

PLAYS FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

2400 THIRD AVENUE SOUTH
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55404
612-872-5108

FAX 612-874-8119

The Dutiful Daughter

Story by

Charles Way

The Dutiful Daughter was first produced by Courtyard Theatre, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds, UK, in 2005.

The license issued in connection with PYA perusal scripts is a limited license, and is issued for the sole purpose of reviewing the script for a potential future performance. All other rights regarding perusal scripts are expressly reserved by Plays for Young Audiences, including, but not limited to, the rights to distribute, perform, copy or alter scripts. This limited license does not convey any performance rights of any kind with this material. By accepting any perusal script(s), Licensee agrees to and is bound by these terms.

Characters:

Satto

Hashi

Li Yi

Ke Xin

Xiao Bai

Two servants to Xiao Bai

**These characters also double as the storytellers*

Note:

The play is set on a fictional island in the South China Seas.

Act One

Enter a group of storytellers.

I Is everyone ready?

2 Yes, yes.

1 Are we all agreed on today's story?

2 Of course, we never argue.

3 We are as one.

4 So let's start.

2 Yes, before it gets too hot.

All Once many years ago

3 How long ago would you say?

4 Oh two thousand years at least.

2 What? This story isn't that old.

I Stop it. We've come to tell a story and all you can do is bicker about when it took place. Perhaps it never took place - perhaps it happens in the future.

4 When daughters will be dutiful again.

I When we're not here.

3 But if we're not here - how can we tell it?

I Shut up.

5 Yes - we are as one.

3 We are as one - but are we here or not?

All Shut up.

I Of course we're here. All I'm saying is – it doesn't matter when it took place, because it's a story, it isn't real.

2 I agree there are too many coincidences in it to be real.

4 No, no. I think it's a very real story, even though some strange things happen.

5 You don't mean real, you mean, truthful.

4 Don't tell me what I mean.

I Stop arguing. We must consider the feelings of our audience.

3 Oh that's new.

2 Anyway - just because we're arguing doesn't mean we disagree.

I What?

2 We are as one in our disputes.

Silence.

I Forgive my fellow actors. We've been touring a long time and we're like a family who know each other too well.

5 Why don't you summarise what we've already done?

I How can I summarise, we haven't even begun?

4 We'd better begin soon, or well be moved on for loitering.

I Alright, as long as we're agreed on the story.

All 'The Dutiful Daughter'

I Good. Music.

Music.

All Once upon a time,
 long ago
 but not too long to be forgotten,
 perhaps today,
 or even tomorrow
 there was an island
 not far from the east of old China ...
 A beautiful island.
 To the south and east lay food producing villages
 To the north there were wild mountains
 and all around its coast were huts made of wood and straw -
 the homes of fishermen.
 The people of this island were seafarers and boat builders
 but the island had a meager harbour
 suitable only for small fishing boats.
 So one day the people began a great project.
 With huge stones they built a new harbour.
 And into the harbour sailed great ships
 Ships from Asia bringing spices, rare woods, and jewels
 Ships from Korea bringing books and ceramics
 Ships from China bringing medicines and minted coins -
 and flowing silk from the far north. Silk like this.
 And around the harbour grew a modern bustling city.
 And the city sang
 the never ending song of trade.

All sing 'The never-ending song of trade'

All The island was called
 'The Island of Joy'.
 and the king was called
 'King of The Island of Joy',
 but his given name was Hashi
 and he lived in a great stone castle
 overlooking the busy harbour.

All Hashi was a proud King
proud that his people were never hungry
proud that he ruled over a peaceful island
proud that his daughter was obedient.
His daughter was called Ke Xin
and sometimes she and her dearest friend would go fishing.

Scene one

A fishing boat.

Ke Xin I think we should go back now.

Li Yi Be still –

Ke Xin It's getting late.

Li Yi Wait. *(Li Yi catches a fish.)* Ha. Ha.

Ke Xin Poor thing. It looks so sad.

Li Yi It's a fish - all fish look sad. But the truth is they don't have any emotions at all. *(He is about to hit the fish.)*

Ke Xin How do you know that? That fish looks very emotional to me - and his poor wife and children are just beneath the boat wondering where he's got to - and why doesn't he come back and the mother is starting to get worried and the fish children are crying. I can hear them.

Li Yi I can't. *(He is about to hit the fish.)*

Ke Xin I think you should throw it back.

