The camera moves down a tall building. The words appear: "Shanghai: The Lower Depths, Autumn, 1935."

A wedding procession. Note the mixture of Chinese and Western elements. Our hero, Xiao Chen ("Little Chen"), plays the trumpet in a Western-style marching band. His friend, Lao Wang ("Old Wang"), is selling newspapers. (The two friends have established seniority between them, using "Old" and "Little".) A young girl appears on a balcony. She is Xiao Hong ("Little Red"), Little Chen's sweetheart.

Scene: The "Teahouse of Fulfilled Wishes." The string-player calls out:
"Little Red, come here."
As she approaches, he says:
"Where have you been? You're grown up now; you shouldn't be running around like this."
The string-player smiles at a patron:
"What would you like to hear?"
"It doesn't matter."
"How about 'The Song of the Four Seasons'?"
"Fine."

As the song begins, a heavy-set man enters the teahouse. He is Gu Chenglong, the underworld boss. Little Red sings:

Spring comes and by a window shaded with green,
A girl embroiders a pair of mandarin ducks (symbol of marital bliss).
Like the falling of a wooden club,
War comes suddenly and separates the pair.

Summer comes, and the willow leaves grow long.
The girl wanders along the banks of the Yangzi,
North and south of the river, all is lovely,
But she prefers the sorghum fields of home.

Autumn comes, and the lotus fills the air.
The girl dreams of her home.
She awakens and misses the faces of her aged parents,
She sees only moonlight shining through her window.

Winter comes and the falling snow is boundless,
The girl has finished making warm clothes for her love.
By blood and flesh the Great Wall was built,
I am as devoted as the wives of the men who built it.

Gu Chenglong laughs and says:
"She's not bad!"

His "parasite" who accompanies him everywhere says:
"Do you really think so?"
"Yes."
"I know the string-player personally."

He calls over to him:
"Old Wang!" (meaning the string-player, not Little Chen's friend)

The string-player answers:
"Hello, when did you arrive?"

The parasite answers:
"Sit down and meet Mr. Gu."

The string-player says obsequiously:
"I have long heard your illustrious name."

The parasite speaks to the point:
"Mr. Gu likes your singing girl very much."
"Oh, I'll call her over . . . Little Red, come over here!"

Little Red comes to the table and the string-player says:
"Meet Mr. Gu."

She answers obediently, but without much enthusiasm:
"Mr. Gu."

A barber shop. The barber (another friend of Little Chen) is perfuming a patron's hair. Old Wang says:
"It sure smells good!"

The barber shop owner passes through. Little Chen greets him:
"Hello, boss. Business seems pretty good today."
"Not really."

Little Chen (to his friend, the barber):
"You're almost done now. Why don't you knock off and come over to my house?"

His friend answers:
"Okay, okay . . ." (he beckons to an apprentice) "I'm going out for awhile. You finish cutting the gentleman's hair . . . Carefully!"

They leave the barber shop. Little Chen blows his trumpet as a signal to all his sworn-brothers to gather. They march in military-style formation to his room.

On arriving home, Little Chen finds the landlady, cradling her baby, lying in wait for him on the stairs. She says to Little Chen:
"Quiet! You'll scare the baby."

Little Chen (comforting the baby):
"Don't worry!"

The landlady tries to detain Little Chen:
"My baby knows you're back when he hears the sound of your trumpet."
"Really? Good boy!"
"Isn't Uncle Chen's uniform smart-looking?"
"Pretty ugly, right?"
"Doesn't he look just like a foreign soldier?"
"Don't I? Just watch."

Little Chen grabs the chance to get away by issuing marching orders to himself:
"One, two, one, two . . . " (as he marches to his room)

His landlady still tries to detain him:

"Halt! Baby, let Uncle Chen hold you."

"No, no, I'll just give him a little kiss."

He bends over to kiss the baby, but the landlady says:

"No, don't let him kiss you. Ugh! Bad breath!"

Little Chen quickly ducks into his room.

His friend, the peddler, laughs: "She's gone."

Old Wang: "The landlady is interested in you."

The barber (imitating her): "Ugh! Bad breath! Don't let him kiss you!"

Old Wang asks Little Chen: "How does she know your breath smells bad?"

Little Chen takes off his uniform jacket, exposing a false shirtfront.

"Leave me alone."

