

無名氏：盆兒鬼

The Ghost of the Pot

Anonymous (13th-14th century)

Translated by George A. Hayden

WEDGE¹

(Enter YANG TS'UNG-SHAN.)

TS'UNG-SHAN (*in verse*):

Summer goes, and winter comes, and after
spring, the fall.

The evening sun sinks to the west, and
eastward flows the stream.

Never trust the fine face of youth;

Your hair turns white full soon.

I am a man of the capital, Yang Ts'ung-shan by name. My son, Yang Kuo-yung, went off to the marketplace this morning in search of a friend of his, but he should be back by now. Well, I'll just have to wait up for him.

(Enter YANG KUO-YUNG.)

KUO-YUNG: I, Yang Kuo-yung, went to the market place this morning to form a business partnership with a friend, but on the way I came across a fortuneteller called Chia the Demigod. Everybody says that his predictions always come true, and so I felt I just had to part with some of my cash and have my fortune told. As soon as he came up with the prediction, he cried out, "Strange, how strange! The fortune says that within a hundred days, blood will glisten! And it looks as if there is no way out, either." I asked him, "Demigod, would you try one more time, just to see if there might be some way of escape or other?" After his fingers flew over the divining board once again, he said, "If you can get three hundred miles² away from home, you just might have a chance." Just as I was about

¹Wedge 楔子. Early Ming editors of dramatic texts used this term to indicate an independent song and its occasional refrain, which may occur before, between, or, exceptionally, after the standard four song sequences (acts) of northern drama. In late Ming editions, the "wedge" is a portion of the text marked by this song plus its accompanying dialogue.

²Lit., "one thousand *li* 里." The Chinese *li* is approx-

imately one third of an English mile.
to leave, he called me back and told me, "Be sure not to come back until the last day of the hundred is up. Remember what I've told you, remember it now!" All this has frightened me very much, and the only thing I can do is borrow five ounces of silver from my cousin Chao K'o, buy some goods, and set out to avoid trouble. Today happens to be an auspicious time, and once I've said goodbye to my father, I'll have to be on my way. (*Goes in and approaches*³ TS'UNG-SHAN.)

TS'UNG-SHAN: You're back, son.

KUO-YUNG: Yes, father, here I am.

TS'UNG-SHAN: Where were you?

KUO-YUNG: Father, at the market place I met with a man called Chia the Demigod, a fortuneteller, who predicted that a bloody calamity would befall me within a hundred days if I didn't go three hundred miles away. That scared me, and I borrowed five ounces of silver from my cousin Chao K'o, purchased some goods, and shall go away to transact some business. I'll be saying farewell, then, father, and after the hundred days are past and I've escaped trouble, I'll come home.

TS'UNG-SHAN: It's true what they say, son, "You can't believe in fortunetelling, for if you do, all you get is a bellyful of grief." My eyes, my arms, all of me exists for you alone. If you leave, who will take care of me? Don't go, my son.

³Approaches 見. Lit., "sees," but besides indicating some kind of recognition between characters on stage, this stage direction may signal some piece of business as well. "Sees," "catches sight of," or "acknowledges the presence on stage of" may be literally more accurate but seem clumsy in translation, while "approaches" may more nearly capture the intended action.

KUO-YUNG: People call that fortuneteller Chia the Demigod, and so it seems to me it would be wiser to take his word for it. I've already made up my mind to go, and I'm afraid that if I stayed, I'd only catch some sickness or other. You must stop worrying, father; wait until the hundred days pass without incident, and I'll be home again. *(Takes his leave.)*

(Hsien-lü mode, Shang hua shih)

Short of rice, lacking fuel, what are we to do?

Hence I leave home to engage in trade.

With a handful of household funds

I'll duck calamity

And be a merchant too.

TS'UNG-SHAN: Come home as soon as you can, son.

KUO-YUNG:

If I get by unscathed,

I'll come back soon enough. *(Exit.)*

TS'UNG-SHAN: My son is setting off now. I'll just gather up some food and wine and send him on his way.

(in verse)

His heart drives his thoughts ahead;

To hold them back would make us foes.

Let him go, then, on his way;

With profit our woes will cease. *(Exit.)*

ACT I

(Enter INNBOY.)

INNBOY:

(in verse)

Others brew wine with rice alone;

For our wine, water serves just as well.

Toss it down and out puffs your gut.

Though you'll never get drunk, you'll never feel starved.

I'm an innboy. I run a little wine shop here at Three Mile Stop beyond the Northern Pass in Shang-ts'ai County,⁴ where everybody traveling north and south, wheelbarrow pushers, pole bearers, merchants, and what have you come to have a drink and stay the night. It's a beautiful day today, and I've gotten up early to tidy up the shop and order some fresh meat and vegetables to go with the wine. I'll just hang out the straw broom⁵ to show we're open for business and see who happens along. *(Exit.)*

KUO-YUNG: I am Yang Kuo-yung. Since the time I left home, said goodbye to my father, and set out to do business, it's been three months now. I had to leave all of a sudden, without getting used to the rigors of travel, and this bumpy road has cut my feet up badly.

(Hsien-lü mode, Tien Chiang ch'un)

On the twisting road

The heart of a traveller is troubled.

In all my haste

I've walked till my strength is gone,

It's getting late.

And the evening sun do I spy, on its ever dim descent.

Better keep moving, Yang Kuo-yung.

(Hun Chiang lung)

Fear is the lot of the wandering tradesman

As crows caw at dusk in the withered wood.

Look at the light of the sun, how fast it sinks.

The sun is gone now,

Nothing but a wisp of red.

Over wilderness creeks I go, across a bridge, mile upon mile,

Aren't those houses up ahead?

In the distance, bamboo paling and thatched huts, two or three.

Man relies on the roads of old, true enough,

⁴Shang-ts'ai County: in present day Honan Province.

⁵In Sung and Yuan times, a straw or bamboo broom

was an emblem of a tavern.

As the wild goose alights on its sandy plain.
 Past lonely hamlets and tiny paths,
 'Round the winding banks, on far, with
 rafts afloat,
 I head for where the dogs are barking,
 a place of rest serene.
 Never has leisure been mine to have,
 As I stagger my way through life.

Here's a wine shop; I might as well stay here for the night. (*Calls at the gate.*) Innboy! Open the gate!

INNBOY: Who's calling there at the gate? I'll just open it up here. (*Approaches KUO-YUNG.*) Where might you be from?

KUO-YUNG: I'm from the capital. Would you have a nice clean room for me?

INNBOY: Oh yes, sure enough. This one is pretty clean. What would you like to eat?

KUO-YUNG: Nothing to eat, but I would like you to light me a lamp, All I want is a night's rest; I have to get an early start tomorrow.

INNBOY: All right, I'll light a lamp for you, and have a good rest. I'll be sleeping in back. (*Exit.*)
 (*KUO-YUNG goes to bed. He has a dream and gets up.*)

KUO-YUNG: For some reason I can't seem to fall back to sleep. I think I'll get up and wander around a bit. Here's a little doorway; I might as well push it open and see where it leads. (*Gives a look.*) Oh, a flower garden. What beautiful flowers!

(*Yu hu-lu*)

The light of spring fills my eyes, a lovely sight indeed,
 As I stroll in the light of the moon.
 Could this be willow floss blown by the wind, or dancing petals of the pear? (*Gives a start.*)

How strange!

Crab apple branches rustle against my cap;
 Thorns of the rose cling to my robe.
 Beyond a pavilion of cypress and pine
 I see the blossoms of apricot and peach,
 Terrace and plot of peony, arbor of climbing rose,
 While I wend my way through flowery profusion.

Ah, in the midst of the flower bushes is a low table with fruit dishes, cups, and plates. Wine and food are arranged so neatly, I suppose the wine seller must have set them out.

(*T'ien-hsia le*)

Am I a wanderer through the wine shops of West Lake?

Who could it be

That put this in place?

I don't see any harm in having a cup for myself.

What harm if he with the passion for flowers should suddenly happen by? (*Picks up the wine pitcher.*)

Let me have a look. Why, it's full of wine. I'll just pour myself a cup.

Into the goblet goes the fragrant brew,
 As the proverb goes, "If you drink, drink a deep draught; if you wear a flower, make it a full bloom."

And into my hair goes the blossomed stem.

We shall be drunk as one, you and I.

What excellent wine! What's the harm in having several cups?

(*Sits down.*)

(*Na-cha ling*)

Lay them out among the flowers,

The seats and beds so soft.

