

The Monk of the River Libretto:

Act 1

Scene 1

Recitative/Chorus

Opens with the villagers of Haizhou singing a chorus about their life and the news of Chen Gangrui

Villagers:

A quiet life here in Haizhou
Under rule of Zhenguan
Thirteen years of peace, it's true
Grateful subjects every one

Wang Feng:

Do you know what news I heard?
Carried with warm breezes

Zhao Yue:

The son of Madame Zhang is home
And bringing news to please us!

Villagers:

Lucky Madame Zhang
She will be so gleeful
When she sees her son
With eyes of pride and joy

Feng Xue:

And he will not return alone
He brings a wife of beauty
From noble birth-

He Hua:

-My cousin says
They travel fast, arrive today

Villagers:

Lucky Madame Zhang
The spring gods shower on her
The glory of a wise son
And beautiful new bride

Madame Zhang:

What are you talking of my friends?

He Hua:

Oh Madame Zhang - I am so happy for you
Your son Chen Guangrui returns
Safely home, and with good news!

Madam Zhang:

Well don't let me wait so long to hear
Why you smile from ear to ear

Wang Feng:

Lucky Madame Zhang
Your son is greatly honoured
He claimed first place and won the prize
Of being Jiangzhou's Governor!

He Hua:

His life is changed forever and with him so is yours.

Madame Zhang is overwhelmed, but as she is an old woman she cannot react with so much outward excitement.

Madame Zhang:

(gasps) Such joy!
I thank the city God's who watched and blessed our souls.

Feng Xue:

And that is not all we heard
He has a bride -

Zhao Yue: (*getting excited and wanting to speak*)

- but not just any bride.

Feng Xue: (*calmly and giving Villager 4 a scolding glare*)

She comes from honourable family
A face of such beauty
The scent of our spring blossoms
Is lesser yet than she

Madame Zhang:

Oh wondrous gods I thank you more
Such blissful gifts laid at my door.

Chen Guangrui, his wife Wenjiao and servant enter the stage now. Madame Zhang sees them and goes to greet them with joy.

Madame Zhang:

Congratulations, my son!

Chen Guangrui:

My mother you must be so proud.

Madame Zhang and Chen Gangrui embrace. Chen Gangrui then turns to the villagers

Chen Gangrui

I have gifts with me for all my neighbours
Souvenirs from other realms

Chen Guangrui summons his servant who carries forward a bag of gifts for all the villagers.

Villagers:

Chen Guangrui you are so kind
Your fate has luck linked with the heavens

After saying this the villagers finish collecting their gifts and leave.

Chen Guangrui walks forward to Madame Zhang with Wenjiao.

Chen Guangrui:
Mother!
Let me introduce my bride

Wenjiao steps forward to greet Madam Zhang

Wenjiao:
My name is Wenjiao
Daughter of chief minister - Yin Kaishan

Madame Zhang:
My daughter, an exquisite girl
What a family we may have!
Now tell me how you met.

Guangrui and Wenjiao:
How we met?

Duet

Chen Guangrui:
Thanks to my mother's blessings,
Your son placed first in the exam
Given the title Zhuangyuan.
And to mark this humbling feat?
A parade through all the streets!

Wenjiao:
I had made an embroidered ball
Silk woven with my heart
From a festooned tower let it fall
When I saw Chen Gangrui ride past

Chen Guangrui:
It fell and hit my hat you see
Then pipes and ladies came to me
And I was led inside a hall
All the time I held that ball

Wenjiao:
A celebration was created
Master of ceremonies decorated
And we were wed, forever vowed
To Heaven, Earth, and all we bowed.

Guangrui and Wenjiao:
From unmarried to married we became
Husband and wife, heart, body and name

Recitative

Madame Zhang:
May your happiness be deep and never changing!

Chen Guangrui:
I awoke to be governor of Jiangzhou
Granted by the emperor

Wenjiao:

We are on our way there
All that is missing is you.

Madame Zhang is enamoured by the sweetness of Wenqiao and her son.

Madame Zhang:

Of course all I want is to accompany you too.

Scene 2

2a

Outside the inn Chen Gangrui is looking for food for his mother in a street market.

Duet (mini aria for the fisherman?):

Fisherman:

Fresh fish caught daily
Today a speciality
Come buy my golden carp

Chen Gangrui:

How much sir?
I need it for my mother
Who is rests from sickness in this inn.

