

JACKALS (1951)
by Han Sōrya

Note: I am offering a complete translation of Sūngynangi over other works mainly because it is the most acclaimed of Han's stories in today's DPRK. In presenting a novella that makes no mention of Kim Il Sung, I also hope to counteract the widespread misconception that the personality cult has always dominated North Korean culture to the extent it has since 1966-67. The Concerned-Asian-Scholarly implication that the UN side had a virtual monopoly on racist propaganda during the Korean War (cf. Halliday & Cumings' Korea: The Unknown War, 1988) also needs challenging, if only to help explain KPA misconduct without resorting to cliches (themselves racist) about typically Asian brutality.

The translation is based on the earliest edition of Sūngynangi I could find, one brought out in 1954 by a Tokyo publisher. Though marred by typographical errors, this is clearly the version referred to by Han Chungmo in his Han Sōryaŭi ch'angjak yōn'gu (1959), and there is no reason to believe it was not the version read by North Koreans throughout the 1950s. In 1960 a slightly expanded version of Sūngynangi, which attempted to bring the original more in line with socialist realism, was published in Han's Selected Works (HSYS, 8:420-491). I have referred to this redaction, whose emendations may or may not be the work of Han himself, only to help clarify phrases that make no sense at all in the 1954 version—though one might say that these very inexplicabilities make the latter a more authentic document of the author's unique style. I have no more aimed for a polished literary translation of this story than Han, who prided himself on writing very quickly, aimed for a polished literary original. The reader will thus find Jackals, like so much of Han's work, to be riddled with mixed metaphors (usually of the bestial variety), logical inconsistencies, long stretches of tautologous dialogue and confusingly abrupt transitions. I have diverged from Han's style only when allegiance to it would have produced an English significantly more unwieldy or confusing than the Korean original. —B.M.

1

In a puddle behind the missionary's cowshed little Sugil found a huge rubber ball. It was a little old all right, but there was something special about its pleasant feel, and the way it had been worn down all nice and smooth.

"This must be my lucky day!" Sugil was so happy he jumped up and down for a while. Then he tried throwing the ball into the air with all his might, bounding after it with long strides to catch it as it came down. It wasn't always that easy, but he felt a foolish pleasure just chasing it, and that one time in five when he managed to jump up and catch it right away. Then he tried kicking the ball. Watching it fall and roll away he wished someone was on the other side to kick it back. He thought of the schoolchildren playing soccer in the schoolyard. Sugil looked around and around in the hope that some children from the village would appear.

But in fact the place had been set up so that children couldn't easily get in. The missionaries' long fence went all the way around, with barbed wire wrapped thickly around the tree trunks, so outsiders did not dare show themselves. Why, not even the boldest pranksters considered trespassing, for everything was on the missionaries' property, from the cowshed to the fruit trees on the slope beneath it—to say nothing of the missionaries' residence itself, which nestled in the dark woods high at the crest of the hill.

Sugil's mother was the missionary's charwoman. She did the laundry, cleaned out the cowshed, helped milk the cow at times, and picked fruit in the autumn. She lived with Sugil in a little hut attached to the cowshed. One room there was set aside for Mr Ch'oe, the old odd-jobs man. He had originally been a farmhand for the landowner "Piggy" Kang. He had been so naive as to handle "Piggy" Kang's night soil every day for ten years, a job which in the village earned him the nickname of Old Sewer-Soaked Ch'oe. But as he got older and his back grew bent, it became clear he would be cast aside despite his years of service. As fate would have it, he had previously cleaned out the missionary's stable, so it was here that he came to work for good. As a result his status in the community rose somewhat, and soon people began referring to him simply as Mr Ch'oe. It was through this old man that Sugil's mother had come here to work. Unlike Mr Ch'oe she was tough and shrewd, but since they were both kindhearted people they got along as well as poor neighbors can, without any major differences.

All in all, there were a lot of poor people living around here. The missionaries had purchased the area for twenty wön upon arriving in Korea twenty years ago. Since then they had turned it into a scenic summer retreat, on which Reverend Yi and one or two newly-rich families had recently erected neat brick houses. But far from benefiting from this, those who had

always lived here in their rock huts just became more inextricably enmeshed in poverty as time went on.

At least here (as in all poor neighborhoods) there was no shortage of children. Sugil had begun to mingle with them soon after his arrival, and he enjoyed nothing more than joining them in games. So today too he dashed out of the yard, taking his unexpected new toy with him. The children all took a turn holding the ball before beginning to discuss the best way to play with it. Then they started to throw it up in the air, knocking their heads together in their haste to get to it first. A boy on this side would punch it with his fist, whereupon a boy on the other side would punch or kick it back. It was fun no matter what they did. Even the children who did not usually play with Sugil came by to take a look, like the orchardist's son, who always walked around with his hands in his silk jacket, removing them only to sneak cookies and candies into his mouth. Reverend Yi's son Yohan,¹ who had a little ball which he always played with alone, also tried to join in. But Sugil cried out, "You can't play! Yesterday when I asked you for a candy you just gave me the wrapper!" Unable to take part in the game, Yohan was forced to stand and watch. Sugil could not abide this fellow. He would turn his pale white face away whenever Sugil asked him for a cookie, saying "Out of the way, your manure smell makes me sick."²

Even after Sugil got home, he could not stop thinking of what had happened. He talked to his mother to get it off his chest. "Today that Yohan fellow sure left with a red face," he said, still savoring the ball's pleasant touch.

"Yohan? You mean Reverend Yi's boy?"

"That little squirt thought he could kick my ball."

"You mean you didn't let him?"

"Of course I didn't."

"Now we're in for it! Reverend Yi is supposed to be a good friend of the missionaries. And what's that school called, the mission school you'll be starting this spring? They say he's more important there than the principal, that his power is second only to the Westerners'. You think you'll be able to go if Yohan tells his father what happened?" At this even Sugil felt a stab in his stomach. Already at the sight of the mission's primary school he had

¹ Yohan is the Korean version of the biblical name John.

² Note that right after introducing the orchardist's son as a hoarder of cookies and lemon drops, the author has Sugil accuse the *reverend's son* of refusing to share precisely these treats. This is but one of the trivial but glaring inconsistencies which riddle Han's prose. This one, at least, was spotted; in the 1960 version the attributes of the orchardist's son and Yohan are reversed (see *HSYS*, 8:423).

begun saying to himself "my school," his body literally tingling at the happy words. Since his mother worked for the missionaries, he had taken it for granted that he would be admitted.

"Do you think any other school would take such a poor child," said his mother in a flash of temper, "and one without a father at that—" She stopped herself in time, unwilling to voice the thought which weighed constantly upon her: the thought that she was without a husband, and her only son without a father. Her husband had been seized by the Japanese in connection with the revival of the — Peasants' Union,³ and after four and a half years languishing in pretrial custody had been sentenced to seven years hard labor. One cold winter, with only one year left, he died suddenly while hauling bricks, before he could even once call Sugil's name, the name he had longed to call.

While he was in prison his wife, with Sugil on her back, would make the ninety *li* trip from her farming village to visit him. Each time she was accompanied by old women of the village whose sons had also been arrested. Without Sugil's plucky, fast-talking mother with them they would have just stood helplessly before the foreboding prison gates. It was not out of the ordinary for one journey to prison and back to take four or five days, so they would make millet cakes and tie them to their waists when they set out. They always slept huddled together on dark roadsides. Too old-fashioned to impose on someone else for shelter, especially since they had nothing to offer in return, they would seek out a cozy mountain bend or something and spend the night dozing fitfully. Once these women slept in this way at the foot of the hill behind the missionaries' house. That was when Sugil's mother chanced to meet Mr Ch'oe, who arranged for her to become the missionary family's charwoman.

Whenever she went to the prison, her husband earnestly asked her to raise Sugil well. Once she brought Sugil along although he had come down with whooping cough, causing her husband to scold her sharply. "Don't come again until Sugil is better. No need to worry about me—just take good care of the child," he said angrily. Her husband had always been a stern man, and even then his face showed no sign of sadness, but she knew well how much the thought of Sugil's illness pained his resolute heart. When she visited him shortly before his death, she intuitively felt that something was wrong with him. He was no more than skin and bones, and he had difficulty holding his

³ While it may seem antiquated to Western readers, the practice of leaving out names of places, institutions, etc, instead of creating fictional ones is still widespread in the literature of both Koreas.

head up. When she asked about his health, however, he simply replied, "I'm not sick. I've been a little under the weather after injuring my finger on a brick a few days ago, that's all." Showing her a finger on his right hand, he gazed attentively at Sugil on her back. "The spring after next Sugil will go to school; a year and a half to go," he said with a satisfied expression. Sugil could already walk on his own, but she kept him on her back, for the infernal wardens would otherwise prevent him from entering the visitors' room with her.

