

曹禺：原野

# The Wilderness

By Ts'ao Yu

Translated by Jane Lai



ESCAPE SCENE from the final act (not translated here). Performance photographs on this and the following pages from the 1974 Hong Kong production of *The Wilderness*.

*Characters:*

CH'OU HU, called "Tiger", an escaped prisoner.

CHIAO TA-HSING, Ch'ou Hu's childhood friend and son of Old Chiao, Ch'ou Hu's enemy.

GRANNY CHIAO, Ta-hsing's mother, a blind woman.

CHIN-TZU, Ta-hsing's wife, née Hua, and Ch'ou Hu's lover.

BLACKIE, Ta-hsing's baby boy, by a former wife.

THE IDIOT, nicknamed Dog's Egg, an idiotic farmhand working for the Chiao family.

CH'ANG WU, an old friend of the Chiao family.

CAPTAIN and MILITIA MEN.

*Time and Setting:*

PROLOGUE: *The scene is set at a spot by the railway that runs across the wilderness. The time, one evening after the Autumn Solstice.*

ACT I: *In the main house of the Chiao family, 6 o'clock in the evening.*

ACT II: *In the same house; 9 o'clock that evening to after midnight.*

ACT III: *The time follows immediately after ACT II.*

Scene I: *After 1 a.m., at a crossroad in the dark woods.*

Scene II: *After 2 a.m., in a swampy part of the woods.*

Scene III: *After 3 a.m., beside a pool.*

Scene IV: *After 4 a.m., outside a small broken-down temple.*

Scene V: *The scene returns to the railway that runs across the wilderness. The time, after break of dawn, past 6 o'clock.*

## ACT II

Nine o'clock at night. The scene is set in the main hall of the Chiao house. On the square table is lit a dim oil lamp, casting shadows which chase each other on the window sill and creep up and down the dull grey walls. The windows are closed. The huge mahogany cupboard, a giant looming by the wall, seems like a mysterious overseer of this gloomy house. At the altar, the candles and joss-sticks have gone out, and the three-headed, multi-armed bodhisattva lurks in the darkness. Only the wispy light of an altar lamp gleams on its dark glossy face, making it look savagely horrible.

GRANNY CHIAO is standing at the altar, her face overcast and grim. She stares through large unseeing eyes, thinking. Softly she strikes the gong, producing a low hum that sounds as though issued from the mouth of the idol. In front of the altar, in a large earthenware bowl, some joss-paper is burning, the currency with which man tries to bribe the gods to avert evil and bestow good. The ashes fly with the sparks as the flames dance up-

wards. Their red light flickers on GRANNY CHIAO's austere face like shades on a rotating lantern. Shadows move across a portrait on the wall showing the sinister face of Old Chiao, now dark and now bright, watching fiercely the scene below, like an evil genie.

Here, fear is an invisible speckled snake, which slides along the edge of the imagination into one's veins, freezing the blood within.

The blind woman curls up the yellow joss-paper which she feeds into the belly of the earthenware bowl. The flames dance more savagely. Facing the bodhisattva, she murmurs a sutra for the dead.

Suddenly from a dark corner comes a feeble sobbing mixed with gasps of fear. It is little BLACKIE waking from a nightmare in his cradle. Seeing a whole wall alive with black shadows, he howls with fear. The blind grandmother goes to the cradle, picks up the frightened child and soothes him softly. . . .

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*To those who have seen it enacted on the stage, Ts'ao Yu's Wilderness is a tour de force hardly equalled by any other play of the same period. Written in 1937, following two earlier works that won him popular success—Thunderstorm (雷雨 1933) and Sunrise (日出 1936)—this is a drama of revenge set in a wild, rural section of China. The background of the story is given in the Prologue and the First Act. An escaped convict returns to avenge his father's betrayal in the hands of an old family friend and finds the archenemy already dead. His unvented hate is visited on the villain's son, a weak but good man who was his childhood friend and who has now married the girl he loved. He is received like a long-lost brother in their house, now ruled by the mother, a blind old woman with an iron will, whose one great purpose is to raise her small grandson to perpetuate the family line.*

*In the Second Act, the highly-charged emotions are intensified through a series of dialogues—between Granny and each of the young protagonists, in turn, between the tormented husband and wife and between the lovers yearning for freedom and reunion—and erupt in violence. Its climactic moments are presented here in the translation by Jane Lai. A final Act portrays the flight of the lovers through a primitive black forest until the hero, infused with Promethean nobility and strength, dies unconquered by his own hand.*

*Miss Lai, along with Miss Vicki Ooi (黃清霞), staged the play last year in a production of the Holy Day on Stage Drama Group (天青劇社) in the City Hall Theatre in Hong Kong. Parts of another play by Ts'ao Yu, Peking Man, appeared in Renditions No. 3, a Special Drama Issue.*

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[Door centre opens. Enter CHIAO TA-HSING. He is a little apprehensive and looks around frequently, jealousy burning in his heart. His eyes are red, his hair unkempt, his voice a little hoarse. He feels that people are laughing at him, as if CHIN-TZU has spitefully told the world of her affair. He looks at her with hatred and the pain of unsatisfied longing. These conflicting feelings cause him to look and act unlike his usual self. Standing at the door forlornly, a dagger tucked in his belt, he looks at the motionless pair in the room, moves his hand up for the dagger when he sees CHIN-TZU, then drops it as if aware of his own strange behaviour. Staring at the two who are stunned, he shows a half-laughing, half-crying expression. CH'OU HU sees him, and instinctively puts his hand into the pocket where he keeps his gun.]

TA-HSING: (To CH'OU HU) Oh, so the two of you are here.

[CH'OU HU looks at CHIN-TZU, doesn't speak.]

TA-HSING: (Looks at CHIN-TZU) Where is mother?

CHIN-TZU: She's in her room. (Bows her head.)

TA-HSING: (Suspicious) What were you talking to Tiger about?

CHIN-TZU: Nothing.

TA-HSING: (Slumps down on the chair by the square table and heaves a sigh. Looks at CH'OU HU with a bellyful of agony.) Tiger, (aware that CHIN-TZU is there, he looks at her) Get some wine!

CHIN-TZU: (Tries to dissuade him) Ta-hsing!

TA-HSING: Get some wine!

[CHIN-TZU gets a flask of wine from behind the altar and puts it on the table.]

CHIN-TZU: (Uneasy, secretly warns him) Tiger, Ta-hsing has had too much to drink. Please keep an eye on him.

CH'OU HU: (Nods and eyes her) Don't worry.

CHIN-TZU: (Looks at TA-HSING) Ta-hsing, I'll leave you.

[TA-HSING looks at CHIN-TZU, no reply.]

CH'OU HU: Go, it's all right.

[CHIN-TZU exits door right.]

TA-HSING: (When CHIN-TZU is gone) Tiger, sit down. (Before CH'OU HU can sit still, hastily) Tiger, why did you look at me like that just now?

CH'OU HU: (Calmly) I didn't.