Chen Gangrui reaches into his pockets and pulls out a purse

I have a string of copper coins.

Fisherman:

You are a good child
As your mother is so sick
You may have it for the string

Chen Gangrui:

I thank you, kindly fisherman.

Chen Gangrui gives the money to the fisherman at takes the fish from him. As he does so he stares at the fish in surprise.

Recitative:

But what is this I see?
This golden carp blinks up at me!

Short aria:

I remember from my childhood
That fish or snakes which blink
Are no ordinary creatures
And should be treated as a kings

Chen Gangrui having thought for a moment turns back to the fisherman.

Fisherman!
You must take it back from whence it came.
Set it free and never fish it out again!

Having said this Chen Gangrui returns the fish to the fisherman allowing him to keep the money and the fish. The fisherman seems to understand and nods in agreement.

2b.

Madame Zhang and Wenjiao appear on stage. Wenjiao is supporting Madame Zhang as she walks weakly towards Chen Gangrui.

Recitative and Trio:

Madame Zhang:
It is right to release all living things
I am so pleased!

Chen Guangrui:
Mother I must leave by the morning.
Has your health recovered these three days?

Madame Zhang takes Chen Guangrui by the hands

Madame Zhang:
My body is still so frail-

Wenjiao:
-And the heat so strong it would make me afraid

Madame Zhang:
It is best I stay at the inn.

Chen Guangrui breaks from Madame Zhang and goes to consult with Wenjiao

Chen Guangrui:
We must leave her here until summer is gone?

Wenjiao:
And rent her two rooms until it is cooler.

Madame Zhang:
Leave me some money and I will recover
You can fetch me when my body is tougher.

Chen Guangrui calls a servant who he discusses briefly with. The servant leaves and returns quickly with his luggage. Chen Guangrui then reaches into one of his bags and pulls out a heavy purse to give to Madame Zhang. As he gives it to her she embraces him and then Wenjiao in a farewell.

Madame Zhang:
My children you do not need for luck
Your subjects will be lucky for your guidance
Farewell

Wenjiao:
We will return just as leaves fall

Chen Guangrui:
Before the winter frost has settled in.

Wenjiao and Chen Guangrui:
Farewell mother Zhang!

After saying this Chen Guangrui and Wenjiao leave the stage with their servant and their luggage. They leave Madame Zhang behind looking after them.

Scene 3

Scene 3a: (Liu Hong & Li Biao)

Chen Gangrui and Wenjiao are settling into the boat as the servant lifts their luggage in for them. Liu Hong and Li Biao the boat men are conspiring on the side. Liu Hong is staring at Wenjiao.

Duet:

Liu Hong:
I cannot stop staring at her
Her face full like a moon
Her eyes like autumn waves

Li Biao goes to join in.

Li Biao:
Her mouth sweet as a cherry
Her waist supple as a willow

Liu Hong:
Oh her beauty makes wild geese fall from the sky
And puts the flowers and moon to shame

Li Biao has been watching Liu Hong

Li Biao:
He has paid us handsomely
For such a simple crossing
This man has kingly wealth

Liu Hong stops staring and thinks out loud

Liu Hong:
And with him is far more

Liu Hong turns to Li Biao excited and with madness.

Li Biao:
(mock frightened)
What will you have me do?

Liu Hong:
Help me kill the husband
I'll keep the wife
And take his name
But all I own will go to you.

Li Biao turns in contemplation

Li Biao:

What evil spirit's taken hold
It rises in me, feeling bold

Then with sudden greed Li Biao turns back to Liu Hong

I'll have money enough to own
A fleet of river boats

Liu Hong:

Let us row into the misty gulf
In darkness we can cut their throats

Li Biao and Liu Hong:

Ha! Ha! Ha!

Scene 3b: (Liu Hong, Li Biao & Guangrui, Wenjiao, Servant)

Liu Hong and Li Biao go over to the boat and start their journey. Liu Hong is staring at Wenjiao. Mist fills the stage.

Recitative/Sung through:

Servant:

Master, I feel worried
The air has grown too dark
These men are -

Before the servant can finish talking Li Biao kills the servant by stabbing him in the back from behind.

Aaaaaah! Tricksters!

Chen Guangrui sees this through the mist and hears the servant scream. Li Biao quickly pushes the servant's body overboard into the river. Chen Gangrui rushes forward to stop him but cannot see Liu Hong lying in wait and runs into his knife. He calls out to his wife.

