

京劇：鎖麟囊
The Jewel Bag
—a Peking Opera

Translated and adapted by Josephine Hung



A POOR RICH GIRL

Irene Ku (古愛蓮) in the role of Hsiang Ling in a production of The Jewel Bag, Taipei, 1970. Miss Ku, a well-known actress of the Ch'eng School, won praise for her graceful sleeve movements.

A wide open field in Laichou.
Enter from upstage right GRANNY HU.

GRANNY HU: The Great Flood in Tengchou almost made a ghost out of me. I, Granny Hu, was once employed as a bond-servant in the House of Hsueh. Unfortunately there was this big flood that swept all of us to Laichou. I am all by myself here, with no relatives or friends. If it had not been for this kind-hearted Lord Lu who set up a soup-kitchen for the homeless refugees, I would have been dead long ago. I come here three times a day for my meals. Now it's late in the afternoon and I'm feeling hungry. I'd better go get some soup! (About to exit upstage left.)

HSIANG-LING: (Offstage) Oh, how bitter life is!

GRANNY HU: Listen to the cry of the suffering. How pathetic and bitter! (Exit upstage left.)

(Enter HSIANG LING from upstage right. She is now in a black three-quarter length jacket, with blue trimmings and a white plaited skirt.)

HSIANG-LING: (Sobbing) Oh, my dear mother! My dear child! My husband! Where are they now? (Walks slowly and exhaustedly downstage center.) It all happened so soon, and I find myself in another world. (Looking around) Mei-hsiang! Servants! When I call Mei-hsiang and my servants, why don't they come to me? Oh, my husband! I am starved! My stomach is empty and yet my husband doesn't know it! Why am I in this wilderness with no houses or pavilions in sight? Oh, I see! (Sings yao pan.)

In our excitement, we rushed to the boats to save our lives. Then we were separated! This is what the cruel Flood has done to

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The Peking opera originated in a number of regional musical dramas, chief of which being the Anhwei school, which congregated in the nation's capital in mid-nineteenth century. Known as p'i huang (皮黃) from the singing style hsi-p'i (西皮) and erh-huang (二黃), this new entertainment took over the stage from the k'un-ch'ü and reigned supreme as the national theatre of China for nearly 100 years. It had a great hold on the popular imagination with its singing, acting, dialogue and mime, and stories derived from history and folklore. Many beloved shows of a bygone theatre now appeared on the p'i huang stage in new guise; for instance, the Peking opera *The Black Pot* (烏盆記) was derived from the Yuan play *Ghost of the Pot* (see page 31). Other productions used original scripts put together by famous actors, but seldom with any attributed published version.

The *Jewel Bag* belongs to the latter category, and was a starring vehicle for the well-known female impersonator Ch'eng Yen-ch'iu (程硯秋). The name of the play is literally "a bag to lock the baby in", signifying an embroidered jewel bag traditionally given the bride with the wish that a baby-boy be secured at the earliest opportunity. Hsiang Ling, the pampered daughter of a very rich Tengchou family, is presented with one on the eve of her marriage. On her way to the wedding, while seeking shelter from the rain, her sedan-chair encounters that of a poor bride who can't help wailing about her lack of a dowry. In a spirit of compassion, Hsiang Ling parts with the only valuable she has with her, the jewel bag, as an anonymous gift to a sister-bride. Six years later, happily married and the mother of a boy of five, Hsiang Ling is separated from her family by a great flood. She flees to another town along with other refugees where she finds employment as nursemaid to a five-year-old boy in a rich family. What develops is enacted in the climactic Scene 17, here reproduced in English, where there are no less than ten changes of place of action and the wheel of fortune turns complete cycle and back again.

us! My poor mother must have perished in the tidal waves, and my dear boy Ta-chi must have been swallowed in the fish's stomach.

GRANNY HU: (*Enters from upstage right and walks to HSIANG-LING and stares at her in astonishment.*) Why, if it isn't our Young Mistress!

HSIANG-LING: Ah, Granny Hu. . . Ah! (*Sings yao-pan.*)

When I see Granny Hu now
I cannot help feeling as lonely
As hearing a lone pipe in a deserted mountain.

Granny Hu, have you seen my husband
and my aged mother?

GRANNY HU: Young Mistress, why do you ask me such a silly question? Don't you remember the Great Flood in our town? The Madame and the Young Master must have long since been eaten up by the fishes and the shrimps!

HSIANG-LING: (*Weeping*) Wey . . . ah!

GRANNY HU: Young Mistress, don't cry. Let me ask you. Are you hungry?

HSIANG-LING: I am hungry. Granny Hu, serve me dinner!

