

Mystery of the Stray Dog Murder

Dramatis Personae

Judge Bao, 包青天

Chan Chao, *Bao's sergeant*, 詹超法警

Bao's Wife 1, 包青天大老婆

Mulan/Yang, *Bao's daughter*, 木蘭／楊，包青天女兒

You-mei, Wife 2 二老婆, 余美

Bao's Son 1 包青天大兒子

Bao's Son 2 包青天二兒子

Bully Liao, *henchman of Landlord Wang*, 廖老大，王地主手下

Gung Fu Master Lan, 功夫大師藍

Mr. Guo, *Coroner* 郭法醫

Messenger 信使

Owner of Lily 莉莉主人

Dogs:

Lily/Pretty White 莉莉／白雪

Blackie 小黑

Brownie 布朗尼

Little Yellow 小黃

Dr. Cheng Jian -jie, *Veterinarian at Zhongli Shelter*, 中壢動物收容所 澄簡婕 醫師

Lulu, *Shelter worker*, 嚕嚕，收容所員工

Weiwei, *Shelter worker* 瑋瑋，收容所員工

Tou Yun-fei, *Photographer*, 杜韻飛，攝影師

Priest, 佛教法師

Mrs. Gao, 高太太

Dancing Girl, 舞女

Vendor 1, 小販 1

Vendor 2, 小販 2

Shopper 1 顧客 1

Shopper 2 顧客 2

Scene 1 Dog site on the mountain

(Dogs gathered together, all looking in the same direction)

YELLOW

She's late.

BROWNIE

I hope she doesn't forget.

BLACKIE

She never forgets. If she doesn't come, something's happened. (*motor sound*)

YELLOW

That's her.

BROWNIE

No, it's a car, not her motorcycle.

BLACKIE

It's slowing down. It's stopping here. Hide!

OWNER

(*car stops*) This looks like the right place...where the dogs were. Oh God, I hate this. Come on, Lily. We're going for a walk.

LILY

Oh lovely. (*jumps out of car*) We've never been here before. (*sniffing*) Wow, there's an amazing bouquet of smells. A popular spot. Come on, don't be such a slow poke.

OWNER

(*gets in the car, to Lily*) Good luck, baby. (*leaves*)

LILY

Baby? My name's Lily. Wait! Where are you going? To park the car? Okay. (*cries out and starts running*) Stop! Stop! Come back. (*crouches and cries*) Why did you leave me? (*brightening*) Maybe this is a test. You want to see how smart I am, whether I can find my way home like those dogs in the movies. I'm up to it. I'll find you.

BLACKIE

(*creeps out*) Cool it, baby. You've been dumped.

LILY

How dare you! Stay away from me, dirty beggar.

YELLOW

Lady, she doesn't want you anymore.

LILY

Nonsense, she loves me more than anything.

BROWNIE

The moment you become inconvenient, that love vanishes.

LILY

But I never gave her any trouble. I never barked inside the house, never peed on her bed. I was always happy to see her; always ready to cuddle and comfort her. I didn't do anything wrong.

BLACKIE

Perhaps you just grew up. No more a cute puppy.

LILY

But I'm lovely.

BROWNIE

You are.

LILY

Perhaps I demanded too much attention...

YELLOW

Don't blame yourself.

LILY

I must have done something...

BLACKIE

You were born a dog.

LILY

I'm not really a dog.

BLACKIE

You are.

LILY

I was her child. (*looks at them*) I hate dogs.

YELLOW

That's too bad. We were going to help you.

LILY

You help me, miserable 3-legged creature?

BLACKIE

Good luck, Baby.

LILY

Don't call me 'Baby,' my name is Lily.

BLACKIE

Not anymore. You're a no-name like the rest of us.

LILY

I'm not! Oh, why am I wasting time with you? I need to find my way home.

BROWNIE

Don't go. Cute Little Yellow here was also dumped. He ran after his owners and was hit by a motorcycle.

LILY

Terrible! And you?

BROWNIE

My mother was dumped, and I was born here. My three brothers and sisters died in a week.

YELLOW

You're one of us now.

LILY

Oh, no! It can't happen to me! (*cries*)
(*they all sing*)

You ain't nothing but a hound dog
Been snoopin' 'round before
You ain't nothing but a hound dog
Been snoopin' 'round before
You can wag your tail
But we ain't gonna see you no more

You thought you was high-class
But we could see through that
Yes, you thought you was high-class
But we could see through that
And baby, I know
You ain't no cool kitty no more
You ain't nothing but a hound dog
Been snoopin' 'round before

YELLOW

(*motorcycle sound; they look around*) Here she comes! You're lucky to meet our Gou Ma.

WIFE 2

Hello, everyone waiting for me? Who is this? A new one. Goodness you're pretty. (*she pets Lily*)

LILY

(*smug*) She likes me. She'll take me home with her.

BLACKIE

She likes all of us.

WIFE 2

Here you go. (*puts out food*) There's enough for everybody.

LILY

What's this rubbish? I can't eat this.

YELLOW

Eat. In a few days you'll be craving it.

LILY

(barks to Gou Ma)

WIFE 2

No, no Pretty White, you can't come with me. I'm sorry. I wish I could take all of you, but at least you have your freedom.

LILY

I don't want freedom. I want my home!

BROWNIE

Come now, Pretty White, new name, new home.

Black out.

Scene 2 At the Court

BAO

(looks over document, Chan pours tea, Bao spits it out) Terrible. I must get First Wife to bring some good tea. Well, I think that's all for the day. This last case has really got me perplexed.

CHAN

Sir, it's hard to believe how it could have happened.

BAO

I need to sleep on it. Make sure everything is well locked up. Good-night. *(walking)* Brrr, it's freezing. I feel pity for any man or beast who can't escape this bitter wind. *(sniffs)* Hmmm, someone is cooking something delicious.

YELLOW

(barks)

BAO

Are you hungry too?

YELLOW

(barks) Yes!

BAO

Ugh, your hair has fallen out and your skin has red patches.

YELLOW

I'm so miserable and cold.

WIFE 1

(comes out with broom, sweeps dog away) Go! Go! You filthy animal. *(to Bao)* It's been hanging around all day. Why does it come to our house?

BAO

I could smell our dinner all the way down the street. Ask Cook if there are any scraps.

WIFE 1

Absolutely not! You start feeding it, others will come.

BAO

(tiredly) All right. Let's go in.

WIFE 2

Ah, you're late. Many cases?

BAO

No, just a difficult one. I'll have to resume it tomorrow.

WIFE 2

Will there be new evidence?

BAO

Probably not, but my head might be clearer.

WIFE 2

You have a headache?

BAO

Yes, worse than before.

WIFE 1

This cold brings it on. You don't dress warmly enough *(brings soup)*.

WIFE 2

(puts on a compress) In two minutes that should begin to soothe.

BAO

It feels better already. *(to Wife 1)* A little more salt, please. Where is Mulan?

WIFE 1

Playing outside in the garden.

WIFE 2

Building a snowman...and putting out seeds for the birds that have a hard time finding food in winter.

BAO

Not feeding stray dogs, I hope.

WIFE 1

Certainly not. There are more and more dogs on the streets—they scare me.

WIFE 2

They've never attacked anyone.

WIFE 1

Well, there're too many of them. Someone should do something about it.

BAO

(mumbles) Yes, probably. It's getting dark. Tell the children to come in.

