

Snow in June

六月雪

An English Translation of Fong Yim Fun's Performance Script
芳艷芬演出本

Scripted by TONG Tik Sang
唐滌生編劇

1956

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This Translation (Version 1.0)
by
Frederick Lau
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© 2012

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Snow in June

Characters in the Play

Dou E
Cai Chang Zong
Feng Ping
Mule Zhang
Mother Cai
Child Fairy Dou
King Shen Zong
Lizhi Fragrance
Yin Chan
Yan Hong
Camel Jin
Woman Zhang
Qian Mu
Yang Tao
Uncle Yang

Act I

(Scene of the Buddhist Hall at the Mountain Shang monastery. The hall is divided into two levels. At the bottom left hand side sits a Jade Buddha. On the side of the meditation room are short fences where a girl is planning to hang a notice to sell herself into slavery. On the opposite side and outside the small garden is a cherry tree surrounded by a low stone wall. Gathering in front of the curtain, two novice monks are standing on both sides of the head monk, Yin Chan. The senior of the two, Wu Yin, has a somber look on his face).

Yin Chan: *(speaks)* The Buddhist monastery is a serene place and we do not pay attention to matters of right or wrong in the mundane world. Your humble monk, Yin Chan, has been in charge of this temple for over a decade and it is a popular temple. Today the seventh sister of the emperor is passing through Shang Zhou. She is planning to offer incense to the Buddha and stay at the western meditation chamber. Novice monk, place a "forbidden" sign there to warn off all visitors.

(The novice monk places a "forbidden" sign on the other side of the wooden fence. Four palace maidens in red clothes and the royal sister Feng Ping enter).

Feng Ping: *(sings)* This precious one is called Feng [phoenix]. I understand those who dream about matters related to love. They become sad during springtime and get overly sentimental in autumn. I am extremely angry at the prison-like supervision of the palace maidens and envious of the beautiful couples who wander around like pairs of butterflies flying between the flowers. I can only complain in secret of all my missed opportunities.

(Prepare to exit the Buddhist hall).

Yin Chan: *(speaks)* This humble monk greets the honorable sister of the emperor, *amitabha*.

Feng Ping: *(recites)* Master monk, I am not accustomed to the loneliness of being at a Buddhist temple and would like to chat about mundane and sentimental things, why did you block the way?

Yin Chan: *(recites)* Royal Sister, according to the royal order, our temple is not allowed to let any visitor see your beautiful face.

(Feng Ping pulls one of the red maidens, Yin Hong, to her side).

Feng Ping: *(recites)* Yin Hong, I have lived deep inside the palace for sixteen years. Today is my first visit to the world of the commoners. How can I spoil this happy occasion?

Yin Hong: *(recites)* Royal Seventh Sister, I must admit that I really had great fun in the back courtyard. There are people enjoying the moon and writing poetry. Some people are slightly intoxicated and leaning against the cherry blossom.

Feng Ping: *(recites)* Ah, Yin Hong, I have an idea. Let's go back to the monastery and exchange our dresses. You wear mine, and I will wear yours. How can the old monk tell the difference between master and servant?

Yin Hong: *(recites)* No way Royal Seventh Sister. If anyone sees through this trick, I, the servant, will be punished severely.

Feng Ping: Don't worry. I will take full responsibility. I swear that I will not reveal to anyone that I am the royal seventh sister.

(Feng Ping drags Yin Hong with her to the monastery to exchange their clothing).

Yin Chan: *(speaks)* It is time to light the lanterns and have the evening prayers in the back hall.

(The monks exit the stage accompanied by the sound of chimes and drums. Dou E enters with the sixteen-year-old Child Fairy and begins her lament).

Dou E: *(sings)* The difficult journey and bad weather is locking us in. It is impossible to return home. The falling leaves remind us of our past. It is difficult to forget it. Our tears are falling as if we were praying for rain and as snow falling in October.

(Child Fairy is kneeling while clutching his knees).

Child Fairy *(sings)* Illness has aged me. My sister has come a long way with a weak body. She should have left me when the time was right. I was hoping that I could be successful in the examination so that I could repay her kindness. However, I used up all my funds, and I missed the examination. Sister, you are so young and beautiful, why did you accompany me on this difficult journey?

(Dou E helps Child Fairy to his feet).

Dou E: *(recites)* Child Fairy, if you hadn't told me, I wouldn't have known that you were sick. There is a big tree inside the temple; you should go and rest under the shade. Our parents and two brothers are already dead. Who else can take care of you besides your sister?

Child Fairy *(recites)* Third Sister, please don't be so sad. I'll obey you and go inside and rest.

(Child Fairy exits the stage from the door to the small garden).

Dou E: *(sings)* We brother and sister had to stop our schooling. All we want is something that would make our family proud. If I don't sell myself as a slave so that he can have the funds to go for the autumn examination, how can either of us be successful?

(speaks) Last night I waited until Child Fairy fell asleep and secretly wrote down this notice of why I want to sell myself as slave. I decided to hang it by the wooden fence and hope that the spirits of our late parents will bless us.

(Accompanied by the sound of the pipa, Dou E walks near the "forbidden" sign. Then suddenly she shakes her head and stops herself from hanging the notice on the fence before kneeling on the ground.)

(Lizhi Fragrance, who is carrying a bundle wrapped in cloth, is helping Mother Cai who has been sighing all the way as she enters the stage).

Mother Cai: *(sings)* I cried for three days in the empty temple but mother and son didn't have a chance to see each other. Could it be that the letters were lost? So disappointing that perhaps we should just go home.

(speaks) My son Chang Zong attended school in Lu Zhou for six years. I asked someone to send him a message that we would meet at the temple gate in Shang Zhou. I want to encourage him to take the autumn examination. Why is it that we wasted three days and still there is no trace of him? Lizhi Fragrance, we should just return home.

(Dou E appears moody while Mother Cai is reading the notice)

Mother Cai *(speaks)* When the tree falls, it is difficult for the flowers to hold on to the familiar branch. When the nest is broken, no one will remember the little brother. All she asks for is ten taels of silver so that she can work hard and honor her parents' wishes.

(Mother Cai helps the beautiful Dou E to her feet)

Mother Cai: *(repeats)* How many people can have this kind of literary talent? I use my blood and tears to express my emotions in writing. Our family is not a big one with many children. I have only one poor filial son. I saved ten taels of silver in ten years in order to find a nice woman for my son. Since you agreed to be my son's bride when you grow up, I have decided not to be frugal but spend the money.

Dou E: *(speaks)* A bride-to-be when I grow up!

(sings) To use ten years' saving to get a wife for the son. It is a pity that a kind mother loves her son. But Child Fairy does not have a mother who could love him. I have no other choice but to sell myself in order to support my brother in hopes that he passes the imperial examination and be successful.

(Mother Cai is happy and hands the silver over to Dou E. Dou E calls out into the stage)

Dou E: *(speaks)* Child Fairy, fourth brother.

(Child Fairy Dou enters)

Dou E: *(speaks)* Child Fairy, your sister sold herself for ten taels of pure silver for you. You should try to do well in the autumn examination so that you can honor our deceased parents.

Child Fairy: *(recites)* Third Sister, I can not sell you in hopes that I will be successful one day.

Dou E: *(recites)* Child Fairy, get up. The emperor highly regards those who are learned and know the classics. The world that we live in prefers boys over girls. Anyway, I will become someone's daughter-in-law someday. If you do not score well in the examination, who else can revive the reputation of our family?

Child Fairy: *(recites)* Third Sister, please tell me which family you will be sold to, and in which state and county they live. I want to repay your kindness someday.

Dou E: *(recites)* Child Fairy, there is a saying for women. Once you are married, you follow the husband. There is no need to ask where one settles down. If there is a day when you are successful, then there will be a time that we should all meet.

Child Fairy: *(recites)* Third Sister, let me go and thank the old lady. I will also ask her to treat you well.

Dou E: *(recites)* Child Fairy, it is not a problem that I am sold to be someone's daughter-in-law, but you cannot disgrace your ancestors. Why don't you just go, and do not turn your head to look at the way I cover up my face.

(Dou E turns her body and covers her face. Child Fairy kneels before Dou E and bows his head).

Mother Cai: *(sings)* Ah! To sell oneself in order to prevent the ancestors from being disgraced, what a wonderful woman I have obtained. Let me thank heaven for its protection.

(Mother Cai looks up and bows three times with both of her hands)

(sings) Let me go back to Shan Yang before I tell my sad stories.

(The pipa plays the piece Lament in the Meditation Chamber accompanied by a few sounds of the bells and chimes. Wu Yin runs into a red palace maiden and is staring at her. Feng Ping changes into the red maiden dress and is looking very lively. As she enters the garden, she raises her head and sees many cherry blossoms. She likes them so much that she picks them from the branches. She stands on the stone wall in order to pick the cherries).

Chang Zong: *(sings)* I regret that I come late to the Mountain Shang monastery. An evil wind blew my ship off course and I missed the dates of my return trip to visit my family. I have studied for ten years but I have not yet passed the imperial examination. I have an old mother at home. I am ashamed that my name has not been announced in the passing list of the top imperial examinations. How can I even talk about filial piety?

(The sound of the pipa continues as he attempts to go inside the temple to find out about his mother).

(All of a sudden Wu Yin rushes forward and embraces Feng Ping. Feng Ping is frightened and yells "thieves!" Chang Zong runs towards Wu Yin and strikes him while Feng Ping continues to scream. Yin Chan and five monks enter and ask what is happening? Feng Ping lowers her head and avoids Yin Chan's gaze.)

Feng Ping: *(speaks)* Master, just now there was a thief in the garden. I was saved by this young master. Why don't you stay away so that I can thank him in person?

(Yin Chan and the five monks back up and divide themselves up on both sides)

Feng Ping: *(speaks)* Thank you young master.

(She is impressed by how handsome Chang Zong is).

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* It is nothing, and there is no need to thank me. I have to take my leave.

Feng Ping: *(speaks)* Young master, I picked cherries but ended up being startled. Luckily, heaven sends a guardian. Could our meeting have been destined? I hope that you can at least leave your name.

Chang Zong: *(sings)* For ten years I still haven't passed the examination. This humble one's family name is Cai and given name Xuanji. Young lady, your mannerism is so elegant and learned, you must hail from a well-to-do family.

Feng Ping: *(speaks)* You are asking me.....I am from.....Too bad that I have been sworn to secrecy earlier and that the nosey monks are staring at me....How many young men inside the palace are this handsome? Why do I have to run into this man at this old temple? What if I just say that I came here to worship? Young Master Cai, are you asking which family I am from and where I live?

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* It is a matter of mutual common courtesy that I should ask for this information.

Feng Ping: *(speaks)* Young Master, even if you don't ask, I am going to tell you. My family name is Lu, a name given by the King's mother. My family is in Fenglai Village near the capital. Like the seventh star in the Milky Way, I am the youngest. The early sun shines on the phoenix. There are phoenixes on Dan Mountain but they have decided to stay. The heavenly liquid is suitable for raising pearls. There is a seven-precious tree in the royal forest. One has to wait for the examination result to be announced before picking the flowers.

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* This girl in red is a bit out of her mind. She said a lot of strange things that don't make sense. I don't know whether she is a goddess, a ghost, a devil, or Buddha. I will just be perfunctory and only have a brief exchange.

(sings) If there is a road to Dan Mountain, how many people go there? Some day later I will go to Fenglai to pay my visit. Let me ask where this woman is going and stop this meaningless conversation.

(Chang Zong goes up to the Master monk).

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Master, was there a white haired old lady temporarily living in the temple?

Yin Chan: *(speaks)* There was an old lady who stayed here for three days but she left for her home at sunset.

Chang Zong: *(sings)* It is a pity that mother and son cannot be reunited. Let me return to my school and thank my teacher. I will wait until late spring before I return home.

(Chang Zong bows at Feng Ping and leaves in a hurry).

Yan Hong: (thought to herself) Yan Hong, why don't you just return to the Meditation chamber. Do you want to be punished?

Feng Ping: *(speaks)* What a clever royal seventh sister.

(sings) There is a seven-precious tree in the royal forest. One has to wait for the examination result to be announced before picking the flowers.

(Feng Ping laughs).

All monks: *(recites)* Amitabha!

(Everyone exits)

(Curtain)

Act II

(If the scene does not use traditional Chinese paintings, it will appear vulgar and in poor taste. It is worthwhile to use skilled painters who can transform the stage into a remarkable scene. On this side is the door of a small family home with a low overhang. On the other side is the entryway to a small garden without a door. Banks of willow trees line one side. In the corner of the short wall is a lotus pond with two or three lotus pods. On the far side of the stage is a locust tree. On the tree is a parrot on a stand. Under the tree is a stone bench).

(Curtain up)

(Dou E is holding a broom sweeping the floor).

Dou E: *(sings)* It is lonely in this quiet garden. All that is left is the white haired old lady and her servant. The old lady is speechless, and she is worrying about the one who is returning.

(Dou E continues to sweep the falling leaves)

(sings) After I arrived in Shan Yang, I had a decent living. I am destined to marry into the family, but I don't know what my husband looks like. If his appearance is proper, it will make up for the fact that I am not too educated but a nice and quiet person. But if he is.....

(Dou E shakes her head and sighs)

Dou E: *(sings)* The willow is entangled because of the wind and the cicadas scatter because the leaves are falling. I do not dare to think any more.

(The handyman hunchback Camel Jin, carrying some soil, is knocking on the door).

Dou E: *(speaks)* Uncle Jin, it is so early in the morning. Why don't you go and repair the road? What do you want?

Camel Jin: *(speaks)* Third Mother, don't you know that your family asked me to come and repair the wall? They said that there was a message from Shang Zhou that Master Cai is returning home today. Because there will be celebrations, they want me to touch up the place and repair the broken wall in the garden.

(Dou E is surprised but at the same time elated).

Dou E: *(speaks)* Ah, Master Cai is coming home today....Huh, huh, you better do a good job.

Camel Jin: *(speaks)* Third Mother, I was in such a hurry that I forgot to bring a shovel. Let me drop off these tools and go home to get it.

Dou E: *(speaks)* If Master Cai is coming home today, it is an important matter. How come the old lady didn't mention this to me? Let me go and ask her to clarify. Who is Master Cai to me? How can I ask such an embarrassing question? If I don't ask, I am getting more impatient. Why don't I find an excuse?

(Lizhi Fragrance is accompanying Mother Cai, and they enter together).

