

Drama

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Injustice to Tou Ō

Kuan Han-ch'ing (c. 1220–c. 1307)

DRAMATIS PERSONAE ¹

(listed in the order of their appearance)

MISTRESS TS'AI, a widow

TOU T'IENTS'ANG, a poor scholar, later a surveillance commissioner

This is a complete Yüan drama (*tsa-chü*) showing all the typical features of the genre. The verses are sung by a single actor per act (a vestige of its origins in prosimetric storytelling) to various standard arias (*ch'ü*), the names of which are not always completely transparent and hence left untranslated here. Instead, they are simply indicated serially by number.

The story of Tou Ō has been told in many different versions and is still presented in Peking opera under the title *Snow in Midsummer*. All of the supernatural phenomena that occur when Tou Ō dies are taken from earlier sources, but through his literary artistry, Kuan Han-ch'ing (see selection 105) first brought them together in a fashion that has made this the most memorable work in which they are to be found. The verse portions of Kuan's play are especially fine. *Injustice to Tou Ō* is written in early Mandarin, as is all Yüan drama, which means that it is full of colloquial speech.

A brief synopsis of the play is as follows: Scholar Tou sells his only daughter, age seven, to Mistress Ts'ai, a money-lender, for a few ounces of silver so that he can travel to the capital to sit for the imperial examinations. Thirteen years later, Tou Ō, who was married to Mistress Ts'ai's son, is now mourning his death as a young widow of twenty. Old Chang and his son, Donkey Chang, come courting Mistress Ts'ai and Tou Ō respectively. The two men force their way into the house and demand compensation for having previously saved Mistress Ts'ai from being strangled by an evil quack doctor. Mistress Ts'ai seems willing to remarry, but Tou Ō refuses out of faithfulness to the memory of her late husband. Donkey Chang plans to do away with Mistress Ts'ai so that he can have his way with Tou Ō after the old lady is dead. When Tou Ō makes some mutton-tripe soup for her mother-in-law, Donkey Chang puts poison in it. Old Chang drinks the poisoned soup by mistake and dies. Donkey Chang accuses Tou Ō of

TOU Ō (Tuan-yün), Tou T'ien-chang's daughter

DOCTOR LU

OLD CHANG

DONKEY CHANG, Old Chang's son

PREFECT T'AO WU

ATTENDANT to a magistrate

THE OFFICER in charge of executions

YAMEN RUNNERS

EXECUTIONER

CHANG CH' IEN, attendant to Tou T'ien-chang

MAGISTRATE succeeding T'ao Wu

THE GUARD escorting prisoners

1. The *Dramatis Personae*, as is the convention of traditional Chinese drama, is absent in the Chinese text.

*Arousing Heaven Stirring Earth Is Tou Ō's Injustice*¹

Kuan Han-ch'ing of Ta-tu² in the Yüan Dynasty

*Prologue*³

(*Enter the old woman* MISTRESS TS'AI.)

having murdered his father and has her dragged into court. There a forced confession is extracted from her after she is flogged. She is sentenced to death and executed. The three-year drought brought on by Tou Ō's unjust execution brings to the district a high official, who happens to be Tou Ō's father, on an inspection tour. As he reviews the documents of her trial by candlelight, Tou Ō's ghost appears to him and asks for retribution. The unfortunate young woman's case is reopened, she is cleared of guilt, and the real culprit is punished.

The third act is the execution scene. In it Tou Ō passionately calls on Heaven and Earth to rectify the great injustice inflicted upon her. The supernatural phenomena that come to pass in response to her invocation transform a single woman's fight against her enemies into a battle of good and evil, thus enlarging the scope of the play and endowing it with cosmic significance. It is particularly renowned for exemplifying the skill and power of Kuan as a playwright.

1. This is also the second line of the couplet at the end of the play. A Yüan drama conventionally concludes with two or four seven-character lines, generally summing up the story of the play. One of the lines usually appears also as the full title of the play. The title refers to the play as a *tsa-chü*, a term that Yüan playwrights presumably borrowed from the name of the Sung dynasty four-act "Variety Play" (*tsa-chü*), a term no longer fitting for a play based on a plot.

2. Peking.

3. The term used for "prologue" here is *hsieh-tzu* (literally, "wedge") and may also signify an interlude in Yüan drama. The *hsieh-tzu* has only one or two songs in it, unlike a regular act, which has a song-sequence.

TS'AI:

(*Recites.*⁴)

Flowers will bloom again,
But men may never regain their youth.
One need not always be rich and noble;
To have peace and happiness is to be like the immortals.

I am Mistress Ts'ai, a native of Ch'u-chou. There were three of us in the family. Unfortunately my husband passed away some time ago, and I have only this one child, who is now eight years old. We two, mother and son, live together and are fairly well off. Hereabouts is a Scholar Tou, who last year borrowed twenty taels of silver from me, and now owes forty taels in capital and interest. I have asked several times for the money. But Scholar Tou only claimed that he was poor and unable to pay. He has a daughter, who is seven this year. She was born cute and has grown to be lovely. I have a mind to make her my daughter-in-law. Then I would cancel the forty taels of silver. Isn't it a case of "both sides getting some benefit out of it?" He has said that today is an auspicious day and he would bring his daughter to me in person. I shall not, for the time being, go out to collect from my debtors, but wait for them at home. Now Scholar Tou must soon arrive. (*The supporting actor impersonating TOU T'IENTS'ANG, guiding the female lead impersonating TUAN-YÜN, enters.*)

TOU:

(*Recites.*)

Having read ten thousand books of great profundity,
Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju still remained as poor as he could be.
When the Emperor summoned him to the court of Han one day,
He spoke no more of wine but of his "Sir Fantasy."⁵

4. The notation "recites" occurs before the mannered declamation of a poem.

5. Title of a famous rhapsody by Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju (c. 179–118 B.C.E., see also selection 129). In his youth, Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju served at the court of King Hsiao of the state of Liang, a prince of the Han imperial house. King Hsiao had gathered around him an illustrious group of poets and rhetoricians, which included Mei Ch'eng (see selection 124). Ssu-ma wrote the first part of this rhapsody while attached to the court of King Hsiao, and it subsequently came into the hands of Emperor Wu, who exclaimed, "What a pity that I could not have lived at the same time as the author of this!" When informed that the author was still alive, the emperor summoned Ssu-ma to the capital and provided him with writing materials so that he could continue his literary labors. The poet thereupon revised and expanded his earlier rhapsody to produce "Sir Fantasy"—sometimes treated as a single piece under that title and sometimes as two items, the second entitled "Rhapsody on the Shang-lin (Hunting Park)."

Like many early rhapsodies, "Sir Fantasy" is cast in the form of a debate, the participants being three officials with names that emphasize their fictitious nature, each speaking in praise

My family name is Tou, and my given name is T'ien-chang. My ancestral home is in the Ching-chao District of Ch'ang-an.⁶ I have studied the classics since childhood and have learned a great deal. However, the times have not been favorable, and fame has not yet come to me. Unfortunately too, my wife has died, leaving me this daughter, whose name is Tuan-yün. She lost her mother when she was three and now she is seven. I am as poor as if I had been scoured; now I have drifted aimlessly here to Ch'u-chou to live. Around here is a Mistress Ts'ai, who is quite well off. Lacking traveling money, I once borrowed from her twenty taels of silver. Now I should repay her forty taels including interest. She has asked for the money several times, but with what am I supposed to pay her back? Who would have thought that she would often send people over to say that she wants my daughter to be her daughter-in-law? Since the spring examinations will soon start, I should be going to the capital. However, I have no traveling money. I have no other choice; I just have to send my daughter Tuan-yün to Mistress Ts'ai to be her future daughter-in-law.⁷ (*He sighs.*) Hai! How can one say that this is marrying her off to be a daughter-in-law? It is clearly the same as selling the child to her. If Mistress Ts'ai would cancel the forty taels she has lent me, and if I can get a little something extra for my expenses while taking the examination, it would be more than I can hope for. While talking, I have come to her gate already. Is Mistress Ts'ai at home? (*Enter MISTRESS TS'AI.*)

TS'AI: Will the scholar please come in. I have been waiting for you for a long time. (*They see each other.*)

TOU: I have brought you my daughter, madam. How dare I presume to present her to be your future daughter-in-law; I am giving her to you only to serve you day and night. Presently I have to go to the capital to take the examination. Leaving my daughter here, I only hope that you will look after her.

TS'AI: Now you are my in-law. As to the forty taels you owe me, including interest, here is your promissory note, which I am returning to you. In

of his master. In the first part of the rhapsody, presumably composed at an earlier date, Sir Fantasy of the fief of Ch'u and Master No-such of Ch'i describe the hunts and outings of their respective lords. In the second part, Lord Not-real, spokesman for the supreme ruler, the Son of Heaven (i.e., the emperor), overwhelms his companions with a magnificent description of the Shang-lin Park on the outskirts of Ch'ang-an and the imperial hunts and entertainments that take place there. Surprisingly, the work ends with a passage in which the emperor is shown renouncing such pleasures, opening his parks and ponds to the use of the common people, and adopting a policy of frugality in government.

6. Ch'ang-an (in Shensi province) was several times the capital in ancient China, and Ching-chao was one of its districts.

7. In old Chinese society, it was customary for a family to take in a girl, usually from a poor family, to be a future daughter-in-law.

addition, I am presenting you with ten taels of silver for your traveling expenses. In-law, I hope that you do not find this too little. (TOU T'IENT-CHANG *thanks her.*)

TOU: Many thanks, madam. Not only have you cancelled the amount I owe you, but you have also presented me with traveling money. Someday I shall greatly repay you for your kindness. Madam, when my little girl acts silly, for my sake, please look after her.

TS'AI: In-law, you need not worry. Now that your worthy beloved daughter has come to my family, I shall look after her just as though she were my own daughter. You may leave with your mind at ease.

TOU: Madam, when Tuan-yün deserves a beating, please, for my sake, just scold her. When she deserves to be scolded, please just speak to her. My child, now it won't be like staying with me anymore; I, as your father, can be tolerant of you. Now if you are naughty here, you will be asking for a scolding and a beating. My child, I do what I do because there is no other way. (*He becomes sad.*)

(*Sings.*⁸)

Having no way to make a living,
I am surrounded by four bare walls;
Therefore I must make a sacrifice and be separated from my child.
Today I shall travel afar to the dust of Loyang.⁹
Not knowing the date of my return,
I become speechless, pale, and listless.