The barber examines his shirtfront and says:

"You do look like a foreign soldier, but do foreign soldiers wear such little shirts?"

The fifth friend, an older and unemployed man who stutters, tries to speak. Little Chen exclaims impatiently:

"Quiet! If you can't talk, don't!"

The peddler exclaims:

"He's got our picture!"

Barber: "Let's hang it up."

Peddler: "Let's write something on it first."

Barber: "I'll write something. Give me a pen."

The barber begins to write a couplet commemorating the friendship of the five sworn-brothers, but he has trouble remembering how to write some of the characters. He asks Little Chen:

"How do you write the character for 'happiness' in the phrase, 'We share happiness,' and the character for 'hardship' in the phrase, "We undertake hardship together"?"

Little Chen: "Stupid, I'll show you."

He swaggers to the table and knocks them all on the head, saying:

"One, two, three, you are all dummies."

He writes "We share happiness" on the right side of the picture. Then he gets stumped and asks:

"What character is 'hardship'?"

The barber strains to remember:

"Hardship, hardship . . ."

Old Wang answers:

"That's easy. It's similar to the character for 'chicken.' This half is written like the character for 'beauty,' the other half is like the 'hai' in 'Shanghai,' or . . . no it's like the 'jin' in 'Tianjin,' or . . . no, that's not it either. Wait a minute. I nearly got it . . . Now I remember. I saw it in yesterday's newspaper."

He finds it on the newspaper-covered wall:

"Here it is. One half is like the character for 'beauty.'"

Little Chen says:

"But the other half isn't at all like the 'hai' in 'Shanghai,' or the 'jin' in 'Tianjin.'"
It's the 'han' in 'Hankow'! It's a place name all right, but you had it in the wrong place!
(Shanghai, Tianjin, and Hankow were the three most modernized cities in China.)

Little Chen finishes writing the couplet:
"It's done. Take it!"

A flash of light appears on the curtain. The little peddler says:
"Here comes the telegraph."

Little Red is in her room across the alley, flashing light from her mirror. Little Chen draws open the curtain and performs magic tricks for her, like a magician on a stage. He makes an apple appear and throws it to her. Another apple appears and he again throws it to her, but it flies past her and crashes into the room occupied by Little Red's older sister, Little Yun ("Little Cloud"). Yun appears and the young people all hide. Yun is only in her 20's but she looks much older, the outcome of a life of hardship and sorrow. Her figure is thin and emaciated and she looks as if she might have tuberculosis. She is a silent person and acts as if she were emotionally cold. Old Wang watches her with love pouring from his eyes.

8
The string-player calls out to Little Red, holding a bird cage.
"Look at this cage. It's filthy. You're grown up but you're still worthless . . . All you know is how to eat!"

9
The string-player returns to his room. His wife is rolling her hair. He says to her:
"What do you think about it?"
"I already told you. No!"
"You're in a bad mood again. Mr. Gu is a very influential man in Shanghai. I was lucky to meet him. Why can't I invite him over for a few drinks just to be friendly? Come on, give me the money."

Little Red enters and startles him. He yells at her:
"You walk like a ghost!"

10
The string-player and Mr. Gu are in a park airing their birds together.

11
Sunset over the river.

12
Late that evening. Yun is plying her trade on the streets as a prostitute. A man passes, glances at her, and passes on. Discouraged, Yun lowers her head.
Little Chen sets up a wooden plank from his room to Little Red's and helps her cross over to his room.

Little Chen's room. Old Wang finds an ad in the newspaper for the theater "The Big World." The three young people set out arm in arm to go to the theater.

Yun, still in the alley, ducks to evade a police officer. The three friends approach. Yun confronts them and sends her sister home. After Little Red departs, Yun tries to detain Little Chen, but is rebuffed. It is obvious that he thinks she is "dirty." He wants nothing to do with her and leaves. Old Wang knows that Yun adores Little Chen, but stays behind to give her comfort with a cigarette.

Daybreak on the river.

At daybreak, the string-player's wife is still playing mahjong after an all-night session. She loses heavily and finally gets up to leave:
"Old Liu, you take my place. I'm going home to sleep."

Yun enters the room of the mistress to turn in her wallet. The string-player is dressing. Yun realizes his wife isn't there and tries to leave. The string-player stops her:
"Wait! Don't run away every time you see me. I haven't done you any harm. I can't help it if the old lady is jealous and beats you. What am I supposed to say . . ."