Li Yi This is my supper.

Ke Xin I am the Princess - throw it back.

Li Yi No, no you are not a princess - look at your poor clothes.

Ke Xin You dare disobey me.

Li Yi Sit down, you'll capsize the boat.

Ke Xin You have no respect - for me or the fish.

Li Yi The greatest respect I can give this fish - is to eat it. If you don't sit down I shall do the same to you. (*He is about to kill it.*)

Ke Xin Look! (*Li Yi alarmed by her tone looks away and she throws the fish overboard.*)

Li Yi What is the point of fishing - if you don't want to catch a fish?

Ke Xin Poor Li Yi - always so practical. For you the world has only one dimension. Can't you hear the fish children laughing?

Li Yi No - I can only hear my stomach rumbling. Goodbye supper. Of course you will have a fine meal to go home to, once you take off your poor disguise.

Silence. A bell rings.

Ke Xin We must go back now.

Li Yi But it's still light.

Ke Xin The bell.

Li Yi Who cares about the bell?

Ke Xin It's the law. Please Li Yi - take me back. My father will be home soon and I must be ready.

Scene Two

Ke Xin takes off her poor cloak and is now a Princess. She bows formally to Li Yi.

Ke Xin Thank you, Li Yi for taking me - around the castle walls.

Li Yi Thank you, Princess. My, my - your room looks different.

Ke Xin You must leave now. (*Li Yi enters the room.*) Li Yi - we are no longer children. Leave before you are seen.

Li Yi Your room is so untidy.

Ke Xin LiYi!

Li Yi You haven't even made the bed. What kind of Princess are you?

Li Yi picks up some dirty clothes, and she grabs them from him.

Ke Xin If my Father finds you here –

Li Yi He'll cut out my tongue? (*Speaks as if he has no tongue.*) Hello Princess.. . come fishing.. .

Ke Xin Is nothing serious to you?

Li Yi I'm a student, it's my role in life to have fun. (*He jumps up and down on the bed.*)

Ke Xin Get off my bed!

The second bell.

Ke Xin The second bell.

Li Yi Who cares? It's ridiculous. Hey - come to the window.

Ke Xin What for?

Li Yi The view.

Ke Xin I've seen it.

Li Yi When we were children we used to sit here and play cards. Now, I'm not even allowed in your room.

Ke Xin It's the way of the world Li Yi. You should go.

Li Yi Look, Ke Xin. The sun is sitting on the edge of the world. If a giant were to tread on one end of the horizon, the sun would roll down and fall off the edge into - into what?

Ke Xin The world is round Li Yi - it doesn't have an edge.

Li Yi Poor Princess - for you the world has only one dimension. And how do you know the world is round anyway?

Ke Xin Everyone knows.

Li Yi How do they know?

Ke Xin They've been told. You must go.

Li Yi How do they know they've been told the truth?

Ke Xin Don't be ridiculous. Great men who study such things have told us. Anyway I can see for myself.

Li Yi You can?

Ke Xin The sun is round - the moon is round. Why should the earth be any different from the rest of the family?

Li Yi I'm not saying it is. But if the great men had told you the earth was flat you'd believe them, even though your eyes tell you something else.

Ke Xin Why are you so argumentative these days? What are you trying to say? (*He gazes out.*) Don't poke your head out. You can be seen from the harbour.

Li Yi I know - last week I was out in my boat and you were sat here in the window. I waved and waved but you just ignored me.

Ke Xin I didn't ignore you. I was probably asleep.

Li Yi You shouldn't sleep by an open window - you could fall out.

Ke Xin And that would make you laugh, I suppose.

Li Yi No, that would make me sad.

Ke Xin For a whole minute.

Li Yi For a whole lifetime.

Ke Xin You mustn't talk like that.

Li Yi Why not, it's the truth. (*She looks out, then draws back.*) What's the matter?

Ke Xin I just remembered something. Something strange.

Li Yi Well?

Ke Xin I did fall asleep. I was watching the sun set over the sea, like it is now. I stared at the ocean, at the surface of it. I stared so hard that I lost focus - and it began to spin and spin like a whirlpool, and the whirlpool rose up with a terrible roar, and out of that sound came...

Li Yi What?

Ke Xin An old sea chest, wet and gleaming, and the water carried it, as if it weighed nothing - right into my room.