Mother Cai: *(speaks)* Dou E, what do you mean by "to find an excuse"?

(Dou E feels embarrassed).

Dou E: *(recites)* Old lady, I am not saying "to find an excuse." I was only saying the parrot is talking too much. Old lady, the parrot keeps repeating "young master come home." I was ridiculing the parrot for being a nuisance since the Young Master has never come home.

Mother Cai: *(recites)* Ah, did the parrot really say "Young Master come home?" You are probably mistaken. The parrot was not here when Chang Zong left home. How can the parrot repeat itself like chanting?

Dou E: *(recites)* Old lady, perhaps I am really mistaken. Because I am from Shang Zhou, I may not be too accustomed to the accent of Shan Yang.

Mother Cai: *(recites)* Hmm, Dou E, you are hearing what you have been thinking in your heart. I am an old lady now. Don't you think I know what is on your mind? You really want to ask when he is returning but would not dare to ask. So you use the parrot as an excuse in order to get the answer, am I right?

(speaks) Dou E, my son Chang Zong is coming home today.

(signs) There is a message from a guest. The west wind is bringing home the geese. After he comes home, he is going for the examination again. I really wish I could eliminate the geese for him so that he could stay.

(Dou E is embarrassed and pretends to sweep the leaves).

Mother Cai: *(speaks)* Dou E, how come you pick such an appropriate time to sweep the floor when I am about to talk about happy things. I don't believe that your heart will be anxious once you hear what I have to say. If you are anxious, why pretend that you don't care?

Dou E: *(speaks)* Old lady, I will be your daughter-in-law some da. Of course I really don't care when the wedding date is.

Mother Cai: *(speaks)* There you are. Isn't it comforting to be able to speak your mind? It looks like Chang Zong will be home any time now. Let me make sure his study room is in order.

(Dou E hurries in with Mother Cai).

Mother Cai: *(speaks)* Dou E, you should really clean the garden floor thoroughly. Why do you follow me in?

Dou E: *(speaks)* Old lady, is the young master coming soon?

Mother Cai: *(speaks)* OK, he is coming home. Finally, it is the parrot's words that made him come home *(while pointing at Dou E's heart)*

Dou E: *(speaks)* Hmm... old lady, I am scared.

Mother Cai: *(speaks)* What? What are you afraid of?

Dou E: *(speaks)* I am scared of seeing the young master.

Mother Cai: *(speaks)* You have to see him sooner or later. If you are scared, why don't you ask Lizhi Fragrance to stay here with you?

Dou E: *(speaks)* The young master is coming home. I really don't know what I am thinking. If his appearance is proper, it will make up for the fact that I am not too educated but a nice and quiet person. But if he is....Why don't I ask Lizhi Fragrance to guard the village entrance. If the young master returns, she can first send me a signal. Good idea. Lizhi Fragrance, why don't you come over. Have you seen the young master? *(whispering in Lizhi Fragrance's ear)*.

(Lizhi Fragrance shakes her head).

Dou E: *(speaks)* Ah, you really haven't seen the young master before.

(People who cannot speak must rely on sign language. Dou E is signing with her hands, pointing at the village entrance and then pretending to walk like a scholar, then points at Lizhi Fragrance and then at herself. All gestures are done with ease and clarity).

(Lizhi Fragrance understands and makes fun of Dou E's improper behavior with her gestures).

(Mule Zhang climbs over the wall and peeps in).

Dou E: *(sings)* I want to straighten myself up but there is no mirror. I can only rely on my reflection in the water. I have to tighten my waistband, brush the tips of my shoes and check whether I have enough make-up on.

(Mule Zhang is getting excited and climbs down the wall).

(Lizhi Fragrance rushes in)

Dou E: *(speaks)* Lizhi Fragrance, is it the young master?

(Lizhi Fragrance imitates the body movements of a scholar).

(Dou E appears excited but tries to restrain herself by staring into the pond).

(Lizhi Fragrance realizes Dou E is being shy, so she steps aside).

Mule Zhang: *(sings)* I peep at the beauty by the pond. I wish I were a frog that could leap into the water and jump over three walls in order to wait for the beautiful woman.

(Dou E 's head is lowered when Mule Zhang comes in. She mistakes him for the Young Master).

Dou E: *(speaks)* Young Master.

Mule Zhang: *(speaks)* You are polite.

(Dou E raises her head and sees Mule Zhang and his ears. She is so anxious that she is pouting and wants to cry).

Mule Zhang: *(recites)* Third Mother, you don't know me but I know you. I have been watching you for several days over the wall. Let me introduce myself, my name is Mule Zhang and I am your neighbor. I come from a big family in Shan Yang and I have tons of money.

Dou E: *(speaks)* Ah, so you are Master Zhang. I am glad you introduced yourself. Otherwise I would be so startled that my soul would run away.

Mule Zhang: *(speaks)* Do you know that the old lady Cai has been borrowing rice and provisions from our family? Yesterday, she already borrowed ten taels of silver and a big load of firewood.

Dou E: *(speaks)* I didn't know. If you are coming to retrieve your money, please give us a few more days because our family is very busy in the next few days.

Mule Zhang: *(speaks)* Third Mother, since we are neighbors, we don't talk about money. It is not that we mind loaning out food and money to help out. We only want to become closer. I can give three hundred taels of silver more so that you can buy more land.

Dou E: *(sings)* The Cai family doesn't have a young woman.

Mule Zhang: *(sings)* But they bought a beautiful girl.

Dou E: *(sings)* They bought a weak girl to help with the family.

Mule Zhang: *(sings)* But they can make a lot of money if they sell her.

Dou E: *(speaks)* No way!

(recites) I don't want to talk to you anyway. I am not a commodity that can be bought and sold. You are truly disgraceful and are insulting me.

Mule Zhang: *(recites)* Third mother, why don't I go and report to my mother and have her deliver the three hundred taels of silver. As you know silver is shiny and bright. I am sure old lady Cai will be very happy when she sees the silver.

Dou E: *(speaks)* You cannot do that, master Zhang.

(Dou E chases after Mule Zhang).

Dou E: *(speaks)* Ah, since young master Cai is not home, I became the target of a bully. Talking about the young master, I wonder what he looks like and whether his appearance is proper. But what if his face is like the face of Mule Zhang.

(All of a sudden, Dou E becomes saddened. She covers her face and begins to sob).

(Chang Zong enters and is carrying a small bundle on his back).

Chang Zong: *(recites)* Why is there a frail woman sitting in front of my family home? She covers her face with both hands and looks sad. I want to ask her a few questions but don't know how to address her. Ah, I know what to do.

(Chang Zong unpacks his umbrella from his bundle and pretends that he bumps into her accidentally).

(Dou E thinks it is Mule Zhang and shakes her body angrily).

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* How come she moves her body so strangely. I really want to try to startle her again so that I can ask her the question.

(Chang Zong bumps into her again).

Dou E: *(recites)* Don't think I am a poor and frail girl. When I was young, I came from a good family where I was used to being treated nicely.

(Chang Zong smiles and lightly bows at Dou E).

(Dou E is shocked and doesn't know what to say).

Chang Zong: *(recites)* I have to beg your pardon for offending you. I am not a vulgar person. This is my home. And my name is Cai Chang Zong.

(Dou E is embarrassed).

Dou E: *(speaks)* Oh no...you are...

(Dou E immediately covers her face and runs inside and locks the door. She sits down by the locust tree and is speechless).

(This scene depicts the mixed emotions of the young bride meeting her husband-to-be for the first time. It should be a bit exaggerated in terms of acting as a way to highlight the beginning of the tragedy).

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Why did she avoid me and run into the house? Let me wait for her to come out.

Dou E: *(speaks)* Aiya, not only is the young master's face proper, he is also handsome, distinguished, and admirable. I should not have given him such a bad impression at the entrance to the family home. If he is disgusted with me because of my behavior, isn't it....

(Dou E is wavering between happy and sad).

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Why doesn't she come out? This is definitely my house.

(sings) It is like a beautiful girl in the garden who is afraid of talking to strange people. But I see that she has tears on her cheeks. I wonder if she is a run-away woman who happened to run into me, the one who just returned home. Open the door!

(Dou E is startled).

Dou E: *(speaks)* What should I do? It is the young master who is knocking at the door!

(Dou E opens the door and quietly returns to where has been sitting).

(Chang Zong pushes open the door).

(Dou E immediately picks up the broom and pretends that she is sweeping the floor).

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Young woman, the way you are sweeping, are you sweeping the floor or the sky? I don't need you to sweep. Even if you are just taking a refuge here for a while, there is no need for you to work.

(Dou E realizes that her broom is upside down).

Dou E: *(speaks)* I am not taking refuge in here. I am sweeping my own house for the servant girl. Do you understand?

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Oh, is this your house?

(Dou E nods her head).

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Then, where is my home?

Dou E: *(speaks)* It is not here.

(Lizhi Fragrance and Mother Cai enter).

Chang Zong: *(recites)* Young woman, I think the Cai family is unlucky, and the family is in decline. I only have an old mother with white hair who lives here. How come there is another person such as yourself? Who are you and what is your relationship to our family? Can you please explain?

Dou E: *(speaks)* I am....I am Cai family's..... Cai family.....

Mother Cai: *(recites)* Aiya, you have such a hard time saying this, let me do it. You really cannot do it. My son Chang, she is the girl I bought from Shang Zhou to be my daughter-in-law. Her family name is Dou, and her given name is E, she is third in her family. She comes from a scholar's family and can read and write. I believe that once you see her, you will like her. Have you seen her clearly?

(Dou E covers her face in embarrassment and hides behind Mother Cai).

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Thank you mother.

(Chang Zong kneels down).

(sings) I have left home to pursue education for six years. I have nothing to repay your kindness. You match me with Third Mother who is as pretty as a cherry blossom. It is like the legend of the moon fairy Seventh Sister who comes down to my cold window to comfort me.

Mother Cai: *(speaks)* My son Chang.

(recites) I am thinking to wait for a few years to have a wedding. But I am already in my old age and don't know how much longer I can wait. Why don't we have a wedding now before you return to the autumn examination. I know you only have a short time to spend with your wife,

but a good wife doesn't just focus on companionship. She also wishes that her husband can bring glory to the family. Lizhi Fragrance, why don't you go to the back of the house and ask Woman Zhang to be the matchmaker.

(Lizhi Fragrance exits).

Mother Cai: *(recites)* I'll go to the main street and ask Old man Yang to pick the right cosmological hour for the wedding. I hope that the Cai family from now on will flourish and have many children.

(Dou E follows Mother Cai).

Mother Cai: *(speaks)* Dou E, you will soon be a daughter-in-law. It doesn't make sense that you are coming with me to find someone to help you pick a good date for your wedding. I see. Are you afraid? What is there to be afraid of? You two will soon be husband and wife. As a married couple, you have to start talking and laughing together.

(Dou E is even more embarrassed).

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Third Mother.

Dou E: *(speaks)* Young Master.

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* My dear wife.

Dou E: *(speaks)* Ah...Cai...husband....

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Please sit down, my dear wife.

Dou E: *(speaks)* Husband Cai, please sit.

Chang Zong: *(recites)* Third Mother, you are bought by my mother to be a daughter-in-law. So you didn't know what kind of marriage you would get. Just now I saw you have tears on your face. I wonder if you find my poor family undesirable?

Dou E: *(recites)* Husband Cai, I have lost everything and have no one to depend on. I am lucky that I am blessed, just like the tears of the Eastern King were able to touch the heart of the monk.

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Third Mother, you are very learned. Third Mother, even though a husband and wife may stay together for one night, their marriage will last for a hundred years. We should not be too overly formal with each

other. Whether you like me or despise me, you should at least indicate that much.

Dou E: (*speaks*) Sigh! Husband Cai, what would you like me to tell you?

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) It is up to you.

Dou E: (*sings*) We have just met, how can I tell you everything in my heart. If I don't tell you something personal, I am afraid you will think I am being cold and impersonal. If you want me to give my love to you, how can I simply randomly give it to you without careful consideration? I have nothing to say when facing the silvery pond. All of a sudden I see a lotus pod, I will pick it as a token of my love for my husband, hoping he doesn't think it is too simple a gift. Husband Cai, do you see the beautiful lotus pod in the silvery pond accompanied by the fragrance of the lotus? Husband Cai, did you see the lotus with two pods?

(Dou E picks the double pod lotus. She puts one on Cai's collar as she repeatedly plays with the other one in her hand).

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) Third Mother, one flower on my collar. What about the other one?

(All of a sudden Dou E places the flower in her hair and sits down).

(Chang Zong is happy and embraces Dou E).

Chang Zong: (*sings*) You picked a double-headed lotus flower. One to put in your hair and the other one to accompany my green gown forever. It is like the because the lotus has two flowers, people can find love together. Third Mother, you are so clever, I want to compliment you. Instead of referring to yourself as a falling flower, why not see yourself as a beauty from Fairyland who could not stand the loneliness in heaven and secretly came down to earth. I studied hard for over ten years and would like to find a poem to commemorate this special occasion. It was not too late when I saw the lotus on my collar. I am a bit slow and cannot find the right words, but here they are: I notice there is a red lotus on my collar and one in her hair. It is as if two hearts are pressed together by the flower petals.

(Dou E is impressed by his talent and feels extremely comforted deep inside).

(Lizhi Fragrance and Woman Zhang enter).

(Mother Cai enters with Old Man Yang who is carrying his almanac and books).

(Dou E notices them and quickly walks under the locust tree).

Mother Cai: *(sings)* Old Man Yang, since you are a doctor and can tell fortunes, can you find me a good date and hour for my son's wedding? Woman Zhang, why don't you act as a matchmaker and decide on the bedding and furniture.

Old man Yang : *(recites)* The fifth day of the twelfth month is a little cold but good for career, how about having the wedding tomorrow? There cannot be a better day than this. It is the eighth day of the twelfth month, with good graces from the sky. You can take your examination, and you will bring glory to your family.

Woman Zhang: *(recites)* Aiya, I will stand in for the bride's family and just as a token you have to give two taels of silver as dowry.

Mother Cai: *(recites)* There is no need. A red pocket for the matchmaker is less than half of that amount. My son Chang, I need to burn some incense soon. Now that you have returned, you need to pay respect to the ancestors. Hurry up.

Chang Zong: *(recites)* I, the young son, pray before the ancestors. I hope that you can bless me so that my name will be listed on the golden score board.

(Lizhi Fragrance exits).

