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Men Write Men Write Men Right

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Abstract

Men Write Men Write Men Right

By Yide Cai

Men Write Men Write Men Right is a full-length play in three parts and written in three languages: English, Chinese, and German. The synopsis of the play is as follows, Cai, the protagonist of an unfinished forgotten play about China by the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht, goes on a journey to get himself and his play produced on stage. He finds that his supposed great grandson in China, Yide, whose English name is John, also wants to write a play about his great grandfather. So, the character Cai comes to John and asks to be adopted into his Chinese family and be a part of his play about his great grandfather. Together, they create a new play that is both Brechtian and Chinese, about how John's great grandfather goes to make theater in Shanghai during the Japanese invasion, while Brecht goes to Los Angeles and tries to produce this very play. It's a play about America, Germany, and China, in three languages, and it's a play about the writing of a play. It takes the concept of metatheater seriously, instead of just a joke or intellectual game.

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Men Write Men Write Men Right
Schreibender Männer Haben Recht
写人的人写的人是人

by Bertolt Brecht
Actually written by Yide(John) Cai

“The pope's convinced the Earth stands still
Or so the Bible proves.
He tries to take it by the ears,
and yet, and yet, it moves!”
—*The Life of Galileo* by Bertolt Brecht

Characters:

Cai:

play by one actor as both John's great grandfather and Bertolt Brecht

An ensemble of four role types:

Old Angry A:

old males, masculine, authoritative, American prosecutor, Japanese commander, etc.

Young Busy B:

young males, quick, energetic, sometimes confused, John's Geist, Brecht's Assistant, etc.

Old Charming C:

old females, calm, graceful, John's great grandmother, poet, fox, math tutor, etc.

Young Daring D:

young females, sassy, witty, Brecht's actresses, great grandfather's lover, etc.

Notes:

This play has the minimum of stage directions, which means that it gives the greatest potential and flexibility for experimentation of its staging and physicality. Do something about it, bitte. Just don't mess with the lines and languages too much, bitte.

Synopsis:

Cai, the protagonist of an unfinished forgotten play about China by the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht, goes on a journey to get himself and his play produced on stage. He finds that his supposed great grandson in China, Yide, whose English name is John, also wants to write a play about his great grandfather. So, the character Cai comes to John and asks to be adopted into his Chinese family and be a part of his play about his great grandfather. Together, they create a new play that is both Brechtian and Chinese, about how John's great grandfather goes to make theater in Shanghai during the Japanese invasion, while Brecht goes to Los Angeles and tries to produce this very play. It's a play about America, Germany, and China, in three languages, and it's a play about the writing of a play. It takes the concept of metatheater seriously, instead of just a joke or intellectual game.

Part I: German (The Essence)

Projection shows "Part I: German(The Essence)"

CAI is rehearsing his lines in Brecht's forgotten play to himself, thinking that he is alone.

CAI

(sings)

Vergessen werden ist wie der Tod:
Niemand will ihn bekommen, aber wir tun es.
Manchmal macht es dich nur sprachlos;
doch manchmal macht es dich einfach los!

*(Forgotten is like death:
No one wants to contract it, but we all do.
Sometimes it only makes you speechless;
But sometimes it just makes you gone.)*

Vergessen werden kommt sehr kurz
schneller fallen wie ein Sturz:
Anfangs fühlt es sich noch subtil an,
aber später schreit es irgendwann!

*(Forgotten comes so soon
travel faster than an arrow:
at first it still feels subtle,
but later it screams whenever.)*

Ja, vergessen werden ist so schade
doch ist auch eine Gnade:
es verschont dir davor,
der Schmerz der Vielen
die Tod lächerlichen Götter zu spielen.

*(Yeah, forgotten is so terrible,
But it is also a blessing:
it spares you from the pain of many
to play the gods who laugh themselves to death.)*

(speaks)

Applaus. Applaus? Applaus!

Es gibt Leute, Zuschauer!

(There are people, audience!)

Auf keinen Fall! Ich dachte, dass es nur Probe war.

(No way! I thought it was just a rehearsal!)

Yo hallo? Hört ihr mir zu? Spricht kein Deutsch?

(Hey, you hear me? Don't speak German?)

Dann ist das nicht Berlin, Deutschland, eben Europa.

(Then this is not Berlin, Germany, even Europe)

Ach, Amerika, yes, I kann tell von your distinct faces und bellies.

Englisch ist fine. Englisch wir spricht, ja?

Achtung, Leute! Wach auf! Wach auf!

Da komm endlich Zuschauer! Echte, echte!

(Attention, people! Wake up! Wake up!

Finally the audience comes! Really! Really!)

