

關漢卿雜劇選



820-47

SELECTED PLAYS OF
KUAN HAN-CHING

ed. by ...

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感天動地實業苑

SNOW IN MIDSUMMER

CHARACTERS

MISTRESS TSAI, a widow
TOU TIEN-CHANG, a poor scholar, later a government
inspector.
TOU NGO, Tou Tien-chang's daughter Tuan-yun
DOCTOR LU
OLD CHANG
DONKEY, his son
PREFECT
ATTENDANT
THE OFFICER IN CHARGE OF EXECUTIONS
EXECUTIONER

ACT I

(Enter MISTRESS TSAI.)

MRS. TSAI:

*A flower may blossom again,
But youth never returns.*

I am Mistress Tsai of Chuchow. There were three of us in my family; but unluckily my husband died, leaving me just one son who is eight years old. We live together, mother and son, and are quite well off. A scholar named Tou of Shanyang Prefecture borrowed five taels of silver from me last year. Now the interest and capital come to ten taels, and I've asked several times for the money; but Mr. Tou cannot pay it. He has a daughter, and I've a good mind to make

talk to
audience

her my daughter-in-law; then he won't have to pay back the ten taels. Mr. Tou chose today as a lucky day, and is bringing the girl to me; so I won't ask him to pay me back, but wait for him at home. He should be here soon.

(Enter TOU TIEN-CHANG, leading his daughter TUAN-YUN.)

TOU:

I am master of all the learning in the world.

But my fate is worse than that of other men.

My name is Tou Tien-chang, and the home of my ancestors is Changan. I have studied the classics since I was a child and read a good deal; but I haven't yet taken the examinations. Unfortunately my wife has died, leaving me this only daughter, Tuan-yun. She lost her mother when she was three, and now she is seven. Living from hand to mouth, I moved to Shan-yang Prefecture in Chuchow and took lodgings here. There is a widow in this town named Tsai, who lives alone with her son and is fairly well off, and as I had no money for travelling I borrowed five taels from her. Now, with the interest, I owe her ten taels; but though she has asked several times for the money, I haven't been able to pay her. And recently she has sent to say she would like my daughter to marry her son. Since the spring examinations will soon be starting, I should be going to the capital; but I have no money for the road. So I am forced to take Tuan-yun to Widow Tsai as her future daughter-in-law. I'm not marrying my daughter but selling her! For this means the widow will cancel my debt and give me some cash for my journey. This is all I can hope for. Ah, child, your father does this against his will! While talking to myself I've reached her door. Mistress Tsai! Are you at home?
(Enter MISTRESS TSAI.)

MRS. TSAI: So it's Mr. Tou! Come in, please. I've been waiting for you.

(They greet each other.)

TOU: I've brought you my daughter, ma'am, not to be your daughter-in-law — that would be asking too much — but to serve you day and night. I must be going to take the examination. I hope you will look after her.

MRS. TSAI: Well, you owed me ten taels including interest. Here is your promissory note back and another two taels for your journey. I hope you don't think it too little.

TOU: Thank you, ma'am! Instead of asking for what I owe you, you have given me money for the road. Some day I shall repay your kindness in full. My daughter is a foolish child. Please take care of her, ma'am, for my sake.

MRS. TSAI: Don't worry, Mr. Tou. I shall look after your daughter as if she were my own.

TOU *(kneeling to her)*: If the child deserves a beating, ma'am, for my sake just scold her! And if she deserves a scolding, for my sake speak gently to her! As for you, Tuan-yun, this isn't like at home, where your father used to put up with your whims. If you're naughty here, you'll be beaten and cursed. When shall I see you again, child? *(He sighs.)*

I drum sadly on my sheath;

I have studied the Confucian classics;

My unhappy wife died young,

And now I am parted from my only daughter. (Exit.)

MRS. TSAI: Now Mr. Tou has left me his daughter, and gone to the capital for the examination. I must see to the house.

(Exeunt.)

(Enter DOCTOR LU.)

DOCTOR:

I diagnose all diseases with care,

*And prescribe as the Herbal dictates;
But I cannot bring dead men back to life,
And the live ones I treat often die.*

I am Doctor Lu. I own a drug shop here. I've borrowed ten taels of silver from Mistress Tsai of this town, and with interest now owe her twenty taels. She keeps coming for the money; but I haven't got it. If she doesn't come back, so much the better. If she does, I have a plan. I'll sit in my shop now, and wait to see who turns up.

(Enter MISTRESS TSAI.)

MRS. TSAI: I am Mistress Tsai. Thirteen years ago Mr. Tou Tien-chang left his daughter Tuan-yun with me to marry my son, and I changed her name to Tou Ngo. But after their marriage my son died, so now she's a widow. That was nearly three years ago, and she'll soon be out of mourning. I've told her that I'm going to town to collect a debt from Doctor Lu. Now I've reached his house. Is Doctor Lu in?

