

Chronicles of a Blood Merchant Chapter Notes

Main Characters

Xu Sanguan (XS): The main protagonist

Erle: Second Son

Ah Fang & Genlong: Men from XS's village

Xu Yulan (XY): XS's wife

Sanle: Third Son

Blood Chief Li:

Yile: First Son (bastard child of HX)

He Xiaoyong (HX): XY's first boyfriend, father of Yile

Lin Fenfang: Woman at silk factory that XS likes

Chapter	Events	Quotes
1	<p>We meet XS, learn a bit about his family. His father is dead, grandpa is senile (possibly dementia?). Works at a silk factory in the town (so he's made it out of the countryside), distributing the silk cocoons to the girls. He's friends with AF & GL from the countryside. We hear of GL's liking for Guihua.</p> <p>XS, GL & AF go together to give blood- talk of blood having a special energy.</p> <p>We first see BCL thru their eyes, seeing his underwear and talking about his woman Ying.</p> <p>Lots of naive talk about giving blood- the need to drink water to thin it etc. Chapter feels youthful, naive, innocent.</p> <p>Lots of description of the countryside, and relating to things via countryside images- e.g. the sunset makes the crops look "tomato-red".</p>	<p>P4 "Around here, that's not how you play by the rules" (grandpa to XS)</p> <p>p.4 "The sky was a wash of crimson that seemed to emanate from the muddy paddies in the distance, shining across the fields, transforming the crops into a vast tomato-red expanse"</p> <p>p.5 "The boy's health is no good. He can only eat one bowl of rice at a time." (local woman)</p> <p>p.6 (XS and grandpa) "Around here the men who haven't sold blood can't get themselves a wife." "What kind of rule is that?" "I don't know if there's a rule or not, but everyone who's strong enough goes to sell his blood."</p> <p>p.7 "The pork livers build up the blood, and the rice wine gives it life" (AF)</p> <p>p.14 "A mass of weeds grew from in between the roof tiles, cascading over the eaves like eyebrows" (description of Victory restaurant)</p> <p>p.15 "You've just sold your energy. That's why you feel weak. What we sold just now is energy, understand? City people call it blood, but we country folk call it energy. There are two kind of energy. One kind comes from muscle. But the kind that comes from the blood is worth a lot of money." (AF to XS)</p> <p>p.16 "I've only just learned what it means to sell the kind of energy that comes from blood... you can't spend that kind of money on just anything. I have to find something important to spend it on." (XS)</p>
2	<p>Short. Melon "interlude" with uncle and XS. XS decides to get married.</p>	<p>Lots of countryside "idyllic" imagery. Metaphor of melons and women:</p> <p>p.18 "I know Goldens. The flesh smells really good, but they aren't actually all that sweet... I've had Old Lady melons too. They're not too sweet, and they're not very crisp either. By the time you open one up and take a bit, it's all mushy." (XS)</p>
3	<p>We meet Lin Fenfang (LFF) at the factory, and Xu Yulan (XY) on the street- she's very fashion-conscious, aware of her image, and her presence on the street. Known as the "fried dough queen". Allows XS to take her for a meal (even though she's seeing HX) and he sees this as her being obligated to marry him. He ignores her protests that she is with HX and circumnavigates her to go to her dad- uses argument of money and</p>	<p>p.20 (of LFF) "The girl with the braids that dangled down to her waist, the girl whose smile revealed a row of straight, white teeth and a pair of dimples" "He figured that he would never tire of looking at her, even for a lifetime."</p> <p>p.21 (of XY) "another girl who was very pretty" ... "she changed her outfit three times a day, because the fact was that she only had three outfits into which to change."</p>