Place them on the table,

The cups of jade so warm.

Pour it down,

Wine of sweetest scent.

This time of year, young spring's first bud,

Counts more than a pile of gold,

And ambrosia have I drunk, many cups.

While I'm here enjoying this wine, I can't help wondering if my father back home has wine like this.

(*Ch'ueh t'a chih*)

Before I go, I'll break off a branch in bloom

And start off for home on the morrow

All I've cared about is the health of my trade,

The balance of intake and cost.

(VILLAIN⁶ enters in stealth and grabs KUO-YUNG.)

VILLAIN: Hey there! Somebody owns these flowers!

KUO-YUNG (*Startled*):

A shout that someone owns the flowers;
Oh, Heaven above,
A black-faced demon, a harrier from Hell!

(VILLAIN holds up a knife.)

(*Chi sheng ts'ao*)

In fright I've lost the bliss of wine.
In panic I've dropped the blooms from my hand.

I see a giant, of chilling malice,
Gripping a shining blade of steel.
The fear in my heart sets me atremble.
"Why?" you may ask, but why not bow my head?
After all, it's his low eaves I find myself beneath.⁷

(*Lu-yao hsü*)

Ai-ya! I've taken a look
And seen his ghastly face.
Rolling eyes of a monster, crossed;
Nostrils aflame,
Clenching fangs,
Enough to kill with fright alone.

(VILLAIN seizes hold of KUO-YUNG's hair.)

Ai-ya! One hand has my hair,
The other pulls out the knife.
So the fortune comes true at last;
blood will shine this day.
So my life is cast away, at the corner
of the sea, the farthest edge of sky.

Have mercy, my brother, spare my life!

VILLAIN: Don't blame me. This same hour, day, and month next year will be the anniversary of your death!

⁶Villain 邦老: the technical name for a villain character type in northern drama.

⁷From a proverb meaning that one is sometimes compelled by circumstances to yield to force, just as he must bow his head under low eaves.

⁸Official 孤: the technical name for the character type of a high-ranking civil officer.

⁹Lung-t'u 龍圖. Lit., "Dragon Patterns," the name of an imperial library in the N. Sung, in which Pao held the

KUO-YUNG: (*Weeps.*)

(*Refrain*)

We have no quarrel, you and I,
Why should you want me dead?

I should not, I grant you, have come
to view flowers.

(OFFICIAL⁸ rushes onstage and grabs hold of VILLAIN.)

OFFICIAL: Don't kill him, don't, I say!

KUO-YUNG:

He makes a sudden grab of the shoulder
And gives the shout, "Don't kill!"
Oh, who might his Honor be?

OFFICIAL: Don't be frightened, sir.

KUO-YUNG:

At the shout, "Don't be frightened,
sir,"

The bandit's hands draw back.

Oh, your Honor is the very Bodhisattva
incarnate.

Could you be the Lung-t'u Judge⁹
Of the court at K'ai-feng-fu?¹⁰

(*Exeunt OFFICIAL and VILLAIN. KUO-YUNG awakens.*)

Murder!

(*Enter INNBOY in panic.*)

INNBOY: Where?

KUO-YUNG: Take a look, brother; is my head still on my shoulders?

INNBOY: Now, sir, if you didn't have any head, do you suppose you could still talk?

KUO-YUNG: Whew, what a nightmare!

INNBOY: Tell me about your dream.

KUO-YUNG:

(*Chin chan-erh*)

Why all the clamor, you ask,
Why startle you as well?

Because of a weird dream, an instant ago,

Of a hulk of a man with a knife.

nominal rank of Auxiliary Scholar 直學士 from 1052 to 1055. The name derives from the legendary sacred writings in seal script which a dragon carried from the bottom of a river to the Yellow Emperor. It has been commonly attached to Pao's surname since at least the Ming.

¹⁰K'ai-feng-fu 開封府: the N. Sung capital. Usually in the text of this play the name means the K'ai-feng Tribunal and is so translated. It was during Pao's administration of K'ai-feng from 1050 to 1052 that his reputation as a judge of criminal cases skyrocketed.

INNBOY: What was he going to do with the knife?
 KUO-YUNG:

He was about to kill me with one slash.

INNBOY: Did he do it?

KUO-YUNG: Luckily an officer of the court grabbed hold of him and shouted, "Don't kill him!"

He saved my life, expecting nothing in return,

This life of mine,

Whose spark was rekindled from dead, cold ash,

Whose bud grew again from withered branch.

INNBOY: They say springtime's the time for dreaming, just as autumn's the time for farting. You can't go by anything in a dream. What's to be frightened of?

KUO-YUNG: It's just that an unlucky dream like that one gives me a sense of foreboding. Well, it's light out now. I'll leave two hundred cash with you for the room and be on my way.

INNBOY: The money will do nicely for the room, sir. All my best wishes for a safe voyage ahead. Just pluck up your courage and don't give a thought to that dream. I hope you'll be patronizing us again in your future travels.

KUO-YUNG (*shouldering his carrying pole and setting out*): I'll be off, then, innboy. (*Exit.*)

INNBOY: I thought I noticed some kind of a shadow across his face; that may mean something bad is in store for him. Pah! What business is it of mine?

(*in verse*)

I'll close the gate and ignore the moon before my window;

Let the plum blossoms do what they will.

(*Enter CHAO THE JUG and PIEH CHIH-HSIU.*¹¹)

CHAO: My name's always been the same and always will be: Chao the Jug, that's me. I lost my parents when I was young, and I'm unskilled in anything but robbery and banditry, murder and arson, which I indulge in just enough to scratch out a living of sorts. Otherwise I don't do anything especially improper. Yesterday, after I had a little too much to drink, I took a nap in the shade of a willow tree and dreamt

that a young man came along carrying a couple of heavy bundles. I ran after him and was just about to dispose of him when some white-bearded old man grabbed my arm and yelled for me to stop. Then I woke up with a start and realized it was all a dream. I operate a kiln in Potsherd Village, a little over ten miles from the capital, and an inn on the side, where merchants travelling north and south stay overnight. If they don't have much cash on them, I let them alone, but if they do, then I take off after their money and murder them in the process. Mind the store, wife; I'm going to take a nap. If a traveller comes along looking for a place to stay, say that you have to have the room charge in advance and see how much he has on him when he weighs his silver. If it's a lot, let me know, and I'll take the appropriate measures.

CHIH-HSIU: All you ever do all day long is drink, and now you're drunk again. Go on to bed. If somebody comes looking for a room, I'll take care of it.

CHAO: I'll go have my nap, then. (*Exit.*)

CHIH-HSIU: I, Pieh Chih-hsiu, have a background that isn't quite what it should be. I was a prostitute until I married Chao the Jug and teamed up with him in a few underhanded dealings. Nobody lives within a radius of over ten miles from us; the only ones here are we two with our inn, where we put up travellers for the night. And when a rich one comes along, it's the Money God himself stepping through the door. That man of mine Chao the Jug has gone to bed, and for now I'll leave the gate open and wait in the inn to see who comes along. (*Exit.*)

(*Enter KUO-YUNG carrying his load.*)

KUO-YUNG: I, Yang Kuo-yung, met Chia the Demigod, who predicted that within a hundred days blood would glisten unless I went three hundred miles away. Accordingly I took leave of my father and set off to escape the curse. Since then I have been engaged in commerce, and by the grace of Heaven and Earth, my profits have mounted a hundred-fold. Now that I'm just fifteen miles or so from home I'm stepping up the pace a bit. It will be so wonderful to get back and see my father again! (*While walking*) Oh, it's getting dark. I wonder what I should do

¹¹Pieh Chih-hsiu 撇枝秀: translates into "cast-off blossom."

