



**THE COCK
CROWS
AT MIDNIGHT**



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*Photos by the Shanghai
Animation Film Studio*

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The Story

Before China's liberation in 1949 when the peasantry was ground down by the landlord class, there were countless incidents in which the peasants rose in heroic resistance. The story told here is about one such incident.

Young Pao and other land workers oppressed by the landlord Skinflint are stirred by their hatred to struggle against him. Educated and organized by an underground Communist, they unite in struggle and finally defeat the cruel landlord's plot against them. They then join the guerrillas and take up arms to fight all such class oppression.

The pictures in this book are stills from the marionette film of the same name produced by the Shanghai Animation Film Studio.





1. In 1931-45 when the Japanese imperialists occupied China's Northeast, the great masses of Chinese working people were made homeless and hungry by the Japanese invaders, traitors and landlords.



2. Worker Liu Ta-hung is an underground Communist who is assigned by his Party organization to return to his home village to help the people strike down the oppressors.



3. Chou Chun-fu, nicknamed Skinflint, is a landlord who exploits and robs his hired hands. It is to this landlord's house that Liu goes and gets a job.



4. Every year Skinflint takes on a lot of workers to cultivate his land. He wears them out with back-breaking labour, and after autumn harvest tricks them out of their wages.



5. Young Pao is the son of a poor peasant who was beaten to death by Skinflint. The boy, though only thirteen years old, is forced to work for his father's murderer to pay off the family debt.



6. After work, Liu Ta-hung tells the hired hands about the revolution. Though Pao is young, he realizes that Chairman Mao and the Communist Party are the liberators of the poor, while the aggressors and landlords are their enemies.



7. One day Skinflint orders Pao to carry a big bag of corn into the barn. It weighs more than Pao, and he staggers beneath his load.



8. After a few steps, Pao trips and falls. The bag bursts and the corn is spilt. The angry Skinflint rushes forward and swings his stick to beat the boy. Pao grabs the stick.



9. Skinflint tries to get the stick back, and there is a tussle. Pao suddenly lets go of the stick and the landlord is sent sprawling.



10. Pao is delighted, but knowing that Skinflint won't give up, he runs to Uncle Liu and the others. Liu hugs Pao and tells him not to be afraid.



11. Skinflint staggers to his feet, determined to beat Pao. But when he sees the others ready to defend the boy, he drops the stick and slinks away.



12. The workers hate the vicious landlord to the bone. Liu Ta-hung says, "The day will come when we'll settle accounts with you, Skinflint!"



13. Soon after the autumn harvest, Liu receives a secret message asking him to contact the underground liaison man Li, a blacksmith in another village. Sent on an errand by Skinflint, Liu manages to meet Li.



14. Li tells Liu that guerrillas from the mountains have captured Pailung-kou, that the Party has decided to expand the guerrilla forces, and that comrades in the countryside should prepare for action.



15. Skinflint is reckoning up his accounts; it will soon be time to pay the workers' wages. He wants to get rid of them but can't bear to think of paying them off.



16. He whispers to his wife, "I have an idea. I'll get them out to work in the fields at cockcrow tomorrow. Anyone who doesn't show up will lose every cent of his year's pay!"