	<p>surname to get her father to agree to the marriage- XY is not involved. She tries to get HX to marry her, but he snubs her (portent of things to come).</p> <p>We learn that XS's mother ran away with a Nationalist company commander and abandoned him after his father died.</p> <p>Events are very matter-of-fact and seem abrupt.</p>	<p>p.21 (of XY) "everyone thought of her as the girl with the most extensive and fashionable wardrobe in town. Her strolls through the streets made everyone feel as if her pretty face were as familiar as the stream that flowed across town. And almost everyone in town knew her as the Fried Dough Queen."</p> <p>p.25 (XS to XY's father) "look at it this way- if I marry Xu Yulan, it would be just the same as if I agreed to take on your family name instead of making Xu Yulan take mine."</p> <p>p.27 (HX to XY) "We're not even married yet, and you want me to pay back <i>your</i> debts?"</p>
4	<p>Short chapter again (this is the style of the book- short, long, short, long). We see, very quickly, how XY bears 3 sons in 5 years.</p>	<p>Contrast of female pain and male joy (the sons are literally called "Joy").</p>
5	<p>There's gossip about Yile's parentage- Yile is already 9 years old at this point (9 years passed between Chapter 3 and here- a significant jump- why? Why does the author choose to not show this, presumably relatively happy, period?</p> <p>XS tells his sons that HX kept visiting after he and XY were married.</p> <p>XS accuses XY of sleeping with HX, she cries and wails (publically), protesting her innocence, but finally admits to one time.</p>	<p>p.35 <i>"these people keep talking and talking, and once they get started, it never stops."</i> (XS)</p> <p>p.37 <i>"this woman... is a stupid fool. You're not supposed to air your dirty laundry, and here she is, sitting on the doorstep crying for the whole world to hear..."</i> (XS about XY)</p> <p>p.37 "only that one time" (XY)</p> <p>p.39 "I was happy for no reason. I've wasted nine years raising that boy, and it turns out that after all he really belongs to someone else." (XS)</p> <p>p.39 "How can I go on living? I'm ruined. I'll never be able to hold up my head again." (XS)</p>
6	<p>Short. XS exacting his petty revenge, refusing to help his wife do anything. Checked out of his marriage and responsibilities.</p>	
7	<p>White gloves from factory.</p> <p>Family dynamics.</p> <p>Yile- with XS</p> <p>Erle- with XY</p> <p>Sanle- ignored by all.</p> <p>Sanle instigates a fight with Blacksmith Fang (BF)'s son- Yile ends up hitting him hard with a stone and almost killing him.</p>	<p>p.51 Sanle described by father as "little brat"</p> <p>p.51 "Sometimes Xu Sanguan would sit back in the rattan chair thinking about Yile and start to cry."</p>
8	<p>We learn of the extent of the injury to BF's son. Village is on the side of XS abandoning Yile, as he's not his blood relation.</p> <p>XS demands that XY goes to HX and asks for money to pay for what his son has done.</p>	<p>p.54 "I heard his skull is cracked open, like a watermelon that's been dropped on the ground and broken into bits and pieces."</p> <p>"The nurse at the hospital said his brains looked like stewed tofu, and steam was coming out from between the cracks in his head."</p> <p>"it's not as easy as pulling up a patch of weeds, with the skull all broken to pieces like that."</p> <p>Repetition of "people said"- the gossip of the village having such an important influence on protagonists.</p> <p>p.58 "He has to pay up, if only just this once. Otherwise I'll have no face left at all." (XS of HX)</p>
9	<p>XY goes to HX house- he turns her down, won't give any money.</p> <p>XS is angry with XY</p>	<p>p.60 XY "enveloped in a cloud of fragrance emitted by the Snowflower cream on her face. The ends of her scarf fluttered in the breeze like a pair of chickens flapping their wings."</p> <p>p.60-1 XY about HX's wife <i>"He Xiaoyong's gone and married a woman without any tits or ass."</i></p>

	XY has dramatic public sobbing again XS demands Yile goes to HX's house Yile goes to HX's house, but is turned away and so returns to XS/ XY's house.	<p>p.61 HX's wife "HX, come down here. What can she do to you? She's not going to eat you, for heaven's sake."</p> <p>p.63 "When she saw that a group of spectators had begun to gather around and watch, He Xiaoyong's woman chimed in, "Take a good look. She's a shameless bitch, this one. Trying to steal my man in broad daylight."</p> <p>p.65 "Xu Sanguan growled at her, "Goddamnit, get back in here! Do you have to let everyone on the fucking street know that I'm a cuckold?"</p> <p>p.67 "By now Xu Yulan's litany had lost much of its interest for the spectators. She went through the changes several more times, but her voice had begun to weaken with fatigue and, lacking its original bit and elasticity, became dry and gravelly."</p> <p>p.67 "her neighbours picked up and left, like theatre patrons after a show."</p> <p>p.67 "Xu Sanguan had long ago become accustomed to her litanies on the doorstep."</p>
10	BF demands money from XS. XS lets him take all the goods that belong to XY- just not his stuff, on the grounds that Yile is her son, but not his.	p.71 (XS to BF) "Come on in. Take everything you can move. Just don't take any of my things. This problem with Yile has nothing to do with me, so you can't take any of my things."
11	Short. XS turns Erle & Sanle against HX. HX has two daughters, and XS makes his sons promise to rape them when they are older. (blood debt) XS goes to give blood. Tries to give a bribe of refined sugar to BCL, but he can't accept now because he is a communist party member. BCL tells XS that he is a famous cuckold.	XS to Erle and Sanle "You two sons are all I have left now. I want you to remember who it was who brought us this low... it was He Xiaoyong... when you two grow up, I want you to take revenge on He Xiaoyong for me... when you're all grown up, I want you to rape He Xiaoyong's daughters for me."
12	XS gets his goods back from BF, but goes and has the liver and yellow rice wine first.	p.83 "She looked everything over, then went to look for the man with whom she'd worked together for those ten years to make a home. Xu Sanguan was sitting by the table inside the house."
13	Key chapter. Feels like a breaking point. XY hears that XS has sold his blood, akin to selling his ancestors. She goes to HX's house. Slanging match on the street between XY and HX's wife. BF tells XS about it, he doesn't care.	<p>p.85 XY to XS "My dad used to tell me when I was little that your blood is passed down from your ancestors. You can sell fried dough, sell a house, sell off your land, but you can never ever sell your blood. Better to sell your body than sell your blood! At least your body belongs to you. But selling your blood is like selling your ancestors..."</p> <p>"Why did I sell my blood? I sold my blood so I could keep playing the cuckold."</p> <p>"she weepingly made her way to the door."</p> <p>"Xu Sanguan growled from behind her, "Come back here, you bitch. You're going to the doorstep again. You're gonna start screaming and yelling and making a scene again."</p> <p>p.86-7 (XY and HX's wife slanging match) "Now here's a woman who must have done a lot of bad things in her last life. She's being paid back for it in this life, let me tell you, and the punishment is that she can't bear any sons, only daughters."</p> <p>"And here's a woman who's so shameless that she'll even boast about stealing someone else's seed!"</p> <p>"You know what's inside your pants? A department store, that's what! Anyone can go inside."</p> <p>"If I've got a department store in my pants, you have a public toilet!"</p> <p>(BF to XS) "There's a big crowd there, thirty people at the very least, and they're all laughing at your woman... everyone's laughing and enjoying the show"</p> <p>p.88 XS: "She's like a broken pot that's not afraid of shattering, and I'm a dead pig who longer minds that the water's coming to a boil."</p>