At that moment his wife returns and yells at them:
"No wonder I lost money! With you two playing tricks here!"

She looks at Yun's empty wallet:
"Shameless tramp! You go out with nothing and come home with nothing . . . Slut! Why don't you do me a favor and drop dead!"

Little Red hangs a bird cage in her window. The bird's singing wakens Little Chen. He brings out his instrument and begins to play. Little Red sings "The Song from Faraway":

Though I wander faraway, I know the sound of my love.
The young girl sings to the boy's violin.
Oh, my love, we are of one heart.
Oh, my love, we are of one heart.

I watch the north where my hometown is.
Tears wet my sleeve . . .

When Yun, in her room, hears this part, she weeps.

. . . The young girl never forgets her love.
Oh, my love, we are of one heart.
Oh, my love, we are of one heart.

In our life, we treasure our youth.
The girl is like a thread, the boy like a needle,
Strung together, they will never part.
Oh, my love, we are well-matched.

Yun can no longer bear the music and bangs on the door to stop it.

20
In the barber shop. Mr. Gu is getting a shave. The string-players brings in Little Red and says:
"You look so handsome. Just like a youngster!"
"Nonsense."
"I mean it! . . . Are you done?"
"Yes"
Mr. Gu puts on his hat and says to Little Red:
"Let's go and enjoy ourselves."

21
The barber, suspicious that something is up, whistles to the peddler and motions for him to follow Little Red and Gu.

22
In a shop, Mr. Gu buys fine cloth for Little Red, who is delighted.

23
A restaurant. Mr. Gu orders a fine meal for himself, the string-player, and Little Red. The waiter asks:
"What else would you like?"
"Deep-fried tripe and stir-fried shrimp."
"Anything else?"
"Not right now."
The peddler watches from the window.

24
The peddler reports to Little Chen:
"I saw them buy cloth and then go to eat. I followed them into the restaurant. Little Red looked happy the whole time, even when that old fatso bought her cloth!"
The barber adds:
"I knew something was up. So I called A-bing to follow them."
The stutterer starts to speak but Chen interrupts him:
"Enough! If you don't know how to speak, then don't!"
Little Chen grabs his trumpet and leaves in a rage.
Little Chen's room. Little Red is across the alley. She tries to show him her pretty new cloth, but he closes his curtain. She decides to go visit him.

Little Chen is lying on his bed, facing the wall. Little Red startles him with a blast from his trumpet. He rises angrily and throws her new cloth out the window. She begins to cry and turns to leave. He shouts:

"Stop! . . . Little Red, I hate you!"
"I hate you too."
"You shouldn't . . ."
"Who are you to tell me what I should or shouldn't do. Let me go!"
"No!"
"I want to leave."
"Okay, if you leave now, don't come back!"
"Okay! Let me go. Let me go!"

Little Red weeps in her room. Yun tries to comfort her.

Little Chen and Old Wang are in the teashop across the street. They are drinking, and Little Chen already has had too much. Wang tries to stop Chen:

"What are you doing? You've had enough."
"Leave me alone. I'm upset. Leave me alone."
"No, you aren't used to drinking. You're drunk already."
"It's none of your business. If you don't want to drink any more, fine. But I still want to."
"Look at you face. You're already drunk."

Little Chen catches sight of Little Red on the stairs and orders her to sing. She turns her back on him, but the string-player orders her:

"A customer is calling you. Where are you going?"

Little Chen shouts angrily:

"Come down! Don't you hear me?"

Old Wang tries to stop him, but Chen says:

"I asked her to come down and she refuses. Is that right?"

He throws a few coins on the table:

"I insist! Sing!"

The string-player's eyes gleam at the sight of the money. He says to Little Red:

"This gentleman wants you to sing. Didn't you hear him?"

He asks Little Chen:

"How about the 'Song from Faraway?'" (to Little Red): "Come down here, hurry!"

The string-player starts to play the same song that Little Red sang earlier to Little Chen. But this time her voice is full of tears. Little Chen also is haunted by the memory of their duet until he can bear it no longer. He strikes his fist on the table, grabs his trumpet, and leaves the room.