(*Exit.*)

TS'AI: Scholar Tou has left his daughter to be my daughter-in-law. He has gone straightaway to the capital to take the examination. (TOU TUAN-YÜN *is grieved.*)

TOU TUAN-YÜN: Father, you really can bear to leave me, your child, behind!

TS'AI: Daughter-in-law, you are now in my house. I am your mother-in-law. You are my daughter-in-law and will be treated as my own flesh and blood. Don't cry. Follow me and we will go to the front and to the back of the house to attend to things. (*Exeunt.*)

Act 1

[*Thirteen years later*]

(*Enter DOCTOR LU.*)

8. The notation "sings" occurs before lyrics set to various fixed tunes.

9. In Honan province, Loyang was several times capital of ancient China.

LU:

(*Recites.*)

I diagnose disease with care,
And prescribe according to the medicine book.
I cannot bring dead men back to life,
But the live ones by my doctoring often die.

My name is Lu. People say that I am good at doctoring, and call me "Sai Lu-yi."¹ I keep an apothecary shop at the South Gate of Shan-yang District. In town there is a Mistress Ts'ai from whom I borrowed ten taels of silver. With interest I now owe her twenty taels. She has come several times for the money, but I have none to repay her. If she doesn't come again, then there's an end to it. If she comes, I have an idea. Now I'll just sit down in the apothecary shop here and see who will come. (*Enter MISTRESS TS'AI.*)

TS'AI: I am Mistress Ts'ai. Some time ago, I moved to Shan-yang to live. It is pretty quiet here. Since that time thirteen years ago when Scholar Tou T'ien-chang left his daughter Tuan-yün behind to be my daughter-in-law, I have changed her name to Tou Ō. Not quite two years after the marriage, my son unexpectedly died of consumption. My daughter-in-law has already been a widow for three years and will soon be out of mourning. I have just told her that I am going outside the city gate to collect a debt from Sai Lu-yi. (*She performs walking gesture.*) I stride along the walls and go around the corners of many houses. I have already come to the door of Sai Lu-yi's house. Is Sai Lu-yi at home?

LU: Come in, madam.

TS'AI: You have kept my few pieces of silver for a long time. How about paying them back to me?

LU: Madam, I have no money at home. Come with me to the village, and I shall get the money for you.

TS'AI: I shall go with you. (*They start walking.*)

LU: Well, here we are—nobody to the east, nobody to the west. If I don't do the job here, what am I waiting for? I have some rope with me. Hey, Mistress, who is calling you?

TS'AI: Where? (DOCTOR LU *tries to strangle her*. OLD CHANG and DONKEY CHANG *rush forward*; DOCTOR LU *hurries away*. OLD CHANG *revives MISTRESS TS'AI.*)

DONKEY CHANG: Father, it's an old woman nearly strangled to death.

1. "Lu-yi" refers to the famous doctor Pien Ch'üeh of the District Lu in the Warring States period (see selection 192, note 3). "Sai" means "to rival"; in Yüan plays, the term "Sai Lu-Yi" is often used ironically for incompetent doctors.

OLD CHANG: Say, Mistress, where are you from, what is your name? Why did that man want to strangle you?

TS'AI: My name is Ts'ai. I live in town and I have only one widowed daughter-in-law, who lives with me. Because Sai Lu-yi owes me twenty taels of silver, I went to ask it back from him today. Who would have thought that he'd lure me to a deserted place in order to strangle me to escape a debt? Had it not been for you and this young man, how could I have come out of it alive?

DONKEY CHANG: Father, did you hear what she said? She has a daughter-in-law at home. We have saved her life; she will have to reward us. The best thing would be for you to take this old woman, and I'll take her daughter-in-law. What a convenient deal for both sides! Go and talk to her.

OLD CHANG: Hey, old lady, you have no husband and I have no wife; how about you being my old woman? How does that strike you?

TS'AI: What talk is this? Wait till I get home; I shall get some money to reward you.

DONKEY CHANG: You must be unwilling and want to bamboozle me with money. Doctor Lu's rope is still here; perhaps I had better strangle you after all. (*Takes up rope.*)

TS'AI: Brother, how about waiting till I think it over slowly?

DONKEY CHANG: Think what over? You go with my old man, and I'll take your daughter-in-law.

TS'AI: (*Aside.*) If I don't go along with him, he will strangle me. All right, all right, all right, you two, father and son, come home with me. (*Exeunt. Enter the female lead.*)

TOU Ö: My family name is Tou; my humble name is Tuan-yün. My ancestors came from Ch'u-chou. When I was three, I lost my mother; at seven I was separated from my father. He gave me away to Mistress Ts'ai to be her daughter-in-law, and she changed my name to Tou Ö. When I reached the age of seventeen, I was married. Unfortunately my husband died, and it has already been three years.² Now I am twenty years old. Outside the South Gate there is a Sai Lu-yi, who owes my mother-in-law twenty taels of silver in principal and interest. Although he has been

2. Tou Ö was married when she was seventeen; not quite two years later, her husband died and she has remained a widow for three years already. In the Western way of reckoning, she should be about twenty-two or at least twenty-one years old by this time, when she claims, "I am now twenty years of age." In Chinese, *san nian* ("three years") may refer to three different years; thus after three years of mourning, Tou Ö can still be twenty, as seen below:

Tou Ö's age

17—married at seventeen

18—husband died, not quite two years later

19

20—Tou Ö at twenty, being widowed for three years already.

asked several times for the money, he has not returned it. Today my mother-in-law has gone to ask for it herself. Ah, Tou Ö, this life of yours, how miserable!

(Sings first lyric.)

Of my heart full of sorrow,
Of my years of suffering,
Is Heaven aware?
If Heaven only knew my situation,
Would it not also grow thin?

(Second lyric.)

I just want to ask:
To go without eating or sleep both day and night—
When is this to end?
What appears in last night's dream often lingers in the mind today.
Embroidered flowers lying across the door call forth tears;
The full moon hanging above the lady's chamber breaks one's heart.
I have long been anxious and unable to suppress my worries;
Deeply depressed, I cannot relax my knitted brows.
More and more my heart grows heavy,
And my thoughts become anxious and long.

(Speaks.) There is no knowing when this sorrow will end!

(Sings third lyric.)

Is it my fate, to be unhappy all my life?
Who else knows such endless grief as I?
We all know that human feelings, unlike water, cannot flow endlessly.
When I was three years of age, my mother died;
At seven, I was separated from my father.
And then I married a man who died young,
Leaving my mother-in-law and me to keep to our lonely chambers.
Who is there to care for us, who is there to look after us?

(Fourth lyric.)

Is it because I did not burn enough incense in my last life,
That in this life I have to suffer?
I urge people to do good deeds to cultivate a better next life.
I serve my mother-in-law and mourn for my husband:
My words must be fulfilled.

(Speaks.) Mother has gone to collect the debt. Why hasn't she come back by now? *(Enter MISTRESS TS'AI with OLD CHANG and DONKEY CHANG.)*

TS'AI: You two, father and son, stay here at the gate while I go in first.
 DONKEY CHANG: Mother, you go in first and say that your son-in-law is at the door. (MISTRESS TS'AI *sees* TOU Ö.)
 TOU Ö: Mother, you're back. Have you eaten?
 TS'AI: (*Crying.*) Child, how can I tell you?
 TOU Ö:

(*Sings fifth lyric.*)

Why are tears flowing down unceasingly?
 Is it because while collecting debts she provoked a quarrel with
 someone?
 I hurry over to greet and inquire after her,
 And she is about to give her reasons.

TS'AI: It's all so embarrassing; how can I ever say it? ³

TOU Ö: She looks half hesitant and half embarrassed.

(*Speaks.*) Mother-in-law, why are you so upset and crying?

TS'AI: When I went to Sai Lu-yi to ask for my money, he lured me to a deserted place and tried to strangle me. Fortunately an old man named Chang and his son, Donkey, saved me. Now Old Chang wants me to take him as a husband. That's why I am so upset.

TOU Ö: Mother-in-law, I am afraid this won't work out. How about thinking it over again? We are not starving, and we do not lack clothing or owe money. We are not pressed by creditors. Besides, you are advanced in years. You are over sixty years old; how can you take another husband?

TS'AI: Child, what you said is right. But I owe these two my life. I also told them, "Wait till I get home, I'll give you a lot of money to thank you for your kindness in saving my life." I don't know how he found out I had a daughter-in-law at home. He argued that since we did not have husbands and they did not have wives, truly ours would be matches made in Heaven; and that if I did not agree with him, he still would strangle me to death. At the time I became frantic; and it wasn't just myself I promised them, but you also. My child, there was nothing else I could do.

TOU Ö: Mother, you listen to me.

(*Sings sixth lyric.*)

To avoid evil spirits, one must select auspicious days;
 For a wedding ceremony, one must offer incense-burning.

3. Tou Ö's next line is sung. The breaking up of the song text with prose dialogue is a convention in Yüan drama and helps to reduce the distance between song and speech.

Now your knot of hair is as white as snow,
 How can you wear the colorful silk veil?⁴
 No wonder people say,
 You cannot keep a grown girl at home.⁵
 Now you are about sixty years of age,
 Isn't it said that "when middle age arrives, all is over"?
 With one stroke, you mark off the memories of former love;
 Now you and this man act like newlyweds.
 To no purpose you make people split their mouths with laughter.

TS'AI: These two saved my life. Since it has come to this, I don't care if other people laugh at me.

TOU Ö:

(Sings seventh lyric.)

Though indeed you had him, had him save you,
 You are no longer young like a bamboo shoot, like a bamboo shoot;
 How can you paint your eyebrows fine to make another match?⁶
 Your husband left you his property;
 He made plans for you;
 He bought fertile land to provide food for morning and evening
 And clothing for summer and winter,
 Fully expecting his widowed wife and orphaned son,
 To remain free and independent till old age.
 Oh, father-in-law, you labored for nothing!

TS'AI: Child, he is waiting to get married. He is so excited, how can I refuse him?

TOU Ö:

(Sings eighth lyric.)

You say that he is excited and happy.
 I, however, am worried for your sake.

4. At a Chinese wedding, red is predominantly used, whereas white, traditionally used in a Western wedding, is worn at a Chinese funeral.