14	Chapter about XS and LFF. LFF is now fat (very vivid descriptions). She's married to a man who wears glasses (no name given). She's broken her leg from slipping when going to do washing. XS goes to visit, gropes her leg, then jumps on her.	p.89 (about LFF) "Xu Sanguan had watched as her neck got shorter and shorter, seen her shoulders thicken, looked on as the contours of her waistline softened and swelled, observed her fingers stubby with excess flesh. Yet he still held all the best silk cocoons in reserve for her even now." (compare with first description of her- p.20) p.91 XS to LFF about XY "if three days go by and she hasn't gone out to the doorstep to cry and carry on, she starts to feel uncomfortable, just like she hadn't taken a shit for a week." p. 93 (LFF) "her body looked like the ruins of a collapsed house strewn across the expanse of the bed." p.93 "the way her legs protruded from her undershorts left Xu Sanguan breathless." p.94 "I never though your legs would be so soft and white. They're even whiter than fatty pork."
15	We meet AF and GL again- off to sell blood. XS joins them. XS is thinking of LFF and how he'd like to send her various food/ drink items as a gift. XS now does not acknowledge Yile as his son- says he has 2 sons, and that he won't spend any of the blood money on him. We find out he definitely had sex with LFF.	p.95 "When Xu Sanguan emerged from Lin Fenfang's house, he felt as drained as a man who has just come from the steam room of a public bathhouse." p.97 "Just the same as Genlong's woman. Two sons" (XS) p.99 "now remember. You shouldn't sleep with a woman for at least ten days after you sell blood." p.100 "What if you slept with someone just before you went to sell blood?" Ah fang Said, "You'd be a dead man."
16	LFF's husband brings the food/ drink items to XS/XY's house- XY is there and works out that her husband has slept with "Fatty Lin". LFF's husband waits for XS to return, then publically announces that XS "raped" his wife (but then leaves with all the goods he brought!).	p.103 "The bespectacled man stood up from the doorstep, stepped out into the lane and addressed Xu Sanguan's neighbours..." p.105 (XY to XS) "It's all over for us. With other folks the old saying holds true: 'As goes the nation, so goes the family.' But it's different for us. The country's fine, but we're ruined..." p.106 "I've suffered and I've struggled for ten years now, and I've given you three sons. When did you ever sell blood for my sake? I never knew until now what a heartless son of a bitch you are. I can't believe you sold your blood just to give that fat bitch some soup bones." "Since when have you given me three sons? Is Yile my son? And when I sold blood to pay Blacksmith Fang, who do you think I was doing it for?"
17	(Short) Bit of a power balance battle. XY now strutting around (harkens back to her pre-marriage self). Threat of public "doorstep" drama stops XS from action. XS now doing the cooking, the neighbours come round and laugh at him.	p.108 "it just doesn't feel right to spend any more of my blood money on him." p.108 "As she shouted, she edged her way toward her place on the doorstep. Xu Sanguan rushed to block her way, saying as he held her fast, "okay, okay, okay then, I'll never bring it up again, all right?"
18	1958 and the Great Leap Forward. We see that XS is very sceptical. Repetition in the writing of "XS said to XY" (x5- start of each paragraph); across the 5 paragraphs we see the passing of the GLF and famine, depicted through the lifespan of the communal canteens.	"Xu Sanguan said to Xu Yulan" p.111 "The state is just like the landlords before. Of course, you can't say that the state is a landlord. You should call it the People's Commune instead." p.111 "...steel is like grain, grain for the state. That's why smelting steel is just like planting rice in the paddies." p.111 "I saw lots of people in red armbands going from house to house confiscating people's woks, and their bowls, and their rice, and all their oil, salt, soy and vinegar." p.111 "All the singing clowns from the Yue Opera Company are up onstage rinsing vegetables." p.111 "I didn't burp once after I ate at Heavenrest Temple canteen... but when I ate at the silk factory, I was burping all night long." p.112 "They shut down all the canteens in town. Looks like the good times are over."
19	We see XY scrimping and saving for the bad times- only this really saves them. The famine is seen through the everyday life experiences of XS and XY. The chaos	P115 "Hard times are going to come. No one can go through their life without running into hard times once or twice, You just can't escape."

