

Ching Wan-Hoey or “Al Paso del Hechicero”*

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FIRST ACT

(Road along the outskirts of Fogan. On the background, the town walls; before them, a mound and in it a Chinese sepulcher (it can be painted, but better if real). On both sides of the path there are trees or orchard huts or fences)

SCENE I

(CHING WAN HOEY, dressed as a Chinese writer in ordinary suit, strolls around looking towards the left side [of the Actor] from time to time)

CHING: Just as I thought! That donkey of a Shang-Hi has been tweaking the nose of the mandarin *(Stopping in the middle facing the audience)*. Off with you, foreign devils! Poor China! Poor land of my ancestors! Chung-tcheng, your emperor, has killed himself; that bandit of a Tseu-cheng profanes the throne of your glories; the great Wu-San-Kuey sells you helpless to the hordes of the Manchu; and neither glory, nor learning, nor liberty is left for your sons! And now comes this pest of

*A Four-Act Play to commemorate the Centennial Anniversary of Blessed (now Saint) Francisco de Capillas' Martyrdom. It was written in Rosaryhill, Hongkong, on November 30, 1947 – January 16, 1948, and staged in English by Philippine National Artist Nick Joaquin in 1949. (Unpublished)

foreign devils to corrupt you, to destroy your most sacred traditions, and to teach you (so they say) the way to heaven... when you, yourself, are a paradise born of the loveliest dream of the gods!

See how in their neglected tombs the ghosts of our ancestors languish and grieve! The best of our ancient lament the disobedience of their sons; the jewels of our wisdom are taken for pebbles; and lamps have gone out in our temples; the worms devour our gods; and even a chit of a girl now dares to defy her parents, to go against plans and negotiations, to turn herself Christians and, despising that honor of maternity which is the Chinese woman's purest glory, chooses to preserve her stupid virginity, horrible enough in itself even if not dedicated to unspeakable passions!

Christian dogs! I return from the battlefield, disconsolate and an orphan, and I find you defiling the land of my fathers! My heart bears the same hatred for you as for the tartars! Fighting against you, my father fell... but his spirit lives in me! I will show you that a Chinese worthy of his name knows how chop off Christian heads with tartar axes, and to drench tartar flags with Christian blood; to slaughter Christians and to slaughter tartars and yet myself remain free from any stigma of assassin or of traitor! (*Looking to the right*) But who comes? Ah, Chiu Wan-Ching, the true friend, and the true heart greater now than ever. This solace is left me in the midst of so much misery! ...

SCENE II

(*Said and Chiu Wan-Ching dressed also as a Chinese writer in ordinary suit*)

CHING W.H.: Greeting, Chiu Wan-Ching! How goes everything with you?

CHIU: Beautifully, Ching, and with you?

CHING: As you see. Good health and bad luck...

CHIU: ...which we share together. And now for the last straw, my wife has fallen gravely ill. I am hurrying to the villa to look for medicine.

CHING: Truly I grieve with you. Go! Hurry! I will not detain you.

CHIU: Thank you. But tell me: how goes our business?

CHING: We will see. I am waiting for that donkey of a Shang-Hi who arranged to meet me here at the tomb of my father. But you will see how he will come hiding behind the skirts of the mandarin.

CHIU: I am afraid that fellow will trap us when we least suspect.

CHING: Really he rises not one inch above the moral level of the mob. Catch him by the belly, or catch him by the pocket, and you can take him up to heaven or down to hell, and he wouldn't care a fig! What indifference, what misery, what fear surrounds us, Chiu!

CHIU: Yes... and what death!

CHING: Now you have said it: Death, yes! Death in everything, and Death of everything! As if the tartars were not enough, now come these Christian devils to corrupt the best of China!

CHIU: Look, Ching, do not speak thus. If you knew what Christians are you would speak differently.

CHING: And are you to teach me what Christians are? There, Chiu, is the tomb of my father. It speaks for itself.

CHIU: Let us drop the subject. I have no time to explain now. But I assure you that the greatest supporters of our cause in Fogan are the Christians. Remember that I who say this to you occupied until yesterday your present position of president.

CHING: Now truly am I afraid. Never can I trust anyone who abandons the usages of his land to embrace a foreign religion.

CHIU: Do you trust me?

CHING: Don't tell me you are a Christian too!

CHIU: I am, and so is my sister, Lucia, who would have been your wife had she not consecrated herself to Jesus Christ.

CHING: But

CHIU: But the only thing your noble heart lacks is the Faith of Christ. Your heart is naturally Christian and I devoutly pray that it become Christian in fact.

CHING: I, a Christian? Never! How can I ... and how can you yourself defend the authentic and legitimate China if you admit into your heart the teachings of foreigners; if you forsake our most sacred traditions to submit yourself to the foreign devil who is a fraud if not a spy?

CHIU: Leave these ravings, Ching, to men of bad will. Men of good will are not Christians. There will be time to explain all this and I trust that my lord Jesus Christ will open your eyes to the light that I see... (*Looking to the left*) Here comes Shang-Hi. We three must not be seen together. We will talk when you have given me the news. Goodbye till then! (*He exits through the left*).

CHING: Till we meet again! ... O gods! Where am I? Even this truest of friends and truest of hearts has turned Christian! Ah, but I – never! I will only continue to fight; I will only die killing! Killing... tartars and killing Christians! And you, Chiu, we will see if you too will not return to what you were! Oh, devil of a foreign teacher, they say you are a wizard and now I believe them. But I am not afraid; I have you in my hands!

SCENE III

(*CHING WAN-HOEY and SHANG-HI dressed as Chinese soldier at the service of the Tartars, with a lance in his hand and a small knife on his belt*)

CHING: At last you have arrived. I wager that the mandarin is not two steps behind.

SHANG: Neither more nor less. One manages as best as he can. If they suspect me and the bamboo bangs – I doubt if Ching Wan-hoey would lift a finger to save me. Or, as I would say...

CHING: Enough of speeches. What orders were received today at the tribunal?

SHANG: To set forth tomorrow together with the mandarin who comes from Funing and with other one already outside Ting-teu to give a hunt for our men in the neighborhood. Moreover it is certain that Lieu Chang-Shan, the emperor Yung-Li's virrey in Foochow, has an army ready to clean Fukien of tartars. So if you wish to help him when he comes, sleep within Fogan tonight and be at my house tomorrow.

CHING: What I shall do, I know. Anything else?

SHANG: A new tartar army is descending from the north and will be here by the twelfth moon.

CHING: Good. Forewarned is forearmed. And what else?

SHANG: Bah! These are enough and too much. Take care of your head.

CHING: Spare me your counsels. Where are you going now?

SHANG: To the temple below, to offer a sacrifice that tomorrow's expedition may go well.

CHING: Well, you have come at the right time to do me a great service, you and the mandarin. Look, (*pointing to the right*) do you see those two men? They are the foreign teacher Shan and Ko Ming-ngo. You will take care that they go to jail, and I will take care that they go to the scaffold. Understand?

SHANG: Yes, but

CHING: But no buts. You are here to serve China and this is the greatest service you can do her. If those two escape, you will be responsible.

SHANG: But how am I to catch them?

CHING: That is up to you. You are a splendid liar. But it is not necessary to lie. Do you remember that procession and tomfoolery which you arranged to defame the foreign religion?

SHANG: Ah, yes. Very well, very well – enough, inspiration comes to me and with the idea I have I am quite capable of dragging all foreigndom to jail!

CHING: Very good then! And I will rest assured that tonight the foreign teacher Shan shall sleep in jail. Oh, and I almost forgot; tomorrow before you go, wait for me at the door of the tribunal. Farewell till then.

SHANG: Go in peace... (*CHING W-H exits through the left side*)

SCENE IV

(*SHANG alone*)

SHANG: (*Looking first towards the side CHING WAN-HOEY went and then strolling.*) Alas, Ching. Alas, poor Ching. You are pitiful. You do not know how to do things. One must be a liar, man – a great liar like I am! Oh, why be afraid of hurting others! It is always necessary to be more clever than they are! By always being more clever, you will always make a fine profit. Which after all is the only important thing in this world. The tartars, the Chinese, the foreigners, the mandarins, the emperor in Kweilin and the other emperor in Pekin – all exist that they may serve my private profit! Look here rascal: you serve the emperor Yung-Li and he pays you and supports you. But you also work for the emperor Chueng-te who also pays you and supports you. Hooray! I serve two masters and I can eat twice as much without bothering myself over authentic or traditional or celestial Chinas like this poor fool of a Ching!

