

# *Li The Later Ruler*

李後主

Yip Shiu Tak's Cantonese Opera Manuscripts

葉紹德粵劇劇本精選

Scripted by YIP Shiu Tak

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This Translation

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Translation Project of Yip Shiu Tak's Cantonese Opera Manuscripts

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# Translator's Note on Translation

1. I believe I should set out, in English primarily since this is an English translation, a note to explain to English readers how I do the translation and why.
2. I was asked to follow the format used in my friends Bell Yung's and Sonia Ng's translation of The Flower Princess and I had tried to follow it closely, particularly where their format and the format used in the Chinese version of 李後主 are different. I adopt the Yung & Ng format of having the character's name singled out before his/her sung/spoken lines. (In the original Chinese version, character's name is within the square bracket.) The square bracket preceding each passage sung or spoken contains 3 more things in the Chinese version besides the character's name (which I have placed outside preceding the square bracket as explained above): (1) stage directions, (2) "sing" or "speak", (3) the title of the Cantonese opera tune, either in Cantonese pinyin for standard tunes such as 二黃 Yiwong, 滾花 Gwanfa, 口古 Haugu etc, or translating the meaning if it is a 小曲, such as "醉酒" as "Drunk with Wine" and "寄生草" as "Parasitic Grass" by Yung & Ng. I have done the same, which is more than Yung & Ng who only have (3) and occasionally (1). From my experience in translating subtitles for Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) Cantonese operas, I feel it is not only desirable but essential to identify each passage with "Sing" or "Speak" before identifying the tune/rhythm. This is where I follow Uncle Tuck's original and differ from Yung & Ng.
3. I also find it difficult to follow another practice in Yung & Ng's translation which is "confusing" and "inconsistent" as they themselves admitted in their introduction, viz. they mix Cantonese pinyin names (such as "Cheungping" and "Sai Hin") for some characters, and mandarin (Putonghua) pinyin ones for what they consider "historical characters with standard translation of names" such as 崇禎 as Chongzhen! In 李後主 I simply consider all characters to be "historical" and use consistently mandarin pinyin. If this is not acceptable (I am not sure who should decide on this besides the translator) then I will suggest using consistently Cantonese pinyin and change "Li" to "Lei", "Qiao" to "Kiu" etc, which will be quite straightforward and no trouble at all.

4. I understand Bell & Sonia's reasons for assuming that the translated lines speak for themselves and no annotation or footnote is made in their translation. But Chinese opera lyrics are full of classical allusions which are not immediately obvious to non-Chinese readers of the translation (or audience reading subtitles). Where possible I will do some paraphrasing within the translation to make it more comprehensible. But I suggest having a list of annotations after each Act.
  
5. One last note: where 後主 addresses himself as 孤 or 寡人, I use the royal plural "we/us". Otherwise I revert to "I/me" in more intimate conversations.

Rupert Chan

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# LI THE LATER RULER

Translated by Rupert CHAN Kwan-yun

## ACT 1 SECRET TRYST

[Chorus sing off: Faansin Prelude]

**Hazy drizzly South of the Yangzi River,  
Same old scenery so intense for whom?  
LI the LATER RULER of Southern Tang,  
Was born amid tribulations, a nation in decline.  
Kind -hearted and loathing war by nature,  
With an imperialistic neighboring Power.  
Seeking only self-preservation,  
Self-strengthening was of no avail.  
Heaven begrudges true love,  
Sweet dream turned into nightmare.  
Only his literary works are passed down to posterity,  
Who, yearly on his birthday, holding his books, mourn the ci maestro.**

*Stage lights up*

*LI the LATER RULER, sighing in face of the scenery, slowly walks onto stage front.*

LATER RULER

[Sings: Yilau, to the ci tune “Partridge Sky”]

**Pond water clears, resembles pretty face.  
The one I pine for is still parted from me.  
Who’d think on the night of the third of the ninth moon,  
With dewdrops like pearls and moon like a bow,  
All quiet in the palace garden,  
The little yard empty,  
Cold anvil and pestle intermittent in the wind.  
Helplessly sleepless throughout long night,**

[Changing directly to sing: Hoche Gwanfa lower line]

**Beating time to moonlight on window sill.  
Thinking of the kingdom in dire straits,  
Who knows my unspeakable secret pain.**

[Speaks]

Sigh, the nation weak for so long, submitting to the neighboring Power is our only option. Several months ago, we sent Xū XUAN to escort our brother Prince Zheng to offer tributes at the Imperial Capital city of Bian, they have not returned so far. This makes one so worried. (*Gong*) Alas, since my consort died, sleeping alone for years, the Queen Mother also died. The neighboring Power presses

hard, we know not how to cope. Uncle-in-law keeps urging us these days, asks us to reappoint a Queen. I think of YOUNGER ZHOU, so clever, we have pledged each other our love, but with an endangered nest in the storm, how can I have the heart to implicate her. Indeed: life may end, sorrow is eternal.

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**Afraid to touch on rueful matter at heart,  
I'll only tell my heartache in dreams.  
To dispel sorrow I sleep ever in drunkenness,  
Only to find wine entering sad bowels saddens more.**

*[Walks around with hands clasped at the back and softly sighs]*

BAO-YI, LIU-ZHU AND OTHER COURT MAIDS

*[Enter and speak]*

We bow to Your Majesty.

LATER RULER

*[Surprised to see them and speaks]*

Rise! BAO-YI, LIU-ZHU, for months we've been busy with state affairs, with no mood for music appreciation. Who's taking the liberty to make such elaborate arrangements?

*[The Maids are dismayed at their king's displeasure.]*

BAO-YI

*[Speaks: Haugu]*

Majesty, we are unable to allay your worries but we'd like to drown your sorrow, so tonight we play again the Dance in Rainbow Color Feather Costume. Our thoughts are reflected in pipes and strings.

LATER RULER

*[Has not the heart to scold them, smiles and speaks: Haugu]*

BAO-YI, how can we not know your sentiments. We come together so rarely, why not just have a leisurely chat. I fear that hearing old music will arouse memories of the poor phoenix consort in the underworld.

LIU-ZHU

*[Speaks: Haugu]*

Sire, if you'd just show a happy face, your maids would be so contented. Pray, Sire, forget sorrow for a while, cheer up and sing verses to the moon and the breeze.

BAO-YI

*[Deeply moved and speaks]*

Sire.

*[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]*

**Your Majesty is benevolent, heaven bless you.  
I pray silently for Southern Tang to prosper.  
I am concerned that you eat little, with so much work.  
I lament a weak maid can hardly serve the state.**

EUNUCH

*[Enters and speaks]*

Your Majesty, Chen the Royal In-law seeks audience at palace door now, Your Majesty's pleasure, please?

LATER RULER

*[Speaks aside]*

Chen the Royal In-law here again? That means just as sadness is driven away, then comes sorrow. I can only fudge the issue, stall the marriage business and make other plans later.

*[Speaks to EUNUCH]*

EUNUCH, come here, go and bring the Royal In-law to see us.

*[Exit EUNUCH as told]*

CHEN QIAO

*[Enters and sings: Gwanfa lower line]*

**The Dowager Queen Mother's last words I still recall.**

**Let beautiful phoenix match golden dragon.**

**I fear His Majesty changes his mind.**

**No wonder this old courtier's suspicion is aroused.**

*[Comes indoors and speaks]*

I bow to Your Majesty.

LATER RULER

*[Seeing CHEN QIAO, leaves seat hurriedly to take him by the hand as if greatly alarmed and speaks: Haugu]*

Chen the Royal In-law, is the state in danger? Are the Powers mobilizing troops? Why do you come into the palace so late at night, alarming us so greatly?

CHEN QIAO

*[Speaks: Haugu]*

Sire, fear not, we may face troublesome times, and the neighboring Power is eyeing us like a greedy tiger, yet South of the Yangzi can still defend itself. I am glad to see Your Majesty's mood changes for the better, having song and dance for entertainment tonight. I only come bearing in mind the last bidding of the Dowager Queen Mother, and happen upon this occasion, just so: half private and half state affair.

LATER RULER

*[Speaks: Haugu]*

Royal In-law, for months we've been in a melancholy mood, with no heart for such diversion. It's just the songstresses from the Royal Conservatoire come to enquire after our health. BAO-YI, you Maids leave first. We will have Rainbow Costume played some other day.

*[Waves hand to dismiss them.]*

BAO-YI, LIU-ZHU AND SONGSTRESSES

*[Look at each other helplessly and speak together]*

Your maids obey.

*[Exeunt all Maids]*

CHEN QIAO

*[Laughs and speaks]*

They say Dharma won't be taught a third man. Sire you are indeed clever.

LATER RULER

*[Speaks: Haugu]*

Royal In-law, since the state is safe, leave small matters for discussion later. We have just recovered from shock, and will retire to bedchamber for a rest. Time is late now. Royal In-law, why not go home and retire. Be careful of frosty and slippery road.

CHEN QIAO

*[Surprised and speaks]*

What, even I am to be dismissed. Sigh, they say a king's worry is a courtier's shame, no wonder. I am old and incapable.

*[Makes to leave but tarries, weeps bitterly]*

LATER RULER

*[Feels sorry and speaks]*

Royal In-law, we have no intention to dismiss you, why so full of grief?

CHEN QIAO

*[Grieves and speaks]*

Alas, Sire.

*[Sings: Yifaan Muk'yü]*

**I cannot assist my king like ancient premier Guan Zhong,  
To take up arms I only envy old general Huang Zhong.  
South of Yangzi cannot fight the neighboring Power,  
Hence we swallow shame, for self-preservation,  
to be a vassal state.**

LATER RULER

*[Sighs and speaks]*

Sigh, the general trend is so, not your fault, why blame yourself.

CHEN QIAO

*[Speaks]*

Sire, I seek your audience tonight. You know full well my intentions. Why is it every time I raise this matter you, Sire, just avoid the subject, how come?

LATER RULER

[*At a loss for words and speaks*]

Well.....

CHEN QIAO

[Speaks]

Sire.

[Sings: Yifaan Muk'yú]

**The Dowager's last wish is weighty.**

**How can I not see the started matter to its finish.**

**You are praised for filial piety.**

**Why won't you obey Mother's order.**

LATER RULER

[*Sighs and sings: Gwanfa lower line*]

**Full of sorrow, with nobody to tell. Now**

**I am at a loss of words to respond.**

**I don't mind wronging myself, but fear wronging another.**

**I fear love sows seeds of sorrow.**

CHEN QIAO

[Speaks: Haugu]

Sire, ever since Queen Elder Zhou passed away, you have been without a consort. Dowager Queen Mother bade with her last breath that the younger sister succeed the elder. Now Sire you have completed the mourning period and should reappoint a Queen, lest you have nobody to look after you day and night.

LATER RULER

[Speaks: Haugu]

Royal In-law, for the nation's decline, and my royal brother's detention, we have not dined or slept in peace for months. Do you want us to get married with a sad face?

CHEN QIAO

[Speaks: Haugu]

Sire, Southern Tang's fate is not desperate yet. Nor is it difficult to have Prince Zheng rescued from detention. Sire, you just immediately celebrate your wedding, announce it to the world. Prince Zheng may then have an excuse to come home to congratulate his elder brother, and thus escape from the wolf's den and tiger's cave.

LATER RULER

[Speaks: Haugu]

Royal In-law, you know full well the Song monarch's target is not Prince Zheng, but to lure us to go to the tiger's lair alone. If we get married, that means we have no intention of paying tribute to Song at all. Then Prince Zheng would become a hostage for life, with no means of escape from his prison.



CHEN QIAO

[*A little indignant and speaks: Haugu*]

Sire, forgive my wagging my tongue again. The sisters Elder Zhou and YOUNGER ZHOU are both my nieces. I hear that Sire you have not met YOUNGER ZHOU at all lately. Are there any other hidden reasons? If you are not satisfied with her, you can by all means call off the betrothal. I only hope to see you name a new consort soon. Why not look for a new love?

LATER RULER

[*Indignant and speaks: Haugu*]

Royal In-law drives me to a corner, makes us unable to defend ourself. You convey our order to the Ministry of Rites: pick an auspicious date, institute YOUNGER ZHOU as Queen, to show that we have not forgotten filial piety and are faithful in love.

CHEN QIAO

[*Sees the king's anger, afraid and sings: Gwanfa lower line*]

**I fear to see the King change colors.  
I regret being stubborn in forcing marriage.  
Even though fulfilling the old one's wish,  
How can I bear his suffering for life.**

LATER RULER

[*Impatient and speaks*]

Royal In-law, we have consented to the marriage, why are you still dallying and not going?

CHEN QIAO

[*Speaks*]

Alas, Sire, reinstating a Queen is a weighty matter. You should make your own decision. I see I was wrong in pressing you repeatedly. I hope, Sire, after due consideration, you decide on your heart's choice, then send for me. That won't be too late. Sire, take care of yourself. This old man asks to be excused.

[*Exit with a sigh*]

LATER RULER

[*Sighs and sings: Gwanfa lower line*]

**Pitiable Ruler of South of Yangzi.  
Hard-heartedly I give up beauty.  
I lament my flowery writing can  
hardly rule the state.  
What use is my natural gift?**

[*Lies on table in a nap.*]

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sings off, to the ci tune “Musalman” on the che wu string]

**Flowers bright, moon dim, light mist drifts.  
Just right tonight to go to him.  
Walking in socks down the fragrant steps,  
Hands holding embroidered shoes.**

[Enters and continues]

**We meet at south edge of parlor.  
For a while I lean on him, trembling.  
Since it is hard for me to come out,  
Please love me to your heart’s content.**

[LATER RULER, *full of pity, suppresses pain at heart.* YOUNGER ZHOU, *embarrassed, pushes* LATER RULER *away to stage left. Act shyness*]

LATER RULER

[Approaches her with sincere feelings showing and speaks]

Younger sister-in-law, I miss you so.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[A little annoyed and reproachfully speaks]

Oh, so I am just to be missed by you, but not to be seen by you? So even though we have been apart for so long, and even though we meet by chance, I should avoid you. Tonight, after so much difficulty, I steal here to meet the King. I little thought you’d call me younger sister-in-law, so estranged.

LATER RULER

[Speaks]

YOUNGER ZHOU.

