

LI BAI LI BAI  
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By Ashley Ryoo

**WHY I LIKE IT; Drama Editor JANET EHRLICH COLSON writes...** *Well, this is an unusual play. Li Bai, by Ash Ryoo, is an ode to its namesake, arguably one of the best poets in the last 1,000 or so years, and not just in China but on this planet. You've gotta have some major balls to write a poetic play about a poetry demigod (along with another of the greatest poets, Du Fu, who appears as Li Bai's best friend) and Ash Ryoo's (balls) are at least the size of the moon from which Li Bai is hatched in this telling of the story. Here's a bit from the prologue leading up to the moon mother giving birth to give you an idea:*

**DU FU**

(chantlike)

THE MOON, MOTHER, LOVER, BRIDE  
ACROSS A STARK DARK STAGE SHE GLIDES.  
A POLISHED ACTRESS, SHEER PERFECTION,  
A DAMNED QUEEN IN RESURRECTION.

*A woman emerges from UL. Wearing a Chinese traditional garb, she slowly makes her way across the stage.*

TONIGHT, HOWEVER, SHE IS FULL BELLIED  
HER EYES SOFT IN MATERNAL JOY.  
INSIDE HER, YET ANOTHER HERO RESTS  
HIS FATE WRITTEN IN THE STARS:  
HE WILL SUCKLE AGAINST THE MOON'S REGAL BREASTS  
AND BE SPOILED WITH EVERY PLEASURE.

*The Moon drops a little ball, as the screen at the back brightens in a*

*brilliant hue. The Moon runs after the ball.*

*The play is highly stylized, influenced by Peking Opera, which gives it a musical rhythm and an otherworldly feel. It's gorgeous, meditative, transportive. It's got a Blood Wedding vibe (you know how much I love Lorca) and there's something about the poets narrating the path of their souls that channels Brecht (BRECHT!). I'm not talking alienation, but something viscerally meta (and even metaphysical?) all in a story that you can follow that takes place in a miraculous 25 minutes.*

*Five Stars.*

**NOTE:** *Second language writing. There are misspells and eccentric grammar constructions. We don't change these and suggest they are part of the reading experience. It's 'HOTS!' in action. The Eds.*

# **Li Bai**

## **A 25 Minute Presentation**

**Character Name**

Li Bai: A man with ample ambition and talent in writing in the time of Tang dynasty.

Du Fu: Li Bai's friend who is also a poet

The Moon: A beautiful heavenly being who fosters in her love for Li Bai

Tutor: Li Bai's Tutor. Played by multi 1

Old man: A spirit believed in Taoism. Played the actor for Du Fu

Boatman: Played by multi 1

Palace official: The one to invite Li Bai into the palace. Played by multi 2

Soldiers: Men hired to fight for the prince. Played by multi 1, 2

General: Played by the actor playing Du Fu

**Place**

China, the Tang dynasty

## Prologue

*A stage lit with only the image of a full moon, brilliant in its allure, beautiful in its pristine whiteness. Du Fu enters in UL. He stares at the moon while underscoring commences, then he utters:*

**DU FU**

*(chantlike)*

THE MOON, MOTHER, LOVER, BRIDE  
ACROSS A STARK DARK STAGE SHE GLIDES.  
A POLISHED ACTRESS, SHEER PERFECTION,  
A DAMNED QUEEN IN RESURRECTION.

*A woman emerges from UL. Wearing a Chinese traditional garb, she slowly makes her way across the stage.*

TONIGHT, HOWEVER, SHE IS FULL BELLIED  
HER EYES SOFT IN MATERNAL JOY.  
INSIDE HER, YET ANOTHER HERO RESTS  
HIS FATE WRITTEN IN THE STARS:  
HE WILL SUCKLE AGAINST THE MOON'S REGAL BREASTS  
AND BE SPOILED WITH EVERY PLEASURE.

