



Dark Days

A Full English translation is available.

日闇之時 DES JOURS SOMBRES

Scriptwriter: Frédéric Debomy **Comic Artist:** Yao-Ching Tseng **Publisher:** Gaea Books

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BFT2.0 Translator: Evian Pan & Michelle Kuo

The story begins with a radio broadcast announcing that society has fallen into chaos: the military will seize control of the country, enforcing strict new regulations. In the streets, protesters march beneath banners demanding “University Autonomy” and “Soldiers Back to the Barracks.”

Dark Days unites Taiwanese comic artist Tseng Yao-Ching and French screenwriter Frédéric Debomy in three interwoven tales set in a fictional nation, each probing the fragile balance between totalitarianism and democracy.

Rich in symbolism, the play of day and night shapes both the cover and the interior artwork, creating a vivid, immersive atmosphere. The result is a graphic novel that blends poetic allegory with sharp political reflection—a thought-provoking work that resonates far beyond its pages.



Scriptwriter **Frédéric Debomy**

Born in 1975 near Paris, Frédéric Debomy is a writer and researcher focused on Myanmar and human rights. He led France Info Birmanie, curated films for the Paris International Human Rights Film Festival, and contributed to *Les Temps Modernes*. As a comics scriptwriter, he has collaborated with artists like José Muñoz and Hong Kong artist Lau Kwong Shing, with whom he published *Burma: The Final Gamble*.



Comic Artist **Yao-Ching Tseng**

Yao-Ching Tseng uses drawing and writing as mirrored extensions of his own body, valuing the physicality and spontaneity of the creative process. He explores diverse forms and movements to both depict himself and engage with the world around him. In his vision, the form of a work is not just a container for meaning, but meaning itself—an embodiment rather than a vessel.

Under the Shadow of an Eclipse: A Reflection on the Comic *Dark Days*

by Chia-Han Chu
(originally published on OKAPI)

Life may have once felt peaceful, but recent global unrest reminds us that we can't afford to be naïve. The dangers we face are not only external—they also come from within. Often, what pulls us into darkness isn't an outside enemy, but the collapse of our own values. When fear of the "other" takes hold, people are stripped of their humanity, compared to monsters, animals, or insects—making cruelty seem acceptable. Little by little, empathy disappears. And in the end, the very things we tried to protect can turn into a prison for everyone.

Dark Days sets its narrative in a distant, undefined past, yet its themes feel urgent and immediate. Through layers of surveillance—from government propaganda on TV to hushed

conversations in the street, down to the silence between individuals—the comic masterfully conveys the disoriented anxiety of living under white terror. The threat lies not in the extraordinary, but the everyday. Power hides in plain sight, omnipresent yet unreachable.

Scriptwriter Frédéric Debomy warns us not just about the horrors of totalitarianism, but about how easily it can grow from within a democratic system—fed by fear, apathy, and the surrender of critical thought. The story's claustrophobic setting heightens the tension, as we follow characters across various regimes: a rebellious young cartoonist, a cautious old man burdened by guilt, a silent woman prisoner. None can alter the course of events. Those who

resist quietly vanish.

This raises the core question: if all resistance is futile, how do we exercise conscience? In an inhumane society, how can one live with integrity?

Illustrator Yao-Cheng Tseng brings this tension to life with haunting visuals. His ambiguous faces, lost and indistinct, echo the despair found in works like Naoki Urasawa's *20th Century Boys*, yet go further—rendering characters almost ghostlike. His cinematic framing and unstable lines create a sense that people and objects might dissolve into the gray-blue gloom at any moment.

The original French title, *Des Jours Sombres*, emphasizes "sombre"—not full darkness, but a dimmed light. It's not that the light is gone, but that we're pushed into corners where it no longer reaches. Still, the longing for freedom and dignity persists, because somewhere, the light continues to exist.