5. There is a proverb: "A grown girl is not to be kept at home; if you try, you only make an enemy out of her."

6. Chang Ch'ang of the Han dynasty, in his devotion to his wife, painted her eyebrows for her. Although later the allusion "Chang Ch'ang painting eyebrows" is used to signify affection between husband and wife, the story, as told in the *History of Han*, always suggests a slightly improper intimacy. Since the painting of a wife's eyebrows by a husband is considered an excessive gesture according to traditional Chinese taste, the thought of Mistress Ts'ai at her age contemplating such an intimate gesture with a stranger is outrageous.

I worry that you, in waning spirit, cannot swallow the wedding wine;
 I worry that you, with failing vision, cannot tie the same-heart knot;
 I worry that you, sleepy and feeling dim, cannot rest secure under the
 flower-quilt.

You want to be led by songs and music to the wedding hall;
 I would say that this match⁷ certainly will fall short of others.

TS'AI: Oh child, scold me no more. They are both waiting at the gate. Since
 things have come to this, it is better that you too take a husband.

TOU Ō: If you want to take a husband, go ahead. I definitely do not want a
 husband.

TS'AI: Who wants a husband? But what can one do when both, father and
 son, squeezed past the door of their own accord? What am I to do?

DONKEY CHANG: Today we are going to be married and be taken into our
 wives' family.

Bright are our hats,
 Today we are going to be bridegrooms;
 Handsome are our sleeves,
 Today we are going to be guests of honor.⁸

What good husbands, what good husbands! Not bad, not bad! (*He and*
OLD CHANG enter and salute.)

TOU Ō: (*Refuses to salute.*) You wretch, stand back!

(*Sings ninth lyric.*)

Women should not, I think, believe what men say;
 My Mother-in-law, I am afraid, will not maintain her chaste
 widowhood.

Now she takes as a husband an uncouth old fellow,
 Who brings along with him a half-dead convict.

DONKEY CHANG: (*Making a grimace.*) You can see that we two, father and
 son, cut such fine figures that we fully qualify for being selected as
 husbands. Don't let your good days go to waste. You and I, let's get on
 with the wedding ceremonies.

7. *Yin-yüan*: generally used to mean the fate that brings about a marriage, or "causes" a man and a woman to marry. The expression is derived from the Buddhist technical term *yin-yüan*, which was a translation of the Sanskrit term *hetu-pratyaya*, meaning "cause" and "condition." *Hetu* is the primary cause, or internal cause, such as a seed is to a sprout, and *pratyaya* is the condition or secondary cause or causes, such as rain, dew, etc., are to a sprout.

8. This verse describing the neatness of a groom's attire and his happy mood appears several times in *Yüan* plays, usually quoted by others to the groom. Donkey Chang's quoting of the verse in praise of himself and his presumptuous behavior here further expose his boorish character and strengthen the audience's sympathy for Tou Ō when she rejects him.

TOU Ǿ:

(Refusing to salute, sings.)

You really can kill a person!

Swallows and orioles in pairs!⁹

Mother-in-law, don't you feel shame?

My father-in-law worked in different prefectures and states;

He amassed a solid fortune, lacking in nothing.

How can you let the wealth he secured be enjoyed now by Donkey Chang?

(DONKEY CHANG pulls TOU Ǿ to kneel for the wedding ceremony. TOU Ǿ pushes him over.)

TOU Ǿ:

(Sings.)

Isn't this the outcome of us widowed women! *(Exit.)*

TS'AI: You, sir, don't be annoyed. You saved my life; I cannot but think of repaying you. Only that daughter-in-law of mine is not to be provoked and easily prevailed upon. Since she does not want to take your son as a husband, how can I take you, sir, as my husband? Now I shall provide good wine and good food to keep you both here at my house. Wait till I take time to persuade my daughter-in-law. When she has changed her mind, we can again make arrangements.

DONKEY CHANG: Such a perverse bone! Even if she were a virgin, just to be pulled by someone, she need not be so cross and push me to the ground for no reason. Will I let this go? I shall swear to your face that if I do not get her to be my wife in this life, I shall not be considered a man.

(He recites.)

Beautiful women I have seen by the thousands,

But none so perverse as this wench.

I saved your mother-in-law's life;

How can you be unwilling to make a sacrifice to serve me with your body? *(Exeunt.)*

Act 2

(Enter DOCTOR LU.)

LU:

(Recites.)

I am a physician.

There is no knowing how many have died from my doctoring.

9. A traditional image of happy couples.

But when have I been afraid of accusation,
And closed my door once for apprehension?

There is a Mistress Ts'ai in town. I owe her twenty taels of silver. She has been here often to claim the money. I almost broke her back. Indeed, I was stupid for a moment; I led her to the deserted countryside. Then we ran into two strangers. They shouted, "Who dares commit a murder, a violent deed, under the open sky, disregard the law and strangle a citizen!" It frightened me so much that I threw away the rope and ran. Although nothing happened during the night, I was scared out of my wits. Now I know that a human life is tied to Heaven and Earth. How can one treat it like mere dust on the wall? From now on I shall change my profession and try to wipe out my guilt and cultivate a better Karma. For each life that I killed by my doctoring, I shall offer the reading of a scripture to release the soul from suffering. I am Sai Lu-yi. Merely for wanting to default on a loan of twenty taels of silver, I lured Mistress Ts'ai to a deserted place. When I was just about to strangle her to death, two strangers turned up and saved her. If she comes again to ask for her money, how am I to face her? It is well said by the proverb "Of the thirty-six schemes, the best is to run away." Fortunately, I am by myself, not burdened by a family. It is better that I pack my valuables and luggage, tie up a bundle and quietly go to another place to hide and to start a new life. Won't that be a clean break? (*Enter DONKEY CHANG.*)

DONKEY CHANG: I am Donkey Chang. But alas! Tou Ō is still unwilling to yield to me. Now the old woman is sick. I shall get a dose of poison to give to her. When the old woman is poisoned, that little wench, for better or for worse, must be my wife. (*He walks.*) Wait a bit! There are too many eyes and ears and too much gossip in town. If they see me buying poison, they will make noise and cause trouble. The other day I saw an apothecary shop outside the South Gate, where it was quiet and just right for getting the drug. (*He arrives and calls out.*) Brother doctor, I came to get some medicine!

LU: What medicine do you want?

DONKEY CHANG: I want a dose of poison.

LU: Who dares mix poison for you? This wretch certainly has a lot of gall!¹

DONKEY CHANG: You really refuse to give me the medicine?

LU: I will not give it to you. What are you going to do to me?

DONKEY CHANG: (*Seizes DOCTOR LU.*) Fine! Aren't you the one who tried to strangle Mistress Ts'ai the other day? Do you think that I don't recognize you? I'll take you to the magistrate.

1. The "gall" is said to be the seat of courage.

LU: (*Panics.*) Big brother, let me go. I have the medicine, I have the medicine. (*Gives him the poison.*)

DONKEY CHANG: Since I now have the drug, I will let you off. Indeed, it is: "When one can set others free, it is better to set them free; when one is able to forgive, it is better to forgive." (*Exit.*)

LU: This is surely bad luck. The fellow who has just asked for the medicine is the one who saved that old woman. Now I have given him a dose of poison; if anything happens, I shall be in more trouble. I'd better close this store before it's too late. I'll go to Cho-chou to sell rat poison. (*Exit DOCTOR LU. Enter MISTRESS TS'AI, sick, holding onto a table. Enter OLD CHANG and DONKEY CHANG.*)

OLD CHANG: I came to the house of Mistress Ts'ai hoping to be her second husband. But her daughter-in-law stubbornly refuses to give in. The old woman has kept the two of us, father and son, here at her house. She keeps on saying that a good thing should not be rushed, and we should wait until she succeeds in persuading her daughter-in-law to change her mind. Who would have thought that the old woman would fall sick? Son, have you had our horoscopes read? When will the lucky star and the auspicious day enter into our life?

DONKEY CHANG: Why wait for the auspicious day to arrive? One can only gamble on his ability. If you are able to do something, go ahead and do it.

OLD CHANG: Son, Mistress Ts'ai has been sick for quite a few days. Let us go inquire after her sickness. (*Sees the old woman and inquires.*) P'o-p'o,² how do you feel today?

TS'AI: I don't feel well at all.

OLD CHANG: Would you want a little something to eat?

TS'AI: I'd like to have some mutton-tripe soup.

OLD CHANG: Son, you tell Tou Ö to prepare some mutton-tripe soup for p'o-p'o.

DONKEY CHANG: (*Calling toward the stage door.*) P'o-p'o would like to have some mutton-tripe soup. Hurry to prepare some and bring it here. (*Enter TOU Ö, carrying the soup.*)

TOU Ö: I am Tou Ö. My mother-in-law doesn't feel well and she wants to have some mutton-tripe soup. I myself have made some for her, and I am going to take it to her now. Mother-in-law, we widows should be discreet in all things. How can we keep Donkey Chang and his father, who are not relatives or members of our family, here in the house with us? Won't that make people talk? Mother-in-law, do not promise them your hand secretly and involve me also in impro-

priety. I can't help thinking how hard it is to keep watch over a woman's heart.³

(Sings first lyric.)

She wants to rest behind lovebird curtains all her days,
Unwilling to sleep in an empty chamber for half a night.
First she was Mr. Chang's woman, now she is Mr. Li's wife.
There is a type of woman, who, following each other's fashion,
Speak not of household matters, but pick up all idle gossip.
They vaguely talk of catching-phoenix adventures,
And display knowledge of trapping-dragon tricks.⁴

(Second lyric.)

"This one is like Lady Cho, who worked in a tavern;⁵
This one is like Meng Kuang, who raised her tray as high as her
eyebrows."⁶
Behind these clever words they hide their true selves.
Their words do not reveal, only their deeds.
Old love is easily forgotten, and new love is favored.
Upon the grave the earth is still wet;
On the rack new clothes are hung.
Where would one find a woman who would weep down the Great
Wall at her husband's funeral?⁷
Where would one find a girl who, while washing her yarn, would
willingly plunge into the Big River?⁸

3. Here Tou Ō turns aside from the immediate situation to a general reflection that will become the subject of the following two arias.

4. "Catching a phoenix" or "trapping a dragon" is usually interpreted as "to hurt a good person."

5. Refers to Cho Wen-chün, the wife of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju. When they were poor, they kept a small tavern in Chengtu, where she served as a barmaid. See selection 129.

6. Meng was the wife of Liang Hung of the Later Han. She showed her respect and love by bringing in the dinner tray raised as high as her eyebrows.