(The servant Simei carries a gift box, Mule Zhang holds an invitation in his hand. He pulls Mother Zhang to his side).

Mule Zhang: *(recites)* Old lady Cai, I am offering you ten strings of pearls and three hundred taels of silver in exchange for Third Mother as my wife. I will also tear up all of your previous loan documents.

Mother Cai: *(recites)* Little Son Mule, I appreciate your kindness. Third Mother is the one I found as my daughter-in-law. It will be a waste of your dowry.

Mule Zhang: *(recites)* Auntie Cai, it costs millions to find a daughter-in-law. It is also not easy for you to find such a big sum as dowry. You can use this money to find your son three or four wives and mistresses and there is still more than half of the money left for you.

(Dou E is showing her displeasure to Mother Cai through her facial expression).

(Mother Cai intentionally mocks Mule Zhang).

Mother Cai: *(recites)*, Little Son Mule, you are one step too late. If it were before Chang Zong came home and when he didn't know that he had a wife, there would be something we could do. As luck would have it, Ah Chang just returned home and you are a bit late, so there is nothing we can do.

(Mule Zhang grasps Mother Zhang and complains angrily).

Mule Zhang: *(recites)* Mother, what did I tell you? Who told you to give birth to a problematic son? Now that I have come too late, I am frustrated beyond words.

Mother Zhang: *(recites)* Hey, old lady Cai, so, if you have money to have a wedding for your son, please repay all your debt.

(Mother Cai hesitates).

(Dou E leans forward and takes a few steps forward).

Dou E: *(recites)* Old Lady Zhang, Dou E has had a really bad life. I am grateful that your rich family would even lay eyes on me. We already have the help of Old Man Yang to pick out the date and hour and Woman Zhang as the matchmaker. Is it because you don't understand that there is nothing we can change at this point?

Mule Zhang: *(recites)* You see, Third Mother's really doesn't care about me. Even if I die, I won't be happy and my eyes won't close. Let me reveal to you that since I saw your beauty by the wall a month ago, I was so distracted that I don't even want to eat.

Mother Cai: *(sings)* Let the mother and daughter-in-law work hard together, if we cannot repay our debt in one year, we can do in two. Luckily, my son will be going to the examination in the fall. Even if doesn't score first, he will score second in the examination.

(speaks) Little Mule Son, please take your dowry back. Tomorrow is the fifth day. I will invite you and your mother to the wedding and my son will leave on the eighth day for the examination. We have plenty of time to repay the kindness of your family.

Mule Zhang: *(speaks)* Mother Cai, please excuse me for not being reasonable. Come this way, Third Mother and let me apologize for my mistake.

Our two families know one another so well, it is not unusual that we make mistakes. Brother Chang and I have been neighbors since we were young and often play together. Tomorrow, I will come with my mother to deliver our congratulations.

Mother Zhang: (*speaks*) My Mule son, you are constantly changing your mind.

(*Mule Zhang moves forward but stands to the side*).

Mother Cai: (*speaks*) Dou E, come over. Do you think we should let my son Chang know of Mule Zhang's bullying? After all, The Zhang family are our benefactors, and we should not offend them.

Dou E: (*recites*) Even if you hadn't told me, I would promise I not to make any more trouble.

Mother Cai: (*speaks*) Woman Zhang, Old Man Yang, please come in to have a cup of tea.

(*Mother Cai exits with Old Man Yang, Dou E, and Woman Zhang*).

Mule Zhang: (*recites*) Do you really think I would give up? Once the fire has started, it will not subside. Hmm, the fifth day is the wedding and he leaves on the eighth day for the examination. He will be gone for three years. Do you think it is cruel? Why doesn't he just leave for good and never return. Huh, it is easy if I don't want him to return. Every time he steps on the road towards the border gate, he has to pass the new bridge. Why don't I bribe the bridge maker Camel Jin to secretly loosen its foundation, so the bridge will collapse? Let me go and find Camel Jin.

(*Camel Jin carries the shovel and enters*).

Mule Zhang: (*speaks*) I was talking about you and you show up. Is this heaven's idea that we are destined to succeed?

(*Camel Jin shakes his head*).

The Mule Chang: (*speaks*) Ten taels of silver.

(*Camel Jin counts the silver and wants to enter the Cai's family home*).

Mule Zhang: (*speaks*) Camel Jin, where are you going?

Camel Jin: (*speaks*) I am going to paint the garden for Mother Cai.

Mule Zhang: (*speaks*) Camel Jin, return the silver to me.

(Camel Jin returns the silver).

Camel Jin: (*speaks*) This is better. I don't have to do anything that would violate the way of the heaven.

(Mule Zhang pulls Camel Jin aside and whispers).

Mule Zhang: (*speaks*) I want this bag of silver to be passed to you from Third Mother.

(Camel Jin understands and exits).

(Mule Zhang stands by the corner of the door).

Mule Zhang: (*recites*) Third Mother, who doesn't make mistakes? But if one makes a mistake and changes, it is the best thing. Why do you have to avoid me? I have a bag of silver for Camel Jin to repair the bridge. I know that he is coming to work in the Cai's family home today. Can I trouble you to give this to him so that it will save me an extra trip?

Dou E: (*recites*) Yes! It is the best thing if one who makes mistakes can change. Master Zhang also comes from a family of scholars. Repairing bridges and roads benefits people and therefore can help you accumulate blessings. The Cai family has already regarded you as Bodhisattva.

(Mule Zhang thanks her immediately).

Dou E: (*speaks*) Master Zhang, how much silver is in the bag?

Mule Zhang: (*speaks*) Ten taels of fine silver.

Dou E: (*speaks*) Master Zhang, please leave it by the pond. Tomorrow I'll ask Camel Jin to deliver the receipt to you.

(Mule Zhang thanks her and exits).

Dou E: (*speaks*) Uncle Jin, here are ten taels of fine silver for you from Master Zhang for the repair of the road and bridge. Please count the silver and deliver the receipt to the Zhang family tomorrow.

Camel Jin: (*speaks*) Third Mother, no more no less.

Dou E: (*sings*) Little pieces of willow flying on a stuffy day, lucky that there is a jade tree protecting the orchid.

(*Curtain*).

Act III

(*Scene of the wedding room*)

(*Revolving stage. The scene depicts the ten different departure episodes between the couple. Therefore it is necessary to use a revolving stage and other theatrical devices to facilitate its progression. Next to the big drapery in the wedding room is a pair of burnt candles. There is a small traveling pack and a food basket on the table. On this side is the bedroom door and the other side is the door leading to the outside and the overhang of the house. The outside scene is the street with small lane that leads to an open field. There is a corridor on one side and the other side is a bridge over the ocean. There is a kite hanging on the big tree on-stage. On its side is a movable pigeon watching over a nest. On the shore are willow trees, and beyond the willow is a small boat with someone in it*).

(*Dou E sits by the candleholders embroidering a purse*).

(*Curtain*).

Dou E: (*speaks*) We have been married for three days and we have to be apart. The wedding candles have already burnt out. I am sending my husband to the border gate. I have used my own blood to glue the seams of the fragrance pouches.

(*Chang Zong enters from the bedroom carrying a backpack with an umbrella, rain shoes, books, and a sword*).

Chang Zong (*speaks*) With tears I bid farewell to my mother in my humble home. It is even more emotional saying farewell to my new wife. Because of my future, I have to leave my wife and take off my wedding gown in order to go for the examination.

(*Dou E is distracted and accidentally cuts herself but doesn't want Chang Zong to see it*).

Chang Zong: (*recites*) Dou E, we have been husband and wife only for three days, can you tell me how do you feel about my departure?

Dou E: (*recites*) I embroider a fragrant pouch for my husband so that it can remind you of me when you see it.

(*sings*) I embroider a sky and a moon on it, then I embroider the Jade Emperor's palace, three cherry blossoms, and three golden sea turtles.

Chang Zong: (*sings*) Dou E is like a sentimental moon and the poor husband is like the silver stars.

Dou E: (*sings*) Tonight the moon and stars cannot be together. The stars depart and the moon leaves in order to gamble on their future.

Chang Zong: (*sings*) I want to fly to the royal forest in order to pick the holy grass.

Dou E: (*sings*) The lonely awning of a house only extends a single shadow.

Chang Zong: (*sings*) Wife, please come and help me to put on my official hat.

Dou E: (*sings*) I only worry that the nest will break before I see the official blue gown.

Chang Zong: (*sings*) Bless you. Please wash your mouth and say it again.

Dou E: (*sings*) I will add three more strands of thread so that I add the scene of the lotus pond fairies scattering flowers.

Chang Zong: (*sings*) Please also add one of the eight immortals, Zhang Guolao.

Dou E: (*sings*) I will put in the two major immortals and the scene of the dragon playing with his whiskers. Then I will embroider a white snake and the scene of "Stealing the holy grass at night." The eighth scene is about the monkey king picking the heavenly peach.

Chang Zong: (*sings*) The holy peach is reserved for your mother-in-law.

Dou E: (*sings*) I am sending the holy grass as a gift to my husband and the nine embroideries of scenes depicting Master Dong marrying the heavenly fairy.

Chang Zong: (*sings*) Hey, please do not embroider his return to the official palace. The tenth embroidery should be the heavenly maidens delivering babies to the household.

Dou E: (*sings*) Sigh, delivering babies. Now that we are departing at the locust tree, I seem to have been woken up from a dream. I will finish with all the fragrant pouches and stop here.

(*speaks*) I have finished embroidering all the fragrant pouches. You told me on our wedding night that you like my hair. Let me cut a few strands and hide them in the pouches. Husband Cai, let me put the pouch on for you.

Chang Zong: (*sings*) The fragrance of your thin fingers is left on the fragrant pouch. Too bad the thread that you used cannot tie us together. I will count the strands of your hair on my way so I know how much love you have for me and to remind me of this departure. I will have to repay everything I learned from my teacher.

(*speaks*) When I was studying in Shen Zhou, I bought this golden locket. Let your husband put it on for you.

Dou E: (*sings*) The one who is heartbroken is my husband. Even without the locket, our love will be firm. The token provides an added guarantee. I will send my husband to the border gate. It is impossible for me to become a green moth to accompany you all the way. I don't mind if you love the flower. I only worry about the ice in winter and the October wind. The sun is setting and I cannot tell you all my feelings before your departure.

(*speaks*) Husband, have you finished with the preparations and packing?

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) Wandering books, wandering sword, the more time you spend with a wanderer, the more tears you will shed. Departure is painful to carry around. A little goat cart, one umbrella, and a pair of shoes for rain become my three treasures. I am only taking them, and I will leave everything behind at home.

Dou E: (*speaks*) Husband Cai, please bring a chair over and open your pack. I have a gift for you. I am giving you a comb, please use it when you get up early to prepare yourself. I am giving a mirror. Please do not show a sad face when you look into the mirror. I am giving a shirt on which there is an embroidery of a pair of birds on a "Stone of Rebirth." I am sending you a pair of socks that will keep us close and warm. I am

sending you threads and needles so that you can repair your clothing. I am giving you a handkerchief and there is a poem on it. I am giving you....even if I don't say it, you can guess it.

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) I guess it (*repeats*). Take care of myself and show respect to my mother and wife.

Dou E: (*recites*) Take care of yourself and respect your parents. I want to give you a basket with four compartments of food. The top drawer contains pears and dates. The second is filled with steamed buns. The third contains dry meat and the bottom part contains wine and glasses. We will wait until we arrive at the Long Pavilion before we pour it.

(Dou E carries the pack while Chang Zong carries the basket of food).

Chang Zhong: (*speaks*) Third Mother, I am going to take my leave.

(Dou E sadly nods her head).

(Chang Zong stares at Dou E's sad face).

(Lizhi Fragrance accompanying Mother Cai enters).

Chang Zong: (*sings*) A lovesick heart! Its love is tightly bound by the silk threads that were spit out by silk worms. I wish I could be by your side until old age. When we can grow old together, we can live comfortably in a poor house. We have been wedded for three nights but now we have to bid farewell. Ai, it is like a sword and knife that pierce through the heart.

(Chang Zong throws the backpack onto the chair in frustration).

Dou E: (*sings*) It has been said that when someone who wears an unadorned green gown gets famous, he will change it to a nicely embroidered one.

(Chang Zong continues angrily).

Chang Zong: (*sing*) But I have to leave my wife behind.

Dou E: (*sings*) It is difficult to exchange love for education.

Chang Zong: (*sings*) I think that since we are married, our love is more important.

Dou E: (*sings*) I think it is better for my husband to score high in the examination.

(Dou E puts the basket on the chair).

(Mule Zhang enters and looks suspicious).

Chang Zong: *(sings)* Luoyang, Luoyang, there is little chance of exchanging letters.
Pursuing success depends on one's effort and I am determined.

Dou E: *(sings)* I will wait for your return even if I get old. Not even the
winter snow can change my being a woman of the Cai family.

(Mule Zhang covers his eyes and beats his own chest).

(Mother Cai clears her throat).

*(Dou E hands the backpack to Chang Zong swiftly. She stands with the basket and
looks downcast).*

Mother Cai: *(sings)* Ai, Dou E is a commoner and her mother is getting old.
After declining for ten years, the family is ruined. The one
who is in charge of the family is an old person. If you do not get
on the path of success, by the time you return the house and the
field will be abandoned. I am urging you to obey your mother just
as the mother of Mengzi taught him.

(Zhang Zong kneels down to listen to his mother).

Mule Zhang: *(sings)* I am glad I am one step before Brother Chang takes his
leave because we have been good neighbors. Even before the
farewell songs were sung, my tears arrived. I bid farewell to you.
Not only will I be willing to walk you to the new
stone bridge, I will also send you to the Western heaven. I am not
afraid of the long distance. We have to say goodbye even though
we don't want to. We have to leave even though we don't want to.
We are sad even though we don't want to be. Let me walk with you a
bit further. Third Mother, let me carry the basket for you.

(Dou E refuses his offer).

Chang Zong: *(recites)* Mother, your son is leaving. Wait until I score in the
examination before I can repay your kindness. Lizhi Fragrance,
even though you cannot speak, you are very smart. Please take
good care of my mother. I will bring a small gift to you when I
come back.

(Lizhi Fragrance uses her hands to show two horns on her head and pretends to stroke the beard on her chin like a scholar would do).

(Chang Zong doesn't understand).

Mother Cai: *(speaks)* My son Chang, Lizhi Fragrance cannot speak and she has to use her hands to sign. She points at your heart and then you. Then she points to the sky and put her hands on her shoulders. This means that she will think of you and please take care of yourself during winter. The two horns and motion of stroking the beard mean that you should buy her a sheep when you return.