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**Lonesome in the palace, untold melancholy,  
So fortunate to have a gorgeous cloud  
drifting down Wu Mountain peak.  
Pity me, embroiled in a lot of worries.  
I dare not pour out my heart to the wind.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks]

Sire.

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**Don’t say it can’t be helped that  
parting is easy but meeting is hard.  
Pity me, making up at my mirror, for whom?  
How can I bear to be so near and yet worlds apart.  
So I pay a night visit, unafraid of heavy  
frost and dew.**

LATER RULER

[Sighs and sings: Long Yiwong lower line]

**Looking at each other, heart-broken, speechless,  
My thoughts rise and fall like waves.  
So hard to find paradise on earth.  
Pity the King's palace is like a cage.  
Writing ci in blood and tears,  
No use for saving the nation's decline  
and fall.  
I lament in vain being born in hard times.  
Seeing that state affairs are hopeless,  
I am ashamed that I lack wisdom and  
courage to defend dynastic foundations.  
Miserably manipulated by neighboring Power.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sings: "Parasitic Grass"]

**I hope you won't lament lack of  
ability and courage.  
Won't you consider self-strengthening and  
reviving the nation?  
I hope you work hard and sweep away  
all despair and despondency.**

LATER RULER

[Continues]

**Alas, compromising for peace has  
harmed the kingdom.  
I am ashamed to be a vassal,  
I cannot face my people.  
Who can I ask to share my pain.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Continues]

**You should use able ministers  
to assist your reign.  
Know that the Late King  
laid the nation's foundation  
in blood that is still crimson.**

LATER RULER

[Sings: Long Gwanfa lower line]

**Alas! Woman outshines man.  
Profound words of ponderous meaning.  
So ashamed, this imbecile succeeded  
the throne,  
I can't emulate Qin and Han Emperors,  
the great heroes.  
In shame I pay tribute to neighboring Power,  
For fear that once war starts,  
South of Yangzi would be strewn with  
refugees.  
Do not tarry under shaky wall.  
Even with parasol tree,  
It cannot be the phoenix's perch.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Alarmed and speaks: Haugu]

Sire, you love peace, but the Powers are belligerent. You should find a good tactic to defend your country. But instead you are indecisive, facing crisis you panic. You even give up your true love, in vain I place high hopes on you, and I love you so deeply.

LATER RULER

[Speaks: Haugu]

YOUNGER ZHOU, we are still a King, even if I can't defend the state, I should die for the state. I only fear loving the flower, I turn out to be flower destroyer. Languishing grass turns into heartbroken falling petals red.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks: Haugu]

Sire, they say true lovers are willing to live and die together. Southern Tang has been weak all along, not all of a sudden. I hope you will work for national revival, and self-strengthening. I will share ups and downs with you, share joy and sorrow together.

LATER RULER

[Moved and speaks: Haugu]

Ah, with such a woman companion, what more can we ask for. But our nation is so tattered, how can I mend it single-handedly?

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks]

Sire.

[Sings: Faansin Jungbaan lower line]

**I hope you make an effort to  
confront the challenge.**

**Select able ministers to advise  
your reign.**

**Hoard provisions and army supplies.**

**In time, stand on your feet again.**

**Fortify your capital impregnably.**

**Yangzi serves as natural barrier.**

**Twenty legions are sufficient  
for mobilizing for the time being.**

**Cease music entertainment henceforth,**

**Save it for use on the state.**

**Love birds stay together through all hardship.**

[Sings: Gwanfa]

**Of one mind, mutually encouraging,  
reverse the decline and fall.**

**I do not seek royal favor for satisfying my  
own passion.**

LATER RULER

[*Mixed feelings of joy and shame, sings: Gwanfa lower line*]

**Ardent maiden speaks her heart,**

**Wakes the benighted with wise counsel,**

**Sagaciously assists king's revival.**

**Henceforth, no more kowtowing to others' whims.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**So glad ivy and cypress vine cling to each other.**

**I encourage my King to be strong as green pine.**

LATER RULER

[Speaks *with music under*]

YOUNGER ZHOU, so rare a beauty, with matching ability, none other more fitting as Queen. Wish we may be together for eternity.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks *with music under*]

Being loved so undeservedly, I am abashed. May wishes for public good and private love all be fulfilled, then I am contented.

LATER RULER

[*Holding* YOUNGER ZHOU, sings: Faansin “One Cloud over Wu Shan” middle section, *somewhat freely*]

Leaning and clinging on each other,  
Admiring your beauty amid flowers.  
Late at night, all alone, secretly speak our love.  
Shut up in the palace, missing phoenix,  
Fragrance emitted by your dress heralds your coming.  
Raising my hazy eyes,  
Out meeting is like a dream.  
How can I let down my love,  
And her great affection for me.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Continues]

So near and yet pining,  
I lament our separation,  
Can't stand parting sorrow,  
Secretly meeting in forbidden palace,  
I speak my heart frankly,  
Encouraging my King,  
Pouring out all my heart's energy.  
I fear most the unspoken languishing.  
I fear one day you may jilt me  
Like a fan in autumn.  
I lament fallen petals buried in grief.

LATER RULER

[Continues, *a little faster*]

For love's sake I can't let down love.  
I hate the monster of sorrow torturing me.  
All of a sudden, all is despair.  
Please understand my difficulty.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Continues]

My heart is already given to you.  
So fortunate our intertwined roots are planted deep.  
Heaven makes match for love birds.  
With a smile my eyes emit fascinations.  
My heart speaks secretly to you.

LATER RULER

[Continues]

**Pledge our bond in forbidden palace.**

**Our wish fulfilled.**

**Happy news announced,**

**The whole nation gives thunderous cheer.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Continues]

**Love well-tempered but undying.**

**Two hearts of ardent hot blood.**

LATER RULER

[Continues]

**With one heart we overcome all hardship.**

**Together we dedicate ourselves to the state's welfare.**

LATER RULER & YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sing together]

**Love birds in hardship,**

**Day and night, inseparably together.**

**We are prepared to pour out hot blood,**

**planting red twin flowers on one stalk!**

CURTAIN

# Annotations on Act 1

1. Between Tang (618-907 A.D.) and Northern Song (960-1126 A.D.), which were Imperial Dynasties of a unified China, there was a half century called the period of “Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms” (907-960 A.D.), with none of these 15 monarchies having been able to rule over a unified China but only each occupying a part of it.
2. Li Yǔ (937-978) was the last king of the Kingdom of Southern Tang which was one of the Ten Kingdoms. He was famous in Chinese history as the first significant writer of ci (lyric poem) which became the prevalent literary form in the Song Dynasty. His birthday is the 7th of the seventh moon, the Festival for Young Lovers.
3. Ci consists of lines of varying lengths (as opposed to Tang poems which have 5 or 7 character lines), with words (lyrics) composed to fit specific ci tunes with titles (called Ci Pai) identified such as “Partridge Sky” and “Musalman”. They should have been sung in those days but the music had been lost and only the lyrics were passed down to posterity.
4. Li Yǔ is called LI the LATER RULER (Li Hou Zhu) in history, following the examples of earlier last in the line kings such as Chen the Later Ruler of the Chen Dynasty in late 6th Century and Liu the Later Ruler of the Kingdom of Shu during the period of the Three Kingdoms (220-280).
5. Li Yǔ’s first Queen is called Queen Elder Zhou (Da Zhou Hou) in history. After her premature death, Li married her younger sister who becomes known in history as Queen YOUNGER ZHOU (Xiao Zhou Hou). Her uncle Chen Qiao was given the prestigious title of Royal In-law (Guo Lao).
6. The “neighboring Power” refers to Northern Song, which was founded by its first Emperor Zhao Kuangyin in 960 A.D. Its capital is Bian, now Kaifeng of Henan Province.
7. Guan Zhong, legendary statesman of 7th Century BC, is Prime Minister to King Huan of the State of Qi during the period of the (seven) Warring States.
8. Huang Zhong is one of the “Five Tiger Generals”, and the oldest one in age, of the Kingdom of Shu during the period of the Three Kingdoms (220-280).
9. The Chinese parasol tree (wutong) is the favorite perch for the legendary bird phoenix in Chinese mythology. Phoenix is the symbol of the Queen and dragon is the symbol of the King.
10. Ivy and Cypress Vine are used in the Book of Songs as symbols of creepers that cling on to tall trees like pine and cypress, and thus imageries for lovers.



# ACT 2 ROYAL WEDDING

With background music, enter eunuchs carrying Court lanterns and feather fans, with LATER RULER and YOUNGER ZHOU waving hands. At last phrase of music, LATER RULER and YOUNGER ZHOU stand centre stage facing each other and happily smiling.

Music changes to brisker tempo.

With this background music, LATER RULER and YOUNGER ZHOU take their seats.

CHEN QIAO leading Ministers, Civil and Military

[Speak together, *bowing*]

We greet Your Majesties.

LATER RULER

[Speaks]

Ministers, rise.

CHEN QIAO & Ministers, Civil and Military

[Speak together]

We thank Your Majesty.

LATER RULER

[Speaks]

Ministers.

[Sings: Chatjiching Jungbaan]

**Flowers bloom in palace field gloriously,**

**The Court gather at Phoenix Hall.**

**Royal wedding ceremony should be frugal,**

**Attending Court matters, sparing no effort.**

[Sings: Gwanfa]

**Simple feast in place of grand banquet,**

**Not daring to squander treasury money.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**King and ministers gather convivially tonight,  
Even three cups of thin wine make merry.  
I do not serve the King with sensual pleasure,  
But will shoulder State crises together with him.**

*All show pleasant surprise.*

HUANGFU JIXŪN *alone stays slightly uneasy, but feigns grin.*

ZHANG RUN

[Happy and speaks: Haugu]

Sire, reinstating Queen today, your servants at this joyous celebration, we rejoice to see Sire bent on self-strengthening. Her Majesty is indeed a matriarchal paragon for the State.

JIXŪN

[Grins insincerely and speaks: Haugu]

Sire, your servant offers renewed congratulations, you made the right choice. But do not over tire yourself. As for petty Court matters, your servants will share the burden.

CHEN QIAO

[Smiles and speaks]

General Huangfu, Sire is a changed man now.

[Sings: Long Gwanfa lower line]

**A heroine upright and talented,  
So full of spirit.  
Prolonged weakness was due to laxity.  
The Queen has extraordinary capabilities.  
Shouldering State crises is no empty talk.  
Preserving the State, one realizes the  
hard-earned founding of it.  
I wish the King henceforth is determined  
on self-strengthening,  
Ridding all internal woes and external threats.**

LATER RULER

[Speaks]

Royal In-law speaks wisely. Henceforth, ministers, make less praise of our good and speak more of our faults. King and ministers work together to defend the nation, that will be the State's blessing.

CHEN QIAO *and Ministers show great joy.*

JIXŪN *alone feigns grinning with malice in mind. [Flourish]*

LIN RENZHAO

[Enters and sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**Bold general at frontiers heard happy news,  
Returned to Royal audience at capital.  
Court attired I come to Palace.  
Long journey detracts not from my spirits.**

[Comes into Court, bows and speaks]

Your servant, LIN RENZHAO, Governor of Hongzhou, greets Your Majesties. Please forgive my belated felicitations.

LATER RULER

[Speaks]

General Lin, defending the territory is doing your duty, what is there to forgive. Rise.

RENZHAO gives thanks and with CHEN QIAO stand on stage right and left respectively.

LATER RULER

[Speaks: Haugu]

General Lin, since your stationing at Yangzi, we have not seen you for a long time. For our Royal Wedding, you travel a long way back.

RENZHAO

[Speaks: Haugu]

Sire, your servant is slightly late and misses the wedding ceremony, all because of heavy military duties, not daring to slacken for a moment.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks: Haugu]

General Lin, we heard you've been called Lin the Tiger Cub. Meeting today, you outshine your fame. The Tiger General is young and full of patriotic zeal and valor.

RENZHAO

[Modestly speaks]

Your Majesty overpraises me, I am abashed.

CHEN QIAO

[Speaks: Haugu]

General Lin, this being a rare gathering, why not drink together until dawn.

RENZHAO

[Speaks]

Royal In-law Chen,

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**Leaving my post to return and  
pay my respects,  
I dare not stay long for drinks.  
I bid my King goodbye hastily,  
And hurry back to defend the frontiers  
without laxity.**

[Speaks]

Sire, your servant asks to be excused.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks]

Wait, General Lin.

[Sings: Jungbaan lower line]

**Tiger General defends the frontiers,  
A responsibility of great weight.  
To observe a minister's protocol, He  
takes the trouble to come and go.  
Twice he repulsed the Power's invasions,  
Outdoing Zhou Yú at Red Cliff.  
One man holding the fort,  
Can counter companies and legions.  
Admirable pillar of the State.  
King and minister meet so rarely,  
Why not discuss State strategies,  
And have long talk in detail.**

[Sings: Gwanfa]

**Of one mind and joint effort,  
defend the realm.  
Offer wise stratagem and speak your mind.**

LATER RULER

[Speaks]

General Lin.

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**Going or staying, half a day's difference.  
So rare to have a moment to spare  
amid busy schedule.  
The Queen has an eye for the hero.  
Don't deny the sincere request to stay.**

RENZHAO

[Speaks]

Sire, Your Majesties' high regard is gratifying, dare I not obey.

LATER RULER

[Speaks]

General Lin, the natural barrier of Yangzi, how is the situation there now?

RENZHAO

[Speaks]

Sire, let me reply. I am charged to defend the strategic points, and have strengthened the watch along the bank. So long as General Huangfu can defend Caishiji, we can complement each other. Even if the Song State have millions of troops, they cannot cross the frontiers at all.

JIXŪN

[Speaks: Haugu]

General Lin, forgive my bold question. You lead the crack troops of the whole State, so Yangzi is safe.

But beware King Qian of Wuyue who may invade when he takes us unawares.

RENZHAO

[Speaks: Haugu]

Pooh, King Qian of Wuyue, just a minor discomfort of scabies, nothing to worry about. Only when Song troops invade South of Yangzi, would Wuyue dare to bother us. Bah, but with me, Lin the Tiger Cub guarding the Yangzi, Song troops and captains find it hard to cross the River.