TA-HSING: (Suspects that CHIN-TZU has been telling CH'OU HU about the scandalous scene just now)

Then why did you look at her?

CH'OU HU: (Taken aback) I look at her? (Heavily) What do you mean?

TA-HSING: (Rubbing his forehead in agony) Oh, my head! Everything is so confused inside. (Pours wine.) Tiger, just now, after I had left, what did mother talk to you about?

CH'OU HU: (Glances at the portrait of Old Chiao on the wall, resolutely) Oh, just talked. About you, about me, about Chin-tzu!

TA-HSING: (Shocked) Oh, about Chin-tzu! (Stands up.) What did she say? What did she tell you?

CH'OU HU: (Reluctantly) What?

TA-HSING: (Rubbing his hands in agony, stammering) Chin-tzu, Chin-tzu . . . she . . . she . . . (seeing CH'OU HU's face is not reacting) Then she didn't say . . . say anything about Chin-tzu, today, in the room, in her room . . . she . . . (breaks down and falls on the table, moaning) Tiger, tell me. How could she . . . she . . . she do that to me, do . . . that to me! Tell me . . . (beating his own head) What shall I do? What shall I do?

CH'OU HU: (Slowly) What, what are you talking about?

TA-HSING: (Looks at CH'OU HU, waves his hand, ashamed) Nothing, nothing. I've had too much to drink. (Drinks another cup of wine.)

CH'OU HU: Ta-hsing! Drinking solves nothing.

TA-HSING: I know. But you don't understand. When I saw her just now, there was a terrible chill in my heart, as if I was going to die.

CH'OU HU: (Astonished) What?

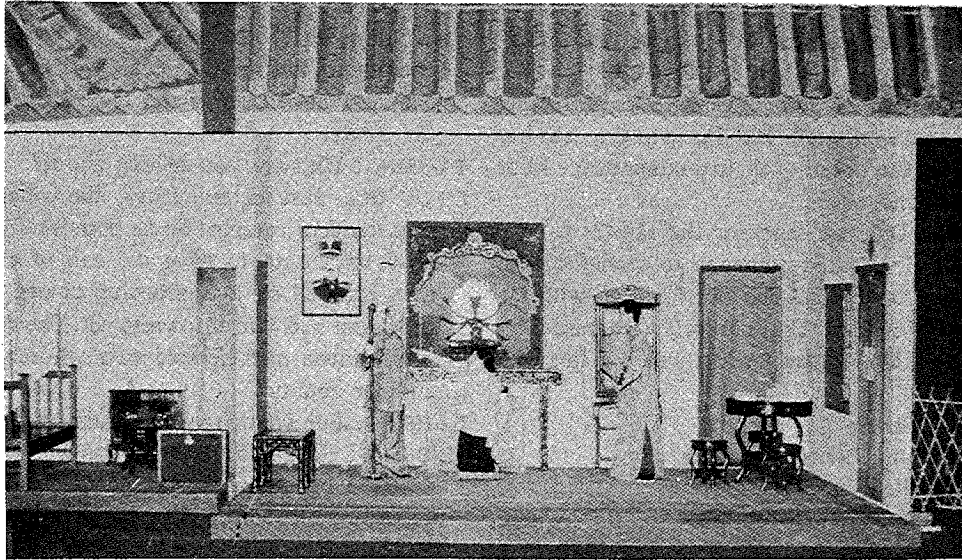
TA-HSING: (Breathes a deep sigh) I can't . . . can't really say why. (Suddenly, as if conspiring) Did you see the look Chin-tzu gave me just now?

CH'OU HU: (Lowers his head) I didn't see anything.

TA-HSING: She . . . (in a low voice) she's sick of me, I know. She can't stand the sight of me.

CH'OU HU: Why?

TA-HSING: Three days after she married me, she suddenly turned cold toward me. I sensed what was wrong, but I didn't dare say. I treated her well, I got her this and bought her that, and suffered a lot for her. Today, she just said to my face, said she now has someone else . . . that she wanted to leave me! (Hammers the table with his fist, aggrieved.) That's too much, too



*"Day and night, she hates me and I hate her. And you are caught in between, trying to please both and pleasing nobody. Isn't that too painful?"*

much! (*Pours more wine.*)

CH'OU HU: (*Excited*) Ta-hsing, do something about it if you must. A man's got to have guts!

TA-HSING: Guts? (*Puts down the flask, looks at CH'OU HU, a little drunk.*) Look at me! Who am I?

CH'OU HU: (*In a low voice*) Who are you?

TA-HSING: (*Points at portrait on the wall*) I'm Old Chiao's son!

CH'OU HU: Well, what are you going to do?

TA-HSING: I'm going to find that man.

CH'OU HU: And when you have found him?

TA-HSING: I will (*whips out his dagger, menacingly*) kill him! (*Stabs the dagger on the table top and raises his cup of wine.*)

CH'OU HU: Ta-hsing, put down that cup!

TA-HSING: (*Doesn't understand*) Why?

CH'OU HU: (*Shouts*) Put it down! (*Grimly*) Look at me. Who am I?

TA-HSING: (*Puts down the cup and looks at CH'OU HU*) Who are you?

CH'OU HU: (*Nods*) That's right.

TA-HSING: (*Frankly*) You are my... my best friend. (*Stares in bewilderment and then, as if he understands*) Oh, Tiger, you want to help me. You want to help me get him, is that it? You are afraid that I can't do it. You're afraid that I'm still that 'useless thing', that 'long-

suffering fool' who wouldn't hurt a fly? Huh, this time I'll show Chin-tzu. I'm not, I'm not! I want to... with one blow of the knife... you see, I want her to see I'm Old Chiao's son.

CH'OU HU: But Ta-hsing, you don't understand...

TA-HSING: (*Gratefully*) I understand, I understand. Tiger, we've been friends since we were boys. I know how brave and good you are. You got into trouble with the law, had your leg broken, and didn't even flinch. And now even before you've settled your own affairs, you want to help me with mine.

CH'OU HU: (*Can't bear to go on*) I, I... Ta-hsing...

TA-HSING: When you got into trouble with the law, my father only allowed me to see you twice. When I looked for you again, they had taken you away. I looked for you for ten years but couldn't find you. Today we meet again, and you are still my faithful and affectionate brother. But, Tiger, you have always looked after me, wouldn't you allow me to show some concern for you? Tiger, this is my... my shame. I can't let someone else settle it for me. But if I find him, and in case I can't deal with him, and I can't make it, Tiger, when I'm dead, you've got to... for me....

CH'OU HU: Yes... but....

TA-HSING: Don't say anything, I know. If anything should happen to me, Tiger, I . . .

CH'OU HU: But you've got to know who he is? Why . . . why don't you ask Chin-tzu!

TA-HSING: (*Full of hatred*) Chin-tzu is protecting him, and won't tell. But I'm going to ask her again. If she doesn't tell, in a moment the Idiot will tell me.

CHOU HU: Did you send for the Idiot?