As *Dark Days* reminds us,

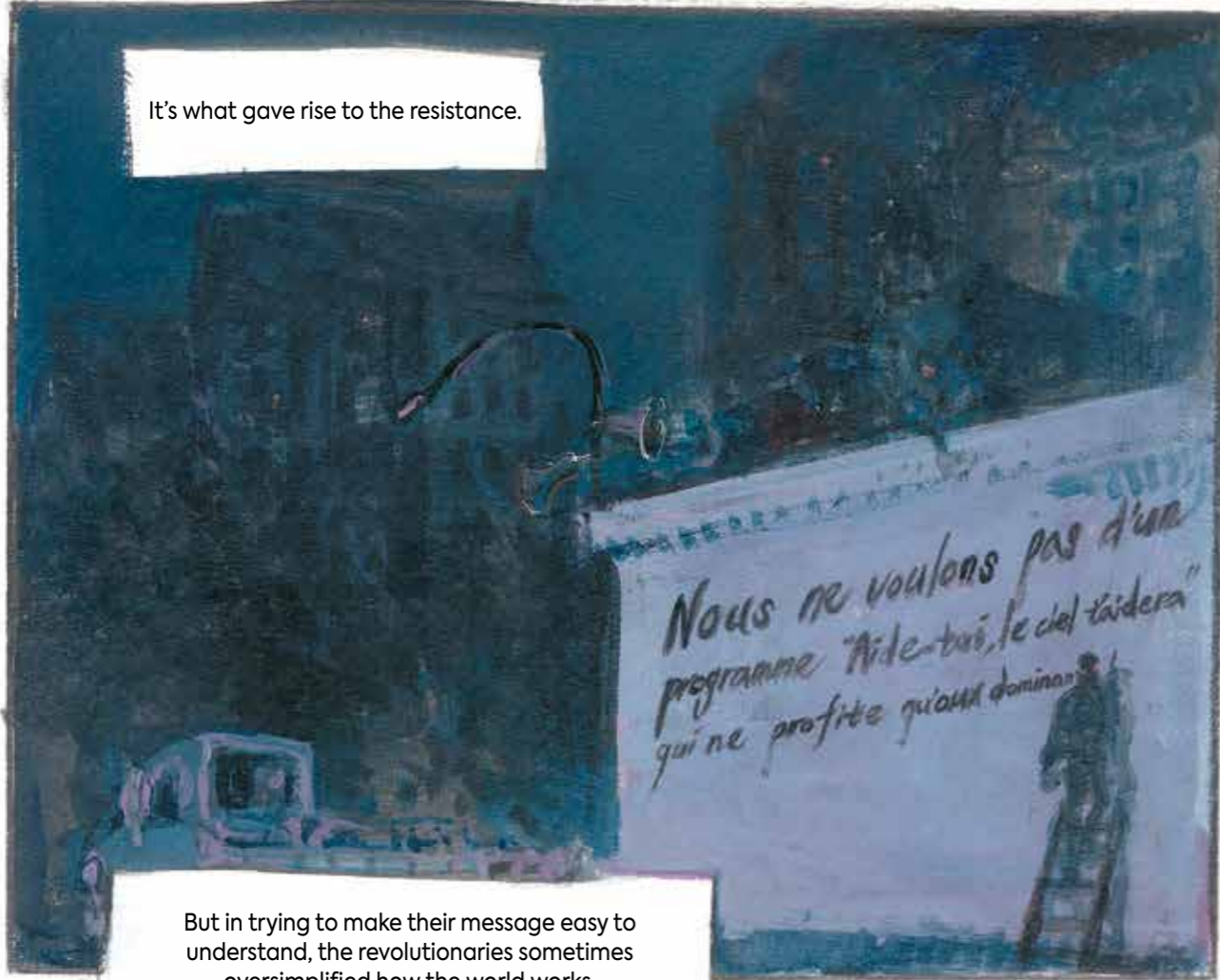
totalitarianism never arrives with fanfare; it seeps quietly into our lives. And its end isn't just the fall of a regime—it's when the shadows in our minds are finally cleared. As the book's final line suggests: only when those powers "can no longer do anything to us" can we truly step into the light.

This essay has been edited for the purposes of this booklet.

*Chia-Han Chu studied in the doctoral program in sociology at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in France and now lectures at Taipei National University of the Arts. He writes both fiction and essays. His works include the novels *The Gift and The Inside of the Inside*, the philosophical reader *Reading Bataille at Night*, the essay collection *In the Best of Circumstances*, and the short story collection *The Drunken Boat*.*

* Spray-painted on the wall: We reject this policy "God helps those who help themselves." This only benefits the powerful.

