

WAITING

Written by

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Based on the novel "Waiting," by Ha Jin

WGA REGISTRATION I262815

INT ARMY HOSPITAL BARRACKS - DAY

We come into the room slowly. It's barren, other than several cots, but only 4 or 5 beds are made. The inhabited areas are immaculate, everything is in its proper spot. A portrait of Chairman Mao is prominent. In fact, signs of austere communist life permeate the domicile.

We see one man. He is late 40's, yet looks younger. Meet Dr. Lin Kong. He wears glasses and the uniform of an officer. He stands next to his cot and pauses from packing a tattered, small suitcase to examine an envelope. He begins to pull out the letter, but then stops. He places the envelope neatly into the bag, closes it, and exits.

INT TRAIN - DAY

Lin sits on the crowded train, his suitcase on his lap.

EXT TRAIN - DAY

Lin disembarks the train and waits. Finally another train comes. He gets on it.

INT BUS - EVE

We see Lin seated like he was on the train.

EXT COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

The bus stops and Lin gets off. He waits respectfully until the bus moves on and he walks.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Lin walks on a simple dirt road through the small village. It is a series of small huts and houses. A few lots have animals that roam, some fenced in. There is no one about. He reaches his destination.

EXT LIN'S HOME - NIGHT

It is a four-room house with a thatched roof. Lin stops and pushes on the outer wall of the home as he does, he notices some books sitting on a stack of firewood. Lin finally enters.

INT LIN'S HOUSE NIGHT

There are a table and chairs as well as a kitchen area. Shuyu is waiting for him. She is small, withered, and barely fills her baggy clothes. She looks older than Lin. The contrast between them is stark.

SHUYU

Dinner is ready, please sit.

Lin nods. Shuyu brings and opens various containers of food: rice, dumplings, meat. It steams.

LIN

Where is Hua?

SHUYU

Hua sleeps. She has been studying all day for her exams.

LIN

(Beat)

Shuyu, can we talk about the divorce?

Shuyu sits at the table opposite Lin. She sews a jacket.

SHUYU

All right.

LIN

Can we go to town tomorrow?

SHUYU

(Not looking up)

All right.

(Beat)

Your meal will get cold, please eat.

LIN

You always say 'all right' but you change your mind afterward. Can you keep your word this time?

Shuyu sews silently.

Lin looks at his food, then back to his wife.

LIN (CONT'D)

Shuyu, you know I need a home in the army. It's hard to live by myself there. I'm no longer a young man.

Shuyu nods without looking up from her sewing.

LIN (CONT'D)

Will you say yes to the judge this time?

SHUYU

All right.

Lin watches Shuyu as if he literally can see the words she has spoken. Finally, he bites into his food.

We move up from the table and slowly around the room. It is sparse. There is a lamp with a cord whose shadow cuts a picture of a baby boy in a red bib riding a large carp. A mat covers a brick bed on top of which are some folded quilts and pillows. We hear frogs croaking. We move to the moths fluttering about near the light.

INT MEDICAL SCHOOL - NIGHT

We focus on a light and move to a 25-year-old Lin. He is deep into a text.

STUDENT (O.S.)

Lin Kong?

LIN

(Looking up)

Yes?

STUDENT

This came for you.

The student holds out a letter. Lin gets up and takes it. The student exits.

Lin opens the letter. There is a photograph of a young Shuyu inside. Lin considers the photo, then reads the letter.

LIN'S FATHER (V.O.)

Dear son. I regret to inform you that your mother has taken ill. She can no longer take care of our home properly and I must work most of the time.

Enclosed is a photograph the matchmaker has provided. Her name is Shuyu and is the daughter of a family recently moved to Goose Village.

(MORE)

LIN'S FATHER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

We have agreed to the match so that you can be married soon and Shuyu will take care of your mother and the house while you finish medical school. You will meet your bride when you come home for winter break. Father.

Lin looks at the photo.

It is black and white. Shuyu is young and even pretty.

INT LIN'S HOME - DAY

We see the photograph being lowered and as it is, we see Shuyu. She doesn't resemble the photo. She looks much older, her face is wrinkled and leathery.

Lin is clearly dismayed at the sight of his fiancée. He looks down at her feet.

CLOSE UP FEET: THEY ARE ONLY FOUR INCHES LONG.

Lin looks to his parents.

WE CLOSE IN ON THEM. PULL BACK OUT. SHUYU IS GONE.

LIN

You must get out of the engagement.

FATHER

How?

LIN

I don't know.

(Beat)

Prove that she is unsuitable.

FATHER

You wish the entire village to turn against us?

LIN

(Bowing his head)

No.

FATHER

Good looks don't feed a family.

MOTHER

A pretty face fades in a couple of years, my son.

(Beat)

It's personality that lasts. Shuyu will be a good help for you.

LIN

How can you tell?

MOTHER

A mother knows such things.

FATHER

Where can you find such a kind-hearted girl?

Lin is clearly frustrated.

MOTHER

Please Lin.

(Beat)

I'll die happy if I know you agree to marry her.

Lin looks at his mother. Tortured, he nods. Float back up to the light.

On the light down to the table. Older Lin finishes his meal as Shuyu sews.