GRANNY HU: Well, Young Mistress, don't you know we are now refugees? Don't forget we are not home any more. At home you just mention the word, and dinner would be served. There would be four big plates and eight large bowls of delicious food—fried, deviled, or steamed. You would be served with bird's nest or shark's fin. But now, at this time, my advice is not to dream such dreams any more.

HSIANG-LING: Granny Hu, I don't have a penny to my name. What am I going to do?

GRANNY HU: You are talking nonsense again. You said you did not bring any money with you from home. If we had known the floods were coming, we could have moved to another town

and saved ourselves from the disaster!

HSIANG-LING: *(Weeping)* Wey . . . ah!

GRANNY HU: My dear Young Mistress, don't cry any more. You can't get anywhere by crying. Let me tell you. There is a very kind-hearted nobleman in this town named Lu. He has set up a soup-kitchen for all the refugees from Teng-chou. Do you want to come with me to get some soup?

HSIANG-LING: That doesn't sound right.

GRANNY HU: What doesn't sound right?

HSIANG-LING: Why, soup or porridge is only something to top off a meal with. How can a bowl of soup satisfy hunger?

GRANNY HU: My word, Young Mistress, you are still putting on airs even at a moment like this! If you want to be literary, let me give you a classical saying: "Things have changed—The present can no longer be likened to the days of old"

HSIANG-LING: Ah, Granny Hu! Then where do you get the porridge?

GRANNY HU: Ask no more questions. If I have porridge to eat, you shall have it. Just come with me!

HSIANG-LING: *(Weeping)* Wey . . . ah . . . !

Granny Hu, please lead the way!

(They circle around the stage as LU JEN and LU I enter from upstage left. A group of refugees enter from downstage right, each holding a bowl to get porridge from LU JEN and LU I. HSIANG-LING and GRANNY HU follow at the end of the line. The refugees all exeunt downstage right except an old woman.)

LU JEN: No more! Come back this afternoon!

(OLD WOMAN starts to weep. HSIANG-LING gives the bowl of porridge which GRANNY HU has obtained for her to the old woman.)

GRANNY HU: Well, Young Mistress, you are still generous! Why did you give your own bowl of porridge to her?

HSIANG-LING: Every one of them is thin and skinny as a stick.

GRANNY HU: You haven't even taken a sip and yet you gave it all to her.

HSIANG-LING: I feel so sorry for her.

GRANNY HU: What do you think you are now? A rich noble lady? Still trying to do a good deed! Huh!

LU JEN: You people have already gotten your por-

ridge. What are you waiting for?

GRANNY HU: Please be patient, gentlemen. She was a rich lady from an official family before the flood came. Please make special allowances!

LU JEN: Well, a rich lady! Hey, partner!

LU I: Yes?

LU JEN: Here is a fine opportunity to do a good deed.

LU I: How?

LU JEN: Remember our House needs a maid to take care of the young master? Let's recommend her *(indicating HSIANG-LING)* to our House to wait on and play with the Young Master. Isn't that a good deed?

LU I: Right! Let's talk it over with her! Come on! *(Walk over to GRANNY HU and HSIANG-LING.)*

LU JEN: *(To GRANNY HU)* Old Lady, I want to talk to you.

GRANNY HU: What about?

LU JEN: Our House is in need of an amah to take care of our young master. I want to recommend the young lady. It's nothing noble or dignified but she will be sure of three meals a day. What do you say to that?

GRANNY HU: Please wait a moment. I'll ask her. *(Goes over to HSIANG-LING.)*

(HSIANG LING walks away to right.)

GRANNY HU: Young Mistress, don't go away. Did you hear that? They want to hire an amah to take care of their young master. Do you want to take the job?

HSIANG-LING: Why don't you go?

GRANNY HU: If it weren't for you, I would go myself. An old woman like me, I have nothing to fear. Not to say getting porridge from a soup kitchen, I am not even afraid to beg for my living. I am much better off than you are!

HSIANG-LING: I don't know how to coax a child.

GRANNY HU: Let me ask you. When you were young at home, how did your nurse coax you? Just do to him as she did to you, that's all.

HSIANG-LING: *(Weeping)* Wey . . . ah! Since I have come to this plight, what can I do but go and serve as a maid?

GRANNY HU: All right, all right, don't cry. *(To LU JEN and LU I)* Gentlemen, she is willing to take the job.

LU JEN: Then follow us.

HSIANG-LING: Granny Hu, you must come to see me often.

GRANNY HU: I'll surely come to see you in a couple of days. Don't be sad now! I'm going. I'll see you! *(Turns to left.)*

LU JEN: Please follow me! *(Turns to right.)*

GRANNY HU: A mistress, once with elegant ways, turns into a bondmaid nowadays!