7. This refers to the folk tale about Meng Chiang-nü, whose husband, Fan Ch'i-liang, died while a conscript laborer working on the Great Wall during the reign of the first emperor of Ch'in. Later she went to seek her husband and wept so bitterly at the foot of the Wall that part of it crumbled and exposed her husband's body.

8. During the Spring and Autumn period, the minister Wu Tzu-hsü fled from the state of Ch'u to Wu. A woman washing by the river took pity on the refugee and fed him. Upon leaving, he asked her not to tell his pursuers which way he had gone. She drowned herself in the river to assure him that no word of his escape could come from her. Another reason for her drowning was that, although she helped the refugee out of compassion, she nonetheless failed in chastity in dealing with a man who was a stranger. Tou Ō made the allusion here evidently on account of this second reason.

Where would one find a wife turning into stone while waiting for her husband's return?⁹

How pitiable and shameful!

Women today are not virtuous but wanton and lacking in purpose.

Fortunately, there were faithful women of old;

Thus say not that "human nature is hard to change."¹⁰

(*Speaks.*) Mother, the mutton-tripe soup is ready. How about eating some?

DONKEY CHANG: Let me take it to her. (*He tastes the soup.*) There is not quite enough salt and vinegar in this; go get some. (*Exit TOU Ö. He puts the poison in the soup. Enter TOU Ö.*)

TOU Ö: Here are the salt and vinegar.

DONKEY CHANG: You put some in the soup.

TOU Ö:

(*Sings third lyric.*)

You say that, lacking in salt and vinegar, the soup has no taste;

Only if I add spice and pepper will it be good.

All I hope is that mother will soon recover.

Drinking one cup of soup is better than filling yourself with medicine;

When you get well, I shall greatly rejoice.

OLD CHANG: Son, is the soup ready?

DONKEY CHANG: Here is the soup. You take it to her. (OLD CHANG *takes the soup.*)

OLD CHANG: Eat some soup, *p'o-p'o*.

TS'AI: Thanks for the trouble. (*She vomits.*) I feel nauseated; I don't want this soup now. Why don't you eat some?

OLD CHANG: This was prepared especially for you. Even if you don't feel like it, eat a mouthful anyway.

TS'AI: I don't want it anymore. You eat some. (OLD CHANG *eats.*)

TOU Ö:

(*Sings fourth lyric.*)

9. This refers to a legend that a faithful wife, during her husband's absence from home, climbed a hill every day to watch for his return, until finally she was transformed into a large stone, which was called "Watching-for-husband Stone."

10. A stock phrase. Here it means: "Do not say that women are born to be fickle, because many women in the old days were chaste and faithful."

One says, "Please eat this."
 One says, "You eat first."
 This kind of talk is hard to take,
 And how can I help getting angry?
 What relation is there between him and us!
 How could she forget the love of her former husband,
 Who used to indulge her many wishes?
 Oh, mother, is it because you regard gold as but a fleeting treasure,
 And a friend in old age a rare thing,¹¹
 That you value your new find more than your former love?
 You want even in death to share a grave with a mate;
 Where is any thought of going a thousand miles¹² to deliver winter
 clothes?

OLD CHANG: After eating the soup, why do I begin to feel dizzy? (*He falls.*
 MISTRESS TS'AI *panics.*)

TS'AI: You, sir, get hold of yourself. Make an effort to stay awake! (*Cries.*) He
 is dead!

TOU Ö:

(*Sings fifth lyric.*)

It's no use grieving; you really have no understanding.
 Birth and death are part of transmigration.
 Some fall sick, some encounter hard times,
 Some catch a chill, some suffer rheumatic fever,
 Some die of hunger, overeating, or overwork;
 Each knows his own lot.
 Human life is ruled by Heaven and Earth;
 How can one substitute years for another person?
 Our life-span is not determined in this world.
 You and he were together only for a few days;
 What is there to speak of in terms of one family?
 Besides, there is neither sheep, wine, silk, money, nor other wedding
 gifts.

11. The meaning of these two lines is ambiguous. The saying here is evidently proverbial, and loosely applicable to the situation; a literary sense perhaps is not to be looked for.

12. A Chinese "mile," or "trident" (three hundred paces), is about one-third of an English mile. Here Tou Ö is contrasting her fickle mother-in-law to the faithful Meng Chiang-nü, who traveled a thousand "miles" to deliver warm clothing to her conscript husband in the construction of the Great Wall under the first emperor of Ch'in (see note 7 above). Mistress Ts'ai evidently wants to enjoy companionship with her mate even in death, but cannot remain faithful when deprived of the companionship.

Clenching our hands, we work and go on,
 Letting loose the hand, it is the end of life.
 It is not that I am contrary; only I fear what others may say.
 It is better to heed my advice and regard the whole thing as poor luck.
 Sacrifice for him a coffin and secure several pieces of cotton and silk;
 Get him out of our house and send him to his grave.
 This one is not a marriage contracted from your young age;
 I really do not care and cannot shed half a drop of tears.
 Do not be so overcome with grief,
 Sigh or wail like this!

DONKEY CHANG: Fine! You have poisoned my father; yet you expect to get out of it clean!

TS'AI: Child, how is this going to end?

TOU Ö: What poison would I have? When he was asking for salt and vinegar, he put the poison in the soup himself.

(Sings sixth lyric.)

This fellow tricked my old mother into keeping you.
 You yourself have poisoned your father.
 Whom do you think you can frighten?

DONKEY CHANG: My own father—to say that I, the son, poisoned him, nobody would believe it. *(Shouts.)* Neighbors, neighbors, listen! Tou Ö has poisoned my father!

TS'AI: Stop! Don't get so excited. You scare me to death.

DONKEY CHANG: Are you afraid?

TS'AI: Indeed I am afraid.

DONKEY CHANG: You want to be let off?

TS'AI: Indeed, I want to be let off.

DONKEY CHANG: Then you tell Tou Ö to give in to me, to call me dear, beloved husband three times; then I shall let you off.

TS'AI: Child, you had better give in now.

TOU Ö: Mother, how can you say such a thing?

(Sings.)

One horse cannot wear two saddles.¹³
 When your son was alive we were married for two years;
 Yet now you ask me to marry another.
 This is indeed something I cannot do.

13. A proverb meaning that one woman cannot serve two husbands.

DONKEY CHANG: Tou Ō, you have poisoned my father. Do you want to settle the matter officially or privately?

TOU Ō: What do you mean by officially or privately?

DONKEY CHANG: If you want to settle the matter officially, I shall drag you to court, where you will be thoroughly interrogated. Frail as you are, you will not be able to stand the beating and will have to confess to the murder of my father. If you want to settle privately, you had better become my wife soon. After all, you will benefit.

TOU Ō: I did not poison your father. I am willing to go with you to see the magistrate. (DONKEY CHANG *drags* TOU Ō *and the old woman out. Enter the prefect with an attendant.*)

PREFECT:

(*Recites.*)

I am a better official than many another.
Whoever comes to file a suit is asked to pay in gold and silver.
If a superior official comes to investigate,
I stay at home, pretending to be under the weather.

I am the prefect of Ch'u-chou. My name is T'ao Wu. This morning I am holding court. Attendants, summon the court. (*Attendant shouts. Enter DONKEY CHANG dragging in TOU Ō and MISTRESS TS'AI.*)

DONKEY CHANG: I want to lodge a charge! I want to lodge a charge!

ATTENDANT: Then bring them over here. (DONKEY CHANG *kneels; the prefect also kneels.*)

PREFECT: Please rise.

ATTENDANT: Your honor, he is the plaintiff. Why do you kneel to him?

PREFECT: Don't you know that these who come to file a suit are like my parents who pay for my clothing and food? (*Attendants shout.*)

OFFICIAL: Which of you is the plaintiff? Which is the defendant? Now tell the truth.

DONKEY CHANG: I am the plaintiff, Chang Lü-erh, who accuses this young woman, called Tou Ō, of preparing poison, putting it into mutton-tripe soup and poisoning my father. This one is Mistress Ts'ai, who is my stepmother. I ask your honor to render a decision on my behalf.

PREFECT: Which one of you put in the poison?

TOU Ō: It had nothing to do with me.

TS'AI: And it had nothing to do with me.

DONKEY CHANG: It had nothing to do with me either.

PREFECT: It wasn't any of you. It must have been I who put in the poison?

TOU Ō: My mother-in-law is not his stepmother either. His family name is Chang; ours is Ts'ai. When my mother-in-law was asking a loan back from Doctor Lu, she was led by him to the countryside to be strangled. However, my mother-in-law's life was saved by these two, father and son. Therefore my mother-in-law took both father and son into our house to stay permanently as a reward for their favor. Who could have known that the two of them would begin to have evil thoughts? One boldly claimed to be my mother-in-law's second husband; the other wanted to force me to become his wife. I had a husband, and my mourning for him was not yet over. I firmly refused the proposal. It just happened that my mother-in-law was sick and asked me to prepare some mutton-tripe soup. I don't know where Donkey Chang got the poison that he carried with him. He took the soup, and, saying that it lacked salt and vinegar, he managed to send me away. Meanwhile he secretly put the poison in the soup. It was indeed a piece of heaven-sent good fortune that my mother-in-law suddenly began vomiting. She didn't want the soup anymore. She gave it to his father to eat. No sooner had he eaten a few mouthfuls than he died. His death had absolutely nothing to do with me. I hope your honor will raise high the clear mirror ¹⁴ and act on my behalf for justice.

(Sings seventh lyric.)

Your honor, you, bright as a mirror and clear as water,
 Can discern whether I am inwardly true or false.
 The soup had the five flavors all properly blended;
 Besides this I know nothing else.
 He pretended to taste it;
 His father swallowed it and became unconscious.
 It is not that I answer evasively in court,
 Your honor, what could I say groundlessly when I am innocent? ¹⁵

DONKEY CHANG: Your honor, please examine the matter carefully. Her name is Ts'ai and my name is Chang. If her mother-in-law did not take my father as her second husband, why did she keep us two, father and son, in her house? This woman, though young, is bad and stubborn, unafraid of a beating.

14. This is an idiom for politely asking an official "to discern wrongs and justice." As a clear mirror reflects things lucidly, a discerning judge sees through motivation and can detect false intentions. A clear mirror is thus associated with a wise judge; cf. the first line of the following verse section and the first line of the concluding couplet of the play.