Li Yi And that's when you woke up?

Ke Xin No - that's when - 'she' came into my room.

Li Yi Who?

The bell rings a third time.

Ke Xin Soldiers are on the street now. Oh, why don't you do as you're told and just go?

Li Yi Look Ke Xin, shopkeepers, sailors, everyone herded into their homes just because it's getting dark. What does he think we are, little kids? What's he so afraid of?

Ke Xin Nothing. He wants people to be safe, that's all.

Li Yi No one likes this law Ke Xin, you should tell him before it's too late.

Ke Xin Too late?

Her Father, Hashi enters and speaks up to her from the garden beneath the window.

Hashi Ke Xin? Who are you talking to?

Ke Xin No one. Myself. (To Li Yi) Now, you make me lie to my Father.

Hashi I'm sorry that I've been so busy. An ambassador came from the great city of Nanking.

Ke Xin Oh - I hope he bowed a thousand times at your feet.

Hashi Ke Xin, I'd like to speak to you. Wait there.

Exit Hashi. Li Yi exits also but then returns at pace quickly followed by Hashi. Li Yi hides under the bed.

Hashi Ke Xin

Ke Xin Father.

He is about to embrace her warmly, but then stops and bows formally. Uncertain, she returns the bow.

Hashi Your room is a mess.

KeXin Not really.

Hashi You must keep things in order.

KeXin I'll try, father.

Hashi When there is order in the world, there is peace in the family. When there is peace in the family...

Ke Xin There is order in the world.

Hashi Your cheeks are red. What did you catch apart from the sun?

Ke Xin I don't understand, Father.

Hashi Oh, how odd - I was told you went fishing with Li Yi. *(He smiles)*

Ke Xin Forgive me, Father.

Hashi How long have you known Li Yi?

Ke Xin You know better than I.

Hashi Since you were very little. So, there's little to forgive, except perhaps the small dishonesty of your disguise.

Ke Xin Father, I'm - tired and I must wash - and - the salt is on my skin and in my hair.

Hashi Li Yi's father used to be a cook, here in the palace.

KeXin I know.

Hashi When he first arrived here he had nothing, just a little silk to sell - now he has three restaurants.

KeXin I know.

Hashi And his son is a fine student of something or other. You would play together, the little princess and the cook's son. You became so

close I was sometimes jealous. I let him stay because he made you happy. When he disobeyed me and took you out into the busy streets I let it go, knowing in my heart, it was good for you to see what life is like for the people.

Ke Xin What are you trying to say, Father?

Hashi That I love you and have your best interests at heart.

Ke Xin I know - I know.

Hashi Li Yi is almost a man. Your close relationship is no longer appropriate.

Ke Xin He's my friend, that's all.

Hashi Ke Xin, you're the future Queen of this island, and somebody, perhaps sooner than you think, may ask to marry you.

Ke Xin Who? Who wishes to marry me?

Hashi Tomorrow I sail with the ambassador to China. There is something for me to collect - a gift from the Emperor. The great lord of China has seven sons. If you were to marry the youngest, our island would be safe for generations. China will protect us - trade with us - there will be wealth, and happiness for all the people. (Silence) I know what I'm asking.

Ke Xin Do you?

Hashi I'm asking you to put the welfare of others, before your own. It's what I ask of every citizen. To ask it of you is more difficult than you could guess, but I have every hope that you'll be happy.

Ke Xin I'm tired, Father ...

Hashi I can see. We'll talk again tomorrow. (He makes to leave.) You've always been an obedient child and I'm grateful. I don't wish to be harsh about this, so - talk to Li Yi - explain to him. He'll

understand. His father has always been loyal. Good night, my daughter.

Exit Hashi. Li Yi emerges from under the bed.

Ke Xin You're my closest, my only friend.

Li Yi Who'll be sent away. There have been others who have been 'sent away' never to be seen again.

Ke Xin My father would never harm you. How dare you even think it.

Li Yi You should listen to the talk on the streets then you wouldn't be so sure.

Ke Xin I know my father. He's a good man and he loves me - and this island, and only wants what is best, for everyone.

Li Yi There are many people who love this island. They don't always agree with your father.

Ke Xin And are you one of them?

Li Yi Ke Xin - something is happening - beginning to happen - as if - the giant is about to step on the edge of the world –

The bell rings final time. Exit Li Yi.