Chen Guangrui:

Wenjiao! Wenjiao!
We have been stabbed!

Wenjiao rushes to Chen Guangrui. As she rushes to him he calls out again but this time much weaker than before. As he does this Liu Hong has pushed him to the edge of the boat and finally throws him overboard as well.

Wen - jiao. . .

Wenjiao is now leaning over the edge of the boat.

Wenjiao:

Chen Gangrui
My husband hear me!
I must throw my body out to yours!

As Wenjiao says this she climbs up to the edge of the boat to jump into the water. Liu Hong runs to her and pulls her back.

Liu Hong:

Be calm now girl
And be my wife
I will steal your husband's life.
Consent to my demands
And all will be alright
If not you shall also die!

Wenjiao holds her stomach which has a sudden pain. She is in fact pregnant with Chen Guangrui's child. Seeing no other way out she lets Liu Hong sit her down in the boat and row away. All that is left is the servant's body floating in the water. The body of Chen Gangrui has already sunk.

Scene 4a: (A yakṣa & The Dragon King + Chorus)

In the hall of the Dragon King. The Dragon King is just entering the throne-hall, and a chorus is singing to mark his arrival, when a yakṣa runs in behind with news.

Chorus

Creatures:

Hail the Dragon King
Returned home to our seas
We celebrate his glory
His watery territory
Is now again at ease
Hail the Dragon King

Yakṣa runs in out of breath and calls out to the Dragon King

Recitative

Yakṣa:

Dragon King-

The Dragon King stops walking towards his throne and turns his head to see who speaks. He sees the out of breath yakṣa.

Dragon King:

Yes yakṣa?

Yakṣa:

There is a report from Hong Estuary.
A man murdered - a scholar
His body now lies on the river bed.

The Dragon King takes in the news and thinks for a second. Then he commands to the yakṣa.

Dragon King:

Bring his body for inspection.

The Dragon King takes his throne. The yakṣa exits with some of the chorus and returns carrying the body of Guangrui. Some other chorus bring on a table to place the body on top of. With the body of Gangrui safely on

the table the Dragon King descends from his throne to carefully inspect the body. The Dragon King then looks up and speaks to the yakṣa.

Dragon King:
Is it not said that one must always repay kindness?

The yakṣa speaks whilst bowing.

Yakṣa:
Always my King.

The Dragon King then takes a quill and parchment from his robe and writes a memorandum. Whilst doing so he talks to the yakṣa about what he must do.

Dragon King:
Yakṣa go to the city god of Haizhou
And the local spirit of Hongzhou
Return with the soul of this scholar
This dispatch will direct you.

The Dragon King hands over the parchment to the yakṣa. The yakṣa kneels to the Dragon King and then leaves on his mission.

Scene 4b: (The Dragon King (aria))

While the Dragon King sings this aria his subjects (the chorus) are all listening intently. At moments they may gasp in fear or relief.

Aria

Dragon King:
As ruler of this river
I've powers

Creatures:
though a few

Dragon King:
Which allow a transformation, a fleeting incarnation
To becoming something new

I like to be a carp
To hide bathed in Hongjiang
With golden scales, acting as a veil
To view all people from

When last I took this form
I was ensnared by the fisherman's net
I could not yet realize, my true form and kingly size
My powers exhausted and not yet reset

I was taken to a market town
Sold to a kind and handsome man

Creatures:
Kind and handsome man

Dragon King:

He noticed my eyes blink, and stopped a while to think
He spoke back to the fisherman

“Release this carp today
Back into Hong river”
Saving my life, he ended all strife
With luck I was delivered!

The chorus are relieved and sing in joy as the Dragon King greets his subjects and comforts them that he has not been lost.

Chorus

Creatures:

Hail the Dragon King
Returned home to our seas
We celebrate his glory
Hail the Dragon King

Act 2

Scene 1

Scene 1a: Xuanzang (aria), Faming

Scene opens in the Jinshan Temple. The abbot monk Faming is at the alter praying. A young monk named Xuanzang comes running into the temple in distress. Faming stands up as he enters and Xuanzang goes to kneel before the monk.

Recitative:

Abbot Faming:

Why do you come here in haste?

Young master Xuanzang what has upset you so greatly?

Xuanzang:

Abbot Faming, I have to know who my parents really are!

Abbot Faming:

Are you sure this is the right time?

Xuanzang becomes upset again and speaks out harshly against a fellow monk who has been arguing with.