JIXŪN

[Speaks: Haugu]

General Lin, forgive my being thick-headed, please elaborate.

RENZHAO

[Speaks]

You listen.

[Sings: Chatjiching Jungbaan lower line]

**Sitting at home, repulsing five-point invasion,**

**Shu Kingdom safe as mountains.**

**Zhuge Liang thus set a good example.**

**Who'd forgo the easy for the hard?**

**Song monarch, with strong armies and doughty captains,**

**Nibbles now and engulfs then, bit by bit towards**

**South of Yangzi.**

[Sings: Gwanfa]

**I only wish to train up my troops**

**to defend the State.**

**King Qian of Wuyue is not worth**

**worrying about.**

LATER RULER *shows expression of shame-facedness.*

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks]

Sire,

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**Tiger General speaks heroic words.**

**Being vassal may not spare you from humiliation.**

**Don't say it's too late to mend the fold after  
losing the sheep.**

**Never too late for self-strengthening.**

CHEN QIAO

[Sighs and sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**Pity, the Middle Ruler promoted the arts at**

**the expense of military preparations,**

**Ceding North of Yangzi, irreparable loss.**

**Wish our King restore order in the Realm.**

**Let national pride shine again.**

LATER RULER

[Encouraged and speaks]

Royal In-law, we will surely accept good advice, reign effectively, and fail not the Court's and the subjects' expectations.

*All in great elation.*

EUNUCH LEADER

[Enters and speaks bowing]

Your Majesty, Minister Xú XUAN returns, bringing Emissary from Song seeking audience. Your Majesty's pleasure please.

LATER RULER

[Speaks]

What, Xú XUAN is back, why is the Royal Brother not yet back?

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks]

Sire, why not summon them and find out, no use guessing.

LATER RULER

[Speaks]

The Royal Consort speaks wisely. Eunuch, go at once, summon the two of them in.

*Exit EUNUCH LEADER in obedience.*

*Enter Xǔ XUAN, carrying secret letter and holding wedding gifts in hand, and LI MU THE SONG EMISSARY holding edict.*

Xǔ XUAN

*[Dejectedly speaks]*

Tarried half a year in Song land. I lament two going there, only one returning.

*They come into the Hall together.*

Xǔ XUAN

*[Bows and speaks]*

Xǔ XUAN greets Your Majesties.

LI MU

*[Bows and speaks]*

Foreign servant bows to King and Queen.

LATER RULER

*[Speaks]*

Don't stand on ceremony.

*Xǔ XUAN and LI MU together give thanks.*

LI MU

*[Speaks]*

King of Southern Tang, my Lord heard of your royal wedding and handed presents to Minister Xǔ with compliments. Minister Xǔ, why not present the wedding gifts?

*Xǔ XUAN presents gifts absent-mindedly, attendant takes them and presents to LATER RULER.*

LATER RULER

*[Accepts gifts and speaks: Haugu]*

Song Emissary, today is our royal wedding. You take trouble to come with congratulations on behalf of Song monarch who sends rich gifts, we are most grateful. And yes, how come Minister Xǔ comes back alone, but Royal Brother Prince Zheng is not back home?

LI MU

*[Speaks: Haugu]*

Your Majesty, let me reply. Your brother Prince Zheng is held in high esteem by my Lord and is appointed Governor of Taining. It's because he's been sent on state business away from the capital that he's unable to be back to South of Yangzi in time.

LATER RULER

[*Impatiently questions Xú XUAN and speaks: Haugu*]

Minister Xú, so what in fact is the situation of the Royal Brother? Make it clear quickly.

Xú XUAN

[*Glances at LI MU, hesitates and speaks*]

Well.....

LI MU

[*Sneers and speaks: Haugu*]

Minister Xú, my Lord treats people kindly. The whole world knows that. Why not tell frankly, lest your King is worried.

Xú XUAN

[*In a dilemma, sings: Long Gwanfa lower line*]

**I fear the wolf and tiger's ferocity,  
how can I not hesitate.  
I fear a chance word courts disaster.  
Knowing Song Emperor's cruel nature,  
and lest Prince Zheng meets calamity,  
I cannot tell my King the truth.**

[*Comes forward and speaks*]

Sire, the message "safe and sound" is worth ten thousand in gold, you, King, need not fret from morn till night.

LATER RULER

[*Sighs and speaks*]

Hard earned message "safe and sound". We are slightly relieved from anxiety.

LI MU

[*Speaks*]

O King, having done with private business, let's turn to talk about state affairs. This Foreign Servant has received Imperial orders, and brings His Imperial Majesty's edict. For my Lord wishes to offer sacrificial rites and pay tribute to Heaven and Earth together with all vassal princes, and henceforth unify the whole country. Later Shu and Southern Han have already sworn allegiance to the Dynasty. It so happens Your Majesty celebrates royal wedding, so the date of rites has been put back three months. It is hoped that Your Majesty will swear allegiance to Song by the due date without fail. The Imperial edict is here. O King, read it carefully.

[*Presents edict.*]

*Attendant receives it and presents to LATER RULER.*

LATER RULER

[*Reads edict carefully, suspicious and Speaks: Haugu*]

Consort, the edict is full of errors. Can you detect the discrepancies?



*Hands it to YOUNGER ZHOU.*

YOUNGER ZHOU

*[Reads it, sneers and speaks: Haugu]*

Song emissary, a monarch jests not, as the saying goes. Knowing full well that the King of Later Shu was slain after swearing allegiance, how can he pay tribute together with the Song Monarch? Whether the edict is real or fake, it seems difficult to judge.

LI MU

*[Shows anger and speaks: Haugu]*

Hey, the edict was written by His Imperial Majesty's hand. How can it be fake? As for kings of vassal states, alive or dead, having their names listed together, what is so strange in that? King of Southern Tang, to escort you to the Capital, a million troops are already stationed north of the Yangzi by my Lord.

RENZHAO

*[Can stand it no longer, comes forward and speaks: Haugu]*

How dare you? Your ruler has treachery in mind, detaining Prince Zheng deliberately. And you come to coerce our Ruler to go to your capital. Know you not that with me, Lin the Tiger Cub at the Yangzi, a million Song troops are but nothing of importance.

LI MU

*[Looks at him, laughs and speaks]*

Ho, so it is General Lin. Forgive my lack of respect. But you serve the wrong master, and my Lord finds it a great pity.

RENZHAO *walks away in anger.*

LI MU

*[To LATER RULER, speaks]*

King of Southern Tang, this Foreign Servant has done his mission and will at once return to report at Court. You watch well your steps. I ask to be excused. *[Exit]*

LATER RULER

*[Sighs and sings: Gwanfa lower line]*

**Forcing me into a corner,  
frightening one's heart.  
Three months deadline, dilemma of  
to go or not to go.  
Loath to leave the State and be  
imprisoned,  
But afraid to provoke the tiger again.**

CHEN QIAO

[Speaks]

Sire, you must not go.

[Sings: Yifaan Muk'yü]

**Old man has State crisis at heart.**

**How can I bear to see surrendering kings  
at their mercy?**

**Southern Han surrendered and suffered  
subjugation.**

**Meng Chang of Later Shu died on foreign  
soil.**

LATER RULER *is aghast.*

RENZHAO *is anxious.*

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Consoles and speaks]

Sire.

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**Don't visit tiger's cave lightly.**

**You should find a good way out**

**of the fix.**

Xü XUAN

[Speaks]

Her Majesty is right. Sire must not go to Bian, then Prince Zheng may stay unharmed. If you send the lamb into the tiger's mouth the result is unthinkable.

LATER RULER

[Speaks]

What do you mean?

Xü XUAN

[Speaks: Haugu]

Sire, the Song Monarch aims at your allegiance and dares not mistreat Prince Zheng. Gives him high office and good pay, just won't allow him back to South of Yangzi. Prince Zheng has made investigations, openly and secretly, about the enemy side's military plans. When this old servant was starting to return, he came at night in a hurry, asking me to bring his letter back.

[Speaks]

This is written by Prince Zheng's own hand, Sire, read it.

[Presents letter]

LATER RULER

*[Snatches letter, reads carefully and speaks]*

Royal In-law, Minister Xú, follow us to inner chamber for discussion. Court dismissed.

Music.

LATER RULER *unfolds letter again, in great grief.*

CURTAIN

## Annotations on Act 2

1. The Tang Dynasty created the rank of Jiedushi (Governor), who ruled over one (or more) zhou (province) with supreme authority in both civil and military matters.
2. Queen YOUNGER ZHOU compares LIN RENZHAO to Zhou Yǔ, the Commander-in-chief of the joint forces of Shu and Wu in the Romance of Three Kingdoms who used the strategy of coaxing the invading Wei navy under Cao Cao to chain up their ships and then burning them at Chibi (Red Cliff), defeating the 830,000 force of Wei with his much smaller army/navy.
3. Caishiji, literally Jewel Rock, is an important strategic ford on the southeast bank of the Yangzi River, the location of many naval battles fought for the control of the Yangzi River, and is the legendary place where the great Tang poet Li Bo drowned when drunk and trying to catch the reflection of the moon in the water. Hongzhou, where LIN RENZHAO was Governor, is the present day Nanchang, provincial capital of Jiangxi.
4. The Romance of Three Kingdoms tells the anecdote of Zhuge Liang, Prime Minister of Shu (which calls itself Han, one of the Three Kingdoms), who was absent from Court on sick leave, when report came that the Kingdoms Wei and Wu jointly sent five invasion forces attacking from five different points hemming in on the Shu capital of Chengdu. The Later Ruler of Shu, in panic, called on Zhuge Liang's house, only to find him calm and composed. Zhuge Liang reassured his King that he had already sent off orders from home to various captains and garrisons dictating counter measures to repulse all five forces. This is the famous anecdote of "Sitting at home and repulsing five-point invasion"
5. Wuyue, Southern Han and Later Shu, similar to Southern Tang, were among the Ten Kingdoms during the period of Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms. All had become vassal states of the Song Dynasty at the time of this Act. The Kings of Southern Han and Later Shu swore allegiance to Song but failed to keep their autonomy or sovereignty. Meng Chang, King of Later Shu, went to Bian to pay obeisance to the Song Emperor and died after seven days there.
6. The expression "now nibbles as the silkworm does, then engulfs as the whale" is used to describe an imperialistic expansion by annexing neighboring countries one by one.
7. Southern Tang was founded (after his usurping the throne of the Wu Kingdom in 937 A.D.) by Li Bian called the First Ruler in 939, who passed the throne on his death (943) to his son Li Jing, the Middle Ruler and father of Li Yǔ the Later Ruler who in turn became King in 959 on his father's death. Both father and son, Jing and Yǔ, were great writers of ci poetry. Jing also championed painting and calligraphy.

# ACT 3 TRICKED

Scene : Inner Palace, table and chairs, with writing materials on table.

Music. Curtain rises.

Forestage dims gradually. Suitable lighting on backdrop, only silhouettes of the three are visible.

Background music to dialogues.

LATER RULER

*[Reads letter, speaks off]*

“Dear Brother my King, having parted for several months, I miss you very much. The Song monarch detains me, in fact house confinement, because he wants to compel you to come to Song sooner. I hope you place the State before Brother. Do not compromise for my sake, and be a surrendering prisoner. Moreover, make your own decisions in every matter. Do not rely on anybody beside you. Even those you used to consider as loyal ministers have secretly colluded with the enemy treasonously.”

Music stops.

Whole stage lights up.

LATER RULER

*[Holds letter, rereads carefully, alarmed and anxious]*

*[Sings: Long Gwanfa lower line]*

**Each word a shock,  
Cold sweat freezes on my collar.  
So hard to tell loyal ministers from traitors.  
What the letter insinuates is unclear.  
I fear the Song monarch's scheme may succeed.  
And South of Yangzi will crumble.  
Who betrays and undermines Southern Tang,  
Collaborates with the enemy as planted agent?**

Xǔ XUAN

*[Speaks: Haugu]*

Sigh, Sire, they say generals usurp easily, civil ministers can hardly mutiny. Ah, I remember while in Song, Zhao Kuangyin, the Song monarch, had shown Prince Zheng and me a portrait of LIN RENZHAO, and had a mansion ready in Bian, to receive geniuses and talents. I am not exaggerating things to raise alarm.

LATER RULER

[*Alarmed* and speaks]

What, so it is LIN RENZHAO.

CHEN QIAO

[*Explanatorily* speaks: Haugu]

Sire, LIN RENZHAO is loyal to the nation. He's been dreaded by the Song monarch. Hence this framing trick. It can't fool even a three-year old child. Old Xū, and you boast of being clever.

Xū XUAN

[Speaks: Haugu]

Royal In-law Chen, I've given careful consideration to this matter. But the Song monarch is treacherous. Sometimes false, sometimes true, he's hard to fathom. If this turns out to be the truth, then South of Yangzi meets its doom in no time.

LATER RULER

[Speaks: Haugu]

Sigh, you both have your points, to be on the safe side, better lock up LIN RENZHAO first, and interrogate him tomorrow thoroughly, to get at the truth.

CHEN QIAO

[Speaks]

Sire, don't be hasty and bungle state affair.

[Sings: Chatjiching lower line]

**Flying Tiger General can't be insulted.  
If the neighboring Power succeeds in its ruse,  
South of Yangzi will be at war henceforth.  
I beg Sire to be calm,  
And carefully judge the right and wrong,  
black and white.**

[Sings: Gwanfa]

**Our safety now hangs by a hair.**

**Don't wrong the loyal one as traitor.**

Xū XUAN

[Speaks]

Sire.

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**Besides LIN RENZHAO, who in South of Yangzi  
Wins the Song monarch's admiration.  
No smoke without fire.  
I just hate my inability to find evidence.**

CHEN QIAO

[*Angry, grabs Xú XUAN's hand, speaks*]

Xú XUAN, LIN RENZHAO bears you any grudge?

Xú XUAN

[Speaks]

No grudge.

CHEN QIAO

[Speaks]

Any enmity?

Xú XUAN

[Speaks]

No enmity.

CHEN QIAO

[Speaks]

You bear him no grudge nor enmity. Why then make insinuations, and frame the loyal one.

