

*Qín
Shihuang
Tǐ*



*A historical drama
in 5 ACTS*

*by
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QIN SHI HUANGDI

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Act One

Scene One

A small village in Southern China, 33year of Qin Shi Hwang. A beautiful day in Spring. Chen-Shen, a peasant boy of about nineteen paces the small dirt floor hut while his mother is busy with her needling..

Mother Chen Shen, be still a moment!
You're upsetting my stitching. Be still, boy.
You're figety as a bull before earthquake.

Chen Shen I'm sorry, mother.
I've been waiting for E-tai for an hour.
I'm worried about her. She's hardly ever late.

Mother If E-Tai say so,
If that's what she said that's what she'll do.
When did E-tai ever disappoint you?
Don't be a mellon head.
O, you're so fidgety for that beauty,
can't wait to get her in your bed.

Chen Shen Mother! What a way for you to talk!
Its shameful; you embarass me.

Mother [*sternly bit playfully*]
Watch your tongue with me, young man!
And your shameful words about a mother's
shamefulness.

Chen Shen Don't tease me, mother, I've enough on my mind.

Mother [*easing back, nostalgically*]
Your father was the same way,
shyer than a village maiden.

Don't take it amiss, my teasing way,
 you remind me so of your dear father.
 In my little teasing ways,
 I commemorate the way we were together.
 O, Chen Shen, what'll happen to me
 when you are gone?

Chen Shen What's this talk!
 You know I'll never leave you mamma.
 Now don't be sad 'bout father's going,
 I know how much you miss him.
 Still, life must go on,
 and we have a duty to his memory—
 to be happy.

Mother What happen's to me 's not important,
 only I pray for your successful future—
 untroubled by sorrows falling on your father.
 He worked, worked 'till vile exhaustion
 sucked up his last breath.
 With this wretched, infertile land
 he slaved to the very bone
 to give an oppulent Emperor the better half.
 O, it hurt my heart
 that Emperor could be so cruel
 to that fine spirited man.

Chen Shen Mamma, don't speak of it, I beg you;
 my blood boils at the thought of it.
 There's a hundred hornets buzzing in my brain
 begging me swarm o'er all his enemies.

Mother You do right Chen Shen,
 counseling me to put away past cares.
 It's over, gone, forgot.
 You, too, must not chew upon that bitterness
 —and yet, how he wanted an inheritance
 for you, that was his deepest wish—
 so you'd have good start in life.
 A father could never more have loved a son,
 yet all came to naught,

despite the life-blood of his effort.

Chen Shen Mamma, please, don't think more on it.
 Deepest dreams rarely can come true
 for everyone, regardless of position.
 Besides, what in life eludes the father
 is often given to the son.
 Besides, mamma, I have his sword
 and such a fine, fine thing it is.
 Not for all the jade in China
 would I part with it.
 Some mysterious element of his being
 resides in that bladed steel.
 Honest, mother, when I touch it I can feel
 his presence in and near about me.

Mother Ah, and he was a master with it, son,—
 swish, swish, it would flash so in his hands
 as he cut the vacant air
 with his incessant practice.

Chen Shen Mamma, never could a spirit such as his
 be broken or defiled.
 Of a gift, what's more precious
 than a father's own good name?
 What in deeds more honorable
 than the rare quality of simple, daily doings
 serving with love
 family, friends, and country?
 What would I with the pomp of princes
 whose fathers corrupted greed had gained
 for them the outward show of honor,
 to flash before the fancies of the world—
 yea, gold for which their fathers crawled
 and mother whore'd? For what,
 if not to give poor people false appearance
 that they are worthy and superior.
 Father well gave me an inheritance:
 the noble quality of his unpretentious life,
 and loving memories that do not die.

Mother [*smiling, touched*]
 Chen Shen, you talk too much.
 Go on, get out of here, you mellon-head!
 E-tai, do you see here here? Go, go
 see what's up or my sewing on this shirt
 I think will never end.

[*knock at the door*]

Ah, someone 's at the door—
 Must be my friend— get out, get out;
 leave a two old women to their gossip!

Chen Shen I'll not be long. Tsai ch'ien.

Mother Out, out. Go!
 [*Chen Shen exits, neighbor woman enters, bows to
 Chen Shen as she passes him in the doorway.*]

Ma Ku Sou An, Tai Tai

Mother Good day to you, too, tai tai.
 Come, lets visit. Sit, sit. [*Drying tears.*]
 I've been longing to see you,
 its good that you have come.

Ma Ku Ay, now what's the matter, tai tai?
 Tears in your bagged eyes
 stand like the flood terraces and tiers
 of the labor'd hills.

Mother Go on with you! You image is mirror
 to your own vissage—though the tears
 are mine, I must confess. Merely
 an overflow of feeling, talking with my son,
 who loves me so dearly. In truth I fear
 to die. Ah, the hopes of youth!
 And we, aged ones—wisdom it's called—
 must break the truer, crueller news to them.
 Ah, no more on it! Sentiments and old age
 are a moist affair. Now,

to the village gossip, I'm all ears.
 Certainly some sins have made the rounds,
 giving us something to wag our tongues on.
 This, of course, I'd never tell my son:
 but without a little sin
 what's the use of livin'.

Ma Ku O, you're a wicked lady, I admit,
 but to your nosey ear I'll serve as gossip.
 Remember, though, your promise not to committ
 all that I say to an accidental slip?
 You're my accomplish in this,
 as you well know.

Mother Ah, wonderful. Have you some knitting?

Ma Ku What's the use of talking to you
 if I can't discharge a chore or two?
 [*Withdraws knitting from bag.*]

Mother Exactly!

*[They knit in silence for a few moments. At last
 Madam Ku breaks the silence.]*

Ma Ku Do you remember that Quan Lin girl,
 the one who played about these parts?

Mother Yes, certainly, she was our only scandal
 for one whole season, and, of course,
 her "sports" were famous all around.
 Why? Have we more from her?
 Rumor had her long removed to, to, —
 Where was the place?

Ma Ku That doesn't matter now. She's returned.

Mother What? Impossible! She was pregnant.

Ma Ku I know, I know. But, some say she drowned her baby.

Mother Heaven forbid! That's mon'strous,
 despite her vagaries she seemed most kind,
 I rather liked her (to be frank),

Always courteous, sweet, sincere.
 Come, come, tell me further,
 don't make me beg, you've got more on this.
 [*Loud knock at the door.*]
 Heaven help us! Who could that be?

Ma Ku Well, open the door and see.

Mother goes to the door; soldiers suddenly barge in.

Soldier [*sternly*] Who lives here? Speak, quickly!

Mother Only me and my son, Chen Shen,
 whatever can be the matter.

Soldier Who is she?

Mother A neighbor lady, we're just visiting,
 is that an offense these days?

Soldier [*coldly.*] Could be. [*To Madam Ku*]
 Get to your own house! Immediately.
 We're soldiers of Chin; we've come to survey
 the village and all occupants.

[*Madam Ku rises to leave.*]

Mother [*also rises and bows*]
 How may I serve you distinguished gentlemen?

Soldier Have you any arms secreted here?
 Beware of what you say to us,
 we're responsible to the Emperor;
 the penalty death to double-dealers.

Mother [*shocked*] I'm only an old woman, as you see,
 with a good son who does his farm duties.
 In a humble home like this?
 What could anything think would be amiss.

enter second soldier

- Soldier #2* Search the hut.
Leave no suspicious sign unsearched,—
tear out the walls if need be!
- Mother* [*Alarmed.*]
O, there's some great mistake, please.
I assure you, we're all humble folk;
My husband's past these many years,
my son's but a boy. We've not to do
with the wider world. Our work
is the common peasant's due. Please,
you're making a mistake being here.
- Soldier #1* Shut up old bag!
- Soldier #2* [*Contempuously, to his comrade.*]
Another mud hut. No books
or other signs of wealth or culture.
Why waste time on this?
- Soldier #1* [*Spying the sword.*]
Ah, ha! And what is this?
- Mother* A thing of no value, I'm sure.
A dead father's memento to a son.
- Soldier #2* That's what we've come for, woman.
All weapons in every village are hereby
confiscate! Sieze it!
- Mother* O, no! Not that! I beg of you.
It's all we have of my dead husband,
I beg of you.
- Soldier #1* Have you more weapons, of any kind?
- Mother* It's not a weapon, but a keep-sake,
the only pridefull object of a poor family,
the remembrance of a dead father.
- Soldier #1* Then, there are no more weapons of any kind?
- Woman* I swear— but, leave it, kind sir,

and Heaven will thank you dearly.

Soldier #1 [Maliciously.]
You, old bag, do not dispense the benefits
of Heaven—we've the Emperor
for such purposes as that, ha ha!

Mother O, I meant no immodesty, only that—

Soldier #2 Lets leave her. We have what 's needed.
Why fight an old woman?
[*They start to go out with the sword in hand.*]

Mother [*desperately*] No, no! This cannot be.
Please, give it back to me! I pray!
Give it back to me!
[*Mother catches at the sleeve of soldier and won't let go. Soldier strikes her viciously about the head.*]

Soldier #2 [*furious*] To impede an officer in his duty
is death, old woman. Now pray
for your own soul!
[*Lifts the sword to strike her.*]

Soldier #1 Nay! Stay your blow! She doesn't know better.
Your sword has too much honor stained on it
to slander with the sickly blood
of an old defenseless woman.

Soldier #2 Very well, by your words persuaded.
At least we left a 'memberance on her cheek.
[*Mother is left a heap of pitiful tears on the floor. The soldiers exit.*]

Scene Two

Outside the village. E-Tai, an extraordinary beauty, poorly dressed in peasant garb, waits for Chen Shen.

E-tai [Alone. Singing to her own accompaniment]

*Silkworm feeds on mulberry leaves
Blue bird twins are fluttering;
The Setting sun beds the green horizon
Breezes mingle lilacs and rose.
O, my prince, so tall and straight,
Stronger than the broad oak tree
Why won't he come to me?*

*Yellow carp swim the broad blue lake
Bees in the flowers are humming
Ah, soon day's work is almost done,
The Skies will soon be darkening
Skies will soon be darkening.*

*In Spring peach trees are most eager
To spread their fruit before the sun;
Maidens are making pretty dresses
Men are awakened to much admiring.
O, there's such commotion everywhere,
But, ah, day-dreams upset daily duties.
O, my prince, so tall and straight,
Stronger than the broad oak tree
Why won't he come to me?*

Entering, not wanting to disturb song right away]

Chen Shen E-tai! At last I find you.
What's wrong. Is there bad news
that you refuse your promise
and keep me waiting? What's wrong?

E-tai Chen Shen, why do you scold me,
 It's I whom you keep waiting.
 Over an hour I've been sitting here.
 Why you so cruel, Chen Shen?
 It's a miserable thing, I'll tell you,
 when I had so much happiness
 So much happiness I thought I'd burst
 thinking I had words to make you glad.
 Now, you've kept me waiting till I'm sad
 and, lonely, my joy almost gone.
 O, I wish I had some bad news to tell,
 Chen Shen, to make you feel like me.

Chen Shen What nonsense-talk, E-tai.
 You said you'd come to my house.
 Even Mama said something must be wrong,—
 go see what that girl is up to, she said.

E-tai Well, your mother knows more than you,
 that's sure. You're too forgetfull, Chen Shen.
 Is that how you be when we're married?

Chen Shen [*Excitedly.*]
 Married? Then your father has agreed?
 Is it true, E-tai. Don't kid with me!

E-tai [*Brightening, but coquettish.*]
 Chen Shen, ten thousand times
 you tell me, "be serious," one hundred times
 you tell me, "you're too forgetfull;"
 ten times you say, "you are too mean."
 One time you tell me two plus two is three.
 What am I to do with you.
 When next time you tell me nothing
 that only time you'd be right.

Chen Shen You must make words just to torture me.
 Is it possible? Did I misunderstand you?

E-tai This possibility is very possible, Chen Shen.
 Why do I sit upon this rock
 all alone, wasting the day away.

Have I nothing to do,
when very soon will come my wedding day?
Tell me that!

Chen Shen [*joyously*] Then it's true! It's really, really, true!

E-tai Shen, you men are so intelligent
and have craft to do a thousand things,
but when it's pronounced and said
"I do" — you all act like a mello-head!

Chen Shen E-tai, I'm so happy.
I don't know what to say.
You don't know how Mother 's waited for this day.

E-tai [*teasing*] Not, I hope, in the same way.

Chen Shen [*blushing*] I didn't mean—that is—

E-tai [*laughing, putting finger to his lips.*]
Shhh! Say no more dear husband;
Sweet words are sweeter
when not said,
Wa ai ne, forever.

Chen Shen Come closer to me, E-tai.
I long to hold you tenderly
and kiss your warm, fruitfull, lips.

E-tai [*playfully*] O, Chen Shen, no!
You kiss me too many times already.
That's enough for you 'till we're wed.
Besides, everyone would know,
and I would die of shame.
Do you want a corpse in your marriage bed?

Chen Shen No one in the whole world would know it,
I promise you.

E-tai Chen Shen, for the whole world
you can't make promises like that.
But, this promise I'll tender you,
until the day I die:
only your lips my lips will not deny.

Lets marry quickly without delay,
for truly my own passion is unbearable
and, being unbearable, I can't bear to show it.

Chen Shen I must tell mother everything is set,
and haste we to our marriage rites
within the week. Seven moons more
shall not touch the dome of heaven,
nor seven suns blaze away the day
before we shall to each other turn
no longer divided
of single heart, soul, and name.

Enter Friend with worried look.

Friend Chen Shen, come quickly, now.
I've something important you must know.

Chen Shen [*Laughing.*]
Nay, its I who have the news to tell.

E-tai Chen Shen, remember *first* tell your mother,
then who ever else you'd tell.

Chen Shen Ah, yes, She she, E-tai, you're more correct.

Friend [*insistingly*]Chen Shen, please, immediately!

Chen Shen What's the commotion?

Friend There's a meeting in the village square,
the whole male population is required.
Come with me, now, don't delay.
Believe me, these officials mean business.

Chen Shen But I can't go now. E-tai and I
have most important business with Mother.

Friend Not now! You must come with me.
Any stragglers will be beaten with bamboo.
Already I risk myself fetching you.
Please, don't question me on this.
E-tai's father 's there and bids you come.

Chen Shen To his directions I'll not delay.
E-tai, forgive me dearest, for now must go.

E-tai Go, Chen Shen. I'll to your Mother's.
I pray there's no problem.
Return to me directly, or I'll worry so.
[Exit all.]

Scene Three

At the Imperial Capital, Court Chambers. Chin sits regally on the throne. His Councilors and Attendants stand ceremoniously to the side on lower levels.

Chunyu Your Majesty.
It's said that the Dynasties of Chou and Shang
Outlasted one thousand years, as younger members
Of the Royal Family and meritorious ministers
Were given tributary states as fiefdoms.
Now, Your Majesty holds undisputed sway
Over the vast T'ien Sha;
Within the broad reach of the Four Seas
All are subject to your indominatable will—
Yet, your Royal Relatives have naught,
Neither positions, stakes, nor distinguished titles
They are as commoners in the common sea
Of all your black-haired people.
Should disloyal subjects suddenly arise,
Like a disease attacking your vast domain,
You have no barons to check the contagion.
Never have I heard ought that can endure
Which is not centered in ancient precedent.
Head not the flattery of Chou Ching-Chen
That peace within your realm will reign eternal;

Often rebellion upsets established government,
 And, as all creation is subject to eternal change,
 And, too, no state was ever completely free
 of contending ambitions and disloyalties.
*[Bows respectfully. Chin glances about to see the
 reaction of Lee Shi and other of his chief ministers.]*

Sire, establish feifdoms to fortify your fame
 and leave a legacy unparalleled in history.
 Continue to honor the scholars,
 give ancient learning a haven and a home
 in your new order of the Enlightened State.

Lee Shi Your Majesty,
 The ancient way is *not* our precedent.
 For you are unique to human history.
 Even the Five Emperors did not each other emulate,
 nor the Three Dynasties adopt each other's ways.
 Yet, all are extolled as great governments.
 This paradox is only seemingly apparent,
 for time changes everything—
 so, too, the applicability of your power.
 and the nature, needs, and scope of government.

*[Bows, pauses, and continues as though unmindful of
 his effect]*

Remembering that even in the Three Dynasties
 Barons contended with Barons
 And rankled strife out-faced their own survival—
 This, tho' all the same were
 By the wandering scholars all informed!
 These scholars learn only from the old,
 Not from the new. How much more pertinent
 Are illustrious examples of *your* triumphant power.
 What you've achieved in a few short years
 Even the Five Emperors could not accomplish!
 For the first time in history
 The China people are one, of one land,

One government, of single spirit and cause.
 Your momentous work has unified the world;
 This was not won by contributions of the scholars!
 Indeed, in truth, scholars from ancient days
 Till now are greatly to be faulted. Impediments
 To the progress you alone have paved.
 Scholars long have mislead people and governments;
 To strengthen their hand they devise strange
 arguments;
 Their learning is used to oppose authority,
 Disseminate dissention, divide opinions.
 They insinuate themselves for self-advantage,
 Claiming glorious knowledge of ancient ways.
 Quoting virtues, deeds, and accomplishments of
 heros,
 By cultisih quackery they'd have all believe
 They, likewise of the same cloth are cut.
 Even now they dare oppose Royal opinion,
 With incessant quoting of long dead sages.
 Far better to put a end to it!

Chin [greatly interested]
 You speak well, Li Szu, continue.
 But, guard the advice you give an Emperor
 as carefully as your own life.

Lee Shi [bowing]
 As always, I speak on pain of death.
 As appropriate to establishment of the New Order
 the following I propose:
 anyone daring to recite the ancient readings—
 the ancient songs, historical records and writings
 of the hundred schools of thought —
 does so under punishment of death,
 at public execution. As to the scholars,
 the wilfull recitation of old precedents
 used to oppose the New Order will merit
 extinction of the offender and his family,
 even to the third generation— like-wise,
 all officials who countenance such offenses!

Whoever fails to surrender all copies of ancient texts,
for public burning, within one month's time,
after issuance of all appropriate edicts,
will be tattoo'd upon the face, condemned
like common criminals and set
to severest labors at the Great Wall,
their freedom forever forfeited.

Chin [*amazed*] Do you say *all* books, Li Szu,
all books must be destroyed?