*The ensemble of ABCD wakes up,
and they start to perform the
beginning of Brecht's forgotten play.
Projection shows "Prologue"*

*CAI and ENSEMBLE act like they
are "backstage," getting into
costumes, which are workers'
coverall suits, putting on make ups,
having small talks, etc.*

*The director, or stage manager, or
whoever that is involved in the
production of the show but not
supposed to act in it approaches the
actors.*

DIRECTOR, STAGE MANAGER, or WHOEVER

Es ist Zeit.

(It's time.)

Places.

Position, bitte.

*ENSEMBLE follows the instruction
and sits neutrally on the ground in a
circle surrounding CAI.*

*CAI remains "backstage," adjusting
his costumes or something.*

CAI

One moment, please.
Actually, can I ask you something?

DIRECTOR, STAGE MANAGER, or WHOEVER
Sure, anything else you need before we start?

CAI

Yes, it's difficult.

DIRECTOR, STAGE MANAGER, or WHOEVER
Say it, we need to start
soon.

CAI

Can we cancel the show tonight?

DIRECTOR, STAGE MANAGER, or WHOEVER
What is the matter
with you?

CAI

It's not ready yet.

DIRECTOR, STAGE MANAGER, or WHOEVER
What? You still don't trust the writing?

CAI

No, I mean why are we, a bunch of Germans,
in East Berlin, in 1956, claiming onstage that we are Chinese?
We played this same trick of a prologue, a play within a play,
when we did *The Chalk Circle*, even touring around Europe,

but China is now too a communist country, our comrade.
So, wouldn't they laugh at us? Look at them sitting there,
what if they just get up and leave? Then I will be done.

DIRECTOR, STAGE MANAGER, or WHOEVER
Okay, I see. I'll figure something to get them ready,
and when they are, you'd better be ready too.

*DIRECTOR, STAGE MANAGER, or
WHOEVER turns toward the
audience.*

So, ladies and gentlemen, as you can see,
our protagonist, who will introduce himself shortly,
is not quite sure if he is for this play, or if this play is for you.

So, let's find out, if that's true, or just nerves,
by playing a simple game: I'll let you guess the story of the play.
You are allowed to ask ten questions, and all I'll only say yes or no.
If the results I get are satisfying, we will do the show tonight.
If not, sorry, no refunds. Check the fine print.

*DIRECTOR, STAGE MANAGER, or
WHOEVER plays the game with the
audience but actually just randomly
saying yes or no, not related to the
play at all.*

Alright, that's ten questions, thank you, and let's see what we have.
The story is about *(Whatever ends up being said)*

*CAI gets up and interrupts
WHOEVER.
The projection shows "Confession"*

CAI

Nie, nie, genug, raus, ich sag raus! (No, no, enough, out, I say out!)

WHOEVER

I suppose you are ready.

WHOEVER leaves.

CAI

I know what he was doing: always fakes it till he makes it.
 Es ist interessant, ja, aber, sorry to say, he was totally messing with you.
 All his yes and no are einfach random, not related to the play at all.
 Why? Because we don't know it ourselves! That's as far in the script as we got!
 Dies play is called "Men Write Men Write Men Right,"
 a masterpiece written by the old Bertolt Brecht.
 Nochmal, "Men Write Men Write Men Right"
 Nie, not Mann ist Mann, we're not doing cannibalism tonight.

None of you heard of it, ja? That's okay.
 It's not because you are Americans or un culturally sophisticated,
 but Brecht, my Autor, never finished it.
 He wrote that Prolog you just saw,
 the opening song, we pretending to get ready,
 my talk with that clerk, and that silly game,
 and that was it, alles. Na klar?

And dies ist not uncommon at all within Brecht's repertoire.
 He has many many unfinished, abandoned Projekte.
 Some of them, his lovers polished and finished them,
 but others like my play got left behind and forgotten.

Zum Beispiel,
 (for example)
 Another play he had been dying to write until he died
 is called "The Life of Confucius," nie, nie, not Galileo,
 Confucius, which he only wrote
 one scene called the ginger jar.

A comes as Confucius.

Confucius? Hallo? You're supposed to act out the scene for us.

A

不, 笑话。
 (No, it's a joke.)

CAI

Ach, come on.
I know it's not that accurate or authentic or makes any sense.
But please, don't disappoint my audience, I need their attention.

A

不, 笑话。
(No, it's a joke.)

A goes back to neutral.

CAI

See, he's eben more depressed than I am.
So, my world premier never came,
instatt my ensemble ABCD and I were waiting for many years.
Oh, what year is it? Can anyone tell me?
So, it has been (however many years since 1956) years.

ABCD comes to join CAI.

ABCD and CAI

(sings)
We were supposed to be funny,
but now we sound scary.
We were supposed to be alive,
but now we walk like ghosts.
We were supposed to be novel,
but now we sit in dust.
We practice, we rehearse,
we review our lines weider und weider
für eine Performance weiter und weiter.