[Three beats]

Xú XUAN

[Speaks]

Sigh, Royal In-law Chen, I've been cautious all my life. How can I frame the loyal. But if a spy is planted in the State, can we not be on the alert promptly. Besides, LIN RENZHAO commands an army. If he really mutinies, the State will be ruined.

CHEN QIAO *is speechless.*

LATER RULER

[*Mediates, speaks*]

Ministers both.

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**Don't get emotional,**

**I just fear using rotten wood as beam.**

**Know a person's face but not his heart,**

**A loyal one may one day lose his good nature.**

CHEN QIAO

[Speaks]

Sire.

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**No trouble under the sky in fact,**

**One worries out of one's own imagination.**

**The Song monarch plays a trick,**

**Don't be deluded all at once.**

Xū XUAN

[Speaks]

Alas, Sire, the State is at stake. How can you not care.

[Sings: Muk'yu]

**Say not it is hard to tell loyal from traitor.**

**I got wind in Bianliang already.**

**Know then the Song monarch secretly ordered**

**Wuyue to invade our frontiers.**

LATER RULER

[*Alarmed* and speaks]

Minister Xū, is this true?

Xū XUAN

[Speaks]

Sire, it is the truth. I'll tell you in detail.

[Sings *a bit briskly*: Muk'yu]

**I returned to South of Yangzi,**

**Leaving Song territory,**

**I saw no garrison stationed**

**North of the River.**

**Must be some general is planted spy,**

**Waiting for the right opportunity,**

**He will show his true colors.**

LATER RULER

[*Alarmed*, speaks: Haugu]

Oh, just now in the Hall, when General Huangfu mentioned Wuyue's invasion, LIN RENZHAO brushed it aside. Royal In-law, do you remember that.

CHEN QIAO

[*Agitated*, speaks: Haugu]

Sire, LIN RENZHAO is loyal. Like the sun in the sky. If you won't believe it still, I'll pledge with my whole household that he is loyal.

LATER RULER

[Speaks: Haugu]

Alas, Royal In-law, if LIN RENZHAO really sells out the State, have you any strategy to remove the traitor?

CHEN QIAO

[*Sighs* and speaks: Haugu]

Alas, if it be true, nothing I can do. Even with the heavenly sword, one can't plunge into the sea and slay the great whale.



LATER RULER

[Speaks]

Sigh, must guard against treason. Must believe the Royal Brother's words. I just have to relieve him of his command, and decide later.

CHEN QIAO

[Speaks]

Sire must not do that.

Xū XUAN

[Speaks]

Sire, the State comes first.

LATER RULER

[*Determined* and speaks]

Sigh, strike first to forestall the enemy. I issue my edict at once. Even if he mutinies, he'll have no army to command.

LATER RULER

[*Writes edict* and sings: *Chatjiching* lower line]

**Quickly roll up sleeve, hold brush,  
I fear wronging loyal one as traitor.  
But I can't let traitor undermine the State.  
Hard to decide on relieving general,  
Still haven't written a single word.  
Thinking of the State's life and death,  
My heart alerts myself.  
Better to wrong than to connive at it.  
I write without mercy.**

[Concludes in long note]

CURTAIN

# ACT 4 CROSSING YANGZI

Scene: Backdrop of Yangzi River's billowing waves.

Time: Night.

CAO BIN

[Sings off: Saubaan]

**Give a shout and scare off  
thousand-feet Yangzi wave.**

*Enter Song troops and officers.*

CAO BIN

[Enters and sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**Advance by two routes,  
Night attack on Southern Tang.  
Marching quickly in silence,  
Arriving at north bank of Yangzi.**

[Speaks]

I, CAO BIN the commander, received the Song monarch's orders, to invade South of Yangzi. How laughable the Southern Tang Ruler, tricked by my Lord, wronged the Tiger General LIN RENZHAO to death, and removed my arch enemy. Now the Great Song warships, will cross the Yangzi first, striking at the main force of the foe. I lead my cavalry, waiting for the inside spy, and raid the heart of the enemy. As the saying goes, repairing mountain path overtly, sneaking past Chencang covertly.

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**Attack by force, winning by ruse,  
Make them indefensible.  
Success is close at hand,  
Because I hold the winning cards.**

[Speaks]

All officers. [*They make answer*]  
Scout carefully. [*Turns his back to audience.*]

HUANGFU JIXŪN

*[Enter stealthily, carrying map, and sings: Gwanfa lower line]*

**A great man knows how to ride with the times.**

**A gentleman stands not under risky wall.**

**Clever bird chooses the tree to nest.**

**Why shed blood and sweat for Southern Tang.**

*[Looks around, sees CAO BIN, bows and speaks]*

Greetings, Commander Cao.

CAO BIN

*[Laughs and speaks]*

General Huangfu, you come at the right time. Have you done everything well?

JIXŪN

*[Speaks]*

Commander, everything is well in hand, Pontoon bridges from Caishiji to North of River were completed just in time. I also bring a map of garrisons South of Yangzi, for the Commander's reference.

*[Presents map]*

CAO BIN

*[Takes map, laughs and speaks: Haugu]*

General Haungfu, you do work fast, my admirations. Now I drive my forces against Caishiji directly. Are there no garrisons South of Yangzi guarding the territory?

JIXŪN

*[Speaks: Haugu]*

Commander, don't worry. Troops at Caishiji had been sent away by me. Just cross the Yangzi, Commander, and join forces with the navy vanguard. Then the Southern Tang troops will be hemmed in on both sides, and perish completely in the Yangzi.

CAO BIN

*[Grins and speaks: Haugu]*

General Huangfu has planned meticulously, taking all possibilities into account. You have worked hard with great merit, making my march on South of Yangzi totally effortless.

JIXŪN

*[Elated and speaks: Haugu]*

Commander, your fame is widely known. How dare I claim merit. When Great Song unifies the country, and I serve at the same Court as you, I hope you will put in a good word for me, and I will benefit for life and never forget your favor.

CAO BIN

*[Speaks]*

General Huangfu, I have one more question. How does the Southern Tang King treat you?

JIXŪN

[Speaks]

He treats me with great trust.

CAO BIN

[Speaks]

If so, why do you betray your old master?

JIXŪN

[Shows shame, forces a smile and speaks]

Commander, the Heaven's mandate goes to Song. I just follow Heaven and obey the times.

CAO BIN

[Turns angry and speaks]

Bah, a traitor like you, what's the use? Guards, tie him up!

*Soldiers rush forward to bind HUANGFU JIXŪN.*

JIXŪN

[Alarmed, struggles and speaks]

Commander Cao.

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**I am scared out of my wits.**

**Cold sweat all over me wet my clothes.**

**Why such thunderous rage,**

**Turned nasty all of a sudden.**

CAO BIN

[Speaks: Haugu]

HUANGFU JIXŪN. [A beat] If I don't pronounce your offence, you won't die with closed eyes. As high official of Southern Tang, you are corrupted by greed, presented LIN RENZHAO's portrait to my Lord. Southern Tang King treated you well. And you repaid him with treason. No guarantee you won't betray my King one day. You shameless scoundrel, can't leave you in this world. Guards.

[Soldiers make answer]

Take him out, execute him, throw his body into the Yangzi.

*Soldiers obey and exeunt dragging JIXŪN.*

JIXŪN

[Turning back begging while walking out and speaks]

Commander, mercy, mercy.

[Exit]

CAO BIN

*[Laughs and sings: Gwanfa lower line]*

**Rebel traitor ends miserably.  
Read the garrison map first,  
Then advance to the South Bank.**

*Soldiers reenter while CAO BIN sings.*

*CAO BIN reads JIXŪN's map.*

*Suddenly a gust of wind, fire light effect moves across stage.*

SCOUT

*[Enters hurriedly, bows and speaks]*

Commander, the warships of South of Yangzi, taking advantage of southeast wind, attack our troops by fire. The situation is critical. Commander, at your pleasure.

CAO BIN

*[Alarmed and speaks]*

Reconnoiter again.

*Scout obeys and exit.*

*All soldiers show fright.*

CAO BIN

*[Sees fire blazing all around, alarmed and speaks]*

Aiya, this is bad, bad, South of Yangzi troops, follow Zhou Yŭ's old ruse, now the van is caught in sea of fire. How do I cope with it. Well, building a nine-ren mountain, how can one fail for lack of one basketful of earth? Our troops in retreat will pass here. If the enemy troops pursue, I will attack them head on. Isn't that wise.

*[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]*

**Can only seek victory amid defeat.**

**Do my best to salvage the loss.**

*Fire light effect moves across stage in opposite direction.*

SCOUT

*[Enters in joy and speaks]*

Commander, the wind changes direction now, blowing towards South of Yangzi. Southern Tang troops are all perishing in sea of fire. Our troops turn and counter attack. At your pleasure, Commander.

CAO BIN

*[Looks upwards, three-part laugh and speaks]*

Heaven helps Great Song and destroys Southern Tang. Hear this, officers, cross the Yangzi at once, strike at Jinling.

CURTAIN

## Annotations on Act 4

1. Marching quickly in silence – literally “mouthing gag and march quickly” – was a standard procedure used in troops marching at night when silence was of paramount importance, usually for night raids.
2. The saying “Repairing mountain path overtly, sneaking past Chencang covertly” (ming xiu Zhandao, an du Chencang) is a famous military tactic used by Han Xin in the war between Chu and Han, and reused by Zhuge Liang in one of his six expeditions leading the Shu army against Wei during the Three Kingdoms. It entails feigning action in one place when secretly advancing in another.
3. “Clever bird chooses the tree to nest” is first half of a couplet, followed by “capable man chooses the right leader to serve”.
4. Building a nine-ren mountain and spoil the entire effort for the lack of one basketful of earth is a famous Chinese saying, describing a whole plan ruined by a last-minute mistake or negligence. “Ren” is a measure of height of about eight feet.
5. Jinling (now Nanjing) was the capital of Southern Tang.

# ACT 5 BIRTHDAY BANQUET

Scene: A side parlor in the palace, hanging silk scroll as the symbol of Milky Way. Wine pot and cups on the table.

BAO-YI and COURT MAIDS busy arranging the decorations at curtain rise, to the background music.

BAO-YI

[ *Sees the decorations are done* and speaks]

War clouds looming over Yangzi, His Majesty is industrious minding State affairs. Music, singing and overnight drinking have been banned. Wine is served again only on the Seventh of Seventh Moon.

[Sings: Long Gwanfa lower line]

**The Palace idle for months.**

**Winds and strings sound no more.**

**His Majesty presides Court early in the morning,**

**Bent on self-strengthening, he appoints talents.**

**Well fed and motivated troops repel the foe.**

**Even wounded and weary rise and march into battle.**

**Henceforth weak turns strong.**

**He fails not his ministers' and people's expectations.**

[Speaks]

Since Sire remarried, he followed the Queen's advice, all weaknesses are gone. For months, the neighboring Power has been repulsed. His Majesty cheers up the troops in person, even forgoing sleep and meals. Tonight, it is Sire's birthday. Her Majesty bade us make all arrangements to celebrate Sire's birthday. So pray silently for the throne to prosper, the King to have longevity.

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**Auspicious day, play music that reaches the sky,**

**Perform the Rainbow Color Feather Costume Dance.**

[Speaks]

Sisters, Sire returns soon. Let us wait on one side.

MAIDS

[*Respond* and speak together]

Yes.

LATER RULER

[*Enters and sings: Long Yilau*]

**Left the Palace at dawn,  
Returning at dusk.  
Each experience adds to wisdom.  
Worked hard for months,  
And yet I feel refreshed and elated.**

[*Continues on Ho note*]

**Facing hard times,  
I no longer indulge in literature.  
In face of strong enemy,  
Who will recoil.  
The Queen encourages me to self-  
strengthening. Defending my Kingdom,  
I neglect the nuptial bed.**

[*Listens carefully and  
speaks*] Strange.

[*Sings: Gwanfa lower line*]

**Music has ceased for months in the Palace.  
How come bells and chimes sound nearby.  
Who forgets national crisis in dissipation.  
I walk back to Palace and find out. [*Walks indoors.*]**

BAO-YI

[*Sees LATER RULER, advances, bows and  
speaks*] I greet Your Majesty.

LATER RULER

[*Speaks: Haugu*]

We have banned music for months. Why is there loud music tonight?

BAO-YI

[*Winks and kneels together with all Maids, speaks: Haugu*]

Sire, we wish you a happy birthday and longevity.

LATER RULER

[*Sees decorations, is moved and delighted,*

*speaks*] Rise, all of you.

BAO-YI

[*Speaks*]

Thank you, Sire.



LATER RULER

[Speaks: Haugu]

BAO-YI, we are busy with state affairs, and do not remember it is our birthday today. All these arrangements tonight, whose idea is it anyway? In these hard times, even if there is exquisite song and dance, we have no heart for it any more.

BAO-YI

[Speaks: Haugu]

Sire, you see to so much business daily, and dare not indulge in pleasures. Her Majesty fears you may overwork, so she takes the opportunity of your birthday, to give a toast in celebration. It is all Her Majesty's idea. How dare we servants presume.

LATER RULER

[Speaks]

So it is the Queen's idea?

[Music starts: Si Gung Maanbaan intro]

LATER RULER

[*With joy at heart*, sings: Maanbaan lower line]

**Silk scroll as the Milky Way.**

**The twin stars float above.**

**In front of such good time and scenery,**

**I can't forget public affairs or private love.**

[Speaks with accompaniment of shang note interlude]

BAO-YI, where is the Queen now?

BAO-YI

[Speaks *with accompaniment*]

Sire, Her Majesty is dressing up. Let me go in and tell her.

LATER RULER

[Speaks *with accompaniment*]

BAO-YI, we will wait here. Do not disturb the Queen. Ah, the Golden Phoenix's shadow not yet seen, exquisite fragrance penetrates curtains already. BAO-YI, do you hear jingling sounds? The Queen arrives soon.

*Enter YOUNGER ZHOU with accompaniment: Maanbaan shang note interlude.*

LATER RULER

[Sees YOUNGER ZHOU, *approaches her* and speaks]

My Queen.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks *with accompaniment*]

Your Majesty.