Old Wang gives some money to the string-player and says:

"He's in a foul mood. It has nothing to do with your playing. Pay no attention!"
The string-player and his wife are escorting Mr. Gu out the door after a visit. He catches sight of
Little Red, then says to Mr. Gu:
"Oh, there's something I mean to discuss with you."
They return to his room. Little Red eavesdrops on their conversation, and Yun joins her. Mr. Gu
says to the mistress:
"I am somewhat embarrassed to ask you this, but I have had a few cups of wine, and that
has made me bold."
Little Red and Yun cannot hear distinctly. Mr. Gu hands the mistress some money. As he rises
from his seat, he thanks her and takes a rose bud from a vase on the table. The mistress urges
him:
"Please stay longer."
"No, I must go now. Please don't bother to see me out."
As he heads down the stairs he pulls out the petals of the rose one by one and drops them under
his feet.

Little Red and Yun are sitting on the bed. Little Red asks:
"What should I do?"
Although Yun envies the love between Little Red and Little Chen, she is anxious that her sister
escape a fate like her own. She motions for Little Red to seek out Little Chen. Little Red
hesitates from pride:
"Ask him... I can't, no."
Yun insists, and Little Red finally crosses the alley to Chen's room.

Little Chen and Old Wang are playing poker. Little Red knocks. Little Chen calls out:
"Who the hell is that?"
Little Red enters dejectedly. "You!"
Little Chen says in a surprised and angry tone:
"How nice you have time to come and visit. Perhaps you would like me to give you a
pretty piece of cloth too!"
Little Red starts to cry:
"I hate you... I hate you."
Little Chen immediately turns contrite and says:
"Little Red, I'm sorry. Little Red... please forgive me! Don't cry, don't cry.
You forgive me, don't you? You don't really hate me, do you?"
Little Red answers him:
"I don't... I do! I do hate you! If it weren't for my sister, I wouldn't have come here."
Old Wang exclaims:
"Your sister? Your sister asked you to come?"
Little Red tells her story to Little Chen:
"That man who took us out to eat came to our house today. He talked to the mistress
about me. He gave her money. She is going to sell me to him!"

Little Chen is dumbstruck:
"He gave her money!... Don't worry, there's still time to think of a way. Come and sit
down. We'll think of a way."
Little Red sits down and Little Chen says:
"Smile for me."
She shakes her head. Little Chen pleads: "Smile for me! . . . You won't smile? Fine!"

Old Wang, reading the newspaper-covered walls, motions to Little Chen: "Hey, come over here."

He shows Little Chen a headline: "Procuress sued!" Under that is a subheading: "Foster daughter accuses procuress. Patron provides backing." Little Chen says: "We'll sue them!"

Wang: "Of course!"

Chen: "But how do you do it?"

Wang: "I'm not sure . . . Look!" (He points to an advertisement for a lawyer.)

Chen: "Let's go right now."

Wang: "Okay."

Chen: "Are you well enough to go?"

Wang: "I'm well enough."

Chen: "Good, then let's go together."

Wang: "How can we go dressed like this?"

Chen: "No problem. I'll wear my band uniform. I'll tell them I work for the maritime customs."

Wang: "But what about me?"

Chen (handing him a blanket): "You can be my chauffeur."

Wang: "Look, she's smiling."

Chen: "She's smiling, she's smiling!"

Little Red: "I'm not, I'm not smiling!"

Chen: "You're not? . . . Look at Old Wang. Does he look like my chauffeur or not?"

She laughs.

32

A lawyer's office in a high-rise office building.

Chen: "We're above the clouds."

Wang: "It's like the Halls of Heaven!"

Chen: "It sure is. My, Heaven is warmer than home!" (The building has central heating.)

The two explore the premises, full of wonder. A water fountain and a bottle of glue totally absorb their attention while they wait for the lawyer to appear. A clerk announces the arrival of Mr. Fang, the lawyer, who enters with a superior air.

Fang: "Please have a seat . . . What do you want?"

Chen: "We want to sue someone."

Wang: "He means, we want to prosecute."

Chen: "Yes, we want to prosecute."

Fang: "Exactly what is it you want to do?"

Chen: "This is my chauffeur . . . his . . . his family has a . . ."

Wang: "Not exactly my family . . ."

Chen: "Oh yes . . . it's his relative."

Wang: "Not exactly a relative, either."

Chen (vexed): "Then what?"

Wang: "It's . . . It's my neighbor!"

