

In 1949, soon after the arrival of communism, David Kidds Chinese fiancée, the daughter of an ancient Mandarin family, telephoned to say that her father was dying and that they must marry immediately. At first the couple was able to continue their privileged lifestyle, a remnant of an old and exquisite culture. But the new proletariat was rapidly suppressing the ancient traditions. Spies watched them from the roof, then confiscated their sets of mahjong; an aunt was sent on a mission to re-educate prostitutes; and the family's final magnificent party was invaded by the police. Eventually their entire way of life, and the thousand-year-old culture on which it was based, was destroyed by the totalitarian regime.

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