
Miss Sophie's Diary

by Ding Ling, translated by W. J. F. Jenner

24 December

It's blowing again today. The wind woke me up before daybreak, then the attendant came in to light the stove. I knew that I'd never get back to sleep again, and that my head would start spinning if I didn't get up. If I lie there wrapped up in my quilt I brood too much on all those weird notions. The doctor says it would be better 'if I had plenty of sleep and plenty of food, didn't read and didn't think. But that's impossible. I never get to sleep before 2 or 3 a.m. and I wake up before dawn. Windy days like this make you think of too many disturbing things. Besides, you can't go out when it's blowing hard and what can you do stuck in your room with no books to read? I can't just sit here by myself doing nothing and waiting for the time to go by. I spend all day enduring and putting up with things and waiting for the time to go by, wishing the winter would pass quicker. Once it's warmer my cough is bound to get better. Then I'll be able to go south or to university, whichever I want. But this winter's too long.

I warmed my third drink of milk when the sun started shining on the window-paper. Yesterday I heated milk up four times. But though I warm it up so often I don't always drink it. It's a kind of exercise to build up my spirits and ward off irritation on a windy day like this. To be sure, it uses up a little bit of time, but sometimes it makes me more irritated than ever. That's why I didn't do it at all for the whole of last week. But when I couldn't think of any other solution. I had to do it again to while the time patiently away. It's as if I were very old.

When the paper comes I read through it systematically. I start with the big headline stories of national news then go on to the summaries of world events and the gossip about this *city*. I read everything, even the pages on education, party propaganda, economics, and the price of 96 government stocks. When I've read all that I go through the advertisements for schools, the legal notices about cases over the division of family property, and even the advertisements for 606 medicine, panaceas, beauty lotions, plays, films. Only when I know them all do I languidly drop the paper. Of course, I do occasionally find a new ad, but they're only for some silk shop's fifth or sixth anniversary sale, or else death notices with apologies to those not personally informed.

When I've read, the paper and can't think of anything else to do all that's left is to sit by the stove and get into a bad temper. I'm now used to getting upset day in and day out at the things that irritate me. Every *day* my head aches when I hear the voices of the other guests shouting for the staff along the corridor outside my window. Their voices are so coarse, loud, raucous and monotonous: "Hot kettle, waiter!" or "Water for washing, waiter." Anyone could imagine how horrible it sounds. Then there's always someone talking at the top of his voice on the telephone downstairs. But it's terrifyingly lonely when there are no sounds, especially inside these four whitewashed walls. Wherever you sit they blankly block your view. If you try to escape by lying on your bed you're crushed by the ceiling, which is whitewashed too. I can't find

anything that isn't disgusting - that pockmarked waiter, the cooked food that tastes of cleaning rags, the dirt on the window frames that are never wiped clean, the mirror above the wash-stand. Look at it one way and your face is over a foot long; turn your head just a little bit to the side and it pulls it into such a twisted shape you give yourself a fright. It's all enough to put you in a filthy mood. Perhaps I'm the only person affected this way. I wish I could find something new to get miserable over and fed up with. But everything new, whether good or bad, is too far away from me.

Wei came after lunch. As soon as I heard the special urgency of his leather shoes from the other end of the corridor my heart felt as relieved as when you get your first breath after being stifled. But I couldn't show it. When he came in all I could do was to gaze at him in silence. He thought I was still in a bad mood, grasped both my hands, and kept saying, "Sister, sister" over and over again. As for me, I smiled of course. I knew why. I understood perfectly well what's hidden behind those bounding pupils that look not at but under my eyes, and what he doesn't want people to know about. It's been such a long time you've been in love with me, Wei. But has he won me? Of course, it's not my fault at all. That's how a woman is supposed to behave. In fact I've been very straight with him. I don't believe that there's another woman who wouldn't have made a fool of him. Besides, I'm really and truly sorry for him. Sometimes I can't stop myself wanting to say to him, "Can't you change your tactics, Wei? The way you're acting only gets me down." Yes, if Wei weren't so stupid I could like him a lot better. But all he can do is to make this sincere parade of his devotion. Wei was satisfied to see me smile. He sprang round the end of the bed to take off his overcoat and his big fur hat. If he'd looked back at me he'd surely have seen the misery in my eyes. Why doesn't he understand me a little better?

I've always wanted a man who could understand me completely. If he doesn't understand me, what's the use of his love and consideration? But my father, my older sister and my friends can only care for me in that blind way. I really don't know what it is about me that they care for. My arrogance? My temper? My T.B.? Sometimes I get angry and upset about it, but they only make even more allowances and are fonder of me than ever. The things they say to try to cheer me up are so wrong that they make me want to hit them even more than ever. At times like that I really long for somebody who'd understand me. Even if he insulted me I'd be happy and proud.

When nobody pays any attention to me or comes to see me I miss people or get' angry with them. But when people do come to see me I can't help giving them a hard time. There's nothing I can do about that either. Recently I've tried to train myself and stop myself saying the things that come to my tongue in case I touch someone's hidden sensitive spots when I'm only joking. That's why the state of mind in which I was sitting with Wei can be imagined. But when Wei stood up and said he was going I began feeling miserable at the prospect of being lonely and started to hate him. This at least Wei has long understood, which is why he never goes before ten at night. But I'm not trying to deceive him or myself. I'm quite sure that, so far from doing him any good, staying late

only makes me feel even more strongly than ever that he's too easy to push around, or be even, sorrier for his incompetence in love.

28 December

Today I invited Yufang and Yunlin to the cinema. Yufang asked Jianru along. I was so angry I wanted to weep, but I laughed aloud. Jianru really does hurt my self-respect. In her looks and movements she's just like a friend I had when I was young, so I often found myself chasing her before I realized what I was doing. And she deliberately gave me a lot of the courage I needed to get close to her. Since then I've been treated intolerably and hated my shameless behaviour in the past whenever I've thought of it, but regrets can change nothing now. Once I sent her eight long letters in a single week, but she ignored them completely. Goodness only knows what Yufang thought she was up to, asking her here on purpose although she knew I didn't want the past brought up again. It's as if she deliberately wanted to make me angry. I was furious. Yufang and Yunlin can't have noticed anything different about my smile. Jianru must have been able to. But she can put on an act, play stupid, and talk to me as if there were no quarrel between us. I was going to give her a piece of my mind, but just when the words were on the tip of my tongue I remembered the ban I'd imposed on myself. Besides, if I'd really told her what I thought she'd only have been more pleased with herself than ever. That's why I controlled myself and went out with them.

We got to the Zhenguang Cinema early and met a whole crowd of girls from home at the entrance. I'm sick of all those routine dimpled smiles so I cut them. For no good reason at all my bad temper extended to all the other people there to see the film. While Yufang was deep in a lively conversation with them I abandoned my guests and slipped back here.

I'm the only person who can forgive me. Everyone is criticising me, and none of them realize the impact that some people have on me when I'm with them. People say that I'm odd. Little do they realise how I'm constantly trying to make people like me and win their affection. But they don't give me enough encouragement to say things that run contrary to my heart. They're always giving me occasion to reflect on my own actions and be further estranged from them than ever.

It's very late now, and the whole **hostel** is quiet. I've been lying on my bed for a very long time. I've thought some things through very clearly. What have I got to be upset about?

29 December

Yufang phoned early this morning. She's a good person and could never lie, so I suppose Jianru really must be ill. Yufang said she'd got ill because of me, and wanted me to go over so that Jianru can explain some things to me. Yufang is wrong and Jianru is too. I'm not the sort of person who likes hearing explanations. I fundamentally deny the need for explanations in the universe. If friends get on well that's fine. And if you give people

something of a bad time when you don't get on that's perfectly proper and respectable. I think I'm very generous and not nearly good enough at getting my revenge. If Jianru is ill on my account I'm delighted. I'm not going to refuse to believe the news that someone else is ill because of me. Besides, if Jianru is ill I won't feel quite as angry with myself as I have been.