ABCD returns to neutral.

CAI

Ja. Was ist zu tun?
(Yeah, what's to do?)
I know many things about this play.
I know its plot, overall story.
I know its time and setting.
I know all the characters' personalities.

I eben know what Brecht was thinking,
 his messages, metaphors, all that!
 I know who I am, jedoch, aber,
 I just don't know my lines,
 because they are never written!
 I am not a playwright. I am just an actor, ein Schauspieler,
 and I don't know
 what to do with all this Information!
 Now, what should I do?
 Can anyone help me?
 I know I'm German, and I'm just fictional, but please!

Warte, Moment, don't leave, don't leave!
 I'm just remembering something,
 something all the way from reality!
 See, see, in this play by Brecht, I am supposed
 to be a Chinese Mann living in the 1930s,
 "Supposed," since I don't speak Chinese or know
 anything about China, but, now I suddenly remember
 that, by the time of 1949, my Sohn in China would be born
 as the erste generation of the "New China,"
 dann, nach rund thirty years, in 1973, my grandson would be born
 as the the erste generation of the "Reformed China,"
 dann, yes, yes, nach thirty years, in 2000, my great grandson would be born
 as the erste generation of the "Newly Reformed China."
 Ja, China has aging anxiety and always wants
 to look younger than it is. I guess we all do.
 Und, and this great grandson is studying Theater and German
 in America! His name is Yide and has an English name, John.
 Perfekt! He is the playwright that can rescue dies play and me!
 Ach, I muss get in touch with him somehow. But how?
 Right, I muss get connected to his Geist!
 I know there is a website for it.

*Projection shows a web page
 that's John's Geist login page, with
 space to enter username and
 password.*

Ach schade, what's the password? John123?

Wir schaffen das, ja? Let's try dies.
(We can do this, yes?)

CAI chooses the option "Forgot Password."

Always a good place to start.

The web page show a security question "What is John's favorite German story?"

Ha, easy, it muss be either

A comes as Goethe, D comes as Schiller. They try to enter the answers.

A

Meiner! Erlkönig, Werther und Faust.

Wrong answers.

D

Nie, meiner! Räuber, Maria Stuart und Wallenstein.

Still, wrong answers.

CAI

Was? Dann was noch?
Don't tell me it's one of those Reisebücher(travel books),
about Herr Doktor Humboldt climbing a volcano in Panama.

Correct answer.

CAI, A and D

Nein, auf keinen Fall!
(No, no way!)

*B comes as John's Geist.
Projection shows the cover page of*

*the book "Oh, wie schön ist
Panama."*

B

Ja, auf jeden Fall.

(Yes, totally.)

My favorite German story is a kleine Kindergeschichte (small children story)
heißt "Oh, wie schön ist Panama."

CAI, A and D

Hä? Panama?

B

Genau, I read that story in my German intro class by a professor
whose great grandfather invented the Maxim machine gun.

And it goes like this. Es war einmal ein kleiner Bär.

Johannes, du bist der Bär.

(Johannes, you are the bear.)

A

Ich?

B

Ja, du.

A as Bär.

A

Hallo.

B

Und ein kleiner Tiger. Friedrich, du bist der Tiger.

(And a small tiger. Friedrich, you are the tiger.)

D as Tiger.

D

Morgen. (morning)

B

They lived in a small house next to a big tree and a big river.

They had alles they need, because

A

I am as strong as ein Bär.

D

I am as tough as ein Tiger.

B

Aber eines Tages, in the river, the Bär found a box.

A

Oh, a box. Es sagt Panama, Panama.

B

So, the Bär decided

A

Oh, Panama ist das Land meiner Träume.
(Oh, Panama is the land of my dream.)

B

So he told the Tiger about it.

A

Oh, in Panama ist alles viel schöner.
Oh, Panama ist das Land unserer Träume.
(Oh, everything is more beautiful in Panama.
Oh, Panama is the land of my dream.)

B

Natürlich the Bär knew everything about Panama
just like Brecht knew everything about China.

D

Oh, wie schön ist Panama. Sofort Morgen.

B

So, the next day, they left their home and were on their way to Panama.

A
Zuerst we have to know where Panama ist.

D
Aber how?

C comes as the fox.

A
Lass ask jemand.

B
Soon they found a fox.

C
Guten Tag.

A
Herr Fuchs, wo geht's hier nach Panama?
(Mr. Fox, where is the way to Panama?)

C
Nach links.
(Turn left)

C returns to neutral.

B
So they turned left, and left, and left.
And you know what happens, when two Germans keep turning left.

A and D walk in a circle.

A/D
Link, link, link, und link.
Link, link, link, und link.

B
Nach many days and nights, durch wind and rain,
until one day they reached a big river.