A few days later a young man with a pale and worn face came to see her at home. When he took off his cap in greeting, baring his shorn head, she immediately thought of her husband. This man has just got out of prison, she thought; the leucoderma on his skin was the unmistakable mark of a prison stay.

"You're Sugil's mother, aren't you?"

"Yes I am. Where...?" She tried to control her racing heart as she spoke.

"I was together with your husband."

"Really? When were you released?" The hope that the day would come when her husband too would appear like this shone before her like the sun and moon combined.

"I've been out a few days now. I would have come sooner...your husband is all right, but he worries about Sugil at times."

"Sugil!" She called, for rather than answer questions about the boy she wanted to show him to her husband's friend right away. But Sugil had gone somewhere to play. "Sugil's doing fine...but why don't you come in for a while?"

"No, I'll come back again. I'm staying nearby."

"But where...?"

"Just in front of that house with the brick chimney."

"Ah, I see, and who...?"

"My name is Yi Tonggöñ," he said. After giving her the latest news about her husband he left.

It was only a few days later when, like a bolt from the blue, she received the news that her husband had died in prison. Tonggöñ was the first person she went to see then, and he was the one who went with her to prison to claim the corpse. From then on he was the first person she turned to whenever she was in difficulty. For a time she contemplated returning to her home village, but her fervent desire to have Sugil receive a good education made it hard for her to leave. There was no school near her hometown, and there was no way that scratching furrows in the barren mountain fields would enable her to send Sugil away to study. After mulling over every alternative

she went to see Tonggön, who agreed with her that it would be best if she stayed on as the missionary's charwoman.

During these visits she got to know Tonggön well. He had started out as an errand boy at the provincial hospital, where his diligence and intelligence had enabled him to rise to the post of assistant pharmacist, before he was sent to prison in connection with the Pacific Workers' Union incident that had so surprised everyone.⁴ While in the hospital he had passed on communications between comrades, used hospital medications to heal them, and engaged in enlightening others. When a comrade had been injured by a bullet while fleeing from police, Tonggön had taken him to an abandoned mine in the mountains, saving his life with his treatment.

Instead of taking time after his release from prison to recuperate properly, he immediately set about looking for a job. After a while he told Sugil's mother he had begun commuting by train to the — Chemical Factory, where he had found work. She wondered why a man of such talents would take a job as a simple worker, but she continued to address him as "sir." When she had gone to see him a few days earlier about entrance examinations for her child, Tonggön had been as concerned as if it was his own affair. He said there were still some of his old comrades among teachers in other primary schools, but was not particularly hopeful that anything would come of these connections, and said it would be easier to get Sugil into the mission school. While regretting his lack of contacts in the church, he reassured Sugil's mother by saying, "But Sugil is so bright, he'll end up getting in. Go to the school and keep after the people there. I'll go too."

Sugil's mother resolved to continue where her husband had left off and raise Sugil well. As she stroked his hair, the hope swelled in her that someday the door would be thrown open to a bright new future for her too. She taught the boy to count to a hundred. She found out the missionary's address and taught Sugil that it was his address too. She also found out what other questions the teachers asked in entrance examinations and taught him the answers. For all this she never ceased worrying, and had finally resolved that she would go to the missionary himself and plead with him no matter what. But now, having heard Sugil had offended the son of the influential Reverend Yi, she felt as if her threadlike hope had been snuffed out like a candle in the wind. Then she thought "But it's still the missionary's influence

⁴ It is not clear what incident is meant here, particularly as we are never told just when this story is taking place, but Han is probably referring to the most famous Korean strike of the colonial era, that of the dock workers in the Pacific port of Wönsan (in present-day North Korea) in 1929.

that decides everything..." and deep inside she continued to place her hopes on Sugil's admission after all.

2

Right after Sugil got up, he ascended one of the mountain ridges near his home. The golden sunlight seemed to make the mountains and streams near and far glow in a dim green hue. It was a fresh morning of the kind that made one want to fly from sheer restlessness. North of this road the mountain ridge rolled gently until it neared the S— river, where it suddenly grew more jagged, throwing a peak high into the air. As it sloped downward it formed numerous little pleats, ridges, hills and valleys. Everything but the bare high peak, which seemed to be wearing a Buddhist wimple, was covered with trees. Scattered through the ones at the base of the mountain were the somber white and red buildings that housed the church, the mission hospital, and the mission school. Below the wimpled peak that faced the S— river the base of the mountain stretched right and left like two arms, its embrace forming a wide and concave shell. At the base of the peak, which stuck up like the shell's crest, was a grove in which the missionary's white house could be seen nestling. Surrounding it were apple, pear and peach trees, which separated the pine forests on the neighboring ridges. The trunks of the apple trees were a purplish-red color in places, as they had been even in winter. Even more striking were the whitish apricot trees on the west corner of the missionaries' house, which were clustered together so thickly that they already made one think of the blaze of laughing apricot flowers to come. Looking at all this while he walked the ground suffused with golden spring sunshine, Sugil was overcome with an almost unbearable happiness that made him want to run around and play as he pleased.

Sugil hurriedly ate his breakfast of millet, spilling half of it in the process. He then hurried with his ball to see the children who lived in the houses down below. This day too was spent kicking the ball around with his friends. As the children played, they became much more skillful in passing and receiving it. Some of them, trying to imitate the middle-school students, kicked the ball with a very self important air. Some dribbled the ball, while others stood aside, then dashed in and kicked it away from them. One child, who had watched the middle-school students play, tried to head the ball, but as he did so he slammed into the boy standing next to him. Both tumbled down on the spot.

Seeing the ball drop behind them, Sugil ran and tried to kick it too quickly. He twisted his ankle and hopped back holding his leg. "You're lucky I don't have shoes on," he boasted, massaging his feet, which were caked

black as a crow's with dirt. He got to his feet again, limped to the ball, and was just about to kick it when someone quickly snatched it away.

"Who stole my ball?" It was the missionary's son Simon. His eyes livid with rage, he glared contemptuously at the children. None of them said a word, but one or two inadvertently looked at Sugil. Simon reacted by clamping his strong hand like a kite's claw on the back of Sugil's neck. Sugil at once drew his head in like a turtle. Simon's fist struck Sugil under his chin with a crack, sending him flying to the ground, where he struck his head and rolled. As his head rebounded off the ground, Simon's boot came crashing down on it so hard that even Sugil's legs shook. The other children's blood turned cold at the sight, and like little spiders they scurried away in search of a hole to hide in.⁵ With the bursting vigor of one fattened on milk—the milk brought everyday by Sugil's mother—Simon dealt Sugil another blow to the chin that knocked him out entirely. Then he looked around for the others. They had scattered. They had the fixed notion that they couldn't possibly lay a hand on the fifteen-year-old Simon, although they did not understand who had given him and his kind the right to do such things in Korea. With the ball in one hand, Simon calmly began shambling home on his long, grasshopper-like legs.

"Simon!" Surprised to hear his name called, the boy turned his head sharply in the direction of the voice.

"Father!" he shouted back, breaking into a run.

The missionary, who had just handled some matters at the church, had watched the incident unfold while walking home up the hill. He stopped to wait for Simon to catch up, pulling in the leash of his bulldog, which was straining to run forward.

"What've you got there?"

"It's a ball. That thief from the cowshed stole my ball."

"Stole it?"

"Yes, so I took it back."

"What, something those children have kicked and handled? Yech, how filthy! Throw it away at once; there might be germs on it." He watched as his son threw it down. "Now Simon," he said, adopting the grave voice he used when praying, "it is for God to punish thieves. We Americans must not touch filthy people with our sacred hands, is that understood?"

⁵ The imagery is inappropriate, implying a criticism of the Korean children which Han obviously does not intend. The metaphor is absent from the 1960 version, which describes the fleeing children as continuously looking behind them to see how Sugil is faring (HSYS, 8:435).

"But father, we Americans have the right to beat blacks to death, don't we? God forgives us for doing that."

"That's because blacks aren't sons of God..."

"And Koreans are?"

At this the missionary hesitated a while, then said, "There are some sons of God among Koreans: Reverend Yi, Reverend Kim, Elder An..."

"Are they really sons of God?"

"Yes, because they swore they would become His sons, and because God has forgiven them. And after all, God has very many sons..."