Lee Shi [*resolutely*] Only those dealing with agriculture,
medicine and divination need be saved.

[*There are gasps among the assemblage.*]

Han Fei Your Majesty.
The genius of a hundred generations
is booked in our vast literature, surely
such a loss would be inestimable.
For the spiritual prosperity of our people
by these works have been long nourished.
Surely, this is a criminal enterprise
beyond belief— to establish the New Order
at the grave of our glorious culture.

[*Chin turns to Lee Szu to see his response.*]

Lee Shi The Great Chin is himself
The new enlightenment for the entire world.
No other is needed nor should be allowed.

Han Fei The historical records is as a birthright
to each subject of our culture.
The exploits of Yao, and Shun, of Shen-Yi
and Chou provide the people with a path
upon which their own virtue should proceed.
Scholars instruct the people with the histories,
give examples of rewards and punishments.
The right to read and freely discuss

the hundred schools enriches the intelligence
beyond measure— from all these fountains
spring the life-blood of our culture,
more precious than all the world's treasures.

Chin [a note of threat in his voice]

Han Fei, you seem to oppose the New Order.
Is this because as a renowned scholar
Famous throughout the empire,
Lee Shi's words have deeply offended
That class of scholars who hold you high?

Han Fei Your Majesty. . . It is difficult to believe. . .
that is. . . I . I . I . I thaaat isss ahhh. . .

Chin [stands up, furious]

You! How dare you stammer before me! Guards!
Execute him!

Han Fei [falling to his knees, his forehead to the floor]
Great Majesty. I have a large family. Mercy,
I beg of you.

Chin Yes! I'm glad you remind me of this.

Executioner, execute his whole family, too.

[Looks at Lee Shi directly, smiles maliciously.]

Yes, even to the third-generation.

[Everyone pretends that nothing has happened; so
terrified are they. Chin glances about seeing their
reaction, he smiles contemptuously and continues in a
suddenly calm voice as though this scene had never
happened. Han Fei is literally dragged away as Chin
continues to speak.]

Lee Shi, I favor your idea.

Counselors, quickly, advise me.

Is there any opposition to this view? [Silence]

Very well. It's decided. Issue the edict.

Now, we need more conscripts

The time has come to conquer Lulian

And then the provinces of Kuelin.

All those who have so far evaded conscription

Call them all to our service, immediately.
If there is nothing more, you are all dismissed.

Lee Shi Your Majesty, I must advise you of a matter
Of grave importance.

Chin Speak.

Lee Shi In parts of the empire, it's come to my attention
Worship of Venus still continues,
It must be stopped, your Majesty, immediately.

Chin Why so, Lee Shi?
Many gods we allow to be worshipped
Why make exception of famous Chin Shing?

Lee Shi Venus-god worship infiltrates all religion,
From ancient time till now.
Royal Astronomers have reported a comet
Screams through the heavens with fearful mein,
The people are afraid and pray to Venus
As of old. The Venus god bears the name
Of books on mathematics and mensuration,
And is memorialized as the founding God,
You must forbid the sacrifice to Venus.
Venus is the Gold Star, its virtue is metal,
Its properties—

Chin Enough, Lee Shi, I accept your advice,
Henceforth worship of Great White, is against
The virtue of my color, Black, and its fire
Is against my Primal Water. It is forbidden
Forevermore.

Scene Four

Meanwhile in the village of Tsou. Villagers are forced to stand in the square as a group of Chin soldiers, dressed in black round up and interrogate the peasants. Enter Shur Ting and Chen Shen.

- Shur Ting* Chen Shen, what goes on here?
All our villagers are frightened, terrified,
See how rough Chin soldiers behave,
Insulting, stone-hearted. Chen Shen,
I am afraid of what is going to happen here.
I think they will take us away, Chen Shen
I am afraid to think of what will happen.
- Chen Shen* Shur Ting, good friend, not a worry,
Everything be alright. You see. Soldiers
Probably just take census or some such,
They just do their job, who can blame them?
They say that Tiger Cheng from Ch'in
Is now King here, too;
some say he be Emperor soon of everything.
- Shur Ting* Oh, oh, careful Chen Shen, soldier come,
Don't talk Chen Shen, I hear these Chin men
Can be very cruel—ay, they get big reward
If they treat us little people with contempt.
- Chen Shen* Don't worry. I afraid of these black-dressed men
Just like you. Just be quiet, say nothing,
And then everything be alright. I promise,
Shur Ting. Don't worry. They leave soon.
Besides who want stay in our little village
- Shur Ting* Oh, Chen Shen, look, the village women
All being herded into square. What's going on?
Chen Shen, look E-tail, and her mother, sisters,

There's my mother. [*calls out*] Mother, Mother!
 [*starts to move in her direction, just then, a Captain steps in*]

Captain Hey, you! Get back in line! Now!

Shur Ting I was just— [*Captain cracks him over the head with a stick weapon, Chen Shen instantly fires and raises his hand and stops another blow. Other soldiers immediately rush in and seize Chen Shen, with his arms held behind his back the Captain is just about to crack his skull open when there is a sudden piercing scream, which causes everyone to turn in the direction of the sound. It is E-Tai's cry that is heard*]

Captain [*startled*] What's that? [*seeing it is just a maiden, starts to turn back to Chen Shen but a soldier accosts him*] What is it?

Soldier Captain, come quickly! The garrison reports
 A rebel band is organizing in the capital,
 We are ordered to—

Captain Very well. What are these women doing here.
 They are to be strickly separated.
 Later, we'll deal with them. Now, sieze these men
 [*aloud*] Listen up! Listen up! Get those women out,
 Now! Move, move! Now, you villagers,
 You there, yes, you five, you are hereby conscripted
 Into the Emperor's service.

Shur Ting [*raising his hand to speak*] Captain, may I speak.

Captain [*petulantly*] What is it?

Shur Ting Some of us, your honor, are only sons left;
 We are freed of service to care for parents.
 The law—

Captain Ch'in is the law now. There is no other!

Remove them. Load them up. [*Captain turns to other matters as the conscripts are taken into custody*]

Shur Ting How long is our service, Master Captain.

Captain Three years. Now shut up! If anyone speaks again I'll have all of you wipped! Move, move.

Chen Shen Captain, may we please say goodbye loved ones?

Captain You've already had your says goodbye.

Chen Shen But, I, too am only son now,
And I am getting married—

Captain [*sacractically*] We will have a party fo you later
Move out!

Act Two

Scene One

Three years later. Palace Court

Chin Now to other matters.
Chunyu, where is that Shi Fong?
He's late and that disturbs me.

Chunyu He is on his way, your Majesty
[*A servant approaches and speaks into his ear. He looks into the distance.*]
Indeed, he comes now.

Chin Hand me more records.

[*He is handed a bundle of wooden slates bound together with leather thongs. he reads the characters written on them while the others bow in waiting reverence.*]

Chao Kao enters, a corpulent eunich who moves close to Chin. The Jade Implements of his official dress tingle as he walks.

What is this? Who allowed this petition to come before my eyes? I dismissed this yesterday. I won't have this. Who's responsible for this?

Assistant How this occurred I can't say. To me it falls all these responsibilities. The fault is mine.

Chin [*regards him critically for a long moment*]

No matter now. The Fong Shi comes.

But take care of this. See it does not happen again.

Fong Shi Enters. Bows as he is escorted before Chin

Ah, at last! You keep an Emperor waiting!
 Let us cut to the matter.
 Hsu Foh, your petition tells
 You possess the secrets of Long-Life.
 But, first secret I'd know is this:
 How many years now hang upon your head?

Hsu Foh Your Majesty. In truth it's difficult to tell
 for many dynasties make dynastic change
 and shifting calendars combine confusions.
 Yet, some— two hundred, I should imagine,
 have cut their mark in me.
 Ah, so many changes have taken me
 from country to country,
 and so many things I've witnessed
 that I look upon this wonderous world
 as an inn of brief stay.

Chin [*aside to Chao Kao*]

How healthy he looks! A mere forty!
 Yet, his hair's white as snow, and
 did you notice his steep ascent
 his way onto this hill?
 His rapid way did not one whit
 chase his breath away—
 Mark, his voice is calm as the unrippled lake -
 [*to Hsu Foh*]
 Hmm, yes, but, Hsu Foh, ordinary life
 however extraordinary is ordinarily prolonged.
 Tis not so with Emperors.
 Mayor quan c'hi.
 Tell Hsu Foh, how is it to long-life
 you given? Tell me the sense and essence of it.

Hsu Foh My life is free from desire and greed.

Fruit I eat, sleep rarely touches me;
relaxing I regulate my breathing,
revitalize the circulation of my blood
and keep my limbs agile each day
through ancient methods of exercise.

Chin [suddenly more serious]

Hsu Foh, can you find an elixir
that gives the spring of long-life?

Hsu Foh Your Majesty. An elixir there is
but finding it depends on luck.
One may stumble over it in a moment
or spend a whole life in vain search.

Chin Any suggestion you may have
which could lead me to such a life
would greatly reward us both.

Hsu Foh Your Majesty, I had a thought, most incredible!

Chin With much respect are you admired by my heart.
Be not a miser with me,
the most powerful Emperor the world has known,
share all your secrets with me.

Lee Shi Your Majesty. With your permission, I'd
ask of him a question. [*Chin nods his assent and turns
to Hsu Foh.*]
By long-life mean you a hundred years, a thousand,
more?

Hsu Foh Can one hundred or a thousand years be called
Long-Life?

Chin [*Impatient to hear the secret, however "incredible."*]

I want to know what you are keeping from me. I want
to know it now!

Hsu Foh [*Bowing respectfully.*]

Your Majesty! Far, far away

east of the East Sea there lies
 the fabled Islands of the Faries.
 All day those faries dance and sing,
 seeking naught but song and pleasure,
 song blown breezes, love,
 sweet lyrics lingering in the air.
 And, there where pure spring waters flow,
 a tender herb— soft green and shaped
 like a mushroom is said to grow.
 Its called the Lin Tze.
 Rare it is, even in the Fairy Islands,
 yet, only there, is Lin Tze ever found.
 The taste of Lin Tze is delicious,
 for the climate there is always sunny
 and at night the moon is always full;
 one taste of it and all hungers are forgot.
 Regardless what the seasons bring,
 one always remains blooming, fresh, vital.
 Men, like flowers and plants,
 are cheered and checked, but he
 who tastes this plant is suddenly free
 to profit from nature's mystery.
 And like a perfectly rhymned verse,
 from this tiny herb
 all is one with the undying universe.

Chin Hsu Foh, I now commission you
 for wonderous is your story -- Go!
 Secure what all you need
 to fetch this magic plant. Great
 is your reward to find this precious thing.

Hsu Foh The task is most difficult.
 For raging storms and violent seas
 patrol the protection of this paradise,
 as well a mon'strous fish,
 horrible to look upon, more horrible
 describe. Another should be chosen
 please, not I—

Chin You are designated to execute this mission!
I'll hear no negatives.

Hsu Foh Your Majesty
Since at the charge of your confidence
I am missioned to this great enterprise,
let me speak frankly. These islands
by greedy men of impure mind are not approachable.
This must be a religious quest.
Therefore, I'll need but boys and girls,
innoscent and nieve to serve the boats,
fifteen hundred each, from best families.
To my judgement alone their characters
must be commended for this selection,
I must be positive they're fit for voyage.

Chin [*taking a deep breath, at the implications of the request*]

Hmmm.. .

Lee Shi [*cautiously, contemplatively*]
My, my, how many families will be disrupted!

Chin [*with manacial resolve*]

And when will you return?

Hsu Foh [*gazing in the distance, as tho' to calculate*]

Lets see. . .yes, in eight months.
In eight months we can return, if
the weather will permit us. Besides—

Lee Shi [*interrupting*]

Your Majesty. With your Heavenly permission.
To send three thousand boys and girls
to fates unknown upon a perilous sea,
in search of unknown islands
where a fabled herb is famed to be
seems, perhaps, not wise to me.

Certainly, all your servants seek the Key
o your eternal life, yet
lets turn to more certain ways to find it.

Chao-Kao Your Majesty. With your Heavenly permission
Such an herb surely must be had.
Neither pernicious seas nor precious cost
can serve impediments to this prize.
No life has value save that it serves your need;
honored and fearless are your subjects
tending on Your Majesty.
Our duty is to be considered, not others death's,
but your immortality.

Chin Lee Shi— publish my decree,
with immediate action execute a draft —
fifteen hundred boys and fifteen hundred girls,
thirty boats and provisions for a year.
Include all kinds of domestic animals,
gifts for royalty among the faries.
Designate Hsu Foh officially:
The Emperor's Seeker Of Long-Life Herb!

*[Lights fade. It is night. We see Lee Shi alone
overlooking a long row of fabulous mansions,
belonging to the emperor.]*

Lee Shi O, I fear his frousome mood,
his sleepless nights and senseless covetings
that fever all his famous doings.
Not one is safe before his sudden suspect,
and the slightest thwarting of his will
sends mon'strous multitudes to riots
of grim reprisals.
For an offense, real or imagined, of one man,
entire families to the third generation
are utterly liquidated. Nay, by hundreds
thousands even. Many a man's been cruel
yet none to compare with him.
Without compuntion slaughter's appetite

is never sated. The death of others
 has no accounting in his chronicles.
 But fears of his own life leave him panick'd,
 paralyzed, craven, crying in the night.
 And we are cowards all, who,
 judging ourselves superior to his evil
 lend council to his mad cravings,
 and excellently execute his wanton will

Scene Two

Scene in the village, somewhere in southern China

Hu-Shur Can it really be?

Fei-Nan It's true. The edict's been posted.
 All books must be surrendered
 and the penalty, death, to all who dare
 quote one phrase from them. I can do nothing,
 my life is ruined. Huge bond fires
 are raging throughout the empire;
 evil flames are licking like dragon tongues
 at the sooted skies. Without books
 we'll soon all become barbarians,
 without the right to quote the Masters
 wisdom will be lost. O, Hu Shur,
 better I had not lived to see this day.
 I'm sorry there'll be no more lessons now,
 or ever. At least not in my time.
 The ancient ways can't be discussed.
 That devil Chin determined to sacrifice
 the living spirit of all ancestors—
 it is criminal beyond belief!

Hu-Shur He mustn't be allowed to get away with it.

Fai-Nan Its done! I myself am on my way

to the great surrender.

Hu-Shur Never! I beg of you!

Fai-Nan I am not afraid to die, my son,
but the whole world's become a blazing oven.
If it were my life alone, I'd already be dead
gladly for disobedience. But, it's true,
I've many grandchildren. If I refuse
they all die, everyone of them,
to say nothing of my children, their dear parents.
For my own honor, is it right
that I assent to their unmerciful slaughter?

Hu-Shur Then give the books to me, master.

Fai-Nan No, my son. This evil has such craft
that we have never dreamed of.
All scholars are interrogated point by point:
"Did you give books to anyone?"
"Who are your relatives?"
"What Masters have you studied with?"
Lying is no use. For there are many,
yes, even among our friends and disciples
who will inform on us to save themselves.
And, if not themselves, then their families.
Nothing can be done, but abject submission.

Hu-Shur Perhaps various families can flee—
Perhaps to the land of the Huns!

Fei-Nan They'd be slaughtered in an instant,
just for the rags on their backs.
Besides, they're hardly a step beyond the animal.

Hu-Shur What then have we here?
The soldiers of Chin, what are they?
Worse, far worse, than wild beasts
for looking civilized.

Fei-Nan You who are young must be patient.
Evil in the end feeds itself on evil,
and when evil, having had its fill,

will mock itself as itself it kills.

[*A sudden noise from without*]

Friend Hu-Shur! Hu-Shur! He's returned!
I've run ahead a pace to prepare you.

Hu-Shur What are you talking? Who's returned?

Friend It's Chen-Shen. He's returned from the wall.
I told him you need see him now.
Directly he was headed to his mother's
and would hardly have heard my words,
but at last I persuaded him.
You were his best friend—I thought. . .

Hu-Shur You did right, dear friend.
O, that such happiness and unhappiness
falls on such a day!

Fei-Nan It's Chen-Shen? Can it really be?

Hu-Shur Already I see him. Yes, it's true,
the bright bull of the village, my friend.

Fei-Nan I leave my humble dwelling to your meeting
but mark me well, Hu-Shur,
Pray you don't be foolish.
For the young there's always something left to live.
Toast his arrival -- Here is gao liang,
he'll need it for the new you give.
Peace with you both.

Hu-Shur Chen-Shen! Chen-Shen! You old dragon!

Chen-Shen Ah, dear Hu-Shur. Can it be?
Spirit-friend, did you receive my thought-talk?
For many a night I kept your spirit near.

Hu-Shur And I, you, Chen-Shen!

[*To the children following Chen-Shen*]

Go way now, children. Later

Chen-Shen will tell you stories, scat!

Chen-Shen But, Hu-Shur, much as I love you dearly
and long to hang on long words with you
I must to my mother's and Wen-Mai
for these long years I've been missing them.
It's too much to tell in so short a breath.
Later we'll have a great festival,
and then of old friendship we'll have new fill.

Hu-Shur Chen-Shen, my tongue and heart have different
directions.
To see you again makes me wonderous happy,
but what I must tell is an agony,
that's why I stay you on your way.

Chen-Shen Has something happened to mama?
Tell me quick— is she sick?

Hu-Shur She's past that sickness we call life;
Chen-Shen, your mother is dead.

Chen-Shen Dead? Dead? No! It can't be.
My poor suffering mother, dead?
But I've only been gone three years,
and longer than my life she was always there.
How did it happen?

Hu-Shur Old age set in quickly when you left.

Chen-Shen But, Wen-Mai's bright beauty was here
to keep her young and not-be-lonely.
And how is Wen-Mai's father?

Hu-Shur Gone, too. Some months before your mother.

Chen-Shen I must to Wen-Mai now—
Ye gods, how she must be suffering!

Hu-Shur Stay! Don't go! You won't find her there.

Chen-Shen Not there! Not there! Then, where?
Tell me, Hu-Shur, for this very moment
I go to fetch her.

