

***Crying on the Second Brother's Bridge
Once Every Three Years***

三年一哭二郎橋

Libretti by Tong Dik Sang
唐滌生粵劇作品

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Crying on the Second Brother's Bridge Once Every Three Years

三年一哭二郎橋

Characters in the Play

耀祖 Yaozu (brother of Xiezu)
谢祖 Xiezu (brother of Yaozu)
春香 Chunxiang
夫人 Mother (mother of Yaozu and Xiezu)
梅香 Meixiang (maid)
香 ft Xiangju
桐轩 Tongxuan (Yaozu and Xiezu's uncle)
媚珠 Meizhu (daughter of Tongxuan) 彦
修 Yanxiu (student of Tongxuan)

Act I

(Scene of a poor neighborhood by the river. Both sides of the river are in view. On the bottom of the stage are rocks and there are mountain trails on both sides of the stage. In the middle of the stage is the scene of a river with a small wooden gangplank over it. On this side of the stage is the door to a house with bamboo chairs and miscellaneous things in front).

Chunxiang: [thirteen years old and carrying a pipa]

(sings) There is a small sparrow on the south side of the city. Every night she is expecting something to happen. Who am I playing the pipa for?
Last year I already had a taste of love.

(She sits on the stairs)

Xiezu: [fourteen years old]

(sings) Nothing is better than blood brothers. My older brother carries firewood and I study. I meet Chunxiang every night on the south side of the city. We have known each other since childhood and have become best friends.

(*recites*) Tonight is mid-Autumn festival, my brother is working at the lumber mill. He definitely will come home for dinner. I have planned not to go out. But Chunxiang and I have been seeing each other every night at dusk, and she even gave me a jade bracelet last year as a gift. Even though she is not rich, she is better off than me. It is almost dusk now. I better go so that I can return early.

(*Xiezu walks up the mountain trail and exits the stage. Chunxiang sees him and puts down the pipa and pulls him to her side.*)

Chunxiang: (*speaks*) Second brother, today you are late. You usually arrive when I finish playing the pipa piece once. But today, you arrive after I repeat the piece three times.

Xiezu: (*speaks*) My dear sister Chunxiang, I think you do not know. The gangplank that is above the water is falling apart because it has been in the water for so long. I would not dare to walk too fast because I do not want it to break. Once it breaks, I will fall in the water.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Yes, it is said that there are many kind-hearted people who could repair the bridge, so why does no one build a new bridge over the water? Well, I won't say any more. Do you remember what today is?

Xiezu: (*recites*) I remember. This is the night of the mid-autumn festival when we first met. Three years ago you even gave me a jade bracelet as a gift. I am wearing it in the inside pocket of my undergarment. I will not let anyone know about this.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Second brother, I was thinking to give you a gift every year. But my family's financial situation is declining, so I can only afford to give a gift once every three years.

(*She presents the gift to him.*)

Xiezu: (*recites*) Oh, I see. It is a small golden gourd. The handiwork is so refined. It is almost the size of a small pearl.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Second brother, every year this time we always do something fun to amuse ourselves. Do you remember how last year you impersonated the god of the earth and I impersonated the goddess of the earth? Even though it was not very original, we almost scared the old woman temple attendant half to death. So, what do we should do this year?

Xiezu: (*speaks*) If Chunxiang wants something more exciting, why don't I

impersonate a blind man and you impersonate a blind woman? Hmm, no, I think one blind person is enough. If you are also blind, who is going to lead me along? Oh, why don't we play leading the blind man across the bridge? It is exciting and new. Come, come, come. I can impersonate a blind man really well. It is really a waste that I am not really blind. Please come and lead me on.

Chunxiang: *(recites)* I don't want to. God bless you. There are so many things to pick from, why do you want to be a blind man? You really scared me and spoiled my fun. Why don't we just sit side by side and talk about something properly.

(The two sits side by side on the ground.)

(recites) Second brother, do you know about the custom in the south side of the city? A girl who gets married after age fifteen is considered too late. I learned to play the pipa when I was thirteen. After this New Year I will be fourteen.

(She is shy when she sings while her fingers are raking over the fine sand.)

Xiezu: *(sings)* We also have a rule for boys at the Western Village. One is not allowed to marry if the boy is still a dependent. I started to study when I was fourteen. I am afraid that it will take me to age twenty-one or twenty two before I am independent.

(He is also playing with the sand with his fingers.)

Chunxiang: *(recites)* Hmmm, you are a person who knows how to cheat.

(She holds his hands.)

(recites) Second brother, I have played with you since we were five or six and now we are teenagers. Needless to say, we are very close to each other. Have you ever told anyone?

Xiezu: *(speaks)* I haven't told my brother because he works hard at the lumber mill in order to support my studies. If he knew that I abandon my book bag every night, he would complain that I am a lazy person.

Chunxiang: *(recites)* Second brother, if your brother doesn't know about us, your mother must. If you have such an important matter, is it true that your mother should be in charge?

Xiezu: (*speaks*) My mother knows about us, and she loves me. She knows that I have to cross the river every night before I can see you. She told me that she wants to save some money in order to build a bridge for me to avoid any accidents.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Yes, parents love the child of their heart in every possible way. When you go home tonight, please thank her for me.

Xiezu: (*speaks*) Oh, the bridge will be built for me, so it is none of your business.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) You are really silly. Do you think your mother will build the bridge for you only? It is also for me. Just think. How can your mother receive her daughter-in-law into her house without the bridge?

(*sings*) Don't call me lovesick. Please listen to the emotions in the pipa piece. You roll up the curtain to lament the world's chaos. You are afraid of the sadness of the poetry in springtime. You wake up from the dream to shield yourself from the wind and rain with your sleeves. People on the west and south are missing each other because they have been separated. One can hardly stop the sorrow when staring into the silvery river. Just hope some day there will be a bridge to cross the river so that young couples can stop their longing. Do you see the moon rising above with a pair of stars next to it?

(*speaks*) Second brother, Please do not tease me for being precocious. In fact, girls of thirteen to fourteen know everything even when they are being playful. In this world, you cannot predict anything. You really need to think carefully.

Xiezu: (*speaks*) Chunxiang.

(*sings*) The two stars line up in the silvery Milky Way. The moon is shining on the land of love. This stirs up mixed emotions in me. This little brother has shed tears numerous times on his green sleeves. Luckily, he has a close friend in this world. Who doesn't wish to have a bridge to reach salvation so that there is no need to rely on red beans to remember one's love? There is a pipa piece played by the riverside. I understand its entire meaning. Hope that someday I can be successful in the examination in order to overcome my poor life. I will never forget this wonderful and romantic love.

Chunxiang: (*speaks*) Once I hear what you say, I am so comforted. Alright, let's play now that we have talked about the serious thing. Come, let's sit side by side with each other.

Xiezu: *(speaks)* You are still veryimmature.

Chunxiang: *(recites)* Second brother, tonight is mid-autumn festival. I took some mooncake from home. Here, you take this half, and I'll take the other half. We take turns in eating it, and it adds special flavor.

Xiezu: *(recites)* I don't think I'll eat this cake. I want to take it home to give it to my brother. It is about time I need to leave. Tonight is the only time that my brother is able to come home for dinner. We have not seen each other for a long time.

Chunxiang: *(recites)* Second brother, it seems that your brother is more important than me. You always ignore me every time you mention your brother.

Xiezu: *(recites)* Both you and my brother are equally important. I love two people in my life. One is my dear brother and the other is you.

Chunxiang: *(speaks)* Is that so? Why don't we each take our leave? Please be careful when crossing the broken gangplank.

Xiezu: *(speaks)* Sigh, I wonder whether my brother is home already. If he doesn't see me there, he will get angry.

(Yaozu carries several short poles on his shoulder and enters.)

Yaozu: *(sings)* I have to carry wooden poles because my family is poor. I have deep love for my dear brother. Even if the load is heavy, I am still able to carry them.

(Xiezu crosses the river and the gangplank breaks. He falls into the water and is yelling for help.)

(Yaozu steps forward and looks.)

Yaozu: *(speaks)* Oh, it is my younger brother.

(Yaozu immediately jumps into the water and pulls his brother out. He hurts his face and left arms in the process.)

(speaks) Oh, my face, my arm. Although it is painful, I will not say anything about it because I don't want my younger brother to worry.

(Xiezu catches his breadth.)

Xiezu: *(speaks)* My brother, what happened to your face and arm?

Yaozu: *(speaks)* Nothing, it is a small thing. Young brother, you know full well that the bridge is unreliable and the current is very rapid. I learned from mother that you cross the river every night. What is going on?

Xiezu: *(recites)* Brother, you are hurt from saving me. I cannot hide things from you any more. I cross the river every night to meet a girl whom I love very much. Here, I just brought back a piece of moon cake from her to give to you. Now it has been soaked in water and turned soggy.

Yaozu: *(recites)*. Ah, younger brother, I didn't know that you are smart enough to be able to find a girlfriend. I am happy for you. To maintain your love, you have to be strong. A lot of great heroes have died for love.

Xiezu: *(recites)* My brother, I cannot believe that you do not blame me but instead encourage me. Let's me help you to get home. You look like you are really hurting.

(Xiezu knells down)

Xiezu: *(recites)* Mother, I am wrong. I fell into the river because I went to see my girlfriend. Brother is hurting because he was helping me.

(The mother is crying.)

Yaozu: *(recites)* Mother, please don't cry. This is really not serious. I will be fine. As you know, I have tough skin.

Mother: *(recites)* I will not only stop crying, I will even smile. There is a saying that when you cut into the flesh, you always cut into the skin. You have a brother who would sacrifice himself to save his young brother. It is not easy. I am in my old age and not doing too well. After I die, the responsibility of taking care of your younger brother will fall on you, my son Yaozu. Second son, please do not forget this day. You must know that your brother loves you. Yaozu, since you work in the lumber mill, why don't you find a piece of wood to build a bridge and call it Second Brother's Bridge. This way you can commemorate your brotherly love and create something safe for everyone in the future. Your mother has been saving enough money to purchase the material. Let me break the money pot to retrieve the cash. You two siblings must remember what I have just said.

Xiezu: *(recites)* Why don't you sit down in the bamboo chair and let me wash your wounds for you.

(Meixiang, Xiangju, Tongxuan, Meizhu enter. Meizhu is twelve years of age)

Tongxuan: *(sings)* Last year I wrote my wife's eulogy. Today I am visiting my sister-in-law. The most important thing in life is to learn the classics. I have a lot of students throughout the city.

Meizhu: *(sings)* I ponder and strategize on my way. I am smiling, and it shows on my cherry-shaped lips. I can't wait to fly over to see my Second cousin. I am so happy when I see him.

(Once Meizhu sees Xiezu, she rushes over to him and ignores Yaozu.)

Mother: *(recites)* Brother-in-law. When my sister was dying last year, I was sick and therefore couldn't go to see her. This is something I will regret for the rest of my life.

Tongxuan: *(recites)* When your sister was dying she asked me to relate a few words to you. Because she knew that your family financial situation was not good, she asked you to send one of your sons over to our house in order to lighten your load.

Meizhu: *(recites)* Father, why don't we invite second cousin to come to live with us. You can teach him how to read and learn to be educated.

Mother: *(recites)* It is not necessary. My older son is working a manual job and it is difficult work. Why don't you have him move to your house? Because I am sick, the younger son is closer and more of a comfort to me.

(Yaozu finally opens his mouth despite the pain.)

Yaozu: *(recites)* Mother, no matter what, I want to finish building Second Brother's Bridge before I go. Otherwise, I will not leave this place.