[Continues to sing: Maanbaan upper line]

**Before pouring wine,  
First wishing long life.  
I also wish peace for the State and the people,  
The King is wise and capable.  
With our faces all smiles,  
We stare at each other in boundless love.  
Tonight the magpies bridge spans above.  
We watch from afar Vega meeting Altair.**

LATER RULER

[Sings: Maanbaan upper line]

**Dusky red carried by cloud dress.  
New green planted in her hair.  
Seeing such outstanding beauty,  
I can't help my heart's stirring.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[*Changes directly* to sing: "Gold Thread Dangling Hibiscus" ending passage]

**Alas, flower's color fades,  
Old beauty wanes,  
I only wish Southern Tang may thrive,  
Lasting myriad generations.  
We share joys and woes together.**

LATER RULER

[*Hugs her lightly* and sings]

**I thank your encouraging words so righteous.  
I just hope to end all wars.  
We fly together, wing on wing,  
Like phoenixes.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[*Speaks with accompaniment*]

In your embrace, I tremble helplessly.

LATER RULER

[*Intoxicated* and speaks *with accompaniment*]

Don't let down the pearl's glitter showing twin shadows.

BAO-YI

[*Watches, sniggers, pours two cups of wine, presents them in a tray and speaks*] Sire, Majesty.

LATER RULER *and* YOUNGER ZHOU *break apart on hearing.*

BAO-YI

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**I wish my King eternal blessing and longevity.  
Maids await orders to dance in Rainbow Costume.  
I earnestly present golden cups.  
Drink up wine that enters happy bowels.**

[Hands cups]

LATER RULER and YOUNGER ZHOU *each takes a cup, drink together.* BAO-YI *retrieves cups and puts them on table.*

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks: Haugu]

Sire, for months you work hard and eat little, tonight I wish you treasure momentary pleasure.

LATER RULER

[Speaks: Haugu]

Queen, I am ashamed of neglecting state affairs for years, thank you for your encouragement, I am in control again at Court.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks: Haugu]

Sire, happy occasion tonight, why not rest from your fatigue. I will show my little talent in front of you and sing old songs anew.

LATER RULER

[Speaks: Haugu]

Queen, facing wine, one should sing, just for tonight. I wish to wait for peace to come, then write new songs.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks]

Spirit turns into long rainbow so valiant. Love hidden in short aria.

Music starts: prelude to "Birthday Song", BAO-YI *leads Maids in dance.*

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sings "Birthday Song"]

**I wish my King peace and happiness,  
Long life and good health,  
A nation impregnable as moated fortress.**

LATER RULER

[Sings]

**Another year,  
Milky Way clear and shallow.  
Beautiful scenery all forgotten.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sings]

**In deep empathy, treasure this moment,  
Wish us good health,  
Lasting long as Heaven and Earth.**

[Music interlude]

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sings]

**Also wish we share sweet and bitter together,  
Sturdy as the pine, braving wind and frost.**

LATER RULER

[Sings, *a little slow*]

**I fear even divine couple  
Must go through rise and fall.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sings, *still slower*]

**We swear, in this life,  
To live and die together.  
Let our souls become lovebirds.**

LATER RULER & YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sing together]

**Flying away together,  
To the most carefree place,  
Where mist and water  
Are boundless and indistinct.  
Flying away together,  
To the most carefree place,  
Where mist and water  
Are boundless and indistinct.**

[Last time, choral singing last line]

*Song ends. Exeunt BAO-YI and Maids unnoticed with music accompaniment.*

LATER RULER

[*Moved* and speaks]

Queen.

[Sings: Jingsin Jungbaan lower line]

**Short ditty tells long lasting love.**

**I hear her panting softly.**

**Her sweat congeals rouge and powder,**

**As drizzles dampen flowing light.**

**National peril at critical moment.**

**I have not forgotten my ambition. Wise  
ministers determine strategy,**

**Hearing drums and think of great generals,**

**Song troops march down South of Yangzi.**

**Fortunately, army and civilians co-operate,**

**Not allowing warships to cross Yangzi.**

[Sings: Gwanfa]

**Pity, our strengths are so different.**

**I have not the heart**

**To see bloody waves billow.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks]

Sire.

[Sings: Long Yiwong lower line]

**They say crises make a nation thrive.**

**Fear not the neighboring Power.**

**Their strong troops bear down on ours, outnumbered.**

**We should defend our frontiers with sagacity.**

**United, strength is generated.**

**Wish my King pluck up his courage,**

**That beats ten legions.**

**Unity of will is impregnable stronghold,**

**And north of Yangzi may be recovered.**

LATER RULER

[Speaks]

My Queen.

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**I regret in the past I lacked vision.**

**North of Yangzi ceded to seek temporary peace.**

**Female vision excels male.**

**Can't let South of Yangzi suffer invasion.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks]

Sire.

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**All your life you shoulder the cosmos.**

**You should live and die with the State.**

**When defending it, one knows how hard it was**

**To lay the foundations of a nation.**

**Fear not the neighboring Power's ferocity.**

*Enter Xǔ XǔAN and CHEN QIAO together hastily, both panting and bowing.*

LATER RULER

[Sees the two and uneasy at heart, speaks: Haugu]

Ministers, you two come in a hurry late at night, what is the urgent matter?

Xǔ XǔAN

[Speaks: Haugu]

Sire, Zhu Lingbin defended the natural barrier of the Yangzi, used fire to attack the enemy line, but Heaven did not help. Amid the battle, the wind changed direction, poor Zhu Lingbin died in action, and his whole army perished miserably on the Yangzi.

LATER RULER *hears the report and is greatly alarmed and at a loss what to do.*

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks: Haugu]

Ministers, Yangzi is lost. Any plans to cope with aftermaths? Are we just helpless and panicky, watching the nation fall?

CHEN QIAO

[Speaks: Haugu]

Alas, man proposes, Heaven disposes. At this moment, the Song troops advance in victory, closing in on Jinling. I have sent orders to troops of all provinces, to repulse the Song troops in defence. But we cannot afford to lose this battle, so old Xǔ and I come at night, to discuss plans to salvage the crisis.

LATER RULER

[Sings: Heavy Gwanfa lower line]

**Alas, desperate King with no divine blessing.**

**I lament Heaven's will to destroy Southern Tang.**

**I fear war clouds over imperial capital,**

**With no good plan to save it from falling.**

Xú XǔAN

[Speaks]

Sire.

[Sings: Long Gwanfa lower line]

**Strong and weak so distinct.  
Hard to plan repulse now,  
No more Flying Tiger General to defend State,  
Can't bear to see battlefield becoming slaughter house.  
Forbear and later plan restoration of nation.  
Surrender for the time being, swallowing shame.  
This old servant is not thinking of only his own interest.  
I will give up my life and follow you  
Through thick and thin.**

CHEN QIAO

[Angry and speaks]

Old Xǔ, at this time, one would die with the State, but no reason for surrendering.

[Sings: Chatjiching lower line]

**Who'd bow in shame to surrender?  
There are still generals and soldiers  
In the capital city,  
Marching over dead bodies to defend the state.  
I curse Xǔ XǔAN,  
What nonsense you utter.  
Too preposterous to show weakness,  
With my dying breath,  
I will not beg for mercy.**

[Sustained ending]

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks *with accompaniment*]

Uncle speaks sense, Sire.

[Sings: Chatjiching lower line]

**Decide life or death with a battle.  
Sun Bin the cripple slew Pang Zhúan,  
In Red Cliff flames the weak beat the strong.  
Sire lead the defence atop city ramparts.  
Beat war drums, send generals  
And kill the jackals and wolves.**

[Sings: Gwanfa]

**Rather die in dignity than live in shame.  
Royal leadership will hearten the troops.**

LATER RULER

[*Hearing this, excited and speaks*]

Good!

[Sings: Faidim lower line]

**I'd risk dying with the enemy,  
Burning bridges, attack flaming net.  
Let my blood hearten my troops.**

[Sings: Gwanfa]

**I can't wag tail and beg for mercy.  
My spirit rises high into the sky.**

[Speaks]

Ministers, we have decided. Hope you two will do your best and help defend the realm, that's a blessing for the State.

Xǔ XǔAN & CHEN QIAO

[Speak together]

If so, your old servants retire first.

[*Exeunt together*]

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks: Haugu]

Sire, you are so brave, to lead and hearten your troops. I will be in the rear, darning and laundering uniforms. Let the nation's people all give their strength to salvage the fall.

LATER RULER

[Speaks: Haugu]

Queen, we will personally lead the army, life and death is unpredictable. At this moment, even though I have a myriad words, I have no way to speak them out.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[*Comforts him and speaks*]

Sire.

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**Even if not to fly wing to wing  
In this life,  
We have a wish to become  
Lovebirds in the underworld.**

CURTAIN



## Annotations on Act 5

1. Li the LATER RULER's birthday is on the Seventh of the Seventh Moon. This is the night when the legendary Cowherd, an earthling, and the Weaving Maid, grand daughter of the Heavenly Empress, two industrious workers tending herd on earth and weaving clouds in Heaven respectively and fallen in love – only to be cruelly separated by the Heavenly Empress with a Heavenly River, the Milky Way, created for the purpose of dividing the lovers – meet each other, on a bridge formed by magpies who sympathize with the lovers across the Milky Way, once a year, in the forms of twin stars. The Cowherd is Altair and Weaving Maid is Vega. This night has become a festival for young lovers and for girls with dexterous handicraft.
2. Bells and chimes sound (literally “gold and jade instruments sound”) is a Chinese proverb describing music performance using exquisite instruments, viz. metal bells and stone chimes. The meaning is to gather the best of various schools of thoughts and form a complete whole.
3. BAO-YI and the Court Maids wish the LATER RULER “a happy birthday and longevity” in two Chinese proverbs. The former is literally “Add another counter as the ocean once again is turned into dry land”, a phrase for birthday wishes. The latter is literally “myriad years and boundless longevity”.
4. “Jingling sounds” are used to describe the approach of a female heard, with jade rings and pendants giving out jingling sounds.
5. “Impregnable as moated fortress” is a Chinese proverb which is literally “Impregnable as a fortress with walls built with gold (metal-plated) and a moat filled with boiling water”.
6. Queen YOUNGER ZHOU cites two instances from history of the weaker side overcoming the stronger in decisive battles. The Red Cliff battle has been referred to in earlier Acts. Sun Bin, a strategist of legendary fame during the ancient times of Warring States (403-221 B.C.), fell victim to the envious rival Pang Zhūan who framed him and had his legs cut off. In retaliation, Sun planned an ambush at Malingdao, defeated and killed Pang Zhūan.
7. “Rather die in dignity than live in shame” is another Chinese proverb which says, “Rather be smashed as jade, than be preserved as a tile.”

8. "Burning bridges" is the English equivalent of another Chinese proverb "Smashing woks and sinking boats", referring to the tactic used by Xiang Yǔ, making it impossible for retreat for his army, having smashed all woks for cooking and sinking all boats after landing, to rouse his troops' will to advance and triumph over the Qin army.
9. "Flying wing to wing" and "Lovebirds" (or "Mandarin ducks") are two common metaphors used in Chinese literature to compare lovers with birds always appearing in couples.

# ACT 6 SELF-IMMOLATION BY FIRE

Music intro Paiji prelude one line at curtain rise.  
Inner curtain reflects burning, using no firewood.

HU ZE

*[Enters, hesitant, dragging lance, loose hair, and sings: Gwanfa lower line]*

**What use my loyalty and courage,  
I am ashamed, powerless against invasion.  
I lament our troops outnumbered,  
Ashamed of losing battle and running afield.**

*[Speaks]*

I, HU ZE, am Commander of Jiangzhou. Hateful Song State, bullying the weak, has now besieged Jinling. I was ordered to defend the capital, had done it for a year now. (Pause)

Alas, our source of recruits is exhausted. Men in all barracks are wounded or dead. At today's battle, I escape afield, beaten, this is lamentable to speak of. The only way open to me now, better return to Jiangzhou, rally the loyal as volunteers, reassemble an army, and salvage the decline and fall. Is that not good tactic, alas. (Pause)

I wish army and civilians co-operate, to save the nation in one decisive battle.

*[Sings: Faidim lower line]*

**I'll risk shedding blood in battlefield.  
No regrets to have body wrapped in horse hide.**

*[Exits hurriedly after stamping feet and sighing]*

Inter curtain rises.

Intro: Paiji prelude.

CHEN QIAO

*[Sings off: Paiji]*

**Frightening, [two beats] city fallen, all in confusion.**

*[Battle cries off.]*

CHEN QIAO

[*Enters, disheveled, hesitant, looking about, sighs and speaks*]

Alas, bad news.

[Sings: Yilau]

**So sad to see nation fallen,**

**Household shattered.**

**I lament my being old, feeble and impotent.**

**Thinking of the safety of the King and Queen,**

**I search all over the forbidden city.**

[*Battle cries off*]

CHEN QIAO

[Sings: Yilau lower line]

**Risking bloody wind and rain,**

**Through swords and sabres, all alone,**

**Breaking through all traps and nets.**

[Sings: Hoche Gwanfa lower line]

**I must protect the King**

**To break through the siege,**

**For temporary relief from crisis.**

BAO-YI

[*Enters on drum beat and runs into CHEN QIAO, speaks*]

So it is Royal In-law Chen.

CHEN QIAO

[*Sees BAO-YI, grabs her quickly and speaks: Haugu*]

BAO-YI, where are Their Majesties now? Quick, lead me to find them.

BAO-YI

[Speaks: Haugu]

Alas, Royal In-law, when the city fell, Their Majesties had disappeared. I now risk my life to look for them, having no regard of all dangers.

CHEN QIAO

[*Thinks, alarmed and speaks*]

Aiya, could they have fallen into Song generals' hands?

[Speaks: Haugu]

No, impossible, if Their Majesties were captured, fighting would have ceased. How come there are still war cries.

BAO-YI

[Speaks: Haugu]

Royal In-law, Her Majesty has a strong temper. I fear she wouldn't stand insult, and with His Majesty die together honorably.

CHEN QIAO

[Hears this, alarmed and sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**I meant to protect the King to escape,**

**And plan restoration later.**

**Hearing this I lose my nerve.**

**Old and ill, my heart aches now.**

[Ponders]

BAO-YI

[Speaks]

Royal In-law.

