

APPENDIX II

Yao Yi-wei

THE CHEST (一口箱子)

A Translation of the Revised
Version of 1977
by Mei-shu Hwang

This revised version was first presented at the National Art Hall, Taipei, on March 24, 1977. It was directed by Mei-shu Hwang. Sets were designed by Patricia Ssutu. The cast was as follows:

LAO-TA	Li Li-ch'ün
AH-SAN	Ch'ü Meng-hsiung
RESTAURANT MANAGER	Lei Wei-yüan
WAITER	Chin Shih-chieh
CUSTOMER A	Kuo Chih-chieh
CUSTOMER B	Hsieh Chih-chang
CUSTOMER C	Ch'ia Ti
CUSTOMER D	Wen Shuan
CUSTOMER E	Ho Pai-ch'uan
CUSTOMER F	Liu Ling-hui
NEWSBOY	Shih Kuang-sheng
TECHNICIAN	Wen Shuan
POLICEMAN A	Lei Wei-yüan
POLICEMAN B	Chin Shih-chieh
CROWD AND OTHER CUSTOMERS	Hsiao Ta-hui, K'uang Su-shin, T'an Ho-chin, Yao Hai-hsing

Thanks are due to my colleagues Ms. Pat. Haseltine, Mr. John Geddes and Mr. Gregory Hyde for their reading the manuscript of my translation and their valuable suggestions. However, I am alone responsible for the translation as it is.

SCENE 1

A trail winds to stage UR.

Near stage center, there is a steep slope, which adjoins onto a flat meadow. When the curtain rises, two tramps enter with their bikes. LAO-TA, tall and the older of the two, easily carries his bike up the slope. AH-SAN, small in build, has a big chest bound on the back of his bike by a rope which is now coming loose. He is unable to manage both the bike and the chest at the same time.

AH-SAN. Lao-ta, Lao-ta, give me a hand, give me a hand.

[LAO-TA has put down his bike and is going to sit down for a rest.]

AH-SAN. Lao-ta, Lao-ta, please, PLEASE, Lao-ta!

LAO-TA. Stop howling.

AH-SAN [appealing]. Come on and give me a hand, will you?

LAO-TA [goes over to loosen the chest and takes it off the bike]. I told you not to carry such a clumsy box but you just wouldn't listen. I'd better get rid of it for you.

AH-SAN. Lao-ta, No! No! Please don't. Don't throw it, I beg you.

LAO-TA. Damn it.

[He puts the chest down on the ground.]

[AH-SAN has parked his bike. He takes the chest up and ties it back on his bike.]

AH-SAN. I told you not to throw it down. It's not strong enough to take that.

LAO-TA. Now look. What do you need this damn thing for anyway? It's so clumsy, old, and you can't sell it. It certainly ain't gonna feed you. Why don't you get a smaller one? You know, for people like us on the move all the time, the smaller the better. Can't you get a smaller one? What are you keeping in there, anyway. . . gold or something?

AH-SAN. You got to be kidding.

LAO-TA. I bet you're just as poor as me.

AH-SAN. Sure, sure. [*Takes out cigarettes.*] Let's cut it out. [*Offers the cigarettes.*] Have a cigarette.

[*LAO-TA takes a cigarette. AH-SAN lights it. They sit smoking under a tree.*]
[*Silence.*]

AH-SAN. Damn, it's hot.

LAO-TA. Yeah, it's damn hot.

AH-SAN. Lao-ta, what day is it today?

LAO-TA. Who knows?

AH-SAN. I think—I think—It's the 15th of the 6th month.

LAO-TA. 15th of the 6th month? Ha-ha. Let me ask you. What's the difference between the 15th and the 16th of the 6th month or between the 15th of the 5th month and the 20th of the 7th month? You think it's the 15th of the 6th month, I'm telling ya it's the 16th of the 5th month today. Ha-ha . . .

AH-SAN. I'm not gonna argue with you. I was only wondering if we were paid by the exact number of days we worked.

LAO-TA. Of course.

AH-SAN. How many days?

LAO-TA. Half a month.

AH-SAN. I was wondering if he cheated us.

LAO-TA. Cheated us?

AH-SAN. I was trying to figure out the number of days.

LAO-TA. Damn it, I just can't remember dates.

AH-SAN. Well, forget it.

LAO-TA. Forget what?

AH-SAN. It's all the same now whether you remember it or not.

LAO-TA. It's not the same as if he cheated us.

AH-SAN. Why?

LAO-TA. I'm gonna deal with him.

AH-SAN. About what?

LAO-TA [*gradually raises his voice*]. I'll kill him if he cheated me. What is he: A dirty pig! . . . Look, pig, who you think you are? You think you can call people names. You think you're somebody don't ya. You think I'm scared of you? You're crazy. Look, I'm no punk, I'm not scared of ya, ya bastard. I could lick you

with my little finger. Want to try it? You gonna look like hamburger when I'm finished with ya. Don't believe me, do ya? Ya bastard, ya pig head! You don't know who you're dealing with, man! ya-ya-ya [*He is exhausted.*]

AH-SAN. What are you shouting about?

LAO-TA. What am I shouting about? You really asking me?

AH-SAN. Are you arguing with somebody?

LAO-TA. The boss, man. Who else?

AH-SAN. It's no use.

LAO-TA. That's all you can say. [*Mimics him.*] "It's no use." You're just no-good, a God-damned good-for-nothing.

AH-SAN. Why didn't you get it straight with him when he paid us?

LAO-TA. Of course I did. He gave me a paycheck for 15 days. Here it is. [*Takes money out of his pocket.*] Damn it, did he cheat us?

AH-SAN. I don't know.

LAO-TA. You don't know. What are you bitching about, then?

AH-SAN. Because—because I couldn't remember the dates.

LAO-TA. Go to the Devil! Shut the hell up if you don't remember.

[*Long silence.*]

AH-SAN. It's not easy to find a job.

LAO-TA. Sure ain't.

AH-SAN. No. If—I say if—

LAO-TA. If what?

AH-SAN. If we hadn't quit . . .

LAO-TA. Hadn't quit? He called you a pig and you still want to beg bread from him?

AH-SAN. That's because we broke his antique.

LAO-TA. So he can call us pigs!

AH-SAN. He said that blue bowl was a family treasure.

LAO-TA. He shouldn't of asked us to clean the cupboard in the first place. We weren't his slaves.

AH-SAN. He paid for our bread.

LAO-TA. So we won't take his bread any more.

AH-SAN. That means—

LAO-TA. Means what?

AH-SAN. We'll have to find another place to work for our bread.

LAO-TA. Well, well. Are you blaming me for losing our jobs?

AH-SAN. No, I'm not. I was only saying . . .

LAO-TA. All right. Who broke his damn antique?

AH-SAN. Me.

LAO-TA. So, there you are!

AH-SAN. But—

LAO-TA. But what?

AH-SAN. But who fell?

LAO-TA. Me. So what?

AH-SAN. So your fall made me fall and break his antique.

LAO-TA. You know why I fell?

AH-SAN. No.

LAO-TA. Who was supposed to sweep the floor?

SH-SAN. Me.