DOCTOR: Yes, ma'am, come in.

MRS. TSAI: You've kept my money for a long time, doctor. You must pay me back.

DOCTOR: I've no money at home, ma'am. If you'll come with me to the village, I'll get money for you.

MRS. TSAI: Very well. I'll go with you.

(They start walking.)

DOCTOR: Now we are outside the city. Here's a good spot, with no one about. Why not do it here? I've got the rope ready. Who's that calling you, ma'am?

MRS. TSAI: Where?

(The DOCTOR strangles the widow with the rope. Enter OLD CHANG and his son DONKEY. As they rush forward the DOCTOR takes to his heels. OLD CHANG revives MISTRESS TSAI.)

DONKEY: It's an old woman, dad, nearly strangled to death.

CHANG: Hey, you! Who are you? What's your name? Why did that fellow try to strangle you?

MRS. TSAI: My name is Tsai and I live in town with my widowed daughter-in-law. Doctor Lu owes me twenty taels so he lured me here and tried to strangle me. If not for you and this young man, it would have been all up with me!

DONKEY: Did you hear that, dad? She has a daughter-in-law at home! Suppose you take her as your wife and I take the daughter-in-law? Propose it to her, dad!

CHANG: Hey, widow! You've no husband and I've no wife. How about the two of us getting married?

MRS. TSAI: What an idea! I shall give you a handsome sum of money to thank you.

DONKEY: So you refuse! I'd better strangle you after all.

MRS. TSAI: Wait! Let me think a moment, brother!

DONKEY: What do you need to think for? You take my dad, and I'll take your daughter-in-law.

MRS. TSAI (*aside*): If I don't agree he'll strangle me! (*To them.*) Very well. Come home with me, both of you.

DONKEY: Let's go.

(Exeunt.)

(Enter TOU NGO.)

TOU NGO: I am Tuan-yun, and my home was in Chuchow. When I was three I lost my mother; and when I was seven I had to leave my father, for he sent me to Mistress Tsai as her son's child-bride, and she changed my name to Tou Ngo. At seventeen I married; but unluckily my husband died three years ago. Now I am twenty. There is a Doctor Lu in town who owes my mother-in-law twenty taels including interest; and though she has asked him several times for the money, he hasn't paid her back. She's gone

Doctor
owes \$

13 years pass

some
impair

repeats by
audience

Doctor
Kai

today to try to collect the debt. Ah, when shall I escape from my misery?

My heart is full of grief,

I have suffered for so many years!

Morning or evening it is all the same:

From dawn to dusk I can neither eat nor sleep,

Racked by sad dreams at night, sad thoughts by day,

Unending sorrow which I cannot banish,

Unceasing reasons for fresh misery.

Wretchedness makes me weep, grief makes me frown;

Will this never come to an end?

Is it my fate to be wretched all my life?

Who else knows grief like mine?

For my sorrow, like flowing water, never ceases.

At three I lost my mother, at seven was torn from my father;

Then the life of the husband I married was cut short;

So my mother-in-law and I are left as widows,

With no one to care for us or see to our needs.

Did I burn too little incense in my last life

That my marriage was unlucky?

We should all do good betimes;

So I mourn for my husband and serve my mother-in-law,

Obedient to all her bidding.

My mother-in-law has been gone a long time to collect that debt. What can be keeping her?

(Enter MISTRESS TSAI with OLD CHANG and DONKEY.)

MRS. TSAI: Wait here at the door while I go in.

DONKEY: All right, mother. Go in and tell her her husband is at the door.

(MISTRESS TSAI sees TOU NGO.)

TOU NGO: So you're back, mother. Have you had a meal?

MRS. TSAI (*crying*): Ah, poor child! How am I going to break this to you?

TOU NGO:

I see her in floods of tears,

Hiding some grief in her heart;

Greeting her quickly, I beg her to tell me the reason.

MRS. TSAI: How can I say this?

TOU NGO:

She's shilly-shallying and looks ashamed.

What has upset you, mother? Why are you crying?

MRS. TSAI: When I asked Doctor Lu for the silver, he lured me outside the town, then tried to strangle me; but an old man called Chang and his son Donkey saved my life. Now Old Chang is going to marry me: that's why I'm upset.

TOU NGO: That would never do, mother! Please think again! We're not short of money. Besides, you are growing old — how can you take another husband?

MRS. TSAI: Child, I couldn't do anything else!

TOU NGO: Mother, listen to me!

What will become of you

If you choose a day and solemnize a wedding?

Now your hair is as white as snow,

How can you wear the bright silk veil of a bride?

No wonder they say it is hard to keep women at home,

If at sixty, when all thought of love should be over,

You've forgotten your former husband,

And taken a fancy to another man!

This will make others split their sides with laughter!

Yes, split their sides with laughter!