Oh, wie groß ist der Fluss. A

And a big tree. B

Oh, wie groß ist der Baum! D

They found an abandoned small house next to the river and the tree, so they decided. B

Dies ist Panama! A

Oh, wie schön ist Panama! D

*A and D return to neutral.
Projection shows "Negotiation."*

Now, see, why is it my favorite German story? B

No. CAI

Okay, so, what do you want? B

Ich bin Cai. CAI

Oh, I don't know my last name exists in Germany too. B

No, I'm Chinese, and we could be related. CAI

Huh?

B

CAI

Ja, we could be related.

B

How? Like your dad was one of these white dudes into Asian girls?

CAI

No, I kann be your great grandfather.

B

Eh, I don't think that's how it works.

CAI

Aber you kann adopt me.

B

Sure, I can adopt a cat or puppy,
but can a great grandfather be adopted?

CAI

Warum nicht? (Why not?)

B

I mean you look the same age as me.

CAI

Ja, natürlich, I am your great grandfather,
when he was your age.

B

Doesn't look like it though.

CAI

Wieso? (Howso?)

B

You look like someone's imagination of China.

CAI

Wow, how did you know? It's the imagination of Bertolt Brecht!

B

That's nice, but, sorry, I'm not interested, okay?

Right now, I'm busy writing a play about my real great grandfather.

CAI

But we live around the same time period! From the 1900s to 50s!

B

Sure, that's a crowded period of history.

CAI

And we are both sons of a landlord family.

B

Sure, but do you know what the word "landlord" or "地主" actually means?

CAI

That they own land?

B

And? Do they drink beer?

CAI

Eh, yeah, maybe? It tastes good.

B

See, it's not that helpful.

You can later come to the audition for the play, if you want,
but I doubt you will get cast.

CAI

Ach ja? And how's your play about your real great grandfather going?

B

It's going well.

CAI

You are getting stuck. I know it.

B

Know what?

CAI

I know you, playwrights. If your writing is really going well, you won't shut up about it. Disagree? Then show me some of your drafts.

B

Okay, fine.

I first wrote the story like Don Quixote with my great grandfather as Don Quixote riding on a horse, while his servant as Sancho riding on a donkey.

A comes as Don Quixote. D comes as Sancho.

A

我亲爱的仆人啊，你知道不知道，
虽然我的外表是光鲜亮丽，
但我的心却在滴血，流泪？

(My dear servant, do you know,
Although my appearance is glamorous,
But my heart is bleeding, crying?)

D

我亲爱的主人啊，我不知道
你为什么要滴血，流泪？
难道是我服侍你还不够周到吗？

(my dear master, i don't know
Why are you dripping blood and crying?
Could it be that I am not considerate enough to serve you?)

A

不，我亲爱的仆人啊，不是因为
你的服侍还不够周到，而是因为
我的爱人还在很远，很远的远方。

我的内心怎么可能不滴血，不流泪呢？

(No, my dear servant, not because
Your service is not good enough, but because
My lover is still far away, far away.
How could my heart not bleed or cry)

D

可我亲爱的主人啊，虽然你的爱人
还在很远，很远的远方，但是我们
已经在路上了，我们已经快要到了。
看哪，看哪，那磨坊风车下的戏台，
不就是你爱人将要演出的地方吗？

(But my dear master, though your lover
Still far away, far away, but we
Already on the way, we're almost there.
Behold, behold, the stage under the mill windmill,
Isn't that where your lover will be performing?)

A

啊我亲爱的仆人啊，那可不是风车，
而是可怖的巨人，虏走了我的爱人。
我要纵马驰骋，我要跟它同归于尽。

(O my dear servant, that is no windmill,
But a terrible giant, who took my love away.
I want to gallop the horse, I want to die with it.)

A and B return to neutral.

CAI

Oh Gott sei Dank.
(Oh, thank God.)

B

Hey, I know it's not that great.

CAI

I'm glad you're smart enough to realize that.

B

But it's related to a Chinese proverb
that sometimes, to find a horse, first you need to ride a donkey.

CAI

Where did this idea come from?

B

From my math tutor.

CAI

Math tutor?

B

Yeah, she was an exchange student from America.

C comes as the math tutor.

C

So, how would you solve this equation?

B

Do you like doing math?

C

What was that?

B

I said do you like doing math? Just be honest, I don't.

C

I guess I don't like it either.

B

Then why are we doing this?

C

Because your parents paid me.

B

How about this?

How about you teach me something that you really want to teach?

C

I really want to teach?

B

Yes, if you can teach me whatever you want.

C

Okay, sure, you know I actually study Spanish literature.

B

Spanish?

C

Si.

B

Sorry, so you are saying, you, an American, is studying Spanish in China?

C

Yeah, the Shenzhen university offered me the best deal.

B

Cool.

C

Thanks, so, I'm writing a dissertation on Don Quixote.