Fang (showing increased impatience): "Excuse me, our fees here are five silver ounces for one hour of consultation, fifteen ounces of silver to write a legal document, and one hundred ounces of silver to go to court, five hundred if you want me to appear personally. It seems to me that you should consider this more carefully first."
Having said this, the lawyer puts his fountain pen in his pocket and rises like an emperor returning to his inner chambers.

Chen:  "Five hundred ounces of silver!"
Wang:  "Five hundred ounces of silver is how much in ordinary money?"
Chen (marveling):  "Damn, to sue you have to have money!"
Wang:  "We didn't think of that!"

33
Little Chen's room.  Little Chen and Little Red sit disconsolately at the table.  Old Wang again is reading the newspaper-covered walls.

Chen:  "Five hundred ounces of silver!  Damn, to prosecute you have to have money.  I never heard of such a thing."
Red:  "What are we going to do?"
Chen:  "Don't worry, we'll think of a way."

Old Wang's eyes rest on a headline.  "Escaped criminal apprehended!"  He tears out the word "escaped" and hands it to Little Chen.  Chen whispers in Little Red's ear.
Red:  "No, that's not a good solution."  (She lacks courage to run away.)
Chen:  "Silly girl, you have us.  What is there to be afraid of?"
Wang:  "And we have many sworn brothers."

Chen:  "Right, we have many sworn brothers.  Hurry home.  In a little while, we will put up the 'bridge' for you to come over . . . Go now."
Red:  "No, no, that's not the way."
Chen:  "Don't worry.  Go home.  If there is any problem, we'll have our sworn brothers to help us out."

As Little Chen escorts Little Red to the door, the thought suddenly occurs to him what this will mean: "She and I will be . . . together!"  He somersaults up the stairs like an acrobat and lands on his bed, his face full of happiness: "She and I will run away together!"

He jumps up and seizes his horn.  His friends all hear the call and drop what they are doing to gather at his room.  Little Chen stands on a bench to exhort them to action.  Little Red watches their shadows on the curtain from the opposite window.  Little Chen looks like a great general.  Her heart suddenly fills with confidence.

34
That evening, Yun gently takes her sister by the hand and opens her box to give her some clothing.  Little Red realizes she and her sister will part.  She starts to cry, but Yun silences her:
"Don't cry, you go with them, they'll be good to you and won't mistreat you."
"But what about you?"
"Me?  They all despise me, I know."
"Come with us, please."
"No."

35
Next morning.  Chen's room is empty.  Yun looks from the window opposite and thinks of the past.
As Yun passes the mistress's window, she hears her arguing with her husband. Yun takes the opportunity to sneak over to Little Chen's vacant room.

String-player: "You play mahjong all day long, don't blame me. Is a man supposed to attend to household affairs?"

Mistress: "You're a fine one to talk. You have such big plans but you'll only play that instrument for the rest of your life. I play mahjong, but I bet my own money. Is that any business of yours? That girl sang with you. She was your responsibility . . ."

String-player: "Okay, okay, don't speak any more nonsense."

Little Chen's former landlady shows Yun the room.

Landlady: "If you want to move over here, this room is much better than the one you have across the street. It's larger and it faces south."

Little Yun says not a word but stares at the empty room.

Landlady: "It's really strange, those two just suddenly moved out last night. I wonder if that trumpet-player really is an honest person."

Yun, hearing the landlady speaking this way, realizes that the landlady, too, was fond of Chen.

The mistress is discussing this affair with her husband. She says:
"The trumpet-player? I never saw him."

Husband replies:
"You ask Little Yun, she knows for sure. Otherwise, why did she run across the street? You ask her, that's what happened for sure."

At that moment, Yun passes by the door. The mistress stonily calls out to her:
"Where are you going? Come in here."

String-player (looking for an escape): "I'll go look for Old Gu."

Mistress (to Yun): "If you don't tell me the truth, I'll beat you within an inch of your life. Take off your dress! . . . You heard me!"

A bath house. Gu's parasite addresses Gu:
"Old Gu, do you want to eat something before or after your bath?"

Gu: "Are you hungry again?"

The string-player enters the room and calls to Gu: "Mr. Gu, I've been looking everywhere for you; this is urgent! . . . Something awful has happened. That young girl--Little Red—ran away last night!"

Gu (amazed): "She ran away?"

In the new home of Little Chen and Little Red. The barber has already cut off Little Red's braids (signifying her newlywed status) and is busy curling her hair.