"But isn't it true that thieves can't become God's sons? Just like blacks can't?"

"For thieves...we have dogs. Just as a dog kills a thief with his teeth, you know, one mustn't beat niggers with bare hands but with sticks. In the same way..." Slackening the bulldog's leash, the missionary began walking again.

While he and his son were entering the house in the misty woods, Sugil was lying unconscious, attended to by no one. Blood streamed from his nose. After a while a boy named Kyedük and his friend timidly approached, but, afraid to touch Sugil, they ran home. Shortly afterwards Kyedük's mother came running out. She too was a widow, and a friend of Sugil's mother, with whom she always spoke her mind. Seeing Sugil's bloodied face she thought of Kyedük, her only son, and she felt a needle stabbing deep into her own flesh. "Will Kyedük end up like this someday?" She felt a wave of terror and pity rush over her. Carrying Sugil firmly in her arms, she returned to her house. She squeezed out a cold wet cloth, wiping his nose and cooling his forehead with it. His body felt as if it were on fire. Under her fingertips she could feel his child's heart racing softly like a little chick's. In a flash a searing thought occurred to her, and tying Sugil firmly to her back with a little quilt she ran without resting to his mother's house.

"I thought only the Japs kill people," she kept thinking, "but the Americans too..." Unable to give voice to such thoughts, she could only cluck to herself as she ran. "The way Koreans are being killed from all sides there won't be any of us left." The future she faced, raising her only son in this harsh world, seemed to her as gloomy as the longest of moonless nights. All the time she prayed to herself. "Don't die, please don't die. Whatever happens, you've got to live. The heavens can't stay so indifferent forever."

No matter how Sugil's mother turned things around in her mind she could not control the rage inside her. Her request to have Sugil admitted to school—and the hope that this might still be fulfilled despite everything—had prevented her from running up the hill right away and wringing Simon's neck, but after pacing back and forth for a while she could bear it no longer. After all, what use was the school if Sugil died? In the twinkling of an eye her precious only child had been reduced to this state. Whether I live or die, I'll get to the bottom of this, she thought. She half-ran, half-stumbled up to the missionary's imposing house. The emotions bottled up inside her made her want to smash boulders with her bare hands.

Then she thought, "He isn't going to die, is he?" Her surging thirst for revenge subsided somewhat before her desire to save her boy's life no matter what. But as soon as the missionary threw open his heavy front door the words burst out of her in an angry rush.

"My son is dying!"

At this the missionary blinked, as if poked in his sunken eyes with a fresh leaf. Then, raising his hand to block the way, he assumed a stately air.

"Uhh..."

"My son is dying because of your son," she cried, her arms trembling violently, "now bring him out here!"

"Uh, what on earth are you talking about?"

"I love my child like everyone else. And in Korea we don't beat someone to death for picking up a rubber ball that's been thrown in a filthy puddle!"

"Oh, the devil has gotten into you. Go away."

"The devil? The devil is the one who attacked an innocent person, that's who the devil is! Hurry up and bring the bastard out here, I said. The son of a bitch, I'll..."

Still blinking his sunken eyes, the missionary pulled his head back, as if slashed in the throat by her sharp, hate-filled voice. Just then the missionary's wife came running in.

"My dear, what is going on here?"⁶ She was as cunning a fox, and now her fear made her adopt a gentle expression as, gushing "my dear," she placed herself between her husband and Sugil's mother.

⁶ In the original the missionary's wife uses a respectful if somewhat untranslatable form of address, namely, *hyöngnim* (lit., honorable elder sister). I have translated this as "my dear" to convey the tone of hypocritically polite familiarity which I believe Han intended, but it is worth noting that Sugil's mother is older than the American woman, which makes the injustice later done to her even more shocking to Korean readers raised on Confucian values.

"As if you don't know? Go ask your son. Is this the way all the sons of God are? My son has been beaten almost to death, I tell you, beaten by your son!"

"That's impossible. Punishment awaits those who tell lies."

"Lies? Who's telling lies? Let's have the village court decide!"

"We have nothing to do with those people. Our Simon is a son of God."

"Is it right for a son of God to go around attacking people? Hurry up and bring him out here. Bring out the vicious bastard, I tell you!"

"Oh, my dear! Your son will be punished." Glaring down with her thin, foxlike eyes the missionary's wife said, "Please go back home. We will pray to God for your son. If you cause a fuss it will only harm him."

Suddenly everything went hazy before Sugil's mother, and she saw in her mind a vision of her stricken son. It seemed to her as if her son's life was draining away while she stood here, taking to task people with hearts so stony they wouldn't shed a drop of blood if jabbed with a needle. She also envisioned her neighbor [Mr Ch'oe], so sympathetic to her despite his own poverty. Even more vivid was Tonggön's form, which rose before her like a lamp in the midnight darkness.

"Just you wait, I have people on my side too. You think all Koreans are dead?" Her eyes flashing, Sugil's mother turned and began to leave, but unable to suppress her rage after all, she cried, "You'd better hope my boy doesn't die. You think I'd let your son go on living the good life if he did?" Her head held high, she stomped out past the couple, swinging her clenched fists.

Arriving home, she felt Sugil's forehead and body, then rushed over to see Tonggön, who had just returned from work. She was greeted cheerily at the door by his old mother and younger sister, but she was not in the condition to exchange pleasantries. "Our Sugil has been beaten so hard he's going to die!" she burst out.

"Hold it, what are you saying?"

"I never thought I'd live to see such a thing!" She told them roughly what had happened. "Sir, please go and take a look at him. I have no one else to turn to in the whole wide world."

"All right, let's go." With that the two hurriedly left. As soon as they reached the entrance of the orchard, Tonggön espied the missionary's wife looking down from the balcony of her house. She seemed to have seen him too, for she craned her neck and peered down intently before going back into the house. Upon entering the charwoman's home, Tonggön felt Sugil's forehead and body. Apart from the traces of blood under his nose no exterior wounds were visible, but his face was ashen and he lay completely still, as

if devoid of any energy. He was obviously bleeding internally. For a while Tonggön simply gazed down at the boy in silence. Not a word escaped his lips. It was frustrating to see unfold before him yet another of the scenes he had hoped never to see again. This was the kind of thing that could have been committed only by people who never consider the consequences of their actions, let alone assume responsibility for them. "Are they allowed to do this because he is Korean? Must Koreans always suffer murder at the hands of others? Damn it, what gives them the right?!" The more he thought about it the more furious he became. Here these people were, thrusting knives under the noses of his countrymen at will, as if to say, what's the problem with killing one lousy Korean?

"Sons of bitches!" Tonggön murmured the words that rose up in him almost of their own will. Then, turning to Sugil's mother, he said, "It's better to have him admitted to a hospital than to keep him here."

"A hospital?"

"Yes, let me think...I know a doctor. I'll probably have to go and see him."

"Oh, could you?"

"Then again, I've already caused him trouble so many times, even to where he's been dragged around and harassed..." The man Tonggön had in mind was Dr Yu. The son of a penurious carpenter himself, Dr Yu understood the situation of his poor patients, and refused all compensation from those in particularly dire straits. He had also treated for free several members of the underground, for which he had not infrequently been called to the police station and interrogated. Just then the sound of someone approaching broke into Tonggön's thoughts.

"My dear?" said a strange voice, as the door opened with a creak. It was the missionary's wife. She held a white cloth to her nose with one hand, as if reluctant to enter a room whose smell offended her so. In her other hand she ostentatiously brandished a transparent wax-paper bag of cookies. "My dear, I've come to offer my prayers." She had adopted a gentler tone.

"Prayers?" Sugil's mother could make neither head nor tail of the woman's words.

"Yes, God...saves all people, every one."

Sugil's mother said nothing.

"We are all God's children." Saying this, the missionary's wife softly laid the bag of cookies next to Sugil's head. Unsettled at the sight of a strange man entering the servants' quarters, she had asked her husband what to do. The missionary, just as uneasy, had sent her down to check on things.

As far as they were concerned, Koreans were not to be taken lightly. They had been hacked into pieces by the Japanese oppressors, to be sure, but

each of those pieces still seemed to be throbbing. Back during the 1919 uprising the Japanese infantry and cavalry had soaked the streets with blood.⁷ Even the firemen had taken part, swinging their fire-axes down on people's heads and yanking them back as if smashing their way through burning houses. But the Koreans' procession never stopped. When sabers struck the heads of the vanguard those behind them tore their own overcoats for tourniquets to stanch the flow of blood. The crowd then linked hands to carry the vanguard, forging ahead in defiance of the bayonets. Jabbed in their hindlegs with steel prods, the mounted policemen's horses charged off through the fences of an adjacent house. Knocked off the road by the angry wave of people, the cops flailed their way back and forth in the open sewer.