Scene Three

Distraught, Ke Xin cannot sleep. She rises from her bed and sits at the open window, where the moon shines in. Music. The sound of the sea gets louder. The sound of roaring wind and storm. The sea enters her room through her window, so that she is driven back to her bed, and stands as on an island. The sea brings with it an old sea chest, wet and gleaming. She opens it and from it comes the sound of battle cries and sword clashes. Then a new sound; soft music. Out of the chest dances a woman, holding an infant which she offers to Ke Xin. She sings.

Woman In a country far away
 Stands a lonely mulberry tree.
 How slow the silkworm spun
 The Dutiful Daughter
 His lovely thread for me.
 From his gift I made for you
 This lovely silk of blue.
 So rest your sleepy head
 And dream of all that's true.
 And if you ever fear
 The dark and stormy night
 Follow the thread my dear
 To the calm morning light.

The woman gets back in the chest and the sea retreats. The Vision fades. Morning. Li Yi appears outside Ke Xin's window.

Li Yi Ke Xin. Ke Xin. 'Princess of the Island of Joy', I know you're there.

Ke Xin What do you want?

Li Yi You look awful.

Ke Xin Thanks a lot.

Li Yi I mean - you look tired.

Ke Xin What's the matter? Is something wrong?

Li Yi You must come down to the harbour.

KeXin Why?

Li Yi Your father has left for Nanking.

Ke Xin Already?

Li Yi And as his ship left the harbour wall another took its place.

Ke Xin A ship, from where?

Li Yi Who knows? The captain of this ship is a strange looking fellow, held captive by his own crew and bound with ropes. He screams abuse at them, and begs to be released, but they don't answer. They're as silent as the harbour wall. A crowd is gathering, and he demands to speak to someone in charge. Which now, is you.

Ke Xin I'm not in charge of anything, and you know it.

Li Yi If you don't calm this man, soldiers will arrive, trouble will start. I can feel it.

Ke Xin I'll meet you there.

Scene Four

The harbour. A busy, bustling noisy place. Enter Satto, in rags. Two silent servants hold him with ropes, one round his neck, the other round his hands. Though he tries to kick them, they are never severe with him.

Satto Untie me. Fiends and dogs - let me go. *(He kicks out at them.)* Why am I bound? What have I done? Who are you that keep me tethered like a madman? Is that what I am? A madman? I thought I was the captain of this ship? Am I? Answer me. No - you won't answer. You never answer. Why don't you answer? Turn the ship about - and we shall sail her to the bottom of the sea - you stinking bits of seaweed. *(He kicks out again. Enter Ke Xin and Li Yi.)* Why don't you fight back? Hey? Why don't you let me drown, that's all I want? A simple watery death. What's wrong with that? Why do you bind me to a nightmare I don't understand? *(He kicks out at his captors.)*

Ke Xin Is this the Captain?

Li Yi He seems to think so.

Satto Look, see the shame you've brought on me. A crowd gathers to watch my performance. Shall I dance? Watch me dance - like a seahorse. Like a whale. Shame on you. Shame on your mothers for

giving you the foul breath of life. Come stench blow, blow my sails across an empty sea.

Hello. *(He falls at Ke Xin's feet. He touches her silk clothes.)*

What softness here? This crowd is cut from rough cloth, but you, you are finely sewn. Are you a goddess? You smell like one. I have a nose for such things. You see my nose? Nice, isn't it? Don't tell me it isn't - I follow nothing else. Excuse me. *(He dances some more, then returns to her.)* Hello again. Would you be so kind as to take me to the King of this island - and then - as a favour to a fellow lunatic - slice off the ears of these two silent sea dogs - they wouldn't miss them. Fiends and arseholes! *(He lunges at his captors, the ropes hold him back.)*

Li Yi

Stand back Ke Xin, he's unpredictable.

Satto

You see what I have to put up with? I spit at them, they don't spit back. I curse and they don't curse back. But who are they? Ghost men - spirits of the air? I'll close my eyes and when I open them, they'll be gone. *(He opens his eyes)* Oh, dear.

Ke Xin

Why won't they release him?

Li Yi

Because he threatens to drown himself, the moment he's untied. These ropes protect him from himself.