- if I can't reach town. (*Counts on his fingers.*) Let's see, it's been only ninety-nine days since I left home, and Chia the Demigod told me not to go back until the last day was up. I still have about ten miles ahead of me and couldn't possibly make it. I'd better put up for the night at the pottery village and wait for tomorrow morning, when the hundred days will be over for sure. (*Comes to a stop.*) Here is Pottery Inn. I'd best call out. Innkeeper!
- CHIH-HSIU: Who's there?
- KUO-YUNG: A passerby who wants to stay the night.
- CHIH-HSIU: Come in, please. We have a clean room with a big bed,¹² just the thing for a good night's rest. (*KUO-YUNG steps inside and sets down his load.*) What would you like to eat, sir?
- KUO-YUNG: Nothing at all. Just light me a lamp and give me a room for the night; I'm leaving first thing in the morning.
- CHIH-HSIU: Very well; let me light it. I'll just tear off some paper here, light it up, pour out some oil, and there now, I've lit the lamp. Here it is, sir.
- KUO-YUNG: I won't trouble you any further, then.
- CHIH-HSIU: Since my husband isn't home and you're leaving early in the morning, I hate to seem petty, sir, but could you see fit to give me something of a deposit, just to make things nice and tidy and avoid any kind of misunderstanding?
- KUO-YUNG: You're perfectly right. I'll count it out. (*Opens a basket, takes out some cash, and covers the basket again.*) Take these two hundred cash.
- CHIH-HSIU: (*With a glance at KUO-YUNG's bundle*) Now that that's taken care of, sir, please consider yourself right at home. (*Aside*) Those two baskets look pretty heavy to me; they must have something in them. I'll just give him a call. Chao the Jug! Oh, Chao the Jug!
- (*Enter CHAO.*)
- CHAO: What are you calling me for?
- CHIH-HSIU: A traveller came just now to stay overnight. He's carrying a couple of baskets. I don't know how much money he's got in there, but they're very heavy. He's gone to bed now, and
- if you're ever going to do anything about it, now's the time.
- CHAO: Well then, I'll just go have a look. (*Pulls out his knife and kicks the door open.*) Where is he?
- KUO-YUNG: (*In fright*) Here!
- CHAO: (*Takes hold of KUO-YUNG's hair*) Straight talk's always better than pussyfooting around. All right, you, what do you have in money and valuables? I want all of it right now and you can go on living!
- KUO-YUNG: I'm just a poor street vendor, brother; how do you expect me to have any money or valuables?
- CHAO (*angry*): You bastard! Let's have it or you're a dead man!
- KUO-YUNG (*in fear*): All right, all right! Here, brother, here's a piece of silver for you.
- CHAO: No offense, now. Remember, I never forced it out of you; you gave it to me of your own free will. (*Steps out and approaches CHIH-HSIU.*) I've gotten some silver!
- CHIH-HSIU: How much?
- CHAO: One piece.
- CHIH-HSIU: Ai-ya! This business has kept me up the whole night, and all you get out of him is one piece of silver? Ask him for some more!
- CHAO: Hey, come here. Here's your silver back.
- KUO-YUNG: Thank you, brother.
- CHAO: It's not enough. I want one of your bundles.
- KUO-YUNG: But, brother, those are mine!
- CHAO: Pah! I'll kill you if you don't let me have it!
- KUO-YUNG: All right, all right. One bundle, then.
- CHAO (*takes one basket out and approaches CHIH-HSIU*): I got one of his bundles!
- CHIH-HSIU: Still not enough! What's the matter with the other one, does it have the imperial seal on it or something?
- CHAO: We've got enough now, don't we?
- CHIH-HSIU: That's all very well for you to say, but these are riches sent down from Heaven; now that you've got him here, are you going to let him go, just like that?
- CHAO: You're right, of course. Hey, come here. I was just having some fun with you. I don't want it; take it back.
- KUO-YUNG: Thanks a lot, brother.

¹²Bed. This is the northern Chinese *k'ang*炕, an elevated earthen or brick platform, heated by coals from

underneath, which served as a sitting and sleeping area of a room during cold weather.

CHAO: I want the whole load.

KUO-YUNG (*kneels*): Leave just a little for me, brother.

CHAO (*shouting*): You bastard! What's more important, your money or your life? Give it to me or I'll kill you!

KUO-YUNG: Take it, brother, take it!
(*CHAO picks up the basket. KUO-YUNG makes to hit CHAO with the carrying pole, but CHAO turns around and sees him.*)

CHAO: Hey, what are you up to?

KUO-YUNG: Take this pole too, brother.

CHAO (*laughs*): You're a tricky bastard! Wife, I've got the stuff! It's not light out yet; let's go back to sleep.

CHIH-HSIU (*blocking his way*): Where do you think you're going? Now that we've made off with all his things, do you suppose he's going to let it go at that? Hide in the shadows a while and find out what he's saying.

CHAO: Fine, fine. "With a good wife in the house the husband comes to no harm." I'll just give a listen.

KUO-YUNG: Ahh, Yang Kuo-yung, after avoiding calamity for a hundred days, here you are, only ten miles from home, at Chao the Jug's of the pottery village, where they've taken your money and your baskets of goods. What I'm going to do, once I get out of this inn of theirs, is go straight to his Honor Judge Pao and make a complaint. Then I'll have plenty of time to get my things back.

CHIH-HSIU: There now, what did I tell you? He's not just saying that, he's really going to go ahead with it! You let him go now and you'll be falling right into his clutches. If you want things nice and neat, you're going to have to use your knife on him and get rid of him for good.

CHAO: Right you are, wife. Hey, come here. Here are your baskets. You can have them back, I don't want them.

KUO-YUNG: Thank you very much, brother.

CHAO: I'd like something else from you instead.

KUO-YUNG: What would that be, brother?

CHAO: Your head.

KUO-YUNG: If it isn't one thing, it's another! . . .
Somebody's coming!

CHAO (*turns around*): Where?

(*KUO-YUNG trips CHAO, who then gets up*

and seizes hold of KUO-YUNG.)

KUO-YUNG: Where are you planning to have me killed?

CHAO: The kiln will do nicely.

KUO-YUNG:

(*Tsuan-sha*)

Murder me in the kiln,

Cast my ghost into the land of the dead?

And who will save me then?

Who could keep this wrong I bear from rising up above?

You have my money, brother; spare me my life at least!

CHAO: I want both your money and your life!

KUO-YUNG:

Oh, father, your poor eyes, clouded with tears,

Gazing out in hope,

You'll think I'm wandering lost, in streams and hills.

Who would guess my corpse will lie ten miles from where you are?

He's taken my wealth and will put me to death,

But Yang Kuo-yung will not stop there.

Even though I'm to die, the bandit will taste my first. (*Tries to hit CHAO.*) Take that! (*CHAO meets KUO-YUNG's attack with his knife held high.*) Before I could touch him, his knife slashed my hand!

Where shall my spirit rest this night?

(*CHAO attacks KUO-YUNG, who falls. Enter CHIH-HSIU.*)

CHIH-HSIU: Now that you've killed him, it won't do to keep his body around. You'd better drag him into the kiln and cremate him.

CHAO: Good idea. I'll take the head, you take the feet, and we'll throw him into the kiln. (*They pick KUO-YUNG up and throw him offstage.*) Bring me some firewood, wife, and we'll pile it up at the oven door. Then I'll light the fire. Put a few more good stout pieces on the leg bones there.

CHIH-HSIU: Yes, yes, I know. (*Arranges the firewood.*)

CHAO (*blows on the flames*): There, he's all burnt up. Now ladle out some water to put out the fire. Gather up the bones and put them in the

mortar while I operate the pestle. Have they turned to powder by now? Then bring me a fine sieve, and we'll sift the remains. I'll mix in a little clay, fashion it into a pot, and put an "X" on the bottom. Into the kiln it goes, along with the rest of the pots. Now for some firewood and a nice big blaze, and then we'll leave the

oven door sealed up for seven days before opening it up again. My friend, a cremation like this is a dandy send-off indeed! I just hope Heaven sees fit to reward me with at least half a bowl of rice for all the charity I'm showing you. *(Exit with CHIH-HSIU.)*

YI-YI YA-YA RUNS THE MILL. Woodcut illustration from a Ming edition of the Yuan plays.



ACT II

(Enter CHAO THE JUG and CHIH-HSIU.)

CHAO

(in verse)

Keeping my place, I ply my trade,
Content with plain rice and rough tea.
Do nothing shameful your whole life long:
At a knock on the door in the dead of
night you shouldn't feel a qualm.

I am Chao the Jug. Ever since I murdered
Yang Kuo-yung, even though I got a good deal
of money from the deed, a series of dreams
these past couple of days has been turning me

topsy-turvy. When I'm sleeping on my bed, I'm
yanked onto the floor, and if I go to sleep on
the floor, then I'm hauled onto the bed again.
It's getting a little hard to take, and if it keeps
up, I'm afraid it will get me into trouble. Wife,
shut the inn gate tight, and we'll keep quiet and
lie low for a few days.

CHIH-HSIU: All right. *(Closes the gate.)*

(Enter the SPIRIT OF THE KILN.)