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* I am leaving.

Dou E: *(speaks)* Mother-in-law, I would like to walk out with my husband for a while to see him off.

(Dou E walks out the door with Chang Zong. Mother Cai and Lizhi Fragrance are waving their hands followed by Mule Zhang).

(Chang Zong, Dou E, and Mule Zhang walk through the winding small lane and exit)

(Dou E is walking side by side with Chang Zong and Mule Zhang follows them. Dou E wants to speak to Chang Zong in private but cannot because of Mule Zhang. She is frustrated. When they stop walking, Mule Zhang also stops. When they start to walk, Mule Zhang follows. This continues until they arrive at the Long Pavilion. Dou E stops in frustration).

(Mule Zhang also stops and pretends to be looking for something by glancing up and down).

Dou E: *(recites)* Husband Cai, we have arrived the Long Pavilion. We should make a toast here. But we only have two cups and there are three of us. What should we do?

(Dou E places the basket on the stone bench).

(Chang Zong understands the situation and whispers to her).

Chang Zong: *(recites)* Brother Mule Zhang, you have been extremely kind and loyal to me. But how can three people drink two cups of wine? How about if you simply return home now? I appreciate your kind gesture.

Mule Zhang: (*recites*) Never mind, never mind. Please go ahead with your drinks, and I can excuse myself by going into the mountain pass. You really should know, your new wife cannot walk too far with you. I can walk with you for another ten miles.

Dou E: (*speaks*) Let me propose a toast to send you off.

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) My shadow gets lonely as I step outside the Western gate.

Mule Zhang: (*speaks*) Have you finished drinking? The rain is coming. If you can, try to be brief.

(Mule Zhang walks closer to Chang Zong and puts his hand on his shoulder).

Dou E: (*sings*) There is a saying in fortune-telling that if one's jawbone can be seen behind one ears, that is not a kind face. If the two ears are curved and protruding sideways like a sail, that person doesn't have a kind character. I don't want husband Cai to be too close to him. But there is also a code of behavior for women. A virtuous wife will not create trouble for her husband and won't hurt his friends. Let me find an excuse to warn husband Cai. Ai, husband Cai.

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) Brother Mule Zhang, please let me speak to Third Mother a bit longer. What is it that you want, Third Mother?

Dou E: (*speaks*) Husband Cai, there is a small bird's nest on the tree and next to it is a big bird. Its call is quite horrifying.

Chang Zong: (*recites*) Third Mother, this is called "the pigeon forcefully occupies the sparrow's nest." That is why he is flapping its wings and crying frantically.

Dou E: (*sings*) If a bird leaves its nest, he has to protect it so that no one will take it by force. If a husband leaves the house, he should be careful of men who take advantage of the situation.

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) Third Mother, I understand what you are saying. Let me have a few words with Mule Zhang about this.

Dou E: (*speaks*) Good! This will make Mule Zhang realize that my husband Cai is not stupid and knows everything.

Chang Zong: (*sings*) My body bows politely and my hands are offering greetings.

(Dou E is a bit puzzled).

Chang Zong: (*sings*) I am warning those who want to forcibly take over my nest. I now entrust my wife to you. The good man Mule Zhang can take care of my wife.

Mule Zhang: (*speaks*) Not a problem.

(*sings*) Brother Cai, don't be afraid that you cannot take care of your wife. Our brotherly bond is more secure than any other sibling relationship. I, Mule Zhang, am a careful person. It is really a small matter that you entrust your wife to me.

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) My gratitude to you Mule Zhang. Let me thank you again.

(*Deep down Dou E is feeling anxious*).

(*There is lightning in the distance*).

Mule Zhang: (*speaks*) Third Mother, the weather is turning bad and you should go home. I will walk with him for a little longer.

(*Dou E reluctantly exits*).

(*Mule Zhang hurries Chang Zong along and opens an umbrella*).

(*There is thunder and lightning and the lights dim. Strong wind blows the umbrella to the top of the stage*).

(*Camel Jin comes up from the bottom of the bridge, and Mule Zhang winks at him*).

(*Mule Zhang blocks Chang Zong and signals Camel Jin to go underneath*).

Chang Zong: (*recites*) Brother Mule Zhang, can you see that the autumn tide is rising and rough waves are rushing in? Why don't we just wait it out because I would not dare to go over the bridge.

Mule Zhang: (*recites*) Brother Cai, don't be afraid. This is a new bridge and the sailboat is arriving. If you miss this boat, you will waste all the work you have done in the last three years.

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) Fine. You don't need to walk with me. I can cross the bridge in the rain.

(Chang Zong steps on the bridge and the bridge breaks. With a loud cry he falls into the water. His overcoat is left on the side of the bridge).

(At this point, it is best if there is a hole on stage and that the light on stage is dim).

(Mule Zhang pretends that he is trying to help the drowning man).

Mule Zhang: *(speaks)* Hey, there is no one around. Why do I need to pretend? Why don't I go and strategize with Mother Zhang.

(Mule Zhang rushes into the rain and exists).

(A man called Li Feng Che carrying a backpack of books and a sword enters).

Feng Che: *(speaks)* The boat is about to raise its anchors to set sail. It looks like someone fell into the water from the new bridge in the distance.

(Li Feng Che rushes over and lifts Chang Zong from the water).

Feng Che: *(speaks)* This person has many wounds and is unconscious. He looks like a scholar, and he must be on his way to take the examination. I should put him in the boat so that he will not miss the examination. There is a saying that to save one life is better than building a seven-story Buddhist pagoda. I can also accumulate some Buddhist credits. I hope the lucky stars are shining on me.

(sings) The boat is riding the wind and is on its way.

(Curtain).

Act IV

(Inside of a small house that connects to the small lane).

(Description: This house cannot appear too poor or plain. Beside the door there is an awning. On one side is a kitchen that faces a small lane that runs parallel to the house. There is a bed in the room and small table and chair. In the corner is a shrine for the deceased. Time: sunset in winter).

(Mother Cai picks up the steamed buns from the table and then puts them down repeatedly).

Mother Cai: (*sings*) He went on the road to the border because he wanted to be successful. But he was taken away by big waves and died an untimely death. I have been missing my son from morning to night. Now I am also sick.

(*speaks*) I should have given up earlier and shouldn't have done what I have done. I hurt Dou E. They were just married for three days and now she has to be a widow for the rest of her life. Six months ago, the Zhang family came with three hundred taels of silver as dowry. But Dou E was reluctant to be sold and returned the silver. She is indeed a virtuous woman. Ai, I am in my old age and don't know how long I will live. How can this young widow spend the rest of her life? I have it! Why don't I find an excuse to create trouble for her so that she will change her mind and take the offer and leave. This way, she can have a place to stay and accumulate some blessings. And she can meet with my son after she dies.

(*Dou E is wearing a blue mourning flower in her hair. She is carrying a bamboo basket for the burnt out candles and incense. Mule Zhang is following her. When Dou E turns her head, he immediately hides in a small lane. Dou E is feeling a bit relieved*).

Dou E: (*sings*) Mule Zhang doesn't know that my life is very difficult. And he is pressing me for my love. I don't know how I can get away from him. I hope heaven will pity me and spare me from this.

(*Mule Zhang catches up with her from behind*).

Mule Zhang: (*recites*) Dou E, the three hundred taels of pure silver are for Old Lady Cai. I also have a string of pearls and hope you accept.

Dou E: (*recites*) Master Zhang, please remove yourself and let me pass through. Please pity me, Third Mother, the new widow, whose collar is soaked by tears that are still not dry.

(*Mule Zhang stops her at the crossroad*).

Mule Zhang: (*recites*) Dou E, If you are not married for more than one hundred days, you are still not married. Why are you trapped by this false status? You are wasting your youth and beauty.

(*Dou E is angry*).

Dou E: (*recites*) Mule Zhang, move away. I am not a willow at the shore and I am not asking for the sun to provide for me.

(Dou E flicks her sleeves and tries to walk away. Mule Zhang stops her three times).

Mule Zhang: *(sings)* Willow on the shore, it is now thin and yellow. Once beautiful and vibrant, but now it no longer green. These glowing black pearls are better than strands of willow branches that tie you down for life.

(He pushes Dou E forward and closes the door behind. He offers her the pearls).

(Dou E pushes him away. Mule Zhang chases after her. She grabs some sand from the ground and throws it at him. She pushes open the door and closes it behind her).

(Mule Zhang watches his opportunity slip away and sighs).

Mother Cai: *(speaks)* Hmm, you are back Dou E.

Dou E: *(speaks)* Mother-in-law, I am back.

(Dou E offers her a cup of tea).

Mother Cai: *(speaks)* I don't want it. I haven't seen you for the entire day. You are having fun outside but I am sick.

Dou E: *(speaks)* Mother-in-law, I am a new widow. I wouldn't dare to have fun outside. Husband Cai was taken away by big waves, and I found his winter overcoat. I buried it under the new bridge and treat it as a grave even though we do not have his body. I go there day and night to pay my respects to him.

(Dou E is crying).

Mother Cai: *(recites)* Do you want to use your crying to kill me? Hmm, Dou E, I don't know whether it is because I don't have enough blessings in me or because your life is miserable. Once you stepped inside my door, we became poor. Then we had to carry a huge debt. I don't mind being poor or carrying a debt, but now my only son also lived a short life.

Dou E: *(recites)* Mother-in-law, mother-in-law *(crying)* I am aware that I have a miserable life and it negatively affected the Cai family's blessing, happiness and grace. Mother-in-law, all along you haven't complained about me. How come you are so mean and heartless towards me tonight?

(Mule Zhang is walking pass the house and heard Mother Cai's voice. He stops to listen).

Mother Cai: (*recites*) I don't need to voice my complaint to you. You don't know how long I have been carrying this dissatisfaction in my heart. I am old and don't have a son who can serve me. Luckily heaven was nice to me but you are not that reasonable. Ten taels of pure silver can buy a casket. Three hundred taels of silver is more than enough for me to use for the rest of my life. But you are the one who made me lose the money for my casket.

(Mule Zhang gets even closer to the door to listen in).

Dou E: (*sings*) I can see that selling one's daughter-in-law in order to save money for a casket is really unwise on the part of a mother-in-law. If one can only recall how much people respect the Fifth woman of the Zhao's family who sold her hair to buy medicine for her parents and how she uses a straw mat to bury her mother-in-law.

Mother Cai: (*speaks*) If you want to know what one is thinking about, then you need to listen to their words. According to you, you don't want me to have a casket but rather want me to be rolled up in a straw mat. Fine, fine. My son is dead. It doesn't matter if it a casket or a straw mat. It is all a "gift" from you. Whether you become a widow or re-marry, it is your choice. Whether I suffer or live a happy life is not up to me. I will not say anything any more. After all, all this happens because I have a miserable life.

(The more Mule Zhang listens, the more he gets excited).

(Mother Cai is weeping as she turns her back).

Dou E: (*speaks*) Mother-in-law, I have only heard about mother-in-laws forcing daughter-in-laws to become a widows. I have never heard of a mother-in-law encouraging her daughter-in-law to remarry. If my mother-in-law is an unreasonable person, I will understand and not blame her. Since you are a good mother-in-law who is educated and knows the correct social code, there is no way that you will have an unreasonable and bad daughter-in-law. Do you recall that three days after Husband Cai was born, my father-in-law died accidentally? Despite all difficulties, you singled-handedly raised him for thirty years. Why? Ironically, now you don't allow me to mourn for my late husband for thirty years. Why?

Mother Cai: (*speaks*) Dou E, when my son as born and my husband was dead, do you know for whom I was mourning?

Dou E: (*speaks*) Mother-in-law, when your son as born and my husband was dead, you mourned as a widow in order to raise your son as you own.

Mother Cai: (*speaks*) Yes, you are right that when your father-in-law died accidentally I mourned as a widow in order to raise my son. But now my son Chang is dead, who are you mourning for?

Dou E: (*speaks*) Your daughter-in-law does this for...*(she lost her voice)*....I became a widow for the sake of my mother-in-law.

Mother Cai: (*speaks*) Yes, since you don't have a son, it is reasonable that you become a widow for the sake of your mother-in-law. What if your mother-in-law dies?

Dou E: (*speaks*), Ah, if my mother-in-law dies?

Mother Cai: (*speaks*) Who are you mourning for?

(Dou E is frightened and steps back).

Mother Cai: (*speaks*) Who are you mourning for?

Dou E: (*speaks*)there is... no one..... for me... to mourn for.

(Mule Zhang reacts strongly to the phrase "no one to mourn for." But it also inspires him to come up with a strategy. He is thinking while walking back and forth in the small lane).

Mother Cai: (*speaks*) So you know that there is no one for you to mourn for.

Dou E: (*speaks*) But because of heaven's blessing, my mother-in-law is still living healthily.

Mother Cai: (*recites*) Ai, how come I am still not dead? What is the point of living? If I beg for a bowl of rice, it is enough for me. But if we have two, then both people have to suffer and it is difficult to live. People who are older than me are all dead. People of my generation are all dead. Now even the younger one is dead. If you are a filial daughter-in-law. Why don't use find a rope for me so that I can hang myself?

(Mother Cai is pounding her own chest and stomping her feet).

Dou E: (*sings*) When someone is hurting, she gets irrational and crazy. What if something bad happened to her? How can I be responsible? Your

daughter-in-law would not dare to blame you. I know you miss your son so much that you change your normal kind demeanor. Mother-in-law, let me pour you a cup of tea to calm yourself down.

(Dou E walks to the table to pour tea and she sees the steam buns. She picks them up).

Mother Cai: *(speaks)* What do you have to say?

Dou E: *(recites)* Mother-in-law, I put out a few steamed buns when I left home this morning. I gave one to Lizhi Fragrance and there were four left. How come now there are still four buns left? Is it because my cooking is not pleasing to your taste?

Mother Cai: *(speaks)* If I ate them, there would be nothing left for you. I know there is no more flour in the container. I know this is all we have. But you didn't eat any and saved them for me. If I ate them, there will be nothing left for you. How could I let you be hungry when you have to go to make a living?

Dou E: *(recites)* I know you love me. Even it is only food, you are saving it for me rather than eating yourself. How come you are willing to let me remarry? *(all of a sudden she understands)* Ah, mother-in-law, are you pretending to be mean in order to force me to remarry?

(Lizhi Fragrance is weak because she didn't have enough to eat. She walks without energy into the kitchen to take a nap).