Like the widow who fanned her husband's tomb,

You're no tender bamboo shoot, no tender shoot.

How can you paint your eyebrows and remarry?

Your husband left you his property,

Made provision for the future,
For daily food and a good livelihood,
So that you and your son could remain beholden to
no one,
And live to a ripe old age.

Did he go to such trouble for nothing?

MRS. TSAI: Since it has come to this, I think you'd
better take a husband too, and today can be the wed-
ding day.

TOU NGO: You take a husband if you must. I won't!

MRS. TSAI: The date is fixed, and they are already
here.

DONKEY: Now we shall marry into their family. Our
hats are brushed as good as new, and have narrow
brims like bridegrooms'! Good! Fine!

TOU NGO: Stand back, you fellows!

Women should not believe all men say;

Such a marriage could not last.

Where did she find this old yokel,

And this other ruffian here?

Have you no feeling left for the dead?

You must think this over again.

Your husband worked in different cities and counties

To amass a well-earned fortune, and lack nothing.

How can you let his estate go to Donkey Chang?

He tilled the land, but others are reaping the harvest.

(Exit.)

CHANG (to MRS. TSAI): Let us go and drink, ma'am.

(Exeunt.)

DONKEY: Tou Ngo refuses to have me, but I shan't let
her get away: she will have to be my wife. Now I'll
drink with my old man! (Exit.)

ACT II

(Enter DOCTOR LU.)

DOCTOR: I am Doctor Lu. I lured Mistress Tsai out-
side the town and was just going to strangle her when
two men rescued her. Today I am opening shop. I
wonder who will turn up.

(Enter DONKEY.)

DONKEY: I am Donkey Chang. Tou Ngo still refuses
to marry me. Now the old woman is ill, I'm going to
poison her; for once the old one is dead, the young
one will have to be my wife. Ah, here is a drug shop.
Doctor! I want a drug!

DOCTOR: What drug do you want?

DONKEY: I want some poison.

DOCTOR: Who dares sell you poison? How can you
ask such a thing?

DONKEY: You won't let me have it then?

DOCTOR: I won't. What are you going to do about
it?

DONKEY (seizing him): Fine! Fine! Aren't you the
man who tried to murder Mistress Tsai? Do you
think I don't recognize you? I'll take you to court.

DOCTOR (in panic): Let me go, brother! I've got it!
I've got it! (Gives him the poison.)

DONKEY: Now that I've got the poison, I'm going
home. (Exit.)

DOCTOR: So that man who came to buy poison was
one of the men who rescued the widow. Since I've
given him poison, he may get me into further trouble
later. I'd better close my shop and go to Chuochow
to sell drugs. (Exit.)

(Enter MISTRESS TSAI, supported by OLD CHANG
and DONKEY.)

CHANG: I came to Mistress Tsai's house hoping to be
her second husband. Who would have thought that
the widow would fall ill? I am really too unlucky.

If there's anything you fancy to eat, ma'am, just let me know.

MRS. TSAI: I'd like some mutton tripe soup.

CHANG: Son, go and tell Tou Ngo to make some mutton tripe soup for her mother-in-law.

DONKEY: Tou Ngo! Your mother-in-law wants some mutton tripe soup. Look sharp about it!

(Enter TOU NGO.)

TOU NGO: I am Tou Ngo. My mother-in-law is unwell and wants some mutton tripe soup, so I've made her some. When you think of it, some women are too fickle!

*She wants to lie with a husband all her life,
Unwilling to sleep alone;
First she married one, and now she has picked
another.*

*Some women never speak of household matters,
But pick up all the gossip,
Describe their husbands' adventures,
And are always up to some low tricks themselves.
Is there one like Lady Cho,* who stooped to serve
in a tavern?*

*Or like Meng Kuang,** who showed such respect to
her husband?*

*The women today are different:
You can neither tell their character from their
speech,*

*Nor judge them by their actions.
They're all of them faithless, all run after new lovers;
And before their husbands' graves are dry
They set aside their mourning for new clothes.*

Where is the woman whose tears for her husband

*Cho Wen-chun, the daughter of a rich man, who eloped with Ssuma Hsiang-ju, a famous Han dynasty scholar. Since they were poor, they kept a small tavern in Chengtu where she served as barmaid.

**Wife of Liang Hung of the Later Han Dynasty.

*Caused the Great Wall to crumble?**
*Where is she who left her washing
And drowned herself in the stream?**
*Where is she who changed into stone
Through longing for her husband?****
*How shameful that women today are so unfaithful,
So few of them are chaste, so many wanton!
All, all are gone, those virtuous women of old;
For wives will not cleave to their husbands!*

Now the soup is ready. I had better take it in.

DONKEY: Let me take it to her. (He takes the bowl.)
This hasn't much flavour. Bring some salt and vinegar.

(TOU NGO goes out. DONKEY puts poison in the soup. TOU NGO comes back.)