15. This foreshadows her later forced confession and suggests that she senses that the case will go against her.

PREFECT: People are mean worms. If you don't beat them, they will not confess. Attendants, select a heavy stick and beat her. (*The attendants beat* TOU ō. *Three times they sprinkle water on her to revive her.*)

TOU ō:

(*Sings eighth lyric.*)

This heartless stick is more than I can endure.
Oh mother, this indeed is your own doing;
Who else can be blamed?
Here I urge all women in the world, married or remarried,
To take note of my case as a precedent.¹⁶

(*Ninth lyric.*)

Ah! Who is shouting so fiercely?
I cannot help being frightened out of my wits.
No sooner does the noise stop and scarce do I revive,
Than once again I faint.
A thousand beatings and ten thousand punishments;
One blow falls—one streak of blood, one layer of skin!

(*Tenth lyric.*)

They beat me till pieces of my flesh fly about,
And I am dripping with blood.
Who knows the bitterness in my heart?
Where could I, this insignificant woman, have secured poison?
Oh Heaven, why don't the sun's rays
Ever reach underneath an overturned tub?¹⁷

PREFECT: Are you going to confess or not?

TOU ō: Really, I did not put in the poison.

PREFECT: Since it wasn't you, let's just beat the old woman.

TOU ō: (*Hastily.*) Stop! Stop! Stop! Do not beat my mother-in-law; rather, I'll confess. It was I who poisoned my father-in-law.

PREFECT: Since she has confessed her crime, have her make her mark on her confession. Fasten her in the cangue¹⁸ and throw her in the cell for the

16. In making sentences, magistrates, besides resorting to the law of the land, often used decisions made in other district courts as precedents.

17. Meaning that justice does not exist in a dark court.

18. A frame used to confine the neck and hands: an old Chinese punishment. The English and French "cangue" is from the Portuguese *canga*, which in turn is from the Vietnamese *gong* (yoke).

condemned. Tomorrow I shall sentence her to death and have her taken to the marketplace to be executed.

TS'AI: (*Weeps.*) Tou Ö, it is I who am costing you your life. Oh, this pains me to death!

TOU Ö:

(*Sings eleventh lyric.*)

When I become a headless ghost, suffering great injustice,

Do you think I would spare you,

A lustful, lecherous, brazen-faced thief?

Men cannot be long deceived;

Injustice escapes not the eyes of Heaven and Earth.

I struggled to the end and fought to the finish,

Now why should I wait any longer?

I willingly admit poisoning my father-in-law and sign a confession.

Oh mother, if I do not die,

How can I save your life?

(*Exit TOU Ö following the attendant.*)

DONKEY CHANG: (*Kowtows.*) Thank you, heavenly magistrate, for acting on my behalf. When Tou Ö is executed tomorrow, my father's death finally will be avenged.

TS'AI: (*Weeps.*) Tomorrow at the marketplace they are going to kill Tou Ö, my child. Oh, this pains me to death!

PREFECT: Donkey Chang and Mistress Ts'ai, get yourselves securities. I would have you at the court's disposal at all times. Attendant, sound the drum for the court's dismissal. Bring my horse. I am going home. (*Exeunt.*)

Act 3

(*Enter the officer in charge of execution.*)

OFFICER: I am the officer in charge of execution. Today we are putting a criminal to death. Officers, guard the roads. Do not let any passersby loiter. (*Enter attendant. They beat the drum and gong three times. The executioner enters, waving a flag, carrying a sword, and guarding TOU Ö in a cangue.*)

EXECUTIONER: Move faster, move faster! The officer in charge of execution has long since gone to the place of execution.

TOU Ŏ:

(Sings first lyric.)

For no reason, I am found guilty by Imperial law;
Unexpectedly, I suffer punishment.
My cry of injustice startles Heaven and Earth!
In a moment, my drifting soul goes to Yama's palace.¹
Why shouldn't I blame Heaven and Earth?

(Second lyric.)

The sun and moon hang aloft by day and by night;
Ghosts and spirits hold the power over our lives and deaths.
Heaven and Earth should distinguish the pure from the foul;
But how they have mixed up Bandit Chih and Yen Yüan!²
The good suffer poverty and short life;
The wicked enjoy wealth, nobility, and long life.
Even Heaven and Earth have come to fear the strong and oppress the
weak.
They, after all, only push the boats following the current.³
Oh Earth, as you fail to discriminate between good and evil,
How can you function as Earth?
Oh Heaven, in mistaking the sage and the fool,
You are called Heaven in vain!

EXECUTIONER: Move on faster; we are late.

TOU Ŏ:

(Sings third lyric.)

I am twisted by this cangue
Till I tilt to the left and stagger to the right;
The crowd pushes me backward and forward.
I, Tou Ŏ, wish to say something to you, brother.

EXECUTIONER: What do you want to say?

TOU Ŏ:

(Sings.)

If we go through the main street, I shall bear you a grudge;
If we go through the back street,

1. The palace of Yama, king of the nether world in popular Buddhism.

2. Both were of the Spring and Autumn period. Chih was a notorious robber, and Yen Yüan, a Confucian disciple, was a virtuous person who died young in poverty. Later these two persons represented the extreme bad and good.

3. Meaning "to help without sincerity; to offer help to those who are already lucky."

I will have no grievance, though I die.
Do not refuse me by saying, "The back road is too long."

EXECUTIONER: Now that you are going to the execution ground, if you have any relatives you would like to see, it would be all right for you to see them.

TOU Ō:

(Sings fourth lyric.)

Unhappily I am all alone and have no relatives;
So I can only endure in silence, and sigh in vain.

EXECUTIONER: Do you mean to say that you don't even have parents?

TOU Ō: I have only a father, who went to the capital thirteen years ago to take the Examination. There has not been any word from him since.

(Sings.)

I have not seen my father for over ten years.

EXECUTIONER: Just now you asked me to take you by the back street. What is your reason?

TOU Ō:

(Sings.)

I fear that on the main street my mother-in-law would see me.

EXECUTIONER: You cannot even take care of your own life now. Why should you worry about her seeing you?

TOU Ō: If my mother-in-law sees me in a cangue and lock, going to the execution ground to be killed,

(Sings.)

Won't she die from anger for nothing?
Won't she die from anger for nothing?
I tell you, brother,
It is good to do favors for people in times of peril.

TS'AI: Oh Heaven, isn't this my daughter-in-law?

EXECUTIONER: Old woman, stand back.

TOU Ō: Since my mother-in-law is here, ask her to come closer. Let me say a few words to her.

EXECUTIONER: You old woman over there, come near. Your daughter-in-law wants to say something to you.

TS'AI: My child, this pains me to death!

TOU Ō: Mother, when Donkey Chang put the poison in the mutton-tripe

soup, he really wanted to kill you and then force me to be his wife. He never expected you to give the soup to his father to eat, and thus kill him instead. Because I was afraid you would get into trouble, I confessed, under pressure, to murdering my father-in-law. Today I am going to the execution ground to be killed. Mother, in the future, during the winter season, on New Year and other festivals, and on the first and fifteenth of each month, if you have any spare gruel, pour half a bowl for me; and if you have paper money to spare, burn some for me. Do this for the sake of the personal dignity of your late son.

(Sings *fifth lyric*.)

Think of Tou Ō, who wrongly was found guilty;
 Think of Tou Ō, whose head and body were severed;
 Think of Tou Ō, who, in the past, worked in your house.
 Oh mother, do all of these for the sake of Tou Ō's face,
 Since she has no father or mother.

(*Sixth lyric*.)

Think of Tou Ō, who served you all these years;
 At festivals, offer me a bowl of cold gruel,
 Burn some paper money for my headless corpse.
 Regard this as offering sacrifice to your own late son.

TS'AI: (*Weeping*.) Child, don't worry. I shall remember all this. Ah Heaven, this kills me.

TOU Ō:

(*Sings*.)

Oh mother, do not cry or fret or complain to high Heaven.
 It is I, Tou Ō, who has no luck,
 And who has to suffer in confusion such great injustice.

EXECUTIONER: (*Shouts*.) You old woman over there, stand back! The hour has come. (TOU Ō *kneels and the executioner unlocks the cangue*.)

TOU Ō: I wish to say to your honor, that if you would agree to one thing, I would die content.

EXECUTION OFFICER: Say what you have on your mind.

TOU Ō: I want a clean mat to stand on. Also, I want a piece of white silk, twelve feet long, to hang on the flagpole. If I have really been wronged, when the knife strikes and my head falls, a chestful of warm blood, without a drop staining the ground, will fly up to the piece of white silk.

EXECUTION OFFICER: I agree to this; it's nothing of importance. (*The executioner fetches the mat and TOU Ö stands on it. He also fetches a piece of white silk and hangs it on the flagpole.*)

TOU Ö:

(*Sings seventh lyric.*)

It is not that I, Tou Ö, make irrational wishes;
Indeed the wrong I suffer is profound.
If there is no miraculous sign to show the world,
Then there is no proof of a clear, blue Heaven.
I do not want half a drop of my blood to stain the earth;
All of it will go to the white silk hanging on the eight-foot flagpole.
When people see it from four sides,
It will be the same as the blood of Ch'ang Hung⁴ turning into a green stone,
Or the soul of Wang-ti⁵ residing in a crying cuckoo.

EXECUTIONER: What else do you have to say? If you don't tell his honor now, when are you going to tell?

TOU Ö: (*Kneels again.*) Your honor, this is the hottest time of summer. If Tou Ö has been truly wronged, after her death Heaven will send down three feet of auspicious snow to cover her corpse.

EXECUTION OFFICER: In such hot weather, even if you had grievances reaching to Heaven, you still couldn't call down one snowflake. Surely this is talking nonsense!

TOU Ö:

(*Sings eighth lyric.*)

You say that hot summer is not a time for snow.
Have you not heard that frost formed in June because of Tsou Yen?⁶
If I have a chestful of wronged feelings that spurt like fire,
It will move snow to tumble down like cotton,
And keep my corpse from exposure.

4. Ch'ang Hung was an official of the Chou dynasty who was unjustly killed. According to legend, after his death his blood turned into a green stone.

5. According to legend, Tu Yü, styled Wang-ti, was king of the Shu state toward the end of the Chou dynasty. He abdicated in favor of his prime minister because of the latter's success in controlling the flood. Wang-ti himself then retired to the Western Mountain and later turned into a cuckoo that cries in the spring, and people grieve for it.

6. Frost formed in the sixth month of the year because of Tsou Yen's unjust death. Tsou Yen was a loyal official of the Warring States period. When he suffered unjust imprisonment, he cried to Heaven; frost occurred—even in the warm month of June. This unnatural event is understood to be a sign of Heaven's displeasure.

