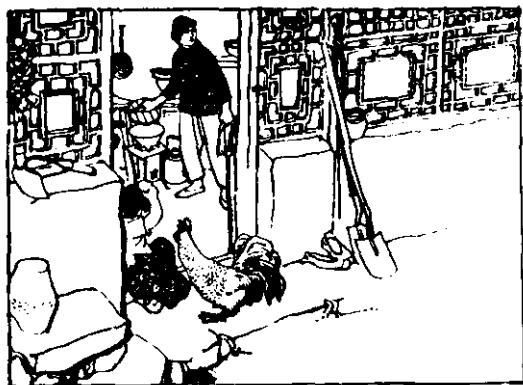
12. As soon as Xiwang saw the words "When you get back, first light the fire," he felt **even more** angry. He immediately ripped down the penciled note, took the key from the window ledge, opened the door, and stormed into the room, going straight **over** to lie down on the **kang**.



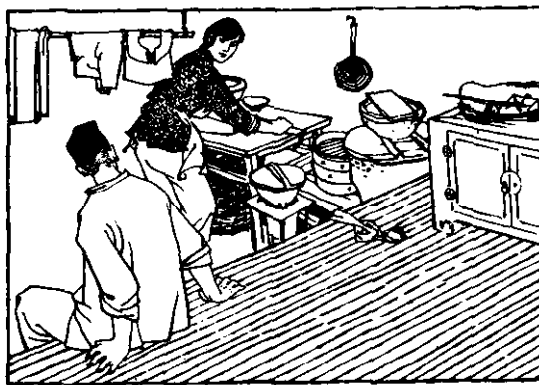
13. It was already noon and still Shuangshuang had not returned. Xiwang was very hungry and was just thinking of getting up when he heard someone at the door and Shuangshuang came in, leading their daughter Xiao Ju.



14. Xiwang quickly lay down again and turned his face to the wall. Shuangshuang took **no** notice of him but handed Xiao Ju a cold steamed bread roll and told her to go outside.



15. Next she raked out the stove and looked into the cooking pot. There was no water in it and she said angrily. "When you came home, why didn't you rake out the stove and put on the water and get a move on!."



16. Xiwang abruptly sat up. "I can't accept this tyranny. If I start cooking for you, next thing I'll be washing your underpants!" Shuangshuang was furious. "You don't seem to be doing much while here I am as busy as anything; haven't you got eyes in your head?."



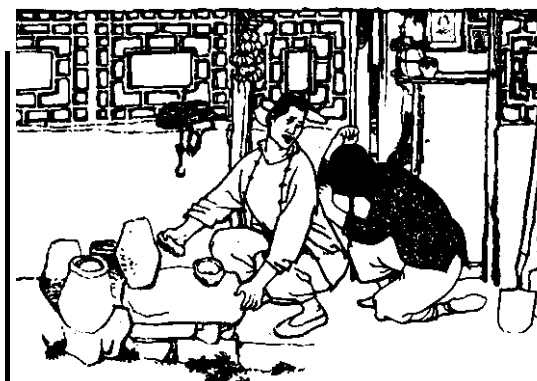
17. So saying, Shuangshuang began slicing the noodles. Xiwang jumped off the kang and said, "That's your own fault! You're an activist. but who gives you anything for that?"



18. The more Shuangshuang listened, the more impatient she became. Stamping her foot, she slapped the knife down on the table and said, "Eat it, you won't like it?"



19. While Shuangshuang angrily sat on the sill wiping the tears from her eyes, Xiwang began to feel better and picking up the already sliced noodles said, "This is enough for me. I'll cook it myself."



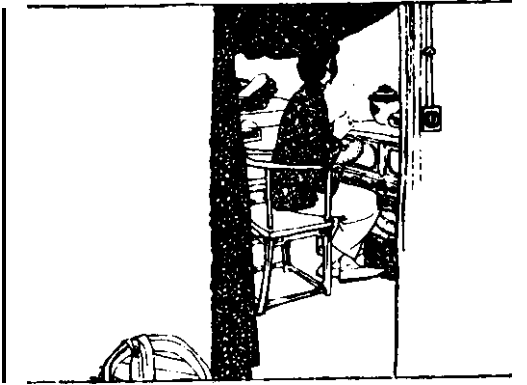
20. He took two cloves of garlic and began to pound them with a mortar. The more Shuangshuang cried, the louder Xiwang pounded, and then Shuangshuang became really angry. She jumped up and began pummeling Xiwang on his back with her two fists.



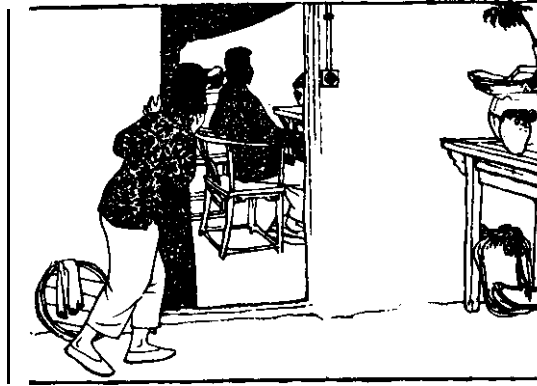
21. "Right, you are rebelling against your husband," muttered Xiwang and he took off one of his shoes to beat her; but Shuangshuang grabbed him by his wrist and said, "Let's go. We'll ask the Party branch secretary to adjudicate!"