It's what gave rise to the resistance.



But in trying to make their message easy to understand, the revolutionaries sometimes oversimplified how the world works.

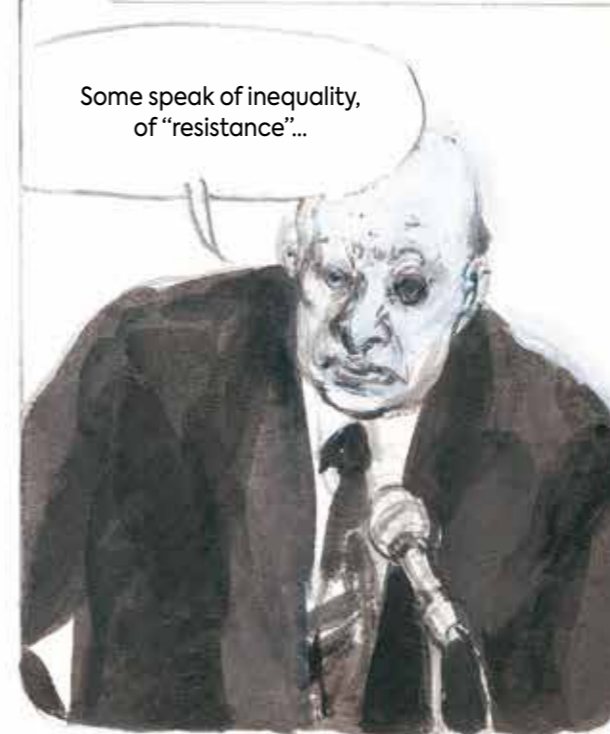


When politicians put the interests of the privileged above that of the public, they've failed their duty. We have to fight back for ourselves.

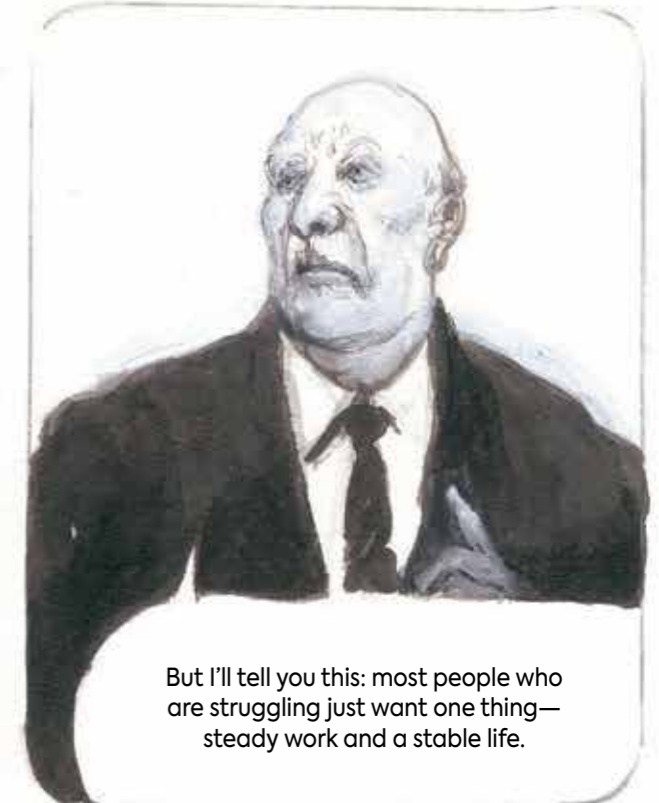


To achieve that, any means is justified.