But it wasn't just the people on the streets. Students and citizens arrested by the police before the event kept their promise to the nation, and began shouting "Long live an independent Korea!" at the same time as those outside. At their forefront were middle school students, including some members of the mission school. One student, who had spent the night under brutal interrogation by the cops, leapt onto a chair and removed a flag from under his clothes. Waving it, he began yelling "Long live Korea!" and immediately all in the interrogation room stood up as one and took up the cry. The detainees kept in the policemen's judo hall and the other interrogation and detention rooms quickly followed suit, rattling the roof-tiles with their shouts.

The chief cop and his counterpart in the military police lashed about with their swords as if to cut through the forest of hands that had risen with the cheers. While the other cops brandished their guns, the judo bastards hurled the detainees to the ground as if killing fish. Blood flowed, arms and legs were broken, but still the cheering knew no end. One student was hit in the back of the head so hard that one of his eyes fell out, but he just pushed it back in and continued shouting. The police sent many to prison. They rounded others up at random on the streets, trussed them up like herrings, then beat them in the fire station's pump room before throwing them out.

But things weren't over. The Korean people never gave up. Only a year and a few months later there was a funeral for a mission middle-school

⁷ On 1 March 1919 a declaration of Korean independence from Japanese rule was read at a park in downtown Seoul. This set off months of disturbances in which over a million people from all areas of the country participated. "The police response to the demonstrations bordered on hysteria, and by May, military reinforcements had been summoned to help quell the rioting....The Japanese reacted to subsequent gatherings with an orgy of arrests, beatings, and even village burnings." Carter J. Eckert, Ki-baik Lee, Young Ick Lew, Michael Robinson, Edward W. Wagner, *Korea Old and New: A History* (Seoul, 1990), 279.

student who had died after being imprisoned in connection with the uprising. Students trailed the bier holding up two streams of white cotton cloth. They were in turn followed by ordinary citizens. Claiming they were blocking traffic, the police repeatedly ordered them to disperse, but the line always formed again quickly. On that day too, the missionary had stood on his balcony and watched the procession passing over the bridge on the S—River. He considered them savages for not fearing death, but to ingratiate himself with the locals he would say, "The Korean people are really quite magnificent. During the uprising I went to the police station and protested on behalf of my Korean brothers and sisters. I said, those Koreans' heads aren't on fire, so why are you using fire-axes on their heads?" For all this the missionary still had to wait five years before he could summon Reverend Yi back.⁸

But of course things never really settled down. On the contrary; as time went on the wind spread, blowing with ever-increasing force. Even stronger was the wind that swept in over the Tumen River.⁹ No one knew what would happen, or when and where it would take place. This atmosphere had prevailed to this day.

The missionary couple was of course aware that Sugil's father had died in prison after a long incarceration. They found this somehow unsettling. Mary stole a glance at Tonggön and Sugil's mother to assure herself they had no weapons in their hands or on their bodies. Then she gently bowed her head, pretending to close her eyes.

⁸ It is unclear what is meant by this sentence, which is absent from the 1960 version (cf. *HSYS*, 8:446). It is likely that Han, who was never one to review what he had just written, mistakenly believed that in the preceding text he had made Reverend Yi responsible for the student's arrest. Han's point would thus seem to be that it took five years for the villagers' anger to subside enough for Yi to return.

Han's excursion into the missionaries' reaction to the 1919 uprising serves an important propagandistic function. The legitimacy of the Korean communists' rule rested largely on the claim that they alone had provided meaningful resistance against the Japanese. It was no secret, however, that the uprising, which had posed a far more important threat to Japanese rule than all Kim Il Sung's exploits combined, had been organized mainly by Christian and other religious leaders (see *Korea Old and New*, 277), with the Korean Marxist movement then too small to play a significant role. Thus Han's effort to try to "expose" the missionaries and their local converts as hypocrites whose true sympathies had rested with the Japanese.

⁹ Both China and the Soviet Union lie to the north of the Tumen River, but the Russophile Han is almost certainly referring to the influence of developments in the latter country. Well into the 1960s it was the custom in the DPRK to credit Russia's October Revolution with sparking the 1919 uprising and the nationalist unrest that followed it. (The influence of Mao's struggle on colonial Korea was only rarely acknowledged.)

"Oh God our father! Save this poor person. Forgive the sinner. Though he may have sinned, he has repented."

Sugil's mother, still eager to have Tonggön visit the hospital he had mentioned, cleared her throat and said "sir" in a low voice. At this the missionary's wife instinctively stole a sideways glance at Tonggön and Sugil's mother. Just then she saw their gleaming eyes meet, as if they were making a silent pact of some sort. For an instant disconnected images rose in her mind. She saw an iron hammer, a kitchen knife, the shovel in the stable, the rake and the pickaxe in the storage room...then she saw all these things in the hands of Sugil's mother and Tonggön as they set upon her. The flash of images before her eyes made her confuse her words and thoughts.

"God our Father! From tonight the front and back doors must—" The missionary's wife caught herself with a start. She had almost voiced her intention to have vicious dogs guard the front and back doors from that night on. She regained her composure and continued. "Bestow fortune on this young child. Make him healthy and strong."

But Sugil's mother was already completely deaf to such talk. Turning to face Tonggön, she murmured, "Sir! This child has to go to the hospital quickly...if we keep standing around..." She pressed her hand on her chest, unable to finish.

"All right, I will go down and see. As long as there's a vacant bed, I will do all I can." With that Tonggön left.

The missionary's wife glanced sideways again, then quickly closed her prayer with an amen. There might be a hue and cry, she thought, if Sugil were to die tonight and be submitted to a Korean doctor's autopsy—or even if he were to remain alive in a Korean hospital for a while. "Relax, my dear. He will soon be well again. There are good medicines and good doctors." After these reassuring words she said, "This room is not clean. It's bad for the patient. He should be admitted to hospital."

"As a matter of fact I just—"

"Ah, but our mission hospital is the best. It has expensive medicines that one can only get from our country. They can even bring the dying back to life." Hearing this, Sugil's mother seemed to calm down a little. "I will talk to the people there. I'll see to it they take care of the boy for free."

"Well, that would certainly be—"

"We are all God's children, all brothers and sisters in the same family. We have to love each other." As soon as the old fox had convinced herself that her ruse had worked, she left the room and ascended the hill to the mission hospital, shaking her fat, goose-like posterior as she walked. She walked straight into the office of the director, Mrs Mack, and told her roughly what had happened.

"Now, under no circumstances can we speak of a contusion; he must be said to be suffering from some kind of disease," she instructed, "so instead of letting another doctor see the boy you must always tend to him in person."

"I understand."

"First, administer an emergency injection and let a day or two go by. After that say it has some different kind of fever, is that clear? Then there won't be any trouble if it dies."

"Don't worry. Once he's here we will have all kinds of ways to handle the situation."

"Well then, send an ambulance immediately."

So that evening Sugil, still unconscious, was laid on a soft hospital bed for the first time in his life. Gloom had descended unexpectedly on him and his mother, but that night the missionary gave thanks to God for his beneficence, and vigorously embraced his wife as if she were a young bride.

"God made you especially wise," he said admiringly. "We have been truly blessed." As they went to the dinner table they sang of the "beautiful world" they lived in, where they could take life with impunity.

4

That night an injection helped Sugil regain consciousness. His stomach was so empty that he ate almost the entire bowlful of the hospital's white gruel. He then asked for something cool and sweet to drink. His mother went to borrow some money from Kyedük's mother, then bought a can of pineapple juice down in the village.

"Just get well quickly and I'll buy you anything you want to eat," she said.

"But we don't have any money. I don't want anything to eat anyway."

"Come now, no matter how poor we may be, we can buy what you want to eat." Whenever she thought of her husband starving to death in prison she resolved anew not to let Sugil ever want for anything. Even now she didn't think there was anyone as obstinate as her husband had been. During one of her first prison visits she had promised to arrange private meals for him, but he had flown into a rage at the idea, admonishing her to raise the boy well rather than worry about such trifles. Back then one such meal cost only fifty chön, an affordable amount even for a woman in her position, and all the other prisoners' wives were having food sent. But her husband refused to listen, even as he was gradually reduced to skin and bones. She knew that he was only thinking of Sugil and herself, but it was still a source of eternal, ineradicable regret for her. The only way for her to come to terms with her husband's death was to raise her only son Sugil well.