	<p>and breakdown of community and the society is seen through the mundane- the silk factory closing because there aren't any silkworms, the price of rice tripling, XY no longer frying dough because there's no flour, no oil. Only the Victory Restaurant remains open. Shops and schools shut.</p> <p>The very real hunger of the family shown through the lack of energy, inability to move, sleeping all the time.</p> <p>Moment of XS being a caring father, p. 121-124, XS "cooks" for them with words. Unsurprisingly, his dish is the liver dish that helps replace his energy when he's given blood.</p>	<p>p.115 "The rice shop was open on occasion and sometimes closed. Every time it reopened, the price of rice would double or even triple.... The silkworm factory stopped work, because there were no more silkworms..."</p> <p>p.116 "I thought that we'd be eating at those big canteens for the rest of our lives. I never thought that after only a year we'd be responsible for ourselves again. And it costs money to build another stove. It costs money to buy a new wok, new bowls, new spoons and new plates again. It costs money to replace the oil, salt, soy and vinegar."</p> <p>p.117 "All your mom and I can do is protect you little ones and make sure you get through this alive."</p> <p>p.118 "What they say is true: You have to have a mountain before you can gather some wood.' That means we have to get through these tough times now, so we'll live to see better days. "</p> <p>p.118 "I'm so hungry I don't have the energy to speak"</p> <p>p.120 "It doesn't matter who eats it in the end. It'll turn into shit no matter who eats it. Let the kids shit a little extra."</p> <p>p.120 "When you've finished eating, each of you has to wish me a happy birthday with a kowtow."</p> <p>p.120 "When is this ever going to end? It's been so hard on the little brats."</p> <p>p.120 "Since it's my birthday, I'm going to do something special for you kids. I'm going to cook a meal for each of you with my mouth, and you can eat it with your ears."</p> <p>p.124 "I'll take my time before I start to eat. First I'll pour myself two shots of yellow rice wine and take a sip. I'll let the wine roll slowly down my throat and warm up my insides. It feels just like washing your face with a hot towel. Then I'll pick up a pair of chopstick and lift a slice of liver up to my mouth. This is the life, this is the moment of paradise."</p>
<p>20</p>	<p>XS decides his family needs to eat, so he needs to give blood. (have eaten corn flour gruel for 57 days in a row).</p> <p>p.126 we see BCL as corrupt again- demanding his bribe from XS. XS has to give him 5Y from his 35Y, in order to be allowed to give blood.</p> <p>XS is weaker than ever. XY fed up of the hard times.</p>	<p>p.125 "everyone in town has lost weight, but Blood Chief Li still has ruddy cheeks."</p> <p>p.125 "All I have left is my blood."</p> <p>p.126 "With times as hard as these, the town blood chief might end up starving to death if he didn't accept a little something to eat and drink now and again."</p> <p>p.127 "After I sold blood today, I didn't drink two shots of yellow rice wine or eat a plate of fried pork livers. That's why I don't have any energy left. It's not that I didn't want to eat some. I went over to the Victory Restaurant, but all they have is plain soup noodles."</p> <p>p.127 "it's not like it's mere sweat. It's blood after all."</p>
<p>21</p>	<p>p.129 recurring image of XY and the snowflower cream (like the Golden melon)</p> <p>p.130- XS very hard on Yile, he won't treat him to the same food as the rest of the family. (b=noodles)</p> <p>We switch to the story through Yile's eyes- he buys the sweet potato, but it doesn't fill him up. He is always cheated by adults (the seller gives him a smaller potato because he's a child). Wanders the streets, people publically seeing him alone, semi-abandoned. Resolves by the end that XS isn't his father.</p>	<p>p.129 "he asked her to put on some Snowflower cream."</p> <p>p.130 (XS to Yile) "The money I made today came from selling blood. This money is special. This money's harder to come by than other kinds of money. I put my life at risk to get this money. So if I let you eat noodles too, I'd be doing that bastard He Xiaoyong a favour."</p> <p>p.130 "Yile nodded as if he had understood what Xu Sanguan had said."</p> <p>p.131 "If you were my own son, you would be my favourite son of all." With these words, Yile beamed.</p> <p>p.131 "The mass of flesh inside the sweet potato was orange, like sunlight."</p> <p>p.134 "The lights of the Victory Restaurant glittered across the darkness. The bright lights made Yile happy. A surge of joy welled up in his heart, as if he were already eating the noodles."</p> <p>p.135 "...he sat down on the ground, circled his arms around his knees, and began to cry."</p> <p>p.136 "he replied to Xu Sanguan's snores with a declaration: <i>If I'm not really your son, then you're not my dad either.</i>"</p>
<p>22</p>	<p>Yile goes to HX's house and refuses to leave. Creates a scene, until HX drags him down the street and dumps him. P.143-145 key to XS and Yile relationship.</p>	<p>p.139 (Yile to HX) "Dad... why don't you go over to the hospital and sell blood?... then you can take me to eat noodles."</p> <p>p.139 (HX wife) "... he wants He Xiaoyong to go to the hospital to sell blood! He wants to kill our He Xiaoyong!"</p> <p>p.140 (HX dragging Yile) "Yile's hands grabbed frantically for his own collar, and his face contorted as he gasped for air."</p> <p>p.140 (HX to Yile) "If you ever come by here again, I'll slaughter you."</p> <p>p.140 "Blacksmith Fang, why don't you buy me a bowl of noodles? Then you can be my real dad."</p> <p>p.141 "Xu Sanguan said, "If he wants to look for his real dad, who am I to stand in his way?"</p> <p>p.142 "Xu Sanguan asked them, "Did He Xiaoyong's woman curse at me too?... then it's none of my business."</p>