Xiezu: *(recites)* Brother, why don't go finish the bridge and then go to uncle's place. You will never make anything of yourself by staying in the Western Village. You can find better opportunities in the Eastern Village.

Meizhu: *(recites)* Aiya, this is really bad. It would be so much better if second cousin was the one coming. Why does it have to be my eldest cousin? There will be nobody to play with me. If you come, you will be well fed and also have a good time too.

Tongxuan: (*recites*) Ahzhu, you need to watch what you are saying. You are already thirteen years old. Why are you still not behaving properly?!

Yaozu: (*recites*) Do you really think I want to go? Even if I am going, it is all because I want to obey my mother's expectations. I don't want to live under someone else's roof. Sooner or later, I will join the military. This is the biggest wish of my life.

Mother: (*recites*) Aiya, brother-in-law. I get very sentimental when I hear what you say. Unless Ahyao gets married and has a family, I will not let him join the military.

Tongxuan: (*speaks*) I remember...

(*sings*) The good mother has the best intentions and should always remember those kind words. I wish you speedy recovery. I have to go back to the city.

(*speaks*) Well, just now you asked me to raise your eldest son, but let me warn you, there are lots of pirates outside the city gates and there are many battles. The Southern City is in the middle of all these conflicts. Something may happen in three months or three years. It is hard to say. If there are troubles where you are, you must bring Second brother and together come to my place.

(Meizhu is unwilling to say farewell. Finally she is being pulled away by Meixiang.)

(Yaozu is feeling pain in his arm.)

Xiezu: (*recites*) Brother, how do you feel? You behave in one way when facing me but look quite different when facing others. I think you are actually in serious pain.

Mother: (*recites*) Second brother, why don't you go to call for a doctor?

Yaozu: (*speaks*) It is unnecessary. It is only a momentary kind of pain. I was born tough and have thick skin and strong bones. I will go to bed early so that I can start building the wooden bridge early in the morning.

Curtain

Act Two

(It is ten years later. There are double happiness celebratory curtains hanging in the hall. Furong, Baimei, Chunying, and eight maids enter together.)

Furong: *(recites)* My name is Furong. Everyone admires my beauty. I was a servant girl of the Jia family across the street. Someone bought me to this family so that I can grow up. In my life, I love money. I like to stir up trouble. There are red lanterns hanging and in front of them are red double happiness banners. If one asks whose wedding this is, it is the wedding of Big brother Jiang.

(sings) There are wars every year. We are feeling anxious day and night. I can't look back, and the future is uncertain. Second brother is also part of this household and is studying very hard in the study room. The heart of the physically challenged person is still strong. He said that he doesn't want to be a weak man but a brave hero. Today's happiness, lanterns, and celebration are the biggest dream of his life.

(Guests enter.)

Guest A: *(recites)* Congratulations. You are a perfect couple. The groom has married an elegant bride.

Guest B: *(recites)* The scholar has extended his love beyond his household. His reputation is well-known in the Western Village.

Tongxuan: *(recites)* Have a drink, first have a drink.

Meizhu: *(sings)* The happy magpie is in front of the window, the oriole is singing outside the curtain. The heart is shaken like colliding with a deer. I am scared of the beautiful lantern for the couple. I am secretly peeking out of the twelfth floor pavilion in order to send my love to second cousin. There is no reason why he goes to the study everyday. He pretends to look through books and articles.

(sings) Father, come over here.

Tongxuan: *(recites)* You have been so spoiled.

Meizhu: *(recites)* Father, big cousin has been talking about joining the military. You better help him to set up a family. But he is crippled, and his face is broken. Which beautiful girl would want to marry him?

Tongxuan: (*recites*) Huh, there is no need to spend any money. There is a poor girl who is also a refugee, her mother is sick and she needs money. Luckily, I have already paid her a dowry; otherwise she would have married Master Jia who lives across the street. And the crippled one wouldn't even stand a chance.

Meizhu: (*recites*) Father, today is big cousin's happy day. Soon it will be second cousin's turn. Then not long after that will be my turn. In order to save money, why don't you hold second cousin's and my wedding together at the same time? It is better than to separate them.

Tongxuan: (*recites*) Ha, little sister, you are very tricky. To have the wedding together, does that mean that you will marry him and he will marry you? Why don't we table this conversation for another day. Why do you insist on talking about this with me today?

(*Xiezu is leading Yanxiu to enter the hall*)

Xiezu: (*sings*) There are tears in front of the pillow and on the collar. I am feeling frustrated in front of the window. Even though I only saw you once, please forgive me for being direct and straightforward.

(*speaks*) Brother Yanxiu, you are a student of my uncle. I had a drink with you two years ago. Today I knew you were coming back to take up your post. I met a girl ten years ago. Last time I saw her it was seven years ago. But we lost contact when the battle began. I know that you will be patrolling the villages and valleys. Can you give me a post so that I can go with you? This would give a chance to look for her.

Yanxiu: (*speaks*) Second brother Jiang, today I want to congratulate your uncle. Let's take up this subject matter some other day. It is said that men have motivation and determination. Why do you lament your lost love? Your uncle has strict family teaching. You must not leave home and seek comfort elsewhere.

Tongxuan: (*recites*) Good student, when did you come back? I heard that you have won an official title in the Autumn Civil Examination. You also enhanced my fame and reputation.

Yanxiu: (*recites*) I arrived this morning to take up my post. I am here to send you my congratulations.

(*Meixiang's wedding sedan chair enters.*)

Tongxuan: *(recites)* Furong, why don't you ask your big cousin to come out to symbolically kick open the door of the sedan chair?

(Yaozu enters, kicks the door, and marries Chunxiang in a series of wedding rituals. During the rituals, Jiahua asks Guanmu to request Furong to go outside. Furong goes outside.)

Furong: *(speaks)* What is the matter Master Jia?

(Jiahua quietly whispers to Furong and then exits with her secretly. After the ritual, Chunxiang and Xiezu exchange glances. Chunxiang kneels down.)

Chunxiang: *(recites)* The venerable one, as a new bride, I should not be speaking. My mother received your dowry, but she only used a little bit of it. I can return the dowry to you because one cannot force a marriage.

Tongxuan: *(recites)* How could this be true? Although Big Brother is crippled with a broken face, you two have finished the wedding ritual to be a couple. Someone come to take her to the wedding room.

(Meixiang forces Chunxiang to leave. Before she leaves, she signals Xiezu for help and indicates that they will meet when the clock strikes three.)

Meizhu: *(recites)* Second cousin, this is really strange. I know the bride doesn't want to marry someone who is crippled and with a broken face. Why does she keep looking at you?

Xiezu: *(recites)* Aiya, my old sickness has come back. I do not want to drink and need to go back to my study room.

Yaozu: *(recites)* I can't blame anyone for not wanting to marry me because my face is ruined and I look like a monster. If I go out at night, I need to pick a night without moonlight. Otherwise, when girls see me it will be worse than seeing ghosts. Today is worse than what the famous fortuneteller Lu Yunting had predicted. I have not even spent an evening with the bride, and I am destined to be a bad luck groom. I dare not cry out loud but can only weep quietly in the wedding hall.

(While Yaozu is weeping he keeps blaming himself for the misfortune.)

Yanxiu: *(recites)* Big Brother, you don't need to cry.

(sings) Don't feel sorry for yourself and do not feel despair. For a

marriage is about the destined love carved in rock three lifetimes ago. It is like looking at the bride under a lamp. She may look proper and elegant, but not necessarily be a loveable girl. I live in the Western Village and have heard about your righteousness. Therefore I admire you. If you want to fall in love, all you need to do is to be attentive and considerate. You don't need to look better than the handsome person Pan An. Why don't you save your tears and hide your sorrow away. Enjoy the warmth and comfort of the wedding night. Someone come help him to the wedding room.

Yaozu: (*recites*) I can't go yet. My younger brother is sick. Since we have very strong ties and love towards each other, let me rush over there to find out what is wrong with him.

Yanxiu: (*recites*) This kind of brotherly love is really rare and hard to find.

Tongxuan: (*sings*) Let the banquet begin. Please go to the inner courtyard.

Curtain

Act Three

(Scene of the wedding night. There is a door and window on the side. In the front there is a table with a pair of wedding candles. On this side is the big curtain, a silvery lamp with a mirror on a small table. On the outside of the window is a short red railing surrounding the garden.)

(Chunying and Baimei accompany Chunxiang who is sitting down.)

Chunxiang: *(sings)* The candle looks lifeless. I am full of tears in front of the happy lamp. The flickering candlelight shakes the tears. My dream by the grassy bridge is falling apart. The date we met three years ago is scattered like clouds. There is the pipa and music, but for whom should I play? My tears are like silk thread flowing towards the mirror. No wonder people say that love seen from a mirror is illusion.

(recites) In life one just cannot predict anything. I have only loved two people in my life. But my love cannot reach either one. First, I love my mother but she is like a candle in the wind and is on her deathbed. The other one is second brother. Ai, even though he is so close to me, our distance is like that between the sky and the ocean. I already have the money, but we don't know whether mother can be cured. In this we will have to rely on fate. I don't know whether I can have second brother. In this tricky situation, I dare not go on thinking. Let me wait until the clock strikes three when I can see second brother to make a decision. If we can stay together, I will stay. Otherwise, I will kill myself to end this misery.

(Four maids carrying lanterns enter together with Yaozu and Xiezu.)

Xiezu: *(recites)* Big brother, this is your wedding night, and you are slightly drunk. Why do you want me to come out with you?

(Chunxiang heard Xiezu's voice from inside the room and she pays attention to the conversation.)

Yaozu: *(recites)* Second brother, we are after all good brothers. Wedding night love and brotherly love are two different things. There is a proverb that the relationship between brothers is as intertwined as one's hand and foot. One's relationship with a wife is as close as one's body to one's clothing. I cannot say whether it is today, tomorrow, or day after tomorrow that I will go to the capital to join the army. I want to see my dear brother for a while longer. When I recalled what mother said before her death, I cannot hold back my tears.

Xiezu: (recites) My brother, you not only do enough for our family, you even remember mother's teaching. The reason why your face is broken and your hand is crippled is all because of me. I wish for you to have a big family, so that mother can smile even in the other world.

(Chunxiang is eavesdropping on the conversation and expresses her anxiety. She raises three fingers to indicate the meeting time but is accidentally seen by Yaozu. Yaozu pulls Xiezu to the side and whispers.)

Yaozu: (recites) Younger brother, I still have another thing to relate to you. Your new sister-in-law doesn't look like a proper woman from a moral family. Once I am gone to the capital, please keep an eye on her. For me, it doesn't really matter. I am afraid this will negatively affect the reputation of uncle's family. I am fully aware of my physical condition. If she is really a proper woman, why is she willing to marry someone who is a crippled and with an ugly face?

Xiezu: (recites) Brother, please do not think like this. Man is all about ability and woman is about virtue. All love is about destiny, fate, and blessings. From what I can tell, sister-in-law is a superior woman.

Yaozu: (recites) Well, you are right that sometime we have to rely on blessings.

(Chunxiang is trying to signal Xiezu but he is avoiding her eyes. Chunxiang is frustrated and a bit angry.)

Yaozu: (recites) Little brother, why do you look kind of bad tonight?

(sings) This is your brother's wedding night. How come second brother is crying? I have worked hard for over ten years. This is the first night that I can relax and have some comfort. Why are you shedding tears?

Xiezu: (recites) No, I am not crying. My tears are the tears of happiness for mother.

