

Fragrant Springtime

(A translation by Brother Anthony of the French "Printemps Parfumé" published in France in 1892 under the name of J. H. Rosny, but owing much to Hong Jong-Woo, clearly being based on a Korean version very similar to that translated later into English by James Scarth Gale.)

Once upon a time, there lived in the province of Jeolla-do, in the town of Namwon, a mandarin named Yi Teung who had a son, Yi Mongryong (I-Toreng), who was sixteen years old. Yi Mongryong was among the ablest young scholars of the country and he grew daily in knowledge through his studies.

One morning, on a beautiful, clear day, the sun was shining, the wind was whispering softly in the trees, shaking the leaves whose shadows trembled on the ground, while the birds flying through the branches were calling to each other and singing in choirs on the branches; the tips of the willow trees trailed in the streams as if eager to catch fish, butterflies were flitting from flower to flower, and Yi Mongryong, watching all these things, called out to his servant: "Look at this admirable nature," he said, "I don't have the heart to study when I see the world of nature so beautiful, when I think that even someone who lives up to the very limits of life, who lives for a century, only lives thirty-six thousand days, with most of them doomed to sorrow, poverty or disease. Ah! Would it not be better to live at least a few perfectly happy days? Why always work and study? It is such a beautiful day; I want to go out for a walk. Show me a place to visit in this city."

The servant told him that he should go to Gwanghallu, a pavilion situated in a garden by a bridge, from where can be seen a splendid panorama of mountains and rivers.

"I want to see that place," answered Yi Mongryong, "so take me there." The servant duly took him. They soon reached the bridge, entered the pavilion of Gwanghallu, and from there Yi Mongryong admired the scenery. For a long while, he refreshed his heart at the sight of the mountains, their peaks capped with clouds and the valleys where mists were sleeping. Finally, he thanked his servant for having shown him such beautiful things, and the latter, happy, joked that he should live there as a hermit.

"It is true," Yi Mongryong replied, "it is a wonderful place; why did you not bring me earlier to this charming pavilion, so that I might rest from all my hard work?"

"Because I was afraid of your father," replied the servant.

Yi Mongryong silenced him and sent him away: "Enough, enough, leave me alone, go and enjoy yourself a little further off; my father is not going to scold you for providing me with a little distraction."

But as he looked toward the mountains, he noticed a girl who was swinging from the branches of a tree. He called his servant back again: "What is that?" he asked, indicating the girl.

The servant, frightened and embarrassed, pretended not to be able to see anything. "What, can your eyes perceive nothing over there?" Yi Mongryong said angrily.

"There is a lady on a swing," the servant finally replied. "Why did you not say so right away?" asked Yi Mongryong. "If you had first asked me if it was a lady, I would have said it was a lady. You did not ask me that, so I believed you had seen something else. But if your father learns that I have brought you here, and you have enjoyed yourself watching such things, then he will be angry with me."

"Why should my father scold you for having taken me on a walk on just one day among so many days of study? Besides, let us no longer talk about my father, and tell me if the person who is on the swing over there is married or not."

"She is unmarried," replied the servant.

"Is she from a noble family or is she a commoner?" asked Yi Mongryong.

The servant replied that she was a low-class girl named Chunhyang, a name meaning "spring perfume."

"Would you," said Yi Mongryong, "pray that girl to step this way?"

His servant objected, saying that the matter presented the greatest difficulty. Yi Mongryong was surprised by his opposition, believing that, on the contrary, nothing could be simpler than to bring to him a girl of the people.

His servant praised the girl's chastity, her great virtue, saying that it would be far from easy to convince her to come to meet a young man.

"What then could I do," Yi Mongryong cried, "to have the pleasure of spending a few minutes in talk with her?"

"If you are really so eager for such an interview," said his man,

"I can show you a good way."

"How will you do that?" Yi Mongryong asked eagerly.

"I will ask your father's permission," answered the servant. "My father?" Yi Mongryong exclaimed in terror. "What are you saying? Do not set yourself against me, I pray you, and do not mention it to my father. You would do me great harm. I want to arrange the matter with you."

"Why not use your father?" replied the servant. "Nothing would be easier than for him to summon this girl, while I, despite all my goodwill, cannot satisfy you."

"Find some other means," said Yi Mongryong. "I do not wish to have my father involved in all this."

"Very well; but if you use other means you will have to spend much money."

"I will spend all that it takes."

"After all," objected the crafty servant, "if you have your mind occupied with this girl, you will think less of your education, and if your father learns that I took you away from your studies, taking you on this walk, he will use his powers as Mandarin and will put me on trial."

At these words, Yi Mongryong despaired: "Alas!" he said. "What am I to do?" He thought for a few minutes, then continued, "Very well, I will give you much money, but everything must be done without the knowledge of my father."

"Why don't you try walking near the spot where the girl is?" suggested the servant.

"I will do that!" exclaimed Yi Mongryong. They went together. Arriving near the swing, Yi Mongryong looked at the girl carefully. She was very beautiful; behind the strands of black hair that the wind swept across her face, she looked to the young man like the moon between two clouds. "How beautiful she is!" thought Yi Mongryong.

A smile played on her lips, her mouth was like a water-lily flower resting lightly on a pond, and as she kept swinging, she passed through the air like a swallow in flight. With the wayward tips of her toes she pushed aside the branches, bringing down showers of leaves. Her white hands, with their beautiful, long fingers, clung to the ropes. Her slim and supple figure bowed like a willow in the wind.

Yi Mongryong, lost in admiration, dazzled by the sight, collapsed in deep despair. The servant pulled him to his feet, alarmed.

"What are you doing?" he cried. "If you behave like this from the start, I will have everything to fear from your father and he will certainly punish me. Calm down, I beg of you; go home and then we will see how best to content you; but do not give up on the very first day."

"You're right," Yi Mongryong answered, "but remember that life is unstable. We are happy today, unhappy tomorrow. Who knows if I will not be dead tomorrow, so why should I not take advantage of the opportunity to speak to this young girl now?"

"If that is what you think, do as you please," said the servant. But at that moment the girl, rendered nervous at being watched, came down from off her swing, arranged her dress and set off playfully to her home. Her little feet moved hardly any faster than a turtle on sand, and ever again she lingered, picking up stones which she threw at the trees to set the birds flying.

Yi Mongryong watched her and was moved even more, despairing to see her go. His servant urged him to return home, saying that it was best to stop there, so that his father would not find them out. He said he would find means to arrange an interview for another day.

"You are right, it is impossible to stay," stammered Yi Mongryong. And he went home like a drunken man. He went straight to greet his parents and ate with them. They asked him if he had been enjoying himself.

"Oh yes, father, I saw something ravishing," Yi Mongryong cried, "Oh! The exquisite 'Chunhyang.'"

"What do you mean, Chunhyang?" asked his father.

Yi Mongryong, scared at his thoughtlessness, replied: "I mean, father, that the flowers deliciously perfumed the springtime."

The meal ended in silence. Then Yi Mongryong went to his room, lit a candle and opened a book; but the words blurred before his eyes, and he saw everywhere the name of Chunhyang, or her beloved image on the swing, in the different attitudes which he had seen. Unable to stop thinking of her, he called his servant.

"Well!" he said, "did you find any way?"

