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Samuel French Acting Edition

Lady Precious Stream

by S. I. Hsiung



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LADY PRECIOUS STREAM

STORY OF THE PLAY

This exotic play tells the romantic success story of a young Chinese maiden of noble birth who, as subsequent events prove, loved a humble gardener wisely and too well. Lady Precious Stream is the third daughter of His Excellency Wang Yun, the Prime Minister. Since his daughter has reached the maritally ripe old age of sixteen, the Prime Minister is determined to choose a son-in-law from the nobility and get his third and last daughter married. But Lady Precious Stream, with a mind and will of her own, has taken matters into her own dainty hands and, in a modest Chinese way, has quite a fancy for the humble Hsieh Ping-Kuei—her father's gardener, who can also furnish a verse when the occasion demands it. By the simple expedient of removing "an act of God," the tossing of an embroidered ball among the eligible suitors to determine the bridegroom, out of Divine hands, the royal maiden gets her gardener, and she is promptly ignored by her rich, regal relatives. She goes to live with her husband in an unpretentious cave, vowing never to return to her father's house unless she can do so as a lady of wealth.

The play then shows how, after eighteen hard years, the "tables are turned" for our heroine. Hsieh Ping-Kuei becomes a king; Lady Precious Stream sits as his queen in judgment on her harsh relatives. The good are rewarded, the bad are punished, and the audience is pleased and satisfied.

Copy of program on the first performance of "LADY PRECIOUS STREAM," as produced at the Booth Theatre, New York:

MORRIS GEST

Presents

LADY PRECIOUS STREAM

A Play in Four Acts

BY

S. I. HSIUNG

Staged by the Author

Settings by Watson Barratt

CAST

(In the order of their appearance)

HONORABLE READER *Mai-Mai Sge*

PROPERTY MEN { *Norman Stuart*
 Jesse Wynne

HIS EXCELLENCY WANG YUN, *the Prime Minister*

—Clarence Derwent

MADAM WANG, *his wife*.....Molly Pearson

Su, the Dragon General, their eldest son-in-law

—Henry Morrell

WEI, the Tiger General, their second son-in-law

—Detmar Poppen

GOLDEN STREAM, *their eldest daughter...* Helen Kimm

SILVER STREAM, *their second daughter. Marcella Abels*

PRECIOUS STREAM, *their third daughter*

—Helen Chandler

HER MAID Sally Fitzpatrick

HSIEH PING-KUEI, *the gardener...* Bramwell Fletcher

SUITORS {Preston Tuttle, Will Claire,

SULLIVANS (Harry Selby, Slater Barkentin

6 ORIGINAL PROGRAM—*Continued*

THE PRINCESS OF THE WESTERN REGIONS

—*Natalie Schafer*

MA TA } ... *Her aides de camp* ... { *Albert Whitley*
KIANG HAI } { *Preston Tuttle*

MAIDS TO THE PRINCESS { *Joan Adrian, Lilian Dushell,*
{ *Joan Miller, Sally Fitzpatrick*

GENERAL MU *Henry Morell*

EXECUTIONER *Gilbert Ralston*

THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS..... *Will Claire*

CHINESE ATTENDANTS, WESTERN ATTENDANTS,
SOLDIERS, CHINESE MAIDS, *etc.*

SCENES

ACT ONE

PART I—

The Garden of the Prime Minister.
On a New Year's Day.

PART II—

The same. The Second of February.

ACT TWO

PART I—

The Cave of Hsieh Ping-Kuei.
One month later.

PART II—

The same. Nine months later.

INTERMISSION TEN MINUTES

ACT THREE

PART I—

The Western Regions. Eighteen years later.

PART II—

The Cave. A short time later.

ACT FOUR

PART I—

The Garden of the Prime Minister.

The next morning.

PART II—

The Temporary Court of the King of the Western Regions. The next day.

Lady Precious Stream

ACT ONE

SCENE I

SCENE: *See design.*

Stage LIGHTS set on dim marks. House LIGHTS out. Blue FOOTLIGHTS on.

*When house LIGHTS out: GONG #1.
READER enters between curtains to in front of curtain. SPOT on READER.*

READER. (*To audience*) Good evening (afternoon), Ladies and Gentlemen. You are now introduced to the traditional Chinese stage, which, according to our humble convention, is not in the least realistic. Scenery is a thing we have never heard of, and the property men who are supposed to be unseen by the audience are taking an active part in the performance. The success or failure of a production is sometimes in their hands. They provide chairs for the actors to sit on and the cushions to kneel upon; and the case when the hero is to die an heroic death he can fall down majestically and without any hesitation, for the never-failing hands of the property men are always on the watch and will promptly catch him before any disaster can take place. Nevertheless they sometimes, in an excess of zeal, overdo their duty by even looking after the worldly com-

forts of the players. When the actor has just finished some long lines, they would present him a cup of tea to ease the throat. These actions would certainly be condemned by a western audience but we accept or rather pretend not to see them. There is, at least, one advantage: if some accident happens to the actor or property they can come forward and put it right before the audience can decide whether it is part of the play or not. (*GONG #2. Curtain up.*) Now let us imagine that this unfurnished stage represents the scene of the picturesque garden of the Prime Minister, Wang Yun, who appears wearing a long black beard which indicates that he is not the villain of the piece. In spite of his very long beard, His Excellency is a middle-aged man who has always found life easy and happy. As he is a man of peppery temper he is sometimes cross when he has really nothing to find fault with. He is a strict master of his home, which he rules with an iron hand, though his wife says that he should have someone at his elbow. In Government he finds that to rule a nation is much easier than to rule a family. That is, no doubt, why we have so many prominent statesmen in history. Madam, his wife, is a kind lady of uncertain age. To her children she seems to be more than a hundred, while to her husband she is but a mere child. She is one of the women who know the importance of the ancient female virtues. To obey your father when young, to obey your husband when married, and to obey your children when a mother. By obeying people all her life she has acquired a benign look and a soft voice. Their eldest son-in-law, Su, the Dragon General, is a famous warrior because he always wins the battle when the enemy's General knows less about making war than he does. He knows nothing but enough to be aware of his own ignorance. Their second son-in-law, Wei, the Tiger General, is also a famous warrior because

he always has the best of luck though it would be impossible to find a worse soldier. He knows nothing and does less, but he talks endlessly and has consequently become famous. As for the daughters of the family, they are such charming young ladies that the author finds his English inadequate to describe their charms. However, charming ladies need no introduction—but we must warn you against Lady Precious Stream, our heroine, because she could make you put the halter willingly around your neck—if she chose to lead you along with her. The hero of the piece, Hsieh Ping-Kuei, gardener to His Excellency, is a man of deeds rather than words. So it would not do him justice if we vainly try to describe his merits, which, we hope, will prevent him from putting that halter willingly around his own neck. (READER bows and exits down L.)