TA-HSING: I've asked someone to send for him. He'll be here soon. The Idiot will go with me to look for him. The Idiot will recognise him.

CH'OU HU: Oh, (*pause*) when will the Idiot be here?

TA-HSING: Soon.

CH'OU HU: And when he comes?

TA-HSING: We'll be off.

CH'OU HU: You've had too much to drink, you're confused.

TA-HSING: Confused?

CH'OU HU: You needn't go to so much trouble. Don't you understand?

TA-HSING: (*Incredulous*) Then, you know?

CH'OU HU: Yes.

TA-HSING: Then tell me.

CH'OU HU: (*Looks at the dagger stuck on the table*) First put away that thing, seeing it there makes me nervous, and I can't talk.

TA-HSING: (*Thinking CH'OU HU was joking, laughs*) Ha! you're joking! (*Puts the dagger back in the belt.*)

CH'OU HU: Joking? Well, you can treat it as a joke if you like. But this joke may not make you laugh. (*Solemnly*) This joke! (*Sighs.*) Ta-hsing, let's have a cup of wine together. (*Picks up cup.*) With this cup, let our friendship. . . . (*Pats TA-HSING's shoulders*) Ta-hsing. . . .

TA-HSING: (*Bewildered, picks up cup*) Well?

CH'OU HU: Well, be like the wine (*makes a gesture of the wine entering the stomach, disappearing and evaporating*) and change into what it will. Ta-hsing, drink up!

TA-HSING: (*Not knowing what he means, softly*) Drink up.

CH'OU HU: Ta-hsing, once there were two very good friends, friends since childhood, like you and I.

TA-HSING: Oh, like brothers, eh?

CH'OU HU: Yes, brothers! Good men, both. But the younger brother's father was a villain, and

with the backing of his power oppressed his neighbours. He had his eye on the rich estate of the elder brother's father. So he got some bandits to kidnap the elder brother's father, had him buried alive, and the villain grabbed the estate.

TA-HSING: Who are you talking about?

CH'OU HU: Just listen! Later, the villain was frightened of revenge. So he connived with the local magistrate to have the son of the dead man arrested on a trumped-up charge of robbery, and had him thrown in jail. The daughter of the dead man he sold to a whorehouse in another county.

TA-HSING: But what about the friend, his brother?

CH'OU HU: He didn't know. He was a fool. He was deceived by his parents and didn't know what was going on. So the elder brother didn't look to him for help.

TA-HSING: What . . . What you are saying, what's that got to do with our problem now?

CH'OU HU: Be patient and listen! Later the elder brother risked his life and escaped home, with one leg broken. (*TA-HSING looks at CH'OU HU's leg.*) Yes, just like mine.

TA-HSING: How did he get out?

CH'OU HU: With two generations of suffering and



"Yes . . . the first day he saw her again, he slept with her."

- grievance in his heart, if he had wanted to break open the sky, the sky would have yielded. He wanted to ruin the whole family of his enemy to avenge his father and sister.
- TA-HSING: (*Still unable to grasp the point*) Didn't he care about his friend any more?
- CH'OU HU: (*Low, angry*) Friend! What in the world is a friend? Wronged again and again, and after ten years rotting in jail . . . in hell! Even his heart was dead. When he came back there was only one word on his mind.
- TA-HSING: (*Fascinated by the passion in CH'OU HU's voice*) What?
- CH'OU HU: Hate! He went back to the old place, and he discovered that the girl betrothed to him had married the son of his enemy.
- TA-HSING: That's the younger brother?
- CH'OU HU: Yes.
- TA-HSING: (*Innocently*) Your joke is getting a bit unreal.
- CH'OU HU: (*Rolls his eyes*) Who says it's not real?
- TA-HSING: Well, how could the younger brother take her?
- CH'OU HU: (*Icily*) He didn't know!
- TA-HSING: What, again he didn't know!
- CH'OU HU: That's right. (*Looks at TA-HSING.*) I was surprised too. But his mother always regarded him as a baby, and his father treated him like a girl. (*Looks at TA-HSING's earring. TA-HSING instinctively touches the earring.*) His wife would not tell him the truth, because she had despised him since the day they got married.
- TA-HSING: (*Sympathetically*) What, even his wife despised him?
- CH'OU HU: Yes, you see, the man who came back, on the first day, yes, the first day he saw her again. (*viciously*) he slept with her.
- TA-HSING: What? That . . . that friend?
- CH'OU HU: (*Spitting the words*) Friend? The friendship was long dead! Friends had become enemies. I tell you, (*his feelings boiling over, almost too excited to talk*) his heart held nothing but hate. He waited for the younger brother for ten days, so he could stab. . . (*Swiftly*) That fellow came back, (*looking at TA-HSING*) and the two met, but he didn't understand, and would talk of friendship. He even. . .
- TA-HSING: (*Stands up, leaning at the corner of the table, anxious and furious*) What! You. . .
- CH'OU HU: (*Clenches his fist and maliciously*) Ta-hsing, I'm telling you, I am like the big brother, you are. . .
- [CHIN-TZU *rushes in from the room right.*]
- CHIN-TZU: Tiger! Say no more. (*Points to TA-HSING*) He . . . he. . .
- TA-HSING: (*Dazed*) What! So it's . . . it's you! Tiger!
- CH'OU HU: (*Eyes him, grimly*) Now, do you see?
- TA-HSING: It can't be, can't. Chin-tzu, (*grabs CHIN-TZU's shoulders, shakes her*) Tell me, tell me, is it he?
- CHIN-TZU: (*Looking at TA-HSING, silent*)
- [*Outside THE IDIOT shouts: "Granny Chiao! Granny Chiao!" He enters running through the centre door carrying a lantern.*]
- IDIOT: Granny! Granny! Someone is looking for you. Someone is asking for you. (*Runs straight to room on the left.*)
- TA-HSING: (*Grabs IDIOT*) Dog's Egg, why didn't you come earlier? Look, (*pointing at CH'OU HU, trembling*) Is he . . . is he the man?
- IDIOT: (*Sees CH'OU HU, surprised that he should meet him again here, then as if greeting an old friend, surprised at first and then very pleased, opening his mouth wide*) Oh, it's 'chika chaka'! Yes, it's him! (*Turns about and shouts to the room left*) Granny Chiao! Granny Chiao! (*Exits into left room.*)
- [*Pause*]
- TA-HSING: (*Whips out the dagger*) Tiger, you. . .
- CH'OU HU: (*On guard*) Ta-hsing, come then.
- CHIN-TZU: (*Leans against CH'OU HU*) Ta-hsing, put down that dagger.
- TA-HSING: (*Spitting the words through his teeth*) Chin-tzu, you. . . How could you love him!
- CHIN-TZU: Yes. (*Deliberately*) I love him, I love only him. (*Closes her eyes, waiting for CH'OU HU to make a move.*)
- TA-HSING: (*Hurt*) Oh, Chin-tzu, give him the dagger then. Your words have cut me deeper than a knife.
- CH'OU HU: (*In exasperation*) Ta-hsing!
- TA-HSING: (*Waves his hand, to CH'OU HU*) You . . . you get out of here! (*Sinks into a chair.*)
- [*IDIOT enters from left.*]
- IDIOT: (*Shaking his head, surprised*) Granny Chiao's . . . not in there.
- CH'OU HU: Eh? She was a moment ago.
- IDIOT: (*Shakes his head*) No! She's not!