17. That very midnight when the workers are all sound asleep, the cock in Skinflint's barnyard crows loud and shrill!



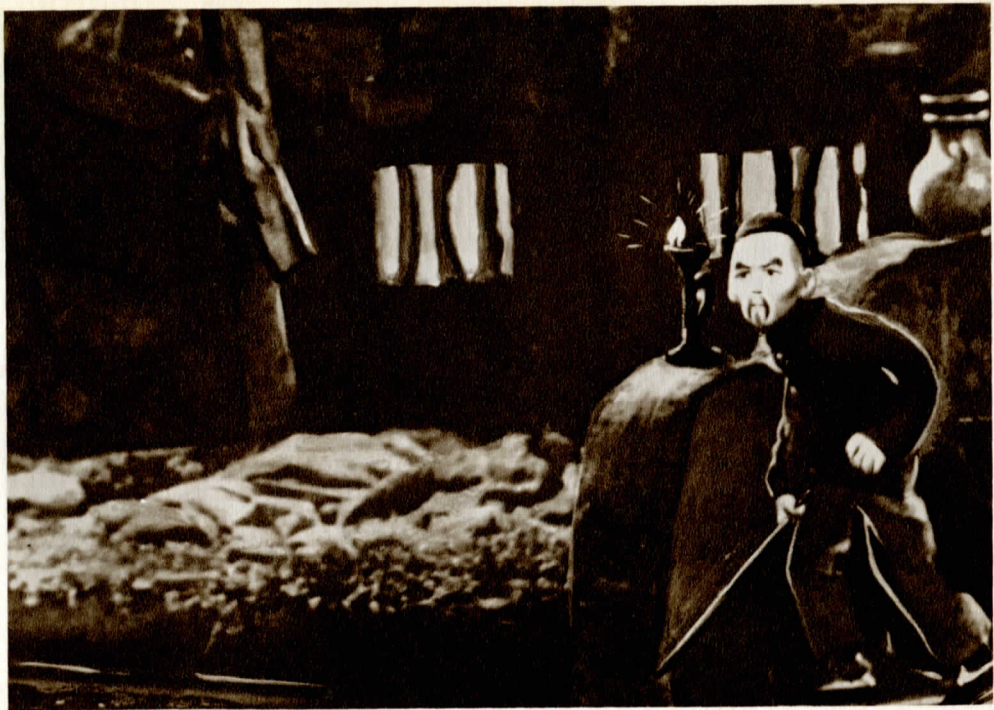
18. Skinflint rushes to the workers' shack shouting, "Aren't you up yet? Get out to the fields! Didn't you hear the cock crow? Get out, you lazy louts!"



19. The workers, tired after a long day's work, seem scarcely to have closed their eyes before they are roused. Old Ma curses, "Damn that cock! We've only just got to bed!"



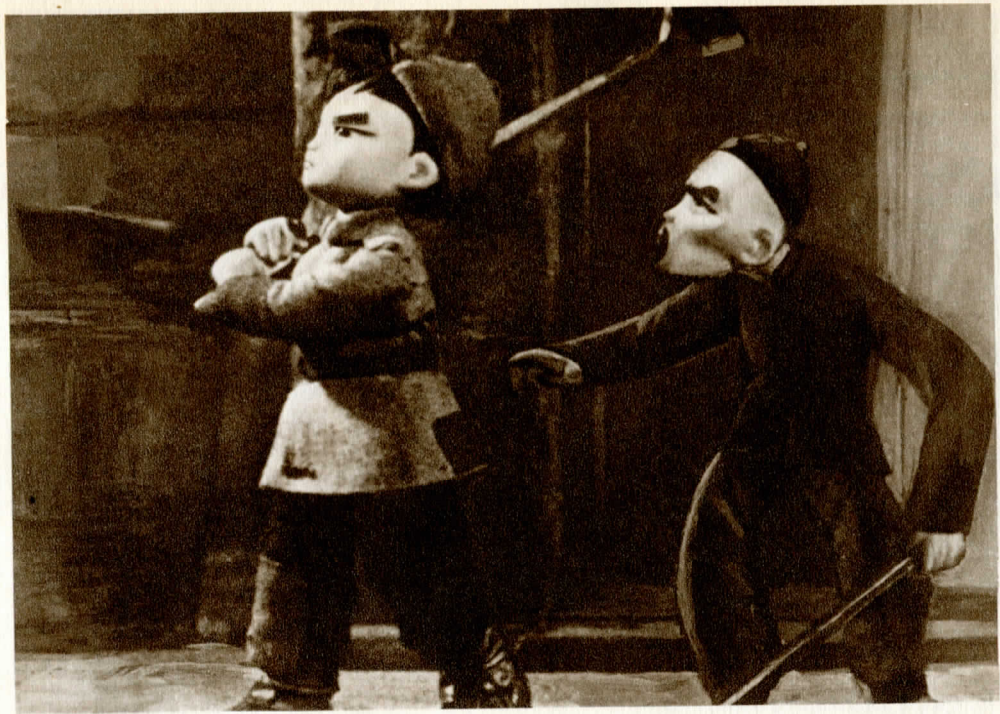
20. Pao, exhausted after the hard work, does not stir. The others think he needs the sleep, so Liu Ta-hung closes the door as if everyone is out.