SPIRIT: I am the Spirit of the Kiln. Chao the Jug
has committed an act so heinous that I am on
my way to teach him a good lesson.

(*Chung-lü mode, Fen-tieh-erh*)

As cloud blends with mist, in rank
upon rank,
I send a chill wind to pierce man's
soul.

I press my cap upon my head and
shift my waistband of horn.

Murderer!

Thief!

Your cruelty and gall know no
bounds;

Bad enough to leave a heap of
corpses dripping blood,

But, heartless villain, to knead him
into a pot?

(*Tsui ch'un-feng*)

If you grind his bones and burn them
to ash,

You must face the heat of your fire.

Inhuman!

Am I to live in this reeking stench?

Am I not to die in the stink?

I'll turn him head over heels,

Grind him down,

Break him apart.

Here I am at his gate. He has closed it up.
(*Pushes on the gate.*)

(*Ying hsien-k'o*)

I push on the gate,

But he has made it fast.

My heart's fire flares to unquenchable
flame.

As I speed forth to question him hard.

A roaring laugh escapes my lips,

And my broad feet smash the gate.

(*SPIRIT kicks the gate open. CHAO in alarm
hides under the bed. SPIRIT seizes CHIH-
HSIU.*)

CHIH-HSIU (*shouting*): He's hiding under the bed,
spirit!

SPIRIT:

(*Shang hsiao-lou*)

The man of the house wields knife and
torch,

Bandit!

And you go along with the wind,

With never a thought that I would
come to grab and tear at your dress,

Grasp your hair,

Drag you this way and that.

Your crime brought all this about,

This disaster that fills Heaven's

breadth.

CHIH-HSIU: Spirit, Chao the Jug committed the
murder; I had nothing to do with it!

SPIRIT: Silence!

You helped at the slaughtering site, that's your
crime. Bring out Chao the Jug this minute!

CHIH-HSIU (*shouting*): Chao the Jug! Come on out!
The spirit wants to talk to you! (*Shouts three
times.*) Chao the Jug is scared, spirit, and so
won't come out.

SPIRIT: Last night when Yang Kuo-yung came to
stay with you, Chao was the first one to bed,
yet with one call from you he came soon
enough. Now he won't come when you call him;
why is that, I wonder?

CHIH-HSIU: Let me see how much money you have
on you, then I'll give him a call.

SPIRIT: Enough of that! Chao the Jug! Where are
all your skills now? Think you can hide under
that bed and escape the consequences forever?
If you don't come out, I'll chop you into mince-
meat, bed and all!

(*CHAO peers out from under the bed. SPIRIT
grabs him by the hair and drags him out.*)

(*Refrain*)

One hand ahold of your waist,

How I should like to cast you in flames,

Gouge out your eyes,

Clutch at your throat,

And rip out your heart! (*Sits on
CHAO.*)

I'll stay awhile

Upon your back,

Sitting erect and still,

And ask why you put an innocent man
to death.

CHAO: Tell me what spirit you are, and I'll get the
incense and lamps and flowers and fruit together
to worship you properly.

SPIRIT: I am the spirit of your kiln.

CHAO: Pooh! You're biting the hand that feeds
you. I sacrifice to you twice a year, and instead
of looking after me, you cause me trouble.
Ingrate!

SPIRIT: Uncouth as ever, I see. Well, I'll just put

on a little more pressure and squash you into a persimmon cake!

CHAO: All right, I confess! If you'll only show a little mercy, O holy one!

(SPIRIT lets CHAO up. CHAO kowtows.)

SPIRIT:

(*Man t'ing fang*)

So now you would like a little mercy,
What with "sacrifices twice each year,"
Which you insist on babbling about.
Who told you, potter, to neglect your
trade

And study the ways of a thief?

An artful villain you are,

Spurred on by a vicious bitch.

Now a ghost with no place of rest

Will rattle off his appeal,

Like Chuang Tzu beating his pot.¹

CHAO: Have some pity, your holiness, and give me pardon!

SPIRIT: If pardon is what you want, you must allow his ghost passage to Heaven; then pardon you will get.

CHAO: If you will show me mercy, O sacred one, I'll choose a plot on the high ground, chop the wood for his coffin, and invite the most eminent priests of the Buddha and the Tao to perform the Great Service of Land and Sea and transport him to Heaven. What is your august opinion?
(*With CHIH-HSIU does a series of kowtows.*)

SPIRIT: Chao the Jug, you and your wife listen to what I say.

(*Shua hai-erh*)

I instruct you both to cease your crimes,

Murder and arson above all.

Man's life is but a dream,

And blessings must wither away.

Just hold to your heart and it will provide;

Riches ill-gained are substance ill-based.

Heaven's fate will weigh and choose;

Stay with your simple fare,

What more to seek and win?

¹The philosopher Chuang Tzu, upon recovering from grief over his wife's death and realizing the inevitability and naturalness of death for all living things, beat a rhythm on a pot as an expression of insouciance. The allusion

(*Erh-sha*)

If you steal from others on the sly,
Then you must guard against others'
hurting you.

Have you no fear? The vengeance of
the gods never mistakes its mark.
Never think that burglary and brigand-
age are matters too trivial to count.
Consider only why indeed Heaven and
Hell exist.

From each is no escape.

You shall hang high from the Sword-
branched Tree,

Be pushed into the Vat of Oil.²

I think of the misery of Yang Kuo-yung. Chao the Jug, you both are too cruel!

(*I-sha*)

Pain in the thousands has been his to
bear,

And how much cash did it give you?

How could he know that disaster would
await him on his journey home,

That flames would roast his bones like
faggots,

That clay and water would mingle with
ash,

That the fire of the kiln would expunge
all trace?

Was this the way to avoid trouble?

Better to have dived in the river, plung-
ed oneself in a well.

CHAO (*kowtowing with CHIH-HSIU*): Forgive us,
and we'll buy incense, lamps, flowers, and fruit
as a sacrifice to you.

SPIRIT (*shouting*): Silence!

(*Wei-sha*)

First sweep the blood stains clean,

Then set his soul to rest.

That will be your hedge against guilt,

Far better than flowers and fruit, in-
cense and lamps, offerings to me

evermore. (*Exit.*)

CHIH-HSIU: Now that the god has left, let's open
up the kiln and have a look.

contrasts strongly with the anguish of Kuo-yung's ghost.

²The Sword-branched Tree and the Vat of Oil are tortures of Hell in popular Buddhism and Taoism.

CHAO (*opens the kiln*): What?! Everything's disappeared but this one pot. Let me see what mark it has on it. (*Takes up the pot and examines it.*) Huh! It's his remains, that's what it is! Keeping it around here might get us into no end of trouble. Better break the damn thing.
 CHIH-HSIU: No, don't break it. Old Chang the Headstrong³ has been asking us for a chamber pot. Why not keep it by and give it to him?
 CHAO: Right you are, wife. When old Chang the Headstrong comes by, I'll give it to him. When he takes it home and puts it to use, I don't care how much spookery that pot is capable of, the old boy's prick will put the damper on it for

³Chang the Headstrong (張儼古) is a character type that appears in more than one northern play. He is a rustic

good. Wife, the Spirit of the Kiln has kept me up all night. After I've checked to see that all the gates are shut tight, let's go to bed.

(*in verse*)

Here at this kiln I live
 And work to my lot in life.
 I've never swung clubs by the flame of a torch;
 Bare-handed have I sought my wealth.
 What spirits howl, what ghosts cry out?
 What God-sent bailiff have I to fear?
 I'll shut my gate and rest content;
 Let Heaven pronounce my doom. (*Exit with CHIH-HSIU.*)

figure, crude and stubborn, but righteous and compassionate.

ACT III

(*Enter CHANG THE HEADSTRONG.*)

CHANG: I am Chang the Headstrong. In my younger days I was once Head Clerk at the K'ai-feng Tribunal, but I'm an old man now, and his Excellency Judge Pao has been kind enough to let me beg for firewood and rice at the market place. By this means I keep myself alive in my waning years. That young bastard Chao the Jug at the pottery village usually sells his stuff through me and has promised me a chamber pot, but he's been lying all the time; he just won't come up with one. I don't have anything in particular to do right now, so I think I'll go to his place and get that pot.

(*Yüeh-tiao mode, Tou an-ch'un*)

Empty handed am I now,
 No firewood or rice to my name.
 I follow my fate in peace of mind,
 Wearing sackcloth, eating gruel.
 I had no children in my prime;
 Then late in life I lost my wife.
 Straight I've walked my path till now,
 Now is time to rest.
 Pitiful only my hair so white,
 My thin frame worn by toil.