ACT ONE

SCENE II

GONG #3. Stage LIGHTS up.

PROPERTY MEN enter L. and R. and bow to audience—sit at their places.

GONG #4. MUSIC.

Enter 1ST and 2D ATTENDANTS from up R. They go downstage R. 1ST ATTENDANT crosses front of stage to down L. 2D ATTENDANT stays down R.

WANG follows ATTENDANTS on, going down C. Bows to audience.

PROPERTY MAN L. brings on table and places it down L.

As WANG starts to speak MUSIC stops.

WANG. I am your humble servant, Wang Yun, the Prime Minister of the Emperor's Court. My consort's name is Chen. Although we have been happily married for twenty years, we are still childless. It is true that we have three daughters but that doesn't count; as you know, daughters leave their parents and become other people's property. My eldest daughter is called Golden Stream, who married Su, the Dragon General; the second is called Silver Stream, who married Wei, the Tiger General. The one dearest to my heart is the youngest, called Precious Stream—(PROPERTY MAN R. places armchair c.)—who will be sixteen next February. I have a mind to choose for her amongst the rich and young nobles for a son-in-law, but the little minx is as wilful as she is pretty, and refuses to obey my wishes. (ATTENDANTS come to c. Pantomime opening large double door. They return to down L. and down R. WANG enters garden, stepping over threshold, and sits c.) However, today's New Year's day; I will spread a feast here in my garden and have all my family present, and let my wife, my two sons-in-law and my two elder daughters try to persuade her to come to reason. Attendants!

ATTENDANTS. (Kneeling) Yes, Excellency!

WANG. Request Madam to come here.

ATTENDANTS. (Rising) Yes, Excellency. (They go up R. and up L., face off R. and call) His Excellency requests the presence of Madam.

MADAM. (Off R.) Yes, I will come. (MUSIC starts. 1ST and 2D MAIDS enter from R. Go to down R. 1ST MAID crosses front to down L. 2D MAID stays down R. MADAM follows them in to down c. Curtseys to audience. ATTENDANTS return to down L. and down R. MUSIC stops.) I am Chen, the wife of the Prime Minister, Wang. (She turns up; steps over threshold; curtseys to WANG) My respects to

Your Excellency. (PROPERTY MAN L. places arm-chair L. of WANG.)

WANG. And mine to you. Be seated. (She sits L. of WANG. MAIDS cross to down c. Step over threshold. 1ST MAID goes L. 2D MAID goes R. to stand over MADAM'S chair.)

MADAM. May I know what is your wish in asking me to come to see you in the garden?

WANG. Today is New Year's Day. I want to celebrate it in some way. It looks as if it is going to snow. I propose that we have a feast here in the garden to enjoy the snow. And during the feast I hope you will try your best to persuade our youngest daughter to consent to marry one of the young nobles whose suit I have approved.

MADAM. Your orders will be obeyed. But I am afraid it will not be of any use, for the young minx is very obstinate. She insists on being allowed to choose for herself.

WANG. Nonsense! It is scandalous for a young girl to choose a husband herself. Our young generation is becoming hopeless. What are the teachings of Confucius and Mencius coming to? They study them and then act in defiance of them. (He shows a trifle of anger.)

MADAM. She says that "Not to impose your will upon others" is one of the most important teachings of Confucius and she hopes you will not forget it.

WANG. (Blowing his long beard in a rage) Ph-ew! You have utterly spoiled her. For heaven's sake do not encourage her to rebel against me. (He turns aside and calls) Attendants!

ATTENDANTS. (Kneeling) Yes, Excellency!

WANG. Tell General Su, General Wei, and the ladies to come here at once.

ATTENDANTS. Yes, Excellency! (They rise, cross up R. and L. and call off R. aloud:) His Excellency

asks General Su and General Wei and his three daughters to come to see him.

VOICES. Yes, we are coming.

(*MUSIC starts. MADAM receives cup of tea from PROPERTY MAN L., gives it to WANG, who drinks and returns cup to MADAM. She returns it to PROPERTY MAN, who retires to his place. During the above business SU has entered up R., followed by WEI. SU to down L.C. WEI to down R.C. BOTH face audience. MUSIC stops.*)

SU. (*Bows*) Your humble servant, Su, the Dragon General.

WEI. (*Bows*) Wei, the Tiger General, at your service. (*PROPERTY MAN R. places two chairs R. of WANG.*)

SU. (*He and WEI face each other*) Just a moment ago our father-in-law, the Prime Minister, asked us to come to the garden to see him. I wonder what is the reason.

WEI. So do I. Let us go up and find out. (*Bows.*)

SU. (*Stretching out his R. arm. Bows*) You first. (*They enter together and bow to WANG.*)

SU and WEI. (*Bowing*) Your sons-in-law beg to pay their respects to you.

WANG and MADAM. Don't stand on ceremony, but please be seated.

SU and WEI. Thank you! (*MUSIC starts. They move R., bow to each other, sit, SU next to WANG, WEI R. of SU.*)

(*GOLDEN STREAM and SILVER STREAM enter up R. They pause at entrance and business of arranging hair. They come down C.; curtsy to audience. MUSIC stops.*)

GOLDEN STREAM. (*L.C. to audience*) Your humble

maid, Golden Stream, the eldest daughter of the Wang family. My husband is Su, the Dragon General. (PROPERTY MAN L. *places two chairs L. of MADAM.*)

SILVER STREAM. (R.C. to audience) The second daughter, Silver Stream, at your service. My husband is Wei, the Tiger General, and the most handsome man in the kingdom. When we were talking in the reception room our father called us to come here. (*She peeps over her shoulder, looking R. and L.*) It seems there is going to be a family council, and I believe I know the reason why. (*The Two SISTERS now face each other*) My eldest sister. (*Curtsey.*)

GOLDEN STREAM. Yes, my youngest sister. (*Curtsey.*)

SILVER STREAM. Do you know why father has called us to come here?

GOLDEN STREAM. No, I don't know.

SILVER STREAM. (*Speaking very rapidly*) Because of our minx of a sister. I'm sure it's about her—She is not very young now and she is choosing a husband for herself. No wonder. I would do the same if I were in her place. But Father is also choosing one for her, and no wonder. I would do the same if I were in his place. And Mother—

GOLDEN STREAM. (*Interrupting her*) All right, don't talk so much. Let us go in. (*They enter up to WANG and MADAM; curtsey.*)

GOLDEN STREAM and SILVER STREAM. (*Together*) Your daughters have come to pay their respects to you, dear Father and Mother.