TOU NGO: Here are the salt and vinegar.

DONKEY: Put some in.

TOU NGO:

*You say that it lacks salt and vinegar,
Adding these will improve the flavour.
I hope my mother will be better soon,
And the soup will serve as a cordial.*

Then the three of you can live happily together.

CHANG: Son, is the soup ready?

DONKEY: Here it is. Take it.

CHANG (taking the soup): Have some soup, ma'am.

*Thousands of the men conscripted by the First Emperor of Chin to build the Great Wall died. According to a legend Meng Chiang-nu, the wife of one of these conscripts, wept so bitterly at the wall that part of it crumbled.

**During the Spring and Autumn Period (770-475 B.C.), Wu Tzu-hsu fled from the state of Chu to Wu. A woman washing by a river took pity on him and fed him. Upon leaving, he asked her not to tell his pursuers which way he had gone. To set his mind at rest she drowned herself.

***This legendary woman, whose husband left home, climbed a hill every day to watch for his return, till at last she was transformed into a boulder.

MRS. TSAI: I am sorry to give you so much trouble.
You have some first.

CHANG: Won't you try it?

MRS. TSAI: No, I want you to drink it first.

(OLD CHANG drinks the soup.)

TOU NGO:

One says: "Won't you try it?"

The other says: "You have it!"

What a shameful way to talk!

How can I help being angry?

The new couple is in transports;

Forgetting her first husband,

She listens to this new man's lightest word.

Now her heart is like a willow seed in the breeze,

Not steadfast as a rock.

Old love is nothing to new love:

She wants to live with this new man for ever,

Without a thought for the other man far away.

CHANG: Why has this soup made me dizzy? *(He falls to the ground.)*

MRS. TSAI: Why should you feel unwell after that soup? *(Panic-stricken.)* Take a grip on yourself, old man! Don't give up so easily! *(Wails.)*

TOU NGO:

It's no use grieving for him;

All mortal men must die when their time is up.

Some fall ill, some meet with accidents;

Some catch a chill, some are struck down by heat;

Some die of hunger, surfeit or over-work;

But every death has its cause,

Human life is ruled by fate,

And no man can control it,

For our span of life is predestined.

He has been here a few days only;

He is not of your family,

And he never sent you wedding gifts:

Sheep, wine, silk or money.

For a time you stayed together,

But now he is dead and gone!

I am not an unfilial daughter,

But I fear what the neighbours may say;

So stop your moaning and wailing:

He is not the man you married as a girl.

(OLD CHANG dies.)

MRS. TSAI: What shall we do? He's dead!

TOU NGO:

He's no relation — I have no tears for him.

There's no need to be so overcome with grief,

Or to cry so bitterly and lose your head!

DONKEY: Fine! You've poisoned my father! What *lies* are you going to do about it?

MRS. TSAI: Child, you had better marry him now.

TOU NGO: How can you say such a thing, mother?

This fellow forced my mother-in-law to keep him;

Now he's poisoned his father,

But whom does he think he can frighten?

MRS. TSAI: You'd better marry him, child.

TOU NGO:

A horse can't have two saddles;

I was your son's wife when he was alive,

Yet now you are urging me to marry again.

This is unthinkable!

DONKEY: Tou Ngo, you murdered my old man. Do you want to settle this in private or settle it in public?

TOU NGO: What do you mean?

DONKEY: If you want it settled in public, I'll drag you to the court, and you'll have to confess to the murder of my father! If you want it settled in private, agree to be my wife. Then I'll let you off.

TOU NGO: I am innocent. I'll go with you to the prefect.

(DONKEY drags TOU NGO and MISTRESS TSAI out.)

ACT III

(Enter the PREFECT with an ATTENDANT.)

PREFECT:

1/2 x 1/2
I am a hard-working official;
I make money out of my lawsuits;
But when my superiors come to investigate,
I pretend to be ill and stay at home in bed.

I am prefect of Chuchow. This morning I am holding court. Attendant, summon the court!

(The ATTENDANT gives a shout.)

(Enter DONKEY, dragging in TOU NGO and MISTRESS TSAI.)

DONKEY: I want to lodge a charge.

ATTENDANT: Come over here.

(DONKEY and TOU NGO kneel to the PREFECT, who kneels to them.)

PREFECT (kneeling): Please rise.

ATTENDANT: Your Honour, this is a citizen who's come to ask for justice. Why should you kneel to him?

PREFECT: Why? Because such citizens are food and clothes to me!

(The ATTENDANT assents.)

PREFECT: Which of you is the plaintiff, which the defendant? Out with the truth now!

DONKEY: I am the plaintiff. I accuse this young woman, Tou Ngo, of poisoning my father with soup. Let justice be done, Your Honour!

PREFECT: Who poisoned the soup?

TOU NGO: Not I!

MRS. TSAI: Not I!

DONKEY: Not I!