(*Tzu-hua-erh hsü*)

I remember in youth my eyes were bright,
 My hands were swift,
 My movements quick, my body light.
 Now in age I'm bent of back; my head
 is cast down low.
 In the distance the dogs are barking,
 Behind the rickety fence.
 I raise my eyes and have a look:
 A house by a creek in a bamboo grove.
 As I reach the land of Chao the Jug,
 As if my mouth's aflame,
 I pant and puff and pant again.

Here I am at the gate of Chao the Jug at the pottery village. What is his gate doing closed in broad daylight? I wonder what the bastard has been up to. Well, I'll just give a call at the gate.
 (*Shouting*) Chao the Jug! Open up! Open up!

(*Enter CHAO and CHIH-HSIU.*)

CHAO: Who is it? I'll just open the gate and see.
 (*Approaches CHANG*) Why, it's Chang the Headstrong. What brings you here, old man?

CHANG: Chao the Jug, you bastard, you promised me a chamber pot. You've been selling your goods through me for some time now, but you

won't give it to me. What's one pot worth, that I have to come myself and ask you for it?

CHAO: I have the pot; I just forgot about it is all. I see you remembered it all right. You know what they say, "To go on living when you're old is to be nothing but a thief." They must have had you in mind when they said it.

CHIH-HSIU: He looks like a thief, sure enough, with that drooping white beard of his.

CHANG: (*Hsiao t'ao hung*)

You think I'm a thief, since I'm old and still alive?

'Though I'm not dead yet, what's the good in that?

CHAO: How old are you now, old fellow? Who supplies your rice and firewood?

CHANG:

With the new year I'll be eighty in full.
Who provides my kindling and grain?
Only you juniors; my elders are gone.

CHAO: Tell me how many cronies of yours are still around.

CHANG: There were ten of us.

CHAO: Who were they?

CHANG: They're either old now or dead. Only three are left: Wang Hung-tao, Li Ts'ung-shan, and I.

Alas! Yesterday Wang's fate was cruel;
Today was Li's turn to go.
Heavens above, my white-headed
friends are few!

Give me the chamber pot, Chao the Jug, and let me go home.

CHAO: Bring out the pot, wife, and give it to Old Chang.

CHIH-HSIU (*bringing out the pot*): Here it is; take it away.

CHANG (*taking the pot*): Has this thing taken root or what?

CHAO: Pah! Old fool! It's from the kiln out back; how could it put out roots when I've just now set it down on the ground? What are you talking about?

CHANG: You young bastard, after promising me a pot all this time, the least you could do would

be to give me a good one. What are you doing, giving me one that sounds cracked? No good, I don't want it; give me something decent!

CHAO (*making as if he has exchanged it for another*): I'll substitute another, old man.

CHANG (*taps the pot*): No good; it doesn't sound right. Another one!

CHAO (*makes another false exchange*): This is a good one.

CHANG: Now this one seems all right.

CHAO (*laughs*): It's all the same to me!

CHANG (*takes the pot and gestures his thanks*): Well, I'll be getting back then.

CHAO: How did you get here, old fellow, by the main road or on a byway?

CHANG: I came here by the main road, but I think I'll take a path back; it's a little closer that way.

CHAO: It's getting late, old friend. You'd better take the main road after all. There aren't any ghosts on the main road, but there are some on the path.

CHANG: Ghosts? Ghosts indeed! I'll give you a rap on your thieving mouth! I'm Chang the Headstrong, the one who isn't afraid of ghosts. I'm famous in the capital for my incantations: the Heart of Heaven, the Heart of Earth, and the Demon King. I write on charms or pray to the rivers, "O Patriarch¹ on high, I call upon thee for exorcism swift and sure!" And so even if a ghost does happen along, one look at me and he's hightailing it for two or three miles at a stretch!

CHAO: Since you know so many incantations, the Heart of Heaven, the Heart of Earth, the Demon King and all, off with you then! (*Pushes CHANG out the gate.*) Shut the gate again, wife, and we'll have some wine in the back courtyard. (*Exit with CHIH-HSIU. Enter CHANG.*)

CHANG: Now that I've got a pot out of Chao the Jug, it's getting late and I'll have to hurry back home. Chao said just now that there are ghosts on the path, but everybody knows that I'm Chang the Headstrong, the one who's unafraid of ghosts. I have a temper like throwing salt into water.² Ah, it's late; I'd better get moving.

¹Patriarch: the philosopher Lao Tzu, who along with the Yellow Emperor is a patron saint of popular Taoism. Exorcism in popular religion had elements of both Taoism and Buddhism, hence the incantation of the Demon King, which is Buddhist in origin.

²This is a play on a common expression descriptive of a quick temper: "like throwing salt into fire." Northern drama is fond of repeating humorous remarks and stage business at least once and often twice; this is no exception.

(T'ien ching sha)

Anxiously I rush ahead.

(startled) What are those footsteps I hear behind me? *(Looks back and shouts.)* Hey! Who's there?

Who is it clomping up behind?

It's enough to scare the life out of me!

Who is it holds me fast?

Who isn't aware that I'm Chang the Headstrong who is not scared of ghosts? My temper is like throwing salt into water. I can do all sorts of incantations: the Heart of Heaven, the Heart of Earth, the Demon King. I write on charms or pray to the rivers, "O Patriarch on high, perform thy exorcism swift and sure!" Whatever ghosts there are have only to catch sight of me and they're frightened away for several miles.

Is it mountain spirit, ogre fierce?

(CHANG trips. Enter GHOST, who hits CHANG.)

CHANG *(gets up, shouting)*: Ghost! Ghost! *(Gives a close look.)*

Ah, just brambles that clutch my robe!

Pooh! Some brambles tripped me! *(Continues walking.)*

GHOST *(following Chang and weeping)*: Old man!

CHANG *(startled)*: What's all that crying about?

GHOST: Old man!

CHANG *(stops to listen)*: It's not crying at all; it's someone shouting, "Old man! Old man!" Oh, now I know: it must be the ox boy, who sent a few oxen out to pasture early in the morning and can't find them now that it's late. And so now you're asking me, "Old man! Have you seen my oxen?" Little bastard! So you can't find your oxen; do you think I give a fart?

(Chai-erh ling)

To children I'm a thing of sport.

They laugh and say I'm old and dense.

It must be the herdboys, up to his tricks.

(GHOST weeps.) Now that's a crying sound, no doubt about it!

Piteous, mournful,

Weeping, sobbing,

Oh, I have it!

Wild geese soaring on gusts of wind.

(GHOST weeps. CHANG stops to listen.) No, it's not wild geese either. Who is crying?

(Refrain)

At the end of the road, devoid of mankind,

I am seized with fear, my spirit flies.

(GHOST hits CHANG on the head. CHANG shouts.) Ghost! Ghost!

I cock my ear for a good long while.

(Looks behind him.)

I gaze about myself.

Ghost! Ghost!

Senile fool! Just a pile of dirt and bones!

I'm getting stupid in my old age. A pile of dirt and bones and I start shouting "Ghost! Ghost!" I'm Chang the Headstrong, the one ghosts can't scare. I have a temper like scattering salt on water. I know all the incantations: Heart of Heaven, Heart of Earth, Demon King. I write on charms and pray to the rivers, "O Patriarch on high, I summon thee for exorcism swift and sure!" One look at me and any ghost at all will run several miles in fright.

GHOST *(calling out)*: Old man!

CHANG: Oh, this ghost is getting to be a nuisance!

A good thing I'm at my gate. A grass rope is holding it to. I'll just set this pot down here, untie the rope, and open up. *(CHANG picks up the pot and steps in, GHOST following. CHANG sighs; GHOST also sighs.)*

(Huang ch'iang-wei)

Whence comes that whistling breath?

My head spins 'round with doubt.

I just get home and in my chair,

And something comes to mind.

(Ch'ing yüan-chen)

When I left, the sun deep red was sinking in the west.

Homeward bound, I saw it still; its light had not yet gone.

Why then my quaking fear and dread; why be perplexed at all?

Hmm, I clean forgot!

It amounts to nothing more

Than foolishness with age.

I never scattered ash outside the gate before I left.

They say if you scatter a handful of ashes in front of your gate, you'll keep out evil spirits.

GHOST: But, old man, I've been inside for some time now!