I really don't know how to analyse myself. Sometimes I can be filled with a vague and indefinable misery when a cloud is broken up by the wind, but the sight of a man in his twenties (Wei is in fact four years older than me) shedding his tears drop by drop on the back of my hand makes me laugh with pleasure like a savage. Wei had come to see me with a lot of writing paper and envelopes he'd bought in the east city. As he was so happy and full of smiles I deliberately teased him and cheered up the moment I saw him crying. "Save your tears," I said, "and don't think I'm weak like other women who can't resist a tear. If you want to cry, go back home to cry. Tears get me down." Of course, he didn't go, defend himself or get angry. He just curled up at the edge of the chair and wept silently and openly. Goodness only knows where all those tears came from. I naturally started feeling ashamed of myself at being so delighted, so I told him like a big sister to wash his face and stroked his hair. He started smiling with tears still in his eyes.

When I was with this open and honest man I tortured him with all the cruelty of my nature. But when he'd gone I wanted to drag him back and make this little plea: "I know I was wrong. Please stop loving a woman like me who doesn't deserve your sincere devotion."

1 January

I don't know how people who like noise and bustle celebrated the New Year. All I did was to add an egg to my milk. The egg was one of the twenty Wei brought over yesterday. I boiled seven of them yesterday as tea-eggs. The thirteen that are left will probably last me a fortnight. I thought that if Wei came to lunch, there'd definitely be a chance of a couple of tins. I hoped he would come. As I wanted him to come I went to Xidan to buy four boxes of sweets, two packets of savouries and a basket of mandarin oranges and apples to give him when he came. I was certain that he'd be the only person to come today.

But I ate my lunch and Wei didn't come.

I wrote five letters altogether on the good paper and with the good brushes Wei bought for me a few days ago. I'd been hoping to receive some nice cards, but I didn't get any. Even my older sisters, who really enjoy that sort of thing, forgot that one thing they should have sent me. I don't mind about not having the cards, but I was upset that they forgot me. Too bad. It serves me right. I've never ever paid a New Year call on anyone.

I ate my evening meal alone too. I was thoroughly fed up.

This evening Yufang and Yunlin came, and they brought a tall young man with them. I reckon that those two are really happy. Yufang has Yunlin to love her; she's satisfied and so is he. Happiness lies not so much in having a lover as in that the two of them have no greater wish. Quiet lives in which they can talk things over. Of course, some people would despise this sort of ordinariness. But that only applies to other people like that, not to my Yufang.

Yufang is a good person. Because she has Yunlin she wants "all the lovers in the world to be united". Last year she tried to arrange a love marriage for Mary, and she wants me and Wei to hit it off. That's why she asked me about him the moment she came. But she, Yunlin and that tall man ate all the things I'd bought for Wei.

The tall man's a real good looker. It's the first time I've ever been aware of male beauty: it's not something I'd ever noticed before. I always thought that there was nothing more to being a man than being able to talk, read people's expressions and be careful. Now I've seen this tall man I realize that men can be, cast in another and a noble mould. He made Yunlin look so petty and stupid by comparison. I really feel sorry for Yunlin. He'd be so distressed at the coarseness of his expressions and behavior if he knew how wretched he looked beside the tall man. Goodness knows what Yufang must feel when she compares the two men, the tall one and the short one.

How can I describe the beauty of that stranger? Of course, his tall body, his delicate white face, his thin lips and his soft hair would all dazzle anyone, but there's also an elegance about him that I can't express in words or put my hands on, but sets my heart aflame. For example, when I asked him his name he handed me his card in an incredibly relaxed way. I looked up, and saw the corners of his soft, red, and deeply inset mouth. Could I tell anyone how I looked at those two delightful lips like a child longing for sweets? But I know that in this society I'll never be allowed to take what I want to satisfy my impulses and my desires, even though it would do nobody else any harm. • That's why I had to control myself, keep my head down, and silently read the name on the card: Ling Jishi from Singapore.

Ling Jishi' could talk here without any constraints as if in 'a very old friend's place. I couldn't possibly say that he deliberately came to make a fool of a timid soul like me. I had to force myself to resist his attraction, so I never let myself raise my eyes to look at that lovely' corner by the stove. It was so bad that my worn-out slippers, which I'd never felt embarrassed about before, wouldn't let me go into the lamplight by the table. I was angry with myself: why was I so awkward and humourless with him? Usually I despise the way other people pay attention to, their social skills but today I know I seemed silly and stupid. Oh dear! He must have thought I was a girl straight up from the country.

Seeing how lifeless I looked Yunlin and Yufang thought that I'd taken against this stranger, so they kept interrupting him and took him away before long. Can I be

grateful to them for their kind intentions? Watching the two short figures and one tall one disappearing in the yard downstairs I didn't want to go back into my room. It was still full of his footsteps, his voice, and the crumbs of the biscuits he'd been eating.

3 January

Last night and the night before I coughed all night. I don't have any confidence in medicine. Medicine and disease have nothing to do with each other: isn't that so? I know perfectly well that I'm completely fed up with that bitter potion, but I keep on taking my doses on time. If I didn't take my medicine what other hope would I have of a cure? God wants people to live patiently, so he arranges so much suffering before death that people want to keep their distance from it. As for me, I seek the good things of life all the more keenly because my life is going to be so rushed and short. It's not because I'm afraid of death but because I always feel that I've yet to enjoy everything life has to offer. I want, I want to make myself happy. Day and night I'm always dreaming of things that would enable me to have no regrets when I die. I imagine myself lying on a bed in an extremely luxurious bedroom, my sisters kneeling on a bearskin rug beside the bed praying for me, my father sighing quietly at the open window, while I read lots of long letters that the people who love me have sent me, and my friends weep sincerely as they remember me. . . . I desperately need these human emotions and want to possess all sorts of impossible things. But what do people give me? For two whole days I've been alone here as a prisoner in this hostel with no visitors and no letters. I've lain on my bed coughing, sat by the stove coughing, been to the table coughing, and thought of those hateful people.... Actually, I have had a letter, but it only added to my unhappiness. It was sent to me by a strong coarse man from Anhui who pestered me a year ago. I tore it up before I'd even finished it. All that "love, love" in it made my flesh creep. I despise the adoration of people I don't like.

But can I tell what I really need?

4 January

Things have gone very badly wrong. Why did I want to move, and why was I stupid enough to trick Yunlin as if lying were so instinctive to me that it came to me today without any trouble at all? If Yunlin realized that Sophie could trick him goodness knows how upset he'd be. They all love Sophie as if she were their little sister. Of course, I was uneasy about it and now I regret it. But can I make my mind up whether to move or not?

I have to tell myself, "You're longing for that tall man." Yes, for the last few days and nights there's been no time when I haven't been yearning for those things that allure me. Why hasn't he come alone to see me these last few days? He ought to realize that it's wrong of him to make me long for him like this. He ought to come to see me and tell me that he's been missing me too. If he came I wouldn't refuse to listen to him declaring his love

for me. I'd let him know what I want. But he won't come. I suppose it's the sort of thing that happens in romances but not in real life. Surely I shouldn't have to go to see him. If a woman's as reckless as that she's bound to come to a bad end. Besides, I still need people's respect. I couldn't think of what to do, so I just had to go to Yunlin's first on the offchance. After lunch I braved the wind and went to the eastern part of town.

Yunlin is a student at the Metropolitan University and he's rented a room in Youth Alley that's in between the university's first and second campuses. When I got there I was in luck: he hadn't gone out and Yufang hadn't *yet* arrived. Yunlin was of course surprised that I'd come out on so windy a day. I told him I'd dropped in on my way to a consultation at the German Hospital. He wasn't at all suspicious and asked about my illness. I deliberately led the conversation round to the other evening. I found out without any difficulty that the man lives in No. 4 Dormitory next to the university's second campus. Soon after that I started sighing and using every kind of language to describe the loneliness and boredom of life in my hostel in the western city. I lied and said that all I wanted to do was to be close to Yufang. (I knew that Yufang was already preparing to move to where Yunlin, was living.) I asked Yunlin to take me to find a room nearby. Yunlin was of course delighted to do this job: he didn't hesitate.

We ran into Ling Jishi while we were looking for a room and he came along with us. I was very pleased, so pleased that I got bold enough to take several good hard looks at him. He didn't notice. When he asked about my illness I told him I was completely better. His smile suggested that he didn't believe me.