"I'll think about it all night long," replied the servant, "and I'll tell you tomorrow morning what I have come up with. But I beg you to put your mind at rest, keep studying tonight or lie down and sleep peacefully."

"Thank you, sighed Yi Mongryong, "and, with the hope that you have given me, I will have peace of mind and sleep well."

His servant withdrew after wishing him a good night, saying to himself: "This is a good opportunity to earn money! But it will be difficult."

He spent some time in thought, perplexed, then suddenly exclaimed: "Aha!" he said. "I have it. I will pay an old woman to go and ask Chunhyang to walk out with her to an agreed spot, then I will tell Yi Mongryong to dress as a woman and I will bring him to the same place so he can talk with the girl. Now, that's enough, let's sleep!"

Once his servant had left him, Yi Mongryong, unable to sleep and full of memories of the beautiful young girl, opened the window and looked out. The moon was bright, the stars few. Ravens were flying southward. The wind was blowing among the bamboos, making them rattle together; the birds awoke, unable to sleep in the noise, and went flying off. The fish slept in the shadow of the branches on the pond. The sight of these things, moving Yi Mongryong, caused him to think yet more of his beloved.

"I cannot stand it any longer," he said, "I will close the window and sleep."

He lay down on his bed; but he fidgeted constantly, turning first to one side, then to the other, quite unable to close his eyes. Finally, after a long while, he fell asleep and dreamed that he was walking in Gwanghallu, where he found Chunhyang swinging from the trees, that he went to see her and she set off toward her home, playful and capricious; but he followed her, telling her many sweet things to which she made no reply. "Ah! Is then her heart as hard as stone or iron?" he thought. "How will I ever manage to reach her?" However, even more attracted by her silence, he begged her to say some word, just to hear the sound of her voice.

She replied that custom required men to be separated from women and that, by thus coming home with her, he was being impolite, so that was why she did not answer him.

Yi Mongryong, ashamed, could find no words, and awoke in agony: "My servant told the truth." He thought. "This girl is very virtuous, and it will be difficult to approach her. But happy is he who will marry her, for she will be faithful to him. If I could make her my wife, what happiness!"

And the night seemed interminable as he lied in wait. Dawn came. Yi Mongryong called his servant: "Well," he said, "have you found any means?"

"Yes, I sought, and though it was very difficult, I have found something. You should find in this neighbourhood an old woman and send her to Chunhyang to beg her to walk out with her at Gwanghallu."

"And what after that?" asked Yi Mongryong.

"Then," said the servant, "you must don a woman's dress and meet her at Gwanghallu."

"Very well, said Yi Mongryong. "I will obey you."

“But,” suggested the servant, “I have to give money to the old woman.”

“Certainly,” Yi Mongryong replied, “I will spend whatever it takes. How much do you need? Speak, I will give it to you . . . Here are forty thousand pun*. Take them to your room; you will use them as you please, noting down your expenses.”

The servant nodded, went home very happy and immediately set about finding an old woman. As soon as he discovered one, he said: “I need you to arrange a meeting between Chunhyang and Yi Mongryong.”

The woman replied: “I will do it, but Chunhyang is a virgin, and if her parents learn that I have corrupted their daughter, I fear their vengeance.”

“Fear not,” said the servant, “for we will keep the affair secret and her parents will never know anything.”

“I am ready to serve you, but how?”

“I will tell you. You must go to Chunhyang, and pray her to walk out with you to Gwanghallu.”

“And then how will Yi Mongryong manage to speak with her?”

“I have thought that Yi Mongryong might put on women’s clothes, then he would go Gwanghallu, and join Chunhyang. As for you, to allow them a moment of private conversation, you can feign interest in something else and move a little way off.”

“Very well,” said the old woman, “but how much will you give me for it?”

“As much as you wish.”

“Because,” said she, “if her parents ever discover anything, I shall be sent for trial and that seems worth a good sum.”

“Yes, I know,” said the servant, “but if you are tried, it will be by the father of Yi Mongryong and, therefore, the penalty will not be harsh.”

“If it is so, I will try; but it is still necessary that the girl agree to walk out with me so I will go to ask her.”

Thereupon, she went to find Chunhyang, who was studying.

The girl politely greeted her.

“So you are still studying?” said the old woman.

“Yes,” said Chunhyang, “I am studying hard; what else can I do? I cannot go out alone; therefore I have to work to distract myself.”

“Do you find this book very interesting?” asked the old woman.

“Yes, I find it very interesting, and I enjoy reading it.” “What is the title?”

“It is a book by the philosopher Confucius,” said Chunhyang. The old woman was thinking that this girl, who loved the philosophy of Confucius, must be very virtuous, and therefore difficult to seduce because philosophy teaches the fear of every kind of pleasure.

“I am going to have to find a ruse to get her to walk out with me,” she thought. Then, addressing Chunhyang, “Oh! I too very much like the books of Confucius, and I also really enjoy studying; but always studying makes me very tired; so often, in order to rest, I take my book and go walking in the woods. Today, the weather was fine, so I went out into the countryside and composed a poem that I will write out for you. It goes like this:

As I was walking down a path near the mountain;
I saw beautiful peach blossoms;
the impetuous wind was blowing in the branches
and as it shook them made white petals fall like fragrant snow;
they flew exactly like cold-hearted butterflies.
Then I saw the willows and their fluffy flowers
that warmed the hearts of the small birds singing in the trees;
and I said to myself: we are like these flowers, we wither and fall
but for us it is forever, not like them, for they bloom again the following spring.

Chunhyang listened dreamily, and suddenly closed her book. “What you say in this poem is so true. Unfortunately, I cannot go out alone; yet, I feel so very tired; will you come

and call on me tomorrow? I will join you for a walk.”

The old woman accepted eagerly and asked at what time she should come.

“Come tomorrow at half past one in the afternoon, I will be free.”

“I will come,” said the old woman. “Goodbye until then.”

She left, went to find the servant and told him: “The thing is decided. I will walk out with Chunhyang tomorrow.”

“Very good, I am pleased with you,” said the servant; “Remember that it is to Gwanghallu that you must go.”

“I will not fail.”

They parted it and the old woman went home. The next day, the servant ran to Yi Mongryong and said: “Everything is arranged. You will change your clothes for women’s clothes and this afternoon, you will walk in Gwanghallu. But be careful what you do because the girl is very virtuous and would not allow any kind of dishonest act.”

“I know, I know,” said Yi Mongryong.

The servant then took leave of his master and wished him a good walk. Yi Mongryong went without delay to visit his parents and asked for permission to go walking in Gwanghallu. They readily gave permission, and told him to enjoy himself. Yi Mongryong took his leave.

Delighted, he carried his women’s clothes to near Gwanghallu. There, in a hotel, he disguised himself, and when it was done he looked at himself in a mirror; he looked very fine, and reckoned that no one would recognize him. Then he thought that it would not be good for him to go directly to Gwanghallu, since it might startle Chunhyang; it would be better to go first to the mountains, pick flowers, catch butterflies, and enjoy himself until he thought it suitable to enter the pavilion. He looked one last time in the mirror and then, feeling satisfied, walked to the mountain where he spent some time, as he had said, picking flowers, chasing butterflies, and stripping willow branches of their leaves that he then scattered on the water, to attract the fish. So Chunhyang was attracted by these games. She called the old woman and asked:

“The girl who is playing there, do you know her?”