CH'OU HU: What do you want with her?  
 IDIOT: (*Frightened*) Nothing.  
 CH'OU HU: Speak up, you fool!  
 IDIOT: Some . . . somebody is looking for her.  
 CH'OU HU: Who?  
 IDIOT: He said not to tell.  
 CH'OU HU: Come with me. (*Exits centre door, pulling THE IDIOT with him.*)  
 [Pause.]  
 TA-HSING: What . . . what have you got to say now?  
 CHIN-TZU: (*In despair*) Nothing.  
 TA-HSING: Chin-tzu, what do you want to do?  
 CHIN-TZU: (*Stiffly*) I want to leave.  
 TA-HSING: (*Starts up*) What? You want to leave? Chin-tzu! (*Pulls at her hand.*)  
 CHIN-TZU: (*Facing TA-HSING alone, she is even more miserable, more disgusted. As if his hand that touches hers was infected with some vile disease, she screams*) Don't . . . don't touch me.  
 TA-HSING: (*Shocked*) What?  
 CHIN-TZU: I'm disgusted! (*Suddenly*) Why didn't you act just now?  
 TA-HSING: Chin-tzu!  
 CHIN-TZU: You good-for-nothing!  
 TA-HSING: Huh, don't you pretend. You're glad I didn't.  
 CHIN-TZU: I'm not, I'm not. (*Softly*) Just now I was all ready, but you didn't act.  
 TA-HSING: (*A ray of hope, and he tries to recapture his lost love*) Chin-tzu, then what you said just now is a lie.  
 CHIN-TZU: (*Loathingly*) A lie? Heaven and earth may be a lie, but your wife has slept with someone else—that can't be a lie.  
 TA-HSING: (*In agony*) Oh, you shameless slut. Vixen! (*Comes at her with the dagger.*)  
 CHIN-TZU: (*Holds her head up*) Kill me then, kill me. If you can't, you're not your father's son.  
 [TA-HSING walks up to her.]  
 TA-HSING: (*Angrily raises the knife, eyes opened wide*) Chin-tzu, you underestimate me. Look, (*stabs downward*) I'll . . .  
 CHIN-TZU: (*Terrified, instinctively raises her hand against his wrist. The back of her hand is cut, and starts bleeding. She cries out*) You really. . . . (*Pushes away his wrist, runs.*)  
 TA-HSING: (*His face perspiring profusely*) I'll . . . (*Runs after her.*)  
 [CHIN-TZU runs round the table, pursued by

TA-HSING.]  
 CHIN-TZU: (*Running and calling out*) Tiger! Tiger!  
 TA-HSING: (*Chasing after her and crying*) You can't get away! He's gone! He doesn't want you anymore!  
 [TA-HSING corners CHIN-TZU in a corner of the room, catches her.]  
 CHIN-TZU: (*Screams*) Tiger! Tiger!  
 TA-HSING: (*The veins throbbing in his temples*) You're still calling him! You're still calling him! (*Raises the knife, stabs down.*)  
 CHIN-TZU: My Ta-hsing, can you be so cruel . . . . (*shuts her eyes.*)  
 TA-HSING: (*Looking down at her face, can't go through with it, shakes his head piteously*) Oh, Chin-tzu, you're the one who's cruel. (*Lowers the knife slowly to his own chest.*) Why . . . why do you treat me like that? How can you bear to do that to me?  
 CHIN-TZU: (*Opens her eyes slowly*) Ta-hsing, what's come over you?  
 TA-HSING: (*Raises the knife again, CHIN-TZU shuts her eyes*) I want to cut out your heart. . . . (*Suddenly puts down the knife despondently—CHIN-TZU looks at him—pleadingly*) Oh, Chin-tzu, I beg of you, don't be so heartless.  
 CHIN-TZU: (*Seeing he is that kind of a man after all*) What?  
 TA-HSING: (*Looks pleadingly at her*) Don't go.  
 CHIN-TZU: I'm your wife, where can I go?  
 TA-HSING: I mean don't let your heart leave me.  
 CHIN-TZU: Do you wish. . . ?  
 TA-HSING: Chin-tzu, please. Chin-tzu, you shouldn't have done such a thing. I've treated you decently. Chin-tzu, I beg of you, let's forget the past. Promise me, you will never see him again. Promise it's finished between you two.  
 CHIN-TZU: Finished?  
 TA-HSING: Yes. Finished. Over. I'll send him away tomorrow, just as if nothing had happened. Chin-tzu, I'll do anything you say. If you want clothes, I'll get them from town; if you want jewelry, I can send for it; if you want money, all my money is yours.  
 CHIN-TZU: Yes, but. . . .  
 TA-HSING: Don't you understand, without you, without you, I have nothing. You mustn't be unfaithful to me. If you think that mother is unkind we'll think of some way. We'll work out something. I . . . I can tell her not to make