LAO-TA. Who spilt oil on the floor?

AH-SAN. I don't know. Not me, anyway.

LAO-TA. It was the oil that made me fall.

AH-SAN. What oil?

LAO-TA. Who knows what oil. I only want to know who's responsible for that oil.

AH-SAN. I didn't see any oil when I swept the floor.

LAO-TA. Then, tell me where'd it come from?

AH-SAN. Maybe it was water.

LAO-TA. Water. Nonsense!

AH-SAN. Weren't you using water to clean the table?

LAO-TA. Ya, I was cleaning the table with water.

AH-SAN. Then, ain't it possible you could of spilt some water on the floor?

LAO-TA. Are you telling me I spilt the water?

AH-SAN. I didn't say that.

LAO-TA. You just said I spilt the water.

AH-SAN. I only said it's possible you could of spilt SOME water on the floor.

LAO-TA. I didn't spill ANY water.

AH-SAN. I didn't say spill a lot, I said maybe just a little splash. Anybody could splash a little water by accident, like [*pantomines*] this. Anybody could splash a little water if he wasn't looking!

LAO-TA. Even if it's possible, that wasn't WATER, that was OIL. It's oil, I'm telling ya.

AH-SAN. Where'd the oil come from?
LAO-TA. Oil is oil no matter where it came from. It was oil that made me fall, not water.
AH-SAN. Ok, it was oil.
LAO-TA. So, there you are!
AH-SAN. But your fall wasn't serious at all. What about me! Mine was worse.
LAO-TA. Wait a minute, brother. Let's get this straight. You fell on top of me, it's YOU fell on ME, remember?
AH-SAN. Right, I fell on you. But you notice how HIGH I was? The higher you climb, the harder you fall, and that's an obvious truth.
LAO-TA. The higher you climb the harder you fall. Right. But you didn't fall on the floor; you fell on MY BODY. So, it's me who got the worse of it, not you.
AH-SAN. Who said I didn't fall on the floor? I just touched you.
LAO-TA. Touched me? Just touched me?
AH-SAN. Sure.
LAO-TA. How can you lie with such a straight face?
AH-SAN. I'm telling the truth.
LAO-TA. No, your ain't. You didn't fall on the floor. Your whole body fell right on top of mine. Look—look, this whole side still hurts.
AH-SAN. How could my whole body have fallen on yours? That's impossible. Look at the back of my head. What do you think this is if it isn't a bump?
LAO-TA. [*feeling with his hand*]. Here?
AH-SAN. O—ouch! That hurts, man!
LAO-TA. Quit acting!
AH-SAN. It hurts, I'm telling you. Who's acting!
LAO-TA. Easy, man. It's only a small bump.
AH-SAN. Yeah? It's easy for you to talk 'cause the bump's not on your head.
LAO-TA. You bastard! Look at me. [*Unbuttons his shirt.*] What do you think this is? That's where you fell on me. It's all YOUR doing!
AH-SAN. Nothing but a little bruise.
LAO-TA. A little bruise! You say it's only a little bruise?
AH-SAN. Sure.

LAO-TA. You got eyes?
AH-SAN. Sure I've got eyes. And who knows WHEN it was bruised.
LAO-TA. Of course when you fell on me.
AH-SAN. You didn't get that today. I saw that two days ago. You've had that bruise for at least two days.
LAO-TA. You were seeing things. It was bruised today when you fell on me.
AH-SAN. I remember I only touched your leg when I fell, not your chest. I remember I didn't even touch your chest.
LAO-TA. You don't remember nothing!
AH-SAN. All right, if you don't believe me.
LAO-TA. Believe it or not, I was more seriously hurt than you. I caught the worst of it, not you.
AH-SAN. Well, suit yourself. But you just try and fall. You'll see.
LAO-TA. How?
AH-SAN. Try to fall from a high place.
LAO-TA. How high?
AH-SAN. As high as I was this morning.
LAO-TA. That's nothing!
AH-SNA. Just try it!
LAO-TA. Fall on top of you?
AH-SAN. I mean to fall just like we did.
LAO-TA. We got no ladder here?
AH-SAN. Forget it, if there's no ladder.
LAO-TA. What do you mean, forget it?
AH-SAN. What can you do? There's no ladder.
LAO-TA. [*looks around*]. Look. I've got an idea.
AH-SAN. What?
LAO-TA. How about the bike?
AH-SAN. What about the bike?
LAO-TA. If I stand on the seat of the bike and fall from there . . . Will that be high enough?
AH-SAN. [*studies the bike*]. No, it's a little too low.
LAO-TA. I think it's just as high.
AH-SAN. A little too low.
LAO-TA. No, it's just as high.
AH-SAN. Ok, suit yourself.

LAO-TA. Come on, move it over here.

AH-SAN. What for?

LAO-TA. To try it.

AH-SAN. I don't think it's worth trying.

LAO-TA. You're a coward, all you can do is flap your jaw. I knew you wouldn't do it. You're yellow. You're scared of death, you're scared of pain, you're scared of God-damned just everything. you don't have a solid bone in you. You ain't going nowhere! . . .

AH-SAN. Are you through?

LAO-TA. Yeah?

AH-SAN. I just don't think there's any point in going and falling down all over again.

LAO-TA. No point? Who says there's no point? It'll prove who fell worse and who was lying. If you admit you lied, we won't have to try it.

AH-SAN. I didn't lie.

LAO-TA. Then, let's try it.

AH-SAN. Alright, anything you say.

[LAO-TA *tries to move* AH-SAN's bike.]

AH-SAN. Don't move mine.

LAO-TA. Why not?

AH-SAN. Don't you see the chest on it?

LAO-TA. Damn your chest.

[*He moves his own bike to DC and mounts its seat.*]

LAO-TA. Now, go ahead and slip, just like I did.

AH-SAN. Gotcha.

LAO-TA. Ready, one, two, three!

[*AH-SAN slips and his feet hit the bike. The bike and LAO-TA both fall on top of him. They lie there still and unconscious. After a while LAO-TA gradually comes to.*]

LAO-TA [*sits up*]. What am I doing? What am I doing? Go falling for no reason—for no reason at all. It's damn ridiculous! Why ridiculous? Ridiculous 'cause there ain't no reasons. We got reasons when we eat; we got reasons when we pick up a whore;

we got reasons when we smoke; we got reasons when we fight; we got reasons when we quarrel with the boss-man. Everything in this world's got its reasons. Right? It's right when nobody can say it's wrong, because what's right is right and what's wrong is wrong. So there must be reasons to fall. When there ain't no reasons it's ridiculous. Right? Nobody can say it's wrong. Right is right! When I say right, it's right. Ah-san! Why don't you say something! Ah-san, you fool. I gonna learn you something today. You're no whiz-kid, you know. So don't play whiz-kid with me. I've tasted more salt and trod more road than you. You just stick with me and it'll be all right. Ah-san. Hey, man. What's wrong, forget how to talk? What are you lying there for? Ah-san, Ah-san. [*Raises his voice.*] Don't fake a mamma's boy ... You—you—

[He seems tired of talking. Then he seems to remember something and suddenly stops. He looks afar as if in a trance.]