WANG and MADAM. Don't stand on ceremony. Be seated.

GOLDEN STREAM and SILVER STREAM. Thank you. (*They BOTH sit, GOLDEN STREAM next to MADAM, SILVER STREAM L. of GOLDEN STREAM.*)

SILVER STREAM. (*Quick and sharp*) Are you call-

ing us here to discuss the case of my youngest sister, Precious Stream?

WANG. Eh—yes; no, not exactly. Today is New Year's Day. I want to celebrate it in some way. It looks as if it is going to snow. I propose that we have a feast here in the garden to enjoy the snow. And during the feast, well—

SILVER STREAM. Oh, I know! And during the feast we will try our best to persuade our youngest sister to consent to marry one of the young nobles whose suit you have approved. Isn't that so?

WANG. Yes, that is exactly what I wish you to do.

GOLDEN STREAM. But if she has a suitor in her own mind—

WANG. Nonsense, I won't allow it.

GOLDEN STREAM. Is that fair, dear Father?

MADAM. Yes, is that fair, dear?

WANG. Well—a daughter's duty is to obey.

SILVER STREAM. Father knows everything of consequence, and if our youngest sister's secret suitor is a desirable person, then he must be on father's list. Otherwise, it must be some unsuitable creature whom it would be well and proper to avoid. When I was young I left my choice entirely in dear father's hands, and, you see, I became the wife of the most handsome man in the kingdom. (*Rises, curtsseys, and sits.*)

WEI. Oh, I thank you. (*Hides face with sleeve.*)

GOLDEN STREAM. (*Sarcastically*) But Father can't find another man as handsome as your husband for her now.

WEI. Yes, that's true.

SILVER STREAM. Not another word, please. She is coming. (*MUSIC starts. PROPERTY MAN L. places chair L. for PRECIOUS STREAM.*)

(PRECIOUS STREAM enters up R., preceded by MAID.

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MAID to R.C. PRECIOUS STREAM *does business of arranging hair, then down to c. MUSIC stops.*)

PRECIOUS STREAM. I am your humble maid, Precious Stream, the third and youngest daughter of the Wang family. When I was doing my embroidery work in my boudoir I heard my father calling to me to come to the garden to see him. My maid, lead the way to the garden.

MAID. Yes, my lady.

(MAID *enters the garden and goes L., followed by* PRECIOUS STREAM. PRECIOUS STREAM *up c. to* WANG; *curtseys.*)

PRECIOUS STREAM. Your daughter's respects to you, dear Father and Mother.

WANG and MADAM. Don't stand on ceremony. Be seated.

PRECIOUS STREAM. Thank you. And my compliments to my brothers-in-law and my dear sisters. (*Sits L. 3d MAID crosses behind PRECIOUS STREAM's chair. ATTENDANTS close door and cross up R. to behind chairs.*)

ALL. Thank you. The same to you.

PRECIOUS STREAM. May I know why I am called to come here, dear Father?

WANG. Yes. Ahem! Well—the fact is—eh—today—eh—today is—eh—

SILVER STREAM. Allow me, Father. (*Rapidly, as if reciting a poem*) Today is New Year's Day. Father wants to celebrate it in some way. It looks as if it's going to snow. Father proposes that we have a feast here in the garden to enjoy the snow. And during the feast he wishes—

WANG. (*Uneasily*) Ahem!—Ahem! That will do, thank you.

PRECIOUS STREAM. Splendid. Call the servants to

arrange the table at once. And when the snow is falling we shall have the gentlemen to write poems for the occasion. I think my brothers-in-law will be glad to do so.

SU and WEI. (*Looking at each other and shaking heads*) No.

WANG. Attendants! (*ATTENDANTS come down R. and L. and kneel.*)

ATTENDANTS. Yes, Excellency.

WANG. Remove that big rock to the centre, and let it serve as our table. (*Points to table down L.*)

ATTENDANTS. Yes, Excellency. (*They go to table L., ONE above and ONE below it. They try to lift it, pause, take breath, try again, but are unable to move it. Kneel*) Excellency, the rock refuses to be moved!

WANG. Nonsense! What useless creatures you are! (*ATTENDANTS cross up L., returning to places up L. and up R.*)

MADAM. But, my dear, it is too heavy for them.

WEI. Cowards! If it refuses to be moved why don't you kick it?

SILVER STREAM. Yes, why don't you kick it?

PRECIOUS STREAM. Dear Father, I do think it's too heavy for them. Why don't you ask my brothers-in-law to remove it? They are renowned all the world over for their strength. It would be real sport.

WEI. My dear relative, as our greatest sage, Confucius, said: "To kill a little chicken, why use a big knife which is made for killing horses!"

WANG. (*Correcting him*) "—for killing oxen" is the ancient text.

WEI. So, to lift this little rock is too small a feat for me. It is also beneath my dignity. If there were a big rock, say ten times as large as that, or even larger, then I would do it with pleasure, and with great ease, I assure you.

SILVER STREAM. Yes, I can assure you, too.

SU. (*A more truthful and practical man*) As none of us can remove that rock, may I make a suggestion?

WANG. Certainly.

ALL. Yes.

SU. You know the gardener, Hsieh Ping-Kuei, before coming into our service was a street acrobat. I remember having seen him perform wonderful feats of strength by lifting up huge stones. Now I—

WEI. Yes, I saw him lifting up a stone ten times as big as that one. Order him to remove it for us.

SILVER STREAM. Yes, order him to do it.

PRECIOUS STREAM. Then don't you think this rock is too small for him?

WANG. Attendants! (*ATTENDANTS come down L. and R. and kneel.*)

ATTENDANTS. Yes, Excellency.

WANG. Order the gardener, Hsieh Ping-Kuei, to come here at once.

ATTENDANTS. Yes, Excellency. (*BOTH go up L. and R. and call off L.*) His Excellency orders the gardener, Hsieh Ping-Kuei, to come here at once.

HSIEH. (*Off stage*) His Excellency's orders will be obeyed. (*ATTENDANTS move to their places L. and R. behind chairs.*)

(*HSIEH enters up L.; gets book from PROPERTY MAN. Down to C.; addresses audience.*)

HSIEH. I am your humble servant, Hsieh Ping-Kuei, once a beggar, now the gardener to His Excellency the Prime Minister Wang. There is very little work to be done here, so I am always reading, hoping to make up the time I wasted in my youth. I hear that His Excellency is calling me. Let me go inside and see what are his orders. (*He puts the book down his back. Enters garden and kneels be-*

fore WANG, R.C.) Your humble gardener, Hsieh Ping-Kuei, begs to report himself for Your Excellency's orders.