SON 1

Dad, look out the window at our snowman. It has a carrot nose and charcoal eyes.

BAO

Why, it's huge, like my sergeant Chan Chao.

SON 2

No, Dad, it's you.

BAO

Oh, I'm flattered...I think. Mulan you shouldn't be out there. You need to study.

MULAN

I already finished my homework. Don't worry, I'll do fine on the exam.

WIFE 1

(proudly) You get so much training from your father, your Soochow law school teachers have little to teach you.

MULAN

They're intimidated when they learn I'm your daughter. Maybe I get good grades because they're afraid to mark me down.

BAO

I hope not. That's the kind of favoritism I most dislike.

MULAN

If I tell them you said so, they'll grade me more severely just to prove how 'honest' they are.
(laughs) A judge's daughter can't win. Did you have any interesting cases today?

BAO

A strange one.

MULAN

Tell me. Maybe I can help you solve it.

BAO

Making judgments is not a game.

MULAN

I'm sorry. But sometimes...it is rather. Cases are like unfinished stories. (*Bao is eating quietly*)
Well?

BAO

Two mothers claim the same child.

WIFE 1

That's outrageous.

WIFE 2

How is it possible? Surely the real mother knows her own child.

BAO

Of course. I have the feeling it belongs to one woman, but the neighbors all protest it belongs to the other.

MULAN

Just ask the child.

BAO

He's still a baby and can't speak.

WIFE 1

Still, a baby knows its own mother.

BAO

But both women raised him. They are the first and second wives. He knows them both.

MULAN

That is tricky. So what are you going to do?

BAO

Hope a brilliant idea comes to me in a dream (*he sighs*).

WIFE 2

There's more? (*begins setting up chess pieces*)

BAO

Yes, the woman I think is the real mother is not a good woman. The other is the kinder more deserving person. Their wealthy husband recently died.

WIFE 2

And whoever has possession of the son, possesses the property.

BAO

Exactly.

WIFE 2

Perhaps a game of chess will help.

BAO

Perhaps, though I won't be surprised if you win.

MULAN

I have an idea. Take a piece of chalk and draw a circle. Put the baby in the center and tell the two mothers whoever pulls the child out will be the real mother.

WIFE 1

They'd kill the child!

MULAN

I don't think so. The real mother will love her child too much to hurt it and will prefer to give it up.

BAO

However, if, as I've said, the real mother is not a loving mother but just wants the child to get her share of the husband's inheritance...

MULAN

Oh dear, that's hard. So you have to judge not only which one is the *real* mother, but also which is the *good* mother.

BAO

The law is concerned only with the biological parent.

MULAN

So in order to uphold the law, you have to go against morality. I wonder what my law professors would say about that!

BAO

They would say my subjective opinion is not relevant.

MULAN

But of course it is! That is what makes you a respected judge, the most popular in our country—you uphold people's sense of fairness.

BAO

Even if it is against the letter of the law?

MULAN

Yes.

BAO

You're on dangerous ground.

MULAN

We both know the law is a matter of interpretation.

BAO

Yes, but not in this case. It's crystal clear.

WIFE 2

Check.

BAO

Exactly. I am caught and cannot win.

WIFE 1

That's enough talk. You shouldn't bring your work into the home. It just tires you.

BAO

I'm sorry.

WIFE 1

You make all our attempts to comfort you hopeless.

BAO

No, not all. (*he goes off with Wife 1 and looks at Wife 2*)

Black out.

Scene 3 market scene

(*Master Lan entertains people with the Sevenboard; shoppers, vendors and dogs watch and chat*)

LAN

All right, give me another and I'll make it right before your eyes.

VENDOR 1

A peach, like the one I'm holding.

LAN

A very fine specimen. Now I'll do its portrait. (*crowd claps*)

VENDOR 2

Do me a dancing girl!

LAN

Coming right up, lovely as you please.

VENDOR 2

Very nice! Now just make her come to life and dance for me!

DANCING GIRL

Master Lan, usually I can dance very well, but I've hurt my knee. Now I can't even bow to the god. Could you make the Sevenboard show me praying?

LAN

Let me see. How about that?

DANCING GIRL

Very good. Thank you. I'm sure the god will be satisfied.

LAN

Fine. Anybody else?

JIAN

(she is wearing a hoodie and steps up) I'd like a butterfly.

LAN

That's easy. Here, you are. Are you happy with it? *(he sees that it is Jian and stops smiling)* Oh, you!

JIAN

I wish it could fly and take my message to someone.

LAN

(Blackie barks) Now look who wants to see his portrait. All right, handsome black dog.

LIAO

(entering, to Vendor 1) Pay up or I'll smash your stuff.

VENDOR 1

I paid you last week.

LIAO

Last week was last week, today is this week. Pay up. *(to next vendor)* Now you. *(vendor pays)* Not enough. You know the price.

Vendor 2

It's too early. I haven't sold enough to pay you now. Come back later.

LIAO

You think I have nothing else to do but come at your convenience. *(eats Vendor's food)*

LAN

What do you think? *(Lan makes a dog, the dogs crowd around to look)*

YELLOW

Hey, it looks just like you!

BLACKIE

Not bad.

BROWNIE

I wonder if he can do me too.

BLACKIE

Don't be silly, he only knows how to make one kind of dog.

LIAO

(kicks dog) Scram mutt, out of my way.

LAN

Let me see if I can make him before he sees me. (*people crowd around and begin laughing*)

LIAO

(*eating, gets suspicious*) What's so funny?

VENDOR 1

Nothing. Master Lan is just entertaining us with Sevenboard.

LIAO

Let me see. (*Lan shows him and Liao knocks it out of his hand*) Being funny, are you? Well, I've come here to see you on some other funny business. Landlord Wang says you owe him money.

LAN

Nonsense, I owe no one.

LIAO

He says you met him for a game of dice, you lost and owe him.

BROWNIE

Uh oh. A fight. Get out of the way.

YELLOW

Uh, I feel an urge...

LAN

I never gamble.

LIAO

You're saying Mr. Wang, a leading citizen in Zhongli, is lying? Besides, you're entertaining in the market place. Everyone who works in the market has to pay a vending fee.

BLACKIE

Little Yellow, get out of here. This is not the place to do your business.

YELLOW

I can't help it. I don't feel well. It's just coming out. (*he vomits*)

LAN

I am not selling anything and take no money. I'll pay back the only debt I owe bullies like you.

LIAO

You threatening me?

LAN

Yes. (*they fight; Lan twists his arm back, money falls out*) Everyone take back your money and run. (*people collect coins and hide*)

LIAO

You'd better take a long vacation. When Landlord Wang hears about this, your life won't be worth a piece on the Sevenboard.

LAN

I'm not going anywhere but the public bath to wash off the filth. (*Bully runs off but slips on Yellow's vomit; everyone laughs*) You'd better bathe too!

VENDOR 1

Even the stray dogs are good for something!

LAN

(*laughing*) But I'm afraid they'll pay dearly for it later. (*he makes a sevenboard figure of a man slipping. everyone applauds*)

JIAN

(*follows him*) Lan!

LAN

Cat, go away.

JIAN

Won't you come to the shelter? Two dogs have broken legs that need setting.

LAN

(*coldly*) No. Don't follow me. It's no good. I made a terrible mistake.

JIAN

But I didn't. Why has my love turned you so bitter? (*touches him*)

LAN

Don't. As I said, I made a mistake. I'm not who you think I am.