I liked the look of a tiny, low, mildewed eastern room in the Dayuan Hostel next door to Yunlin's. He and Yunlin both said it was too damp, but I insisted on shoving in tomorrow because I was too fed up with the other place and desperately wanted to be close to Yufang. Yunlin had no choice but to agree, and he also said that he and Yufang would come to help me move first thing tomorrow.

Could I tell anyone the only reason why I chose that room? It's because it's between No. 4 Dormitory and Yunlin's place.

He didn't say goodbye to me, so I went back to Yunlin's, talking and laughing with all the courage I could muster. I examined him in every detail. I felt the need to kiss him everywhere. Didn't he notice that I was sizing him up and working things out about him? Later I deliberately said that I wanted to ask him to give me some extra English lessons. Yunlin smiled, but he looked disconcerted and gave a vague embarrassed answer. I told my heart that he couldn't be a bad lot. Fancy a big man like him blushing. This made my fire burn more fiercely than ever. But I didn't want him to understand me and see me as a push-over, so I forced myself to leave and came back very early.

Thinking it all over carefully now I'm worried that my impetuosity may have got me into an even worse mess. For the time being I'd better remain in this room heated by an iron stove. Do, I have to admit that I've fallen in love With that overseas Chinese? I know nothing about him at all. His mouth, his brows, his eyes, his fingertips . . . all mean nothing.

They aren't what one ought to need. If that's what I think about I've been bewitched. I've made my mind up not to move, but to concentrate all my efforts on recovering my health.

I've decided. I regret now the wrong things I did today, all the things a lady should never do.

6 January

It's all my fault. When they heard I'd moved Jin Ying came from the south city and Jiang and Zhou from the west city to my damp, low-ceilinged little room. I laughed and was even rolling about on the bed at times, so that both of them said I was getting more and more childish. That made me laugh aloud and long to tell them what I was thinking of. Wei too came this afternoon. He was very upset that I'd moved: I hadn't discussed it with him and it was taking me further away from him. When he saw Yunlin he ignored him completely. Not understanding why Wei was in such a -bad temper, Yunlin stared at him, only for Wei to look grimmer than ever. I wanted to laugh, but I said to myself, "Poor thing, you've treated him very unfairly. He's a good man."

Yufang has stopped talking about Jianru to me. She's decided to move to Yunlin's place in the next two or three days. As she feels I'm so keen to be near her she won't let me stay here all alone. She and Yunlin are showing me even more warmth than ever.

10 January

I've seen Ling Jishi on each of the last few days, but we've said very little to each other. I'm certainly not going to be the first to bring up the extra English lessons. It makes me laugh to see him going to visit Yunlin twice a day. I'm sure he was never as close to Yunlin before. I haven't invited him to my place once, even though he's asked me several times how the move has gone. The only answer I give is a smile as if I didn't understand what he's getting at. I'm giving all my mind to this. It's as if I were involved in a struggle with something, something I want but won't go after. I must find a way of making him give it himself. Yes, I understand myself, I'm only a completely female woman. Women devote all their thoughts to the men they want to conquer. I want to possess him. I want him to give his heart unconditionally and kneel before me, begging me to kiss him. I've gone completely mad. I just keep thinking over and over again of the tricks and methods I'm going to use. I've gone right off my head.

Yufang and Yunlin didn't notice how excited I was getting. They just said that I'd soon be better. I didn't want them to understand, so when they said I was getting better I pretended to be pleased.

12 January

Yufang has moved in, but Yunlin has moved out. Can there be another couple like them in the universe? They won't live together for fear of having a child. I imagine that they can't be certain that if they lay in each other's arms in bed they wouldn't do other things too, which is why they're taking this precaution against that sort of physical

contact. Hugging and kissing when they're alone isn't dangerous, so the occasional discreet bout doesn't come within the scope of their ban. I couldn't help laughing at them for their asceticism. Why shouldn't you embrace the naked body of your beloved? Why repress that manifestation of love? How can the pair of them think of those irrelevant and worrying things before they're even under the same quilt? I don't believe that love can be so rational and scientific.

They didn't get angry with me for teasing them. They're proud of their purity, and they laughed at my childishness. I can understand their state of mind, but there are so many strange things in the world that I can't fathom at all.

I stayed at Yunlin's (or Yufang's, as I should now say) till io before coming back. We talked a lot about ghosts.

I got used to talk about ghosts when I was tiny. I often used to sit on my aunt's lap listening to my uncle telling stories from *Liaozhai*, and I loved listening till late at night. As for being frightened, that was another matter. I'd never tell anyone about it, because if I'd admitted being frightened I'd never have heard the story to the end, my uncle would have gone into his study, and I'd not have been allowed to get out of bed. When I ' went to school I learnt a little science from the teachers. Because I was completely convinced by our teacher Pockmarked Zhou I believed the books too, whereupon ghosts weren't frightening any more. Now I'm more grown up I still say that I don't believe in ghosts, but my disbelief doesn't stop the goosepimples or my hair standing on end. But whenever the conversation gets on to ghosts other people don't realize that I'm wanting to change the subject because I'm afraid of lying alone in my quilt at night being sad at missing my dead aunt and uncle.

When I came back and saw that dark alley I did feel a little scared. I wouldn't ,have been at all surprised if a great yellow face had appeared in some corner or if a hairy hand had stretched out in that alley that seemed to be frozen solid. But that tall man Ling Jishi seemed a reliable bodyguard to have beside me, so when Yufang asked me I said I wasn't scared.

Yunlin came out with us and went back to his new place. As he went south and we went north the sound of his rubber-soled shoes on the footpath died out within three or four paces.

He put out a hand and took me by the waist.

"I'm sure you're frightened, Sophie."

I tried to struggle but I couldn't break free.

My head rested against his ribs. I wondered what sort of creature I'd look like in the light, held in the arms of a man over a head taller than me.

I ducked down and got out. He let go and stood beside me as we knocked at the front gate.

The alley was very dark, but I could see very clearly where he was looking. My heart was pounding somewhat as I waited for the gate to open.

"You're frightened, Sophie," he said.

There was the sound of the bolts being drawn as the porter asked who was there. I turned to him and started to say, "Goodnight." He seized my hand fiercely and I couldn't finish the word. The porter showed his astonishment as he saw the tall man behind me.

When the two of us were alone in the room my boldness was not needed any longer. I deliberately tried to make some politely conventional remarks but just couldn't. All I could manage was, "Do sit down." Then I began washing my face..

Goodness knows how, but I'd forgotten all about ghosts.

"Are you still interested in studying English, Sophie?" he asked suddenly.

So he was coming to me, and he was the first to bring up the English. Of course he wouldn't necessarily be pleased at having to sacrifice his time for nothing to give some extra classes: he couldn't fool me, a woman of twenty, about what he had in mind. I smiled, though only in my head.

"I'm too stupid," I said. "Pm worried that I couldn't manage it and would only make a fool of myself."

He said nothing, but picked up a photograph that was standing on my table. It was of my sister's little girl. She's just one year old.

When I'd washed my face I sat down at the other side of the table. He looked first at me, then at the little girl, then back at me again. Yes, she looked very much like me.

"She's nice, isn't she?" I asked him. "Do you think she's like me?"

"Who is she?" His voice clearly showed that he was very serious.

"Don't you think she's sweet?"

He kept asking me who she was.

Suddenly I realized what he was driving at. I wanted to lie to him.

"She's mine." I snatched the photograph and kissed it.

He believed me. I'd actually fooled him. I felt triumphant in my dishonesty.

This triumph seemed to make him less charming and handsome. Why else could I have ignored his eyes and forgotten his mouth when he showed that naive astonishment? Otherwise this triumph was bound to cool my passion.

But after he'd gone I felt sorry. There'd been so many obvious chances set in front of me. If only I'd made some other expression when he pressed my hand and let him understand that I wouldn't have turned him down he'd certainly have made some bolder moves. When it comes to boldness between the sexes I'm absolutely certain that as long as you don't detest the other person the pleasure you 'feel must be like the body melting. So why do I have to be so prim and proper with him? After all, what did I move into this dilapidated room for?

