

The Peony Pavilion

牡丹亭驚夢

Libretti by Tong Dik Sang
唐滌生粵劇作品

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Translated by Cho-ning Gwendoline KAM

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ACT I: The Garden Visit and the Shocking Dream

Setting: Inside the Chun Hei Hall, the garden and the boudoir. The beginning of *paizi* for curtain raising

With wine in hand, Chun Heung enters from stage left, singing the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Little Chun Heung I am, reading partner of Mistress Toh. Being a bit mischievous, I very much obey my mistress. She treats me as her dearest,
though Madam Toh gives me the least regard.

Toh On moves flowerpots while Chun Heung is sweeping.

Mui Chun Lam enters from stage left, with two imperial servants holding an appointment letter.

Chun Lam sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

The most memorable thing in my childhood was Lai Neung's company. After all these years and in this lovely blossoming season, I am back to my romantic dream.

I just wanted to take the chance of announcing my uncle's advancement to meet the beauty once again.

Chun Lam signals the two imperial servants to wait downstairs. Taken by surprise, Chun Heung says:

Alas! What brings you here after all those years, young master?

You look entirely different nowadays!

You are wearing a black gauze cap and dressing in...

Chun Lam recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Chun Heung, you are just as artless and vivacious as before! I am here today, on the one hand, to bring Uncle Toh good news of his advancement. On the other hand, I wanted to see if Lai Neung was doing well all these years.

Sigh! Uncle is dogmatic about his ethical code;

Lai Neung has been barred from seeing any man since twelve. I can visit her only secretly.

Chun Heung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*You are asking about young mistress's well being...
She isn't doing very well since Master Toh hired her a
teacher last year.
The teacher is just fat, dumb and disgusting.
He can never utter a word even after shaking his head
for thousands of times.
Coming out of his mouth is but jargon and puff.*

Chun Lam recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Chun Heung, there are a lot of renowned teachers in
Si Chuan.
Why did Uncle Toh pick this old guy for Lai Neung as if
there weren't any other choices?*

Chun Heung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Young master, you might not know the whole picture.
The one and only merit of this teacher is that he is real
old. You know well the temper of our old master.
He prefers old dumb guys rather than handsome young
man to take up the post.*

Chun Lam speaks:

*Could I ask you for a favor, Miss Chun Heung?
Would you mind bringing this letter to Lai Neung?*

Chun Heung shakes her hands and says:

No, I definitely can't take up the responsibility.

Chun Lam recites in rhymed *haugu* with a begging gesture:

Please, Chun Heung. I know it' brings no inconvenience.

Toh Po coughs behind the scene.

**Heading down, Chun Heung dares not offer Chun Lam a
hand. Toh Po, Madam Toh and Ha Heung enter from the left.**

Toh Po sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

The two Chinese characters "poetry" and "courtesy" have
run through our family for generations.

As a government official for twenty years, I have held
myself aloof from politics and material pursuits.

Now I am glad to be promoted to a higher rank and
thus holding a banquet at home to express gratitude to
my teachers.

Chun Lam bows and says:

Chun Lam greets Uncle and Aunt Toh. I wish both of you well.

Delighted, Toh Po recites in rhymed *haugu*:

I heard that you are now a diplomat in the imperial court. Your achievement justifies my talking up about you throughout the years!

Chun Lam recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Uncle, I have brought you the appointment letter from the capital.

Congratulations on being now the chief Minister of Wai Yeung! I come especially to urge you to set off for reporting duty. Return safely as soon as you can.

Speaks: *Please present the letter of appointment.*

Imperial servants kneel down and hold the letter high.

Toh Po receives the letter in delight. Imperial servants leave. Madam Toh recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Chun Lam, we have prepared a simple banquet to thank the teachers tonight.

As you are here with us, let's take this also as a welcoming meal for you.

Chun Heung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

I believe that young master would be happy to stay.

Oh, I don't mean that the young master is greedy for food and drinks.

But by joining the banquet, he can see the young mistress.

Chun Heung covers her mouth and smiles at Chun Lam knowingly.

Toh Po says:

Nosy you are!

Turns to Chun Lam and says:

Chun Lam, this way please.

Guests taking their seats at the table.

Chun Heung, go to the study room and invite Tutor Chan to join the banquet.

Chun Heung speaks:

Tutor Chan shows up soonest at every banquet. He would come uninvited anyway.

Why should I go and invite...

In anger, Madam Toh speaks:

Chun Heung!

Chun Heung speaks:

Yes, yes. Here I go...

Chun Heung walks fast and leaves.

Tutor Chan Chui Leung enters from the left.

Chun Heung looks at the edge of the stage and says:

See, he comes without invitation as I predicted.

Tutor Chan recites a poetic speech:

Spring is definitely not a right time for teaching.

It is nice and wise to take a nap after good food and drinks. The expense of a meal at the prefect's equals half a year's tuition fee of village students.

Chun Heung approaches.

Toh Po speaks:

Chun Heung, come and greet Tutor Chan.

Tutor Chan, please take a seat.

Chun Heung sweeps the chair. Tutor Chan sits down and licks his chaps for the delicious meal that sets in front of him.

Madam Toh recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Chun Heung, why haven't you gone and asked young mistress to come down and serve the banquet?

Chun Heung responded; winked at Chun Lam to ask to leave with her.

Toh Po speaks: *Wait.*

Continue in rhymed *haugu*:

My wife, banquets are just routine at our place.

I think Tutor Chan won't mind if Lai Neung doesn't join the one tonight.

As propriety dictates, unmarried men and women shouldn't sit at the same table.

Since Chun Lam is here, Lai Neung should avoid him.

Disappointed, Chun Lam recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Uncle, I am not just a guest but also a relative of yours. Plus Lai Neung and I are used to be close when we were young.

Toh Po speaks:

*Now and your childhood are completely different things;
Lai Neung is already eighteen this year.*

Chun Lam wants to beg again but Chun Heung speaks ahead of him:

*Old master, even if you allowed her to, young mistress
would unlikely be able to come down and join the banquet.
She is a bit ill after learning the Mo Poem from Tutor Chan.*

Toh Po speaks anxiously:

What is the poem about?

Chun Heung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*The poem reads,
"Guan guan cry the ospreys
on the islet in the river.
So delicate the virtuous maiden,
a fit mate for our Prince."¹
And that's why, young mistress feels sick afterwards.*

Toh Po speaks:

Oh no!

Sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

The teacher from the Western Sichuan does not understand
the heart of a young lady who is yearning for love.
This worries the Nam On Prefect and makes him
frown. I must admonish my daughter here at the main
hall, lest our family tradition be smirched.

Continues to sing and speak:

Chun Heung, request young mistress to come here.

Chun Heung responds and leaves from stage left.

**Knowing Lai Neung is coming, Chun Lam extends his neck to look
for her down the hall. He signals Toh Po by waving his sleeves.**

**Lai Neung enters from the left. Chun Heung follows Lai Neung
with winery in her hands.**

Lai Neung sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa* at stage front:

*I pity myself for the lean figure I see in the mirror.
Time just flows. My beauty brings me sorrow;
My talent gives me illness.*

Entering the hall, Lai Neung bows to her parents:

Blessings on you, my dear father and mother.

Toh Po speaks:

¹ Refer to Cyril Birch, page 24

*Lai Neung, we have got wine here. Why did you ask
Chun Heung to bring some more?*

Lai Neung kneels down and speaks sentimentally:

*Papa, the weather is so awesome today.
Both you and mother are sitting here in the hall.
Chun Heung comes and tells me that my papa looks
unhappy. I guess it must be my problem.
You must be upset not having a son, but only a
thoughtless daughter, at this point in your life.
To show my heartfelt gratitude for your loving care, I
ask Chun Heung to prepare the wine especially for you.
I wish you good health and longevity.*

Still keeling down, Lai Neung holds the wine high.

Toh Po becomes less angry as he listens to Lai Neung's reveal.

Getting the wine, Toh Po speaks in a sad weeping voice.

*Good girl, Lai Neung.
As you father, it's my responsibility and pleasure to take
care of you.*

**Feeling more comfortable, Toh Po helps Lai Neung to stand up
and says:**

Lai Neung, come and greet your cousin.

Lai Neung stands up and is so surprised to see Chun Lam.

**Feeling shy, Lai Neung heads down. As Lai Neung has not seen
any man since twelve, a special emotion should be applied to
express her trembling heart.**

Madam To speaks gently:

Lai Neung, greet your cousin

**Lai Neung hesitates to step forward. Chun Lam is thrilled and
takes a few steps closer to her. Toh Po gives him a glance,
impeding him right away. The significance of depicting Toh Po's
personality at this point should be noted. This will help reinforce
the atmosphere of the later part of the story.**

Chun Lam recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Lai Neung, I haven't seen you for six years,
and you are just as delicate and beautiful as
before. My heart melts upon seeing you.
It seems to me that you are in melancholy.*

What makes you sad?

Phlegmatic, Lai Neung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*What I have been doing in these six years is just sitting
inside my boudoir, hearing the wind and rain of the Spring
and Autumn.*

*I never know what worries lie outside this chamber,
and I never know if I am worthy of anyone's care and love.*

Lai Neung takes a step back.

**Toh Po signals Chun Heung to prevent Chun Lam from getting
too close to Lai Neung.**

Toh Po eagerly steps forward and says:

*My humble daughter would like to advance herself like Jo
Dik. Approaching the clear clouds step by step, she is so
determined to pursue her dreams.*

Toh Po bows with both hands clasped in front.

Lai Neung feels shy and afraid, takes steps

back Tutor Chan speaks:

*Chun Lam, I have been teaching Lai Neung for a year but
I have never seen her smile.*

*Discourteous words do not make any difference to her
current state.*

Lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

My female student is just like a Bodhisattva portrait.

It is a waste of time and effort to pray for anything about
her. How can a stone-faced depiction of the Seafarer Goddess grant you
any kindness?

Chun Lam makes a step further and says:

Lai Neung...Lai Neung...

Toh Po is not happy and says:

*Chun Lam, return to your own seat please. Cheung
Heung, pour the wine.*

Chun Heung speaks:

*Could you please return to your seat please, young master?
I have to offer you the wine.*

**Feeling helpless, Chun Lam sits down and stares at Lai
Neung soulfully.**

Toh Po speaks solemnly:

Lai Neung, come here.

Astounded, Madam Toh speaks softly:

Just a few words would do, my husband.

Don't be too harsh on her.

Knowing well what is coming, Lai Neung kneels down and says:

Papa, please admonish.

Toh Po sings the wooden fish song *mukyu* in *yifan* mode:

I am unlucky not to have a son.

You shoulder the responsibility of passing on our
family legacy, my daughter.

I don't ask you of a brilliant career;

I just wish you could cast away romantic dreams.

Lai Neung speaks in a sad weeping voice:

I will listen to your words.

**Accompanied by slow wooden block strokes, Lai Neung stands
up and sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa* with watery eyes:**

I know the rites well even if you didn't teach me.

I have confided my romantic dreams in the cuckoo already.

Dad, allow me to bring myself some cheer...May I go to
the deserted garden to encounter spring?

Toh Po speaks:

You have been talking too much.

Recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Let's have Tutor Chan take a walk with you in the garden.

Despite his age, he still hasn't visited any garden.

**Lai Neung feels extremely unhappy at heart. Wiping her
tears frequently, she says:**

Yes.

Tutor Chan recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Old master, I won't go, I won't go.

*As the saying goes, pretty and delicate girls visit
gardens when they are free.*

Old guys as me shouldn't go to the garden.

Chun Heung speaks at the edge of the stage:

The smartest thing you have ever said!

Chun Lam bows and says:

How about allowing me to go with Lai Neung?

Toh Po waves his sleeves at Chun Lam:

*Chun Heung, go visit the garden with young mistress
and come back soon.*

Lai Neung farewells everyone. Holding Lai Neung's elbow, Chun Heung leaves with her from the left of the stage. Ha Heung unlocks the gate for them.

Chun Lam leaves his seat and gazes at Lai Neung.

Tutor Chan tries to block Chun Lam's view by proposing him a toast.

Setting: At the Peony Pavilion

Lai Neung feels great for the nice weather as she walks. She tries catch a butterfly but fails. Chun Heung holds her waist when she falls down.

Lai Neung says:

*Never would I have realized spring's
splendour without visiting this garden!*

Lai Neung starts singing the new tune " A Stroll in the Garden":

*How brilliant gleam these combs all set with gems,
Always in my nature to love fine things.
Butterflies are flying in pairs.*

Chun Heung says:

They fly to the lotus pond.

Lai Neung picks up and says:

*Silently in this pond, the blossoming lotus are in pairs...are
in pairs.*

*The air of this water palace is saturated with their
secret fragrance.*

Chun Heung says:

*Lady, that is not the scent of lotus. See, there is a big
plum tree over there.*

Lai Neung picks up and says:

Wish that I could be buried under this plum tree after I died.

Chun Heung says:

Touch wood!

Lai Neung picks up and sings:

*Bright the morn, lovely the scene,
Listless and lost the heart – where is the garden "gay
with joyous cries",*

Flowers blossom when swallows come. The latter leaves
when The former withers.

Chun Heung says:

Don't just make sentences that grieve over the passing of spring.

Picks up and sings in the previous tune:

Bright the morn, lovely the scene,
Melancholy would easily hurt your waist.

Speaks:

Young mistress, let's go and play on the swing!

Lai Neung picks up and sing in the previous tune:

By the plum tree is the swing,
Let it bring me over to the east wall to call for the return
of spring.

**Lai Neung gets on to the swing. She giggles when Chun Heung
is pushing her. After moving to and fro for a short while, the
swing stops. Lai Neung leans against a red string and ponders.
Previous tune is played lightly to serve as the background music
for this session.**

Chun Heung claps her hands softly and says:

*Great, great. Young mistress has been playing a
lot. Let me tell old madam.*

Chun Heung leaves secretly.

Lai Neung opens her eyes wide and soliloquizes:

*Back from spring stroll to silent room,
What to do but try on the spring's new
adornments. Ah, Spring,
You come into my heart,
What shall I find to fill my days when you are past?
Chun Heung, Cheung Heung.*

Looking for Chun Heung.

*Where has Chun Heung gone?
From time immemorial, females are doomed to feel sad for
the passing of spring. There is no reason to blame a lady
for her hatred towards the advent of autumn.
I, Lai Neung, was born and raised in a renowned
official's family.
I have yet to meet the man who is able to get a twig of*

cassisa.

With the homily that my strict parents frequently deliver, the more scared I am about romance, the more I try to seek it – it gives such an intoxicating drunken feeling.

Lai Neung goes up to the Peony Pavilion. Finding nothing attractive inside it, she leans against the tea table and takes a nap.

Setting: Switches off stage lights. Turn them on again until the background is changed to that of a dream.

Lau Mung Mui enters the dream from the left side of the stage. Singing *yeungchau yilau*:

A promise that lasts for three lives, my heart has been tied with a string.

Wisps of smoke feathering around this lonely garden, there is a pretty lady sleeping in front of the peonies. Fragrant mist surrounds, let me sleep with flowers holding in my arms.

I want to know who is my real love, let us meet each other in our dreams.

Lai Neung wakes up and sees Mung Mui. Taken by surprise, she covers her face with her fan and moves rapidly to the willow shade. Mung Mui goes up to her. He bows and says:

Young mistress.

Remains silent, Lai Neung gives Mung Mui a side glance through the slits on her fan. The tune of "Cannot be exchanged with Gold" begins. Mung Mui bows again and says:

Young Lady.

Lai Neung gives Mung Mui a side glance again through the slits on her fan. Finding out Mung Mui is a young handsome guy, Lai Neung heads down and turns her back to him.

Background music should be well-played here. Mung Mui says:

Young Lady. I have greeted you again and again. Why you have to cover your face, lower your head, and face me with your back? Why don't you respond to me?

Bow again.

Nice meeting you, young mistress.

Lai Neung would like turn to Mung Mui and greets him. Yet she

makes herself remain dignified and soliloquizes in rhymed *haugu*:

As virgin, my body is worth for thousands of gold.

*Standing alone in the solitude of this garden, I used
not to see any unacquainted guests.*

*We have, moreover, never seen each other. How could I
not cover my face with the fan.*

**Still covering her face with her fan, Lai Neung side glances
Mung Mui through the slits.**

Mung Mui laughs and says:

Young mistress, we have seen each other...

Lai Neung looks surprised.

Mung Mui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*This sandalwood fan is hold too high. It only hides
your head ornaments. But your smart and pretty eyes
have already conveyed your love to me.*

**Lai Neung feels ashamed as Mung Mui read her heart. She stands
next to the pond and look at it leisurely. Taken by a little surprise,
she further bends over and stares at the pond as Mung Mui's
charm and attitude are reflected from the water.**

Getting closer to Lai Neung, Mung Mui laughs and says:

Young mistress, why are you staring at the lotus pond?

Why don't you turn your back and take a look at me?