What need is there of white horses and a white carriage,⁷
To escort my funeral through the ancient path and wild trail?

(TOU Ō *again kneels*.) Your honor, I, Tou Ō, truly die unjustly. I ask
that from this day this Ch'u-chou⁸ district should suffer from drought
for three years.

EXECUTION OFFICER: Slap her! What a thing to say!

TOU Ō:

(*Sings ninth lyric.*)

You say that Heaven cannot be counted on,
It has no sympathy for the human heart;
You don't know that Heaven does answer men's prayers.
Otherwise, why did sweet rain fail to fall for three years?
It was all because of the wrong suffered by the filial daughter at Tung-
hai.⁹
Now is the turn of your Shan-yang district!¹⁰
It is all because officials care not for justice,
People in turn are afraid to speak out.

EXECUTIONER: (*Waving a flag.*) Why is the sky suddenly overcast? (*Sound of
wind is heard from backstage.*) What cold wind!

TOU Ō:

(*Sings tenth lyric.*)

The wandering clouds darken for my sake,
The mournful wind whirls on my behalf.
My three prayers will make things completely clear.

(*Weeps.*) Mother, wait till snow falls in June and drought lasts for three
years;

(*Sings.*)

Then, and only then, the innocent soul of Tou Ō will be revealed.

(*The executioner strikes, and TOU Ō falls.*)

EXECUTION OFFICER: What! It is indeed snowing. How strange!

EXECUTIONER: I, for my part, say that usually, when I execute people, the

7. In the Later Han period, Chang Shao died, and his friend Fan Shih came from afar and attended the funeral in a white (the color of death and mourning in China) carriage drawn by a white horse. Later this allusion comes to mean a funeral.

8. The area from which Mistress Ts'ai hails.

9. An allusion to the source of the basic story in *Injustice to Tou Ō*, which is taken from the biography of Yü Ting-kuo in the *History of the Han*.

10. Where the action of this play occurs.

ground is full of blood. The blood of this Tou Ö, however, all flew onto the twelve feet of white silk and not a single drop is on the ground. This is truly wondrous.

EXECUTION OFFICER: There must be injustice in this death sentence. Two of her wishes have already come true. There is no knowing whether her talk of a three-year drought will come true or not. We shall wait and see how it turns out. Attendants, there is no need to wait for the snow to stop; now take her corpse away and return it to Mistress Ts'ai. (*All answer. Exeunt, carrying the corpse.*)

Act 4

(*Enter TOU T' IEN-CHANG in cap and sash, followed by CHANG CH' IEN¹ and attendants.*)

TOU:

(*Recites.*)

As I stand alone in this empty hall, my thoughts are dark.
The moon appears above the cliff-top, the woods are shrouded in mist.
It is not because of cares that I cannot sleep;
It's just that my startled spirit cannot rest at night.²

I am Tou T'ien-chang. It has been sixteen years since I left my child Tuan-yün. I went to the capital, passed the Imperial Examination on the first try, and was made a State Councilor in the Secretariat. Because I am incorruptible, able, moderate, and strong, the emperor kindly appointed me concurrently to the post of Surveillance Commissioner to the two circuits of the Huai River area.³ I have traveled from place to place to inspect prisons, check court records, and to discover and investigate corrupt officials. I have been given authority to execute the guilty before reporting to the throne.⁴ I am both happy and sad. I am happy because I hold high posts in the Censorate and Secretariat and have the power to see that justice is done. With the sword from the emperor and a golden tablet, my authority is extensive. I am unhappy because of my child, Tuan-yün. When she was seven years old, I gave her to Mistress Ts'ai to be her daughter-in-law. After I had become an official, I sent messengers to Ch'u-chou for news of Mistress Ts'ai. Her

1. A conventional name for a male servant in Yüan drama.

2. He is probably haunted, as his next reference to his daughter indicates.

3. The Circuit to the west of the Huai River and north of the Yangtze River and the Circuit to the east of the Huai River and north of the Yangtze River.

4. Note here the extraordinary power given to Tou to carry out a death sentence without the usual mandatory review by a higher (in this case, the central) judicial authority.

neighbors said that she moved away that same year; no one knew where she went, and there had been no word since. I have wept for my child, Tuan-yün, till my eyes are dim and blurred, and I have worried so much that my hair has turned white. I have come south of the Huai River and I wonder why it hasn't rained here in Ch'u-chou for three years. Today I shall rest in this district office. Chang Ch'ien, tell the local officials they need not call today. I shall see them early tomorrow.

CHANG CH'IENT: (*Calling toward the stage door.*) Officials of all ranks! You are excused from attendance today; his honor will see you early tomorrow.

TOU: Chang Ch'ien, tell the secretaries of the six departments to bring over all the files that ought to be reviewed. I shall study some under the lamp. (CHANG CH'IENT *hands him the files.*)

TOU: Chang Ch'ien, light the lamp for me. You must be tired; you may retire now. You need not come unless I call. (CHANG CH'IENT *lights the lamp. He leaves with other attendants.*) Let me go through a few cases. Here is a criminal by the name of Tou Ö, who poisoned her father-in-law. This is the first thing I read and I come upon someone with the same family name as my own. To poison one's father-in-law is one of the ten unpardonable crimes.⁵ Thus, among my clan too, there are some who

5. The Criminal Law Section in the *History of Yüan* lists the "ten crimes" as the following:

- (1) "to contemplate rebellion": more specifically, to conspire against and to put into danger the gods of soil and grain [to endanger one's country];
- (2) "to contemplate a greatly subversive act": more specifically, to conspire to destroy the imperial ancestral temples, tombs, and palaces;
- (3) "to contemplate treason": more specifically, to renounce one's country and to put oneself in the service of a foreign power;
- (4) "a detestable, subversive act": more specifically, to beat or murder grandparents or parents; to kill a paternal uncle, paternal uncle's wife, paternal aunt, older brother, older sister, maternal grandparents, husband, husband's grandparents, or husband's parents;
- (5) "to lack moral rules": more specifically, to massacre three persons of one family not guilty of a capital crime; to mutilate someone [for making medicine]; to concoct violent poisons and to conjure up evil spirits;
- (6) "to be extremely disrespectful": more specifically, to steal any of the sacred vessels consecrated to divine purpose, the ornaments on carriages or sedan chairs and other objects used by the emperor; to steal or to counterfeit the imperial seal; to make a mistake in a remedy prepared for the emperor, not following the prescriptions of the formula; to present things erroneously in the secret reports to the emperor; in the preparation of the emperor's meals, to present him forbidden food [because of religion or of health]; or to put at the emperor's disposal boats that are not strong. . . .
- (7) "to lack filial piety": more specifically, to accuse in court, or curse and revile one's grandparents, father, or mother, or the husband's grandparents, father, or mother; while one's grandparents and parents are still living, to establish a different household and to store property there; to be lacking in providing for one's parents; during the mourning

are lawless. Since this is a case that has been closed, I shall not read any more of it. I shall put this at the bottom of the pile, and look at another case. (*Yawns.*) I am drowsy. It must be that I am getting old and tired from traveling. Let me lean on the desk and take a little rest. (*Sleeps. Enter the ghost of TOU Ö.*)

TOU Ö:

(*Sings first lyric.*)

Daily I weep at the Homegazing Terrace;⁶
Anxiously I await my enemy.
Slowly I pace in darkness,
And quickly I am borne along by the whirlwind;
Enveloped in fog and clouds,
I come fast as a ghost.

(*The ghost of TOU Ö looks about her.*)

The door-guards⁷ will not let me pass. I am Surveillance Commissioner Tou T'ien-chang's daughter. Because I died unjustly, and my father does not know it, I come especially to visit him in his dreams.

period for one's father or mother, to marry, to make music, or to discard mourning clothes; upon learning of the death of one's grandparents, father, or mother, to feign ignorance and abstain from showing grief; to falsely report the death of one's grandparents, father, or mother.

- (8) "to lack concord": more specifically, to contemplate the murder or the sale of a relative for whose death one should wear fifth-degree mourning; to beat, or to accuse in court one's husband or a relative of an older generation for whom one should wear third-degree mourning, or a relative of an older generation for whose death one should wear fourth-degree mourning.
- (9) "to be unrighteous": more specifically, the crime of a subordinate who kills his prefect, governor, or magistrate; the crime of a soldier who kills his officer; the crime of a clerk or employee of a court of justice who kills an official of the fifth or higher rank; the crime of a disciple who kills his teacher; the crime of a wife, who, learning of the death of her husband, feigns ignorance and abstains from showing grief, finds joy in music, discards mourning clothing, and remarries.
- (10) "to commit incest": more specifically, to have carnal relations with relatives for whose death one should wear fourth-degree mourning, with the concubines of one's father or grandfather, or with any other woman with whom the father or grandfather has had intimate relations.

Tou Ö was accused of the crime of "a detestable, subversive act," listed as item (4) here.

6. According to Chinese folklore, there is a terrace in the nether world for the dead to ascend to watch their families in the human world.

7. On the New Year, pictures of the god of the left door and of the god of the right door are hung to ward off evil spirits.

(Sings second lyric.)

I am the executed daughter of the Surveillance Commissioner;

I am not an evil spirit.

Why prevent me from going near the lamp shadow?

Why do you stop me outside the gate?

(Calls.) Oh, that father of mine,

Useless are his powerful sword and golden tally.

How is he to redeem my innocent, three-year rotting bones,

From the boundless sea of sufferings?

(She enters the gate, weeping. TOU T' IEN-CHANG also weeps.)

TOU: Tuan-yün, my child, where are you? (TOU Ö's ghost vanishes. TOU T' IEN-CHANG wakes up.) How strange! As soon as I closed my eyes, I dreamed of Tuan-yün, my child, who seemed to appear right in front of me. Where is she now? Let me go on with these cases. (TOU Ö's ghost enters and adjusts the lamp.)