(Exit to upstage left.)

HSIANG-LING: The way things happen, rise and fall, may serve to waken us one and all.

(They circle around the stage and stop at downstage center.)

LU JEN: *(He gestures to enter the house.)* My Lord and my Lady, please come out.

(Enter from upstage right two maids, the lord LU SHENG-CHOU and his lady CHAO SHOU-CHEN.)

LORD LU: *(Walks with SHOU-CHEN to downstage centre.)*

Since we received the jewel bag

We've, husband and wife, no more suffered from poverty.

SHOU-CHEN: I think of my benefactor every day, the one who gave me the jewel bag. Lu Jen, what is it? *(They both go to stage center and sit down, LU on table left while SHOU-CHEN on table right.)*

LORD LU: Lu Jen, what is it you want to see us about?

LU JEN: My Lord and my Lady, didn't you ask me to find an amah to take care of the Young Master? I have found her.

LORD LU: Where is she?

LU JEN: She is outside.

LORD LU: Ask her to come in.

LU JEN: *(Gestures to go out of the house by lifting his right foot downstage center. To HSIANG-LING)* Come here! Go in and greet my Lord and my Lady.

HSIANG-LING: *(Follows LU JEN into the house and kowtows before LORD LU and SHOU-CHEN.)* Please pardon my dirty and plain clothes. Now allow me to greet my Lord and my Lady.

SHOU-CHEN: *(Curtsies with her hands held together on her right waist, her left leg bent behind her right, and head and back bent low.)* Why, who is this woman?

HSIANG-LING: My surname is Hsueh.

SHOU-CHEN: Where are you from?

HSIANG-LING: From Tengchou.

SHOU-CHEN: How's the flood in Tengchou?

HSIANG-LING: It's completely flooded and everything is destroyed.

SHOU-CHEN: Maid, take her inside and have her changed into clean clothes.

LORD LU: Madame, where is our son, Tien-ling?

SHOU-CHEN: Maid, call the young master to please come here!

MAID: Yes, my lady. *(She goes to stage right and turns toward upstage right.)* Young Master, please come!

(Enter TIEN-LING, a good-looking boy of five. He is very bright and active. He has on a red jacket and red trousers.)

TIEN-LING: Coming! Coming! *(Goes before his parents and bows.)* Daddy! Mama! *(He goes to stand beside SHOU-CHEN.)*

SHOU-CHEN: My boy, since you are supposed to study, why did you go out to play?

TIEN-LING: Ma, you don't understand. I like to play while I study. Don't I save more time that way than just studying?

SHOU-CHEN: My Lord, see how smart our child is! He will be a great man someday.

LORD LU: A great man, bah! Look at the dirt all over him, how can you say he'll become great someday!

SHOU-CHEN: My boy, where did you get all this dirt on your clothes?

TIEN-LING: Ma, you know, I got tired of studying. So I went to the backgarden to swing. Whoops! I fell off the swing and turned a somersault!

SHOU-CHEN: Oh, my dear boy! *(Gets up to pet him.)* Did you hurt yourself?

TIEN-LING: No, not at all.

SHOU-CHEN: *(Sits down again, relieved.)* Now I have found an amah to play with you. How would you like that?

TIEN-LING: I don't want any amah.

SHOU-CHEN: Why?

TIEN-LING: An amah is an old, old woman, seventy or eighty years old, who can hardly walk, how can she play with me? I don't want an amah!

SHOU-CHEN: My son, this amah is not old at all.

TIEN-LING: I don't believe it. I've got to see her for myself.

SHOU-CHEN: Maid, call Amah Hsueh out.

MAID B: *(Goes downstage and turns toward upstage left.)* Amah Hsueh, come out quick!

(Enter HSIANG-LING with MAID A from upstage left. She is in a maid's clothes with a

long sleeveless jacket and a sash. She walks to downstage left.)

HSIANG-LING:

I used to hire and order servants around
But now I am myself a servant. . .
One must lower one's head
To walk under low beams!

MAID A: Look at you, slow as a snail! Hurry up
and go in there! Our Lady wants to see you!
*(They gesture to enter the room by lifting
the left foot at downstage center.)*

TIEN-LING: Ma, is that the new amah?

MAID B: Hey you, come over and pay your respects
to the Young Master!

HSIANG-LING: *(Goes over to TIEN-LING and bows.)*
May I play with you?

TIEN-LING: All right. Ma, I want to play with her.
Come on, let's go out and play!

SHOU-CHEN: Amah Hsueh, take very good care of
the Young Master when you play with him. Be
careful of the Tai-hu rocks; don't let him fall
over them. Take special notice of the Gold Fish
Pond. Don't let him fall in it. Don't let bees
sting him, or let him pick the spider's web.

