

Officer 1 Stop falling in love with the women we execute.

Officer 3 She was innocent. Her prophecies happened!

Tianyun Who were the witnesses?

Officer 2 Is she sexting?

Officer 3 *gets another text.*

Officer 1 Time's up.

Tianyun That's my last question.

Officer 2 *(grabbing phone, reads text)* "My boyfriend's in town."

Officer 1 Cocktease.

Officer 2 "And he loves beef noodles. Let's take him to the place by the high school. Smiley face. Heart. Thumbs-up. Flower."

Tianyun Who were the witnesses? Where can I find them?

Officer 1 Dinner break's over, boys. Back to the rounds.

Officer 1 There's always your left hand.

Officer 2 Nothing's more important than loving yourself.

Officer 3 I repeat: Public Health Emergency.

The Officers exit. Tianyun is alone under the plastic palms.

Scene Nine

New Harmony Guest House. Night. Fei-Fei, now in pajamas, makes giant bubbles with her new bubble-wand and solution. Tianyun, also in her pajamas, prepares for bed. The area under the Yuan dynasty table is filled with pillows and a sleeping bag.

Tianyun Get ready for bed.

Fei-Fei *(motioning to table)* I'm ready.

Tianyun What's this?

Fei-Fei My sleep fort.

She wiggles into the sleeping bag, then positions herself under her "fort", the Yuan dynasty table.

Fei-Fei Will you cut my nails?

Tianyun I thought cutting nails during Ghost Month was an invitation for spirits to visit.

Fei-Fei I like Snow Girl. I want her to visit.

Tianyun Darling –

Fei-Fei Can we adopt her?

Tianyun Stop playing.

Fei-Fei She needs our help. Bad things happen when you don't keep your promise.

Fei-Fei hands Tianyun a pair of nail clippers. Tianyun clips her nails.

Fei-Fei I wish the trees would come back.

Tianyun I wish for that too.

Fei-Fei Real flowers are better than fake ones.

Tianyun When we go back to Shenzhen I'll get you some real flowers and we'll look for good climbing trees.

Fei-Fei I want to climb trees here.

Tianyun Even if it starts raining tomorrow it will take a very long time for any tree we plant here to grow big enough to climb in. You might be as old as me.

Fei-Fei *(falling asleep)* Then I hope it rains soon so we can climb trees together.

Tianyun I hope for that too.

Silence. Fei-Fei is asleep. Tianyun tucks her deeper into the sleeping bag so she's completely cocooned. The crickets suddenly fall silent.

START **Judge Wu**, the town judge, and **Dou Yi** enter from opposite directions. **Dou Yi** wears a prison jumpsuit and is shackled at the hands and feet. She is escorted by **People's Armed Police Officers 2** and **3**. They can't see **Tianyun**. **Judge Wu** sits at the desk that **Fei-Fei** is sleeping under. **Dou Yi** is led to him.

Judge Wu Cai Dou Yi, you have been convicted of the murder of Master Zhang.

Dou Yi Your honor, I'd like to change my plea.

Judge Wu You confessed to the murder at the crime scene.

Dou Yi I'm not a killer.

Judge Wu Seven eyewitnesses disagree.

Dou Yi They're lying.

Judge Wu Officers — I need a moment alone with the prisoner.

The People's Armed Police Officers salute and exit.

Dou Yi Let me tell you the truth, plain and white —

Judge Wu Master Zhang was a pillar of this community. This whole town feels his loss — not just in their hearts, but in their pockets as well.

Dou Yi I'm innocent. Let me tell you what happened.

Judge Wu The trial is over. This is a sentencing hearing. The only question now is whether you'll be executed or sent to a labor camp.

Dou Yi My mother-in-law is sick. I'd like to care for her as long as I can.

Judge Wu You may be be a widow, but you're still young, and very pretty. I'm an old man and my wife is hairy and fat. Why don't we come to an arrangement in which both sides receive benefit?

Dou Yi I'd rather die.

Judge Wu Don't you know that those who file a suit are like parents who pay for my clothing and food?

Dou Yi Courthouses open to the south. It doesn't matter if you are right or wrong, just whether you've brought money — along.

Judge Wu Officers!

The People's Armed Police Officers return.