TOU: How strange! I was just about to read a case when the lamp flickered. Chang Ch'ien is asleep. I had better fix the lamp myself. (He trims the lamp. TOU Ö's ghost rearranges the file.) Now the lamp is brighter. I shall read a few more cases: "A certain criminal, Tou Ö, who poisoned her father-in-law. . . ." (He is puzzled.) I read this case first, and put it under the other documents. How has it again come to the top? Since this case has already been closed, let me again put it at the bottom and study a different one. (TOU Ö's ghost again adjusts the lamp.) Why is this light flickering again? I shall trim it once more. (He trims the light. TOU Ö's ghost again turns over the file.) Now I have made the lamp brighter. Let me read another case. "A criminal Tou Ö poisoned her father-in-law." Ah! How strange. I had definitely put this paper at the bottom of the file, and I have just trimmed the lamp. How is it again put on the top? Can it be that there is a ghost in the hall? Even if there is no ghost, there must be some injustice involved in this case. Let me again place this underneath and read another case. (TOU Ö's ghost again adjusts the lamp.) How is it that the light dims again? It must be a ghost who is adjusting this light. Let me again trim the wick. (He trims the wick. TOU Ö's ghost enters. They unexpectedly see each other. TOU T' IEN-CHANG takes out his sword and strikes the desk.) Ah! I said, "There is a ghost." Hey, you ghost over there, I am the Imperial Surveillance Commissioner who wears the golden tally⁸ and has access to the government's horses and posting stations. If you advance toward me, I shall

8. A symbol of power that enables an official to execute first and report to the throne later (see note 4).

cut you in two with my sword. Chang Ch'ien, how can you be sound asleep? Get up at once. There is a ghost. There is a ghost. This frightens me to death!

TOU Ö'S GHOST:

(Sings third lyric.)

Full of doubts, he makes random guesses;
Upon hearing my cry, he becomes frightened.
You, Tou T'ien-chang, are indeed powerful;⁹
Let me, Tou Ö, bow to you.

TOU: Ghost, you say that Tou T'ien-chang is your father and should receive the greetings of his child, Tou Ö. You must be mistaken. My daughter was called Tuan-yün. When she was seven, I gave her to Mistress Ts'ai to be her daughter-in-law. You are Tou Ö; the name is different. How can you be my daughter?

TOU Ö'S GHOST: Father, after you gave me to Mistress Ts'ai, she changed my name to Tou Ö.

TOU: You are then my child Tuan-yün. Let me ask you this: Was it you who poisoned your father-in-law?

TOU Ö'S GHOST: It was.

TOU: Be quiet, you wretched girl! I have wept for you till my eyes have grown dim, and I have worried for you till my hair has turned white. How did you come to commit one of the ten unpardonable crimes and be executed? Now I hold high official posts in the Censorate and the Secretariat, and am in charge of criminal law. I have come here to the Huai River area to investigate criminal cases and to expose corrupt officials. You are my own daughter. If I could not govern you, how can I govern others? When I gave you in marriage to that family, I expected you to observe the Three Obediences and the Four Virtues. The Three Obediences 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 service to your parents-in-law, respect for your husband, being on good terms with your sisters-in-law, and living in peace with your neighbors. You have disregarded the Three Obediences and the Four Virtues, and, on the contrary, have committed one of the ten unpardonable crimes. In our Tou family for three generations there has been no male who has broken the law, and for five generations there has been no woman who has remarried. Now

9. The daughter would not, in actual speech, pronounce her father's given name, especially in his presence; nor would she use the pronoun for "you." This is a license allowed in arias; it could also be a freedom accorded a ghost.

you have disgraced our ancestors and dishonored my good name. Tell me at once the truth in detail, and do not try to make excuses. If your account varies in the slightest from the truth, I shall send you to the temple of the city god, and you will never be able to re-enter human form, and will be exiled to a dark mountain and remain forever a hungry ghost.

TOU Ö'S GHOST: Father, please, for the time being, rest your anger and your "wolf and tiger"-like bearing. Listen to me tell the whole story slowly. At three I lost my mother, and at seven I was separated from my father. You gave me to Mistress Ts'ai to be her future daughter-in-law. At seventeen I married. Unfortunately, after two years, my husband died. I remained a widow and lived with my mother-in-law. Outside the South Gate of the Shan-yang District there was a Sai Lu-yi. He owed my mother-in-law twenty taels of silver. When my mother-in-law went to ask for the money, she was lured by him to the country, where he intended to strangle her to death. Unexpectedly Donkey Chang and his father came upon them. The two of them saved my mother-in-law's life. When Donkey Chang learned that there was a young widow in our family, he said, "You two, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, do not have husbands. Why don't you two marry us, father and son?" My mother-in-law was unwilling at first. Donkey Chang said, "If you refuse, I shall strangle you again." My mother-in-law was afraid. Because there was no way out, she haphazardly consented and brought the two of them, father and son, home, to provide for them for life. Donkey Chang tried several times to flirt with your daughter and to seduce her. I firmly resisted him. One day my mother-in-law was not well and wanted some mutton-tripe soup. When I had the soup ready, Donkey Chang happened to be there with his father to inquire after my mother-in-law's sickness. He said, "Bring the soup and let me taste it." Then he said there was not enough salt and vinegar. Having tricked me into fetching salt and vinegar, he secretly put poison in the soup. He actually expected to poison my mother-in-law and to force me into marrying him. Quite unexpectedly, however, my mother-in-law started to vomit. Not wanting the soup any more, she gave it to Old Chang to eat. Then blood spurted from the old man's mouth, nostrils, ears, and eyes, and he died. Donkey Chang then said, "Tou Ö poisoned my father. Do you want to settle this officially or privately?" I then said, "What do you mean by settling this officially or privately?" He said, "If you want it settled officially, I shall take the case to court, and you will pay for my father's death with your life. If you want it settled privately, then be my wife." Your child then said, "A good horse will not have two saddles; a chaste woman will not serve two husbands. I would rather die than be your wife. I would rather go to court." He dragged me to court, where

I was questioned again and again, hanged, beaten, stripped, and bound. I would rather have died than make a false confession. How could I stand it when the prefect, seeing that your child would not confess, was going to beat my mother-in-law? I was afraid that she was too old to stand the torture, so I could not but make a false confession. Thereupon they took me to the execution ground and executed me. Your child made three vows to Heaven. First, I asked for a twelve-foot piece of white silk to be hung on a flagpole. I swore that if I were falsely accused, when the knife struck and my head fell, a chestful of warm blood would not stain the ground, but would fly up to the white silk. Second, I asked that, although it was mid-summer, Heaven would send down three feet of snow to cover my corpse. Third, I vowed that this Ch'u-chou would suffer three years of severe drought. Indeed, my blood flew up to the white silk, snow fell in June, and there was no rain for three years. All these came to pass because of your child.

(Recites.)

I appealed not to the court, but to Heaven.
 The grievance in my heart cannot be put into words.
 To save my old mother from torture,
 Without argument I willingly confessed to the crime.
 Three feet of snow fell to cover my corpse;
 A chestful of blood stained the silk streamer.
 Not only did frost fly because of Tsou Yen's wrong,
 Today the injustice to Tou Ö is also revealed.

(Sings fourth lyric.)

Look at the record and see whether it reveals anything!
 How am I to endure this injustice?
 I would not yield to another;
 Instead, I was sent to the execution ground.
 I refused to disgrace my ancestors;
 Instead, I lost my life.

(Fifth lyric.)

Ah! Today I lean on the Summoning-souls Terrace,
 A lonely spirit, grievous and sad.
 Ah, father, you have the law in your hand
 And are sent by the Emperor;
 Study this case with care.
 That wretch, violating the moral order, deserves ruin;

Even if he is cut into pieces,
My wrongs can never be fully avenged.

TOU: (*Weeps.*) Ah, my wrongly slain child. For you, I shall die from grief. Let me ask you this: is it really because of you that Ch'u-chou has had no rain for three years?

TOU Ö'S GHOST: It is because of your child.

TOU: That such things could happen! Wait until tomorrow; I shall act on your behalf.

(*Recites.*)

A white-headed father is suffering great pain,
Because you, a young girl, have been wrongly slain.
I am afraid that dawn is breaking, and you had better go.
Tomorrow I shall set right your case and make it plain.

(TOU Ö's ghost leaves.)

TOU: Ya! It's dawn. Chang Ch'ien, last night when I was reading these cases, a ghost came to complain of her grievance. I called you several times, but you did not answer. You really slept well!

CHANG CH'IENT: I never closed my nostrils all night long. However, I did not hear any woman ghost complain of her grievance, nor did I hear your honor call me.

TOU: (*Scolding.*) Be quiet. The court is to be in session this morning. Call the court to order.

CHANG CH'IENT: (*Speaking aloud.*) People and horses in this courthouse be still; bring in the desk. (*To the Commissioner:*) The magistrate presents himself. (*The magistrate enters and presents himself.*) The clerk presents himself. (*The clerk enters and presents himself.*)

TOU: Why is it that there has been no rain in Ch'u-chou for three years?

MAGISTRATE: This is a drought decreed by Heaven. It is a calamity of the people of Ch'u. We know no guilt.

TOU: (*Angrily.*) You know no guilt? In the Shan-yang District there was a criminal, Tou Ö, who poisoned her father-in-law. When she was executed, she made a vow that if she were wrongly accused, there would be no rain in Ch'u-chou for three years, and not an inch of grass would grow on the ground. Is this true or not?

MAGISTRATE: This conviction of the criminal was effected by the former magistrate T'ao, who has since been promoted to the position of prefect. We have the documents.

TOU: That such a muddle-headed official should have been promoted! You are his successor. During these three years, have you offered any sacrifice to the wronged woman?

MAGISTRATE: Her crime was one of the ten gravest. No one has ever per-

formed sacrificial services for a person guilty of such a crime; so I have not made sacrificial offerings to her.

TOU: Formerly in the Han dynasty there was a widow who showed great filial piety. When her mother-in-law hanged herself, the mother-in-law's daughter brought accusation that this widow was the murderess. The governor of Tung-hai had the woman executed. Because she was wronged, for three years there was no rain in the district. Later, when Lord Yü was reviewing cases of persons confined in the prisons in the area, he seemed to see the widow weeping in front of the courthouse, with papers in her hands. After Lord Yü rectified her court records and personally offered sacrifice to her in front of her grave, rain poured down. Now your Ch'u-chou is suffering severe drought. Isn't the situation comparable to the Han case? Chang Ch'ien, ask the Department to sign a warrant and go to the Shan-yang District to arrest criminals Donkey Chang, Sai Lu-yi, and Mistress Ts'ai. Quickly bring them here for questioning. Do not delay.

CHANG CH'IENT: Yes, your honor. (*Leaves. Enter the guard, escorting prisoners DONKEY CHANG and MISTRESS TS'AI, accompanied by CHANG CH'IENT.*)

OFFICER: The Shan-yang District has arrested and brought here the criminals, waiting to be called.

TOU: Donkey Chang.

DONKEY CHANG: Present.

