





Li Wei lived in a small, sunny village nestled among green hills, where the rhythm of life was tied to the land. Every morning, he would help his family tend their fields, the rich soil a comforting friend beneath his bare feet. Laughter often filled their humble home, a testament to their simple but content existence.



One day, stern-faced soldiers from the Kuomintang marched into their peaceful village, demanding food and supplies. Their presence was heavy and unsettling, casting long shadows over the villagers' hopeful faces. They took what they pleased, leaving behind a lingering sense of fear and injustice.



Months later, a different kind of army arrived, weary but determined, their clothes worn from a legendary 6,000-mile trek. These were Mao's Red Army soldiers, and their arrival brought a strange mix of curiosity and apprehension. They moved with a quiet discipline, unlike the previous visitors.



A kind-eyed Red Army soldier shared stories of their long journey and their vision for a new China, where land would belong to the people. Li Wei listened intently, his young heart stirred by their words of equality and justice. The soldier's calm demeanor offered a stark contrast to the harshness he had known.



Inspired by their promises and the respectful way they treated his village, Li Wei felt a spark of hope ignite within him. He decided to support the Red Army, believing in their dream for a better future. A sense of purpose filled him, ready to contribute to this grand new chapter.



Years later, Li Wei's village was transformed into a collective farm, his family's private land now part of a vast communal field. Giant posters of smiling workers dotted the landscape, urging everyone to work harder for the nation. The familiar sense of personal ownership had vanished, replaced by a shared, but sometimes overwhelming, responsibility.



The pressure to industrialize was immense, with villagers even melting down pots and pans in makeshift backyard furnaces to produce steel. Li Wei worked tirelessly, his hands calloused from the endless tasks, but the air was thick with a strange anxiety. The focus on steel often meant less attention to the crops.



Soon, the bountiful harvests promised by the collective farm began to dwindle, and the village felt the tightening grip of a man-made famine. Empty bowls became a common sight, and the cheerful posters seemed to mock their growing hunger. Li Wei watched with a heavy heart as the once-vibrant community struggled to find enough food.



In 1966, China was engulfed in chaos, and Li Wei's village saw the arrival of the zealous Red Guards. Young people, fervent with revolutionary spirit, marched through the streets, tearing down old traditions and promoting loyalty to Chairman Mao. The air crackled with a new kind of intensity and suspicion.



Daily life was now a constant performance of loyalty, vastly different from the simple rhythms before the CCP took power. Li Wei navigated this new world with quiet resilience, remembering the past while adapting to the present. He learned to keep his thoughts close, finding strength in his own steady heart amidst the swirling changes.