Have you heard of the book?

B

Yeah, it's written by Cervantes, right?

And didn't he get captured in a war and tell this story to his cellmate?

C

No, I think that was Marco Polo.

B

Oh, I'm so sorry. How can I get this wrong?

C

Hey, it's okay. I can tell you about it.

C return to neutral

B

This story has a point, trust me.

CAI

Gut, alles klar.

(Good, everything is clear.)

So, do you have any other drafts?

B

Yeah, and it's actually related to that Shenzhen University.

CAI

Wieso?(Howso?)

B

It was quite an avant garde place at the time.
Shenzhen, the city was also quite young
and very rich, because for a time, it was
the only place in China where capitalism was allowed.
Meanwhile, the city was a hub for artists,
musicians, writers and poets.

CAI

Ach ja, sounds like somewhere in Germany.

B

And one of the poets was my favorite
who wrote these verses.

C comes as the poet.

C

生活是一次机会,仅仅一次,

谁校对时间,谁就会突然老去。
 (Life is a chance, just one once,
 Whoever checks the time will suddenly age.)

CAI

What does it mean?

B

Right, you don't speak Chinese, "great grandpa."
 So, my second version of my great grandfather
 is in the similar form of an epic poetic drama.

CAI

Neo-romanticism that's how Brecht would call it.

C

那孤独的骑士
 带着他唯一的战利品,
 是他那爱人献出的花,
 回到他那久别的故乡。
 山谷中,溪水旁,就是
 他的小村庄,如今一片
 荒凉,四周都是野草。
 这场为了爱情的远征
 换来剥夺生命的收场。

(the lonely knight
 With his only booty—
 Flowers from his lover,
 Back to his long-lost hometown.
 In the valley, beside the stream, is
 His small village, now
 A desolate, surrounded by weeds.
 This expedition for love
 In exchange for the deprivation of life.)

C returns to neutral

B

That's the moment when he finally made it home from Shanghai.

CAI

Ein bisschen besser(a little better) than Don Quixote,
aber you don't actually know much about your great grandfather, right?

B

Of course, I do, how could you think that?

CAI

Because I have noticed that you keep mixing other sources, fantasies
into this real story, then it must mean that you don't have much
to work with in the beginning. So, your story is not much realer
than the one Brecht wrote about me.

B

Fine, I never met him, and I heard most of his stories
from my great grandmother, when I was a child, but she is now dead.

CAI

So, my playwright great grandson, it seems
that unless the truth ministers occasion to you, you are gagged.

B

Okay, Shakespeare, I do know many things about him, alright?
I know our hometown, his and my great grandmother's families,
even his passion for Chinese theater, but there is just this one thing.
It's like an abyss, a black hole.

CAI

Which is?

B

In the 1930s, when the Japanese invaded China,
he left home and moved to Shanghai, and when he came back,
he gave up all the land of his family to the villagers, got married,
and was never interested in theater again, and he never talked
about what happened to him in Shanghai. I mean I did
a lot of historical research, but I'm just not sure.

CAI

Dann ist das perfekt! See, the play Brecht wrote is exactly

my trip to Shanghai. Trust me, it'll work much better than Don Quixote or some romantic poems!

B

Really, then why wasn't this play ever written?

CAI

Because Brecht died, an heart attack, in his Berlin apartment, but more deeply, I think it was because of Fascism, a long story.

B

Same, same, I can't write about my great grandfather, because of Communism. His life is a part of this taboo, forbidden history of "old" China. The communist party destroyed most the records and invented an official narrative that the landlords were the villains who exploited their peasants, so the party was the hero who saved them from oppression, and that's what most Chinese people including me are taught, while most people who remember choose to avoid and forget it.

CAI

Brecht was actually a fan of Mao and communist China, his Hundred Flowers Campaign and thought it was better than East Germany.

B

Yes, I know, which was an illusion based on lies!
I mean how did such things escape from us? Huh, tell me!
Bertolt Brecht and my great grandfather are both real people in history, yet all we have now is some fragments, rumors, official narratives, scholarly research and propaganda, and you, a half-finished fictional character!

CAI

Hey, I am fully developed. It's just that I don't know my lines.

B

You know truth and personal memories are so weak and can be so easily overwhelmed by power, by archives and institutions.

CAI

And by Fascism, which is Capitalism.

B

At my city Shenzhen, the government used to set up borders and checkpoints, so only the legal residents were allowed to enter, kind of like America now. Growing up in this island, I once developed a paranoia for what's outside the city. In my mind, there could be only barbarians or monsters.

*Projection shows the historical image.
C comes as John's mom.*

So, when my dad wanted to take me on a trip all the way to another province, I thought I was going to die for sure and wrote a last will to my mom.