[Silence.]

LAO-TA [*murmurs, as if to himself*]. Alright if you don't want to talk to me. Who cares. I have friends everywhere, I've seen all sorts of places and all sorts of people. But I've never seen no country boy like you. [*Spits.*] No good-for-nothing like you, as scared as a mouse, no guts to face anything new. How can you dream of getting anywhere in this world? [*Spits again.*] I'm sorry I ever met you. Don't expect me to see you again even if you got on your knees in front of me. Want to be a mamma's boy and to be babied? Alright, then you can go to your mother! I won't take it. When I say no, I mean no. I mean it. I only felt sorry for you—so young and having to come out to earn a living by yourself. Do you know what this world is like? You're washed-up if you don't have ways to get along. But what have you got? Your shoulders couldn't carry, your hands ain't good for lifting, your arms are weaker than a woman's, you can't even stand to look a stranger in the eye! I was just too soft-hearted and couldn't bear seeing you so damn down and gave you a hand. Who'd ever thought that you'd be trying to run my life. [*Pause.*] Ha, ha, come on, I'm a big MAN and won't blame you for your

kid's tricks. I won't take things as you kids do. I was just teasing you. You know you can't go around look like a funeral, all the time. We've got to have some light moments, we've got to laugh a little, joke a little, or be mule-headed about something once in a while. Right? Don't you think so? [*Suddenly he looks worn out.*] I was only kidding with you. Why don't you say something? You . . .

[*He stands up and walks to AH-SAN, who is still lying there motionless. He bends over him, looks closely at him, and feels his head with his hands.*]

LAO-TA [*in panic*]. Ah-san, Ah-san, what's wrong with you! Ah-san, Ah-san, what's the matter with you! [*His voice sounds woeful and horrified.*] Come on, what's wrong, Ah-san? You're not dead! Can you hear me? I'm Lao-ta, I'm Lao-ta! You're not dead! Ah-san, Ah-san, you're not dead. [*Lifts AH-SAN's head to his own knee.*] You hear me? You can't die! You'll be all right, you will. [*His voice becomes extremely horrified.*] You, you, you, you can't die, Ah-san, Ah-san. [*He puts AH-SAN's head down on the ground in great despair.*] You're dead, yes, you ARE DEAD. I killed you. I should die. I deserve to die. [*Stands up, frightened.*] What have I done? I—I—what have I done? I, I didn't mean to, Ah-san, I like you so much, I wouldn't touch a hair on your head. You are so young, you can't die. I can die, I should be the one to die. It ought'a be me lyin' there dead . . . [*His voice rises to a wail.*] I killed you, Ah-san, I did it. I did it—I killed you. No, no, no.

[*AH-SAN wakes up while LAO-TA is talking to himself. He sits up.*]

LAO-TA [*hasn't noticed AH-SAN, still talks to himself*]. You mustn't think I killed you, Ah-san. [*Sobs loudly.*] Ah-san, you mustn't think I killed you. [*Trembles with fear.*] I didn't mean to, no, I didn't . . .

AH-SAN [*murmurs*]. Lao-ta, what are you saying?

LAO-TA [*hasn't heard him*]. Ah-san, I didn't. [*Crying.*] No.!

AH-SAN [*more loudly*]. Lao-ta, what are you doing?

LAO-TA [*greatly startled*]. You, you, you!

AH-SAN. What's the matter?
 LAO-TA. How—how do you feel?
 AH-SAN. What's the matter with you?
 LAO-TA. Tell me how you feel.
 AH-SAN. Where are we?
 LAO-TA. Who knows.
 AH-SAN. It seems I fell asleep.
 LAO-TA. Are you feeling better now?
 AH-SAN. It seems I slept for quite a while.
 LAO-TA. Are you feeling all right?
 AH-SAN. How come I fell asleep?
 LAO-TA. Are you sure you don't feel anything wrong?
 AH-SAN. I feel—I feel—
 LAO-TA. What do you feel?
 AH-SAN. Nothing.
 LAO-TA. Didn't you say you feel—?
 AH-SAN. The sun is already in the west.
 LAO-TA. Yeah, yeah.
 AH-SAN. Where are we going?
 LAO-TA. Let me have a look at ya. [*He goes over to examine AH-SAN's body, turns his neck, lifts his arms, etc.*] What if I do this? Do you feel anything, this way?

AH-SAN. What are you trying to do?
 LAO-TA. Nothing, nothing.
 AH-SAN. What's the matter?
 LAO-TA. Thank heavens.
 AH-SAN. Where on earth are we going?
 LAO-TA. Straight ahead.
 AH-SAN. Where's straight ahead?
 LAO-TA. I mean straight ahead is straight ahead.
 AH-SAN. [*looks around for a while*]. Where?
 LAO-TA. Still far far away.
 AH-SAN. [*pointing*]. Over that mountain?
 LAO-TA. Right, right.
 AH-SAN. You've been there before?
 LAO-TA. Sure, I've been there before.
 AH-SAN. What kinda place is it?

LAO-TA. There is a town over there. They've discovered some kinda mineral out there.

AH-SAN. What kinda mineral?

LAO-TA. Mineral is mineral no matter what kinda mineral it is.

AH-SAN. You know anybody there?

LAO-TA. Know anybody? It doesn't matter if you know anybody or not.

AH-SAN. Why, it'd be better if you knew somebody there.

LAO-TA. Don't worry. They're now opening up the mountains, building new roads and houses. There are all sorts of chances waiting for us. Don't you worry.

AH-SAN. But—

LAO-TA. But what?

AH-SAN. Really how far is it?

LAO-TA. There you go again. What does it matter how far it is?

[Black out.]

SCENE 2

In a crowded, noisy restaurant, CUSTOMERS walk in and out.

When the lights go up, a NEWSBOY is crying "Evening papers, evening papers. Big news, big news . . . evening papers, evening papers. Big news, 20,000 dollars reward for a lost box. . . ." CUSTOMERS buy newspapers.

Background music from the radio is mixed with "Waiter," "A beer," "Three bowls of noodles," "Coming!" etc. The MANAGER is sitting behind the counter reading a newspaper.

RADIO. Ladies and Gentlemen, may I have your attention, please. Dr. Chou Cheng-kuang of our town has lost a big leather trunk while moving. It is black, about 3 by 2 feet, and the corners are rein-

forced with copper. The leather is partially discolored from age, with some scratches on it, and the copper is a dark green. It's bound by two leather straps. There is a big oval-shaped lock in the middle and two strong clasps on each side of it. The trunk contains medicinal radium, which is very dangerous to the human body. If you find it, be careful not to open it and especially don't touch anything in it. Contact the police at 3120 or Dr. Chou at 4753 immediately. They will send experts over for it. Dr. Chou has offered a reward of \$10,000 to anybody with information leading to its recovery, a reward of \$20,000 to anybody who returns it to him. It is of vital importance as it concerns the health of all residents. Please assist the authorities in every way you can. Thank you . . .

[Now music comes back up from the radio and the conversation focuses on the missing box and radium. CUSTOMERS are grouped as follows: A and B at the table DL; C and D at the table UC; G, H, I at the table DC; and E and F, who come in a little after the lights go up, at the table CR.]