CHANG: I'll grab a handful of thatch from the eaves and light it. (*Grabs some thatch.*) Here's some thatch. Now, when I left, I had some cow manure burning in the stove; let's see if it's still there. (*Blows on the flame. GHOST hits CHANG on the mouth.*) My heard's on fire! Pooh! It was just a cat jumping out at me, but it almost burnt up my hair and whiskers! (*Curses.*) Oh, I know, it's Old Lady Wang's cat from next door. She never feeds the thing, and it's always coming over here to steal some food. I'll just give her a piece of my mind. Old Lady Wang! You won't feed that cat of yours, and so it comes over here and eats everything: meat, rice, chickens, ducks, even the ashes out of the stove! Any of your lip and I'll settle with you tomorrow! (*Lights a lamp.*) I'll light a lamp. (*Picks up a sheepskin.*) I don't know what's on this sheepskin robe, lice or fleas. Let me look and see.

GHOST: Isn't that a flea there, old man?

CHANG: What the hell business is it of yours? I'll spread this robe out and get some sleep. (*Lays out the sheepskin and goes to bed. Ghost steals the sheepskin.*) Now that's strange! I lay this sheepskin out every day for a nice cozy sleep, but now why am I cold as ice all of a sudden? (*Feels about him.*) Hey, somebody stole my sheepskin! Thief! Police!

(*Huang ch'iang-wei*)

At the top of my voice I call out
"Thief!"

And run out on the street in fright.
No constable can I find, no patrolman
on his rounds.

Whom can I get to answer my call?
(*Ch'ing yüan-chen*)

I turn back and dart into the house.
(*Trips.*)

Over the door jamb I fall on my face.

(*GHOST twists the sheepskin around CHANG's head.*)

Got him!

With my hand I grab him by his dirty
robe of fur,
Pound him with my fist,
Kick him with my foot.
Pah! Nothing but a worn out skin of
wool!

It was just this sheepskin robe covering up my head, and I had to start yelling thief! Well, this business has kept me up the whole night, and now I have to get up and relieve myself. There's that pot Chao the Jug gave me; I might as well test it out. (*Urinate. GHOST takes the pot away.*) Why is it I don't hear anything hitting the pot? It's landing on the ground instead! (*Feels about him.*) Damn! I really *am* getting stupid in my old age. The pot's over there, and here I am pissing over here! (*Crosses over. GHOST takes the pot away again. CHANG feels about him once more. Startled.*) How did it get over there now? (*GHOST puts the pot on his head. CHANG gropes about.*) Ai-ya! Now it's hanging in midair!

(*T'u ssu-erh*)

I had thought I'd rise early at night,
Get all my preparations over.

But with all that water and all that
soup, I have to get up at night.

Who could guess

On this one day

Such weirdness would occur?

(*Sheng Yao-wang*)

I race over here

And it runs over there.

All I see is something flying to and fro
in the air.

Then it runs over here

And I race over there.

My whole body is sweaty, from top to
toe.

Ai-ya! And I'm full of a whole night's
water!

(*GHOST approaches CHANG with the pot and kneels. CHANG is startled.*)

(*Kuei san t'ai*)

Right up to me he comes,

As I turn away in fright,

GHOST: Old man, didn't you say you were like
salt thrown into water?

CHANG:

Like salt thrown into water.

GHOST: Aren't you Chang the Headstrong?

CHANG:

I see you know my name.

GHOST: Didn't I hear you say you weren't afraid
of ghosts?

CHANG:
Well, I am from this time on.

GHOST: You know the Incantation of the Heart of Heaven.

CHANG:
The Heart of Heaven? Not a shred!

GHOST: The Demon King?

CHANG:
Nor that as well, O ghost!

GHOST: Then I suppose you can't pray to the rivers or write charms either.

CHANG:
Pray to the rivers, write on charms?
Not at all!
Just tricks to cheat the ghosts, to scare them far away.

GHOST: Old man, how come all your incantations are not working?

CHANG:
(T'iao hsiao ling)
Now let me ask you:
What is it you want?

GHOST: Have a guess.

CHANG:
Are you a forgotten spirit, demanding wine and food?

GHOST: No.

CHANG:
If then a demon, let me know your name.

GHOST: Nor am I that.

CHANG: No again, eh?
Then who in hell can you be?

GHOST: I am the pot, and the pot is I.

CHANG:
Look at all the trouble he's caused with just a chamber pot;
That bastard Chao the Jug!
Now if it were a big water cistern, that would really be the end!
Just let me ask you something: are you man or ghost, and how did you get in here?

GHOST: You carried me in under your robe.

CHANG *(curses the door gods³)*: Let me give those door gods a good talking-to. Door gods! How did you happen to let a ghost get by you? What

³These are painted images, one to each of the two gate panels, of mythological figures, possibly the brothers Shen T'u (神荼) and Yü Lü (鬱雷), who according to legend

are you good for anyway?
(Ma lang-erh)
On New Year's Day I put you up,
Offered you sweetmeats and tea,
In hopes that you'd drive out forces malign,
In hopes that you'd guard this my home.

(Refrain)
Pah! I had you portrayed
In grim and foul face,
But what do you do but doze off, O gods of the gate?
Both charms of peach wood, what good do they do?
(tears off an image of Chung K'uei, the demon queller)
I rip with my hands Chung K'uei of dreams.

GHOST: Help me, old man.

CHANG: Explain yourself and I shall.

GHOST *(weeps)*: Have pity on me! My name is Yang Kuo-yung of the capital. After having made a little money selling goods from the south, I was on my way home when, before I knew it, it was nighttime, and so I stayed over at Chao the Jug's in the pottery village. The two of them, husband and wife, stole my money and murdered me; then they burned me to ashes, pounded up my bones, and made me into a pot. I'd thought I would hold soup or water; I never dreamed I'd be given to you as a chamber pot! How am I supposed to put up with such filth and pestilence? Pity me, old man, and give me your help!

CHANG: Ah, what a foul fate! The trouble is, pot, you're a ghost, and I'm a man; how can I possibly be of any help to you?

GHOST: Take this pot to his Excellency Judge Pao and rap on its edge three times. I'll then rattle off my story.

CHANG: Well, then, I'll do what I can for you. It's light out now, and I'll lock up the gate and take this pot off to see Judge Pao. *(Goes out the gate.)* But hold on a minute. "Practiced in private, polished in public." If he by any chance

since the Han used peach wood to exorcise evil spirits. Hence the mention of peach wood charms later.

doesn't say anything once I get to the K'ai-feng Tribunal, what'll I do then? I'll just give it a trial rap; here's the edge of the pot. (*Raps on the pot.*) One, two, three.

GHOST: Just ask me to say my piece, old man, and I'll rattle away for you.

CHANG: (*Shou-wei*)



Off to K'ai-feng I carry the pot,
Straight to the Lung-t'u Judge.
If Hell's to be avoided, why then, so it
shall be.

Pot,

If you but see justice brought you at
last, of joy this time you'll die.

TING-TING TANG-TANG RATTLES THE
GHOST OF THE POT.

ACT IV

(*Enter JUDGE PAO with CHANG CH'EN¹ and attendants.*)

CHANG CH'EN (*shouting*): Yo! Silence, all in court! Bring in the court desk!

PAO:

(*in verse*)

When laws are just, Heaven's heart's in accord;

With moral purity comes an unblemished world.

¹Chang Ch'ien 張千: the name of a servant character commonly seen in northern drama. His given name, "Thousand(th)," may mean either that he is typical of 999 others like him or that he is one thousandth in order of birth, i.e., he is a bastard.

Lu-chou.² While young I passed my Doctorate of Letters examination and have since received a good many official appointments. Because of my honesty of character, competence in office, devotion to my country, and unselfishness, his

My brush exalts sons loyal and filial;

My sword beheads the guilty.

My surname is Pao, my given name Cheng, and my courtesy name Hsi-wen. I come from Lao-erh Hamlet, Ssu-wang Village, Chin-tou-chün,

²Present day Hofei, Anhui Province, Pao's actual birth-place. Chin-tou-chün is another name for Hofei. Lao-erh Hamlet and Ssu-wang Village, however, appear to be fictional.

Majesty has been gracious in promoting me to the rank of Academician-in-waiting of the Lung-t'u Pavilion³ and the post of prefect of the K'ai-feng Tribunal. I also have as an imperial gift the Sword of Authority and a golden badge, with the right to perform summary executions.⁴ I devote my entire attention to investigating corrupt officials and clerks. At the moment I am about to preside over early session. Chang Ch'ien, call for the cases to be presented.