"Mother, how many more nights must I sleep until I start school?" Sugil asked suddenly.

"Well, there are still more than thirty nights to go."

"Thirty?" Sugil counted to thirty on his hands, then went on to count to a hundred.

"You don't have to worry about getting into the school, because Christian schools actually *prefer* poor children." She said this with a knot in her stomach, well aware now that the Christian schools were no different from the others.

"When I get into school, I'll be at the top of the class."

"Of course you will, you think there's another child like our Sugil?"

They were so immersed in their conversation that they did not notice nightfall. But after midnight Sugil began to complain of a stabbing pain in his head again. Unable to bear it, he ground his teeth violently until, too exhausted to continue, he lapsed back into a coma. After a while the nurse entered and peered at him. "He has fallen asleep now, so you mustn't wake him." Having said this, she left the room.

Unable to sleep a wink, Sugil's mother kept watch over his bed all night. Sugil's pain-wracked form was worn and pale. The muscles in his discolored face and around his mouth were twitching violently. Something was definitely very wrong indeed. Sugil's mother suddenly placed her hand on her chest. She felt a jabbing pain from the pit of her stomach down to her toes, as if a needle was stabbing into her flesh and bones. But she was sure it was not her own pain but Sugil's that she was feeling. She gently laid a hand on Sugil's head. Feeling the sharp heat deep in her flesh, she told herself she was drawing his pain out of him. With one hand on his forehead and the other supporting the back of his head she cried out silently. "I don't care how much it hurts me, just as long as you live!" Then she bent down over the bed, resting her forehead once again on Sugil's cheek. Closing her eyes gently, she murmured, as if in prayer, "What is my pain, after all; I can die for all I care. If I can save Sugil that way, I'll gladly die right now." Her eyes misted over with tears.

During the next morning's round of visits the female doctor gave Sugil two more shots. These may have been why Sugil was able to regain consciousness shortly after. Though his body remained exhausted and limp, and his face dull and expressionless, his mother was happy that he was conscious at all. When his eyes finally opened it seemed to her as if a dark door had been thrown open to let in the morning sunlight.

"Sugil, do you know who I am?"

"Of course I know."

"How about an apple?"

"I'm not hungry."

How much like his father he is, she thought. Last year Sugil had had to go the hospital for an eye ailment. After he had seen his mother's empty purse one day, he had stubbornly refused to go back there, so following the hospital's instructions she had had to heat a flat stone and massage his eyes with it herself. His father too had been stubborn until the day he died. "He was worth a hundred men, but that didn't stop the Japs from getting him, did it." The thought vexed her no end. And now Sugil, who was to have followed in this rare man's footsteps, had been reduced to this by those American vermin. She could no longer see or hear anything; she was blind and deaf to the outside world. Guns, knives, and the sound of cannonfire formed one lament in her dreams. Her body was like a hard bullet that would explode like a lightning bolt on contact with anything in its path. "What bastard could do this to my son...no! They can't kill my son!" She cried out to herself. From somewhere, faintly, she seemed to hear an answer.

The injections still enabled Sugil to regain consciousness now and then. For some reason the old director looked in regularly on the boy, and, perhaps because he was in more serious condition than the other patients, often gave him his shots in person. "They're feeling guilty for what they did," thought Sugil's mother. Whatever the reason, Sugil was able to cling to life like this for over a week. His condition didn't seem to be getting better, but neither was it deteriorating significantly. After a few days, however, he would sometimes start talking in his sleep after his shots, then would open his eyes a little and come to. His mother was happy just to hear his voice; she saw it as a sign of recovery, which she attributed to the injections.

One day, leaning against the cold radiator, she managed to rest her tired eyes for a while. Half awake, she felt as if she was holding something in her arms. Certain that it was Sugil, she tightened her embrace. Then she realized it was an icy cold boulder. Death! The consciousness of it suddenly sent a horrid fear running down her spine. In vain she tried to cast off this feeling. Just then she was jogged by a pitiful call from somewhere.

"Mother...ahh mother..."

She opened her eyes with a start. She began to let out a sigh, but the terrifying sound of another cry stifled it. She could hardly bear the tightness in her chest.

"Mother...that bad guy, that bad guy..."

Pressing both hands hard against her chest, she almost threw herself on Sugil's bed. A fire raged inside her throat, as if the sigh trapped inside her would explode.

"Simon, it was Simon...that guy..."

"Sugil," cried his mother, embracing him tightly, "Sugil my child..." Only when she could feel that his body was still warm was she freed of the tightness inside her, and she let out a long sigh. But Sugil, lying there as limp as a wilted leaf, now lacked even the strength to talk in his sleep.

At times his mother was gripped by foreboding, but she didn't know what to do. The women in the village only added to her uneasiness. They would say "What, you think they take good care of non-church members there?" or "How well do you think they're taking care of him for free?" Such talk made her hair stand on end and her heart sink. An outsider could not see behind the scenes at the hospital, said another woman, but one could imagine what it was like simply by looking at doctors who had established their own practices after working there for a long time. As if by a conspiracy of some sort these doctors, whether Dr Ham or Dr Ro, would first find out if a patient had money, and if so how much, before treating him. If a patient had no money they would boot him out, telling him to go to a different hospital, even if he was on the verge of death. At night they would see no patients at all, devoting themselves to a different kind of business—in most cases, usury. It was said that they would place church members in their debt, and if the money was not repaid in time they would seize property as payment, saying, "Sons of God mustn't lie, for God will punish them." Why, they had even taken a gold watch off someone's wrist.

"And you think people so obsessed with money will be nice enough to take care of someone with none at all?" By way of contrast the women would say how good other hospitals were, or how this and that doctor virtually raised people from the dead. Of all those mentioned, Dr Yu was said to be the best. "They say that gentleman has a lot of good medicines, so with one injection he can cure people who'd need three injections somewhere else. And it's inexpensive too."

"In the village down there someone's son started thrashing his head around and rolling his eyes, but they say that doctor just extracted water from his spine and gave him a shot, and he was well again."

Sugil's mother ran to see Tonggön and told him all that she had heard. She then asked if it wasn't too late to have Sugil entrusted to Dr Yu's care.

"Well, last time he said he'd take him, but it's a question of how the church hospital will react...You go on up already; I'll go and have another talk with Dr Yu, and then I'll come up after you." Somewhat relieved, she returned to the hospital. After a while Tonggön arrived, telling her she could begin the formalities of discharging the boy, as Dr Yu had agreed to take him. Sugil's mother immediately sought out a nurse and told her of her plans. She had not anticipated any difficulty, but the nurse, with a dignified expression, told her she would first have to get the director's approval.

"Wait a minute, he's my son and I'll take him where I want," said Sugil's mother. Tonggön told the nurse to communicate this to the director. The nurse returned from the director's office with a grave look.

"The director says that not even a parent can discharge a patient at will after he has been admitted." She turned around and began disinfecting needles, as if to preempt any further questions. Sugil's mother and Tonggön went straight to the director's office.

"Now really, even if he is to be released I will have to take one more look at him first." The old director's face was unexpectedly friendly. "As I've already said, he seems to be showing symptoms of a different illness...and now that he's with us he's my responsibility. It's too late today, so tomorrow morning I will take one more good look at him, and after I give him the appropriate treatment...anyway, please leave things as they are for tonight." Feeling a little reassured, Sugil's mother decided to wait until the next morning. Little did she dream that on that accursed night Sugil was hastening towards his doom.

5

That night the missionary listened a little to what the director (Mrs Mack) had to say. Then, excitement creeping into his prayer-voice, he said, "You are an American. For what have we Americans come to Korea to work, for what do we bestow God's grace on Koreans?"

"For America," said his foxlike wife, picking up where he had left off, "for the American people."

"And what is the life of one Korean child when weighed against the glory of the American people? I tell you, why concern yourself any more with a life that even God knows nothing about?"

"One discarded by God is like a flea-bitten beggar," chimed in his wife once more.

"I know; that's why I didn't let it leave," said the director.

"You did well. But what's the point of simply refusing to let it leave? A doctor has certain rights, certain methods."

"Well, that's why I always said it wasn't a contusion, but another disease that had manifested itself."

"But the ignorant are brave. What do you plan to do if they come in at night and smuggle him out?"

At this his wife's mouth twitched. "That's true," she said, butting in again, "they could steal him away. Where's your American wisdom? You mustn't become a Korean, I tell you, you mustn't be contaminated by their ignorance. American wisdom, bravery and virtue are vital."