Red: "Is it done yet?"

Barber: "Almost."

Red: "I'm too hot."
Barber: "It's almost done."

Chen: "Little Red, I've bought something for you. Look!" (he holds out some cloth.)
Red: "Give it to me! When did you buy it? Why didn't you tell me?"

Peddler (to Old Wang): "Old Wang, why are you always pasting up newspapers?"
Wang: "It pains me to look at these crumbling walls."
Peddler: "What do you think we should give to Little Red?" (as a wedding present)
Barber: "I'm going to give her my comb."
Peddler: "What about us?"
Wang: "I haven't thought about it."
Barber: "Little Red, I give you this comb." (He offers a comb missing a few teeth)
Red: "I don't want that old comb."
Chen: "Give her your earring. That's a better present."
Red: "I don't want his earring, either."
Chen: "It's not for you to wear as an earring, but as a wedding ring . . . This is a symbol of our marriage. Bring on the wedding feast! . . . Drink up, everyone drink. Little Red, drink some more!"
Red: "No, I'm already dizzy."
Chen: "It doesn't matter, drink some more. You and Old Wang drink a glass together!"

Old Wang is lost in thought. He fears that now that he has helped his friends escape he will never see Yun again.

Chen: "What's the matter, why are you so quiet?"
Wang: "I've drunk too much."
Chen: "Aha! Old Wang is very happy today; he has never drunk so much in his life!"
Barber: "We're all happy!"
Stutterer: "This . . . this . . ."
Chen: "Okay, okay. If you can't talk, don't!"
Peddler: "No, don't stop him. Today everybody is happy. Let him speak!"
Stutterer: "Little . . . Little . . . Red, sing . . . sing a song!"
Chen: "Aha, you may live a long time, but you will never say something more to the point. Sing, Little Red."
Red: "No, my head is swimming. I can't sing."
Chen: "No, you must sing. I'll get my fiddle."
Red: "First perform a magic trick, and then I'll sing."
Chen: "Okay, I'll do it. Let me through . . . This is a 'hard' trick and not a 'soft' trick . . . Here it goes."

Little Chen pulls two silver coins out of his mouth and then appears to put them into his eyes.

Peddler: "If that's a 'hard' trick, then what is a 'soft' trick?"
Chen: "That trick is called 'Flying Money.'"
Everybody: "Do another one!"

Little Chen hits himself on the head and the coins pop out of his mouth.
Everybody: "What is that called?"
Chen: "That's called 'Silver . . .'"
Wang: "I know! I know! It was in yesterday's paper!"
Wang looks at the newspaper and points to a headline: "This Month's Silver Exports at Record
Levels." (The word "export" in Chinese reads literally as "going out the mouth" [port]. Wang is so illiterate that he makes an unintended pun. This is an oblique reference to the silver crisis during the Great Depression.)

Wang: "This trick is called 'Silver Export!'" ("silver going out the mouth")

41

Old Wang is on the street selling newspapers. He calls out to passers-by:
"Silver exports, Ai! Read the news, read all about it . . ."

42

A shop hangs a banner advertising a sale. It has hired a band to advertise the event. (This scene is meant to illustrate the dire effects of the 1935 currency devaluation.)

43

In the barber shop. There are no customers.
The barber shop owner: "No business! What am I supposed to do?"
Barbers: "It's not our fault there's no business. You still owe us our wages!"

44

Old Wang is talking to Yun in an alleyway:
"You wouldn't eat much. Everyday Little Red asks for you. Why don't you run away, too. I think you should . . . I don't understand you."
Yun waits until he turns to leave and then secretly follows him to the new home of her sister. A policeman passes by, causing Yun to run.

45

Inside, Little Chen is telling Little Red a ghost story:
". . . That night, it was quiet without a sound. You could only hear the wind blowing and shaking the window. The candle flame flickered. Just then, the ghost came down the stairs . . ."
A sound at the window startles both of them. But it is Yun, fleeing from the police, coming in from the rain.
Red (anxiously): "Big sister, did they send you?"
Yun silently reaches for a glass of water.
Red: "That's too cold."
Red pours a glass of hot water for Yun. But Little Chen angrily grabs it and smashes it on the floor:
"No reason is good enough for her to sneak up on us at this hour of the night. How did she find out where we live? (to Old Wang) It must have been you!"
At this moment a policeman enters the room.
Police: "Does this woman live here?" No one answers, and he repeats the question.
Wang: "Yes . . . yes, she does."
Police: "I wasn't asking you. (to Chen) Well?"
Chen (reluctantly): " . . . Yes."