Ay, Ching: learn of this man. (*Pointing to the tomb*) He too was infatuated over the same China as you and he sought it by all means. There were too many Christians, it seemed to him, and to diminish them he aroused a tumult with the holy intention of hanging them all. But the mandarin found him out and so he lost his head. It is bad to be too wise. But if he had succeeded, neither you nor I would be bothering our heads now over these foreigners!

Alas, Ching-Wan-Hoey, you are the noblest Chinaman of them all but you have a heart like the heart of the foreign teacher and I fear that you will end up on the scaffold... or in the Church. Which is one more reason why I detest this foreign devil. Look at him! (*Looking to the right*) Ay, you are doomed! To your heaven or to my hell I will send you to rot! You will see! (*He hides himself in the wind near the tomb*)

SCENE V

(*SHANG-HI and then Fr. Francisco dressed in Chinese civilian clothes with a silk scarf hiding his beard, and KO DOMINGO with a suitcase or wooden box*)

KODO: There is no one here.

BEATO: (*Coming in*) Praised be JESUS!

SHANG: Halt! Who goes there? (*Coming out of the hiding place with the lance pointed towards the two of them*).

KODO: Do not detain me, Shang-Hi, I am in a hurry to finish this suit which you ordered me to make you.

SHANG: Very well, but leave that box here. Go, and do not forget that I allowed you to pass. But your companion shall stay here and tell me who he is.

KODO: Ah, but he is half-mute; he stutters; he cannot talk well; he cannot be left to walk alone.

SHANG: Te...te...then le...le...let him se...se...say s-s-so and wi... wi... we will s-s-s-see!

KODO: (*He lets some silver coins fall*) Look, Shang-Hi allow us to go in peace. There comes the mandarin. We will return the same way we came.

SHANG: (*He keeps his lance pointing but turning to look toward his left*) But, man! Lighting strike the mandarin, and you, and this blasted foreigner. Why the devil didn't you show me the silver at once!

SCENE VI

(The same, the military escort – some 10 soldiers armed with lances and swords – WANG-IO dressed in military Mandarin battle suit.) Soldiers, on entering and seeing SHANG-HI with his pointing lance get ready also them)

WANG: *(Passing amid the soldiers)* What is this? What goes on here, Shang-Hi? *(He notices the silver coins)* And whose silver is this?

SHANG: Reverence to thee, oh mandarin! These coins belong to your humble servant. They fell from my pocket when I ran to detain these persons.

WANG: Hmm. Gather them up, you. *(To another soldier)* We will see if Shang-Hi deserves to have them returned to him. And what is the meaning of all this?

SHANG: *(Pressured and in bad mood)* Ever obedient to thee, I came here where you ordered me. These persons looked suspicious to me and I detained them.

WANG: Let us see. Come over here. *(He moves to the center of the stage, the soldiers raise their lances and occupy the sides)* Now, you two... here before me. On your knees! *(They obey)* Who are you? *(Referring to Ko-Do)*

KODO: Your humble servant, Ko Mingo, a tailor dwelling on the Main Street of Fogan.

WANG: I will wager you sallied forth to negotiate with the bandits for rice.

KODO: Reverence to thee, oh mandarin! But I swear I sallied forth with no evil intentions towards thee. My sister is sick and I but wanted to visit her.

WANG: And you *(Referring to Father)* who are you?

KODO: He is my friend, Chan, from Nin-Te, who had the honor...

WANG: I do not suffer irreverences. Let him whom I question answer. Please remove your shawl, my friend. *(With a giggle)*

BEATO: (*He removes his shawl*)

WANG: Oh, what a lovely beard! Are you a Chinese?

SHANG: (*Hurrying up*) Reverence to thee, oh mandarin. Just as I suspected, this is that blasted foreigner. I have had the fortune to arrest the worst enemy of China and of the emperor Chuen-Te.

WANG: Really! And what has this poor man to do with his imperial highness, the emperor?

SHANG: Oh, much, much! This man is a spy of the Spaniards who had come here to betray our land. Moreover he practices witchcraft and he can bring madness upon men —and especially upon women, so that they no longer wish to obey the sacred laws of China. And moreover he teaches a foreign religious sect which is banned in Pelinkiao and....

WANG: (*To Fr Francisco*) So you are the fellow who escaped a few days ago from Fogan after having stirred up the entire villa in your favor?

SHANG: The very same one!

BEATO: My lord, I am neither a spy of the Spaniards nor a wizard. I am merely a teacher of the religion of the true God and I have come to China to show you how this God, who created you and who died for you, should be loved and worshipped. I do not intend to take anything away from the Chinese. Rather do I wish to give them happiness, the happiness of heaven. And I shall ever strive to give them this blessed gift — though it should cost me my life.

WANG: All this is very nice indeed. And so you confess yourself a teacher of this prohibited religion?

BEATO: I am a minister of our Lord Jesus Christ and my Faith is a holy Faith, a good faith, the True Faith. Wicked men have spoken lies about it. Hear me, your excellence. You are a just person and you will see that I speak the truth.

WANG: And in this box you carry silver?

SHANG: He carries the instruments of the witchcraft with which he deceives the Christians.

BEATO: They are not silver, nor instruments for witchcraft but...

WANG: Good, good. We will see. You *(to a soldier)* chain this teacher *(he is scoffed)*. And this also *(referring to KODO)*. And we will bring them with us to the temple. Upon returning to the tribunal, we shall do them judgment. Hey, you *(to SHANG HI)* carry the box. If what you say is found to be true, I will give you the silver this foreigner offered you. Understand? Forward! *(They exit through the right side. Two soldiers, Shang-Hi with the box, and the six remaining soldiers surrounding the mandarin)*

SCENE VII

(CHING WAN-HOEY alone. Nobody on the stage for a few seconds)

CHING: *(He enters cautiously from the left side and makes sure that they left. He puts on in front of the sepulcher, claps ritually his hands, waits, makes slowly the three ritual prostrations, and remains for a few moments in a position of respect and reverence).*

Venerable spirit of my father, here is your son, Ching Wah-Hoey. I come to tell you the good news. Rejoice, oh father, for the foreign teacher has fallen into the hands of the mandarin of the accurst race that enslaves us! Your desires shall be accomplished. The teacher shall die and you shall taste his blood and your face shall be cleansed by the vengeance and the deed of your son! Your son Ching Wan-Hoey knows how to use the crime of his death to annihilate the judges that condemn him! I pray you to have confidence in the justice and wisdom of your son!

Deign to communicate this good tidings to the august spirit of our ancestors. Beg them to grant me their powerful assistance.

And you, oh father, be ever at my side!

(He remains silent and in an attitude of attention and respect) (Triple prostration) (He turns around and looks at the sky)

Oh China of my affections, thou art immortal! But thou needest a light, an ideal, a fierce flame to purify thy sons! I shall kindle the flame! We will triumph over our conquerors! The star of thy glory shall shine afresh and thou shalt be great, immense, magnificent, and powerful as the sun of gold at noon in the blue sky!

CURTAIN

[END OF ACT ONE]

SECOND ACT

In the hearing hall of the civil court or "Yamen" of Fogan. Last days of November, 1647. (The hall consists of a floor and a platform accessible by a central stairway)

SCENE I

(KO-IO, the Civil Mandarin in ceremonial robes seated on his judgment seat, surrounded on each side, seated on Chinese chairs, by three magistrates, the last of whom towards the audience are CHIN WAN-HOEY – to the Mandarin's left – and CHIU WAN-CHING – to his right. In the center and in front of the stairway, lying on the floor, barefooted and with splints bound to his ankles, Fr. FRANCISCO. On his knees and with long chains around his feet and hands, KO DOMINGO. To both sides of these two bailiffs with rolled up sleeves. Fr. FRANCISCO wears his Dominican habit.)

BEATO: Oh, sweet Lord Jesus, help me!

KO-IO: Oh-ho Teacher, the boards do not seem to be as sweet as you say!

BEATO: I do not say they are sweet, your excellence, but what sweetness these torments have is my Lord Jesus Christ! Yes! These boards hurt but they are my glory because I suffer them for love of Him who suffered for me!

KO-IO: (*With irony*) What a love is the love of you foreigners. Come, do not be stupid. Forsake this odd religion. The money of the West can no longer reach your flesh like these boards and these bamboos. Or, for instance, the fine silk of the robe of a mandarin. Do I make myself clear?

BEATO: Your promises do not move me, nor do your torments terrify me. Rather are they my delight!