*The Moon drops a little ball, as the screen at the back brightens in a brilliant hue. The Moon runs after the ball.*

BUT WHEN THE HEART OF THE MOON, EYE OF THE THUNDER  
IN A MOMENT OF MINDLESS BLUNDER  
LETS SLIP FROM HER HANDS THE FRUIT OF HER LABOR  
AND SENDS IT TUMBLING INTO THE WORLD  
THE CREATION WATCHES, MUCH CONFOUNDED  
AS THE ANGUISHED CRY OF A MAN CHILD RISES

HE'LL GROW WEARY WITH MUCH GRIEF  
HIS YEARS OF WANDERING WILL BE BRIEF...  
A WANDERER, HE'LL KNOW NO REST  
FOR HE KNOWS, DEEP WITHIN HIS SOUL  
THOSE FOREIGN GROUNDS ARE NOT HIS OWN  
THERE'S A HOME HE'S ALREADY KNOWN  
WITHOUT, HE'S NEVER WHOLE.

*Du Fu stares at the audience then says:*

His father named him after the star of the Eastern sky, Li Tai Bai. To his friends including I, Du Fu the poet, however, he was Li Bai.

**END OF SCENE**

## **Scene 1. Childhood**

*The stage lights up to reveal a boy, Li Bai, before his tutor, furiously writing with a brush dipped in ink. The tutor is astounded. Du Fu watches from a side of the stage.*

**TUTOR**

*(Chantlike)*

SO YOUNG, A SLIP OF A CHILD  
BUT HIS CRAFT EXQUISITE  
HE REMINDS ME OF THE REVERED POETS OF OLD  
YET HE'S NOT FULLY BLOSSOMED  
HIS WAYS ARE BRUSQUE, HIS MANNER BOLD  
WITH AMBITION HE'S FULL BOSOMED.  
I SEE THE DESIRE IN HIS EYES  
A FIRE HE CANNOT DISGUISE

**LI BAI**

Tell me revered tutor, what do you think of my writing?

**TUTOR**

You remind me of Sima Xiangru, the revered poet of the Han dynasty.

**LI BAI**

Is that a good thing?

**TUTOR**

Yes. It's a very good thing.

**LI BAI**

Do you think I will be able to shake this nation with my writing?

**TUTOR**

Do you want to?

**LI BAI**

Yes. Very. I think I will die if I cannot. And this is what I'll do...

**DU FU**

He embarks on a journey...

**LI BAI**

I'LL GO ON A JOURNEY...

**DU FU**

As a young man...

*Li Bai stands.*

**LI BAI**

*(Chantlike)*

WHEN I AM A YOUNG MAN... I WILL...  
SHINE LIKE A LAMP IN A DARK CONFUSED AGE.  
WITH THE SWING OF MY SWORD  
AND THE TIP OF MY BRUSH  
I SHALL ENTHRALL, RAPTURE AND ENGAGE  
ALL CHINA: MY MOTHERLAND.

I MUST EMBARK ON A JOURNEY.  
I MUST VISIT THE GREAT CAPITAL.  
I WILL DRINK FROM POTS OF EARTH AND GOLD,  
MAKE FRIENDS OF MEN GREAT AND SMALL,  
FOR A YOUNG MAN VERY EASILY GROWS OLD...

**DU FU**

*(Chantlike)*

AND DREAMERS OFTEN STUMBLE...

**LI BAI**

*(Chantlike)*

I'LL FULFILL MY DESTINY OR FALL...

**DU FU**

One day, Li Bai decided he was ready to be known! He traveled far...

**END OF SCENE**

## **Scene 2. Traveling the Yangtze River**

*A wide muddy river which is the Yangtze river. Li Bai travels on the river, a boatman rowing the boat for him. Landscape of hills and sandy riverbanks pass by. As the boat travels slowly down the waters, Li Bai finds an old man with his fishing pole dipped into the river. It is a spirit but Li Bai does not know yet.*

**SPIRIT**

Young man! Will you help me?

*Li Bai stares at the old man. The boatman continues to row.*

I have been fishing for hours but did not catch anything. Would you kindly let me on your boat so I can try the deeper waters? I will repay the favor.

*Li Bai gestures to the boatman to go ashore. The old man pulls his trousers up to his knees and comes towards the boat. He comes on with his fishing rod and boards the boat.*

Thank you. Thank you kindly.

*The boat continues to travel. All three men are silent. Then Li Bai notices that there is no fishing hook attached, just a straight needle.*

**LI BAI**

How do you fish with a straight needle like that?