(sings) I shed tears like a lonely young bird in the wind. Brother you are setting up a family, and it reminds me of our beloved mother. I hope you two remain a devoted couple until the end of your life together and do not disappoint mother and her expectations for you.

(Chunxiang is trying to figure out a way of meeting up with Xiezu at the stroke of three. She smiles wily.)

Chunxiang: (*recites*). Ai, even if I don't want to be, I am married now. Why do you turn your face away from me and hide your hands. Even if you were not crippled and your face was not broken, you would still not be a handsome man.

(*Yaozu is hurting inside and gradually getting angry.*)

(*recites*) Oh, what do you mean by that? My brother just told me outside the window that what man needs is ability and woman needs virtue. It doesn't matter whether I bought you as my wife with money or we are married through an arranged marriage, you are my wife in terms of title. You don't need to be pointing out the obvious to tease me that I am an ugly one who is marrying a beautiful wife.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Why are you so serious? I am only saying this, and in my heart I have never disliked you. When you came into the wedding room, I felt that you were avoiding me. If I disliked you, why would I first open my mouth to speak to you? Don't be angry. I apologize for my mistake. Let's have a drink and make up.

(*Yaozu is feeling embarrassed in his heart.*)

Yaozu: (*recites*) Even if you were thinking like that, I would not blame you. There is an old saying, the moon lady Chang E loves a young man. How many beautiful women would pick a cripple? I know this is hard on you. I understand that when a beautiful phoenix is asked to follow an ugly owl, many people will comment on it.

(*Yaozu is drinking while he looks at himself in the mirror. He hates himself. Chunxiang encourages him to have another drink.*)

Chunxiang: (*sings*) Let me encourage you to have another drink. Why torture yourself by looking into the mirror and into your sadness? This is a wonderful evening with good wine. Let me pour the wine in front of the wedding candles. Let's have two more drinks. After the drink you can forget all your sorrows.

Yaozu (*recites*) How come she treats me so well tonight? No wonder Second Brother said that everything depends on destiny and blessings. But the more I think, the more I think something is not right. Even if I had used thousands of pieces of silver to buy this wonderful girl, she would not treat me so well on our wedding night. I should just let it go. As long as I see with my sharp eyes, it doesn't matter if I am drunk.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Are you getting drunk? You have had less than three cups. Why are you closing your eyes already?

Yaozu: (*recites*) Normally I cannot drink. Tonight is an exception. It is the first time I can taste a beautiful woman in the wine. Only three cups and my legs are weak, and I can hardly walk.

(*Yaozu is yawning and he walks over to the bed and sleeps. Chunxiang is feeling uncomfortable while sitting in front of wedding candles.*)

Chunxiang: (*recites*). Why don't I ask someone to bring the ginseng soup to dispel the drunkenness.

(*Yaozu pretends to snore.*)

Chunxiang: (*speaks*) No wonder people said that when a person is drunk, he will fall asleep easily. I don't have a knife or sword with me tonight. I can only secretly take down a silver hairpin from my hair. I'll wait till the clock strikes three to break the curtain. My fate of living or dying will be clear when tomorrow comes.

Xiezu: (*sings*) It is difficult to go either way. I weep in silence. I am afraid to hear the clock strikes at three. I am confused and scared, and my heart is shaking. Tears are soaking my sleeves. It is difficult to behave properly. Our past love has been destroyed, and everything is now only an illusion. Do not feel sorry for me. It will be hard for me to meet her. Our love is hanging on the verge. It is not easy to see her face. I see that the curtain is half rolled up. The heartbroken one is leaning at the window railing under the moon. Who would dare to lightly knock on the curtain to put oneself into a more difficult situation, like a silkworm that encircles itself in a cocoon?

Chunxiang: (*speaks*) Second brother.

(*Xiezu keeps waving his hands. Chunxiang is getting frustrated*)

Chunxiang: (*speaks*) Second brother, do you see what I am holding in my hand?

(*Xiezu sees her but pretends that he cannot hear what she says.*)

Xiezu: (*recites*) What are you doing holding a silvery hairpin? You could hurt someone. Please don't do anything irrational.

Chunxiang: (*speaks*) Second brother, please wait for me outside the room. Your brother is drunk, and he is sound asleep.

(*Chunxiang goes out of the door.*)

Xiezu: (*recites*) Why go through all this trouble? I should not be seeing you tonight.

Chunxiang: (*speaks*) Second brother, I want to see you tonight for two reasons. First, I want to explain to you why I am getting married tonight. Second, I want to ask you whether this is the end for the pair of lovebirds that used to sit by the bridge?

Xiezu: (*recites*) Chunxiang, concerning the first point, I am aware that you have no choice and are forced into this by your family situation. You don't need to explain it to me. We also do not need to resolve the second issue. I was initially planning not to see you tonight. Why am I here? Remember that you used to give me one gift every three years? I am here to return all of them to you, the original owner.

(*Chunxiang is sobbing.*)

Chunxiang: (*speaks*) Second brother, I gave you all the gifts, so it is true that you can return them to me. But I gave you my heart. Let me ask you whether you can return it to me or not? Second brother, I know you are in a difficult situation. But let me ask you. In the past, you are attentive and protective of me, how come now you don't have the courage to be sympathetic?

Xiezu: (*recites*) Chunxiang, please do not talk about our future. Everything in the future has dissipated like smoke and cloud. Now we only have four words to characterize our relationship, it is the relationship between sister-in-law and brother-in-law.

(*Xiezu steps back. Chunxiang is getting emotional and angry.*)

Chunxiang: (*sings*) Ten years of debt to pay for our sin. All that is left is to stop our love in one split second. You retract your love and break the string of my pipa, how can I play any music for you?

Xiezu: (*sings*) This would be difficult to continue. Your heart is broken, my heart is broken. Why do we want to face each other and cry?

Chunxiang: (*sings*) Your heart is so cold, I do not want to stay in this world.

Xiezu: (*sings*) After your marriage, please do not talk about our courtship and love. It will be too much for me.

Chunxiang: (*sings*) Even though our love is over, the sin and evil continues to torment us.

Xiezu: (*sings*) You are already married, I cannot break the family teaching and go against social code.

Chunxiang: (*sings*) Thank you for your caring.

Xiezu: (*sings*) Please don't lock your sorrow in your heart.

Chunxiang: (*speaks*) Second brother, why don't you leave. If this is the case, why do you come to see me? There is no love to continue. Why would I pressure you to go against your will? All I know is that the Second brother who crossed the Second Brother's Bridge for love is now gone with the rain and smoke.

Xiezu: (*sings*) Even if your tears run dry tonight, I still cannot find something comforting to say. The one who is behind the curtain is also a decent person. Please do not say that the love we had is strong and the new love is shallow.

(Yaozu can see what is going on but he cannot hear what is being said. He continues to pretend to be asleep. Chunxiang has very mixed emotions and she walks into the room and sits in front of the wedding candles while holding up the silvery hair pin and tries to kill herself.)

(Yaozu makes some coughing noise and pretends to just wake up. He walks towards Chunxiang.)

Yaozu: (*speaks*) Wah, I am so drunk. I don't know how long I have slept. I don't know whether it is because I have been thinking about it all day that I even dreamed about it at night. I dreamed that Second brother was just outside the window talking continuously with you for a long time. That cannot be. You just know each other as in-laws. How can you be so friendly with each other? This must be a nightmare.

Chunxiang: (*speaks*) This is strange. How come your dream is the same as what really happened? Dreaming is not unusual, but how can you have a dream in such a short time? It is true that Second brother came earlier, and I also went out for a bit.

Yaozu: (*recites*) Wah ha, there are guilty ones who carry with them a guilty conscience, but I haven't seen those who were wrong but go on the attack first. I have known for a long time that you are not from a proper family. You are really wicked and sly. This crippled one is also not that passive. When you talked to second brother by the window, did he actually come in to see you or did you go out to meet him? You better confess, and don't think you can bully me because of my handicap.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Why are you so angry and pressuring me? I will tell you the truth even if you are angry. I will answer every question. But I will not answer the one you just asked. If second brother didn't come here, why would I go out? If I didn't go out, what is the point of second brother coming here? So you are correct that second brother came to see me, and it is also correct that I went out to see second brother.

Yaozu: (*recites*) Oh, what you said is rather pointed and aggressive. Chunxiang, don't think I cannot kill because my hand is crippled. Don't think I cannot kill because I cannot hold a knife. How dare you talk to me this way? I want to see whether your lips are stronger than my blade. I am not bluffing.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Ai, the sky really follows the wishes of the human beings. I already said that there should be no sword or weapons in front of dragon-phoenix candles. If she uses a single thick blade to commit suicide, it is infinitely better than using a hairpin.

(Yaozu is surprised by what he sees and rushes forward.)

Yaozu: (*recites*) Ah, this new bride is rather rude and unreasonable, and she is hopeless. No wonder there is a saying that a ruthless man is afraid of a woman who is rude and unreasonable. A metal knife cannot win over one's recklessness. I have worked hard to become a groom, and in a flash I am in trouble. I give up. I know that one's character is hard to change. I know that I am crippled and my face is ugly. It is fine, and I can accept the fact that no woman will pity me in this life. Even if you flirt with others and stare at them with your eyes, I won't care. But you cannot turn your aim toward second brother. Do you know how much I love and protect my brother? He is my other life.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) I also came from a proper family. I grew up on the south side of the city. If it were not because of a specific reason, why would I lean over the window to shed my tears? You won't allow me to think of

second brother, but I deliberately want to think of him. I don't see how you could love your brother. It is a miracle that you didn't harm him.

Yaozu: (*recites*) That is enough. Are you trying to find an excuse as soon as possible after you get here to shock me so that I will die? I will allow you to say ridiculous and unreasonable things, but this fallacious thing is totally out of the question. Do you know that ten years ago second brother had to cross the river to meet his lover? One night he fell into the river in a rapid current. My hand was hurt and my face was broken because I jumped into the river to save him. This is the kind of love I have for my brother. Don't you think it is precious and admirable?

Chunxiang: (*recites*) I know all about this. You were very kind to him then. You had a compassionate and kind heart such as that of a mother. The way that mothers love and care for their sons is limitless. It was so moving that she broke her saving pot to get money to rebuild the bridge.

Yaozu: (*recites*) Everyone in the Western Village knows this story, so you are not the only one who knows about it. I was very good to my brother then, and why would I not be treating him well now? I can accept everything you have said and not get angry except for the last sentence.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) It is hard to imagine that you almost killed yourself in saving your brother. Then do you know whom your brother was seeing every night when he crossed the river and undertook such a long journey? So who was his lover?

Yaozu: (*recites*) No, I don't know because we didn't live together at that time.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Big brother, the girl who was at the second brother's bridge then is the poor girl who sits in front of the lamp weeping.

(*Yaozu is so shocked that he falls into the chair. Chunxiang gets down on her knees.*)

Chunxiang: (*sings*) The past is already so sad. This is the beautiful evening of the wedding. The old dream has faded away. I cannot really sufficiently explain what the Second Brother's Bridge was about. I do not remember morning or evening. When we met again today, our soul died at night when the clock struck three. This love has been ended, and that is the most difficult thing. Like a butterfly that lingers around a fallen petal, wondering about the person who stands by the window and the love that has endured the torment of time. Tonight is the wedding night, and there is no more love left, so I indirectly kill the love bud of spring time.

(*sings*) Do you know that you are very thin and look worrisome? The way you look is not the way to express your love for your brother. You make him worry about you. Why did you save him then? Wouldn't it be better if you had let him be carried away by the current and drowned?