CUSTOMER A [points at the paper]. Look, here is the story.

CUSTOMER B. What about it, the same?

CUSTOMER A. Exactly the same.

CUSTOMER B. Twenty thousand dollars is a lot of money!

[Now the focus shifts to the table CR, CUSTOMERS A and B continue to talk in subdued voices while E and F raise their voices. All the following dialogue follows the same pattern when the focus changes.]

CUSTOMER E. I seem to have seen the box before.

CUSTOMER F. Really?

CUSTOMER E. Black leather, four corners reinforced with copper, bound by two straps, and—

CUSTOMER F. Right.

CUSTOMER E. I remember it very well. It was the antique type, now out of fashion. Nobody uses that kind any more.

CUSTOMER F. Yes, it is an antique type. Where did you see it?

- CUSTOMER E. Where?—It was . . . wait a minute.
[*She tried to think. Now CUSTOMERS C and D raise their voices.*]
- CUSTOMER C. The newspaper has more details of the story. Look.
CUSTOMER D. Yes, with a map, too.
CUSTOMER C. They moved from East Gate Road to . . .
[*They study the map.*]
- CUSTOMER A. That stuff must be handled very carefully. You know about radium?
- CUSTOMER B. Of course, it's a kind of radioactive metallic element.
CUSTOMER A. If it's left on the road, it could contaminate anybody just walking by.
- CUSTOMER B. How on earth did it get lost then?
CUSTOMER A. It just happens. The Americans lost an atomic bomb over the North Pole. Did you see the news? They spent lots of money and manpower to get it back.
- CUSTOMER B. That fell out of a plane.
CUSTOMER A. That makes no difference. It happens to me all the time: When I have something that I can't afford to lose, I put it in a real safe place. The result is always the same—I just can't find it. But the trash is always there—right under your nose. You can never lose it, it's just as if it grew there.
- CUSTOMER B. That's true. The more you mind it, the more things go wrong. Even human beings are like that. Take small babies for example: The more you worry about their getting sick, the more easier they get sick. And before you realize it you are seeing all sorts of doctors everyday.
- CUSTOMER A. Hope they can find it soon . . .
[*CUSTOMERS C and D raise their voices from the map.*]
- CUSTOMER D. Yes, there is a new road there. It's still under construction.
- CUSTOMER C. What's the name?
CUSTOMER D. It hasn't got a name yet.
CUSTOMER C. Never mind the name. Look, the road leads to Fu-pei street.
CUSTOMER D. The new road isn't paved yet.

CUSTOMER C. But vehicles have already begun to travel there. Only it's bumpy.

CUSTOMER D. The leather box must have fallen off there when the truck bumped along the road.

CUSTOMER C. That's surely possible. But there are other possibilities, you know.

CUSTOMER D. I think the police should make a house to house search along the route.

CUSTOMER C. No, I don't think that'd be of much help. There are all sorts of other possibilities. It might have got lost before it was loaded on the truck.

[CUSTOMER G, H, and I have finished their meals and begin to leave.]

CUSTOMER D. No, that's impossible.

CUSTOMER C. It's always a mess when you move. A slippery-fingered guy could have come by and picked it up, just like that.

CUSTOMER D. No, I don't think so.

CUSTOMER C. Perhaps you've never had the experience of moving.

CUSTOMER D. Of course I have! I have moved several times. When you move you always watch your valuable things very closely.

CUSTOMER C. How did it get lost then?

CUSTOMER D. Must be lost on the road. It was not safely loaded or something.

CUSTOMER C. Are you sure?

CUSTOMER D. It's only logical, isn't it?

CUSTOMER C. Alright, I don't want to argue with you.

[He begins to enjoy his food which has been served.]

CUSTOMER F. Listen, dear. It's worth 20,000 dollars.

CUSTOMER E. No kidding?

CUSTOMER F. Who is kidding? Didn't you listen to the radio or read the paper?

CUSTOMER E. Let me think.

CUSTOMER F. [impatiently]. Think hard now!

CUSTOMER E. I am thinking.

CUSTOMER F. When did you see it?

CUSTOMER E. This morning—

CUSTOMER F. How could it be this morning?
CUSTOMER E. No—not this morning; it was about noon.
CUSTOMER F. Noon?
CUSTOMER E. When I came out for lunch.
CUSTOMER F. Didn't you have lunch in the office dining-room?
CUSTOMER E. Had lunch in the office dining-room? No, I had it outside.
CUSTOMER F. I remember I saw you.
CUSTOMER E. You saw me? Where was I?
CUSTOMER F. In the dining-room. You were with Little Ho.
CUSTOMER E. Little Ho? let me see . . .

[LOA-TA and AH-SAN enter and walk to the vacant table DC. AH-SAN puts down the chest beside himself. It looks like the one the radio has just described and soon has attracted all the eyes.]

LAO-TA [to the waiter]. Boy, a small bottle of whiskey, some dishes to go with it, and two large bowls of beef noodles.

AH-SAN. Some tea please.

[The waiter goes to the back with the order.]

CUSTOMER E. I remember now. [Stealthily points to AH-SAN's chest.]
That's what I saw.

CUSTOMER F. This morning?

CUSTOMER E. No, at noon.

CUSTOMER F. At noon?

CUSTOMER E. Don't bother about the time. I don't remember the exact hour. But I am sure I saw them.

CUSTOMER F. Well, well, a fortune has just walked right up to our door step.

CUSTOMER E. What are you going to do?

CUSTOMER F. Let me see—

[He begins to think. CUSTOMERS A and B raise their voices again.]

CUSTOMER A. Does it look like the same one to you?

CUSTOMER B. Exactly.

CUSTOMER A. We have to be careful. That stuff is dangerous.

[They move to the left side of the table to

sit further away from AH-SAN's chest.]

CUSTOMER B. Are we far enough from it?

CUSTOMER A. Well—

CUSTOMER B. Are we safe here?

CUSTOMER A. I think so.

CUSTOMER B. Should we make a phone call?

CUSTOMER A. What's the number?

[They look for the number in the paper.]

CUSTOMER D. *[stands up]*. Should we make a phone call?

CUSTOMER C. Wait. In case it isn't we'd make ourselves laughing-stocks.

CUSTOMER D. It must be the one.

CUSTOMER C. Can't two things look exactly alike?

CUSTOMER D. Could be, but there can't be such a coincidence.

CUSTOMER C. I don't quite agree. The world is full of coincidences. And how would they dare carry it before everybody's eyes if they'd stolen it?

CUSTOMER D. Maybe they haven't read the papers or heard it over the radio.

CUSTOMER C. I think if it wasn't their own stuff but something they stole or found, they wouldn't dare carry it about openly.

CUSTOMER D. Maybe they are old hands at this sort of thing.

CUSTOMER C. Don't rush. Let's wait a little longer and see.

[The waiter has served wine and tea to LAO-TA and AH-SAN. Now LAO-TA is drinking his wine and AH-SAN is holding the teacup in his hands, looking straight ahead.]