JIAN

And you think, I too, am not what I pretend to be? Come for the dogs' sake. They need your help.

LAN

I'm not going back there. Don't make me late for my bath. (*goes*)

JIAN

I wish you could mend a broken heart as well as you do bones. (*leaves*)

LAN

(*turns around*) Ah, such a beautiful girl...I wish I had never seen her. Who could imagine what that pretty face hides. (*he stumbles over Yellow who is curled up. Surprised, Yellow barks and bites him.*)
Ow! Let go!

YELLOW

Sorry, I didn't mean to. You stepped on my leg.

LAN

You've taken a chunk out of my leg. It's bleeding.

YELLOW

Just a nip.

LAN

I hope the hot spring water will clean it. Don't lie in the middle of the path.

YELLOW

I'm not feeling well.

LAN

Sickly creature. (*Yellow goes*). Ugh, I hope you're not diseased.

Black out.

Scene 4 Bao's home

Wife 2 massages Bao, the others serve dinner.

MULAN

I feel sorry for the baby—it didn't get to choose which mother *it* wanted.

BAO

You didn't get to choose your parents —do you have regrets?

MULAN

No, but...

BAO

(*coughs*)

WIFE 1

That sounds bad. You should stay at home tomorrow.

BAO

I'll feel better in the morning. You-mei, another compress, please.

WIFE 2

Is it your head or heart that hurts?

BAO

Both. When I handed the baby over to the true mother and saw the gleam of satisfaction in her eye, I felt so bad for the other woman—childless and now friendless too. I am not sure that man was made to sit in judgment of others.

WIFE 2

You do your best; you can't be perfect.

BAO

But I exert such influence on people's lives. My words have heavy consequences.

WIFE 1

I've never heard you complain your responsibilities before.

BAO

Cases seem more complicated these days.

WIFE 2

If you have to choose between your heart and your head, perhaps you should retire.

WIFE 1

Nonsense. You're too young, and besides what would you do all day...write poetry?

BAO

A holiday would be very welcome, but I'm afraid a judge's work is never done. (*knocking on door*). See, what did I tell you!

CHAN

Very sorry to bother you, sir, but there's been a sudden death.

EVERYONE

(*Everyone but Bao gasp*) Who? Where? How?

CHAN

Your Honor, the deceased is Gung Fu Master Lan.

BAO

No! He's one of the strongest men in town.

CHAN

Indeed. Once, he was practicing with a ball, rolling it over his shoulders like it was a basketball. When he handed it to me, I immediately dropped it. It was solid iron and must have weighed 100 kilos!

WIFE 2

Earlier today I saw him entertaining everyone in the market place with his Sevenboard. He seemed in the peak of health and best of spirits.

CHAN

From what I heard, Bully Liao came to the market and started a fight.

BAO

So it is likely that Liao and his boss Landlord Wang have something to do with his death.

WIFE 1

Murder!

MULAN

Don't jump to conclusions, mother.

BAO

Chan Chao, is there anything else?

CHAN

Yes, on his calf, there is an animal bite. It might be from one of the many stray dogs around the market this morning.

WIFE 1

I told you!

WIFE 2

Oh, no, they're too timid to bite anyone.

BAO

The death of Master Lan is a serious matter and will have to be investigated from all angles. Take Liao to jail. A night there will help him clear his mind. And round up all the stray dogs. Pay attention! If any of them show signs of rabies, they'll all have to be put down.

CHAN

Sir! (*leaves*)

MULAN

Oh, no! You can't do that. That's collective punishment for one person's guilt. And the poor sick dog is not even guilty...just sick.

BAO

If any of you see a sick dog and don't tell me, I shall be very angry.
Black out.

Scene 5 Dog site on the mountain

BLACKIE

I got to a full rubbish bag from a rich house—there's plenty for everybody. Beef bones and noodles.

BROWNIE

You're lucky. I just got fish bones. They're still caught my throat. (*hacks*) Here's the head, but be careful.

YELLOW

My stomach still hurts. (*scratches*) I can't eat anything, but I caught this. I don't know what it is, but it was easy to catch. (*he drops a lump that turns out to be a baby pangolin*).

BLACKIE

Let me see. It looks like a pangolin, a baby.

YELLOW

What's that?

BLACKIE

Chuan shan jia. 穿山甲。

BROWNIE

It's protected. You shouldn't have killed it.

YELLOW

Uh oh! Am I going to get into more trouble? *(he begins to scratch nervously.)*

BLACKIE

Well, it's dead, so someone should eat it. People think its scales are nutritious. *(chews a little)* Maybe nutritious, but not delicious.

BROWNIE

Stop scratching. You're making me nervous.

YELLOW

I can't help it.

BROWNIE

You have to stop or the rest of your hair will fall out and you'll freeze.

BLACKIE

(hears barking in the distance) What's that? I'll go check it out *(leaves)*.

YELLOW

I'm going to sit in the river. Only the water can take away the itch.

BROWNIE

I'll go with you. Make sure you don't drown.

BLACKIE

(comes running, panting) Run. They're coming. They're catching everyone.

YELLOW

Who?

BLACKIE

Don't ask questions.

BROWNIE

Just run.

BLACKIE

Spread out and join up later. *(they run in different directions. dog barks in the distance)*
Black out.

Scene 6 Dog site on the Mountain

Mulan secretly watches Wife 2 before entering

WIFE 2

(calling in an empty place) Pretty White! What are you doing here? Poor thing. Still waiting for your people? Well, you'll get my food today. But that's not what you want, is it?

PRETTY WHITE

No.

WIFE 2

She won't come back. Staying here alone is dangerous. All the dogs are being picked up.

PRETTY WHITE

Take me home with you.

WIFE 2

I can't.

PRETTY WHITE

I'm not a dog. I can be your child.

WIFE 2

I'm not free to do as I wish. Come, eat a little.

MULAN

(suddenly revealing herself) So this is where you come?

WIFE 2

Oh, Mulan! What are you doing here?

MULAN

I followed you. How long have you been coming here?

WIFE 2

Over a year.

MULAN

No one knows?

WIFE 2

You do, now.

MULAN

I won't tell anyone.

WIFE 2

First Wife suspects and has told your father. He didn't mind until this business with Master Lan started. Now all the dogs are being caught. If they are put to death. I couldn't face it.

MULAN

Father is responsible to the people of the town, not its animals.

WIFE 2

As a magistrate yes, he must, but as a human being sharing this world with other living beings, he, we also have a responsibility to them.

MULAN

The law doesn't cover that.

WIFE 2

But our culture does—they are part of our lives—we must consider them. All sentient beings are loved by The Buddha.

MULAN

What's this dog doing here?

WIFE 2

She was dumped by her owner.

MULAN

He could be prosecuted.

WIFE 2

You know as well as I that he, and many others, won't be caught.

PRETTY WHITE

We're disposed of like rubbish. I wish I had never been born.

MULAN

Maybe Dad could...

WIFE 2

Stop! Don't give her hope!

MULAN

What are you talking about? Dogs don't understand our speech.

WIFE 2

Of course, they do. They've lived with us for thousands of years.

PRETTY WHITE

(nods)

MULAN

Really?

PRETTY WHITE

(nods)

MULAN

Maybe if Dad finds some other cause of Lan's death, he will release the dogs.

WIFE 2

We'd better go back.

PRETTY WHITE

You'll come tomorrow?

WIFE 2

I'll try.

Black out.