Xuanzang:

That dog eating, beer drinking, monk chided me today.

When I confronted him on his blasphemy,

He condemned me as a nameless animal.

Arietta:

Xuanzang:

I have always tried hard

To act within the rules

I meditate and study daily

In gratefulness to you

All that I have ever known

Is that I was born of stone

But this cannot be true

I am made of man like you

Xuanzang becomes more upset now. And gets to his knees to beg Abbot Faming for the truth.

I beg you, tell me truth

My parents must be real

This painful longing in my heart

Needs honesty to heal

At your feet now kneeling

Please do not conceal

I beg you! Abbot Faming

My parent's names you must reveal!

Scene 1b: Xuanzang & Faming (Arietta)

Recitative

Abbot Faming:

Dear child, as you are old enough to care for yourself
And mature enough to see the source of your pain

Abbot Faming reaches into his pocket and pulls out a letter written in blood.

This letter written all in blood will show your parent's names.

As Abbot Faming sings Xuangzang reads the letter.

Aria

Abbot Faming:

When meditating eighteen years ago
I was aroused and heard an infant cry
On the river bank I saw a glow
A baby on a board let out a sigh

Tied to his chest I found a letter
Written in blood, to not forget her
I took this babe and named him River
Then later Xuanzang to be a monk

The letter you are reading now
A mother wrote to tell you how -
You came into the world!

Xuangzang has become more and more distressed whilst reading the letter and interrupts Abbot Faming.

Recitative:

With resolve and anger.

Xuangzang:

How can I be a man if I don't avenge my father and mother?

Abbot Faming is saddened by the story but remains very calm.

Abbot Faming:

I cannot condone your revenge
For violence is no means to ends
However, you must find your mother -
Travel as a mendicant monk, in an educational journey.

Xuangzang:

I would not be alive today, teacher, had you not rescued me and raised me as your son.
I shall rebuild the temple to repay your kindness!

Xuanzang leaves to start his journey.

Scene 2b: Yin Wenjiao & Xuanzang

Recitative:

A voice comes from outside the room (off stage)

Xuanzang:
Alms! Alms!

Wenjiao rushes to the window and calls out.

Wenjiao:
Good monk, please come inside
I can offer vegetables and rice.

Xuanzang enters the doorway of the house and comes on stage.

Xuanzang:
Noble lady you are so kind.

Wenjiao gasps in surprise and says to herself

Wenjiao:
It is as if my husband Guangrui had returned as a monk to me.

Then she speaks directly to Xuanzang again

Where have you come from?

Xuanzang:
I am a disciple of Faming at the Jinshan Temple of the Gold Mountain.

Wenjiao signals to Xuanzang to come in further from the doorway. She also turns to send her maid away.

Wenjiao:
You may leave us.

The maid leaves.

Young teacher tell me - have you always been a monk?
What of your mother and father? Did they leave you at the temple?

Xuanzang looks earnestly at Wenjiao as he answers.

Xuanzang:
I did not become a monk as a child or an adult.
A great wrong befell my family and now I have a hatred as deep as the sea.
My father was murdered and my mother stolen by his attacker.
Abbot Faming told me I should seek my mother here.

Wenjiao:
What is your mother's name?

Xuanzang:
My mother is Yin Wenjiao and my father Chen Guangrui.
My nickname is River and my temple name Xuanzang.

Wenjiao gasps in shock and says in half joy half fear.

Wenjiao:

I am Wenjiao

Now Xuanzang gasps and falls to his knees.

What proof have you for me if your identity?

Though his weeping Xuanzang takes the blood written letter from his inner garments.

Xuanzang:

Mother! Read this and believe.

Wenjiao looks at the letter then back to Xuanzang.

Wenjiao:

Have you any deformities?

Xuanzang:

Only one – my left foot's little toe.

Xuanzang removes his shoe to show Wenjiao his toe.

Wenjiao:

I bit it so I would know it's you .

Wenjiao and Xuanzang embrace. Wenjiao then takes a ring and letter from a box.

You must leave as fast as you can, or Liu will have you killed.

Take this incense ring.

Find Madame Zhang at Ten Thousand Flower Inn, in the province of Hongzhou.

Then find my father Yin in the golden palace.

Take this letter and he shall avenge my husband's death.

Xuanzang:

It pains to leave but I know I shall see you soon.

Farewell mother.

Xuanzang respectfully bows to his mother, take the items and leaves.