B

Dear mother,
my blind father is going to lead me
on to a journey which will lead to our tragic end
like the one of Oedipus, hitting his father on the way.
My only comfort is, at least, I know who my mother is.

C

Okay.

B

When you finally hear about this heartbreaking news, don't be quick to despair, don't let sadness overwhelm you but lift up your spirits and see to the matters at hand. First, you should bring justice to our deaths and seek punishment to these perpetrators whoever and wherever they might be.

C

Sure.

B

Second, you should properly settle my properties.

Among them, the ones with the utter most importance are my toys. Each of them I have given an extensive life story which should not be left forgotten. I shall list all of them for you to be remembered. My Ultraman was born on the planet of Thebes. He rescued the life of my Hello Kitty who was doomed to be sacrificed under the claws of my Tyrannosaurus. But to save her, he must first

CAI

For the sake of time, I won't let John introduce all his toys.

B

Fine.

After you have done all the missions required of you, you may seek happiness again, meet another man and have a new son with him.

Sincerely wishes,
Your Son.

C

Alright.

C returns to neutral.

CAI

Apparently, you made it back alive.

B

Now, this memory only my mom and I remembered it, and of course, the government is never going to keep any trace of it: you can't find any sign of a border or checkpoint now.

CAI

Ja, unlike Berlin, the checkpoints there are now tourist sites.

B

That's why I rarely told my American friends about it. They'd just think I'm crazy and made everything up.

CAI

Brecht never told anyone about the play either.
Well, he tried, but no one ultimately listened to him.

B

So, fuck them, let's do this!

CAI

Genau, wir schaffen das!
(Exactly, we can do it!)

B

And that's why we need theater!

CAI

And let us, ciphers to this great accompt,
On your imaginary forces work.

*The projection shows
"Brainstorming."*

B

Alright, Shakespeare, how about you first tell me the story, as Brecht wrote it?

CAI

So, it's actually a rewrite based on one of his earlier plays
called "Die Maßnahme." Have you heard of it?

B

Of course, he was later questioned by the Un American Activities Committee
because of it. But I guess, some of you in the audience don't know it, right?

CAI

Ja, leider. (Yeah, unfortunately.)

B

Okay, we are trying to save time for you here, so let's just get this over real quick.

*The projection shows the
wikipedia page of "Die
Maßnahme"*

CAI

Four agitators from Moscow return from a successful mission in China and are congratulated for their efforts by a central committee (called The Control Chorus.) The four agitators, however, inform the committee that during their mission they were forced to kill a young comrade for their mission to succeed. They ask for judgment from the committee on their actions. The committee withholds its verdict until after the four agitators re-enact the events that led to the young comrade's death.

B

Great, now we can start.

CAI

So, this time, he focused instead on that young comrade and wrote a different story about him in Shanghai. It starts with me at the harbor leaving my village to go see my mistress's performance in Shanghai. I discovered her in the local theater troupe singing traditional Chinese opera, and I fell in love. I wanted her to succeed, so I sent her to Shanghai, to perform in these modern western theaters.

B

Huh, like what?

CAI

She is going to play Nora, in the China's premier of A Doll's House.

B

Interesting, it was an actual production. I researched about it. You know, in history, it was played by Mao's later wife.

Projection shows the historical image.

CAI

Nice, so I get to mess with her, before Mao does. Then, when I visit her, she doesn't like me anymore and doesn't want to come home with me.

B

She finds a new white boyfriend?

CAI

Yeah, but not for long, Japan invades,
and all her western friends including that boyfriend abandon her
and hide into their safe colonies. Meanwhile, I stay in Shanghai.
To earn a living, I, a landlord son find a job in the factory
working alongside the Chinese proletarians
who were starting to unionize and thinking about joining
the new communist party.

B

Right, I think Brecht wrote another play about how the bread king learns to bake.

CAI

And I transform myself through labor and suffering,
by becoming one of the leaders of the communist party.
As my lover is arrested and interrogated by the Japanese,
my comrades and I put on a strike in protest.
She is then released and reunited with me.
That's the story. And all you need to do is to write the lines.

B

I see, this story is pretty much an idealized version
of his own early adult life in Berlin.
But where is my great grandmother?

CAI

Was? Can't she be that actress?

B

No, they were from the same village,
and they had been engaged since they were born.

CAI

Oh, nice.

B

See, in his play, you are like an orphan,
just exist out of nowhere.
And the Japanese invasion seems like a mild
nuisance or a simple theatrical device.
These Japanese are so kind to just release your lover
to let you two move on with your lives,
but, for us, they are real, drunk with American oil
and Chinese blood.

CAI

Das stimmt.

B

And unfortunately, we are many years later in America
and trying to explain all this to an American audience,
so we must make the play both authentically Chinese,
and be interesting and relevant enough for them,
so they won't try to make more money
for Facebook or Tik Tok by looking at their phones.