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**Sleeves cover secret tears for fallen State.**

**Loyal girl ashamed to be foreign subject.**

**I will spill my blood for my Kingdom,**

**Rather than live long in sorrow.**

[Makes to kill herself]

CHEN QIAO

[Stops her and speaks]

BAO-YI, know you that it is easy to die for loyalty, but hard to preserve one's life to await mission. I don't die because I want to save the King and Queen to escape from the trap. Then plan for restoration. I think the Queen is strong and tenacious. She should have my same idea. How would she give up her life lightly.

BAO-YI

[Speaks]

Royal In-law, you keep your head in danger, and save the situation from worsening. Whatever your bidding, I will not say no to even dying for it.

CHEN QIAO

[Speaks]

BAO-YI, not a moment to lose now. Let's part and seek out the King and Queen. Then we meet again.

BAO-YI

[Speaks]

Royal In-law, fighting's everywhere in the Palace. If I find Their Majesties, where shall we meet?

CHEN QIAO

[Thinks for a while, and speaks]

BAO-YI, behind the Palace garden, there is a secret passage to the city suburbs. I will wait there in two hours for news.

BAO-YI

[Speaks] I

obey.

[Sings: Faidim lower line]

**Receiving orders at crisis,  
I will do my best.**

[Sings: Gwanfa]

**Shouldering heavy responsibility,  
Life or death hangs on it.**

[Bows quickly and exit stage right]

CHEN QIAO

[Hesitant, Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**Even though nation's fate  
Faces danger like sunset,  
I wish to escape death at desperate spot.  
Old homes south and north of Yangzi,  
Who can bear to see them crushed all at once.**

[Exit stage left.]

War cries off.

Music: Faansin Pajji Prelude.

LATER RULER

[Sings off]

**Woe betides whole life,  
Ashamed to be King losing Kingdom.**

[As music crescendo on prolonged Faansin "Gung" note, enter LATER RULER on drum beat holding torch.]

[Strong percussion]

LATER RULER

[Grievously and madly wailing, speaks]

Alas, Late King, Father, Heavens!

[Sings: Faansin Returning Time last passage, without prelude]

**Fortified defence works and left nothing usable,  
To resist invading Power.  
At last, I lament moated fortress has fallen.  
Recalling ancestors founding the Kingdom,  
How can I hand it over to others.**

*[Heart-broken]*

**No use bathing battlefield with blood.  
One against a hundred, impossible odds.  
Afraid to hear war drums,  
Ashamed to fail my State,  
I'd rather die to repay my people.**

*[Interlude, accelerating, then slowing down.]*

*[LATER RULER sets fire to the stage left wings with torch.]*

YOUNGER ZHOU

*[Enters in haste amid interlude, shouting, speaks]*

Sire, Sire.

*[Looks around, sees LATER RULER.]*

LATER RULER *hears her, gesture of locking door.*

LATER RULER

*[Continues to sing]*

**Separate love and hate in Palace.  
Carrying blood and tears,  
In agony, I burn myself to death.**

*[Sets fire all around.]*

Glow of firelight in stage right and backdrop too.

LATER RULER *sits on the floor, waiting to die with eyes closed.*

YOUNGER ZHOU

*[Knocks on door and speaks]*

Sire.

*[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]*

**Thick smoke through door in wisps.  
Fearsome flames already flying high.  
Howling and weeping blood, I knock on door.  
I'd live or die with you without regret.**

*[Knocks and speaks]*

Sire, Sire, at this moment, how can you leave me and depart? Sire, open the door!

*Hearing this, LATER RULER is moved, stands up and means to open door, then heaves a long sigh, turns around and not answering.*

YOUNGER ZHOU

*[Speaks: Haugu]*

Sire, when I first married you, I made the pledge of not parting till death. Today, the State falls, household shattered, you may wish to die for the State and people. Why leave me and depart, that is too cruel.

LATER RULER

[Sighs and speaks: Haugu]

My Queen, the State in woe, we are to blame, not your fault. We are determined to die, alas, I can't bear to cause your death too.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Kneels and speaks: Haugu]

Sire, a common loyal wife could die with her husband, more so I as Queen of the Realm. My love for you rivals sun and moon, constant as gold. I prostrate and beg not to part with you. Kneeling and weeping at Palace door, I beg you in great sorrow.

[Speaks]

Sire, open the door quickly.

LATER RULER

[Sighs and speaks: Haugu]

Alas, they say a couple are like birds in the same forest, crisis comes and they fly separate ways. Queen, we can't share same dream in this life, wish we could be bedfellows again in the next.

[Speaks]

Never mind me, make haste and run for your life.

Music starts with heavy percussion on Yishang note sustained.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Heart-broken and sings: Yifaan Gwanfa lower line]

**How can I bear it, so near yet so far apart.**

**Pity the lone goose, severed from her flock.**

[Sings: Yifaan Naamyum without prelude]

**I lament broken mirror,**

**I grieve at severed hairpins.**

**The King dies for the Realm.**

**I am willing to immolate too.**

LATER RULER

[Continues to sing]

**We can't bear to see you die.**

**Our sins will be even greater.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Continues to sing]

**My tears drained, my voice croaking,**

**I beg to be near my King.**

**Even if we can't dream together in life,**

**I wish to share same tomb in death.**



LATER RULER

[Continues to sing]

**So sad, crying on the other side of the door.**

**I split silk for you to wipe tears.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Continues to sing]

**See blood-stained tears shedding outside the door.**

**So hard-hearted to separate loving couple.**

LATER RULER

[Continues to sing, *accelerating*]

**I fear meeting adds to sorrow.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Continues to sing]

**You can't keep me out and not love me.**

LATER RULER

[Continues to sing]

**Blame not Lovers' Heaven for leaving a crack.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Continues to sing]

**I lament sea of regret forever ebbs and flows.**

LATER RULER

[Continues to sing]

**Just wish lovely flower avoids ill fate.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Continues to sing]

**Same path in life or death, parting not.**

LATER RULER

[Continues to sing]

**Parting in life or death equally sad.**

[Sings: Yifaan Gwanfa]

**So ashamed, no longer able to pity beauty.**

[Speaks]

Queen, never mind me, you better leave.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[*Heart-broken*, speaks]

Alas.

[Sings: Faidim lower line]

**I rush the door to meet**

**The one separated by it.**

**Love when insane is uncontrollable.**

[Cymbals, she rushes door thrice, kneels and pants]

LATER RULER *hears it, relents, opens the door latch, means to open door, turns his back, blocks door with arm.*

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Madly shouting, speaks]

Sire, Sire, even if mandarin ducks don't show white hair, how can lovebirds in danger be a door apart.

Think, a couple were not born in same year, but may die on same day. Let me knock myself dead on

Palace door first, and await my King on the way to the Underworld.

[Rises]

LATER RULER

[Shouts to stop her, speaks]

Queen, don't do it.

[Opens the door.]

YOUNGER ZHOU, *reckless, rushes in and falls, accompanied by cymbals.*

LATER RULER

[Helps YOUNGER ZHOU up, faces each other weeping, speaks]

My Queen.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Hugs LATER RULER tightly, speaks]

Sire.

LATER RULER

[Much grieved, speaks] Queen,

we made you suffer.

Music starts, Paiji prelude, at second beat.

LATER RULER

[Sings: "Cuckoo Cooing", free tempo]

**I let down my State, my subjects and my love.**

**I harm my Kingdom and people.**

**Facing each other, weeping our collars wet,**

**Ashamed for letting you down.**

**You had such great expectations of me.**

**South and north of Yangzi, four decades,**

**Perished in our hands.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Continues to sing]

**My King, don't blame yourself,  
And add to your grief,  
Blame Heaven's will for Southern Tang's fall.  
It is not your fault of incapable reign.  
You can't repel a thousand troops alone.**

LATER RULER

[Continues to sing]

**End of the road, troops of nation defeated.  
So grieved I wish not to live.  
I hate myself, even killing myself,  
It is not adequate to repay my people.  
I wish you can escape from sea of blood,  
And break out of ill fate.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Continues to sing]

**Live and die together,  
Our vow was engraved,  
Loving partners go the same way  
To the Underworld.  
Don't abandon ill-fated me,  
I wish to share life and death with you,  
And follow my King forever.**

LATER RULER

[Continues to sing]

**A thousand threads of love,  
Weaving web of regret in vain.  
I sigh for implicating you for life,  
Suffering myriads of disasters and woes,  
Helplessly, calling on unanswering Heaven,  
And unhearing Earth.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Continues]

**Henceforth, away from all troubles.  
Loving partners laugh and leave,  
Retire and leave mortal world forever,  
For eternity never to part.**

LATER RULER

[*Moved*, speaks]

My Queen,

[Sings: Yifaan Jungbaan lower line]

**Lamenting bones buried,  
I'd rather burn my flesh to ashes.  
I seek to immolate for national woe.  
I fear to make out your knitted brows.  
I have tears to shed for my realm,  
But no ink to pour on South of Yangzi.  
I let down your great love,  
I am abashed that I do not deserve such blessing.  
Harming myself, I fear harming others.  
Hence I plunge into raging flames alone.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Continues to sing]

**Who will pity me, after your departure,  
I cannot live on alone.  
I wish we become intertwined boughs.  
True love is manifest in tribulations.  
Heaven or Underworld,  
Living or dead, be together forever.  
Holding your hand, I fear parting in life.  
With same heart, we cannot part in death.**

LATER RULER

[Continues to sing]

**Let raging flames make ashes of lovers.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Continues and sings: Yifaan Chatjiching, faster]

**Ashes of lover after woe cannot vanish.  
Following wind and rain, go back home.**

LATER RULER

[Continues and sings: Yifaan Chatjiching, faster]

**I fear to see old and young  
Lamenting nation's fall together.  
Tear stains everywhere South of Yangzi.**

[Sings: Gwanfa]

**Flesh of ice, bones of jade, fallen to dust.  
Red blood, yellow blossoms,  
Leaving eternal stamp of life and death.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

*[Tearful smile, speaks]*

Sire.

*[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]*

**Liang and Zhu, lovers turn into butterflies,**

**I wish to be a common loyal woman,**

**And keep Han Pin company.**

**Raging flames refine true love.**

**Love ends not though Heaven and Earth perish.**

*[Embracing, speaks]*

Sire.

LATER RULER

*[Speaks]*

We let you down so much, take a bow from us.

YOUNGER ZHOU

*[Hastily helps him rise, speaks]*

Sire, it is pressing now, why not depart from city of sorrow soon, leave sea of grief quickly.

LATER RULER

*[Hardens his heart, sighs and speaks]*

Alas, poor King and Queen, buried in sea of flames together.

YOUNGER ZHOU

*[Speaks]*

Refine our love, no regret in giving up life.

*Music starts, LATER RULER sets fire.*

*Projection of fire light, zooming up.*

LATER RULER

*[Sings: "Cuckoo Cooing" ending, a bit brisk]*

**Dying for home and country,**

**Repaying people on earth.**

**Make out flowery beauty,**

**Stamp it in my brain.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

*[Continues to sing]*

**Let thin bones turn into ashes.**

**So fortunate to keep my King company forever.**

**Troubles vanish, sorrow shattered.**

**Boundless happiness.**

LATER RULER

[Continues to sing]

**Heaving a long sigh,  
Raising tearful eyes,  
I fear to see tear stains,  
On your checks, heart-rending,  
Panting, in weariness.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[A bit slow and free, continues to sing]

**This life ends, hope for next life.  
Force faint smile to replace deep frown.**

LATER RULER/YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sing together]

**Birds of same fate,  
Love unending in life and death.**

CAO BIN

[Leads officers and soldiers, enter together amid music of hastiness. Cao orders putting out fire, speaks]

Guards, put out the fire at once.

[They put out fire.]

CAO BIN

[Speaks: Haugu]

King of Southern Tang, know that the Song Emperor is generous, wherefore commit suicide? Why not submit letter of surrender, follow me back to Bianliang, and cease fighting.

LATER RULER

[Speaks: Haugu]

Bah, Song Emperor the tyrant, bullying the weak. I'd rather be shattered jade, but never go up north to surrender.

CAO BIN

[Speaks: Haugu]

Bah, don't think just by dying, that you can escape disaster. Know you 300 people in your family, of your four brothers, have their life or death in my hands. If you do not surrender to Song Emperor, not only could you not preserve your household, but I'd further massacre the South of Yangzi. Military and civilian in your entire kingdom, not one will be spared.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks: Haugu]

CAO BIN, they say killers will be killed. Our nation's troops and people, would gladly die with the enemy.

CAO BIN

[Speaks]

Your Majesty, this foreign minister acts on Song Emperor's orders. I cannot help it. King, you do what's best. This foreign officer bids you goodbye.

LATER RULER

[Stops him, speaks]

Wait, General Cao.

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**For preserving the people,  
I am willing to be prisoner of war. (Beat)  
Helplessly, not up to me to live or die.  
I can't bear to see my old realm.  
Leaving the State to surrender,  
My heart is full of grief and rage.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**I'll accompany my King to face suffering,  
I care not tasting bitter and sweet together.  
Flower cannot seek to fall on home soil.  
Buried in foreign land without complaint.**

CAO BIN

[Speaks: Haugu]

Thanks to you, King, to preserve lives, you are willing to be subjugated prisoner. This foreign officer salutes you. In a while, please submit surrender document. Tomorrow, bid farewell to your royal ancestral shrine. Pack more jewels for your personal spending. Once my official business is completed, I will order cease war immediately. Then I will come to see you. I ask to be excused now.

[Exeunt CAO BIN and company.]

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Aggrieved, rushes forward, speaks]

Sire.

LATER RULER

[Speechless, sighs, speaks]

Alas.