LAO-TA. If you don't like wine, eat something.

AH-SAN. Hm—

[LAO-TA continues to enjoy his wine and dishes.]

[CUSTOMER F stands up.]

CUSTOMER F. Let me find out.

CUSTOMER E. How?

CUSTOMER F. You just watch.

[He goes over to AH-SAN's table.]

CUSTOMER F. *[to AH-SAN]*. Hi, you look familiar. Have we met before?

AH-SAN. *[at loss]*. Uh—I don't remember. What's your name, Sir?

CUSTOMER F. Li. And yours?
 AH-SAN. Chang.
 CUSTOMER F. Mr. Chang. [*To LAO-TA.*] And your friend?
 LAO-TA. Chao.
 CUSTOMER F. Mr. Chao.
 AH-SAN. I really can't remember we've met before. This is the first time I've been in here.
 CUSTOMER F. Of course it wasn't here. I think it was years back. You've just arrived in this town?
 AH-SAN. We've just arrived. We came from Big Woods.
 CUSTOMER F. Big Woods. A nice place. I lived there once. Big Woods is famous for its BIG watermelons and lotus-roots. [*Pause.*] Are you familiar with the Chen family there?
 AH-SAN. No, not really. I didn't live there very long.
 CUSTOMER F. Sure, sure. Your home-town is—
 AH-SAN. I'm from Mountain Back.
 CUSTOMER F. Ah, yes, the Chang family of Mountain Back.
 AH-SAN. Yes.
 CUSTOMER F. Then, we are no strangers. [*Begins to cook up a story.*] My uncle's third son married the daughter of the Chang family of Mountain Back; my wife's second elder sister was married to the first son of the Chang family of Mountain Back. [*Laughs affectedly.*] Ha—so, we are practically relatives.
 AH-SAN. I was small then. Sorry I can't remember anything that far back.
 CUSTOMER F. Sure. But to which of the Chang families do you belong?
 AH-SAN. We are of the third son's branch of the Chang family.
 CUSTOMER F. The third is doing very well indeed.
 AH-SAN. Thank you.
 CUSTOMER F. How is your dear father?
 AH-SAN. He's passed away.
 CUSTOMER F. Sorry to hear that. When did it happen?
 AH-SAN. Two years ago.
 CUSTOMER F. I'm sorry! No wonder we haven't heard about him for the past two years. By the way, where do you work now?
 AH-SAN. Well, I am here looking for a job.

CUSTOMER F. What a coincidence! What a coincidence! Recently we discovered gold here. People are flooding in from all directions and that has made the place boom. There are all kinds of job openings, everywhere, anything you want.

AH-SAN. Could you give me some more information?

CUSTOMER F. Why, no problem! But what kind of job would you like?

AH-SAN. Anything.

CUSTOMER F. I've a friend who is looking for a bookkeeper. How do you like bookkeeping?

AH-SAN. Bookkeeping? Keeping what kind of book?

CUSTOMER F. He runs a food supply store. So he needs somebody to keep the books of his business.

AH-SAN. Well, it— [*To LAO-TA.*] What do you think?

LAO-TA [*shakes his head*]. I don't know anything about doing things like that.

CUSTOMER F. That's all right. If you don't like that, we can find something else.

AH-SAN. I have to think it over.

CUSTOMER F [*begins to go back to his table, then looks round*]. What a nice box?

AH-SAN. Thank you, but it's nothing.

CUSTOMER F. You can't find anything like this on the market any more.

AH-SAN. It's an old one.

CUSTOMER F [*touches it*]. Good leather, good craftsmanship, and very strong, too.

AH-SAN. That's true, not like that new stuff.

CUSTOMER F. May I ask where you bought it.

AH-SAN. Where I bought it? I really don't know.

CUSTOMER F. You don't know?

AH-SAN. No, I don't. It's older than me.

CUSTOMER F. That's strange. How then— [*Realizes his slip of tongue.*]

AH-SAN. What?

LAO-TA [*at almost the same moment*]. Hey Mister! [*Stands up.*] What are you up to?

CUSTOMER F. Nothing.

LAO-TA. Why are you trying to nose into other people's private business?

CUSTOMER F. I was just curious.
 LAO-TA. Curious? Listen, man, you can't pull that kinda stuff on us! What do you think I am?

CUSTOMER F. What are you going to do about it?
 LAO-TA. You better take another look at the man you're talkin' to.
 CUSTOMER F. Watch your tongue, man.

[CUSTOMERS *have all stood up and gradually form a semi-circle around them, but stay at a distance.*]

LAO-TA. You first try to nose into his family and then the box. What are you really up to?

CUSTOMER F. It's none of your business!
 LAO-TA. When you push him, you are pushing me!
 AH-SAN. Lao-ta, forget it. Forget it.
 LAO-TA. What do you mean? "forget it"?

CUSTOMER F. What are you going to do about it, then?
 LAO-TA. I'll show you! [*Slaps F in the face.*]
 CUSTOMER F. You hit me! . . . You hit me! . . . This punk hit me! . . .

[*The MANAGER and some CUSTOMERS have come over to stop them from fighting.*]

LAO-TA. That'll learn ya. Next time better watch yourself more closely.

MANAGER. Hold it, everybody. Take it easy, take it easy . . .
 LAO-TA. Check, waiter. [*Throws some money on the table. To AH-SAN.*] Let's go!

[*AH-SAN takes his chest and walks out with LAO-TA. Nobody tries to stop them; they make way for them.*]

CUSTOMER F. [*seeing himself at a safe distance from LAO-TA*]. Stay if you've got the guts.

[*LAO-TA looks back, but AH-SAN pushes him out.*]
 [After they are gone, some CUSTOMERS go out to see the direction they are taking, but no one dares to follow them immediately.]
 [The people still in the restaurant are

shouting: "Get the police, quick, the police." "Use the phone, quick!" "It can't be wrong. It must be the lost box." "Follow them! Don't let them get away." etc., etc.]

CUSTOMER D *[has grabbed the phone, but forgotten the number]*. The number, quick!

CUSTOMER B. Let ME call!

CUSTOMER D. Why? You just tell me the number.

CUSTOMER B. Funny! If you don't know the number, give me the phone.

CUSTOMER D. Somebody give me the paper? Quick, quick, please!

[No one pays any attention to him. Most of them are now running out to follow the tramps.]

[Black out.]

SCENE 3

An old half-ruined temple stands empty under the moon light. The stern expressions of the sculptured dieties can be vaguely discerned.

LAO-TA and AH-SAN enter, pushing their bikes toward the temple, looking tired and breathless. They park their bikes inside the temple and sit down on the front steps.

There is silence except for the wind and the flapping of bats. After a while, LAO-TA breaks the silence.

LAO-TA. How do you feel now?

AH-SAN. Better.

LAO-TA. God damnit.

AH-SAN. What was that all about?

LAO-TA. Who knows.

AH-SAN. Why were they watching us all the time? They just wouldn't leave us alone and followed us everywhere.

LAO-TA. Shit!

AH-SAN. Is there something wrong with us?

LAO-TA. Something wrong? Ridiculous! We ain't got nothing painted on our faces for people to look at us that way.

