

IDtPS a1 s03-04 Exile of a Pariah

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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.