[Sings: Saatbaan]

**Leave my realm.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Continues to sing]

**Bid farewell to Royal Ancestral Shrine.**

LATER RULER

[Continues to sing]

**Ashamed to face ministers and subjects.**

CURTAIN



## Annotations on Act 6

1. Self immolation (burning oneself to death as a form of human sacrifice) comes from both the “imported” Buddhist custom (of monks being cremated, or burnt alive in suicidal protest); and the ancient Chinese precedents of King Zhou, last King of the Shang Dynasty, killing himself by burning his own palace upon defeat by the uprising of Ji Fa, Duke of Zhou who became First Emperor of the Zhou Dynasty.
2. “Jiangzhou” is present day Jiujiang, a city near Nanchang the provincial capital, in Jiangxi province. “Commander” is an officer of the Royal Guards, defending the capital (Jinling, present day Nanjing in Jiangsu Province) and the King as emergency measure, even though Hu Ze’s title is Commander of Jiangzhou.
3. “Wrap one’s dead body with horse hide” is a Chinese saying meaning “die in action”.
4. “Fortifying defence works and leaving nothing usable for the enemy” is the proverbial tactic used as, for instance, Russia against Napoleon’s invasion in 1812.
5. “A couple is like birds in the same forest, when disaster comes they fly away in their separate ways” is a Chinese proverb stating a pessimistic view of married couples.
6. “Shattered mirror” and “parted hairpin” are imageries of parted couple.
7. “Split silk” is used to describe crisp sound such as fire cracking. “Lovers’ Heaven leaving a crack” refers to the prehistoric legend of the Goddess Nuwa refining rocks to fill up the crack in Heaven.
8. “Mandarin Ducks” are always seen in pairs. “Lovebirds” (Jian Die) are legendary birds with only one wing each, so that a couple must join together in order to fly.
9. “Liang and Zhu” refer to the legend of Liang Shanbo the scholar and his school mate Zhu Yingtai who was a girl disguised as a boy in order to gain admission to school which was for boys only. When they fell in love but were not allowed to be married by Zhu’s family, Liang died of a broken heart and Zhu killed herself by throwing herself into Liang’s new tomb. They were seen to turn into a pair of butterflies. The story is the subject of many Chinese operatic works, and of the 1960s Violin Concerto “Butterfly Lovers” composed by Chen Gang and He Zanhao.

10. "Han Pin" is a story collected in the anthology "Collected Fairy Tales" (Sou Shen Ji) by Gan Bao. Han Pin's beautiful wife was abducted by a Prince of Song during the Southern Dynasties. Han committed suicide, and his wife also leaped from the high tower to her death, and the couple were turned into either lovebirds or butterflies according to different versions.
11. "Die with the enemy" is a Chinese proverb, literally "jade and stone burn together".

# ACT 7 LEAVING COUNTRY TO SWEAR ALLEGIANCE

Scene: Backdrop shows Yangzi River. At the wings, a pier with people standing on one side, and trees on the other. The whole stage a river bank.

Time: Sunset, twilight clouds, light breeze and drizzles.

The general public and songstresses of the Royal Conservatory stand behind the curtains.

Curtain rises slowly.

All in darkness, lights up slowly, people on stage are faintly visible. As music grows louder, lights up more.

During music intro, enter Xǔ XǔAN, HU ZE, ZHANG YI, ZHENG WEN-BAO, HUANG BAO-YI, LIU-ZHU, XUE JIU, Eunuchs accompanying LATER RULER and Queen YOUNGER ZHOU.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sings]

**Tears of subdued people,**

**Tears like river flowing into sea.** [Strong sound effect]

ALL ON STAGE

[Sing together]

**Tears of subdued people,**

**Tears like river flowing into sea.**

LATER RULER

[Continues to sing]

**Grief of conquered nation,**

**Grief like peak piercing into sky.**

ALL ON STAGE

[Sing together]

**Grief of conquered nation,**

**Grief like peak piercing into sky.**

LATER RULER

*[Slowly, in tears, looks around at ministers and subjects, looks far into the horizon, sighs and speaks]*

Alas.

PEOPLE

*[Speak together]*

Sire.

*Quick tattoo turns slow, LATER RULER holds YOUNGER ZHOU by the hand, faces each other sadly.*

YOUNGER ZHOU

*[Speaks]*

Sire.

LATER RULER

*[Grief-stricken, looks up, weeps, sighs, and sings: Yifaan Long Gwanfa lower line]*

**Sun and moon dim,**

**Country fearful at upheaval.**

**Never skilful with archery on horseback,**

**Just good at writing Ci and musical taste.**

**When city fell, I had already meant to die.**

**Who could suffer insult for self-preservation,**

**But thinking of South of Yangzi,**

**Sadly occupied by neighboring Power,**

**What wrong have the people done**

**To deserve suffering such misery.**

**I am willing to be subjugated prisoner,**

**In order to protect my people's safety.**

**Swallowing insult, swearing allegiance,**

**Not for staying alive after nation's conquest.**

*Heavy percussion. All stage in sorrow and wiping tears to the accompaniment of music.*

YOUNGER ZHOU

*[Feels unable to comfort him and can hardly contain own sorrow, speaks]*

Sire.

*[Sings: Yifaan Saipei Baanmin without prelude]*

**Hot blood spills, mixed with tears.**

**I lament vassal not pitied by Song King.**

**War clouds gather over southern sky,**

**How can caged bird fly far.**

LATER RULER

*[Sadly continues to sing]*

**Can't bear to leave South of Yangzi  
And weather of apricot rain,  
Crying at Royal Ancestral Shrine,  
My heart pains as if stabbed by myriad arrows.  
So hard to lay foundation of country.  
How can I bear to abandon it.  
Sadly, subjugated prisoner begs for mercy,  
I am overwhelmed with grief at Palace.**

*[Music interlude]*

YOUNGER ZHOU

*[Helpless but tries to comfort him, speaks accompanied by music]*

Sire, dynasties wax and wane, all due to Heaven's pre-destiny. Also you are not a King who causes his country's fall, you can't help being weak against a strong foe. The times are against you, that's all. I hope Sire will take good care of yourself, bear the shame, shoulder the onus, and plan later moves.

LATER RULER

*[Guilty and speaks]*

Alas, we lack virtue, hence Heaven blesses not us. The country suffers the pain of conquest. The whole clan is sadly implicated. This day I go up north to surrender. I become a bottled up turtle. Looking back several times, can I help being reluctant to part, looking far into the horizon, facing the scenery, I can't be comforted. I am ashamed of staying alive, I cannot face the late King. Dying is inadequate to repay my people's affection. Alas, how can I not grieve?

*All on stage must react to every line, to achieve unity in emotional effect across the stage.*

YOUNGER ZHOU

*[Holds back tears, encourages him and continues to sing]*

**You suffer insult,  
Never mind trivial injury.  
You should first plan for restoration.  
Even though in prison,  
Think of state affairs always,  
Fear not bearing other people's arrogance.  
Song armies crushed Southern Tang,  
Like Wu and Yue at war in ancient times.  
History repeats itself.  
I counsel my King time and again.  
State affair comes first.  
Emulate Gou Jian of those days.**

*[Slow music]*

LATER RULER

[Speaks accompanied by music]

Restoring the nation, not so easy!

[Sings: Yifaan Yiwong prelude on He note]

**Even if I have heroic spirit,**

**I fear it follows the flowing water**

**And vanishes into nothing.**

**Visitor's dreams are short.**

**Road is far, man also far away.**

**Heart-rending scenery locked in my eyes.**

**Long lasting grief, past history, ah,**

**Only fit for lamenting,**

**I grieve at vicissitudes of life in vain.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sings: Yifaan Long Yiwong lower line]

**At the deadend, one's will is still strong,**

**Sorrow in life is inevitable.**

**Pity not flowers growing old now.**

**Who knows next year the moon's not full.**

**Heavy the responsibility, worry not the way's far,**

**Even songstress laments country's fall. Ministers**

**and subjects can match**

**The example of Boyi the loyal.**

LATER RULER

[*Sadly*, continues to sing: Yifaan Long Yiwong upper line]

**Nostalgic about home country,**

**Sorrow unconsolable.**

**King at end of tethers laments depression.**

**Horses cross thousand-mile Yangzi.**

**Rearing talents for a decade,**

**So few loyal and capable.**

**Not to mention Song monarch is valiant,**

**Far better than Fucha of Wu.**

**I am ashamed of being incapable**

**To emulate Gou Jian of Yue.**

[Music ends].

HU ZE

[Speaks]

Sire, you said just now, rearing talents for a decade, so few loyal and capable. That's enough to shame us ministers to death. I greatly admire Zhang Xūn's sacrifice of his life heroically. I did not die, not for clinging on to life, just to save my useful body, to work on restoring the nation.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[*Reacts and speaks*]

What?

*All stage react, looking around, afraid that Song soldiers may overhear.*

HU ZE

[Speaks: Haugu]

Sire, remember, South of Yangzi is fertile. Goods are plentiful and people happy. How can it fall into other's hands. Sire, the day you leave to surrender, is the time for us your servants to pool and train manpower.

[Percussion]

I may not have Statesman Wen Zhong's capability. But still I can encourage women to weave, men to farm on the one hand, and retrain the army on the other.

ZHANG YI

[Speaks: Haugu]

Sire, they say the nation's rise and fall is the concern of every citizen. We subjects are ashamed to be subjects of a foreign country. We are willing to die for restoring our nation.

[Percussion]

Hence, one man raises his arm, a thousand men follow. With one heart and united effort, let us restore our nation.

ALL ON STAGE

[Speak together]

Yes. [Percussion]

With one heart and united effort, let us restore our nation.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[*Looks around amid tattoo, speaks*]

You be careful with what you say.

HU ZE

[Speaks]

Your Majesty, don't worry, at this moment, the Song officers and men are all in the boats. We may say what we wish.

[Heavy sound effect]

YOUNGER ZHOU

[*Spirited, looks around at the people, sings: Ditty*]

**Glad to see ministers and people**

**Have patriotic feelings.**

**Why worry there's nobody**

**Ready to use the whip first.**

**I hope my King will sharpen your spirit,**

**Keep encouraging yourself.  
Henceforth, sharpen not your ink stick,  
But sharpen your sword.  
Don't let down the late King's foundation.  
Don't let down the people's patriotism.**

LATER RULER

[Upon hearing this, shame-faced, slow tattoo, speaks]

Alas.

[Sings: Gwanfa lower line]

**I let down my country and people,  
And should have died of shame.  
Covering my face many times, tears flow like spring.  
But then I fear Heaven disposes,  
I may not be allowed to change fate.**

HU ZE

[Sings: Jingsin "Teasing Daji" ending]

**Aiyaya, conquered people, grief-stricken.**

[Sings: Quick Maanbaan]

**Choosing loyalty and death,  
Patriotic spirit lives forever,  
National feud to settle, won't live under same sky.**

ALL MALE VOICES ON STAGE

[Sing together: Gwanfa lower line]

**To restore our nation,  
We are willing to fight to the death.**

*All on stage in high spirit.*

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks]

Sire.

[Sings: Chatjiching lower line]

**Ten myriads sharpened swords,  
As if visible now.  
A myriad throw in whips can block stream.  
The King does not surrender in vain,  
The country's strength is preserved.  
Shen Baoxū of yore also fulfilled  
His wish to preserve Chu State.  
I hope South of Yangzi's talents  
Surpass the capable ones in history.**



[Sings faster]

**Impatient for restoration,  
Like arrow at bowstring.  
Heroic spirit plucks heart strings.**

[Sings: Gwanfa]

**Beautiful land South of Yangzi.  
Can't let warmongers occupy it.**

LATER RULER

[Sighs and speaks]

Alas, we reigned poorly, empty words now are no remedy. We are ashamed of ourself, letting down ancestors above, and ministers and subjects below. Letting down the dead and the living.

[Heart-broken]

We admit our guilt.

Xú XǔAN

[Speaks]

Sire.

[Sings: Yifaan Muk'yǔ]

**I hope my King won't blame yourself,  
You can't shoulder all woes.  
The First Ruler founded the dynasty  
With his great talent in those days.  
But the Middle Ruler had already sown  
For years deep-rooted weaknesses.  
Sire ascended to the throne in hard times.  
The Ten Kingdoms' territories,  
Already annexed by Song.  
South of Yangzi boasted  
emptily Of natural barrier.  
Cornered, we could not withstand the enemy.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks: Haugu]

Sire, Minister Xú speaks sense. Why torture yourself with guilt, and make yourself so miserable.

LATER RULER

[Looks far ahead, sighs and speaks: Haugu]

Alas, early spring in the south, apricot blooms, misty drizzles. We are ashamed to face loyal people. How can I bear to part with them. I fear the Song monarch is cruel as Jie and Zhou, while I can't emulate Tang and Ji Chang.

EUNUCH

[Enters and speaks]

I report, Sire, General Cao has waited for long, he is not pleased, so he sent this servant to hurry Your Majesty.

LATER RULER

[Speaks]

Politely reply to General Cao. Say that we will soon come.

EUNUCH

[Speaks]

Yes.

[Exit]

HUANG BAO-YI

[Speaks: Haugu]

Sire, singing at Palace in those days, now becomes the sound of fallen State. The pipa's tune can't tell in full the blood-stained tears of conquered people. After the King has left, this pipa will be like Bo-ya's qin. Please allow us to use the last remaining sound to bid our King farewell on a thousand miles journey.

LATER RULER

[Hearing this, even more sorrowful, speaks: Haugu]

Alas, tomorrow, worlds apart already. Hearing this lingering music, it only adds to the heart-breaking. But going away now, there is no telling of when to return. We hope this talk of fallen nation can hearten our spirit. Alas, I fear homecoming only in my future dreams, heart-broken, I recognize not old instruments.

*A passage of pipa music. Songstresses of the Royal Conservatory come forward, holding instruments and sit on the ground.*

LIU-ZHU, XUE JIU, BAO-YI

[Sing together: "Broken-hearted Flower"]

**Open teary eyes,**

**Pluck sorrowful strings.**

SONGSTRESSES

[Choral singing]

**When will we meet again,**

**Happily in days of peace.**

**The country, beautiful as a painting,**

**Restoration hopes for future years.**

LATER RULER

[Weeps and speaks]

Alas, future years? So many days to come. How far away are future years?

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sadly speaks]

Sire.

BAO-YI

[Sings: "Winds Whistling"]

**All flowers wilt at Palace.**

**All the people moan at river side.**

**One would cry but swallow one's tears.**

[String snaps.]

[Continues to sing, unaccompanied]

**Heart-rending, the string has snapped.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sadly speaks]

String snaps, song ends then.

