

"Garden of My Childhood"

By Kuangchi C. Chang

"Run, run, run,"

Whispered the vine.

"A horde is on the march no Great Wall can halt."

But in the garden of my childhood

The old maple was painting a sunset

And the crickets were singing a carol;

No, I had no wish to run.

"Run, run, run,"

Gasped the wind,

"The horde has entered the Wall."

Down the scorched plain rode the juggernaut

And crossed the Yangtse as if it were a ditch;

The proverbial rats had abandoned the ship

But I had no intention of abandoning

The garden of my childhood.

"Run, run, run,"

Roared the sea,

"Run before the bridge is drawn."

In the engulfed calm after the storm

The relentless tom-tom of the rice-sprout song

Finally ripped my armor.

And so I ran.

I ran past the old maple by the terraced hall

And the singing crickets under the latticed wall,

And I kept on running down the walk

Paved with pebbles of memory big and small

Without turning to look until I was out of the gate

Through which there be no return at all.

Now eons later and worlds away,

The running is all done

For I am at my destination: Another garden.

Where the unpebbled walk awaits tomorrow's footprints.

Where my old maple will come with the sunset's glow

And my crickets will sing under the wakeful pillow.