“Where?” said the old woman, feigning ignorance.

“Why, do you not see her?”

“Ah! Yes, I see, but it’s a bit far, I cannot make her out clearly.” “It is true that at your age you cannot see as far as I can; the girl has a charming face; she is dressed so beautifully that it is impossible that she should be from here; we are all poor people.”

“Is she really so beautiful? Let us go a little closer so that I too can see.”

They descended onto the bridge, and the old woman asked Chunhyang to wait; “I will go,” she said, “and come close to that girl, I will observe her well and then I will come and tell you what I have seen.”

“Do that, please,” said Chunhyang, “for I am very curious.”

The old woman went off, approached Yi Mongryong and soon returned, “Oh! It is as you said. This girl is not from here. I think she is the daughter of the Mandarin.”

Chunhyang looked at Yi Mongryong, and declared that indeed the girl was playing with a grace full of nobility:

“Her figure is as fair as the moon rising in the mountains to the east,” Chunhyang thought. “Alas! If she had been a young man, how I would like to have him for my fiancé.” Then, turning to the old woman: “She must be very bored, playing all alone, since she is a stranger here.”

“What a kind heart you have,” said the old woman. “Suppose we call her? If she comes, so much the better, and if she refuses, there is nothing we can do.”

“It would not be polite,” said Chunhyang, “to ask a stranger to come to us, especially a noble stranger who does not know us. Let us go ourselves to where she is.”

The old woman, happy at the success of her ruse, approved her politeness.

So they went walking toward Yi Mongryong. The latter, when he suddenly saw the old woman and the young girl so close, seemed surprised and bowed politely.

“We were enjoying ourselves in Gwanghallu,” said the old woman, “when we saw you

playing here all alone; we thought it would be very pleasant to keep you company.”

Yi Mongryong was overjoyed. They went together up into Gwanghallu. There the young man gazed at Chunhyang and thought how pretty she was! She, meanwhile, thought that her companion was of a quite marvellous beauty. How different the girls of the aristocracy were from the girls of the people by the distinction of their manners!

The two talked together for a few minutes, observing the landscape and pointing out the most beautiful sites. “Ah,” said Chunhyang, “how I regret that we did not meet earlier; we could often have walked together as today.”

The old woman moved away slowly, leaving them alone together. Then Yi Mongryong told Chunhyang: “I want to recite a poem that I have written.” And seeing Chunhyang attentive, he began:

Life is like a river that flows,
which is why the sight of water increases my melancholy;
but the greetings of the willows bowing in the wind console me.

Chunhyang, hearing these words, was sad and while walking she said: “The world is like a spring dream, and we can only be young once. Never to enjoy oneself, never to go outside is very sad, and since we can only be young once, we must brighten our youth.”

Here, she called the old woman back, “Why do not you stay with me?” she asked. “Do not go away like that.”

The old woman replied: “Alas! I am old, and old people are useless beings.”

“Why do you say that?” asked Chunhyang. “I once was your age,” lamented the old woman, “and your games and talking make me feel old and useless, so I walked away.”

Chunhyang and Yi Mongryong acknowledged the justice of her argument, but they consoled her kind-heartedly. So she assured them that she took only pleasure in their company, and had spoken of her old age without bitterness.

“It was by chance that we met today,” said Yi Mongryong to Chunhyang; “God wanted our friendship; he has made our souls one for the other.”

“That is true,” said Chunhyang, “our meeting was by chance.” But she remained pensive, thinking that Yi Mongryong did not speak like a woman. He had none of their ways; this singularity struck her and she conceived some suspicion of the truth.

“Your parents are still alive?” asked Yi Mongryong.

“No, my father is dead, I live with my mother. And you?” “I have my father and mother,” Yi Mongryong replied.

“You are happier than I. But if you come back too late will your parents not scold you?”

“Yes, if it happened often; but just once is nothing.”

“Parents always scold their children when they come home late; therefore, to avoid my mother’s reproaches, I must leave you.”

Yi Mongryong, displeased at the idea of separation, stammered: “When you can walk with me again?”

“I do not go out often,” she said. “Will you come to my home?”

“Very willingly!” Yi Mongryong replied. “But will your mother not scold you?”

“Oh no! On the contrary, she will be very happy to see me study and play with a friend.”

So saying, Chunhyang summoned the old woman: “It’s getting late,” she said, “so please, let’s go together.”

“Yes,” said the old woman. Yi Mongryong accompanied them as far as the bridge, and there he bade them goodbye. Chunhyang walked away with the old woman. Yi Mongryong returned home, immediately went to visit his parents, ate with them and told them of his walk.

After lunch, he retired to his room, called his servant and said: “I am very pleased with you; I walked around with Chunhyang and I talked to her. The old woman took great pains, so we must give her some money.”

“Very well,” said the servant, “I will summon her and give her reward.” With that, he

left and went home. As for Chunhyang, once she reached her home with the old woman, she warmly thanked her for all the trouble she had taken. "It's nothing," replied the old woman, taking her leave.

Chunhyang then went in to her mother and gave her an account of her day, and especially how happy she was to have met the daughter of the Mandarin with whom she had walked and talked: "A young, well-educated and intelligent girl who will often come here to study with me."

"Oh! What a blessing, dear daughter!" replied the mother. The servant went to the old woman as soon as he left Yi

Mongryong and thanked her, telling her that his master had shown the greatest satisfaction and had sent her a gift. The old woman happily took the money and held it tight.

Chunhyang, feeling weary, having retired to her room, went to bed, fell asleep and dreamed that a dragon came and wrapped itself around her body. She was very frightened, awoke and jumped up. "What a strange dream!" she exclaimed.

However, she went back to bed but could not sleep, so she took up a book. The night passed in that manner. In the morning she ran to her mother. "I could not sleep for fear," she said; "I dreamed that a dragon was wrapped around my body."

"It is a nightmare that comes from having your mind and body tired from your walk yesterday, your conversations and games; do not let it worry you." Chunhyang then returned to her room.

Meanwhile Yi Mongryong, too, could neither study nor sleep because he was always thinking of the girl. He resolved in the morning to write her a letter, announcing a visit for that very evening. He called for the old woman and entrusted the letter to her. The old woman took the letter and brought it immediately to Chunhyang. The girl opened the letter, read it in joyful surprise, and hurried to respond: "I will be delighted to see you. I kept thinking of you since we parted at Gwanghallu. So how happy your letter made me! I shall wait with impatience."

The old woman brought this reply to Yi Mongryong, who was elated with joy. The day seemed to pass slowly, such was his desire. Finally dinner time came. He ate, returned to his room, dressed as a girl, slipped out, went to the old woman and asked her to take him to Chunhyang. This she duly did. They soon reached the house where the girl lived. Here Yi Mongryong told the old woman to leave him, and went in alone.

Chunhyang greeted him eagerly, thanking her friend for the trouble she had deigned to take. Then she took her to her mother and presented her as the friend of whom she had spoken. Then she brought Yi Mongryong to her room.

"Ah! What a beautiful moon," the girl exclaimed. "Shall we spend some moments walking in the garden?"