PREFECT: If none of you did it, I wonder if I could have done it?

TOU NGO:

Your Honour is as discerning as a mirror,

ACT III

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And can see my innermost thoughts.
There was nothing wrong with the soup,
I know nothing about the poison;
He made a pretence of tasting it,
Then his father drank it and fell down dead.
It is not that I want to deny my guilt in court;
But I cannot confess to a crime I have not committed!

PREFECT: Low characters are like that: they'll only confess when put to torture. Attendant! Bring the bastinado to beat her.

(The ATTENDANT beats TOU NGO. Three times she faints and he has to sprinkle her with water to bring her round.)

TOU NGO:

It's fault
This terrible beating is more than I can bear.
You brought this on yourself, mother. Why complain?

May all women in the world who marry again
Be warned by me!

Why are they shouting so fiercely?

I groan with pain;

I come to myself, then faint away again.

A thousand strokes: I am streaming with blood!

At each blow from the bastinado

My blood spurts out and my skin is torn from my flesh;

My spirit takes flight in fear,

Approaching the nether regions.

Who knows the bitterness in my heart?

It was not I who poisoned the old man;

I beg Your Honour to find out the truth!

PREFECT: Will you confess now?

TOU NGO: I swear it was not I who put in the poison.

PREFECT: In that case, beat the old woman.

TOU NGO (hastily): Stop, stop! Don't beat my

lies to save mother-in-law
 mother-in-law! Rather than that, I'll say I poisoned the old man.

PREFECT: Fasten her in the cangue and throw her into the gaol for the condemned. Tomorrow she shall be taken to the market-place to be executed.

MRS. TSAI (*weeping*): Tou Ngo, my child! It's because of me you are losing your life. Oh, this will be the death of me!

TOU NGO:

*When I am a headless ghost, unjustly killed,
 Do you think I will spare that scoundrel?
 Men cannot be deceived for ever,
 And Heaven will see this injustice.
 I struggled as hard as I could, but now I am helpless;
 I was forced to confess that I poisoned the old man;
 How could I let you be beaten, mother?
 How could I save you except by dying myself?*

(She is led off.)

DONKEY: If she's to be killed tomorrow, I'll hang around. *(Exit.)*

MRS. TSAI: Poor child! Tomorrow she will be killed in the market-place. This will be the death of me! *(Exit.)*

PREFECT: Tomorrow Tou Ngo will be executed. Today's work is done. Bring me my horse; I am going home to drink. *(Exeunt.)*

(Enter the OFFICER in charge.)

OFFICER: I am the officer in charge of executions. Today we are putting a criminal to death. We must stand guard at the end of the road, to see that no one comes through.

(Enter the ATTENDANTS. They beat the drum and the gong three times; then the executioner enters, sharpens his sword and waves a flag. TOU NGO is led on in a cangue. The gongs and drum are beaten.)

EXECUTIONER: Get a move on! Let no one pass this way.

TOU NGO:

*Through no fault of mine I am called a criminal,
 And condemned to be beheaded —*

★ *I cry out to Heaven and Earth of this injustice!*

I reproach both Earth and Heaven

For they would not save me.

*The sun and moon give light by day and by night,
 Mountains and rivers watch over the world of men;
 Yet Heaven cannot tell the innocent from the guilty;
 And confuses the wicked with the good!*

*The good are poor, and die before their time;
 The wicked are rich, and live to a great old age.*

The gods are afraid of the mighty and bully the weak;

They let evil take its course.

*Ah, Earth! you will not distinguish good from bad,
 And, Heaven! you let me suffer this injustice!*

Tears pour down my cheeks in vain!

EXECUTIONER: Get a move on! We are late.

TOU NGO:

The cangue round my neck makes me stagger this way and that,

And I'm jostled backward and forward by the crowd.

Will you do me a favour, brother?

EXECUTIONER: What do you want?

TOU NGO:

If you take me the front way, I shall bear you a grudge;

If you take me the back way, I shall die content.

Please do not think me wilful!

EXECUTIONER: Now that you're going to the execution ground, are there any relatives you want to see?

TOU NGO: I am going to die. What relatives do I need?

EXECUTIONER: Why did you ask me just now to take you the back way?

TOU NGO:

*Please don't go by the front street, brother,
But take me by the back street.*

The other way my mother-in-law might see me.

EXECUTIONER: You can't escape death, so why worry if she sees you?

TOU NGO: If my mother-in-law were to see me in chains being led to the execution ground—

She would burst with indignation!

She would burst with indignation!

Please grant me this comfort, brother, before I die!

(Enter MISTRESS TSAI.)

MRS. TSAI: Ah, Heaven! Isn't that my daughter-in-law? This will be the death of me!

EXECUTIONER: Stand back, old woman!

TOU NGO: Let her come closer so that I can say a few words to her.

EXECUTIONER: Hey, old woman! Come here. Your daughter-in-law wants to speak to you.