KO-IO: Oh-ho! Very well, boys, give him more delight! Remove the boards clean and dry. You will see how delicious it is!

BOYS: (*Untying the boards*) One, two, three... (*The cracks are heard and the boards jump*)

BEATO: (*Trembling*) Oh, sweet Jesus! Oh, sweet Mary!

KO-IO: How did you like that, my brave bold laddie? (*With irony*)

BEATO: They hurt! They hurt truly! But I am happy in God who sustains me!

A satellite of the tribunal arrives to the staircase, makes a bow showing a paper and waits respectfully. (Outside rhythmic sounds of cymbals are heard)

KO-IO: Approach! (*He reads the paper and folds it*) (*Addresses to the magistrates*) His Excellency, the Military Mandarin, wishes to honor with his presence our humble tribunal. (*Those sitting down rise as KO-IO rises*) (*He walks towards the staircase*) (*To the executioners*) Boys, bring another chair and place it here at my left. Then you can retire. (*On the last step*) (*To Fr. FRANCISCO*) You, remain as you are. Give thanks to your God should you ever be able to stand up again! (*He goes towards his left, waits at the entrance. In the meanwhile, the satellites place an arm-chair and retire to the actor's left.*)

SCENE II

(The same, WANG-IO dressed up as Military Mandarin in ceremonial robes, with two escorting soldiers fully armed)

KO-IO: Deign to have the goodness, your excellence, to enter our miserable tribunal and assist us with your wisdom that justice may be done.

WANG: A thousand thanks! *(Coming in)* But I do not come to teach but to learn!

KO-IO: *(Making him notice Fr. Francisco)* Please excuse the foreign teacher for not rising. It was necessary to clamp him between boards *(They arrive to the staircase, KO-IO invites WANG-IO to go up, offers him the arm-chair on the left; they sit down and upon a sign by KO-IO, the magistrates sit down. The two soldiers go behind the mandarins' armchairs and remain there with their upright pikes.)*

KO-IO: This foreign teacher Shan or Francisco de Capillas, justly apprehended by your excellence and yet declared innocent of the crime of rebellion and of espionage, now has to answer to the charges of disseminating false doctrines and of corrupting the venerable usages and customs of China. The prosecution is in the hands of the great sage Ching Wan-Hoey and the defense in the hands of the equally cultured Chiu Wan-Ching. *(Those mentioned bow their heads)*. I pray both gentlemen to repeat their opinions in brief so that his excellence may see justice.

WANG: A thousand thanks!

KO-IO: Ching Wan-Hoey, you have the floor.
(He gets up and makes a deep bow)

CHING: I would speak as much as I value the honor of addressing you, but I have been commanded to be brief. Like all of you, I admire the courage of the foreign teacher. I am astonished at the wisdom he showed while being tormented. And his ability to smile gaily even in the midst of the most grievous agonies has won my heart and the hearts of all present.

Nevertheless I must maintain my position as a guardian of justice.

This foreigner has been disseminating among us an alien religion, justly proscribed in Pelikiao for being pernicious to the customs of China and hostile to its authorities. Precisely for refusing to recognize the emperor as the only authority on earth it has been necessary to place this man between boards.

KO-IO: Precisely, precisely!

CHING: The effects of his teachings are notorious. The sons learn to disobey their fathers; and the women, their husbands. Because of this new religion, Fogan – as everybody knows – has become a hell! A hell of family dissension! A hell of domestic warfare!

I do not say, as ignorant people say, that the teacher teaches lies. But yes, I do believe that he is a monstrous wizard! She who would have been my wife – and Chiu Wan-Ching cannot deny it because she is his own sister – that woman, that girl, who should have been mine... she listened to this teacher... and what happened? Right away she broke off the marriage negotiations; she turned Christian; she decided to remain a virgin forever and dedicate herself to a fantastic being called Jesus Christ! Would a Chinese woman ever have done such a thing had she not been bewitched? Moreover I dare the teacher to explain the contents of this box! Do they not prove that the Christians submit themselves to black rites and magical ceremonies? ... Because of all these things, I deem the teacher deserving of death as a despiser of our gods, our customs, our emperor, and our ancestors; as the preacher of a religion prohibited under pain of death; and finally as an infamous wizard!

I rest my case! (*He makes a bow and sits down*)

KO-IO: Very good. Let us hear now, if you like, the arguments of the defense. Chiu Wan-Ching, take the stand.

CHIU: (*Getting up and making a bow*) To speak before your excellencies is at once an honor and an intimate pleasure for me.

A wellborn man is happy to be able to say to an honest judge: The prisoner who stands before you is innocent; you can give rein to all the noble impulses of your heart by setting him free. I also, like the noble Ching Wan-Hoey, have admired the valor the foreign teacher has shown during his torments and I see in that valor the best proof of his innocence. A man who believes that he stands in the presence of God cannot suffer calmly if his heart is not guiltless. And the heart of the foreign teacher is guiltless of all the crimes imputed to him. Hear me, I beg you!

The teacher confesses that his one aim is to preach the religion of the Lord of Heaven. There can be no cause to condemn him to death because the said religion is not prohibited, nor is it wicked. It is not prohibited because in the decree that his majesty the emperor signed against the sect of Pelinkiao nothing is said about the religion of the Christians. Other hands have included this religion in the condemnation, but without authority, because only the emperor can forbid anything under penalty of death. It is said that this religion of the Lord of Heaven is wicked because it is alien and pernicious. False! The teacher preaches openly that this religion can be alien to no nation or people because it belongs to no one nation or people! God Himself preached it on earth so that each man and all men may learn to be good and attain to heaven. This religion, therefore, is for all the world. It belongs as much to us Chinese as to the Europeans. Moreover, I believe that if we are to be worthy of our ancestors who took unto themselves the wisdom common to all men until they had surpassed all men in that wisdom, we in turn must take unto ourselves this religion and strive to surpass, if it be possible, the rest of the universe in the practice of this universal religion. As for the harmfulness imputed to it, I say that the imputation is a calumny. In the first place, it is notorious that the virtues the teacher preaches he himself practices. And we all know many in Fogan who were formerly thieves and deceivers and scoundrels, but who have become good citizens, true friends, and honest workers because they listened to this teacher. Now he is accused of having overturned Fogan. But look: his friends;

his enemies have defamed him in public processions and have continually accused him of the most absurd crimes. And how has he responded? By being patient, by turning away, by calming those who wished to defend him. His enemies, therefore, and not him should be condemned to death!

He is accused of being a wizard, because the ceremonies of his religion are incomprehensible to outsiders. But we sages here in the tribunal: do we not practice rites that are also incomprehensible to the populace? Are we then also practitioners of witchcraft? But in the same way that our ceremonies express the wisdom of our judicial proceedings, so the ceremonies of the teacher's religion express and instill in the mind the noble principles of the religion. I ask you: Is this witchcraft?

He is accused of despising our laws and customs. But here he is, living among us like one of us, and so accommodating himself to our ways and habits that he has won the heart of many of us. And surely it is not against filial piety to remind parents that they in turn must respect their sons and obey God. All Fogan has been talking of that girl who, although she was beaten and despised and cast off by her father, nevertheless, heeding the counsels of this teacher, returned and most tenderly took care of that cruel father of hers when he fell ill of a disease so horrible even his wife deserted him. It is true that the teacher tells us not to offer material gifts at the tombs of our dead ones; on the other hand, he urges us to offer instead our continual prayers to the God who, he believes, can give a life of unending happiness to the souls of our departed. All these, and much more that I could cite, are merely the perfection of the virtues that our sages taught us.

Let my words stand: The foreign teacher is not a rebel, nor a wizard, nor a despiser of our empire, and he is deserving not of death but of a worthy prize for the benevolence and affection he bears towards our China! Let his prize be the freedom to continue in his noble mission. I rest my case.
(*He makes a bow and sits down*)

(A Chinese from the town enters hastily and hands over a paper to CHING-WAN-HOEY, who has a look at it, stands up and with a bow approaches KO-IO and gives him the piece of paper. Everything while the following answers take place)

KO-IO: (A Wang-IO) What do you think?

WANG: Very good for the prosecution and equally good for the defense.

'We will see... (He remains thinking)

KO-IO: *(After reading the paper) (To Wang-IO)* Pardon me. *(To all)* Ching Wan-Hoey is urgently needed by his mother. He may retire, unless he wishes to add something more to his case.

CHING: Thanks, your excellency, it is the time for deeds; words are superfluous. With your permission. *(A bow) (While exiting)* *(At last they are mine! Tartars and Christians with one blow!)*

SCENE III

(The same except Ching Wan-Hoey)

WANG: I think it would be convenient to hear the teacher.