"With pleasure," said Yi Mongryong.

They went out and walked to where he had seen Chunhyang swinging, the first day they met.

"Ah! A swing!" he exclaimed. "Shall we swing on it together?" Chunhyang gladly accepted. So they swung and Yi Mongryong said: "I very much regret that you are not a young man, because if you were, I would love you infinitely and we would get married."

"I think as you do," said Chunhyang; "I too would like you to be a young man so that I could marry you."

"Oh! I cannot believe you," Yi Mongryong replied.

"Why not?" asked Chunhyang.

"Because I believe that your thoughts cannot be like mine and that you are deceiving me." Chunhyang replied: "I know, I know, Confucius said: 'A suspicious heart always suspects others.' That is why you do not believe me. It is you who are deceiving me, I'm sure."

"Oh!" laughed Yi Mongryong. "I will gladly admit that I am deceiving you! So you really think like me?"

"Certainly, I am not accustomed to doubting others, and I speak directly as I think."

“So,” Yi Mongryong continued, “if you are speaking the truth, I want to ask you something.”

“And what might that be?”

“Very well,” he said. “I trust your words, and we will admit that if I were a young man, you would marry me, and if I were a girl, we would be like sisters; but I want us to put that in writing.”

“With pleasure,” she said.

“Then let us stop swinging,” he continued, “and write.” “Yes, let’s.”

They got down from the swing and Yi Mongryong wrote the promise: “Now sign,” he said, when he had finished.

She signed. Yi Mongryong put the paper in his pocket. So Chunhyang, joking, asked: “Why are you doing all this . . . are you a boy?”

“Yes, really, I am a boy,” said Yi Mongryong.

Chunhyang, surprised, exclaimed: “I do not believe you; why, if you are a young man, are you wearing women’s clothes?”

“You are right, it must seem very strange; but as I kept thinking of you after I first saw you, and since I could not approach you in my men’s clothes, I put on women’s clothes.”

Chunhyang, convinced that it was a simple joke, spoke again: “You say that, but I do not believe you.”

“Really, you do not believe me? I am Yi Mongryong, son of the Mandarin, and, under these women’s clothes, I am wearing my male attire.”

“Oh! No more joking, please; you know I cannot believe you.” “And yet I am very serious,” Yi Mongryong replied “and if you still doubt me, I will remove my women’s clothes and show myself to you as a young man.”

But Chunhyang, wanting to keep the joke going and so confound her friend, said, “Very well, I believe you, show me.” He took off his women’s clothes and appeared beautifully dressed as a young man.

“Oh!” Said Chunhyang, suddenly frightened and saddened. He tried to console her, and gently put his hand on her shoulder. “Why be sad, do not you love me? I was right just now to say that you were deceiving me, and I did well to get you to sign your words.

“I did not think you could be a boy, and I spoke freely as a sister; I was joking, but if you are talking seriously I have made a great mistake, and worse still, I have signed it.”

“Yes,” he said, “and if you refuse to fulfil the agreement, if you do not love me, I will go back home and, armed with my paper, I will have you condemned.”

“Condemned! Chunhyang exclaimed, “Why?”

“Because you signed the promise to accept me as your husband, and you have to honour your signature.”

“I signed as a pure joke, she said, “and if I had known that the matter was serious, I would certainly not have signed.”

So Yi Mongryong tried to convince her: “We will only be young once,” he said, “and why should we not take advantage of it to love each other tenderly?”

Chunhyang long remained thoughtful, and reflected that she could not refuse because she had signed!

“Very well,” she said, “I accept the treaty, but we will add that, once married, we will never part.”

Once we are married,” replied Yi Mongryong, “we will never be parted; there is no need of a treaty for that.”

“If I were from a noble family,” she replied, “I would not ask you for any treaty, but since marriage between commoners and aristocrats is not recognized, it is only honest that I should take this precaution. If you refuse me this, give me back the paper.”

“What, do you suspect me?” he asked.

“I suspect you very much,” she said. “You have already made me commit a fault, by deceiving me; so I cannot trust you.”

“Very well,” he said, “I will do all that you demand.” And, feeling very satisfied, he

wrote the second commitment, signed it and handed it to the girl. She took it, looking mischievous and mocking him in turns, then pointed to the paper: "Take care, now, if ever you leave me, I will find your father and I will have you condemned."

"What a disaster!" Yi Mongryong said ironically, throwing his arms around Chunhyang's neck and pressing against her. "Never . . . I will never leave you, believe me."

"It is getting late," said Chunhyang, "Let's go to my room."

So they returned, entwined softly, kissing and murmuring tender things. And she, pinching his cheek, as people do with children, chuckled: "Oh you rascal!" she scolded, delighted, "How you deceived me!"

They entered Chunhyang's bedroom. Yi Mongryong removed her clothes, while she did the same for him, then they went to bed and spent the night in love, like the couples of geese on ponds.

"You will never leave me, will you?" said Chunhyang, pressed tightly against her lover. "If you do, beware of the paper!"

"Do not say such things," Yi Mongryong answered. "I will never leave you, and if you were to die before me, I would die as well, like a male goose deprived of his female."

So they married, and Chunhyang spoke symbolically to Yi Mongryong: "The spring sea lies quietly sleeping, but the flowing tide will soon make the mast of the ship depart."

He replied in his ecstasy, contemplating her and seeing her blush so that she resembled a half-ripe cherry: "I love the red flower of the mountain. I want to enjoy it as long as I can and go down to the plains as late as possible."

The night followed on, morning came . . . They got up. Chunhyang advised Yi Mongryong to return home. He asked why she was pressing him so. She replied that she was not pressing him, but advising him to return home for fear of his father:

"If your father learned of our love, you would not be allowed out and I would be very unhappy."

"My father," laughed Yi Mongryong, "was young too. Why he would scold me?"

"If you do not listen to me," she said, seriously, "misfortune is likely to befall me."

"Oh!" Yi Mongryong answered. "What are you saying? What misfortune are you talking about?"

"I mean," she said, "that your father will never allow you to come and spend the night with me and that would make me sad."

"It is true," he admitted. "I had better go home immediately."

So he went back home and visited his parents. Then he retired to his room. He took up a book and tried to study; but the memory of Chunhyang, the joy she had given him, her pretty face pink with pleasure, all swam before his eyes and he could not read. He waited impatiently all day, longing for night. It finally arrived and he could go to his mistress.

Left alone, she had studied all day long until evening. Then she began to think about Yi Mongryong and, walking in the garden, she felt a great sadness: "I am happy to be married to Yi Mongryong; but if he ever returns to his native place, he will forsake me!"

Amid these melancholy reflections, Yi Mongryong appeared. She ran to him, and they greeted one another with gentle caresses. He, on examining the face of the beloved, noticed that she was sad. He thought her mother had scolded her: "Why are you sad?" He asked cordially. "Could it be that you repent of being united with me? Or has your mother scolded you?"

"No," she said, neither of those things."

"Then why are you sad?" asked Yi Mongryong. "When I see you, my heart is like snow exposed to heat. Entrust to me then all your troubles."

"No, my dear, I am not sad for the reasons you think. I just think that when you return to your native place, you will leave me here and I will be the most unfortunate of women."