**Still facing Mung Mui with her back, Lai Neung fixates on the
pond and recites in rhymed *haugu*:**

*Who wants to see you? I am looking at the dragonflies
skimming over the water and I am addicted to the beauty
of lotus.*

Mung Mui laughs and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Young mistress, how could there be dragonflies
skimming over the water when it is not raining?*

*You look so attentive, it is obvious that you want to see the
handsome face behind you through the reflection from water.*

**Lai Neung is angry for Mung Mui reads her secret thoughts again.
She wants turning to Mung Mui and hits him with her fan. Yet, her
voice gets softer with the slow wooden block strokes and says:**

Gentry scholar, please stand aside.

Mung Mui laughs as he moves his steps. Lai Neung walks past him

and stands on the left.

When Lai Neung is moving in front of him, Mung Mui says:

*Young mistress, as the saying goes, a beautiful woman
Should have a distinguished husband, a lady would
rather not marry if no perfect match were to be found.
Why bother to shun yourself from me?*

Lai Neung is inspired as she moves and listens to Mung Mui's words. Stopping suddenly, she turns her head and softly speaks:

*Gentry scholar, what can we talk about if I don't
shun myself from you?*

Mung Mui is happy and says:

*Great, great. Young mistress finally talks face-to-face
with me .*

Recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*I happened to see a beautiful willow tree in the garden.
and I broke off one branch for you.
You are such a well-versed lady
I should like you to compose a poem to honor it.*

Gives Lai Neung the willow branch.

Surprised by Mung Mui's genteel charm, Lai Neung would like to take the branch. Yet, she is still shy and says:

Gentry scholar, thanks for letting me show up myself.

Thinks for a moment and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Surrounded by the mist, the greenish willow swings
along the pond side. The unexpected broke made by the
scholar causes me to ponder and pity on it.*

Mung Mui is surprised and says:

Young mistress, you are so talented.

Blushed, Lai Neung speaks in a lower voice:

Gentry scholar, what do you want?

Mung Mui says:

*Mistress, please sit on this peony bench and let me tell
you a few hearty words.*

Lai Neung shakes her head lightly and smilingly, but she can't help herself from sitting down with Mung Mui.

Mung Mui sings the lower phrase of *maan baan*.

*With the flowering of your beauty, as the river of
years rolls past, everywhere I have searched for you pining*

secluded in your chamber. Please do not shy away from your good match.

"Lament of the foreign lady"

As we meet for the first time, you lean against the parapet of the peony pavilion. As we meet for the first time, you hide yourself from me behind the sandalwood fan. You don't even say a word when I slightly pull your sleeves. Sitting under the red plum tree, you just turned away from me. Alas, there is a flower (Lai Neung) shedding tears under the shade of the willow.

Speaks:

Oh, if we don't have the three-life promise, how could we meet each other now?

Wiping her tears frequently, Lai Neung shyly sings the *faansin jungbaan* in reversed tuning:

Staying in the east mansion for twelve years, I do needlework under the flower shadow all day long. The window curtain obstructs the way of my longing eyes and I have not seen any man. Sitting by the incense burner, I try to keep away from romantic dreams. The violet is winding my heart. Having a rather pretty face, my time has been spent on study if not on the passing time. I went to the peony pavilion and walk along the flower path. The heart of the young lady cannot make the little lotuses (her small feet) to stay. I am not a poplar blossom, a wild Osmond, a street plum blossom or a post-autumn fan. I am just like a bluish green willow standing in a silver vase. If it is not the bodhisattva having pity on you, I promise that you can never get a drop of dew.

Gwanfa: I have already responded your willow branch with my poem, don't let your unreliable words litter the floral palace.

Mung Mui sings the *faansin "Butterflies flying in pair"* in reversed tuning

We make our love vows in front of the peony,
I hold your sleeves quietly.

Takes Lai Neung to stage right.

Feeling shy, Lai Neung gives Mung Mui a sideways look and says:

Where do you want to go?

Continues to sing:

What a pity that I am entwined with this affair,
I am afraid that this scholar is being too entangled
with me .

Mung Mui says:

There.

Continues to sing:

Let us stay under the flowers and willows. There is
a romantic inn on this flower path.

Cannot help laughing, Lai Neung picks up and sings:

Impressed by my beauty, wild geese are falling to the
earth and the birds are alerted by their noises . I am
afraid that the branches here will gash my lovely face.

Mung Mui picks up and sings:

Singing under the willows, the birds tell us that we
are almost there at the West Chamber.

Lai Neung picks up and sings:

I cannot see what are there between the flowers. I regret
to hear the birds sing in the spring.

Speaks: *Where are we going?*

Mung Mui holds Lai Neung's sleeves and sings *yiwong*:

There, just beyond this railing peony-lined
against the mound of weathered Tai Wu rocks.
We walk pass through the willows and beautiful
flowers. Will be beneath either the plum or willow.

Flower Spirits enter and recites in poetic speech:

*The flower spirits come with the mist. Though the thing
has not been done, we have to wake her up with fallen
petals and let her continue after three years.*

Awaken amidst the falling red petals, Lai

Neung sings the wooden fish song *mukyu*:

What a pity that we our dream has been shattered by
the falling petals.

**Lai Neung uses her sleeve to cover the fallen red petals and
sings shyly:**

I am overwhelmed by the fallen petals all over the sky.

Mung Mui picks up:

The pavilion offers us a shelter with its tiles.

Lai Neung picks up:

The peony has to sleep alone in sorrow.

Mung Mui turns his head after walking for a few steps and sings:

Turning around to see her lovely and beautiful face
once again.

Lai Neung picks up shyly and sings:

I hide my shyness with my pillow.

Mung Mui approaches the edge of the stage silently and sings:

The fallen petals do not allow us to stay together.

The lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

I ask the Goddess when I will return to Mo Ling and see
this beautiful lady once again.

Lai Neung opens her eyes and says:

Gentry scholar, come back.

Settings: Changes back to the original one.

Cheung Heung and Ha Heung enter with Madam

Toh. Madam To speaks:

*I really wonder if you have ever got toothache when you
lied. You told me that young mistress is playing happily in
the garden, and it turns out that she has fallen asleep in
the peony pavilion.*

Goes up to the pavilion and pats Lai Neung.

Waking up sleepily, Lai Neung says:

Ah...Gentry scholar...

Madam To speaks nervously:

Ah? What has happened to you my daughter?

**Waken up with Madam To's cry, Lai Neung walks slowly to the
edge of the stage to look for her dream. Seeing the fallen
petals, she picks them up and stares blankly.**

Astounded, Madam Toh says:

*Lai Neung, Lai Neung, I understand well that girls are
becoming more moody as they grow up. As your mom, I
don't really want to admonish you. But from now on, you
have to work hard on your study, do not always visit the
garden and have a watchful eye on everything around you.*

Lai Neung nods her head slowly.

Cheung Heung says:

Old Madam, you should return and take a rest. I will take care of young mistress. In fact, young mistress has been ill ever since she studied the Mo poem half year ago.

Madam Toh laugh and says:

Nonsense...she is definitely not ill. Lai Neung, remember my words. Mum has to go now...As saying goes: Mom has always to move around with their children, and that makes mom always being laborious.

Leaves with Ha Heung.

Lai Neung stares blankly until Madam Toh leaves. She moves to flower shadow and plays with them. Covering her face, she moves to the edge of the stage and pants.

Chun Heung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Young Mistress... Young Mistress...why your hands and face are so cold? Alas, Young Mistress, what has made your pretty face changes tremendously all of a sudden?

Lai Neung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Chun Heung, please send me back to my boudoir quick. Prepare the four treasures of study and a four-feet silk for me.

Knowing the situation is not good, Chun Heung nods to Lai Neung and escorts her to leave.

Settings: In the boudoir

Lai Neung rushes and leans against the flowerstand once she enters her room. Panting softly, Lai Neung slightly shakes her sleeves.

Chun Heung prepares several papers on the table for Lai Neung to draw.

Lai Neung says:

Chun Heung, pass me the mirror.

Astounded, Chun Heung says:

Young mistress, are you going to draw or to do make up?

Holds the mirror in her hands and cries:

Young mistress, what have you actually seen which makes you look so abnormal now?

Presents the mirror.

Taking the mirror away from the edge of the stage, Lai Neung sighs and says:

Chun Heung, do I look slimmer than before?

Cheung Heung says:

Not just thin, your pretty face also looks pale like a paper.

Looking into the mirror again, Lai Neung is frightened and says:

I used to be slim and beautiful, how come I am that thin now? Grieving over the departing spring with an interrupted dream, I might pass away really soon. If I don't take this time to portray myself, I simply don't have a chance to do so when misfortunes come unexpectedly. It's easy to portray oneself when she is still pretty; it's hard when one is sad.

Chun Heung is frightened as she holds the light for Lai

Neung. Lai Neung sings the lower phrase of *jungbaan*:

As thin as the waning, let me portray myself on the paper. Just like the Peony Pavilion, which is standing alone in a lonely autumn night. Despite being surrounded by flowers, the pavilion is in solitude as the flowers sleep with the moon in their arms.

Chun Heung speaks:

Young Mistress, when you are playing in the garden, can it be...

Lai Neung says:

Chun Heung, I don't want to hide anything from you. I met a bosom friend when I was visiting the garden.

Taken by surprise, Chun Heung says:

Ah, could it be a ghost?

Lai Neung shakes her head.

Could it be a flower goblin?

Lai Neung shakes her head.

If it's neither a ghost nor a flower goblin, what is the last name of this human being?

Shaking her head, Lai Neung continues to sing:

Drawing a branch of willow as a memento. To write a line, I have to prepare the ink again.

Chun Heung prepares the ink with shaking hands.

Lai Neung continues to sing:

However close the likeness viewed from near at hand,

from farther off one would say this was some
airborne sprite.
Union in some year to come with the
"courtier of the moon"
will be beneath the branches either of plum or willow.

Gwangfa:

After completing my own portrait (**falling her pen**), a
few drops of blood come out from my mouth.

Lai Neung fainted away after splitting blood.

Helping Lai Neung to sit down, Chun Heung shouts and says:

Young Mistress, Young Mistress!

Cries out sadly:

Please don't leave us!

Says in a more rapid manner:

*The knell suddenly comes and the soul of the
beautiful young lady has departed her home.*

Ha Heung and Mui Heung enter with Madam Toh.

**Tutor Chan, Chun Lam and Toh On enter from the left. Upon
their arrival at the boudoir's door, Tutor Chan obstructs the way
of Chun Lam. Chun Lam lingers outside the boudoir.**

Toh Po is frightened and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Alas, my daughter's breath is as weak as the rose. Send
a doctor here quick!*

Toh On leaves in a rush.

Madam Toh chokes with sobs and recites in rhymed *haugu* sadly:

*Lai Neung...Lai Neung, give me a response. It's all the
faults of studying the Mo poem and visiting the garden.*

Tutor Chan recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*I have never heard one could lose her life studying the
Mo poem. I understand how sad you are, Old Madam.
But please don't distort the truth, make me unemployed
and dishonor the literary.*

**Chun Lam shouts loudly outside the boudoir and recites in
rhymed *haugu*:**

*Uncle..Uncle...when cousin dies, there's no need to stick
firmly to the rites and ethics and letting me stay outside
the door.*

Tutor Chan shouts down and says:

No way.

Chun Heung cries and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Master, I will tell no matter you hit me or not. How could I not be sad when mistress left?

To Po says: *It's all the fault of visiting the garden.*

Picking up a rod, Toh Po recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Report honestly on happenings in the garden!

Chun Heung Continues to sing in *yifan mukyu*:

I didn't see anything when I visit the garden with young mistress. Young mistress was at death's door when she returned from the garden. She cried bitterly under the light, telling me that she has met a gentry scholar in the Peony Pavilion. The portrait of young mistress is now being placed under the ink stone. The paper is soaked with her tears. There is a poem written on her portrait. What has happened is just like the lotus picking boat has been overthrown even there is no wind.

Picking up the portrait, Toh Po says:

*However close the likeness viewed from near at hand,
from farther off one would say this was some
airborne sprite.*

*Union in some year to come with the "courtier of the moon",
will be beneath the branches either of plum or willow.*

Tutor Chan giggles and says:

I know what it means, I know.

Toh Po says angrily:

What do you understand?

Tutor Chan recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Old Master, young mistress was doing all right throughout the year. It's only tonight, where there is one more person and that young mistress died. "Will be beneath the branches either of plum or willow". This indicates that the guy that young mistress encountered has got the surname "Mui". It must be Mui Chun Lam who sneaks into the garden!

Toh Po shouts angrily and says:

Chun Lam, come in!

Stunned, Chun Lam says:

Oh, why has the rule been relaxed suddenly?

Toh Po slaps Chun Lam's face twice and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Chun lam, you have been so well treated by us, you really shouldn't have defamed us. Tell me honestly, when did you sneak into the Peony Garden?

Give Chun Lam another slap.

Lai Neung awakes as she hears the noise.

Feeling lost, Chun Lam touches his face and sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa* bitterly:

I have been slapped thrice for no reason. I have been longing for spending time with Lai Neung. But have I ever got the chance? I can only weep quietly.

Waking up, Lai Neung chokes with sobs and says:

Papa (kneels down),

Mama, thank you for your love and care throughout my life. Please forgive me for failing to fulfil a child's duty.

The poem on my portrait refers not to Chun Lam. My death is just mainly due to the dream I had on the short life of falling flowers.

Toh Po responded unhappily.

Lai Neung continues to say:

It is sad that I am leaving now, but glad that I am still a virgin (Toh Po is a bit relieved)

Papa, please bury me under the plum tree after I die... Mom, please put my portrait into a decent box...

Chun Heung, please cry out my name often in front of my grave... Tutor Chan, I have just lasted briefly, please forgive me that I cannot fulfill my duty as your student.

Chun Heung takes Lai Neung to the tent.

Tutor Chan cries out loudly and says:

Alas, I am already at the age of seventy. The death of Lai Neung means that I can no longer stay and enjoy the good food and life here.

House servants enter and say:

Reporting, officials and people of Nam On know that Old Master has become the new Chief Minister, they have prepared the drum music to farewell you.

Toh Po recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Alas, the edict has ordered to me to go to the west but the coincident death of my daughter has deterred me from leaving. I have to decide it quick anyway. Let's just bury my daughter under the plum tree and establish a plum temple to settle her spirit tablet. Tutor Chan, considering that you are old, you can stay in Nam On to help managing the temple. Yet, you are not in any position to direct it. Sister Shek and Miu Fu are here coincidentally. Chun Heung, invite them to come.

Chun Heung takes the order and leaves. Tutor

Chan says:

Thank God, my life has been assured.

(Chun Lam cries) *I just don't understand why you are crying. It's totally none of your business.*

This plum is different from that plum. You plums are of the kind that brings bad luck.

Chun Heung enters with Sister Shek and Siu Yeung Nui. Siu Yeung flaunts her hair.

Toh Po recites in rhymed *haugu*:

My daughter has already gone to heaven. I am going to erect a plum temple for her. Would you please help run it?

Sister Shek recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Old Master has been accumulating virtue all your life. I don't see any problem for me to run the temple.

Toh Po sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

It's hard to have my daughter back from her death. I'd better go and report duty to my family as soon as possible.

Act Two: The Portrait and the Wandering

Spirit Setting: In the Plum Blossom Temple

Shiu Yeung Nui kneels in front of a ritual table and hits the wooden block.

The beginning of *paizi* for curtain raising.

Tutor Chan enters against the wind and sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

I hear the ghost crying every night here in this small lodge,
the whirlwind blows for no reason.

I have been guarding the Plum Blossom Temple for
three years.

Ingot, candles, incense and light have been kept offering.

Shiu Yeung Nui keeps making up while hitting the wooden fish.

Tutor Chan recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Oh! I really doubt if it is a dressing table rather than the
one for worshipping.*

*You shouldn't be a nun if you are reluctant to depart
from the secular world.*

*Once you are a nun, you should never have a desire for
the secular world.*

Shiu Yeung Nui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Tutor Chan, you don't have to make a fuss about trifles.
You understand well that monastics are all vegetarians;
our face wouldn't bleed even if a pin pierces it.
Then why shouldn't we put on some rouge then?*

Stroking her hair.

Tutor Chan speaks: *Evil doer...evil doer.*

Continues reciting in rhymed *haugu*:

*Hey, you should light the candles and lanterns now.
Hiding yourself here the whole day long, I bet you
are singing love songs rather than chanting sutras.*

Shiu Yeung Nui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Ah? Why I am the one who should light the candles and
lanterns?*

*What's the point of Prefect Toh spending money and food
on you?*

Tutor Chan lights the fire annoyingly.

Shiu Yeung Nui keeps chanting.

Lau Mung Mui enters and sings *naamyam*:

One is afraid of the west wind when he travels alone.
The nidifugous swallow encounters the falling snow.
Emaciated scholar like me really can't stand the cold in the
mid-night.

I have used the same old umbrella for three winters.
Dogs and chickens have tricked me with their barks and
crows.
Glad that there is a temple with Buddhist Lantern hanging
up high.
I tried hard to stand the wind and coldness in the snow, and
now I can only make a stop here.

Continues to sing the lower phrase of *yiwong*:

Gosh, I hurt my waist unexpectedly (**falling onto the
ground**) and being covered by the snow dust.