15 January

I'm not lonely now. During the day I'm next door, and in the evenings I've got another new friend to talk to. But my illness is getting worse. It really gets me down: whatever I want is useless to me. Am I hankering after something? Everything is so ridiculous, but to my surprise the thought of death makes me feel even more miserable. Whenever I see Dr. Klee's expression I think: Yes, I understand, say what you like, there's no hope for me now. But I put on a smile instead of weeping. Nobody knows how many tears I shed in the middle of the night.

Ling Jishi has come for several evenings running. He tells people he comes to help me with my English, but when Yunlin asked me about it all I could do was to say nothing. This evening I put my copy of *Poor People* in front of him and he really did start teaching me. Then I had to push the book aside and say, "Don't tell people any more that you're helping me with my English. I'm ill, so nobody will believe you." "Sophie," he was quick to reply, "couldn't I teach you when you're a bit better? As long as you'd like me to, Sophie."

This new friend might seem to be a very desirable person, but for some reason I don't understand I can't be bothered with any of that sort of thing. When I watch him leave every evening, having got no joy at all, I feel rather guilty and awkward. As he was putting his overcoat on I had to say to him, "Forgive me. I'm ill." He misunderstood me and thought I was just making a polite remark. "That doesn't matter at all. I'm not afraid of catching it." Later I thought it over carefully. Perhaps he was referring to something else. I can't be sure that other people's actions are as simple as I imagine.

16 January

Today I had a letter from Yun in Shanghai that has plunged me even deeper into despair. I could find no words with which to comfort her. "My life and my love are useless to me now," she wrote. So she has less need than ever for consolation from me and the tears I shed, for her. I can guess from her letter what her life has been like since her marriage, even though she won't tell me in as many words. Why does God have to play such cruel tricks on people in love? Yun is highly strung and very passionate. Of course she wouldn't be able to stand that gradual cooling, or a lack of feeling that can no longer be concealed. I wish she'd come to Beijing, but is it possible? I doubt it.

When Wei came I showed him Yun's letter/ He was really upset by it because the man who makes her feel that her life is pointless is, alas, his own elder brother. So I told him a lot about my new "philosophy of life", and he did the only thing that instinctively he can: he cried. I could only watch very coldly as his eyes turned red and he wiped them with his hands, and I gave him every kind of cruel explanation of what he was doing. I never imagined that he could be an exception, an honest person in the world. Before long I slipped out.

Because I wanted to avoid everyone I knew I stayed by myself in the cold, lonely park till very late. I don't know how I got through all that time. All I could think was, "It's so meaningless. The sooner I die the better."

17 January

I think I may be going off my head. I'd be very happy to do so if I really could. I reckon that if I went mad I wouldn't be aware of life's troubles any longer.

Today I started drinking hard after keeping off it.

for six months because of my illness. I could see quite clearly that what I spewed up was blood even redder than the wine. But I felt as though something else was in

charge of my heart. It was as if the drink was going to kill me tonight and I didn't want to go on thinking about all those tiresome complications.

18 January

I'm still in this bed. Soon I'm going to leave this room, perhaps for ever. Can I be certain that I'll have the happiness of touching these pillows and quilt of mine again? Yufang, Yunlin, Wei, Jin and Xia were all sitting around me in silence, anxiously waiting for the dawn so that they could take me into hospital. It was the sound of their gloomy mutterings that woke me up. I didn't want to speak; I was thinking about what had happened yesterday morning. The smell of the drink and vomit left in the room made me notice that my heart was in acute pain; the tears flowed again. Their silence, like the desolation and gloom on their faces, seemed like signs that my death was imminent. If I were to go to sleep forever in this way would they sit around my stiff corpse in silence like that? When they saw I'd woken up they came around me and asked how I was. That was when I felt the full horror of death and separation. I held their hands and gazed closely into each of their faces as if I wanted to remember this for ever. Their tears fell on my hands as if they realised that I was going to leave them finally for the land of death. Wei especially was crying so much he made himself look terrible. Oh dear, I thought, cheer me up a bit, friends. That made me smile. I asked them to sort some things out for me, and they pulled the big rattan case out from under the bed. Inside it there were some bundles wrapped up in embroidered handkerchiefs. "I want those to take into the Union Hospital," I said. When they passed the bundles to me I showed them that they were all full of letters. "Look," I said to them with a smile, "yours are here too." That seemed to cheer them up a bit. Wei quickly handed me a photograph album from the drawer as if he wanted me to take that too. That made me smile even more. There were seven or eight pictures of him in it, and as a special concession I let him kiss my hand and rub it against his face, which stopped the room feeling as though there were a corpse lying in it. Just then the sky began to show the greyish white of dawn and they all began to get busy, rushing around to find me a rickshaw. And thus my hospital life began.

4 March

It's twenty days since I had the cable about Yun's death, but my health has been improving daily: On the 1st the people who'd brought me into hospital took me back to the hostel, where my room had been beautifully tidied up. Because they were worried I'd feel the cold they'd lit a little iron coal stove for me. I didn't know how to thank them, especially Wei and Yufang. Jin and Zhou stayed with me for a couple of days before going. They were my nurses and I could lie in bed all day. I was so comfortable it was just like being at home, not at all like being in a hostel. Yufang has decided to stay with me for a few more days. When it's warmer she'll find me a place to convalesce in the Western Hills. I'd love to get out of Beijing, but although it's March it's still so cold. As Yufang insists on staying I won't refuse so the little bed that was put up a few days ago for Jin and Zhou won't be taken down.

Being in the hospital was also good for my heart: it really and truly was warmed up again by the kindness those friends showed me, and I feel once more that the universe is full of love. Especially Ling Jishi. When he came to see me in the hospital I felt very proud. I thought that only someone as handsome as him was fit to visit a woman-friend in hospital. I was also aware that the nurses were all jealous of me. One day that very beautiful Miss Yang asked me, "What's that tall man to you?"

"A friend." I disregarded the rudeness of her question.

"From your province?"

"No. He's an overseas Chinese from Southeast Asia."

"Then is he a fellow-student of yours?"

"No."

Whereupon she gave a knowing smile. "Then he's just a friend?"

Of course, I didn't have to blush, and I could have said a few words to warn her off the subject, but I was embarrassed. Only when she saw the embarrassed way in which I shut my eyes and pretended I was going to sleep did she go away, wearing a self-satisfied grin. From then onwards I was always in a bad mood with her. To avoid trouble I lied that Wet' was my brother whenever people asked me about him. There was one boy who is very close to Zhou. I pretended that he came from my province or was a relation.

When I was alone in the room after Yufang had gone to her classes I looked through all the letters I'd received in the last month or more. I was both pleased and satisfied that so many people had remembered me. I need people to remember me: the more people who feel friendly towards you the better. As for my father, that goes without saying. He sent me another photograph, but it looks as though he's got a few more white hairs. My older sisters are both well, but their children keep them too busy to be able to write to me often.

Ling Jishi came back before I'd finished reading the letters. I tried to stand up, but he held me down. When he squeezed my hand I could have wept for joy.'

"Did you think I'd ever come back to this room?" I asked him.

He glanced at the spare bed at the side of the room with visible disappointment. I told him that the two women who'd been staying with me had gone and that this was kept there for Yufang.

When he heard this he told me that he hadn't wanted to come back today in case Yufang would get fed up with him. That made me feel happier than ever.

"Aren't you worried that I'll get fed up with you?" I said.

He sat at the head of the bed, telling me even more about how he'd been living this last month or more - his clashes with Yunlin and their arguments because he had thought that I should come out of hospital earlier but Yunlin had insisted that I couldn't. Yufang had sided with Yunlin. Ling Jishi had realized that as he hadn't known me for very long his opinions wouldn't carry any weight so he dropped the matter and had left earlier whenever he met Yunlin at the hospital.

I knew what he was driving at, but I pretended not to and said, "You're running Yunlin down, but I'd never have got out of the hospital without him. I was much more comfortable there."

I saw him silently tilting his head to one side. He didn't reply.

He reckoned that Yufang would soon be back, so he went, quietly saying he'd be back tomorrow. Yufang did indeed come back soon after. She didn't ask and I didn't tell her. As I'm ill she didn't want to waste my energy by making me talk too much. I was glad to use this as an excuse to think about other, trivial things.