21. But the sly and heartless landlord counts the workers: One is missing! He rushes into the hut, searches everywhere, beating the pallets and scattering the straw. But he fails to find anyone.



22. Puzzled and angry, he draws a sack aside. There lies Pao asleep on a pile of sorghum stalks! Skinflint raises his stick, but the boy is on his feet before the landlord can strike him.



23. Skinflint swears at Pao viciously. But Pao replies with only a scornful glance, then goes to join Liu and the others in the field.



24. The moon and stars are still out, and the workers protest angrily, "Skinflint gets us out in the middle of the night. He wants to work us to death!" Liu tells them just to sit down and not work.



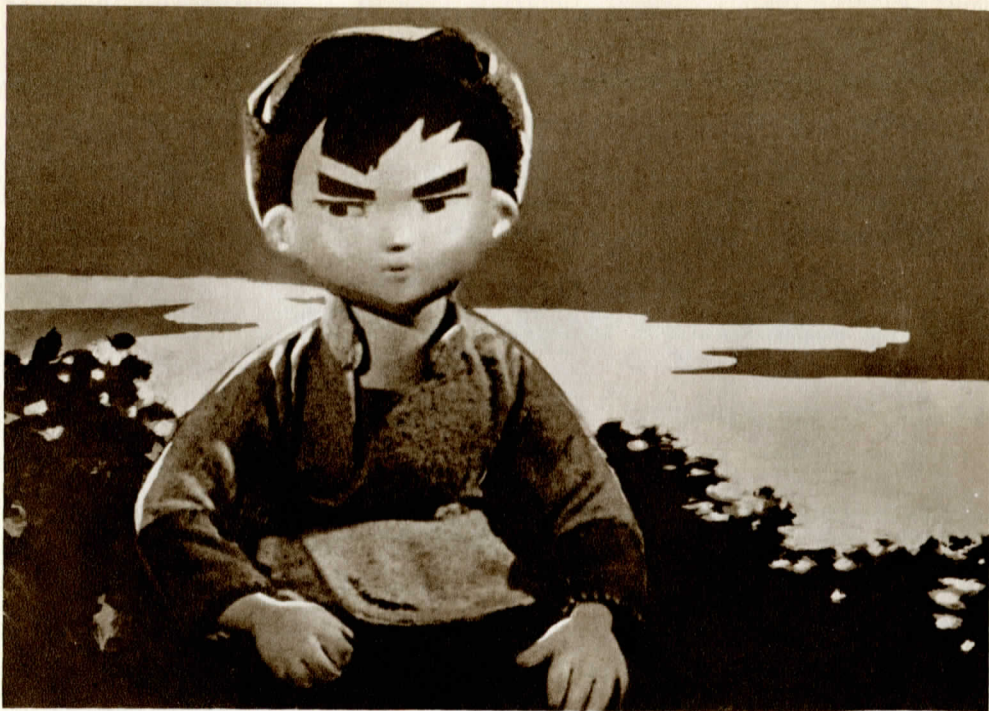
25. Liu explains that their misery is due to imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism, and these are weighing them down like mountains. "But now, Chairman Mao leads the poor in revolutionary struggle to overthrow the mountains!" he says.