Judge Wu Cai Dou Yi has been sentenced to death. Inform Doctor Lu of the sentencing, which I am setting for one month from today.

Officer 1 Your Honor —

Judge Wu What is it?

Officer 1 This was just delivered.

He hands an envelope to Judge Wu, who opens and reads it.

Judge Wu There's been a change of plans. Cai Dou Yi will be executed tomorrow.

Dou Yi What — why?

Judge Wu Because the will of the state and the people requires it.

Dou Yi Make sure my mother-in-law stays away. Please. I don't want her to see —

Judge Wu Those days are over. You won't be paraded through the streets.

He exits. The Officers unshackle Dou Yi's feet, give her a tablet of medicine to take, put a raincoat over her prison uniform and a cardboard sign around her neck. On it is written the characters "Dou Yi" in black brush ink. A red X is drawn over her name, indicating that this woman has been sentenced to death. The Officers guide Dou Yi away from Judge Wu's table and out of his room. Lights shift, indicating they are in a different space. Dou Yi steps onto a dining chair and then stands on the table, which is now the court execution grounds. It turns into a

40 Snow in Midsummer

lush summer day. Birds sing. A brook bubbles nearby. A white flag flaps overhead.

Dou Yi

I didn't think I'd draw such a crowd
 Why have so many come to watch one woman die?
 They must be selling snacks outside.
 Red-bean cakes, candied berries, grilled rabbit, puffed rice.
 My husband and I saw a public execution when we were
 very young.
 When the condemned man was brought out, the crowd
 roared and
 Pelted him with rocks and rotten vegetables.
 My husband's eight-year-old boy part stiffened
 As we screamed and hurled moldy melons.
 Maybe I will have the same effect on men in this audience.
 Perhaps the sight of Dou Yi flying, then falling, will make
 women wet
 And watching me die will make you lust for life.
 Afterwards, will you go home
 Shove your bodies together and try to
 Forget that you –
 And you
 And you, and you, and you, and you, and you
 And even you –
 Will vanish
 Without a trace
 Erased.
 Everything ends.
 Doctor Lu gave me a blue pill to take with my last meal.
 How strange to already feel like I'm drifting down
 Towards King Yanfa's house
 Away from you and this fleeting, temporary body.
 What can be made of this short, wretched life?
 Heaven and Earth fear the strong and oppress the weak
 Earth fails to discriminate between good and evil
 Heaven mistakes the wise man and the fool
 Both leave me nothing but two streams of tears.

She recognizes a woman in the audience.

Mother Cai –

I didn't want you to see me like this.
 I confessed to save you
 If I don't die, how can I save your life?
 A thousand beatings and ten thousand punishments
 One blow, one streak of blood, one layer of skin.
 They beat me till pieces of my flesh flew out
 And I was dripping with blood.

Officer 3 enters.

Officer 3 (*into audience*) Old woman, stay back!

Dou Yi

Mother Cai, from now on
 When it is the winter solstice and the new year festival
 And on the first and fifteenth day of the month
 If you have rice pulp and water left
 Leave a half bowl for your daughter to eat.
 If you have spirit money left unburnt
 Burn a wad for Dou Yi.
 Please –
 Think of Dou Yi, who was sold by her mother
 And can no longer conjure her face.
 Think of Dou Yi, who tended your son's grave when
 His life was taken building this town's factories.
 Think of Dou Yi, who was framed for murder
 Betrayed by a lecherous judge
 And executed for a crime she didn't commit –

Officer 3 Move.

He exits.

Dou Yi

Mother Cai, don't cry
 Don't get angry or curse the sky
 Maybe Dou Yi is not fit for this time.

My mother read me a story about a loyal official framed for murder.
 As he howled at Heaven before his execution
 Frost flew from the sky even though it was May.
 If we still live on a planet that hates injustice
 Snow will fall from the clouds and shield my remains.
 May that snow, be the last water that falls on New Harmony
 until
 Justice is brought to Dou Yi.
 Officers –
 Do you see the white flag flapping overhead?
 If I am innocent
 Not a drop of hot blood will spill onto the green earth or
 stain my clothes
 No matter how many bullets pierce this flesh.
 My blood will fly towards the Blue Sky and
 Stain the white flag flying above us.
 This has happened before when wrongs were suffered by
 honest women.
 Now it will happen here
 Where the good suffer poverty and a short life
 And the wicked live long and make lots of money.
 Because officials are heartless and choose to
 Close their eyes and fill their pockets
 And men in this town were born with
 Mouths that can right wrongs with a few words
 But you are all too timid to speak.

