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I heard this story when I was a student in Xi'an City. I added to it, using pieces of other stories I have heard, and my imagination.

A gentle breeze blew across everyone's face, creating a feeling of pleasure. Sunshine brought the earth to life in the same way a clanging bell jars sleepers awake. Birds flitted in a cloudless blue sky announcing spring's immanent arrival.

It was the second weekend after the start of semester. Sunshine beamed through our dorm room window. I took deep breaths of cool air and felt excellent. Everything seemed new and fresh. I went outside to review some materials for class. I reached the school sports ground and found many students reading aloud and studying their lessons, filling the playground with noise. I sat on a step and began reading.

A few minutes later, a young man whom I had seen before walked within about ten meters of me. I realized that he was someone I had first met when the term began. I greeted him and we soon began chatting about our winter holidays. He told me this story about a couple.

CHOS DBYANGS AND MGU RU

When Chos dbyangs first came to Xi'an to begin her studies, she was gentle and kind with a mind as pure as snow. Everyone liked her. She studied hard during the first semester, listening carefully, and doing what the teachers said. She spent most of her time studying and practiced her Chinese with her Chinese classmates when she had free time. She never wasted time. Her school life was fulfilling and many students envied her. In fact, so many compliments bounced around her that she became somewhat self-intoxicated.

Feeling bored one Saturday morning, she considered playing shuttlecock or chatting with someone. Undecided, she instinctively

wandered to an internet bar, went inside, logged into her QQ account, noticed a request from someone to join her QQ list, accepted, and started chatting.

"Who are you? Why do you want to be my friend?" Chos dbyangs asked.

"My name is Mgu ru. I'm not sure. Maybe it's our fate," was the reply.

They each introduced themselves and soon realized that they had grown up in the same general area and were the same age. They thus had much to discuss.

The man was from an agro-pastoralist community that had ample cropland and a large number of sheep. His family was poor, however. Finally, he typed, "Please give me your phone number. I have a special feeling about you. I really feel very good when chatting with you."

Chos dbyangs thought about it for a bit, typed her phone number, said goodbye, and happily returned to her dorm room where she shared her conversation with her roommates.

Some days later, Mgu ru phoned her. Gradually their relationship became more intimate. In time, they shared the feeling lovers share. Time seemed to flow like a river that never pauses when they chatted, and Chos dbyangs experienced emotions she had never felt before. As the days passed, their love deepened. They chatted every night, and if there was a day when Mgu ru didn't phone, Chos dbyangs felt that day was empty and meaningless.

A CONSTRUCTION JOB

After three months, Chos dbyangs decided to find a construction job for Mgu ru and ask him to come to Xi'an so they could live together. She searched the internet and found what seemed to be a suitable job, called Mgu ru, and asked him to come.

Mgu ru then announced to his parents that he had found a job in Xi'an with the help of a friend. He said he could earn much money in a year. He lied, "My friend bought a car from his income last year. I must go there to make money to buy a car for our family. Science and

technology are now so highly developed that we cannot still ride horses and continue to live in such a poor house. Trust me! The God of Wealth has taken me into his embrace."

His family listened carefully, felt what he said was reasonable, and agreed that he could travel to Xi'an.

Mgu ru then rushed to the provincial capital, bought the cheapest train ticket available, and was soon on his way to Xi'an.

MEETING

Chos dbyangs was overjoyed when she learned Mgu ru would soon arrive in Xi'an. Meanwhile Mgu ru was in a dream-like state on the train. He seemed to be the happiest man in the world and everything seemed beautiful. The proverb 'Shit had become gold in his eyes' was very apt. He even imagined he could hear the trees and flowers congratulating him from outside the train windows. He thought about reaching Xi'an thirteen hours later, Chos dbyangs would be waiting for him at the train station, they would walk away from the train station hand in hand...

The train arrived on time. He got off and began searching the unfamiliar faces, looking for a familiar QQ face. Finally, they saw each other. Chos dbyangs was wearing fashionable clothes and her permed hair made her even more attractive. Mgu ru was dressed in ordinary clothes. A single glance would tell you that he was a countryside man, yet his handsome features made him stand out.

They quickly drew near each other and embraced tightly. Mgu ru felt that he had found a fairy maiden and Chos dbyangs was equally satisfied. Hand in hand, they walked out from the train station while chatting about his trip. When they got close to Chos dbyangs's university, they decided to rent a room nearby to avoid their relationship being detected.

A few hours later, they had rented a room for 500 RMB a month, and moved in.

A few days passed and then Chos dbyangs took Mgu ru to the construction company that she had earlier contacted about employment. When they arrived, they met a man dressed in an

expensive suit working in a large, lavishly decorated office. The two lovers sat while Mgu ru began introducing himself. After he had said a few sentences in broken Chinese, the boss realized Mgu ru was a minority, and that he had no previous construction work experience. The boss then interrupted him, made an excuse, and said goodbye.

They disappointedly returned to their small room. Chos dbyangs felt very bad that the company had refused to hire him. She felt responsible, because she had promised Mgu ru a high-paying job before he came to Xi'an.