- trouble for you. I can . . . I can have it out with her. Oh, I can even ignore her. And, if that won't work, then we can go away together. I can split with her. We can live away from her.
- CHIN-TZU: But, (*In despair*) What do you hope to gain by keeping me?
- TA-HSING: I . . . I want you. You don't know how much I . . .
- CHIN-TZU: But why do you want me? I suffer here, and when I suffer you also suffer. When you suffer, don't I suffer too?
- TA-HSING: Then, Chin-tzu, you won't do as I ask.
- CHIN-TZU: It's not that I won't. I'm thinking for your own good. I know that you can't leave your mother, and your mother can't do without you. Your mother and I, as you know, are deadly enemies. Today mother fights with you because of me, and tomorrow I may fight with you because of your mother. So, day and night, she hates me and I hate her. And you are caught in between, trying to please both and pleasing nobody. Isn't that too painful?
- TA-HSING: Then you are going?
- CHIN-TZU: I didn't say.
- TA-HSING: (*Pained*) You're determined to go away with him.
- CHIN-TZU: I'm not.
- TA-HSING: (*Woefully*) You're lying.
- CHIN-TZU: (*Helplessly*) I'm not.
- TA-HSING: (*Insistent*) Tell me the truth, I want you to tell what's in your heart. What do you feel about me? Don't lie to me anymore.
- CHIN-TZU: You want me to tell what's in my heart?
- TA-HSING: (*Nagging*) Tell me what you feel about me. What do you feel? What?
- CHIN-TZU: Do you really want me to tell you?
- TA-HSING: (*Insistently*) Yes.
- CHIN-TZU: Then, (*Looking at TA-HSING*) I love you, I adore you. I only wish I could hold you all day, call you, pat you, love you, kiss you. And all night I want to hold you in my arms, taste you in my mouth, every day of the year, from morning till night. I dream about you, think about you, long for you, talk about you. . . .
- TA-HSING: (*Pounding the table*) Enough! Enough! Chin-tzu!
- CHIN-TZU: Now that you've heard, do you feel better?
- TA-HSING: (*Staring ahead of him*) Oh, God! Why must a man have a woman to torment him!
- CHIN-TZU: Ask yourself. If I were you. . . .
- TA-HSING: Well, Chin-tzu?
- CHIN-TZU: I would kill the woman.
- TA-HSING: (*In despair, shaking his head*) But you're not a man.
- CHIN-TZU: Then ignore her, let her go.
- TA-HSING: Let her go? No, no. Chin-tzu, you can't leave me. You have a child, a child without a mother. You can't leave him.
- CHIN-TZU: That child is not my own.
- TA-HSING: Then Chin-tzu, you still have me. I want you, I'm your (*gasps*) man. You can't leave me.
- CHIN-TZU: I didn't choose my man.
- TA-HSING: Then aren't you afraid that people will talk about you and abuse you? The law will certainly catch up with you.
- CHIN-TZU: Don't talk anymore. If you won't let me go, you can threaten me with a knife as you did just now. But you can't hold a knife at me all day, so I will leave sooner or later. Ta-hsing, I was born in the wilderness, I grew up in the wilderness, and one day I may die in the wilderness. Ta-hsing, a person only lives once. In this household, I might as well be dead.
- TA-HSING: Then you will throw away everything? But Chin-tzu, you should at least consider my kindness to you. I haven't treated you badly, you must know that.
- CHIN-TZU: (*Nods*) I know.
- TA-HSING: Then, I beg you once more. (*Solemnly*) This time, Chin-tzu, on my knees. Chin-tzu, a woman as beautiful as you can't be so unkind. You can't be entirely heartless. Look, (*kneels down, sorrowfully*) a grown man, kneeling in front of you. Think again of what you have just done, what no decent woman should have done. But Chin-tzu, I must have owed you a debt in our last incarnation, and am paying it off now. I beg you, I beg you never to leave me. What you have done, I'll forget. What wrong Tiger has done me, I'll also forget. I'll give him money, and send him away. Now it all depends on you, on you!
- CHIN-TZU: No, you get up.
- TA-HSING: (*Stands up*) Well?
- CHIN-TZU: (*Adamant*) No!
- TA-HSING: (*Painfully pleading*) But Chin-tzu, how



- can you love him? He's ug—ugly, a monster, his head's as big as a melon, his skin rough like a toad's, he's crippled too, and his body—
- CHIN-TZU: That you don't have to tell me. I know. I love him and I'm determined to follow him.
- TA-HSING: What, you still want to go with him?
- CHIN-TZU: Yes.
- TA-HSING: Why?
- CHIN-TZU: He's good to me.
- TA-HSING: (*Stunned*) Oh, in just ten days?
- CHIN-TZU: (*Hardens her heart*) Just ten days, and I can't leave him.
- TA-HSING: (*Mechanically*) You can't leave him?
- CHIN-TZU: No!
- TA-HSING: (*Wildly*) Then, if only you will stay, I'll let him come here. I'd rather, when I'm not at home . . . you . . . you and . . . he . . . can. . . . (*can't bear to go on.*)
- CHIN-TZU: (*Grimly*) What?
- TA-HSING: For you sake . . . I'd rather. . . .
- CHIN-TZU: (*Explodes*) God!
- TA-HSING: What?
- CHIN-TZU: (*Extremely bitter*) What do you take me for? You born cuckold!
- TA-HSING: What?
- CHIN-TZU: You goddamned tortoise!
- [TA-HSING slaps CHIN-TZU on the face.]
- TA-HSING: You! (*Stares at her with tears in his eyes. He closes his eyes and the tears come rolling down. Cursing himself*) I love you too much. You don't deserve it. (*Opens his eyes.*) Well, Chin-tzu, you want to go with him, then go!
- CHIN-TZU: (*Calmly*) What'll you do?
- TA-HSING: I'll kill him!
- CHIN-TZU: You wouldn't dare.
- TA-HSING: If I can't, the militia will get him.
- CHIN-TZU: So, you've reported him to the militia.
- TA-HSING: Yes. (*To make it more emphatic*) Yes, I have.
- CHIN-TZU: (*Hatefully*) But we'll leave this house somehow.
- TA-HSING: There is only one way.
- CHIN-TZU: What?
- TA-HSING: You'll have to kill me first!
- [GRANNY CHIAO enters from left.]
- GRANNY CHIAO: What are you two muttering about?
- CHIN-TZU: (*Surprised that GRANNY CHIAO should come in from the left*) Eh, I thought you weren't in the house.
- GRANNY CHIAO: Who said that I wasn't? There isn't another door to the room, how could I go out?
- CHIN-TZU: Didn't you see Dog's Egg come in looking for you?
- GRANNY CHIAO: Dog's Egg? Oh!
- CHIN-TZU: Eh?
- GRANNY CHIAO: Where's Tiger?
- CHIN-TZU: He's out.
- GRANNY CHIAO: Who told him to go out? Who let him out?
- [CH'OU HU enters from left door, CHIN-TZU and TA-HSING surprised.]
- CH'OU HU: (*Cunningly*) I didn't go out either, godmother. I, too, was in the room.
- GRANNY CHIAO: (*Simultaneously*) What?
- CHIN-TZU:
- CH'OU HU: Just now when I was outside, I saw godmother coming home and climbing in through the window into the room. I said to myself, if the old lady didn't think it too much trouble getting in this way, why couldn't a young fellow like myself do it too? So I climbed in after you.
- GRANNY CHIAO: Oh, well. (*Uneasily*) Tiger, you might as well have my room. I'll sleep out here. Chin-tzu, have you made the bed?
- CHIN-TZU: Yes.
- GRANNY CHIAO: Then, it's time you all went to bed.
- [THE IDIOT rushes in through door centre.]
- IDIOT: Granny! Granny!
- GRANNY CHIAO: What is it?
- IDIOT: Ch'ang Wu, Ch'ang Wu!
- GRANNY CHIAO: Hush, stop your jabbering.
- IDIOT: (*Intimidated*) He . . . he wants you to go out again.
- CH'OU HU: (*Guesses half of it*) Ch'ang Wu?
- [The baby screams in his sleep.]
- GRANNY CHIAO: Go! Go! To bed! To bed! You've waken the child!
- [CHIN-TZU and TA-HSING exit to room right, CH'OU HU exits to room left.]
- GRANNY CHIAO: (*To IDIOT*) Get out! You stupid egg!
- [Lights fade out slowly, leaving the stage dark. In ten seconds, lights fade in again: an hour has elapsed, it is now midnight. The people in the CHIAO house are all asleep. From the left room issues the sound of

CH'OU HU's snoring, and from the room at right TA-HSING keeps moaning in his nightmare. The oil lamp on the table is out, leaving the room even darker. Only the altar light gives out a dull, mournful gleam. In the shadows, GRANNY CHIAO sits on a chair, patting the child. Nearby is a narrow bed made of planks, with blankets on it. GRANNY CHIAO has something on her mind; as soon as she lies down, she gets up again. From outside is heard a cuckoo's call, crisp and pleasant, but it stops after a while. There is the horrible wailing of distant telegraph cables vibrating in the wind.]