WANG. I want you to remove that rock to the centre.

MADAM. It will serve as a table, you see.

HSIEH. Very well, Your Excellency. *(He goes to table, picks it up, raises it up L. and behind row of chairs. He stumbles and almost falls.)*

ALL. *(Startled)* Ooooooooooooo— *(HSEIH brings table to in front of WANG at C.)*

HSIEH. Is that all right, Your Excellency?

WANG. All right. You may go now. *(HSIEH crosses L.; as he passes PRECIOUS STREAM:)*

PRECIOUS STREAM. All of us, and especially General Wei, thank you very much. *(HSIEH bows.)* That will do. You may go now. *(He goes off up L.)*

WEI. That's nothing. I can easily remove a rock ten times larger.

WANG. Attendants!

ATTENDANTS. *(Coming down L. and down R., kneeling)* Yes, Excellency.

WANG. Serve the feast here. *(MUSIC starts.)*

ATTENDANTS. *(Rising)* Yes, Excellency.

(PROPERTY MAN R. gives tray with wine jug and seven cups on it to ATTENDANT R., who carries it C.; gives it to ATTENDANT L., who puts it on table before WANG.)

WANG. *(Rising. MUSIC softer)* Precious Stream, my dear daughter, serve the wine. *(MUSIC louder. PRECIOUS STREAM pours wine. MUSIC softer.)* Madam, my honorable sons-in-law, my dear daughters, please drink. *(MUSIC louder. As he names them they come forward to table and pick up wine cups together.)*

ALL. Thank you. *(They drink. MUSIC softer.)*

WANG. The wine is excellent. Now once more.
(*MUSIC louder. PRECIOUS STREAM repeats pouring business.*)

ALL. Thank you. (*They drink. As they are drinking, the PROPERTY MEN bring chairs down L. and down R., face C., standing on chairs, unfurl flags and allow snow to fall, then return chairs and retire to their places. MUSIC stops.*)

WANG. What a beautiful scene the snow makes.
(*ALL sit.*) Having wine and snow, we must also have some poems to celebrate the occasion. Who is going to write them? (*Looks to sons-in-law. PROPERTY MAN R. takes away wine jug and tray. PROPERTY MAN L. takes away table.*)

SU. I am a very poor scholar, my dear Father-in-law, and I must ask you to excuse me.

GOLDEN STREAM. Father will of course excuse you.

WEI. Although I am known as the most brilliant scholar, my dear Father-in-law, I regret to say that I am not in the right mood for poetry now. I remember some poet said: "To write good poems, one needs perspiration!" It is very cold now, you see. We can't expect any perspiration until summer comes. (*ALL except WANG and SILVER STREAM smile. SILVER STREAM is upset.*)

WANG. Perspiration? You mean inspiration.

PRECIOUS STREAM. If it's only perspiration you need, then you must be the greatest poet of the age.

WEI. Oh, thank you.

SILVER STREAM. For shame to chaff my dear one like this.

SU. As none of us can write any poetry, may I make another suggestion?

ALL. Yes.

WANG. Certainly.

SU. I remember having heard the gardener, Hsieh

Ping-Kuei, sing beautiful songs in the street, and I was told they were composed by himself.

GOLDEN STREAM. Yes, I remember, too.

WEI. No, I don't think he composed them.

WANG. Yes, he did, and that's why I took a fancy to him, and gave him the post of my gardener as a just reward for his talent.

WEI. Truly, you are the most just Prime Minister in history. Now let him repay some of your kindness by entertaining us with his songs.

SILVER STREAM. Yes, if he really can.

WANG. Attendants!

ATTENDANTS. Yes, Excellency. (*They come down L. and R. and kneel.*)

WANG. Order the gardener, Hsieh Ping-Kuei, to come here again.

ATTENDANTS. Yes, Excellency. (*Go up L. and R. Call off L.*) His Excellency orders the gardener, Hsieh Ping-Kuei, to come here again.

HSIEH. (*Off stage*) Coming. (*ATTENDANTS retire to their places. HSIEH enters up L., returns back to PROPERTY MAN and comes to below PRECIOUS STREAM's chair, and kneels.*)

WANG. As we are drinking wine and enjoying the snow here, we find we need a little poem to celebrate the occasion. As I have heard that you are somewhat of a poet in your own way, I order you to give us one of your poems.

HSIEH. If Your Excellency will excuse my being forward—

WANG. Certainly.

HSIEH. I must beg to point out to Your Excellency that I am one of your laborers and my duty to Your Excellency is limited to labor.

WEI. Bravo! I said he couldn't!

SILVER STREAM. So did I.

SU. Wait a moment. What do you mean?

GOLDEN STREAM. Tell us candidly.

HSIEH. If it is not my labor but my talent you want, then I must beg you to treat me as a gentleman and I must be invited, not ordered.

WEI. Impossible! What impudence!

SILVER STREAM. The man ought to be thrashed.

PRECIOUS STREAM. Why, this is most reasonable. A true poet must not be treated as a workman. Why shouldn't we treat him with proper respect?

WANG. Well, to show that I am a just man I will give you a seat in that corner, and request you to write a short poem of four lines on the subject of "Wine, Snow and Poetry." If your poem proves to be good, I will give you a reward; if your poem is bad, or you can't write at all—

WEI. I'll have him punished for his impudence.

SILVER STREAM. That's exactly my view.

WANG. Do you hear, man?

HSIEH. Yes, Your Excellency. (*He rises, crosses to down L. and calls*) Attendants, bring me pen, inkstone and paper.

WEI. What insolence!

WANG. Really, this is too much! (PROPERTY MAN L. *gives pen, inkstone and paper on tray to* PRECIOUS STREAM'S 3D MAID.)

PRECIOUS STREAM. Why, this is but the true attitude of a poet. If no one will bring you what you want, allow me. (*MUSIC starts. PRECIOUS STREAM rises and goes to* HSIEH. MAID *follows to* PRECIOUS STREAM'S R. PROPERTY MAN L. *brings* PRECIOUS STREAM'S chair *to* HSIEH. *He sits. PRECIOUS STREAM prepares ink on inkstone; points the pen; hands paper to* HSIEH; *gives him prepared pen. She gets behind chair. MAID to her* L. *MUSIC stops.*)

HSIEH. (*As he writes*)

"Wine brings a double cheer if snow be here."

WANG.

"Wine brings a double cheer if snow be here."

HSIEH.

"Snow takes a brighter white from song's delight."

WANG.

"Snow takes a brighter white from song's delight."

HSIEH.

"Ah, but when cups abound, and song is sweet,
And snow is falling 'round, the joy's complete."