The only way that I can help myself out is to scream

***Gwangfa*:**

like the nightingale waking people up from their sweet
dreams.

Climbing for several steps and cries weakly:

Open the door...open the door for me please...

**Shiu Yeung Nui holds a spirit tablet and a candle, speaks from
the edge of stage:**

Go away, just go. No one is available here to take care
of you. **Using her leg to push Lau away.**

Mung Mui turns his head and says: *Please help, nun.*

**Shiu Yeung Nui steps forwards and holds the candle close enough to
see Mung Mui's face. Her attitude changes totally and says:**

*Please come in, please come in. Even if I have to refrain from
eating my meal, I have to take very good care of you.*

Leading Mung Mui to seat on a bench.

Mung Mui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Nun, I am scholar Lau Mung-mei, travelling to the autumn
exam on my own.*

*Having travelled for miles, it is unexpected to encounter
such a cold snap in Nam On.*

And I cannot stand the cold and hunger.

Shiu Yeung Nui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

I know you are a brilliant scholar from the very first sight.

You won't be that genteel if you are not so bright.

I am Shao Yeung Nui, styled Miu Fu.

I am submitted to Buddhist discipline while keeping my hair.

I am 19 years old.

All physical existence is vanity to me except love.

Tutor Chan enters with a lantern in hand.

Mung Mui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Nun, could you please let me stay in the temple for a few
days? I will leave when the snowstorm stops.*

Shiu Yeung Nui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Monastery used not to welcome man to stay.
But you are so lucky that we have the East and
South Chamber behind this monastery.
I am living in the Eastern one.
You can just stay here if you like.
It is not okay for other man to stay, you are the only one
to have this privilege.*

Tutor Chan shouts and speaks:

*You bug off, Miu Fu. Continues to sing the long
lower phrase of *gwangfa*.*

Your arousing desire for the secular world has made me
bristled. There is no spider cave with the altar. The East
Chamber is not a flowering shrub; the door of the monastery
is only for the monks. The Monastery is just like a brothel
now. Miu Fu has got the desire for the secular world from
the very beginning. I can hardly pretend to know nothing
about this. This pure land is not allowed to serve any guest.
I am the one who manage this monastery.

**Giving Mung Mui the gate, Tutor Chan continues to
say:**

*Go away! Do you think monastery would allow male guest to
stay? If you dare to stay for a second, I will report to the
government office, saying that you break the Buddhist rule.
Go!*

Mung Mui begs and says:

You are a man also...

Tutor Chan becomes angrier and says:

I am different from you. I am a scholar at my seventies.

Sits down angrily.

Mung Mui speaks:

Oh, an old scholar you are. Sorry for my misbehavior.
I am student Lau Mung Mui. Please accept bow and
apologies.

Tutor Chan becomes less angry as the young scholar bows to him.

Mung Mui is hinted by Tutor Chan's facial expression and says:

*As Saints say, one can hardly have silver hair with a
childish face if he is not well-cultured.*

*Old scholar, you do not only have silver hair but also a
childish face. This is indicates you are well-cultured and
worth great respect of others. Please accept my bow once
again. **Bow.***

**Tutor Chan is soothed and intended to return Mung Mui a bow. Yet
he remains dignified and turns his back.**

Mung Mui deliberately turns to Shiu Yeung Nui and asks:

Could you please tell me the surname of this old scholar, nun?

Shiu Yeung Nui says:

His surname is Chan.

Mung Mui subsequently says:

Chan, Lee, Cheung, Wong and Ho are all the big surnames among which family members always have a great life.

Needless to say, Mr Chan must be a noble descent from a renowned family in Sichuan.

No gorgeous clothing though, you have a scholar-like visage.

It's really, really rare. Please accept my bow thrice.

Tutor Chan giggles as if he is possessed. His face backs to normal upon seeing Shiu Yeung Nui and he recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Look, Lau Mung Mui. You are also a Confucius and Mencius student, why do you come down in Nam On and get into this monastery? Do you know you are breaking the propriety?

Lau Mung Mui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Lau: *Alas, even Confucius has suffered from poverty and hunger, and old scholar you are spending your quiet life here at this monastery.*

So no wonder for me, Lau Mung Mui, is now in a desperate state.

Feeling moved, Tutor Chan stands up with slow wooden block strokes, and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Gentry scholar, you come all the way to Nam On.

Come and take a seat. Let me ask you a few questions and you answer them one by one.

Mung Mui casts a complacent glance at Shiu Yeung Nui and sits down slowly.

Tutor Chan recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Let me ask you, gentry scholar. I have been studying for sixty-five years and have only enjoyed good food for four years. I have never received three bows from any gentry scholar like you. **Choke with sobs***

As I am, does it mean learning is meaningless?

Frequently wipe tears from eyes.

Mung Mui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

No, not at all. The most commendable thing is that you don't go with the bad flow for living and meals.

One can be able to do this only when he is well cultured.

Tutor Chan cries and sings Wooden Fish Song *mukyu* in the *yifan* mode:

Old tears are running as I am moved.
A bosom friend is here at the temple with me.
I have been mocked for my whole life, but this young
scholar is not ignorant.
Ah Mung Mui... I wish I had nice wine to serve a good friend
like you. Fortunately, the south mansion is available.
If you don't mind having simple meals, I am willing to take
care of you. **Holding Mung Mui's hands to show sincerity.**

Sister Shek enters from the left.

Mung Mui sighs and sings "A monk misses his wife":

Tragedy makes one pine, time flies.
I wander around with a sword and books on my shoulder,
If I become the number one scholar one day,
I must return with splendid dressing to thank you, the old
scholar.

Tutor Chan holds Mung Mui's elbow and says:

*Young scholar you shouldn't do that, that is more than
I deserve.*

**Covering her mouth, Shiu Yeung Nui laughs and recites in rhymed
haugu:**

*Oh, Tutor Chan, how could a monastery take male guests?
As you said, "The altar is not a spider cave."*

Sister Shek recites in rhymed haugu:

*Tutor Chan, the older you are, the more muddled you are.
Monastery is a lust-free place. How could you let an elater
to stay just for his flattering words?*

On purpose, Mung Mui says:

If it is not convenient for Sister Shek, then I am leaving now.

**Refusing to let Mung Mui go, Tutor Chan holds his hands
and recites in rhymed haugu:**

*No, wait a second.
All the things can go but just not Scholar Lau.
We appreciate each other, how could I let you go and
suffer from the cold outside.
Let me clean the south mansion for you immediately.
There is a light marking the building.
Never go to the east mansion by mistake.
Go and worship the South and East Goddesses with incense
first. Wish the two Goddesses are efficacious, blessing you
to be the number one scholar.*

Continues to speak: *Here I go and clean the room for you.*

Sister Shek bows and says:

A scholar you are. My apologies for my misinterpretation.

Once seeing Tutor Chan leaves, Shiu Yeung Nui gets close to Mung

Mui and laughs, she says:

Aiya, you have such a good communication skill.

Sister Shek shouts and says:

Miu Fu, Tutor Chan will take care of the young scholar.

Come to the rear hall with me and chant the Sutras again.

Shiu Yeung Niu does not want to go.

Sister Shek urges.

Tutor Chan returns and speaks breathlessly:

Gentry scholar, I have forgotten to remind you one thing. Do not make this lust-free place becoming the Moon Palace.

Sister Shek forces Shiu Yeung Nui to leave with her.

Tutor Chan leaves.

Settings: Stage lights turn dark.

Mung Mui speaks in the rhythm of the background music:

Chilly the wind is and the candle light blinks. The atmosphere is so gloomy.

Lai Leung (in a ghost form) enters from the left and leans against a pillar.

Mung Mui lights the incense, bowing to the East Goddess and sings the "Willow Wavering like gold":

I burn the incense in the cold moon. I am so afraid of the chilly wind, and ghost shadows abound.

Approaching Mung Mui Lai Leung wants to be acquainted with him but dares not to.

Mung Mui continues to sing:

Why is the fairy attic so cold tonight? And the red candle lights are shaking.

Lai Leung approaches again, but dares not to be acquainted with Mung Mui.

Mung Mui continues to sing:

It seems that there is a fairy lady ringing the bell on the attic.

Mung Mui continues to sing:

Iron horses are quaking up high there and wind comes in through the window slits.

I burst into tears after worshipping the Bodhisattva.

What a pity that even the strong winds laugh at my down and out life.

When Mung Mui sings the last three lines of the previous verse, Lai Leung indicates that she knows how to show him the place where her portrait is kept.

Flowers falls down from above

Surprised, Mung Mui speaks:

It's so strange. There are no flower branches near the worshipping table. Why are there petals falling from above?

Discovering a portrait as he uses his hands to sweep the falling petals, says: *Ah, here is a portrait!*

Lai Leung is relieved when she sees Mung Mui discovering her portrait and leaves.

Mung Mui speaks:

It looks like a portrait of the Avalokiteshva. Let me take it back to the south mansion for worshipping.

Continues to sing the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Who hides this painting here?

Let me study it carefully under the light.

ACT 3: Union with the Ghost

The beginning of *paizi for curtain raising.*

Holding the portrait, Mung Mui sits and sings:

Who have hidden this picture in the sandalwood box?

Turning up the wick, I examine it in this rainy night.

Speaks:

The guesthouse is boring, thus I visit the temple and by accident, I discover this little portrait that seems to be the one of the Goddess of Mercy.

Given the solemn package of the box, let me appreciate it with a namaste (putting the two palms together and bow) under the light.

Unrolls the portrait with slow wooden block strokes.

Ah, it looks like neither the Goddess of Mercy, nor the Goddess of Moon but a beauty of a renowned family whom I have met before...

Hangs the portrait onto a lamp post and sings the main tune "Mr. Lau playing with the Portrait."

She doesn't look like the Goddess of Mercy who is surrounded by lotus.

If she is the Solemn Master, she should not have hair buns on her head

She doesn't look like the Goddess of Moon also, who should be surrounded with auspicious clouds. If she is a demoted Goddess, she should also travel on the rainbow.

Appreciating the portrait under the light, let me rub my eyes and examine it over again.

I am not the returning Chui Woo, how come this lady looks so familiar to me?

A lonely wanderer I am, it seems that I have met the lady in the portrait before. Why is she holding a green plum in her hand, while I am always alone in my dream?

Sings the tune "Cutting the flower"

How priceless is this painting, in which she looks like the moon covered with a piece of yarn. I am surprised by the unexpected encounter. She looks really elegant. Let me take a careful look at her under the light. I found a poem in small fonts on the portrait as I examine it.

Sings the *faansin jungbaan* in the reversed tuning:

The painting technique excels that of Chui Fai, the penmanship is as elegant as So Wai's. Madam Wai the beauty takes flowers as her hairpin. This is a poem from the Song-Yuan dynasty or the Jin-Tang dynasty? This is an Ode of the Forsaken wife or hearty words of someone?

Recites the poem:

*However close the likeness viewed from near at hand,
from farther off one would say this was some airborne sprite.
Union in some years to come with the
"courtier of the moon"
will be beneath the branches either of plum or willow.*

Continues to sing:

This sentence take me a while to study.

It consists of both the "plum" and the "willow", to which I am related in many ways.

If the unexpected encounter doesn't exist, then who is the one that passes through the peony pavilion, the lake mountain and walks under the stone with me? If we are destined to be together, why she leaves me with her portrait?

Sings the lower phrase of *yiwong*:

What a pity that I can only appreciate and indulge in her beauty with this piece of paper. I would hug her shadow to sleep if I could.

I move towards the silk screen and hang the portrait low on it.

Hangs the portrait at a ventilated place on the screen. The more he looks at the portrait, the more he likes it. Sings in *naamyam*:

Her dress is slightly open and I see her little feet.

Her softness and sentiment are all hidden under her brows.

Sister, at whom you are smiling and showing your beautiful teeth? Your desire for love has been revealed in between the lake and the mountain. Staying in the south mansion, I take it as a temporary home of mine.

I burn incense in front of the moon to welcome your arrival.

Who would pity on the lonely one in this guesthouse?

The lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Perhaps only this beautiful portrait will do.
The sun sets, it's really hard to go through my nostalgic thoughts.

Gwangfa:

Let me tell you how sad I am with a poem.

Takes a pen and writes a poem on the portrait.

Says as he writes.

The painting impressed me by its fascinating naturalness.

You are a fairy on earth if not from the heaven.

I would like to be the one who stay with you, just like
spring standing side by side with the plum and willow.

Mung Mui sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

The lady in the portrait seems to be smiling at me. How
annoying is the wind that comes suddenly and disturbs
the candlelight.

I wanted to call her, but lost my voice as I
realized that she doesn't have a name.

Speaks:

*Having neither a first nor last name, I don't know how
I should address her. What if I style her "Sister"?*

Feeling embarrassed and calls in a soft voice:

Sister, sister.

*To let her come into my dream, why don't I
keep the window screen half opened and so I can search for
her in my dream? Let me hang the portrait high on the tree.*

The wind blows and leaves of the phoenix tree fall.

**Hiding her face under her sleeves, Lai Neung enters and sings
the prelude of "The Spirit of a Young Lady":**

The wind blows off the phoenix tree's leaves.

Enters in the form of a spirit soul.

The tears of a pretty young lady have her red yarn moistened.

The wind is whispering and I stand under the Terrace of
Nostalgia.

I leave my grave as its gate opens at night.

I am afraid as I walk, **Feels frightened as the dogs bark.**

It's the dogs barking towards fireflies in the flower shade.

The beautiful plantain leaves are covering the rack of tomei

flowers (some kind of rose).

(Sounds the night watches)

It's the sound from the drum building/tower,
telling the time in this cold autumn night.

Don't be afraid, don't be afraid.

Knocking the bamboo curtain slightly, let me approach
him with my fragrant soul.

Still in his dream, Mung Mui speaks:

Sister, sister...

Feeling sad but glad, Lai Neung continues to sing:

A handsome man he is, he is calling me in his dream.

Looking outside the window.

There is a new poem on the portrait.

Laughs shyly after reading the poem twice.

He is such an affectionate man. The
two-headed flower buds early.

Missing him so much, I cry badly in front of the window.

I have to approach him without having my rouge being
washed by my tears.

Mung Mui wakes up dreamily.

Lai Neung knocks the door thrice again.

Taken by surprise, Mung Mui says:

*The moon is penetrating into the silk curtain. It's already
late at night, who is knocking at the door? Um, perhaps it's
the rain hitting the bamboo screen and the wind shaking the
iron horses.*

Goes back to sleep.

Lai Neung uses the weakest voice to say:

Mr. Lau, open the door.

Further surprised, Mung Mui sits up and says:

*It's strange, it's neither the rain hitting the bamboo
screen nor the wind shaking the iron horse. It's obvious
that someone is knocking at the door. Who's that?*

Lai Neung says:

It's me.

Mung Mui says:

Oh, it's the voice of a lady. Um, it must be the little nun who is

sending the tea.

Lying against the door.

Sister Siu Yeung, it's late. No thanks.

Lai Neung stumps and says:

Open the door.

Mung Mui speaks:

Well, she came wholeheartedly to send me the tea. How could I keep the door closed. I should open the door to get the vegetarian food and ask her to go right away. Um...let me light the candle first.

Lai Neung enters and sits down shyly.

Mung Mui speaks:

Well, it might be a ghost. Surely there was someone knocking at the door, but I can only see a shadow after opening it. There is nothing at all when I check carefully. Um...let me close the door and go to sleep again.

Places the candle on the desk.

Scared and wants to leave when seeing

Lai Neung

Lai Neung speaks in a low voice:

Mr. Lau.

More frightened, Mung Mui says:

We have never met. Why does she know me?

Lai Neung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Mr. Lau, we have never met in real life, but we did in our dreams. We need not be acquaintances to meet with each other. I hope you can treasure this merry evening.

Mung Mui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Lady, lady, did you come here by riding with the rain or the fair wind?

Frightened.

When did you come in? Why didn't I notice that? You have made me in the air and feel dizzy.

Lai Neung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Mr. Lau, as the saying goes, it's your luck to have friends visiting you in the wind and rain. If I were not your friend, how could I have come all the way in the wind and rain? Why

is it a must for you to know how did I get here. I have come anyway.

Indeed, I entered when you were making your romantic dream. Sigh, since you are afraid why do you desire, and if do desire , why do you have to be afraid?

Mung Mui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Ah, when did I make romantic dream? Even I have had, it's only because the guesthouse is boring and I miss the lady in the portrait.

Lai Neung closed her lips and gives an admiring glance to Mung Mui. Leaning against the plantain tree, she plays with her red yarn. Mung Mui follows and soliloquizes:

I should have avoided her for her dubious background. But she looks so pretty and attractive, why don't I go down to the garden.

Goes downstairs with fear and love.

and take a look at her.

Sings to the tune "The Regret of the Two Stars"

She looks like a fairy coming down to the earth from the moon. She plays and plays with her red yarn.

The mist is hiding up the moon. Could it be the reason that she lost her way home?

Shaking her head, Lai Neung picks up the tune and sings:

I live under the willow shade. I stand in the wind and beg for sheltering.