6 March

When Yufang went to her lectures, leaving me alone in the room, I started thinking about the peculiar things that happen between men and women. In fact, without wishing to boast, I've had more, even several times more, training than my friends have. But recently I haven't been able to understand it all. When I'm alone with that tall man my heart starts pounding and I feel ashamed and frightened, while he just sits there casually talking about his past with something like naivety, squeezing my hand from time to time. He does it ever so naturally, but my hand can't rest calmly in his big one and it gradually gets hot. The moment he stood up to go I couldn't help getting desperate and feeling that I was about to fall into a terrifying panic.

I stared at him, but I don't know whether it was a plea for pity or a look of resentment. He ignored my look. Even if he did happen to understand it all he said was, "Yufang's coming." What could I have said? He's afraid of Yufang! Of course, I wouldn't want anyone to know about the shocking things I think about in secret by myself, though recently I've also felt that I need people to understand my emotions. I've tried to talk about my feeling in a roundabout way with Yufang, but she just faithfully puts my quilt over me and worries about my medicine. Really, I can't help being a bit irritated.

8 March

Yufang has moved out now, but Wei wants to replace her as nurse. I know that Wei would be much better than Yufang. If I wanted some tea in the night I wouldn't have to bury my head in my bedclothes and forget about it because I could hear her snoring away and didn't want to disturb her. Of course I turned down his kind offer, but he insisted. I had to say, "It'd be very awkward for me if you were here. Besides, I'm not ill now." Then he pointed out that the room next door was empty and he could stay there. I was at my wits' end when Ling Jishi came. I thought they didn't know each other, but Ling Jishi grasped Wei's hand and said they'd met a couple of times at the hospital. Wei was very cold and ignored him. "This is my younger brother," I said to Ling Jishi with a smile. "He's only a boy and doesn't know how to behave in public. You must come more often and get to know him." Wei really did turn into a miserable-looking little boy who stood up and went. I felt very upset because there was someone else present, but I had to hide it. I felt a little guilty towards Ling Jishi, but he wasn't at all bothered. Instead he asked me, "But isn't his surname Bai? How did he turn into your brother?" I laughed. "Do you only let the Lings call you brother?" He laughed too.

These days young people like talking about "love" whenever they're together. Even though I may know a little about it I can't really explain it when it comes down to it. I think I know perfectly well about those little movements that men and women make

together. Perhaps it's just because I know about those movements that I'm so confused about "love", that I don't have the courage to advocate love, that I can't believe in myself as a pure and lovable girl, and that I'm suspicious of what the world calls "love" and of the love I've received.

When I was just beginning to understand something of life those who loved me gave me a very hard time by giving a lot of people who were not involved the chance to despise and humiliate me. In the end my dearest friends abandoned me. Later I was so intimidated by love that I had to leave my school. Although I grow up a little every day, I've always been aware of all those pointless complications, which is why I'm sometimes suspicious of "love" and even despise that kind of intimacy. Wei says he loves me, but why does he keep making me miserable? This evening, for example, he came here again and cried, and with great intensity at that. It made no difference when I said, "Tell me, what's the matter?" and, "Talk, Wei, I beg you." He just ignored me. This is something that has never happened before. I tried as hard as I could, but I couldn't guess what catastrophe had hit him. I didn't know what to guess. Later on he must have had enough crying because he shouted, "I hate him." "Who's been bullying you?" I asked. "Why all the shouting and yelling?" "I hate that tall man. The one you're so thick with." That's when I realized that he was in a sulk with me. I couldn't help smiling. Is this tiresome jealousy, this selfish possessiveness, love? I smiled, and my smiles were of course no consolation for that ma and his wild ambitions. My contempt made him lose all control of his temper. At the sight of his blazing eye I imagined he was going to bite and thought, "Com beret" But he just bowed his head, started crying again and lurched out, wiping his eyes.

This performance might, I suppose, be regarded as an expression of passionate and frank love, but the completely thoughtless way in which he put it on in front of me was of course bound to end in failure. It's not that I want people to be hypocritical and put on a show over love -it's just that I feel it's completely pointless to try to melt my heart by behaving like a little body. Perhaps I was born with this hard heart. If so, I deserve the trouble and grief that all my ways of upsetting people have brought me.

After Wei had gone I naturally thought over my own feelings, and remembered in every detail the kindness, generosity, honesty and tenderness of someone else's manner. That alone was so marvellous that I was drunk on its heady sweetness and warmth. I wrote a few words on a card straight away and sent a porter round to Dormitory No. 4 with it at once.

9 March

When I saw Ling Jishi sitting so relaxed and casual in my room I couldn't help feeling sorry for. Wei and praying that other women wouldn't be like me, neglecting and despising his admirable sincerity and falling into a vast misery from which I'll never be able to extricate myself. I hope even more strongly that a sincere and pure young woman will accept all of Wei's love and fill the emptiness he now feels.

13 March

I haven't written anything for several days. I don't know whether this is because I've been in such low spirits or because I can't find the so-called mood in which to write. All I know is that I've wanted to cry more than ever since yesterday. When people see me crying they think that it's because I'm homesick or worried about my illness. And when they see me smiling they think it's because I'm happy and enjoying the glow of returning health. Friends are all like that. Who can I tell about my infatuation that's not worth crying over but I haven't the strength to laugh about? Because I've seen the misery that the human passions and longings I won't give up have brought me, not even I am prepared to sympathise any longer with the grief that such blindness causes. Even less am I willing to take up my brush to write in detail about my self-blame and self-hatred.

Yes, I do seem to be having another moan. But this is just something hidden in my heart that I'm saying over and over to myself, which doesn't matter much. I've never had the courage to let people see my frowns and hear my sighs, even though I've long been groundlessly labeled "conceited", "eccentric" and the like. In fact I certainly don't want to moan, only to cry. If only there were someone who'd let me weep on his chest and tell him that I've ruined myself. But who can understand me, embrace me and comfort me? So all I can do is drown the words "I've ruined myself" in laughter.

Whatever am I trying to do? I can't say. Of course, I've never admitted to myself for a single moment that I'm in love with that tall man, but I can't put my finger on why he's in my every thought. His tall body, his tender pink face, his soft lips, and his charming eyes could allure a lot of women who were vulnerable to beauty, and his languid manner could bowl over any who were still capable of love. But why should I fall for a hundred-per-cent overseas Chinese just because of those meaningless charms? Really, I've found out from our latest conversations how pathetic his ideas are and what he wants: money, a young wife who would know how to entertain his business friends in the drawing room, and several fat, fair-skinned and very well-dressed sons. What's his idea of love? Spending his money in the whorehouse to buy a moment's physical pleasure, or sitting on a well-upholstered settee with his arms round a scented body, smoking a cigarette and joking with his friends, his left leg folded on his right knee. If he wasn't feeling very cheerful he'd forget about it and go back home to his wife. His passions are debates; tennis tournaments; going to study at Harvard; becoming a diplomat, an ambassador or a minister; following in his father's professional footsteps; going into the rubber business; becoming a capitalist. ... What ambitions! Apart from his resentment that his father does not give him enough money, nothing can stop him from sleeping soundly at night. If he has any other complaints, it is only that as there are so few good-looking women in Beijing he sometimes gets fed up with going to theatres, cinemas and parks. What can I say? I realized what a mean and low soul there is in that noble and beautiful form I adore. And I've accepted so much affection from him for no good reason at all. Of course, this affection isn't worth half of what's left over from what he squanders in the brothels. When I think of how he kisses me on my hair I want to cry from shame. Aren't I just offering myself to him to trifle with as if I were one of the sisters who sell themselves? But this only makes me feel more guilty and wretched. If only, if only I'd been prepared to give him a glare that

showed I was really turning him down I believe he'd never have been so bold, and I also believe that the reason why is because he's never been burned by the fires of love. I can't find the words to curse myself with.

14 March

Is this love? Perhaps only love can have such magic power. Why else should someone's thinking be so transformed and incalculable? When I went to sleep I despised that pretty boy, but the moment I woke up and opened my eyes I was thinking of that philistine and wondering if he'd be coming today, and when. Early in the morning? This afternoon? In the evening? Then I jumped out of bed, washed my face in a great hurry, made the bed, picked up the big book that was dropped on the floor last night and kept rubbing its edges. It's a volume of speeches by President Wilson that Ling Jishi forgot and left here last night.