GRANNY CHIAO: (Listening to the snoring from the left room, and patting the child) Yes, yes, little Blackie go to sleep . . . mm . . . um . . . um. (Still softer) Go to sleep . . . sleep . . . mm . . . mm . . . mm . . . (Stands, ear turned to the left listening, walks two paces, still humming) mm . . . mm . . . mm.

[Someone knocks on the centre door outside.]

GRANNY CHIAO: (Gropes to centre door) Who is it?

CH'ANG WU: Me . . . Ch'ang Wu.

GRANNY CHIAO: Come in.

[CH'ANG WU enters, cloaked in black, a red lantern in his hand.]

GRANNY CHIAO: (Softly) Hold on.

CH'ANG WU: (Timidly, pointing to the left) What? Has Ti . . . Tiger gone to sleep?

GRANNY CHIAO: Listen.

CH'ANG WU: (Hears the sonorous snoring, relieved) He's fast asleep.

GRANNY CHIAO: (The red lantern reflected on her grim face) Well?

CH'ANG WU: (Looks round) I have reported it to the militia.

GRANNY CHIAO: This time you really did go?

CH'ANG WU: Naturally . . . they said that they would be here soon.

GRANNY CHIAO: Soon?

CH'ANG WU: (Ingratating) Very soon! (Turning) But the reward, Auntie Chiao . . . the hundred and fifty dollars.

GRANNY CHIAO: It's all yours.

CH'ANG WU: (Surprised) Don't you want any of it?

GRANNY CHIAO: No. (Grimly) If only I could get rid of this burden on my mind. (Suddenly)

Why, why haven't the militia people arrived yet?

CH'ANG WU: They will soon. They said that if there were too few of them, they wouldn't be able to manage him. They said it would be best to have him dead, it would save a lot of trouble.

GRANNY CHIAO: (Has a sudden inspiration) What? Do they want him dead?

CH'ANG WU: The militia people said, dead or alive, it's the same to them. Whoever kills him wouldn't have to pay with his life. But . . . (stingily) if he's dead, he's only worth one hundred.

GRANNY CHIAO: (Teeth clenched) Oh! So whoever kills him does not have to die!

CH'ANG WU: (Doesn't understand) Well?

GRANNY CHIAO: Ch'ang Wu, come with me.

CH'ANG WU: What? Out there?

GRANNY CHIAO: We're going to see whether anyone has arrived.

[CH'ANG WU and GRANNY CHIAO exit centre door. CHIN-TZU enters from right door with a candle and a bundle. She is dressed in a scarlet tight-fitting jacket, her hair loose, her eyes glinting fiercely. She puts the bundle on the table, and goes slowly to door left. She shivers suddenly, turns round and looks at centre door. Just at that moment, CH'OU HU enters from door left. He is stripped down to the waist, his chest black and hairy, his muscles bulging. In his wide black leather belt is tucked a gun, half wrapped in red cloth. He is carrying his blue jacket in one hand, and with the other he gently touches CHIN-TZU's shoulder.]

CH'OU HU: (Softly) Eh!

CHIN-TZU: (So startled she nearly screams, turning round) Oh! It's you. You scared me to death.

CH'OU HU: (Urgently) Blow out the candle.

CHIN-TZU: Why, the blind can't see.

CH'OU HU: Others have eyes.

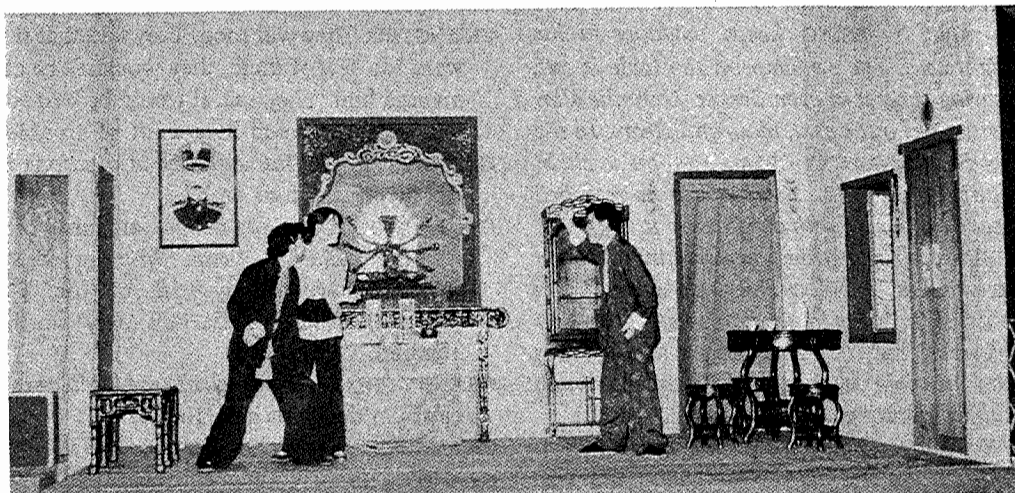
CHIN-TZU: Oh! Ch'ang Wu! (Blows out the candle quickly.)

CH'OU HU: (Solemnly) How dark it is! (Both stand still holding their breath.)

CHIN-TZU: (In the dark, eagerly) Things are getting tough.

CH'OU HU: (Solemnly) I know. They've reported me to the militia.

CHIN-TZU: Oh. (Bitterly) Then what Ta-hsing said was true.



"Chin-tzu, you... How could you love him!"

CH'OU HU: Oh, Ta-hsing, so he's in it too.

CHIN-TZU: He said so.

CH'OU HU: If that's the case, he's finished as well.

CHIN-TZU: I'm afraid we can't escape. He said he'd rather die than let us leave.

CH'OU HU: (*Alert*) Then the time has come.

CHIN-TZU: (*Holds CH'OU HU's hand, hopefully*)

You're saying we should leave now?

CH'OU HU: No, (*his eyes sparkling with a terrifying glint*) it's time to act.

CHIN-TZU: (*Terrified*) Tiger, are you really going to...

CH'OU HU: (*Nods*) How many times in a man's life can you pretend like this? (*points to cradle.*) Take the child into the room.

CHIN-TZU: (*Goes to cradle, looking at CH'OU HU*) Why?

CH'OU HU: If he should wake up and start crying it'll mess things up.

CHIN-TZU: (*Picks up BLACKIE*) But Tiger...

CH'OU HU: (*Waves her away*) Do as I say. Take the child into the room.

[CHIN-TZU takes the child out the left door. CH'OU HU searches all over the place, doesn't find anything. While he was still looking, CHIN-TZU enters from left.]

CHIN-TZU: What are you looking for?

CH'OU HU: (*Looks at CHIN-TZU, seems to have an idea, points ahead*) See that?