- Hu-Shur* She. . .That is. . .
- Chen Shen* [*in agony*]
Hu-Shur! Have mercy, speak!
- Hu-Shur* She's gone to the Imperial Palace.
- Chen Shen* [*uncomprehendingly*]
Imperial Palace? Imperial Palace— What business has she at the Imperial Palace?
- Hu-Shur* She's a concubine in the Royal Harem.
- Chen Shen* Concubine? Concubine? That's not possible!
- Hu-Shur* Doubt me not, my friend—
[*withdraws a dagger*]
or I must my own throat now slit!
- Chen Shen* [*stunned, dazed*]
So, E-Tai, live now perfumed palace life?
Her father must have already been dead,
why else would she leave him -- but,
did she. . did she. . .leave my mother alone?
- Hu-Shur* Don't torture yourself with this. It's done.
- Chen Shen* Tell me I must know!
- Hu-Shur* My word of honor, I gave to E-Tai—
- Chen Shen* Why, did she ask for it?
- Hu-Shur* But heaven will not hold me accountable
for such a promise. I'll tell you everything.
Your mother died a year after you were gone.
Then Chin's soldier's came. They forced her
to the Palace Harem in lieu of torturing
her father. He never knew, was broken hearted
that Wen-Mai became so frivolous
as to prefer jewels and fine dresses
to keeping him comfort in old age
and waiting for your return, you
whom he loved as his own son.
- Chen Shen* Ah, that poor old man.

Hu-Shur He never knew the truth, dying broken hearted
but months following her departure.
So Wen-Mai, seeking to save her father,
herself was lost to no avail.
Tis piteous to repeat. She made me pledge
never to tell her father. How could she know
in two months time he'd be beyond all knowing.

Chen-Shen And I will join them, but first
I'll kill the first Chin soldier that I meet.
Lend me your dagger, Hu-Shur,
for I have bloody tales to tell.
O, Heaven, help me in this mission
and sanctify the murder's I'll committ.

Hu-Shur No, Chen-Shen! It's useless, there are too many;
too great their evil, too strong their force.

Chen-Shen You dishonor me to think me capable
of silence before these screaming crimes.
For three long years I've labored
with my comrades dying on every side,
whose flesh and bones were motored with the brick
and every living back was bathed in blood.
To beseach a drop of water,
heads were battered, skulls crushed.
Not five out of five hundred will return, ever.
Yet, I've chewed my tongue
set straight my gaze and never flinched.
For what, Hu-Shur, for what!
Only to see my mother's smile on my return,
to hear her say: "I knew you'd come back."
to hear Wen-Mai say, "At last!"
and to dry the bitter tears upon her cheek.
For this alone I vowed to live,
for this alone I now vow to die.

Hu-Shur Live, Chen-Shen, live that *Chin* may die.
There's no honor now in individual death.
We must make compact with the cares of millions.
Take the selfish sting from out your sorrow

and pledge your life to that destined day
 and purpose of Chin's defeat.
 We are scarce commodities, you and I.
 Of families bereft and by that blest
 with the freedom to kill and die.
 To that holy purpose am I set;
 we must find means to hunt them by the hundreds,
 nay thousands, tens of thousands
 if it must and it must be!
 Hence forth I have no name, village, friend,
 save those that join us
 to hasten evil dragons to their end!

Chen Shen I take you at your word,
 prepare to leave.

Hu-Shur I'm ready now. Direct it!

Chen Shen Then, away from here, never to return again,
 not till we bring news of the death of Chin!

Scene Three

In the Royal Harem in the capital

Hwa E-tai, come tell me truly,
 why would you return to your old life?
 Poverty was your peasant life,
 often there was little left to eat,
 after taxes were tallied, or the gods
 had ravished the meagre fields
 with drought, floods, or ravenous insect hoards.
 In your fathers eyes surely you saw,
 ghosts of a thousand miseries --
 the same as I. Why return to a peasant's hut?
 Here you live in palaces,
 the choicest delicacies are your daily meal,

fine silken gowns adorn your beauty,
 there's music and a hundred entertainments,
 drums, flutes, gay tinkling bells, exciting
 dancing. To be a palace concubine
 is the ambition of every artful beauty
 throughout the vast domain of Chin.
 Yet, you dream of returning to a mud hut,
 as though that primitive habitat
 pursues you like some exotic dream -
 how can this be?

E-tai To me, what's not my way is prison.
 Extravagance I abhor worse than sin.
 Dear friend, truly, I cannot say
 why I am the way I am, who can?
 Can any creature explain its nature?
 Here before my eyes are glorious flower gardens,
 yet, most prized to my eye
 is the found flower in its natural field,
 uninfluenced by any human hand.
 The whole world prizes the perfection of jade,
 yet, seeing something beautiful
 I have no need to own it.
 My sweetest possession is the joy I feel
 marveling over its lustrous beauty,
 not the thing itself. For what is jade's value
 if the heart-response is as dull clay?
 As for the adornment of silken dress,
 I'd rather watch the silkworm
 buzying about on the mulberry tree.
 Choice foods do not tempt me,
 for where is my appetite when I'm not free?

Hwa You talk of freedom - yet, that's false.
 For, from birth we women are enslaved
 first to parents-will, then in-laws,
 then husbands— worse, our own customs of
 subservience.
 You talk romantic stuff, E-tai.
 Better of the world to see it as it is

and find means to be free from misery.
 Little good you'll do yourself
 fretting on the impossible— besides,
 as a dear friend, I must confess
 your desire to oppose the will of fate
 seems the very mountain of immodesty.
 Should a fish in the consuming sea
 long to covet dry ground beneath its feet?

E-tai Little I know of fish or the sea,
 but I am sad my shared secrets
 cause you so much worry over me.
 Better I had kept to myself my private misery
 since to your ears I'm expressed immodestly.

Hwa E-tai, don't be so sensitive!
 Well you know you are my dear sister here,
 in this parentless hell bereft of family.
 It's only I long upon your happiness,
 and cannot bear to see you sad.
 Well I know your hidden dream,
 yet, our fate here is as sealed
 as if death itself had had its say.
 Besides, our families are much honored now --
 let that, at least, be a prayer's answer.

E-tai My mother died in infancy,
 on leaving my homeland my own dear father
 thought me frivolously ambitious --
 yet, I had no choice, for grim exile
 would have been his fate had I refused,
 though I never could have told him so.
 For, he would have taken honor in his hands
 and slashed his aged throat.
 No, no more of this, I pray.
 For furious tears will salt my cheek
 if anymore I say.
 Don't judge me too harshly, dearest sister.
 For who knows their fate until its set?
 No one, not one of this world,

not you, or me, or even Emperor.

Hwa I do you wrong to criticise
for I myself have chosen this drear fate
much to the delight of my family.
Forgive me friend, how easily we err
making judgements out of our own stupidity
with casual cutting criticism based on ignorance.
Love often is mislead to foolish words
when we conflate our identities,
however helpfull our hearts would be.

E-tai Mayo quan c'hi

Hwa One last thing, then no more.
E-tai, be carefull—
There's native gracefullness in all you do
and, in the court's arts, I have observed
you make an effort to be clumsy,
fearing to excell and so excuse yourself.
While other's devote every once of discipline
to properly execute the movements, sounds
and services you deliberately seek some fault
to take attention from your native art
and shadow your showing to the common lot,
hoping thereby to win your annonymity.
But fault in this may find your face
to those obvservances of error,
and then they shall look upon your fair
and famous beauty, forgetting all the arts.
For in beauty there's no mistaking you
and, you shall be singled out anew.

E-tai [*blushing*]

I fear to speak response
at what you say, but, thank you
most dearly for your observances.
Come now, here! Let's play a game of maja,
and, if you wont cheat me,
as you always do, I'll beat you.

Hwa Ha! To cheat at maja is crafty
but to beat you I need not be.

Enter the Eunich Pi-Ku

Pi-Ku Ladies, I have most urgent news,
great news, wonderful things to tell.
There'll be a great selection soon,
Emperor will take new concubines
into his private palace. In one week
a great review will be accomplished.
Imagine it! From this palace, this very one
ten new cortesans will be chosen
to harken to the Emperor's Harem.
A greater honor is not imaginable.
I've been sent to tell you all.
Kao Chao himself will select the prospects.
You've only a week to set yourselves aright.
I must go now, spread the news.
[*exits*]

Hwa This is wonderful!
Even the prospect of selection is exciting.
Tho' I've little chance, that's sure.
Still, I'll enjoy the preparation
and like inferior gold set next the best
I, too, will shine a bit brighter.

Enter Mai Li, another cortesana

Mai-Li [*excited*] You've heard the news?

Hwa Just now.

Mai-li It's almost beyond belief —
that from this very palace some will be chosen
though hundreds of palaces are crammed
with the most dazzling beauties. Sweet sisters.
How fortunate we are,
to be chosen to the Emperor's own harem!

Regardless of who's selected
 O, but I fear Kao Chao won't chose me,
 he's never even glanced at me.
 Anyway, this will be a famous competition.

Hwa And surely we'll all have fine new robes,
 beautifull jewels and paints and rouge.
 No expense will be spared, I'm sure.

Li-Mai But E-tai, why so dour?
 You perplexedly knit your brows
 as tho shadow thoughts play in your mind.
 Are you ill?

E-tai No, dear sister, it's nothing.

Li-Mai But, certainly you'll be a main contender
 as Kao Chao has eye'd you more than once.
 You have excellent chances to be a hit.

E-tai I'd rather sleep in a snake pit
 than be touched by the hands of Chin!

Li-Mai [*shocked, agast*]
 E-tai! Shhh! [*Looks about.*]
 For such remarks you know the due—
 man, woman, child, cut in two!
 I did not hear you.

Hwa Nor I, of that you have my vow.
 And Li-Mai, don't dare repeat it,
 I beg of you; besides you missheard
 and I'm the only witness.

Li-Mai Don't dishonor me, dear sister.
 E-tai is family to my feeling, too.
 Both of us, as witnesses to nothing
 have nothing to contend.
 But you are right to stop her mouth
 for this competition there are many
 who'll forward themselves to any end.

E-tai I disgrace myself to contaminate your ears
 with my mad utterances -- forgive me, friends.

[*Mai Li embraces her.*]

Li-Mai Sweet love. And you, dear Hwa,
we sisters three
Are we not now of true family
and in that we are ever one.
But I go now - to mirror moments
when you are all yourselves, come
join us in gossip, for surely tonight
many longing hearts will pine upon the pillow
dreaming of a dream come true.

Hwa Later we'll join you. [*Li Mai exits.*]
E-tai, please you must promise me
you know how things go here.
Since we are all friends
what happens to you, if there's trouble,
may well be the very end
of all who love you and call you friend.
If you must speak these things --
and without one friend to speak the heart
not one soul has freedom --
but never, never before another sister
or someone will say were part of a plot.

Scene Four

In the Throne Room. The Drum Bell is sounded. All prostrate themselves. Chin is seated on the dias. General Woo, Lee Sze, Kao Chao, Chun Yu Yueh.

Chun Yu Your Majesty.
The great task is accomplished,
the long years of the Warring States is over,
all war is at an end.
For generations civil strife has plagued our land.

The seven states eternally contended,
murderous enmities of powerful clans
were heaped upon the backs of peasants
to further themselves the lust for war
boiled like a caldron in the blood of enmity,
factions fomented on all sides,
the suffering was terrible. No law was respected.
A handful of nobles, to augment their power
sent multitudes to hideous death.
Ordinary people of extraordinary talents
were blocked in advancement at every pass.
All priviledges were hereditary,
brutal subjection fell on the black haired people.
On all sides our borders were insecure,
barbarian peoples, lacking all culture,
plundered, raped and robbed at will.
With no common defense mad tartars
like crazed animals brought torches of terror.
Children sucking at their mother's paps
were speared like a vast shoal of fish,
uncountably. All this is past.
A momentous achievement was in the past
never recorded. [*bows*]

Chin You speak well of our sick history.
Moo-Shi Your Majesty.
Your will is indominatable,
your intelligence more blinding than the ten suns.
Every state, the combined genius of all generals,
could not out-wit you. With infinite craft
and profound knowledge of evil ways,
you knew in adverse their strategems,
anticipated every move
and properly placed our forces.
As soon as your enemies had thoughts
to oppose you they were no sooner dead.
Every major battle was famous beyond belief,
when you gave orders Chin soldiers obeyed,
no cry for pity softened your heart

or lead you to misplace your historic duty.
 Tho' all tried none could leave you astray.
 Steadfast and unrelenting you forged forward.
 Even the beastly tartars learned enough
 to fear you. For ten thousand generations
 the illustrious honor of your deeds
 will be documented.
 You gave distinction to all who merit it,
 a lowly peasant is free to become a great general,
 any soldier who died in your cause
 has more honor heaped upon him
 than kings of old who are abhorrent to your will.
 Thus, you fill every heart with hope
 and none bickers over who has a right to lead.

Lee Shi Your Majesty. A New Order is at hand.
 Even Yao or Shun could not accomplish it.
 Preparations must be made for the New Dispensation.
 The old ways must be hacked away,
 clearing the path for Heaven's New Mandate.

Chin What measures do you advise?

Lee Shi The multitudes must have new visions
 to direct their understanding of momentous change.
 Of old the highest titles of the Ancient Ancestor
 were Celestial Sovereign, Terrestrial Sovereign,
 and Great Sovereign— who of the Three
 was most exalted and glorious.
 Upon pain of death for speaking,
 I advise the title of Great Sovereign.
 Your proclamations must be called edicts,
 your pronouncements, mandates.
 Only in such a manner will the New Order
 begin to dawn on the consciousness of mankind.

Chin Your intention is correct, your choice wrong.
 Rather I shall select another title.
 Of all titles Emperor is most appropriate to me,
 as well as Sovereign. Therefore, accordingly
 I am the Sovereign Emperor, by Heaven manifest,

The Divine Sovereign Emperor!
Henceforth, Chin Shih Hwang Ti!
All may stand as you declare it.

Chun Yu Your Majesty. A new emblem is needed.
A famous flag bannering the benefits
of your unique and august rule.

Chin Quite right. I . . . that is we
have given thought to it. Consider then
the last empire of any stature was Chou,
Chou 's emblem and insignia was Fire.
According to the ancient time-tested theory
of the five elements there was Wood,
Earth, Metal, Fire, and Water.
Therefore, the Element of my reign is Water,
for Water destroys the life-breath of Fire,
and Chin has superceeded the Fire Dynasty.
The color of the New Order is Black.
For Black emphasises the solemnity of our office
and is the opposite color of mourning.
Six is our sacred number,
for it is the square of three
and the cube of two— all things
in Heaven and Earth are contained in it,
Heaven's circle and the square of Earth.
Is it not said the sum of Heaven
mounts the throne of power on six dragons.

Lee Shi Your sagacity is unerring.
May I suggest, too, a revolution
of all weights and measurements, all standards
of mensuration unified and extended
throughout the whole earth.
Thus, from the eastern seaboard
to the westernmost edge of the world.
One system will prevail. From axles
of chariots to every sphere of industry,
commerce and the building trades.
Thus, all problems of mass production are resolved,

currency exchange is constant and unvarying
with confusions abated on every side.
Instruction in every field is thus simplified.

Chin Do any disagree?
[*Silence.*]
Then do it!

Lee Shi Great Sovereign— pray you one matter more.

Chin Speak, this day we do great things,
shape your words to exalted significance.

Lee Shi The world is at peace—
yet least precautions are taken
the whole ediface could crumble.
Through language mankind is distinguished
and unified with human spirit.
Yet words have many meanings in different minds
and clarity of r instruction may be confused,
The official language of our ancestors
is given in the Great Seal,
but who can understand it perfectly.
Even the scholars who spend their lives
studying their meanings have divided views
and talk all kinds of nonsense.
his will not do. In the state of Chao
they can barely read the characters of Chu
and the people of Zee delight
in mocking even the scholars of Lui.
Here one word means mother, there
it is a horse, elsewhere it means urination.
The language must be standardized.
Therefore, I solemnly propose a New Seal,
the same meanings will be manifest in every city.
Thus, for all the future your fame
will endure with correct name and meaning.

Chin Lee Shi, you are surely correct.
Throughout the entire world there's none
who could accomplish it so loyally as you.

Accomplish it. And quickly, too!

Lee Shi Master, for years I knew one day
you would accomplish the Confederation,
and every night I prepared for it,
the essence of the New Seal is now completed.

Chin This is the wonder of all days!

Chun Yu Your accomplishments will never be surpassed.

Chin No, you are wrong there, Prime Minister.

Chun Yu Master, can this be?

Chin Eternal things shall fall upon this land.
This, my Councilors, is the Great Beginning,
not the end. But now enough. Leave me.
Tonight Chin feasts you all with banqueting
and the cheers of ten thousand delights.
Kao Chao, remain with me a moment.

[Motions for the others to leave, they exit.]

Kao Chao, little did you speak today,
does some reticence of our doings
hold back your tongue?

Chao Kao Master, I am not worthy to speak
in such august company.
Momentous beyond belief is your doing,
beyond my comprehension. Master
who in all history could favor a eunich
as you have me. It is truly beyond dreaming.
I feared my words might have the babble-
of a sleep-walker dared I speak.

Chin You speak well, Kao Chao,
and Chin likes your modesty.
A new harem is needed too to commemorate the day.
Accomplish a new selection. You've an eye
for the high quality of true beauty,
knowing nothing of the passions of a man

your view is objective and removed.

O, remove entirely the old harem,
return them to their ancestors.

Chao Kao Their ancestors, Great Sovereign Emperor?

Chin Indeed, their ancient ancestors, Kao Chao.
They are useless to me now
they remind me too much of the past.

Chao Kao What belongs to Emperor no man may touch,
it will be their honor to die.

Chin Execute, too, the former Master of the Harem
you will take his place —
thats why I called you to this historic day,
you'll find all guards are ready to obey.

Scene Five

In the quarters of Chao Kao. Rain pours down and adds its mysterious sounds to the scene.

Guard Venerable Master, I have the concubine, E-tai;
will you see her now?

Kao Chao Yes, very well. Show her in. Then leave us.

Guard [*Escorts E-tai in and exits.*]
Master, here she is. I go.

Kao Chao Ah, there you are. So good to see you.
Please, be at ease. Come sit here.
So, you are E-tai, a lovely name,
lovely indeed— you are a rare one,
exquisit— as all the world can see.
E-tai, don't be nervous. I've only called
you for a brief visit. . . Ah. . . you see. . .
I've often noticed you of late.

Thoughts of you play like sweet music
in my mind's ear. Please,
don't think that strange. You know,
do you not, my position here?