22. At mention of going to see the Party secretary, Xiwang knew that he would come off worse, so he quickly broke free and leaped out through the gateway, turning to shout, "Let's go. You follow me; I'll go first!" and then he dashed off back to work.



23. By evening Xiwang had not returned home. After eating supper, Shuangshuang put the child to bed and sat alone by the window, sewing the sole of a shoe. She was thinking about her argument with Xiwang and also about why the production spirit of the women was so low.



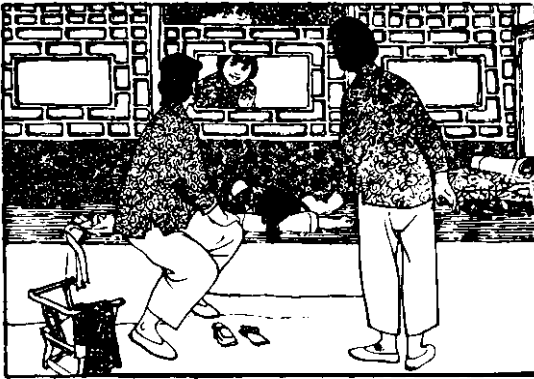
24. Suddenly there was a slight cough at the door and somebody walked in. Shuangshuang, thinking it was Xiwang, did not turn to look, but it was in fact the wife of the team leader, You Fang.



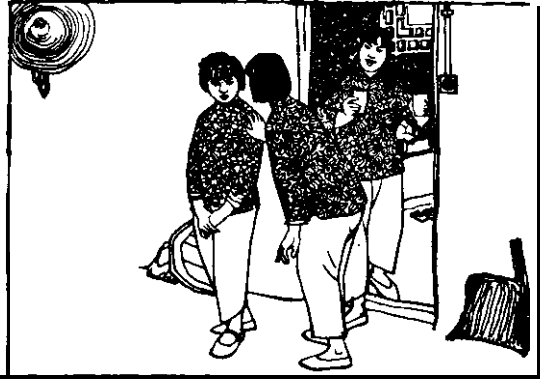
25. You Fang's wife knew that the two of them had been arguing and said persuasively, "Call it a day! There's a proverb: 'A young couple bears no malice after an argument, for by day they eat from the same pot and at night they share the same pillow!'" Shuangshuang couldn't help smiling. "But we can't even eat together?"



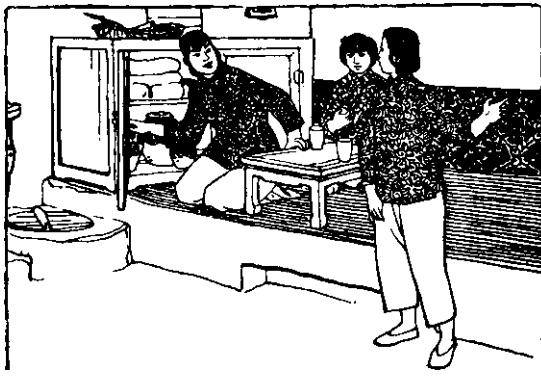
26. Shuangshuang said, "You see, he's gone running off to take an active part in the irrigation works. If irrigation is so important, why are we buried at home?" YOU Fang's wife said to her, "My mother-in-law has been ticking me off again. She says there's absolutely no point in going. We don't get any extra work points so what's the point in going there and working like an ox!"



27. They were chatting merrily away when they heard someone giggling at the window. It was Sun Youpo's daughter, Gui Ying.



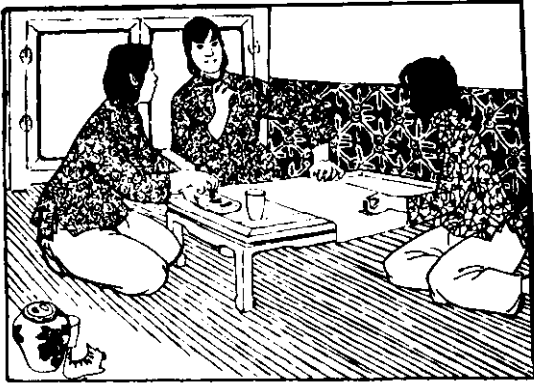
28. Gui Ying had just left lower middle school, and Shuangshuang was her best friend. Smiling, she came in and said, "Same with me. My mother often says to me. 'Why don't you hurry up and go to the town and find work there. There's no point in taking part in the labor here.' You must agree. that talk is pretty unpleasant?"