Mother Cai: *(recites)* My good daughter-in-law, how can four steamed buns last us for the rest of our lives? The more I press you to remarry, the more you reveal your true feelings.

(Dou E is so moved that she goes down on her knees and embraces Mother Cai)

Dou E: *(sings)* My mother-in-law...I consider you my mother. At the age of three, I lost my mother, so I never had a chance to have a relationship with my mother. Now that your son is dead, please consider me your daughter. Even in your old age, you will have a chance to taste the experience of having a daughter again. Like mother and daughter, we will support each other and live on.

(speaks) Mother-in-law, why don't you simply eat the buns.

(Mule Zhang comes through the small lane and enters while whispering to himself).

Mule Zhang: (*speaks*) If the mother-in-law is dead, there is no one to mourn for.

Mother Cai: (*speaks*) I really want to have some mutton soup. Normally, I would ask Lizhi Fragrance to get some for me. But today, I am merely talking about it and don't mean it. Perhaps I am getting old and not behaving properly.

Dou E: (*speaks*) Ah... if mother-in-law wants some mutton soup, I still have a few coins and I will ask Lizhi Fragrance to get some from the village gate.

(Mule Zhang reacts excitedly to the idea of mutton soup. He keeps repeating it to himself. When Dou E steps out, he quickly sneaks into the small lane and peeps in).

Mother Cai: (*speaks*) Dou E, the weaving is not done, where do you find the money?

Dou E: (*speaks*) Mother-in-law, I worked in the wheat harvest and saved some money. That should be enough for you to use.

(She steps out to call Lizhi Fragrance. She also gives a silver hairpin for Lizhi Fragrance to pawn. Then she holds up a bowl tell her to find the soup vendor. She gestures toward the vendor and makes a motion for the mutton beard and points at her stomach).

(Lizhi Fragrance receives the hairpin, the bowl, and then exits).

(Dou E enters).

Mother Cai: (*speaks*) Dou E, your body is weak, I am unwilling to see you work for other people's harvest. How about if I work harder on weaving?

Dou E: (*speaks*) Mother-in-law, you are elderly, let me do the weaving.

(They are fighting to do the weaving. Their behavior clearly reveals the love between the daughter and mother-in-law).

Mule Zhang: (*sings*) I can succeed without the help of the matchmaker. I can replace the rope with a bowl of mutton soup.

(Mule Zhang is pulling Old Man Yang along and tries to convince him to bring his medicine box. Along the way, he whispers into Old Man Yang's ears, and he appears shocked. Mule Zhang offers a piece of gold and a piece of white jade to bribe Old Man Yang into going along with his plan).

(Old Man Yang nods his head).

(Mule Zhang hurries Old Man Yang into the small lane to retrieve the medicine box).

(Lizhi Fragrance carries the mutton soup and eats some of it on her way home).

(Mule Zhang gestures to show a piece of pure silver to Lizhi Fragrance indicating that she can fill her stomach if she complies with his plan).

(Lizhi Fragrance turns her head and looks into the small lane).

(Old Man Yang enters from the small lane and waves to Mule Zhang).

(Mule Zhang again rushes Old man Yang into the small lane and gestures to Lizhi Fragrance to close her eyes).

(Lizhi Fragrance receives the piece of silver and hands the soup to Mule Zhang).

(Mule Zhang quickly turns his back and pours the medicine into the soup before returns the soup to Lizhi Fragrance).

(Lizhi Fragrance hides the steamed bun and takes the soup inside).

(Mule Zhang exits).

Mother Cai: *(recites)* The soup is quite gamey. This is quite strange. When a person is losing weight, she is not able to stand the smell of meat. Dou E, why don't you have it. I don't want you to waste the kindness you have for me.

(Dou E holds up the bowl and tries to drink the soup).

Dou E: *(recites)* It is not only your stomach that is shrunken, mine is equally shrunken. Why don't we save the soup for tomorrow. We can add some peppers and reheat it again. This way the peppers can neutralize the gaminess.

(Mother Zhang accompanied by Second Plum enters).

(When Mother Cai sees Mother Zhang, she immediately stands up and invites her to sit down).

Mother Zhang: *(recites)* Mother-in-law of the Cai family. I think you are wrong. In my life, I have been frugal and wouldn't dare to spend money on food and clothing. We loaned you some money. If you are unable

to repay your debt, you should have sold your villa to repay the loan.

Dou E: *(recites)* Madame Zhang, please be kind. I beg you to be lenient and give us an extension. Otherwise, both of us will have no place to stay.

Mother Zhang: *(speaks)* You bring this upon yourself. And don't reject what has been offered. Now my son is love-sick and all because of you.

(recites) Oh, how come there is a bowl of hot mutton soup and nobody is eating it? What a waste! Heaven will not protect your continual fortune.

Mother Cai: *(speaks)* You can have it. To run into you is far easier than finding a time to invite you. Let this be my friendly gift to you.

Mother Zhanbg: *(speaks)* Well this may not be appropriate but I really appreciate it. Even if I cannot get what I came here for, I at least, can gain some small advantage. This soup is only worth a few coins. It is not going to kill me if I eat it.

(Mother Zhang eats ravenously, Dou E offers tea, Mother Cai flatters Mother Zhang).

(Mule Zhang has been thinking repeatedly when Mother Cai dies, Dou E has no one to mourn for and she will have to depend on Mother Zhang for food and a place to stay. He peeps through the door and is shocked by what he sees).

Mother Zhang: *(speaks)* My Mule Son.

(In a split second, she spits out black vomit and blood shoots out of all seven holes of her face. She is dead in no time).

(Mule Zhang cries for help frantically).

(Neighbors, local patrols, all people on the street enter upon hearing his call).

(Mule Zhang is getting more frantic once he sees the neighbors and local patrols. He makes the first move by grabbing Dou E and covering her mouth).

Mule Zhang: *(speaks)* Dou E, I have no hatred towards you, why do you use a bowl of mutton to poison my dear mother?

(The local patrol sees that this is a murder case, he immediately calls out)

The patrol: (*speaks*) Call the officers, call the officers!

(He then rushes out quickly).

Dou E: (*recites*) Master Zhang, there is no poison in the mutton soup, why did Mother Zhang die all of a sudden? It is really difficult to understand.

Mule Zhang: (*recites*) I don't believe that there is no poison in the mutton soup. Nobody move. We need to preserve the evidence for investigation. I only have one mother in this life. If I do not get angry about this, then all my bearings on human relationship and morals are all gone.

(Mother Cai pulls Dou E aside).

Mother Cai: (*recites*) Mule Zhang, I will be responsible for whatever happens. Please do not frighten my daughter-in-law.

(Dou E in turn pulls Mother Cai aside).

Dou E: (*recites*) Mule Zhang, if you are going to frame someone for this, you can frame me. My mother-in-law is in her old age of seventy, her life is like a candle in the wind.

(Mule Zhang pushes Dou E and grabs Mother Cai).

Mule Zhang: (*recites*) Old lady, how can you deny that you killed my mother because of your debt. You know that there is a god in heaven every time you raise your head.

(Dou E rushes over and releases Mother Cai from his grip. She then grabs Mule Zhang).

Dou E: (*speaks*) Mule Zhang, if there is hatred, you find the source of the hatred. If there is injustice, you locate the root of the injustice. But you cannot blackmail my mother-in-law.

(The Shan Yang county officers are here).

(The two lower ranking guards are leading the two county officers, the chief officer, and the head of the County Qian Mu enter).

(Mule Zhang rushes forward, hides the string of pearls in his palm, kneels and greets the officers).

Mule Zhang: *(speaks)* I greet and kneel before the equitable head of the County head.

(He gestures at the hidden string of pearls in his palm to the head of the County Qian Mu).

(Qian Mu understands Mule Zhang's gesture).

Qian Mu: *(speaks)* Enough.

(He helps Mule Zhang to his feet and in the process receives the string of pearls).

(Lizhi Fragrance sees this and understands what is going on. She quickly exits).

Mule Zhang: *(recites)* Your honor, the one who died with blood all over her body is my mother. I am a filial and pious son. How can I bear to see her dead of an untimely death. This is Old Lady Cai, and she is the one who bought the soup. This is their house. None of this is related to this young woman Cai. All the neighbors know that she is capable and virtuous. Everyone respects and admires her. If one owes others money, then he has to repay the money. If one takes someone's life, then he has to give up his life in return. If I do not put this old lady in the bottom of the casket with my own hands, how can this filial and pious son face his deceased mother?

(Mule Zhang is pounding his own chest and crying frantically).

(Dou E embraces her mother-in-law).

Dou E: *(sings)* My tears are like rain pouring down.

(Dou E holds Mother Cai even tighter).

(Mule Zhang continues to pound his chest and cry frantically. His voice mixes with Dou E's cry, creating a confusing situation).

Qian Mu: *(speaks)* Shut up, Mule Zhang. You keep yelling and crying, how can I think properly?

(Mule Zhang immediately changes his expression and smiles at Qian Mu).

Qian Mu: *(speaks)* Hmm, Old Lady Cai has a lot of white hair and she doesn't look like a...

(Mule Zhang winks at Qian Mu indicating that he is going to increase his bribery).

Qian Mu: *(speaks)* ...a kind soul. And she is the one who bought the soup and the place of murder is her house, even without investigation I know that she is the killer. The son avenges his mother's death. This shows that Mule Zhang is a filial son. I will let you shackle her before taking her back to the county office to wait for her verdict.

(Mule Zhang rushes forward and grabs the shackle from the officers and tries to lock up Mother Cai. Dou E blocks him at least three times. She closes the door and kneels down).

Dou E: *(sings)* You should not randomly condemn her to die. You cannot convict her for no reason. If you really want, you should take my life instead.

(Dou E blocks Mule Zhang and kneels in front of him).

(Mule Zhang shakes the chain and backs off).

(Mother Cai rushes forward and pulls Dou E over, closes the door, and throws herself to the floor).

Mother Cai: *(sings)* If you randomly convict me to die, heaven and earth will never be at peace.

Mule Zhang: *(sings)* I will use the blood from your neck as a ritual offering. This filial son misses his mother so terribly much that he becomes irrational.

(Dou E helps Mother Cai to her feet and avoids the shackle being put on Mother Cai. In three successive moves, she attempts to take the chain with her own body. She goes down on her knees and begs).

Dou E: *(speaks)* Ah, Mule Zhang...

(sings) The white hair already signals the end is approaching. The dimming light diminishes the view of the mountain-top. How can anyone take this hostility? There is justice up above and there is god in heaven. The observers on the sideline are clear. Why makes waves and shed unnecessary blood in this deserted garden? The flower is fading away, I

am watching myself withering away. Why do you want to frame this lonely widow who was born unlucky when her life is already bitter?

Mule Zhang: *(speaks)* Ai, if the old lady is guilty, she should confess the crime. Why does Dou E want to protect her? Your honor, I don't know what to do next.

(Mule Zhang throws the chain and lock back to the officers in frustration).

Qian Mu: *(speaks)* come county officers, take Mother Cai back to the county court.

(The officers yell back in unison. The head officer rushes forward with his chain and Mother Cai rushes forward to be locked up).

(Dou E blocks the officer and begs).

Dou E: *(speaks)* Your honor, the equitable one.

(recites) There is a saying about an eye for an eye, a body for a body and a life for a life. Let me admit my guilt. I am the only one responsible for poisoning Mother Zhang. Mother Zhang was forcing us to repay our debt and my mother-in-law was so embarrassed that she cannot face Mother Zhang. It is my evil mind that made me want to deny the loan. Ultimately, I wanted to eliminate the problem altogether. I am the one who bought the soup, and I am also the one who encouraged Mother Zhang to take the soup. Don't be deceived by my kind face, I have the heart of a snake and the character of a scorpion. Why would you rather convict an innocent one and let the guilty one go? If you are an official who takes care of us as if you were our parents, how can you be so confused?

(Qian Mu is shocked. Mule Zhang rushes forward).

Mule Zhang: *(speaks)* Equitable honor, the killer is not her. She is weak and timid, so light even a strong gust of wind can blow her away. How could she be so heartless as to commit a murder? Clearly that old woman is the one.

Qian Mu: *(speaks)* Yet all justice depends on evidence and all crime depends on confession. Young woman Cai already confesses her guilt, why do you choose to protect her? Hmm, are there other reasons that I am not aware of?

(Mule Zhang is a bit taken back).

Mule Zhang: *(speaks)* Alright, I will let your highness make the decision.

Qian Mu: *(speaks)* Come, lock young woman Cai up and take her to the court.

The court officials: *(speaks)* Lock!

(They proceed with the lock and push Dou E's head forward).

(Mother Cai falls on the ground and holds Dou E tightly and is being dragged along. Mule Zhang leads the way. Mother Cai calls out while she is being dragged).

Mother Cai: *(speaks)* Dou E, Third Mother.

(sings) The king of hell takes the life of my filial daughter-in-law. Is it because you want this old lady to have to sweep your grave during Qing Ming? Little Dou E! You said that we are like mother and daughter and we can support each other.

Dou E: *(speaks)* Mother-in-law, mother-in-law, if I die, please bury me by the new bridge so that I can accompany my deceased husband. During Qing Ming in March, you can watch the breeze and remember us. Your daughter-in-law has a hard life and I cannot fulfill my filial duty to serve you. Fortunately, we have good neighbors and they are all very kind. As they watch me end up this way, they will pity the poor, respect the elderly, and take care of your daily needs. I will be relieved even if I am already living at the ninth level of the underworld.

Qian Mu: *(speaks)* Ya, bring the body and woman criminal to the county court and waste no time.

(The county officers first carry the body and then pull Dou E. Mule Zhang is crying about how his mother met with a sudden death. Dou E is last in the procession).

(Mother Cai is calling out Dou E's name all the way. She even lurches forward and kneels on the ground and cries).

(Dou E tries to turn her body to help Mother Cai but the officers stop her).

(Thunder and rain begin to start).

Mother Cai: *(sings)* I am frantically calling Dou E's name in the rain.

(Curtain).

Act V

(Scene of a Five Phoenix Building with a garden).

(Description: the front view shows a Five Phoenix Building. There is a king's seat on top. In the bottom there are tables in the shape of the number eight, colorful lanterns are hung high up. In one corner there is a wall made of white jade. Inside there are cinnamon and cherry trees. There is a colorful bird in the other corner. The bird's leg is tied to the short fence. The whole scene is elegant and beautiful).