Yi Mongryong consoled her: "Dearest, do not say such things. We made a treaty that will last as long as stone. So do not let such questions trouble you."

"You speak as your heart guides you," she said, "but your father and your mother cannot have the same feelings as you; and I think it will be very difficult for you to take me

back with you to your home.”

“Oh!” replied Yi Mongryong. “Why?”

“Because I am a simple commoner and you are a nobleman.” “No matter, our hearts will never change, and we will always belong to one another.”

And he put his hand on her shoulder: “Think of it no longer.” he said. “I beg of you.”

Feeling reassured, they went to the room of Chunhyang, and made love as the night before. But while it was still quite early Yi Mongryong said: “I must go home.”

“Why are you in such a hurry to leave me?” Chunhyang asked anxiously.

“Oh! I am in no hurry to leave you,” he said, “far from it.” “Yes, you are in a hurry,” she replied. “Last night you did not think to abandon me so.”

“It is because,” he explained, “at this time, my father and my mother are not yet asleep. So I want to go to wish them good night, then return here.”

“In that case it is good, but then it will be better that you stay at home and come back tomorrow.”

“Oh! How cunning you are. Just now you were reproaching me for wanting to leave and now it is you who are driving me away.”

“Oh no, I am not forcing you out,” she said; “Only if you come back late at night, as the air is cold in the mountains, you may become sick and then I would be very sad. It is better to postpone the joy of meeting again.”

“How kind you are,” said Yi Mongryong. And he left her as she wished. As soon as he returned home, he went to his parents, who ordered him to go to bed early. But once in his room, he began to think of Chunhyang, anxious for her, unable to sleep, tossing constantly. No longer able to endure it, he dressed and ran to the house of his mistress. Left alone, she had gone to bed, but then suddenly she heard the voice of Yi Mongryong. She rose, excited by the courage, the passion of her lover, and quickly opened the door, ushered him in.

“Why have you come back?” she scolded, “I told you not to return until tomorrow, and you agreed. How then can I trust your words, if you fail to keep your promises; you bring back all my doubts for the future.”

“Excuse me, my dear, I admit my fault; but, alone in my bed, I kept seeing you constantly, I could not sleep, and that is why I came back.”

“I am grateful to you for thinking of me,” she said; “Only if you act like this every day, you will be unable to study, your body will suffer, and that’s why I feel annoyed.”

“Nothing is more true,” agreed Yi Mongryong; “But grant me just tonight!”

“Impossible,” she protested, stubbornly, “I cannot accept that you break all your promises. Goodbye until tomorrow.”

“How cruel you are!” he replied.

“I am not cruel at all. Listen to me. If you are all the time thinking of our love, you will not study, you will not be educated and you will make people unhappy; your parents will be saddened, and, in addition, your too frequent visits to me will weaken your body. So I judge that it is better that I should not grant what you ask me.”

But Yi Mongryong insisted: “Just for tonight,” he begged, “and I promise you that tomorrow I will start to work.”

“No,” she repeated, very firmly. “Oh, how unkind you are,” he said. “Why call me unkind? I’m not.”

“Yes you are, because if you do not give me this night, I shall fall sick with chagrin. Your cruelty is therefore unnecessary.”

She remained pensive, saddened that she might make him sick and recognizing the truth of his words: “He loves me so much, I cannot cause him so much suffering.” Then, addressing him: “At least, swear to me that if I grant you this night, you will invariably keep your promise to work tomorrow.”

“I swear that I will not break my promise.” She gently stroked his face and kissed him, saying that she loved him, that she was delighted with him. “But be reasonable; do not come so often on other days. Work, I beg of you.”

With the greatest joy, he promised to work whole-heartedly; then they went to bed.

The night passed. They rose at dawn. Yi Mongryong went home, went to visit his parents; then, once in his room, he took up his books, and, according to the desire of Chunhyang, he studied fervently. Two days passed.

On the third day, the servant brought him a letter. When Yi Mongryong had read the letter he was desperate: it announced that his father was being called to high office under the king.

"Alas! Alas! What am I to do?" murmured the young man. At that moment, his father summoned him and said: "You must go on ahead with your mother."

"Why should we not all leave together?" Yi Mongryong stammered.

"Because I have to inform the new Mandarin about everything; so it is impossible for us to leave together."

"Then I will go," said Yi Mongryong in a docile manner. But then he went to his mother: "My father wants us to leave before him, are you happy with that?" "Certainly," she said, "I will do as he pleases."

Yi Mongryong hastened to pack his trunks, into which he piled all his favourite things; then he returned to his room, and there his heart failed him, he wept and despaired.

"What am I to do! What to do! If I go on ahead, it will be very difficult to take Chunhyang."

So he went to find his mistress that night, and, along the way, he lamented. Still, he wiped his eyes well before going into her room, and composed his face. She kissed him tenderly:

"What a long time it has been since I last saw you," she said.

Yi Mongryong, sad, did not reply. She then remarked that his father, having learned of his love, had scolded him, and that was probably why he had not come these last few days.

Yi Mongryong replied tearfully, "No, my dear, it's not that. I am going to return to my native home." Chunhyang, at this news, let her arms drop, her body sagging.

"What are you saying?" she cried. "Is your father sending you away because he has found out about our love?"

"Oh no," Yi Mongryong replied, "but my father has been called to serve the King as minister. So I have to leave."

He wept as he said these words. She consoled him, and thinking that it would be difficult for him to take her with him, urged him: "Do not cry so. If you leave before me, I will wait for you to come and fetch me."

"You are right; but I cannot bear to leave you an hour, a single quarter of an hour here, while I go; I will miss you so, it is above my strength."

She threw both arms around his neck, and in a very sweet, but slightly ironic gesture, she put her cheek against his: "You will go, my dear, and tell me, when are you coming to fetch me?" And pointing to a painting of a stork hanging on the wall she continued: "When that bird flies and sings, when the mountains become plains, then you will come back, will you not, my dear? When the sea takes the place of the earth and the earth takes the place of the sea, then you will come to get me, will you not? If you kill me first, then leave, it is good; but to leave me here alone like this is not possible."

Hearing these words, Yi Mongryong exclaimed: "What are we to do?"

They were talking when the servant arrived. He drew Yi Mongryong to one side: "Your father summons you immediately: go quickly."

Yi Mongryong left Chunhyang, saying: "Goodbye, I will return soon."

He returned with the servant, and went to visit his father, who said: "Why have you not gone yet? You must leave immediately." Yi Mongryong replied: "Yes, father, I'm going now." He said goodbye to his father and ran to find his mother. "Go on ahead,

I will join you at the earliest. I have some friends to whom I want to say goodbye."

"Very well," his mother replied, "go immediately to your friends, then join me."

"Yes, mother," he said, "I will see you soon."

Once his mother had left, he returned to Chunhyang.

"I am leaving now," he said. "Leaving! Leaving! Leaving! I'm leaving! I have to leave you here. What am I to do?"

She panicked: "Leaving?" she said in despair. "Now, immediately? How unhappy I shall be!"

She accompanied him as far as the bridge where Gwanghallu stood. He held tightly the hand of his mistress, unable to bring himself to let go, and crying. The servant, who was watching Yi Mongryong, then ran up and said:

"Come, come, we must go; your mother is waiting."