MRS. TSAI: Poor child! This will be the death of me!

TOU NGO: Mother, when you were unwell and asked for mutton tripe soup, I prepared some for you. Donkey Chang made me fetch more salt and vinegar so that he could poison the soup, and then told me to give it to you. He didn't know his old man would drink it. Donkey Chang poisoned the soup to kill you, so that he could force me to be his wife. He never thought his father would die instead. To take revenge, he dragged me to court. Because I didn't want you to suffer, I had to confess to murder, and now I am going to be killed. In future, mother, if you have gruel to spare, give me half a bowl; and if you have paper money to spare, burn some for me, for the sake of your dead son!

-offerings for the dead

*Take pity on one who is dying an unjust death;
Take pity on one whose head will be struck from
her body;*

*Take pity on one who has worked with you in your
home;*

Take pity on one who has neither mother nor father;

Take pity on one who has served you all these years;

And at festivals offer my spirit a bowl of cold gruel.

MRS. TSAI (weeping): Don't worry. Ah, this will be the death of me!

TOU NGO:.

Burn some paper coins to my headless corpse,

For the sake of your dead son.

We wail and complain to Heaven:

There is no justice! Tou Ngo is wrongly slain!

EXECUTIONER: Now then, old woman, stand back!

The time has come.

*(TOU NGO kneels, and the EXECUTIONER removes
the cangue from her neck.)*

TOU NGO: I want to say three things, officer. If you will let me, I shall die content. I want a clean mat and a white silk streamer twelve feet long to hang on the flag-pole. When the sword strikes off my head, not a drop of my warm blood will stain the ground. It will all fly up instead to the white silk streamer. This is the hottest time of summer, sir. If injustice has indeed been done, three feet of snow will cover my dead body. Then this district will suffer from drought for three whole years.

EXECUTIONER: Be quiet! What a thing to say!

(The EXECUTIONER waves his flag.)

TOU NGO:

A dumb woman was blamed for poisoning herself;

A buffalo is whipped while it toils for its master.

EXECUTIONER: Why is it suddenly so overcast? It is snowing! *(He prays to Heaven.)*

TOU NGO:

*Once Tsou Yen caused frost to appear.**

Now snow will show the injustice done to me!

(The EXECUTIONER beheads her, and the ATTENDANT sees to her body.)

EXECUTIONER: A fine stroke! Now let us go and have a drink.

(The ATTENDANTS assent, and carry the body off.)

ACT IV

(Enter TOU TIEN-CHANG.) - father

TOU: I am Tou Tien-chang. It is thirteen years since I left my child Tuan-yun. I went to the capital, passed the examination and was made a counsellor. And because I am able, just and upright, the emperor appointed me Inspector of the Huai River Area. I have travelled from place to place investigating cases, and I have the sword of authority and golden tally so that I can punish corrupt officials without first reporting to the throne. My heart is torn between grief and happiness. I am glad because I am a high official responsible for seeing that justice is done. I am sad, though, because when Tuan-yun was seven I gave her to Mistress Tsai; and after I became an official and sent for news of the widow to Chuchow, the neighbours said she had moved away — to what place they did not know — and there has been no word since. I have wept for my child till my eyes are dim and my hair is white. Now I have come south of the Huai River, and am wondering why this district has had no

*Tsou Yen of the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.) was a loyal subject of the Prince of Yen, but because an enemy slandered him he was imprisoned. Since such great injustice had been done, frost appeared in summer.

rain for three years. I shall rest in the district office, boy. Tell the local officers they need not call today. I shall see them early tomorrow.

SERVANT (*calling out*): The officers and secretaries are not to call on His Excellency today. He will see them early tomorrow.

TOU: Tell the secretaries of the different departments to send all their cases here for my inspection. I shall study some under the lamp.

(The SERVANT brings him the files.)

TOU: Light the lamp for me. You have been working hard, and you may rest now. But come when I call you.

(The SERVANT lights the lamp and leaves.)

TOU: I shall go through a few cases. Here is one concerning Tou Ngo, who poisoned her father-in-law. Curious that the first culprit's surname should be the same as mine! To murder one's father-in-law is one of the unpardonable crimes; so it seems there are lawless elements among my clan. Since this case has been dealt with, I need not read it. I'll put it at the bottom of the pile and look at another. Wait, I suddenly feel drowsy. I suppose I am growing old, and am tired after travelling. I will take a short nap on the desk. (*He sleeps.*)

(Enter TOU NGO's ghost.)

TOU NGO:

*Day after day I weep in the underworld,
Waiting impatiently for my revenge.*

I pace on slowly in darkness,

Then am borne along by the whirlwind;

Enveloped by mist I come swiftly in ghostly form.