HSIANG-LING: Yes, my Lady!

TIEN-LING: Let's go! Come on, let's go out and
play.

SHOU-CHEN: Another thing, Amah Hsueh! When
you go to the back garden, don't allow him to
swing. Don't you let my son fall down and hurt
himself.

LORD LU: Madame, stop all this nagging.
(Exit to upstage left.)

SHOU-CHEN: Whoever knows of anyone who does-
n't love his own son!

(HSIANG-LING secretly wipes her tears.)

TIEN-LING: Come on! Come on *(Pulling HSIANG-
LING).* Let's go!

SHOU-CHEN: Oh, Amah Hsueh! By the way, you
can play with the Young Master in any part of
the garden, except the east corner. Don't go into
the Pearl Hall in the east, or you'll be severely
punished without fail.

(Exit upstage left with MAID A.)

TIEN-LING: Come on! Let's go out and play.

*(He holds HSIANG-LING's hand and pulls her
out of the house downstage center, followed
by MAID B. They circle around the stage.
They are now in the garden.)*

TIEN-LING: Say, Amah Hsueh! Did you have such

beautiful buildings in your house?

HSIANG-LING: Yes, we did.

MAID B: What? You brag! How can you say you
had such beautiful buildings? You ought to be
ashamed of yourself! You must have lived in
half a thatched-roof cottage!

TIEN-LING: Huh! *(Stares at MAID B with contempt.
They make another circle around the stage.)*
Amah Hsueh, did you have a garden like this in
your home?

HSIANG-LING: No, we didn't.

MAID B: You are smarter this time. I knew you
couldn't afford to have such a beautiful garden.
(To herself) Her coming to our house is an eye-
opener to her. I'm sure she has not seen the likes
of it. Here we are! Come on in! *(They gesture
to enter the house by lifting their right feet at
downstage center.)* Let me tell you, Amah
Hsueh. There are three parlors. Inside is a bed-
room. If the Young Master is tired and feels
sleepy, make him lie down and put him to sleep.
It is not easy to coax a child. If he has a fall or
a bruise, you have got to be responsible! I am
giving you good advice, and you can take it or
leave it!

HSIANG-LING: Thank you for your advice. I shall
follow your direction.

MAID B: *(Proudly)* You are welcome! *(She goes
stage left to the table placed by the property
man and picks up a toy.)* Hey, Amah Hsueh.
Here are some of his toys. Have you ever seen
this before? *(Picks up a toy.)* Do you know how
to play with it?

HSIANG-LING: Please show me how.

MAID B: I knew you had never seen such toys in all
your life. Come on, let me show you. Watch
carefully. *(She shakes the toy to make a rattling
noise.)* This is how you play it!

TIEN-LING: Huh! What are you doing here?

MAID B: I'm trying to please you.

TIEN-LING: You are not wanted here anymore.
Now go away! *(Pushing her.)*

MAID B: All right, I'll go. You little ungrateful
creature. As soon as you have a new maid, you
forget the old one! *(Gestures to go out of the
room and exits angrily to upstage left.)*

TIEN-LING: Amah Hsueh! Aren't you going to
play with me?

HSIANG-LING: Yes, Young Master. How about this
toy? *(Picking up a toy.)*

TIEN-LING: No, I don't like that.

HSIANG-LING: (*Picks up another one, trying hard to please.*) This one?

TIEN-LING: I am sick and tired of that old toy. If you can't play with me, I am going to tell my Ma.

HSIANG-LING: Ah! (*Anxiously and excitedly*) Young Master, let me cut a paper doll for you, would you like that?

TIEN-LING: Cut a paper doll? Good! Hurry up and cut one for me.

HSIANG-LING: All right. (*Cuts a doll from a piece of paper.*) How do you like this paper doll?

TIEN-LING: Good, I like that. Amah Hsueh, will you cut a paper horse for me?

HSIANG-LING: All right, I will.

TIEN-LING: Hurry up! I want a green horse!

HSIANG-LING: (*Terrified*) It will take some time, Young Master. A man has two feet, while a horse has four feet, so it will naturally take longer to cut a horse.

TIEN-LING: You are right! A man has two feet while a horse has four feet, so it is surely harder to cut a horse.

HSIANG-LING: (*She has cut a horse and shows it to TIEN-LING.*) Here, Young Master, how do you like this horse?

TIEN-LING: Hey, Amah Hsueh, can this horse gallop?

HSIANG-LING: No, how can a paper horse gallop?