*Suddenly, the river and the landscape disappear and the boat travels down the galaxy. The boatman is frightened and lets go of the paddle, which falls into the black of the universe and disappears. Li Bai is surprised as he studies the old man.*

**LI BAI**

Who are you? (*Beat*) Answer me.

**SPIRIT**

*(Chantlike)*

I SEEM AN OLD MAN  
WEAK AND BENT  
WHO LEANS ON A STICK HIS CROOKED FRAME  
FOR MY PURPOSE IT'S A PERFECT GUISE  
THE DYNASTIES I LIVED HAS MADE ME WISE

**BOATMAN**

*(chantlike)*

GOOD GODS OF THE  
HEAVENS, HEAR.  
I HAVE LOST MY MIND  
I FEAR.  
GOOD GODS OF THE  
HEAVENS, HEAR.  
I HAVE LOST MY MIND  
I FEAR.

**SPIRIT**

*(chantlike)*

I SEEM AN OLD MAN  
FEEBLE, DIM  
BUT I CAN LIVE  
TOMORROWS AT MY  
WHIM  
I AM, IF YOU WILL, A  
LITTLE GOD  
I MAKE LITTLE  
MIRACLES WITH MY  
ROD

**LI BAI**

*(chantlike)*

AH...  
AH...  
AH...  
AH...  
AH...  
AH...  
AH...

*The stars begin to shine in brilliant bursts.*

**LI BAI**

Why did you find me? What do you want?

**SPIRIT**

Ah, that is a good question.  
A good question indeed.  
I've come to confound you with riddles.

**LI BAI**

Answer!

**SPIRIT**

Here's a riddle for you.



Why do I fish with straight needles and not hooks?  
It's because I am wealthy. Where is my wealth?

**LI BAI**

How should I know?

**SPIRIT**

Ah, but this is important. Especially for young ambitious men like you, Li Tai Bai.

**LI BAI**

You...know my name!

**SPIRIT**

*(chantlike)*

I AM, IF YOU WILL, A LITTLE GOD  
I MAKE LITTLE MIRACLES WITH MY ROD  
NOW THAT I HAVE HAD MY FUN  
WITH A BURST OF LIGHT I WILL BE GONE....

*The spirit disappears. The fishing rod, however, still remains. Li bai  
and the boatman find themselves drifting down the Yangtze river again.*

**END OF SCENE**

### Scene 3. Hard Roads in Shu

*The royal palace. Li Bai steps into a hall at the end of which sits an official, before which Li Bai bows.*

**LI BAI**

Sir.

**OFFICIAL**

We finally meet! I have heard many good things about you. Welcome to the palace! We are in want of men like you.

**LI BAI**

It's my honor.

**OFFICIAL**

Come this way, please. Sit! Sit. I have liquor for us both.

*UL there is a table set with a white liquor bottle and two cups, accommodated with dried grapes. The two men sit and pours alcohol for each other. Chinese traditional music starts to play.*

**OFFICIAL**

I hear that you are also an accomplished poet.

**LI BAI**

You flatter me, sir.

**OFFICIAL**

Would I be fortunate enough to hear one of your poems?

**LI BAI**

Ah, certainly. It is not often that I am privileged with such an audience. I have...

*Li Bai pulls out a large piece of paper which has been folded many times. The Official leans back.*

**LI BAI**

Hard Roads in Shu.

*(chantlike, Li Bai speaks. The background shifts according to his narrative)*

STEEP THE MOUNTAINS TO BE CONQUERED  
STEEP THE HEIGHTS THAT NEEDS BE WON  
I THOUGHT I SAW A SUMMIT IN THE DISTANCE,

**LI BAI(CONT'D)**

YET IT WAS SOON GONE.

UNCHARTED HEIGHTS, SITES YET UNTOUCHED  
THE TREES RISE LIKE THE FUR  
OF SOME BRUTE OF AN UNKEMPT CUR  
THE FOWLS TREMBLE  
AS THEY GLIDE AGAINST THE SHADOW OF THE HIGH PEAKS  
TOO HIGH FOR THEM TO POLISH THEIR BEAKS  
AGAINST.

THE RAIN SHOWERS  
RAVAGE THE MOUNTAINSIDE FLOWERS.  
FAR OFF, A MONKEY CALLS FOR ITS MATE  
WHOSE CRIES ECHO IN THE AIR  
AGAINST PRECIPICES SMALL AND GREAT  
WHICH ALL LONG TO CLIMB BUT DO NOT DARE...

