

# IDtPS a1 s03-04 Exile of a Pariah

*by Winnie Khaw*

## SCENE 03 NO PROGENY OF LOVE

After that heated exchange, during which HANEUL falls violently infatuated, he never sees the Fox Spirit again. Nearly a year later, a fey baby boy is found in his bedchamber, and the guards standing at the doors cannot explain his appearance. Disliking the boy intensely as a reminder of Haneul's brief affair, Haneul nevertheless claims him as a son, calling him Bai (Chinese for "white") in the current tradition of giving first sons Chinese names.

HANEUL

Now steeped in sin, owing  
voluptuous debts for an artificer  
of pleasure's trifling favors, I  
crave pardon of the gods for my  
wrongdoing, futile as charms  
written in dust, and accept this,  
no progeny of love, as just  
penance.

## SCENE 04 EXILE OF A PARIAH

HANEUL tells BAI, a quiet shy young man who has been treated  
as a pariah and the offspring of a demon, to go to the Chinese court (the oldest Korean son is a guest/hostage) —  
19 years later.

HANEUL

Ye ministers accomplish naught but  
stare, beetle-browed in feeble  
contemplation, at scrolls of law  
and decorum! Fat and slothful  
creatures who fret much, yet with  
little done. Think you I know not  
councils of war lull aged eyelids  
to slumber?

(beat)

Inform me of the proper course for  
action.

MINISTER 1

(aside)

Is it not said, "To cover the eyes  
and snatch at swallows is to fool  
oneself?"

(beat)

O king, inauspicious signs have  
revealed themselves, of black  
clouds, turbid mists on a summer  
day. And the seer dreamt of a  
resplendent jade sent from the  
heavens fallen into mire.

HANEUL

Truly? Be this specious uttering  
only? I of a surety place faith in  
the gods; yet I suspect timidity on  
your parts. But silence on this  
primordial scheme.

Enter Bai.

BAI

I answer to the order of the king.

(aside)

Ever a cloud ov'erhangs his brow at  
the sight of me, gloom darkness  
hovering about his head.

HANEUL

For near twenty years of  
upbringing, I have received but  
scanty expression of gratitude.

BAI

My lord, I am content to grind ink  
and wash the slabs if such labor be  
in your service.

HASUEL

This I know: rolling vapors lie  
floating beneath the lofty aureole  
of serenity surrounding the  
mountain.

(beat)

Like the mother, of steadfast gaze,  
radiant gold eyes as glittering  
blades with incisive stroke,  
keen-fanged hounds of the hunt  
tearing flesh--snowflakes like  
pear-blossoms shed with every step.

BAI

If so, the sire frowning stern,  
allow me in evanescence to wane  
from sight, and haunt as a phantom  
where shadows roam.

HASUEL

In clemency I have indulged  
unavailing, indolent pursuits of  
your choosing; dilatory, fond of  
leisure and ease, no aimed  
ambition.

BAI

I beg forgiveness for having  
angered your majesty; how may I  
bring about conciliation?--for to  
have displeased you is to have  
liver and gall torn from within.

HANEUL

The Emperor of \_\_\_\_\_ has  
commanded that my eldest son be  
sent to his empire as a guest in  
all affluence and honors for an  
undetermined period.

(aside)

If you pretend not to sluggish  
intellect, lucidly fathom the  
import.

BAI

(aside)

I am cognizant of the gist--to be  
an opulent puppet-hostage in a  
foreign court.

(beat)

Have I no duties to bind me to the  
kingdom?

HANEUL

Heaven treads down difficulties.

(aside)

Your meager contributions, fit only for tomb guardians or a reciter of poems, I miss no more than a flourishing tree a single leaf, a millet of grain from a prosperous granary. What I have viewed as an evil may be a means of deliverance from it, removing the blight of harmony.

BAI

Common birds understand the flight of cranes. I do with alacrity as you command, O king.

(aside)

In plaintive melody I have mourned the unceasing disfavoring eye my father has cast upon me, as a sheet of ice draped on rock and ridge.

Exit Bai.

HANEUL

(aside)

Could I, who in vain clasp statues of cold stone, only blot out utterly the heated remembrance, uproot with complete destruction! Yet I remain blunt in resolve, unhappy beset each night, full of gall and bitterness.