Scene 7 in Bao's court

CHAN

Good afternoon, Your Honor.

BAO

Chan Chao, bring tea, the hotter the better. It's too cold in here.

CHAN

Right away. (*brings tea*)

BAO

(*spits it out*) Still terrible. You don't have anything a bit...stronger.

CHAN

Certainly, Sir. (*produces his bottle and pours*)

BAO

That's better. Now, tell me what you learned from the owner of the bath house.

CHAN

Master Lan went there regularly every other evening at three. He gave orders not to be disturbed until after an hour, when he would call for more tea. But yesterday, he never called. The attendant waited, and then, fearing something had happened, opened the door and found him dead!

BAO:

So he must have been killed in his private room. Or, after being bitten by a mad dog in the market, he succumbed to the disease. We have to wait for the coroner's report.

CHAN

We have one more clue—the Sevenboard.

BAO

Aha! What does it show?

CHAN

Unfortunately, he wasn't able to complete the picture. The last piece was still in his hand and the others were disturbed when he fell to the ground.

BAO

Arrange them as you found them. That seventh piece in his hand contains the whole mystery. Hmm, no, I can't make anything of it. So, we must go on to who he met on his way to the bath house and who was seen entering it.

CHAN

All the regulars were there. Tailor Lin mentioned he saw Master Lan speaking to a small young man in a hoodie, who then parted in the opposite direction.

BAO:

However, in all the steam, that young man could have returned and left unobserved through the back entrance. (*Bao hits the gavel*) This special session of the tribunal has convened in order to inquire into the murder of Kung Fu Master Lan. Chan, call in the Coroner. Coroner Guo, come forward and state your findings.

GUO:

Your Honor, I've made all the standard tests on Master Lan's body and the deceased died of a poison that might be the powdered root of the Snake Tree.

BAO

How was he poisoned?

GUO:

I can't figure out how the poison was introduced. I can say that he did not die from rabies.

CHAN

Then we can stop rounding up the dogs?

BAO:

Not yet. I have a feeling that the dogs are somehow implicated. (*to the court/audience*) The late Master Lan, poisoned by a person as yet unknown, was a distinguished martial artist of noble character. This tribunal shall do its utmost to apprehend the criminal. That ends this session. (*raps gavel, Guo remains and Bao looks at him questioningly*)

GUO

Your Honor, my wife heard that the tea in court was not to your liking and begs to offer you some high mountain tea she collected.

BAO

Excellent. Her gift is very welcome. Please thank her for me.
Black out.

Scene 8 at the dog shelter

(*dogs sleeping on the ground*)

LULU

What are we going to do? The shelter was full before, but now it's utter chaos. The judge makes us round up all the dogs—but he doesn't assign extra workers to help us, or give us more space to house them, or more money to feed them.

WEIWEI

It's not his fault. He knows people are panicking over rabies.

LULU

But I haven't seen any evidence of rabies, have you? Not one case.

WEIWEI

No, none, but that little yellow dog is still sick.

LULU

I've isolated him for special observation. Where's Jian?

WEIWEI

She's been so upset ever since that damn CTI interview. And then, with Master Lan's death, she was crying all yesterday. I told her not to come in today.

LULU

He was a wonderful man—so kind to the animals—but he was afraid of his emotions, and was too shy with women.

WEIWEI

Jian really liked him, though she never talked about it. Do you think they were lovers?

LULU

I'm not sure. (*Jian enters*) Oh, I thought you weren't coming in today.

JIAN

(*goes at computer*) I couldn't take the day off and leave you with so much work. I've been up most of the night loading photos of the new dogs on Facebook. It's so difficult to get people to adopt, now that they're afraid of rabies. (*Jian suddenly cries out*)

WEIWEI

Jian, what's wrong?

JIAN

I can't believe it! Look!

LULU

(*reads*) "Beautiful murderer! Killer of animals. You'll go to hell." Oh, god, why don't they stop? Doesn't everyone know we're under more pressure now? Even more dogs will be put down as the law stands. Don't read anymore.

JIAN

I only did that interview because I wanted people to know what we have to do, so that they would have more sympathy for the dogs and adopt them.

WEIWEI

They shouldn't be attacking us—we don't desert the dogs and we don't make the laws.

JIAN

I never should have told them that we, I, have to kill the dogs. How we feed them a nice dinner, take them for a walk, calm them down, and then take them into the “humane” room, give them a shot and cuddle them till they die. I told the reporter I cried all night the first time I had to do it. I showed her the memorial tablet we made for the dogs, where we pray for their souls.

WEIWEI

It’s not fair. First they blame the dogs for the death of Master Lan. Then they blame us for the deaths of unwanted dogs. It’s the public who is to blame—people should look at themselves, not us who have to do their dirty work.

JIAN

Look, this person accuses me of *enjoying* being cruel. Do they think we would do it if we were given any other choice?

WEIWEI

Ignore them!

JIAN

I could at first...but not now, not after Lan... (*puts head down and cries*).

WIFE 2

(*in disguise*) Hello, oh, sorry to bother you.

LULU

Yes, can I help you?

WIFE 2

Actually I’m here to see if I can help you. I know you must be overcrowded and overworked.

LULU

That’s kind of you—but we have to have trained people...

JIAN

Lulu, wait. I think I know this lady—she has a special way with the dogs. Thank you for coming.

WIFE 2

Please, never mind who I am; it’s not important. I’ll do whatever you need...just tell me.

JIAN

Come help us with the new ones. (*dogs wake up and bark*)

BLACKIE

It’s Gou Ma—have you come to rescue us?

WIFE 2

I’m sorry to see you here. I’ll do my best to make you comfortable.

BROWNIE

We knew you wouldn’t desert us. We’re so happy to see you.

(to Lulu) Look, how they like her.

JIAN

Where's Little Yellow?

WIFE 2

He's sick and been taken elsewhere.

BROWNIE

I'll do my best to keep you safe. (to Jian) I'll clean and feed these and then go to the others. (Lulu and Jian leave together)

WIFE 2

Who is she?

LULU

Judge Bao's second wife. She is in disguise, so we have to keep her identity secret, or it will be bad for her... and the Judge.

JIAN

Perhaps she feels guilty about what the Judge has done.

LULU

He did as he had to.

JIAN

(entering officially) Which one of you is Cheng Jian-jie?

CHAN

I am.

JIAN

You are arrested by order of Judge Bao and must come with me to the court.

CHAN

You can't take her.

WEIWEI

There's been a mistake.

LULU

Why have I been called?

JIAN

You were the last person to be seen talking to Master Lan before he died and are therefore implicated in his murder.

CHAN

LULU

That's impossible.

JIAN

Don't worry. I'll go and clear myself. I'm not afraid. (*she goes with Chan*)

LULU

I don't believe this.

WIFE 2

Don't worry. The judge is a fair man. He won't accuse her unjustly.

WEIWEI

Even 'good' judges beat defendants to get confessions.

WIFE 2

Tell me, did Lan ever come to the shelter?

LULU

He used to come quite often to set the broken legs of cats and dogs. He was very good with animals, and Jian admired him. You know she's an expert veterinarian and scored the highest on the national exam.

WEIWEI

His presence cheered Jian up, and gave her strength, but his death has plunged her into despair.

LULU

And now...even though the coroner said Lan didn't die from rabies, Judge Bao hasn't given the order to release the dogs. Several of them have passed the 12-day limit and we'll have to start the injections. Jian would have begun putting them down today...