Satto

Oh scared are we? Why? Because I breathe fire, like a dragon. That's it - I am a dragon, the sun has turned my skin to scales. These are not ghosts you superstitious fools, they are circus folk, who thought to tame me but a dragon can't be tamed. *(He roars at the people. Ke Xin steps forward.)*

Ke Xin

Be still. Be still *(Satto gets on all fours and whimpers.)* We have a tradition here that all strangers are welcome, however strange they are, but you must cease your foolish roaring.

Satto

I wasn't roaring, I was speaking dragon. An ancient tongue.. . an ancient tongue.

Ke Xin

What's your name?

Satto Don't know. What's yours?

Ke Xin My name is Ke Xin and I'm the princess of this island which is called, 'The Island of Joy'.

Satto I'm sure it will be when I leave it.

Ke Xin It's the most famous island in the world.

Satto And I've neyer heard of it. Perhaps I never went to school.

Ke Xin Where have you come from?

Satto I've no idea. It's gone - it's gone.

Li Yi His mind has gone. There's no progress to be made here.

Ke Xin Am I to be defeated by a fool with sunstroke?

Li Yi You can't reason with a dragon.

Ke Xin See - now he's crying.

Li Yi It's a trick, an act.

Ke Xin His tears are real enough. Why do you weep? What's happened to you?

Satto Weeping is my only means of transport. Yesterday I woke and the plains were dry and full of bones. I wept and wept until my salt tears became this ocean, across which I sailed to you and this – island of sadness.

Ke Xin If you mean to make a fool of me in front of my people -

Satto Your people? No, no... these are not your people, your people would smile from lobe to lobe but these poor folk have another look about them. They must be actors too, who with a word will put on a fearful face, play the role assigned, as I play mine, the Captain, the madman, the dragon ...

Ke Xin Ah - you are an actor then?

Satto Yes - Yes - that's it, and these - of course, of course, are my fellow actors. How clear it is now – if only they'd told me. We've been rehearsing a most interesting drama ... the ... the ... 'The Princess and the Dragon'? Yes. Yes - I'm an actor. Bring me the book. The book. The book.

One of his captors brings forward a book. He snatches it and snarls at him.

Ke Xin Li Yi.

Satto It's mine - it's mine - it's mine.

Ke Xin If there's meaning in this book that tells us who you are and where you've come from, please show it to us.

Satto I don't know. I don't know.

Li Yi gently takes the book.

Ke Xin What's in it?

Li Yi It's a story book that's all, fit for a child. There are pictures; kings and queens, a storm at sea, shipwrecks ... that kind of thing.

Satto 'That kind of thing. That kind of thing.' How heavy your judgment is. Are you a student?

Li Yi I am.

Satto Strange how a group of people who have experienced so little are always certain of so much. (*He snatches the book from Li Yi.*)

Li Yi We ask you one last time, who are you? Why have you come here? What's the meaning of this book?

Ke Xin Li Yi! Answer the question.

Satto I don't know. I don't know. Who? Why? What? I - have lost my anchorage. Has anyone seen my anchor?

Ke Xin But you are actors?

Satto 'That kind of thing - that kind of thing.'

Ke Xin Good, then tomorrow you can entertain us. You will perform the story of this book. You and your silent 'troupe'. It will keep us all amused until my father returns.

Satto Oh? Is he an actor too?

Ke Xin Can you do this?

Satto Untie me?

Ke Xin On your word that you won't jump into the same sea you wept into existence.

Satto I'm mad and can't keep promises - but if it be the will of heaven, tomorrow my 'troupe' and I will perform the story of this book. It's the only thing that gives them speech, for often they have sung it to me - in the dark before dawn.

Ke Xin Li Yi, see they are given soft beds, food and drink.

Li Yi Princess?

Ke Xin I ask you to obey.

Scene Five

The Castle.

Li Yi A strange occurrence.

Ke Xin I could barely breathe ... the way the people hung on my every word.

Li Yi You did well, Ke Xin. If I may still call you by name? Although you ended up inviting a madman into the castle.

Ke Xin His madness isn't proven.

Li Yi A man in rags, who doesn't know who he is or where he's come from? Roars like a dragon, cries like an infant. He's bonkers.

Ke Xin We'll see. It'll be fun.

Li Yi It isn't kind to use a fool for entertainment.

Ke Xin You are indeed a harsh judge. If I didn't know you so well, I'd say you were big-headed. Li Yi? A joke. What's the matter?

Li Yi This man's arrival ... gives me a strange feeling. Like - a bad omen.