The sky darkens.

This floating world dims for me
 A cold wind spins!
 Officers, I promise you –
 It is the hottest time of the year
 But soon snow will tumble down like cotton
 And New Harmony will experience the wrath of a drought
 for three years.
 They say Heaven has no sympathy for the human heart –
 The Blue Sky will answer my prayers.

Mother!
 Wait until snow falls in June and drought lasts for three
 years.
 Then, and only then, will my innocent soul be –

CRACK CRACK CRACK! Bullets hit Dou Yi's head and neck. She flies sideways, and collapses onto the ground, dead. The white flag flying above them turns red and heavy with fresh blood.

The People's Armed Police Officers enter. Officer 2 and Officer 3, the younger officers, carry a stretcher. Officer 1 takes a few cell-phone pictures of Dou Yi's body – including a "thumbs-up" selfie with him and her bullet-ridden head. When he is done, the other officers transfer Dou Yi's body to the stretcher.

Officer 1 Who hit her neck?

Officer 2 Who do you think?

Officer 3 It wasn't me!

Officer 2 Horse shit. You drank too much coffee.

Officer 3 Says who?

Officer 2 Your twitching left eyelid.

Officer 1 The bullets have cauterized her wounds. There's not a drop of blood anywhere.

Officer 3 There's not enough girls as it is. Why get rid of a perfectly good specimen? They should have let me marry her and keep her under house arrest.

Officer 1 That would be considered a "cruel and unusual punishment."

Officer 3 I don't hit girls.

Officer 2 He means marrying you is a fate worse than death.

Snow starts to fall in thick white clumps.

Officer 3 I'm a beast in the kitchen. Any woman I cook for would be on her knees –

Officer 2 Dying of food poisoning.

Doctor Lu enters, dressed in surgical scrubs.

Officer 1 Move.

Officers 2 and 3 pick up the stretcher with **Dou Yi's** body.

Doctor Lu The van unit's prepped.

Officer 3 notices a necklace on the ground. He tosses it on the stretcher.

Officer 3 She lost her necklace.

Officer 1 (reading characters) "Double Happiness." Maybe in the next life.

Officer 2 (off snow) What the –

Officer 3 It's ashes from the incinerator.

Officer 2 Fuck me. It's snowing. How strange –

Officer 1 It's called "climate change."

The men start to exit. The snow follows Dou Yi's body, accumulating on top of it, covering it completely.

Officer 3 When we kill on any other day, the ground is full of fresh blood. Look at the flag – it's bright red and soaking wet. This death sentence must be unjustly sent.

Doctor Lu Oh dear. My tomatoes aren't going to like this.

Officer 2 Your spinach will.

Officer 3 Cabbages like cold too –

Doctor Lu We don't have time to talk about vegetables. Move faster. I have patients from seven countries waiting on this harvest.

They exit. It continues to snow. As the lights bring us back into the New Harmony Guest House, Tianyun emerges from underneath the table, gently wakes Fei-Fei, and leads her to the bedroom.

END

Scene Ten

A spacious loft, later that night. Rocket packs a suitcase. Handsome rushes up.

Handsome Sorry I'm late. There were oceans of traffic.

Rocket ...

Handsome How are you, darling? How is your heart?

Rocket ...

Handsome We closed the deal. The funds will be released tomorrow. We're finally free.

Rocket ...

Handsome Please. I've been frantic. Say something.

Rocket Where do the cards go?

Handsome Cards?

Rocket That we send to the teenager's family.

Handsome My assistant sends them off.

Rocket To which province?

Handsome I'd have to check.

Rocket You don't know?

Handsome My mind is muddled. I've been so worried.

Rocket What was the boy's name?

Handsome We agreed to avoid details –

Rocket I changed my mind.

Handsome It was was Wei – Wei something.

Rocket Are you sure?

Handsome What's this about?

Rocket I have a feeling it might be more – feminine.