E-tai Indeed, venerable Master.

Kao-Chao Good, good. I ment to speak to you before,
but business keeps me from these small plans
which are precious to oneself alone, but to
the state. . . ah, well, at last we have
some time to spend together.

E-tai Have I been remiss in my duty?

Kao-Chao Please, O no, no, put it out of mind!
Would you care for a touch of wine, dear?
It's a good relaxant of excellent quality.

E-tai I fear I have no taste for it.

Kao-Chao Hmmm, yes, yes, I understand.
Tis a bit akward to make conversation
out of the blue. But, ever since I laid
eyes on you the urge to share some part
of you remains wedged in my heart.

E-tai But I thought. . . O, forgive me, sir
that is. . .

Kao-Chao Put it out of mind, no need for embarassements.
Yes, indeed, I am a eunich as you supposed.
But being less than man makes not
me less than person.
And, as a person it is I long to chat with you.
You see, dear E-tai,. . . how to say it?
I do taste and touch and dream and feel,
you mustn't think me strange or contemptable.
O, listen, it's raining. Lovely, isn't it?

E-tai Indeed, it is. But venerable Master,
I fear to share your intimate conversation.
From the lowest classes I was taken,
and don't really fit here as others do.

All of it is strange to me, and most,
if I may use the word—unnatural.

Chao-Kao [Laughing good-naturedly.]
E-tai, we converse in confidence,
let me tell you this. Don't think yourself
so far beneath my status
that friendship is quite impossible.
From a family of eight children I came
My father feared we'd die of starvation,
so wretched was our lot.
At ten, the chance came to send me here,
to the Royal Palace where he knew
I'd be well fed and cared for.
At home, with sticks we beat the rats away,
My younger brother's foot was eaten.

E-tai [Wincing.]
Yes, you must have had a great suffering.

Chao-Kao But enough of that. My! My!
Listen to that rain. Even as a child
I rememberance how much I loved the rain.
Snuggled in my bed, I'd press an ear
close as possible to the window
and inhale the misty fragrance.
Ah, E-tai, don't laugh at me,
or my clumsy efforts to make words.
Somehow I feel great fondness for you
exquisitely your beauty touches me.
For it is sex, not sensuality that was extinguished
and, perhaps, as the man whose lost his sight,
an enrichment of other facilities occurs,
making simple sensations quite rare.
For example, just to touch your glowing skin
has become for me a passion. The feel
of your silken hair between my fingers. . .

E-tai [Drawing back, alarmed.]
Forgive me, Master, but I must go.

Chao-Kao E-tai! Don't! I beg of you!
Don't despise me my feeling or think me grotesque.

E-tai Master, it is not that.
You are highly respected and must respect yourself.
But, I can not, my heart is already given
and only to his touch may I consent.
He's of my village and my betroved.

Chao-Kao That's all over, E-tai.
In the past all that must be put --
never will it be. No concubine
ever leaves the Palace, nor will you.

E-tai My spirit-love is ever in my heart
there it shall always be, untill I die.

Chao-Kao E-tai, I wanted you to be my friend.
hundreds of beauties surround me every day,
yet, not to one of them have I deigned
to shame myself.

E-tai Then both of us must have a bad fate.

Chao-Kao I can make your life wonderful,
or more terrible than can be imagined.
I could have you tortured and killed,
merely at my word, for rebuffing me.
One word from me
and your life would be endless agony.

E-tai No offense is ment. But I must go. Forgive me.
[*Exits in a rush.*]

Chao-Kao E-tai! . . . I . . . ah . . . [stunned]
Can it be? She's left, left me cold!
And yet . . . I did'nt order her to stop.
This is impossible—a common concubine!
Ahhh! Ye gods, ye gods, ye gods!
Only her tender touch I would have cherished
to have some small part of her
memoried sweetly in this wretched longing heart,
yet, despite my position and my power

by her I'm treated worse than a leper.
O, why did you do it, E-tai,
why, why? For surely all the gods must know
long and dearly for this offense you'll pay.

[Collapses in a fit of tearful frustration.]

Act Three

Scene One

In Chin's residence. His son Fu-Su in his study. Intently buried in a book. Enter Lee Sze.

- Lee Shi* Ah, the very picture of a budding scholar.
Fu-Su, why aren't you with your brothers
They've gone horse-back riding, plan a party,
why do you do all by yourself?
- Fu-Su* Forgive me, I didn't hear you enter.
- Lee Shi* No matter -- Ah, the sacred yarrow sticks.
Fu-Soo, have you an interest in such things?
I had no idea you have such interest,
whatever can you learn with this?
- Fu-Su* For three years now I study I-Ching
I'm so fascinated with these things.
- Lee Shi* Hmm, I see. Does your father know of this?
- Fu-Su* No, father doesn't care these things, I think.
- Lee Shi* Do you just amuse yourself or study?
- Fu-Su* I study. As best I can.
- Lee Shi* Then you must have I-Ching master
to guide you through the thickets.
- Fu-Su* Do you know I-Ching, Lee Shi?
Surely you must for throughout the four corners
of the world you are considered greatest scholar.
- Lee Shi* A passing acquaintance I am credited,
but it has been long ago I study I-Ching.

At your interest tho' I'm amazed,
you know the Old Ones consider this work sacred.

Fu-Su I know.

Lee Shi It's said I-Ching mustn't be studied
'till one's already old, steeped in life-time
of scholarly dedication. Confucius himself
dared not touch it till the age of seventy.
What question did you contemplate
when you cast the I-Ching, what hexagram
did the yarrow stalks provide? --
That is if you don't mind my question.

Fu-Su I contemplated fathers rule and the future,
the hexagram I found from my hand
was Chien-chien, subject to the changes
"Arrogant Dragon Have Cause To Repent."
I'm most troubled at this reading.

Lee Shi Do not be troubled, Fu-Su,
what is it that troubles you?

Fu-Su I'm not sure. . . but. . .

Lee Shi Yes, tell me. We speak in confidence.

Fu-Su No, I'm only a novice and shame myself,
but tell me, Lee Shi— lately I read
the words of Confucius and am much amazed.
Never have I heard of anything so profound.
The more I think on it, deeper it becomes
and when about to suddenly grasp meanings
of some special point, suddenly
the meanings seem to disappear.
Confucius taught benevolence
that the correct ruler must be compassionate,
for the purpose of ruling is to prosper people
uphold right conduct in all things.
And Lee Sze, this I found most penetrating,
do not do to others what you do not want
them to do to you. Sincerety in all things
is counseled. One feels reading these words

from insincerety worst things happen
to mankind.

Lee Shi Yes, Confucius was a great man,
but a dreamer— that is why the rulers
of this world don't heed his words
in the difficult task of government.

Fu-Su But, Lee Shi, when given the reigns of government
the prosperity of his domaine was famous
throughout all states. It was jelousy
of lesser men, afraid of this good idea
that kept his good works from liberating
the whole of humankind.

Lee Shi Fu-Su, you are son of Chin.
taught also hereditary kingship
wrong, that government should go
the nations most able men.

Fu-Su Promotes the idea in matters of war,
should it not apply to issues of state
has power of matters of war?

Lee Shi 'Wisdom' could deprive you
and all your family of an inheritance,
is such wisdom wise?

Fu-Su Is it sincere to ask such questions,
the purpose of government is to further
prosperity of the people?
do you disagree this idea?

*Enters the room, where he has been listening off to the
side for a few moments. Chin is angry.*

Chin How dare you be impertinent
my Prime Minister.

Lee Sze We only speak in play, Great Emperor,
he ment no offense.

Fu-Soo [*emphatically*] No offense was ment father, but

I do not speak in play.

Chin I'll tell you about Confucius
 And the heros he harps upon,
 Yao and Shun our greatest Emperors
 their own flesh and blood.
 revered Duke of Chou killed both his brothers,
 et the whole world called them sages
 acting in the public good.
 demanded musicians and entertainers killed
 over a trifle, and why?
 his sense of propriety was offended,
 Confucius is regarded as a philosopher
 teaches humanity above all things,
 a sage for all the world to hallow.
 dares complain over my deeds,
 I who have out-faced all their famous doings!
 [*Fu-soo begins to respond, but Lee Shi wjispers to
 him out of range of Chin's hearing.*]

Lee Shi To speak now is foolishness,
 it is called "Throwing meat
 onto path of hungry tiger."
 [*Fu-soo takes the council of Lee-Sze and bows
 respectfully.*]

Fu-Su I humbling thank you father for your corrections.

Scene Two

General Moo-Shi, Lee Shi. At the home of Lee Shi. A palace nearly as palatial as that of Chim himself. It is late at night. Candles flicker on the walls.

- Moo-Shi* Lee Shi, we have been friends for many years in all matters I've done my duty. My loyalty have never been questioned— yet, I must speak heavy concerns make turbulent my thoughts.
- Lee Shi* Speak with openness, Moo-Shi and do not fear your frankness. My honor is totally pledged to your confidence.
- Moo-Shi* I would unburden my heart regarding Chin.
- Lee Shi* The air hear has no alien ear, speak what 'ere disturbs you.
- Moo-Shi* I'm troubled over the Emperor's edicts. Hysterical fears are in too many hearts, Emperor is now committed to Eternal Life and pursues with extravagant passion his search for Long-Life. The Fu-shih's insinuate themselves unto his confidence, feed the Emperor with fantastic claims of magic elixirs in fairy islands Emperor hangs upon their words— His eyes burn feverish at their false hopes. Fortunes are consumed, and. . .
- Lee Shi* Speak truly your heart's telling. I've given my life's honor, this will go no further than my own ear.
- Moo-Shi* [*Ironically.*] Whatever happens I must dare. It is increasingly apparent to everyone tho' none dare speak of it, that the fear of death haunts him night and day. Why else this desperate longing for immortality.

He's forbidden to everyone the subject of death,
 none may speak of it within his hearing.
 Under penalty of sever punishment.
 Everyone says only what will please him,
 regardless of consequences to the state.
 Hence, the Councilors are corrupted all.
 How can the state maintain integrity
 under such circumstances.
 I fear some sickness is set upon him
 which no medicine will ever mediate.
 Children of my closest friends have been torn
 from the arms of their parents
 for some mad scheme to make him immortal,
 never to be heard from again.
 What words have I for their bitter tears?
 300,000 men were made castrates just last week,
 so that there thoughts would be more pure
 in building fantastic palaces, 300,000!
 All this because Foo-Shih said spirits impure
 would make quest for the immortal elixir possible.
 But castration saps the manly strength
 and the armies fear their own fate.

Lee Shi Yes, the situation is difficult, I know.
 But have I not dared oppose him time
 and time again, risking my life
 to stay the worst of it. What can I do?

Moo-Shi With rare exception you're the only one,
 yet even this seems insufficient.
 If there is a failure of the Heavens
 and Chin should not live forever,
 who will succeed him? He refuses to name
 a successor. Into chaos the empire will plunge
 without a pre-determined course.
 Many there are who'd vent grave grievances
 if shadowy hesitations fell upon the scene.
 I fear even to consider it.

Lee Shi As I as well. My hopes are with Fu-Soo,

yet, I worry over his resolve.
 Confucian influence is too much on him,
 his younger brother is too frivolous,
 and had Kao Chao as his tutor
 who daily worked upon his mind. Who knows
 what he's implanted there.
 Tell me, what view have you of Kao Chao?

Moo-Shi Dare I really speak so frank with you?

Lee Shi I need your advise. Cowards are many,
 brave men like you a rarity.

Moo-Shi I do not trust him, not a whit.
 Often I notice his eye is sideward glancing,
 he dares audacious council - supine
 and arrogant at once. Yet,
 Emperor bestows high favor on his head
 and often applauds his foolish praise.
 Kao Chao knows well the Emperor's fears
 and encourages his fantasies of Long-Life,
 regardless of the cost to others.

Lee Shi I fully agree. Crafty, cruel and trecherous
 A slight hint of disloyalty against a comrade
 brought him instant death, so, even I
 beware him dearly. Hold!
 Someone comes, lets no more on this.

A guard enters.

Guard Great Minister. Come quickly,
 Emperor is in a fury.

Lee Shi What is it?

Guard News has just arrived. A comet-god has landed.

Lee Shi A comet-god, how can this be?

Guard It turned into a stone in the provine of Ho Nan.

Lee Shi Why cause for such alarm.

- Guard* On it was a message: "Primal Dragon Will Soon Die." Rumor of this strange event spreads like prairie fire throughout the populace. Emperor is furious. None can quit him.
- Lee Shí* Go! I'll be there directly.
- Moo-Shí* Must be a trick. Work of the rebels.
- Lee Shí* No doubt, but Emperor believes such things, to challenge his belief is death, to agree with its meaning, death. To dangerous council I am summomed, I can not say he is not the Primal Dragon, nor dispute the auguries of Heaven. Many astologers tonight, I fear, will die as they stumble over interpretations of these falling stars. And, will I?
- Moo-Shí* Surely sir you need not fear personal consequences from such a thing.
- Lee Shí* Had I been presumptuous 'bout Emperor's favor I'd not be standing here tonight. Leave me a moment, friend— to compose myself. Later, with Heaven's leave we'll later make words on these matters.
- Moo-Shí* Heaven guide you, sir.
[Exits.]
- Lee Shí* Put in Silloquy here from first part.

Scene Three

Chin's private chambers. A huge replica of palaces, temples, whole cities, laid out in miniature detail.

Chín And above the sarcophagus

let the illuminaries of the heavens shine
 each stone of the most precious hues
 precisely set and scintillating as the stars.
 A river, too, in perpetual motion,
 here, surrounding the miniature mausoleum.

Architect In perpetual motion, Master?

Chin Of course, ylu fool!

Architect Forgive my ignorance, Master, but water,
 won't it evaporate in time? Or am I wrong?

Chin [*Impatiently.*]
 Of course, of course. A brilliant conception,
 truly you instruct in all forms of knowledge.

Enter Fu-Su.

Fu-Su Father, I must speak with you.

Chin Can't you see I'm busy. Go 'way. Later.

Fu-Su Father, I humbly beg of you.
 [*Chin motions the architect away.*]

Chin Speak.

Fu-Su Father, news of your edict has just reached me.
 Can it possibly be true— that you've
 ordered five hundred of our greatest scholars
 to be executed, to be buried alive?

Chin You heard correctly. They plot against me
 and slander my name throughout the land.

Fu-Su Father, this edict is ill-advised,
 panic will storm the entire land.
 The New Order only recently is accomplished
 and such an edict will engender fears
 so powerful the entire kingdom may collapse.
 It's not possible— total destruction
 of all our famous classics,
 the teachings of Confucius ripped out

like a rank weed. Tell me truly
how could this be possible?

Chin [*Furious at being challenged.*]
Fu-Soo, beware your words,
I am Chin Shih Hwang Ti,
what what you've just said— nay much less
legions have died, do not tempt me,
you are arrogant beyond belief!

Fu-Su [*Sadly.*]
Is it such a temptation to have me dead?
But, father, this you must now know
you'll not live a moment longer for the deed.
Even had you 10,000 Long-Life elixirs
to chose from.

Enter Moo-Shi; seeing Fu-Su, bows and is about to withdraw

Chin [*Trembling with rage.*]
No, come in, Moo-Shi!
My eldest son speaks disrespect.
Get him from my sight immediately.
You see, Moo-Shi, how these scholars work.
Now my own son plots against me,
I will not hear it!

Moo-Shi [*Draws his sword.*]
Great Emperor, at your command.

Chin Quickly, advise me!
What's a proper penalty?

Moo-Shi Another mortal would die unquestionably,
but, Great Emperor, your kindness is immense,
the most famous feature of your reign.
Banish him - for two years duration -
at the Wall. By your humble leave
I myself will accompany him.
There he'll learn lessons he'll not forget

to return humbly, with filial love,
remorse, and 10,000 regrets.

Chin Moo-Shi, you die if your council is insincere.

Moo-Shi [*Forcefully, with confidence.*]
I speak wisdom and on pain of death.

Chin So be it, banishment!
[*Moo-Shi takes Fu-Soo's arm, they exit.*]

Scene Four

*In the chambers of Chao Kao. He is just receiving news of
Fu-Su's banishment from one of his informants*

Informer Yes, the Emperor has banish eldest son
for two years time to Northern provencies
To commnad with Meng T'ien and his brother
The 300,000 troops assembles there.
The report is absolutely authentic,
I have verified it all myself.

Chao Kao You will be rewarded for this quick report,
in such matters as these quick dispatch
is essential, for information slow coming
can not be quick acted on,
and who looses the urging advantages of action
is sore set to serve another's will. Go!
Rewards will be yours for this tidbit.
A tasty tidbid, too.

Informer I will keep our informants alert
As to all these matters and will report to you
As always, Long
[*Informant exits. Chao Kao pours a drink of wine and
savors the first sip.*]

Chao Kao Excellent, excellent, indeed!
 Fu-Su is exiled, 'least for a spell.
 Now, with this wedge twix father and son
 I'll work the younger son's ascension—
 He's self indulgent, foolish, lacking merit.
 The interests of the world
 hang between his legs, a fit candidate, I think
 for an empire to inherit.
 Ha, imagine it— me, Chao Kao
 a eunuch will soon to sire an Emperor
 if all goes right. Lee Shi is distraught
 and favoring Fu-Su he'll ill-favored be
 if dare he speak on his behalf.
 Now, from the capital Chin must be removed.
 Aye, Come crafty counsel, hatch me a plan.
 Yes, yes, ah, now I have it.
 I'll counsel a sacred tour throughout the land,
 as Emperors of Old to manifest their power
 and impress upon the world their holy right.
 Yes, a pilgrimage of the 5 sacred mountains,
 yes, that should do quite nicely.
 He'll go for it— how could he resist.
 [*Mockingly; mimicking himself.*]
 "Your Majesty. Emperor's of Old
 to set right the course of man
 and establish the Mandate of Heaven
 made homage to the Holy Mountains -
 You, who are The Unique One,
 by fullfilling the ancient way
 thereby you establish the New Order—
 Things like that, he loves it . . .
 Yes, and Lee Sze must accompany him
 and, of course, myself. . Ha Ha Ha . . .
 and also Hu-Hai. . .Ha Ha Ha.
 [*Near hysterical laughter and tears of self delight.*]

Scene Five

In the Throne Room. Chin confers with Foh Shih Lu concerning the Long-Life project.