"We must be decisive. There are countless ways of dealing with the situation, are there not? I mean, just diagnose a dangerous contagious disease or something, and quarantine it at once. And don't let anyone near it, do you hear?"

"Yes, that is what I was thinking."

"Gooood. Spoken like a true American. We need our own virtues, not Korean virtues or any others for that matter." The director was silent. "Not only that: we have to demand our virtues from others. And if it hasn't got a contagious disease, then we must give it an injection of bacillae and *make* it a contagious disease."

"Let's just say it is for the sake of the American people—," put in his wife again.

"It won't be difficult."

"Very good, director! But we have to think of an even better method. A contagious disease is all well and good, but if it has to die within an hour no time can be wasted. There are several good injections for such a contingency, are there not? Well, are there no such injections in our hospital?"

"Yes there are."

"Good. I should hope so. The victory of the American people and its virtues requires more than just churches. God also gives us bullets, airplanes and warships. What do you think the bibles are, that we missionaries carry, or our doctors' syringes?"

The director said nothing.

"They are weapons for America and its people," answered his wife with another twitch of her mouth.

"He who forsakes his rifle and is then shot by someone else is a pathetic fool. You have to use your weapon first. You must take precautionary measures. If you don't, your weapons are useless."

"I understand, sir."

"Good. If that's the case I will, as God's representative, ask you one question: What happens if the corpse of a patient who has died of a contagious disease is subjected to a thorough autopsy by another doctor—by a Korean doctor, shall we say?"

"Who is there who would do that?"

"You never know. Koreans are ignorant, and ignorant people are brave. Their lives mean nothing to them. If they can fight the rifles of the Japanese with their bare hands, they can certainly spirit off their own son's corpse. In that respect they're braver than people who respect laws and policemen."

"So I should dispose of the body entirely," said the director decisively.

"Ah! Right, right. Americans are wise. The day when America rules the world is nigh. May you be imbued with the glory of the American people." The missionary raised his hands and pretended to pray for a moment. Then he continued. "Have the body cremated immediately, do you hear. A doctor has the right to do that. The Japanese police won't interfere."

"Yes sir." The director stood up. The missionary and his wife followed suit.

"God our Father!" cried the missionary. "Bestow glory on the American people. Aamen."

"Bestow fortune on Director Mack. Aamen," prayed his wife, as if to supplement her husband's prayer.

The following morning Sugil's mother went home to eat breakfast, then rushed back to the hospital. When she got there Sugil was already gone. A vile antiseptic smell stabbed her nostrils. As if to escape it a pleurisy patient in the neighboring bed had covered himself with his blanket. Hearing someone enter he poked out his face.

"Hey, where's my boy?" she asked him.

"Well, they say he has a contagious disease. I was just lying here and it was like a bolt from the blue. There was a real commotion." Just then a nurse with a huge hood-like mask on her face came running in, accompanied by a man in a medical smock. They brusquely grabbed hold of Sugil's mother and straightened her up, then sprayed her with a foul-smelling disinfectant. It stung her nose and made it difficult for her to breathe.

"Listen, where has my Sugil gone?" she shouted sobbing. The pungent disinfectant stabbed her tongue. "Our Sugil is—"

"Your son has a contagious disease. That's why we're disinfecting you."

"Contagious disease?"

"He's been taken to the isolation ward."

"Where's that?"

"You can't go there."

"Well, where is it anyway?"

"I said you can't go there, so just hurry up and go home." With that, the two left.

For the life of her Sugil's mother could not make head or tail of this. Her stomach churning with fear, she half-ran up the stairs to the director's office, only to be told that the director was out. Not knowing who to turn to, she wandered around in confusion for a while. With nothing better to do she headed back in the direction of the sick ward. She staggered up and down the hall on her shaking legs until she finally encountered a nurse who looked familiar.

"Excuse me miss, where is my boy Sugil?" She pleaded.

"Sugil, you say?" The nurse looked at her for a while. Then, as if suddenly remembering something, she said, "Hold on, isn't he in that ward?"

"Well, they said something about a whatchamacallit, an isolation ward—"

"Ah, I see...well, you can't go there." The nurse tried to get past but Sugil's mother blocked her way.

"No, please, just tell me where it is." Sugil's mother drew close to her as if to grab her sleeve.

"Go home and stay there. Patients are well taken care of in this hospital. Please calm down and leave."

"Just let me be with him in his room, I beg you."

"That's not allowed; you would be contaminated."

"No I wouldn't. And I don't care if I am contaminated and I die, just let me be with him. I'll do anything you want."

"That's impossible. If the police find out they will take you away." With that the nurse disappeared into another room.

These medical people are all in it together, thought Sugil's mother. Not knowing who to turn to or what to do, she felt her chest tighten even more. She had no choice but to leave out the back door of the sick ward. She walked around for a while peering into the various buildings, but there was no way of knowing what was what. Squatting next to the flight of stairs that led to the director's office, she waited for Mrs Mack to turn up. It was afternoon when she finally saw the director returning from some business outside. Like a mad woman Sugil's mother ran up the stairs and blocked the way to the office.

"Director! Where is Sugil?" Her eyes pleaded even more forcefully than her voice. A little startled at first, the director looked at those eyes. Then she quickly regained her composure.

"Your son has a contagious disease. He has gone to the isolation ward." She tried to get past, but Sugil's mother, sticking to her like a magnet, forced her to stop.

"Director! Please let me go there, please."

"That's impossible. No one else is allowed there."

"Then bring Sugil out to me."

"That's not allowed. A patient suffering from a contagious disease is not allowed to go anywhere. Please go home."

"No! Director!"

"Please get out of the way."

"Director, give me Sugil. Let me have him and I'll see he gets better, I promise."

"I said no; now get out of the way before the police take you away."

"No. He's my child, and I can take him away if I want."

"I told you no."

"Director! Whether he lives or dies, let me be the one...please."

"That's impossible. Please get out of the way or I'm calling the police."

"I'll take my child away if it's the last thing I do. You can kill me, but I'm not leaving here without him."

"I told you to get out of the way. Hey, somebody over there!"

"No! Do you think I'd allow someone to kill the child I raised? I won't allow it, I won't."

"Get out of the way I said! Hey, over there!" Straightening up as as if to deliver a kick, the director again tried to slip away.

"No," cried Sugil's mother, grabbing hold of her sleeve.

"Oh my goodness!" the old director struggled to break free, her eyes wide-open in surprise like a trapped rat.

"Let me have my boy, let me have him!"

"Isn't anyone going to help me?"

"Not so fast! I've asked you where you've hidden my Sugil. Let me have him!"

"Hey, there's a crazy person here! Is anyone there?" The lifelong spinster bleated meanly, unable to find a hole to escape. Her head bobbed around like a puppet's. By now her spectacles had slid to the end of her nose and her sleeve had been pulled almost completely off her shoulder.

"I'm taking my child with me...hand him over, hand him over!"

Just then two nurses and a janitor ran up and latched on to her. The man grabbed her wrist, while one of the nurses tried to pry her fingers loose. The director managed to slip into her room. Looking down from her window she saw the janitor and a guard pushing Sugil's mother out the door. Only then did she let out a sigh of relief, and begin scrubbing her hands and her sleeve with disinfectant. "I wonder if I'll ever get the dirt and the smell out..." Scrubbing her skin raw in the places Sugil's mother had touched, she thought to herself, "It will have to be done tonight...and he must be gone early tomorrow morning."

Having been pushed and shoved to her home, Sugil's mother waited for the hospital workers to leave. Then she went to Tonggön's house, but he was not at home. She returned straight to the hospital, only to be pushed away again by the doorman. Climbing to the top of a hill behind the hospital, she gazed down blankly at the redbrick buildings. Somewhere in there Sugil was lying all alone, gasping for air. She envied the birds flying overhead. Then she briefly clung to the phantasy that she could be taken on as a

hospital maid and be allowed to see Sugil without any problems. Above her the spring sky darkened with clouds, and the telephone cables hummed. Just then she saw someone walking up the steep road. It was the hospital's pharmacist. She had sometimes seen him coming out of church with a bible under his arm, and he had always seemed very dignified to her.¹⁰ She had seen him a few times since then in the hospital. She quickly caught up with him.

"Excuse me sir!" After calling him a few times he slowly turned around. He was on his way home from work. After listening indifferently to her trembling voice, he said in a prayer-like tone: "Being entrusted to American doctors is like being entrusted to God."

"But sir! What do you mean, entrusted to God?!" If anything, the pharmacist's words only unsettled her more. How could even the greatest god compare with a boy's own mother?