Stepping forward, Mung Mui bows and sings:

I do not mean to investigate you. I do not have a drink to offer you in the middle of the night.

Take a lantern and find your way home.

Shaking her head, Lai Neung picks up the tune and sings:

I feel sad as my life is just like a flower in the mist. Toh Lai Neung doesn't have a home; I weep for my loneliness.

Taken by surprised, Mung Mui says:

Oh, you don't even have a home. It is not reasonable for lady To be homeless in this world. Oh, can it be...

Continue to sing to the tune "The Regret of the Two stars":

the fairy lady likes my charm and thus coming to my room

secretly?

What a pity that I am a poor scholar, which seems not a good match.

Lai Neung smiles bitterly and says:

You are wrong.

Continues to sing to the tune:

We are a perfect match, I came to your room despite it is late. I admire your charm, I love your charm. I cry and wait for you under the moon. Staying under the willow shade, my heart longs for the butterfly coming to say that it understands the flower.

Mung Mui is surprised and says:

Lady, why are you speaking in a tearful voice?

Continues to sing:

You look so beautiful when you cry. Grieving over the passing of time, you want to sprout again like the love flowers.

Speaks:

Lady, have you been newly widowed?

Lai Neung continues to sing:

I am still a virgin and have not yet married.

Feels shy.

I live in my boudoir as a single lady.

Mung Mui picks up and sings:

It is destiny and luck that you remain unmarried fairy.

Wants to get close to Lai Neung but dares not to.

I am afraid.

We meet each other under the plantain tree.

Lai Leung laughs and sings:

Sir, don't be afraid. Don't you remember the blowing of petals in front of the altar when you were worshipping? I did that purposely so as to lead you to find my portrait.

Remains surprised, Mung Mui says:

So where are you from actually?

Lai Neung says:

Why do you have to question the rain and cloud, and afraid of the wind and rain? Portrait...portrait...as I was born out of it, naturally I came from it.

Mung Mui says:

So the young lady comes from the picture. Could you be the pretty lady in the portrait?

Runs upstairs, takes the portrait and compares it with Lai Neung again and again.

Lai Neung smiles inwardly and says:

True or not?

Mung Mui says:

No difference at all.

Lai Neung says:

Only the waist is slimmer.

Mung Mui says:

As pretty as the flower, you look great both in real life as well As in the portrait.

Lai Neung says:

The value of the portrait is lowered for my pretty face has been covered with cold mist.

Mung Mui says affectionately:

Let's go and sleep together in the love tent.

Feeling shy, Lai Neung dodges and says:

I'm afraid that my/the coldness of my skin will scare you.

Mung Mui says:

It won't, It won't.

Lai Neung says shyly:

I am afraid...afraid that...the time signal is interrupting.

Mung Mui holds Lai Neung's red yarn and sings:

I close the window so as to shut the moon off.

Feeling sad and complicated, Lai Neung weeps and says:

My husband...Mung Mui...

Continues to sing the wooden fish song in *yifan* mode:

Please allow me to say something sad before the west window is closed.

Master Song Yuk should have mercy on the unfortunate flower. It is not the autumn rain that urges me to get married but he should understand women always want the tender love from men. I am neither Man Kwan the newly widowed; nor the Goddess of Moon who steals the cinnabar, nor a

passenger with a golden hairpin who sneaks away under the blue bridge; nor a peach blossom lady who sends the herbal tea at midnight.

Chokes with sobs.

Mung Mui says:

Lady, I know you are innocent, and you are different from those lascivious ones. But who are you then?

Lai Neung continues to sing:

Lai Neung worth's for "a thousand gold pieces", and I am born the Minister's family. I still remember my parents' words after all the years.

Sobs.

My father says I am a piece of taintless jade from Kun Shan.

Chokes with sobs and sings the upper phrase of *gwangfa* without prelude:

Only because of the interrupted dream I had in the garden, I made my parents worry.

Mung Mui seems to be inspired and says:

The interrupted dream...the interrupted dream...oh

Sings the lower phrase of *jungbaan*:

When I was in Lau Chuen, I dreamed of a pretty lady who was standing under the plum tree. She held my hand and asked for love. The love was yet to be continued as I was woken from the dream. We used the characters of the "plum" and "willow" as our love symbols. When I examine the portrait under the light, I hold the hands of the Goddess of Moon and ask if she is the lady in my dream.

Lai Leung nods while weeping. Mung Mui also cries with Lai Neung and continue to sing:

You are the one in my dream. And I am the one who dreams. This small lodge is the fairy bamboo raft that brings us together. We can take your charming portrait as our matchmaker. Although I am poor, just hope that my literary talent will be appreciated and become valuable some day. "Will be beneath the branches either of willow or plum". If I

am participating in the civil exam, I must return with good results and honor your family.

Gwangfa:

Let us make our marital pledge at the main hall before your parents despite my poverty. Come on, come with me.

Feeling embarrassed, Lai Neung shakes her head lightly and sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Don't go and/to beg my parents.

Mung Mui feels sad and says:

Could it be that the Minister disdains the poor?

Lai Neung shakes her head desperately and says:

My tears would fall like rain.

Mung Mui says:

It must be that the Minister doesn't welcome a son-in-law without any official title.

Lai Neung keeps shaking her head and continues to sing *gwangfa*:

Silent and cold is my boudoir. It has been empty for three years.

Mung Mui says:

It is normal that people don't visit a maiden's boudoir.

Feeling difficult to explain, Lai Neung stomps lightly and sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Only my bed is left there. It is placed under the waning moon with spider webs.

Mung Mui sighs and sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

How could I assume to be the man whom the virgin has been expecting? I know she has her heart on me, but all will just be an illusion if I don't make a name for myself.

Lai Neung cannot bear to see and says:

Mung Mui...Mung Mui...

Remains unresponsive, Mung Mui stomps lightly and says:

Alas!

Lai Neung gets closer to Mung Mui and sings to the tune of "An Ode for the Forsaken Wife"

I have already given you my heart and you need not to worry. My heart is really in pain. Please smile at me, Mung Mui.

Mung Mui smiles at Lai Neung.

Lai Neung speaks:

Our love has gone through life and death, how could it be possible that I don't want you to propose our marriage to my parents? But my body is cold and stiff, and it could vanish easily like the rosy cloud. I dare not to mention what happened in the past, it is really difficult to tell the truth. I'll let you solve a riddle. Mung Mui...Mung Mui, the light has gone and the serendipity has come to an end. I am waiting for you to come to my well decorated cave, which is now half-illuminated. Do you get it?

Mung Mui shakes his head innocently.

Lai Neung continues to say:

Alas, it would be really difficult if you can't get it.

Continue to sing to the tune of "An Ode for the Forsaken Wife"

I am sleeping eternally under the willow shade and my face is covered with a red yarn. I hear the autumn rain in the plum forest, and let it sprinkle over my grave. The ruthless soil is my home, to which the wind and rain hit.

Speaks:

Mung Mui, we love each other so much, I dare not tell you the story. Think you may ... you may ... understand it now.

Worried and feels bad.

Mung Mui speaks:

I don't understand. What do you mean by the autumn lamp and the night rain? All these are words by which maidens grieve over the passing of spring. Fine, let me try to solve the riddle.

Entering with a lantern in hand, Tutor Chan overhears and says:

*All the lights here in the temple have been dimmed, but love talks are still going on in the opposite building. If it is not the bad scholar who feels unwell, it must be him who has hidden a nun there. **Goes up and knocks on the door.***

Mung Mui says:

Who is there at the door?

Tutor Chan says:

It's me. Am sending you the tea.

Lai Leung soliloquizes at the edge of the stage and says:

Oh, I recognize that this is the voice of Tutor Chan.

Alerted, Mung Mui says:

It's late, Tutor Chan. I don't need any tea.

Tutor Chan says:

Sending you the tea? Do you think I am really sending you the tea? Of course not! I just want to check you room. Open the door quickly!

Frightened, Mung Mui holds Lai Neung's hands and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

You are the daughter of the Minister and I am a young scholar, we have to save our face. The others will mock and berate us if our secret is exposed.

Lai Neung smiles inwardly and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Alas, Mung Mui, see the cold moon is shedding its light on us and the autumn lantern is illuminated. There is no way for us to escape. Why don't you just go and open the door?

Mung Mui is more desperate and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Lai Neung, how come you are still so calm while I am half dead with fright. Unmarried man and woman should keep a distance from each other, not to mention having a tryst in a room. This will be really suspicious.

Lai Neung can't help laughing and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

It doesn't matter, Mung Mui. As the saying goes: If destiny prescribes, encounter will work out despite after travelling thousand miles, if not, one won't even recognize when facing each other. Tutor Chan and I won't see each other. He is too old and his eyes are not good enough to see.

Signals Mung Mui to open the door.

Mung Mui says doubtfully:

How could he not able to see you while you are standing here?

Lai Neung laughs and says:

Just go...

Stands under the flower shade.

Standing outside the door, Tutor Chan says:

Hey, I can hear a female voice even my ears are not good. If you don't open the door, I will just bang it down.

In a hurry, Mung Mui says:

Coming, coming... I'm coming!

Tutor Chan says:

Huh! Gentry scholar, see what a terrific mess you have achieved?.

Tutor Chan checks the garden and the underneath of plantain tree with his lantern.

Lai Neung giggles.

Mung Mui shivers as he sees Lai Neung and signals her to move back.

Lai Neung signals Mung Mui not to be afraid.

Tutor Chan takes a look at the direction where Mung Mui is pointing.

Lai Neung dodges swiftly.

Mung Mui thinks that Tutor Chan must be able to see Lai Neung.

He keeps shivering at the edge of the stage and dares not to see.

Turning his backs, Tutor Chan scolds and says:

Gentry scholar, aren't you crazy? Neither a human being nor a ghost is here. Why are you pointing here and there? You must be getting crazy.

Taken by surprise, Mung Mui says: Ah...

And he soliloquizes:

You are really so short-sighted that you can't even see anything.

Tutor Chan says:

Gentry scholar, you must be playing a trick on me if you are not crazy. I am sure that I heard a female voice here in your room. You must have hidden a nun here!

Mung Mui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Don't say so, Tutor Chan. Nuns have devoted their lives to serve the Buddha. You shouldn't tarnish the cassock (Buddhist gown) as an educated scholar.

Lai Neung takes this chance to sweep and grab some flower petals.

She spread them over in front of Tutor Chan.

Tutor Chan looks to the left and then to the right but finds nobody.

Mung Mui signals Lai Neung, blaming that she was taking a big risk.

Tutor Chan shouts and says:

Crazy scholar, what tricks are you playing again?

Recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Weird it is, there are flowers neither in front of nor behind me, but why are petals falling on my head? This must be the home of fox if not a ghost house. It's really scary as I think

about it.

Mung Mui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Tutor Chan, this is the south mansion but not the fox cave;
this is an elegant house, but not a ghost ruin. It's you who
think that there is a ghost with your suspicious heart. You
should go and rest earlier. Why do you have to force
yourself checking my room?*

Tutor Chan laughs and says:

Why should I be afraid of ghost?

Continues to sing the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

The elder me has got an/a piece ancient jade within my
bosom. Marking the paper late at night, I have got
vermillion on my palms.

Lai Neung is scared as she listens, and hides at the back of Mung Mui. Tutor Chan sings the upper phrase of *gwangfa*:

Let me shed the light on the plantain tree and flash light upon
the spring. I put my piece of jade on top of the lantern.

Mung Mui hides up Lai Neung with his body. Lai Neung then moves next to the portrait and disappears.

Tutor Chan recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Gentry scholar, I am sure there was a shadow right
behind you. Yet she goes into the portrait once I shed the
light on her. What kind of portrait is on the wall?*

Mung Mui pants and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Tutor Chan, I do not have a clear mind and sight now. You
go and take a closer look at it on your own.*

Tutor Chan soliloquizes:

*Um...I am sure that was a shadow. Could it be the lady in
the portrait has become a fairy? Let me take a closer look.*

Tutor Chan cries.

Taken by surprise, Mung Mui says:

Tutor Chan, why do you cry when you see the portrait?

Tutor Chan sings the wooden fish song *mukyu* in *yifan* mode:

I cry and cry and cry. The girl in the portrait is my beloved
student. She respects me a lot and that makes me miss her
every minute and second. I know that she treats me with her
real heart. How could I help not thinking of her? When did you
sneak into her room to take her portrait and hang it up

here? Lau Mung Mui, I thought you are a poor scholar but it turns out that you are a lech! You really shouldn't take the portrait of our young mistress and put it here for your own appreciation. You will definitely seduce woman since you stole young mistress' portrait. I am sure that I heard a female voice in your room. Why can't I see her now? You must have hidden a nun here.

**Hearing the noise, Sister Shek goes upstairs with Siu Yeung Nui.
Mung Mui shakes his hands at Tutor Chan.**

Tutor Chan moves forward and says angrily:

The little nun is young and attractive. She exchanged flirting glances with you at the Plum Temple. Mung Mui, I give you half an hour and you must hand the nun over. Otherwise, I will send you to the government and blame/accuse you for/of having a relationship with nuns.

Sister Shek enters the room with Siu Yeung Nui.

Sister Shek recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Tutor Chan, what has the gentry scholar done so that you have to scold him late at night?

Tutor Chan becomes speechless.

Siu Yeung Nui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

I heard that you kept mentioning my name. Did I offend you at all? You shouldn't have insulted me.

Tutor Chan recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Sister Shek, the matter is not trivial. I heard a female voice here in the south mansion tonight. I am not sure if this little nun has escaped and re-entered the room. Sister Shek, you are the eldest one, you are in the best position to judge.

Siu Yeung Nui shows contempt to Tutor Chan.

Sister Shek recites in rhymed *haugu* seriously:

Tutor Chan, the little nun has stayed and chanted the sutras with me since evening. She hasn't been away from me for a second. You are just stirring up troubles.

Mung Mui speaks:

You now understand, Tutor Chan.

Tutor Chan says:

Ah, if there isn't any one here, could it be a ghost?

Haugu.

If I have wronged you, I am willing to be struck by lightning. Aside from Siu Yeung Nui and Sister Stone, there shouldn't be any female in this house. There was one more when Lai Neung was here back then. What a pity that she has already passed away for three years.

Frightened, Mung Mui falls onto the ground.

Siu Yeung Nui takes the chance to express her feelings to Mung Mui by helping him to stand up.

Tutor Chan continues to rhyme in *haugu*:

I am afraid that the candlenut coffin has gone with the wind. No more beauty is here in this garden. Could it be a fairy lady who dispersed the petals just now?

Sister Shek says:

Gentry scholar, you need not be afraid.

Continues to sing the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Uneducated scholar like him can hardly insult your fame. As the saying goes, an elephant's tooth can never be from a dog's mouth. Old stubborn Chan, you should return to your study room and never defame others again.

Takes Tutor Chan to leave with her.

Taking the chance, Siu Yeung Nui says:

Gentry scholar, is it necessary for you to be so afraid that even your hands have become cold.

Sister Shek turns back and says:

Nun, tomorrow is the third anniversary of young mistress' death. We should burn joss paper in front of the grave. Come and prepare things in advance with me.

Siu Yeung Nui follows Sister Shek and leaves with her and Tutor Chan.

Dropping himself onto a chair, Mung Mui sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Sigh, don't even mention matching with a portrait. It's only passing clouds that come and go.

The wind blows the candlelight out.

In consternation, Mung Mui covers himself with his sleeves and lays prone on the table.

Lai Neung enters with the rhythm of drums and gongs from the flower shade on the right.

Mung Mui...Mung Mui...Mung Mui...

Pulls his sleeves.

Mung Mui looks up and sees Lai Neung. He squats on the ground and shivers.

Choking with sobs, Lai Neung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Mung Mui, Mung Mui...could it be that you have got
an answer to the riddle and don't need a hint?*

Nodding his head frequently, Mung Mui still shivers and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*The light is out and the serendipity has come to an end.
It's the night ghost who returns to her home.*

Lai Neung's voice turns dull and says:

A night ghost returning to her home...

Feels ashamed and continues to sing the long lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

My beauty has long been buried and ignored under the ground. My body is surrounded with cold mist inside the candlenut coffin. In front of you is not a zombie worshipping the moon but my soul. Human beings are afraid of ghost since ancient times. Who would like to be the returning ghost at night?

Cries.

A dream has cost my death for three years but a meeting of us has concluded my wish of three lives. Only the legacy of the love between a human and a ghost remains for further comments.

Mung Mui kneels down in front of Lai Neung and sings the tune of "The Love of a Human and a Ghost":

Lai Neung, I am not afraid even you are a ghost.
Embrace my knees and call Lai Neung bitterly, I crawl on the floor.

Lai Neung makes two steps forward and says:

Mung Mui, are you really not afraid of me?

Mung Mui continues to sing:

You have died for me, like fragrance vanishing from the flower in the mirror. I cry for I am holding a lute with broken strings. I worship and admire your gorgeous dead body, like embracing the rosy evening clouds.