(*Yaozu turns crazy and slaps Chunxiang on her face.*)

Yaozu: (*recites*) This is not about me hurting my brother. This is about you hurting both me and my brother. I can't believe that I worked so hard all my life by hauling lumber in hope of obtaining a wonderful evening. There are so many households around, how did you end up picking this door to enter?

(*Yaozu slams on the table and picks up a knife.*)

Yaozu: (*speaks*) Get out and leave. Do not look at me. We each find our own death. I am no longer a human being. Why are you still standing here staring at me?

(*Chunxiang is shocked and takes her leaves. Yaozu dashes towards the table and the wedding candles. Then he leans over to the table and cries loudly for a long time*)

Yaozu: (*recites*) Let this be passed. I have made up my mind not to stay under someone else's roof, I am ready to go to the capital and join the army. Why don't I just leave at the break of dawn? Once I leave, I will never return. Although I would give Chunxiang back to second brother, under this kind of custom and ritual once the wedding ritual is over, everyone knows that we are husband and wife. My uncle has raised us both for many years, so how can I ruin his family reputation? Also, I cannot bring this up to second brother. This kind of thing is detrimental to the relationship between siblings. Perhaps I should just write a letter to my brother before I leave. I will indirectly remind him that he should take Chunxiang away and go as far as they can. This is one way to end the evil sin of the romance at the Second Brother's Bridge.

(*Meizhu enters the hall secretly.*)

Meizhu: (*recites*) Yesterday at the wedding ritual, the new cousin's wife was exchanging glances with second cousin. I can tell right away that they must have had a relationship prior to this. I am attracted to Second brother, so how can I not defend my interest? I wonder whether second brother was hiding near the wedding chamber last night. Let me try to find him.

(Yaozu finishes the letter and is leaving with his luggage.)

Yaozu: *(recites)* I am sober now and remember that she took the red silk and left for the side room. I don't know whether she will hang herself. Hey, are you already dead?

(Chunxiang is still clutching the red silk. Her gaze is still as she walks from one side of the room towards him.)

Chunxiang: *(recites)* I will die sooner or later. I should have been dead. But all of a sudden I was thinking of my mother's illness and didn't know whether she had recovered or not. So I decided to prolong my life for another night.

(Chinxiang walks towards the curtain, covers her face while crying and ignores Yaozu.)

Yaozu: *(recites)* Chunxiang, what else is there to say. You have no feeling towards me. You will not die. Why don't you save your tears? That's it.

(Yaozu walks out of the door and sees Meizhu.)

(recites) Cousin Meizhu, it is only daybreak, why are you loitering outside my door?

Meizhu: *(recites)* Nothing.

(Yaozu pulls Meizhu to his side and whispers.)

Yaozu: *(recites)* That is right, cousin Meizhu, I am leaving for the capital now. I was going to find second brother so that we can say goodbye. But I have a special feeling and do not want to see him. I have a confidential letter, why don't you quietly hand it to him. I know you are trustworthy.

Meizhu: *(recites)* Fine, big cousin. Are you leaving now? You can avoid second cousin, but shouldn't you say goodbye to my father?

Yaozu: *(recites)* Yes, let me go and say goodbye to uncle.

Meizhu: *(recites)* This letter is so secretive. I really want to read what is inside. I am particularly interested in anything that is related to second cousin.

(Meizhu opens the letter and reads the content.)

Meizhu: *(sings)* Oh, I see. If this letter gets to second cousin's hand, my dream

of having him will fade. My infatuation towards him takes over my conscience. I will secretly destroy the letter.

(Baimei, Chunying, Tongxuan and Furong comes to the wedding chamber altogether. Chunxiang steps aside and greets her in-laws.)

Tongxuan: *(recites)* My nephew's wife, I have two unfortunate pieces of news to tell you. First, your husband has left for the capital. Second, your mother is on the verge of dying and she sends you a letter.

Chunxiang: *(recites)* As I see my dear mother's hand writing, I am getting even more sentimental and sad.

Tongxuan: *(recites)* My nephew's wife, the messenger also said that your mother wishes you to go back to see her. According to proper etiquette, you must wait for two mornings before you can return to your parent's house. But it doesn't matter since your husband is not here. Why don't you immediately leave for your home to see your mother?

Meizhu: *(recites)* Father, from the West Village to the city, one has to go pass wild countryside and mountainous area. In such a hurry it would be difficult to find a sedan chair. Who can accompany cousin's wife since our household is full of women?

Tongxuan: *(recites)* I have an idea. There is the husband's brother. Furong, why don't you ask second cousin to come here.

Furong: *(recites)* Quick, our master is asking for you.

Xiezu: *(speaks)* Too bad, is it because he found out what happened last night?

Tongxuan: *(recites)* Second cousin, come in.

(Xiezu is nervous and is shaking his hands and head.)

Tongxuan: *(recites)* Second brother, your brother has gone to capital. It is not proper for you to come into the room of your brother's wife, but because we have so many people here right now, come quickly.

Xiezu: *(recites)* What is your order?

Tongxuan: *(recites)* Second brother, I want you to accompany your brother's wife to go back to her parents' home. Her mother is on the verge of dying.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) If this is inconvenient for second uncle, why don't I just go by myself? I have a hard life, and I don't need to be too careful. I have nothing to fear.

Meizhu: (*recites*) Right, father why don't you just let cousin's wife go by herself? She is a grown up. Do you think she will trip and fall into the river?

Tongxuan: (*recites*) This cannot be. Ah-yao told me that if she needs any assistance, we can ask second brother to help. I am well versed in the classics and know the proper ritual and social custom. Nephew's wife is going into the city to visit her mother, and the trip in the mountains is not an easy one. She is a newlywed, so she should not be seen in public and attract unwarranted attention. Second brother, our family has strict family and moral codes. I am asking you to go, so of course I have already thought through this. Remember that you can only walk her to the Ten Mile Pavilion. That is where you should stop and not one step more. One step more towards the other side is closer to the city and its outskirts. There are a lot of people in the area, and you don't want people to gossip about us. If something happens to her, she can always call for help. According to the distance, if you leave for Ten Miles Pavilion now, you can get there by dusk. When she gets into the city, the sky will not be totally dark. That is it. Nephew's wife, please go pack now.

(Chunxiang is packing. Xiezu quietly talks to Meizhu.)

Xiezu: (*recites*) Cousin Meizhu, my heart is not feeling at peace. My brother and I have so much love between us. Why didn't he see me before leaving for the capital? Did you see him? Did he look sad when he left?

Meizhu: (*recites*) I saw big cousin. He was angry when he left. I have a sense that he must have a bad feeling toward you. That is why he didn't want to see you. Please be careful when you send your brother's wife to the Ten Miles Pavilion. If you run into any trouble, your brother may not be able to forgive you, and that will ruin your relationship.

(Xiezu is surprised when he hears this.)

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Are you ready second brother?

Xiezu: (*recites*) Brother's wife, why don't you start first. It will be sufficient if I can watch you from a distance. It is because I am used to walk slowly.

Tongxuan: (*recites*) This is totally unnecessary. As long as you don't talk during walking, people will not gossip about you.

(Xiezu sends Chunxiang away.)

Curtain.

Tongxuan: *(sings)* Second brother understands the proper ritual and moral code, he is a great man.

Furong: *(recites)* Send her to the Ten Miles Pavilion and that is enough. Let me quietly go to Master Jia and report to him. I can earn a hefty sum of money.

Act Four

(Scene of the Ten Miles Pavilion. There is a big tree on one side. On the other side is the distant view of the city. There are two short peach blossoms on both side of the pavilion. There is a stone bench under the tree.)

(Chunxiang looks sad as she enters. Xiezu is carrying a parcel and pretends to be innocent. Chunxiang turns round and finds him funny. Xiezu also stops. Chunxiang pretends to run into a rock and falls to the ground. Xiezu immediately rushes forward. Chunxiang is waiting Xiezu to help her. But Xiezu hands over an umbrella to her to pull her up. Chunxiang takes the other end of the umbrella and gets up. Xiezu repacks the umbrella and continues to walk.)

Chunxiang: *(speaks)* Second brother, where are you going?

Xiezu: *(recites)* Nowhere. I am sending you to your parent's house. I am standing away from you because I need to be several feet away from you.

Chunxiang: *(speaks)* If when we walk we have to be several feet away, why don't you accompany me on the trip. If a tiger comes out from the mountain, there is no way you can save me and to take care of me.

Xiezu: *(recites)* If there is a tiger, even if we walk side by side, we both will die. Brother's wife, a tiger doesn't hurt people easily. What hurts people easily is a flickering heart.

Chunxiang: *(recites)* Stop stalling, second brother. It is difficult to walk alone. Why don't you accompany me and talk to me while we walk? I know you are a man of honor, I will not say anything indecent to you. We can talk about the scenery along the way.

Xiezu: *(recites)* This is not impossible. We can just make do. We can talk about the scenery along the way. But please do not talk about our past love. To be honest, we should stay three to five feet apart.

Chunxiang: *(recites)* It is fine no matter how many feet we stay apart.

Xiezu: *(recites)* Brother's wife, are you ready? Come on quickly. I wish that we could get to the Ten Miles Pavilion in one step. Are you ready to go?

Chunxiang: *(recites)* Fine, walk if you want to start.

Xiezu: *(sings)* The forest is quiet, and it is desolate everywhere. Second brother

is sending brother's wife to the Ten Miles Pavilion. Little do we know that we have arrived at the Three Branch Range. Listen to the lone goose that is crying on top of the branch.

Chunxiang: (*sings*) Why there is only one lonely goose on the branch? Geese like to fly in pairs. Why is only one left?

Xiezu: (*sings*) Perhaps the goose is lost and flew away from its group. That is why he is crying out sadly.

Chunxiang: (*sings*) Once we pass the Three Branch Range, the scene is even more desolate. Second brother is accompanying me, and I am relieved. I just saw a pair of butterflies flying between the flowers.

Xiezu: (*sings*) Flying across the Eastern fence to tease its partner.

Chunxiang: (*sings*) Butterflies like to fly in pairs. Second brother, can you see how beautiful the scenery is against the setting sun. In addition to the shadow of the butterflies, there is the shadow of you and I.

Xiezu: (*recites*) How can this be the same? Now our relationship is that of brother and sister-in-law. The trail in the mountain is far. There are lots of echoes. How many more steps does the second brother have to take to send brother's wife on her way? There is no need to remember the old trails. Can you see that the setting sun is gently shining on the green mountain?

Chunxiang: (*sings*) On top of the mountain there is a place called The Range of Forgotten Love. Oh, second brother, I only know that people can forget about love. Can even stones forget about love?

Xiezu: (*recites*) Where is the Range of Forgotten Love?

Chunxiang: (*sings*) There.

Xiezu: (*recites*) You made it up. It is clearly the Stone for Expecting the Return of a Husband. That is the Stone for women to wait for the return of their husbands.

Chunxiang: (*sings*) His cold words have reached my heart. How can we even talk about our love? The lovebirds will separate at the Ten Miles Pavilion. The old days when we were at the river and on the bridge are not recognizable. You and I should not rely on words to convey our love that has no future.

Xiezu: (*sings*) Burden, burden, you are a burden. Our relationship is clear. Brother and sister-in-law cannot not bear to remember the love that has passed. We have made a promise but who wants to adhere to it? Sister-in-law, you broke the promise before we started our journey. You shouldn't have insinuated our past feelings. It is easy to break the proper moral code, and we have to guard against that. Sister-in-law, please excuse me for being impolite in speaking out of line. Let me ask you how far should we stand apart from each other?

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Aiya, how far should we stand apart from each other?