Ke Xin I don't believe in omens. They're banned, didn't you know. Li Yi?

Li Yi Last night when I got home, soldiers came to my house. They crashed down the door, demanding to see me... I only just got in through the back window in time.

Ke Xin Perhaps it was a mistake - they had the wrong person.

Li Yi Perhaps it wasn't a mistake and your father sent them.

Ke Xin What are you saying?

Li Yi They beat the back of my legs with sticks and demanded to know where I'd been.

Ke Xin *(She is shocked but still defensive)* I told you not to break the curfew ... just do as you're told and this won't happen.

Li Yi Just do as I'm told? Is that your answer?

Ke Xin Don't speak to me again about this. I don't know what you want.

Li Yi I want to say what I think without fear but I can't because your father has declared public meetings a crime.

Ke Xin Only because it always ends in fighting.

Li Yi It only ends in fighting because your father sends soldiers to pack us off to bed.

Ke Xin Don't shout at me.

Li Yi But how could you see what's happening? Not from this room.

Ke Xin You will say nothing more.

Li Yi And now his soldiers feel free to attack us in our own houses. We must leave, Ke Xin.

Ke Xin Leave?

Li Yi I must take you away from this island. We can steal the captain's ship - and sail east before your father returns.

Ke Xin You're as mad as that captain. I'm not leaving. This is my home.

Li Yi Which very soon you'll have to share with a man you don't know and don't love.

Ke Xin Get out! If you don't, I'll call the soldiers myself.

Li Yi Then we're no longer friends.

Ke Xin Li Yi. Tomorrow, the Captain will perform his play. You will attend.

Exit Li Yi.

Scene Six

Morning. Ceremonial music. Ke Xin makes an elaborate entrance. Li Yi enters, and bows once. Enter Satto and his two silent companions. Satto is still bound. He holds the book. He bows very graciously, several times.

Ke Xin I see you're more - composed than yesterday. (He bows again.) Untie him. How can he perform if you don't untie him?

Satto 's silent companions untie the ropes and step back cautiously.

Ke Xin What is the title of this story?

Satto It has no name.

Ke Xin Of course, how foolish of me. Begin.

Music. The performance is a mixture of narration, mask and movement work.

Narrator This is the sad tale of Xiao Bai, a poor girl - unwanted - unloved ... sold into slavery because of her beauty. Her skin was softer than silk and her eyes dark as the night. From merchant to merchant, she was sold like a rare object. Many men desired her but she would always resist with wit, bravery, and some well aimed blows. She saved herself from harm. One day she was sold to a silk trader who was called Old Tao. Now Old Tao saw the true value of Xiao Bai. So he sought out a lonely king wealthy enough to pay for her beauty.

The play enters a dumb show phase, told only by music and movement. Enter a sad King. Music as Old Tao brings forward an old sea chest. Ke Xin tenses. From this chest Old Tao brings silk to tempt the King. The King is not interested but then out of the chest comes Xiao Bai, wrapped in silk. The King slowly unwraps her. He pays Old Tao, who leaves. The King woos Xiao Bai. They dance, they fall in love. She becomes his Queen. Then out of the chest comes a baby and the King and Queen are happy. Now out of the chest comes a five year old child/puppet. Time has passed. They dance together. The dance is stopped by the sound of thunder. Xiao Bai sings to her daughter.

Xiao Bai My little princess. I am happy at last, even though a storm rages outside. Do not go down to the water's edge - the waves are dangerous and like beasts they will eat you up.

King Do not go down to the water's edge - the waves are dangerous and like beasts they will eat you up.

The King and Queen embrace. While they are thus engaged the child disobeys and goes outside, alone. There is a raging sea personified by a masked figure. She goes near the sea and is swept away. She nearly drowns, but the Queen sees her and enters the water and pulls her out. The child shivers with cold and fever but her parents stay beside her. They sing, begging the Gods that she does not die.

Xiao Bai/King Oh Gods who rule the heavens and all that happens on earth, do not take my daughter for I would rather give my own life then see her wither and die.

Slowly the child recovers. The King is overjoyed and lifts her to the sky but the Queen collapses with exhaustion.

Narrator Now here comes a poor man a messenger from the people.

Poor Man Oh my king, the storm that nearly killed your daughter has swept away the harbour wall, floods have ruined the fields. The people are starving.