TIEN-LING: Right! How can a paper horse gallop? Well, Amah Hsueh, let me show you how a horse gallops. Now watch. (*Imitates the galloping of a horse.*)

HSIANG-LING: Young Master, don't get your clothes dirty!

TIEN-LING: Oh, don't bother. My mother is very rich. She will have new clothes made for me! (*HSIANG-LING secretly wipes her tears.*) Hey, Amah Hsueh! Show me how a horse gallops. I want to see how you do it.

HSIANG-LING: A human being is a human being, while a horse is a horse. How can a human being imitate a horse's gallop?

TIEN-LING: If you don't imitate a horse, I'll tell my Ma! (*Turns to go.*)

HSIANG-LING: (*Excitedly stops him*) Ah, Young Master, let me imitate a horse for you. But, Young Master, there's no use in imitating a horse when you don't have a horse whip.

TIEN-LING: No horse whip? Look at this! (*Picks a horse whip from the table.*) Isn't this a horse-whip?

HSIANG-LING: (*Trying to distract his attention*) Ah, Young Master, let me catch a butterfly for you. All right?

TIEN-LING: Where is it?

HSIANG-LING: It's gone.

TIEN-LING: I want a butterfly. (*Stamping his feet*) I want a butterfly!

HSIANG-LING: Ah, Young Master! How would you like to have a paper butterfly? I'll cut one for you.

TIEN-LING: Hurry up and cut a butterfly for me! (*He sits down on the chair placed behind the table while HSIANG-LING sits down on his right.*) Why don't you hurry! (*He falls asleep.*)

HSIANG-LING: Yes, Young Master.

TIEN-LING: Hurry up. (*Speaking in his sleep*)

HSIANG-LING: Wey...ya... (*Weeps, sings erh huang man pan san yen.*)

In a moment, I am at sixes and sevens,
all confused,

Wetting my collar with bitter tears.

(*Changes to quick tempo*)

I thought wealth and prosperity would
last forever

Whoever knew there could be a sharp
change in life.

I was once as spoiled as can be

Now I have tasted the bitterness of the
world.

This must be a lesson to me from God in
Heaven

He tells me not to hate, not to scold.
And to change into a new woman:

To change my spoiled ways

To recognize my flaw through this bitter
tide!

Alas, poor me! To have to suffer from
such poverty

To suffer from such disaster!

Oh, My dear child! (*Embraces TIEN-LING
as her own child.*)

TIEN-LING: (*Talking in his sleep*) Hurry up and cut
it for me. (*Falls asleep again.*)

HSIANG-LING: Oh dear, I took that child for my
own. I remember my mother gave me a jewel
bag for my wedding. There was a baby boy
embroidered on it, so that I might have a baby

boy as soon as possible. Now I gave that bag to another and my mother is dead! Oh, my dear mother is dead! Oh, my mother!

TIEN-LING: (*Waking up*) Amah Hsueh, you are not playing with me! Instead you are crying! All right, I'll go and tell my Ma! (*Gets up to go.*)

HSIANG-LING: (*Quickly stops him.*) Young Master, you were sleeping, how could I play with you? All right, let's go out into the garden.

TIEN-LING: Right! Let's go out to the garden and play.

(*They gesture to go out of the house as the PROPERTY MAN moves the table to stage center and hangs a pair of red curtains in front and the red embroidered jewel bag in the center. They circle around the stage. TIEN-LING picks up a ball.*)

Here is a ball. Let me throw it to you. (*Throws the ball.*) Ai-ya! Where is the ball? Go and get it.

HSIANG-LING: Yes, young master. (*Looks for the ball. Suddenly she sees the Pearl Hall.*)

TIEN-LING: You go up there and get the ball for me?

HSIANG-LING: Ah, Young Master! Don't you remember Madame's orders that the Pearl Hall is forbidden? I am not allowed to go up there. Who is going to be responsible if Madame should blame me?

TIEN-LING: I will be responsible. No fear, you just go up there and get the ball.

HSIANG-LING: (*Sighs.*) All right, I'll go up and fetch it for you.

TIEN-LING: Why don't you hurry, you slow coach.

HSIANG-LING: I dare not disobey the order of the Young Master, so I'd better go up. (*Stops at the imaginary stairs downstage right.*)

TIEN-LING: Why don't you go up? Didn't I tell you? If my Ma blames you, she can talk to me. What are you afraid of? Go on and get the ball for me.

HSIANG-LING: All right, all right, let me go up and fetch it for you. (*Looks for the ball.*) What do I fear? I have the Young Master to back me up. (*Downstage from right to left she climbs up the imaginary stairs by supporting her right hand on the imaginary rail. TIEN-LING follows her. They are upstairs. She looks for the ball. Suddenly she sees the embroidered jewel bag enshrined on the table stage center. She recognizes it at once and weeps.*)

TIEN-LING: Why are you crying here again? I'll go

and tell my Ma.