(She looks about her.) Now the door-gods will not let me pass. I am the daughter of Inspector Tou. Though I died unjustly, my father does not know it; so I have come to visit him in his dreams. (*She enters the room and weeps.*)

TOU (*shedding tears*): Tuan-yun, my child! Where have you been?

(TOU NGO's spirit leaves, and TOU wakes up.)

How odd! I fell asleep and dreamed that I saw my daughter coming towards me; but where is she now? Let me go on with these cases.

(TOU NGO's spirit enters and makes the lamp burn low.) Strange! I was just going to read a case when the light flickered and dimmed. My servant is asleep; I must trim the wick myself. (*As he trims the lamp, TOU NGO's spirit re-arranges the file.*) Now the light is brighter, I can read again. "This concerns the criminal Tou Ngo, who poisoned her father-in-law." Strange! I read this case first, and put it under the others. How has it come to the top? Since this case has already been dealt with, let me put it at the bottom again and study a different one. (*Once more TOU NGO's spirit makes the lamp burn low.*) Strange! Why is the light flickering again? I must trim it once more.

(*As TOU trims the light, TOU NGO's spirit once more turns over the file.*) Now the lamp is brighter, I can read another case. "This concerns the criminal Tou Ngo, who poisoned her father-in-law." How extraordinary! I definitely put this at the bottom of the pile just before I trimmed the lamp. How has it come to the top again? Can there be ghosts in this office? Well, ghost or no ghost, an injustice must have been done. Let me put this underneath and read another.

(TOU NGO's spirit makes the lamp burn low again.) Strange! The lamp is flickering again. Can there actually be a ghost here tampering with it? I'll trim it once more. (*As he trims the wick, TOU NGO's spirit comes up to him and he sees her. He strikes his sword on the desk.*) Ah, there's the ghost! I warn you, I am the emperor's inspector of justice. If you come near, I'll cut you in two. Hey, boy! How can

you sleep so soundly? Get up at once! Ghosts! Ghosts! This is terrifying!

TOU NGO:

Fear is making him lose his head;

The sound of my weeping has frightened him more than ever.

Here, Tou Tien-chang, my old father,

Will you let your daughter Tou Ngo bow to you?

TOU: You say I am your father, ghost, and offer to bow to me as my daughter. Aren't you mistaken? My daughter's name is Tuan-yun. When she was seven she was given to Mistress Tsai as a child-bride. You call yourself by a different name, Tou Ngo. How can you be my child?

TOU NGO: After you gave me to Mistress Tsai, father, she changed my name to Tou Ngo.

TOU: So you say you are my child Tuan-yun. Let me ask you this: Are you the woman accused of murdering her father-in-law and executed?

TOU NGO: I am.

TOU: Hush, girl! I've wept for you till my eyes grew dim, and worried for you till my hair turned white. How did you come to be condemned for this most heinous of crimes? I am a high official now, whose duty it is to see that justice is done. I have come here to investigate cases and discover corrupt officials. You are my child, but you are guilty of the worst crime of all. If I could not control you, how can I control others? When I married you to the widow's son, I expected you to observe the Three Duties and Four Virtues. The Three Duties are obedience to your father before marriage, obedience to your husband after marriage, and obedience to your son after your husband's death. The Four Virtues are to serve your parents-in-law, to show respect to your husband, to remain on good terms with your sisters-in-law, and to live in peace with your neighbours. But regardless

Confucianism

3 Duties - all to ↓

obey father
obey husband
obey son

4 Virtues

serve in-laws
respect husband
get on w/ sis-in-law
live peaceful w/ neighbours

of your duties, you have committed the gravest crime of all! The proverb says: Look before you leap, or you may be sorry too late. For three generations no son of our clan has broken the law; for five generations no daughter has married again. As a married woman, you should have studied propriety and morality; but instead you perpetrated the most terrible crime. You have disgraced our ancestors and injured my good name. Tell me the whole truth at once, and nothing but the truth! If you utter one false word, I shall send you to the tutelary god; then your spirit will never re-enter human form, but remain a hungry ghost for ever in the shades.

TOU NGO: Don't be so angry, father. Don't threaten me like an angry wolf or tiger! Let me explain this to you. At three, I lost my mother; at seven, I was parted from my father, when you sent me to Mistress Tsai as her future daughter-in-law, and my name was changed to Tou Ngo. At seventeen, I married; but unhappily two years later my husband died, and I stayed as a widow with my mother-in-law. In Chuchow there lived a certain Doctor Lu, who owed my mother-in-law twenty taels of silver. One day when she went to ask him for the money, he lured her outside the town and tried to strangle her; but Donkey Chang and his father came by and saved her life. Old Chang asked: "Whom do you have in your family, ma'am?" My mother-in-law said: "No one but a widowed daughter-in-law." Old Chang said: "In that case, I will marry you. What do you say?" When my mother-in-law refused, the two men said: "If you don't agree, we shall strangle you again!" So she was frightened into marrying him. Donkey tried to seduce me several times, but I always resisted him. One day my mother-in-law was unwell and wanted some mutton tripe soup. When I prepared it, Donkey told me to let him taste it. "It's good," he said. "But