Continues to say bitterly:

Lai Neung, Lai Neung, you are the daughter of a renowned family, from which you received love and care since you were young. I am a poor student and have nothing to rely on at all. What a surprise that you fell in love with me in your dream and died for me. You couldn't be my woman when you were alive. There's no question you are my wife in your afterlife. Lai Neung my wife...

Lai Neung starts to cry.

Don't cry. Wait for me under the loquat tree. Let me go hang myself from the rafters. Even if we are not together in the human world, we are family in the netherworld.

Choking with sobs, Lai Neung kneels down slowly. She holds Mung Mui's face with both hands and sings to the previous tune:

Mung Mui, it is worthy to give you my heart. Holding you in my arms, I cry out your name loud and bloody tears run down my beautiful face.

Mung Mui says:

Lai Neung my wife, release me and let me die.

Lai Neung holds Mung Mui tightly in her arms and sings:

You are willing to die for me. Kind and merciful you are. I won't blame the heaven and earth but I feel glad and honoured instead. The revived flower is budding again.

Continues to speak as she cries:

Mung Mui, if you didn't tell me your sincere thoughts, I would regret and be ashamed even I am reborn...Mung Mui my husband.

Hides her face under her sleeves

Although I died for grieving over the departure of spring. Fortunately the Infernal King rechecked the marriage registry, and found out that we first had physical love in our dreams and got married later in the human world. Despite my name is registered on the ghost record, my body remains intact. Today the human world is welcoming me again and my days in the netherworld has come to an end. I died for you in the past and live for you again now.

Urges Mung Mui:

Mung Mui, if you are willing to open my coffin before the

seventh hour tomorrow, our love is to be continued.

Mung Mui holds Lai Neung's hands happily.

Feeling lost, Mung Mui cries and says:

Lai Neung...Lai Neung

Continues to say doubtfully:

Only holy spirits would never die in this world. I have never heard of any revival after dying for three years.

Turning her head, Lai Neung approaches Mung Mui anxiously.

She holds his hands tightly and says:

Mung Mui, I have another reminder for you and hope you can remember. If you are taking me as your wife, you must not miss the time limit. If we fail to meet the deadline, that means... I will never be able to see the sun again.

A cock crows thrice.

Mung Mui sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Crack the coffin then save the reborn flower.

Settings: The grave yard next to the Peony Pavilion.

Sister Shek and Siu Yeung Nui burn the joss money in front of Lai Neung's grave.

Getting rid of Sister Shek and Siu Yeung, Mung Mui cracks the tomb with a hoe.

Sister Shek recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Gentry scholar, are you possessed by the devil or are you crazy? If the others see that you are cracking the grave, you will be put in prison.

Siu Yeung Nui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Master, don't blame me for I am standing on his side. If he is a thief, would he plunder the grave in front of us? It's obvious that he does that with reasons.

Wiping his sweat as he digs, Mung Mui says:

Miu Fu, I am not available to answer whatever question you ask now. Just hope that you can remind me when the seventh hour is approaching.

Siu Yeung Nui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Gentry scholar, it's the seventh hour when the sun comes Above the Peony Pavilion. The sundial is always accurate.

Mung Mui looks at the rising sun and says:

Oh my God!

Siu Yeung Nui feels strange and pulls Sister Shek away.

The sun is approaching the top of the pavilion.

Mung Mui turns his heads and looks at the sun again. He gives up using the hoe but his hands to excavate the coffin.

Siu Yeung Nui and Sister Shek asks:

Gentry scholar, what are you doing?

Mung Mui pants. Using his hands to excavate while asking Sister Shek and Siu Yeung Nui for help.

Sister Shek and Siu Yeung Nui says together:

Crazy scholar, how could one be reborn after dying for three years?

The sun has already reached the edge of the Peony Pavilion. Turning back and see the sun, Mung Mui digs even more rapidly with his bloody hands. He says:

Listen to me when you are standing on the terrace. I have not been unfaithful to you. I wish there could be bloody waves to wash away the soil. Lai Neung my wife, if your reminders are all true, then you dream of revival will vanish right away.

Siu Yeung Nui says:

Wait.

Continues to sing the lower phrase of a couplet:

Cannot bear to see the burying of a talent. Let me dig with the hoe...

As Siu Yeung Nui is digging, Sister Shek gives a hand also.

Mung Mui exerts all his strength to hold up the coffin.

Lai Neung screams from the inside of the coffin and says:

Mung Mui...Mung Mui...

Sister Shek and Siu Yeung Nui look stunned.

Mung Mui gives Sister Shek the cover of coffin and she throws it into the lotus pond. Mung Mui then throws Lai Neung's yarn to Sister Shek, again, she throws it into the lotus pond.

Lai Neung sits up in the coffin with her eyes closed.

Mung Mui cries out Lai Neung's name continuously.

In consternation, Sister Shek says:

Gentry scholar, gentry scholar, is Miss Toh reborn or her corpse has ...

Mung Mui says:

Of course she is reborn.

Sister Shek says:

Oh, Miss To has returned to life. Let me prepare the soul reviving pill.

Still closing her eyes, Lai Neung says:

Mung Mui...

Feeling complicated, Mung Mui sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Her revived soul is not stable yet. Miu Fu, you go and get her a cup of Seven-treasure tea.

Lai Neung vomits the mercury ingot that was in her mouth.

Siu Yeung Nui gives her the tea and picks up the silver/mercury ingot immediately.

Mung Mui says:

Miu Fu, the silver/mercury ingot is the proof of Lai Neung's rebirth and I take it as my treasure. Please return it to me, I will have some other rewards for you.

Siu Yeung returns Mung Mui the ingot.

Lai Leung sings the *faansin yiwong* in reversed tuning:

The singing of cuckoos reminds me that I have returned to life. I see this misted and blurred world again.

Rubs her eyes and sings again:

Avoiding the light, I open my eyes again.

It feels like I am walking in the mist and rosy clouds.

Everything looks so unreal and I sigh for my slimming waist.

Sister Shek enters with the soul reviving pill.

Siu Yeung Nui puts the pill into the tea she prepares.

Mung Mui helps Lai Neung to drink the tea.

Lai Neung vomits. But she becomes more conscious and says:

Thanks, Mr. Lau...

Mung Mui is extremely happy and says:

She is really reborn. Thanks God! Lai Neung!

Tries to hold Lai Neung into his arms.

Lai Neung stays away from Mung Mui.

Mung Mui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Lai Neung, you need not to be shy. This is Sister Shek and this is Sister Miu Fu, both of them manage your grave. You did more than throwing yourself into my arms last night. What can't we be more intimate now?

Lai Yeung shyly recites in rhymed *haugu*:

My husband, I am a human being today while I was a ghost yesterday. As the saying goes, whatever ghosts do, it's all illusion. Yet, human must/should obey the ethics and rites. How can I not blush when you get close to me?

Mung Mui nods his head and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Lai Neung, we met each other three years ago in our dream and we became husband and wife last night. We could continue our love at the south mansion tonight as both the moon and lights are relighted.

Lai Neung feels more shy and recites in rhymed *haugu*

*My husband, making love in the dream was union of our spirits.
My revived body is now just as feeble as the mace.*

Sister Shek laughs and says:

Congratulations, gentry scholar and young mistress.

Continues to recite in rhymed *haugu*:

The revived Miss Toh has to get married anyway. Minister Toh is now serving the court at Wai Yeung. Having me as the matchmaker and witness, young mistress can form a family despite in a rush. As gentry Scholar has to go for the civil exam in Lam On, why don't you buy a small boat and stay temporarily in Hangzhou? You must go. If what happened today is disclosed, the young mistress will be considered as an evil spirit and the gentry scholar the grave raider. If the gentry scholar is to be caught, he will be sentenced to jail.

Mung Mui says:

Sister Shek's words are true. Don't know if young mistress agrees?

Lai Neung nods her head shyly.

Mung Mui sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

We are going to have our first married night at the Su Causeway. I will then go for the imperial/civil exam and wish that I can come top!

Lai Neung says: *Wait.*

Continues to sing the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Taking off my golden hairpin and bracelet so as to avoid attention from government officials on our way. Sister Shek,

thanks for your help, but I cannot get you into trouble. We'll live by the Su Causeway with a willow and a plum planted in front of our door gate. Come whenever you want to , Aunt. Having a matchmaker and a witness would help us get rid of gossips.

Continues to sing the upper phrase of *gwangfa*:

To remember what has happened today, my husband, can you take me and get the portrait back?

Lai Neung Leaves with Mung Mui from the left.

Sister Shek recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Miu Fu, the daughter from a renowned family looks really different. She has been really considerate. She thinks about the future and us.

Siu Yeung Nui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Aunt, why don't we go back to the temple in Hangzhou to avoid the government's investigation?

Sister Shek and Siu Yeung Nui leaves from the left.

Tutor Chan enters with candles and joss paper. Slipping into the empty coffin, he says:

How come the coffin is empty?

Continues to sing the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Who has excavated the candlenut coffin, taken all the treasures away and ruined the precious body of the virgin lady? I can't help crying bitterly and loudly.

Continues to say:

What a pity, the bad guy should only have taken the treasures But not throwing Lai Neung's body into the lotus pond.

Cries for a while and says:

I guess it was Lau Mung Mui, the good looking but poor scholar, who did the thing. His heart is just as bad as the wolves'.

I am going to look for him in the south mansion. If I can't get him there, I will leave for Wai Yeung immediately and report the whole story to the Minister.

***Gwangfa*:**

Describing how he looks and dresses like, we are making a public notice to arrest him!

The Peony Pavilion

ACT 4: Visiting the Relatives and Meeting the Mother

The beginning of *paizi* for curtain raising.

Beating the wooden block fish, Sister Shek enters and raps in rhymed speech *bak laam*:

Flower in the mirror, moon in the water. The cotton from the willow, snow on the dike. It's unbelievable that life could be reborn in this world. There's nobody here, saying about the revival in secret wouldn't be a matter. It has been three months since separating with Lai Neung. I am going down the hill to visit her. There're really a plum and a willow in front of the gate.

Knocks on the fence gate and says:

Is Lai Neung home?

Lai Neung enters and opens the gate. Taken by surprise, she says:

Oh...Aunt...

With tears under her lashes, Lai Neung sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

My cold body has regained warmth from my husband and almost fully recovered. But when I compare my face in the mirror to that in the portrait, it has yet to be recovered to the level of beauty back in those years.

Sister Shek laughs and says:

Lai Neung, how could one be fully recovered in just three months after being buried under the soil for three years? As long as you two love and care for each other, and be inseparable like the rain and the mist, I'm sure that it won't take you too long to get fully recovered.

Oh, Lai Neung, why can't I see the joy but just tears from your face? Can it be...?

Stops weeping, Lai Neung laughs and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Aunt...my husband is a really good husband and the meals that I enjoy are also good. I used not to worry; yet a guest from Wai Yeung told me that Lee Chuen has initiated a riot and my parents are in danger now. I really worry about them and so I can't help my tears falling down.

Sister Shek recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Lai Neung, your relationship with your husband is as good as that with you parents, it's no surprise that you worry and cry for them. Why don't you ask the gentry scholar to go to Wai Yeung and check on your parents' well-being?

Lai Neung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Aunt...I wish I could have done what you have suggested. We would not have been staying here at the Su Causeway if my husband were qualified to go and visit my parents. It's me who do not want our family to have son-in law without official title. I only wish Mung Mui can come top in the civil exam and that he can meet my parents with his glory. Unfortunately, the imperial court is now focusing on the warfare in the south of Wai Yeung and the exam results have thus not been released.

Sister Shek recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Lai Neung, you are really considerate. You demonstrate how a daughter of a distinguished family should be. But as sayings go, family relations is just as deep as the sea, scholarly honor is just only temporary. Your revival can sooth your parent's heart forever, but fame and honor can just make them happy for a short while.

Nodding her head with the slow wooden block strokes, Lai Neung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Thank you aunt for your sincere reminder. Let me beg my husband to go when he is back. Aunt, why don't you come in and have some tea? I still have to prepare clothing for the coming winter.

Sister Shek says:

Lai Neung, let me help you. You go under the bamboo fence and wait for your husband.

Lai Neung sweeps the fallen plum blossom petals next to the bamboo fence.

Mung Mui enters angrily and sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa* at the edge of the stage:

The exam results still haven't been released in the Eastern City; I do not blame the war but the imperial court. Scholars are always highly regarded by the Son of Heaven, but who knows they have a bitter life?

Going up to Mung Mui, Lai Neung holds his hands and says:

Mung Mui, my husband.

Mung Mui says:

Alas, I have made a meaningless walk again.

Lai Neung laughs very gently and says:

My dear husband, you need not to sigh, as you will become the Prize Candidate anyway. I am assured as I studied with you under the autumn lamp at this Su Causeway.

Mung Mui smiles bitterly and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Lai Neung, if I did not have this reviving romance with you, failing to get prized in three or thirty years would mean the same to me. But now because of this reviving romance, I have to get prized as soon as possible so that you won't suffer.

Lai Neung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Mung Mui, you treat me well, I know. I wanted to talk to you actually...but since we are so much into one another...

Relaxed and says:

Well, just let it be. The order is withdrawn before my mouth opens.

Mung Mui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Lai Neung, say whatever you want to. Never give me riddles just as we were under the moon in the South Mansion.

I know that I am not as clever as you are.

Covering her lips, Lai Neung laughs and says:

My dear husband, you still remember what happened on the South Mansion that night...

Mung Mui says:

I remember of course. You called me as your husband for a hundred times and shed a thousand drops of sad tears...

Lai Neung feels shy and says: Ah...

Still feeling shy, she continues to sing the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

I have yet to report my rebirth to my parents. My homesick tears reduce my happiness. I wish my dear husband could go to Wai Yeung today. Yet separating with you, even just for a short while, makes me feel bad.

Mung Mui says:

Ah! You ask me to go to Wai Yeung to see my parents-in-law.

Anxiously waving his both hands, Mung Mui sings the long lower

phrase of *yiwong*:

I am still wearing cheap clothes, and I lost my confidence and pride for I am a poor scholar. I still haven't succeeded in the civil examination, I feel ashamed to go into your parent's house. And I just can't stand their teasing laughter. I am afraid that your parents won't take me as their son-in-law. I will fall when they bawl at me. Please forgive me, I just can't persuade myself to go.

Lai Leung laughs and says:

I don't think the situation would be that serious. My husband, every word you said is just so "ghostly funny."

Mung Mui laughs and says:

Not as "ghostly funny" as you do.

Lai Neung says:

Mung Mui, guess how would my parents treat you when you arrive in Wai Yeung? Listen to me...

Sings the long lower phrase of long *yiwong*:

My father would be surprised when you show the proof of my revival and he just couldn't wait to admit that you are his son-in-law. Report your name under the jade platform and little maids would regard you as their young master.

Admiring exclamations will fill the corridors. Chun Heung will go and report her Madam the good news. My mother will call you as her good son-in-law and ask about my rebirth.

Mung Mui is happy and says: *Is that true?*

Continues to sing the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Oh, isn't that I can get their recognition before I come top in the civil exam? If Minister To really admits and calls me as his son-in-law, my head will be turned and do not know how to respond.

Lai Leung says inwardly:

My father has just been honored as the new Chief Minister, it's natural that there are thousands of guests in the dining hall. There will be no one but you to entertain him, making him happy in his lonely old age.

Mung Mui says:

The son-in-law can entertain his old age. Lai Neung, then I am leaving now.

Bows and is going to leave.

Lai Neung says: Wait a moment.

Continues to raps in rhymed speech *bak laam*:

When you make this trip to Wai Yeung, don't feel ashamed of yourself. Although you are yet to be a prize candidate of the civil exam, you will achieve that eventually. Dress properly, head up and straighten your waist. You have to get familiar with my parents before you go up to the white jade hall. My father is very strict; he runs our family in the way that he does for his office. You must be careful when dealing with him, and be respectful to him all the time. My mom is a very kind person; she will offer help whenever you need. If we compare our mother with the Goddess of Mercy, she is even kinder than her.

Mung Mui says:

I will bear all this in mind, Lai Neung. I am going now.

Lai Neung holds Mung Mui's sleeves again and says: Wait a moment.

Continues to raps in rhymed speech *bak laam*:

I keep reminding you again and again, but there are still thousands of reminders I would like to make. The Minister needs a marriage proof to get acquainted with his son-in-law. Don't worry that you have got nothing to prove; I have my portrait here.

Mung Mui says:

You have been reminding for half day long. I will remember all what you have said. I will go now.

Nodding her head, Lai Neung says all of a sudden.

Wait ...

Mung Mui turns and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Alas, not even leaving home for ten feet, she has called me to turn my head for three times. Lai Neung, if we are so difficult to separate, what do you have to ask me to go right away?

Lai Neung laughs bitterly and says:

Mung Mui, we have to depart from each other eventually. What I worry is, if my dad asks for evidence to show my rebirth, I am afraid that my portrait still cannot make things clear.

Mung Mui laughs and says:

Lai Neung, if you are not forgetful, you should remember that I still have the mercury ingot that was contained in your mouth. The ingot has got the mark of the Prefect's Office. If you are not reborn, how could I have got this mercury ingot.

Mung Mui takes out the mercury ingot and plays with it.