LEGENDS OF DRAGONS, FEARSOME CREATURES  
THEIR TALES UNRAVEL  
IN THE MOUTHS OF MEN WHO TRAVEL  
IN SLOW LABOROUS STEPS ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS.  
I SHARE A LONG MOMENT WITH AN OLD FRIEND  
BEFORE HE SAYS GOODBYE  
HE REACHES THE SPOT WHERE THE PATHS BEND  
THEN HE DISAPPEARS.  
THE WATERFALL ENCLOAKED IN FOG...  
THE DROPLETS BATTER AGAINST THE ROCKS  
OVER WHICH WILD GEESE DISPERSE IN FLOCKS...  
IT'S A HARD TRIP, THE ROAD TO SHU.

**END OF SCENE**

## Scene 4. Yue Xia Du Zhuo

**DU FU**

The Tang dynasty. Despite his ambition as a politician, Li Bai was accepted into the palace as a court poet. In Li Bai's time, Yang Guefei was consort and the most noted influence for the emperor Xuanjong. Li Bai was hired to entertain the royal family and naturally was expected to flatter consort Yang.

*A crash and a shrill voice of a woman(played by the actress for the moon) pierces the air. Li Bai appears UL. A voice urges that he leaves.*

**VOICE**

Get out!

**LI BAI**

But revered consort...

**VOICE**

Leave.

**DU FU**

Palace politics were not one of Li Bai's specialties.

*Li Bai is drinking and becoming drunk. He boards a boat UR. A full moon is shining overhead.*

**LI BAI**

*(chantlike)*

A MILLION WORDS I LONG TO RELEASE....  
INSTEAD IGNORANT EARS

I MUST STRIVE TO PLEASE.

MY REFLECTION  
AND THE MOON...  
GOOD ENOUGH A COMPANY  
AS I DRINK LIQUOR STRAIGHT FROM THE POT.  
BOTH ARE SILENT, BOTH LEND AN EAR  
AS I LET OUT A SONG,  
A SONG OF ANGER, OF LUST FOR POWER,  
AN EPITAPH FOR ANOTHER PASSING HOUR.  
A MOMENT OF GLORY WHICH WILL SOON DEFLOWER.  
A RENDITION.  
A TUNE THAT NEEDS BE SUNG  
BEFORE THE NECK OF A BIRD IS WRUNG.

**LI BAI(CONT'D)**

MY REFLECTION  
AND THE MOON.  
MUTE, THE PERFECT SPECTATORS  
AS I BECOME DRUNK WITH FRAGRANT WINE.  
A MAN STRIVES TO MAKE FOR HIMSELF A NAME.  
A LEGACY HE MUST ESTABLISH AND CLAIM.  
AND THE WORLD MUST NEVER BE THE SAME  
FOR HIS HAVING BEEN.  
MY SILENT COMPANIONS, DON'T YOU AGREE?  
I TAKE YOUR GENTLE COMPLEXION AS A YES.  
MY TWO FRIENDS, HEAR MY ADDRESS;

FOR VERY LONG I'VE BEEN  
LIKE AN ALIEN IN THE WILDERNESS  
YET MY HEART BURNS WITH DESIRE  
WHILE I SEE ANOTHER PRECIOUS HOUR EXPIRE,  
MY CHANCE TO SET THE WORLD AFLAME  
BEFORE I RETURN THE WAY I CAME...  
TALENT AND AMBITION I DO NOT LACK  
YET WHAT GOOD IS ALL MY WEALTH OF MIND  
SINCE THE CROWD IS BLIND?

UNDISCOVERED, UNFINISHED AND UNSPENT  
EVER DREAMING OF MY ASCENT  
IS THIS THE WAY I PERISH?

*Li Bai's boat reaches the riverside. He curls up drunken and falls asleep.*

**END OF SCENE**

## **Scene 5. Li Bai's Dream**

*The riverside where Li Bai is asleep. A beautiful woman who looks as if she is in her early 30s appear in front of Li Bai. Li Bai rises surprised in his sleep and sees the woman.*

**LI BAI**

Who are you? Why are you here? *(beat)* You're beautiful.

**MOON**

Child of twilight, child of dawn...