		<p>p.142 (XS) "If a kid really isn't your own flesh and blood, there's no way he'll ever become your own, no matter how well you raise him."</p> <p>p.143 (contrast XS feelings to what he says) "XS began to feel uncomfortable... to feel anxious" "Goddamnit, you scared your mum half to death and you scared the hell out of me too"</p> <p>p.144 "it would be better if you never came back." "Stop right there, you little brat. Where do you think you're going"... Xu Sanguan knelt down by his side. "Climb onto my back."</p> <p>p.145 "Timidly he asked Xu Sanguan, "Dad, are you taking me to eat noodles?" Xu Sanguan stopped cursing Yile. His voice suddenly grew gentle. "That's right."</p>
23	<p>HX is hit by a truck and in hospital gravely ill. He has internal bleeding (significance of blood again). XS gloats, strutting around telling neighbours that Old Man Heaven pays out in the end. Lot of reverting to old traditions- XS and talk of Old Man Heaven, HX's wife goes to a fortune teller to ask what to do. He says HX's son must perform a ceremony on the roof to pull HX's soul back to Earth. XY delights in the other woman's fate to her face when she comes to beg Yile to perform the ceremony. She's more forgiving when she explains to XS. XS in turn is unforgiving to XY's face, but ends up asking Yile to do it. (public v private faces, contradictory natures seemingly- have to read between the lines a lot with these characters).</p>	<p>p.146 "XS gloated for a day."</p> <p>p.147 "Most people in town think selling blood is something to be ashamed of, but in my grandpa's village they believe that the men who sell blood are stronger than the ones who don't. Now look at me. I've sold blood. Am I the weaker for it? No, of course not. And why not? Because Old Man Heaven's rewarding me. I'd continue to survive even if I sold blood every day. Blood for me is like a money tree."</p> <p>p. 149 "When people's souls take flight, they almost always exit through the chimney."</p> <p>p.150 (XY about HX's wife) "rather than crying in the privacy of her own home, she cries on someone else's doorstep. And she doesn't just cry. She wails like a cat in heat."</p> <p>p.151 "My fate is sweet"... "My fate is bitter"</p> <p>p.152 (HX wife) "He is He Xiaoyong's son, after all." Xu Yulan grinned. "Oh, if you had said that from the beginning I might have let Yile go with you."</p> <p>p.152 (XY to HXW) "You have bad karma, and you're getting exactly what you deserve."</p> <p>p.152 "her eyes were so swollen from crying they looked like lightbulbs... She's as skinny as a pole. You could use her to hang your laundry out to dry."</p> <p>p.153-4 "Still, you have to feel bad for HX's woman. It's just about the worst thing that can happen to a woman... it just wouldn't feel right if we didn't try to help her out."</p> <p>p.154 (XY to XS) "You always say that those who do good get good in return... if you let Yile call back his soul, everyone will say XS is a good man..." (XS to XY) "They'll say that XS's a real idiot, a prize fool, a stupid fucking cuckold."</p> <p>p.155 (XS to Yile) "the way HX treated us was unforgivable, but people have to let bygones be bygones... if someone's about to die, you have to do what you can, no matter what you think about him."</p> <p>p.156 "Yile, HX will recognise you as his own son now. And even if he didn't, I could never be your real dad. Yile, remember what I've told you today. You need to have a conscience... after I get old and sick and die, if you would remember from time to time how it was that I raised you, and if you feel sad for a moment, maybe even shed a tear or two for me, that would be enough for me. That would make me very happy."</p>
24	<p>Yile goes to the rooftop to call for HX's soul. Big crowd watching (this omnipresent "chorus" of the village/ neighbours/ others bearing witness to the private family dramas).</p> <p>p.159 HX's wife begs on her knees to ask XY to make Yile plead for HX. Yile continues to refuse. Everyone losing face.</p>	<p>p.161 "Yile began to cry. "Everyone says you're not my real dad. Mom says you aren't my real dad either. Now you're saying the same thing too. That means I don't have a dad. I don't have a mom either. I don't have a family. All I have is me..."</p> <p>p.161 (XS) "Yile, all you have to do is shout a few times. Once you shout, I'm going to be your real dad. Just shout a few times, and when you're done, that bastard HX will never be your real dad again. From now on I'm your real dad." When Yile heard what XS said, he lifted his face to the sky and shouted..."</p>

