

The Monster of Gao

Overture

Many years have passed
Since illustrious emperor Tang
Ordered Guangrui to be scholar
And a monkhood for Xuanzang
And while the people worked
The gods around them
Lurked, and crafted darkness.

A member of the Dragon Kings
Who had double crossed the heavens
Spoke to the emperor
In dreams he begged
That somehow he would save his head.

The emperor flew in another dream
To kill the executioner Dragon King!
In dark revenge for this attempt
He took the emperor's soul,
To tour the underworld -
There he saw the many orphaned souls.

To relieve their suffering the emperor held
A ceremony to -
"The Great Mass of Land and Water".

Watched over by Guanyin the golden goddess
She proclaimed:
To untie the knots of all injustice –
And save the innocent from disaster.
Someone must travel westerly.
To India's Thunder Monastery
Where the Buddha lives!
Collect the Tripitaka
And the San Zang scripture.

Forward stepped Xuanzang
To save all souls from eternal pain
He would suffer now, then never again.
In howling forests he followed his course,
At first alone – then guided through divine force.

He passed through the five-elements-mountain
Where tigers and wolves roam unguarded
And trapped within lies Sun Wukong
The rebellious Monkey King!

Xuanzang shouts to the heavens in fear
“Venerable ancients, I call for your help”
The mountain bellows the voice of Sun Wukong -
“My master’s come, my master’s come!”

Act 1

Scene 1: Gao Village

Recitative

The Monkey King is on stage. Gao Cai enters and strides with purpose across the stage. The Monkey King watches and then runs over and grabs the young mans wrist with one hand.

Monkey King: Where are you heading? Tell me! and what is this town called?

Gao Cai struggles trying to break free from the Monkey King’s grasp. As he is doing this Xuanzang enters the stage and watches the scene.

Gao Cai: Let me go! Isn’t there someone else you can ask?

Gao Cai continues struggling in a wild manner. The Monkey King is calm and smiles.

Monkey King: If you help me then I will help you. Prove yourself – pry open my hand and I will let you go!

Gao Cai twists and tries to pry open the Monkey King’s fingers but cannot manage and ends up feeling exhausted. Xuanzang then steps towards them.

Xuanzang: Wukong, be nice. There is no need to hang on to this young man, someone else is coming from over there. Let him go.

Monkey King: Master you don’t understand. If I ask someone else it will all be in vein. *(Then turning to Gao Cai)* And besides where is the fun in that?

Gao Cai is in a rush and sees that there is no hope so gives in.

Gao Cai: This town is called Gao Village, in the land of the Kingdom of Qoco.
It is called such as most of the families have the name Gao.
Now let me go!

The Monkey King doesn’t let go.

Monkey King: I see . . .

You are not dressed for a stroll, and you walk with such purpose. Tell me the truth, what is your business here? (*Gao Cai tries to run away but the Monkey King interjects*)

-Then I will let you go.

Aria

Gao Cai: I am a member of the family of old Squire Gao, and my name is Gao Cai.

Squire Gao has a daughter
He suffers from her loss
This past year a monster stole her - took her for his wife
Now old Gao lives in shame
For such a son-in-law
Has ruined all our reputations, the marriage still goes on

Since then she has been locked up
Behind his house in some dark hut
That evil spirit keeps her from us

Old Gao gave me some silver
To search for a wise monk
Who might break the monster's spell
And free his daughter from this hell

Each one I asked, failed in their task
Charms impotent and weak
They took the silver and failed us
Our lives still wrought and bleak

Since then old Gao has scolded me
Called me inept, useless and forcefully
Gave me one small purse more
One last chance to free her
From that monster's door!

Gao Cai has become more and more upset and lets out a wail.

Oh how my lucky stars abandoned me!
You know my tale – now set me free.

The Monkey King has listened with great excitement and interest to this story. With a joyful happy face he says to Gao Cai and speaks with a mad hunger and joy.

Recitative

Monkey King: Young man you are in luck! Do not take one more step, do not spend your silver –
Here stand the finest monster capturers in this land.
We are the chosen monks from the East
To worship the Buddha, and carry his scriptures, in the West
We can seize and bind your fiend!

Gao Cai is both scared by the Monkey King's excitement and excited that his journey might be over.