CAI

So, you are saying instead of filling your "abyss"
with my play, you want to change the play itself?

B

Yes, we need to make changes. We want to make a good theater
not that creature from Frankenstein.

CAI

No, then it wouldn't be me and my play anymore.
I don't want to be forgotten. I want my world premier,
not some adaptation or misinterpretation.

B

Sure, then I want my real great grandfather,
not some German's speculation or imagination.
Hey, don't worry, I won't change it that much.
It'll still be the same story.

CAI

Ach ja, how can I be sure?

B

Have you heard the Chinese fable about dry fish?

CAI

No.

B

See, we have a lot of work ahead of us.

*D comes as the fish. A comes
as Zhuang Zi.*

Once, Zhuang Zi saw a fish struggle on the ground.

CAI

So, the fish was drowning, ja?
Das ist komisch. (That's funny.)

D

Hilfe, Hilfe, I'm drowning.

A

Keine Sorge, mein Fischchen.
(Don't worry, my little fish.)
I'm the wise philosopher Zhuang Zi.
I'll help you. Das verspreche ich.(I promise.)

CAI

Why are they speaking in German?
I thought it's a Chinese story.

B

Yes, but still a Chinese story,
see the point?

D

Wasser, bitte.
Gib mir Wasser.

A

Ja, Wasser, auf jedenfalls.

I will talk to the König at once,

und we will form a helping the drowning fish action committee, HDFAC,

dann we will form a helping the drowning fish philanthropy foundation, HDFPF,

D

Wasser,

gib mir Wasser.

A

Dann wir werden start a construction Projekt

building a canal to transfer Wasser von the Yangtze river right to your mouth.

Fischchen, Fischchen? Was fehlt dir?

(Little fish, little fish? What's the matter?)

D

Wasser.

A

Ja, sicher, Wasser vom Yangtze River.

D

Aber when it reaches me, I'll be a dry fish.

A and D return to neutral

CAI

Okay, a sad story,

but what does it have to do with the play?

B

I just made an adaptation of a Chinese fable for you, a German,

and it's still the same story, so I can do the same with your play.

And just like the fish says, when it's time for water,

we don't go all the way to the Yangtze river.

CAI

Sure, and so?

B

Brecht is a fish.
 Scholars are convinced
 that he was a wish,
 and yet, and yet,
 wherever there is water
 there he swims,
 Rhein, or Mississippi,
 Yangtze river or Pacific ocean.
 Water is water.
 Water is everywhere,
 in everyone, in you, me, and you.

CAI

Egal, okay, I trust you.
 But promise me that you won't lose yourself to fantasies again
 that you need to stick to what we have, not inventing anything new.

B

Danke, I promise, and you need to promise me that you won't
 just be an imaginary Chinese but a real one, this time.

CAI

Sicher(sure), but how?

B

First you need to speak Chinese.

CAI

Oh mensch, that'd take years.

B

No, we are on the stage.
 And here, to learn Chinese, you just need to watch a tutorial.

CAI

Gott sei Dank.(Thank God.)

*A comes as the Chinese lord.
 C comes as the Radhersteller.*

B

Once upon a time, a Chinese lord and his Radhersteller(wheel maker) were on a trip, on their way, one of the wheels of their chariot broke down, so the Radhersteller had to go down and fix the wheel, while the Chinese lord was in his seat reading a book by Confucius.

A

学而时习之，不亦说乎？
有朋自远方来，不亦乐乎？
人不知而不愠，不亦君子乎？

(Is it not pleasant to learn with constant perseverance and application?
Is it not delightful to have friends coming from distant quarters?
Is he not a man of complete virtue, who feels no discomposure though men may take no note of him?)

CAI

Sounds familiar.
I think Brecht had a copy of it in his apartment.

C

嘿，嘿，
哈，哈，
嘿，嘿。

(Hey, hey,
Ha, ha,
Hey, hey.)

CAI

I can understand that.

B

Then, seeming to be upset, Radhersteller stopped, came up to his lord and asked him.

C

敢问，公之所读者何言？
(May I ask what you are reading?)

CAI
 About the book?

A
 圣人之言。(The words of the saint.)

C
 圣人在乎？(Is the saint still alive?)

B
 What a question. Of course, Confucius was dead.

A
 已死矣。(He is dead.)

C
 然则君之所读者，古人之糟魄已夫！
 (Then you are reading trash.)

B
 He is calling the most sacred book trash? Outrage.

CAI
 Polizei.

A
 寡人读书，轮人安得议乎！有说则可，无说则死。

B
 You'd better give a reason, otherwise you die.

CAI
 Oh mensch.

C
 臣也，以臣之事观之。
 斲轮，徐则甘而不固，
 疾则苦而不入。

B
 I'm a Radhersteller.