	<p>p.160 another example of XY getting frustrated and losing interest quickly. HX's friends go to XS to ask for his help. XS goes. Nice moment between him and Yile- father-son bonding. p.162- dramatic gesture with the knife- Yile is his real son – use of blood significant (blood ties)</p>	<p>p.162 “Standing by the doorway of HX’s house, he lifted the blade to his face and sliced his own cheek. Then he stuck out his hand, rubbed it with the blood running from the gash, and announced to the crowd, “You saw what I just did, right? I cut my own face with this knife. From now on... if any of you ever dares to say that Yile is not my real son, I’ll do the same to you.”</p>
<p>25</p>	<p>Seems quite a pivotal chapter. The Cultural Revolution has begun, again seen through XS’s eyes- very disillusioned. Repetition again (this time “XS said) to mark a passage of time between paragraphs. Has an almost poetic rhythm (would be good to read the original Chinese). We discover HX did die from the truck, and it was 3 years ago now (another significant jump in time between chapters). Yile is now 16 yrs old. A poster slandering XY as a “broken shoe” (prostitute) is seen on a wall. XS tells his sons to go and paste over the poster with another declaration. It doesn’t do any good, as 2 days later “red armbands” come for XY. Arbitrary nature of these decisions/ events depicted in the fact that they only get her because they need a “prostitute” for their public “mass struggle”. They shave half her hair- Yin/Yang haircut. p.167- XY is simultaneously outraged and bemused by what has happened (parallels with characters in Blue Kite). XY gets taken repeatedly for struggle sessions. XS tries to support and help her- helps cut her hair. P.168- rural/ mundane image- XS referring to XY as “like MSG” to their sons (there to add flavour to the events). She’s repeatedly made to stand on the streets with a placard around her neck. Sweet/ caring moment of XS risking himself to take her food with meat in it. p.169 Yile and Erle now ignore their mother, only Sanle dares to look after her, possibly because he’s too young still to see what’s going on (guess he’s about 12-13 if Yile is 16). p.171- the image of XY is a stark contrast to her first appearance. XS is told by a sinister stranger that they must denounce XY at home (public/ private thread again). XS, makes XY tell her sons about the sex/ rape with HX.</p>	<p>p.163 “Everyone’s in the streets... there are people with red armbands, and people marching, and people writing political slogans, and people pasting up big character posters... they paste them up... thicker and thicker, until it looks like the walls are wearing cotton-padded jackets.”</p> <p>p.163-4 “ Do you know why the factories have shut down, and the stores are closed, and why there are no classes at the schools,,, why some people have hung themselves from trees, and some people are locked up in ‘cow sheds’ and beaten half to death?... Do you know why as soon as Chairman Mao says something, people take what he said and make it into a song, and paint his words on the walls, and on the pavement, and on cars and ferry boats, on their sheets and pillowcases, on cups and cooking pans and even on bathroom walls and the sides of spittoons?... Because the Cultural Revolution has arrived.”</p> <p>p.164 “XS said, “ I’m only just now starting to understand what this Cultural Revolution is all about. It’s actually just a time for settling old scores. If someone offended you in the past, now’s the time to write a big-character poster about him and paste it on a wall on the street... you can say whatever you like. There aren’t any courts or police these days anyway. There’s just a lot of different crimes. You can pick any one you like, put it up on a poster, and sit back and watch everybody hound whomever you’ve accused to death.”</p> <p>p.164 (Sanle) “Someone put up a poster on the wall of the rice store saying that Mom is a ‘broken shoe.’”</p> <p>p.166 “They said they had spent three days looking for a prostitute, and since there was only half an hour left until the meeting was to begin, they had finally found one.”</p> <p>p.166 (of her XY’s hair) “it looked like a rice paddy midway through the harvest season.”</p> <p>p.167 (XY) “XS, how am I to go on living? It would be better to die. I don’t have anything against them, and they didn’t have anything against me. I don’t even know them. So why did they shave my head? Why didn’t they just let me die?”</p> <p>p.168 “She’s like MSG. You can add MSG to any kind of dish, and it makes everything a little tastier.”</p> <p>p.169 “When I stand on the street, I’m just like a telephone pole for all anyone cares.”</p> <p>p.169 “I’m not afraid of anything anymore. I’ve suffered everything now. There’s nothing else they can do to me... What more could they do to me? Kill me? Fine, I’m not really afraid of dying... if it wasn’t for you and the kids, I really wouldn’t be afraid of anything.”</p> <p>p.169 “XS, as long as you’re good to me, I’m not afraid of anything in the world.”</p>