Gao Cai: I've suffered so much already – please do not deceive me.

Monkey King: I give you my guarantee. You won't be harmed. You will see. Lead us to old Gao's door.

The Monkey King is still holding onto the wrist of Gao Cai. Gao Cai leads the way and then stops at the door of old Gao. He turns to Xuanzang and the Monkey King.

Gao Cai: Please take your rest – I'll announce you both.

The Monkey King then releases Gao Cai. Gao Cai exits the stage leaving the Monkey King and Xuanzang sitting next to the door.

Scene 2: Mr. Gao's house

Recitative

Gao Cai enters the main hall. By chance Mr. Gao is also here and is immediately angry at Gao Cai for returning so soon.

Mr. Gao: You foolish buffoon! You should be out on your mission - why have you returned empty handed?

Gao Cai bows and speaks looking up at Mr. Gao.

Gao Cai: My lord, I am your humble servant. I only reached the end of the street when two monks blocked my path. They claim they can get rid of that monster spirit!

Mr. Gao: Where did they come from? Who are they?

Gao Cai: One claimed to be a holy monk. A younger brother of the emperor who sent him from the Land of the East to worship Buddha in the Western Heaven and bring back the scriptures.

Mr. Gao is impressed by this news, but also wary.

Mr. Gao: They have travelled far, but still they may not help. . . Where are they now?

Gao Cai: Waiting outside the front door.

Mr. Gao gestures to Gao Cai to fetch them. Gao Cai goes to the side of the stage and Xuanzang and the Monkey King enter.

Mr. Gao: Greetings honorable elders. I bow deeply before you.

Xuanzang returns the deep bow, but the Monkey King just stands still. Mr. Gao looks at the Monkey King and, seeing how ugly he is, decides not to bow to him.

Monkey King: Where is my deep bow of respect?

Mr. Gao is affronted and turns to Gao Cai.

Mr. Gao: You brazen idiot! We already have one ugly monster here we cannot drive out, and now you bring me another!

The Monkey King berates old Mr. Gao and with a powerful command speaks back.

Monkey King: Gao you are an ignorant old fool. Did no one teach you not to judge by appearances?
You may see no beauty in my face
But don't dare doubt my ability
To rid your fiend from this place
And return your youngest daughter - I'll be doing you a favor!

Old Mr. Gao starts to tremble a bit in fear but pulls himself together.

Mr. Gao: I hear you come from the Land of the East?

Xuanzang: Yes, sent to seek the scriptures. And with your blessing we would ask shelter for the night. In the early morning, we shall be gone.

Mr. Gao: If it is simply lodging you need why profess to catching spirits too?

Monkey King: If we are staying, we might as well have our fun, and go fishing for monsters. Just how many might we find?

Mr. Gao: By heaven's! How many do you want? We have only this one, and have fed him long enough!

The Monkey King's eyes light up with a hungry joy.

Monkey King: Do tell me all about him!

Aria

Mr Gao: My poor fortune gave me no sons and three daughters! Three daughters!

The eldest two were betrothed as children,
To men from this town Gao.
But for my youngest – Gao Cuilan, I hoped,
A husband who would let his name go.
He would live with our family,

Become my heir and look after me.

Three years ago, a man named Zhu,
Handsome despite his name meaning pig,
Arrived here from Fuling Mountain,
With neither parents nor siblings.
So I blessed him as my son-in-law,
Fool that I am, gave Gao Cuilan's hand!

I concede he was a hard worker.
Ploughing our field without oxen
And no scythe to harvest the crops!
But his appearance began to fade,
Day by day, his features would change.

Monkey King: That's funny! Change in what way?

Mr Gao: At first, he had seemed swarthy and stout
But now he looks just like a mutt,
With oversized ears, and distended snout.
His hair tufts of bristles, a coarse hulking gut.
If I didn't know better I'd call him a hog!

Oh! And I haven't mentioned his appetite.
He eats barrels of food day and night.
At once three to five bushels of rice,
With hundreds of biscuits he doesn't snack light.
Thanks heaven's he's vegetarian –
He'd cost me the earth in meat and wine!

Mr. Gao has been getting more and more excitable and agitated as he tells the story of his son-in-law.