WIFE 2

I said I'd do anything you needed.

LULU

By law it has to be done by a vet.

WIFE 2

I trained as a traditional healer and am legally qualified. Before I married, I worked for a doctor. I will do it. Tell me which animals are doomed.

LULU

Most of the sick ones; we just don't have the time or resources to cure them.

Black out.

Scene 9 At Bao's court

BAO

This morning session of the court of Zhongli is now open. Bring in the accused. State your name and occupation.

JIAN

This humble person is Cheng Jian-jie, chief veterinarian and administrator of the Zhongli animal shelter.

BAO

How long have you been employed there?

JIAN

Three years.

BAO

Explain your duties.

JIAN

I'm in charge of all the dogs and cats and other animals such as pet birds or lizards that are found in the public domain without owners, as well as capturing stray animals when people complain about them.

BAO

What do you do with them?

JIAN

We house, feed, clean, and care for them. We vaccinate and neuter them too. We try every way to encourage people to adopt the animals because the law stipulates that after 12 days, the animals must be euthanized.

BAO

My order to capture all strays must have made the shelter extremely crowded.

JIAN

Yes, Your Honor, it has been difficult.

BAO

You have received pressure from other quarters also?

JIAN

You refer to the Facebook accusations? Yes, some people have been very unkind.

BAO

How have you endured these attacks?

JIAN

I have wonderful supportive co-workers...and I love the dogs.

BAO

I see, and perhaps you also got support from elsewhere. Explain your relations with Gung Fu Master Lan.

JIAN

Master Lan was an excellent bonesetter and came to the shelter to reset the broken legs of dogs hit by cars and motorcycles. He impressed me with having a special affinity with animals.

BAO

And his relationship with you?

JIAN

We had a friendly working relationship. He appreciated my abilities too.

BAO

It was more than 'friendly,' wasn't it? Tell me the whole story.

JIAN

I have, Your Honor.

BAO

Give the accused ten lashes. She has not confessed the whole truth. (*Chan beats her*) Now, tell me everything.

JIAN

I have nothing more to say.

BAO

You were seen talking to Master Lan before he went to the bath house and met his death. I order you to repeat what was said between you.

JIAN

I told him we needed his assistance with two new dogs.

BAO

What did he say?

JIAN

He refused.

BAO

Why?

JIAN

(*no answer*)

BAO

Answer me!

JIAN

(*sighs*) He had heard about the Facebook accusations. Knowing that we had to kill the dogs, he did not want to be associated with us, with me, anymore.

BAO

That may be true, but you are still not telling me everything. I will question you again tomorrow. Chan Chao, take her back to the jail. *(they go, he hits gavel)* This session of the court is now closed. *(to himself)* She is withholding something—perhaps protecting Master Lan’s reputation. I will try another interrogation method tomorrow.

Black out.

Scene 10 at Bao’s court

Jian is hidden behind a screen

BAO

(to Lulu) How long have you known the accused, Dr. Cheng?

LULU

We were friends at school, but then lost touch because she went to the capital to study veterinary medicine. When I found out she was assigned to Zhongli, I went to see her, and she offered me a job at the shelter.

BAO

What was she like as a girl?

LULU

She studied a lot. She was shy, more comfortable with animals than people.

BAO

Did she have a pet?

LULU

No, but she was always taking care of stray animals outside—bringing them food, water, or patching up their sores.

BAO

So she did not have a cat?

WEIWEI

No, but she herself was called ‘Cat’.

BAO

Do not interrupt the court!

WEIWEI

Sorry, Your Honor.

LULU

Actually, she was first called ‘kitty.’

BAO

Why was ‘kitty’ changed to ‘cat.’

WEIWEI

She grew up.

BAO

Do not interrupt! You, answer.

LULU

(giggles) When the ‘hello kitty’ became popular, Dr. Cheng hated it. She said “I hate pink and I hate cute. When people teased her with ‘Hello Kitty’ she insisted on ‘Cat’.

BAO

So, cat or kitty, the accused has long been associated with this nickname—many people know and use it. I assume that even Master Lan would be aware of it.

WEIWEI

Yes, I remember him calling her ‘Cat’ and smiling.

BAO

Chan Chao bring out Master Lan’s Sevenboard and reconstruct it as he left it. Then bring out Dr. Cheng. I will now show the court how Master Lan himself implicated her as his murderer. You see the six pieces are slightly disturbed but if you push them together and add the seventh piece you get—A cat! I accuse Dr. Cheng Jian-jie of the murder of Master Lan. *(Cheng screams and faints)*

BAO

Throw water on her face and rouse her.

LULU

Oh Weiwei, what have we done?

BAO

Go back to the shelter. I’ll summon you if I need you again. *(they go)* Clear the court.

CHAN

Your Honor, Coroner Guo is uncertain of the kind of poison because the effects of the toxic root and some modern drugs are quite similar. Moreover, the tea Lan drank shows no signs of poison, and he ate nothing that afternoon.

BAO

So we have only Dr. Cheng to enlighten us. I think she will be ready to confess to their love affair. She and Lan were equally matched in skill and sensibility. She must have thought she had found her soul mate, and was hurt when he rebuffed her—and she, in shame, she struck back at him. His Sevenboard clearly shows a cat...

CHAN

It could have been a real cat...

BAO

Perhaps, but I don’t think so. Has she revived?

CHAN

Yes, Your Honor.

BAO

Dr. Cheng, you have heard the testimony of your friends and how your nicknames ‘kitty’ and ‘cat’ are implicated by Master Lan’s Sevenboard. Confess or you’ll receive fifty lashes.

JIAN

Your Honor, you know I could not survive 50 lashes, but I’m willing to die. Working in the shelter is a job full of joy and sorrow. Every day, you become closer to the dogs—they are your family. They love and trust you, and you do everything give them a better life. But few people adopt these dogs; they’d rather pay a lot of money for little wooly breeds they treat like dolls. You take care of them, always knowing in the end you’ll be forced to kill most of them—you, the very same person who has been cultivating their trust and love. Can you imagine a worse betrayal? The job eats away at you until you are hollow and unfeeling. People call me the ‘executioner of the innocent’ and that is exactly what I have become. And then one day, a man comes who loves animals and has a magical way with them. He gives you strength and hope...

BAO

Were you and Master Lan lovers?

JIAN

Yes.

CHAN

I don’t believe it—Master Lan was not interested in women.

BAO

Don’t interrupt!

JIAN

He did not like women...but he liked me, and then was ashamed of falling in love. He lost his heart, and blamed me. I could not bear his kindness to others and his hatred toward me.

BAO

So you killed him!

JIAN

No!

BAO

By poison!

JIAN

Never! How would I get poison?

BAO

Easily, at your infirmary.

JIAN

Oh no, I could never... (*she faints again*)

BAO

Take her to the prison, and then go to the shelter. Look for any signs of poison she might have used.
Black out.

Scene 11 at Bao's home

BAO

(*Wife 2 puts on compress*) Your hands are trembling.

WIFE 2

This business with Dr. Cheng is so unsettling.

BAO

I'm sure she is guilty.

WIFE 1

It's the fault of all these stray dogs.

BAO

I just need a solid piece of evidence.

WIFE 1

(*sniffing at Wife 2*) I seem to smell dirty dogs everywhere.

MULAN

It was a brilliant stroke to use the Sevenboard and make a cat.