26. After a long while, the cocks in the neighbourhood begin to crow. Pao says, "Listen! Why are they crowing only now? Skinflint's cock crowed long ago!"



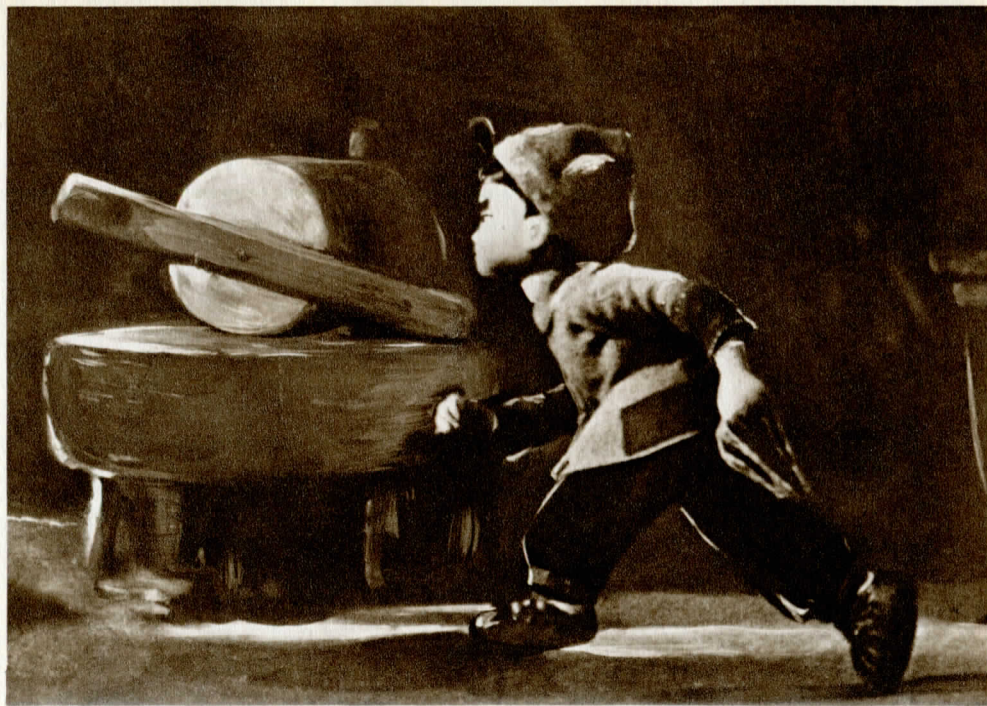
27. Liu replies, "I've heard how Skinflint cheats workers out of their wages. He's up to his tricks again. We'll have to deal with him seriously!"



28. Pao thinks, "That's right! He's looking for an excuse to rob us of our wages. I'll strangle his blasted cock tonight, and see what trick he'll play next."



29. That night, when the others are asleep, and all is quiet, Pao creeps out of the shack. He has taken a rope to tie up the rooster.



30. The moon is hidden behind a cloud, and the courtyard is very dark as Pao cautiously makes his way to the chicken coop.