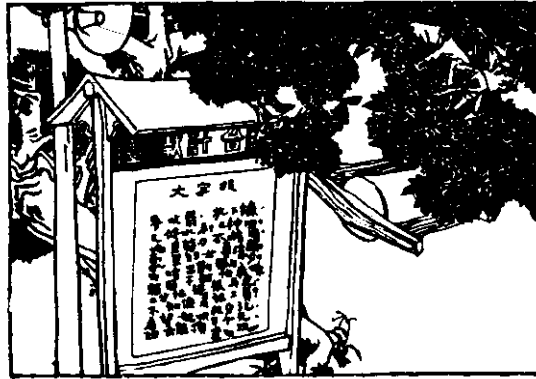
29. Why did none of the households send their women out to work? Shuangshuang felt that it was connected with the fact that the recording of work points was slack. As soon as she brought this up, You Fang's wife added, "Yes, and it's Assistant Team Leader Jin Qiao who is to blame for doing away with the recording of work points; in other villages they still make settlements to everyone --according to their work points!"



30. Shuangshuang slapped her thigh. "Ha, didn't the Party secretary say the other day that everybody should express their opinions? Let's bring this out and write a big-character poster!" When You Fang's wife and Gui Ying heard the idea of putting up a big-character poster, they began to hesitate; Gui Ying said she couldn't write characters and the other said she feared a scolding from her grandfather.



31. Shuangshuang boldly said, "I'll write it. This matter is too important to be passed over!" And You Fang's wife added, "That's for sure. As soon as work points are issued according to the work done, whoever is free will want to go and win some points." They all smiled.



32. Two days later, early in the morning in the most striking position in the village street, a big-character poster appeared. Although the characters were not written too well, the content was fresh and lively and it instantly aroused everybody's interest:

Big-character Poster

The harvest is over and the sickles have been put away; now the irrigation works are being repaired and the fields are being planted. There isn't enough labor to go around, but the women stay at home with nothing to do. Why is there a shortage of people going out to join the labor force? It's all because the cadres are lazy so the work points are recorded slackly. Don't you know who is the work-point recorder? I hope he will hurry up and start recording work points. The women can work half the day.

Li Shuangshuang



33. Just at this moment Secretary Liu of the commune committee, the Party secretary, and You Fang were passing by. When Secretary Liu had read the big-character poster, he said to You Fang, "An excellent criticism! This is an important problem in your team. I think you should do some research into it straightaway."



34. Secretary Liu then asked, "Li Shuangshuang whose wife is that?" The former secretary You Fang was not too certain but thought it was the wife of Xiwang. They asked around and someone explained that it was Xiwang's wife and that Li Shuangshuang was the new name she had chosen for herself when she had gone to the people's school the previous year.



35. While they were discussing this, Xiwang arrived on his way back from the work site, pushing a wheelbarrow. When everyone saw him they shouted, "Xiwang, come over here! Was this big-character poster written by your old woman or not?"



36. Xiwang got quite a fright as he thought to himself, "Let's hope it's not the business of my argument which has come out!" He was in something of a panic as he read the big-character poster, humphing all the while, and it was only when he had read it through that he felt relieved.



37. Secretary Liu said to the branch secretary, "This big-character poster is well written." Turning around, Xiwang said with a smile, "Uncle Progressive, the poster was written by the woman in my house."



38. No sooner had he said this than they all burst out laughing. Xiwang thought they were laughing at him because they thought he was boasting, so he quickly tried to explain. "What? Really it was she who wrote it! That one that cooks for me can write. Not only does she write big-character posters but she also writes lots of little-character posters in the house!"



39. Secretary Liu said with a smile, 'Young man, in the future you must change your old habits; how can you still call your wife 'the woman in my house' or 'the one that cooks for me'! And as for the small-character posters only appearing inside your house, surely that's slightly undemocratic.' Only half understanding, Xiwang began laughing again.



40. It never occurred to Xiwang that the Secretary of the Party Committee of the Commune would attach such importance to the poster. When he got home he sat looking at Shuangshuang, laughing and giggling at her. Shuangshuang began to lose her patience and finally said, 'So you've decided to come back to eat, have you?'



41. It was only then that Xiwang said seriously, 'Mother of Xiao Ju, you're no fool! Writing a big-character poster for Commune Secretary Liu to see. He said your opinions were extremely good and that the commune committee would have to do special research into the whole matter.' Both happy and worried, Shuangshuang asked, 'Are you sure? Is that really true!'



42. Smiling from ear to ear, Xiwang said, 'How could it be otherwise? If you really can go to earn a few work points, from now on I'll give you a hand with the food.'



43. Xiwang thought for a moment and added, "But in the future, you shouldn't just write the first thing that comes into your head. You know what policy means. If you write any old nonsense, washing our dirty linen in public, then what are we to do?"



44. Shuangshuang's eyebrows shot up as she said, "You must be a coward. The Party leadership saw the poster today, so what are you afraid of? If there is something on one's mind, one should tell it to the Party. I can't stand the type of person who every time he rakes out the cinders is frightened of burning himself."