WIFE 1

This is what comes from girls not marrying and taking jobs outside the home.

BAO

I wish the dogs could talk—they could tell me what I need to know.

MULAN

What will you do if you don't find any incriminating evidence?

BAO

I'll have to send her to the Supreme Court in the capital since I received an official message to solve the case quickly.

MULAN

You can't do that!

BAO

Master Lan was famous throughout the country. The Chief of Police is worried that people are getting restless because his killer hasn't been punished yet.

MULAN

But she would be convicted without further investigation!

BAO

Perhaps I should appeal for another magistrate to take over.

WIFE 1

The Justice Ministry has no one as capable as you.

MULAN

I think you have to find the identity of those Facebook trolls who attacked the shelter workers. Chan Chao is quite good at decoding the internet. I'm sure he can find out who they are and you can interrogate them. If they were so vicious against Dr. Cheng, perhaps they've framed her, or Master Lan.

BAO

Good idea! We need to find them even if I have to summon Mark Zuckerberg to reveal their names.

MULAN

That's more like it!

Black out.

Scene 12 at the shelter

LULU

(comes in) The Judge is sending Jian to the capital for a second trial!

WEIWEI

He can't do that. We have to go to her. No one else will stand up for her.

LULU

We can't go. Today we're supposed to put down three dogs.

WEIWEI

I refuse to do it. Not until we free Jian. That volunteer is with them now. She said she would do it.

LULU

Really? All right. Let's go to the court and see if we can talk to Judge Bao. *(they exit)*

WIFE 2

(with Blackie, Brownie and Yellow) Today we have to say good-bye.

BLACKIE

Couldn't you just open the door and let us out?

WIFE 2

Yes, but you'd be caught again.

BLACKIE

Nobody's going to catch me again. I'd get as far away from here as possible.

WIFE 2

No place is safe for a homeless dog. It's better to go to sleep and fly away in your dreams.

YELLOW

You can take me first.

WIFE 2

Oh, not you, little Yellow.

YELLOW

You still call me Little Yellow. (*laughs*) All my hair is gone. I'm nothing but skin and bones.

WIFE 2

You're always Little Yellow in my heart because I know your heart hasn't changed.

YELLOW

Gou Ma, I'm in such pain it will be a relief to die. My whole life I've had bad luck—cruel owners, broken leg, and now this horrible pain burning in my gut.

WIFE 2

What's wrong with you?

YELLOW

I've been poisoned.

WIFE 2

Poisoned!

YELLOW

Someone put out poisoned meat to kill us strays. Blackie and Brownie suspected it, and left it alone, but I was so hungry I gobbled it down. A few hours later, I got such bad stomach cramps, I could hardly move. That's when I made the mess in the market.

WIFE 2

But who would do such a thing?

YELLOW

It could have been anyone, but I suspect Bully Liao and Landlord Wang.

WIFE 2

Why?

YELLOW

Landlord Wang wants to sell a piece of land near the bridge where most of us live. He was showing it to a prospective buyer and the man complained there were too many strays around. Wang told him not worry, they'd be taken care of. I believe he started to put out poisoned meat, and then...

WIFE 2

He didn't have to continue because Judge Bao ordered all the dogs to be captured.

YELLOW

That's how I see it.

WIFE 2

I'm so sorry you had to suffer. I've heard this death is painless.

YELLOW

I welcome it. Don't feel bad. You're doing me a favor. Let's get it over with. I'm ready.

TOU

(enters) Oh, excuse me—I thought Dr. Cheng was here.

WIFE 2

I'm replacing her.

TOU

Really? That's brave of you. I'm Tou Yun-fei, the photographer...

WIFE 2

Ah yes, they told me. You take portraits of the condemned dogs.

TOU

They're my subjects—to let people see their dignity when facing death.

WIFE 2

Little Yellow, perk up and smile. You might become famous.

YELLOW

I don't care.

WIFE 2

You do. You don't want to have suffered for nothing. Mr. Tou's photographs will show the world this injustice. I know you're a wise little fellow, let your eyes shine with the brilliance of your spirit. *(Tou takes photos; she prepares the syringe. She injects Yellow)* Wait! Little Yellow, was it you who bit Master Lan?

YELLOW

I didn't mean to. He stepped on my leg. I bit him before I knew what I was doing. *(dies)*

WIFE 2

Ah, now I think I understand what happened! Little Yellow, you might have saved the others! Brave little boy. *(to Tou)* Now excuse me, I must go. *(she opens cage doors.)*

TOU

You're leaving the doors open!

WIFE 2

Yes, go Blackie and Brownie. Go as far as you can. *(she runs in opposite direction.)*
Black out.

Scene 13 at the court

WIFE 2

(runs to the court) Yuan, ah!

BAO

Who is calling 'injustice' at the court?

CHAN

(embarrassed) Your second wife, Your Honor.

BAO

What are you doing here? This is highly improper.

WIFE 2

I think I've solved the mystery of Master Lan's murder! Dr. Cheng is innocent!

BAO

How dare you challenge the decision of this court? State your evidence immediately.

WIFE 2

Your Honor, I've just come from the shelter where I have been helping the overworked caretakers.

BAO

You what?

WIFE 2

I disguised myself to bring no shame to Your Honor, but now I must reveal that I've discovered that a yellow dog was made ill from eating poisoned meat put in the streets to kill the strays. After Master Lan left the market and went to the bath house, this dog accidentally bit him. The bite transmitted the poison to Master Lan. That is why you never found how the poison was introduced.

BAO

Coroner Guo, is this possible?

GUO

Your Honor, I have never heard of such a transmission, but if a sample of the poisoned meat was found and analyzed, this new evidence could be conclusive.

BAO

Chan Chao, you look doubtful.

CHAN

I do not doubt this good woman's word, but there is still the strong evidence of the Sevenboard's image of a cat.

BAO

Ah, yes, I was wondering the same thing. Bring the Sevenboard. Arrange it as Master Lan left it. You see. It easily forms a cat.

WIFE 2

(changes the pieces) It just as easily forms a dog.

BAO

Goodness! It's true! I think this proves the case.

CHAN

Hmmm, quite persuasive, Your Honor, but there is one more thing.

BAO

Yes, I think so too. Speak.

CHAN

How does she know the dog ate poisoned meat and bit Master Lan?

BAO

My thoughts exactly. How do you know this?

WIFE 2

(doesn't answer, realizes she's trapped)

BAO

Well?

WIFE 2

I can't say.

BAO

You must!

WIFE 2

I can't.

BAO

Chan Chao, give her 10 lashes.

CHAN

Oh no, Your Honor.

BAO

No favoritism. *(Chan lifts the rod)* Answer.

WIFE 2

(quietly) The yellow dog told me.

BAO

Do you mock this court?

WIFE 2

No.

BAO

Take her away! Strike all of this testimony from the court record. None of it is admissible evidence. This session of court is closed. (*bangs gavel*)

Black out.

Scene 14 at Bao's home

WIFE 1

Why is the Judge so late tonight? I thought everything would go back to normal now that the girl is being sent to the capital and Master Lan can be given a proper burial. And where is Second Wife? She hasn't prepared his poultice. (*calls*) Mulan, come to dinner.

MULAN

(*shouts back*) Not hungry.

WIFE 1

You must come to eat anyway. Tell your brothers to come. How is the studying going?

MULAN

I can't concentrate. Everyone's talking about the case. And all the dogs are going crazy at the overcrowded shelter—we can hear them barking during class. The workers can't cope, especially now with their director gone. Where's Dad?