CHANG CH'EN: Face the court.

(CHANG steps in and kneels.)

PAO: The old fellow Chang the Headstrong served many years in the courthouse, and now that he has no one to look after him, I let him beg for firewood and rice in the market place to support himself for the rest of his life. I suspect that one of the people on the street must have treated him badly by refusing to give him some firewood or some rice, and so he's come to make a complaint. What is your grievance, old fellow?

Tell me all about it, and I'll do all I can for you.

CHANG: I bear no grievance, but this pot does.

PAO: Well, if you bear no grievance, old fellow, tell me about the pot's, then.

CHANG: I'll rap on the pot three times, your Honor, and it'll rattle away.

PAO: Indeed! Well, then, rap away, old fellow. Listen to it, Chang Ch'ien.

CHANG (*raps on the pot*): One, two, three—pot!

PAO: Can you hear what it's saying, Chang Ch'ien?

CHANG CH'EN (*cocking his ear*): He's lying, sir; I don't hear a sound.

CHANG: He didn't talk!

PAO: I thought the old fellow was getting a little foolish. After all, how can a pot rattle and talk?

Throw him out, Chang Ch'ien!

CHANG CH'EN: Yes, sir. (*Pushes CHANG out.*)

CHANG: Why didn't he say anything? I'll try rapping on it. One, two, three!

GHOST: I'll rattle it off.

CHANG: Where were you just now?

GHOST: I had a terrible thirst and went off to find me a cup of tea.

³The Academician-in-waiting 待制 rank actually pertained to another imperial library, the T'ien-chang Pavilion 天章閣. Northern drama constantly confuses this with Pao's later Lung-t'u rank.

⁴Nominally capital punishment in the Yüan could be executed only after review at the provincial and central governmental levels, but occasionally certain ministers

CHANG: Still joking around, are you? When you didn't show up a moment ago, you had me scared so much my face itself was the color of tea!

GHOST: Help me, old man!

CHANG: I'll make your plaint once more, then. (*Calls out again.*) Injustice!

PAO: Chang Ch'ien, who is making all that fuss at the gate?

CHANG CH'EN: It's Old Chang the Headstrong again, calling out an injustice.

PAO: What, again? Bring him in. (*CHANG kneels.*) What is your complaint?

CHANG: Your Honor, this pot really does have a grievance. Outside the courthouse gate just now I beat on it, and it started rattling. (*Raps on the pot.*) One, two, three—pot!

CHANG CH'EN: Yes, sir. Carry out the sign for appeals!

(*Enter CHANG THE HEADSTRONG with the pot.*)

CHANG: Here I am at the gate of the K'ai-feng Tribunal. I'll give a rap on the pot and see what happens. (*Raps on the pot.*) One, two, three!

GHOST: I'll rattle off my story.

CHANG: Then let's go make the accusation.

(*Cheng-kung mode, Tuan-cheng hao*)

Holding a pot with grievance sore,
I approach the awesome public hall.
All I wish is that the criminal be
brought to justice,
And who more famous for this than
Old Pao, the Lung-t'u?
Let me steal a look by the screening
wall.

(*Kun hsiu-ch'iu*)

I see fierce lictors gripping staves,
Glowing clerks stamping papers.
On each side the Sword of Authority
and the bronze blade⁵
And in the center him with ivory tablet
and cap of black gauze.

were given extraordinary power to take the law into their own hands.

⁵A bronze blade was used to execute criminals and was large enough to cut a victim in half at the waist. It appears often in northern drama as a symbol of special power, along with the Sword of Authority and a golden badge.

Pot, I wonder if we should have come here at all.

If a matter of false pretences, you're all but false.

Did I come for a joke? You're certainly no joke!

I'm rousing my courage in the middle of fright;

Am I being made victim for no reason?

Pot, I'd like to impress something on you: when Judge Pao asks you questions, answer him in full detail.

Pot, if you fail to make your plaint this morn,

I, Chang the Headstrong,

Who brags in vain of honest heart,
Must prepare to carry chains and cangue.

I'm going in now, pot, and once I give three raps, you start talking.

GHOST: I'll rattle it off, old man.

CHANG: Injustice!

PAO: Chang Ch'ien, who is that calling out an injustice? Bring him forward.

PAO: What is it saying, Chang Ch'ien?

CHANG CH'EN: I guess the old boy is the only one who can hear it, because I didn't hear a thing!

CHANG (*listening himself*): Now why didn't he say anything?

PAO: Throw him out, Chang Ch'ien.

CHANG CH'EN (*pushing CHANG out*): This is a court of law, old man, not some place where you can pull shenanigans! Go on home with you!

CHANG (*steps out and sighs*): Ahh, I, Chang the Headstrong, have had a reputation for honesty my whole life long, and now it's all been ruined by a pot!

(*Tao-tao ling*)

How can I get rice and fuel without paying the price?

How do I walk into court and out without being tongue lashed?

Because I'm straightforward, fair, with no grain of deceit,

Because I don't speak abuse or play lord of the town.

But you've done me in now,

You've done me in now,⁶

And I'll just have to hold back both anger and tongue and wend my way home again.

Let me rap on the pot just one more time.

(*Raps on the pot.*) One, two, three!

GHOST: What's the matter, old man?

CHANG (*angrily*): Now where did you go?

GHOST: I was hungry and went off to eat a roast bun.

CHANG: Because you didn't show up, Judge Pao came close to beating every last fart out of me!

GHOST: Help me, old man!

CHANG:

(*Tsui kao ko*)

In private you rattle away;

When it counts, you play deaf and dumb.

I'm going to pick you up,

And on this very street

I'll smash you to smithereens!

GHOST: If you do, then who will make my case known?

CHANG: Pot, did you happen to see it?

GHOST: See what?

CHANG:

(*Hung hsiu-hsieh*)

That staff just now was as thick as an arm,

And it fell on me like a hook.

You ghost, you use an old man for sport!

GHOST: Go in again for me, old man.

CHANG:

It's not that I fear to stride over the sill.

It's not indolence keeping me out.

GHOST: If you won't go in, who will help me?

CHANG:

Pot, it might mean beating number three.

GHOST: It's not that I don't want to go in, old man; it's just that the door gods are blocking the way and won't let me in.

⁶The song *Tao-tao ling* repeats the penultimate line.

CHANG: Well then, why didn't you say so before?
I'll call out again. (*Shouting.*) Injustice!

PAO: There he goes again! Have him come in.
(*CHANG steps in and kneels.*) What's your grievance, old fellow?

CHANG: It's actually the pot that has the grievance.

PAO: Doesn't the old man have any idea how to behave at all? He's played a joke on me with that pot two or three times now. Come out with a good reason and all will be forgotten; but speak falsely, and don't expect me to pardon you.

CHANG: Calm your anger, your Honor, and listen to me while I tell you the whole story, item by item.

(*in verse*)

Over eighty am I now,
But I'll go through it all from head to tail.
When I left, out of the haze and gloom
shone the sun;
When I returned, with darkness and murk
the heavens were black.
On the wall I lit a lamp, flickering but
never dying,
And made ready for a lovely snooze,
When I heard choking and racking sobs.
In a state of alarm I got up once again
And asked, "Are you spirit, are you demon,
or are you ghost?"
He replied, "The pot is my body."
Hence I make his plaint at court
And appeal to your Honor to hear the truth.
By day you've decided in the world of light;
At night you've heard phantoms in the realms of the dark.
Thrice for the Wangs you investigated the butterfly dream.
Singlehanded, you sold rice at Ch'en-chou.
You used a wise strategem for the boy in the chalk circle.
With craft you beheaded a lord of *Chai-lang* rank,
solved the riddles in the "Flower in the Back Courtyard" songs,

And recovered both copies of the contract.⁷

Command those peevish door gods
Not to block my rattling ghost of the pot.

(*Hsiao Liang-chou*)

I appeal to your Honor, look into this case.

Would I make schemes and lie?

It's your gods of the gateway, like fierce demon kings,

Broadaxes firmly in grasp.

Your Honor, just look!

How can a mere ghost survive terror so stark?

PAO: Yes, of course! Every house, large or small,
has its door gods, and a murdered ghost would be blocked from entering. Chang Ch'ien, bring me gold and silver paper money.

(*in verse*)

In my mind I've hatched a plan;

Set out the paper cash.

Goblins and demons should not be let past,

But a ghost with a grievance may safely step in.

CHANG CH'EN (*burns the paper*): I've burnt the string of paper money, and just look at that blast of cold wind!