(*sings*) What is in front of us is only a fictitious relationship and title. It is difficult for me to share my love. I am sure this will bring an unhappy ending. I am lonely and feel left out, but why should I ask for your sympathy?

(*Xiezu stands far apart from Chunxiang and follows her.*)

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Ten Miles Pavilion.

(*She pulls the stone bench and sits down.*)

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Second brother, now where are you going?

Xiezu: (*recites*) Oh, don't you remember? Uncle only requested that I escort you to the Ten Miles Pavilion. Not one step more. I am done with my duty and I have to say goodbye. There is no need to repeat yourself. The three words that need to be in your heart are Pavilion of Forever Separation. Any mishaps will entice me into a trap. I have to stop before something happens. Otherwise, my reputation will be ruined. When the moon is out, it is not difficult to recognize one's own home. When you are at the parents' house, please send them my regards. I panic in every step I take. Now I feel like I am completely out of harm's way.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Second brother, you are leaving just like that. Do you know how to tell time? It is right that according to your uncle's calculation, you should arrive at Ten Miles Pavilion way before sunset. But when we arrive here after a long journey and a long chat along the way, the sky is all dark. Second brother, are you that cruel that you want to leave me in the wilderness?

Xiezu: (*recites*) Even if I don't want to be cruel, I will be cruel. If I move one more step forward, I will be a villain. If I step one step back, I will be a

person of noble character. I will never step one step forward. There is a saying that when a leopard dies, all it leaves is the fur, and when a person dies, what is left is his reputation.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Second brother, please don't take me wrong. After the long walk and your unfriendly way of treating me, I have already given up any hope. Regardless of the fact you knew me since age four, you should not have treated anyone that way by leaving her alone here in the wilderness. I am a woman, and if something happened to me, nobody would hear me even if I cried out loudly for help.

Xiezu: (*recites*) How could this happen? Why would I talk with her for so long that I didn't know how late it is? In fact, what does it matter if I take a few more steps as long as I feel proper and have bad thoughts? Aiya, cousin Meizhu also reminded me if there are pirates or hoodlums in the area, this won't be good for her, and if my brother finds out, I will become his enemy.

Chunxiang: (*sings*) The only thing I can do is to hold my knees and cry sadly. Please listen carefully. As long as you are escorting your sister-in-law on this trip, what difference does it make to add a few more steps? Don't you see that this is the wilderness and there are deserted graves and spirits everywhere? You know that I have been sheltered all my life and this kind of situation is new to me. I have only encountered this sort of things since my family has fallen. Second brother, second brother, please don't leave me behind. If it is true that I am your sister-in-law, you should not be treating me this way. Besides, last night...last night...I don't worry about being shameless, let me tell you that your brother already learned about what happened between you and I. From what I could tell, he has already forgiven both of us.

Xiezu: (*speaks*) There is no use for you to tell me this. I want to hear it from him directly. Please let go of my hand, we will be in trouble if someone sees us.

Chunxiang: (*speaks*) Second brother, I am scared of darkness, I will not let go of your hand.

(*Xiezu pushes Chunxiang away.*)

Xiezu: (*sings*) It is quite shocking to behold. If someone sees this, I will not be forgiven. Please don't call me second brother. If someone is eavesdropping, they will take your brother-in-law as your lover. I cannot bear this responsibility. Today I am helping my sister-in-law in passing

through the wild forest and it is worse than being punished for a crime. My uncle is protective of me and told me to stop at the Ten Miles Pavilion. If I take one more step, it will attract gossip, and I will be in even deeper trouble. I have had cold sweat until I could see the Ten Miles Pavilion. Since my brother left, I have to be careful and not make any mistakes. Sister-in-law, please treat me as someone who has lost his soul and is crazy.

(Chunxiang is frantically calling Xiezu. Furong is coming into view with Master Jia who enters the Ten Miles Pavilion. Master Jia quietly enters the Ten Miles Pavilion.)

Chunxiang: *(recites)* Ai, I couldn't predict that second brother would be so cruel to me. But because of his love for his brother, I cannot blame him. After I visit my mother, I realize that I don't want to live any more. Let me return to the stone bench in the Ten Miles Pavilion.

(Master Jia Hua comes up behind Chunxiang and embraces her from behind.)

Master Jia: *(recites)* Chunxiang, how come you didn't marry me and instead marrying this cripple? I have been thinking about you, and it is so serious that I have been sick.

Chunxiang: *(recites)* Hey, let go of my hand. You cannot take advantage of me in the dark.

Master Jia: *(recites)* This is a golden opportunity. Even if you scream, no one will hear you.

Chunxiang: *(recites)* Hey, you let go of my hand. I am getting serious.

(Chunxiang pulls out her sharp jade hairpin and stabs Master Jia in his face and chest many times. Blood is gushing out of Master Jia, and he is screaming for help. He pulls out the hairpin and holds it in his hand. Local constables and Jia's father enter. The official and guards from the Jia family also arrive.)

Zhongsheng: *(recites)* My dear son, why is there blood all over your body? Who harmed you?

Chunxiang: *(recites)* No one hurt him. It is I who has stabbed him. Master Jia wanted to rape me but to no avail. During our struggle, I stabbed him and he fell into the Ten Miles Pavilion.

Master Jia: *(recites)* Father, this is not true. Please help me to clear my name and

right the wrong for me. I saw her and her brother-in-law doing something improper inside the Ten Miles Pavilion. In order to eliminate an eye-witness, she therefore stabbed me in order to kill me.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Hey, Third brother Jia, you better not frame me. You can hurt me, and I don't really mind, but you should in no way hurt second brother's reputation.

Zhongsheng: (*recites*) Local constables, arrest her, let me take her to court.

(*Chunxiang and Zhongsheng are on their knees.*)

Yanxiu: (*sings*) The more I study, the more I can be a better official. It has been a year since I became a judge. I am revisiting Ten Miles Pavilion and hear some disturbances along the quiet path.

(*Chunxiang and Zhongsheng both yell out loudly to ask for justice.*)

Yanxiu: (*recites*) How come both of you want to redress an injustice? Aren't you the new bride of the Jiang family? Last night I attended your wedding banquet. Why you are here in the wilderness today?

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Your honor Zhang, I am on my way to visit my sick mother, and when we came to the Ten Miles Pavilion, it was dark and Master Jia wanted to molest me, so I stabbed him.

Zhongsheng: (*recites*) That is not true, your honor Zhang. My son is still alive. He said that he arrived at the Ten Miles Pavilion and saw the two doing something improper. In order to avoid embarrassment and to eliminate the eye-witness, she therefore stabbed him.

Yanxiu: (*recites*) This is not too difficult to explain. Bride from the Jiang family, I believe that your brother-in-law wouldn't come here under any circumstance. Why do you people want to accuse them of doing something improper?

Chunxiang: (*recites*) This is not quite right, your honor. Things can happen serendipitously. Just now second brother from the Jiang family did come here. He was sent to escort me to my parents' house because I had to pass through the wilderness and quiet roads.

Yanxiu: (*recites*) Bride from the Jiang family, this account is incorrect. If he was escorting you, he should take you all the way to your parent's house. How could he leave you alone in the dark to be bullied by others? Why do

we not see him now? Are you feeling guilty and trying to find an excuse to cover up?

Zhongsheng: (*recites*) Your honor, there is nothing more the killer can say. Why don't you take her to the courthouse and convict her?

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Your honor, since you ask, I don't even know how to start. I believe there is nothing more difficult than what I am going to tell you.

(*Chunxiang keeps bowing her head.*)

Yanxiu: (*sings*) I have been a proper student for ten years, and I do not want to ruin my teacher family's reputation. What if the new bride of the Jiang family is brought to the courthouse? Officer, please request Tongxuan to come for a meeting. I want to tell him about this whole saga. Please ask him to come see me immediately.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Aiya, your honor Zhang, please don't do that. Please do not involve second brother in this whole thing. I am already ready to die. I am not afraid to plead guilty. Yes, it was me who revealed my admiration and love to my brother-in-law at the Ten Miles Pavilion. But he had nothing to do with this. He was asked to accompany me to the mountain and he was simply following orders from his uncle. No matter how many convictions, I will take them. After I was married to the cripple with an ugly face, I saw my brother-in-law and could not hold back my happiness and delight. Yes, I am the one who killed that man. All the improper things that are about to ruin my family's reputation are my fault. I am ready to take the punishment and willing to follow the law. But please do not involve second brother in this whole case. Once I am dead, everything will be resolved. Second brother can have an easier life. Let me use my own blood to write the confession. I hope your honor will immediately take me back to the courthouse.

Yanxiu: (*speaks*) Bride of the Jiang family, why did you refuse to confess your sin earlier when now you are behaving totally the opposite? You didn't even have to think but offer to write the confession. Is it true or not?

Chunxiang: (*recites*) It is true. I hope that before second brother comes here, you can arrest me and put me in jail.

(*Tongxuan has a rope around Xiezu's neck and slaps him in the face until he kneels on the floor. The court police are following them.*)

Tongxuan: (*recites*) You have ruined my family's reputation. You have evil thoughts

and want to steal your brother's wife. You have lost your mind and morals. It is such a waste that you have studied for so long. How can you face your ancestors and all the sages? I asked you to accompany your sister-in-law to the Ten Miles Pavilion. Why would you do improper things and harm people? Why didn't you become a thief instead?

Xiezu: (*sings*) Aiyaya, except for the tears that I am shedding, the only thing I can do is to use my own blood to write the confession.

Yanxiu: (*speaks*) Teacher, please do not blame second brother. He is not involved in this whole case. The bride of the Jiang family has already used her own blood to write the confession.

Tongxuan: (*speaks*) Bring it over. Chunxiang, I paid a hefty sum for you to be my nephew's wife. If you didn't like the crippled one with an ugly face, why did you accept the offer? Even if you were scamming my money, why did you want to seduce second brother? Although you have confessed your sin, my family's reputation has been completely ruined by you.

(*Tongxuan proceeds to strike Chunxiang. Xiezu rushes over to Tongxuan and pulls on his legs and begs.*)

Xiezu: (*recites*) Uncle, I don't know how and why sister-in-law would write such a confession. I was with her outside the Ten Miles Pavilion and not inside the Pavilion. How could we be doing improper things?

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Dear eldest one, please do not listen to second brother. Since he couldn't accept my love inside the pavilion, I do not blame him. First, you are from a good family, and second, you love your children and your loved ones. It is me that who is responsible for all this, and I am the guilty one. This has nothing to do with second brother. Why would he plead my case? Elderly one, please hurry home. One more minute here with him would undoubtedly attract more unwarranted gossip.

Xiezu: (*recites*) Uncle, please don't listen to her. She didn't do anything wrong, I am at fault. I shouldn't have stopped before I accompanied her to the city. Then this kind of thing wouldn't have happened.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) This is my fault and this has nothing to with him.

Xiezu: (*recites*) This is my fault and this has nothing to with her.

(Tongxuan is angry and slaps Chunxiang's face. Then he turns to Xiezu and slaps his face. Beimei, Chunying are accompanying Meizhu, and they are shocked by what they see.)

Tongxuan: *(sings)* Why don't you have some sense and not ruin my family's reputation? If this has nothing to do with you, why admit it? This is a whirlpool of sin, so why do you rush toward it? Are you trying to join in for more fun? I have raised you two brothers all these years and are you trying to repay me by ruining my reputation? I hoped you could quietly read your books and stay in the study. If we stay any longer, we will be criticized by others. Your honor, why don't you take the sinner to the courthouse and convict her? I will take second brother home and give him a good lesson.