14 March, evening

I have such a beautiful dream that Ling Jishi gave me. But he's also ruined it. It's only because of him that I can drink the pure wine of youth to the full, and spend the morning in the smile of love. But it's also because of him that I've come to understand this thing called "life", been disappointed, wanted to die, and so detested my own willingness to fall that the punishment I've brought on myself has seemed the lightest possible. Truly, sometimes I've even wondered if I'd have the strength to kill someone to preserve what I love.

I've thought it over. I reckon that in order to preserve my beautiful dreams and to prevent, my life-force ebbing away day by day the best thing would be to go to the Western Hills at once. But Yufang tells me that the friend of hers who lives in the Western Hills she's asked to find me a house there hasn't answered her letter yet. There's no way I can make enquiries myself or hurry things along. But I've made my mind up. I've decided to let that tall swine have a taste of me being disobliging. I'm going to be heartlessly arrogant and insulting.

17 March

After storming off in such a bad temper the other night Wei came back all meek and mild today to make his peace with me. I couldn't help laughing, but I also realized how lovable he is. A woman who wants a faithful husband for the rest of her life couldn't possibly find a more reliable one than Wei. "Are you still angry with me, Wei?" I asked him with a smile. "No, sister, I'd, never dare," he replied, all embarrassed. "You understand me. My only thought is the hope you won't ditch me. All I want is for things to go well for you. If you're happy that's enough for me." So sincere, so moving. What a comparison with that fair-skinned face and red lips. But later on I said, "Wei, you're fine. One day everything will come out right for you." He gave a bitter smile. "Never. But I wish you were right." What did he mean? He was making things hard for me again. I longed to be able to kneel down in front of h'm and beg him to love me as a friend or younger brother would. For purely selfish reasons I want fewer complications and more happiness. Wei loves me and can say all those nice things,

but there are two things he forgets: first, he should damp down his passion; and second, he should conceal his love. I feel unbearably apologetic about being unable to do anything for that honest man.

18 March

I've asked Xia too to look for a house for me in the Western Hills.

19 March

Ling Jishi hasn't been here for several days. Of course, I don't know how to dress, I'm useless at social behavior, I'm no good at household management, I've got T.B. and I'm broke, so what would he want to come here for? I didn't want him to come, but when he stayed away it made me feel more miserable than ever and was even more proof of his earlier frivolity. It can't be because he's as well-behaved as Wei. When he got my note - "I'm ill, so please don't come and disturb me" - could he have believed I meant it and not come because he didn't want to disobey me? So now I want to see him again to find out just how that monster sees me.

20 March

I went to see Yunlin three times today, but didn't meet the man I wanted to meet. Yunlin seemed a bit puzzled and asked me if I'd seen Ling Jishi during the last few days. All I could do was come back in misery. I really am very anxious,; and I can't kid myself that I haven't been thinking of him these last few days.

Yufang and Yunlin came at seven this evening to ask me to the Third Campus to listen to an English debate. Ling Jishi was. the captain of one of the teams. The moment I heard this news my heart began to pound. I had to use my illness as the excuse for turning down this well-meant invitation. I'm hopelessly weak. I didn't have the courage to undergo an emotional upheaval. I was still hoping I'd be able to avoid seeing him. But as they left I asked them to give Ling Jishi my regards and tell him I'd asked after him. What a stupid thing to do!

21 March

I'd just drunk my egg and milk when there was a familiar knock at the door and a tall shadow could be seen through the paper window. All I wanted to do was to leap up and open the door. I don't know what emotion it was that helped me to control myself and keep my head down.

"Are you out of bed yet, Sophie?" The voice was so tender that I could have burst into tears.

Was it to know that I was already in my chair or to know that I didn't have it in me to lose my temper and reject him that he pushed the door quietly open and came in? I didn't dare raise my damp eyelids. "Are you any better? Have you just got up?"

I said not a word in reply.

"You're very angry with me. You're sick of me, Sophie. I'd better go."

That would have been best for me, but I jerked my head up and gave him a look that stopped his hand from opening the door.

Who says he's not a bad lot? He understood me and dared to hold both my hands tight

"Sophie, " he said, "you've treated me badly. I've not dared come in when I pass your door every day.

I wouldn't have dared come today if Yunlin hadn't told me you wouldn't be angry with me. Are you tired of me, Sophie?"

Anyone could have realized that if he'd dared embrace and kiss me wildly I'd have laid my head on his 'wrist and wept, "I love you, I love you." But he was cold, so cold that he made me start hating him again. Then I thought in my heart, "Come hete, embrace me, I want to kiss your face." Of course, he was still holding my hands and gazing fixedly at my face. But when I looked hard at every expression of his feelings I could find no sign of what I wanted him to give me. Why does he only understand what's useless and contemptible about me? Why can't he see his place in my heart? I wished I could kick him out, but I was in the grip of another emotion. I shook my head to show him that I was not cross with him for coming.

Then I meekly accepted all kinds of shallow marks of affection from him, listened to him talking with such relish about his trivial pleasures and his view that earning and spending money was the meaning of life, and let him give me a lot of hints about how women should behave. This made me despise him, curse him under my breath, jeer at him, and secretly hit my heart hard with my fist. But when he strode out of my room I felt so wretched that I wanted to cry. Because I controlled my raging desires I didn't ask him to stay a little longer.

He went, alas.

21 March, night

What a life I was living this time last year. I used to stay in bed pretending to be ill and refusing to get up to make Yun care for me and do just what I wanted. To make her caress me I exploited the desperate and unconsolable tears that flowed when I laid my head on the table, thinking of trivial upsets and sobbing aloud. Sometimes I'd be feeling rather sad after a whole day of silent thought, and this pale melancholy would make me more eager than ever to stir up that sort of emotion. It was almost as if I could taste a little . sweetness that *way*. Now I can't even bear to think of listening to Yun lying on the grass in the French park at night and singing *The Peony Pavilion*. If she hadn't been tricked by God into loving that pasty-faced man she'd never have died so early and of course I'd never have drifted to Beijing by myself to struggle against disease without relatives or love. Although I've got several friends and they're very sorry for me, can my relationship with them be set on the scales against the love between me and Yun? When I think of Yun I really ought to let go and weep aloud the way I used to when I was acting the spoiled child for her. But this last year I've learnt too much. Although I often want to cry I choke it back because I'm afraid that people would dislike it if they knew about it. I've even less idea why all I can do at the moment is feel anxious. I can't find the little bit of calm I want in which to consider the good and bad effects of what I do and think on my health, my reputation and my future. All day

my disordered brain thinks about what I don't want it to think about. It's precisely what I want to avoid that makes me more and more indescribably upset and miserable. But now I have nothing else to hope for. I can only say, "Death would serve me right." Could I find any sympathy or consolation? But then I just seem to be begging for pity.

Yufang and Yunlin came here after supper, and at 9 I still wouldn't let them go. I knew that Yufang made herself sit down again so as not to hurt my feelings, but Yunlin insisted on going back by himself on the excuse that he had to prepare for classes tomorrow. I hinted at the dilemma I've been in recently to Yufang, longing for her to be able to understand, to take the initiative, change my life and do what I'm not up to doing. But she took what I said the wrong way and faithfully warned me, "Sophie, you're not being fair to him. Of course, you don't do it deliberately, but you ought to be more careful about the way you look at people. You must realize that Ling Jishi and his friends aren't like the boys who used to go out with us in Shanghai. They see very little of women and can't resist a spot of kindness. You mustn't cause him despair and pain in the future. I realize you couldn't possibly love him." Is this my fault too? If I'd not talked freely to her to ask her help would she have said these things that made me even more angry and upset? I swallowed my temper and smiled. "Don't make me sound too awful, Yufang," I said.

When she offered to spend the night here I sent her home.

When brilliant women are feeling a bit miserable they can write lots of classical or modern poems about their "grief and emotion" or the "sorrows of the heart". But I'm useless. I'm in this poetic situation but I can't make anything of it. I can't even use tears as an alternative to poetry to express my emotional turmoil. For this reason alone I ought to drop everything and, live for all I'm worth if I'm not to fall behind others. At the very least I ought to, be able to use a pen or a gun for my own amusement and the admiration of a crowd of shallow eyes. Really, I've dropped myself into misery that's worse than death, and all just for that man's soft hair and red lips.