Taken by surprise and delight, Lai Neung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Oh, Mung Mui, you are even smarter than I am.

Mung Mui says:

I am really leaving this time.

Lai Neung says:

You said you were leaving, but why you are still standing here?

Mung Mui speaks:

One and two, two and three, three and four, all these are staying closely together. I know you have never-ending reminders to make because of your kindred feelings.

Feeling sad, Lai Neung sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

The unstable situation has deterred me from going home, and I am also too weak to do so. I bow to my parents for thousands of times. I wish the star of fortune and longevity will shed their lights on my parents always.

Mung Mui leaves the stage from the right.

Lai Neung sees off Mung Mui and leaves from the left. A silver moon hanging up above the Su Causeway.

Chun Lam enters with a sword and sings the lower phrase of a couplet:

The cloud has left the city silently and the Su Causeway is lonely and quiet.

Continue to speaks:

Lee Chuen initiates the mess, Minister Toh is in the midst of worries. Madam Toh thinks of her deceased daughter and is so depressed that she becomes ill. Minister Toh is afraid that once setting off the war, Madam Toh would not be able to go through the panic. To assure the morale of the troop in a subtle manner, I was requested to bring tens of soldiers to escort Madam Toh to take a rest in Nam On. When we pass through the Su Causeway, it's already late and the moon has risen.

Madam Toh yells from the backstage:

How painful it is!

Chun Heung enters with the sick Madam Toh.

Madam Toh sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Despite the wealthy life in Wai Yeung, it is still incomparable to the life in my hometown, where I can stay forever with my daughter's spirit soul. What a pity that she leaves early...

Chun Heung sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

If using a copper pot to contain the tears of old Madam, all together there could be more than ten pots of her tears. Chun Heung does not know the skill of spiritism, but who would save the old madam's life if the spirit is not back?

Weeps.

Madam Toh moans even more severely.

Chun Lam sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

In a panic, there is no inn within eyesight, it is expedient to take this empty posthouse for a temporary stay. I use the golden sword to break down the doors. The army, pitch camps and wait for my order.

Helping Madam Toh get into the empty posthouse, Chun Heung turns to Chun Lam and says:

Simple and crude is this posthouse; bet there is no tea and water. Oh, luckily there is a small family across, and candlelight appears through the bamboo fence. Young Master, could you go and borrow a cup of tea for old madam?

Madam To praises Chun Heung for her thoughtfulness and leaves with her.

Chun Lam makes his golden sword leaning against the gate.

Picking up a little lantern, he hits the fence gate thrice.

Lai Neung takes off her thornwood hairpins and wraps her hairs with a plain cloth. Approaching the gate with a candlelight, she asks and says:

Who is knocking the door?

Chun Lam speaks:

It's a passerby. I would like to borrow a cup of hot tea, could you please open the door and do me a favor?

Lai Neung shakes her head and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Sir, if you want a tea, you can go to the east of this causeway.

Teahouses there will offer what you need.

Chun Lam recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Aunt, it takes more than a hundred steps for walking to
the east causeway from here.*

*Borrowing a cup of tea is just for quenching an urgent thirst.
Alas, no wonder there are sayings
that Suzhou and Hangzhou are places that are bestrewn
with golden dust and luxury. human feelings are just
as thin as papers.*

Lai Neung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Sir, it's not me who doesn't have a helping heart.
It is the annoying woman education that teaches us to
keep door close to strangers.
As my husband is not at home, my apologies
for not being able to offer you the tea I have.*

**Nodding his head as he listens, Chun Lam finds it reasonable
and says:**

*It's all right. I will ask Chun Heung to knock the door.
Chun Heung...Chun Heung...*

Chun Heung enters quickly and says:

Oh? The family doesn't even have a cup of tea?

Chun Lam recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Chun Heung, there is tea, just that the owner is not willing to do
a favor. There was an aunt answering the door when I knocked.
She said her husband was away and that she couldn't offer the
tea she had. Chun Heung, you go and knock the door. I have to
go and see if madam is feeling all right.*

Chun Heung says:

*Oh?! Her husband is not at home and thus she can't offer
guests a cup of tea? Decent, magnanimous and cultured her
words are. I thought only my deceased young mistress Lai
Neung would talk in such a way. It's surprising that even a
housewife from a small family would do so. I have to go
and meet this aunt. Great, let me knock the door.*

Lai Neung enters and says:

Who is knocking the door?

Chun Heung says: *Oh...wait a second.*

Moving rapidly of the edge of the stage and says:

The way this aunt talks is so decent and elegant, probably she is from a well-educated family. I, Chun Heung, have to imitate the way that young mistress talked and show to this aunt. Um, I am ready.

Lai Neung feels strange for there is nobody answering, she asks again:

Who is knocking the door?

Chun Heung walks freely to the door and says:

I am passerby Mui Heung who wishes you good fortunes. Despite looking at the plum can quench one's thirst, it's difficult to take medicine without tea. Have mercy on us for we come from a hundred miles away and our Madam is suffering from a gas pain. Could you please do me a favor?

Lai Neung giggles first and says doubtfully:

Um, it's strange. A man came first and knocked at the door for a cup of tea. After his failure, someone came after and knocked again, but there was no response when I answered the door. Then now comes Mui Heung... could it be...Um, let me give her the tea through the half-opened fence gate, but I can never show her my face. Lady, please wait for a moment.

Chun Heung says:

It's useful! I dare not show off in front of the young mistress, but for the others, I am just confident.

Holding a cup of tea, Lai Neung passes it through the half-opened fence door with sleeves covering her face. She says:

Lady, please get the tea.

Chun Heung looks at Lai Neung's body figure when she gets the tea. Lai Neung closes the door and prepares to leave.

Chun Heung says:

Why her body figure looks so much like my young mistress's? No way, I must take careful look. Oh no, she closes the door so quick. Um...I've got an idea...

Spilling the tea over the ground deliberately.

Aunt...aunt...

Almost arrives at the house, Lai Neung hears the cry. She turns back and says:

What's up?

Chun Heung pretends to be crying and says:

Aunt, little Mui Heung stepped on a stone carelessly and spilled the tea. Could aunt do me a favor again?

Lai Neung is annoyed and soliloquizes:

She is even more careless than Chun Heung in the past.

Chun Heung passes the cup slowly.

Lai Neung is surprised to see Chun Heung.

Chun Heung is stunned when seeing Lai Neung. Back to conscious gradually, she says:

Ghost...ah ghost...Madam...Madam...

Lai Neung is stunned and leans against the fence door when she hears "Madam". She cannot even say a word.

Holding a staff, Madam Toh enters with Chun Lam.

Chun Heung runs into the sleeves of Madam Toh upon seeing her. She keeps shaking and can only utter the word "ghost" consecutively.

Hearing about ghost, Chun Lam is frightened and hold the golden sword tightly in his hand.

Madam Toh recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Chun Heung, you need not to be so afraid. As long as we the human beings do not offend the ghosts, they won't offend us either. There maybe ghosts on this broken bridge in this cold moonlight.

Chun Heung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Ma...Ma...Ma...dam. If the Su Causeway is not the entrance of the underworld, then it must be the border between life and death...I...I have seen the spirit soul of young mistress.

Madam Toh says: Ah?

Continues to recite in rhymed *haugu*:

Chun Heung, young mistress died with no regrets. How could there be her spirit? Even her spirit exists, it should appear in Nam On but not in this silent night at the Su Causeway.

Chun Lam recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Chun Heung, you only know talking about belated ghosts stories for your whole life. You have given Aunt Toh a false alarm.

Chun Heung says:

Be...be...belated ghosts stories? The spirit soul of young mistress is still standing under the fence gate.

Madam Toh shifts her eyes slowly to the fence gate.

Chun Lam is afraid and drops his sword onto the ground with the slow wooden block strokes.

Lai Neung cries from soft to loud:

My Mother...My mother...mama!

Moves a step forward.

Madam Toh moves forward as Lai Neung calls "My mother". Yet she falls back when she hears "mama".

Chun Heung kneels down subsequently and soliloquizes.

Chun Lam makes subsequent backward steps.

Madam Toh cries and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Lai Neung, I know that I have to say sorry to you. I know you are blaming me for not performing a ritual to release your soul and thus your spirit is wandering around.

Lai Neung also cries and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

I would not want to disturb you if I am a ghost. I dare to come and get acquainted only because I am a human. I haven't seen the moonlight for three years, and now my bitterness ends and happiness begins.

Madam Toh says:

Ah, Lai Neung, are you really a human?

With tears turning in her eyes, Lai Neung nods and kneels down slowly.

Chun Lam wants to get closer to Lai Neung but he dares not to.

Chun Heung waves her hands to signal Madam Toh that Lai Neung is definitely not a human.

Madam Toh cries and says:

Lai Neung, as the saying goes, ghosts do not have human blood circulation and therefore weak in their voice. If you are no ghost, I will call your name thrice and you must answer thrice, each time louder than before.

Lai Neung cries and says:

My mother, my mother.

(Can't help crying and cannot utter a word.)

Madam Toh is frightened and says:

Aiya, a ghost!

Continues to sing the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

My heart breaks after you died and you really shouldn't make me sad and frightened now. We will have a solemn ritual set for your soul when back to Nam On. Your appearance would become a subject for ridicule.

Lai Neung cries vigorously and sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

With the meals from the human world for just a hundred days, it's hard to call you thrice with a strong voice. I will never make me leave you again, when should we be acquainted if not now?

Sister Shek soliloquizes on the left. Entering the fence gate, she is surprised and says:

Madam.

Taken by surprise, Madam Toh says:

Aunt, how come you are dead also. We have another ghost here.

Sister Shek laughs and says:

Madam, I am not a ghost, nor Miss Lai Neung.

I swear that I can prove her rebirth. I witnessed the opening of the candlenut coffin and the revival of this young lady.

Madam Toh says:

Is it true?

Holds Lai Neung in her arms and cries.

Chun Lam gets closer to Lai Neung and sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

I have shed tears for you for three years, and have dreamed of the peony pavilion for several times. My armour still has my tears on it, can you still feel my deep love?

Chun Heung says:

Don't ever listen to him.

Continues to sing the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Never did you offer young mistress incense after her death, Your mouth is full of sweet nothings only when she is alive. He proposed marriage to me last night when we were traveling in the moonlight.

Continues to say:

Mistress...Mistress, indeed I recognized you when the gate is

half-opened. Why did you tell Chun Lam that your husband is not home when he asked you for a cup of tea? Could it be...

Lai Leung feels shy and says:

Mom...mom... I.. I..I do not know how to tell you the story.

Madam Toh says:

Lai Neung, are you married?

Lai Leung shyly nods her head.

Madam Toh sighs and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Sigh, Lai Neung, you didn't study hard when you were young. Even you know that I am gentle to you, you should also respect your father's rules. Got married without having a matchmaker...anyway...you are too clever.

Lai Neung kneels down slowly again and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Mom, on the one hand, I married to thank Mung Mui's grace of opening the coffin. If there is nobody to warm my cold skin, I can hardly live till now.

Madam Toh is still not happy and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Sigh, who's your Mung Mui? You father cares about his birth and family fame.

Imperial Official: Lau Mung Mui from Ling Nam comes top in the imperial exam and becomes the Prize Candidate!

Lai Neung laughs and says: Yes! Here!

Madam Toh is surprised and says:

Ah, Lau Mung Mui, Lau Mung Mui, who is Lau Mung Mui?

Sister Shek laughs and says:

Lau Mung Mui is your son-in-law.

Receiving money from Lai Neung, the official says: Thanks!

Madam Toh says: Wait a second.

Imperial Official bows.

Madam Toh says;

Mother-in-law of the prize candidate, the wife of Minister Toh, Ms. Yan is offering.

Imperial Official bows.

Lai Neung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Mom, Mung Mui has set for Wai Yeung and thus not able to greet you. Why don't you come in and let me tell you my revival story.

Madam Toh recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Lai Neung, you are wrong. You father has been tight and strict throughout his whole life. He is not as gentle as I am. You return to Wai Yeung with Chun Heung tomorrow. I am old, and can only follow slowly.

Lai Neung holds Madam Toh, and leaves with Sister Shek.

Chun Lam would like to follow Lai Neung.

Chun Heung obstructs Chun Lam's way and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

It's all women inside the house, why are you getting in? Hey, young master Lau is not home and cannot offer you a cup of tea. If you are afraid that the posthouse is empty, you can go and talk to the wild animals and tell them about the revival story.

Chun Lam sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

The moon at the Su Causeway finally comes out from the cloud and sheds light on people always as usual.

Goes back to the posthouse sadly.

ACT V: Interrogation under the Rod

Official A recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Congratulations Prefect Toh on settling the war with just a paper.

Official B recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Congratulations Prefect Toh on settling the war without commanding soldiers.

Minister Toh speaks:

Please have a seat, Sirs. Young and energetic you are, you both deserved to be conferred the rank of nobility. As I, Toh Po, return to the court in my old age, I am trivial right from the start.

I don't have a son but only a daughter. Unfortunately she died of her passionate grieving for the flowers and I am lonely since then.

*I am feeling so complicated. May I take this chance to sooth my sorrow by drinking with you the heroes? **All drink.***

Tutor Chan enters and takes Toh Po to the edge of the stage.

He says

Minister Toh, my master.

Tutor Chan cries bitterly.

All are surprised.

Toh Po recites in rhymed *haugu*:

We haven't met for three years, Tutor Chan. Why do you squat and cry bitterly as soon as we meet?

Tutor Chan recites in rhymed *haugu* while he cries:

Old Master, I have been studying for 70 years, but have only been treated nicely for once. I inherited the virtue of this cultured family and manage the Plum Blossom Temple...but it just turns out that young mistress has been smirched.

Toh Po laughs and says:

Hey, Stubborn Chan, the older you are, the more muddled you are.

Continue to recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Lai Neung's coffin was sealed with thousands of pins and her tomb is one yard below the ground. She was totally pure when she was buried. How could she be tarnished by the soil?

Tutor Chan speaks:

Old Master, the older you are, the unclearer your mind is .

Continues to recite in rhymed *haugu*:

Even the coffin is hammered with thousands of pins and no matter how deep the grave is, the coffin can be easily cracked and excavated. Someone has cracked the coffin and young mistress' body has gone.

Continues to speak:

Don't even mention the others have touched her body, she is just not as pure as before.

Waving his beards, Toh Po picks up and sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Remote is the Plum Blossom Temple and only two white-headed nuns are there. Who did bring the coffin cracker there?

Continues to sing the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Sister Shek shouldn't be the one.

Official says:

Please take care, Chief Minister.

Toh Po

says:

Tutor Chan, do you know the coffin cracker?

Tutor Chan says:

I know.

Toh Po

says:

Who brings the guy there?

Tutor Chan says: *It's me.*

Toh Po throws his beards and says: *Ah?!*

Stares at Tutor Chan angrily.

Tutor Chan squats and says:

Old Master, please allow me to report the whole story to you. I think the coffin cracker...

Continues to sing the lower phrase of *jungbaan without prelude*.

One night, when cotton is flying around and snowing heavily...

To Po picks up rapidly and sings:

Don't waste time and effort on talking about things that

are not related.

Tutor Chan picks up and says:

There was a young scholar who fell sick next to the plum and willow.

Toh Po picks up even more rapidly and says:

That's not related to the lost of coffin. No use.

Tutor Chan picks up and says:

I felt pity for him and let him stay in the south mansion.

Toh Po picks up angrily and sings:

It's obvious that you led the thief to steal the peaches!

Tutor Chan sings more rapidly:

The sick scholar, I didn't expect that he has got such a bad virtue. I heard a female voice in his room one night. When I went to clean the grave one day, I found that it has gone emptied. Pieces from the coffin are floating among the grasses. On the lake next to the hill, one sees a red scarf paving. The body and skeleton of the young mistress have fallen into the lake, following the waves out to the Dong Ting lake. The innocent bones of the mistress have fallen into the arms of criminals.

Toh Po sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Breaking the tomb and tarnishing the white bone...this has tarnished the fame of the To family. What is the name of this tomb cracker?

Tutor Chan picks up and says:

That's Lau Mung Mui from Ling Nam.

Toh Po sings half sentence of *gwangfa*:

I will never forget his name even when I have no teeth.

Toh Po makes toasts and speaks:

I am sorry that there is such a scandal of my family.

Tutor Chan drinks bitterly next to Toh Po.

Mung Mui enters from the left and sings the long lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

It will be the Minister's house after passing through the White Willow Street. Delicate as I am, I come here with a little bit of pride. I straighten my back and dress up myself, so that the little young maids will announce the arrival of their young

master, and prepare me ten yards of red carpet. The flowers are smiling while grasses are heading down. I am more than happy to hear the singing of cuckoos.

Toh On shouts:

Who is intruding?

Mung Mui speaks:

Mr. Gatekeeper, I will assist you in any way I can even if you don't do me a favor first. I will take care of you even if you don't want to take care of me, guard. Never shout at me, I am really somebody.

Toh On is scared and speaks in a lower voice:

I don't really care if you are significant. Any tips?