Yanxiu: *(sings)* Even though a good judge cannot easily preside over family affairs, it seems clear that the brother and sister-in-law do not seem to have committed adultery. Unfortunately there is a confession and the conviction is set. Why don't I take the injured one back to the courthouse, file the case, and put the woman in jail.

(Master Jia, Zhongsheng, guards, neighbors and local constable all exit.)

Xiezu: *(recites)* Sister-in-law, sister-in-law!

Chunxiang: *(recites)* Second brother, second brother you said today that Ten Miles Pavilion will become the Pavilion of Forever Separation. This is becoming true. Please don't miss me. Please be nice to your brother. Now I can tell that your brother is good to you in every way. Second brother, this time, you don't need to accompany me, there are lots of people going with me.

Xiezu: *(recites)* Sister-in-law, when will you be released from jail?

Tongxuan: *(speaks)* Oh, what are you trying to do?

Yanxiu: *(recites)* The injured one is in serious condition. If he doesn't die, your sister-in-law will have a few years in jail. But if the injured one dies, then she will never be released. Come, take the woman to jail.

(The guards take Chunxiang away. Yanxiu follows. Xiezu raises his head, staring at the sky with tears streaming down his face.)

Tongxuan: *(recites)* Second brother, aren't you coming home with us? I can't bear to watch you.

Meizhu: (*recites*) Second cousin, had I known that this was going to happen, I wouldn't have....let cousin leave for the capital. Let's go home. It is useless to stand here and stare into the distance. Second brother, second brother, I understand your pain. Don't you think I am not hurting? You have done nothing wrong. But I have already done something wrong. Why don't you come with me. I'll wait until you are calm before I reveal the despicable things that I have done.

(*Xiezu shakes his head.*)

Meizhu: (*sings*) It is like the precious god has lost his precious charm. This saddens me tremendously. I don't want to stay any more in the mountain. I have no reaction even with a thousand words. If Chunxiang can escape jail time, I will feel better. But if she is...I don't really know....

Xiezu: (*recites*) I want to cry but for whom am I crying? I cannot see the one I love the most, and I cannot see the one who is closest to me because he has already left home. I would rather not return to uncle's place. I will go to the capital as well. I want to shed tears in front of my brother.

Zhongsheng: (*recites*) Lawyer, I am a careful and thoughtful person. I know my son well. It is true that he was trying to molest that woman but to no avail. I am afraid that someone will testify and support second brother, and then our case will be destroyed. He said that he is going to the capital. I don't know who he knows there. Since you are going to the capital tomorrow, why don't you notify my people in the capital (whispering in his ears) so that my reputation and security is guaranteed? Now that I think of my beautiful Furong, it reminds me that my son's condition is serious.

(*Exit.*)

Curtain

Act Five

(Three years later in front of the mansion of the Duke of the Pingnan region. There is a main door that leads to the street. Stone lions are on both sides of the short stairs. Behind the door is the inner courtyard. Inside there are big trees, and there is a short table with wine glasses on it.)

(Xiaobo is sweeping the floor while Simei is standing to the side.)

Xiaobo: *(sings)* This is the mansion of the Duke and it has its own story. If you want to be a super human being, you need to be able to endure hardship. Three years ago a crippled man joined the army to defend the nation. He fought year after year and has established a winning record. He returned to the capital three days ago. Today he is moving into the Duke's mansion.

Yaozu: *(sings)* Even a crippled person can be knighted as a duke. If one can make a heroic contribution to the emperor, then he can single-handedly stand up to be proud and can use his hands to serve the emperor. I am so excited when I think about this.

(speaks) I am almost drunk. I have been drunk twice in my life. The first time I was faking it and tonight is the real drunk. When I was faking being drunk, that was the saddest time in my life. This time it is the opposite and I am overjoyed. Do you think I am happy because I became the duke? Not really, I am ecstatic because I have done something really great in my life. Could I secretly write a letter to second brother and Chunxiang? I believe that second brother and Chunxiang are already free and unfettered in another world. Second brother is a great scholar, and I am sure they both will lead a happy life. My responsibility is to make sure my brother has a wonderful and happy life. Becoming a duke and nobleman are unessential things for me. The day I became a duke, I wrote a letter to the Western Village. So far I have heard nothing from them. It must that second brother and Chunxiang have left and are not living in the Western Village anymore. If I cannot share their happiness, how can I be called a good brother? Come, let me write a public notice in my own hand-writing. If anyone knows their whereabouts, I will give them a hefty reward.

(Xiaobo immediately picks up the paper for the public notice. Yaozu quickly finishes writing the public notice.)

Yaozu: *(speaks)* Here, you take this public notice and post it in front of the

mansion. I am going inside to the Western Garden to take a rest and to get sober. If anyone responds to the notice, bring him to me.

(Meixiang helps him inside and Xiaobo goes out to post the notice.)

Xiezu: *(sings)* A lonely swallow weeps for broken clouds, and my talent has all been wasted. I have been impoverished for three years. I hate the fact that I cannot even buy any clothing. In the boundless horizon there are million of pathways. Where can I find my brother in the capital? I cannot bear to look back, and I cannot bear to look to the future. I can only silently wish the wrongly accused woman good luck. The capital is a merciless world. I am not that poor because I have three precious souvenirs with me. I would rather die than sell them. But it is true that I cannot walk far without a proper meal.

Xiaobo: *(recites)* Hey go away, this is not the kind of place for you to sit and rest.

Xiezu: *(recites)* I will get up if you don't think I should sit here. Who really wants to willingly sit on the street? Everyone wants to be healthy and be able to walk and run. I am very hungry, and therefore I can't walk. Oh, there is a public announcement on the wall. I wonder if there is a call for a poem or a piece of writing. Although I am not a great poet like Yuan Ji, my writing is valuable. Let me go near and read the notice. It reads big brother is being knighted today and wonder where second brother is. If anyone knows his whereabouts, there will be a reward for the help. Written by Duke of Pingnan Region Jiang Yaozu. Jiang Yaozu.....

(Xiezu excitedly tears off the notice.)

Xiezu: *(sings)* Three years of autumn winds has aged this young brother. A public notice may be able to overturn everything. It would be so encouraging to be reunited with my brother, encouraging indeed. I feel so ashamed that my tears are soaking my tattered clothing.

Xiaobo: *(recites)* Hey, if you have torn off the notice, this means that you have information. Why don't you go into the Western Garden to get your reward? What are you still standing here for?

Xiezu: *(recites)* Old uncle, who is in the Western Garden except the duke? Are there any important people there?

Xiaobo: *(recites)* Of course. The guests at the Western Garden are all either rich or have high social status. Everyone has an official title.

Xiezu: (recites) Old uncle, if this is the case, I wouldn't dare to go in. Please inform the Duke to come meet me outside the Western Garden. With my impoverished outlook and appearance, I will be an embarrassment to the Duke.

Xiaobo: (recites) You are silly. If you know the whereabouts of second brother, why wouldn't you just go in and get you reward? You are not the Duke's relative, so why would you care about embarrassing him?

Xiezu: (recites) You don't know this. Why don't I tell you? I am actually the second brother of the Jiang family that your Duke is looking for.

(Xiaobo is surprised.)

Xiaobo: (recites) I am lacking in manners. If it is not an inconvenience, can I ask Second Master to go wait in the street corner while I ask master to come out to meet you?

(The Jia family lawyer comes with two guards and they are whispering.)

Xiezu: (recites) I don't know how much we both will cry when we see each other.

(The two guards come up from behind and spray a powder made of ground up glass into Xiezu's eyes.)

Xiezu: (recites) Aiya, my eyes...

(The Jia family lawyer signaled to the guards.)

Family Lawyer: (speaks) First hide the man!

(The guards takes Xiezu away. Yaozu is frantically calling for second brother from inside the garden. But he cannot find him.)

Yaozu: (recites) Are you trying to make me happy?

Xiaobo: (recites) No, I am not.

Yaozu: (recites) When second master was here, was there a woman next to him?

Xiaobo: (recites) No.

(Yaozu is angry and he kicks Xiaobo and complains that he is stupid.)

Yaozu: (*recites*) How come second master would quietly leave without seeing me? He must be having a difficult time to care for Chunxiang and felt so embarrassed that he left.

Meizhu: (*recites*) How can things be this confusing. I lament that my love was taken away and was so sad that I have been crying non-stop. I regret that I destroyed the letter. I cannot bear the fact that I planned the attack at the Ten Miles Pavilion in that dark evening. I cannot even begin to express my emotion. I have traveled thousands of miles. The dream of my life is half realized. I broke the ties of the lovers and separate them. I am afraid that I will receive bad karma for my jealousy and actions.

(*sings*) Since the year I swung the knife that broke their love, I have been blaming myself and saddened by the incident. There are not too many who care about others and who would volunteer to protect a weak woman. All of a sudden I heard a piece of good news. It is destiny that it is the one who left who is going to be successful and a great person. Who urged me to take the wrong turn and is afraid of taking the hard road? This spring, the injured person finally died. Apart from relying on the power of my big cousin, I have no other way to escape this. It is lucky that big cousin wrote a letter to Western Village. Otherwise, I would not have a chance to redeem myself.

(*Baimei waves at Xiaobo.*)

(*speaks*) Please tell the Duke that there is a woman who wants to speak with him.

Xiaobo: (*speaks*) My honor Duke, there is a woman looking for you.

Yaozu: (*recites*) It must be second brother who cannot explain Chunxiang's absence and has gone back to get her. Please come in Chunxiang.

(*Meizhu comes in and addresses her big cousin.*)

Yaozu: (*recites*) Oh it is you, cousin Meizhu. If you came earlier, I would have received you properly. Just now I was in a bad mood. I was told that second brother was at the door but he was unwilling to see me. He must be afraid that I will despise the two of them.

Meizhu: (*recites*) Huh, when did second cousin get married and have a wife?

Yaozu: (*recites*) Cousin Meizhu, are you pretending or being stupid? I am talking

about Chunxiang. Even though they didn't get married through a proper ritual, they have been living together for a long time.

Meizhu: (*recites*) Big cousin, are you drunk? Second brother went missing three years ago. I don't know where he went. Chunxiang was imprisoned in the county jail three years ago.

Yaozu: (*recites*) Cousin Meizhu, I remember that before I left home and I said goodbye to uncle, I had already heard that Chunxiang's mother was sick. I told uncle that he could rely on second brother to take care of his sister-in-law. How come there was no news after he accompanied his sister-in-law on the journey?

Meizhu: (*recites*) It is because second brother was accompanying his sister-in-law to the Ten Miles Pavilion, and he didn't want to go any further. After that, something wrong had happened.

Yaozu: (*recites*) Ha, how come he didn't want to go any further? Did second brother not know how to read and write or was he so blind that he could not read what I wrote him in the letter?

Meizhu: (*recites*) Oh, read, read, read...It is not that he didn't see, perhaps he was so blind that he couldn't see. Big cousin, how come you are so cruel towards me? I am scared when I see you.

(*Meizhu goes down on her knees.*)

(*sings*) I am kneeling before you and crying. I have committed an injustice but have no way to right the wrong. Can you see that my tears are pouring out? I am getting embarrassed under the moon. My tears are falling in front of the Buddha altar. If you want to save the wrongfully accused woman, I still have the letter. I am blamed by my own conscience and will not be afraid to take a long journey to make things right. I hope that you can return to Western Village with me so that I can redeem my sin.

Yaozu: (*recites*) Get up. It is such a waste of my three year's of happiness.

(*sings*) On that day I wrote the letter with my own blood. I was full of good intention but it all disappeared. I have to send a request to the emperor if I want to leave. I cannot leave without the royal decree. You go first.