WANG. "—the joy's complete."

(While this is being written, ALL nod their heads in time to the rhythm, with the exception of WEI. PRECIOUS STREAM takes back pen; gives it to MAID; returns to her place. MAID follows. HSIEH rises; crosses to WANG. PROPERTY MAN L. brings back PRECIOUS STREAM'S chair and takes tray from MAID.)

HSIEH. Here you are, Your Excellency. *(Hands him the paper and backs to down L.)*

WANG. Well, it is very good indeed. *(Passes paper to SU.)*

SU. Yes, very good. *(Tries to pass paper to WEI.)*

WEI. I don't think so. I could write a much better poem.

SILVER STREAM. Yes, I'm sure you could.

WANG. *(To HSIEH)* Thank you. You may go now. A reward will be given to you—later on.

MADAM. I will order the steward to give it to you.

HSIEH. *(Bowing)* Many thanks, Your Excellency. *(Starts to leave.)*

WANG. *(To his wife)* You see, my dear, our family needs a poet. *(At this point HSIEH stops; bows to PRECIOUS STREAM. WANG sees and is indignant. HSIEH exits up L.)* When we want to celebrate an occasion like this we find that none of our family can write anything. Now those suitors whom I have

approved all write first-class poems. All the poems they have shown to me are excellent.

PRECIOUS STREAM. My brother-in-law, Wei, also used to show you very good poems before he married my sister.

WEI. I can still show you good poems if I am allowed.

SILVER STREAM. Yes, I am sure he can.

PRECIOUS STREAM. I should like to see you write them in my presence.

WEI. Impossible!

SILVER STREAM. Imposs— (*All snicker.*)

WANG. How unreasonable! But these young suitors are also all rich and of high birth; indeed, one couldn't find anyone better than they are in every way.

PRECIOUS STREAM. May I ask you, dear Father, is every one of them rich and noble?

WANG. Yes, certainly.

PRECIOUS STREAM. Are there not one or two among them not so rich and noble?

WANG. No. None. They are all equally rich and equally noble.

PRECIOUS STREAM. (*Rises and curtseys*) Then, dear Father, how can I choose? By choosing one, it will be unfair to the others. To be fair, I think I must refuse them all. (*She sits.*)

WANG. Oh! (*He puts his hand to his forehead.*)

MADAM. (*Laughs*) You have outwitted your father, dear child.

GOLDEN STREAM. Very clever indeed.

SILVER STREAM. Very silly.

PRECIOUS STREAM. (*Coaxingly*) Dear Father, you are the Prime Minister and therefore the most clever man in the kingdom. (*WANG is rather flattered and looks pleased.*) When the most clever man in the kingdom is at a loss as to say who is the most

suitable, then how can I, a stupid young girl without any experience, make a decision?

MADAM. That's true.

GOLDEN STREAM. Yes, dear Father, it's quite true.

SILVER STREAM. No! When I was young I was neither stupid nor without experience. (*ALL react.*)

WEI. Why don't you refer the matter to the imperial counsellors, so that they may hold a conference?

SU. Nonsense! Our dear Father-in-law will settle it sooner or later. In the meantime, let us drop it.

PRECIOUS STREAM. (*She rises; curtsies*) Thank you, dear Brother-in-law! (*Sits. SU smiles at her, rises and bows.*)

WANG. (*Rises*) I think I have a very good plan for settling it.

ALL. Marvelous! How clever! So soon!

WANG. Listen, my dear. On your birthday, the second of February, there will be a festival. Let us build a beautiful pavilion here in the garden, and let all the suitors come beneath it. You, in the pavilion, take an embroidered ball and throw it down from the pavilion. The one who catches it will be your bridegroom.

PRECIOUS STREAM. Is that a wise way to settle such a problem?

WANG. It is the only way. And I am quite determined. (*Sits.*)

MADAM. It is romantic too.

ALL. Yes, very romantic.

PRECIOUS STREAM. When even careful judgment is not sufficient to settle such a problem, is it wise to settle it by lottery?

WANG. It will not be a lottery. It will be the will of God.

WEI. The suitor who is hit by the embroidered ball can well call his case one of *force majeure*. (*He laughs. SILVER STREAM laughs also, MADAM looks*

ACT I LADY PRECIOUS STREAM 27

at WEI, *who stops. Then at SILVER STREAM, who also stops laughing.*)

MADAM. I see! Whenever we find a situation which cannot be dealt with by mortals we ask the help of God. We always turn to God when we are in distress.

ALL. (*Put up R. hands to face and say*) La, Mo, Gno, Me, To Fu.

MADAM. Well, now that we have put our responsibility upon God, shall we retire?

WANG. Yes, let us retire.

(*MUSIC starts. ATTENDANTS open doors and stand aside. ALL rise. WANG down c., followed by MADAM. He bows to audience and goes off up L. She curtseys and follows him, then the TWO MAIDS follow her. ALL step over threshold as on entering. As family moves downstage, PROPERTY MEN R. and L. place chairs R. and L. in their original places. MUSIC softer.*)

SU. We have some business at my house if you will excuse us— (*He and GOLDEN STREAM bow and curtsey to audience and exit up L.—he first, she following him. WEI crosses to PRECIOUS STREAM.*)

WEI. Now, dear Sister-in-law, allow me to give you a little advice.

PRECIOUS STREAM. (*Pointing out to audience*) Look, there is a rock ten times as large as the one used for our table. I think you said a moment ago you could lift such a rock with ease. Now, will you please— (*SILVER STREAM to L. of him; pulls his sleeve.*)

WEI. I think we have some important business waiting for us, too. Good morning.

(*MUSIC louder. WEI and SILVER STREAM down c., bow and curtsey to audience and exit up L. AT-*

TENDANTS follow them and close doors of garden. Exit up L. PROPERTY MAN L. places chair C. MUSIC stops.)

PRECIOUS STREAM. (*Goes R.*) What shall I do? (*Goes L.*) What shall I do? (*Taps her forehead, then up C.; sits*) My maid—ask the gardener, Hsieh Ping-Kuei, to come to me.

MAID. Yes, my lady. (*To up L. and calls*) Lady Precious Stream wishes the gardener, Hsieh Ping-Kuei, to come here immediately.

HSIEH. (*Off stage*) Yes, I am coming. (*MAID to L. of PRECIOUS STREAM. HSIEH enters up L. and kneels L. before PRECIOUS STREAM*) May I know your orders, my lady?

PRECIOUS STREAM. Stand up, please. (*He rises.*) My maid, provide a seat for Mr. Hsieh. (*PROPERTY MAN L. places chair behind HSIEH.*)

HSIEH. How can I sit down before you, my lady?