Yi Mongryong exclaimed angrily: "If you were me, what would you do then? Would you leave Chunhyang alone here and set off without hesitation?"

"If I were you," replied the servant, "I would not cry like that. You would not lament more if your parents were dead."

"Wretch! Rogue!" exclaimed the furious Yi Mongryong. "What, you revile me," said the man. "I will go and tell your mother everything."

The poor Yi Mongryong calmed him, begging him not to do so.

"We are going to take our leave," he said. "Why would you play this trick on me?"

"If you go with me right now, I will say nothing," replied the servant.

Chunhyang said: "It is impossible for me to accompany you further; we will separate here." And tightly embracing him, caressing him, she said: "Do not trouble yourself too much for me, my dear; but study well so that one day you can become the Mandarin of Namwon, and then you can marry me."

"Oh! Yes!" Yi Mongryong cried. "I will work hard while thinking of you and I will pass my exams in order to obtain you."

"I still doubt your words," she said; "Once you are back in your home, you will fall in love with some other girl and you will forget me."

"How can you say such a thing?" protested Yi Mongryong; "It must mean that you are thinking of taking a new lover."

At that they embraced. She wished him a good journey and good luck. Then he said, in turn: "Do not despair! I will come back to claim you as soon as possible."

They exchanged rings, and he walked away. Collapsing onto the bridge, her eyes followed her lover, and she was crying. He turned back ceaselessly. She waved her handkerchief. He did the same. Arriving at the turn of the mountain road he stopped one last time and the lovers never tired of sending signals.

His servant urged him on, very vexed. Yi Mongryong begged him to wait. Their leave-taking threatened to go on forever and the servant grumbled as he watched Chunhyang wave her handkerchief yet again. Finally, exasperated, he took the arm of Yi Mongryong and dragged him round the corner from where he could not see the girl.

"Alas, alas!" cried Chunhyang, "My love has gone; I cannot see him anymore. Ah! The cursed mountain that steals my beloved from me; though I live for a century, I will keep alive my resentment toward this mountain."

She went home, piled all her best dresses in a trunk, together with her perfumes, her jewellery, as a sign of mourning, and remained dressed in poor clothes.

However, as the servant was about to leave him and return to Namwon, Yi Mongryong said: "Here is some money for you, and here is a sum you must give to Chunhyang."

The servant returned to town, went to Chunhyang, and gave her the money.

The new Mandarin of Namwon soon arrived. At once he said to his servant: "Show me, please, a girl from this city named Chunhyang."

"Very well, sir."

"Bring her to me."

"That will be difficult," replied the servant, "for she is married to Yi Mongryong, the son of the previous Mandarin."

At this news, the Mandarin became very angry: "Do not say that, and summon her

here immediately.”

The servant bowed, and ran to accomplish his mission. Chunhyang was at home. He asked to see her: “Why do you want to see me?” asked the young girl, appearing.

“The new Mandarin wants to see you. Come at once.”

Unable to evade this order, she accompanied him. The new Mandarin examined her carefully.

“She is beautiful,” he thought, “despite her dreadful clothes.” “I’ve heard a lot about you in the capital Seoul, and now I

understand why, on seeing how beautiful you are. Will you marry me?”

She did not answer. The Mandarin insisted: “Why do not you answer me?” he asked.

He repeated the same question two or three times but still Chunhyang made no reply. Full of anger, he continued: “Why are you not replying?”

“I am married to Yi Mongryong,” she said at last; “that is why I did not answer you. Besides,” she continued, growing exasperated, “if the King of Korea has sent you to Namwon, it is to take care of the needs of the people. Work will not be lacking for you. Certainly, if the king had sent you here only to marry me, I would obey his order; otherwise, you will do better to fulfil the duties of your office and apply justly our nation’s laws.” The Mandarin’s rage knew no bounds. He called his servants and ordered them to take Chunhyang to prison. But she said: “Why put me in prison? I have committed no fault. A married woman must remain faithful to her husband. If the King of Korea were replaced by a usurper, would you betray him and serve the new monarch?”

This time the Mandarin sprang to his feet in fury.

“To prison with her, to prison, right away,” he ordered. The servants threw themselves on her and took her to jail. She spent many days there in deep sadness, almost without taking food, always thinking about Yi Mongryong.

Meanwhile, Yi Mongryong had arrived in the capital. He worked tremendously, hoping to quickly pass his exams and go back to find his beloved Chunhyang.

One day, finally, he learned that the Korean king had set the exams for two days later. Yi Mongryong passed brilliantly, ahead of all, and the king, who loved the young man, questioned him after having congratulated him: “What do you want from me? I will give you anything you want. Do you want to be a Mandarin, a governor?”

“I wish to be named Royal Emissary,” said Yi Mongryong. The king then gave him the seal and the rich clothing related to his job, and Yi Mongryong set off, after taking leave of his parents. He disguised his servants and himself as beggars. He explored the country in that manner, questioning the people to identify their needs and to check the administration of the mandarins. He soon came to Namwon. He lodged in a small farming village, where the people worked together in their fields and sang patriotic songs. Yi Mongryong listened to them singing. They sang:

The rice we grow with great difficulty under the burning sun,
that we water with our sweat, first we must give
a portion as the king’s tribute,
then a portion for poor friends,
then a portion to share with passing travellers,
then still spare some money for ancestral rites.
Even then we would be fine,
if the mandarin did not press us
so that we have barely enough to eat.

“Hush,” shouted a young man. “Do not sing those songs, because I have heard that a royal envoy is in the vicinity of Namwon, and if ever he hears us sing like this, he will blame the Mandarin for his misconduct and he will take revenge on us.”

Interested, Yi Mongryong approached and said: “I want to ask you something.”

"What is it?" they asked.

"I have heard that the Mandarin of Namwon has married Chunhyang and that he is very happy thanks to her."

The young man and all the people cried out: "How dare you say that? Chunhyang is very loyal and very pure, and it is very wrong of you to talk thus about her and the wicked Mandarin who is oppressing her . . . No, the son of the former Mandarin seduced the poor girl and then abandoned her without ever coming back to see her. He is the son of a dog, a widow's spoilt son!"

"Enough, Enough!" Yi Mongryong said. "Do not say such things, have more respect, fear to show yourselves unjust."

But he thought to himself that he had done wrong and went off to cry.

He stopped in another place where schoolchildren were playing. Curious to see them up close and hear them, he approached. Playing, one of them, already a tall young man, said to his friends: "Today we are gay; the weather is fine, let's compose a poem!"

Another responded: "But on what subject should this poem be?"

"The subject will be: 'The life of the people'."

Yi Mongryong thought it was very interesting and, lying in the grass, he listened. The young man sang:

Over the bright and gentle sun a wicked cloud has slid. Everything on earth is sad.
This cloud is like a fishing hook designed to catch the poor people.

Another young man exclaimed: "Ah! How sad! I heard that a young girl named Chunhyang is to be executed in two or three days by the executioner of the Mandarin.

"Why does the Mandarin want to kill Chunhyang?" asked the first young man.

Another answered: "Oh! The Mandarin, who hardly ever works, thinks only of Chunhyang; but she is like the pine tree and the bamboo that never change, she remains faithful to her husband."