Mung Mui says:

Oh...Born to a renowned family that is the posterity of poet Lau Jung Yuen, I know a bit the rules of the gate. No matter how much, I have to do him a favor.

Toh On

says:

Why don't you give me silver instead of these green copper coins?

Mung Mui speaks:

This silver is even more significant and influential than me. I cannot disclose the heavenly secret.

Toh On

says:

The Minister's house is holding a banquet today; the guest book has already been submitted. I am not sure if he is willing to see any other guest. Gentry scholar, please wait a moment.

Enters the gate and reports:

Old Master, there is a gentry scholar who would like to see you.

In low spirits, Toh Po says:

What's his name?

Toh On says:

I haven't asked yet.

Recognizes his own fault.

Still in low spirits, Toh Po says:

How does he look like?

Toh On plays tongue twister:

He looks like a scholar but in worn clothing. He is kind of gentleman, holding an umbrella in his armpit and bringing a painting on his back.

Toh Po says:

Think he could be a scholar who failed in the civil exam and then became a painter. Knowing that I respects painter a lot, he inquires for me to sell his works.

Gatekeeper, go and tell him that I am not available to see him. Don't shout at such a disappointed scholar.

Toh On returns to the door and says:

Gentry scholar, please go back. Our old master is not available to see any guest tonight.

Remains in a strict tone.

Mung Mui says:

I am not a guest; how can he deny my request?

**Toh On
says:**

If you are not a guest, then who you are?

Mung Mui says:

Gatekeeper, stand still and listen. I am the excellent son-in-law-to- be of Minister Toh, the new young master of this government building.

Taken by surprised, Toh On says:

You must be crazy, what's your name?

Mung Mui says:

Ah...you don't even know the name of your young master?
Oh, careless I was, I forgot to give you the proof of the revived life. Take it to the Chief Minister.

Toh On is frightened and says:

Report to you again, Old Master. The scholar inquires for you.

Tutor Chan speaks:

Old Master has already asked you to send him away. Why are you reporting again?

Toh On says:

The scholar has got a statement. He said he is the son-in-law of the old master, the new young master of us.

Toh Po

says:

Let me have a look. Lau Mung Mui from Ling Nam, Lau Mung Mui...

Tutor Chan falls onto the ground with a strong stroke of the drum. Mung Mui picks up and speaks at the edge of the stage:

Wow, Minister Toh spelt out my name loudly once the statement of revival is sent to him. No wonder Lai Neung told me that the statement is powerful.

Toh Po recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Why do you fall onto the ground as you were sitting so properly? We talked of the devil and he appears!

Tutor Chan is frightened and says:

Old...Master... this coffin cracker comes without any invitation; he must have some mysterious strengths.

Rolling his eyeballs with a strong stroke of the drum, Toh Po thinks and says:

Tutor Chan, Mr. Lau first stole the coffin and then inquired for me, I think he must be asking for money now. I have to get the evidence to prove that he has plundered the grave and he will be sentenced to death. Cover your face when he comes in. Toh On, you should bow for every three steps and pay respect for every five steps. Remember that you shouldn't act rashly and alert him.

Gatekeeper takes the order.

Mung Mui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Gatekeeper, why does it take so long? Could there be twelve pretty maids and ten-yard long carpet waiting for me?

Toh On bows and says:

This way please.

Mung Mui enters with dignity and says:

My respects to you, my father-in-law.

Couches.

All stare at Mung Mui.

Standing up, Toh Po holds his breath recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Lau Mung Mui, we have never seen each. Why do you claim yourself to be my son-in-law? I only have a daughter and she died three years ago. She hadn't got married before she died and I didn't even know she had had a lover.

Continues to speak:

Have you ever met Lai Neung indeed?

Tutor Chan gives Toh Po an eyesight, indicating that this is the man they talked about.

Mung Mui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

My father-in-law, your daughter Lai Neung shares the same bed and pillow with me, how could Lai Neung and I have never met? If we have never met, how could I have her portrait in my hands?

Toh Po continues to hold his breath and says:

Mr. Lau, please stand up.

Mung Mui says:

Thanks my father-in-law.

After taking a look at the portrait, Toh Po recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Lau Mung Mui, this is surely the painting of my latest daughter Lai Neung. It is possible that the portrait has gone somewhere after her death. The portrait cannot be the proof of your marriage.

Mung Mui laughs complacently and says:

Fortunately I am the most talented of my generation; I have no way to make things clear otherwise. Here is the mercury ingot that was put into the young mistress' mouth when she was buried. The ingot has got an inscription, which belongs to the Prefect's Office. Please check it, my father-in-law.

Giving the mercury ingot to Toh Po with pride and confidence.

Toh Po receives the ingot, then bursts into laughter:

As the saying goes, thieves must be caught in possession of stolen goods. Guys, come and arrest Mr. Lau!

Male servants come and chain Mung Mui.

Mung Mui uproars and says:

Why do you take me as a thief, my father-in-law?

Toh Po spits and says: *Damn it!*

Continues to sing the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

It weighs so much for each mercury ingot and the portrait proves that you have committed the crime. You are caught in possession of stolen goods. Raise your head and see Tutor Chan. Tutor Chan, come up and announce the accusations on what he has committed.

Mung Mui recognizes Tutor Chan and says:

I have got a savior! I have got a savior! That's Tutor Chan who has saved me before. Please help unlocking me!

Tutor Chan says: Damn it!

Tutor Chan slaps on Mung Mui and sings the wooden fish song in *yifan* mode:

Even if one eradicates all his hair cannot number the sins you have committed. You dare to challenge our old master upon your arrival. I regret to have released your dead soul from the purgatory. I was wrong to have taken you as a respectful scholar at the South Mansion. It's apparent that you cracked the coffin and stole the mercury ingot for money. You exposed the body of young mistress. You just look like those wild cats that block the ways of others, and fallen peaches on the ground. The pure body of young mistress has never been in the arms of men; her body definitely does not allow to be tarnished. Minister Toh can hardly be not angry, sentence this man to prison right away.

In depression, Mung Mui sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

*As the saying goes, the son-in-law relies on his wife to reach high position,
Why it turns out that I have become a prisoner?*

Continues to speak:

Lai Leung has deceived me...

Getting angrier, To Po says: *Shut up!*

Continues to recite in rhymed *haugu*:

Servant, ask the secretary to get an official paper and write the following on it: Lau Mung Mui has opened the coffin of Toh Lai Leung and stolen the treasure inside. Ask Lau Mung Mui to sign after the document is completed and send it to the Board of Punishment afterwards.

Getting the paper with the slow wooden block strokes, Mung Mui simpers and says:

Hush...I can't sign on this paper no matter what, I can only sign the marriage contract. How could I sign a statement that will send me to the prison? Father-in-law is muddled, but not his son-in-law.

Angry to death, Toh Po says:

This arrogant guy is not willing to sign. Tutor Chan, I am going to ask him questions and he has to answer them one by one. Jot down accordingly.

Tutor Chan agrees and picks up a pen.

Toh Po speaks:

Lau Mung Mui

Mung Mui says:

What's up, my father-in-law?

Toh Po recites in rhymed *haugu*:

The grave-plundering thief, what time, what month and what date did you find and open my daughter's grave? Did you throw the corpse into the lotus pond?

Mung Mui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

I didn't deny at all. Listen, I visited her grave when the moon was not full and the wind blew strong. I opened her coffin when the sun rose above the Peony Pavilion. The body of Lai Neung is fully intact. How could I have thrown her body into the lotus pond? I took her to a barge. Undressing ourselves, we are close together every night.

Toh Po is so angry that he squats on his chair and speaks gaspingly:

Have you written down accordingly, Tutor Chan?

Tutor Chan presents his writings and says:

Not missing even a word.

Toh Po is getting more angry and says:

Tomb raider, where did you move the corpse to after you took it to the barge? Report the details quick!

Mung Mui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

To where had she been moved? She was moved to a bank sided with willows and then into the lotus curtain. After touring the Wu mountain (making love), we were back to the green residence (wedding hall).

Toh Po grabs the rod from Tutor Chan and sings the lower phrase of a couplet:

Apply cruel punishment to torture this arrogant guy.
Exaggerated sentences and indecent words

Gwangfa: have bristled me with anger.

Continues to speak: *Serve him with instruments of torture.*

Civilian officials all agree with Toh Po on inflicting the torture.

Crying out from aside, Mung Mui shakes his hands and says:

Hold on, hold on. Good messieurs, Lau Mung Mui comes here only for reporting good news. The Chief Minister should not repay kindness with ingratitude, insulting literati with severe punishment. Could it be that he dislikes me because I am poor?

Toh Po is so angry that his body is shaking. Holding his staff, he moves a step forward and says:

What is the good news?

Mung Mui says:

If you are asking from what the good news is, then listen, father-in-law.

Gong and drum start *jungbaan* in the reversed tuning.

Digging up the purple candlenut coffin, I carry from it a lady who is as charming and delicate as a flower. Her skin was icy and I draped my arm round her shoulders, clung my face to hers, ruminated the miracle pill and protruded towards her cherry like lips slowly.

Toh Po is in melancholy.

Mung Mui continues to sing:

And then I woke her up. As the soft golden lotus was weak, it was me who hold her to walk step by step. Sleeping in the barge with the autumn rain hitting the windows, she begged for my embrace several times.

Mung Mui continues to sing:

When her drowsy eyes were half opened, she said her heart was as cold as ice but fortunately I was hot as a stove. **(Getting more rapidly)** I was struck by her beauty and worshipped her portrait for a hundred times. My ten fingers were worn because of her.

To take care of her, I had been sleepless for nights.

I make painstaking effort on her and thus she awoke.

Gwangfa:

She...she...she is now neither in the netherworld nor the in the lotus pond. She lives as a virtuous woman on the Su Causeway.

Toh Po takes off his gauze hat and sings the lower phrase of

gwangfa:

This arrogant guy makes up a cock-and-bull story, could he be a ghost also too?

Continues to speak:

Hearing the words of Mr. Lau, he must be either a ghost or bewitched. Take off his clothes and cap, and hang under the louver, hit him with willow branches and spray water at him. He will turn into his original shape.

Toh Po sings *gwangfa:*

Let me break off a willow branch, roll up my sleeves
and Beat him fiercely.

Tutor Chan sprays water at Mung Mui.

Miu Shun Bo enters and recites a poetic speech:

*The flower street is bustling with noises and excitement.
The results of the imperial exam have been released, who
will be the prize candidate?*

Speaks:

*We are missing the prize candidate since the release of the
civil exam results. Crying out on the streets with the
imperial edict. Sound the gongs and cry out the name of the
prize candidate.*

Hitting a small gong, an official servant speaks:

*Where is Lau Mung Mui the prize candidate?
Where is Lau Mung Mui the prize candidate?*

Mung Mui yells and says:

The new prize candidate is here.

Getting more angry, Toh Po says:

*This little ghost claims himself to be the new prize
candidate, slap his mouth.*

Tutor Chan gets close to Mung Mui and slaps his mouth.

Shun Bo hears the slaps and enters to see what is going on.

Civilian officials welcome Shun Bun by saluting with both hands folded.

Mung Mui cries out bitterly and says:

Tutor Miu, please save me, save your student.

Shun Bo is unhappy and says: Old Prefect!

Continues to recites in rhymed *haugu:*

You are not thankful for the Son of Heaven who treasures

the talented wholeheartedly. Instead, you torture the prize candidate. You are not qualified to be the Chief Minister.

Toh Po is shocked and says:

Who is the new prize candidate?

Taken by extreme anger, Shun Bo points at Mung Mui and says:

Lau Mung Mui from Lingnan!

Toh Po sneers and says:

*Master Miu, under the louver is a devil and tomb raider.
Whenever someone becomes the Prize Candidate, his name would be on record. Do you have any proof to show?
Do not take this gangster as the top civilian.*

Shun Bo recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*Old prefect, I took the order to come and name the talented. I have the proof for sure.
Generals, free the prize candidate at once, or I will report to the court otherwise.*

Tutor Chan is shocked and says:

*What...what the hell it is? Sick scholar, tomb raider and the prize candidate are all his incarnations!
Untie...untie...him, we dare not disobey the imperial order.*

Frees Mung Mui in person.

Shun Bo speaks:

Imperial servants, present the robe and hat, and invite the prize candidate for the imperial banquet.

The imperial servants present the robe and hat and hold them high above their head.

Mung Mui moves a step forward confidently.

Toh Po is so angry that his eyes turn red. Leading by a step, he says:

Old Master, to me, Lau Mung Mui has been proven guilty for plundering my daughter's coffin. Forgive me for not letting him receive the red robe and gauze hat.

Shun Bo recites in rhymed *haugu coldly*:

*The Old Prefect, there are different degrees of sin.
You dare to disobey the imperial proclamation despite the edict is here!*

Toh Po withdraws his hands and steps backward.

Shun Bo says:

Prize candidate Lau, this way please.

Mung Mui wears the Prize Candidate robe. He bows to Toh Po and says:

*The Old Minister (**bow twice**),
Congratulations on your triple happiness.*

Toh Po remains unresponsive.

Tutor Chan laughs and says:

What do you mean by "triple happiness"?

Mung Mui says wittily,

Listen. First, the joy of receiving the news of young mistress' revival. Second, the joy of having the Prize Candidate as the son-in-law. Third, the joy of having both the father and son-in-law as significant government officials. Aren't these happiness that honor the whole family?

Touches Toh Po lightly.

Want to be acquainted with your son-in-law or not?

Toh Po says: *Who wants to be acquainted with you?*

Mung Mui says loudly:

*If this is the case, I have to go for the banquet now!
You take care.*

Shun Bo and others leave.

Civilian officials find it uninteresting and leave also.

The wind blows off the candlelight.

Disappointed, Toh Po sits down and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Tutor Chan, I am sixty and have been a government official for thirty years. I have never been insulted like today. To thank you for your loyalty that has brought you from a thousand miles away, I will recommend you to be the chamberlain in the royal court. It is still unclear that if my daughter is now a human or a ghost. How could the news of her revival ever exist?

Tutor Chan recites in rhymed *haugu*:

*The Ole Prefect, how could life revival happen on God's earth?
It's apparent that young mistress is gone and there aren't any ghost. If ghosts exist, I am willing to cut my head off.*

In low spirit, Toh Po says:

Well, let just dismiss.

Tutor Chan mumbles and says:

A human will turn into a ghost after dying for one year, and

*after two years, only white bones would be left.
Reincarnation happens in the third year and one would
become a human again in the fourth year. The
interchanges between human and ghost never end.*

Chun Heung escorts Lai Neung and both of them enter.

**Toh On is so frightened that he hides himself under the flower
when he sees Lai Neung.**

Tutor Chan is stunned when he looks up.

Lai Neung feels of overwhelming sadness and says:

Oh, my teacher.

Tutor Chan uproars and says:

Ghost...the ghost of young mistress appears.

Covering his face with the sleeves, he says:

Where is the ghost spirit now?

Toh On reports and says:

The ghost of young mistress is entering.

**Knowing that she has been misunderstood, Lai Neung rushes to
the hall.**

**Tutor Chan hides himself under the table upon Lai Neung's
entrance.**

Toh Po picks up and says:

Male servant, close the door.

Four male servants rush to the door and close it.

Lai Neung tries to get through the door thrice but still fails.

Lai Leung says:

*Papa, the flower withered in the middle of its life and fails
to give delights to her parents. I have stood on the terrace
from which I can see my home for three year and my never
ending tears fall next to the grave.*

Toh Po is moved and steps forwards.

Lai Neung continues to speak:

*Fortunately the Infernal King shows his mercy on me, and
Let me reunite with Mung Mui under the plantain tree.*

Toh Po becomes angry as he hears the name of Lau Mung Mui.

Lai Leung continues to say:

*Papa, this is not the crying voice of a ghost but the calling
of your revived daughter.*

Chun Heung yells and says:

Old master, open the door. Young mistress is not a ghost.

With his hands clasped behind his back, Toh Po speaks solemnly:

Gatekeeper, how does the ghost outside dress and act like?

Toh On says:

Reporting to you, old master. The ghost is wearing a phoenix cape with a bob on her head. She looks like a married woman.

Toh Po wavers his beards and says:

The ghost outside, listen. Who would not have kindred Feelings? Who would not suffer from separation between life and death?

Lai Leung raises her head.

Toh Po continues to say:

Not to mention that there is no such thing as one can be revived after dying for three years in the human world. There is also no virgin ghost get tarnished in the Underworld.

Lai Leung trembles.

Toh Po says rapidly:

I run my family with culture and dignity. The sealed coffin once contained the intact body of a virgin. But her ghost is no longer pure.

Toh On sneaks away.

Lai Neung cries out "Papa" from soft to loud as she cannot hear anything from the hall.

Tutor Chan opens the door secretly.

Mui Heung and male servants leave.

Chun Heung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Young mistress, no matter you are a ghost or human, the phoenix cape still cannot make the old master to get rid of his stubbornness.

Lai Neung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Alas, Papa is reporting the story to the imperial court. I am only afraid that the prize candidate robe will be tarnished by its relationship with a ghost.