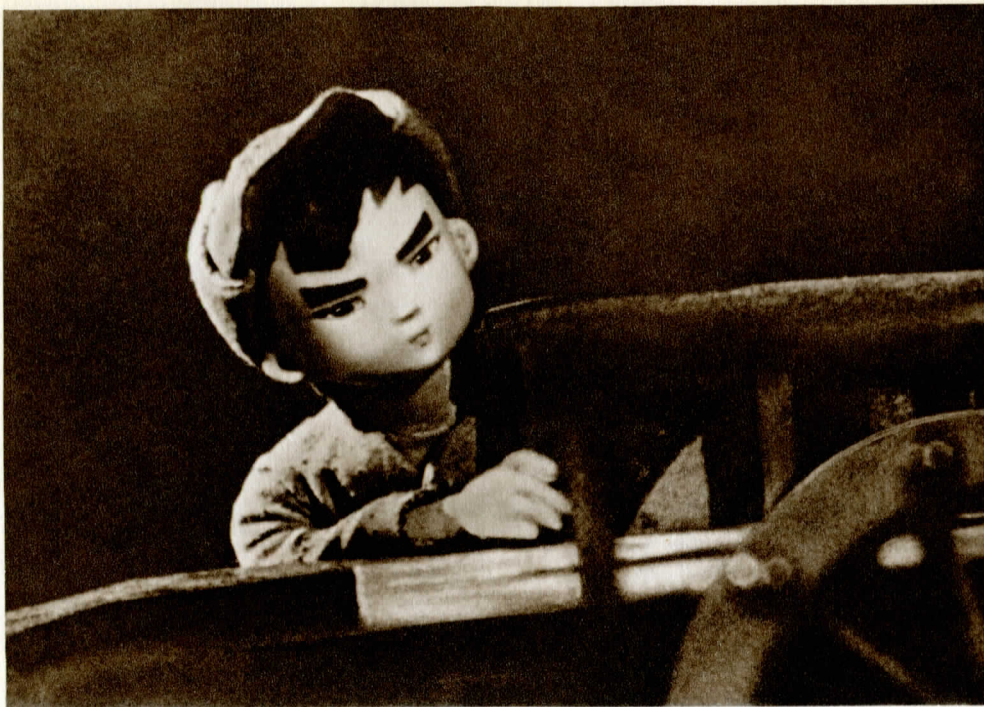
31. He quietly opens the coop door and is reaching in to grab the rooster when he is startled by the creaking of Skinflint's bedroom door. Someone else is out!



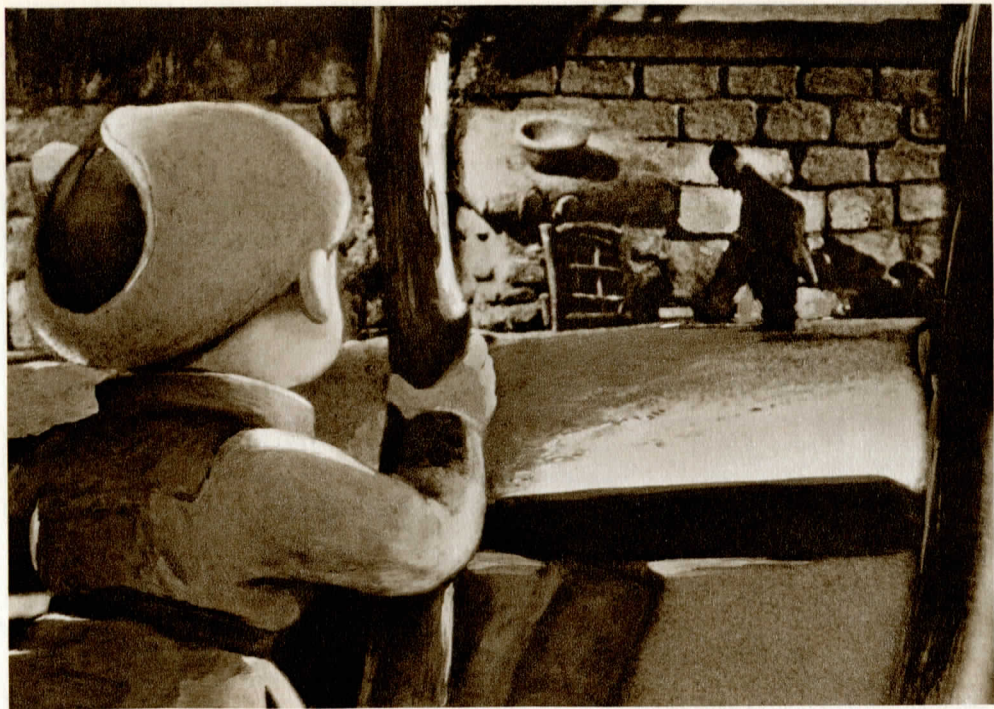
32. Quick as lightning, Pao slips into the nearby cattle-shed, picks up a stout stick and gets ready for action.