PRECIOUS STREAM. The best of manners is obedience.

HSIEH. (*Bows and sits*) Then I must thank you.

PRECIOUS STREAM. My maid, go to my boudoir and fetch some fifty taels of silver for me. (*MAID curtsseys and goes down C.*) Go as quickly as possible. (*MAID opens door, goes C., closes door and stoops as if listening. PRECIOUS STREAM comes down C., opens the door and says*) And return as slowly as possible.

MAID. (*Jumps up, moves L. and says*) Yes, my lady. (*Exits up L.*)

PRECIOUS STREAM. (*Returns and sits*) Mr. Hsieh, I now know that you are a man of both high literary and military abilities. I wish to help you, but first of all you must tell me about your family.

HSIEH. Thank you, my lady. Do you really want to know about my family? Well, I am of a very poor family.

PRECIOUS STREAM. That I know. I want to hear about the members of your family.

HSIEH. My father and mother are both dead.

PRECIOUS STREAM. I see. Is there anyone else in your family?

HSIEH. Being poor, I only had one father and one mother!

PRECIOUS STREAM. I mean those of your own generation.

HSIEH. I had a brother who died at five. I have no sister.

PRECIOUS STREAM. Did any one of your family marry?

HSIEH. Yes.

PRECIOUS STREAM. (*Taken aback*) Oh! Who?

HSIEH. Well, my father married my mother.

PRECIOUS STREAM. (*Relieved*) Of course! And your brother?

HSIEH. As he died at five he did not marry.

PRECIOUS STREAM. I see. Well—and did—did your parents have a daughter-in-law at all?

HSIEH. No, they had none.

PRECIOUS STREAM. Then I have something to tell you, but I find it hard to do so. *Well*, do you understand riddles?

HSIEH. A little.

PRECIOUS STREAM. On the second of February it will be my sixteenth birthday, and I am going to marry the man who is hit by the embroidered ball which I shall throw down from a beautiful pavilion to be erected here. It will be a case of the will of God, but I have resolved to take it into my own hands. I have in mind a suitable person. Now, this person, if you look far—

HSIEH. (*Continuing her speech*) —is a thousand miles away—

PRECIOUS STREAM. Yes, and if you look near—

HSIEH. Then he is before you! (*Rises.*)

PRECIOUS STREAM. Thank you! That is exactly what I mean. (*MAID enters up r.; comes downstage; takes silver from PROPERTY MAN R.*)

HSIEH. If my lady bestows on me such an honor I will never fail her.

PRECIOUS STREAM. My maid is returning. Not another word. Be sure to be present on the second of February. (*MAID opens door.*)

HSIEH. The second of February.

MAID. (*Up to R. of PRECIOUS STREAM*) Here you are, my lady.

PRECIOUS STREAM. Give it to Mr. Hsieh. (*MAID crosses to HSIEH and gives him the piece of silver, then stands up L. of PRECIOUS STREAM.*)

HSIEH. Thank you. I shall never forget your kindness. (*Down c.*) The second of February. (*Goes up L., gives PROPERTY MAN the piece of silver and exits.*)

PRECIOUS STREAM. (*Rises*) Let's retire to our boudoir and wait for the will of God. (*Exits up L.*)

3D MAID. (*Crosses down c. to audience*) The will of God.

(*MUSIC starts. MAID laughs; moves up L., laughing as she exits. MUSIC stops. LIGHTS fade. LIGHTS UP immediately after they have come down. MUSIC starts.*)

(*During the exit of the MAID and the entrance of WANG the PROPERTY MAN L. places the two chairs L.C. and R.C. with backs to audience. PROPERTY MAN R. places armchair C. for WANG. PROPERTY MAN L. goes off up L. and returns with table, which he places between the L.C. and R.C. chairs. PROPERTY MAN R. goes off R. and brings on embroidery attached to bamboo sticks. This he and PROPERTY MAN L. tie to outside of the two chairs. Enter ATTENDANTS up*

R., followed by WANG. ATTENDANTS cross to down R. and L., WANG to down C.)

WANG. Today is the second of February, the day on which I am going to take a new son-in-law into my family. (*Crosses up C. and sits*) I have been looking forward to it enormously, and I am very happy to find the weather is so fine. It is now quite near the hour of throwing the ball, and I must give the necessary instructions. Attendants!

ATTENDANTS. (*Kneeling*) Yes, Excellency.

WANG. You must stay in the garden and guard the gate. Admit only those young gentlemen you know I like. (*Enter FOUR SUITORS from R.—1ST and 2D to down L.C., 3D and 4TH to down R.C.*) As soon as the embroidered ball has been thrown I will come back at once.

ATTENDANTS. (*Rising*) Yes, Excellency.

1ST SUITOR. (*To audience, bowing*) Lady Precious Stream is as beautiful as the flowers of May.

2D SUITOR. (*Same business*) The second of February is her wedding day.

3D SUITOR. (*Same business*) The young suitors come here happy and gay!

4TH SUITOR. (*Same business*) Who will be the lucky one—

WANG. (*Rises*) Nobody can say. (*He exits up L. PROPERTY MAN R. removes armchair from C.*)

1ST SUITOR. Here we have arrived. Let us knock at the gate. (*They turn and knock at gate.*)

1ST ATTENDANT. Yes, I am coming. (*He opens the door, coming C. with 2D ATTENDANT*) Good morning, my young lords. Have you young gentlemen come to await the lucky ball?

SUITORS. Exactly.

1ST ATTENDANT. Come in, please. (*1ST ATTENDANT shows the way to the L., round stage, below pavilion to R., they imitating his movements.*)

2D ATTENDANT *closes door. BOTH return to places down R. and down L.*)

ALL. Lady Precious Stream is coming. (*MUSIC starts.*)

(PRECIOUS STREAM *enters up R. Two MAIDS before and two MAIDS after her. She goes to c., two MAIDS R. and two MAIDS L. of her—ALL stand facing her. She carries an embroidered ball given her by PROPERTY MAN R. MUSIC stops.*)

PRECIOUS STREAM. Time flies and today is the fatal day of the second of February. Although I am anxious to be free from suspense, the idea of going up to the pavilion and throwing down the embroidered ball while the crowd looks on makes me feel very shy, and I don't know how I shall ever manage to carry on. My maids!

MAIDS. Yes, my lady. (*Curtsey.*)

PRECIOUS STREAM. Lead the way to the pavilion, please.