Xuanzang: He'll need that food if he works so hard!

Mr. Gao: Just wait that's not the worst of it!
He comes and goes riding a wind,
Sets grit, and dust in a foggy spin.
My neighbours can't get a moments peace,
Even in their own home they don't feel safe.

And then he locks up my little girl.
For half a year we haven't even heard her.
And now we know that he is a monster!

We need a priest to drive him out -
Break the curse he's cast on our house!

Monkey King:

Relax, old man! This will take no time.

I can catch him for you tonight!

I'll demand the marriage annulled and return your daughter.

All you need do is go to bed.

Act 2

Scene 1: Ganglie's house

Recitative

Only Gao Cuilan is on stage. There is a soft light but it is very dark. From off stage we hear the voice of the Monkey King.

Monkey King: Quickly, get the key.

Mr. Gao: If a key could do the trick, I would have no need for you!

Monkey King laughs.

Monkey King: Are you so old you can't recognize a joke? I was only teasing. Don't be so literal.

With a loud smash the Monkey King hits the lock with his rod and blows open the door. Inside is total darkness as the Monkey King and Mr. Gao enter the stage. The Monkey King speaks to Mr. Gao.

Monkey King: Call to your daughter.

Mr. Gao: Miss Three! Dear Cuilan!

Gao Cuilan: Papa! Is that you? I'm over here!

Gao Cuilan and Mr. Gao make their way through the darkness towards each other. When they find each other Gao Cuilan embraces her father and starts to cry and wail. The Monkey King impatiently speaks to Gao Cuilan.

Monkey King: Stop crying! Stop crying! Tell me where the monster has gone.

Gao Cuilan: I really don't know where he goes. He leaves at dawn, and returns after dark.

Monkey King: *(snidely)* Of course to avoid old Gao. *(turning to Mr. Gao)* Take your beloved child with you to the house. Have a nice long catch up. I'll wait here to weed out your demon from its roots.

Mr. Gao leads his daughter off stage.

Monkey King grins with excitement.

Monkey King: What fun I'm about to have. First let me morph into the form of that girl.

The Monkey King starts to use their magic to change into Gao Cuilan. They move offstage or into a darkened part of the stage, and once the audience cannot see them Gao Cuilan takes their place.

Gao Cuilan/Monkey King is now sitting by herself as a wind starts to blow. As it picks up pace she begins to be blown about by it. It becomes stronger and stronger, turning into a

hurricane ripping through and carrying any object it passes. As the wind starts to subside a monster, Zhu Bajie, appears mid air.

Gao Cuilan/Monkey King: So I have to deal with a spirit like this.

Gao Cuilan/Monkey King goes to lie on the bed and starts to moan, pretending to be sick. Zhu Bajie has not noticed this is not really Gao Cuilan and walks over to the bed and grabs Gao Cuilan.

Zhu Bajie: Give me a kiss.

Gao Cuilan/Monkey King quickly brings his hand up, catches the snout of Zhu Bajie and gives it a strong twist. Zhu Bajie falls to the floor with a thud. Zhu Bajie picks himself up from the floor.

Zhu Bajie: Darling, why are you so angry with me today? Is it because I returned home late?

Gao Cuilan/Monkey King: I am not angry!

Zhu Bajie: Then why give me such a fright?

Gao Cuilan/Monkey King: You gave me a fright! Grabbing me like that and demanding a kiss. I'm feeling so unwell. Otherwise I would have been waiting for you at the door. Get undressed and come to bed.

Zhu Bajie, not suspecting anything, takes off his clothes. Gao Cuilan/Monkey King jumps up and goes to the chamber pot.

Zhu Bajie: My dear – where have you gone? Take off your clothes and come to bed.

Gao Cuilan/Monkey King: Go to sleep. I'm relieving myself.

Zhu Bajie gets undressed and stays in bed.

Gao Cuilan/Monkey King: Oh what terrible luck!

Aria:

Zhu Bajie: What's wrong? Why speak of bad luck?
Yes, I may eat buckets, drink gallons,
But look at how hard I work!
I've given your family, ditches, walls, moved bricks and tiles,
fields weeded and ploughed, planted seedlings of rice and
wheat.
I've done the job of many men.
Made your family rich – so now you dress in
Brocade, and ornaments of gold.
You've fruit and flowers in all four seasons,
Vegetables throughout the year

And yet you moan and groan and are cold.
No satisfaction do I hear.
Tell me how is your luck so low?

