Wang Meng’s short parables first appeared in newspapers and magazines in the period after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Many of them satirize the self-important and inflated rhetoric of political leaders, as does the following about a political committee meeting.

Right to the Heart of the Matter
By Wang Meng

A meeting to discuss cold drinks for summertime was held in a place called “M.”

MA put forward his proposal to raise the quality level of osmanthus-flavored sour-plum nectar, and voiced his opinions on the issue of beverage production facilities in general.

MB made a recommendation regarding the opening up of additional sources of cold milk and liquid yogurt.

MC advocated an energetic expansion of the production and supply of bottled beer, ale, and light beer.

MD made known his ideas regarding the production of top-grade soft drinks.

ME demanded the return of the traditional thirst-slaking dried fruit from North China.

MX stood up, pounded the table, raised his index finger, and sounded a warning:
“Gentlemen, friends, since we are discussing the issue of beverages, we mustn't forget for a single moment man’s most basic, his principal, his most essential, his most important beverage, the one that can never be overlooked: not beer, not fruit juice, not yogurt, and not soft drinks, but H2O—that's water! Talking about beverages and ignoring water is a perfect example of reversing the relationship between principal and subordinate, which can only lead to chaos. At this rate, before long the people will be drinking urine, lime wash, maybe even lubricating oil. Why? Because they will have forgotten that water is the source, that water is at the heart of all things, that they must
hold on to water at all costs! If we can tolerate this sort of trend, then what's left for us not to tolerate?"

All the other, from MA to ME, gazed at each other in blank dismay, not knowing what to do now.

MF was the first to respond to the challenge. “I'm in total agreement with MX’s point of view,” he shouted, “and I want to go even further by stating that it's not enough just to drink water, that in order to ensure its survival, mankind must also eat! Whether it's flour or rice, vegetables or seafood, makes no difference at all, as long as we eat. Just ponder for a minute the serious consequences of drinking water and not eating! Therefore, of primary ...”

MA was clearly getting worked up. He unbuttoned his shirt to expose his chest, shouting as he did so: “I want to solemnly declare that I have never opposed the eating of food or the drinking of water, not in the past, not now, and certainly not tomorrow, or the day after, or the day after that....” His declaration thus completed, he took a biscuit out of his pocket, poured himself a glass of cool water, and began eating and drinking right there in front of the others.

MB entered the fray at that moment, calling the others to account: “I want you all to take note that it's not nearly enough just to eat food and drink water. We must also wear clothing! Clothing is necessary to keep us warm and to keep our bodies concealed from view. Without clothing we would be no better than beasts!”

And the debate goes on.