They had a simple, subdued supper of flat-noodle soup. Mgu ru was sad and silent. Chos dbyangs then went to a nearby store and bought ten bottles of beer, which she brought back to their room.

Mgu ru looked at Chos dbyangs and said, "I'm useless. I can't even do something as simple as get a lowly construction job."

Chos dbyangs responded by opening a bottle and drinking some cups of beer with Mgu ru. Chos dbyangs said, "Don't worry, my father puts 1,000 RMB on my bank card each month. That's enough for us to eat. Don't blame yourself, and don't blame fate. This is not your fault."

Mgu ru felt guilty and ashamed, and drank more beer.

Two hours passed.

They were drunk.

They embraced and kissed.

Chos dbyangs put one hand around Mgu ru's neck and ran her fingers through his hair with her other hand. They hugged more passionately and then kissed. Chos dbyangs moved over and sat on Mgu ru's lap...

PREGNANT

Two months passed and Chos dbyangs felt sure she was pregnant. She and Mgu ru went to a hospital where a doctor said, "You are a student and pregnant. You need 5,000 RMB for an abortion. Life has not been fair to you."

The high fee frightened Mgu ru and Chos dbyangs, who did not have 5,000 RMB. They then decided to stay in their room and

wait. Day by day, Chos dbyangs's belly got bigger and bigger. Finally, she could no longer attend class.

When the winter holiday approached, she phoned her parents and said, "I cannot join you for the New Year, I must stay in Xi'an and study Chinese."

Her parents reluctantly agreed, and missed her terribly.

Several mornings later, a baby entered this world and a more painful life began.

WRONG CHOICES

Mgu ru decided to take Chos dbyangs and the baby to his home, because they could not continue to live in Xi'an, depending only on Chos dbyangs's stipend. When they got near Mgu ru's home, his parents saw three people and almost fainted. Mgu ru had earned not a single RMB, and had also brought two people home.

After Mgu ru described everything that happened, his father beat him mercilessly with a stick. Chos dbyangs stood, silently watching.

Mgu ru's father thought for many sleepless nights and then announced one morning, "I will go to Chos dbyangs's home and inform them of what has happened. I hope they will accept that Chos dbyangs has become Mgu ru's wife."

Everyone stared at him in disbelief.

Chos dbyangs pleaded, "Please don't. According to local custom, they will call all their relatives, come here in a group, and destroy this house. They might even kill Mgu ru. They will surely take all the livestock. Please leave this situation as it is."

Mgu ru's father hesitated and said, "You cannot deceive your parents. I will be responsible for whatever happens, even if it costs Mgu ru his life."

Chos dbyangs knelt and begged, "I can live without my own family, but this baby cannot live without a father. As long as we don't talk about this, no one will know. Don't create conflict between our families. Nothing good will come of it."

Mgu ru's father was touched and decided not to inform her

parents. Chos dbyangs stayed in the home. When her parents called on her mobile phone, she said that she was in school and doing very well. Her parents were very proud of having such a diligent daughter, and truly believed she was studying hard in Xi'an. Meanwhile, she lived in Mgu ru's home, leading the life of the wife of an agro-pastoralist and hardworking daughter-in-law. She spent the money her parents put in her bank account mostly on the baby, who was fretful, frequently ill, and often taken to local doctors.

Her school in Xi'an expelled her after she stopped attending classes.

Mgu ru was always busy on the grassland herding his family's livestock, or in the fields harvesting barley and doing other agricultural work.

All the locals pitied Chos dbyangs and the work hard she had to do for the family as a young wife, daughter-in-law, and mother – this had become her reality, a reality she had tried to escape by attending university.

GONE

Time passed. Chos dbyangs's parents phoned her and said, "You have now graduated. We are so proud of you!"

Chos dbyangs answered, "Dear parents! I now have my diploma and will soon be home to show you!"

Her parents were very pleased and eagerly awaited her visit. Chos dbyangs then paid 2,000 RMB to have a fake diploma printed and returned home. She wore a happy expression, guiltily showed the diploma to her parents, and said, "I've been accepted into a graduate degree program. I want to continue my study to further develop myself."

Her parents were glad to hear this, happily consented, and handed over what Chos dbyangs said the school fees were for the first year of graduate study. Chos dbyangs took the money, returned to Mgu ru's home, and resumed her life of hard labor.

Some months later, her parents phoned her. Chos dbyangs hung up without saying anything, agonizing over her wrong choices

and years of deception.

Chos dbyangs, Mgu ru, and their baby vanished one morning. Mgu ru had made the decision that they should leave because he was worried that Chos dbyangs's family would eventually learn of their deception and what he imagined the terrible consequences that would follow.

Today, no one, not even Chos dbyangs's parents, knows where they are.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Chos dbyangs ཚོས་དབྱངས།

Mgu ru མགུ་རུ།

Pad+ma dbang chen པདྨ་དབང་ཚེན།

Rdo rje རོ་རྗེ།

Xi'an གཞི་འདུ་གཤིབ།