KO-IO: It is only just. Very well, teacher, stand up! *(With irony)* *(Fr. Francisco makes efforts, staggers, but finally gets up)*

KO-IO: *(Surprised)* What! You can still stand up with the boards clamped on?

BEATO: Everything is possible to me in my Lord Jesus Christ.

KO-IO: Let me see. Come over here.

BEATO: *(He staggers when walking and going up the stairs)* My God! My God!

KO-IO: If I had not seen this I would not have believed it! Well done teacher! Now go down again and remain standing. *(Fr. Francisco obeys)*

WANG: You are a magician, teacher!

BEATO: Magic is of the devil who is the worst enemy of my religion.

KO-IO: Then what do you give to those who follow you to make them love you so?

BEATO: I give them the love of God and he who loves God cannot but love his fellowman.

WANG: And what do you have in this box?

KO-IO: Well said, your excellency. Yes, explain this to us.

BEATO: With all my heart. Ko Domingo, open the box and give me each article as I ask for it. (*Ko Domingo obeys*) First give me the catechism. (He gets it and opens it) In this book is explained who God is, what the religion of the Lord of Heaven is, and how one must live as a Christian so that they may learn their obligations and fulfill them.

WANG: And what are those obligations?

BEATO: To love and serve the Lord of Heaven and earth above all things, and to love your fellowmen as you love yourself, and to live in such a manner that you offend neither God nor man in thought, word, or deed.

KO-IO: In thought, word or deed... I will wager, foreigner, that there are very few good Christians.

BEATO: Oh, yes, there are many of them. And that is what the ministers of my religion are for: to counsel Christians and to give them the aid of Heaven. You will see. Here, take this. (*He returns the book to Ko*) Give me the baptismal shell, Domingo. (*Ko obeys*)

WANG: (*On seeing it*) Ah that looks like witchcraft.

BEATO: But it is not, your excellency. Before we present ourselves in public, do we not wash ourselves first? Well, in the same manner we should wash ourselves on being born, before we present ourselves to the world. Which is the reason why, on becoming Christian, we wash...

WANG: And with what do you wash yourselves?

BEATO: With pure water, your excellency, which we fetch with this shell and pour over the head of him who desires to become a Christian, as a sign that while we wash his head, God washes his soul...

WANG: Soul? And what is the soul?

BEATO: The soul is the agent by whose power we talk and breathe, laugh and cry, and think and move, and without which we would be corpses, unable to move, like the stones unless they are pushed.

WANG: I never believed it was so easy to prove that we have souls!

BEATO: (*Handing over the shell to him*) Give me the stole, Domingo. (Ko obeys) This is the robe we use to indicate that we represent God, as your excellencies avail yourselves of certain ceremonial robes to indicate that you represent his majesty the emperor.

WANG: And when do you represent your God?

BEATO: WELL, for example, when a Christian wishes to beg pardon for his sins.

WANG: Ah, then it is easy after all to be a Christian. He sins and then he begs pardon from you...

BEATO: I pardon him in the name of God, assigning him a certain punishment, and only after he has sincerely promised not to commit that sin again.

WANG: And how do you know that your God pardons him?

BEATO: In the same way that your excellency knows that the emperor will ratify that your excellency commands by virtue of the authority you have from him.

WANG: Very good! I begin to see that a good Christian must be an excellent person indeed!

BEATO: Ah, but that is not all. Give me the crucifix, Ko. *(He kisses it and lifts it up)* This is the image we keep to remind us that the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, whom I represent, became man for love of us, and for love of us dwelt thirty three years upon earth teaching men to be good, and still for love of us suffered and died on a cross, and still for love of us suffered and died on a cross, naked and abandoned...

WANG: Beautiful! But what do you mean by "love"?

(Ko Domingo opens up distracted the box of the hosts and some fall)

KO-IO: Ah, there you have it, your excellency, the Christian witchcrafts!

BEATO: (Domingo, who told you to take those out?) They are not witchcraft, your excellency. Look! *(He takes a host with his right hand while maintaining the crucifix with his left)* Love is that passionate tenderness for another person with whom we feel ourselves so closely united that our heart, our mind, our soul, and our entire being seems to dwell in him that all the good things which we wish for ourselves may be fulfilled in him. But this mystical union which for us, is after all, only an emotion, God transforms into a reality. And because Jesus Christ so passionate desired to live in everyone he loves...

(An emissary enters quickly, unceremoniously. Everything stops. He gives piece of paper to Wang-IO, who stands up and whispers something to Ko-IO, makes a sign of leaving to the two soldiers and goes down the platform while trying not to look in a hurry and keeping his composure. All stand)

WANG: Master, *(Upon getting close to Fr. Francisco)* duty calls me. But I would like to learn more about love and about this God of Love who died on a cross. For the present, please excuse me *(He exits)*.

BEATO: God be with you!

SCENE IV

(The same except Wang-Io and the soldiers)

KO-IO: *(Trying to control his excitement)* Foreigner, put those things away and kneel down! *(Fr. obeys and kisses the crucifix as he hands it over)* Oh, no! Me, you do not deceive! You are a wizard! You Christians are wicked folk. And moreover you are a spy!

BEATO: No, I'm not!

KO-IO: But I know that you Christians defend the emperor Yung-li against us and that Christian priests are teaching him the use of European weapons.

BEATO: I know nothing about that. And I do not care to know anything about it. The Christian priests who are with the emperor Yung-li or with the Manchu emperor Chieng-te are there to teach those rulers the Christian religion. Whatever else they may do to win the favor of their patrons does not interest me because it is entirely irrelevant to me and to the Christian religion. I love China, and I love both the Chinese and the tartars because all men without distinction are my brothers in Jesus Christ. I have done nothing and I will do nothing more than to teach them the love of God.

KO-IO: Enough of orations! Time presses! Foreigner, you must die! Or look: tell your friends in Manila to send you a sum of money. I will put on a boat and you can go away and leave us in peace from your Christianities!

BEATO: I will never do that! I am a pilgrim of love and here I came to China to win hearts! And here in China will I leave my flesh, my bones, my blood, and my love!

KO-IO: Very well, you have sealed your fate! Boys, *(to the bailiffs)* Take him away! And this servant of his too! *(They obey)* *(To the actor's left side)* *(All stand)* *(Tinsel noises are heard outside)*

SCENE V

(The same except Fr. Francisco y Ko. Domingo)

(Four soldiers enter with unsheathed swords and violently dragging SHANG-HI)

KO-IO: What is this? *(He takes a seat)* Be seated, gentlemen *(to the magistrates)*. And you, on your knees *(to Shang-Hi)* Boys, bring the boards and the bamboos.

SHANG: *(Trembling of fear)* No! No! I will tell everything!

KO-IO: I warn you that I already know everything and if you tell me a single lie I will clamp you between boards, but if you should dare tell me three lies – ah, right here and now, you will lose your head!

SHANG: I was guarding the gate of the city. Chinese spies approached me and threatened me...

KO-IO: Confess that you are sold over to them, or by the devil, I will have you flogged!

SHANG: I will confess anything your excellency desires! It was this way; they needed Ching Wan Hoey to lead the troops that were to assault Fogan and I sent him a message saying that his mother needed him.

KO-IO: And where is Ching Wan-Hoey now?

SHANG: Fighting against the garrison commanded by Wang-Lo to cover the retreat of the Chinese who entered by the south gate.

KO-IO: Because you and that traitor of a Ching Wan-Hoey opened the gate to them! Shang, you will die. Only one salvation is left to you. Tell me who are your accomplices?

SHANG: All the Christians in Fogan and all the friends of Ching.

KO-IO: You lie! Ching Wan-Hoey and his friends are the bitterest enemies of the Christians.

SHANG: But the Christians know how to forgive and moreover they believe it is just to serve Yung-Li because he is fighting to liberate China, the land they love.

KO-IO: Christian dogs! This is the last straw! I wont leave a single one of those dogs alive! Who is the leader?

SHANG: (*He looks around and keeps quiet*)

KO-IO: ... You wont speak ? All right, boys, bring the boards!

SHANG: No! No! I will tell you, I will tell you!