Recap
whole
story

there's not enough salt and vinegar." When I went to fetch more, he secretly poisoned the soup and told me to take it to her. But my mother-in-law gave it to Old Chang. Then blood spurted from the old man's mouth, nose, ears and eyes, and he died. At that Donkey said, "Tou Ngo, you poisoned my father. Do you want to settle this in public or in private?" "What do you mean?" I asked. "If you want it settled in public," he said, "I shall take the case to court, and you will pay for my father's death with your life. If you want it settled in private, then be my wife." "A good horse won't have two saddles," I told him. "A good woman won't remarry. For three generations no son of our clan has broken the law; for five generations no daughter has married again. I'd rather die than be your wife. I am innocent. I'll go to court with you." Then he dragged me before the prefect. I was tried again and again, stripped and tortured; but I would rather have died than make a false confession. When the prefect saw that I wouldn't confess, he threatened to have my mother-in-law tortured; and because she was too old to stand the torture, I made a false confession. Then they took me to the execution ground to kill me. I made three vows before my death. First, I asked for a twelve-foot white silk streamer and swore that, if I was innocent, when the sword struck off my head no drop of my blood would stain the ground — it would all fly up to the streamer. Next I vowed that, though it was midsummer, Heaven would send down three feet of snow to cover my body. Last, I vowed that this district would suffer three years' drought. All these vows have come true, because of the crime against me.

*I complained not to any official but to Heaven,
For I could not express the injustice that was done
me;
And to save my mother from torture*

I confessed to a crime of which I was innocent,
 And remained true to my dead husband
 Three feet of snow fell on my corpse;
 My hot blood gushed to the white silk streamer;
 Tsou Yen called down frost,
 And snow showed the injustice done me.
 Your child committed no crime,
 But suffered a great wrong:

For resisting seduction I was executed!

I would not disgrace my clan, so I lost my life!
 Day after day in the shades
 My spirit mourns alone.
 You are sent by the emperor with authority;
 Consider this case and this man's wickedness;
 Cut him in pieces and avenge my wrong!

TOU (weeping): Ah, my wrongly slain daughter, how
 this wrings my heart! Let me ask you this: Is it
 because of you that this district has suffered for three
 years from drought?

TOU NGO: It is.

TOU: So! This reminds me of a story. In the Han
 dynasty there was a virtuous widow whose mother-in-
 law hanged herself, and whose sister-in-law accused
 her of murdering the old woman. The governor of
 Tungngo had her executed, but because of her unjust
 death there was no rain in that district for three years.
 When Lord Yu came to investigate, he saw the dead
 woman's ghost carrying a plea and weeping before
 the hall; and after he changed the verdict, killed a
 bull and sacrificed at her grave there was a great
 downpour of rain. This case is rather similar to that.
Tomorrow I shall right this wrong for you.

I bow my white head in sorrow

Over the innocent girl who was wrongly slain.

Now dawn is breaking, you had better leave me;

Tomorrow I shall set right this miscarriage of justice.

TOU NGO (bowing):

*With sharp sword of authority and tally of gold,
 You will kill all evil and corrupt officials,
 To serve your sovereign and relieve the people!*
 (She turns back.) There's one thing I nearly forgot,
 father. My mother-in-law is old now, and has no one
 to look after her.

TOU: This is dutiful, my child.

TOU NGO:

*I ask my father to care for my mother-in-law,
 For she is growing old. My father now
 Will reopen my case and change the unjust verdict.*
 (Exit.)

TOU: Dawn is breaking. Call the local officers, and all
 those concerned in the case of Tou Ngo.

SERVANT: Yes, Your Excellency.

(The PREFECT, MISTRESS TSAI, DONKEY CHANG
 and DOCTOR LU are sent in. They kneel before TOU.)

TOU: Mistress Tsai, do you recognize me?

MRS. TSAI: No, Your Excellency.

TOU: I am Tou Tien-chang. Listen, all of you, to the
 verdict! Donkey Chang murdered his father and black-
 mailed good citizens. He shall be executed in public.
 Let him be taken to the market-place to be killed.
 The prefect passed a wrong sentence. He shall be
 given one hundred strokes and have his name struck
 off the official list. Doctor Lu is guilty of selling
 poison. Let him be beheaded in the market-place.
 Mistress Tsai shall be lodged in my house. The wrong
 sentence passed on Tou Ngo shall be rescinded.

Let the Donkey be killed in public,

The prefect dismissed from office;

Then let us offer a great sacrifice

So that my daughter's spirit may go to heaven.

(THE END)

*virtue rewarded
 vice punished*

*Can't win
 in earthly life*

*historical
 archetype
 only if
 involved in
 plot*

*father is
 hero*