Scene 3

Scene 3a: Madam Zhang (Aria)

In a dilapidated potter's kiln near the Southern Gate we see Madame Zhang. She is looking much older. Her clothes are ripped and she is now blind.

Aria:

Madame Zhang:

My son, the governor of Jiangzhou
Left me here in spring
Many years have passed on since
No news did he bring.

Eighteen sets of leaves have fallen
As I wait for him each Autumn.
Eighteen frozen winters passed
My days and years rushed by too fast

The sadness from a life alone
Is great enough to trap a soul
And what am I sick of?
The loss of all I love

18 years have come and gone
In loneliness I'm living on.

Scene 3b: Xuanzang & Madame Zhang

Xuanzang enters the stage and sings to the audience of the news he has heard.

Recitative

Xuanzang:

Poor Madame Zhang.
The innkeeper from Ten Thousand Flowers told me she went blind.
Having no money left he could not let her stay.
She begs now night and day.

I feel that she is close
The heavens will help me find her
I will search the streets in hope
With money for each beggar

As he sings this he comes close to Madame Zhang who is begging.

Madame Zhang:

Is that my son Chen Guangrui, or are my ears deceiving me?

Xuanzang:

This must be Madame Zhang!

Turning to Madame Zhang.

No, but I am his only child. Lady Wenjiao is my mother.

Madame Zhang pauses for a moment in thought.

Madame Zhang:

Why have your mother and father not come to me themselves?

Xuanzang:

I'm sorry for what I must say.
My father was brutally murdered.
And my mother stolen away.

Madame Zhang wails in pain at this news.

Madame Zhang:

Oh! For all his merit and worth – this is how it ended?
I thought he had forgot his mother's kindness.
Thank the heavens for your return!
How did you know this is my home?

Xuanzang:

I found my mother again.
She told me where to seek.
Take this ring and read this letter.

Madame Zhang:

My grandson I am blind.
In abandon daily I wept
Till my eyes could no longer see.

Xuanzang:

Grandma...

When hearing this Xuanzang knelt down and prayed to heaven. Then he stood again kissed both of Madame Zhang's eyes.

A miracle!
Now I see you really are my son's child.

Madame Zhang embraces Xuanzang. She is crying but happy. Xuanzang holds her out to tell her his new promise.

Xuanzang:

Take this money grandmother
Go back to Liu Xioer's inn.
I promise to return for you
Just wait one month more.

After handing over the money Xuanzang collects his bags again and leaves the town (exits stage). Madame Zhang is left with hope and renewed faith in her family again.

Madame Zhang:

Just as your father promised me.
Goodbye! Goodbye, son.....

Xuanzang:

Goodbye, grandma... Goodbye!

Scene 4

Scene 4a: Chunmei, the chief minister, the chief minister's wife & Xuanzang

Recitative

Chunmei walks into the hall of the chief minister at his home.

Chunmei:

Chief Minister, a young monk, who claims to be your kin, is waiting at the gate.

Chief minister:

No monk is kin of mine. Send him away Chunmei. He must be mistaken.

The ministers wife who was sitting next to him raises her hand to Chunmei.

Minister's wife:

No stop. Last night I dreamt our daughter Wenjiao would come home.
Perhaps he brings some news?

The minister contemplates for a moment then turns back to the Chunmei.

Chief minister:

Very well. Send him in.

Chunmei turns and goes out. She returns on stage with Xuanzang behind him. Chunmei bows and moves back. Then Xuanzang steps forward to bow. As he looks up and sees the minister and his wife he falls in tears to the floor. The minister signals to Chunmei to help him up. As she does so Xuanzang passes Chunmei a letter. He speaks through his tears.

Xuanzang:

Please give this to your master.

Chunmei hands the letter to the Chief Minister. The minister reads the whole letter and wails out loud.

Minister's wife:

What is the matter my husband?

Chief minister:

This monk is our grandson.
Our beloved son-in-law was murdered by a brigand.
Our beautiful daughter stolen to be his bride.

On hearing this news the Minister's wife also wails out her anguish and falls to the floor.

Minister's wife:

So this is why she never came home!

Scene 4b: The chief minister with the chief minister's wife & Xuanzang (trio)

Recitative:

Chief Minister:

My dear wife, be soothed.
I shall ask permission from the emperor to lead an army against Liu Hong!

The Chief Minister, Minister's Wife and Xuanzang all sing to the audience about their pain.