"How unfortunate we are to have, after the good old mandarin, this wicked man so hard of heart, like a hook set to catch the poor people."

"Was this Chunhyang married?" asked the first young man. "Yes, she was married to the son of the former mandarin.

What a pig that son is! Once married, he left the poor girl, he was more cruel than a tiger."

Yi Mongryong, on hearing this, was very moved and, appearing all of a sudden, he asked the students which of them had sung the poem: "It was me," said the first young man.

"Will you give me your name?" Yi Mongryong asked.

"I am Chung Wan-Jong." Thereupon Yi Mongryong hurried away toward Namwon, weeping at the thought of his poor Chunhyang.

Meanwhile, Chunhyang, in prison, remained faithful to the memory of Yi Mongryong and since she was barely eating she was quite emaciated, very weak and sickly. One day as she slept she had a dream. She saw her house and in the garden, the flowers she had planted and loved so much were wilting, the leaves withering. Her mirror in her room was broken. Her shoes were hanging on the lintel of the door. Frightened, she awoke: "What a horrible nightmare!" she thought, "I will probably die soon. I do not regret life, but I am sad at not seeing Yi Mongryong before then."

She stopped a blind man who was passing at that moment in the street and asked him the meaning of her dream. He thought a few minutes: "Oh!" he said at last, "what a happy dream!" "How can you say that to me," she said, in anguish, "as I am in prison and will soon be sentenced to death. You are deceiving me!"

"Why do you say that?" replied the blind man; "you are indeed now in jail, but you will not die and later you will be happy!"

"But," said Chunhyang, "flowers that fade, the broken mirror, those shoes hanging at

the door, this is all very strange and ominous.”

“Listen well, I’ll tell you what that means: the flowers that fade will bear fruit, the noise of this broken mirror will be heard by everyone, the shoes at the door indicate the crowd come to congratulate you on your approaching happiness.”

“Thank you,” said Chunhyang, “what joy for me if it all happens!”

And she offered some money to the blind man, who energetically refused with his right hand, while his left hand was advancing to receive the reward.

The new Mandarin, that same day, called his servant and said: “In three days I will celebrate a big party, I am inviting all the mandarins of the surroundings. On that day I will have Chunhyang executed. Here is the money to make the necessary preparations.”

“Very well,” said the servant, bowing. He took the money and prepared everything for the party.

Yi Mongryong, meanwhile, arrived in the city and went to the house of Chunhyang. Everything was abandoned, untidy, ruined.

He called the mother of the girl. She did not recognize him, but mistook him for a beggar.

“Alas!” she said, “I cannot give you anything. My daughter has been in prison for a long time; in three days she will be executed and I have had so many expenses.”

Yi Mongryong heard that and felt terribly sad: “Come closer,” he said to the mother.

She approached and carefully considered him. “I do not know you,” she said. “Your face reminds me of Yi Mongryong but your clothes are those of a beggar.

“Yi Mongryong I am,” he said.

She dropped her arms in surprise and moaned: “Ah! Every day I expected you and my poor girl expected you, too. You are here now; but alas! In two or three days, Chunhyang will be dead.”

“Listen to me,” said Yi Mongryong; “Though I am a miserable beggar, I still love Chunhyang and I want to see her again.”

“Oh!” cried the mother. “This is very strange. You, a beggar, and you still love Chunhyang. Very well, I will take you; we will try to see her.”

She walked in front and Yi Mongryong followed her, pretending to be wretched. They arrived at the prison. She knocked on the door and called to Chunhyang. She was sleeping, sad and weary. She heard someone calling her.

“Who can be calling me?” she thought. “My mother probably, for who else do I have on earth?” She looked out of the window and saw her mother.

“Oh! Mother,” she said. “Why are you calling me in so pressing a way? Alas! I am still awaiting my dear Yi Mongryong; has any news arrived? Speak, tell me why you are so upset.”

“Alas!” the mother said in tears. “Yes, we always expected Yi Mongryong, and now a beggar has come to my house!”

“Well, what about this beggar?”

“It is Yi Mongryong who has become a beggar, and, here, here he is.”

Chunhyang, incredulous before this absurdity, said: “What? Yi Mongryong a beggar? I do not believe it, it is not possible!”

“Here he is, here he is,” said the mother angrily, irritated by the loyalty of her daughter to this Yi Mongryong who had returned to them a beggar. Yi Mongryong appeared at the window. Chunhyang looked at him.

“Oh!” she cried, bursting into tears, “it has been so long, so long!”

She passed her hand feverishly through the window, then she pushed her head through, delivering it to the kisses of her lover. But the mother intervened ironically: “That is very odd,” she said. “You’re going to die soon, you will close your eyes forever to the light, and here you are, embracing a miserable beggar!”

“If I am a beggar by my coat,” Yi Mongryong replied angrily, “I have neither the face nor the heart of a beggar! How dare you insult me like that?”

“Oh! Mother, Chunhyang sighed, “why say impolite words to a man such as Yi

Mongryong? Do you forget that often the heroes of olden times experienced hardships and fell into misfortune? Would I reject my sweet, my only Yi Mongryong because he is humiliated? But you may be sure, if we are miserable today, we will find happiness again! . . . No, no, mother, oh! I beg you, listen to me: go home, here are the keys to my trunk, take all my jewellery, all the precious things in it and sell them; you will buy with the money whatever Yi Mongryong needs and you will arrange my room so that he can stay there."

"Very well," said the old mother, chuckling a little, "I will do that; but still I have no confidence in your Yi Mongryong."

"My dear," said Chunhyang, addressing the young man, "go home with my mother, rest well and comfort yourself. Do not think too much of me; but. As I must die tomorrow at the feast given by the Mandarin, before I die I want you to come to my window so that I may see once again your dear face."

"Until tomorrow, then," Yi Mongryong replied, "I will certainly return."

And he went off in the company of the dissatisfied mother, who grumbled as she walked along briskly: "What, give money to this vagrant; what stupidity! My daughter deserves all her misfortunes."

Yi Mongryong, still imitating a wretched beggar with wobbly legs, whispered to himself: "Today you are angry with me; but tomorrow we will see what you look like."

They came to the house, and the mother, obeying the wishes of Chunhyang, ran for the jewellery; but Yi Mongryong stopped her.

"No need to sell that today; we have time to wait until tomorrow or the day after tomorrow."

With that, Yi Mongryong went to sleep. The next day when the mother knocked on his door to awaken him, grumbling at the young man's laziness, she received no answer. Opening the door, she saw that Yi Mongryong was gone.

"Oh! What the devil!" she said, surprised. "Alas! My daughter is going to be sad on her last day. Where is he?" But she searched everywhere in vain.

"If I tell Chunhyang," she thought, "she will suffer horribly. So I will not mention this at all."

Yi Mongryong had gone to collect his servants, disguised as beggars like himself. He gave them strict orders for the day. They had each to be ready at his post around the house of the Mandarin.

Meanwhile, the Mandarin was receiving guests and presiding over the grand gala dinner and other entertainments. Yi Mongryong managed to enter the palace and even to approach the Mandarin.

"I am a poor man," he said, "and I am hungry. Give me some food."

The Mandarin, furious, commanded his servants to chase away the intruder. They jostled Yi Mongryong and threw him out of doors.