Narrator And so the poor man begs and pleads; he wrings his hands and bends his knees.

Poor Man All would be well, if the King would open up the royal store of grain and rice.

Narrator But the King is angry. How dare the people think only of themselves. Can't they see the Queen is sick? And he turns the poor man away.

Xiao Bai My good king - my husband. I know what it is to be hungry. Listen to this man's plea.

King Be silent. If the people starve, it is the will of heaven. I offer the royal food to the spirits of the storm to appease their anger.

Thunder and music climax. Xiao Bai collapses.

Narrator How cruel can this king be? His hungry people moan and bury their children, but he does not hear their sorrow. The poor man, driven by hunger and despair rebels against his own nature and his King.

Now out of the chest is pulled a warrior's mask, which the poor man puts on. He also brings out a sword. He challenges the King to fight and a dance fight ensues which the King loses. He is about to be slain when the child steps in the way of the sword as it falls. It stops just in time. The warrior/poor man is drawn to the child and picks her up gently. The King and Queen reach out their arms to her.

King I beg you - do not harm my daughter.

Poor Man In return for the child I give you your lives. But from your own Kingdom you both shall be banished. Go and never return.

Now from the chest comes a tiny boat and as in Ke Xin's dream, the sea fills the stage. They wave goodbye to the child and before very long she fades from view. The little ship sails on.

Narrator Lost and alone on the summer seas the Queen suffers and sighs and sings softly.

Xiao Bai So many miles I have travelled from the land of the mulberry tree and now I have lost my daughter and my home and will never see them more. I have no will to live.

Ke Xin But she cannot die - she can't.

Li Yi But she will. It's only a play. (Story) Ke Xin.

The Queen dies in his arms.

Li Yi You see, in a tragedy the best people always die.

Narrator The King wept over his wife and lay her body in an old sea chest lined with bitumen. Weeping he put the chest upon the sparkling sea and watched it float away until it could be seen no more.

Li Yi Personally, I prefer comedy.

Ke Xin Be quiet. Have you no manners?

Narrator For many months, the King sailed the lonely waves until one day the spirits of the sea shook his ship until its timbers cracked. And now the fates combined to wash him fast ashore onto the very land where once he was King and master.

Poor Man Why have you returned, a poor fool in rags? Can't you see I am lord and master now?

King I want nothing but to see my little girl, whom you severed from my heart and hand. Where is she? Where is she? Where is my daughter?

Poor Man Now you will suffer as we suffered under the will of heaven. *(He brings forth the child's body.)*

Narrator Now he can weep no more as he is shown her lifeless limbs. Of some strange sickness she has died. And all that he can do is take a spade and bury her as many a poor man has done.

The two slaves become silent and tie Satto with ropes so he now appears as he did at the harbour. Ke Xin approaches him almost as if the play were continuing.

Ke Xin Is this story your own?

Satto I don't know. I don't know.

Ke Xin Are you this tragic king?

Satto I cannot remember - anything.

Ke Xin Where did you get this book - in whose hand is it written?

Satto Yes, yes ... the priest, at the shrine gave me the book.

Ke Xin There's no shrines upon this island.

Satto Far away ... far away.

Ke Xin Why? Why did the priest give you the book?

Satto (*Cries out*) I don't know. I don't know. Why do you torment me?

Li Yi Ke Xin. Your father's home.

Enter Hashi.

Once again he is about to embrace her warmly but resists and bows formally.

Ke Xin Welcome home, Father.

Hashi Have you been crying? Who's this?

Ke Xin The teller of a sad story. A poor traveller who's lost everything in the world.

Hashi How careless.

He bows towards Satto, who bows extravagantly back.

Ke Xin He is a little strange.

Hashi Why's he tied like this? Is he dangerous?

Ke Xin Only to himself. He arrived as you departed and his odd behaviour compelled me to invite him here to tell the story of this book, which he says was given to him by a priest.

The book is given to Hashi.

Ke Xin I hope I've done the right thing.

Hashi Who are you? What's your name?

Ke Xin He doesn't know.

Hashi Why have you come here?

Ke Xin He doesn't know that either. He is - a little mad.

Hashi Mad?

Ke Xin At least he thinks he's mad, he's not sure. He's confused and in constant turmoil.

Hashi And you thought it wise to invite such a man here, into our home?

Ke Xin You've always told me it's our duty to entertain strangers as if they were members of our own family.