Meizhu: (*speaks*) Make sure you are planning to come home. Don't just say it to

make me happy. My hard work is not wasted and has yielded some positive result. I will go back to my home even though it is nighttime.

Yaozu: (*sings*) This whole thing is confusing me, making me crazy and distracting me. Three years of excitement, now all gone. How come second brother read my letter and didn't do what I told him to? If this is the case, he should be responsible for his own pain.

Curtain.

Act Six: Conclusion

(Scene of the moonlit evening at the Second Brother's Bridge. The name Second Brother's Bridge is written on the side of the bridge. On one side are azaleas flowers. On the other side is a stone tablet with the title Kaifeng Western Village. On the far side are fields and isolated tombstones. Since it is after the Qingming Festival, incense and flame are still burning around the graves.)

Xiezu: *(sings)* The smoke has hidden the moon by the bridge. It is difficult to see the azaleas. I lament that the clouds are returning to the valley but people are being separated. I am like a little boat on the other side of the willow that is heading the wrong direction. I am also like an old crow living on a dried-up lifeless branch. In the old days, I crossed the river every night and I didn't even have time to paint. Tonight it is windy and rainy, and I am carrying an old pipa for no reason. I remember when we were both young, we met here every night. Several times we even got wet by playing near the river. She was never afraid of the cold water and slippery moss. She was only afraid that in a faraway place there was a lonely bird that was sitting by itself. She told me her heart is like a little boat and expressed her love to me. She told me that she would forever stay in her home by the river. No wonder people said that ten years of infatuation disappears like a dream. There is no way not to stop thinking about all this.

I am like a broken cane and faded willow in reminiscing about the past. All that is left is a bit of sadness. I wipe my face and tears come down. I see the lantern and realized that I should have been married. I am so confused right now. The wonderfully matched couple is no longer together. It is not because she was being cunning. She just couldn't express what was in her heart. It is a sad story, and in front of the wedding candles there was lots of love. What I saw through the Western window was like a dream.

I saw Chunxiang under the dim light. She was already a bit aged in spite of her exquisite face and loose hair. She had nothing to say to me. She glanced at me, and her tears were flowing. On the Second Brother's Bridge I remembered the love that I used to have. Who is now coming to meet me? Ai, the flower on the river is so lonely and cold. The beach blossoms on the river used to be full of life and love, and I could pick any one I wanted. Why did I have such a hard time making up my mind? When I almost lost my soul outside the bamboo window, it was the same for her inside the green curtain. I would rather not break the love bud. I moved to the Western home to cry in front of the green lamp. But I dare not go towards the door of the mansion. I regret that I accompanied my

sister-in-law and was afraid that someone would gossip about me. If only I had broken the social code. I didn't give in even though it was just a few steps. My heart is lonely but I didn't want to remind myself. Sister-in-law, please don't be sad. Like swallows we had to be apart because of an accident that took your youth. The blood that you drew from the hairpin is a case that is hard to resolve.

The two of us were talking quietly under the moon. I sent my sister-in-law to the Ten Miles Pavilion. I am a romantic scholar, but I was expressionless toward a lonely and sentimental person. Even though I had my feelings, I had to adhere to the social code. Even if you supplied wine, I still could not drink and write poetry. No matter what was said about a colorful flute, Second Brother's Bridge, all the places that were filled with love and romance have been completely erased. I can no longer see the beautiful flowers, nor can I hear the partridge singing in my dream. After this incident, I have lost a lot of weight. All these disasters happened all because of my love. I am crying because there is no home for me, and even after I die there is no dwelling for me.

The past life is like a dream. My youth has been destroyed, floating like smoke in the wind. How did I get to be this way? After her marriage she could not think of me. Now I have arrived at the river during the night, and my heart is more confused and heavy. I cried for the wonderful youth that has disappeared. The pipa piece also flew away in the wind. I should stop being sad and not worry so much. I am afraid people will make fun of me and tease me if I return.

I feel that everything is like falling petals. Following the breeze from the west, I stop crying at the bridge. Let me bury the jade bracelet, a pair of jade rings, and the golden gourd. Why should I leave behind any traces of my romance? I bury my infatuation under the bridge. When I was young, Chunxiang and I saw each other at this bridge. She sent me a gift once every three years and told me not to forget that day. Now everything is faded, the grass is dying, the bridge is about to fall apart, and the person is about to die. Why do I still keep these gifts? I should bury them at the Second Brother's Bridge. After one hundred years, people may come to pay respects.

(Xiezu is digging a hole in the ground and buries the three presents in the soil. Chunying and Baimei are going up the bridge with a lantern and some offerings. They are surprised by what they see.)

Xiezu: *(speaks)* No, the soil is too loose. It can easily be discovered by people. Let me go pick some wild flowers and branches to cover it up.

Chunying: (*recites*) Ahmei, doesn't the man under the bridge look like our second master? Why does he walk that way? Let me follow him and see.

Baimei: (*recites*) Don't do it, this will alert him. Not only his voice, he looks exactly like our second master. He is now blind. He will come back this way. Let's hide here and wait for his return, and we can take him home.

(Three strokes of the gong. The neighbors are standing on both sides of the river. The executioners, the clerks, and the courthouse officials enter. The executioners are holding Chunxiang.)

Chunxiang: (*sings*) The falling flower cannot take any more torture. There is blood all over my body. I am not afraid of your bullying. Please let me see you clearly and do not tease me indiscriminately. You should be able to discern what the truth is. I have paid off all my debt. I am innocent. I remember the meeting three years ago. Our love has become a joke, and our emotions are gone like a dream. I now cry at the riverside. I lost my voice over the bridge that is falling apart. Did I really want to get married? My arranged marriage has hurt my love, but I cannot stop my love for him. I hate that his feeling is so cruel. He said goodbye at the Ten Miles Pavilion and let me depart by myself. My tears fell like blood and I couldn't stand saying goodbye to him. The wind and rain broke the flowers. Tears were falling on my cheeks. Thousands of sorrows followed me. It is the social code and morals of society that have hurt him. We two didn't have a chance to tell each other what was in our hearts. For whom was the blood shed, and for whom the shackles worn? Now all is left are some faded memories and a romantic feeling that has to be buried by the bridge under the fading moon.

Chunxiang is a decent person. I lived on the south side of the city. The master in the Western Village is handsome and sincere. Every day during dusk we played together since our youth. I had decided that I would only marry him in the future. Our two hearts are clear and determined. But my mother received the dowry and broke our love. I was married to my husband's house. I was crying, and when I saw him I could not see myself marrying the other person. The social code and morality are frightening. My husband left for the capital after the wedding. My infatuation turned to my lover. He had to accompany me, his sister-in-law, to the Ten Miles Pavilion. He was thin and looked like he was frustrated and had been crying. I was like the willow blowing in the western breeze, and I was like a pear flower struggling in the heavy rain. I was suffocated by tears and could not speak to reveal my sorrow. Just one step short of getting to the south side of the city, we shouldn't have had to say

goodbye, but we did. Ai, his heart was like iron and my tears were plentiful. My feelings were like a thousand miles of cloud and water churning, but I was left alone to finish the journey. There were only a few houses in the distance and the air was cold. Then came the accident. How could a weak woman fight against a hoodlum from the city? I did it for love. I take the blame because of love. I didn't want to involve him and have him interrogated. I cried frantically. My voice is almost gone and the offerings have been given at the bridge. The sound of crying is sad. The hatred of my heart is in the pipa. It is priceless to make the sacrifice. I pity myself that my infatuation could not result in my marriage to the one I love. Ai, the biggest sin is to reject someone's love and there is nothing sadder than a withered heart. My heart has been dead for a long time. There is nothing that I miss tonight. I have said that I will cry once every three years. But today is that day of the third year. The faded bridge and I both are about to die. Let me mourn for the bridge, and then I can die comfortably.

(Chunxiang is carrying the candles and walking towards the bridge. Chunying and Baimei hear the cries and quietly go to take a look.)

Yanxiu: *(sings)* This flower is a love flower. The good saying turns into a joke. The one who knows music is Boya. To get a confession one doesn't need torture and also doesn't need an execution. Tonight I will be killing a woman. But I heard crying. It also makes me want to cry behind people's backs.

Chunxiang: *(recites)* Ai, how come the soil is so loose? It feels like someone has moved the soiled before. Ah.... This is a golden locket... this is a pair of jade ring...and the golden gourd. These are all sad objects. When did second brother bury all of them here? The soil has been worked on recently.

Chunying: *(recites)* Madame, I just saw second master buried these few objects in the soil under the bridge. Second Master is now blind and he looks terrible.

Chunxiang: *(recites)* Your honor Zhang, please be kind.

Yanxiu: *(recites)* Chunxiang, you are about to die, why do you keep bowing at me? We all understood everything. You want to cry on the Second Brother's Bridge, I let you do that. So what other parting words do you have?

Chunxiang: *(recites)* Your honor Zhang, Second Brother is not only alive, he has just

been here. I don't want him to know Chunxiang is about to die. I beg you to help me.

Yanxiu: (*recites*) Chunxiang, if you know this is the outcome, how come you didn't think about what you were doing then? At that time, it was not that I didn't want to help you. You were the one who was determined to die. I couldn't save you even if I wanted. It is too late to overturn the case tonight.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Your honor Zhang, this is not what I meant. I heard from Chunying that second brother is blind, he can only hear and is not able to see anything. I beg you to give me an opportunity to speak to him, but I don't want him to know that there are two executioners there. I also don't want him to know I have been shackled.

Yanxiu: (*sings*) Although Chunxiang only has a short life, her heart still desires to return to her love. She will be separated from life in a short while, I will let her sit under the bridge. Come, bring a piece of big rock over here so that she can sit comfortably.

(*The officer brings a stone and help Chunxiang to sit down.*)

Xiezu: (*speaks*) It's a good thing that the Second Brother's Bridge is a sentimental place for me. I vaguely remember everything in this place. If it were another place, how could I find it and get around since I am blind?

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Second brother.

Xiezu: (*speaks*) Yee, how come I hear Chunxiang's voice? No, it cannot be. Perhaps because I have been missing her for so long I am dreaming about her now. It cannot be Chunxiang.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Second brother.

Xiezu: (*recites*) Oh, it is really Chunxiang. Chunxiang, why are you here?

(*Chunxiang sees Xiezu and is a bit angry because he looks pathetic.*)

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Second brother, don't you know that there is a woman being accused of a crime in Western Village? There is no rain in three years. It is lucky that I can see the sky again today. Now if I am really not your sister-in-law and not your lover, what is there left for me to live for? I'll just let it be. Second brother, please do not miss me from now on. I made up my mind and am determined to marry again. Now I am sitting

in a sedan chair, and it is a long journey for me. The carriers need a rest before going on, and that is why we are sitting by the bridge to rest.

Xiezu: *(recites)* Chunxiang, you are getting married again. I don't believe you. Although I am blind and my heart turned to stone, I can still feel things with my hands.

(Xiezu is feeling with his hands and touches the umbrella.)

(recites) Oh, you are right, there is a sedan chair. Chunxiang, why do you want to remarry?

(Xiezu keeps touching and accidentally touches the blade of the executioner's knife and cuts himself.)

(recites) No, this is not it, how come there are so many blades by the side of the sedan chair?

Chunxiang: *(recites)* You are right. Second brother. Your hands are very sensitive. Why are there so many blades next to the sedan chair? It is because I was scared once. Don't you remember the incident at the Ten Miles Pavilion when you refused to accompany me into the city in the name of adhering to social codes. That led to a major disaster. Now I am being cautious. It is good that my new husband's family is well-to-do; therefore, they have horses and guards to protect me.