(*GHOST follows the wind in and kneels.*)

CHANG: (*Refrain*)

The paper cash is burned away.

A whirlwind hovers by.

I'll risk it all and on the pot

Give raps in number three.

(*Raps on the pot.*) One, two, three—pot!

GHOST: I'll rattle it all off!

CHANG: What a relief!

He says he'll rattle away.

Listen, your Honor,

He's going to tell it right.

PAO: At the bottom of the courtroom steps is the ghost of a murdered man, and I am the only one who can see it. Ghost, what is your plaint? Tell me in full and I will help you.

⁷Each of these six cases is represented by a northern play in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan* and some other editions. Their short titles are as follows: (1) *Hu-tieh. meng* 蝴蝶夢 (The Butterfly Dream); (2) *Ch'en-chou t'iao mi* 陳州糶米 (Selling

Rice at Ch'en-chou); (3) *Hui-lan chi* 灰欄記 (The Chalk Circle); (4) *Lu Chai-lang* 魯齋郎; (5) *Hou-t'ing hua* 後庭花 (The Flower in the Back Courtyard); and (6) *Ho-t'ung wen-tzu* 合同文字 (The Contract).

GHOST: Your servant is from the capital by birth. I came upon someone called Chia the Demigod, who foretold that within a hundred days blood would shine unless I went three hundred miles away. And so I took leave of my father, first, to deal in goods from the south, and second, to escape disaster. Fortunately I did well in business and made some money. By the time I headed back home, it was already the ninety-ninth day, and since the full period was not yet over, I was reluctant to reach home right away. That's why I stayed overnight at Chao the Jug's in the pottery village, about ten miles out. To my surprise the two of them, Chao and his wife, stole my fortune and murdered me. Then they burned me to ashes, ground up my bones, and fashioned me into a pot. Oh, the misery I feel!

(*in verse*)

To escape dire fate I set out afar
And in alien land plied my trade.
Although my gain was a hundred fold,
Pain in countless varieties was given to me
to bear.

A scant ten miles from my home
A stranger's house was my abode.
That night man and wife, seized with
greed,

Were cruel as tiger or wolf.
Murder cast me from the realm of light.
Then they burned me to ash, pounded my
bones,

Mixed in water and clay, molded a pot,
And gave it to Old Chang the Headstrong.
How hope to hold water or broth?

To avoid the fate of a chamber pot—this
request denied.

Hence I rattle and tell my tale,
Proclaim my woe for all to hear,
That you, O lord of justice bright,
Might aid a ghost of murder dead.

PAO: This is indeed an injustice! Chang Ch'ien!
Bring Chao the Jug and his wife here, and give
them a stroke of the staff with every step.

CHANG CH'EN: Yes, sir. (*Leaves and calls out.*) Is
Chao the Jug home?

(*Enter CHAO.*)

CHAO: Who's that calling me?

⁸Chih-hsiu was formerly on the roster of public entertainers or prostitutes on call for service at official functions.

CHANG CH'EN: Where's your wife?

CHAO: She's an entertainer, I know, but her name's been off the rolls a long time now, and here you are calling her up for service!⁸

CHANG CH'EN: Pah! Judge Pao has a summons out for her; get her out here, quick!

(*Enter CHIH-HSIU.*)

CHIH-HSIU: Chang Ch'ien, brother! It's been a long time! You're even nastier than you used to be. Come on in and have some tea.

CHANG CH'EN: Judge Pao is waiting; get a move on! (*Arrives at the courthouse and reports.*) Defendants face the court!

(*CHAO and CHIH-HSIU kneel.*)

PAO: Chao the Jug, someone has accused you of killing Yang Kuo-yung.

CHAO: We're both of us vegetarian Buddhists; we never killed any sheep called Yang Kuo-yung or whatever.⁹ Who's the plaintiff? Let me confront him.

PAO: Chang the Headstrong is the plaintiff.

CHAO: That's a fine way to behave, you old dolt! Here I give you a chamber pot as free as you please. What's wrong with that? Yet you have to accuse me of homicide! Think you can put the squeeze on me, eh?

CHANG: Blackguard! The time you gave me that pot, I thought it had a bad ring to it. I asked you to exchange it, and after three exchanges, you still gave me the same old pot! And after I got it home, its weeping and wailing kept me up all night. That's bad enough, but what's worse, I peed all over the floor! Then it started talking—rattle, rattle—some tall tale or other, something about a Yang Kuo-yung and his money, and how you were out to get it.

CHAO: Do you mean to tell me that pot, after saying nothing at my place, started talking at yours? I don't believe it!

CHIH-HSIU: What kind of story is this? The old bird must be after one of our water cisterns!

CHANG:

(*K'uai-huo san*)

Ah, Chao the Jug!

Did you think me a child?

You gave me a pot for the bedroom
And a horrible shock as well!

⁹This is a pun on a homophone of the surname "Yang," meaning "sheep" or "goat."

(*Ch'ao T'ien-tzu*)

When I brought you home, pot,
You nearly brought me death from
fright!

If you don't believe me, your Honor, just send
somebody to take a look.

The piss I spilled like a fool is there
still.

PAO: How did he go about committing murder in
the kiln?

CHANG: Your Honor,
His pottery village was worse than a
bandit lair
That all the troops in the realm could
scarcely quell.
He murdered the innocent
And baked them into tile,
Sending their souls into perdition.
If you want justice served aright,
Give him cuts a thousand times ten.

Your Honor,
Even that would barely fit his crimes.

CHAO: It's going to take more than your testimony
to put a capital crime on my head. If you can
get that pot to rattle off, I'll give in.

CHANG (*raps on the pot*): One, two, three—pot!

GHOST: Chao the Jug, at last this day has come!
(*Hits CHAO.*)

CHAO: Don't you harass me. Let me go home, and
I'll give you a service and guarantee your ascent
to Heaven. I've got plenty of money to do it,
too; I won't let you down.

GHOST (*hits CHIH-HSIU*): You—you heaped those
big pieces of firewood on my leg bones and
burned me to a fare-thee-well.

CHIH-HSIU (*in fear*): You were dead as could be;
it couldn't have hurt.

PAO: Chang Ch'ien, pick out a large staff and give
each one of them a hundred strokes. Then have
the secretary get their confessions down on an
official form. Once they've signed it, I'll sentence
them to death in this very session. On this same
day they are to be taken to the execution
ground and put to death by a thousand or ten
thousand slashes.

CHANG CHIEN: Yes, sir. (*Beats them and has CHAO
sign a sheet of paper.*)

CHAO: I'll sign, I'll sign! I was the one who killed
Yang Kuo-yung, took his money, burnt him to
ashes, pounded up his bones, and made him

into a pot. I did it then with my eyes open, and
I'll take what's coming to me now with my eyes
closed. The only thing is, I had to involve you
in this, wife.

CHIH-HSIU: In the K'ai-feng Tribunal, if they don't
kill you, they give you a beating. At least they're
not going to burn me to ashes, grind up my
bones, and make a pot out of me. What have I
got to be afraid of? Let them kill me! Let them
kill me!

(*Enter EXECUTIONER with a knife, who
ushers CHAO and CHIH-HSIU offstage.*)

GHOST: I'm going to go to the execution ground
and watch. I'll serve as the official supervisor of
executions! (*Kow-tows in thanks to PAO; exit.*)

PAO: Chang Ch'ien, I want you to confiscate every
last scrap of Chao the Jug's property and divide
it into two portions. One half goes to Chang the
Headstrong as reward for doing his duty and
sounding a plaint for another. The other half is
Yang Kuo-yung's father's as his support. Give
this pot to him as well to take home and inter.
Meanwhile, let this whole matter be announced
to the public.

(*in verse*)

It is not that I delight in executions,
But the law of the land knows no favor.
The remaining funds I give to those of old
age,
And an empty grave calls to the ghost of
the dead.
Never say the righteous exist no more;
The law is here for those in need.
And now let this be known by all
As a tale of marvel in ages hence.

CHANG (*kowtows in thanks*): If it had not been
for your Excellency, this crime would never
have found solution. Truly, your virtue is like
Heaven itself, great beyond all conception!

(*Ssu-pien ching*)

With these white hairs of mine
But for a grieved ghost I would never
have come.

Judge Pao,
Your virtue is perfection itself;
The spirits stand in awe.
Let it be known from this time forth
To the ends of the sky
As a tale very wondrous and strange.

(*For Chinese text of Act III see page 178*)