Recitative

Gao Cuilan/Monkey King: That's not what I meant. Today my parents threw bricks and tiles over the wall. They scolded and cursed at me.

Zhu Bajie: What could they scold you for?

Gao Cuilan/Monkey King: They say since we married they lost all respectability.
That you are too ugly to introduce to family.
The way you travel with clouds and fog
Makes them question who you are and where you come from.
That you have destroyed their legacy.
This is why they angrily chide and curse me.

Zhu Bajie: I admit I have not the face of a prince,
But we married and live here at your father's consent.
Why have they questioned me so today?
If they ask you again repeat what I say:
My family are in the Cloudy Paths Cave of Fuling Mountain
My surname, Zhu, is like my face - swine.
And my full name Zhu Ganglie, means strong-maned hog.

Gao Cuilan/Monkey King says to himself.

Gao Cuilan/Monkey King: So I have an honest monster here.

Gao Cuilan/Monkey King speaks to Zhu Ganglie.

Gao Cuilan/Monkey King: They've sent for a priest to come and catch you.

Zhu Bajie laughs.

Cabaletta

Zhu Bajie: Get some rest my dear and come to bed.
Go to sleep, go to sleep.
I know as many transformations as stars in the glittering plough.
I have the strength of my nine pronged rake!
I have no fear of a weak monk or exorcist or priest.

Recitative

Gao Cuilan/Monkey King: I heard they invited a great sage, by name of Sun -
Who five hundred years ago, caused great trouble in the Heavenly Palace!

Zhu Bajie suddenly becomes alarmed and stops to think. He then stands up quickly.

Zhu Bajie: If that is really so, then now I must go!

Gao Cuilan/Monkey King: All of sudden – just like that?

Zhu Bajie: You may not know this, but that stable boy by the name of Sun has great talents. I fear I would be no match for him, and I do not want to find out!

Zhu Bajie puts on his clothes and goes to the door. As he leaves the Monkey King takes up his weapon and grabs Zhu Bajie.

Monkey King: Where are running off to my fine monster? *(roaring)* Do you see who I really am?

Zhu Bajie turns and sees the magical weapon in his wife's hand and realises it must be the Monkey King.

Zhu Bajie: Sun Wukong!

He manages to escape the Monkey King's grasp and flees.

Monkey King: You can't run away! I'll chase you to the palace of the north star and follow you into the heart of hell!

Monkey King joyfully runs off stage after Zhu Bajie.

Scene 4: At the Cloud Pathway Cave

The Monkey King has chased Zhu Bajie to the Cloud Pathway Cave. The Monkey King then shouts out.

Monkey King: Despicable monster! Where are you from?

Fiend! How did you know my name? What powers do you have? Confess and I will spare your life.

Aria

Zhu Bajie: Though I was born very simple - I had a body lithe and nimble
Water God of the Heavenly Reeds I was named
Commanding all sailors of the Milky Way

I was to be a great leader,
Until the Queen Mother gave that dinner!
Her wine clouded my mind and thoughts
In a drunken stupor I thuggishly sought
The Vast Cold Palace

A beautiful fairy greeted me
Just the sight of her bewitched me
My body fuelled by lustful desire
Only she would quench that fire
Forgetting my rank and dignity
I grabbed her, asked her to bed with me
She rejected my bullish advances
Distressed she hid in the East and the West
My passions burned I roared with thunder
Almost knocking the gates of heaven over
And so I sealed my fate

By the gods I was arrested,
My drunken heart remained undaunted,
Marched to the hall of Emperor Jade
The Golden Star pleaded my case
And saved me from death through his grace
Instead punished to two thousand blows
Which tore my flesh, almost cracked my bones.

And banished from the gates of Heaven
I tried to live on the Fuling Mountain
Reborn to the earth but through the wrong womb
I was doomed
To become this Iron Haired Pig!

Monkey King: You are the God of the Heavenly Reeds! No wonder you knew who I used to be!