AH-SAN. Are they trying to put us down 'cause we're strangers?

LAO-TA. There're lots of strangers around here.

[*They light their cigarettes.*]

[*Silence.*]

AH-SAN. It's not your first visit here. Was it like this before?

LAO-TA. I've been here before but that was years ago. It's been—five or six years, I think. Of course it wasn't like this, it was a very small town at the time. And there wasn't no gold mine. Only a few streets and a few stores here and there. Even the roads weren't level. Everything is different now.

AH-SAN. What were you doing then?

LAO-TA. I was working for a transport company. They sent me here to collect some bills. I didn't get much—no, I collected some, but I spent all the money I got. The company found out and fired me. So I began fooling around here.

AH-SAN. What did you do then?

LAO-TA. Oh, this and that on the dock.

AH-SAN. Tell me now—

LAO-TA. Tell you what?

AH-SAN. Did you get into any trouble?

LAO-TA. Any trouble? I can't remember.

AH-SAN. Try and think.

LAO-TA. Oh, yeah, I remember now. That year, it was over a chick. I was at odds with a hoodlum here. He tried to make trouble with me along with several of his pals, but I knocked them all out with a bench. That gave me a name here!

AH-SAN. No wonder.

LAO-TA. You'd better get it straight, Ah-san. I quarrel with people sometimes, I stick up for people if I think somebody's pushin' 'em around, but I'm not the kind would steal or rob anybody. I've never done nothing real bad.

AH-SAN. I think somebody must of recognized you.

LAO-TA. You think they are noticing me?

AH-SAN. I think so.

LAO-TA. [*laughs*]. You're out of your mind. You—they were looking at you!

AH-SAN. Me—me—but how come?

LAO-TA. That big trunk of yours!

AH-SAN. My chest?

LAO-TA. Perhaps they think a tramp shouldn't be carrying such a big trunk.

AH-SAN. Why not?

LAO-TA. Perhaps they wonder why a young man should be carrying such an old trunk.

AH-SAN. Why?

LAO-TA. Perhaps they suspect you don't own it.

AH-SAN. Don't own it? You know my father gave it to me.

LAO-TA. When did you tell me that?

AH-SAN. My father gave me the chest, three years ago when I left home to look for a better life. He said, "Ah-san, I have nothing valuable for you but this chest. Your grandfather gave it to me and I took it with me to try and make it in the world. But all these years got me nothing. Now, it's your turn. Go, the chest is yours now. It's a little bit old, but still good. Take care of it. When you see it you'll remember me and your dead grandpa. Ah-san, I wish you better luck than I had"

LAO-TA. I didn't know it had such a history behind it.

AH-SAN. So, I have had it with me all these three years. My father died last year, but I didn't even know. I didn't have time to go back to see him even once. I—I don't even have a picture of him. Sometimes I can't even remember what he looked like. But when I touch the chest, feel it with my hands, little by little, the past will become more and more clear to me, as if I was going back home, back to my childhood. . .

LAO-TA. Please stop.

AH-SAN. What's the matter?

LAO-TA. I don't even have a box. I got nothing.

AH-SAN. Oh—

LAO-TA. So, I never think—I can't think. It seems I was dropped from the sky. My childhood—what was it like? My father—what did he

look like? My mother—who was she? I have no idea. . . Really, I have no idea at all.

AH-SAN. Are you an orphan?

LAO-TA. Yeah, I grew up at an orphanage.

AH-SAN. How long did you stay there?

LAO-TA. Don't know. Quite a few years, I guess. Later somebody came to adopt me.

AH-SAN. Foster father and mother?

LAO-TA. Only a father. I never saw my foster mother. She probably died.

AH-SAN. Was he good to you?

LAO-TA. A nice guy, very old.

AH-SAN. Still alive?

LAO-TA. No. He was already very old. He wanted me to go to school.

AH-SAN. You've been to school?

LAO-TA. Sure. To high school.

AH-SAN. Did you finish high school?

LAO-TA. No, I quit.

AH-SAN. I finished high school.

LAO-TA. I didn't. I didn't like to study.

AH-SAN. Me, either.

LAO-TA. Either I hated what I was studying, or what I liked, I flubbed up.

AH-SAN. Me, too.

LAO-TA. When the teachers started to talk, I began to feel sleepy. Once I fell into a deep sleep and was only woken up by the teacher's pointer.

AH-SAN. But I never fell asleep or ever felt sleepy.

LAO-TA. There was one thing—I loved to play ball. I could play all day long, from morning till dark and I'd never feel tired or sleepy.

AH-SAN. I didn't play ball. I wasn't interested in it.

LAO-TA. I didn't like girls; it used to annoy me to see them. But a girl classmate liked me very much. Isn't that funny? But she got no where with me. I just didn't like her, not at all. I ignored her you know. Once she cried, actually cried. Ha, ha . . .

AH-SAN. I like girls—I think all boys like girls, don't they? I once liked a girl. She was very pretty. She was so graceful. She despised me. She had no interest in me—a poor kid from a poor family. I knew. I knew I was not good enough for her, but I couldn't

help liking her.

[Each begins to sink into his own memories and begins talking to himself, yet one's thinking-aloud is in some way related to the other's.]

LAO-TA. I'll stick up for people if I think somebody's pushin' 'em around

...

AH-SAN. I don't like to mind others' business . . .

LAO-TA. People tell me not to poke my nose into others' business. But I can't help it. I just have to; I love to . . .

AH-SAN. I never mind others' business. I can't even mind my own business; how could I mind others' . . .

LAO-TA. One day in school a senior was trying to bully an underclassman. He insisted the kid took his pen and forced him to take his pants off to see if he hid the pen there . . .

AH-SAN. I often get bullied around . . .

LAO-TA. That's too damn much . . .

AH-SAN. I remember . . .

LAO-TA. I go up and say, what are you trying to do? He says it's none of your business, I say it is my business. One blow and his nose is bleeding. A lot of blood . . .

AH-SAN. I remember I was in primary school. I wore new clothes to school. Two kids threw mud at me, splashed water at me, I cried. I should have beaten them up, but I didn't. I—I didn't. I was no good . . .

LAO-TA. Then he goes and tells the school authorities.

AH-SAN. No damn good . . .

LAO-TA. The school authorities sent me home.

AH-SAN. [*almost at the same time*]. I cried and went home.

LAO-TA. My foster father, do you know what he does? He doesn't try to find out the truth but tells me to get down on my knees and starts beating me with a stick. . .

AH-SAN. My pa says, "What are you crying for? You chicken, you good for nothing. You can only cry . . ."

LAO-TA. I don't make a sound. Not a tear . . .

AH-SAN. "Can you only wait to be hit? . . ."

LAO-TA. I let him hit me . . .

AH-SAN. "Can't you hit him . . ."

LAO-TA. Till his arm's sore . . .

AH-SAN. "You're a big guy. You never leave anything on your plate. . ."

LAO-TA. He calls me a damn fool. He gasps out "Tell me you won't do it again! . . ."

AH-SAN. My pa jumps up . . .

LAO-TA. He lifts his stick . . . I don't make a sound . . .