"Americans don't lie. Take a look around you. In Korea they build hospitals, establish schools...doctors come, and preachers..."

"But sir!" Just gazing down at the hospital buildings that contained her son was better than listening to this talk. All the Koreans who worked in the hospital, all of them, were Korean in name only. Inside they were no different from Americans. They seemed to her like people from a completely different world.

That night she went to see Tonggön again. Listening to the day's events from start to finish he thought there was definitely some unpleasantness afoot, but he had no way of knowing just what was being planned. But he promised her that, no matter what happened, he would accompany her to the director's on his way home from work the next evening.

After almost an entire day and night without sleep, she was finally able to close her eyes at dawn and doze off for a bit. No sooner had she done so than she began to dream. She was being chased by a terrifying thief. She tried to flee but was unable to run. After struggling for a while she saw the thief before her eyes. But suddenly someone took a sharp dagger and went and stabbed the son of a bitch. It was a welcome sight indeed. She was sure her rescuer was her husband, but when she looked closer she saw it was

¹⁰ The news that Sugil's mother had a favorable impression of a bible-toting churchgoer is significant. Judging from the other villagers' comments earlier in this chapter, it seems that Sugil and his mother were not actual members of the church. But while reluctant to tarnish his heroes by depicting them as *bona fide* Christians, Han knew he could not ask his readers to believe that a missionary would employ a woman who was completely unsympathetic to the religion.

Tonggön. She woke, stretching herself with a deep sigh of relief. Now she could hear the sound of a nightingale from somewhere. "What does today have in store?" She thought, with a tightening of her heart.

That afternoon a strange man came to see her. For some reason her heart sank as soon as she saw him. He was a villanous looking man, with a dark face, droopy eyelids, and a nose that hung down like a steer's testicles in June. She was sure he was either a security guard or a janitor she had seen at the hospital. Rocking on his heels as if he would go back before communicating his message, he asked, "Is this Yi Sugil's home?"

"Yes, what is it?" She ran out of the house in her bare feet, placing her hand gently on her breast to still her pounding heart.

"You're wanted at the hospital."

"At the hospital? But what—"

"Someone from this house was in the hospital, right?"

"Yes, that's right."

"They say he died."

"Di..." Sugil's mother head began to spin. Her legs gave way and she sank down into a crouch then and there. The man shambled off without so much as another word. "Su— Sugil!" With a loud clap of her hands she ran after him, without even bothering to put on her shoes. But she hadn't gone far when she felt her throat constricting tightly and a wave of sadness rushing over her. She sank down again onto her haunches. "Sugil's dead? What do they mean he's dead?" As she struck the ground with her hand she began to wail. She was racked so hard with sobs it seemed she would cease breathing altogether. Then anger rose up in her like a bludgeon. Everything was clear to her now. Those missionary jackals and that bitch of a director had killed Sugil. "All right, so that's the way it is. You sons of bitches, you've all conspired to take my child from me, but I won't let it happen, I won't." She took up a pole that had been lying around in the field and struck the ground with it with all her strength. "You can't get away with it, you can't. You sons of bitches can't take an innocent person and say he has a contagious disease...you can't, you can't. Make him well again, make him well again, or I'll make short work of you sons of bitches, do you hear me?"

She broke into a run again. The vision of Sugil's corpse battled strangely in her mind with the image of Sugil still breathing laboriously. She plunged on, unaware of the movement of her feet or the lay of the road beneath them, and arrived at the hospital before the security guard. As she entered the lobby, someone called to her from the reception desk, but hearing nothing, she hurtled down the long corridor.

"Sugil, Sugil!" she cried.

"Hey, hey!" A man in a white smock caught up with her and grabbed her firmly by the arm.

"Where is my Sugil?"

"Don't make such a racket. You'll startle the patients."

"Listen—where is my Sugil? Just let me see him quickly."

"Come this way please."

She was led into a room in a dark and gloomy corner. But Sugil wasn't there either. "Where is Sugil? Please hurry up and let me..." She turned and tried to run out the door, but the man grabbed her again and pulled her back.

"Please sit down here," he said, trying to sit her down on a stool.

"I can't, I have to go—"

"Yes, well, just sit down. I will let you see him shortly." With that he forced her down onto the stool. "Are you Yi Sugil's mother?"

"Yes. Sugil's still alive, isn't he?"

"With our hospital's warm prayers your son has gone to the eternal world."

"Gone, you say?" Blue lights flashed before her eyes.

"He has returned to God's embrace."

"God?" She rose with a start, then sank back down again.

"The illness became so severe that we didn't even have time to contact you at home."

Sugil's mother was speechless.

"It's hospital policy. The rule says that to prevent contamination anyone who has died of a contagious disease must be cremated immediately. Therefore—"

But Sugil's mother could not understand a word. "Where is Sugil?" she asked.

"I shall give him to you." The man in the white medical smock went to the shelf and took down a little box wrapped in white cloth. Proffering it to her with both hands he said, "Here is your son. Please." She gazed blankly at the box, but unable to comprehend what it was, did not even attempt to take it. "This is your son." Still she said nothing. "This is what was left after the fire. Please."

"Fire?"

"Yes, it's hospital policy."

"My son...burned..."

"Yes, that's what this is."

"Oh, now I get it. You killed an innocent person and then you destroyed everything to get rid of the evidence, you filthy sons of bitches. I'll kill you with my own hands, you hear me!" She started up from the stool,

clenching her fists tightly. "No, it's impossible," she cried, biting her lip and forgetting her grief for a moment, "I want my son back! Who told you to burn my son?" The man in the smock took a few steps backward. "You can't, you can't beat my son to death and then get rid of—"

"Calm down please. Whether one lives or dies is for God to decide. It's all written down in the Bible."

"I don't have a god, now give me back my son."

"It will do you no good to offend the will of God. Nor will it help your son—"

"Hurry up and give me back my son, can't you do that?"

"In commemoration of your son's eternal life the reverend missionary has asked me to..." The man in the smock extended to her a paper envelope, a little condolence gift from the missionary.

"The missionary—" She slapped it away. "A fine lot of missionaries they are, the bastards, the murderous God-selling sons of bitches." Sugil's mother snatched the box of remains from the orderly's hand and clutched it to her breast. At the same time the envelope containing the missionary's money fluttered to the ground. She snatched it up with her free hand like a kite swooping down on a chick, then kicked open the door and hurtled out.

6

One of her feet struck the jagged edge of a rock and began to spout blood, but she took no notice of it. Blood had clotted on her lower lip, swollen from where she had bitten it. In her mind she saw the protruding bald head, the eyes like lamps...Like a tornado she flung open the third heavy door of the missionary's brick house to find her three enemies around the dinner table. As if fixing on a target she looked around at their faces, which grew and shrank before her eyes as if shown on a moving screen. The old jackal's spade-shaped eagle's nose hung villainously over his upper lip, while the vixen's teats jutted out like the stomach of a snake that has just swallowed a demon, and the slippery wolf cub gleamed with poison like the head of a venomous snake that has just shed its skin. Their six sunken eyes seemed to Sugil's mother like open graves constantly waiting for corpses. Like demons before the king of the underworld this pack of wolves quaked at the sight of Sugil's mother, with her tangled hair, bloodshot eyes, blood-soaked feet and torn skirt.

"Oh...oh my God..." The vixen was the first to begin praying.

"Give me back my son!"

"Oh...God our Father!"

"You sons of bitches, I told you to give me back my son!" Sugil's mother bit so hard into her blood-caked lips that red blood came spurting out. Flinging the envelope at the old jackal with the one hand, she tried to grab hold of the wolf cub's skull with the other.

Standing up, the vixen cried out again in a trembling voice, "Hey, God is up there. My dear, your son has gone to heaven."

"Heaven? *You* sons of bitches can go to heaven for all I care, I have no use for it." Sugil's mother thrust out her hand again. "Hurry up and hand me back my son, 'cos if you don't I'll take yours!"

"My dear, this is no way to act. The devil has gotten hold of you."

"The devil? You want to see a devil, just draw some water and look at your reflection. Your son is still important to you, you murderous bastards, but you beat my son to death...you say he'll get better in the hospital, then say I can't come because he has a contagious disease, then you secretly kill him...burn him till nothing's left. Hurry up and hand him over, you sons of bitches, hand him over! You can't get away with this, you can't!" She reached out again for the wolf cub. The vixen stepped in the way, signalling to her son with her eyes to run off. Shielded by his fat mother's stomach he scurried into a room at the back. After a while one could hear the sound of a telephone being dialed.