Trio:

Minister's wife:

My poor and captured daughter
Forced to lose her child
Her husband taken from her
Lives a sad disguise

Chief Minister:

Such honour stolen from her
Wenjiao shall be avenged
And Guangrui exalted
Through Liu Hong's bloody end

Xuanzang

I am so grateful for
The family I've found
Still anger boils inside me
For Liu Hong chained and bound

Minister's wife:

Forgive us Wenjiao
You must come home

Chief minister:

I will raise an army
To bring you home

Xuanzang:

No longer an orphan
We will remake my home

End of Act 2.

Act III

Scene 1a: In the private residence of the governor of Jiangzhou

The scene opens with Liu Hong lying asleep in his bed chambers. He is awoken from his dreaming by the sounds of a gong and drums approaching. Liu Hong gasps and sits up suddenly.

Liu Hong:

I thought that sound of army drums was only in my dreams.
But now awake I hear it still!

At this point the Chief Minister, Xuanzang and a group of guards rush on stage.

Chief Minister:

Sieze this man! He is a false hero.
Not the governor of Jiangzhou but instead the despicable boatman Liu Hong.

Xuanzang runs forward with some of the guards.

Liu Hong:

How dare you arrest me? I am the governor of Jiangzhou, Chen Guangrui!

Xuanzang:

You murderous coward. Finally, my family shall be avenged!

Liu Hong tries to break free and runs towards the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister:

There is no use in trying to escape. Sixty thousand of the emperor's soldiers are waiting to catch you.
The execution ground awaits.

Liu Hong is frozen in fear. As he stands frozen in front of the Chief Minister the soldiers come up behind and take both arms to drag him off stage. The Chief Minister then calls out to his daughter.

My daughter I must see her now.

The chief Minister turns to look offstage. He sings to the wings.

Wenjiao, please greet us! Your son is returned, your husband avenged.

Scene 1b: Xuanzang, Yin Wenjiao & the chief minister (Trio)

Xuanzang is waiting to hear a response. He is impatient and becomes restless.

Xuanzang:

Grandfather, why does my mother not answer?
(aside) I have a sudden sour feeling.
Wait here and I shall fetch her myself.

Xuanzang runs offstage to find Wenjiao. From offstage we here him cry.

No mother! You must not!
With my sword I cut this rope.

Then he enters the stage as well supporting Wenjiao. She seems to be in shock and is almost crying. As soon as she sees her father she turns to run offstage again. Xuanzang stops her before she can leave.

Trio:

Wenjiao:

I cannot face my father.

Xuanzang:

The brigand is now gone

Wenjiao:

The shame I brought upon him
Can never be undone.

The Chief Minister steps forward and pleads with Wenjiao.

Chief Minister:

Wenjiao! My daughter I forgive you
I wish to see your face

Wenjiao:

To have more than one husband
Is to live a life disgraced
It was only for my son
I had to carry on

Xuanzang:

And now that I have found you
If you died I would die too.

The Chief Minister reaches for Wenjiao in grief.

Chief Minister:

It is I you must forgive my child
Eighteen years have gone so fast
And I did not notice your husband passed.

Hearing this Wenjiao turns to her father with compassion.

Wenjiao:

No, you have been strong!

Xuanzang speaks to Wenjiao whilst sobbing.

Xuanzang:

You have done no wrong.

Chief Minister:

The two of you need not be distressed.
Our enemy captured, together let's rest.

Xuanzang:

I have found my family.
Now we may live happily.

Xuanzang takes his mother's arm and the Chief Minister leads them all off stage.

Scene 2a: The chief minister, Liu Hong & Li Biao

The scene opens back at the Hong river crossing, where Guangrui had been murdered many years ago. This time we see both Liu Hong and Li Biao have been captured by the Chief Ministers guards. They are both very weak now as they have just received 100 lashes. The Chief Minister, Madame Zhang, Xuanzang and Wenjiao are also gathered there. The scene is laid out a like a trial with the Chief Minister as judge and Wenjiao and Xuanzang as jury.

Recit:

Chief Minister:

Li Biao, Liu Hong -
I have your statements here
To all it is made clear
That murder was your plan
To steal wealth from an enviable man.

Have you anymore to say?

Arietta:

Li Biao:

Wise and righteous minister

My actions poisoned more
Than the life of Guangrui
Once to evil I had sworn
My world was gone from me.