Lu Your Majesty, we work night and day,
all realms of mystic knowledge have been beckoned,
spirits of stream, hill, and field
have been consulted. I-Ching directs us
and all arts of scapulmancy and alchemy
are summoned for purification of the elixir.

Chin Yes, yes, but what has happened? What is the
result?

Lu As yet, nothing produced the perfect accord,
only one answer for this strange failure
explains the inadequacy of our efforts—
some impure spirit is afoot
that would do harm to your sovereignty.
Though you have fasted and perform the rites
the observances must not be perfect,
some other effort is required.

Chin It's beyond belief that this goes on—
month after month after month.
Huge sums of money I've bestowed
upon your efforts— Hu-Fi fails to return
from the magic islands. Delay after delay!
And now some evil spirit mocks
and torments my dreams.

Lu Your Majesty, since he who rules the empire
can not lead a pure and simple life
we can only advise your whereabouts be secret
in order that evil spirits can not find you
and pure spirits in their absence will come.
Pure Spirit can not be wet by water,
nor burned by fire, he rides on cloud and air
and endures as long as Heaven and Earth.

You, too, must become as Pure Spirit
and with evil knowing your residence
it is most difficult indeed.

- Chin* What say you Astrologers?
- Astrologer* Lu speaks correctly. It is time
for travel and removal.
- Chin* Yes, I would be Pure Spirit.
Henseforth, no longer will be used the royal "we"
Now I am "Pure Spirit."
- Chao-Kao* Your Majesty, I had last night a dream
and would not intrude this august audience
unless I thought it had some relevance here.
I saw you at the 5 sacred mountains,
making sacrifice to Ancient Ancestors.
Perhaps Heaven favored my unworth soul
with premonitions of this present council
and to message you with this mission.
- Chin* Can this be?
- Lu* All servants are instruments of Emperor's.
Indeed, there's precedent for such a thing.
- Chao-Kao* Rumors and criticisms are evil spirits, too
and some disloyal souls have criticized
your unvarying justice. From my subordinates
it comes to me that Fu-Su's banishment
is latest excuse to challenge you.
And, if I may suggest, it occurs to me
that Hu-Hai would be most honored
to accompany you— thus, to the world
it would be demonstrate your family love
despite judgements that your sovereign self
must in State interest make.
- Chin* Lee Shi, you are most silent here,
advise me on these matters.
- Lee Shi* Your health primarily occurs to me.
Your Majesty of late you've traveled much

and I fear another sojourn coming so soon.

Chao Kao All are concerned with this
but achievement of immortal life
renders the very cure to this most obvious of fears.

Lu Chao Kao 's right.
Once Pure Being inhabits the Emperor
this worry is as but a drop lost
in the endless compass of the immortal sea.

Chin Then it's decided. We leave immediately.

enter Hu-Hai, youngest son

Ah, Hu-Hai!

Hu-Hai [*bowing*]Great Emperor and noble father, I was sent
for, as you requested.

Chao Kao Your Majesty, I anticipated that you—

Chin The Emperor has decreed he will make an inspection
of the provinces, perhaps I will allow you accompany
me.

Hu-Hai Great Sovereign
the joy of such a travel is better than a dream
though I would never have suggested it
what wonderful honor it would bring to me,
I dare not hope that you would permit it.

Chin Hu-Hai, you have been good son,
But you are too given to play all time.
It will be good for you to see T'ien Sha,
How whole world is Emperor's work table.
You will learn by observing. Now,
I have thing to attend. Lee Shi, come
I have some matter talk you [*all bow, exits with Lee Shi*]

Hu-Hai My goodness! This good luck unbelievable,
To travel with father throughout the empire,
And spend time, and see wide world's rim,
this is great good fortune.

Lu Great Prince, indeed, this much good fortune,
But do not think good fortune come like rain,
Or sun, or fresh breezes.
Chao Kao, Emperor's great Chamberlain,
Make this arrangements by bringing to Emperor
Good timed words of your great virtues.

Hu-Hai Tell me, Chao Kao, is this a truth?
For if so, I have great indebtedness to you,
For this is a very wonderful thing for me,
To be favored among all my many brothers.
This is great honor, indeed.

Chao-Kao It is always great honor for me to advance
Your favor with the Emperor. Even if
I must sometimes put myself at great risk
To remind Emperor of your great love and loyalty.

Hu-Hai Chao Kao, you serve as my law teacher,
And always very patient with my slow learning,
Now, you not only prepare my mind
To show characteristic of a proper Prince,
But, now you provide also opportunity for fun,
And you know I like the girls and fun
More than anything in whole empire.
Chao Kao, in whole empire, methinks that you
Are above all, most loyal subject. I must go
To prepare. Tsai Ch'ien. [*exit*]

Lu Chao Kao, is Prince really so stupid as seems.

Chao-Kao I am counting on it.
[*both laugh*]

Act Four

Scene One

*Nothern China, at the Wall. Meng Tien, Moo-Shi, Lt., etc
It is mid morning.*

- Fu-Su* Just look at it, Meng Tien
what a horrid sight my eyes survey.
By tens of thousands they struggle and toil,
near naked, half starving, utterly wretched
devoid of the least semblance of hope.
Was it for this the Empire's been united
so that our own kind must perish
in such awefull agony?
- Meng* Most sorrowfull is the sight, my Lord,
well do I know. For many years I've directed
all doings here, yet, I merely enforce
the Emperor's will in all these matters.
- Fu-Su* They're treated worse than animals,
its disgusts me to the depths!
How many sons, brothers, fathers, cousins,
are skeletalized in this inhuman service.
I fear some great sin must lay upon my soul
that 10,000 centures will not clenthse.
- Meng* Great Prince, do no consider so.
Nor pray you speak as such before the others --
it would seem most unseemly to your father.
- Fu-Su* Then let it be! I can not stomache it!
Better I be degutted than let
these horrors pass through my entrails in silence.

- Meng* My Lord, instand death is ordered
for any who complain— bear it bravely
it is Heaven's way.
- Fu-Su* No! It is not the way of Heaven.
Heaven does not sanction it!
- Meng* My Lord, you've heart for people suffering,
compassion is you nature and your fame
yet you are young in world's ways.
My Lord, I pray you, wait upon the day
when Emperor's crown sits upon you head
then it will be proper to do and say
what 'ere you will, for the present
bear it bravely without complaint.
- Fu-Su* But look at them, how ghastly, horrid
and despicable their circumstance.
- Meng* For many years I've been appointed
to this post, as horrid as it is
believe me there's much worse.
- Fu-Su* No, Meng T'ien, nothing could be worse.
- Meng* My Lord, humbly I ask permission to speak,
frankly and with complete sincerety,
on pain of death I'd tell you something.
- Fu-Su* Speak, I've not the cruelty to kill
a man such as you of great sincerety.
- Meng* Great honors have been given me,
over many years of military battle—
I've waded in blood, know agony of war.
As well as any man alive.
You know not the perils of our history
and have yet to see the carnage of great combat.
Emperor does right to build this wall.
In past times, and even now, are things
more unspeakable than what you see.
Inhuman efforts are needed for inhuman foes.
We, my Lord, are human, with heart

mind and soul. But creatures, by millions
 live and more beyond this wall.
 they have no high-thought in their head,
 idea of spirit is alien to them,
 they know not meaning of family tie,
 for music they beat on jugs,
 scream at each other like dancing monkey,
 they eat their dead, live children when hungry,
 sweeping down by hundred of thousands,
 without armies or leadership, they invade
 and overrun all human habitations—
 Like raw meat on hungry tiger's path
 they devour absolutely, mutilate everything
 in sight, nothing stops them till their fill
 is fully taken. Ten miles away their smell
 will tell you they are near,
 we call them Huns but they are animals,
 with human semblage but inhuman hearts.
 Only prospects of certain death dissuade them—
 that is why we need the Great Wall,
 however many die, at least for human purpose
 they work, toil, suffer, and fall.

Fu-Su I'm not totally unaware these things,
 yet, worse you speak than I imagined.
 But, tell me, Meng T'ien,
 How this gives reason to such cruelty,
 cannot future's grand idea of wall progress
 without the worst of this distress—
 and how does this for other deaths account,
 such as 500 scholars buried alive?
 #00,000 castrated and so much more,
 these actions weaken strength and will,
 defeating even purpose of the wall.
 No, evils I see mostly need not be.

Meng Your Highness has many questions,
 I can not answer all— nor is it fit
 for me to presume such thing.
 T'would be an arrogance beyond belief

to justify actions of Commander-In-Chief.
Please, do not bend me to it.
I've no standing to justify nor decide
save do my duty or suicide.

Fu-Su You are most honorable man,
I do you wrong to press such thing
or pour into your ear burdens of my heart.
Regardless consequence I must write
imperial father beseeching changes
or I'm not fit to be honored by you.
To whatever station in life we're brought
whether commoner, craftsman, noble, or King
much it comes to the same thing.
Either our lives are pledged to honor, or not
regardless of consequence we must act,
and live till death sincerity of heart.
Dreaded is the idea of Emperor's censure,
still more displeasure of my father.
Yet, even worse, sin against Heaven,
if such it seem to me.
Tonight I write a plea to Emperor and father
whatever becomes my destiny.

Meng Great caution I have cautioned you
yet here I stand, your instrument
300,000 soldiers are at my beck and call,
Great Prince, but pronounce the word
and all our lives are at your service.
No power on earth can entice my disloyalty,
here is my sword, my neck—
even if you challenge Chin's sovereignty
do it, I pray, I've spoken traitorously!

Fu-Su [*Surprised; alarmed.*]
Mean you what you say?

Meng I beg your permission to suicide
for you must doubt my honor
to ask such a question of me.

Fu-Su Meng T'ien, please! Listen carefully.
 There's no dishonor in my refusal,
 nor will I allow your execution.
 Your honor and mine is for us to be friend.
 Gaze upon the suffering of the multitude,
 consider best purpose for our common end!
 Put away your sword and take mine,
 for I, too, seal myself with your vow.
 I swear I never want to be Emperor
 but if I must that destiny obey
 I order you to live. If in your words
 there's treason
 my life is pledged to that same reason.

Scene Two

In the chambers of Chao Kao. A conference with Foh Shih Lu is in progress. Lu is just entering the room.

Chao-Kao Lu, come here, I would speak to you.
 Efforts to achieve Long-Life elixir go slow
 and Emperor is most distraught, you know
 the penalty for failure in duty.
 It is not pleasant.

Lu We will not fail and if we're destroyed
 all chances to achieve it will be lost.
 Thus, condemning Emperor to certain death.

Chao-Kao [*Smiling sardonically.*]
 Yes, ineed, hummm. . .
 There's nothing more certain, it seems,
 for, other than the claimed longevity
 of your own kind, who in all history
 has escaped the net of Heaven?
 It would be most momentous to accomplish this.

Lu Emperor inspires momentous deeds
to doubt this would surely be blasphemy.

Chao-Kao But I do not contend you on this point,
everyone has right, for Emperor, to try his way,
of one thing, however, I'm most confident
that you, Foh-Shih know secrets of strange alchemy
and have produced miracle herbs and fungi
to cure grave illnesses, even it's said
to hasten sorrowful living to merciful dead.
Have you a poison for merciful end
that no doctor can discover or detect?

Lu It may be this is most possible.

Chao-Kao And could you produce for me such a drug
one not known to former times
which has a slow effect that none can detect?
If so, how long must be the preparation,
surely not so long as Long-Life elixir.

Lu Of course, such things take time.

Chao-Kao Shir, do not play with me
or presume upon my gullibility
if the matter's one of your own survival
and a week was all the time you had
have I a right to hope you'd be successful?

Lu This 'successfull' would be dearly prayed for
tho' search for Long-Life must needs be suspended.

Chao-Kao [*Cautiously.*]
This cannot be for I can't countermand the Emperor
yet, surely, you need not sleep so much
you are reputedly exceedingly clever.
Perform, in secret, this favor for me
and count me as dear friend of you Magicians,
for Emperor honors me to give advise.
And such a task will serve you purpose, too
unless greatly I'm mistaken.
I must have drug before the Great Departure.

Lu I see. . .very well, you may count on it.
 Death's drug is simpler, Long-Life more difficult.
 But, Great Master, a thought occurs to me,
 the drug I have in mind while undetectable
 if administered in one dose would produce
 erratic symptoms in the consumer— a fact
 that would surely cause suspicion,
 even in small doses over a period of time
 the patient, if we may call him that,
 would have erratic thoughts, even delusions.

Chao-Kao Of what sort— do you know?

Lu Man, near death, often sees himself immortal,
 and has illusory conversations with the living
 and the dead.

Chao-Kao But, if native disposition is of this nature
 such symptoms could not be easily read.

Lu Tis true, t'would be most difficult
 distinguishing the red on red.

Chao-Kao Enough— hold these words in strick confidence
 and charge you to this task.

[*Lu bows and exits.*]

Indeed, Ha, Ha, t'is most true
 an exlixir of death is easier to do
 than that for immortality
 as any alchemical magician will agree!
 And more impossible than Long-Life
 Is that drug to make E-tai love me.

Scene Three

Southern coast of China. Chin's retinue has just finished ascending Mount Kuaichi and sacrificing to Yu the Great.
ll.

Counselor Your Majesty. Your humble Counselors beg word.

Chin What is it?

Counselor Great Sovereign, we've prepared a memorial in commemoration of your august deeds, a mounument to last a thousand generations so that all history will know your fame.

Chin Read it. I will listen.

Counselor Illustrious the Soverign Emperor whose kindness remains forever, who unites and pacifies the land
In the 37th year he toured his relm, inspected all distant regions, ascended Mount Kuaichi, examined local customs and was accorded respect by all the black-haired people. Chin, a sage-king ammended laws, made old ways manifest, established lasting order, but the six princes opposed him committed evil, moved armies into battle, by their own acts came to great grief.
The tryants were wiped out, the rebels perished, Chin's kindness forever reigns throughout the world as he rules all things, near and far.
From his sagacious eyes nothing is hidden, he makes reforms, teaches wisdom.
The sexes are strictly separated, license is ended, men and women are pure and honest.
If a man commits adultery, it is no crime to kill him. Chin's great rule purifies society; all men live in harmony and peace, obeying his orders.
Later ages will respect his law, his rule will endure for all time, the ministers

in his train extol his greatness, inscribe
this stone as a mounument to his glory.

Chin Yes, this is adequate and most truthfull.
Erect it! Now get away from me

Coun #2 Your Majesty, a communication has arrived
from Prince Fu-Su.

Chin Read it to me, Lee Shi,
this news I've much longed to recieve
for I have been sore at hear over Fu-Su.
The necessity for my stern judgement
does not sit well with me,
fain I'd rather have him at my side.
Ah, most he reminds me of his dear mother,
deep of hear, different from myself,
yet most loyal, honoring and faithful.
Nothing is so precious to a parent
as a child's contrition, sincere remorse
and promised to right wrong action.
Tis natures way that the child opposes the parent
seeking new directions in search of self.
He loves me dearly, that I dearly know
and now his repentense he would show.
For him I think I'll make exception
and cut short his long banishment.
Tis difficult for a son to always distinguish
when Emperor speaks and when father.
but read the words, I'm hungry
to hear the tone and tener of filial piety.

Lee Shi [*Reading.*]
Tis a tribute to your godly humanity
to forgive the foolish deeds of youth,
most Holy Sovereign and dearest father.

Chin I like it already. For here
he acknowledges the highest office of my sovereignty
as well as deep feelings for his father,
continue. . .

Lee Shí Most Holy Sovereign and dearest father.
Greatly I regret giving you offense
though never such purpose was presumed
much time I've given to considering my faults
here at extreme reaches of this alien world.
Too much I was a privileged and pampered Prince
unknowing of the cruelties that destiny gives
to others not born to famous fortunes
and the protection of an unprecedented parent.

Chín Ah, this sits well with me.
How easily a repentent son plucks
the heart-strings. O, this makes my day!

Lee Shí [*Continuing to read.*]
How many others must suffer a different lot.

Chín [Critically.]
This verges on repetition. Continue.

Lee Shí Now, father, this from depths of my loving heart.

Chín Ah, that's better, now I hear his voice again.

Lee Shí In obedience to my duty at the Wall
to oversee your works both great and small

Chín "And small" What's this? No matter,
and yet a better word should have been chosen,
but there's small fault in a small word.
Continue.

Lee Shí [*Continuing to read.*]
This I must bring to your imperial attention,
here there are things most terrible to mention.
Tears of thousands labor to your will
yet, by thousands half-starved they fall ill
dying by the droves to no purpose.
I beg of you, let me right and redress
these grievous abuses with new policy
for I am shamed before this unnatural suffering
and would honor the humanity of your caring
by putting end to this wonton cruelty.

Let this Holy Sovereign be my honor
to make swift changes in the name of my father.

Chín Ye gods —the fool's impossible!
How dare he question my righteous policy!
Viper! that would so poisonous strike
the softened heart of Emperor and father.
It makes me mad and furious,
decietful son that sends sweet words
to mock with malicious challenges.
Who does he think he is— that pip squeek!
Sniveling snot-nosed kid— that traitor
to the trials of his father's blood.
O, bloody, bloody, thoughts, better I'd bash
his skull in birth than live to bear
this brutal insolence!
Where is his surrogate?

Lee Shí You Majesty?

Chín His surrogate who dared to bring this news.

Lee Shí Bring the messenger of this letter forward
I want to see his face.

The messenger is brought forward.

Chín Did you receive this letter by his hand?

Messenger Your Majesty, I did.

Chín And brought it forward on your feet?

Messenger It was my honor to do the Prince's will.

Chín Kao Chao! What should be his penalty?

Chao-Kao His hands must be chopped off,
then his feet.

Chín [*Ruthlessly.*] And?

Chao-Kao Then he should suffer the 5 tortures
and finally cut in half.

Chin Execute the order! Without delay!
Messenger

[*Instantly takes out his sword.*]

Chin Shih Hwang Ti, your name is Sin!
[*Falls on his sword and dies, all are aghast.*
Attendant rushes to him to inspect him, as blood gushes on the floor]

Attendant Your Majesty the man is dead.

Chin [*Raging.*]
How dare he kill himself - how dare he!
Guard! Guard! Animal!
How dare he defile this court with his blood.
Who is in charge of this man's discipline,
he has failed him in his task —
none can escape the judgement
not the judgement of Chin Shih Hwang Ti,
The Pure One!— Judgement falls on his superior!