*The moon extends her hand. Li Bai tries to take her hand but the moon playfully pulls her hand away and hides it behind her back.*

**LI BAI**

You're so beautiful.

**MOON**

Come! Don't just sit there. Follow me!

*The moon rushes into a field of azaleas and Li Bai follows close behind her. The moon looks back, giggles and continues on.*

**LI BAI**

At least let me know your name!

**MOON**

*(chantlike)*

I AM THE EYE OF THE DIMMER HEAVEN

THE LOVE OF POETS AND THE INSANE  
I AM THE DAUGHTER OF THE CELESTIAL EMPEROR  
WHO OPENS THE CLOUDS AND LETS OUT THE RAIN

I AM FRIEND TO THE DARKNESS OF DUSK  
WHICH SEEPS INTO THE SHADOWS AND MELTS AWAY  
I AM THE MASTER OF THE ANIMALS OF THE NIGHT  
I SEE THEIR GREEN EYES COME ALIGHT

IN ANOTHER LIFE AND ANOTHER AGE  
WE WERE LOST IN PASSION HEATED  
WE DANCED IN THE FOG AND ROSE ABOVE,  
THE KISSES OF THE FIRST DAWN WE GREETED

### MOON

*(chantlike)*

AH... AH...

AH... AH...

AH... AH...

AH... AH...

AH... AH...

AH... AH...

AH... AH...

AH... AH...

AH... AH...

AH... AH...

AH... AH...

I AM THE DAUGHTER OF THE  
CELESTIAL EMPEROR  
WHO OPENS THE CLOUDS AND LETS  
OUT THE RAIN.

### LI BAI

*(chantlike)*

PLEASE DON'T RUSH AWAY TOO  
SOON.

I'LL PURSUE YOU ONTO THE  
DIMINISHING NOON

LET ME TAKE YOUR HAND FOR I  
DESIRE YOU

LET ME HOLD YOU AND ADMIRE  
YOU

I WON'T ASK FOR MORE I WOULDN'T  
DARE

I'VE KNOWN YOU I DON'T KNOW  
WHERE

*Li Bai finally reaches the Moon and they fall and roll in the azalea  
field.*

*(chantlike)*

I AM MOTHER, LOVER, SPOUSE  
I AM YOURS BUT SHOULD NOT BE HAD  
IN THE MORNING I WILL GO AWAY  
IN THE MIX OF YELLOW, RED AND GRAY.

*The Moon laughs and embraces Li Bai. When their lips are just about to meet, she disappears. Li bai is left with a corner of her garment in his hand.*

**END OF SCENE**

## **Scene 6. Rebellion**

**LI BAI**

*(Chantlike)*

I GROW OLD. I GROW TIRED.  
I'VE LOST JOY, AND I WAS ONCE SO INSPIRED  
I STILL HAVE FIRE. IT HURTS ME SO  
I MISS NOT KNOWING WHAT I DIDN'T NEED TO KNOW  
LIKE AN OLD MAID WAITING FOR HER GROOM  
CONTEMPLATING WHAT GESTURE TO ASSUME  
A FLOWER WHICH HAD CEASED TO BLOOM  
AND STARTED FADING  
ITS SMELL PERVADING  
AN ODOR OF THE EPHEMERAL

**VOICE**

It was tumultuous times in China. An Lushan, a rebel general, declared a revolt against the royal family. Since the Emperor fled, a prince declared himself the new ruler, whom Li Bai came to serve.

*Soldiers appear from UR. One is wearing a blue garment, the other the red.*

**SOLDIERS**

*(chantlike)*

HARD OUR WORK  
AND TIRED ARE WE  
WE KNOW NOT WHEN WE WILL BE FREE  
FROM THE BREAKING DAY TO THE DARK OF NIGHT



WE'RE IN DANGEROUS GROUNDS TO BE  
LOYALTY TO THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD  
LOYALTY TO OUR SUPERIORS  
WHEN THE BATTLE'S DONE  
AND THE WAR IS WON  
WE'LL BE BACK HOME WITH OUR WIVES

*Li Bai enters UL. A general salutes him Chinese style, to which Li Bai returns the greeting.*

**GENERAL**

Welcome to our base, sir.

**LI BAI**

It is an honor to serve the Prince in person.