(Curtain).

Minister A: *(recites)* There is a banquet in the jade garden.

Minister B: *(recites)* They will get drunk by the Phoenix pond.

King Shen Zong: *(sings)* We are having a banquet next to the Pond of the Imperial Water. It has been a tradition that I prefer the bright and virtuous one. Finding the best examination paper is like a female phoenix looking for a male phoenix. On the side of the Five Phoenix Building one finds the destined love. I have to pick one out one from the rest.

(Please be seated).

Minister A: *(speaks)* Reporting to my emperor, we have three who received the golden score and we are waiting for your order.

King Shen Zong: *(speaks)* Bring them here.

(Chang Zong, Child Fairy, Feng Che all enters together).

Chang Zong: *(sings)* My literary luck is with me and fortunately I come first in the examination. My career is taking off with this new official title.

(The three men greet the emperor humbly).

King Shen Zong: *(speaks)* You may sit.

(The three thank the emperor and divide themselves up to sit on both sides).

King Shen Zong: *(recites)* Feng Ping mentioned last night that there are five hundred scholars of the second rank. She was wondering whether there is one called Cai Xuanji who came from Shan Yang county of Sheng Zhou Province.

(Chang Zong immediately thanks the emperor).

Chang Zong: (recites) Your highness, Xuanji is my other name. Because of heaven's good graces I, Cai Chang Zong, have been awarded the title of Zhuangyuan [champion] in the examination.

(King Shen Zong is delighted).

King Shen Zong: *(speaks)* Zhuangyuan please rise.

(recites) There is an old friend of yours in the imperial garden, and he is waiting to meet you.

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Your highness, there are so many people with the same name, I don't think this very special offer belongs to me. Furthermore, I come from humble stock and will have never met anyone from the palace or royal family.

King Shen Zong: *(speaks)* My dear Zhuangyuan, why don't you return to your seat and wait. Palace servant, bring the royal seventh sister.

(Chang Zong is startled).

(Four palace maidens accompanied Feng Ping enters).

Palace maidens: *(sings)* Behind the embroidery screen is a red mountain phoenix. She has already peeped to see the one who is the champion. Her tears of love have become the size of pearls. If woven they can become a string of love pearls.

King Shen Zong: *(speaks)* Palace sisters please rise. Among the hundred scholars of the second rank, you really can find a man of your dreams. Furthermore, this person is the one who has been awarded the title of Zhuangyuan [champion] in the examination. You really are perceptive.

(Feng Ping moves forward)

Feng Ping: *(speaks)* Brother Zhuangyuan, how have you been?

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) I humbly greet the royal seventh sister.

Feng Ping: (*speaks*) Brother Zhuangyuan please rise. If today's meeting were for someone else, he would be overwhelmed by this gracious offer. Why are you so overly polite given the fact that this is not our first meeting?

(*Chang Zong has forgotten things that happened in the past*).

Chang Zong: (*recites*) This poor scholar hasn't seen your noble face in the past. From now on, I will tremble with fear and get even more dizzy.

(*Chang Zong kneels down*).

(*speaks*) If I have offended the royal sister, I will not be able to bear the responsibility.

(*Feng Ping goes over and helps him on his feet with her fan*).

Feng Ping (*recites*) Hmm, how come you are so forgetful, Brother Zhuangyuan? Please calm yourself down and look at me carefully. See whether you can recognize the purple swallow from the Meditation pavilion not long ago?

(*Chang Zong suddenly realizes what he heard*).

Chang Zong: (*recites*) Ah, the woman in red in the purple bamboo forest is the fairy descended from the Queen mother's heavenly dwelling. My mortal eyes are not able to know that you are the royal sister. For this, I deserve to die, to die.

Feng Ping: (*speaks*) You deserve to die, to die, please don't be so repetitive.

(*sings*) The young woman Song Yunien loves the beautiful face of young man Poon. On her patterned fan she ties a small red phoenix. But there is no place she can develop her affection. Her waistline is gradually getting smaller because she is overwhelmed and cannot focus. Let me ask my Imperial brother, how come they say that he spent ten years studying and ground his ink stone until it has a hole on it?

King Shen Zong: (*recites*) Brother Zhuangyuan, my royal sister asked why did you spend ten years studying and grind your ink stone until it has a hole? Why don't I simply offer her hands to you in order to honor her wishes?

(Chang Zong is shocked).

Chang Zong: *(recites)* I, I, I...it is not because I am unwilling, what to do? I cannot agree and I am unable to agree to this. My mind is so confused and I don't know what to say.

King Shen Zong: *(speaks)* You are a lowly Zhuangyuan who is given the hands of the seventh sister, how can you not be grateful?

(Chang Zong wants to kneel but doesn't feel like kneeling. He is feeling uncomfortable).

Child Fairy: *(sings)* You set up a peacock screen and it is not a banquet at the jade garden. Tonight is the night for picking a husband. They want to know the age. Once the king's grace has been known, there is nothing to strategize. Even if you want it, it may not be given to you. It is not a matter of destiny or love. Many people admire the royal sister.

(speaks) Orchid Brother, if you even have half of the word "no" in your thoughts, all the hard work you have done and your future will be all destroyed.

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* If I don't thank the king for his kind grace, I am afraid that the royal sister will be angry. I recall the farewell at the Long Pavilion and what Third Mother told me. I didn't realize that now I have power and the good graces of the king. Let me find some sweet words to convince her. I hope that she will pity me and let me out of this based on the fact that she has feelings for me.

(sings) I can never guess what this riddle of love is all about and I can never finish telling you about my dream. I can only tidy my belt. Like a lonely goose, I return to Shan Yang. I relied on my white hair as my matchmaker to tie the knot between me and my beautiful wife. But she is heartbroken and is wandering. If I don't pity her, who will? I was only married for three days and had to say farewell. I turned my face in tears to look at her. Even if she is an old lady, she will wait for my return. It is hard for me to send love letters, it is also difficult to endure the agony of being apart. For three years there has been no news or letters. I recall she embroidered ten difficult fragrant pouches for me. She hung them on my collar and cut her hair for me as souvenir. Her beautiful hair is still here. But I cannot go against the king's good graces, I just hope the royal sister can be kind and sympathetic.

(Feng Ping sees the fragrant pouches and hair. She is moved).

Feng Ping: (*sings*) He sheds hero's tears. My heart aches as I swallow the tears. Fly, fly, fly away back to Shan Yang. Don't bother with a new sorrow but pity the one you had before.

(*recites*) My King brother, I don't know whether I should be happy or sad. I am cancelling my marriage to the Zhuangyuan.

(*King Shen Zong stares at Chang Zong angrily*).

(*Chang Zong is shocked*).

Child Fairy: (*recites*) Your highness, there is a saying that matters of love are like putting three stones together. Even if you force them, they cannot put together perfectly.

King Shen Zong: (*recites*) Ai, brother Zhuangyuan, because you have received love from my sister, I will award you as the commissioner of seven provinces, this high rank position is noble and prominent.

Chang Zong: (*recites*) Your highness, the person who comes second in the examination with the title Bangyan is my benefactor. I would rather give this high-ranking position to him. I request that you give me the job of commissioner for Shaanxi province so that I can also provide help to my family.

King Shen Zong: (*speaks*) Let me award you the job of commissioner and Imperial Censor for Shaanxi province. I will give the job of commissioner of seven provinces to the one who earned the Bangyan title in the examination. The job starts immediately.

Feng Ping: (*sings*) Orchid brother, even if you are honoring your promise from the past, you should not have to lower the rank of your job. One never realizes that because of your kindness, you will receive even more honor.

Chang Zong: (*sings*) I shouldn't look forward to return to my home with full glory. I should remember that my old mother is still there. Let me sincerely thank the royal sister once more. I will humbly return your kindness with my humble gift that is made of straw.

(*Chang Zong and Feng Che exist together*).

(*Feng Ping reluctantly reminds Chang Zong to take care of himself*).

(Chang Zong sighs and sheds tears as he exits. Child Fairy quietly walks up to royal seven sister).

Child Fairy: *(recites)* Royal Seventh Sister, if you are feeling lonely, how about if I, the useless one, accompany you to walk around in the garden.

(The royal seventh sister glances at Child Fairy).

Feng Ping: *(recites)* Fine, the one who came third with the Tanhua title is also a handsome young man.

(Feng Ping gradually begins to smile).

King Shen Zong: *(sings)* I see that my sister is smiling, there is a cure for her broken heart.

(Everyone exits).

(Curtain).

Act VI

(Scenes of the street, execution ground, the court room in succession).

(Revolving stage: the busy street in Shan Yang, building after building, use traditional Chinese painting to depict the complex street and building arrangement. This side there is a small lane that leads to the execution ground. The bottom of the execution ground is a wheat field. Because of the draught, the ground is cracked. The scene after June should use dim lighting to show that it is deep winter. There is a stone platform on this side with a stone table and chairs in it. This is for the official to sit on during the times of the execution. There is a straw scaffolding nearby that functions as the waiting space for the criminal. On the side of the stage, the scene can be changed to Shan Yang county court room. The focus of the execution ground is the seriousness of the stone platform and the bloodstain on the straw scaffolding. The point of using this revolving stage is to show the cruelty of the ancient method of penal punishment.

(Curtain opens after the sound of three low gong strokes).

(Two court officers carry ink brush, ink stone and a piece of paper enter. Qian Mu sits down).

Qian Mu: *(recites)* The wicked will die at the execution ground. Those who bribe the officials will not. The sound of the canon will shake the

mountain. The one who die in vain can only lament that the city is too busy.

(speaks) Today we have the case of mutton soup poisoning of Mother Zhang. According to the royal decree and law, the woman criminal should be executed. Executioner?

Executioner: *(speaks)* Here!

Qian Mu: *(speaks)* Take the woman criminal for a street procession before tying her down at the execution ground and waiting for orders.

(Qian Mu exits with the court officers from the small lane).

(Two court officers pulling a specially made criminal cart that is carrying Dou E inside. Four executioners and the four officers carry poles follow in order to stop people from rushing towards the criminal carte).

(Change to the execution ground).

Qian Mu: *(speaks)* Once the canon is sounded, you can kill the woman criminal.

(Four executioners move their blade at the same time. The officers also hoist their poles and yell to demonstrate their bravery. Dou E squats on the ground).

Dou E: *(sings)* This humble woman rather takes the falling blade and cries out sadly rather than staying in prison. I met the god of prison and now I am on my way to the execution ground. I can only lament that this case is wrong and it is my karma. Being shackled and carrying hatred is like a poor insect trapped and dying on a spider's web. I won't treasure any more hairpins and will bid farewell to the world of mortals. I have experienced too much and my frightened soul has already left the narrow lane. I can't bear to be the frightened weaving maid who cannot find her cowherd in the underworld. As I contemplate I see a blood stain that was shed for a just cause as if I am on the way to the underworld.

(Three young children point at Dou E, mocking her).

Dou E: *(sings)* Children are playing and a little girl pokes fun at me. They laugh at my karma and how my life ends. While I am crying and laughing, I hate the fluctuation of human relationships. Who is crying by the hillside? I turn my head and look.

(Woman Zhang and Old Man Yang slowly come up to Dou E while weeping and waving their hands).

Woman Zhang and Old man Yang: *(speaks)* Third Mother.

Dou E: *(sings)* You have only white hair left to mourn for Third Mother.

(On this side, some passersby stop and look).

Dou E: *(sings)* The third day of the sixth month is the holy day for incense. Every family is going to the wheat field. There has been no rain for three years and the soil has dried up. Everyone is complaining about it. But the sound of the complaining hasn't stopped and the sound of sadness has already descended upon us. I am not dead but heartbroken. On this side is Woman Zhang who has white hair and lives in the red lane. She is the matchmaker who picked my husband. Ah, Woman Zhang.....We were only married for three days and now we have regret forever.

(Dou E nods her head to Woman Zhang).

Dou E: *(sings)* On that side, there is an old man who knows how to cure sickness and tell fortunes. He is the one who picked the right hours to hang the wedding lantern for me. Ah...Grandfather Yang...That beautiful time is all but a dream. The third day of the sixth month is the holy day for incense. Every family is going to the wheat field. Even when they are poor, they don't put the blame on the drought. When they don't food, they still have their man on whom they can rely. This virtuous one innocently is being hurt by a blade but I have no one on my side.

The golden locket settles my life. My good destiny is given by heaven. I remember when we first met, we faced each other by the pond but had nothing to say. We picked a double-headed lotus blossom. I put one on his collar and the other in my hair. One smile ties the two hearts together. We thought we had given each other our hearts. But this is already a bad omen.

Waking up from a dream I sing the farewell song. Who would guess that the new bride would kill my husband. Would it be that we were married in a wrong celestial hour? In the remote red building I drink a glass of mourning wine. I stay by myself at the green cemetery that sits low facing the setting sun. My good graces have been terminated and I am even being accused falsely. This ridiculous case is worsened by the corrupt officials who muddle up the bright moon. The moon can be

bright but the cloud tries to be calm, this can't happen unless there is snow falling in June.

Flying snow, flying snow...can the god of thunder let it fall? The purple command and yellow flag are all flying together. The white snow is falling in the river. Please give me back my innocence! How come there is snow fall in June?

(The lights begin to dim. The flowing clouds begin to move and thunder in a distance).

(Mother Cai carries a straw mat in one hand and a basket of food in the other hand. She is screaming frantically).

(Dou E tries to enter).

(The officer puts up the poles in the form of a cross to stop Mother Cai from rushing forward. She does it three times. Every time she pushes forward, she calls out Dou E's name. Dou E answers her mother-in-law every time. The last is the most tragic).

(Qian Mu sees that and yells out).

Qian Mu: *(speaks)* Tell them that if there are relatives and friends, they can come forward to pay a visit. Otherwise, there will be no chance to see them once the canon is fired.

(Upon hearing the order, the court officers lower their poles)

(Mother Cai, accompanied by Lizhi Fragrance, goes forward step by step).

Mother Cai: *(sings)* This white hair is crying for the young one. I have a straw mat that can be used for your burial. I have a bowl of sesame soup for you. How can you go to the underworld with an empty stomach?

Dou E: *(speaks)* Lizhi Fragrance, come closer. Third Mother has a hard life. From now on, I will not be able to see you every day and night. You are young, but you are disabled. I know that there is nothing you can do about it, please serve my mother-in-law well. Although you are a lowly servant, you have been loved by the Cai family.

(Lizhi Fragrance nods her head and covers her face and cries).

