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The prison was only a ten-minute drive from the site of the mass struggle meeting, and the truck jolted to a stop before I had time to collect my thoughts. But when I realized that I was standing in front of the prison itself, my mind focused sharply. I remember small details even today.

The country around Changwu prison is stark and barren—no trees, no grass, no water, only the dry, brown hills. There were only a few brick houses in the area. Most of the peasants lived in what amounted to small, cavelike dwellings dug into the hillsides. At first I didn't realize I was standing in front of the prison, because all I could see was what looked like a doorway in a hillside that wasn't any different from many of the peasants' doorways. When I stepped inside, I knew different. It was like stepping into hell.

The doorway I entered was not flush with the hillside as it had first appeared. The minute the guards opened it and thrust me inside it seemed as if the earth had opened up beneath my feet. I found myself looking across and down at a large sunken courtyard, scooped out of the earth to a depth of nearly thirty feet. From the outside, you couldn't even tell it was there. The guards roughly pushed me forward and we descended to the floor by means of a steep staircase. When we reached the bottom I looked across the large open space. Directly opposite was a wall about ten feet high, which was patrolled by armed guards, who walked along the top, rifles at the ready.

My guards marched me directly toward that wall, and we passed beyond it through a small door. On the other side was a very small open space and beyond that a row of ten caves dug directly into the hillside. These were the cells. They were about 33 feet long, 10 feet wide, and 8 feet high. Ten prisoners had to try to live in each one of them. At least a third of the space inside was taken up by the earthen beds on which we had to sleep. When I was put into my cell, the other prisoners all looked up, suspicious but also curious about what was going on outside. Some were just peasants who had committed various crimes; some were hardened criminals—murderers and rapists; a few were political prisoners like me. What I remember best is their eyes. A few were fearful but had the eyes of people who still had hope. These, I later learned, were the newer prisoners. Most of the prisoners, however, had only expressionless stares, their eyes focused somewhere well beyond the prison and the horizon, without a flicker of hope. When the door closed behind me, the stench of human filth, sweat, and fear was so strong that I nearly vomited.

The first few weeks in this prison were one of the most miserable periods in my life. The filth was overpowering. We were allowed out to go to the bathroom only twice a day. The rest of the time we had to urinate and defecate in a large clay pot that was emptied every morning. We had no soap or towels and were forever surrounded by powerful nauseating odors. And we were under constant attack from an army of lice who called the cell and us home. You couldn't get away from either of them.

There was also the pain of hunger. At ten in the morning we were given two pieces of steamed bread, one boiled turnip, and one bowl of hot water. We got the same meal again at four in the afternoon, and that was it. Nobody actually died of starvation while I was there, but there wasn't nearly enough food, and I couldn't get used to the hunger and the weakness that this caused. Like the smells and the lice, the pain of hunger never went away, and I don't think I ever stopped thinking about food. Equally terrible was the inactivity and sense of total isolation. Except for the brief periods when we went to the bathroom and emptied the urine pots or when we ate, there was nothing to do. We were cramped together in our small, vermin-ridden cells day in and day out with nothing to occupy our minds. The guards discouraged movement or even talking. They patrolled the top of the wall that separated our cells from the main courtyard, and they could hear any-