	<p>Yile declares he hates HX and XY, he loves Mao and XS. XS confesses his sex/ rape with LFF- to make sons see he is as “bad” as XY.</p> <p>p.180- the arbitrary nature of Mao’s edicts- Yile and Erle get sent to the countryside, but Sanle gets to stay, graduate and work in the town. Sets up next chapter.</p>	<p>p.170 “What are you kids afraid of? You kids were born into the new society, and you’ve grown up under the red flag. You’re innocent.”</p> <p>p.171 “XY’s clothes were in tatters, and her back was curved like the question marks that filled the big-character posters.”</p> <p>p.172 (XS to XY) “I hid the good stuff under the rice.”</p> <p>p.173 (XS) “You can know a man’s face but not his heart.”</p> <p>p.173 (XS to XY) “You’re already in hot water, and I’m the only one in the world who’s trying to save you. If I got thrown in the water along with you, there’d be no-one left to pull you out.”</p> <p>p.176 (XS to XY) “Don’t look at them as your sons. Just try to see them as the revolutionary masses who are denouncing you.”</p> <p>p.178 (Yile) “I hate He Xiaoyong the very most. And I hate her second most... the person I love most, of course, is our Great Leader Chairman Mao. And the one I love second most”- Yile gazed and Xu Sanguan- “is you.”</p> <p>p.179 “Xu Sanguan stared back at Yile without so much as blinking. After what seemed like a long while, tears spilled from his eyes, and he said to Xu Yulan, “Who says Yile isn’t my son?”</p> <p>p.179 “If you hate her, you have to hate me too, because she and I are birds of a feather.”</p> <p>p.180 “Later Chairman Mao began to talk. Chairman Mao was saying things nearly every day...”</p> <p>p.180 “ They marched under a red flag, singing anthems, happily climbing onto buses, happily boarding ferries, waving good-bye to the tears of their mothers and fathers on their way to their new homes in the countryside.”</p> <p>p.181 “One day Chairman Mao sat on the sofa in his study and said, “You may keep one child by your side.””</p>
<p>26</p>	<p>Yile returns but looks dreadful. He is broken in spirit- actions all speak of severe depression (staring of the of window etc).</p> <p>P. 184- XS talks significantly about energy (theme)</p> <p>p.186- XS sells more blood, to give the money to Yile (so, literally –willingly-giving up his “energy” so that his son can have energy- contrast with CH21 et al where he said he couldn’t use the blood money for Yile because it was special).</p> <p>XS gives money to Yile and sends him back to his brigade in the countryside. Pitiful sight (Yile crying).</p>	<p>p. 182 “He was skinny as a twig, his face was greyish yellow and he held a broken old basket in his hands, filled with a bundle of leafy vegetables. This was his present for his parents.”</p> <p>p.183 “He always sat by the window, with his arms draped over the windowsill and his chin resting on his arms...”</p> <p>p.183 “The walls were nearly a hundred years old, and green weeds grew from the crack between the bricks, fluttering in the breeze.”</p> <p>p.184 (CS) “You know, energy isn’t like money. The more you use money, the less you have. But the more energy you put out, the more you’ll have.”</p> <p>p.187 (XS to Yile) “Take all of it. I earned it selling blood just now. Take all of it.”</p>