Now we want to select a work-point recorder. Everyone can suggest people but we must choose someone who puts the public good first, we mustn't choose . . .

45. On the next day the team called a commune members' meeting. The Party branch secretary, holding up a work-point book, said a few words. "From today, we want to record work points conscientiously. As I see it, this should help cure some people's faults." As he said this, he fixed his eye on Sun Youpo.



46. Everyone began to join in a lively discussion. Some nominated Gui Ying, others Shuangshuang. At this point Sun Youpo stood up and said, "It's no small matter to be work-point recorder. It should be someone friendly. I think Xiwang fits the bill!"

This shows the "work unit" system in place (Danwei). The work unit's push for productivity and conscientious recording of work points is evident of Mao's communist leadership - searching for a lifestyle fulfilling the "common good."



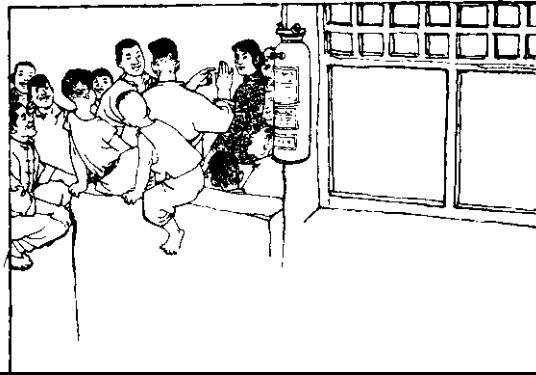
47. Assistant Team Leader Jin Qiao quickly seconded him. Several people also said, "Yes, let's choose Xiwang." Xiwang quickly stepped forward and said, "I couldn't do this job. I can't write account figures, nor can I use an abacus. I would muddle everybody's paints, so how could I possibly take it on?"



48. Suddenly Shuangshuang jumped up. "He can keep accounts and he can write account figures-he taught me!" Seeing that she had let the cat out of the bag, Xiwang embarrassedly said, "Stop talking! There's no need for you to say any more! When did I ever teach you to write account figures!"



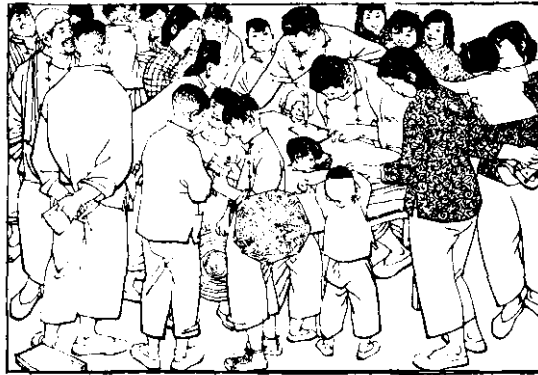
49. Shuangshuang pointed a finger directly at him. "This spring! Do you dare deny it? Whether or not he's done something to distinguish himself, we'll never drag this donkey along. The more you try to force him, the more stubborn he gets."



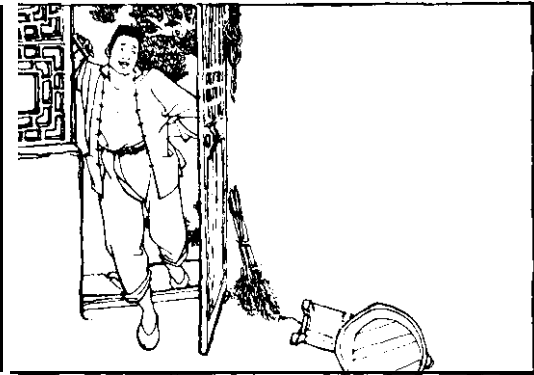
50. Seeing that Xiwang was speechless, You Fang found a way out of the impasse by saying, "All right-if Xiwang really isn't willing, how about electing Shuangshuang?" Xiwang got a terrific shock and hurriedly said, "What? Let her do it? That I'm still a bit better than her. Let me do it."



51. The meeting ended with roars of laughter. The Party branch secretary handed over the pile of work-point books to Xiwang. Seeing that everybody was taking the matter of work-point books very seriously, without realizing it, he regained his composure, rolled up his sleeves, and called everybody to come and collect their books.



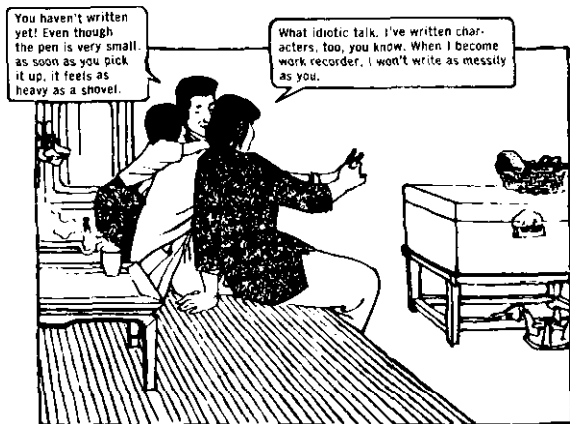
52. He carefully wrote the owner's name on each work-point book as he gave them out to everyone. Shuangshuang also received one and the ever-quarrelsome Sun Youpo and DaFeng, who were rarely seen in the fields, also grabbed theirs.