Zhu Bajie: You hooligan!
Do you know how much we suffered
At the hands of your rebellion?
And still you make a nightmare for others!
I'll teach you to behave
With a taste of my rake!

The Monkey King lunges at Zhu Bajie and strikes him on the head with his rod. The two enter into a magnificent fight on the mountainside. In turn they raise in turn the gold banded rod and the nine pronged rake, glistening against the red misty clouds. The rake attacking like a dragon was easily blocked by the cudgel with the quick speed and strength of a phoenix. They clashed and fought from day till dawn. Finally Zhu Bajie struck a blow that hit the head of the Monkey King. But it did not even make a scratch on his head. Zhu Bajie trembles with fear.

Zhu Bajie: What a skull!
Monkey! I remember your time causing troubles in heaven,
But I have not heard your name again
Tell me why you came to oppress me?

Monkey King: I have turned from evil to the path of good
And travel with the brother of the Great Tang Emperor
To seek the scriptures in the Western Heaven
Tang Sanzang is the name of my master.

By chance we met your father-in-law
Who asked me to strike down your door.

Zhu Bajie is pleased to hear this and throws down his rake. He respectfully bows to the Monkey King then asks:

Zhu Bajie: Where is the pilgrim?
Please help me to meet him!

I am a convert of the Bodhisattva
Dear Guanyin, who made me vegetarian.
And bid me wait for the scriptures pilgrim.

I must follow him into the Western Heaven,
To atone for my sins, be rewarded with truth
Waiting here for years with no news

If you are his disciple truly - why treat me so viciously?

Monkey King: Don't dare to trick me with such a story. You still won't be able
to escape me.
If you are telling the truth then face the heaven's and swear.

*Immediately Zhu Bajie kneels down so low he kowtows and places his head on the ground.
He exclaims:*

Zhu Bajie: Amitābha Buddha! If am lying cut me into ten thousand pieces
for breaking the laws of heaven!

Monkey King: Come with me.

Monkey King leads Zhu Bajie down the mountain offstage.

Scene 5: Old Mr. Gao's House

Monkey King and Zhu Bajie enter the house. The Monkey King is tugging Zhu Bajie along by his ear. He lets go when they reach Xuanzang and Mr. Gao. Gao Cai runs away when she sees Zhu Bajie. Zhu Bajie then falls to his knees and kowtows to Xuanzang.

Zhu Bajie: Master! I am your disciple brought here by my elder brother. Forgive me for I did not know of your arrival and greet you.

Xuanzang confused turns to the Monkey King

Xuanzang: How did you make him submit?

Zhu Bajie: I will tell you my story, but know by Bodhisattva you are my Master and I shall follow you on your journey to the West.

Xuanzang is very pleased to hear this.

Xuanzang I thank the Bodhisattva for her divine grace. Go

Turning to Monkey King

Go ahead – untie him.

Monkey king unties the wrists of Zhu Bajie who once again bows to Xuanzang.

As a good reward, I will grant you a buddhist name.

Zhu Bajie: Master, the Bodhisattva already named be Zhu Wuneng – Pig Awakened to Power.

Xuanzang: *(laughing)* Very well! You are Wuneng and your brother Wukong,

Monkey King: Wukong – Awakened to Emptiness. We are members of the same crew.

Zhu Bajie: Master. May I be released from the commandment of the Bodhisattva to never eat the five forbidden meats and stinking food?

I have faithfully been vegetarian since she laid her hands on my head. Will you break me from this vow?

Xuanzang: Certainly not! But I can give you another name . . .

You shall be now be Zhu Bajie – the 8 ruled Pig!

Zhu Bajie: I shall happily obey!

Mr. Gao is delighted to see how his son-in-law has been transformed into the disciple of this great monk and to the path of the good.

Mr. Gao: Gao Cai – go and prepare a feast to thank the great Tang Monk.

Zhu Bajie tugs at the coats of Gao Cai

Zhu Bajie: Sir, may my wife join us to meet my Master and Brother?

Monkey King: *(laughing)* "Worthy brother! Since you have embraced Buddhism and become a monk, please don't ever mention 'your humble wife' again. Let's sit down, rather, and have a nice vegetarian meal. We'll have to start off soon for the West."