WIFE 1

That's what I'd like to know.

MULAN

I want to ask his permission to go to the temple to study for the final exam.

WIFE 1

That's a good idea. It will be more peaceful.

BAO

(*enters*) What a terrible day! Prepare Second Wife's room. I am having her brought home, but she is not to leave her room.

WIFE 1

Why? What's happened? I knew no good would come of her roaming about.

BAO

Chan Chao is bringing her. Please bring me something to eat, no, to drink. I feel faint.

CHAN

(*running in*) Your Honor, your honorable Second Wife has escaped.

BAO

What?

CHAN

Thinking her so weak, I didn't hold on to her tightly. Coming out of the court, she quickly disappeared in the crowd. I ran through the market, but no one had seen her. I sent men to guard the gates so that she could not leave town. I've searched everywhere.

BAO

The shelter! Come, immediately. *(they run)*

CHAN

(entering the shelter) What's happened? All the dogs are gone.

BAO

Someone has opened all the cages and released them. Search all the other rooms.

CHAN

Your Honor, she's in here. She's dead! *(body off stage)*

BAO

No!

CHAN

There's no pulse. I'll fetch Coroner Guo immediately.

BAO

No, I cannot face this. My sweet You-mei, what has happened to you? Am I to blame for this? I cannot...*(collapses)*

Black out

Scene 15 in the court

CHAN

The judge will be confined to his bed for quite a while?

GUO

Yes.

CHAN

I've written to the Minister of Justice informing him that we need another magistrate to oversee this case. *(sighs)* He's very bad?

GUO

His wife says he murmurs strange words she can't understand. She fears for his sanity.

CHAN

He's a strong man. I'm sure he'll survive...if we can resolve the case satisfactorily.

GUO

His wife is dead—what can ever satisfy again?

CHAN

I mean, that he is not implicated in her death.

GUO

I'm afraid he'll never be relieved of that guilt. It will weigh heavy on his heart.

Black out

Scene 16 outside the court

MULAN

(disguised as warrior) Stop. Give me the document.

MESSENGER

No, it's to be delivered directly to the Justice Minister.

MULAN

I will deliver it.

MESSENGER

In your dreams! *(draws bamboo sword)*

MULAN

As you wish. *(draws bamboo sword, they fight)*

BLACKIE

(enters, barking)

MULAN

(surprised, turns and accidentally knocks out the Messenger) Oh dear. Look what you made me do!
(as she takes the document, and runs; changes costume)

BLACKIE

What did I do? *(sniffs, looks puzzled at MULAN, sniffs the fallen messenger and exits)*

Black out

Scene 17 at the court

MULAN dressed as young magistrate YANG. (she enters the court; Chan Chao is drinking beer and playing cards, he jumps up when Yang enters.)

CHAN

Your Honor? You're from the capital?

YANG

The Justice Minister received your message and sent me as Judge Bao's replacement.

CHAN

You came very quickly

YANG

Your message indicated urgency.

CHAN

You're very young.

YANG

I'm the number one candidate in this year's examination. Here's the letter approving my appointment.

CHAN

The Zhongli court is honored to receive you, Judge Yang.

YANG

And Judge Bao? How does he fare?

CHAN

Not well. He is very distraught by the death of his wife.

YANG

What evidence is there regarding her death?

CHAN

Not much. Coroner Guo will give you his report. We have no witnesses, no murder weapon, nothing but...

YANG

Tell me!

CHAN

Before she died, she testified that the accused Dr. Cheng, was innocent, and that Master Lan's death was a terrible accident, that he was killed by a bite from a dog that had eaten poisoned meat set out by Landlord Wang.

YANG

So her final assertion was that no one was directly responsible for Master Lan's death.

CHAN

Correct, but Judge Bao was just about to investigate the online attackers who accused Dr. Cheng of murdering dogs...before his wife...died.

YANG

Yes, I believe the secret of these two deaths will be revealed once we find those Facebook culprits. Chan Chao, follow Judge Bao's instructions in this matter.

Black out

Scene 18 at the court

YANG

Bring in the first accused. Mrs. Gao, you have been discovered to have been one of the Facebook attackers of Dr. Cheng and the shelter workers.

GAO

Those women murder dogs! They pretend to be compassionate, but they are hypocrites and people should know that.

YANG

Dr. Cheng and the workers themselves are very unhappy at being forced to do their unpleasant job. It is the law. They get no pleasure from it.

GAO

Yes, they do! If they can't find enough strays to kill, they start stealing people's pets.

YANG

Do you have any proof?

GAO

They stole my dog.

YANG

When it went missing, why didn't you go immediately to the shelter to find it?

GAO

I did. I was too late. They don't wait the 12 days—they kill immediately. My dog didn't go missing. It was tied up in the backyard and they stole it. I wouldn't be surprised if they sold it as dog meat.

YANG

There is no sign of such behavior. Chan Chao, take down Mrs. Gao's accusation and inquire at the shelter if any of it is true.

GAO

(shrieks) Of course it's true. She killed my dog!

YANG

Bring in the next defendant. *(priest enters)* I am shocked that a temple priest viciously attacked a civil servant anonymously.

PRIEST

Everyone saw her television interview. I was horrified when she confessed to having already killed 700 dogs. It is a sin to take a life.

YANG

She was only following the law. You should have written to your legislator expressing your feelings about this law—not blaming Dr. Cheng.

PRIEST

Every human has a choice. She did not have to kill them. No one was forcing her to work in the city shelter. There are privately-run shelters where the animals are cared for their entire lives. She could have worked at one of those.

YANG

Dr. Cheng is a dedicated public servant. The people to blame are those who neglect and discard the dogs, and those who overbreed them for profit. Why don't you accuse them? You will rectify Dr. Cheng's good name on your temple's website, and apologize to her in person.

PRIEST

Yes, Your Honor. *(he bows and goes)*

YANG

My predecessor, the honorable Judge Bao clearly ascertained that the death of Master Lan was a terrible accident. And although Landlord Wang and his bully Liao are indirectly responsible because they put out poisoned meat they cannot be accused of murder. They will be fined and jailed for endangering the citizens of Zhongli. This session is now closed. *(strikes the gavel)*

CHAN

Your Honor has successfully concluded the case of Master Lan.

YANG

Not quite. There was another Facebook troll—the most vicious one of all. Both the Priest and Mrs. Gao had reasons for being angry at Dr. Cheng, but the third seemed merely vindictive. I don't understand his motives.

CHAN

Your Honor, Coroner Guo has come.

YANG

Have you more information?

GUO

I'm sad to say I do. Master Lan frequently came to our house for a chat with me and my wife. We both enjoyed his company. But one night, he treated her rather rudely, and said he wished to speak with me alone.

YANG

What did he say?

GUO

He spoke about 'a friend' who was betrayed by a woman, and I began to suspect that Lan himself was secretly in love. I teased him about getting married. He quickly rebuked me, saying he was a loner and a 'rover' who could never settle down anywhere. He said, "I should have been named 'Rover.'" I was puzzled by his answer since "Rover" is a dog's name. I searched the internet and I discovered...

YANG

Yes?

GUO

Oh, unhappiness!

YANG

Master Lan was the ‘Revenge Rover’, the third troll on Facebook accusing Dr. Cheng!

GUO

I am afraid so.