CHIN-TZU: What?

CH'OU HU: (*Chillingly*) My father is here.

CHIN-TZU: (*Softly, anxiously*) Tiger.

CH'OU HU: (*As if seeing something*) He tells me to go. He says that there is a dagger in the house.

CHIN-TZU: (*Pretends not to know*) A dagger?

CH'OU HU: (*Looking at CHIN-TZU*) He says it's right in front of me.

CHIN-TZU: (*Involuntarily produces the dagger*) Tiger, I...

CH'OU HU: (*Puts out his hand*) Give it to me.

CHIN-TZU: (*At first unwilling, looking at CH'OU HU's face, then savagely*) All right! Take it. And get it over with, quick!

CH'OU HU: (*Listening*) He's asleep?

CHIN-TZU: (*Bows her head, very softly*) I... I coaxed him to sleep.

CH'OU HU: Take a look outside. (*Tiptoes to the right door, very softly*) Ta-hsing! Ta-hsing! (*There seems to be moaning, as if someone is talking in his sleep. To CHIN-TZU*) Listen!

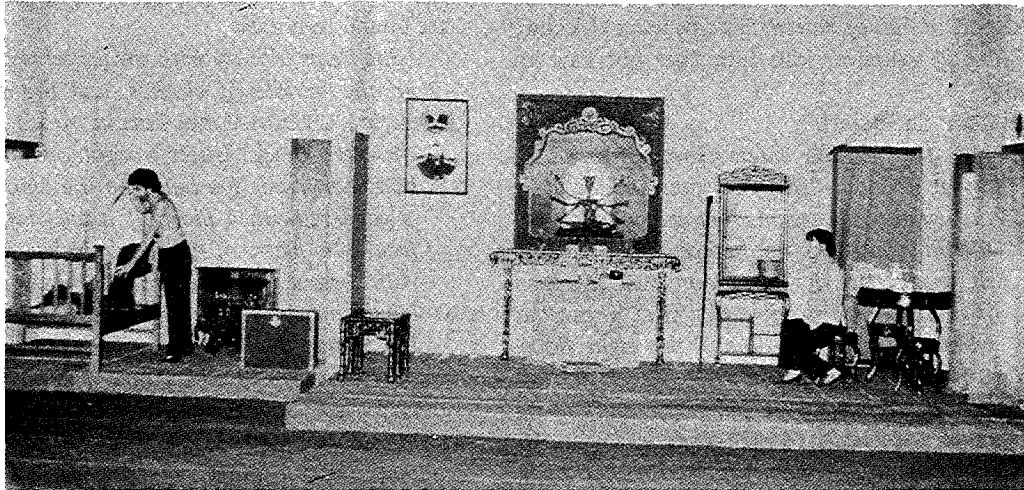
INSIDE: (*Half-choked and rapidly*) Quick! quick! Chin-tzu! (*Feebly*) My knife, my knife. (*Painfully*) Chin-tzu! (*More faintly*) Chin-tzu!...

CHIN-TZU: (*Whispering*) That's him... He is talking in his sleep.

CH'OU HU: What horrible sleep talk. (*Pokes his head into right door, softly*) Ta-hsing.

INSIDE: (*A long sad sigh*) How dark! How dark! (*Moaning horribly*) How dark the world is! (*Another long painful sigh, then silence.*)

CHIN-TZU: (*Shivering, softly*) He... he said it for us, it seems.



"How dark! How dark! How dark the world is!"

CH'OU HU: Ta-hsing! (No reply) Ta-hsing! (Still no reply, he turns abruptly and talks into space) Father, you've got to help me! (Goes immediately through door right.)

[CHIN-TZU waits outside, terrified, listening to every sound from inside the room. But nothing.]

[Outside the wild dogs howl, like a pack of hungry wolves. CHIN-TZU looks out uneasily. Inside there is suddenly the choking, gasping noise of a man, then a dull thud of something falling on the floor.]

CHIN-TZU: God!

[CH'OU HU enters from right room staggering, eyes staring, as if in a trance.]

CH'OU HU: (The dagger in his hand covered with blood, his voice almost inaudible) Finished! He is finished.

CHIN-TZU: (Gasping for air, pointing at CH'OU HU's blood-stained hands) Oh, your hands, your hands.

CH'OU HU: (Holds up a pair of trembling hands, remorsefully) My hands, look at my hands. I have killed, I have killed so many, but this is the first time my hands trembled like this. (A long sad sigh from deep within him) Living doesn't seem real. It's death that's real. (Horri-fied) Just now when I caught hold of him he woke up suddenly, his eyes staring at me. He wasn't afraid, he was drunk. But when he saw me, it seemed as if he had a lot of things to say.

He looked into my eyes (Slowly nodding his head, sympathetically) and I saw his grief and frustration. (Suddenly forcefully) I raised the dagger, then he understood he had just that long to live. . . . He became very frightened, took a look at me, (softly, slowly) then he laughed, a strange gurgling noise in his throat. He pointed at his heart, and nodded at me. . . . (Becoming resolute, fiercely) And I did it! (Almost inaudible) He didn't even make a noise, just closed his eyes. (Throws the dagger on the floor.) A man is such a worthless thing: a handful of dirt, a bit of flesh, and a mess of blood. Sooner or later, life comes to this, and it's over, finished.

CHIN-TZU: Go and wash your hands quickly.

CH'OU HU: There is no need. This blood can never be washed clean.

CHIN-TZU: Then let's go.

CH'OU HU: (Looks up) Go? (Looks at CHIN-TZU.) Yes, let's go! (Takes two steps.)

CHIN-TZU: (Stops abruptly) Listen!

CH'OU HU: What?

CHIN-TZU: There's someone! (Goes to the window, CH'OU HU follows.) A red lantern. They're here!

CH'OU HU: (At the window) No, no. It's the blind woman, and the Idiot. He's carrying the lantern.

CHIN-TZU: (Nods) Yes, yes! (Suddenly) The blind woman, she . . . she's coming.

CH'OU HU: She is looking for me.

CHIN-TZU: (Frightened) What's she muttering to

herself?

CH'OU HU: (*Full of hatred, in a low voice*) I know!  
(*Slowly*) Whoever kills him does not have to die!

CHIN-TZU: Sh, quiet!

[GRANNY CHIAO enters from centre door. CH'OU HU and CHIN-TZU stand stock still by the window, watching her go solemnly to the altar and take up the heavy iron staff; as she walks past the right door CHIN-TZU is so frightened she nearly cries out. The blind woman listens, and locks the right door. GRANNY CHIAO's face suddenly glints with strange savagery. Dragging her staff along quietly, she walks to the left door. CH'OU HU and CHIN-TZU followed her with their eyes. GRANNY CHIAO walks boldly into the room left.

[*There is no noise in the room. In the distance comes the fiendish, wolfish howl of the wild dogs. CHIN-TZU looks at CH'OU HU, CH'OU HU stares at door left.*]

CHIN-TZU: (*Softly*) Strange. What is she doing in the room?