"Give me back my boy!" Sugil's mother put her head down and lunged forward in an effort to get past, but the vixen, taking a few steps backward, blocked her way.

"God will not forgive you for this."

Just then the old jackal stood straight up. "Out, devil!" he shouted at the top of his voice.

"Devil? You son of a bitch, you kill someone for taking a ball you've thrown away. *You* bastards get out! Who gave you the right to come to another country and kill innocent people? This is our Korean land, Korean land...do you think all Koreans have died?"

"I told you to get out."

"Give me back my son, you thieving bastards, give me back my son."

"Go and look for him at the hospital."

"You bastards want to play hide-and-seek like a bunch of goblins, I see. But I won't let you. Your son did the killing, so give him to me, I won't let him get away with it, I won't."

"You godless barbarian—," said the vixen, shielding her husband and striding forward.

"I told you to hand over the bastard that killed my son, now hurry up!" Ramming into the vixen's belly with her head, Sugil's mother again tried to force her way past.

"Kill that demon!" The old jackal yelled out urgently, "The gun, Simon, the gun!"

Shortly the wolf cub came out with a long hunting rifle, which he thrust at Sugil's mother's breast. "I'll shoot!" he cried.

"Go ahead, try and shoot me. If you want to kill me too, go ahead and try." She advanced, puffing out her chest. Flinching like a frightened rabbit, the wolf cub stepped backwards. The old jackal wrested the rifle from him and jabbed her in the chest with the muzzle. She staggered one or two steps back, then steadied herself. Puffing out her chest again, she wrested the rifle away with all her strength. The old jackal, his body bent over the rifle, was pulled forth a few steps before finally letting go. With all her strength Sugil's mother took the gun by the barrel and smashed it over the edge of the huge stove, breaking it in half. The pair jumped back while their little bastard retreated once more into the back room. The telephone gave out a loud ring as it was cranked.

"Yes...Hurry, hurry...yes." The words could be vaguely made out. "He's left already? Yes, yes...yes...she has a gun now and she's—"

"You sons of bitches, you try to kill me with a gun and then—well, you're not going to get away with it. I won't die until I've cut out your livers and eaten them. You think I won't eat the liver of that bastard son of yours, the one who killed my son?" Grinding her teeth, Sugil's mother ran into the back room, where the son of a bitch and his wife blocked her way. A shoving match ensued. Just then the sound of shouting could be heard. In the next instant Sugil's mother was grabbed firmly on the back of her neck as if attacked by a kite, then kned so hard in the base of her spine that she felt a stabbing pain in her joints. It was the cop.

"You bitch, can't you leave well enough alone?" He said, kicking her repeatedly in the shins with his boot.

"So there's more of you, huh?" Sugil's mother spat out the blood that had filled her mouth. "So you're all in this together eh, well that's fine, let's just see who lives and who dies." At this the policeman too staggered back.

"Bitch!" He struck her in the face with his massive hand. Red lights flashed before her eyes.

"Give me back my son! You son of a bitch. Does being a policeman mean taking the side of these sons of bitches?" But finally she was tied up fast in rope. Only then did the wolf cub come back into the room. "Why do you tie me up instead of that murderous bastard?" She cried.

"Can't you just shut up, you bitch?" The cop turned to the missionary pair. "I'm sorry, Reverend. If I'd known earlier, none of this would have happened."

"That's all right; you've done your job well. God has found out, and now He is punishing her, is He not?"

"Well then, I will deal firmly...I'll take this gun along as evidence."

"As an American I have one request: should she repent her crime, I hope you will be so kind as to forgive her. Please make her a good person. All kind people are the brothers and sisters of the American people. This is God's will."

"Who said I wanted your forgiveness? You've tricked an ignorant person, used your gun to boss me around, tried to kill me—all those tricks, but you won't get away with it, you won't!"

"Stop babbling, you bitch, and carry this gun." The policeman shouted.

"Why should I carry it? I have something else to carry." Bending over despite her bonds she picked up the box of her son's remains. It was bitterly mortifying to be taken away before exacting vengeance on her enemies.

"But just you wait," she said, "Not all Koreans have died." As she walked, it seemed the darkening street would never end. The birds were flying back and forth across the low sky in search of their nests.

Note: The following is the conclusion of the version of Jackals contained in Han's Selected Works (1960). While not going as far as Sö Manil and Yun Kihong's 1955 dramatization of the novella, which ends with a concerted attack on the missionary's house, it does imply more solidarity on the part of the villagers.—B.M.

"Just you wait," she said, "Not all Koreans have died." She was dragged outside past the villagers, who had gathered behind the fence as if awaiting a sign. Kyedük's mother had found one of Sugil's mother's rubber shoes by the cowshed, and now bent down to slip it on her friend's bloodied foot.

"Out of the way," shouted the Japanese cop, "what are you all standing around for?"

But far from dispersing, the neighbors quietly began to follow the two. Sugil's mother stumbled along the darkening twilit street. Suddenly she was reminded of the song she had heard the children singing in the mountains the day before:

The knot in the heart—
How will it be untied?

Of course she did not remember these lines word for word, but their meaning had been planted unmistakably in her brain. The Yankees and Japs had

incessantly brought the blackest gloom down upon on the Korean people, but in the heart of every Korean raged eternal flames...Even now the beautiful rhythm of those lines resounded in her ears. Suddenly she looked up. The birds were flying back and forth across the low sky in search of their nests.

Chronology

- 1900 On 3 August in Hamhüing, Han Sörya is born Han Pyöngdo to a county magistrate and his wife.
- 1919 Han graduates from middle school.
- 1921-24 Han studies at Nippon University in Tokyo.
- 1925 Han emigrates to Manchuria. KAPF is formed in August in his absence.
- 1926 Han participates in published serial debates with KAPF's ideological opponents.
- 1927 Han returns to Seoul and formally joins KAPF.
- 1929 *Transition Period* and *Wrestling Match*, Han's most highly regarded short stories, are published.
- 1934 Han is among the KAPF members arrested by police.
- 1935 KAPF is dissolved. Han is convicted of subversive activity, but released several months later, after having spent over a year in jail.
- 1936 Han's first novel *Dusk* is serialized in the newspaper *Chosön ilbo*.
- 1940 Han's autobiographical novel *Pagoda* appears in the pro-Japanese newspaper *Maeil sinbo*. He joins pro-Japanese writers' organizations.

- 1943 Han is jailed (according to at least one account) for spreading news garnered from Syngman Rhee's Hawaii-based radio broadcasts.
- 1944 Han is released from jail and returns to Hamhŭng.
- 1945 Korea is liberated on 15 August. Han arrives in Pyongyang in November.
- 1946 Han meets Kim Il Sung in February and assumes the post of party director of cultural affairs. The NKFLA is formed. Han edits the group's organ *Munhwa chŏnsŏn*. He is elected to the NKWP's CC in August.
Path of Blood, Mining Settlement, The Hat
- 1948 In January Han replaces Yi Kiyŏng as NKFLA chairman. The DPRK is inaugurated in September.
- 1949 *Growing Village, Brother and Sister*
- 1950 The Korean War breaks out on 25 June.
- 1951 In March, during the KPA's occupation of Seoul, the North and South Korean writers' organizations are united; Han becomes chairman of the KFLA.
Jackals
- 1953 The Korean War truce is signed in July. Yim Hwa is convicted of espionage in August. The KFLA is dissolved during the First Korean Writers' Congress in September. Han becomes chairman of the WU.
History
- 1955 Kim Il Sung purges WU vice-chairman Yi T'aejun and his Soviet-Korean backers. In his *Chuch'e* speech in December he declares his support for Han.
Man'gyŏngdae, Taedong River (trilogy)
- 1956 Han becomes Minister of Education while retaining the chairmanship of the WU.
- 1957 Han oversees an anti-revisionist campaign and begins enlisting writers directly from the proletariat.
- 1958 Han (by most accounts) is awarded the People's Prize for *History*, and the title People's Artist for general service to the state. The Ch'ŏllima campaign is launched on the literary sector.
- 1960 Han's sixtieth birthday is the cause of effusive tributes in literary publications.
Love, Emulate the Leader
- 1961 The KFLA is reestablished in March with Han as chairman.
- 1962 During a September meeting of KFLA cadres Han is attacked for parochialism, bourgeois decadence and other transgressions. In October he is stripped of his offices and expelled from the party.
- 1963 Han is exiled to a village in Chagang province.
- 1969 Han reappears for the last time on the roster of the KWP's CC.

Han Sörya
and
North Korean Literature

*The Failure of Socialist Realism
in the DPRK*

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