Lee Shi Your Majesty, this is outrageous,
all of his superiors up to the rank of 2nd General
must bear the penalty of this offense,
we must not sanction this lack of etiquette.

Chin You are correct, Lee Sze, I am too lenient.
It will be as you have said,
arrest them all and execute them all,
just as Kao Chao has recommended.
Wine! Wine! I must calm my nerves

Wine Master steps forward.

Chao-Kao Great Master, if there be some plot
against your holy person, the wine
may be poisoned. Allow me first to taste
for there's no greater honor than to die
in honorable service to the Emperor.

- Chin* You are most quick and thoughtful, Kao Chao and your loyalty is much overserved
- Lee Shi* Your Majesty, I've assembled the poets to deliver you to some pleasure— as you have commanded. it would do well for your purification, O Pure One, to clear the mind of these regrets.
- Chin* Yes, Lee Sze, I must remember my holy duty I would hear them, as you suggest. [*Lee Shi signals to the guards;*]
- Chao-Kao* [*aside, as Chin studies his tablets*] Grand Counsellor, what is this, about Pure Spirit? I do not know what is going on.
- Lee Shi* The Emperor told me he was feeling desperate Unhappy and need to change existences, from that of mortal to immortal Pure Being, henceforth now, forever, he will be only Nothing more than Pure Being, an immortal.
- Chao-Kao* I see. I wish you tell me these things, Lee Shi, It may go bad for me if I make bad mistake Inadvertently because I do not know these things.
- Lee Shi* I just learned of it myself.
-
- Poets enter with music players, Chin looks up, first poet prostrates himself before Chin*
-
- Poet #1* Pure Being, my poem is *The Lord Within the Clouds*, Would thou hear it now, your Majesty?
- Chin* Yes, I will hear it.
- Poet #1* [*reciting*] We have bathed in orchid water, Washing our hair with fresh perfumes We dressed ourselves like flowers

In rich embroidered clothing.
 The God has halted, swaying above us,
 Shining, ah, a persistent radiance!
 He is going to rest in the House of Life
 His brightness is like that of sun and moon.
 He yokes to his dragon car the steeds of god:
 Now he flies off to wander around the sky.
 The god had just descended in bright majesty,
 When, off in a whirl, he soared again,
 Far, far, into the furthest clouds.
 He looks down on Chi-chou and lands beyond;
 There is no place in the whole world
 He does not pass over.
 I think of my lord with a heavy sigh,
 And sad thoughts trouble my heart very sorely.
 [*poet bows upon completing*]

Chin This not too bad. Next poet, however,
 I don't want to hear something "heavy sigh,"
 We have 'nuff heavy sigh. This for Pure Spirit
 Only! Pure Spirit not have troubled heart.
 Li Shi, do you think this poem suitable
 To satisfy commandment of Pure Spirit?

Lee Shi Your Majesty, the *Shu Ching*, and other—

Chin Chao Kao, what you think?

Chao Kao Your Majesty, if poet have heavy sigh,
 He not know nature of Pure Spirit,
 He must die for the offense, your Majesty.
 He must be cut in half, along with all family.
 This cannot go unpunished, your Majesty.

Chin Lee Shi, Chao Kao is correct.
 I accept his judgment, carry out the penalties.
 Now who next poet want to recite.
 [*Lee Shi glances at Chao Kao, who tries to repress a smile*]

Scene Four

A few months later. Half way up Tai Shan, one of the five sacred mountains of China.

Hu-Hai The winds are furioius and the slashing rain totally impedes all progress. Most miserable is this inclement weather to our purpose. The general says we can't go on for fear of some great catastrophe. What are we to do? Some awful omen has had its hand in this, for surely the gods reject our ascension to the summit. Father's in a rage, his mood fouler than the sooted thunderous clouds rampaging like maddened stallions in the sky. The lightning is terrifying and dangerous the General fears it may strike the caravan so ominously close the coiled dragon strikes. Father fears a host of evil spirits are gathered against me, that is, him.

Lee Shi We should have waited as I advised. No matter now, where is he?

Hu-Hai I'm worried 'bout him, he flails about in the mist of the storm, berailing the rain ordering the furious winds to obey his will. With sword he slashes at phantom drenched and soaking wet. Its most piteous to behold and yet he'll not listen to my pleas to quit this furious defiance of the elements. He's order me back into the tend, I fear his sanity is torn. Go to him Lee Shi, I beg of you devise some argument agianst his actions, he'll catch the death of cold.

- Lee Shi* Where is he, how will I find him
in this sheeted rain?
- Hu-Hai* By the lion rock where the memorial
was to be posted. Hurry, quickly,
I'm much afear'd at all of this.
It's as though the Heavens themselves
are hell bent to some hateful vengeance.
- Lee Shi* If Heaven has a hand in it
helpless are mortal to any change,
but, I'll go. Stay here. You may be needed.

Scene Five

Chin in a fever, abed. Surrounded by Chao Kao, Lee Shi, Hu-Hai, various eunuchs.

- Chin* I fear it goes not well with me
and to the light of day, maybe
never my head will rise to see again—
Mayo quan chi. I feel cold.
A kind of numbness like a long remorse
spreads out a frigid feeling.
Can it be an Emperor is waning
and the bite of winter's white fang
has bitterly bitten to the bone.
Ha! Hu-Hai, come near.
- Hu-Hai* Father at your command
I, uh, I, know not what to say.
- Chin* Everything is silent in the end.
You are dear son and pride to me,
you and eldest brother, love sons
of the Queen of all Queens, you mother.
Come, kiss me son, some
gentleness give way in me to death.

But you must not be a foolish
 or dally on lovely figures night and day.
 Listen well to your brother,
 certainly he'll make changes quickly
 and thought its not my way
 better the world without my will
 which like a monstrous power from birth
 welled up in my moving me to unify.

Hu-Hai Father you mustn't die.

Chin I still don't like to hear the word
 applied to my own being— yet,
 so it must be, I fear.
 Be strong in knowledge of my love
 and there your love and honor prove.
 Go way now! I'll call you later.
 [*Hu-hai exits.*] Lee Shi come near me.
 In your inimitable calligraphy
 I'd have you draft my last decree.

Lee Shi Your Majesty, you must not make this thought
 of death, dying and taking-offs.
 Rest, you need no such excitements,
 I beg of you, let off this dreary attachment
 of your low spirit.

Chin Prime Minister, prepare an edict,
The Pure One, Chin Shih Hwang Ti
 hereby designates eldest son, Fu-su,
 as my successor in Chin Dynasty.
 He shall be known as Chin Shih Hwang Er,
 in dying breath and spirit-counseled,
 Chao Kao, the Royal Seal.

Chao-Kao Its right here, Your Majesty.

Chin Affix it for all future time and generations

Chao-Kao It's done.

Chin At last now done, I rest in peace.

Lee Shi It is done, Your Majesty, that's true,

and with that seal a new China will be born
to live unto the far distant ages
Your Majesty, great was your coming and going.

Chao Kao And yet Your Majesty your attention
to this fact I'd urge your eyes to see
[Rips us the royal decree.]
How shortly lives immortal history!

Chin [Gasping, trying to rise.]
How. . .how dare you. . . A Royal. . .
Edict. . .Lee Shi. . .Ah, my heart—
is hot and cold at once. . . water. . .

Chao Kao [Pouring water.]
You see your Majesty we've planned another way
You are gone, no longer consequent
to considerations of the New Order,
Chin-tiger.[giggles]

Lee Shi This is cruel beyond belief
to mock a man upon his spirit leaving.

Chao Kao You see, Chin, may I call you that. . .
Chin, you see, Lee Shi and I have elected
Hu-Hai to be next Emperor.

Chin Lee Shi, you have betrayed me,
you have permission to suicide! [Coughs.]

Chao Kao Its soon over for you, Chin. You'll be dead
worms will feast you no more
than any common carcass. . .

Lee Shi I forbid this further.

Chao Kao O very well, I leave you with your death rattle.

Chin Ahhhh, I can't breath.

Lee Shi I am shamed to the depths.

Chao Kao That you refused invitation to suicide
never mind that. He's not the Emperor
but dead fish in Heaven's fateful net.

Besides here is the Royal Decree
We shall produce— official in every degree
in proper style, form and mark of authority.

Chin You've forged a—Lee Shi, how dark it is
be kind to my children. Fast I fade.

Chao Kao Yet hardly fast enough.

Lee Shi More hatred I've not more seen.

Chao Kao We're in it together, as both know,
our positions clear and secure,
officially honorable.
Why wasn't that the purpose at the start.
Rivers of blood were wades to get her,
now that you are more powerful
than any Prime Minister to proceed you!
Certainly such a thing is dear,
dearer than decapitation
for everyone related, next to or near
console yourself, Prime Minister
You're yet of the living not the dead.
Two peas in a pdo we are, Ha!
a pair we are, the Scholar and the Eunich!
Ha, Ha, Ha!

Lee Shi You're despicable to the depth,
you play me in your drama of dishonor
offend the last diginity of a dying-off
mock a man, nay an Emperor
in his mortal bed. Never, never
could I concieve such blasphemy
yet, here I am co-conspirator,
full party to these foul doings.

Chao Kao In any case—together knit.
Now on to it, Lee Shi, you need but say
from Emperor's hand you recieve it,
and I that exactly these words
were set down, read and signed under the seal
of Emperor's authority.

[Affixes the royal seal on the paper.]

Lee Shi Hardly can I believe this arrogance.

Chao Kao How did you think we'd work it?
Simple thoughts and humble logic
though escaping the trap of towering intellects
is more to the point. How simple acts
seem strange to those who dare them not.
Come, come, be not my belligerent
You're my own audience to this audacity—
call it treason, treachery, murder,
what have you, its all true.

Lee Shi Murder?

Chao Kao Yet, if we serve as Councils to Emperor
whose to make differences of what they say?
Those who oppose us we slay.
So, like Chin, we, too, rewrite the history.
You must remember, Lee Shi,
how could you survive in the reign of Fu-Su'
You who ordered burning of China's history?
There you dealt with the works of millions,
here it is the fraud of one famous man,
a mere scribe near the end
of an undistinguished literary legacy.
How compare this trifle with what you did
total destruction, civilization's glory
by your hand smashed, stomped, burned.

Lee Shi Ah, perhaps you have the Confucian ethic, too?

Chao Kao No more than you.

Lee Shi Well, then, honorable Councilor and colleagues
lets greet successor to Emperor Chin,
his noble son, and our new charge.
Our duty is manifestly clear,
to steer the empire through terrible tides
of treachery in the kingdom and the court.

Chao Kao Chin's death is better secret kept,

our actions to complete command
 from his tent will expound his word
 issue edicts and execute our justice.
 Many weeks cut us from the capital,
 if word advances beyond our arrival
 a chaos of contending cares may greet us.

Lee Shi Quite correct and far-seeing.

Chao-Kao But the smell will be a give-away.

Lee Shi Well pack the corpse in salt-fish
 and pull it at the end of the caravan.

Chao-Kao Even then by the time we reach the capital
 most of his weight will be maggots
 and a great sufference to nose that smell,
 no doubt from a long distance.

Lee Shi All who touch the body must die
 there's no need for them to testify
 as to how odious he was.
 Call Hu-Hai, the Emperor Designate,
 he, too, must witness his father's fate.
 We need no questions circling round that subject
 especially in his eye.

Chao-Kao May the New Order last 10,000 years
 and we to mighty pillars with no fear.

Lee Shi That dream itself is dream
 but ever dreaming it you'll never have it.

Chao-Kao I'm to the logic of the moment
 action need no such subtleties.

Lee Shi What all does Hu-Hai Know?

Chao-Kao Only that it's been arranged, enough,
 and that his Chief Counselors are two.
 That I, in advance, did concieve his destiny
 that you gave proof unto the fact
 with documented ministerial authority.
 He's ready, and completely with us.

Lee Shi And Fu-Su?

Chao Kao [*Handing him a note.*]
This to him.

Lee Shi [*Resigned.*]It must be. Yet, I'll wait for word of this
before I'll breath at all easily.

Scene Six

*Fu-Su in his quarters. Alone. He had just been given note
from a guard, sent from the Royal residence.*

Fu-Su Ancient Ancestor, guide me to my way.
Father offers me to suicide
to satisfy his will. In fear of lacking
filial devotion, I address myself to you,
Ancient Ancestor. May the spirit counsel
and concieve me to my purpose.
to resist one's father is greviouisw.
More grevius to give way to evil enterprises,
if such they be.
Though pained to do it, I must speak free
all in my heart greviously informs me
that Heaven's Mandate has been nullified
and lost from the ruling class of Chin
his deeds pronounce their disparity with Heaven.
All that I have's come by me falsely,
my title, weath and honor
all by evil deeds the inheritor,
the honor of compassion, where is it?
the honor of truthfullness, where is it?
the honor of sincere heart, where is it?
the honor of statesman to pople, where is it?
the honor of honest law, rightfully applied,
where is it?

Honorable Ancient Ancestor,
 I fear to say it but father is a terrible
 aberration
 Inform my spirit of it's best purpose spent!
 Speak to me, priest, hear my true soul
 and counsel me your counsel.

Priest Fu-Su, well you are heard, fear not.
 Sore hearted are you, considering your father.
 Growing shame continues to increase you
 with agony of right and wrong.
 Peace unto your heart, noble Fu-Su.
 No one man is totally at fault, neither your father
 for great is Heaven's circle
 and great is Time's circle, compassion,
 good and evil serves the Great Way
 though each souls truth is a whole history
 still, mysterious is the ultimate purpose.
 If you oppose Chin the empire may crumble,
 continuation of no-law and father-son opposition.
 To inherit throne with blood upon hands
 makes meaningful reform most difficult.
 To challenge use of the Royal Seal
 Brings more slaughter to the scene,
 with no clarification of true facts.
 Better, Fu-Su, take father's fate, too, unto
 your self, for as the son of such a man
 upon what authority do you stand?
 Let final question remain in peoples mind:
 "Did Chin order death of his good son?"
 or "Are these corruptors on the throne?"
 both questions serve your purpose
 and will move to bring the end of Chin,
 furthering the higher purpose of the people.

Fu-Su A question more—shh, someone comes.

Priest Other's come, I go, now's the no more of it.

Priest exits. As he does Meng-Tien enters from the other door greatly excited.

- Meng* Great Prince, pray you, rise.
Time's press is greatly on the moment.
Decisions demand directions
and waiting acts desire actions.
- Fu-Su* [*Great calmness*] I am ready.
- Meng* What's your decision, Great Prince.
300,000 men to your command are committed
to free the slaves they'd march
upon the Capital one half million strong.
- Fu-Su* Meng T'ien, It's not fit to oppose my father.
- Meng* No fit, Great Prince? Can Heaven's Mandate
still obtain upon this sordid scene?
- Fu-Su* It does not. Yet, loyally I'll obey
the invited order.
- Meng* Knowing that it all may be a trick.
When His Majesty lived outside the Capital
But had as yet no Crown Prince,
Myself he appoint to command 300,000
To protect the frontier, and you, his son,
to be Overseer. This is the way
Of correct responsibility in the Empire.
Yet, now, upon the coming of one emmissary
you are about to kill yourself.
I beg you, obtain confirmation of this,
If it is true, it will not be too late
To kill yourself.
- Fu-Su* Nay, Meng T'ien. It must be so.
When a father allows his son to die
There can be no question of sending the request
Back to him. Besides, this is father's sword,
he must be dead. As a child I played with it

and longingly looked upon its jeweled blade.
 Often I held it thus, tho unpermitted.
 Often I heard him say
 another who'd touch the Emperor's blade
 would, for the offense die, but you eldest son
 shall one day own it as your own,
 that's a decree no other mortal knows,
 and here it is. Chin must be dead
 or died as Emperor and father
 to plan my other purpose— no matter now.
 I sense it is the work of Kao Chao,
 thinking it serves his purpose that I die.
 Lee Shi's hand would never stop it.
 But, Moo-Shi 'tis to my own soul's purpose
 that I consent to die. I am sorry
 my death serves yours as well.

Meng In truth I cannot say I welcome it.
 But a man whose killed as much as I
 mustn't protest the time his turn to die.

Fu-Su Leave me a moment to myself
 I must collect my full consciousness.

Moo-Shi As on a battlefield, no need to say Tsai-Ch'ien

Fu-Su For who knows when we shall see again.
 [*Meng T'ien exits with deep bow*]
 To speak of death is not so difficult
 how will go it with the deed.
 [*Unsheathe Chin's sword.*]
 O, father, despite it all, know this O world,
 I loved you till the end.
 [*Falls on sword, dies.*]

Meng T'ien enters with Moo-Shi

Meng [*seeing Fu-Su, dead, draped in blood*]
 Oh, no, no, no, Fu Su! Why, why?

Moo-Shi He was determined. There was nothing I could do.

Meng I think it was a trick. I do not think Chin
Would have had his son suicide. Yea, perhaps,
If he was before him and outraged him,
But not, like this, no, no, I don't believe it.

enter Captain, with a guard.

Captain My Great General, there is a message here
For you as well, direct from the Emperor,
[*catches himself*] Pardon, I mean the Pure One.
[*hands the letter to Meng T'ien*]

Meng [*takes the letter, reads it, stares a moment at the
Captain*] You know what this says.

Captain I was told.

Meng You know I can have you taken captive and killed?
You do know this do you not?

Captain I do.

Meng But, I will not do you an injustice,
You serve your Emperor. I will allow you
To take me prisoner; we'll be accompanied
By my troops.

Captain [*bowing deeply*] Whatever you say, I obey.

Act Five

Scene One

In Chao Kao's residence. On the travel with Chin, touring the sacred mountains of China.

Chao Kao [Alone.]
 This is most remarkable, indeed!
 For three days now I've administered the poison
 each time, rather than becoming more erratic
 he grows more sane and even tempered.
 How can this be? A reversal of effects?
 Strange. . . Do the magicians mock me
 with this curing medicine and devise
 and antidote for his inherent madness. No,
 I mustn't think on it. It must be
 that madness in such extremities,
 unimagined merely moves to opposite principle
 much as to cure a snake bite
 another drop of poison reverses the effect.
 In any case, his will is weakening
 doubts begin to crowd his mind
 and shadowy hesitations are habituated in his brain.
 Now chasm yawn, engulf him wholly

Enter Hu-Hai.