I beg of you to spare me now
I'll give you all I own – I vow!
Then live as hermit with just a knife
That I may use to take my life –

Liu Hong interrupts Li Biao laughing

Liu Hong:

Ha ha ha ha ha
You squandered all your gold!
You haven't even property to buy a flowered vase.
Ha ha ha ha ha

Liu Hong continues to laugh a manic and sinister laugh.

Chief Minister:

There is no room for mercy here.
Li Biao – you shall be dragged to market place,
Cut into a thousand strips
Leaving whole only your face
For all to see in remembrance of this.

Li Biao wails as he is dragged off stage and Liu Hong laughs.

Liu Hong – your living heart and liver,
We shall sacrifice to the river.

Liu Hong is now killed by the guards. We hear his laughter turn into wailing.

Scene 2b: Chen Guangrui, Xuanzang, Yin Wenjiao, Madame Zhang & the chief minister (Quintet)

Recit:

Wenjiao then cries out in pain and rushes towards the edge of the river, ready to throw herself in and drown her. Xuanzang rushes forward to hold her back.

Xuanzang:

Mother! No! The lowlife is dead!

Wenjiao is crying and looking out to the river when suddenly she sees something floating towards them.

Wenjiao:

Son, son, I must be going mad
I think I see my husband Guangrui
I see him floating back to me.

Xuanzang and the Chief Minister both come to the edge of the river to look. They both see it too. They watch as we see Chen Guangrui stretch out his hands and legs, stand up, and then walk out of the river towards them.

Chen Guangrui:

What are you all doing here?

In shock Wenjiao and Madame Zhang reply.

Wenjiao and Madame Zhang:

What are you doing here?

Arietta:

Chen Guangrui:

After I was killed my soul was blessed not damned
In the Water Crystal Palace
By the Dragon King's command

He was the carp I had let free that day
In return he let me stay -
A Water Bureau officer

A preservative pearl was placed on my tongue
And my body preserved
For my soul to float back on

Your sacrifice has brought me home

All welcome Chen Guangrui back in great joy.

Quintet:

Wenjiao:

After you were killed I gave birth to this son.
By good fortune he was found and raised at temple Jinshan.

Xuanzang:

Mother!
When I learned of my mother's tale I found her

She sent me then to seek help from her father

Chief Minister:

I am now still ashamed of the 18 years that passed
Before I avenged your death. Forgive me son at last.

Madame Zhang:

Ah! My son!
And I thought you had left me behind
Forgotten your mother, become unkind.

Chen Guangrui:

My wife! Wenjiao!
I am just happy to be
Finally with my family

Wenjiao, Xuanzang, Chief Minister, Madame Zhang and Chen Guangrui:

Praise to the Dragon King
Who sent you/me home
Your/My life restored
Our joy is yours.

Scene 3

The scene opens and we see Wenjiao in her bed chamber. She is washing her face in preparation for something. She looks up to the mirror and sings to herself. Initially she is angry with herself, but her anger dissipates as she becomes resigned to her fate.

Recitative

Yin Wenjiao:

What a woman - with two husbands!
How unnatural!

My honest life destroyed, I chose comfort and shame.
Unforgivable!

Oh - South Pole Star you warned me, the Dragon King would bring my husband home.
We both would wait in luxury, disingenuous and mystical.
The life of my son, made my world hypocritical.

Aria:

How joyous to see my dear Guangrui
Avenged and delivered from the murky sea
But the shame that pervades my soul
Permits me always to suffer, hollowed, not whole
I betrayed my love and wedding vows
Perjury must be punished somehow.

Quiet my soul, oh Gods, have mercy!
I give back my body, stolen by men from me.
Take what I wanted to let go of long ago

Suddenly remembering the Star's prophecy:

Oh – South Pole Star you told me

My son's name would be known by all
This story does not end with me

Wenjiao takes the cup of poison and kneels to pray.

Gods please keep my son from harm,
Within his spirit I shall stay forever.

She picks up the cup and drinks the poison. She falls over and dies.

Scene 4 (Epilogue):

Scene 4: on the "Five-Phases mountain"

Xuanzang is part way through his journey. It has been hard and he is very tired and hungry. He has already encountered demons and spirits, and his fellow travellers have been eaten along the way. He was spared due to his enlightened spirit.

Then from under the mountain the thunderous voice of the Monkey King suddenly appears.

Monkey King:
My master's come, my master's come.

End of Act 3