(*He goes down the imaginary stairs and exits upstage right.*)

HSIANG-LING: I can still recognize this bag which I gave away to another bride on my wedding day. It can't be a dream! How dare I find out the truth about it all, to relate the whole story from the beginning to the end? (*Picks up the bag and is lost in memory and tender thoughts.*) When I hold this bag in my hand, I can't help shedding tears without end!

(*Enter SHOU-CHEN with TIEN-LING and MAID B from upstage right.*)

SHOU-CHEN: How dare Amah Hsueh go up there against my will. (*Climbs up the imaginary stairs and points at HSIANG-LING.*) Huh, how dare you, Amah Hsueh? Didn't I tell you that you were forbidden to come up to this Pearl Hall in the East-corner? Now come down with me and be punished.

HSIANG-LING: Madame, please don't be angry. The Young Master threw the ball upstairs just now and ordered me to get it for him. I told him you forbade me to come up here to this East Pearl Hall but the Young Master insisted on my getting the ball for him and said he would be responsible if you should blame me for it.

SHOU-CHEN: My boy, did you say that?

TIEN-LING: Yes, I did ask her to go up and get the ball. But Ma, why don't you ask her why she started crying when she held our red bag in her hand?

SHOU-CHEN: Oh, is that so? Amah Hsueh, come downstairs with me. I want to talk to you.

HSIANG-LING: Yes, Madame (*Looks around for the bag.*)

MAID B: Ah-ha, now you are in trouble. Go on! So you still assume airs, eh?

SHOU-CHEN: Don't be afraid, follow me. (*Gestures to climb down the stairs from left to right downstage. HSIANG-LING still looks back at the bag.*) What are you looking at?

HSIANG-LING: At the jewel bag!

SHOU-CHEN: What?

HSIANG-LING: The jewel bag.

SHOU-CHEN: Come with me quickly. (*Gestures to climb down the rest of the stairs with TIEN-LING, followed by MAID B and HSIANG-LING.*)

(*They gesture to enter the house and circle around the stage. The PROPERTY MAN re-*

moves the curtains and places a chair in front of the table. She sits on the chair. HSIANG-LING stands on her right, TIEN-LING on her left with MAID B by his side.)

Well, Amah Hsueh, actually where are you from?

HSIANG-LING: From Tengchou.

SHOU-CHEN: I say, what is your name?

HSIANG-LING: Er. . . , my name?

MAID B: Oh, look at you. When Madame asks you a question, you must answer her quickly. Why do you put on airs?

HSIANG-LING: My name is Hsueh Hsiang-ling.

SHOU-CHEN: What kind of family did you come from?

HSIANG-LING: My family . . . ? Er. . . . It was some what like yours.

SHOU-CHEN: How about now?

HSIANG-LING: Now everything was lost in the flood. . . .

SHOU-CHEN: When did you get married? How many years have you been married?

HSIANG-LING: Oh. . . . It was on June 18th of the Yu Year. So I have been married for six years now.

SHOU-CHEN: June 18th of the Yu Year. It has been six years now since you were married? Ah, my son, how old are you now?

TIEN-LING: Ma, don't you remember I am five years old?

SHOU-CHEN: My child, go out and play.

TIEN-LING: All right, I'm going. *(Exits upstage left with great delight.)*

SHOU-CHEN: Maid, get a chair for Amah Hsueh.

MAID B: Say, Madame, she is only an amah. Why should she sit down? Standing up is good enough for her.

SHOU-CHEN: Get a chair.

MAID B: Ho, she must have a chair. *(She gets a chair and places it sideways on the right to indicate it is a stool.)* Come on, you are late today. All the chairs are occupied, so here is a stool for you.

SHOU-CHEN: Please sit down, Amah Hsueh.

HSIANG-LING: Thank you. *(Sits down.)*

MAID B: Let me tell you. This stool is made of wood. And wood is used to make fire. So be careful! Don't burn yourself!

HSIANG-LING: Please sit down with me.

MAID B: *(Embarrassed).* . . . I am used to standing up.

SHOU-CHEN: Please sit down! Ah, Amah Hsueh, do you still remember the weather on your wedding day—June the 18th?

HSIANG-LING: Yes, I do.

SHOU-CHEN: Please tell me.

HSIANG-LING: Madame, please listen to my story. *(Gets up.)*

SHOU-CHEN: Please sit down and tell me your story.

HSIANG-LING: *(Sings hsi-p'i yuan pan.)*

It started out to be a fine day

But suddenly it turned windy and stormy.