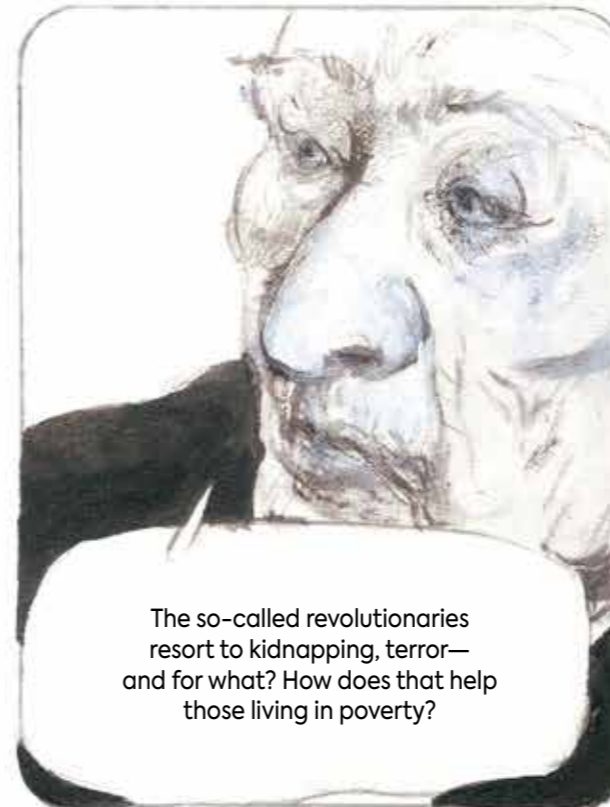
In doing so, they made the policies they opposed seem more persuasive.



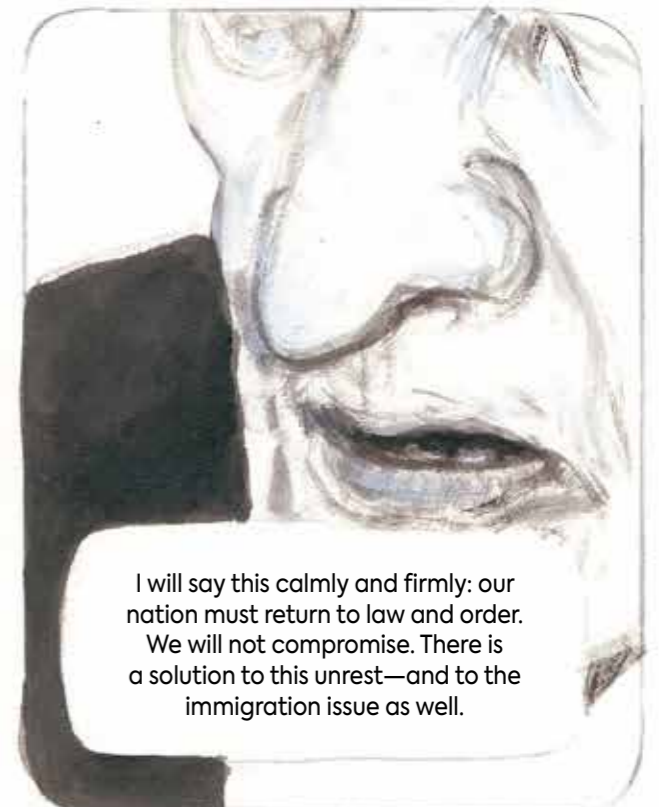
Some speak of inequality, of "resistance"...



But I'll tell you this: most people who are struggling just want one thing—steady work and a stable life.



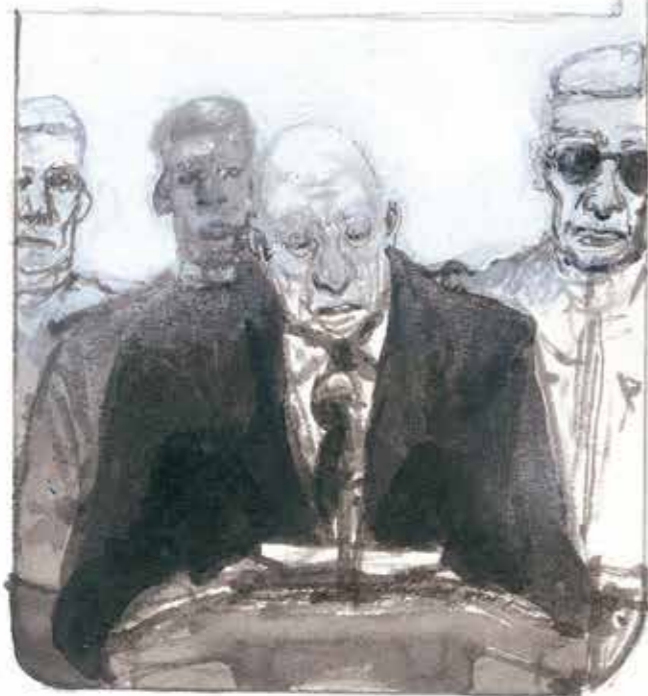
The so-called revolutionaries resort to kidnapping, terror—and for what? How does that help those living in poverty?