KO-IO: Release him (*The bailiffs move and Shang-Hi kneels down again*)

SHANG: (*Pointing to Chiu Wang-Ching*) That man is the leader of the Christians of Fogan and the lieutenant of Ching Wan-Hoey among the partisans of Yung-li. (*All stand except KO-IO*)

KO-IO: (To Chiu) Traitor! Grab him! (*Two soldiers with naked katanas cover Chiu putting them on his stomach – Chiu makes slowly the sign of the cross – Another soldier takes the crickets attached to his belt and handcuffs Chiu. He is taken down from the platform and forced to kneel before KO-IO, who remains sitting.*)

SCENE VI

(*The same and Yang-Ie with his sword naked and blood-stained*)

YANG: (*He enters hastily without saying a word and goes up the platform in front of the empty chair left by Wang-IO*)

KO-IO: (*Standing up in bewilderment*) Captain Yang-ie, what has happened? What is going on?

YANG: Nothing, calm yourselves. Your excellency, I come to inform you that the most noble Wang-IO has perished, fighting to the end, like a lion. While his troops defended the wall, he sallied forth to close the south gate against Ching Wan-

Hoey and his Chinese troops, but our noble commander was killed before we could rush to his assistance. I have therefore become the military commander of the Fogan and also its supreme authority by reason of the emergency.

KO-IO: (*With a profound bow*) What you say is certainly true. Deign to accept our humble submission and veneration. And what of Ching Wan-Hoey?

YANG: I left him surrounded by spears and fighting like a tiger. My orders are to capture him alive. I do not ask who these people are. I know. Your excellency, continue with the trial. The situation is ours. Up to now, the good heart of Wang-Io impeded us from treating the Christians as they deserve. The last word on his lips was the name of this Jesus of the foreigners. Now he is dead and our hands are free, your excellency. Be sure that the greatest desire of my heart is to wipe out from the empire the last trace of this foreign superstition. Whether or not they be partisans of the emperor Yung-li, the Christians must be killed, killed, killed, killed!

CURTAIN

[END OF ACT TWO]

THIRD ACT

In the courtyard of the Prison of Fogan. December 1647

SCENE I

(Nobody on the scene. After a while, a prisoner with chains on his feet enters; then another one with a canga. Behind him Shang-hi imitating the movements of both of them in a mocking attitude; they take it with a laugh)

SHANG: Hey, you ! (*to the one with the canga*) Look out! There's a rat wants to bite your feet! Maybe he thinks they're cheese!

CHIU: (*Entering with chains on his feet and hands*) But, man, with the axe practically swinging at your neck, how can you be in any mood for joking?

SHANG: Well, what do you want me to do? There's got to be some sort or difference between this patio and that horrible prison-cell inside. Or maybe you want me to go around looking like that brute of a jailer when the mandarin's over here for inspection? Boy, was I scared when he suddenly entered yesterday and caught Master Francisco without his chains on! I thought he'd burst! And me – you should have seen and heard me pretending to be snoring my head off so he wouldn't notice I was practically dying of laughter! And boy, you should have seen the mandarin too! Like this (*He imitates him becoming jokingly serious and terrible to the point of ridicule*) And that poor donkey of a jailer was shivering so hard you could hear his bones rattle! Like this (*Trembling exaggeratedly*) And afterwards when he could control himself he started bowing right and left and making dog-eyes at the mandarin like this (*Bowing his head with merciful eyes*). But the mandarin, Oh! He glared back at the poor chap like this... (*As if he were to eat up someone*) It was good the mandarin finally burst out into the most horrible cuss-words you ever heard. He said he wanted all the prisoners tied up head and feet and he raised such a noise I could roll over into a corner and laugh my head off! And baby, did I laugh! I couldn't stand up for hours, my stomach was aching so hard! No, man, let's put on a sour face when we're inside that stinking cell or when Master Francisco is praying or preaching to us. But when we're here outside – gosh, I wanna tap-dance! (*Without asking permission he starts tap-dancing*)

CHIU: Come on, guy! Control yourself!

SHANG: (*Who has remained seated on the floor*) If you only knew how happy I've been since I decided to turn Christian! Right from the first days they threw me into this darned prison, (*getting up*) I've been happy. It is impossible not to be happy with Master Francisco around. What a man! I don't worry about anything anymore. They are going to chop my head off, I know. And so what? You got to die some day, don't you?

Oh, Chiu, you're an old Christian and you can't imagine how sweet, how wonderful it is for me to know there's a heaven waiting for me after I die, because only a few days ago I couldn't see I had any more future than a dog has!

CHIU: And so you're really decided to turn Christian?

SHANG: I am decided to die. I have presentiment that I am going to. Look (*Becoming serious*) you've truly and sincerely forgiven me for betraying you?

CHIU: Even were you not a Christian, I would forgive you.

SHANG: But how I wish you were still free!

CHIU: I? What can I say to you? I wish I were free too so I can go on working for the emperor and for my brother Christians. But because of my love for Jesus Christ I prefer to remain here in prison. They will certainly kill me, but not so much because I'm the leader of the rebels as because I am a Christian. Yang-ie is determined to annihilate us to the last man.

SHANG: Therefore I have been begging the Master to baptize me as soon as possible.

CHIU: I just heard him say he would do it after we have said the rosary – that is, if you really wish it.

SHANG: I certainly do! Right now if possible.

CHIU: Would you like me to be your godfather?

SHANG: Chui! (*Moved*) Oh, Chui, God will repay you!

CHUI: And what would Chin Wan-Hoey say if he knew!

SHANG: I don't know. I'd like to see him a Christian too.

CHUI: And so would I. A soul so noble deserves heaven.

SHANG: Ah, but he is as hard as a rock! He is mad with love for China and for our institutions.

CHUI: Yes, that's true – but God can do anything... and the heart of Father Francisco will do rest!

SCENE II

(The same and Fr. Francisco de Capillas)

BEATO: *(Coming in with chains on his hands)* God grant you a good day!

CHUI & SHANG: The same to you, Father.

BEATO: Well, Shang, have you got over that scare of yesterday?

SHANG: Who was scared? Why, I was practically dead from laughing! Father, did you see the face of that jailer?

BEATO: Yes, and the poor man probably wanted to laugh too. In the future we must be more prudent. Shang-hi, when you hear the gong of the tribunal, give the alarm right away and every man to his cell. Agreed?

SHANG: Agreed.

CHUI: That won't help much. The mandarin only comes here to see if you haven't died of hunger yet, Father, as he would like you to.

SHANG: And golly, what if he finds we have a banquet here every-day with what people bring here for the Father!

CHUI: He marched off yesterday swearing that before the new year comes, either he himself or the foreign teacher would be a ghost!

BEATO: Yes, I know he wouldn't like anything better than to find some excuse to save his face. The day he finds it, I go to God. Well, God's will be done. Come, let us all sit down and continue with our occupations which are more interesting. *(He sits down on the stool and the other prisoners around him)* What, Shang? Would you like to be baptized today?

SHANG: With all my heart!

BEATO: We'll see if we can fix you up after we've said the rosary. I am certain that my hour fast approaches and yours too, I fear. Therefore we must be prepared. Just the same, I pray

that God pardon and save the soul of his excellency the mandarin.

THE REST: AMEN!

BEATO: Now, Shang-hi, let me see if you know your catechism well. Who is God?

SHANG: God is the Lord and Creator of heaven and earth. He is our Father. He takes good care of us. He will reward us with heaven if we are good but He will punish us with hell if we are bad.

BEATO: That's very good, Shang! And now, what is the Holy Trinity?

SHANG: The Holy Trinity is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who are three different persons but only one God.

BEATO: Better and better! And do you sincerely resolve to be a good Christian?

SHANG: Yes!, Father.

BEATO: Even if you won't out of this prison?

SHANG: Father, you've been teaching me that I must place all my hope in the goodness of God. But I am and I'm afraid I'll always be a rascal and so I don't dare promise anything. But my heart truly wishes to be good and to make up for all the crimes I have committed in the past. And I will keep this resolution, Father, wherever I may be and whatever happens to me.

SCENE III

(The same and CHING WAN-HOEY, who comes in, greets with a bow to the group which answers, Chiu and the Fr., with another and a smile. He walks in front of the group)

BEATO: Very good, Shang. Place yourself under the patronage of our Lady, the Holy Virgin Mother of God, and you need fear

nothing. Now tell me: Do you truly love Jesus Christ who died for you on the Cross?

SHANG: (*He notices that Ching Wan-Hoey has remained staring at him and keeps quiet*)

CHING: (*With disdain*) Go on, man, tell him another of your lies! It won't cost you anything even if it's the biggest lie of all your life!

SHANG: (*Decidedly*) I am not lying now, Ching Wan-Hoey. I am going to be baptized only now but my heart is already Christian.