53. Xiwang worked for a long time before he had finished handing out the work-point books and when he returned home he stood in the doorway and let out a long sigh.



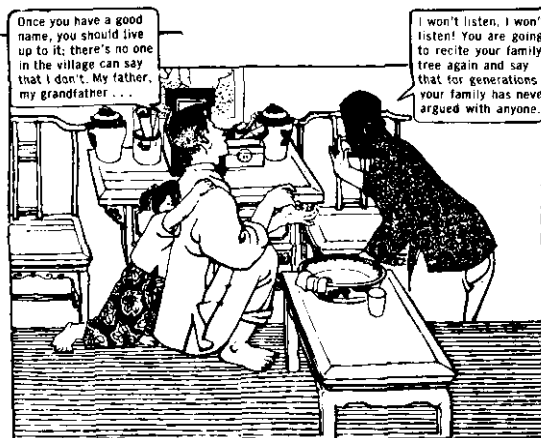
54. Shuangshuang smilingly said, "Hello! What's the matter with you?" Xiwang slapped his head with his hand several times. "Ugh! I feel as if I'm coming apart. I'm tired out. I'm no good for this brain work!"



You haven't written yet! Even though the pen is very small, as soon as you pick it up, it feels as heavy as a shovel.

What idiotic talk. I've written characters, too, you know. When I become work recorder, I won't write as messily as you.

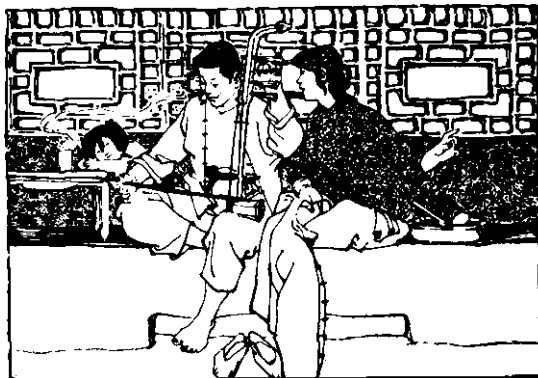
55. Shuangshuang caught sight of his hand as he stretched to take a drink and said, "Hm. People usually write characters on paper-how come you write them on your hand?"



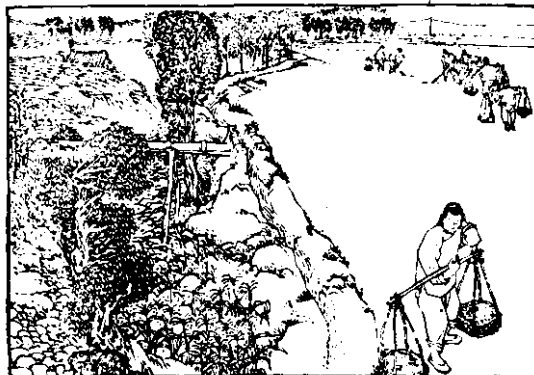
Once you have a good name, you should live up to it; there's no one in the village can say that I don't. My father, my grandfather...

I won't listen, I won't listen! You are going to recite your family tree again and say that for generations your family has never argued with anyone.

56. Xiwang washed his hands, swallowed hard, and said, "You know, if you're the work-points recorder you have to be making apologies to everyone all the time." Shuangshuang didn't agree. "How come? Depending on how much work someone does, you just record the points. If you set it up right and keep it going strictly without bias, who can say anything against you?"



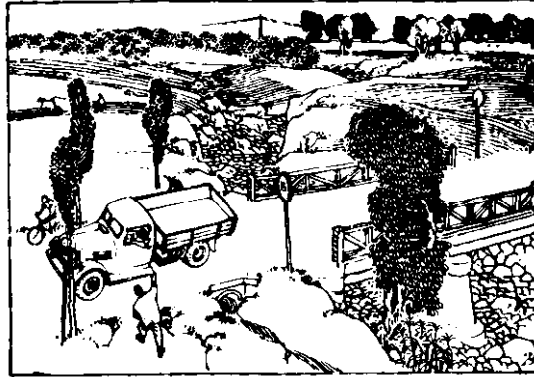
57. Xiwang was somewhat dejected. Shuangshuang urged him to put the public good before his own while working for the masses, to conscientiously put into operation the work-point system and then there would certainly be a lot of people turning out to join the work. When Xiwang remembered that Sun Youpo and Da Feng had also just taken work-point books, he couldn't help nodding in agreement.



58. That very day the team put into operation the system of work assignments and work points. Xiwang, Sun You, and several others undertook the work of spreading manure on eight mu of freshly planted wheat. Because the manure was some distance from the field they had to fetch it as well as spread it. Sun You kept muttering as he carried the manure.