"Ah! Ah!" Yi Mongryong muttered between his teeth, "What strong authority, but be patient! That authority will soon be lowered: I will show my strength."

The Mandarin, surrounded by courtesans, indulged in an orgy with his friends, eating, drinking, singing. Yi Mongryong, meanwhile, was prowling around the house, looking for some way to get inside. The doors being guarded, he resolved to use a window. Calling one of his servants, hidden nearby, he asked him to help him reach an open window. The servant hoisted him up as far as the windowsill and Yi Mongryong was back in the palace.

He slipped into one of the rooms where the party was being held. The Mandarin of Unbong, named Yong-Chang, was next to Yi Mongryong, who asked: "I am hungry, could you get me something to eat?"

Yong-Chang called to one of courtesans and told her to bring something to the beggar. Yi Mongryong ate and then, still addressing Yong-Chang, said: "Thank you very much for the trouble you have taken for me. I want to repay you with a small poem," and held out a paper. Yong-Chang read:

"This beautiful wine in vessels of gold

is the blood of a thousand men.
“This magnificent meat on these rich marble tables
is the flesh and marrow of ten thousand men.
“These resplendent candles whose tears flow,
they are tears of an entire afflicted people.
“These resounding songs of courtesans do not rise higher
than the moans and reproachful cries of the people
that are being obnoxiously pressed.”

“Oh!” cried Yong-Chang, much alarmed at what he read. “That is against us.” And he passed the paper to the Mandarin of Namwon. He read in turn, and then asked: “Who made this?” “That young beggar,” said Yong-Chang, designating Yi Mongryong. But he was suddenly frightened, thinking how strange it was that a beggar could have made these verses. So he rose, claiming urgent business, and retired.

The mandarins, seized with the same terror, all went out under various pretexts, and the Mandarin of Namwon, left alone and very scared too, retired to his room.

Gradually, as the mandarins came out, they were arrested by the servants of Yi Mongryong, according to the orders he had given them.

“Why are you arresting us?” the mandarins asked.

The servants answered: “We do not know, we are acting on the orders of the Royal Emissary.

“The Royal Emissary? Where is he?” they quavered, pale with terror.

“The Emissary?” said the servants. “We do not know; he was with you at the party earlier.”

So the mandarins were persuaded that the emissary was the beggar who had produced the poem.

Meanwhile, the servants came to Yi Mongryong to report what they had done, and he ordered them to let the mandarins go.

“Only arrest the Mandarin of Namwon.”

They obeyed and took the Mandarin to prison. Then Yi Mongryong ordered the servants of the palace to fetch Chunhyang, so that she could be judged. She was surprised to see them so very early and asked them why they had come: “It is the Emissary who has sent us,” they said. “He will judge you.” Horrified, she murmured: “Oh! I will die! Please,” she begged the servants, “call my mother, so that I can still her before I die.”

They did as she asked. The mother came running.

“Mother, said she, “the hour of my death has come. Where is my friend Yi Mongryong?”

“Yi Mongryong!” she cried; “But I do not know where he is, he disappeared from the house this morning, and I have looked everywhere in vain, I have not seen him again.”

“Oh! Mother!” Chunhyang moaned. “You must have mistreated and he is gone. You make me so wretched!”

But the servants separated them, saying that the Emissary could not wait until the end of their talking, and they dragged Chunhyang away. The mother followed her anxiously from afar. The Emissary, stationed behind a curtain to preserve his anonymity, began to admonish Chunhyang once she was there: “If you do not like the Mandarin,” he concluded finally, “will you at least marry me, the Royal Emissary?” And, motioning to his servants, who surrounded the girl with drawn swords, he added: “If you refuse to marry me, I will have you beheaded immediately.”

“Alas!” Chunhyang exclaimed. “How unhappy are the poor people of this country.”

“Why,” said the Emissary, “what is making the people unhappy?”

“What there is, she said, “is first of all the injustice of the Mandarin and then you, the Emissary of the King, who are supposed to provide help and protection to the poor, you plan to immediately condemn to death a poor girl whom you desire. That is what is sad for the people. Never was seen a more iniquitous thing.”

Yi Mongryong then addressed the courtesans who had remained in the room: "Untie the cords that bind the hands of Chunhyang," he said. "Cut them with your teeth."

They did so and Chunhyang was free.

"Raise your head now," said the Emissary, "and look at me." "No," she said, "I will not look at you. I will not even listen to you; cut my body into pieces if you wish, but I will not marry you."

So Yi Mongryong, charmed, took off his ring and ordered a courtesan to bring it to Chunhyang. She looked at the ring and recognized it as the one she had once given to Yi Mongryong. She looked up, recognized her lover, stood up straight and, supported by the courtesans, approached, trembling with emotion.

"Ah!" she cried in joyful surprise. "Yesterday my lover was a vile beggar and here he is the Royal Emissary."

Yi Mongryong held out his hands, she rushed into his arms, and they spent several minutes sobbing with happiness.

At this time, the mother, seeing this beautiful outcome, ran up, dancing for joy, and exclaimed: "What! The Emissary is our Yi Mongryong. I have not had a son," she continued, addressing the others, "but my daughter brings me more joy than any son. I have brought her up well, and she has been the most virtuous, the most faithful of women. And here she is, married to a Royal Emissary. What happiness! I wish you all to have a daughter like mine, rather than boys."

Coming close to Yi Mongryong, she asked pardon for having mistreated him the day before.

"But we had waited for you for so long," she said, "and seeing you arrive as a beggar with no authority to rescue my poor girl from death, it turned me against you. But all is well and I beg your pardon."

"Chunhyang has suffered more than you," Yi Mongryong replied. "She has waited for me with even more impatience, yet she never got angry with me!"

"Oh!" said the girl. "My mother is old, and she was nearly maddened to see me suffer!"

Yi Mongryong, laughing, said he excused everything gladly, he could feel only joy. He then gave the servants and courtesans the order to go, since he wanted to retire with Chunhyang to a room where they could make love at their ease. But the girl objected to this project.

"You must first," she said, "do your duty to the full, render justice to the poor, and punish the guilty. After that, we can be happy together. "

Yi Mongryong, delighted with the wisdom of his dear friend, consented to her desire.

So he sent for the mandarin of Namwon.

"When you were appointed Mandarin of Namwon," said the Emissary, "you set about squeezing the people dry, you have made them unhappy; I sentence you for all this to be sent to an island."

Then Yi Mongryong summoned the schoolboy whose satire he had overheard. He gave him money and cakes, asked him about his studies and advised him to study hard. The scholar thanked him and expressed his good resolutions. Yi Mongryong thus brought to a close all the pending cases, in a spirit of justice. When everything had been settled to the general satisfaction, he set off for Seoul with Chunhyang and her mother.

He recorded his adventures in a book which he handed to the king. The king, having read it, surprised and delighted with the faithfulness of Chunhyang, named her Jeonggyeongbuin (Duchess). She was then formally presented to the parents of Yi Mongryong and they were married in style. They were happy and she bore him three sons and two daughters.

The king said that the loyalty of Chunhyang, a daughter of the people, was more meritorious than noble girls; he wished that her loyalty might serve as a model for other women and that men would be inspired by it as a symbol of the faith they owed to the king, their master.