It looked as if the sun had set in the west

Inside the sedan-chair all I felt was

That the world had gone topsy turvy.

I heard the wild wind roaring

The rain pouring and the thunder

pounding

The wedding bugles, drums and gongs

sounded

People lifted up their voices and cried:

"What a terrific storm!"

SHOU-CHEN: Oh, so you had a storm that day?

HSIANG-LING: Exactly.

SHOU-CHEN: Since it was raining hard, you don't mean to tell me your sedan chair proceeded without trying to find shelter?

HSIANG-LING: We did find shelter at the Spring-Autumn Pavilion.

SHOU-CHEN: Ah, you found shelter at the Spring-Autumn Pavilion? Let me ask you: when you were there at the Pavilion, was yours the only bridal sedan chair or was there another one?

HSIANG-LING: There was another bridal sedan-chair.

SHOU-CHEN: *(Surprised)* Ah, there was another one? Well, let me ask you: how was the other bridal sedan chair? Was it as beautiful and elegant as yours?

HSIANG-LING: Madame, let me tell you. *(Sings hsi p'i yuan pan.)*

That bridal sedan chair was simple and plain.

(She walks around and gestures to demonstrate the dilapidation of the sedan chair.)

Through my curtains I could peep

Although it was a virtue to be thrifty and plain

Her curtains were just too short and plain.

That sedan chair was all tattered, faded

and patched

Oh, I had never seen the likes of it before.

SHOU-CHEN: Oh, so that sedan chair was tattered, faded and patched?

HSIANG-LING: Exactly. *(Sits down.)*

SHOU-CHEN: Maid!

MAID B: Yes, madame.

SHOU-CHEN: Put Amah Hsueh's chair in the guest's position.

MAID B: Why, Madame, she is only an amah. You were kind enough to let her sit down. Why should we move her seat to the guest's position?

SHOU-CHEN: No more talk. Do as I told you!

MAID B: *(Goes to HSIANG-LING.)* Hey, get up! Get up! Let me move your nest.

(HSIANG-LING gets up, MAID B moves the chair and places it right side up on the left of SHOU-CHEN's chair but a little more down-stage.)

SHOU-CHEN: Please sit down. *(HSIANG-LING takes the guest's seat.)* Let me ask you further. How was the girl in that bridal sedan-chair? Was she rich? Tell me all about her.

HSIANG-LING: Madame, I'll tell you in detail. The girl in that bridal sedan chair must have many sorrows. Her tears came running down in streams, her voice often broke down in sobs.

She wailed like a cuckoo

Or like a lonely and miserable ape in a deep gorge.

How very pathetic! Very sad indeed!

One should be happy on one's wedding day

But why did she weep and sob so bitterly?

SHOU-CHEN: If she was so pathetic, did you do anything for her?

HSIANG-LING: I had loads and loads of dowry, but in my sedan chair I had no money with me!

SHOU-CHEN: Then what did you do?

HSIANG-LING: All of a sudden I remembered I had the jewel bag with me. Although it was small, it was a great source of relief at that moment.

SHOU-CHEN: Ah, did you give her a jewel bag?

HSIANG-LING: Exactly.

SHOU-CHEN: Maid! Place Amah Hsueh's chair in the honored position.

MAID B: All right, I'll move it, I'll move it step by step. *(She moves the chair to the center in front of the table and moves SHOU-CHEN's chair to the right where HSIANG-LING's stool used to*

be. To HSIANG-LING.) You have been promoted to the center! Now sit down.

SHOU-CHEN: Come, come and sit down. *(Helps HSIANG-LING to sit down in the center and she sits on the right.)* Let me ask you: what did you have in the jewel bag?

HSIANG-LING: Madame, in that bag?

There are pearls, gold and all kinds of sparkling, precious stones.

Red coral, green jade, everything you can think of.

Besides there were pearls, called "night-brilliance" tied in a string.

There were pure gold necklaces and purple emerald pins.

A pair of white jade bracelets for the bride
All kinds of diamonds, rubies set in hair pins

Each vied for its sparkle and value.

This bag may not be unique or priceless
Yet it would feed and clothe her for years on end.

SHOU-CHEN: Ah! *(Surprised)* When I heard her story, I couldn't help feeling sad and grateful. So this is my benefactor right before my very eyes. Now I see the whole truth. Maid!

MAID B: Present! *(Acts like a military.)*

SHOU-CHEN: Take Amah Hsueh and have her clothes changed?

MAID B: Oh my! She is but an amah. Why should she have her clothes changed?

SHOU-CHEN: Pick out some of my very best dresses and put them on her, the more the better.

MAID B: Ho, come on! Follow me and go change your clothes. All I can say is you are lucky, indeed!