59. Just at this moment Jin Qiao came along. As soon as he saw the manure they had laid on the field he asked, "Still so much to do! How much have you spread?" Sun You looked very displeased. "It's a big field. The tools are not up to much. We certainly got the worst of it when we undertook to do this work."



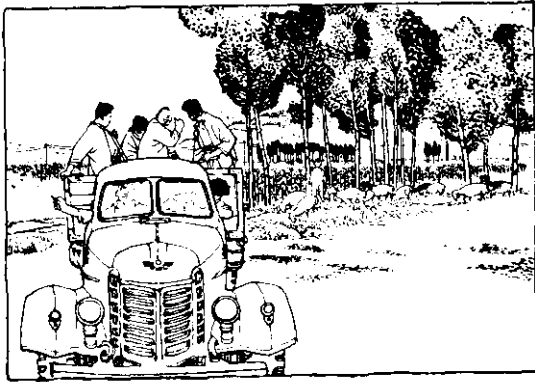
60. Just at this moment an empty truck came by. Jin Qiao immediately recognized the driver as Xiao Wang, a long-distance truck driver, and waving and shouting, he ran to the road. "Xiao Wang, where are you going? Stop and have a rest-have a drink of water."



61. The truck stopped at the side of the road beside the pile of manure. Jin Qiao poured out a bowl of water and led Xiao Wang to a shady spot and began chatting. Sun You came up behind the truck and took a look and thought to himself that if the driver would help, they could have the manure spread in no time.



62. He then told this excellent idea to Jin Qiao who said, with some embarrassment, as soon as he'd thought it over, "Right away! Xiao Wang, how about bringing the manure to the field on the truck for us?" At first Xiao Wang was unwilling, but later he was unable to withstand Jin Qiao's mixture of pleading and threats; he could only agree.



63. They had the manure on the truck in no time. The truck slowly drove around the field. Sun You and the others stood on the back scattering the manure.



64. The assigned eight mu were completed in the twinkling of an eye. Sun You and the rest took out their work-point books for Xiwang to mark in the work points. Xiwang generously recorded ten points for each of them, even putting ten points down in Sun You's book.



65. At this moment Shuangshuang and the other women were in the cotton fields deciding on their work points. Finally they came to Da Feng, and Sun Youpo was the first to express an opinion. "She spent the whole afternoon clearing up six rows. Give her five points."



66. "I don't agree!" interrupted Shuangshuang immediately. "We shouldn't only take into account speed, but also consider quality." So saying, she pointed to a row of cotton flowers. "Look, she did those rows without getting rid of all the weeds, which means that later on there will be fewer bolls!"



67. One of the team members came forward to solve the situation. "Give four points!" "Four points is all right," said Shuangshuang, "as long as she comes back in the afternoon to do the rows over again." Da Feng couldn't restrain her anger. "I don't need the work points—I've still got my parents!" and turning on her heel, she left.



68. Neither Gui Ying nor You Fang's wife were content with Da Feng and they hurriedly returned home to eat. Shuangshuang was furious as she stayed behind to redo the rows which Da Feng had done.



69. When she had finished she set off far home, and on the way she passed the wheat field where she saw old Gengpo, who was plowing and grumbling to himself, "Ha! Is this supposed to be a job of work? I've never seen anything like it!" Shuangshuang stopped to ask what the trouble was.



70. Shuangshuang glanced over the field and asked, "Who was it who spread the manure?" Old Gengpo snorted, "Who? You'll know when you get home!" Shuangshuang asked no more questions but hurried back to the village.



71. When she got to the village street, she ran into Xiwang who was bringing Xiao Ju to meet her. As soon as he saw her, Xiwang, full of smiles, asked, "Knocked off so late? Busy half the day? How many work points did you get?" Shuangshuang said, "Five points. And you?"



72. Xiwang laughed and said, self-satisfied. "You're asking about us? Well, Sun You, in no more time than it takes to smoke a few pipes, had earned ten points and as for Jin Qiao, with a few strokes of his spade he had also earned ten points." Shuangshuang questioned him further and discovered that their assigned work was none other than the field which Old Gengpo was plowing.



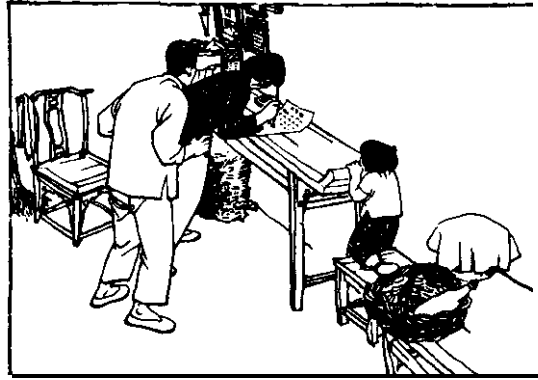
73. Xiwang had no idea that Shuangshuang was angry and he continued to put on airs. "That's why they say if you want to earn work points, you have to be smart in choosing the work you do. It's written in the disappointed look in your eyes!" He hadn't finished when Shuangshuang broke in with a change of mood. "You really know how to cheat-working without a thought for the quality of the work! That won't do!"