I will say this calmly and firmly: our nation must return to law and order. We will not compromise. There is a solution to this unrest—and to the immigration issue as well.



Just a few years ago, these same controversial policies—especially with manipulated public support—might have unleashed a political crisis.

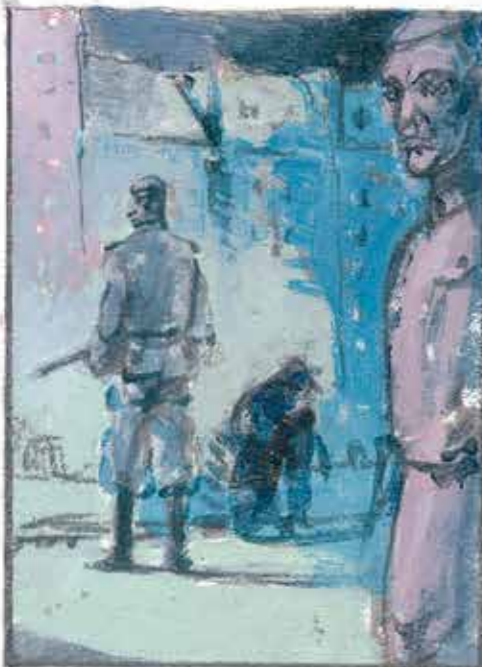


But now, things have unraveled.



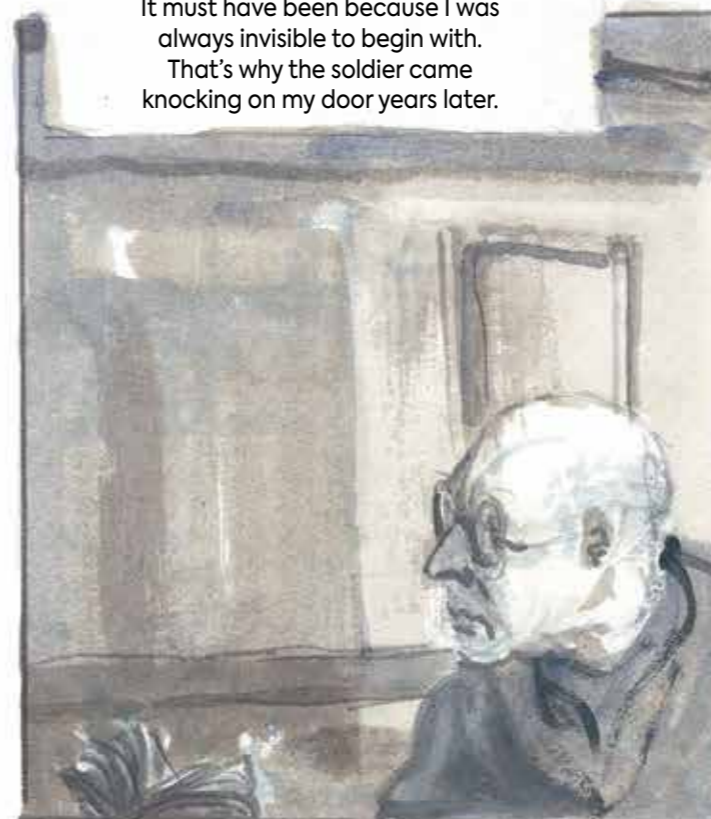
The government is incapable of resolving the chaos, and the military had to take control to restore order.

Fear has taken root in people's hearts.



And those who refused to be invisible began to disappear, one after another.

It must have been because I was always invisible to begin with. That's why the soldier came knocking on my door years later.