CH'OU HU: (*Holds her hand*) She wants to kill me.

CHIN-TZU: (*Whispers*) What . . . what with?

CH'OU HU: (*Urgently*) Didn't you see the iron staff she was carrying?

CHIN-TZU: What?

CH'OU HU: (*Makes as if to strike*) She'll strike—so.

CHIN-TZU: (*Suddenly remembers, shivers, whispers urgently*) Oh—the child is in your bed.

CH'OU HU: (*Stunned*) What? The child. . . .

CHIN-TZU: (*Panicks*) The child . . . I put him in that bed. . . .

[*Suddenly the noise of the iron staff thumps heavily and dully on the bed, then a soft moaning, like that of a tiny animal. Silence.*]

CH'OU HU: (*Simultaneously*) Oh! God!

CHIN-TZU: [*In the room left, GRANNY CHIAO suddenly shrieks.*]

GRANNY CHIAO: (*Absolutely horror-stricken*) Oh, Blackie, my Blackie!

[*Again silence.*]

CH'OU HU: (*Terrified*) Too late!

CHIN-TZU: (*Abruptly*) Let's go! let's go now!

CH'OU HU: (*Even he is terrified*) The child is dead!

CHIN-TZU: Put on your jacket. There must be

somebody outside. If you go out like this, they are bound to notice.

[*She helps him on with the jacket and picks up the bundle of clothes, and the dagger. Before CH'OU HU can button up his jacket, GRANNY CHIAO enters from door left. With both her hands she holds up the child, who is covered with a piece of black cloth. Her face is a mask of grief, her brows knitted with sorrow, the corners of her mouth drooping like two deep gorges. She doesn't cry, but stands like some horrible fury in front of the door. CH'OU HU and CHIN-TZU back up in fear and huddle together in a corner.*]

GRANNY CHIAO: (*In a voice which is almost inhuman*) Tiger! (*Pauses—no reply*) Tiger! (*Still no reply—severely*) I know you're here, Tiger. (*Suddenly explodes.*) You are too vicious, Tiger. Heaven will not pardon you for what you have done. Our family has done you wrong, but this revenge of yours is far too cruel. (*Wild with grief.*) You guessed right. Look! I have killed the child with my own hands. Now even if I took it to the Old Buddha herself she couldn't bring it back to life. Tiger, (*vehemently*) I'll follow you, wherever you go I will follow you. (*Resolutely*) Tiger, I'm going to walk right past you! (*Walks to centre door, talking*) If you want to, strike and kill me! I tell you, (*Gets as far as the centre door*) the militia is ready with their guns outside. They'll soon be in here to take your life.

[*GRANNY CHIAO takes the child, exits centre door. The two seem rooted to the ground. Outside one hears GRANNY CHIAO calling softly "Dog's Egg!" and then a hoarse voice intoning strangely: "On the first and fifteenth of the month, the temple gates are open wide. . . . Hell's monstrous warders are arrayed on either side . . ." Both turn to listen.*]

CHIN-TZU: (*Afraid*) Who's that? Who would sing at such a time?

CH'OU HU: (*Trying to be calm*) It's . . . Dog's Egg.

VOICE OUTSIDE: (*Even more frightening*) "The lord judge of hell is seated high above . . . when a cold wind blows. . . ."

CHIN-TZU: (*Looks up, screams, pointing*) Old Chiao's eyes are moving . . . moving again.

CH'OU HU: (*Frightened*) What?

CHIN-TZU: (*Terrified*) He is going to talk!

- [CH'OU HU pulls out his gun, points it at the portrait, and fires four shots in rapid succession. The portrait drops to the ground.]
- CHIN-TZU: Tiger!
- [The people outside think that CH'OU HU is trying to rush them. They fire a volley of shots in confusion.]
- CH'OU HU: They have really come.
- [In the midst of the shots, CH'ANG WU is heard shouting: "Don't shoot, back there! Don't shoot, I'm right in front of you!" He stumbles into the room through door centre.]
- CH'ANG WU: (Sees CH'OU HU, paralysed with fright) Oh, my God! (Turns to rush out.)
- CH'OU HU: (Grabs hold of him) You've come at the right time! (Points the gun at him) Just right! (Calls to outside the centre door.) Hey, you out there! Don't shoot! (Shooting continues outside. Turns to CH'ANG WU) You talk to them, tell them not to shoot.
- CH'ANG WU: (At an angle to the window, calls urgently) Captain Liu! Captain Liu! Don't shoot, it's me, Ch'ang Wu, old Ch'ang Wu.
- [The shooting stops.]
- CH'OU HU: Tell them I've got you covered. Tell them not to shoot. I want to go out.
- CH'ANG WU: (Hardly audible) Captain Liu! Ch'ou Hu's got me. Captain Liu, He's taking me with him as hostage. He's coming out. Please, please don't shoot.
- CH'OU HU: Brothers, I, Ch'ou Hu, have no score to settle with you. I'm here to avenge the great wrong done to two generations of my house. In the name of brotherhood, spare me a way out. If you don't I'll start with Ch'ang Wu right here.
- CH'ANG WU: Captain Liu! Captain Liu!
- CH'OU HU: Well, what do you say? What? No answer? If you don't agree, fire one shot; if you agree, fire two. What about it?
- [Silence.]
- CH'OU HU: Well, if you don't answer me, I'll count ten. If you still don't answer, (to CH'ANG WU) then I won't stand on ceremony.
- CH'ANG WU: Captain Liu! Captain Liu!
- CH'OU HU: (Starts counting) One, two, three, four . . . .
- CH'ANG WU: (Almost simultaneously) Captain Liu, Captain Liu! I have a big family, grownups and children. If I am killed my people will go after you, Captain Liu!
- [Silence all round.]
- CH'OU HU: Eight, nine. . . .
- CH'ANG WU: Captain. . . .
- [One shot is fired outside.]
- CH'OU HU: One shot!
- CH'ANG WU: Captain Liu! Captain. . . .
- [Another shot is fired outside.]
- CH'OU HU: Two shots!
- CH'ANG WU: (Sighs with relief) Ah!
- CH'OU HU: (With a gun in CHANG WU's back) Let's go! (To CHIN-TZU) Let's go!
- [CHIN-TZU takes the bundle of clothes and follows the two men out through door centre.
- [There is no one in the room. A pause. Suddenly one hears two distant shots, followed by more shots fired at shorter and shorter intervals. As the curtain closes, more rapid gun shots are heard.]

### On Target

Most aspiring translators do not fail because they don't know the source language, but rather they fail because of one of the following reasons:

- (a) they simply haven't got the brains required;
- (b) they are incapable of the necessary attention to minute detail;
- (c) they have not mastered the *target* language.

I have never yet met any native-born American who admitted that he or she was incapable of writing good English; nor for that matter any German who admitted to not being capable of writing good German—yet very few can write.

—"The Agent Speaks", *The ATA Chronicle*, Newspaper of the American Translators Association, April 1975.