AH-SAN. He's getting so mad. . .

LAO-TA. He hits me again, but I grit my teeth . . .

AH-SAN. He shouts . . .

LAO-TA. "Would you dare! Will you do it again!" His face is red—he's mad . . . gasping, howling . . .

AH-SAN. "I've brought you up for nothing. I've brought you up for nothing at all—you're no-good. . ."

LAO-TA. I still won't make a sound . . .

[Their thinking-aloud begins to partly overlap. The actors must time their lines so well that, by using short pauses and volume control, the audience can hear clearly what they are talking about.]

LAO-TA. All of a sudden he fell to the floor . . .

AH-SAN. All of a sudden he stops yelling at me . . .

LAO-TA. I'm scared. I bend over him and whisper: "I won't do it again. . ."

AH-SAN. He is staring, straight ahead—staring out the door . . .

LAO-TA. He doesn't hear me . . .

AH-SAN. Frozen, as if something strange is happening outside. . .

LAO-TA. I say again, louder this time, "I won't do it again!" He still doesn't hear me . . .

AH-SAN. I follow his eyes, but I can't see anything outside . . .

LAO-TA. I say again, still louder, "I won't do it again, I won't do it again. . ."

AH-SAN. He is still staring, without moving . . .

LAO-TA. He isn't moving or making any sound—he—he's dead. . .

AH-SAN. Both of us are frozen there . . .

LAO-TA. They say I did it, I made him so mad he died. They all say it. . .

AH-SAN. Why don't you say something . . .

LAO-TA. They say I did it. I made him so mad he died. Did I? . . .

AH-SAN. Say something, Papa, please scold me or beat me . . .

LAO-TA. He was such a nice old man. Could I make him so mad he died?
 . . .

AH-SAN. Do anything you like, beat me, scold me . . .

LAO-TA. Yes . . .

AH-SAN. I beg you do something. Don't just keep silent like this! . . .

LAO-TA. Yes . . . [*Stands up.*]

AH-SAN. Don't ignore me like this . . .

LAO-TA. Yes, I did it. I made him so mad he died. . . Yes, I did it . . .

AH-SAN. Don't ignore me like this . . .
[He moves forward very slowly and is going to kneel down.]

LAO-TA [*loudly*]. I made him so mad he died . . .

AH-SAN. Please don't . . .
[They speak in turn again.]

LAO-TA. I made him so mad he died . . .

AH-SAN [*in a small voice*]. Don't ignore me like this, please don't . . .
[Kneels down.]

LAO-TA [*more loudly*]. I did it . . .

AH-SAN [*in a smaller voice*]. Don't ignore me like this . . .
[Short silence.]
[They begin to speak at the same time.]

LAO-TA [*in a low voice, slowly*]. I made him so mad he died . . .

AH-SAN [*in a hoarse voice*]. Don't ignore me like this . . .
[Their words fade out. Silence.]
[A dog's bark is heard. Short silence. Then the barking becomes louder, mixed with human voices, both of which get louder and louder. LAO-TA and AH-SAN are waken up as if from a dream.]

AH-SAN. They're coming.

LAO-TA. I think so, too.

AH-SAN. Yes, they're coming. Are they gonna take my chest away from me?

LAO-TA. I think so.

AH-SAN. It's MY chest. It was given me by my father.

LAO-TA. I know. But they want it.

AH-SAN. Why?
LAO-TA. Who knows?
AH-SAN. Can there be any reason?
LAO-TA. What reason?
AH-SAN. Any reason to take away my chest?
LAO-TA. Maybe they got their reason.
AH-SAN. What reason can they have?
LAO-TA. I don't know.
AH-SAN. They can't have any reason!
LAO-TA. You really got nothing valuable in the box?
AH-SAN. What? Even you don't trust me?
LAO-TA. It's not that. I'm just curious.
AH-SAN. Nothing. Nothing valuable at all. But it's mine. Sometimes we can like something, even if it's useless and not worth a cent, can't we?
LAO-TA. Yeah.
AH-SAN. I can't let them take my chest away.
LAO-TA. Of course not, of course not.
AH-SAN. [*almost crying*]. I can't let them take my chest away.
LAO-TA. Take it easy, take it easy.
AH-SAN. [*sobs*]. I can't let others push me around all the time. [*Wildly.*] Why? Why do people always push me around? Why? This time I'm gonna fight back, I'm gonna see it through with them.
LAO-TA. I won't let them push you around any more.

[*Loud noises of dogs and people are heard again.*]

AH-SAN. What are we gonna do?
LAO-TA. What'll we do? Let me think—
AH-SAN. They're coming. They'll be here any moment now.
LAO-TA. Let's find a place to hide ourselves first. Yes, we've got to hide ourselves first.
AH-SAN. But where? Where can we hide?
LAO-TA. I remember a place—yeah, I've got it. There's a place, a very good place, over by the docks.
AH-SAN. Really?
LAO-TA. Of course. I remember the place now. We can have a good sleep there. Nobody can find us there.

AH-SAN. Then let's hurry.

LAO-TA. Let's get a move on.

[They go to their bikes. AH-SAN stops half way.]

AH-SAN. How about tomorrow?

LAO-TA. Tomorrow?

AH-SAN. What should we do tomorrow?

LAO-TA. Nobody knows what tomorrow will be like.

[They get on their bikes and ride away. The stage is empty for a few seconds. Then, enters a crowd with the people from the restaurant, two POLICEMEN, and a TECHNICIAN with a Geiger counter. They stop DR in front of the temple.]

POLICEMAN A *[stops the crowd]*. Get back. It's dangerous. They may be armed.

[The bold ones stop where they are while the timid retreat a few steps.]

POLICEMAN A. You people stay here, get it?

[The POLICEMEN go into the temple CUSTOMERS D and F follow them.]

POLICEMAN B *[loudly]*. Are you asking to die? Get back! Get back!
[CUSTOMERS D and F retreat reluctantly.]

POLICEMAN A *[shines his flashlight in all directions]*. Come on out, men. Come on out with your hands up. We won't harm you.

[There is no response.]

POLICEMAN A. You have nowhere to hide now. The place is surrounded. Come on out, with your hands up. We won't hurt you.

[The POLICEMEN search the place, shining their flashlights in every corner. Finally POLICEMAN B discovers cigarette butts on the ground.]

POLICEMAN B. They were here, all right. Not very long ago.

[People crowd into the temple, talking noisily: "They have got away again." "They are tricky." "Professional thieves.]

They're professional thieves." "We must have them arrested." etc.]

POLICEMAN A. Quiet! Quiet, everybody! They won't get away, they won't get away.

[They all start to leave.]

[Black out.]

SCENE 4

In the dim light, stands DR an old wooden structure on four posts about two yards from the ground. It is an old abandoned watch-tower.

POLICEMAN A is speaking toward the tower through a loudspeaker; POLICEMAN B shines his flashlight at the structure. Behind them is the TECHNICIAN with the Geiger counter. The crowd is scattered around. They have all come in through the audience.

POLICEMAN A *[through the loudspeaker]*. You have no place to run now. You are surrounded. We won't do you any harm. We promise. Just give us the box. Can you hear us? Can you hear us? Just give us the box, that's all.