33. He sees a man sneaking towards the coop, and thinks, "Oh! a chicken thief! Good! Let him take away the cock that crows at midnight!"



34. But the thief does not touch the coop. He squats down beside it, stretches his neck, cups his hands to his mouth and crows like a rooster.



35. The cock-crowing man gets up, pats the dust from his clothes, and then takes something from his pocket.



36. There is the scratch of a match, and the thief is revealed lighting his pipe. Pao recognizes the brute features of Skinflint.



37. Pao hastens to tell the others, who are furious and exclaim, "That old scoundrel! Crowing like a rooster to get us out to work at midnight. A real Skinflint!"



38. Old Ma says he can't take any more of Skinflint's treatment. He throws down his hoe and declares, "I'm off! I won't stay here another day! I've had more than enough of him!"



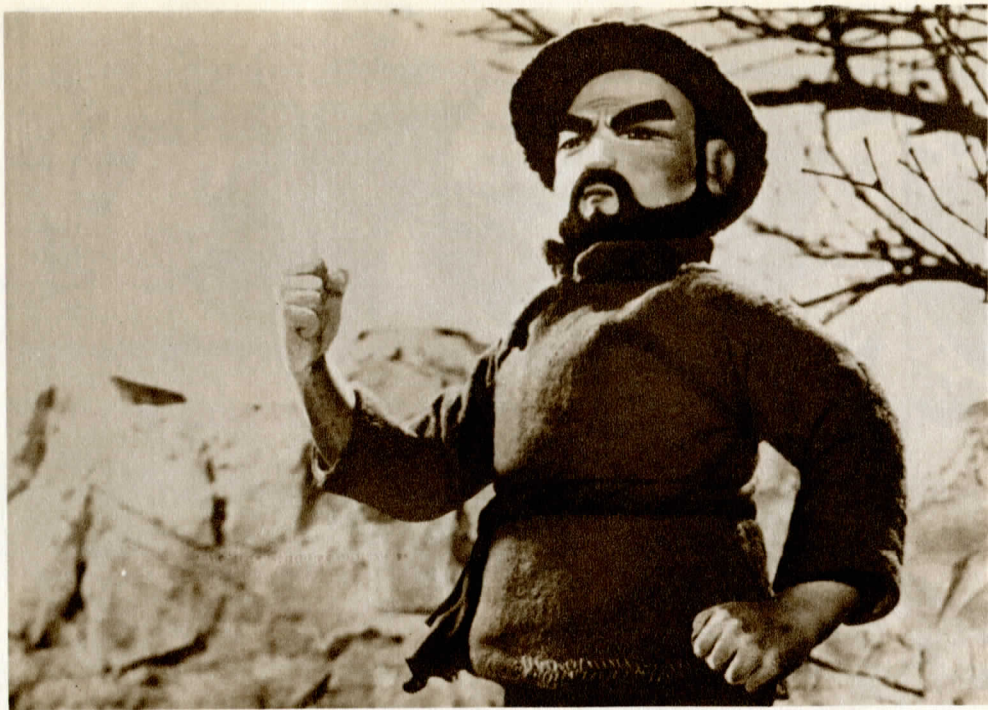
39. Liu stops him to ask, "Where do you think you're going, brother? With the Japanese invaders, traitors and landlords throwing their weight about, you can't make out at home either!"



40. Old Ma replies, "I'm ready to go and wipe out all the blood-suckers!" Pao raises his hoe and shouts, "Yes! Let's go and have it out with the lot of them!"



41. Liu says, "We can't let them ride on our backs any longer! We should get together and settle with them." Pao says, "I agree! Tell us how to do it."