	<p>Erle's Brigade Chief visits, we see he is very corrupt as well, abusing his position to get treated and given goods by parents. XY asks XS to sell blood again, so that they can entertain him and make sure Erle is treated well (never a hint in this story that a woman could give blood?)</p> <p>BCL says he can't sell blood, it's too close to the last time he gave blood. GL enters- pleads on behalf of XS so BCL relents.</p> <p>We hear from GL that AF's bladder burst last time he went to sell blood (all the water they drink before going).</p> <p>We find out AF is Brigade Chief of their village- unlucky that Yile or Erle didn't get sent there.</p> <p>After giving blood, XS and GL go to the Victory Restaurant as per usual. GL passes out in the restaurant- only 40 + yrs- we find out he's had a cerebral haemorrhage (blood again). XS decides it's because GL must've sold blood recently.</p> <p>P197 Brigade Chief forces XS to drink with him- XY pushes him to, to help Erle.</p> <p>Next day, XS goes to visit GL- he's already dead and gone.</p>	<p>p.195 "The doctor said Genlong had suffered a cerebral haemorrhage, but XS knew better. XS told himself, <i>the doctor must not have know that Genlong had just sold some blood. Otherwise he wouldn't have said that it was a cerebral haemorrhage.</i>"</p> <p>p.199 "it's better to harm yourself than to hurt a friend's feelings."</p> <p>p.201 " he sat and remembered Genlong. And Ah Fang... and when he was finished remembering, he sat and cried."</p>
27	<p>Yile is getting sicker. Erle goes to visit, sees how sick he is, carries him 3 miles to the ferry, to get him back to the town. Runs back to get his blanket to protect him from the snow. Contrast of freezing Yile and hot Erle. Finally gets him to the hospital, Yile has hepatitis (again a blood illness), and sending him to the hospital in Shanghai is his only hope. P.207-208, XS goes around the town asking various families for money to help- even the Blacksmith gives money (whose son Yile nearly killed). HX's wife and daughters give the most money (why?).</p> <p>XS goes to BCL to sell more blood- but BCL refuses (too dangerous after giving twice recently)- but suggests that XS can give blood elsewhere, where people don't know he's given blood.</p>	<p>p.208 (HXW to daughters) "Yile is your big brother, after all. You can't just stand and watch a drowning man go under... give the man whatever you have."</p>
28	<p>XS plans to sell blood at each of the 6 towns on the way to Shanghai. He sells in the first town, ends up freezing cold. P.216-217- lot of talk about hot and cold in the body (very important in TCM).</p>	<p>p.212 "His time-bronzed skin flushed a deep red in the cold wind."</p> <p>p.215 "The cold winter wind chilled his face, slipped down his collar, and down his neck... wrapped in the cotton-padded jacket, he felt his body suddenly go cold. He knew it was because he had sold his blood, because he had sold all the warmth in his body."</p>

	<p>p.218- he sells more blood only a few days later- he can't walk, is shaking and freezing cold. Locals want to take him to a doctor, he refuses, so they take him to an inn.</p> <p>P221- XS talks about selling "all my strength". Shares a room with an old man who has two piglets. Old man kindly lets one of the piglets sleep with him, so the animal's heat can warm him up. (ironic given pig's liver is his "go-to" dish after giving blood). Four days later he sells blood again at Pine Grove, but then passes out and results in having to have a blood transfusion of more blood than he gave- so loses all the money he'd made so far.</p> <p>Can't afford ferries, hitches a ride on a silk cocoon river barge. Makes friends with the brothers on the boat, and introduces them to selling blood. One of them sells to him, so that he can give more blood later.</p> <p>Finally gets to Shanghai, thinks Yile is dead, then sees he isn't –cries from happiness.</p>	<p>p. 215 "He looked as if he were pulling his body down the road with his collar."</p> <p>p.221 "If you sell just once or twice, you feel weak. If you keep on selling blood, all the warmth in your body escapes, and you just can't get warm."</p> <p>p.221-222 "I already sold all my strength. All I had left was my warmth... now even the little warmth that I had left is gone."</p> <p>p.222 " the old man said, "First you sold your strength. Now you've sold your warmth. What's left but your life?" "If that's what it takes, I'm willing" XS explained, "my son has hepatitis."</p> <p>p.223 "I'll put the pigs in bed with you. They'll help keep you warm"</p> <p>p.230 "Your blood is like water in a well. It'll never run dry, no matter how much you draw."</p> <p>p.231 "There are four kinds of blood... they're foreign letters. I don't know how to write them either. I only know the first one, O. You draw a circle. My blood type is a circle."</p> <p>p.237 " When I was young I was just the same, I thought selling blood was like shaking money from a tree... but that's not how it is at all... if you keep on selling your blood, you'll ruin your health." (contrast with p.147)</p> <p>p. 243 "Just now I was crying because I thought Yile was dead. Now I'm crying because I know he's alive."</p>
29	<p>Final chapter. Cultural Rev is over, XS is an old man, sons are married. XS & XY live comfortably. XS walks past VR, smells the livers and gets a hankering to sell blood- but is roundly abused by the new blood chief, who tells him his blood is too old and not wanted. XS reacts by crying through the streets. Neighbours get his sons and wife, and they find him on the street. Sons chastise him, then XY lets rip into them, reminding them of the fact that XS kept them alive with his blood, that every penny went on them, and that he nearly killed himself to save Yile. She then takes him for a liver feast in VR.</p>	<p>p.245 "the wrinkles that covered his face rippled like river water."</p> <p>p.245 "The smell stopped him in his tracks, and he stood stock-still, nostrils flaring and mouth widening"</p> <p>p.245 "Today he would sell blood once again, but this time he was going to sell blood just for himself."</p> <p>p.247 "There's more dead blood than living in your veins... the only person who might be able to youse your blood is the lacquer man... because just before they lacquer a piece of furniture, they prime the wood with a coat of pig's blood."</p> <p>p.247 "he had overcome every family calamity by selling his blood. Now that no one wanted his blood, what would be do if some calamity were once again to befall his family?"</p> <p>p.248 (whole description of XS crying) "like rain streaming across a windowpane, or the hairline cracks crawling up the sides of a fragile antique bowl..."</p> <p>p.250-51 (whole of XY's speech) "You were <i>raised</i> on his blood."</p>