I dreamt of a man with the manner of a mediaeval European knight. Anyone who's seen Ling Jishi would realize how appropriate the comparison is. He combines it with the special gentleness of the East. God generously gave him everything else that's good, but why did he leave out all intelligence? He doesn't understand what real love is, he really doesn't, even though he already has a wife (Yufang told me that tonight), even though he once cycled after a woman in a rickshaw in Singapore and loved her for a little while after, even though he used to spend the night in the Hanjiatan brothels. But has he ever been loved by a woman? Has he ever loved a woman? I'm sure he hasn't.

A strange idea has been burning in my head again. I've decided to educate that student. The universe isn't as simple as he imagines it to be.

22 March

My mind's in turmoil, but I've forced myself to write this diary. I started it because Yun kept on asking me to in letters, over and over again. Although Yun has been dead for a long time now I couldn't bear to give up writing it. I suppose it

must be that because of the very serious advice she gave me when she was alive. I want to go on writing it for ever in her memory. So no matter how little I feel like writing I force myself to scribble half a page or so. I was already in bed, but the sight of Yun's picture on the wall was more than I could bear. I dragged myself out of bed and started writing this to spare myself the agony of yearning for her. Of course, the only person I'd ever have shown this diary to was Yun. First, because I only record all these trivial details as Yun wanted to know about my life, and second because I don't want people to show in their faces that they know too much when they look at me - that would be even more wounding. It seems that I really feel guilty and miserable because of the morality that other people respect. So I've long kept this black notebook at the bottom of the mattress under my pillow.

Today, alas, I forgot my old intention. I did so because I had to, unconsidered though my action may have appeared. Recently Wei has been misunderstanding me completely. This often makes him feel very uneasy, which then affects me. I'm sure that everything I do shows what my attitude is. Why can't he realize what I'm trying to say to him? But I couldn't tell him directly to stop him loving me. I often think that if it had been anyone else but Wei I'd have known the best way to deal with him. But Wei would have to be so good a man= I can't bring myself to do it. So there was nothing for it but to show him my diary. I let him see that there's no hope for him in my heart and that I'm a cold and fickle woman not worth loving. If Wei understood me he would of course become the only friend I could pour out my heart to. I'd hug him and kiss him warmly, and hope that he'd find the most lovable and beautiful woman in the world. Wei read the diary through then read it again. He cried, but he was extraordinarily calm. I was astonished.

"Do you understand me?" I asked.

He nodded.

"Do you believe me now?" "About what?"

Only then did I realize what his nod meant. Anyone who can really understand me will understand this diary that can express only a ten-thousandth part of me, this diary that only causes me the misery of seeing how limited it is. Besides, it's depressing enough in itself to try to get others to understand me and to show someone a diary that uses all sorts of devices to explain things over and over again. On top of that Wei was worried afterwards that I'd think he hadn't understood me.

"You love him," he kept saying, "you love him. I'm not good enough for you."

I'd have torn the diary up in a fury. I couldn't deny that I'd sullied it. All I could say to Wei was, "I want to go to bed. Come back tomorrow."

Never hope for anything from others. Isn't this appalling? If my dear Yun were still alive to read my diary I know she'd have embraced me, wept and said, "Sophie, my Sophie, why can't I be a bit greater so as to spare my Sophie all this grief?" But Yun is dead. If only I could weep bitterly with this diary in my hands.

23 March

"Sophie," Ling Jishi said to me, "you really are a strange girl." I can understand that gasp of completely incomprehending admiration. Why he finds me strange is because he can see my tattered gloves, the chest of drawers in which no perfume is to be found,

the new quilted dress torn to shreds for no good reason at all, the old toys I've kept. Any other reason? He's heard some strange laughs from me. There's no way in which he could appreciate anything else, as I've never said anything to him that really comes from me. For example, I smile when he says, "From now on I'm going to try hard to earn some money." When he told me about arranging to meet his friends to chase women students in the park - "It's real fun, Sophie" - I smiled too. Of course, what he means by strange is something he's not used to in his ordinary life. It depresses me that there's no way I can make him understand and respect me. My only wish now is to go to the Western Hills. When I think of all the wild illusions I used to have I find them ridiculous.

24 March

When he's alone with me and I gaze at that face and hear that voice like music my heart has to endure emotional torture. Why don't I fling myself at him to kiss his lips, his brow and all the rest of him? Really, some- times I'm on the point of saying, "My king! Let me kiss you!" The reason - no, not reason, because I've never - had any sense of reason, but some other feeling of selfrespect - keeps me under control and holds the words back. No matter how dreadful his ideas are, there's no doubt that he drives my emotions wild. So why don't I admit I'm in love with him? I'm certain that if he were to hold me in a close embrace and let me kiss him all over then throw me into the sea or a fire I'd gladly shut

my eyes to greet the death that would preserve my love for ever. I have fallen in love with him: it'll be enough for me if he gives me a good death.

24 March, late at night

I've made my mind up. To save myself from being dragged down by a sexual obsession I'm going to Xia's tomorrow morning. I'll avoid the agony of seeing Ling Jishi. This agony has been tormenting me for so long.

26 March

I left here because of one entanglement but then another one forced me to rush straight back. The day after I got to Xia's Mengru turned up too. Although she said she'd come to see someone else it hurt me very much. She went on and on that night about some new theory of the emotions she'd just picked up, indirectly getting at me. I kept quiet to deny her any further satisfaction. I lay wide awake all night in Xia's bed till dawn then came straight back here, still having to contain my fury.

Yufang told me that she's found a house in the Western Hills and another companion for me. She's an invalid too, and a good friend of Yufang's. I ought to be very happy at the news, but no sooner had the frown begun to disappear from my forehead when a kind of silent desolation fell on it again. Although I left home as a child and have been around in the world since then, I've always had friends or relations with me.

Going to the Western Hills will only take me a few miles from town, but it'll be the first time in all my twenty years I've ever gone, to a strange place by myself. If I quietly die in those hills who'll discover my body? Can I be sure I won't die there? Perhaps some people would think me ridiculous for worrying over such trivialities but they really have made me cry. When I asked Yufang if she'd miss me she laughed at me for asking so childish a question. She said that it was so near she wouldn't be losing me. I could only wipe away my tears with embarrassment when she promised to visit me in the hills every week.

I went to Wei's in the afternoon. He too promised to visit me in the hills every week on days Yufang doesn't go.

By the time I came back it was late. I cried again packing my things all by myself and thinking how I'd be leaving all my friends in Beijing. When I realized that none of them had ever cried to me I dried my tears. Once again I've decided to leave this ancient city alone and by myself.

In my loneliness I thought of Ling Jishi again. In fact it's not true to say of Ling Jishi that I've thought of him or thought of him again. I'm obsessed with him all day long. What I should say is that I'm going to talk about my Ling Jishi again. The separation I've been deliberately arranging these last few days will be an incalculable loss for me. I wanted to let him go, but I've only been clinging to him more tightly than ever. As I can't pluck him right out of my heart why do I keep avoiding seeing him face to face? I'm really upset. I can't leave him like this and go to the Western Hills feeling so lonely.

27 March

Early this morning Yufang went to the Western Hills to fix up my house for me. She said I can go tomorrow. How can I find the non-existent words to express my gratitude for her great kindness? I'd have preferred to spend another day in town, but I could hardly say so.

Ling Jishi only came when I was feeling very anxious.

I grasped both his hands tightly.

"Sophie," he said, "I haven't seen you for days."

I wished I could have wept then with my arms around him, but all I could do was smile again and keep the tears back. Hearing that I'm going to the Western Hills tomorrow, he showed a kind of astonishment and sighed, which was a big consolation for me, so my smile became a real one. When he saw my smile he clutched my hands so tight that they hurt.

"You're smiling, you're smiling," he said. He seemed to be angry. The pain was more delicious than anything I've known before. It was as if something were boring into my heart. Just when I wanted to fall into his arms, Wei arrived.

