

this tower. They might harm your life. (Lü does not wake) He is fast asleep. . . I can't awaken him. What shall I do? I think I'll go downstairs, put away the heating pot, pull down the sign and put up the shutters. Then I'll go back up again and wake him up. (to Lü) Hey, you! If you do not wake up, the evil spirits will come here and devour you up. I cannot be responsible. I'm leaving. (exits)

WILLOW SPIRIT: (enters, reciting a poem)

*My roots and my trunk are grown in full maturity.*

*Green leaves and soft twigs fill the branches.*

*Since I have gathered an abundance of virtuous merits,*

*The Supreme Ruler has entitled me the River Guardian.*

(speaks) I am an old willow tree. I have lived beside the Yüeh-yang Tower for hundreds of years. The white plum tree spirit in front of the Tu K'ang Temple haunts this place. I think I should go upstairs to patrol around. Do you know why? I fear she might harm people. It is getting late now. I had better go up and look around. (going up the tower) Strange! Usually, when I come up here I felt peace in my heart. Why do I feel so apprehensive today? Since I have come this far, should I go back? I might as well go up and see. (seeing Lü) Ah! No wonder, a Superior Immortal is here. I should avoid him. (starts away)

LÜ: (shouts, and stops the willow spirit) Hey, you! Where are you going? Come back!

WILLOW SPIRIT: Had I know that your worship was here, I would have welcomed you. Now I have failed in welcoming you, I can only beg your forgiveness.

LÜ: Oh! What a pity!

(sings—tune of *Tsui-chung-t'ien*)

*I see he supports himself with a long cane,*

*He looks just like the Old Dragon-King.*

WILLOW SPIRIT: Had I known earlier that your worship was here, I would have bowed to you.

LÜ (sings)

*With your crooked back, and a camel-like waist,*

*What do you come here for?*

(speaks) Let me see your original form.

(sings again) *Here, I lean on the railing to see.*

WILLOW SPIRIT: Your Worship, what are you looking for?

(sings again)

*Actually you are the old willow where the sign hangs in front of the door.*

WILLOW SPIRIT: Your servant has been here for hundreds of years.

LÜ: Shut up! (sings again)

*Don't you say your roots are buried ten thousand feet deep.*

*Now your catkins have touched mud.*

*I fear you have betrayed the presence of spring.*

(speaks) Willow, you have several shortcomings.

WILLOW SPIRIT: Your Worship, what do you mean?

LÜ: (sings—tune of *I-wang-sun*)

*The evening breeze was chilly in the camp of Ya-fu,<sup>25</sup>*

*The spring days were long in the palace of Emperor Yang,<sup>26</sup>*

*After the dance, the persons on the Ch'u Terrace suffered hunger.<sup>27</sup>*

*You busy yourself only for spring.*

WILLOW SPIRIT: Any other bad points?

LÜ: (sings)

*You had starved the palace maids of the Ch'u so much that their waists were as thin as an incense stick.<sup>28</sup>*

(speaks) Old willow, the one who haunts the Yüeh-yang Tower is actually you.

WILLOW SPIRIT: It has nothing to do with me. The white plum tree in front of the Tu K'ang Temple is one that causes all the trouble here.

LÜ: Let me see. Indeed, it is the white plum tree that haunts this place. Very well, old Willow, you follow me. And I will take you out of this world.

WILLOW SPIRIT: Your Worship, I cannot go.

LÜ: Why can't you go?

WILLOW SPIRIT: My trunk and roots are firm and strong; my branches and leaves thick and luxuriant. I cannot leave.

LÜ: Though he is a creature of earth and wood, he speaks good words.

(sings—tune of *Chin-chan-erh*)

*I, Lü Ch'un-yang, can deliver you, a green willow.*

*But you would want to accompany smoke and rain over the river bridge,*

*Dancing in the east wind, floating frivolously around.*

*Nowadays, people plant their trees in the morning.*