CHING: No other crime remains for you to commit except this, animal! These chains (*referring to his own's*) are upon me because of your treachery. These others (*referring to Chiu*) are in prison because of your cowardice. And because of the cheapness of your heart our cause is ruined; ourselves face death; and our families, our homes, our entire city lie at the mercy of the savage tartars. Nothing more was left for you to sell except the faith of our ancestors and of our native land... but even this you will now sell to the foreigner! You are like a harlot! All your life you have been selling yourself to be dishonored!

SHANG: (*Hurt*) Ah, but if I was willing to sell myself, you were quite as willing to buy!

CHING: (*Going towards him and slapping him*) Take that, you, beast!
(*All rise*)

CHIU: (*He covers Shang-Hi with his face and receives the full blow*) Stop, Ching!

CHING: Another ass! Why do you defend him? Is he not the man who has placed you here waiting to have your head chopped off while out there your family suffers unspeakable miseries?

CHIU: I am a Christian, Ching. I know how to forgive. There is a Father in heaven who cares for us, whom we obey, and who brings forth life out of death.

CHING: Nonsense! You also have lost your senses because of the silly stories of this foreign teacher! But I will not lose mine!

BEATO: All right, all right. Calm yourselves. Let us sit down and make peace. (*While they take a seat*) Ching Wan-Hoey, you are a prisoner like all of us. Your fate like ours will be the executioner's axe. Why will you embitter what little remains you of life?

CHING: Master, please pardon these ravings of mine. I can't bear this humiliation! Look, I admire your valor and your fortitude. But I can't imitate them because I don't understand them. They seem to me only a stupidity!

BEATO: Then let me explain them. If you understood, Ching, you would become a Christian.

CHING: I, a Christian? Never! From childhood I have sought wisdom. Do you think I would ever renounce what I have learned for a way of life none of our sages ever dreamt of? Leave me in peace!

BEATO: But who told you that you must renounce wisdom? The Christian religion does not destroy; it only makes perfect the wisdom of all the ages!

CHING: Nothing of the sort! For example, is it just that Chiu Wan Ching should pardon this beast who sold him, who destroyed our labor of years, and who delivered to the enemy everything that we hold most precious?

SHANG: You are right, Ching. I am a criminal. But if I had been a Christian I would have known how to die for you.

BEATO: There you have it, Ching Wan-Hoey! The transformation of a sinner into a hero! And remember: it is never too late!

CHING: Very well. But suppose I turn a Christian and forgive and embrace Shang-Hi – How can I ever again face the people of my country – I, the defender and the leader of the defenders of China if I accept the doctrines and the faith of foreigners?

BEATO: You will face them with the brow lifted high as befits a hero who, although misunderstood and despised by everyone, abandons and despises everything ... everything, to follow the Truth!

CHING: But what is Truth? To disobey one's parents? To forget one's ancestors? To teach one's children not to reverence those who gave them life?

BEATO: Calm yourself, Ching. Christianity teaches that there is God in heaven who receives the spirits of our parents when they die. This God receives also and desires to receive the prayers of the sons for their parents because it is in his power to give them a happiness without end... a happiness that He will give to them and to us also – if we pray Him for it.

CHING: That would be very beautiful if only it were true!

BEATO: It is true! And about obedience – tell me sincerely, Ching: Don't you think that if God is the father of our fathers and of all of us, our duty towards Him should be respected even by those who gave us life?

CHING: Certainly!

BEATO: Well, that is what we teach, and nothing more. Therefore the obedience of the Christian is an obedience even unto death because it is inspired by a love that is immortal!

CHING: LOVE! Your eternal solution and your eternal mystery! I understand by love what our sages call benevolence ... but what benevolence is yours? What do you love? Sons, you do not have, nor do you wish to have them. Your country and your family, you have abandoned. Wealth and possessions do not interest you. Nor are you motivated by the desire for fame and glory. What then is this benevolence of yours that has no object, no motive, no profit, and no reason for being?

BEATO: Ching, do you know what is the tie that binds two souls so closely that in each other's eyes they can read each other's heart?

CHING: (*Moved*) Oh, Chiu, what sweet days were those when together we looked at the flowers and the stars... dreaming together you and I... Ah, but then, you were not yet a Christian!

CHIU: What would I give if only now you were... the tie that binds two souls!

BEATO: Yes, and the one object, the one motive, the one profit, and the one reason for being of Christianity is to establish that tie, that sweet union between all men... and between each man and God!

CHING: Perhaps so, but believe me, Father: it is not the viciousness, the bad qualities in my race, but rather the virtuousness, the good qualities that rebel against Christianity. It is my racial dignity that forbids me your Faith. Do you know that it is I who put you here in prison? That it is I who dragged you through those torments and heaped accusation upon accusation on your head, and all because I hate you? Do you know that it is I standing here before you loaded with chains, who shall be the real cause of your death?

BEATO: Yes, and therefore I desire to save your life with my death!

CHING: I don't understand this madness of yours!

BEATO: Of course not. You are a pagan and you understand only material values. But to die for love is the greatest of all treasures and I am grateful to you for giving it to me!

CHING: The only thing I understand is that your motive for wishing to convert me is so you can die killing!

BEATO: On the contrary, I wish to die giving life... the life of love!

CHING: But love for what?

BEATO: Love for God, our Father who is in heaven ... and love for Jesus Christ!

CHING: A love for Being who does not exist!

SCENE IV

(The same and KO-DOMINGO)

KO.DO: *(He comes in hastily)* Hurry, hurry, Father! Go to your cell!

BEATO: *(All stand up)* Why? What's going on?

KO.DO: The jailer is calling. He fears for his life and for the lives of all of you. Because the Military Mandarin is arriving right away.

CHING: But he came only yesterday and he did nothing more except growl.

KO.DO: Ah, but this is a different one. My nephew who brings me my meals has just told me that the entire villa is in confusion. It is known for certain that Lieu Chung-Shan the virrey of Foochow is already at Ning-te with a huge army, heading for Fogan.

CHING: Hooray! Fogan is ours!

KO.DO: It is too late, Ching. Fogan is without leaders. You and Chiu are here in prison while Yang-ie runs amuck all over the place like a maddened tiger, hunting Chinese and Christians.

CHING: Chinese and Christians!

CHIU: Yes, the two principal aversions of that barbarian.

KO.DO: Alas, Chiu, only too true. Lift your eyes up to heaven!

CHIU: Why?

KO.DO: Because your sister Lucia watches you from up there!

CHIU: What do you say?

KO.DO: What you heard. As soon as Yang-ie heard of the arrival of the troops, he flung himself to destroying everything he could before retreating and of course his very first victim was the girl he had set his eyes on but who refused him because she was dedicated to God of Christians whom he hates.

CHIU: Blessed be God! Ching, she who was promised to you is now forevermore safe in the arms of Jesus Christ!

CHING: In the arms of Jesus Christ! And my mother, KO.DO you know anything about her? Or was she the second victim?

KO.DO: Be brave, Ching! I won't hide it from you. Lucia and your mother were found together, clasped in each other's arms and headless, at the gate of Chiu's house. (*Fr. Francisco comes forward and hugs Ching tightly*)

BEATO: Courage, Ching Wan-Hoey! You will meet her again someday in the presence of God!

CHING: (*Trying to control himself*) Father, she was all that was left me in this world!

KO.DO: Hurry, hurry. Let's go. There's no time to loose!

CHING: Chiu, wait here. (*Separating himself from Fr.*)

CHIU: At your orders.

BEATO: What, you are not coming in?

CHING: There is something we must talk about first.
(*Father, the prisoners, Shang-Hi and Ko-Domingo go out*)

SCENE V

(*CHING WAN-HOEY and CHIU WAN-CHING*)

CHING: (*Once they are alone*) You are a Christian, Chiu.

CHIU: As you know. Why?

CHING: Precisely because you are one, you can do me a great service.

CHIU: I am yours to command.

CHING: We must avenge the crimes that have been committed.

CHIU: Say rather that we must continue the fight we began.

CHING: As you like. I have a plan... to start a riot in Fogan right away tomorrow. We must escape from this jail – you and I at least. While I attack the military tribunal, you will hurry to the villa, gather together as many armed men as you can and send them over here. Then speed over to Ning-te and tell Lieu Ching Shan that he must arrive here as fast as possible. Now I need men who will obey my orders unconditionally.

CHIU: Of course, and so?

CHING: And so you must get a letter of command from Father Francisco, because you Christians obey him unconditionally.

CHIU: Oh, no, Ching, not that! The Father would never allow it.