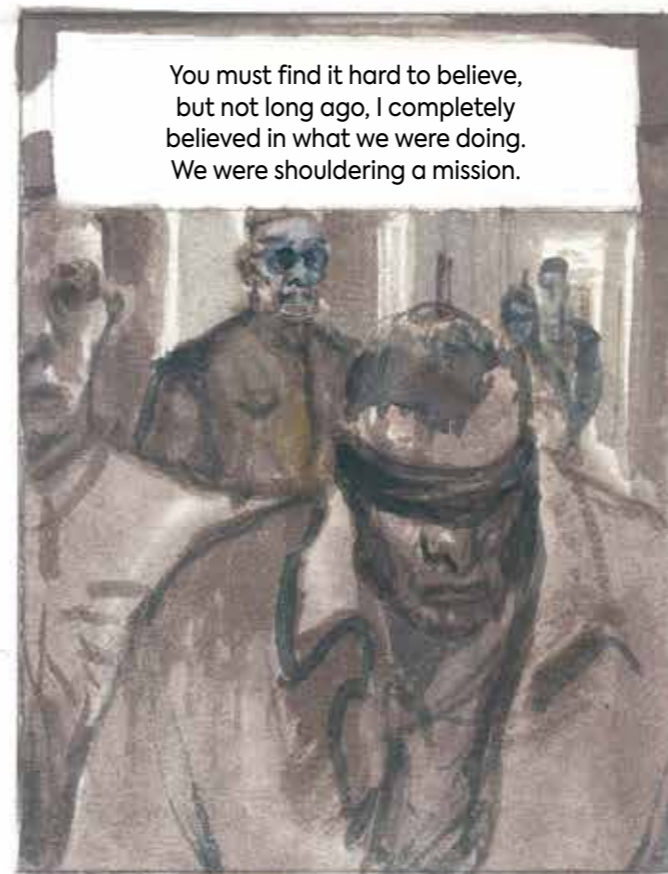
You don't know me. I'm not going to tell you my name. But you need to hear what I have to say.



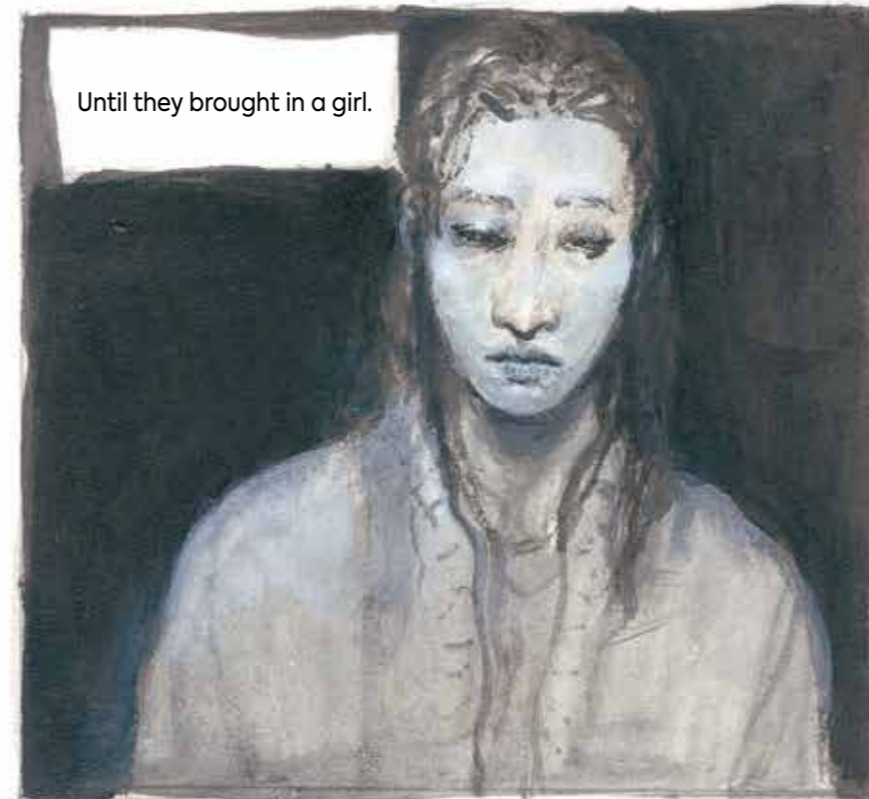
I can't bring myself to tell anyone else.



The rumors are true. I was sent on a special military mission, and our orders were to abduct, interrogate, and eliminate subversives. They told us that the fate of the nation lay in our hands.



You must find it hard to believe, but not long ago, I completely believed in what we were doing. We were shouldering a mission.



Until they brought in a girl.



She didn't look like a subversive at all.