46

The next day.
Little Red: "Big sister, I'm going to fix a meal. They'll be back in a minute."
Old Wang enters.

Red: "You're back! Look at my new blouse!"
Wang: "Oh, it's very nice." He starts up the stairs in search of Yun.
Red: "Are you going upstairs?"
Wang (hiding his real intention): "Oh, the walls upstairs need to be pasted up with newspapers. Do you have any paste?"
He goes up to Yun:
"Here, I've bought you some medicine. From now on, you don't need to live that kind of life anymore."

Below, Little Chen has returned:
"I've learned a new trick. Let me show you."

He places two glasses on Little Red's back which she is supposed to hold up with her shoulders.

Chen: "This glass has red wine and this glass has white . . ."

Just then the landlady enters:
"How about the rent?"
Chen: "Oh, right. Here's one dollar."
Landlady: "One dollar isn't enough."
Chen: "If it's not enough, I'll give you more tomorrow."

The landlady leaves and goes downstairs, where her husband is waiting:
"Did you get the rent?"
"He gave me one dollar,"
The husband looks at the coin: "Why did you take this? This kind of money is worthless now."
"Worthless! That's a joke. If you can't use that money, what can you use?"
"You don't understand . . . I'll go make him change it."

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Landlord: "Mr. Chen, please exchange this coin for a bill, okay?"
Chen: "Why? Is the coin no good?"
Landlord: "It's not that. These coins aren't any good right now. Didn't you know?"
Chen: "The money's no good? You must be joking. Give it back to me, then."
Landlord: "You don't have any bills?"
Chen: "None."
Landlord, grudgingly: "Well, alright then." (Leaves)

Little Red is still immobilized, holding the glasses to the wall with the backs of her arms, while Chen reads the newspaper and pretends not to notice.

Little Red calls to Chen, complaining that she can't move: "I have to make dinner."
Chen: "Not to worry. I've already prepared dinner for us in that glass. . . Close your eyes."
Little Red closes her eyes. Taking advantage of Little Red having her arms pinned to the wall, Chen kisses her. As Little Red starts to flail at him, the glasses fall to the floor and shatter. In the loft, Wang and Yun are about to embrace when they are startled by the breaking glass. Wang goes to the door, looks down and sees Chen and Little Red kissing passionately. Wang throws an object to the floor, causing the couple to jump apart.
Wang: "What was that noise?"
Chen, looking sheepish: "It was the landlord. He says coins are no good now. How can that be? . . . By the way, what are you doing up there in the loft? When did you get home?"
Wang stammers: "Me . . ." (looks back at Yun, who lowers her head)

A man on a ladder is painting the street name on the stone archway over the alley where the youths had lived before. The owner of the barber shop loudly scolds the painter for making a mess, attracting the attention of a man holding a briefcase.

Man with briefcase: "Who's that fellow?"
Another man: "That's the proprietor of the barber shop next door."
First man: "I was just about to look for him . . ." (walks over to barber shop owner)

"Hey, what about your rent? Can you pay it or not?"
Barber shop owner: "Who are you?"
Man with briefcase: "I'm from the landlord's office."
Barber shop owner: "You haven't been here before."
Man with briefcase: "The ownership has changed. From now on I'll be collecting the rents. The new owner says that he wants three months' rent in advance. You have three days to pay. If you can't pay it, you'll have to move out!"
Barber shop owner: "Within three days?!"

The barber shop owner stalks into his shop, swearing. The idle barbers look up and ask him what the trouble is.
Barber shop owner: "You all better go quickly and find new employers. I'm closing up my shop!"

The barber friend of Chen and Wang sits in their apartment, looking morose.

Wang: "Closing the shop?"
Chen: "Closing the shop?"
Barber: "Yes, the shop's been closed."
Little Red comes over to comfort him: "Don't. Don't cry."
Chen: "Yes, don't cry. I have a plan to keep your barber shop open. You two come with me."
Chen, Wang, and the barber all leave.

Little Chen and his friends are in front of the barber shop. They are shouting to the crowd that the price of a haircut has been slashed. But strangely enough, the only customers they seem to attract are Buddhist monks with shaved heads.

