

SNOW IN MIDSUMMER

Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig

DOU YI: Everything ends.
Doctor Lu gave me a blue pill to take with my last meal.
How strange to already feel like I'm drifting down
Towards King Yama's house
Away from you and this fleeting, temporary body.
What can be made of this short, wretched life?
Heaven and Earth fear the strong and oppress the weak
Earth fails to discriminate between good and evil
Heaven mistakes the wise man and the fool
Both leave me nothing but two streams of tears.
She recognizes a woman in the crowd.

Mother Cai -
I didn't want you to see me like this.
I confessed to save you
If I don't die, how can I save your life?
A thousand beatings and ten thousand punishments
One blow, one streak of blood, one layer of skin.
They beat me till pieces of my flesh flew out
And I was dripping with blood.

Mother Cai, from now on
When it is the winter solstice and the new year festival
And on the first and fifteenth day of the month
If you have rice pulp and water left
Leave a half bowl for your daughter to eat.
If you have spirit money left unburnt
Burn a wad for Dou Yi.

Please -
Think of Dou Yi, who was sold by her mother
And can no longer conjure her face.
Think of Dou Yi, who tended your son's grave when
His life was taken building this town's factories.
Think of Dou Yi, who was framed for murder
Betrayed by a lecherous judge
And executed for a crime she didn't commit -

Mother Cai, don't cry
Don't get angry or curse the sky

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Maybe Dou Yi is not fit for this time.
My mother read me a story about a loyal official framed for murder.
As he howled at Heaven before his execution
Frost flew from the sky even though it was May.
If we still live on a planet that hates injustice
Snow will fall from the clouds and shield my remains.
May that snow be the last water that falls on New Harmony until
Justice is brought to Dou Yi.
Officers -
Do you see the white flag flapping overhead?
If I am innocent
Not a drop of hot blood will spill onto the green earth or stain my clothes
No matter how many bullets pierce this flesh.
My blood will fly towards the Blue Sky and
Stain the white flag flying above us.
This has happened before when wrongs were suffered by honest women.
Now it will happen here
Where the good suffer poverty and a short life
And the wicked live long and make lots of money.
Because officials are heartless and choose to
Close their eyes and fill their pockets
And men in this town were born with
Mouths that can right wrongs with a few words
But you are all too timid to speak.
(*The sky darkens.*)
This floating world dims for me
A cold wind spins!
Officers, I promise you -
It is the hottest time of the year
But soon snow will tumble down like cotton
And New Harmony will experience the wrath of a drought for three years.
They say Heaven has no sympathy for the human heart -
The Blue Sky will answer my prayers.
Mother!
Wait until snow falls in June and drought lasts for three years.
Then, and only then, will my innocent soul be -

CRACK CRACK CRACK! Bullets hit Dou Yi's head and neck.