**GENERAL**

Come here. Let me show you...

*They step into a tent together UR. The soldier continues to sing.*

**SOLDIERS**

*(chantlike)*

LOYALTY TO THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD  
LOYALTY TO OUR SUPERIORS  
WHEN THE BATTLE'S DONE  
AND THE WAR IS WON  
WE WILL NO MORE MISS OUR TOWNS.

**VOICE**

What they did not see was that there was yet another ambitious prince ready to challenge his brother. Thus, the battle raged between one prince and the other.

*The two soldiers suddenly turn toward each other and starts a swordfight, The fight continues for a long time since both soldiers are competent. However, the sword is wrenched from the hands of the blue soldier(Multi 2). The soldier in red(Multi 1) presses his own sword against the neck of the losing party, who in turn falls to the ground. The general and Li Bai step out of the tent. The red soldier presses his knife against them..*

Unfortunately for Li Bai, his was the losing party.

He was arrested for treason.

*Li Bai is tied up, and so is the general. They are led out by the soldier in red, UR.*

**END OF SCENE**

## **Scene 7. Imprisonment**

*A cold stark prison almost dark yet lit by moonlight. Li Bai speaks to himself.*

**LI BAI**

*(chantlike)*

COOL MY BED AGAINST THE FLOOR  
DARK DEMENTED DREAMS  
I AM FINISHED, IT SEEMS

THE MOON PEERS THROUGH THE WINDOW  
A BARRED SLIT OF A WINDOW  
ITS YELLOW LIGHT WASHES A CORNER OF THE ROOM  
IN MY FANTASIES, VOICES BOOM

I ONCE HAD PROMISE  
MY WINTER'S COLD.  
AND I AM OLD.  
A SORRY MESS TO BE...  
THEY GOSSIP IN THE STREETS ABOUT ME,

MY ENEMIES KNOW NO MERCY.  
AS FORTUNES HAS UNLEASHED THEIR WRATH  
THEY SPEAK AGAINST ME ON THEIR PATH.  
AS ANOTHER HAIR OF MINE TURNS WHITE  
AND DIMMER GROWS MY SIGHT  
WHAT AM I TO DO?

ON THE DAMP WALL LINGERS  
PATTERNS SCRATCHED BY FINGERS  
OF PREVIOUS CRIMINALS  
WHOSE ILL LUCK LED THEM TO THIS PRISON.  
THEN, WITH PRECISION  
I RECALL THE OLD MAN  
WHOSE BASKET WAS FULL OF VISION  
THE BRILLIANT VISIONS HE LEFT BEHIND  
THE WORDS BRANDED ON MY MIND...

*There is a cough below the bed. Li bai is surprised and gets up. The spirit reappears from under Li Bai's bed.*

You! **LI BAI**

Hello! Here I am again. **SPIRIT**

What do you want? **LI BAI**

Do you remember my riddle? **SPIRIT**

Yes. **LI BAI**

Do you know the answer? **SPIRIT**

No. **LI BAI**

**SPIRIT**  
Silly mortal, you don't understand.  
Why do I fish with straight needles and not hooks?  
It's because I am wealthy. Where is my wealth?

I... **LI BAI**

**SPIRIT**

The wealth I possess... is time.

**LI BAI.**

Ah...

**SPIRIT**

Time! I've dynasties of it! Unlike you.

**LI BAI**

Ah.

**SPIRIT**

Your supply was lacking to begin with. Now you've squandered it all. Every tiny bit. Meaninglessly.

**LI BAI.**

Ah...

*The spirit laughs a mean, malicious laugh. He continues to laugh louder and louder, and his laughter fills the entire prison cell. Li Bai covers his ears. The spirit then disappears with a puff of smoke.*

**END OF SCENE**

## Scene 8. Li Bai's Death

*Li Bai, shaken and humbled, leaves the prison he was in. Du Fu meets him at the entrance. Li Bai stumbles and almost falls. Du Fu helps him, holding him by his shoulders.*

**DU FU**

It's nice to see you again, old friend. *(beat)* Come. I have brought you some clothes you can put on.

**LI BAI**

No need. *(Beat)*. I am finished, Du Fu. Finished. And I had such high hopes...

**DU FU**

You don't need to be too pessimistic now, Li Bai.