TOU: Mistress Ts'ai.

TS'AI: Present.

TOU: How is it that Sai Lu-yi, who is a key criminal, is not here?

OFFICER: Sai Lu-yi fled three years ago. An order has been issued to search widely for him and to arrest him. As soon as he is taken, he will be brought here for trial.

TOU: Donkey Chang, is Mistress Ts'ai your stepmother?

DONKEY CHANG: How can a mother be falsely claimed? She is truly my stepmother.

TOU: In the court file there is no mention of the person who mixed the poison that killed your father. Whose poison was it?

DONKEY CHANG: It was the poison mixed by Tou Ö herself.

TOU: There must be an apothecary shop that sold this poison. Tou Ö was a young widow; where could she have gotten it? Donkey Chang, could it be that you mixed the poison?

DONKEY CHANG: If I had mixed the poison, why didn't I poison someone else instead of my own father?

TOU: My wrongly slain child, this is an important court case. If you do not come to defend yourself, how can things be made clear? Where is your wronged ghost anyway? (*Enter the ghost of TOU Ö.*)

TOU Ö'S GHOST: Donkey Chang, if you did not mix the poison, who mixed it?

DONKEY CHANG: (*Terrified.*) There is a ghost! There is a ghost! Put salt in the water. "God on high! Come quickly, as commanded. An Imperial Order."

TOU Ө'S GHOST: Donkey Chang, when you put the poison in the mutton-tripe soup, you planned to kill my mother-in-law and force me to be your wife. Unexpectedly my mother-in-law did not eat the soup and gave it to your father. He then died of poisoning. How dare you deny this today?

(*Sings sixth lyric.*)

Suddenly I see you, cursed knave.

I only want to know where the poison came from.

Your original scheme was to secretly arrange things, forcing me to marry;

However, you poisoned your own father.

How could you have let me shoulder your guilt?

(TOU Ө's ghost strikes DONKEY CHANG.)

DONKEY CHANG: (*Dodging.*) "God on high! Come quickly, as commanded. An Imperial order." Your honor has just said that there must have been a store that sold the poison. If your honor can find the seller to confront me, I shall die without further words. (*Enter the clown as guard, escorting DOCTOR LU.*)

OFFICER: The Shan-yang District has brought here under guard another criminal, Sai Lu-yi.

CHANG CH' IEN: (*Calls.*) Face His Honor!

TOU: Three years ago you wanted to strangle Mistress Ts'ai to escape a debt. How are you going to explain this?

DOCTOR LU: (*Kowtows.*) It is true that I attempted to escape the debt that I owed Mistress Ts'ai, but two men rescued the old woman; she did not die.

TOU: As to these two men, could you recognize them? What are their names?

DOCTOR LU: I would recognize them all right. But in that moment of excitement, I did not ask their names.

TOU: There is one at the foot of the stairs. Go and identify him. (DOCTOR LU goes down to identify.)

DOCTOR LU: This is Mistress Ts'ai. (*Pointing at DONKEY CHANG.*) I think it must be that the poison case has been discovered. (*Speaks to the official.*) It is this one. Let me respectfully report to your honor the story. That day when I was going to strangle Mistress Ts'ai, those two, father and son, came upon us and rescued the old woman. A few days later, he came to my store asking for a dose of poison. I am one who is

devoted to reciting Buddha's name and who observes a vegetarian diet; I did not dare to do anything against my conscience. I said to him that we only had legal medicine in the store; we did not have any poison. He opened his eyes wide and said, "Yesterday in the country you wanted to strangle Mistress Ts'ai. I shall drag you to see the magistrate." All my life what I have dreaded the most is seeing an official. There was nothing I could do but give him the poison. I saw that he had an evil look and surely would use the poison to kill someone. For fear that later the murder would be exposed and I would be involved, I fled to the Cho-chou area, where I sold rat poison. It is true that recently I poisoned quite a few rats, but in all truth, I have never even once mixed poison for killing people.

TOU Ō'S GHOST:

(Sings seventh lyric.)

Merely to escape a debt, you employed deception;
You deserve to be punished.

(Speaks.) Oh, this poison!

(Sings.)

It was sold by Sai Lu-yi and bought by Donkey Chang.
For no reason at all,
They wrote the crime on my criminal plaque.
Now the judge is gone, only the courthouse remains.

TOU: Bring Mistress Ts'ai up here. I see that you are over sixty years of age; your family is quite well off. How is it that you were married to Old Chang and were involved in all this?

TS'AI: Because the two of them, father and son, saved my life, I took them home to provide them with food and lodging for life. Donkey Chang often suggested that I marry his father, but I never consented to it.

TOU: In that case, your daughter-in-law should not have confessed to poisoning her father-in-law.

TOU Ō'S GHOST: At the time the judge wanted to beat my mother-in-law. I was afraid that she was too old to stand torture, so I confessed to poisoning my father-in-law. It was truly a false confession made under pressure.

(Sings eighth lyric.)

You say that I should not have signed the confession.
It all started with my feeling of filial piety,
Which, however, became the root of all my troubles.

I thought the officials would re-examine the case;
 How could I know they would wrongly execute me in the street?
 First, I vowed my blood would stain the white silk flying on the
 flagpole;
 Second, I vowed that three feet of snow would cover my corpse;
 Third, I vowed a three-year drought would visit as a divine
 punishment.
 My vows were indeed comprehensive.

(*Ninth lyric.*)

Ah, it is true that from olden times, courthouses have faced the
 south,¹⁰
 None inside has not suffered injustice.
 It pains me that for over three years,
 My fragile body has been locked in the netherworld.
 All I have left is my deep sorrow flowing on like the long Huai River.

TOU: Tuan-yün, my child, I am fully aware of the injustice you have suffered.
 Now you had better return. After I sentence these criminals and the
 officials who originally handled your case, I shall offer a Buddhist
 sacrifice to release your soul from suffering and enable you to ascend
 to Heaven.

TOU Ö'S GHOST:

(*Sings tenth lyric.*)

Hereafter the golden tally and the sword of authority
 Are to be displayed prominently in the first place.
 They are to kill corrupt officials and dishonest clerks,
 To relieve the Son of Heaven of his worries,
 And to rid the people of evils.

(*Speaks.*) I almost forgot one thing. Father, my mother-in-law is old and
 has no one to look after her. Please, out of compassion, keep her in
 your house and provide her with her daily needs and give her a funeral
 on behalf of your child. Then I shall be able to close my eyes in peace
 in my grave.

TOU: What a filial and obedient daughter!

10. There is a Chinese jingle reflecting the people's cynical attitude toward the court:

Courthouses open to the south;
 Whether you are right or wrong,
 Just bring the money along!

TOU Ö'S GHOST:

(*Sings.*)

I ask you, father, to care for my mother-in-law;
Take pity on her who has no son or daughter-in-law.
Who is to care for her, old and feeble?
Furthermore, re-open my case.

(*Speaks.*) Father, also under my name Tou Ö,

(*Sings.*)

Clear the criminal charges of the wrongly executed one,
Who had confessed under torture. (*Exit.*)

TOU: Call Mistress Ts'ai to come up here. Do you recognize me?

TS'AI: My eyes are bad; I do not recognize you.

TOU: I am Tou T'ien-chang. The ghost who has just been here is my wrongly slain daughter, Tuan-yün. Now all of you listen to the sentence. Donkey Chang, who murdered his own father and attempted to seduce a widow, deserves to be sentenced to "slicing alive." Take him to the market-place, nail him on a "wooden donkey,"¹¹ and let him be sliced one hundred twenty times and die. T'ao Wu, who has been promoted to the post of governor, and the clerks in his department, all responsible for the wrong handling of criminal law, should each receive a hundred strokes and never again be employed in the government service. Sai Lu-yi should not have repudiated his debt, tried to strangle a citizen, or mixed poison that cost a human life. He is to be permanently exiled to a malarial district to work under the surveillance of military authority.¹² Mistress Ts'ai is to come to stay in my house. The guilt of Tou Ö is to be cleared.

(*Recites.*)

Say not that for the thought of my late daughter,
I wipe out her guilt and wrongs;
It was only because of the pity for Ch'u-chou Prefecture,
Which has suffered a severe three-year drought.
Formerly Lord Yü revealed the innocence of the filial daughter of
Tung-hai;¹³

11. A wooden stake used as an implement of cruel punishment. The "Donkey's" being punished by a "donkey" adds a macabrely ironic twist to the sentence that has been imposed.

12. This was part of a banishment sentence.

13. This is the story told by Tou T'ien-chang on p. 708.

Then rain was moved to fall like a fountain.
 Do not make the excuse that natural disaster occurs in every
 generation;
 The will of man can move Heaven to respond.
 Today I shall correct the records,
 To show that Royal law allows no one to suffer injustice.

Theme: Holding a mirror and carrying a scale¹⁴ is the way of the
 Surveillance Commissioner.

Title: Arousing Heaven and stirring Earth is Tou Ō's Injustice.¹⁵

Translated by Chung-wen Shih

14. "Holding a mirror" and "carrying a scale" are images associated with a discerning and just law officer.

15. At the conclusion of a Yüan play, two or four seven-character lines are used to give a brief summary of the story and repeat its title.

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The Peony Pavilion

Scene 7: The Schoolroom

T'ang Hsien-tsu (1550–1616)

CH'EN TSUI-LIANG:

Droning verses, re-revising
 lines composed last spring,

The Peony Pavilion (*Mu-tan t'ing*), written in 1598, is a southern-style drama (see selection 213, note 49) consisting of fifty-five scenes. It celebrates the power of passion and was part of the new, humane current of thought that appeared during the waning years of the Ming dynasty. The schoolroom scene selected here is one of the two most famous scenes of the play and one of the few that is still performed. The play is much too long to be performed in toto for modern audiences.

The plot is that of a typical romantic comedy: boy meets girl; there are obstacles to their love due to family opposition coupled with a fortuitous separation or the machinations of some boorish rival; the obstacles are overcome; and the play concludes with a celebration of reunion. The theme of *The Peony Pavilion* is especially fantastic: Bridal Tu, the heroine, is resurrected from death by her lover, for whom she has pined away and died. She first experiences love only in dreams, then as a shade in the nether world, and finally as a real wife in the flesh. Bridal Tu's lover is Liu Meng-mei ("Dreaming of Plum," the name he has taken in memory of his dreamy assignation with her), who comes from a good family. He is a handsome, gifted scholar, but not simply conventional, for he also has the courage to follow his instincts borne of his