Dou E: *(speaks)* Mother-in-law *(she kneels down)*, mother-in-law *(she kowtows with her forehead on the ground)*. The tree wants to be calm but the wind keeps blowing. One should serve one's parents, but the son is not

here. The daughter-in-law also cannot fulfill her duty. I am leaving and following my husband.

(Dou E holds her knees and cries).

(The canon is heard three times).

Qian Mu: *(speaks)* Come and take this old lady out. Executioners, get your blade ready.

(Mother Cai is pushed out).

(With the blade in hand, the executioners are positioning themselves before their action).

(There is thunder and lightning. Snow falls on top of the straw scaffolding. The lights are turned off and the scene is changed into a snow-covered scene)

(The executioners' hands are frozen and they cannot move).

(Dou E continues to lie on the floor).

(Chang Zong comes on his horse carrying an umbrella and a sword).

Chang Zong: *(sings)* The fragrance of the lotus flower permeates the imperial garden. The northern geese coming back from the south are darting through the narrow lane. How come there is snow in June? The sound of the horse shoes hitting the snow makes a loud noise.

(The horse whinnies and also throws Chang Zong off the back. He pulls the reins and stops the horse).

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Huh ah, I come by the execution ground and there is snow falling in June, that must be a miscarriage of justice. Someone bring the person in charge of Shan Yang County in front of my horse. I have questions.

The guard: *(shouts loudly)* Bring the person in charge of Shan Yang County in front of the horse to be questioned.

Qian Mu: *(speaks)* Who is shouting?

The military guard: *(speaks)* The new Zhuangyuan, also the commissioner of the province.

(Qian Mu removes his official hat and nervously goes forward and greets).

Qian Mu: *(speaks)* Shan Yang County greets the commissioner.

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* For thousands of years, there is no snow in June in the county. There must be a miscarriage of justice. Who is the person being executed at the execution ground?

Qian Mu: *(speaks)* There is a case that involves mutton soup poison that killed Mother Zhang. According to royal decree, the woman criminal deserves the punishment to be executed. I am simply carrying out the order.

(Chang Zong gets off the horse).

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Why don't you just retreat for a while and let me conduct some questioning myself.

(Qian Mu exits).

(The little guard flatters the commissioner by getting the stone bench for him. A big umbrella is shielding him from the snow that is above the scaffolding).

(The little guard drags Dou E over and she is on her knees).

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Woman criminal, which family did you come from? How come you don't understand the moral injunctions and four virtues for women and to serve the elders? Why are you so violent that you use mutton soup to poison Mother Zhang?

Dou E: *(recites)* Ai, this woman criminal only knows just a little bit about the injunctions for women. I can only blame the three things that I don't have in life. Before I was unmarried, I didn't have a father. After I was married, my husband was gone and I didn't have a husband to follow. I don't even have luck after marriage to have a son to serve me. If this person with a hard life doesn't know how to respect the elders, it is because her virtues were long gone like fading flowers. How can I deserve to have a good ending in life?

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Ya, her speaking shows that she is gentle and educated. She doesn't look like a violent woman who can kill. Woman criminal, don't you want to declare your innocence? But you don't seem to be resentful. You must have made a confession, otherwise, why would the imperial court convict you?

Dou E: (*recites*) Your honor, it is said that we women will not be seen even in times of major disasters. We will not reveal our face in times of major obstacles. I am already frightened to show my body and face in the court room. How can I withstand the merciless physical punishment? Furthermore, it is a recent practice that the government determines matters of right or wrong based on the amount of money and gold.

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) Woman criminal, if you confessed after being tortured physically, I should really carefully review this case. Where is your family?

Dou E: (*sings*) The willow blows in the wind against the setting sun, I live on the Red Plum lane near in Autumn River. I don't have a family that can protect me. With some blessings, I was married out based on an arranged marriage. The groom is a good person. But the time was too short for me to enjoy the marriage. I wished my husband would do well in the examination and be famous. It was autumn when we said goodbye at the border gate. Who knew that this farewell marked the beginning of my sad and lonely nights. Who destroyed this table with short-legs [*wonderful marriage*]?

Chang Zong: (*sings*) What does it matter that the table with short-legs is broken temporarily. In order to wait for the announcement of the result of the examination, the virtuous woman in every family has to wait alone in the house. They can only depend on the dream of hope. The affection between them lasts more than a hundred year. The short separation is like paying for the price of being in love.

Dou E: (*sings*) The price of being in love? I am willing to die for it. Like the Han dynasty beautiful and cultured woman Zhuo Wenjun, whose hopes were high even when she was in old age with white hair. Like the heroine of the Qin dynasty Woman Mengjiang. She searched for her husband who died long ago when she was still in her youth. Like a runaway boat that is wandering aimlessly with no one to be in charge of its oar.

(*Chang Zong misinterprets that the woman criminal is an adulterer*).

Chang Zong: (*sings*). Who is in charge of the oars, this needs a little bit of analysis. After woman Mengjiang was married, there was no husband to provide for her. After his death, we can see that she is a chaste and propitious woman. How can you be like the Fifth daughter-in-law of the Zhao family who sold her hair to buy medicine for her father? This clear-minded judge can simply bury any amorous feeling of love.

Dou E: *(sings)* To bury any amorous feeling of love? You snub those who wait for glory and wealth. This woman doesn't have a boat nor an oar. My mother-in-law doesn't have a son and there is no main beam in the house. All because the beautiful woman doesn't have any one to depend on. The one who is close by was able to take advantage of the situation. He offered three hundred taels of pure silver and ten strings of pearls. But the young woman doesn't regard the pearl as rare items and the old lady didn't want to fill the house with all the gold pieces. Mule Zhang is the one who devised the bizarre case of miscarriage of injustice.

(Chang Zong is scared when he hears the name Mule Zhang. He signals with his hand and closes his eyes several times to force himself to recognize his wife. Because there are too many people at the execution ground, he doesn't want to do anything).

Chang Zong: *(sings)* There is snow at the executioner ground. There is a drought at Shan Yang for three years. The cuckoo bird is so sad that he cries until there is blood. The sadness is like blood that showered the Pond of tears. What a coincidence this is. As I try to call to her soul, I see someone there who looks like my wife. I can recognize Third Mother just by looking at her hair. Let me use my sleeves to cover myself to take a closer look.

(He finds an excuse to get closer and quietly whispers to her).

(Dou E recognizes Chang Zong and her emotion is both sad and happy. The two silently match their gold locket. Finally, Dou E cannot bear it any longer and pulls his clothing and tries to call him).

(The crowd is aghast).

(Chang Zong shouts loudly).

(Dou E immediately crawls back down).

Chang Zong: *(sings)* Even when the smoke is blocking the view of the willow on the river bank, there is still a way. I am not afraid of tigers and wolves. I think you are the kind of woman who would not invite trouble to your life. So woman criminal, after your husband was dead.....

Dou E: *(speaks)* After my husband was dead...

(sings) I faced the gravestone during the day. At night I hid in bed to embroider. I missed my husband and I cried by myself until I got cold. I did my best to serve my mother-in-law. All of a sudden disaster came

from nowhere. The hunter bee who tries to get honey has no mercy on this virtuous widow. He tries to gain my heart when I was alone. He hid the poison in the soup. It is so unjust that I suffered false accusations.

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) The poison in the soup should kill your mother-in-law, why would it kill Mother Zhang in stead?

Dou E: (*speaks*) My mother-in-law dislikes the gamy flavor in the soup, and Mother Zhang ate it instead.

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) Who made the mutton soup?

Dou E: (*sings*) It was bought from the entry to our small lane.

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) Who bought the soup?

Dou E: (*sings*) Pawn, pawn, I pawned the silver hair pin for money to buy the soup. I gave the money to Lizhi Fragrance. I was falsely accused. Nobody understands my good intentions. This is the true version of the heart-breaking story. The facts are so sad. I have no more tears and I have been virtuous, but still I end up at the execution ground.

Chang Zong: (*sings*) Snow is falling. She can be proud that even the snow respects her righteousness and integrity. I quietly lament, tears fill my chest. Even during reunion we still have to avoid being in a room. Ai, the falling tears ruin the unadorned make-up, the past seems as if it never existed. She is so thin and weak, what could I use to carefully investigate this case? To maintain my moral integrity, I have to resist my emotion and thinking of the past.

(*speaks*) If I need to find a way to capture a pig, I need to ask the one who knows the place. In order to pour wine, I need to ask the wine jug. If the soup was bought, did anyone ask Lizhi Fragrance?

Dou E: (*speaks*) No one asked her.

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) If you knew there is poison in the soup, did anyone ask where the poison came from?

Dou E: (*speaks*) No one looked into that.

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) For a long time Mule Zhang already want to push you to remarry him. Who is the mediator and was there a charge of the person who offered the three hundred pieces of silver?

Dou E: (*speaks*) No one was charged for that.

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) First you didn't question Lizhi Fragrance, and secondly, you didn't trace the source of the poison, thirdly, you didn't sue the mediator for impropriety. You are asking to be punished.

(Dou E resents Chang Zong for shouting at her with all these points).

Dou E: (*speaks*) What you said is true.

(sings) If you are not in the middle of it, you will never understand the detailed situation. If a son leaves to study, how would he know that the house is leaking and cannot shield the cold rain from coming in? If this beautiful woman didn't die in front of the law, who will take the place of the old lady in the court room? Just like what is happening now.

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) Just like what is happening now.

Dou E: (*sings*) It is like the husband sits high up in the courtroom and the wife is falsely accused.

(Chang Zong motions Dou E to cover her mouth).

Chang Zong: (*sings*) The sentence that the house is leaking and the rain won't stop throughout the night is ten times worse than being accused as heartless. Let me take a better look to clarify.

(Chang Zong attempts to embrace Dou E but sees Qian Mu).

Chang Zong: (*sings*) Let me clarify...let me clarify the details of this case and I want to retry this case.

(Qian Mu moves forward).

Qian Mu: (*speaks*) I am at your command.

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) Three years there is no rain, there is snow falling in June. Dou E being falsely accused is a serious matter. Let's go back to the courtroom and begin the trial. Bring everyone who is involved in this case to the

courtroom. Also notify the Shen Zhou prefectural magistrate to join in the trial. There should be no delay.

(Qian Mu hears this and is shaken up).

Qian Mu: *(speaks)* This lowly one obeys.

(The executioners and the court officers exit together. The passersby make way for them. Cai Chang Zong stays behind at the ground by himself).

(Chang Zong is the last to exit and he and Lizhi Fragrance look at each other before entering the courtroom. Chang Zong shouts at the guard).

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Hey, you still....*(he changes his tone)* haven't loosened her shackle?

(The guard loosens her shackle).

(Dou E uses her hands to remove the dust while she stares at the other side with a smile).

The guard: *(speaks)* Congratulations Third Mother. As I often tell you, do not ruin yourself. The imperial minister alternates being harsh and tender towards you. Hehe, this is all because you are good looking.

Dou E: *(recites)* You are overly concerned, grandpa. All the prison guards are indecent people. You are the only good one with a kind heart.

(Dou E tries to walk but cannot. The guard comes up to help her).

(Mule Zhang brings a basket of incense and offerings. He is crying in front of the shrine)

Mule Zhang: *(sings)* The Paulownian wood casket is three feet long, please give alms to me before I go to the execution ground. The sound of the canon frightens me.

Dou E: *(speaks)* Thank you for your charity, Mule Zhang.

(Mule Zhang is not prepared for this).

Mule Zhang: *(recites)* Sha!, There is a saying that you walk in alive in but have to be carried when you go out. How come you are still standing there like a pole? Didn't I clearly hear three sounds of the canon?

(Dou E laughs).

Dou E: *(recites)* In the past, someone's head rolls on the ground when the canon is heard three times. But today when the canon was fired once, my shackles came off. Mule Zhang, this is time for you to think about the past. When the canon sounds twice, it is telling people to look to the future. When there are three sounds, it is to inspire your morals and conscience.

(Mule Zhang changes from being frightened to laughter).

Mule Zhang: *(recites)* Are you deceiving me? It must be that the snow fell for no particular reason. The county officials were so cold that they needed to go back to put on more clothes before firing the canon again. It is widely known that one out of ten officials are too timid to know how to take care of themselves.

Dou E: *(recites)* Mule Zhang, if the canon is fired again, it will be for you. Heaven never bars one's way and you will find a way through. This is my night to go to the execution ground to kill the official.

Mule Zhang: *(recites)* What are you talking about? If the canon is to be fired again, it is for me?

(sings) I, Mule Zhang, can never be forced into submission. One out of nine new officials will take my bribe. Is the new official also indecent or is he like the god from heaven who has six arms and three heads?

Dou E: *(sings)* The new official is not indecent. He is a new officer and is as clean as the lotus blossom and his new hat is fresh. Although he doesn't have six arms and three heads, he does look like my husband.

(Mule Zhang is bit frightened).

(The guard realizes what is going on like just he wakes up from a dream. He kneels down and kowtows to Dou E).

Mule Zhang: *(sings)* Mule Zhang devises this great strategy. Now I don't have any more options and I don't have any conscience.

(There is a call from inside of the court).

The guards: *(speaks)* Bring Dou E to the courtroom.

(The guard helps Dou E to her feet).

The guard: *(speaks)* Madame, please take care.

(The scene changes to that of the courtroom).

(Chang Zong is facing Qian Mu and showing off his red official gown).

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Woman criminal, I notice that the case of poisoned mutton soup is very complicated. You mentioned that at the execution ground that Mule Zhang had made a marriage proposal. Who is the matchmaker that brought the hundred taels of pure silver?

Dou E: *(speaks)* Ah...husband.

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Ai!

Dou E: *(recites)* Your honor, that year when I was a young bride, it was Woman Zhang who was the matchmaker. The one who brought three hundred taels of pure silver for Mule Zhang was also Woman Zhang. You can see that there is no value left in this world.

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Someone bring Woman Zhang to the court.

(The court officers bring Mother Zhang to the courtroom. When she sees Chang Zong, she is scared).

Chang Zong: *(recites)* Woman Zhang, you must know that a woman cannot be married to two men at the same time. Why did you become a matchmaker for Dou E twice and engaged in this shady business?

Woman Zhang: *(recites)* To this day, I am still ashamed of my behavior. There is a saying that eyeballs are black and the pure silver pieces are white, besides, this is my profession and I am used to it.

Chang Zong: *(recites)* Woman Zhang, do you remember exactly on which day and which month that Mule Zhang offered three hundred pieces of pure silver?