[AH-SAN and LAO-TA appear on the tower; AH-SAN carries the chest in his hands. The crowd begins to stir, shouting, "That's the box." "Yes, that's the one." "That's the one; he's carrying it." etc.]

POLICEMAN B. Quiet, quiet, please. *[To the tramps]* We won't do you any harm, we promise. Please hand over the box to us. Don't throw it down. Have you got a rope? Have you any rope? You can send it down with a rope. Send it down carefully, very carefully.

LAO-TA [loudly]. What do you want the box for?
 [*The crowd begins to get excited again:*
 “*How can he have the gall to ask us why*
 we want the box!” “*He’s really too much.*”
 etc.]

POLICEMAN A. [through the speaker]. Have you seen the evening paper?
 LAO-TA. No.

POLICEMAN B. Have you heard the news on the radio?
 LAO-TA. No. We’re not from here; we just arrived this afternoon.

POLICEMAN A. Have you heard people talking about it?
 LAO-TA. About what?
 POLICEMAN B. About a big box.
 LAO-TA. What big box?
 POLICEMAN A. A big box is missing; it contains some pieces of radium
 in it.

LAO-TA. What?
 AH-SAN [simultaneously]. What’s “real dumb”?

POLICEMAN A. Radium, ra-di-um—! Radium for medicinal use, a kind
 of radioactive element, ra-di-o-active element.

AH-SAN. We don’t have none of this here radioactive element.
 LAO-TA. You must be kidding, sir. What would we be doing with
 a—a radioactive element?

POLICEMAN B. It’s something very dangerous. Do you know that?
 AH-SAN. We ain’t got no radioactive element up here.

POLICEMAN A. We only want to have a look at your box.
 AH-SAN. This is MY box.
 LAO-TA. What right do you have to look in somebody else’s box?
 POLICEMAN B. We’ve received reports that your box looks exactly like
 the lost one.

LAO-TA. Who says that?
 [*The crowd grows tumultuous again, shout-*
 ing: “I saw it.” “I saw it, too.” “The very
 same.” “He tried to get away with it.”
 “He is trying to deceive us.” “Don’t talk
 rubbish!” etc.]

POLICEMAN A. Quiet, everybody, quiet!
 AH-SAN. That’s weird. Can’t two things ever be alike?

POLICEMAN B. Suppose they look alike, what harm can we do if you just let us have a look at it? If yours isn't the one we're looking for, we'll give it back to you intact. You won't lose anything.

AH-SAN. This is my box, MINE. [*Hysterically.*] I don't want you to lock in my box. I don't want nobody to look in my box!

[Turmoil and shouting among the crowd again: "It must be the one." "Can't be wrong." "He won't dare to let us look at it!" "If it's his own, why would he be afraid of letting us see it?" "Just listen to 'em? He's practically admitting he stole it!"]

POLICEMAN A. Look, friend, let's get it straight. We ARE going to have a look at it. You can't get away now!

LAO-TA. [*to AH-SAN*]. They just want to have a look.

AH-SAN. This is mine. I don't want nobody looking into it.

LAO-TA. They will give it back to you. What does it matter to let them have a look?

AH-SAN. [*hysterically*]. I won't let them look. I won't let them look.

LAO-TA. They've made up their minds. You can see they ain't gonna leave us alone without having a look.

AH-SAN. [*hysterically*]. I won't, I won't, I won't . . .

LAO-TA. Come on, give it to me now. Give it to me!

AH-SAN. No, no, no . . .

[LAO-TA takes a step toward AH-SAN and tries to take the chest from his hands. AH-SAN struggles for it. Suddenly the chest flies down the tower and lays open on the ground SC. AH-SAN jumps after the chest and falls unconscious DC, not far from the chest. The crowd rushes to the chest and surrounds it, without noticing what happens to AH-SAN. Only LAO-TA, who jumps down after AH-SAN, is now kneeling beside him.]

POLICEMAN A [tries to keep order]. Keep away from the box, stand back. It's dangerous. Stay away from it!

[The TECHNICIAN starts testing the chest and the things inside.]

TECHNICIAN [shakes his head]. No reaction at all. Nothing.

[The crowd moves in and starts taking things out of the chest. There are a few old pieces of clothing, some old-fashioned toys, several old textbooks, and a school certificate of honor.] [While they are looking at the things, they shout: "How come there's only this old stuff!" "All worthless junk." "Hey, what's the idea, what's all these toys!" "God, these toys should be put in a museum. They're so old!" "What's this?" "A school certificate of honor. What's it doing here?" etc.]

[They feel disappointed and cheated and start to leave. Then they find LAO-TA bending over AH-SAN. They move toward them.]

LAO-TA. Ah-san, Ah-san, wake up, wake up! Don't lie there like this. Don't lie there like you did this morning. Don't play no game now. Ah-san. [His voice gets very sad, like a wailing. It sounds frightened.] Wake up. Get up please. It's getting late. We've got to move. We've still a long way to go. We have to hurry a bit, Ah-san, Ah-san

... [The POLICEMEN have come forward through the crowd.]

POLICEMAN A. What's the matter?

LAO-TA. Ah-san, quick, we've got to get going!

[POLICEMAN A bends over and feels AH-SAN.]

POLICEMAN A. He is dead.

LAO-TA. He—he's what?

POLICEMAN A. He is dead.

LAO-TA *[in a fit of frenzy]*. He isn't, he isn't, he isn't!

POLICEMAN B. He is dead. There's no pulse.

LAO-TA *[frantically]*. He—he—he—he is dead! He really is dead. I did it—I killed him. I did it—I killed him.

[The crowd stops leaving and some of them move in toward DC.]

CUSTOMER F. He pushed him down.

CUSTOMER A. Yes, he did it.

CUSTOMER B. I saw him do it.

CUSTOMER C. I saw it, too.

CUSTOMER D. We all saw it.

POLICEMAN A *[to LAO-TA]*. It seems you'll have to come along with us.

LAO-TA *[he doesn't hear him but continues crying as if to himself]*. Ah-san, Ah-san! *[In a frantic wail.]* I did it—I killed you. I did it—I killed you . . .

[POLICEMAN A takes out a pair of handcuffs and puts them on LAO-TA, who does not put up any resistance.]

POLICEMAN A. If you have anything to say, wait till we get to the station.

LAO-TA *[murmurs]*. I did it—I killed you . . . I did it—I killed you . . . I did it—I killed you . . .

POLICEMAN B. We'll need you all as witnesses later.

[Some people among the crowd leave stealthily.]

POLICEMAN A *[to POLICEMAN B]*. Take down their names.

POLICEMAN B. Right.

LAO-TA. I did it—I killed you. I did it—I killed you . . .

POLICEMAN A. Let's move.

[POLICEMAN A takes LAO-TA away. The crowd begins to disperse.]

[Gradually, lights start dimming except those over DC, where AH-SAN's body lies.]

[The TECHNICIAN alone walks over to the body, takes a last look at it in silence, then walks off slowly.]

[Silence.]

[BLACK OUT.]