HSIANG-LING: Ah Madame, I don't understand.

SHOU-CHEN: That's all right, I am not going to get you into any trouble. Just go on in and change.

MAID B: Don't worry. Our Lord and Madame are very reasonable and decent people. They won't make you his concubine. If they ever wanted one, they would have had me first. It wouldn't be your turn!

(She exits upstage left with HSIANG-LING. Enter LORD LU from upstage right.)

LORD LU: Heavens! What has become of this world?

SHOU-CHEN: My lord, what has come over you?

LORD LU: It is difficult to open the gate of charity

but it is not so easy to close it either.
 SHOU-CHEN: What do you mean?
 LORD LU: We took in Amah Hsueh just because we felt sorry for her. But now Amah Hsueh's mother, Amah Hsueh's husband, Amah Hsueh's son and Amah Hsueh's friends and relatives are all here!
 SHOU-CHEN: Ai-ya! They came here in good time, otherwise I would have to send people to look for them.
 LORD LU: Madame, are you mad?
 SHOU-CHEN: Why do you say I am mad?
 LORD LU: We took in Amah Hsueh just because we felt sorry for her. Now all this swarm of people have come to our house, how can we feed all these mouths?
 SHOU-CHEN: That Amah Hsueh is our benefactor.
 LORD LU: What? How can she be our benefactor?
 SHOU-CHEN: Amah Hsueh gave us that jewel bag. Does it not make her our benefactor?
 LORD LU: Oh? Was it Amah Hsueh who gave us that jewel bag?
 SHOU-CHEN: Right.
 LORD LU: In that case, not only Amah Hsueh is our benefactor, but her mother, husband, son, friends and relatives are all our benefactors. Let me go out and personally invite them to come in.
(Exit upstage right and re-enter with MAID A, Servant supporting MADAME HSUEH, HSUEH LIANG, TING-SHUN, TA-CHI, MEI-HSIANG, GRANNY HU, HU CHIEH, CHENG TSUN, Old and Young Wedding Attendants.)
 LORD LU: Ah, Madame. This is old Madame Hsueh.
 SHOU-CHEN: *(Bowing before MADAME HSUEH)* Welcome to our house, Madame Hsueh.
 MADAME HSUEH: Madame, where is my daughter?
 SHOU-CHEN: Let me ask her to come out. Maid, ask Lady Hsueh to come here.
(MAID A goes to downstage left and stands with her right hand raised toward upstage left.)
 MAID A: Lady Hsueh, please come out.
(Enter from upstage left HSIANG-LING with MAID B. HSIANG-LING is now in a beautiful blue embroidered three-quarter jacket and with flowers and brilliants her on hair. They walk to downstage, HSIANG-LING sings erh liu.)
 HSIANG-LING: With fine clothes, I regain my noble

look. Is this a dream, I wonder?
(Goes downstage center and gestures to enter the room with the two maids. She sees her mother.)
 Oh, Heavens, who do I see before me?
 My dear mother smiling at me.
 Oh, my dear mother, where did you come from?
 MADAME HSUEH: My dear daughter!
 TA-CHI: My Ma! *(They both rush to HSIANG-LING and embrace her.)*
 HSIANG-LING: How happy I am to see my son. Thank God in Heaven! He has returned my beloved child.
 TA-CHI: Ma, Papa is here too!
 HSIANG-LING: My husband must be surprised to see me in fineries again.
 TING-SHUN: Ah, Madame. After this disaster, we never expected we could be reunited here. And look, all our friends and relatives are here. Can it be a dream?
 MEI-HSIANG: Master, don't you remember the great flood?
 TING-SHUN: Ah! How can I forget. . . .
 HSIANG-LING: My lord, I will remember it as long as I live!
 GRANNY HU: Say, master, our Young Mistress is now an amah to the House of Lu and yet she still has on such high-class clothes. She is really lucky.
 TING-SHUN: That's right, Madame. As you are only a maid here, why should you be in such fine clothes, unless you have done something disgraceful to our family?
 HSIANG-LING: Oh, my Lord, your rash words have made me blush like cherry-apple.
 TING-SHUN: Why? Don't you understand the meaning of the word shame? *(Very furious.)*
 HSIANG-LING: Oh, Heavens! How can I explain the whole thing to you?
 TING-SHUN: See, evidently you must have done something improper and disgraceful. Now what does this make me? *(To MADAME HSUEH)* Your daughter is supposed to be an amah in this house yet she puts on such fineries. Apparently she has been improper and indecent. That makes a man wear—*(demonstrating a pair of horns on his head.)*
 MADAME HSUEH: Eh, what is that? Hey, daughter, where did you get these fine clothes?