CHING: Then, the Father is against us!

CHIU: Nothing of the sort. Have no doubt that all the Christians in Fogan are Chinese patriots... but the Father does not meddle and will never wish to meddle in such affairs.

CHING: Maybe he does not believe that our cause is just?

CHIU: He leaves that for us to decide. He has only one affair, one cause, one word: Jesus Christ!

CHING: Does not your religion admit the piety due to the emperor and to the native land?

CHIU: It admits and blesses and foments that piety. But it cannot concern itself with the creation of native lands because it has only one native land, which is in heaven.

CHING: So, to be a Christian, one must stop being a Chinese?

CHIU: (*Showing him his chains*) Here is your answer! And tomorrow you will see me and all the Christians fighting as true Chinese. Forgive me, but I also have plans and I will carry them out. I will give you what you need and more. You can count on me, Ching. And for my Lord Jesus Christ, remember that the heart that you loved will love you and will be at your side unto death!

CHING: Thank you, Chiu, (*Putting his arm around his neck*) thank you! At the brink of death and ruin, impotent under these chains, I have found you again! Thank you! We will know how to die, won't we?

CHIU: And to live! You dream of a China freed from foreigners and I of a China that is Christian and that shall be immortal!

CHING: How?

CHIU: When the love for the Crucified God will have banished away distrust, covetousness, egoism, and indifference from our land; and when fired by the idea of the Cross and inspired by the ideals of our sages, it launches forth to conquer itself and the world for Christ! Then China will be great... in a greater universe! Because love...

CHING: LOVE! LOVE! LOVE! My eternal problem!

CHIU: And the eternal problem of our land. Ching, when China shall have learned what the love of Christ is, then it will have learned what the glory and the grandeur of life is!

CHING: Chiu, please go. I want to meditate.

CHIU: I will leave you. We have no time to lose. Now we are going to pray. Later on we will see how we can manage to communicate with those outside. Tomorrow you will have the men you need. I arrange the final details with you tonight. And just in case, Ching – because any moment may be last (*holding his hands*) if I perish, remember me! Or better in the Christian manner: Goodbye, Ching, till we meet in Heaven! (*Releases his hands and leaves*)

SCENE VI

(*CHING WAN-HOEY alone*)

CHING: (*In silence he sits down on the stool and holds his head with his hands*) (*Inside the following lyrics are heard*):

Chorus: *[of prisoners] –*
 Virgen santa del Rosario,
 Madre del Señor, María,
 Consolad nuestra agonía
De tu vida con la luz,

Solo: *[Father] –*
 En el antro de una cárcel,
 Con el cuerpo entre cadenas,
 Embargada el alma en penas
 Aguardamos el morir.
 Mándanos tu dulce aliento,
 Mándanos paz y consuelo,
 Mándanos del alto cielo
Tu materno sonreír!

Chorus: –
 Virgen santa del Rosario,
 Madre del Señor, María,
 Consolad nuestra agonía
De tu vida con la luz.

(Father's voice: The Glorious Mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary, the first Mystery, the Resurrection of the Son God; etc. The prisoners answer to the Rosary)

CHING: RESURRECTION ... Our Father who art in heaven...
 Deliver (*repeating*) us from evil... Pray for us now and at the
 hour of our death! How true! How lovely it must be to pray
 like that!

My mind is a tempest of ideas. Let me not have illusions. I
 can do nothing except die. To die... when long after I have
 killed Yang-ie... But my dreams vanish... Oh, Land of my
 fathers! When I am dead... when my works are dead... and
 the tartar triumphant. Triumphant, the foreigner? Oh, China,
 shall I abandon thee? I, also? No! Never! I will die and with
 me will die the last of the Chinese! (*He stands up*)

To die, I want to triumph! Chiu, your ideals pull me. How I
 wish I could see things like you, like your sister Lucia. I crave

to behold life and love open before my dying eyes. But I cannot. I cannot renounce all that I have felt and thought. And what if your Jesus Christ is only an illusion?

Our Father who art in Heaven! If you listen to the voices of suffering men... If you can read my heart, my agonies, my struggles... If you can give light to my darkness. Come, Lord, and enlighten me! You know my heart is sincere. I do not want to betray my land nor to fail in my duty. I do not want to die without hope! I want to die triumphant over death!

Come, Lord! Hear me, Lord! Listen to me! And give me life immortal!

CURTAIN

[END OF ACT THREE]

FOURTH ACT

(Dungeon in the jail of Fogan, 15 January 1648)

SCENE I

(Fr. Francisco, wearing his habit, embracing Ko-Domingo and Shang-Hi. Chiu Wan-Ching to the right of Father standing, to his left Ching Wan-Hoey, both loaded with more chains, other two prisoners at the martyr's feet. – In the proscenium one soldier with a lance and another with unsheathed katana on each side)

BEATO: Farewell! Farewell, my sons! Till we meet in heaven!

CHIU: Goodbye, Father. Remember us when you stand before God!

BEATO: Fear nothing. You will follow me soon. Tell my Christians that I went to death thinking of them... and that I hope to see them in heaven. Tell them to work hard so that the love

of Christ may be diffused over this blessed land. Tell them that I willingly give my blood to enrich this earth. Tell them that my love can never die! Tell them that I will go on living for them in Jesus, the God of Love! Tell them that I go but that others will come!

CHING: And for me, Master, have you nothing?

BEATO: (*Looking intently at him and smiling*) For you? Come! I wish life for you; I wish you light! Noble soul, I invite you to heaven!

CHING: To that heaven you preach? I cannot! There is something in you that draws me, that attracts me... But I cannot! Tell me: have you some talisman?

BEATO: Yes. Look! (*On saying this he draws a relatively big crucifix he was wearing and leaves it hanging on his breast*) This is my talisman. This is what draws and attracts all hearts to me. Your heart is tied down by little cares but it seeks the life of love. Become a Christian, Ching!

CHING: And what if your Jesus Christ is only a fantasy and your religion only a delusion?

BEATO: Open your eyes, Ching! Open your eyes and see! Open your eyes and believe! Open your eyes and love! Open your eyes to behold... to believe... to love... and to be loved! Farewell, my sons. Let me bless you for the last time with the blessing of Almighty God (*All kneel down except Ching who only bows a little*) the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost come down upon you and dwell in you always. (*Blessing them*) (*On lowering his hand Ching holds it with his own hands tightly for a while without saying a single word*).

(*The soldiers who obviously did not kneel start moving headed by the two with the lance, one carrying the long chains of the Father, and followed by the two with their swords*) (*The prisoners go out of the dungeon behind the soldiers*)

BEATO: Farewell!

SCENE II

(Chiu W.C. and Ching W.H., who remain alone)

CHING: *(After a few moments of silence, with his head bowed and thoughtful)* This is a monstrous crime, Chiu! We tried to break jail and they caught us – well, let them kill the two of us. What has the Father to do with it?

CHIU: Our death is a sure thing, Ching. Yang-ie has all the proofs he needs – those letters he intercepted and those witnesses who sold us. He knows that Father Francisco is perfectly innocent. But he bears for the Christian Master a hatred as fierce as death. This was his chance – that most of the rebels captured were Christians – and he made haste to use this chance before some higher authority could order a reprieve.

CHING: But why does he hate the Christians so? As the chief official here he has every chance to know that the Christian way of life is not criminal. Even my pagan heart has learned how to be happy here in prison, although abandoned and impotent and loaded with chains. Poor Father Francisco! An immense grief weighs me down. Now I understand why you loved him so... why he drew you towards the sacrifice towards that heaven he preached to you. He was a great soul, a heart of gold!

CHIU: Very true, Ching. But remember that you did not always talk like this about him.

CHING: *(Begging)* For a favor, Chiu – be silent. *(He remains as dismayed)* It is true! I delivered him to die! Mine is the crime! *(Rising his eyes to heaven)* Lord, what more remains in this abyss of failures and despondencies?

CHIU: Forgive me, Ching – but you must pull yourself together. You know that the Father forgave you... and more than that: he loves you. So control yourself.

CHING: Control... (*With determination*) the heck with control! (*With great energy and serenity*) I defended his death. Now I will defend his life!

CHIU: (*Serene and spontaneous*) Impossible. One word of yours in his favor will surely bring about his death. Besides, (*in cold calmness*) you are in chains.

SCENE III

(*The same, Ko-Domingo, Shang-hi and the rest of prisoners*)

KO-DO: (*He enters sobbing. The rest of prisoners follow him crest-fallen*) They have taken him before the tribunal.