Hu-Hai Kao Chao, you sent for me?
 What is it? What can it be?
 Is father well, quickly answer me.

Chao-Kao No, Great Prince, but I must speak with you.
 Please, accustom yourself to my rooms,

something most important needs discussing.

Hu-Hai Kao Chao, I've no stomach for legal lessons
all night my mind's turned and turned
so that by day-break I'm already exhausted.

Chao-Kao No, there are no lessons we need talk.
Listen, well you know your father's sickness.

Hu-Hai It's that which troubles me all night.
Yet, he looks much better don't you think.
I sense some bright change braves
new moods upon him.

Chao-Kao So it does seem, and yet I fear
'tis but the prelude to a final plunge
into immortal darkness and death.
Hu-Hai, have you made consideration
what will happen when your father dies?

Hu-Hai Please, Kao Chao!

Chao-Kao Prince, I beg of you hear my words
for well you must know my loyalty to you
and that I broach this dread subject
to help prepare you in advance.
Should the inevitable come, Prince,
consider, merely for the exercise, these things.
For surely we'd be remiss in duty
to give no future thought to sad happenings
Surely the Empire must not be unaware. ..
he who avoids these present promptings
will find himself the future's fool
what will happen when the Emperor dies?

Hu-Hai What will happen, is there a doubt?

Chao-Kao Regarding the transference of power.

Hu-Hai That you know as well as I..
Fu-Su will mount the throne as Emperor,
as eldest son it is his ancient right
and father's will as well.

- Chao-Kao* This is the issue I'd conferr with you.
- Hu-Hai* The issue? There's no issue here
it's clearly codified and intended.
- Chao-Kao* Hu-Hai, you are young. . .
Not yet you contemplate the meaning of your fate.
You must consider all the odds
that life has cast your way.
Positions of power are most precarious
whatever privledges are posted at present
for with a change in the arrangement
new references and relations are being established
causing otherws to catastrophic tilt.
Simply the point is this, my Prince
have you never thought of being Emperor
rather than your elder brother's lacky?
Forgive my blunt words, Great Prince
but time necessitates these words
when dire circumstances crouch behind our backs,
have you never thought to be the Emperor?
- Hu-Hai* In truth I'm not ambitious as you know
Yet, what younger brother has not dreamed
of some inspired victory o're the elder,
t'would be unnatural otherwise,
the same as were there only hatred, no love.
Hero worship and self-inspired victories. . .
ah, anyway, only in most playfull fantasy
have I imagined the Crown upon my head
but never did I seize it.
- Chao-Kao* Ah, I see, he was already dead, heh?
But such is everyman's childish fantasy—
you, Great Prince, however, are more
a potential inheritor of the Crown
and must separate the fiction from the fact
for your choice, one way or the other
shall become for China her history.
- Hu-Hai* I'd not harm my brother to be Emperor
besides, I'm too unskilled, unworthy

next my brother's talents and high-mindedness.

Chao-Kao Would you're brother likewise feel
once he hold the power and pomp of Emperor
of course, you know, you he must kill.

Hu-Hai [*Shocked.*]
How dare you speak like this, Chao Kao!
My brother would never harm me.

Chao-Kao There's no suggestion he desires it,
but consider this Hu-Hai, consider well,
you alone might prove impediment to his power
while you live he question remains.
With you gone no one will contest it.
Does Fu-Su not know you are the father's favorite?
Its been said all your ways do not please him,
that he abhors your penchant for pleasure,
elder brother who play roles of father`
to younger siblings are rarely kind
and stand in stern judgement of their deeds.
Did not your own father have his brother's killed
to ensure his claim upon the throne.

Hu-Hai Yes, rumors of it have reached me.

Chao-Kao It is a dangerous precedent, don't you agree
you see, Hu-Hai, sibling rivalries
though common and usually of no consequence
in common fold, assume a different character
of extraordinary meaning in extraordinary men.
Surely, he will not leave yo to your ways
to lavish parties, famous feasts, lovely concubines.
The Confucian ethic is by him espoused
and no doubt he'll take those scholars
to his highest council. What will they say?
Their counsel, I say, is quite predictable
and an Emperor newly come to his command
dare not appear weak in judgeing you.
Truely, Hu-Hai, I fear for your safety.

Hu-Hai But I have no talent for leadership

and would hardly know my way
in administration of so vast an empire.

Chao-Kao Put away such thoughts
for years I taught theory of the legal codes
now I would instruct you in practical affairs,
of course in consent with Lee Shi,
whose brilliance is the genius of Chin's doings.

Hu-Hai Lee Shi! Would he join such a plan?

Chao-Kao I've reason to believe it, or I'd not
have brouched this momentous subject
with your Highness. We think of you mostly
and of the good of the Empire.

Hu-Hai Besides, father, should it come to it
will designate Fu-Su before he dies.

Chao-Kao Then two deaths would mark the occasion

Hu-Hai This is so sudden— it curdles my blood
considering such things while he lives.
I must talk to Lee Shi.

Chao-Kao No, your Highness, I've given him my word
no word of this will come till you're resolved
His position, you must appreciate,
is most precarious

Hu-Hai I see. When must you know.

Chao-Kao Tonight, at most in the morning, by mid-morn.

Hu-Hai I'll think on it. For now farewell.

Chao-Kao Farewell your majesty— when next we meet
I pray, if things go bad with Chin,
in you the new Emperor I'll greet
and not a man marked for the grave
before his time.

Scene Two

: *Hu-Hai, alone, reading news of the latest happenings.*

Hu-Hai [Astounded.]
 My brother dead, a suicide, by Emperor's invitation?
 And Meng Tien executed in a flash
 cut in two like a worm?
 This at the direction of father's decree?
 Who is real father to these deeds
 need not concern me now. It's done,
 I am the future now, yet how well I'll recall
 how a thought can kill!
 Am I not true son of my father
 who before me took this very step
 seizing power in a single chance.
 I did not want my brother dead
 and had no share in it,
 nor am I ungrateful to my supporters.
 Past is now past, now we to the future,
 Imperial and Devine Successor,
 enscribe my name, Chin Shih Hwang Er!

Scene Three

In the Harem Palace, a group of young harem ladies. E-Tai is at the window, looking out

E-tai Sha Na, listen, please, can you hear it?
 Can't you hear it?

Sha Na Hear what, E-tai? I hear, yes, I hear—
 though what you hear I do not know.
 How could I know this simple thing?
 I'm but a humble lady of the Court

Sweet thing, enlighten us.
What do you hear?

E-tai But, listen carefully, look.[*points out into the sky*]
See those two blue birds circle and careen
above Peace Blossom hill,
Heavenly messengers they truly are,
O, spirit wings of love, divine messengers,
what have you to say?—
Listen! Do you hear: "Chen-Shen" "Chen Shen"
Look! Over there, a yellow oriole
how beautiful Heaven braves its messagers
in wondrous motion, color, sound

Sha Nan E-Tai, you concern me, the way you act.
You talk of things that only you can see

E-tai The air itself is special luminous
as many spirits light upon the scene
lovlier than the words can compare.
[*suddenly startled*] Ah, what's that!
Chen Shen! Chen Shen!
Chen Shen is alive, but near trouble.

Sha Na E-tai, don't read dark messages
on such a bright day as this
watching the flight of birds.

E-tai Truth of spirit is not dark or light
but ever-living illumination.

*Wen Mai enters goes over to Sha Na while E-tai
remains alone at the window.*

Wen-Mai [*Concerned.*]
How is she now, better?

Sha Na I most worry over her— she's quite
for days, then talks wonderful things
hardly to be believed.
I fear she dreams too much over Chen Shen

and her impossible dream.
 And, then to learned about her father,
 That he 's already dead these last two years
 Killed by the Emperor for book possession,
 it getting too much for her.
 And now upon new Emperor's return
 she was told she will be transferred
 to Emperor's private harem,
 to her like Hell's own promise
 to her whole heart and spirit.

Wen-Mai Poor dear. O, what we can do?
 Like locked between horrible terror
 and sweetest dream her mind not wake
 nor sleep. It's only a matter of time
 before her condition is too obvious
 I fear what will be done to her.

Sha Na She'll come out of it. [*approaches E-tai*]
 E-tai, you such a problem.
 Come now, please, eat noodle
 and hot soup. You must have good diet
 or conditions grow worse.
 [*aside to Wen-Mai*]
 Wen-Mai, I feel sometimes
 some strong spirit communicates
 with E-tai in her troubles.

Wen-Mai Remember, Confucius words on this—
 Better not to spend time with spirits.

Sha Na Better not to counsel E-tai
 with quotations from forbidden texts,
 a crime itself that's capital!

Wen-Mai I slipped. With you I talked as to myself.

Sha Na This is same problem as E-tai.
 Please! don't doctor her with capital crime
 quotations. Leave me to my ways,
 hot soup, noodle, special herbs and much love.

Wen-Mai I agree this is good idea,

Heaven speed your special treatment.
But, I fear she'll soon attempt escape,
she's planning it, I know.

Sha Na O, no, she'll never get out of the palace
and, if so, they'll kill her for sure.
You mustn't let her try such a foolish.
Not only herself but all of us
may be a dangerous over this. Please!
Wen-Mai, you must realize our jepordy.
We all may die for this.

enter Eunich official, with two guards

Eunich I am dispatched to get E-tai;
Lord Chamberlain Chao Kao would see her
Now, which one is E-tai?

Sha N E-tai is not feeling good, I'm afraid,
I don't think she can go anywhere.

Eunich [*forcefully*] Where is she?
[*Sha Na nods to E-tai at the window, Eunich nods to
guard who approaches her*]

Guard Shoujia, are you E-tai?

E-tai Yes.

Guard Come with me.[*E-tai exits with Eunich and guards,
the harem ladies begin to buzz immediately*]

Scene Four

Chamberlain Chao Koa's ministerial offices, Lee Shi and Chao Koa in discussion

Chao Koa Prime Minister, certainly you agree,
That Meng T'ien had to be executed,
As he was too close to Prince Fu-su, too long,
And, in time, that or that might come to light,
Such always is the case, those clever men
Think it's not so. Against the time,
If ever that time come, we must remove all
Who might have standing for a trouble.
Meng is, or I should say, was, fierce loyal,
Consider that he, just as foolish, as Fu-su
(though at time he think he far wiser)
Turn himself over to our command. Fool!
This, foolish move to prove himself loyal
Is what killed him. His loyalty is rewarded
His death serves the Emperor's honor,
So, of course, it is his honor to die.
I had him cut in two.

Lee Shi And chatted with him, too, as I hear,
While he was in two separate pieces.

Chao Koa This is true, I thought it was a delight
To have a few words with a great general
In such a situation as this. I had his brother
Also cut in two. Because, history teach
That one brother will avenge another oftentimes
Ay, he proudly protested, he died without fault,
Always honorable loyal, so he die blameless.
But, at very end when all was over,
He admitted his great sin to all the world,
That in building the Wall he had surely
At some point in long miles of huge sacrifice,
Cut the viens of Earth God; that he confess

Were a great crime-sin. So, at end, he admitted
he was a guilty.

Lee Shi So, Chin first had to go,
Then must get rid of a Fu-su,
That so, his loyal friends must go,
And I have just heard you tell me
That you have gotten from the Emperor
Permission to execute all his brothers,
All their families, is correct? All of them.

Chao Kao What can I say, surely, you yourself
Would be first victim from any challenge hence,
Dway bu dway?

Lee Shi What is it, Chao Kao,
Please, directly, what more do you want of me?
Have I not already myself disgraced
Capitulating to your captious intrigues,
While you insulting your influence
where e'er you go? Emperor looks to you only,
From you he takes his cues, his hems his haws,
With your eye lids consent he has sent
Thousands to graves, protecting himself
From fears you yourself do in him instill.
When does this death logic end?

Chao Kao With this last move, for now,
First Emperor's entire harem must be buried
Alive with him in Li Mountain masoleum,
All who did not bear children,
So First Emperor will have familiars about
And not be lonely in his grave.
This Emperor Hu-hai agree. You Lee Shi
Most also endorse this action, for loyalty.
I have already procured the edit.
[hands the edict to Lee Shi] Signed, seal'd delivered.
[Lee Shi glances at the list]
As you can see. Four hundred and fifty.

Lee Shi Chao Kao, I think you love death,
 Other people cut in two is a happiness for you;
 Misery by millions better than by thousands.
 That is what I see in you Chao Kao.
 I think when they castrate you, Chao Kao,
 Thousands of “normal” people die.

Chao Kao No reason that one cannot mix pleasure
 With one’s profession, Prime Minister.
 Prince Hai-hu was a foolish but gentle soul
 Who was loyal, wished no one bad—

Lee Shi Until you showed him the benefits of pleasure,
 The fears of assassins, and the need
 To protect himself by horrid punishment of others,
 Which you assured him they’d inflict on him.

Chao Kao What ever my ruses, Prime Minister,
 No doubt the same of them it would be true.
 One back’s one’s animal in the race.
 So, I trust, knowing the same of you, of us,
 I mean, do we not wish to avoid ourselves
 Such punishments? You, all your family,
 Positions, honor, rank, grandchildren—

Lee Shi [*firing*] You threaten me, Chao Kao, with such words,
 About my grandchildren, my family, and
 Talk of the 5 punishments. How dare you!
 Do you presume now yourself, to rule
 Over all of China—a Eunich Ruler, I do not think so,
 Chao-Kao, you over reach yourself.

enter Emperors advance retinue

What’s this? The Emperor is coming?
 I told him I was too ill to wait upon him,
 Just as you said, so that I could come here.
 What have you done Chao Kao?
 To now show myself a liar to the Emperor.
 You have betrayed me, Chao Kao,

You set me up for this to get rid of me, too.

Chao Kao No, not yet. I still have need of you. Quickly, go away this way. He will not see you. Hurry.

[*in panic Prime Minister turns and quickly exits*].

enter Emperor Chin Er, Chao Kao bows

Emperor Chao Kao, I have come as you requested,
Though I did interrupt a fair-fun game
And a wonderful performance of actors.
What is it? Did I hear you right you have
Some important evidence of treachery?
Speak, I am afraid when I hear such things.
What is wrong.

Chao Kao You Majesty, did I not tell you
That there are those who'd destroy you
And that when—

Emperor Yes, yes, don't keep scaring me,
Why do you talk these things now, when
Any other time would do?

Chao Kao Two things, if you will, I just receive a visit
From Prime Minister, who was in very jovial mood—

Emperor Not Prime Minister, he sick, I am told.
He could not come to see me, as you suggested
For he was too ill. Now you say he jovial
And just left you?

Chao Kao [*prostrating himself*] Great Emperor,
I did not know, that is, I, how can this be?
Great Emperor did I not warn you how
Intrigue surrounds you all about?
But I did not mean to betray Prime Minister,
How could I know—

Emperor This worries me.

Chao-Kao Do not worry your Majest, I'll spy it out
And make enquires into the Prime Minister's doings.
In any case, he insists, and I agree,
That the edict for the entombment of Harem
Of Chin Shih Hwang Ti must be signed,
Because the edit of an Emperor can not be voided,
Even by a succeeding Emperor.

Emperor And Lee Shi says this must be so by law?

Chao-Kao It is mandatory. Failure to carry out the will
Of the Pure Spirit will incite incendiary talk
Amongst your enemies. It is clear.
All must be buried. What ever Prime Minister
Is up to, which I find out for Emperor,
In this matter his judgment is not to be questioned.

Emperor Very well, but it seem a shame so many beauties.
O, well, if it must be.

Chao-Kao There must be no exceptions.

Emperor Of course.

Chao-Kao Except one. No one must know,
But I think if your Majesty sees this beauty
He will want her for his own Harem,
Even though no one must know suppose to die
Come, I've sent for her. I would not do this
Unless, I was so sure you would be struck
With her beauty so hard—well, your Majesty
Knows more these things than me.
I have arranged peek-a-boo show
To view this beauty, she is very proud,
Sullen, intelligent, difiant—very much type you like.

Emperor This sounds good fun, Chao Kao,
We can relate to each other for a good time,

Prime Minister, always rules, regulations,
Propriety. What good to be Emperor,
If I cannot enjoy self and do my pleasure in world?

Chao-Kao Your Majesty has vassals such as my humble self
To do the crass work of state.

Emperor Let us see this maiden, I may make her mind
If I like her. As Emperor I can do what I want.

Chao-Kao [*sucking up*] Now, I hear an Emperor speaking,
A man who realize he is Emperor [*both laugh*]
[*lights dim to black, slowly in chiacurro, Chao Kao is holding an intimate garment of E-tai's in his hand*]
You, little farm girl, I could not give up,
Though other's I could sacrifice by the hundreds,
The most beautiful women the world's ever seen,
Still, you I could not sacrifice, and made exception:
O, dreadful are exceptions in such matters,
For if its proved for myself I did this,
I'd die for it, yeah, even I, Emperor's Chamberlain.
So, to keep her I had to give her away
To the Emperor. She is too good for Emperor,
O, sweet, sweet, E-tai, your presence a magic
To my mind, my spirit, my ever hungering
And never satisfied desire to be, to be,—
To be what? O, sweet, sweet, merciful sensation.
[*presses his lips to the garment and agonizingly kisses it over and over*] To kiss your lips,
To be by you kissed with tenderness
With despisement in your eyes or in your taste,
For that I would send ten thousand to their graves
And more, merely on her asking.
But, back to work. Now I must test my powers,
Flush out my enemies, and make final move,
For I will my self an Emperor make
And make her, E-tail, mine, whether she will or no
For who can refuse an Emperor,
Though he be a eunich by the brunt of fate
And not because he merit innate hate..

Scene Five

On the road to Mt. Li from Ch'u. Rain is pouring down, a caravan of conscripts stopped along the way

Officer Forget it, no way to continue,
The rain 's too fierce, it won't let up;
They're doomed, doomed—
There are no exceptions.

Officer#2 Perhaps some allowances are made,
Surely natural disasters that cause lateness
Can not be used to penalize a conscript
With death penalty. That is too severe
For such a thing, to any honest mind.