Woman Zhang: *(recites)* Your honor, I remember the date when the pure silver taels were delivered was the eighth day of the second month. On that day, Mule Zhang was begging me to help him put.

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) Ah, the pure silver was delivered on the eighth day of the twelfth month. Woman criminal, do you remember what date your husband left for the capital when you bit farewell?

Dou E: (*recites*) Your honor, don't you think I will forget about this date? The date that my husband left for the capital is three years ago, the fifth day of the twelfth month. Ai, when he departed, the falling willow was flying and this period was known as "lesser cold."

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) Ah, the date your husband went to the capital was the fifth day of the twelfth month? I think I went to the capital on the fifth day as well. Mule Zhang made the marriage proposal on the eighth day, it was only three days later. Clearly the plot to occupy the other's wife was pre-meditated. If we look at it this way, I wonder if the bridge was also part of Mule Zhang's plot. Remember the bridge was newly built. Although there was rain and wind, a new bridge should not break just like that. There must be other factors in this case. Someone come! Bring the bridge builder Camel Jin to the courtroom!

(The courtroom officers bring Camel Jin into the courtroom).

Chang Zong: (*recites*) Camel Jin, is that the bridge you built? Why did it break all of a sudden? If I don't apply serious punishment to him, it will be very difficult to determine what the real situation is. Have the most severe form of corporal punishment ready.

(The courtroom officers answer in unison in the hall).

Camel Jin: (*recites*) You honor, please spare my life. I should have not taken the ten pieces of silver from Mule Zhang three years ago. I deliberately loosened the foundation of the bridge, and that is why the bridge broke.

(Dou E understands as if she just woke up from a dream).

Chang Zong: (*sings*) The wind is sending the misty cloud away. The stars and moon can be seen clearly. I secretly want to comfort my wife with my tears and affection. Quickly lock up Mule Zhang up and overturn the original verdict of the case.

(The court officers shackle Mule Zhang and tie him up in three different places, then push him to the ground).

Chang Zong: (*recites*) Mule Zhang, Why don't you try to recognize who I am? Ai, I can't believe you are still looking well since our last farewell.

Mule Zhang: *(recites)* Your honor, I, Mule Zhang, recognize you. You were a poor scholar three years ago. Today you are the new commissioner. If not for your new found power, how could you have sided with your wife?

(There is a loud sound of discontent in the courtroom. Upon hearing the sound, Qian Mu and Yang Tao's faces turn pale).

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Mule Zhang, there is an ancient teaching that one should not mistreat a friend's wife. Why did you wait until I left for the capital on the fifth day and make her a marriage proposal on the eighth day? Obviously you have committed the crime of taking someone's wife.

Mule Zhang: *(recites)* Your honor, I, Mule Zhang also studied for a little while. You use ancient teaching to test me, so let me also use ancient teachings of Mengzi to answer you. The ancient sage says that when a woman is drowning, one should always lend a hand to protect her. The reason why I, Mule Zhang, was so eager to offer a marriage proposal is because there was no one on whom the widow could depend. I was simply doing my best to look after your wife and save your mother. I was willing to be the second groom.

(The audience in the courtroom finds that funny and laugh).

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Mule Zhang, taking someone's wife is animal behavior, like taking someone's life. Earth and heaven won't allow it. Why did you loosen the stones of the new bridge three years ago and pay Camel Jin ten pieces of pure silver?

Mule Zhang: *(recites)* Your honor, you are using a small-minded person's perspective to measure the great deeds of a person with noble character. Mule Zhang comes from a reputable family in Shan Yang. We have repaired countless road and bridges. I paid Camel Jin to use good materials to repair the bridge. I didn't ask him to loosen the foundation of the bridge. Furthermore, the ten taels of pure silver were given to him by Dou E. Let me ask you a question. If your wife knew about this plot, why didn't she forewarn you on the day that you left for the capital?

Chang Zong: *(recites)* Dou E, if you already knew that the bridge was to be repaired, how come you didn't let me know on the day I departed?

Dou E: *(speaks)* Aiya, my husband Cai.

(The audience in the courtroom is getting annoyed).

Dou E: *(speaks)* Your honor. This is called someone with an intention is pretending to appear to have no intention. I really have nothing to say. When we were saying goodbye, I lost my heart and my soul, who could remember about the bridge repair?

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Mule Zhang, the new bridge was not a broken bridge, how come it needed repair? I think you planned this plot. You have lost all your morals.

Mule Zhang: *(recites)* Your honor, a case is based on investigation and not based on speculation. Don't wrongly accuse me because you have met your wife and she shed a few tears. If I want to be ridiculous, I can also say that Dou E intentionally hid the fact of the broken bridge in order to kill her husband so that she could find another husband.

(Mule Zhang laughs cunningly).

(The audience in the courtroom reacts more strongly than before).

Chang Zong: *(sings)* I cannot indulge this improper behavior. The torture of using three pieces of wood is not easily tolerated!

(Chang Zong shouts three times but the courtroom officers are not responding enthusiastically. Chang Zong is angry and stares into the courtroom).

(Mule Zhang feels triumphant).

Mule Zhang: *(sings)* In one's heart, one knows what is right and what is wrong, regardless of whether you wear a monk's blue robe or burn incense of mercy. The Zhang family has treated you well. We loaned you rice and provisions for a long time. This case of mutton soup poison is earth shattering. Even the imperial court would not dare to falsely accuse the local dignitaries. It is not a fabrication that the husband repays the wife's debt. You have to repay the life of my mother. Your honor, within Shan Yang county, who doesn't know that the Zhang's family has offered help to three generations of the Cai's family? Now all you have left is the old mother who has white hair. Because my mother was trying to get back the silver that we loaned to your family, she was killed by your wife. If you raise your head proudly and be just, honorable and above

board, then according to the law, the husband should repay the wife's debt. But if you excessively treasure the relationship with your wife, then come, come, come and remove your official gauze hat and take the punishment with your body.

(Chang Zong removes his official gauze hat).

Qian Mu: *(recites)* Your honor, justice exists in the will of the people. Let me urge the sacrifice of a worthless woman, in order to avoid stirring up wind and waves.

Yang Tao *(speaks)* If this case is spread to the outside, I am afraid it will destroy your future. Let it go. Officials protect one another, we will help as much as we can.

(Chang Zong moves his hands and closes his eyes).

Chang Zong: *(sings)* This is the solemn Hall of White Tiger. It is like a green bamboo snake that wraps its body around. The gold and silver thread weaves a web of justice to capture the officials, local dignitaries, and all the unsavory characters. I bid farewell to my mother and left my wife to find a job as an official. Now I know I made the wrong decision. A mother expects the son to be an official and a wife expects the son to be an official *(move one step forward towards Dou E)*. Today, I am an official but my entire family is squandered away.

Dou E: *(sings)* The python on the black gauze, a mansion of heavenly waves, jade carved beams. I recall the white hair lady leaning against the green house, all alone with nothing, only accompanied by the maid Fragrant Ring.

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Fragrant Ring, Lizhi Fragrance. Speaking of Lizhi Fragrance, there is the soup as evidence.

(Dou E pulls her dress and shakes her head)

Dou E: *(sings)* Husband Cai, how why are you so forgetful?

Chang Zong: *(sings)* I should have poured the wine myself and ask for the pot...

Dou E: *(sings)* How could a dumb girl speak?

Chang Zong: *(sings)* If a mouth cannot speak, a brush can write.

Dou E: (*sings*) But grudgingly she cannot distinguish the four treasures of the study.

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) Oh, you mean she doesn't know how to write. Without the stolen property and evidence, it is difficult overturn the verdict.

Mule Zhang: (*sings*) Then I will leave the courtroom and return home.

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) Quickly bring the dumb maid to the courtroom. Heaven protects the innocent and those who are falsely accused.

Mule Zhang: (*speaks*) If a dumb girl can speak during the trial, this will be a fantastic story.

(Mule Zhang winks at Qian Mu and Yang Tao and is proud of himself).

(Dou E is anxious).

(The court officers bring in Lizhi Fragrance and pushes her to the ground. She is scared and holds Dou E tight).

Chang Zong: (*recites*) Lizhi Fragrance, when the lady of your family told you to buy a bowl of mutton soup, it ended up killing Mother Zhang. There must be more to the story. You better come clean and tell the truth.

(Lizhi Fragrance becomes so anxious that she wants to say something but cannot make a sound).

Mule Zhang: (*recites*) To ask a dumb person about the case is like asking a blind person for direction. It is like asking for a bald-headed monk for a comb and a nun how to bundle hair. It is a waste of time and absolutely ridiculous.

(Lizhi Fragrance nods her head and use hand gestures to sign four different kinds of action).

(Chang Zong nods his head as he watches attentively).

Chang Zong: (*speaks*) The circle gesture is for a bowl of soup. A fat and a short person consult one another. The fat one is Mule Zhang and the one who has horns and beard is named Yang [*same sound as the word sheep*]. Who in Shan Yang county has the surname Yang?

Dou E: (*speaks*) This....hmm...can it be possible that it is Old Man Yang?

(Upon hearing the name Old man Yang, Mule Zhang begins to tremble).

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Ah!

(sings) Old Man Yang cleverly cracks the mutton soup case. As a doctor and fortune teller, of course he has the evidence.

(speaks) Go arrest Old Man Yang.

(The audience in the courtroom begins to despise Mule Zhang and begins to change their reaction. Together they make a loud sigh).

(The court officers bring in Old Man Yang).

(Chang Zong leaves his seat and grabs Old Man Yang).

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Old Man Yang, heaven is above, the earth is below, a person's heart is in the middle. Who bought the poison to put in the mutton soup?

(Chang Zong pushes Old Man Yang to the ground).

(Dou E kneels down together).

Dou E: *(sings)* On the left, I have no one to rely on, on the right, I have nothing to depend on. My hair has turned white. To speak the truth is greater than burning incense for ten years.

(Mule Zhang slaps Old Man Yang's shoulder and grabs him after he turns around).

Mule Zhang: *(speaks)* Head against the sky, feet on the ground, you have to be responsible for anything you say. I can give you half of my family wealth and divide my home with you equally.

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* You have to speak.

Mule Zhang: *(speaks)* Be careful what you say.

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Speak, speak, speak!

(The courtroom guards hold up their pole and the executioners draw their blade right after the third word).

All the guards: *(speaks)* Speak!

Old Man Yang: (*speaks*) Heaven above, earth below, my conscience is in the middle. The poison was for Mother Cai, Mule Zhang lost his conscience. He pulled me into the side street and dragged me into the small lane. He told me that money can buy everything. You can even ask a ghost to push the cart for you. He conspires with the county court officers. He uses gold to buy the crown of a crane and exchange white jade for poison.

(Dou E listens while kowtowing to heaven and earth).

(Mule Zhang becomes feeble and sits on the floor).

(Qian Mu is scared and tries to exit but is blocked by the guards).

Chang Zong: (*sings*) Spread the web of justice and capture the wolves. If you don't confess, you will get the strokes. Guards on both sides, employ punishment.

(The two guards use their poles to form a cross against Mule Zhang's neck).

Mule Zhang: (*sings*) Could it be that there is already a book in the underworld to punish those who have bad intentions? Could it be that it is the person on duty there helping to solve the mutton soup case?

(The messenger presents the confession).

Chang Zong: (*recites*) Come, take Mule Zhang out to be executed. After the third sound of the canon, present his head to close the case. Take the prefectural magistrate Yang to prison and let me present the case to the imperial court.

(The courtroom officers take Qian Mu, Yang Tao, and Mule Zhang away).

(Mother Cai enters and when Dou E notices her, she rushes out to help her in).

Mother Cai: (*recites*) Third Mother I heard from the street that the new official is like a living Buddha. I want to see what this living Buddha looks like.

Dou E: (*recites*) Mother-in-law, you are familiar with the face of this living Buddha. You don't need to go inside the temple to see this Buddha.

(Dou E intentionally raises her voice).

(recites) The Buddha knows that you are an old woman and will come out of the temple to greet you.

(Upon hearing the sound, Chang Zong rushes out and falls on his knees and greets his mother. He cries all the way as he helps her inside).

The messenger: *(speaks)* Old lady please take a seat!

Mother Cai: *(recites)* My son Chang, you died three years ago because of the broken bridge. How has your situation has become so glorious?

Chang Zong: *(recites)* Mother, I was saved by scholar Feng Che on that day. I became blood brother with him. The reason why we can reunite is all because of his sense of justice and loyalty.

(Dou E reacts strongly. She walks away and quietly weeps).

Mother Cai: *(recites)* My son Chang, everything you have today is because someone is just and loyal. Everything I have today is because of a virtuous and filial daughter-in-law. How come this daughter-in-law has turned around and weeps behind her back?

Dou E: *(recites)* Mother-in-law, this daughter-in-law has had a harsh life. Now that I know I will soon become a lady, I am even more panicked.

(The four palace maidens enter with lanterns in hands and with Feng Ping, Feng Che, Child Fairy, and Feng Che).

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Let me cup my hands to greet gracious brother and gracious royal sister.

(Dou E is getting even more uncomfortable).

Dou E: *(speaks)* I cup my hands to greet the royal sister.

Feng Ping: *(recites)* Brother Cai, this lady of your family is very proper, composed, and elegant. I have already married to Child Fairy and I am coming with imperial inspector Li for a visit.

Child Fairy: *(recites)* Brother Chang, because you are not disgusted by your worthless woman, I leap over the phoenix and ride the dragon by marrying the royal sister. How come sister-in-law looks so familiar? Too bad she lowers her head, and I cannot see her face.

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Third Mother, come over and greet benefactor Li and the royal son-in-law.

(Dou E greets Feng Che and then sees Child Fairy).

Dou E: *(speaks)* Ah...is this Child Fairy?

Child Fairy: *(speaks)* Is this my sister?

Chang Zong: *(speaks)* Someone brings Mule Zhang back here.

(The court officers bring in Mule Zhang in blood-stained clothing and tell him that it is the lady who requested a pardon).

Chang Zong: (recites) How come there is blood all over his body but there was no canon being fired?

Mule Zhang: *(recites)* What goes around comes around. It is destined that I have such an ending. Right before I was to be executed, I had already taken some poison. I thank your honor for not executing me. I thank Dou E for her pardon so that my corpse can be intact after I die.

(Mule Zhang kowtows once and died).

Everybody: *(sings)* Good and evil is clearly demarcated, snow falling in June.

(Curtain).