"Here comes somebody with hair!"

Before the man can open his mouth, he is whisked into the barber chair.
"I'm not here to have my head shaved!"
"Haircuts are cut-rate today."
"But I'm not here to get my hair cut. I'm here to collect the rent!"
The barber, too eager to take advantage of any business, does not listen to him but proceeds to cut his hair.
Chen: "With his shaved head, that guy is beginning to look like a dying pig."

The owner returns and sees a crowd outside his shop. He hurries in to see the unwilling customer, with very little hair left, throw a stool through the window. The three friends run away. As they run, the string-player catches a glimpse of them and starts to follow after them.

53
The barber shop has a sign on its door: "Out of Business." The barber, for lack of anything better to do, is washing the stutterer's hair.

54
In the bath house. Old Gu is getting a massage. The string-player says to Gu's "parasite":
"Now I know where they're living."
Parasite: "But did you see the girl?"
String-player: "Well, not exactly, but I'm sure that she's there. It was really lucky. The day that she ran away, that other devil moved out, too."
Parasite: "That's right!"
String-player: "Also, I've often seen him with Little Red, looking sneaky."
Parasite: "Old Gu, what do you want to do? You say the word and we'll go see about them."
Gu: "Okay."

55
Gu, his parasite, and the string-player set out together.

56
Yun, at the window, sees them coming and motions to Little Red.
Red: "What should we do? Little Chen and Old Wang aren't due back for awhile."
Yun gives her the ladder and helps her escape into the loft. The three enter.
String-player: "Aha! So today I've found you! . . . Tell me, where is Little Red?"
He grabs her:
"Tell me! right now! You cheap tramp!" (He pushes her into a corner)
Yun grabs a meat cleaver and throws it at him. It misses.
String-player: "So, you want my life, huh? Then I want yours!"
He throws the cleaver at Yun and hits her in the breast. Then he demands:
"Tell me, where is Little Red?"
Yun cannot answer.
"Aha! She must be upstairs. Old Gu, you look after Yun."
The string-player goes up to look and when he turns back, Old Gu has slunk away. The string-player realizes that he has committed a murder and flees.

57
Little Red, Little Chen, and their friends are in a basement room. Old Wang springs up as if to run out.

Chen: "Think about it. Am I right or not?"
Wang: "Don't stop me!"
Chen: "Don't."
Wang: "Why not?"
Chen: "What good would it be to go?"
Wang: "I'm going to get him."
Chen: "Is it worth it?"
Wang: "What does it matter?"
Chen: "Is it worth it to risk your life for that kind of woman?"
Wang (outraged): "What did you say?" (He hits Chen.)
Chen: "Old Wang, forgive me!"
Little Chen springs up and runs out the door.
Wang: "Where are you going?"
Chen: "I'll go and find her for you."
Wang: "You fool! This is nothing to fool around with." He pulls Little Chen back and goes himself.

58
Old Wang finds Yun in the darkened apartment:
"Yun! Yun! Are you hurt? Yun!"

59
Old Wang carries Yun back to the basement room.
"He's back."
Wang: "Hurry! Look after her. I'm going to get a doctor."

Old Wang leaves. They put Yun on the bed and Little Chen gives her some water to drink. They both remember the other time when he smashed the glass of water Little Red poured for her sister.

Chen: "Yun, I cannot face you. Please forgive me! (Little Red weeps.) Don't lose hope. Old Wang has gone to get a doctor."
Yun (weakly): "A doctor? . . . Old Wang? . . . He's a true friend! (She sees a shadow passing by the window) Is that Old Wang? Is he back already?"
Chen: "No, that's just a policeman. Old Wang will be back soon."
Chen: "Yun!"
Chen: "Yun, it's nothing, don't worry."
Yun: "Let him go. Let him go. He is a good person. He helps the poor. We are like ants . . . so small . . . ."

Yun breathes no more. Little Red weeps. Old Wang finally returns. Without speaking, he wearily sits in a chair.

Chen: "She's sleeping. Are you tired?"
Wang: "I didn't have enough money. The doctor wouldn't come."

Little Red starts to weep again and Wang rushes to Yun's side, realizing that she is dead.

60
Camera pans back up the high-rise building seen in the opening scene. "Shanghai has so many beautiful buildings. But they all rest on the heads of people like these!"

END