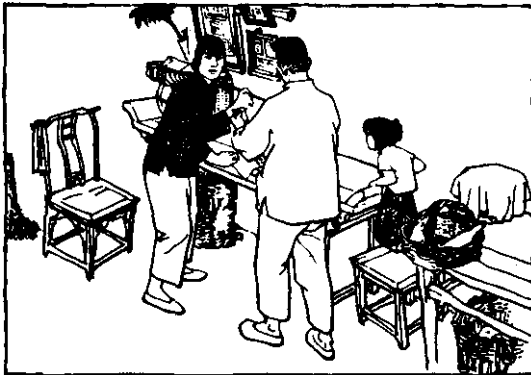
74. She shook her head and, with a snort, ran into the house and furiously took up the brush which was on the table and started quickly writing characters on a sheet of paper.



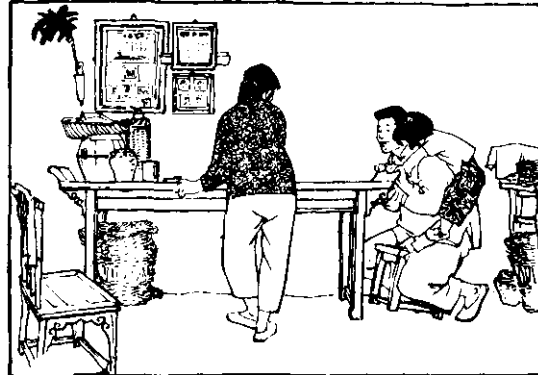
75. Xiwang followed her in to see what she was doing and saw that she had written several rows of large characters: "Some of the commune members are not so good; they don't take work points seriously, paying no attention to quality but just taking into account speed, doing their work opportunistically." Xiwang said shocked, "You. You're writing a big-character poster again?"



76. Shuangshuang said bitterly, "I won't tolerate spreading manure like that, and I won't tolerate clearing up the cotton stems like that either." Xiwang was so upset he started shifting from foot to foot. "You're always poking your nose in other people's affairs; you'll get yourself into trouble."



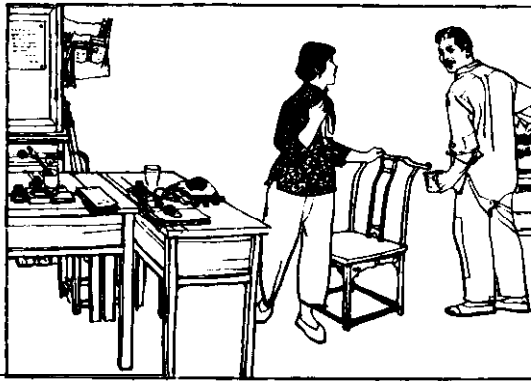
77. He whipped out some work-point tickets and said, "If you think you earned too few work points today, I'll give you two of mine." Shuangshuang pushed his hand away. "I'm not after your work points. It is not work points I'm after at all."



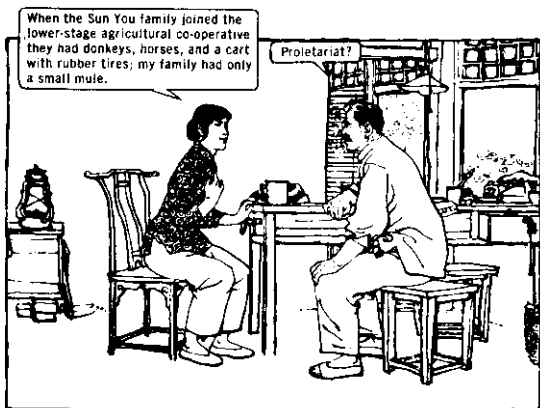
78. Xiwang pleaded with her, "Mother of Xiao Ju, I'm involved in this. Even if they took more work points than they should have, I was the work-point recorder. I wasn't going to record the extra points but they began to kick up a fuss and I got all confused."



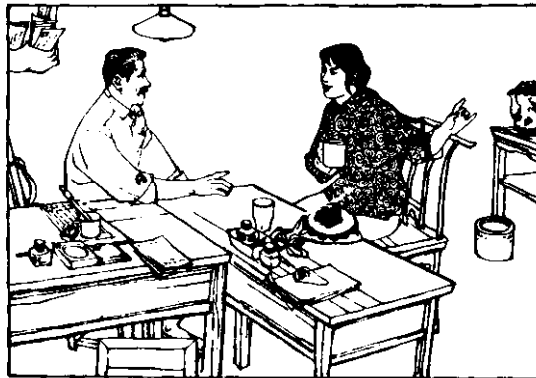
79. Shuangshuang was so angry that she began to tremble all over. "If you hadn't been involved in this, I would have exposed it in a big-character wall poster. but since it does involve you, I'll go to the commune to accuse you." So saying, she threw down her pen and like a gust of wind rushed out of the house.