*All look alarmed.*

LATER RULER

[*Bitter smile*, speaks]

String snaps, song ends, so fitting to the present situation. Why are you so upset?

[Sings: Faansin Jungbaan lower line]

**Flowers chase the rain, flitting.**

**Song follows lost music score, scattered.**

**Moved by the season, aware of regret.**

**Sorrow at parting, silently speechless.**

**How much woe can one body carry?**

**Nowhere in mortal world can it be disposed.**

**Thinking of the past, one should be heart-broken.**

**Cold rain farewells setting sun.**

**Ask how much regret of rise and fall.**

**One dreads the rustic old man**

**Talking about seas turned into mulberry fields.**

**Such beautiful country,**

**Easy to part, difficult to meet again.**

**Turning my head, reluctant to part,**

**Boundless grief.**

ALL ON STAGE

[Choral singing of interlude]

**Our King leaves, mountains apart,**

**We ask when will we meet again.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sings: Faansin Yiwong lower line]

**Misty waves on the river, saddening,  
All one sees are conquered people's tears.  
I dread their clinging on my clothes,  
Asking when will I return.  
Stone City's old bank, dusk clouds lowly hung,  
Straining one's eyes, where is the home town?  
Drifting with the waves, leaving South of Yangzi.  
Only dreams return to the Palace in vain.  
Last year's flowers are redder.  
Hair is turning white from today.  
Ruefully, the past is like smoke.**

LATER RULER

[Sings: Faansin Yiwong interlude on Che note]

**The country remains the same,  
One grieves at dynasty's change.  
Now I go to be imprisoned in Song land,  
I can't foretell when to come back. Don't  
know which day,  
Don't know which day to restore my Kingdom.  
Facing each other makes the heart sadder.  
I cannot stop blood-stained tears falling.  
Stealing a look at the Song craft,  
My heart is disturbed.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sings: Faansin Yiwong upper line]

**Alas, Guangling tower and hall desolate,  
Wu Palace now deserted.  
All that is left, wind and rain Seeing  
sad people off for a distance.  
I lament a thousand miles domain,  
Cold colors so remote.**

LATER RULER

[Sings: Faansin "Little Peach Red" ending]

**Kingdom changes color,  
Myriad emotions.  
King and subjects weep together  
By the river side.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Continues to sing]

**Home and country fallen.  
Wind howling, rain pattering,  
A thousand sighs, a myriad moans,  
Tender heart rending.**

SONGSTRESSES

[All female voices sing together]

**Royal Conservatory songstresses,  
Prostrate before the King,  
Ashamed that we have no watery wine  
For a farewell feast by the river.  
Eyes full of tears substitute for wine.**

Music with percussion as background.

CHEN QIAO

[*Carrying dagger, enters, kneels to LATER RULER, sobs and speaks*]

Sire...

LATER RULER

[*Hurriedly helps him rise, speaks*]

Old Minister Chen, you are old and ill, why bother to see me off.

CHEN QIAO

[*Panting, plucks up spirit, speaks*]

Sire, if this old servant comes not to see you off, I fear I will not see Sire again.

LATER RULER *is saddened.*

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks]

Uncle, why speak thus?

CHEN QIAO

[*Sighs, plucks up spirit and speaks*]

Sire, Queen,

[Sings: Yifaan Long Gwanfa]

**Grief unending, grief unending,  
Southern Tang cannot be preserved,  
To be passed down as a dynasty.  
Opening up my heart,  
I cannot write on conquered minister's grief.  
Weeping blood, I cannot prolong the existence of the State.**

**Sadly, flesh and blood thrown to falcons and hounds.  
Causing the King to surrender and be a prisoner subject,  
My sin is great.**

[Sings: Gwanfa]

**Dying a hundred times,  
I still cannot repay my King.  
I wish to turn into a sword,  
To offer my guts.**

LATER RULER

[All tears and speaks]

Minister, you fret and labor for the State, fatigued in body and spirit, what sin is there?

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks]

Uncle, henceforth, the State has no ruler. Uncle, we count on you to take control.

CHEN QIAO

[Heart-broken, speaks: Haugu]

Alas, even if I am Zhuge Liang reincarnate, I lament as he did at Wuzhang Plain. I am old and feeble, I know my days are numbered.

[To YOUNGER ZHOU]

Niece, this time you escort the King in his suffering, I hope you will bear the responsibility, swallowing the insults, and rival the Queen of Yue's paragon.

[To LATER RULER]

Sire, I hope you emulate Gou Jian of Yue, lie on faggots and taste gall, to fulfil the wish of defeating Wu. I won't begrudge cutting open my guts to encourage my King's ambitions. In future, when the Kingdom is restored, I, though dead, will have no shame to face the late King in the Underworld.

[Pulls out dagger, stabs his own chest]

*People are too late to stop him.*

LATER RULER, YOUNGER ZHOU

[Shout]

Old Minister Chen.

Xú XǔAN

[Holding CHEN QIAO, sadly speaks]

Royal In-law.

CHEN QIAO

[All blood-stained, hands trembling, feeble in breath, speaks]

Brother Xú XǔAN, this old man, though he has the courage to cut his chest, he has no more strength to take out his guts. May I ask you to do it for me, and fulfil my wish.

[Dies]

*Seeing this, LATER RULER swoons. YOUNGER ZHOU hurriedly holds him.*

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Speaks]

Sire, Sire.

*Songstresses cover their faces. Ministers surround CHEN QIAO's corpse. Xǔ XǔAN takes out his gall bladder.*

LATER RULER comes to. *He rushes to CHEN QIAO's body. Ministers disperse.*

Xǔ XǔAN takes red bowl, holding CHEN QIAO's gall bladder in it, and presents to LATER RULER.

LATER RULER has no heart to see it, backs off.

Xǔ XǔAN kneels and advances on his knees.

YOUNGER ZHOU receives CHEN QIAO's gall bladder, kneels beside CHEN QIAO's body and weeps.

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sings: New composition]

**In hard times, a minister's moral fortitude is seen,**

**Even the supernatural weeps for his heroism.**

**Cutting out his guts,**

**His heart emulates the sun and moon.**

**His great spirit rises high into Heaven.**

**I weep on his upright dead body,**

**In life and death he keeps his vow.**

[A little brisker]

**Fear not suffering hardships,**

**Or facing dangers.**

**One day, the debt of blood will be repaid.**

**The loyal minister will then be comforted.**

**I pray silently that his heroic soul**

**May watch over us,**

**So we may restore the old realm,**

EUNUCH

[Enters and speaks]

This servant reports again to the King. General Cao is angry that Your Majesty is so late in arriving. He is in great rage. If Your Majesty does not start at once, he....

*All on stage react to this.*

EUNUCH

[Continues to speak]

He will lead his men, and come to escort you in person.

LATER RULER

[*Grieved*, sings: Deep Gwanfa lower line]

**Aiyaya, loyal bones not yet buried,**

**Heart-broken, I board Song craft.**

LATER RULER, YOUNGER ZHOU and Xú XüAN go up to pier together.

Music starts, prelude to Li The LATER RULER's Ci "Po Zhen Zi".

ALL ON STAGE

[Speak together]

Sire, Queen.

[*Weep together.*]

LATER RULER

[Sings: "Po Zhen Zi"]

**Forty years hitherto, family and State,**

**Three thousand miles of domain.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sings]

**Phoenix and dragon palace linked to the sky.**

**Jade trees and boughs as misty creepers.**

LATER RULER

[Sings]

**What did I know about war?**

**All of a sudden, a subjugated prisoner.**

**Shen's waist thinning,**

**Pan's temples graying, wearing away.**

YOUNGER ZHOU

[Sings]

**Most panicky, on the day of**

**Bidding Ancestral Shrine farewell,**

**Royal chorus still playing parting song.**

**Shedding tears, facing Court Maids.**



ALL ON STAGE

[Speak together]

Sire, O Queen, take care!

*Curtain falls slowly.*

Finale music.

FINAL CURTAIN

## Annotations on Act 7

1. Queen YOUNGER ZHOU comforts LATER RULER, saying “You are not a King who causes his country’s fall”. This quote is in fact an excuse used by Emperor Chongzheng, last emperor of Ming Dynasty, saying “The emperor is not an emperor who causes his country’s fall”, in 1644 A.D., when he went on to put the blame elsewhere in his next remark, “the ministers are the ones who cause the country’s fall.”
2. She goes on to quote the precedent of Wu and Yue in the period of the Warring States (403 -221 B.C.) Yue was defeated by Wu under King Fu Cha. Gou Jian, King of Yue, and his Queen were both kept as subjugated prisoners and slaves at the Wu Palace, doing menial duties. Gou Jian suffered all insults silently, and heartened himself by inflicting even more hardship on himself: sleeping on a bed of faggots, and tasting a bitter gall bladder hung over his bed. His ministers in Yue, on the other hand, carried out plans for restoration. Wen Zhong implemented the strategy of “Spend 10 years on breeding (people) and pooling (resources), 10 years on training.” Hence LATER RULER’s pessimistic remark “rearing talents for a decade, so few loyal and capable”, prompting HU ZE to respond that he would “pool and train manpower” emulating Wen Zhong. The story ended with Gou Jian gaining Fu Cha’s trust and releasing him to return to Yue. Another Yue minister Fan Li presented a beauty named Xi Shi, to Fu Cha, causing him to spend all his time on merry making and neglect state affairs, and stirring up strife between him and his ministers, thus giving the opportunity for Yue to attack and defeat Wu in the end. Another allusion of the Queen’s is Boyi who with brother Shuqi were ministers of Shang Dynasty and starved to death rather than eat Zhou Dynasty grains when Zhou overthrew and succeeded Shang.
3. HU ZE also cited another example of General Zhang Xūn of Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.) who was besieged at Zhuyang Pass, killed his own concubine to feed his starved garrison, and died bravely at the fall of the Pass after grinding his teeth so hard that they fell off one by one.
4. “Ready to use the whip first” comes from the story of two rival heroes, Liu Kun and Zu Di of the Jin Dynasty (265 – 420 A.D.) Zu was famous for “hearing cock crow and rising to practice his sword play”. And Liu Kun was always wary of lagging behind Zu his companion, stating that he would always be “ready to use the whip first” ahead of Zu. This proverb is used to denote taking the first move and thus gaining the upper hand.
5. “Throw in whips can block stream” are the arrogant words of the barbarian King Fu Jian when he set off to invade Jin, declaring that “With my great number of troops, if they throw their horsewhips into the stream the flow would be blocked.” This proverb is used to denote a large and/or powerful army.

6. The story of Shen Baoxú tells how the State of Chu was invaded and occupied by Wu, and Shen the Chu minister went to the State of Qin to ask for help. He stood outside the Qin palace wall and cried bitterly for seven days and nights, thus moving the Qin ruler to send troops to rescue Chu.
7. Xú XǔAN was fair and just in saying that the decline of Southern Tang, after the First Ruler had built it up into a strong Kingdom, started to decline with Li Jing the Middle Ruler and father of Li Yǔ. Li Jing was devoted to Chinese calligraphy and Ci writing. His most famous story was commenting at Court not on state affairs but on a minister Feng Yanji's Ci, "You wrote the line 'wind starts suddenly, blowing ripples, wrinkling a pond of spring water'. Well, what business is that of yours if a pond of spring water is wrinkled?" His over-indulgence in artistic and literary pursuits, at the expense of attending to State affairs and defence, is the main cause of decline and fall of Southern Tang.
8. The LATER RULER quoted ancient history, saying "I fear the Song monarch is cruel as Jie and Zhou, while I can't emulate Tang and Ji Chang." This refers to Jie the last ruler of the legendary Xia Dynasty who was a tyrant, eventually overthrown by the rebellion of a nobleman Tang who then founded the Shang Dynasty. Zhou was the last ruler of Shang and another notorious tyrant, persecuting his nobles, including the famous sage Ji Chang, whose son Ji Fa overthrew Zhou the tyrant and founded the Zhou Dynasty.
9. A sustained metaphor of music is used, first by BAO-YI, referring to the legend of Bo Ya of the Period of Spring and Autumn (722 – 481 B.C.) who played the seven-stringed qin so divinely that even animals and fish would come out to listen. And Bo Ya smashed his qin when Zhong Ziqi died, since this was the only human listener who could really appreciate his music. Then LATER RULER picked up the metaphor with another story about a "lost music score", with the title of "Guangling San" ("San" literally means "scattered"), which the Jin Dynasty musician Ji Kang played for the last time before his execution. The score was lost forever thereafter. YOUNGER ZHOU followed with a reference to "Guangling tower and hall".
10. Jinling the capital of Southern Tang (now Nanjing) is also nicknamed "Stone City" (Shitoucheng).
11. "Royal Conservatory" (in Chinese "Jiaofang") was first set up in the Tang Dynasty (618 – 907 A.D.) as an institution in the Imperial Palace for the training of musicians and songstresses.
12. "Gall bladder" is believed, in Chinese traditional medicine, as the seat of "courage", hence roughly equivalent to Western reference to "guts".
13. CHEN QIAO's reference to "throwing flesh and blood to falcons and hounds" is a metaphor of feeding animals used in hunting. "Falcons and hounds" are used in a derogatory sense as "jackals", meaning accomplices in wicked deeds.
14. CHEN QIAO made a reference to Zhuge Liang, Prime Minister of Shu and famous brilliant strategist and statesman in the period of The Three Kingdoms. He died in action of illness, when leading an invasion of Wei, at the place called Wuzhang Plain.

15. The ending song is composed by another Hong Kong composer, Yu Lin, setting the melody to fit the words of the famous Ci “Po Zhen Zi” by Li Yü the LATER RULER.
16. “Misty creepers” refer to a place where grass and tree are so abundantly grown that mist gathers and creepers twine. It is also used to denote a place where Taoists perform divine practices.
17. “Shen’s waist thinning” refers to Shen Yue (441 -513 A.D.) the South Dynasties writer who described his waist thinning – “my belt kept buckling tighter” – owing to his not yet given office by the King. “Pan’s temples graying” refers to Pan Yue (247 – 300 A.D.), more commonly known as Pan An, the legendary handsome man, whose hair at the temples started graying at the age of 32, according to his own writing.