42. Liu replies firmly, "Join the guerrillas! They're the armed force led by Chairman Mao and the Communist Party. We'll have to take up arms to overthrow the exploiters and oppressors and free the poor!"



43. The workers' spirits run high after they have heard Liu. They are determined to take up guns and fight for their rights.



44. Liu Ta-hung continues, "Our guerrillas have routed the Japanese invaders and overthrown the traitors and landlords in Pailungkou. Our poor brothers there are proud and happy!"



45. Before Liu can finish his report all rise to their feet and say excitedly, "Let's join the guerrillas in Pailungkou! Right now!"



46. Pao says, "Just a minute. Let's teach Skinflint a good lesson first!" They gather round and Pao tells his plan.



47. All laugh and say it's a good idea. With Liu's help they work out the details.



48. The next night, at the stroke of twelve, the wicked landlord steals into the yard prepared to play his old trick again.



49. As Skinflint crouches down beside the chicken coop to crow, there are shouts of "Thief!" "Thief!" "Stop thief!" "Someone is stealing the rooster!"



50. The thief is caught in the act! Skinflint tries to run away but is booted by Liu, who rushes from his hiding place shouting, "Here's the thief! Give him a good thrashing!"



51. Sticks at the ready, the others run to rain blows on Skinflint's back.



52. The wicked landlord grovels before the workers and cries, "It's me! It's me!" Pao gives him another whack as he says, "Right you are! It's you we're thrashing, you old thief!"



53. Skinflint wails, "You mustn't hit me. I'm the master." Old Ma shouts, "You're calling the master? If he hears it he'll hit you harder. Take that, and that, and that!"



54. "I'm your master . . . Master Chou . . ." Skinflint moans. Liu puts one foot on Skinflint's back and laughs contemptuously. "Master Chou? That won't scare us either!"



55. The workers give vent to their anger, and Skinflint gets a good beating. He cowers and snivels like the coward he is.



56. Pao recalls how Skinflint mercilessly beat his father to death. Revenge! He picks up a broken earthenware bowl and hurls it at his father's murderer.



57. Skinfliint is frightened out of his wits and tries to escape by crawling on all fours into the coop. He gets wedged in the narrow doorway. His bottom is a splendid target. Wham! Wham!



58. The rooster, scared at the sight of Skinflint's bald head, attacks the intruder. Talons scratching, beak pecking, he rushes at him again and again.

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59. Skinflint's wife, awakened by the commotion, waddles out crying, "You mustn't . . . you mustn't hit him! He's the Old Master!"



60. She comes to Skinflint's rescue. What a mess he is! Head and face scratched and bleeding, smeared with chicken filth, grovelling and groaning!!



61. Pao smiles as he remarks, "It's long past midnight, but I haven't heard the big cock crow!" The workers have a good laugh.



62. Skinflint, now speechless, is dragged to his feet by his wife and the pair slowly make their way home.



63. The workers are in high spirits after giving Skinflint his lesson. Liu Ta-hung points out, "This is only the beginning. We have more and harder struggles to face. Let's go!"



64. Where there is oppression, there is resistance! Breaking out of their prison-like existence, the workers take the road of revolution. Confident of victory, they go to the mountains and join the guerrillas.



65. On the mountain peak, facing the rising sun, Liu Ta-hung says, "My poor neighbours, we will fight our way back!"



66. The following year. Under the leadership of Chairman Mao and the Communist Party, the people's army defeats the Japanese invaders. Liu, Pao and the others indeed return, and the peasants try Skinflint for his crimes.



67. The workers, knowing that the Chinese people will only be free when imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism have been overthrown, join the People's Liberation Army and march forward to win new victories throughout the country.



68. Educated in Mao Tsetung Thought, Pao steadily matures. He fights heroically during the Liberation War. He's a resolute People's Liberation Army man, loyal to Chairman Mao.



半夜鸡叫

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