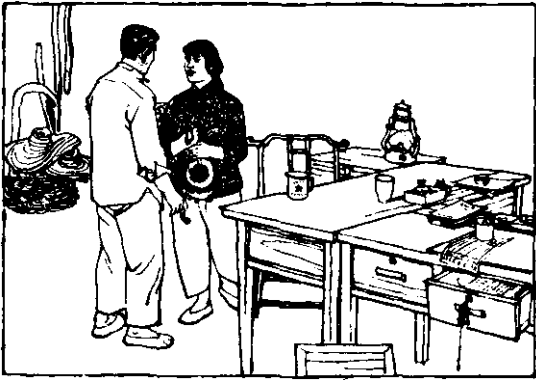
80. She reached the commune office in no time and reported the whole thing to Secretary Liu. He said with a smile, "This includes Xiwang. Isn't he your husband?"



81. Shuangshuang explained. "My husband has no sew? of right or wrong and he has no definite principles and he's easily swayed. But Sun You is not like that; he's full of bad ideas. He's not a member of the proletariat. Our family is."



82. Secretary Liu now understood everything. He asked Shuangshuang what she thought was the best way to guarantee quality. Shuangshuang did not know. He said. "For example, we should strengthen political education as well as making sure that assignments are properly fulfilled. What do you think of that?" Shuangshuang nodded in full agreement.



83. Secretary Liu also asked Shuangshuang whether she was a woman cadre. She shook her head. "No, people said my tongue was too sharp." Secretary Liu smiled and said, "If you are impartial and genuinely responsible, your tongue *should* be sharp. But at the same time, if something comes up we should consult with the masses."



84. The next day, the Party branch secretary called a meeting of all the team members near the field of wheat stubble. Sun You, Jin Qiao, and Xiwang all made a self-criticism and the secretary said, "Let's consider the matter now closed. In the future we should put into operation the system of group responsibility."



85. The Party secretary continued, "Today our team has to elect a women's team leader. The Party branch opinion is to let Li Shuangshuang try it. What does everyone think of that?" No sooner had he finished than everybody at the meeting raised their hands and shouted, "Agreed! Agreed!"



86. Everybody wanted Shuangshuang to say what she thought, but she only smiled to herself and refused. The branch secretary said, "In that case, I'll say something. Since we elected Shuangshuang, from now on we must listen to her instructions and that applies especially to us men laborers."



87. The Party branch secretary faced Shuangshuang and said, "As for you, Shuangshuang, you must also take great care." Xiwang glanced quickly at Shuangshuang and she pouted her lips at him and everybody exploded into laughter.



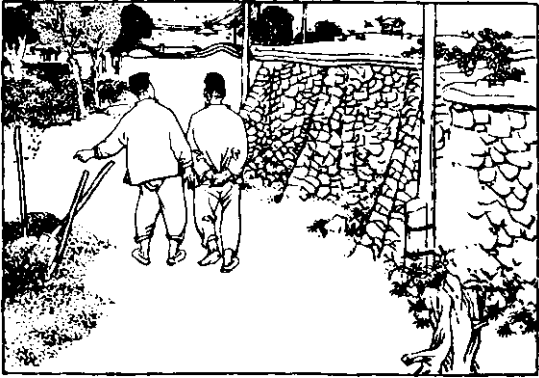
88. After the meeting had broken up, Xiwang followed behind Shuangshuang, embarrassed and silent.



89. On the way, Shuangshuang suddenly discovered a pig eating the maize. She picked up a stone and cried out, "Shop!" and ran off to chase the pig away. Xiwang, startled, raised his head and saw Jin Qiao walking along the path alone, his head lowered.



90. Xiwang ran up to Jin Qiao and quietly offered his apologies. Jin Qiao nonchalantly said, "What Shuangshuang proposed was correct and I accept it. However, Xiwang, old fellow, you should keep a rein on that wife of yours. If she carries on like this, she will step on everybody's toes in the village."



91. These wards of JinQiao struck home. Xiwang hurriedly said, "Of course, of course, you just wait and see. If I can't tame her this time, then I'll I'll..." He swallowed hard and ran off.



92. When Xiwang got home, Shuangshuang was discussing with old Gengpo the question of using animal power for the water wheel. She had her back to Xiwang and he coughed twice impatiently as he went in.



93. Shuangshuang turned around and said gently, "Are you back?" Xiwang put on a stern face. "Hm, team leader. Now that your public duties are over, could you come and do some private business for me?" Shuangshuang thought he was still joking and roiling her eyes at him said, "Oh, look at you."



94. Xiwang was completely serious. "Nobody's joking with you. Go and pack my things." Shuangshuang was suddenly worried. "What, are you going on a trip?" Xiwang stared at the ceiling. "Huh! I'm going to do transportation. I won't rot any more in this house."