Officer We are not arbiters of honest minds,
My friend, but soldiers of Ch'in,
I fear what may fall upon our heads,
Perhaps we, too, will be executed. Why not?
We no more responsible for this rain
Than they are. Well, one way or another,
A few hours won't matter. The conscripts
Are secure, lets go have a game a majah
And get cozy with a little fire.
[exit

enter Chen Shen and other conscripts, herded silently into the corner, guard exits

Shur Ting Chen Shen, did you hear that,
We will be executed for arriving late
At our assignment. How can that be.
Chen Shen this is a crazy business,
If conscripts are needed so badly that they take
Everyone they can, how afford to waste them
If late for a day or two because of terrible storm,

Its makes no sense Chen Shen. I'm afraid.

Chen Shen Emperor is a mad man, like father,
Human being only stuff for use or destroy
Whatever pleasures most, not care at all,
Suffering of ordinary people.

Shur Ting Wow, listen to that rain.
Because of Rain Dragon we're swept away
Like trash near storm drain.
So, we're going to die anyway.
The rain is our funeral song.

X Maybe Chen Shen you can explain to authorities—

Shur Ting Don't be a foolish. "Explain to authorities," ha!
How explain anything if listener not rational.
It is just a bad fate; nothing can be do but die.

Chen Shen It will take days to get to Mt Li,
Even if rain stop right now. So, this
Not a funeral song, but sound of freedom.

X What do you mean, Chen Shen.

Shur Ting Chen Shen make desperate joke,
Free of life he mean.

Chen Shen Listen, this new government, like old
So crazy that Heaven never gave a mandate
For such a thing as this; why everything crazy
The seasons are out of circle, the new year
Start in tenth month, Autum become Spring,
And annals of all is scored with cruelty,
Listen Shur Ting, listen Ho,
I am going to kill those guards, announce war,
And sieze the throne. Even poor countryboy
Like me can rule better than these monsters.

Shur Ting You crazy, Chen Shen. You are strong,
Fast, and very intelligent. Perhaps you can

Kill guards, but you will not succeed,
 They will kill you sure as I see you now
 With these eyes. I am afraid the way you talk.
 I am not courageous like you, Chen Shen.

- X Or so foolish either. We may all suffer for what
 You would do Chen Shen. And, not only this,
 But our families they would be killed.

Chen Shen Everyone lives in fear,
 The government tries keep all ignorant,
 Act absurd to prove powers arbitrary,
 They upset the nest to break the egg,
 Rail at nature and curse the elements,
 Horrified of pain and thought of death,
 Slaughter men of merit by ten thousand.
 No, old Chen Shen, is already dead,
 Killed by cruelty, mad plots of incompetents.
 It no more sin, I think, kill mad rulers
 Than rabid dog that 's gone beserk.
 Quit now. Speak no more to me.
 I am to a purpose.

*lights fade, the sound of rain subsides; lights come on
 slowly, shadowly figure of guard enters*

Officer Alright up we go! [swiftly *Chen Shen* manages to trip
 the *Officer*, there is a struggle, *Chen Shen* subdues his
 victim and kills him]

Scene Six

at the Harem

- Sha Na* E-tai, listen to me, please, I beg of you.
 You must be cooperative. Believe me,
 Things can go very bad for all of us, E-tai
 If you persist in this. You must yield,
 I know how much it hurts, to break love vow,
 From sweetest buds of freshest soul-love,
 But that a fairy-tail now, E-tai, all that over.
 Chen Shen is dead, long ago, no one hear
 Anymore from him. Such silly vow,
 Not silly then, but silly now, such silly vow
 Cannot apply to someone who is dead.
- E-tai* No, no. You not understand! It does apply,
 It does apply, did apply, now apply, will apply.
 I made vow to never kiss but Chen Shen,
 So, let them make me do whatever else they can
 Deprive my dignity or slander my sex
 By treating as an insignificance, but never,
 Will E-tai kiss any but Chen Shen.
 Not even an Emperor can make me.
- Sha Na* Listen, E-tai, its not like that.
 I'm told to tell you the Emperor likes you,
 He likes you very much and for warm affection
 He willing to make great concessions
 To your pleasures and sensitivities,
 "Great concessions," E-tai, this amazing,
 Amazing good luck. If you play cards
 Carefully, well—
- E-tai* Sha Na! Listen, I will do anything
 Anything Emperor want, but, I cannot
 Give him a kiss of "warm affection."

To me better were cold kiss of death.

Sha Na [tearfully] You think too much of yourself, E-tai,
And too many mellon head seeds in your mind,
As though you don't know who you are,
A Chinese farm girl!
Where you get such big idea, *you* can refuse
An Emperor! You mad!

E-tai I refuse a Eunich, why not Emperor [*both girls look
at each other and suddenly break down in tears and
laughter*]

Sha Na You impossible, E-tai! [*hug and kiss*]

enter guard

Guard Sha Na, come! [*Sha Na rises*]

Sha Na I must go, they let me sit with you
As you requested and as I wanted to,
But now, the Emperor will see you,
And I'm too lowly for Emperor's presence.
Please, E-tai, please, be accommodating,
For all of our sakes.
[*exits with Guard*]

enter Chao Kao

Chao-Kao E-tai, o, it is wonderful to see you again,
My, how beautiful you are in your new dress,
That is a new dress, isn't it, E-tai,
I think I know all of them. Well, now,
Ah, E-tai you are so beautiful that even
Yes, its true, even a Eunich such as I,—
Well, we are not hear to indulge my indulgence.
E-tai, before the Emperor come in,

He asked me to speak with you.
 Will you insist on not kissing him?
 He is much displeased by that.

E-tai An Emperor like him, who rule universe
 Must have many disappointments,
 This must be amongst the least of them.

Chao-Kao You amaze me, E-tai, you must be
 Only farm girl in all of T'ien Sha
 To be so bold and foolishly impertinent.

E-tai No, there is another, Harem girl, E-tai.

Chao-Kao Listen to me, E-tai, my tender girl, my

E-tai I don't listen that.

Chao-Kao Listen this, E-tai. I beg of you,
 I didn't want to have to tell you this,
 It is a very important secret. But you must,
 You simply must yield to Emperor,
 It is your only chance to survive.

E-tai I did think I would survive my refusal
 Of either you or Emperor, *Long Chung*.

Chao-kao E-tai, I am serious in this,
 Much as my heart by you is moved
 And filled with strange longings I dare not speak
 Still, even I cannot protect you any longer.
 The funeral is tomorrow. If you don't
 Yield as I tell you to please the Emperor,
 Tomorrow you will be dead along with all of them,
 All of them, the entire Harem of Hwang Ti.

E-tai That's a vicious trick to fool a farm girl,
 By scaring for life of friend with such threats
 Knowing my own to me means nothing.

Chao-Kao You don't understand.
 Ne bu dong, ne bu dong!

The Emperor has already signed the order,
 The entire Harem will be entombed alive
 With Emperor the First's corpse.
 You will be among them, E-tai, if you don't yield.
 Do you understand me?
 [*E-tai faints, Chao Kao, rushes over to her,*
muttering]

enter Emperor

Emperor What have we hear. What has happened here?

Chao Kao E-tail has fainted, your Majesty.

Emperor [*concerned*] What's wrong with her? Is she ill?

Chao Kao It was on news of your Majesty's coming,
 I think it were an overwhelming honor
 And she was not yet ready for it.
 But, ah, look, you Majesty, is she not a pearl
 Beauty beyond mere ornamental treasure,
 She will be ready for you a little later,
 I promise you, your Majesty. I promise.

Emperor Poor, thing. It must be quite a thing
 For a shy farm girl to receive attentions of Emperor.
 [*laughs, Chao Kao takes up the laugh*]
 The Emperor is not a brute, take care of her
 Not for the world would any harm come to her.
 Away, take care Chao Kao, see she is tended to
 I'll have her tomorrow.

Chao Kao Excellent idea, your Majesty, excellent.

Emperor Come with me, Chao Kao, they take care her.

Chao Kao But, I must take care of her, you do not under—

Emperor [*sharply*] Chao Kao, not another word.

[*Chao Kao groans as E-tai is taken away and he is ordered to join the Emperor's entourage in the rear. Exuent*]

Scene Seven

Haren

Sha Na Of course we shall take care of her,
She is our sister. [*goes over to E-tai on her bed, E-tai is just awakening*]
E-tai, E-tai, are you alright, E-tai?
I worry 'bout you so much.

E-tai [*starts to waken slowly, then suddenly, in a start*]
Sha Na! Sha Na! O, it must be bad dream.
Where am I? [*frightened*] Sha Na. Sha Na.
Come close I must tell you something, quickly,
The others not need to know. [*whispering*]
Sha Na, there is an order that all the Haren
All women of First Emperor's harem, as we,
We must all be buried with the First Emperor,
Tomorrow, at the funeral, that will be funeral
For five hundred, at least. We will be among them
Unless we try escape.

Sha Na This is more of your foolishness, E-tai
Spirit talk told you all this, I suppose.
[*looks deeply into E-tai's eyes*]
O, by all the spirits of Shang Ti,
I speak truly, yea, yea, you speak truly
I do fear it. [*suddenly starts screaming in terror, all eyes in the harem turn to her transfixed by what they hear*]
We are all going to be buried tomorrow,
With the First Emperor, they are going to bury us,

All of us. We are all going to die!

E-tai [*shocked by Sha Na's response, which she obviously did not anticipate*] Sha Na! No, don't Sha Na!
[*pandamonium breaks out, panic, terror, screams and other acts of sudden desperation*]

Voices We'er all going to die tomorrow.
No, no! No! No! O, mericful gods!
O, mama, mama, I'm going to die.
The Emperor is going to kill us all
He's going to kill me, me!
What did I ever do to the Emperor!
No, no, don't sollow that gold,
No! No! Don't kill yourself
Maybe its a mistake! A mistake I tell you!

eunich guards stream into the harem, with weapons, trying to stop suicides, restraining desperate acts—women swallowing gold—lights dim, action slows almost to freezes at the time of backout. silence. lights come on, early morning; the harem is a mess; torn curtains, things strewn about, others in the near, here and there a muffled cry of an unknown voice

E-tai I will, I will, I will do anything,
Yes, yes, I will be ready when you say,
Please, get me out of here. I don't want to die.

Eunich Quiet, not so loud, everyone's calmed down now;
Don't talk too loud.

E-tai I won't, I wont, just get me out of here.

Eunich Very well, I'll inform Chao Kao what you said,
I'm sure they will send for you 'right 'way,

The Emperor has been worried 'bout you,
 He is furious news of this got out
 And caused this, this, catastrophe. Main thing
 Get you out. Keep quiet. I come right back.
 [*exits*]

E-tai One thing Chao Kao and young Emperor
 Do not conceive, I'll betcha, is that
 Farm girl from dirt village would ever dare,
 Would ever dare to murder
 An Immaculate Emperor. Only then,
 If I succeed such a thing, maybe, maybe,
 Horrid happening of Harem buried alive
 May not occur. Only maybe, but, is this not
 Worth a try? My life like thrown away rag—
 No! not true, my life like, like free person,
 Since I'm no longer among the living fated
 And I'm no more an E-tai, or "Harem girl,"
 But the Sun of Heaven's would-be-murderer.
 [*takes out dagger*] O, I will go anything to please
 The Emperor, so that I get my blade so near,
 That not-killing him will be my greatest fear.

Scene Eight

Chao Kao's quarters

Eunich #1 Everything is as you have specified.

Chao-Kao How many do you have.

Eunich #1 I thought five hundred of our legion,
 Should be enough, all dressed in ordinary clothes
 Just as you said, to appear as ordinary people,
 Not Eunichs of the court, with weapons and all,
 All ready to show themselves like actors,
 Before a vast review showing

Without knowing why or to what purpose,
But to accommodate your doings. You Long Chung
Are one of us—something others will never know.

Chao-Kao Wonderful, wonderful, Lien Shu,
I'll have a little theatre for you. Remember,
Just when I give signal, that, go—
With whole riot and clangorous show.
[*imperial drums sound*]

Eunich #1 The Emperor is arriving. I go. Good luck.

Chao-Kao Duck soup!

Chao Kao, pretends to be reading documents at his desk when the Emperor arrives, enters the room alone

Emperor Chao Kao! What's going on. I'm dreadfully afraid.
What's going on? Why do you need see me alone?
What is it, I demand to know. Now, immediately. I'm
afraid Chao Kao, what's happening. Where's E-tai,
you said she was longing for me but ther was some
problem—what problem?

Chao-Kao We have bad news, your Majesty. [*long silence*]

Emperor By Shang-Ti's tooth, tell me what are you thinking,
Tell me. I'm going crazy here with fear.
Tell me everything is going to be alright!
Tell me that much, Chao Kao.

Chao-Kao Does Emperor prefer to be deceived.

Emperor Yes, maybe I do—the way you say such a thing!

Chao-Kao The Black Headed people are revolting,
Your Majesty, I'm sorry to say,—its said you broke
The Mandate of Heaven and deserve to die,
In most terrible manner imaginable.

Emperor O, by the Three Sovereigns!
This can't be happening to me, not me.
I am the Emperor, Chin Shih Hwang Er.
The Son of Heaven, God's Elected!

Chao-Kao First I have some bad news for you,
Your Majesty. E-tai is dead. She won't
Becoming to meet you.

Emperor E-tai dead? No, how can this be.
You said she not want to be buried, changed
Her mind and wanted be affectionate.

Chao-Kao Apparently, she lying. When she pronounce
Ready to see Emperor, she had knife,
And when guard start to take away,—anyway,
She was chopped to pieces before my eyes,
As punishment.

Emperor You did this without my approval?
How dare you! Chao Kao I am angry with you!

Chao-Kao We are beyond all that now your majesty.
O, wait, I hear door. One moment.

enter Eunich#2, goes to Chao Kao, whispers

Eunich#2 Long Chung, they will not agree,
The require the Five Punishments, also,
Cut in two. I am most sorry for his Majesty.
[bows, exits]

Emperor This is crazy! What you talk about?

Chao-Kao I've been negotiating for you, your Majesty,
But everthing has failed. They say you have
Too many sin. You kill Harem and—

Emperor But you told me, must do this,

Must honor intention of the First Emperor.

Chao-Kao This turn out to be wrong policy. People think,
This go too far! So you must die for it.
You kill your brother Princes, too.

Emperor That, too, you said I must do.

Chao-Kao Well, that another mistake, too.
Chin Shih Hwang Er, do you remember,
How you did laugh to hear Fu-su, the rightful prince
Committed suicide by faked decree of father?
And at that time you, laughed, too,
And when heard of what happened to Meng T'ien
You said, he may have been most lucky.
Here, I have something for you, a little luck,
I call it. It is your father's sword,
The one that we had for Fu-su to kill himself,
Same lucky sword, I have arranged for you
To have it, for you own. [*bows and hands him sword*]

Emperor [*desperately*] This is insane, Chao Kao!

*Chao Kao sets off secret signal, suddenly, loud noise
outside door, banging, enter group of Eunich guards,
in this fakes riot scene, manage to get inside the door*

E. Guard They demand the Five Punishments,
We can't hold them off much longer.

Chao-Kao What did they say?

Guard That they will torture the Emperor
To the cruelest edge of unimaginable suffering
Until he die, agony of prolonged pain,
Just as he had inflicted of many another!

Emperor [*pushing the sword towards Emperor*] Hurry!
Hurry, before it is too late.

Don't be a fool! Hurry, Hurry! [*noises of the mob outside rises, we hear voices*]

Voices He's not the real Emperor.
He killed the real Emperor, we'll kill him!
The Five Punishments, we want five Punishments
Cut him in two! Fraudulent Son of God,
Bastard of Monster Che'yu Devil is what is.

Chao-Kao [*virtually screaming as mob breaks in*]
Kill yourself you fool! Before its too late!
Kill yourself!
[*Emperor, dazed, horrified, in a panic, takes the sword in hand and leans himself into its razor sharp blade—silence, then we hear the horrid death rattle of the Emperor. Dies*]

The Emperor is dead! Long live the Emperor

Epilog

outside of Capital at Hsienyien, at the camp of Chen Shen, scouts gathered about, Wu Kuang, camp leader, now Chief Commander near Tatshesiang

Wu Kuang Chen Shen, after you were elected General
 You appointed me, a peasant like, you
 To honor of Chief Commander.
 And we, conscript laborers, once farm hands
 Baring our right arms in holy oath
 Announced we are the Army of Chu.
 To stay alive, we be crafty, too. Tell all,
 Whole world before our presence,
 You, Chen Shen, are General of Fu-su,
 The Rightful Emperor, that he is not dead,
 As forgery Emperor the Second would have believe,
 He still alive, with General Hsiang Yen—
 We are under the authority of Emperor Fu-su
 And General Hsiang Yen.

Chen Shen That a good idea. Emperor Second forgery,
 Bad man. Wu Kuang—ah, wait, others come.

enter Ko Ying

Ko Ying General, Chen Shen, Chief Command wu Kuang,
 I greet you, I greet you with the victory of Chi.
 General, your bravery has set bonfires
 Throughout all China, by the thousands, nay,
 By tens of thousands they rebound in applause
 And will follow you to the end of Chin's destruction,
 They leave their crops and take up arms,
 Soldiers on all fronts are rebelling,
 Chin the Second is doomed if not already dead.

Shall we move on the Mt.Li,
And take him there if still alive, General?

Chen Shen At this rate, by time we reach Chen
Have 700 chariots, 1000 cavalry men
And many tens of thousands of infantry,
Enough, easy, to take it.

Ko-Ying At Chen the people will demand you
Become their king as their Chin collaborator
Will have fled or will be dead.
I think all over the land will rise the people
To over throw Chin and his circles,
The friends of Chin, aye Chin the Criminal
Are the enemies of China.

Wu Kuang Chen Shen, tell me, my friend,
Will we not just have more of the same,
As same as with Chin and the same as before?
Everyone killing for position, power, glory.

Chen Shen It may be Wu Kuang, that life is still brutal.
But now, at least, we breath of freedom,
We have a human worth, we are a dream,
Whew, in Ch'u even Chen Shen
Can be a King. [*all laugh*]
A cruel heart and an honest mind do not eat
From same plate. Why nature makes this so,
I do not know, *wa bu shih tao*.
I have heard it said by the Hun Tzu the great
That the ruler to truly unify the people
Will be one who likes to kill others,
It will be one who does not enjoy killing others.
All would have died by irrational rule
Of no excuse, or seven out of ten of us,
Would already be dead at the frontier.
Our heads are not chopped off,
We live for our country and our people,
We breath and fight to live in freedom,
And mad tyrants we have had enough of.