CHING: So there's going to be a trial? (*Cheering himself up*)

CHIU: Don't believe it. Yang-ie only needed an excuse. There were Christians involved in our conspiracy; therefore the Father must have know about it; therefore he must die.

CHING: Then why have they taken him to the tribunal?

CHIU: Just a formality. So they can legally sentence him to death before they kill him.

CHING: I can see (*through the window*) the tribunal from here. (*He climbs by grasping the bars and looks out of the window*)

SHANG: What are they doing?

CHING: A troop of soldiers are marching out in double file... (*Rhythmical sounds of drums are heard outside and far away*) There is a Chinese in the midst of them... His hands are tied, he bears the placard of the condemned... Now come more soldiers... Oh, there he is! The Master! He is naked, they have stripped him completely naked! His hands are tied! A soldier with a drawn sword follows him... Now they all stopped... The Master is kneeling down. They... they are going to kill him! (*To those outside and shouting*) No! No! Stop! It is a crime to kill him! The Father is innocent!

SHANG: What now?

CHING: The Father has lifted his face to heaven... Now he turns his head... he gazes towards the jail... He is looking at us!

VARIOS: At us?

CHING: Yes, yes! He is looking at us, smiling at us! Oh, good father, forgive me! Oh! Oh!

VARIOS: What's the matter? What is it?

CHING: The executioner has approached... He is lifting his sword... He is going to strike... No! Oh, I can't look! (*He releases the bars and sits down dejected*)

CHIU: Jesus whom you loved, receive thee, noble spirit! (*All kneel down for a few moments and in silence*)

SCENE IV

(*The same*)

CHIU: (*He approaches Ching and puts his hand on his shoulder*) Control yourself, Ching. Here, do you feel ill?

CHING: Leave me alone! Oh, leave me alone. (*detaching from Chiu's embrace*) to die! Alone with the horror of my crime!... and with the fury of my impotent rage! Not even in your heaven can there be a place for me now! Oh, Father... Father Francisco, where are you? (*Standing to go to the window*)

(*A blue and pink sea wraps up the jail. Clouds of Glory fall down covering the background wall. They rend and in their midst Jesus Christ the King appears (golden crown of thorns) with the cross on his left hand and his right extended to the Martyr (to his right) and looking tenderly to Ching. – Fr. Francisco with stars on his habit, a golden crucifix on his breast; in his left hand the Chinese flag surrounded by flowers, and on his right hand a golden palm. – To the feet of the Redeemer the sword tinged with shining blood; roses*)

and lilies are spread on the clouds as a carpet) (At the beginning of the vision, far distant but in crescendo as the clouds grow, the sound of the introductory chords of the Hymn start; as the clouds rend, the chorus bursts out:

HYMN

SALVE, SALVE, HERALDO DEL AMOR!
 SALVE, SALVE, MÁRTIR DEL SEÑOR!
 TÚ, FRANCISCO, DEL MARTIRIO ABRISTE
 SENDAS EN LA CHINA Y DE VICTORIA:
 TUYO EL TRIUNFO, DE TU FE ES LA GLORIA,
 TUYA LA CORONA, VENCEDOR!

Strophe 1.

Corazón inmenso vuelas
 Por las tierras, por los mares:
 Como el pie de los altares
 Es tu nido una prisión.
 Y la fe a tu paso brota,
 Y en los pechos la pureza,
 Y en las almas la belleza
 De la vida que es canción.

Strophe 2.

Cuando el alba despuntaba
 De la Fe en el pueblo chino,
 Tú ofrendaste al sol divino
 De tu sangre el rosicler.
 Haz que triunfe la luz pura
 Del error y las tinieblas!
 Haz que brillen sin más nieblas
 Los fulgores de la Fe.

Strophe 3.

Pura flor inmaculada,
 De la tierra en que viviste
 Solo sangre recibiste
 Que esmaltara tu primor.
 De la gloria en que ahora vives
 Pide a Dios sea fecunda,
 Que por ella se difunda
 La fragancia del Amor!

(After one strophe – only one –)

BEATO: *(Amid soft chords of music)* Here I am, Ching Wan-Hoey!
 And here is Love!

CHRIST: *(Clear, soft and solemn voice)* Ching Wan-Hoey, come
 hither!

(Chorus: Fills and fades away gradually as the clouds are closed and the vision vanishes) (Ching Wan-Hoey remains kneeling and absorbed)

SCENE V

(The same and Yang-Le with soldiers)

(As soon as the vision fades and while the clouds retire and go up, four soldiers enter with lances and two with swords, and go slowly to occupy the corners of the proscenium)

YANG: *(Entering as the last cloud vanishes) (In a loud and arrogant voice)* Ching Wan-Hoey! Chiu Wan-Ching! Outside, you two! The foreign teacher is dead! Now it is your turn!

CHIU: *(Serene, majestic and smiling)* We go, but others remain. China is too great for you tartars to destroy!

YANG: *(With utmost disdain)* We will see! And you, Ching, what are you so pensive about?

CHING: *(He stands up majestically and becomes radiant of power and happiness)* Who? What did you say?

YANG: That the time has come to pay for your crimes!

CHING: You mean, you're now going to cut my head off?

YANG: I'm afraid so, my dear fellow!

CHING: Blessed by God! *(In jubilation)* But wait! *(imposing himself)* This once, Yang-ie, you will have to obey me before I die. Shang-Hi, get a glass of water *(Shang-Hi exits and comes back soon)*. You are going to kill me, Yang-ie, but you cannot kill China! She is immortal! Over her will pass *(with exultation)* the tartars; over her will pass the cloud of conquerors without consciences; over her will roll red waves upon red waves of butchers, blood, and barbarians! But every blow of their hammers, every blow of their swords, every blow of their axes will but form the mighty China of my dreams – the China of Christ and of the Cross! Here you have me. Murder in me a Chinaman... and a Christian!

Chiu, *(plainly)* my heart is already Christian. I believe and accept all the doctrines Father Francisco taught us. I love

my Lord Jesus Christ and wish to belong to him in my death since I did not know how to serve him in my life. *(His kneels down on the supporter while takes the glass from Chang-hi's hands)* Do me the favor. Take the water *(He passes the glass to Chiu)* and baptize me before I die!

CHIU: *(Standing on the supporter – to the left side of Ching, while Shang-hi on his knees taps the shoulders of Ching – to the right side)* *(As subdued by Ching's influence)* CHING WAN HOEY, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost!

(In the meanwhile, the curtains fall)

END

CHARACTERS:

CHING WAN HOEY – Unos 30 años, nobleza, generosidad, iniciativa, perseverancia, campeón de la causa China militar y religiosa, literato y jefe de la resistencia a los tártaros.

P. FRANCISCO – Unos 40 años, nobleza, Misionero, caridad, saber, celo puro, Mártir.

CHIU WAN CHING – Unos 30 años, caracteres morales como Ching, defensor decidido de la causa patriota China, Cristiano, segundo jefe de la resistencia a los tártaros, literato, muy buen conocedor de los recursos.

WANG IO – Mandarín militar tártaro de Fogan, bueno, valiente, justo, de ideas amplias.

KO IO – Mandarín civil tártaro de Fogan, astuto, cruel con ciertas formas, avariento, rabioso enemigo de chinos y cristianos.

YANG IE – Capitán tártaro, lugarteniente de Wang-io y su sucesor, dominador, cruel a lo militar, desalmado, brutal, rabioso enemigo de chinos y cristianos.

KO DOMINGO – Chino, bueno, servicial, fiel, catequista y compañero del P. Francisco.

SHANG HI – Soldado chino al servicio de los tártaros, espía de la resistencia, volátil, avaro, despreocupado, egoísta y dicharachero antes de la conversión, después abnegación aunque resabios.

SOLDADOS TÁRTAROS Y CHINOS A SU SERVICIO

2 VERDUGOS, O SATÉLITES DEL TRIBUNAL

VARIOS PRISONEROS EN LA CARCEL

4 LITERATOS ASISTENTES AL TRIBUNAL

ÉPOCA – 1647-1648. Periodo revuelto de Transición de la dinastía Ming a la dinastía Tsing. Momento de las luchas entre los ejércitos de Chuen-tshe (Manchu) y Yung-li (Ming) por la conquista del Sur. Principios de las Misiones Católicas.

LUGAR – Villa de Fogan en la Provincia de Fukien medio ocupada por los tártaros y amenazada por los chinos. Inmediaciones. Sala del tribunal. Patio de la cárcel. Calabozo.

LAUS DEO MARIAE DOMINICO