(Xiezu feels sad and jealous.)

Xiezu: *(recites)* So you are making a good marriage. So who is your new husband, where does he live, and what is his last name?

Chunxiang: *(recites)* Ah.....my new husband lives in Yuzhou [pun with underworld] and his last name is Yan [name of the king of hell].

Yanxiu: *(recites)* It is the same last name of Yanluowang, the king of hell. It is a big family. You should be relieved.

Xiezu: *(recites)* Yee, how come there is another man standing next to you? Chunxiang doesn't have any brother. It must be that Chunxiang was forced into marriage and now she cries so much that she is losing her voice. But I cannot blame her. How come the voice of the man next to her is also so sad? Strange!

(Xiezu touches Yanxiu.)

(recites) There is a horse, and he is wearing a light fur outfit. Who are you really?

(Chunxiang begs Yanxiu not to reveal the secret.)

Yanxiu: *(recites)* Fine, she is getting married, so you should just let this whole thing go. Why are you asking so many questions? I am the, I am... the dumbest person who is sending her off.

Xiezu: *(recites)* My apology.

(Xiezu keeps on feeling with his hands and all of a sudden he touches the shackle and from there he feels the lock. He frantically calls out.)

(recites) Chunxiang, Why are you being shackled? It is sad enough that I am blind. Why do you want to hide something from me? I have never heard about someone who needs to be shackled before getting married.

Chunxiang: *(recites)* Second brother, don't be alarmed. How come it is only today that you discovered that I have a chain on me? In fact, I have been in an invisible ball and chain for a long time. You don't need to worry about me. Once I arrive at the Yan family in Yuzhou, I will be free forever and not be shackled.

(Xiezu goes forward while Chunxiang is not paying attention. He accidentally touches the tablet on the back of her neck that states her guilty verdict.)

(recites) Aiyah, how come there is a tablet on your neck? Chunxiang, you are actually a criminal waiting to be executed! How come you are so cruel that you are still deceiving me?

(The only thing that Chunxiang can do is to cry, and she cannot answer.)

Yanxiu: *(recites)* Second brother Jiang, No wonder there is a weird saying that a good person is always punished for his good deed. If it was not because of Chunxiang's pity for you for being blind and protecting you from any more shock, she wouldn't have spoken to you. She is caring for you in every possible way. But the way you are treating her could not be any worse.

Xiezu: *(sings)* Aiyaya, the only thing I can do is to use my blood to soak this place. Chunxiang.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Second brother, when I saw the blood on your chest, I knew that you were still in love with me. I already knew that you were blind and I could not bear to see you hurting again. On that day when you sent me to the Ten Miles Pavilion, why did you refuse to take the extra few steps? Why? Tonight when we met, you would not stop asking questions. Second brother, if you had used the way you treated me at the Ten Miles Pavilion right now, you wouldn't have heard of such a heart-breaking story. If you had used the way you treated me tonight on our long journey to Ten Miles Pavilion, I would not have been involved in this murder case. Second brother, no wonder everything is destined. I did not want to involve you in this case because my love for you is too great. Since you do not want to be the one who goes against the social doctrine, you had no feelings for me and didn't sympathize with me. Because I had been married to your brother, you stayed quiet and strictly adhered to the social doctrine and moral code. Why, when you heard that I was marrying someone else couldn't you stop asking questions? Second brother, if you had been honest and revealed yourself to me at the Ten Miles Pavilion, we both wouldn't have this kind of miserable ending. Second brother, I did not intend to force you to go against the social doctrine, but I also do not want to be known as an improper woman when I die. Because I also lived under the strict social doctrine, I didn't dare to tell you about my affection and love. Now that I am going to die, I can say anything I want. I am your sister-in-law, but except for the fact that we have drunk a glass of wine and shared some betel nuts, there is no other relationship between us and we are not husband and wife. Second brother, it is an unexpected blessing because of my impending death, I have the courage to reveal my love to you and speak the truth from the bottom of my heart. Second brother, if you have the courage, come and share the last moment with me. Your honor Zhang is not able to make any more exception. I am about to die.

Xiezu: (*sings*) I frantically embrace Chunxiang, our dreams are fading. Now I know that I am a fool. I cry in front all the passersby to reveal my feelings. If it were not for your harsh words, I wouldn't know that you have so much feeling for me. But now you have been deserted, and I mistook you as an improper woman. Let me bow and beg your honor Zhang to have both of us buried together in the same grave so that we can leave a beautiful story behind. I am now blind and my heart is dead. I cannot face this picturesque world. The flower falls on an empty bridge, the voice is drying up, tears are falling as thick as the texture of hemp. Since we are both being scorned in life, it is compensation if we can be buried together in one grave. I bow to you my officer. I would like to be executed under the same knife. Your honor, it is just another extra action

with the same knife. Please make my wish come true. Please do a good deed for me.

Yanxiu: *(recites)* Second brother Jiang, do you think the court of law is like a game? Today you pity your love because she is leaving soon. Did you realize that there are unexpected winds that stir up big waves? Drop your hot tears, but why make yourself misery by prolonging the pain? I will give an order and the tears will follow the direction of the knife. Come, execute this criminal woman right here.

(The executioners respond with a yell and take Chunxiang away. They raise the blade and prepare to execute her. The sound of gongs comes from afar and the sound calling to clear the way is heard. Once Yanxiu hears this, he signals to stop the execution and asks Chunxiang be taken to the bottom of the bridge.)

Xiezu: *(recites)* Aiya, the gong, Chunxiang must be dead. Chunxiang, Chunxiang...

Yanxiu: *(recites)* Chunxiang cannot die now, take her aside.

(The guards and the office assistants are seen holding up a sign that says to remain silent and clear the road. The Duke is given permission to return home.)

Yaozu: *(sings)* Even though I am crippled, I have a high-rank position of six flowers. I single-handedly help the emperor and have just returned from the royal autumn banquet. I heard about the disaster in the countryside. I am riding the horse that was given to me by the emperor. When I got on the road, it was rather late. Why is there so much noise close to the Second Brother's Bridge?

(Meizhu enters with Tongxuan and is nervous. Yanxiu rushes forward to kneel down.)

Yanxiu: *(recites)* This lowly one greets the honorable old gentleman.

Yaozu: *(recites)* All stand.

Yanxiu: *(recites)* Yes.

Yaozu: *(recites)* Ah. There is an executioner at the Second Brother's Bridge tonight. I want to know whether it is a male or female criminal. What is the name? You need to answer clearly.

Yanxiu: *(recites)* Yes, yes. No wonder people say when someone is accomplished, he will see nothing when he returns. My honor Duke, the person to be

executed is no commoner but a relative related to the noble class. The woman criminal is the original wife of the Duke of the Pingnan region. She is Chunxiang of the Yang's family.

(Yaozu quickly gets off the horse and is embarrassed deep inside.)

(recites) This...this..., hah!! Who tried this case and who set the sentence? From what I can see, you are in the service of the people. You must be confused and have set the wrong verdict. Let me ask you. If you want to execute someone, why do you have to wait till the evening with a faded moon and do it on the bridge? Are you that busy during the day that you have to wait till night to stage an execution? Are you too busy enjoying yourself during the day?

Yanxiu: *(Recites)* My honorable Duke, I was planning to stage the execution at dusk. But your wife was requesting to cry over the Second Brother's Bridge and your brother also requesting to cry for Chunxiang. With all these delays, we have had to wait until the faded moon rises. As you know, I need to honor these requests since they are your relatives. They do have a lucky life because they are related to you, the Duke's family.

Yaozu: *(recites)* My reputation has been greatly reduced. Where is my second brother? Second brother?

Xiezu: *(recites)* Brother, brother.

Yaozu: *(recites)* My young brother, you see that I have arrived, how come you didn't come up to greet me.

Xiezu: *(recites)* Brother, I can hear your voice but I cannot see where you are. I am blind.

Yaozu: *(recites)* What? Second brother, how come you are blind? What evil sin have our parents done that you are being punished? We have one crippled after the other one.

Xiezu: *(recites)* Brother, I was wandering in the capital for three years. By the time I almost found you, someone came and damaged my eyes. Ai, on the day you left home, Chunxiang's mother was sick and she needed to return home to see her. Because there was no man in the house, uncle asked me to accompany her on the journey but stop at the Ten Miles Pavilion. I was under the strict social doctrine and code, so I did not dare to take an extra step. But then after that disaster, this terrible result ensued.

Chunxiang: *(recites)* My honorable Duke, I beg of you not because you have power and glory. I hope that you can explain to second brother that during our wedding night we didn't have a relationship.

Xiezu: *(recites)* Second brother, Chunxiang, I understand everything. But there is one thing that I don't understand. Second brother, you said that it was three years after I left that you accompanied your sister-in-law on the journey. On the day I left home, I wanted to maintain the reputation of the family and so I wrote a letter and handed it to cousin Meizhu to give to you. After you read the letter, why you were so cold and cruel to Chunxiang at the Ten Miles Pavilion?

Xiezu: *(recites)* Brother, after you left the house, there was no letter left for me. That morning I even saw cousin Meizhu and asked whether you had any words for me. She only told me that you were really angry and that you wished to slap my face.

Yaozu: *(recites)* Ah ha, it is cousin Meizhu who was behind this mess. I need to find her right away.

Meizhu: *(recites)* Big Cousin, you don't need to find me, this horrible cousin of yours is here.

(Meizhu goes down on her knees in front of Chunxiang and cries.)

(sings) Yes, I destroyed the letter, but I didn't anticipate that there was a molester in the wilderness.

Tonxuan: *(recites)* Please forgive my ignorant daughter.

Meizhu: *(recites)* Because I was secretly in love with second cousin, I was planning under the window.

Tongxuan: *(recites)* This was her real intention.

Yaozu: *(recites)* Ha, I see that this judge is brother Yanxiu. This murder has developed to a point of no return. Since you are a student of my uncle, I will hope that you can take good care of this business and with that relationship in mind.

Yanxiu: *(recites)* Chunxiang is the one who confessed that she is guilty. I want to clear her name and I am sure there is a way.

Furong: (*sings*) Master big cousin, Master second cousin, I know that I am wrong. Because I was greedy, I secretly betrayed the wife of Master big cousin. The person who committed the crime is from the Jia family. His plan was to molest Chunxiang, and it was a serious crime. Master Jia saw that I am pretty, and he secretly wanted me to be his mistress. But he often beats me and scolds me. I know I am wrong. Before I kill myself to redeem my guilt, I want to explain this to all of you so that the innocent one won't be wrongfully accused and punished.

Yaozu: (*recites*) This case has been clear. Master Jia was helping his son to commit a crime. I will not let this go.

Tongxuan: (*recites*) Ai, Yaozu, I know I am wrong. If it were not for the restrictive social doctrine, Second brother would have taken a few more steps and nothing bad would have happened. Meizhu told me everything. I agree that Xiezu should marry Chunxiang.

Chunxiang: (*recites*) Why take all this trouble? I feel that it is better to die than to live. I have seen enough in this life.

Yaozu: (*recites*) Chunxiang, it is too bad that Meizhu destroyed my letter. Do you know what I wrote in that letter? I said that those who are in love should be together for life. But the meaningless social doctrine is like a shackle. Chunxiang, you still have lots of beautiful days ahead of you. With my new-found power and wealth, I can find the best doctor to cure my brother's blindness.

Yanxiu: (*recites*) The moon is getting full again on the Second Brother's Bridge. It is like glory has returned to decorate a life that is already perfect.

Curtain.