Hashi In spirit child, not literally. (*Satto begins to snore.*) What's he doing?

Ke Xin Sir? Sir? He appears to be asleep.

Hashi Wake up! Wake up!

Ke Xin Father.

Hashi Wake up!

Satto Morning. What's for breakfast?

Hashi Breakfast?

Satto Not fish again?

Hashi Take this man away and lock him up.

Ke Xin But Father –

Hashi One day Ke Xin, when you are Queen, you'll be less trusting. This man is dangerous.

Ke Xin Dangerous, how?

Hashi You can't predict what a man like this will do next. I will question him later and discover what he wants.

Ke Xin He wants nothing, except a little kindness.

Hashi That little he's had from you. Take him away.

Exit Satto.

Ke Xin In your absence I made a few decisions of my own. Now you overturn them, as if I were a child.

Hashi There are things - going on - that you don't understand.

Ke Xin How can I understand, if you don't explain. Father?

Hashi Ah Ke Xin, only because I want your childhood to last one extra day.

Ke Xin You want me to marry a man I've never met. I think that means my childhood is over. So tell me what is 'going on' Father. Why have you imposed this curfew? Why have you stopped public meetings? Don't you know how unpopular these things are?

Hashi And who have you been talking to? These questions do not belong to you.

Ke Xin I was at the harbour - I saw the people's faces - they are not happy, Father. There is fear and worry in every glance.

Hashi Li Yi?

Li Yi My Lord?

Hashi Are you loyal to me?

Li Yi I am loyal to all that - is right and good.

Hashi Then you'll do the right and good thing for this island, and for Ke Xin.

Li Yi I must be the judge of that.

Hashi No Li Yi, you're not the judge of that! In the affairs of state each individual cannot decide what is best - not unless you want terror and lawlessness to rule. Is that what you want? Are you loyal to me?

Li Yi To you both.

Hashi Then leave the Island of Joy. Go to Peking to study - history, ethics, the art of polite conversation. You will be an honour to us. Peking is a wondrous place and there I'm certain you'll find another girl to love and marry. Do this and I'll make sure your family are protected and cared for.

Ke Xin Father, please?

Li Yi You threaten my family?

Hashi Do you forget, Li Yi? I made your family. I gave you a mother and a father. Obey me and I will believe again in your loyalty.

Exit Li Yi.

KeXin Li Yi.

Hashi Ke Xin?

Ke Xin Go away. Go away.

Hashi I am lord of this island! It is I who command you. (*Frightened of him now, she backs away.*)

Ke Xin Father?

Hashi Everyday there are plots to overthrow me. I don't know who to trust any more - apart from you - my own daughter.

Ke Xin Li Yi is my oldest - my only friend.

Hashi Li Yi has the idealism of youth. A force that can be used against us. We must be careful, nothing maybe what it seems, even friendship. Beneath a man's madness may lie a plot to get close to you. If you were to be killed, everything I've built here would be lost. Your marriage will be a signal to the people that our leadership is strong and has the support of the Emperor himself. There will be no war – no hunger - no bloodshed. You understand Ke Xin? But your new husband won't be happy having to share time with a man who knows you better than he. Be dutiful, my daughter. *(Ke Xin bows her head)* I have brought you something from Nanking. *(Ke Xin does not raise her head)* You don't want to see the man you'll marry?

Ke Xin He's here?

Hashi No, no - only his likeness. His name is Ma Pin. I've brought a portrait of him. He'll be a handsome man. Would you like to see it? *(The portrait, which is covered in cloth, is now brought on.)* You aren't curious?

Ke Xin I'm confused. This picture ... Li Yi ... the poor fool you've thrown in jail. My head is spinning.

Hashi It's natural that someone of your age should feel confused. When I was young we had no time for the luxury of confusion. We were poor - and hungry. A hunger that you've never known. So many died of hunger - even your own mother.

Ke Xin What? Why do you speak of this now? You've always said the past should not be spoken of, that it will cloud our present view.

Hashi Because if you decide to hate me for a while, I'll understand. I've been through bad times before. A storm is brewing Ke Xin ... I can feel it. I love you so much, and whatever happens in the next few days, I want you to remember it.

Exit Hashi. Ke Xin goes to the portrait and takes off the cloth. She gasps - the picture is of a child, no more than twelve years old. She rushes out.