

When stories shape lives

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



Shiniang remembered the time when her mother, Mei, told her she would marry 50-year-old De Bei. It was the 1950s in a remote town in China.

Shiniang stopped herself from crying. Arranged marriages were part of Chinese culture, and to be married this way affirmed their social identities (Zhongyi 96). Shiniang, however, felt resentment and anger inside her rise. She was fifteen years old, literate, and already in love. Shiniang was prepared to challenge society and to marry the man she loved, even when he was poor and black.

Shiniang was fourteen years old when she met Carson Gueye, the first time her mother allowed her to go the market alone, and love blossomed since then, though they knew it was doomed love. Carson was a market worker. He did anything he could for people inside it, like carrying boxes and cleaning stalls. He was an orphan, but an old man, Chan Mo-wan, took him in. In the market, the noise and nauseating odors of men and butchered animals that Shiniang used to hate were gone. Instead, she saw human life and freedom. More than that, she saw Carson. He was sixteen, but already he hovered over others with his 5'11 height and large frame. Shiniang blushed, for he caught her staring at him. Shiniang ran, or rather, stumbled away, nearly falling on women on the floor selling dried fish. She dared look back, and Carson was still there, with a smile on his dark brown eyes. Shiniang was about to go home, hardly able to carry what she bought, when Carson helped her. Their arms brushed and their eyes met. What they saw inside each other's eyes married their souls. Afterwards, Shiniang and Carson found ways to be together. Young love was not assuring, however. Shiniang once confided to Carson that her cousin, Li-Wang, committed

suicide to avoid arranged marriage. It was not new news for many young women killed themselves to oppose arranged marriages (Man 123). Carson asked Shiniang to never do the same thing. Shiniang shook her head: “ I’d rather die than marry a stranger.” Carson kissed Shiniang for the first time on the lips. Their love was doomed, but loyal nonetheless.

Shiniang raked her mind, trying to find a solution to her problem, until one story gave her a fitting solution. Uncle Chow Li-Bao was angry when he came to their house years ago. His daughter, Hsien-Hsien, was supposed to be married to a rich trader, when her lover kidnapped her. Marriage by kidnapping was looked down in their community, but it was effective (Zhongyi 58). Risking her own life, Shiniang escaped and found Carson. She informed him of her plans. Carson should kidnap her tomorrow, when her mother went to the local temple, or all would be lost for she would kill herself on her wedding day. Carson promised to take her away.

Carson was anxious because he did not know if they could pull it off. He also could not understand arranged marriages, for the whites and blacks he knew married people they loved. He only had one friend in the world that he trusted, and he could not endanger his life. Li Tian was a good man. Li Tian, upon knowing what he should do, helped Carson whole-heartedly.

The kidnapping was swift and surprisingly successful. Shiniang’s parents were almost ready to kill Shiniang and Carson, but Carson managed to have some savings, all of which he sent to the former to ask for forgiveness and to plead for them to allow their daughter to marry him. Shiniang and Carson were married. They lived happily together and had seven children. Shiniang never asked her children to marry anyone else apart from those they loved.

Works Cited

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