Wei knew I was angry with him for coming, but he just wouldn't leave. I gave Ling Jishi a look and said, "Have you got a class now?" Then I saw Ling Jishi out. He asked me when I was leaving tomorrow and I told him. When I asked him if he'd come back he said he'd do so very soon. I gazed at him with delight, forgetting how contemptible his character is and how he only looks beautiful. Just then he was a lover out of a romance in my eyes. Yes, Sophie has a lover !

27 March, late

It's been five whole hours since I saw Wei off. How can I find the right words to describe these five hours? I've been as restless in this little room as an ant in a hot pan, sitting down, standing up again, and rushing to the door to peep outside, but - he's definitely not coming, he's definitely not coming. I wanted to cry again at the dreariness of my departure. Is there nobody in all Beijing who will cry with me? Yes, I ought to leave this cruel city, so why am I so attached to this plank bed, this greasy desk, this three-legged chair? Yes, I'm going tomorrow morning, and my Beijing friends won't have to be fed up with Sophie any longer. For the sake of her friends' happiness and comfort Sophie ought to die in the Western Hills. But they are all prepared to let Sophie go off to the hills lonely and by herself without a touch of warmth. Presumably Sophie won't die, and people won't suffer any loss or be emotionally disturbed.... No, I don't want to think any more. No. Why should I want to? If Sophie weren't so greedy to wallow in emotions wouldn't she be satisfied with those sympathetic looks?

As for friends, I'll say nothing. I know that Sophie will never be satisfied with human friendship. But where else can I find satisfaction? Ling Jishi promised me he'd come, but it's already 9. Even if he did come would it make me happy? Could he give me what I need?

Now I realize that he's not coming I ought to hate myself. Long, long ago I used to know the right attitude towards different kinds of men, but I've turned stupid now. Why did I give him that imploring look when I asked him if he'd be coming back? I shouldn't be so open with so handsome a man and make myself look cheap. But I love him. Why should I use tricks?

Can't I express my love to him directly? It seems to me that there's no reason why I shouldn't be allowed to give him a hundred kisses provided nobody else is harmed.

By promising to come and breaking his word he's shown that he's only trifling with me. My friend, you won't lose anything by showing Sophie some goodwill when she's leaving.

Tonight I've gone completely crazy. At a time like this language and words seem so useless. My heart feels as if it's being gnawed by hordes of mice, or as if a brazier were burning inside it. If only I could smash everything or rush wildly out into the night. I can't control the surges of wild emotion; and I lie on this bed of nails of passion, which drive themselves 'into me whichever way I turn. Then I seem to be in a cauldron of oil listening to it bubbling and boiling as my whole body is scalded. Why don't I run out? I'm waiting for a vague and meaningless hope to be realized. Oh. . . . At the thought of those red lips I've gone crazy again. If this hope were possible - I couldn't help laughing by myself. I asked myself over and over again, "Do you love him?" And then I laughed even more. Sophie couldn't be so stupid as to love that overseas Chinese that much. Surely I can't be forbidden to do something that does nobody else a scrap of harm just because I won't admit I love him.

If he's really not coming tonight how can I bring myself to go off to the Western Hills as if I didn't give a damn?

Oh dear! It's 9:30.
9:40.

28 March, 3 a.m.

All her life Sophie has been too passionate and too sincere about wanting people to understand her and share her feelings. That's why she's been submerged in bitter disappointment for so long. But who else, apart from her, can know the weight of her tears?

This diary is less a record of Sophie's life than simply every one of those tears. Only they seem true to her. But this diary is now coming to an end because Sophie no longer needs to give vent to her resentment and find consolation through tears. This is because I feel that everything is meaningless, and that tears are the profoundest expression of this meaninglessness. But on the last page of this diary Sophie should happily celebrate finding satisfaction in the depths of her despair, satisfaction that ought to kill her with happiness. Yet all I find in this satisfaction is a sense of victory, a victory in which I find desolation and an even deeper sense of how pathetic and ridiculous I am. So the "beauty" I've been dreaming about so obsessively for months - that tall man's elegance - has now faded far away.

How can I explain the psychology of a woman who's crazy about a man's looks? Of course I could never love him, and the reason is easily explained. Such a low and ugly soul lurks behind his beauty. But I admire him, long for him, and without him I'll lose everything that ensures my life's meaning. I always thought that if one day our lips were to join close, close together I'd cheerfully let my body go to pieces with the wild joy of my heart. Indeed, I'd have sacrificed everything just for a caress from that knight of a man and the casual touch of his fingertips anywhere on my body.

I ought to be going wild because I've had all the amazing dreamlike things in my fantasies happen to me without any difficulty at all. But did it all give me the soul-intoxicating bliss I'd imagined? No.

When he, Ling Jishi, came at ten last night he started trying to tell me in his clumsy way how he longed for me. My heart was touched many times. But when I saw his eyes burning with sexual desire I was frightened. The oaths he swore, that were even uglier than the low mentality from which they sprang, revived my self-respect. I'm sure that if he'd given all that superficial, nauseating -sweet talk to other women they'd have found it very delightful and he'd have won a so-called loving heart. But when he spoke to me the force of all those words only pushed me even further away from him. Poor man! Although God gave you so beautiful a body at the same time he tricked you by crowning your life with so totally illmatched a soul. Do you imagine that what I long for is "family" and "money"? That I'd be proud of social position? "What a pathetic man you look to me!" Just when I was wishing I could weep for his misfortune he was still staring at my face with that terrifying, burning lust. If all he'd wanted had been physical satisfaction his beauty would have overwhelmed my heart, but he said in that weepy voice, "Believe me, Sophie, I'll never let you down." Pathetic man. He didn't realise with what contempt the woman in front of him pitied him for that kind of performance and for that sort of remark. I couldn't help laughing aloud. To say that he knew what love is and could love me is almost a

joke. Weren't his two flashing eyes, burning with lust, proclaiming that he knew about nothing except despicable and shallow needs?

"Hey, be sensible and clear off. Hanjiatan's the place for you to look for your pleasures." As I'd seen through him that's what I should have said, and sent that lowest of human beings packing. But although I was secretly mocking him I forgot about everything when he boldly and rapidly put his arms round me. I temporarily lost my self-respect and pride, completely bewitched by the charm that's the only thing he has. In my heart all I could think was, "Tighter. Longer. I'm leaving tomorrow." If I'd had any self control then I'd have thought of the other things besides his beauty and thrown him outside like a stone.

Oh dear! What kind of words or emotions should I repent with? You, Ling Jishi, a man as contemptible as you, kissed me. And meekly and quietly I let you. But when that warm, moist soft thing was on my face what was my heart getting? I would never swoon like some women in the arms of their lovers. I was looking at him, *my eyes* wide open, thinking, "I've won! I've won!" It was because when he kissed me I knew the taste of what it was that bewitched me, and at the same time I despised myself. That's why I -suddenly felt miserable, pushed him away and started crying.

Perhaps he paid no attention to my tears and thought that his lips had given me such warmth, softness and tenderness that my heart was too intoxicated to know what it was doing. That was why he sat down beside me again and went on saying a lot of nauseating things that are supposed to be expressions of love.

"Why do you have to expose all your appalling side?" I really began to feel sorry for him again.

"Don't you get any wild ideas," I said. "I might be dead tomorrow."

Goodness only knows what impact my words had on him. He kissed me again but I evaded him, and his lips landed on my hand.

My mind was made up. My mind was clear enough for me to insist that he went. He looked rather disgruntled and wouldn't leave me alone. "Why are you being so stubborn?" I wondered. He didn't go till 12:30 a.m.

When he'd left I thought about what had just happened. I wanted to hit my heart hard, with all my strength. Why did I let a man I despise so much kiss me? I don't love him and I was jeering at him, but why did I let him embrace me? Really it was just because he looks like a knight that I feel so low.

In short, I've ruined myself. How in heaven's name am I going to avenge and make up for all my losses when I'm my own enemy?

Fortunately my life is mine alone in all the universe to play with. I've already wasted enough of it. It doesn't seem' to be a matter of any importance that this experience has thrown me into the very depths of grief.

But I refuse to stay in Beijing, let alone go to the Western Hills. I've decided to take the train south to waste what's left of my life where nobody knows me, and as a result my wounded heart has perked up. I'm laughing wildly with self-pity.

"Quietly go on living, and quietly die. I'm sorry for you, Sophie."
