

CHE ★ CHE WAS CALLED CHE FOR ONLY THAT ONE YEAR—BEFORE THAT EVERYONE CALLED HER CHI. IT WAS 1997, THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF LATIN AMERICA'S REVOLUTIONARY LEGEND CHE GUEVERA. THE WHOLE WORLD WAS AWASH WITH CHE FEVER, RENEWING ITS IDOLATRY OF THE 1960S SAINT OF LEFTIST STUDENT MOVEMENTS. THAT FAMOUS OLD PHOTO OF CHE SPORTING A GUERRILLA BERET AND A LONG MOUSTACHE APPEARED ON T-SHIRTS, WATCHES, FOOD PRODUCTS, SOUVENIRS.⁷ CHI BOUGHT A RED COMMIE CHE TEE, PUTTING IT BACK ON AS SOON AS IT CAME OUT OF THE WASH, WEARING IT ANY SEASON, EVEN UNDER HER WINTER COAT, UNTIL EVERYONE WAS FAMILIAR WITH THAT MOUSTACHED FACE ON HER CHEST. SO SHE NICKNAMED HERSELF CHE. ★ CHI BOUGHT THE CHE TEE WITH HER BOYFRIEND, KIN. "ONE FOR EACH OF US," SAID KIN. "THIS MOUSTACHE GUY SURE LOOKS HOT." THE TWO OF THEM WORE ARMFULS OF BRACELETS, HAD LONG, LOOSE, BLOND-STREAKED HAIR, RODE THEIR MOTORBIKE EVERYWHERE AT LIGHTNING SPEED—THE ENVY OF ALL TEENAGERS. ONE NIGHT KIN'S BUDDY BALDY CALLED TO ASK CHI OUT TO KARAOKE, BUT ONCE HE GOT DRUNK HE STARTED GROPING HER, WHILE THE REST OF THE GUYS JUST STOOD THERE WAITING THEIR TURN. THE NEXT DAY, KIN TOOK HIS BROTHERS TO BALDY'S PLACE, AND WITHOUT A WORD BEAT ALL THOSE GUYS TO A PULP, BREAKING BONES AND EVERYTHING. A MONTH LATER, CHI WAS WAITING IN TSIM SHA TSUI EAST FOR KIN ONE NIGHT, AND FINALLY SAW HIS BIKE WEAVING UNSTEADILY TOWARD HER. HE STOPPED IN FRONT OF HER, AND PULLED ON HIS JACKET. SOMETHING WAS STUCK INTO HIS TORSO, A KNIFE. THE BLOOD DIDN'T SHOW MUCH ON THAT RED CHE TEE, IT JUST TURNED A LITTLE BLACK. KIN FELL FROM THE BIKE. ★ AFTER KIN DIED, CHI LEFT HOME. SHE DIDN'T TAKE MUCH, JUST WHAT SHE HAD ON. OUT ON THE STREET, SHE RAN INTO HER FATHER, WHO WAS JUST GETTING HOME FROM ALL-NIGHT MAHJONG. HE ASKED HER WHERE SHE WAS GOING, AND SHE SAID, "JUST GOING TO WALK AROUND A WHILE, NOT SURE HOW LONG." CHE BRAIDED HER LONG HAIR INTO DREADS, COCKED THE VELVET CAP, AND GOT ON KIN'S MOTORBIKE TO START HER PURPOSELESS JOURNEY. SHE THOUGHT SHE WOULD DRIVE UP ALONE INTO MAINLAND CHINA, THEN MAYBE TO THE MIDDLE EAST OR INDIA, BUT IN THE END, SHE JUST ARRIVED AT THE BUILDING LOBBY OF A FRIEND. AND JUST LIKE THAT, CHE BEGAN BOUNCING AROUND FROM PLACE TO PLACE, STAYING WITH ONE FRIEND AFTER ANOTHER. ★ KIN'S UNCLE ALWAYS HAD STUFF TO SELL—SILVER JEWELRY, CRYSTAL, WATCHES, BOOTLEG CDS, UNAUTHORIZED DESIGNER GOODS, THINGS OF THAT SORT. SO CHE GOT SOME MERCHANDISE FROM HIM TO