YANG

Ah! So it was not Dr. Cheng seeking revenge herself against him for unrequited love as Dad, I mean, Judge Bao suspected, but Master Lan punishing her when he discovered that she put the dogs to death—some of the very animals that he had helped to heal. No wonder he was bitter.

GUO

Yes, a terrible tragedy.

YANG

The circle of karma closes—he was outraged she killed the dogs, and one of the sick dogs inadvertently killed him.

Black out

Scene 19 at the court

CHAN

Your Honor, I informed Judge Bao that you have successfully concluded the case of Master Lan’s death. He expressed his congratulations.

YANG

And how is the judge?

CHAN

He’s still terribly depressed. I fear the Judge will not get better until we unravel the mystery of his wife’s death.

YANG

Even the truth might not bring much comfort. Tell me again, what were her last words in court?

CHAN

When pressed to reveal who told her about the poisoned meat and biting Lan, she said the poisoned dog told her.

YANG

We must investigate the possible truth of her statement. Too often those most affected by our decisions are not allowed a voice.

CHAN

Surely you don’t intend to interview the dogs?

YANG

That’s exactly what I intend to do. According to your recall of her testimony, she mentioned it was a little yellow dog.

CHAN

It was the last dog she euthanized.

YANG

Ask Dr. Cheng if they have picked up any of the dogs that Bao's wife set free that day.

CHAN

They have already reported that two dogs returned on their own. They belong to the same gang as the little yellow dog.

YANG

Are they looking for their dead companion?

CHAN

(shrugs) The workers just say the two dogs sit there patiently every day waiting. Dr. Cheng thinks they wait for their Gou Ma—Judge Bao's second wife.

YANG

If Dr. Cheng is right, they might be able to tell us what happened to her. Tell Coroner Guo to bring in the corpse of Judge Bao's wife.

CHAN

No, Your Honor! The Judge will not allow his wife's body to be exposed in public!

YANG

I am the Judge here now. And tell Dr. Cheng to come with the two dogs.

CHAN

This is highly irregular, Your Honor.

YANG

I am aware of that. If it does not bring results, I will take the consequences and resign.

Black out

Scene 20 at the court

(Wife 2's body is laid out. Jian is with Weiwei, and Lulu who hold Blackie and Brownie on leashes. The dogs cry and howl)

YANG

Quiet those dogs! Dr. Cheng, it is your contention that although the little yellow dog was a companion to these two dogs, they do not mourn his death but that of this woman here.

JIAN

Both, Your Honor. The little yellow dog was also her favorite. She was loved by all the dogs that gathered on the mountain.

YANG

I am counting rely on you and your colleagues to help decipher any behavior the dogs show to reveal the cause of her death. (*the dogs sniff and howl*) Coroner Guo pull back the sheet. (*people gasp, dogs run around it barking*)

BLACKIE

We didn't need to see her; we knew her smell!

BROWNIE

I can't believe she's really dead. Such a terrible smell...death. What do they want from us?

BLACKIE

To tell them how she died.

BROWNIE

Even if we could, they wouldn't believe us. (*they howl and cry*)

YANG

Stop them howling!

JIAN

They know her. (*to the dogs*) Blackie and Brownie, find out who did this. Find her killer.

YANG

Wait! We must be careful to discern whether the dogs have been trained to accuse someone falsely.

CHAN

Your Honor knows the story of the evil Du An Gu in the *Orphan of Chao* using a dog to attack an innocent man.

BLACKIE

But we do know who did it. We saw it.

BROWNIE

How can we persuade them? They don't understand us as she did.

BLACKIE

I'm going back to the shelter and see if I can find any evidence. (*he runs off*)

YANG

Where's he going? Catch him!

LULU

No, wait. He's going to look for something and will be back. (*Blackie sniffs around the humane room and picks up a syringe in his teeth, and gives it to Jian*)

JIAN

He's found a syringe.

YANG

The same as those you use for both vaccines and euthanizing. So?

WEIWEI

It might be the syringe she used to put down Little Yellow. She volunteered to do it.

YANG

So, she destroyed his evidence and then went to the court? Then she escaped from Chan Chao's custody to return to the shelter. Why? According to Tou, the photographer, she had already released the other dogs.

JIAN

(Blackie barks) Are you sure?

BLACKIE

(barks) Yes, we both saw her. *(Brownie barks)*

JIAN

The dogs say that the Judge's wife administered the dose of Pentobarbital to herself.

YANG

Impossible! Are you sure? Coroner Guo inspect the body again more closely.

GUO

(Guo examines the body) Ah yes, here is a puncture slightly hidden by a mole. Do I have your permission to examine some of her blood for traces of the drug?

YANG

Yes, and report as soon as you find anything. *(Guo takes out body)* It may be proved that the drug is in her body, but we have no evidence but the dogs' testimony that she did it herself.

JIAN

Your Honor, you are the first person in power to ever consider the thoughts or feelings of the animals—they would not lie to you.

YANG

But how can I explain that to the Minister of Justice—I will be laughed out of the country or worse.

JIAN

I know how she felt. The reasons for her suicide are not difficult to find—she had just killed a dog she loved. She then dishonored her husband, his position, and his family in the court. How could she face him after that? Deeply religious, she wanted to care for all living things. Many veterinarians have taken their lives; I know I have considered it.

YANG

I hear that in Judge Bao's household, she alone did not eat meat. She was innocent of wrong doing and had nothing to fear from the law.

JIAN

Precisely. By choosing this method of death, she wanted to make a point—to charge all society for its unjust policy toward these unwanted animals. Like her, they are innocent, and by putting herself to death in this shocking manner she demonstrated its immorality.

YANG

In light of there being no other suspect or evidence of suspicious behavior, the court will accept this verdict. For although there is no suicide note, Judge Bao's wife was a person of great courage and capable of such self-sacrifice. I will issue a memorandum to the legislature to change the law governing the treatment of stray animals. This session is closed. (*hits gavel*)

Black out

Scene 21 Dog site on the mountain

MULAN

Dad, I'm glad to see you so much better.

BAO

And I'm glad you were at the temple and didn't see me just after the incident. I have never felt so thoroughly defeated. You did well on the exam?

MULAN

Ahh, not especially. I couldn't concentrate.

BAO

You weren't, by chance, distracted by the handsome young magistrate who came to replace me? I hear he conducted himself quite brilliantly. Did you see him?

MULAN

I, ah, caught a glimpse of him.

BAO

Good. I've asked your mother to inquire about his family. Given the fine reports made by Chan Chao, and the Justice Minister's confidence in him, we've decided he would be a fine match for you.

MULAN

(*speechless*) Uh....maybe....

BAO

All in good time. No wedding will take place until after a year of mourning for my Second Wife. I'm sorry she didn't live to see the passing of the new law banning euthanasia. Her death shocked the nation into passing it.

MULAN

But this new law doesn't solve the problem at all! The shelter will just be more overcrowded and Jian and the workers will be even more overworked. (*she sees Pretty White lying on the ground*) Oh, no! Pretty White!

BAO

You know this dog?

MULAN

Yes. My God! She never left the spot where her owner dumped her. She must have died waiting. Dad, you have to petition the Legislature to mandate a law requiring chips in all dogs, and fining all

owners who abandoned their pets. A big fine! This law needs teeth, not just tears. (*she pets Pretty White and cries*) This...has...to stop.

BAO

Yes, that would be a fitting memorial for You-mei. We must push it through.

Fade out

The End