**LI BAI**

It was my last chance. I was positive I was doing what's right. I was ready to give my life should my cause be fulfilled. And now...

**DU FU**

I'm so sorry, Li Bai.

*Du Fu pats Li Bai on the back and leaves. Li Bai walks and walks. He eases into a dirty alley and curls up to sleep. Midst a foggy atmosphere and the moon, just as lovely as before, steps in clad in a beautiful robe of white. Li Bai stirs and wakes.*

**LI BAI**

You. You've returned once again.

**MOON**

My child... My son.

**LI BAI**

I've waited for you.

**MOON**

I, too, have waited for this moment... Come with me.

**LI BAI**

What?

**MOON**

Come!

**MOON(CONT'D)**

*The moon rushes away from Li Bai.*

*(chantlike)*

IN ANOTHER LIFE AND ANOTHER AGE  
WE WERE LOST IN PASSION HEATED  
WE DANCED IN THE FOG AND ROSE ABOVE,  
THE KISSES OF THE FIRST DAWN WE GREETED

*The two rush into the wilderness. Underscoring as they dance in the fields. Shooting stars shoot through the air. The two then slowly rise up into the sky and dance against the dark of the night. The moon then slowly descends into the water below and watches Li Bai.*

**LI BAI**

*(chantlike)*

PLEASE DON'T RUSH AWAY TOO SOON.  
I'LL PURSUE YOU ONTO THE DIMINISHING NOON  
LET ME TAKE YOUR HAND FOR I DESIRE YOU  
LET ME HOLD YOU AND ADMIRE YOU

**LI BAI**

I'm coming for you!

*Li Bai jumps into the water. Ripples against the surface of the water, then silence.*

**END OF SCENE**

## Scene 9. Du Fu's Soliloquy

*Du fu appears UL. The full moon shines at the backdrop.*

**DU FU**

What is life on this world? It is a journey, a voyage through the wild. And, someday, you must return. Home.

**DU FU**

*(chantlike)*

THE MOON, MOTHER, LOVER, BRIDE  
ACROSS A STARK DARK STAGE SHE GLIDES.  
A POLISHED ACTRESS, SHEER PERFECTION,  
A DAMNED QUEEN IN RESURRECTION...

Li Bai died at the age of 61. Little did anyone in his time knew that he would be one of the most successful and well-known poets in all the Chinese eras. He is remembered as the artist of the dynasty and the lover of the moon.

*All the cast appear UL and UR. They chant as one.*

**ALL**

THIS LIFE IS NOTHING BUT A DREAM  
BEAUTIFUL THOUGH IT MAY SEEM  
KEEP YOUR FEET FIRM ON THE GROUND  
BUT CHERISH YOUR BRUISES AND YOUR WOUNDS  
AND LOOK UP INTO THE NIGHT SKY  
FIND THE HEAVEN'S DIMMER EYE

THESE MORTAL GROUNDS ARE NOT OUR OWN.  
THERE'S A HOME WE'VE ALREADY KNOWN.  
WITHOUT, WE'RE NEVER WHOLE!

**END OF SHOW**

**THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS:** *As a graduate of NYU's Graduate Musical Theater Writing program, I was always looking for a theme and a story that other writers had not written about yet. I found that Li Bai, the beloved Chinese poet of the Tang dynasty, had seldom been depicted by anyone so far, thus I started to write about him. This piece was originally conceived of as a musical, with its lines with irregular rhyme scheme. I took into account the norms of Peking opera, a traditional performance of China. I took note of Li Bai's actual poems when I wrote the lines, but they are all my own creative products. I plan to lengthen the show one day into a*



*longer piece. What I wanted to say through this piece is that just like Li Bai, we are all children of the darkening sky. We all have a “home” to return to.*

**AUTHOR BIO:** Hyunjin (Ash) Ryoo is a Seoul-based Book/lyric/song/drama writer, translator and an MFA graduate of NYU Tisch, Graduate Musical Theater Writing Program.

Her performed works include the musicals "The Tale of the Azaleas(Summer Fresh Festival, Tisch Multicultural Festival)" "The Girl in Blue(Blackbox, NYU)" and "Better Letter(Black Box, NYU)"

She is also a working translator of books and theater pieces between Korean/English language pairs.