PEDDLE ON THE STREETS. WHEN SHE WAS LUCKY, SHE'D KEEP A FEW HUNDRED DOLLARS FOR HERSELF, OTHERWISE SHE'D GO HUNGRY—YOU CAN'T EAT A STALL OF JUNK. CHE WAS BRILLIANT TO STILL HAVE THAT MOTORBIKE, THOUGH. BEING MOBILE, SHE COULD STOP ANYWHERE TO SELL AND AT THE FIRST HINT OF TROUBLE QUICKLY TAKE OFF. ONLY ONCE WAS SHE STOPPED BY THE ANTI-HAWKER INSPECTORS.⁸ CHE FEIGNED SOME TEARS AND SOBS. THE OLD GUY HAD PROBABLY NEVER ARRESTED A LITTLE GIRL BEFORE, AND DIDN'T WANT TO HAVE TO GET ROUGH, SO HE LET HER OFF. CHE ALSO RAN INTO BALDY ONCE. SHE WAS ON HER MOTORBIKE WHEN SHE SAW HIM SITTING ON A ROADSIDE FENCE OUTSIDE A MOVIE THEATER WAITING FOR SOMEONE. AS SHE DROVE BY HIM, SHE DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING ELSE TO HIT HIM WITH, SO SHE BANGED HER HELMET INTO THE BACK OF HIS HEAD. THEN SHE SPED OFF. ★ BY THE TIME SUMMER RETURNED, CHE'S CHE TEE HAD BECOME UNBEARABLY OLD AND DIRTY. THE MAGAZINES WERE SAYING THAT A CHIC NEW CUBAN RESTAURANT HAD OPENED IN CENTRAL, WITH AN ENSHRINED PORTRAIT OF CHE GUEVERA. CHE HAD ALWAYS ASSUMED THAT CHE GUEVERA WAS CUBAN. ONE DAY, CHE SET UP HER BLANKET OF GOODS IN A PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY IN CENTRAL. A CROWD OF DEMONSTRATORS MARCHED BY, PROTESTING WAGE CUTS AND LAYOFFS. IN THEIR RANKS WAS A STUDENT FROM THE UNIVERSITY'S SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT. THE UNIVERSITY STUDENT NOTICED CHE SELLING BRACELETS, POINTED AT HER SHIRT, AND CRIED: "LONG LIVE CHE!" AT NIGHTFALL HE CAME BACK, WANDERED AROUND LIKE HE WAS LOOKING FOR SOMEONE. SHE HAD LONG PACKED UP HER THINGS AND WAS SMOKING IN A CORNER. SEEING THAT HE WAS SO HOPELESS, SHE FINALLY CALLED HIM OVER. ★ CHE AND THE UNIVERSITY STUDENT SAW EACH OTHER A FEW TIMES. SHE WOULD DRIVE HIM BACK TO HIS DORMITORY ON HER MOTORCYCLE. HE WOULD RIDE IN THE BACK WITH HIS ARMS AROUND HER WAIST, SHE WOULD SIT IN THE FRONT, DRIVING AND QUIETLY CRYING. ONCE SHE TOOK HIM TO THE TEMPLE STREET MARKET. HE LET HIMSELF GET ROPED IN BY A "FORTUNE TELLER," WHO WAS HAPPY AND GAVE HIM 2-FOR-1, SO SHE GOT A FORTUNE TOO. SHE WAS SHOCKED WHEN SHE READ IT: "MISS, IN YOUR LAST LIFE, YOU WERE A GOOD MAN AND A HERO. YOU WERE NOT CHINESE, BUT ARGENTINIAN, WITH BIG AMBITIONS FOR YOUR GENERATION, BUT SADLY DIED YOUNG." THE UNIVERSITY STUDENT FOUND THIS HILARIOUS, "OH, THIS GUY MUST REALLY BE A MYSTIC," AND EVEN JOKINGLY CALLED CHE "OLDER BROTHER." CHE'S HEART WAS FILLED WITH SORROW, SHE LOOKED DOWN AT THE PORTRAIT ON HER CHEST, AND WALKED ON ALONE, AHEAD OF HIM.