MAIDS. Yes, my lady. (*Curtsey.*)

(*MUSIC starts. The two MAIDS L. come c. and go round stage, below the pavilion, followed by the two MAIDS R. PRECIOUS STREAM follows them. They go round stage once, then up behind pavilion. PRECIOUS STREAM goes in the pavilion. MUSIC stops.*)

PRECIOUS STREAM. (*Surveying the crowd represented by the SUITORS*) Now I must look carefully. There are princes dressed in red and there are young nobles dressed in blue. Those clad in—(*As the costume of each SUITOR is mentioned he steps out of line and then back*)—yellow are the sons of rich merchants, and those in white are heirs to the great land-owners! I must find where Hsieh Ping-Kuei is

standing. I have looked from East to West, and now I must look from North to South. Again and again I have looked for him, and nowhere is he to be seen. I remember clearly when I gave him the silver I told him to come on this day and he promised he would. But he has proved unfaithful. (*Then to SUITORS, directly*) Oh, woe is me! I must retire without throwing the ball. (*HSIEH enters up L. crosses down L.*)

1ST SUITOR. No! You mustn't go back.

2D SUITOR. Throw the ball before you go, please.

3D SUITOR. How can you desert us?

4TH SUITOR. I have been waiting all the morning.

PRECIOUS STREAM. Ah! I see him emerging from that corner. (*Speaks to the SUITORS*) Now, gentlemen, please come near to the pavilion and listen to my words. (*SUITORS one step forward.*) I want all of you to pledge your word of honor to me that you will uphold the man who, by the will of God, is going to be my husband, whoever he may be. And, moreover, that you will swear that you, one and all, will draw your swords against him who will not uphold the destined match.

ALL. We swear! (*Step back.*)

PRECIOUS STREAM. This marriage is to be arranged by the will of God, and we mortals have to abide by this arrangement. Now, catch the ball. (*She holds ball above her head; swings it; counts*) One, two, three! (*SUITORS sway and reach upward each time she counts. She throws ball and HSIEH catches it.*)

HSIEH. Here it is!

SUITORS. Oh! (*They make a move forwards.*)

PRECIOUS STREAM. Gentlemen, remember that all of you have pledged your word of honor to me and you must abide by it. Now, like decent folk, congratulate him and me.

ALL. Congratulations!

HSIEH. Thanks.

(PRECIOUS STREAM has now got down from the pavilion. Curtsies to HSIEH, then up to SUITORS R. When PRECIOUS STREAM gets down from pavilion, PROPERTY MAN L. takes table off up L., returns, unties the pavilion. Takes chairs to L. PROPERTY MAN R. takes pavilion to R., then returns to his position R.)

SUITORS. Our hearty congratulations!
PRECIOUS STREAM. Many thanks!

(WANG enters up R.; downstage to c.)

WANG. Where is my new son-in-law? Where is my new son-in-law? (*Business of SUITORS in rotation, up stage to down stage, turning back on WANG.*)

HSIEH. At your service, my dear Father-in-law. (WANG sees HSIEH—blows through beard. PROPERTY MAN R. brings cushion forward and catches WANG as he faints. WANG faints into the arms of PROPERTY MEN, who lower him onto the stage. PRECIOUS STREAM fans him with her sleeve.)

PRECIOUS STREAM. Oh, Father, Father!

SUITORS. (*Fanning WANG with sleeves*) Oh, Your Excellency! Your Excellency!

WANG. (PROPERTY MEN pick him up) Oh, my God!

PRECIOUS STREAM. Yes, dear Father, this is indeed the will of God.

SUITORS. (*Sarcastically*) The will of God!

WANG. (*To audience*) But I won't have it. I will take the matter away from God into my own hands.

PRECIOUS STREAM. But, Father, aren't you glad? You said our family needed a poet, and now we

have one. (*Crosses L. to HSIEH*) God has granted your wish.

WANG. We will see whether God will grant me a different wish.

PRECIOUS STREAM. Now, my gallant suitors, did you not swear that you would draw your swords against him who dared not to uphold the destined match?

SUITORS. Yes, we did. (*One step forward, bravely.*)

WANG. (*To SUITORS*) What! (*SUITORS fall back, WANG turns to PRECIOUS STREAM*) You have conspired against your own father.

PRECIOUS STREAM. I never dreamt it would be you we should have to deal with.

WANG. (*To SUITORS*) You fools, to think that I once liked you! I am a blind fool. Now get out, all of you. (*ATTENDANTS open doors. HSIEH and PRECIOUS STREAM go up to entrance L. and take tea from the PROPERTY MAN. WANG takes SUITORS one by one by the ear and ushers them out up R.*)

1ST SUITOR. Lady Precious Stream is as beautiful as the flowers in May.

2D SUITOR. The second of February is her wedding day.

3D SUITOR. The young suitors come here happy and gay.

4TH SUITOR. But when they are leaving they say—

WANG. (*Kicking 4TH SUITOR, against whom PROPERTY MAN L. holds pillow*) Woe is the day. (*They exeunt. MUSIC starts. PROPERTY MAN R. places armchair C. PROPERTY MAN L. places two chairs L. of WANG, then PRECIOUS STREAM's chair. PROPERTY MAN R. places two chairs R. of WANG. WANG sits C.*)

(*Enter up R. MADAM, GOLDEN STREAM, SILVER STREAM, SU and WEI. They come up to WANG,*

curtsey, bow and sit. PRECIOUS STREAM comes down L. to her chair; does not sit. HSIEH goes round back, down R., and stands opposite PRECIOUS STREAM. MUSIC stops.)

MADAM. (*To PRECIOUS STREAM*) Why don't you sit down, my dear?

PRECIOUS STREAM. So long as my future husband is not given a seat, I can't sit down, dear Mother.

MADAM. Then be seated, both of you.

WANG. No! This is the house of a Prime Minister, not a beggar's hut. How can he be allowed to sit down here?

MADAM. Dear, you are only making the situation worse. Come, don't be headstrong. Let all of us sit down and talk over the matter, and see what is to be done.

WANG. (*Sulkily*) All right. Have your own way. (*PROPERTY MAN R. places chair behind HSIEH.*)

MADAM. Now be seated, please. (*BOTH sit.*)

HSIEH. Thank you, Madam.

PRECIOUS STREAM. Thank you, dear Mother.

WANG. (*Gruffly*) Say, man, on what conditions— (*MADAM nudges him. Then softly*) —will you let her be free?

WEI. Allow me to arrange for you, dear Father-in-law. I know how to deal with this sort of customer. Look here, my man! Say, my friend! Hullo, Hsieh Ping-Kuei! (*Rises*) Mr. Hsieh Ping-Kuei!

HSIEH. (*Fiercely*) What is your wish, my great General?