Chun Heung sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

What a pity that old madam is old and sick, and the decorated sedan chair is still on its way.

Act VI: The Reunion

Settings: Inside the Golden Palace Hall

Court drums sound. Four courtiers enter.

Tutor Chan enters from the left and sings the lower phrase of

gwangfa: The clouds are cleared at the royal palace surrounded by incense from the burners.

The golden steps of the hall are particularly enshrined by the shadow of the sun.

This old chamberlain is deeply grateful for the grace of the emperor.

As an old man in his seventies, this is my first time listening to the drums of the royal court.

The Song Emperor enters and sings *jungbaan*:

Results of the spring exam have just been released. I could never imagine that Judge Toh is the one who interrogated the number one scholar. It's rare that one can come to life again after dying for three years.

Continues to sing the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

I am here to make a judgement on the revival case.

A eunuch kneels down and presents a folded memorial. A maid receives the memorial and put in onto the Emperor's desk. Courtiers hurray for the Emperor thrice.

The Song Emperor speaks:

*Now Toh Lai Neung of Nan On has revived from death after three years, both Judge Toh and Scholar Lau submitted their memorials, one claims that Lai Neung is a ghost, while the other claims that she is a human being. The argument is really fierce. **Waving his hands.** Tutor Chan, please send Judge Toh and Scholar Lau to the palace hall.*

The Song Emperor can review the memorials when Toh Po and Lau Mung Mui enter.

Tutor Chan speaks:

*Obey your command your majesty. **Signals Toh Po and Lau Mung Mui to come in from the edge of the stage.** The two opposing sides, the Emperor has ordered, summoning Judge Toh and Scholar Lau to go to the palace hall.*

Toh Po and Mung Mui enter from the left and right respectively sing

the lower phrase of a couplet together:

Built with white jade pillar, this palace is filled with fragrance,
and we are here to meet the Emperor with our black gauze
hats. **The two meet each other at the edge of the
stage.**

Mung Mui bows and says:

Greetings, my father-in-law.

Toh Po speaks:

Damn it! Who's your father-in-law?

Mung Mui bows again and says:

Greetings, the old Judge Toh.

Toh Po speaks:

Who allows you to call me the Judge?

Mung Mui says angrily:

I respect you as my father-in-law only because I love my wife,
otherwise I wouldn't have greeted you again and again.

Tutor Chan laughs next to them and intends to reconcile the two.

Toh Po sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

The top scholar is only a coffin cracker after all. The prize
candidate used to be a wall breaker. The lotus clothing
should not be stained with eerie phosphorescent dots. I
plead for the order of demoting the top scholar.

Tutor Chan stands aside and speaks:

Your words are so true, Judge Toh.

Mung Mui sneers and says:

Lau: There is no ethics under the old judge Toh's pen.
In the eyes of the new minister there is only wealth
and power.
Don't take your own daughter blood as ghost and spirit.
Let me tell you the three sins that the Minister has committed.

Toh Po throws his beards and sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Only if the sun sets in the east, I would admit that you are
my son-in-law.

Mung Mui sings the upper phrase of *gwangfa*:

Only if there are two moons in the galaxy, I would admit
that you are my father-in-law.

Both Toh Po and Mung Mui enter and pay respect to the Emperor The Song Emperor grants them to stand.

The Song Emperor recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Did your daughter revive from death at the Peony Pavilion,
Judge Toh?

To Po recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Your Majesty, could you please convict Mr. Lau's crime of
raiding the grave before investigating the revival case?
When the coffin was sealed in/at the Peony Pavilion,
there was only my virgin daughter. Now the Judge's
mansion simply would never allow a deflowered ghost
to revive.

The Emperor recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Tutor Chan, on the memorial written by Judge Toh, you
are said to be the one who reported about the lost. Did
you witness your female student's revival?

Tutor Chan recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Your Majesty, although I didn't witness the revival, it is
evident that the grave has been cracked. The things that
were buried with my female student are now gone to the
lotus pond because of Mr. Lau.

The Song Emperor says:

Lau Mung Mui, did Tutor Chan lie at all?

Mung Mui says:

He is not lying.

The Song Emperor says angrily:

Lau Mung Mui, only newly dead lady can return to life. I
have never heard of those who had died for three years can
be revived. Do you know that you have committed a
heinous crime for exhuming?

Mung Mui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Your Majesty, I have been studying the ethics and codes since
I was young, and as I turn older I do understand the royal law
and regulations. How could I not know that I am risking the
death penalty to crack one's grave? But Lai Neung's spirit came
to my dream, saying that she could come back to life if I help
her. I believe that heaven above would love to see life reborn,
and the infernal king would also be obliged to send

her back to life. With the hopes of both the heaven and earth,
I forgot all the risks that I will face. **This verse has to be read fluently with confidence in order to convince the emperor and bring up the remaining drama.**

Nodding his heads in the rhythm of the wooden block while appreciating Mung Mui's talent in his heart , The Song Emperor recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Judge Toh, do you think Lai Neung is a ghost or human being?

To Po anxiously recites in rhymed *haugu*:

I think it is a ghost spirit from the hell.

The Song Emperor recites in rhymed *haugu*:

What about you? Do you think Lai Neung is a ghost or human being?

Mung Mui anxiously picks up and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

I think she is a living beautiful lady returning to the Prefect's hall.

The Song Emperor recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Tutor Chan, you should be old and experienced enough to justify. Do you think Lai Neung is a ghost or human being?

Tutor Chan picks up and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

I think that she is half ghost and half human. If she were a human, she wouldn't have died for three years. If she were a ghost, she couldn't be here with us today.

To Po recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Minister Toh: Your Majesty, please do not trust as Lau Mung Mui is spreading fallacy to mislead people.

Mung Mui anxiously picks up and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Your Majesty, please do not trust as Judge Toh is breaching the boundary of ethics.

The Song Emperor says:

Both of you please stand up.

Continues to sing the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Even if Lung To, the judge with an iron face were here, he would also be hesitant. Whether Lai Neung is a ghost, a human being or a flower spirit, I'll let you two to handle this revival case.

Says: *Royal servants, provide seats for them!*

Both Toh Po and Mung Mui says:

Thanks for your grace, Your Majesty!

The Song Emperor speaks:

Tutor Chan, I heard that ghost spirit can appear in the shape of human being, but it will vanish with the wind when encountering monks and Taoists. Please send imperial Buddhist monks here, who should put on cassocks and hold their staffs. Lining up in two rows along the two sides of this hall. Send Toh Lai Neung here afterwards.

Tutor Chan says:

The Emperor orders imperial Buddhist monks in cassocks to come here with their staffs. Lining up in two rows along the two sides of the hall.

Tutor Chan delivers the Emperor's order again:

Please send the well-dressed Toh Lai Neung over.

The tune has to be played continuously.

Dressing in chaplet and official robes, Lai Neung enters from the left. Since only returning to the human world for three months, she was slightly frightened when she sees the monks. She calms down eventually and speaks:

Music should be stopped upon Lai Neung reaching the edge of the stage.

How holy is this place, my clothes have been immersed in the scent from the incense pot. I, Lai Neung, was originally a ghost spirit of the underground, now I am back to the human world. Bow to you, Your Majesty.

Tutor Chan speaks:

It's still the voice of a ghost after all. I bet you can't step into the palace hall even if you can go through the imperial passage. **Showing that he is still afraid of Lai Neung.**

Lai Neung smiles to Tutor Chan again. Walking to the golden stairs to the rhythm of drums and gongs, she couches and says:

As the daughter of To Po and as the wife of Lau Mung Mui, I, Toh Lai Neung wish you longevity, Your Majesty.

Officials, courtiers and maids show that they are frightened.

The Song Emperor says:

Stand Up.

Lai Neung is afraid when she sees both her father and husband are in the hall.

The Song Emperor looks carefully at Lai Neung and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Toh Lai Neung, you have a lovely face but a weak body. If you were ghost, you couldn't have walked pass the passage, stepping onto the golden steps. But if you are a human, why you look so frightened?

Lai Neung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Your Majesty, I have been in the underworld for three years and have only been back to the human world for a hundred days. One can hardly be calm when she faces up and sees the Son of Heaven.

The Song Emperor praises Lai Neung's talent in his heart and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Toh Lai Neung, although there are sayings about returning to life after death, we haven't really seen it in real situation. The marriage between human and ghost, the revival from death, all these are really strange to me.

Lai Neung recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Your Majesty, although a flower has languished, it can be revived by two drops of dew; although a light has been extinguished, it can be re-lighted by the fire of love. Although one has died, she can be revived when real love approaches. As the saying goes, spirits can be revived when two come together. My spirit has been wandering around the Peony Pavilion for three years, and came to life again when the plum blossoms.

Surprised by Lai Neung's talent, The Song Emperor says:

Talented as she is, it seems to me that Lai Neung is not a ghost. Your relatives are here. I give you the permit to recognize them before I make the judgement on the case.

The monks leave.

Filled with elation and amusement, Lai Neung speaks:

Heartfelt thanks, Your Majesty!

Toh Po stares at Lai Neung. He waves his sleeves and turns his back to Lai Neung when she approaches.

Lai Neung feels scared and ashamed. Moving next to Mung Mui to the rhythm of the wooden block, she weeps and says:

Mung Mui...my husband...

Shaking his head, Mung Mui smiles bitterly and sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Lau: Meeting my wife all of a sudden in front of the Emperor, I can hardly utter a word but only feel sad. You have deceived me, my wife. There was a group of wolves obstructing my way to show your revival. It is much more difficult than pleading for food. They hung me up on the beam before showing respect to me. I am just as thin as the willow, how could my weak body stand their torture?

Lai Neung feels sad when she sees the bruises on Mung Mui. Tutor Chan speaks in a little voice:

Scholar Lau, Scholar Lau, the Emperor is just right in front of you. Don't beg for pity from your wife!

Lai Neung weeps and says:

Mung Mui, I have asked you to respect them and deal with them carefully. How come you got insulted? Alas, as the saying goes, the love between the married couple worth a thousand ingots, while the love of parents worth ten thousands catties. Let me greet my dad, but I dare not blame him for treating you badly. Papa, papa, papa **(crying)**...

Tutor Chan reminds Toh Po to respond to Lai Neung's call.

Toh Po turns to Lai Neung and says: Damn it!

Sings the long lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

I had a pearl-like daughter; she had never disappointed her father and mother. She had a romantic encounter in a dream when she visited the rear garden. Luckily she died early as a virgin. Her coffin was buried one yard under the ground, so that her spirit wouldn't be allowed to wander around. Now the mark of virginity is no longer on her body, it's obvious that this is an evil that bother us all intentionally. I remember that there are a lot of peach roots next to the pond; this girl must be a flower spirit who fakes to be a human being.

Taken by anger, Mung Mui recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Judge Toh, you first say that Lai Neung is a ghost. Luckily the Emperor is wise enough to find out the truth. You shouldn't further malign Lai Neung as a flower evil. As the saying goes, one should obey her husband after marriage, you are not allowed to malign my wife again and again.

Also taken by anger, Toh Po recites in rhymed *haugu*

Lau Mung Mui, I definitely won't admit this lady as my daughter and I am sure that she is an evil. If evils do not perish, our nation can hardly be prosperous.

The more Lau and Toh appears to be combative, the stronger is the climax toward the end.

Running to Toh Po to the rhythm of gongs, Lai Neung kneels down and says:

Papa...

To Po spits at her and says:

Who's your father?

Lai Neung weeps and recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Alas! I have my husband's love and care on one side, but not my father's on the other. It is unexpected that a night of love is not compatible with my filial respects. I ask for three yards of red cloth, Your Majesty. I don't want to live any more.

Couches on the golden steps and can't help crying.

Mung Mui gnashes his teeth to show his hatred towards Toh Po.

The Song Emperor recites in rhymed *haugu*:

Toh Lai Neung, you need not to ask for the red cloths, I will Make my judgement. Tutor Chan, I heard that a shadow follows as a human walks, evils are afraid of mirrors, and calamus, and ghosts are afraid of willows. Please ask the guards to bring the evil reflecting mirror left from the Qin Dynasty and let Toh Lai Neung do her make up in front of it. Tutor Chan, observe if Toh's face has changed and check if there are shadows under the flowers. Ask also the twelve maids to hold calamus leaves and wine in their hands.

Tutor Chan speaks:

Got the order.

This is the most important dance scene.

Mung Mui and Toh Po sit aside. When Lai Neung looks into the mirror, Mung Mui praises her beauty while Toh Po scolds her.)

Lai Neung sings to the tune "Elegant steps of Lady Yeung"

I brush my eyebrow lightly and neatened up my hair ornaments again.

Tutor Chan interrupts and says right after:

Your Majesty, the face in the mirror hasn't changed at all.

Lai Neung continues to sing:

I rouge my face to make it look nice.

Tutor Chan interrupts and says:

Your Majesty, the face in the mirror still remains unchanged.

Lai Neung continues to sing:

I color my lips red like cherries. But tears are turning
around in my eyes....

Tutor Chan interrupts and says:

Your Majesty, the face in the mirror hasn't changed at all.
Even if she is a ghost, I can't just help having pity on her.

Lai Neung continues to sing:

Breaking the golden lotus, I go and look for the moon in the
west street.

Tutor Chan interrupts and says:

Your Majesty! There isn't any shadow under the flowers...

Lai Neung continues to sing:

As thin as the willow is my waist, I lean lazily on the spring
breeze, which is going to the south.

Tutor Chan interrupts and says:

It is a shadow! It is a shadow! The clouds cover the moon
on the flower street just now.

Lai Neung continues to sing:

Couching on the golden steps, I take a little rest; my
sweat has infiltrated my clothes.

Tutor Chan sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Her face doesn't change at all in the mirror and there is her
shadow under the flowers. How amazing this is! Revived
flower does exist in the world. No wonder everybody doubts.

Knowing the situation, the Song Emperor says:

Tutor Chan, please ask the wife of Judge Toh in formal
attire and come to see me.

Lai Neung hears the news and thanks the Emperor from her heart.

Tutor Chan delivers the Emperor's order.

**Dressed in formal robes, Madam Toh is escorted by Chun Heung
and Chun Lam.**

Madam Toh says:

The sun is warming the pond, and the fragrance has occupied the palace hall.

Madam Toh enters the palace hall and makes hurrahs for the Emperor.

The Song Emperor speaks:

Stand up.

Madam Toh hugs Mung Mui and sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Having an excellent son-in-law like Mung Mui is much better than having ten Toh Pos. I am going to Wai Yam with Lai-Neung, so that I can be with her always.

Lai Neung and Mung Mui affectionately lead Madam Toh down to the hall.

Toh Po is jealous but remained dignified.

Tutor Chan reads the mind of Toh Po and sings him the tune "Dragon Boat" secretly:

It's obvious that he wants that but he keeps his mouth tightly closed.

Chun Lam picks up the tune and sings:

What do you cry if you are heartless?

Toh Po wipes his tears and remains dignified.

Lai Neung pulls Mung Mui closer to herself and picks up the previous tune in a soft voice:

Now I have a glimpse of my dad's thought.

Chun Heung picks up the previous tune quietly:

Just like the defeated army that refuses to surrender.

Madam Toh shouts at Chun Heung and says:

Shut up! **Continues to sing:** All the people have love and care from parents.

Taken by surprised, Lai Neung picks up the previous tune:

My heart and liver are broken for what my mom has just said.

Mung Mui comforts Lai Neung and sings to the previous tune:

I should love my father-in-law as much as I love my wife.

Lai Neung continues to sing to the previous tune:

I dare not force you...

Mung Mui volunteers and sings to the "Dragon Boat" tune to Toh Po.

Mung Mui greets again...

To Po speaks slowly:

Can you see there are two moons outside the Palace of the Azure Clouds, Chun Lam?

Mung Mui feels bad. Chun

Lam speaks slowly:

Ah, I can't see that. There is only one moon hanging up high in the east.

Mung Mui goes back and stands next to Lai Neung.

Tutor Chan sings to the "Dragon Boat" tune:

Pretends to be dignified when someone treats him good.

Mung Mui picks up the lower phrase of *gwangfa* sung by Lai Neung:

He disappointed me intentionally; it's hard for me to bow to him again. There are no two moons in the sky.

Lai Neung laughs and says:

His words are right, my husband. Go ahead.

Lai Neung Speaks into Mung Mui ears, then Mung Mui moves forward and says:

Greetings, my father-in-law.

Kneeling down to see Toh Po's face.

Toh Po speaks slowly:

Can you see there is a pair of happy moons above this building?

Chun Lam says

I can't see them. Can you see them, Tutor Chan?

Tutor Chan says:

I can't see them of course.

Mung Mui says:

Ah, can't you see them? I can see them!

Continues to sing in *gwangfa*:

There is one in the sky and one in the water.

Toh Po laughs and says:

How clever and smart my daughter is!

Lai Neung and Mung Mui kneels down immediately and sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

We ask for your forgiveness, Dad.

Toh Po gets acquainted with his son-in-law and sings the lower phrase of *gwangfa*:

Chun-lam can marry Chun Heung. The moon pairs shed their light onto these two lovely couples.

THE END.