WEI. Don't be cross, my—er—Mr. Hsieh. You know it would never do for Lady Precious Stream to marry you, a beg— (*SU nudges WEI.*) Say—a poor man. I quite understand that this is, for you, a great chance, and that you must have a handsome price before you let go your hold.

HSIEH. (*Fiercely, rises*) I don't quite understand your meaning.

SILVER STREAM. (*Rises; goes R.*) You can't bully my husband. Bully him back, my dear. (HSIEH turns back to WEI.)

WEI. (*Curtly*) Be quiet—(*Softly*)—dear. (SILVER STREAM to L.; *curtseys and sits.*) I mean, that if you will let us off quietly, without any scandal, I am sure my father-in-law is willing to give you, say—

SILVER STREAM. One hundred taels of silver.

WEI. (*Watching HSIEH*) No, say two hundred.

SILVER STREAM. Not a penny more.

WANG. I am a just and generous man. I will offer you five hundred taels.

WEI. Now, be sensible, my man. (*Sits.*)

WANG. Well, how much do you want? (MADAM presses WANG's arm.) How much do you want, Mr. Hsieh?

HSIEH. I want nothing from you, sir. Even millions and billions could not buy me off. The decision lies with Lady Precious Stream. If she thinks that I am not her equal, and that this is but a lamentable mistake, just let her say the word, and I will go away without taking a penny from you.

PRECIOUS STREAM. (*Rises*) Beautiful! (HSIEH and PRECIOUS STREAM sit.)

SU. It's quite right.

MADAM. Dear, dear!

GOLDEN STREAM. He is playing the game.

WANG. My dear Daughter, you know that to me you are dearer than all. Now, say the word and let us get out of this disgrace.

WEI. And if—eh—Mr. Hsieh actually refuses to take any money, then the five hundred taels you promised, dear Father-in-law, ought to be given to me as a reward for my acting as a go-between.

SILVER STREAM. Of course Father will reward you, dear.

PRECIOUS STREAM. (*Rises. HSIEH rises.*) I am sorry to deprive you of your reward. I will stick to my match. (*HSIEH bows. ALL react.*) To my sister—(*Curtsey*) I am not worth one hundred taels, and to my brother-in-law—(*Curtsey*)—only two hundred, and even to my father—(*Curtseys*)—who professes to love me dearer than all, I am worth only five hundred.

WANG. No. (*Beckons PRECIOUS STREAM to him. She goes.*) In my heart I was prepared to offer one thousand.

PRECIOUS STREAM. (*Crosses back of chair*) Thank you, Father. (*To audience*) I see I am getting on. (*To FAMILY*) You seem to think that one would prefer to have, let us say, a thousand taels rather than to have me. And here is a man who refuses to take millions and billions and prefers me instead. Shall I be so ungrateful as to give him the go-by and to remain with those who value me so little? No, Father, I decline! (*Curtseys and sits. HSIEH sits.*)

GOLDEN STREAM. So would I.

MADAM. Dear, dear!

SU. Very noble!

SILVER STREAM. Very silly!

WEI. It's too bad. My five hundred taels are gone.

WANG. If you insist on marrying him, all I can say is that a beggar girl is going to marry a beggar and remain one. You need not expect any dowry from me. No—not even a penny.

PRECIOUS STREAM. (*Rises*) No, Father. Not a beggar girl to a beggar. But a working girl to a worker. We both can work.

WANG. (*Laughs*) You?—Work? Impossible!

SILVER STREAM. Don't you think it will soil your beautiful clothes?

PRECIOUS STREAM. No, because I will not wear them. (*She goes c. The FAMILY crowd round her,*

MADAM and the TWO DAUGHTERS L. of her, the MEN R. of her with backs to the audience. WANG remains by his chair; turns his back upon them. MADAM helps PRECIOUS STREAM off with her clothes; hands them to R. PROPERTY MAN. PRECIOUS STREAM gives her jewels to L. PROPERTY MAN. PROPERTY MAN R. moves forward, takes PRECIOUS STREAM's dress and puts it off up R. PROPERTY MAN L. moves forward when PRECIOUS STREAM receives her jewels.) The ancient proverb says: "A good son will not depend upon his father's wealth; and a good daughter will not depend upon her family for clothes." Here I am giving back to you these fine clothes. And here are your jewels, too.

MADAM. Oh, dear, don't!

GOLDEN STREAM. My poor sister!

SU. A brave girl!

SILVER STREAM. I wonder how they will manage to live.

WEI. They will soon die of starvation.

WANG. (*Still in a rage*) Do you mean that you will leave us? Probably will come back to us when you find you are starving. (*ALL sit except PRECIOUS STREAM and HSIEH, whose chairs have been removed.*)

PRECIOUS STREAM. That's far from the case. If I come back to see you, dear Mother, it will be when we can raise our heads higher than any of you can.

WANG. Poverty and failure will be your lot. But don't come to me for any help.

MADAM. Don't mind what your father says, dear. We shall always be ready to help you. But you're not really going to leave us for good, are you?

GOLDEN STREAM. Please don't, dear Sister.

PRECIOUS STREAM. (*Crosses to R. below HSIEH*) I am afraid I'll have to. My place is to be by my husband's side for better or for worse. (*PROPERTY*

MAN L. *is putting cushion in front of WANG as PRECIOUS STREAM crosses to kneel.*) My dear Father, your humble daughter, Precious Stream, pays her respects——

WANG. *(Rising and snatching away pillow)* No! You needn't consider me as your father. *(PROPERTY MAN L. places second pillow.)*

PRECIOUS STREAM. *(Kneeling)* Then I must at least thank you for your share in my birth.

WANG. It was a mere accident. *(Sees MADAM; sits quickly. PRECIOUS STREAM rises and crosses to below HSIEH at R.)*

SILVER STREAM. And a sad one, too.

WANG. But I'll bet you'll be glad to leave him very soon.

PRECIOUS STREAM. Do you dare to lay a wager definitely by clapping hands three times with me, Father?

WANG. Certainly, and do you dare?

PRECIOUS STREAM. Certainly.

ALL. Oh, please don't!

PRECIOUS STREAM. *(To audience at c.)* I call upon all of you here to witness. Today I hereby make a wager by clapping hands with my father three times, that my husband and I will never come back to the Prime Minister's house unless we are rich and successful. *(PRECIOUS STREAM goes up to below and R. of WANG. WANG rises and they clap hands three times. WANG sits. PRECIOUS STREAM returns to below HSIEH.)*

ALL. It can't be helped now.

PRECIOUS STREAM. *(To HSIEH)* Now let us leave here for good and prepare for the wedding. *(They go down c.)*

HSIEH. *(To audience)* I will always honor you.

PRECIOUS STREAM. *(To audience)* And I will obey you.

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