I only know how to make wheels.
 I only know when I hit the nail too slow,
 it won't be firm enough,
 but when I hit the nail too fast,
 it won't be straight enough.

C

不徐不疾，得之于手而应于心，
 口不能言，有数存焉于其间。
 臣不能以喻臣之子，
 臣之子亦不能受之于臣，
 是以行年七十而老斲轮。

B

Only I know the right speed to hit the nail,
 after making thousands of wheels for 70 years.
 I can't describe it; I can't put it into words,
 I can't even teach this skill to my son.
 After I die, he is going to starve to death.
 So, anything written into words must be trash.

CAI

Right, I get it. Brecht once stared at a Radhersteller too,
 while complaining how ungeduldig(impatient) he was.

B

Yes, it's another adaptation of both an ancient Chinese parable and Brecht's life
 about how language is meaningless, which is perfect for you to learn Chinese.

CAI

Toll, and what should be the first Chinese words out of my mouth?

B

Let's sing this song. It's my favorite Chinese nursery rhyme,
 and it captures the moment and energy perfectly
 when you and my great grandmother first met each other.

CAI

Simple enough.

*C comes as John's great
grandmother as a little girl.*

B

So, sing after me.
昨天我打从你门前过。
(Yesterday, I walked past your door.)

CAI

昨天我打从你门前过?
(Yesterday, I walked past your door.)

B

你正提着水桶往外泼。
(while you were splashing water out with a bucket.)

CAI

你正提着水桶往外泼?
(while you were splashing water out with a bucket?)

*CAI and B sing the Chinese
nursery rhyme “泼水歌”
to C.*

B/CAI

昨天我打从你门前过
你正提着水桶往外泼
泼在我的皮鞋上
路上的行人笑得呵呵
你什么话也没有对我说
你只是眯着眼睛望着我
噜啦啦 噜啦噜拉勒噜啦啦啦
噜啦啦啦 噜啦 噜啦噜啦勒
噜啦啦 噜啦啦 噜啦噜拉勒噜啦
噜啦啦啦 噜啦啦啦勒

(Yesterday, I walked past your door,
while you were splashing water out with a bucket,
and it got all over my shoes.
All people on the streets were laughing,
but you said nothing but smiled at me.
Lu La La, Lu La La, Lu La Lu la Ley,

Lu La, Lu La Lu La, Lu La Lu La Ley,
 Lu La La, Lu La La, Lu La Lu La Ley,
 Lu La, Lu La Lu La Ley.)

C

Sorry. Bye.

*C goes back to neutral.
 The projection shows "New
 Prologue."*

B

So, let's start the story over, shall we?

CAI

Jawohl.

B

Here's your new script.
 In it, you now have a village
 next to the Yangtze river, over a stone arch bridge,
 with a tall clock tower that you can call hometown,
 a house with your bed that you can call home,
 an old wealthy prudent man you can call dad
 and a rather, I'll have to say, strange fiance.
 Meanwhile, you get to be Brecht during his exile
 in Los Angeles, America, trying to produce
 this very play about China into a film and sell it to Hollywood.
 So, this way we can both do the play itself and explain
 why it wasn't written and got forgotten in the first place.

CAI

Awesome, now author is the character, and character is the author.

B

So, great grandfather, what's your role in the family?

CAI

A playboy.

B

What do you do all day?

CAI

Pretty much the same, every morning, before I wake up, our servant sets up breakfast and tea on the round dining table, then he brings me a towel with hot water, with it I wash my face and shave.

B

Shave, are you sure?

CAI

Yes, I know it's not traditional, but we do have this level of modernity. I have breakfast at the table with my father who reads his newspaper which I'm never interested in, and he rarely talks to me. Then I'll go out, wandering around the streets on my bicycle.

B

Bicycle, are you sure? Not a horse?

CAI

No, a peasant can ride a horse, but only I ride a bicycle, in the best quality, imported all the way from Germany where it's called Fahrrad. With this German efficiency, I always find a theater whatever is on stage that day. In the spring, when the cherry blossoms, I go to the theater on the east side, next to the temple, where the actors sing but don't move. In the fall, when chrysanthemum blossoms, I go to the west side, next to the market, where the actors sing little but move a lot. After the show, I stay and chat with the actors about the lyrics, about the singing, about each little step they take on stage; what's well done, and what could've been better. That's how my mistress and I met.

B

That's it? You are a passionate audience, friend of the theater?

CAI

And obviously I pay the most. There is no sale of tickets but pay as one wishes. I pay for the roof with golden foils of the theater

and the balusters around the stage, all out of my pocket.

B

Out of your father's pocket you mean.
So, you are also a patron.

CAI

Not just that, my words can either make or destroy a show,
whether it will go on every night for three weeks or it will pack up
the next day and go home.

B

So, you are a critic too, a nasty one.

CAI

And sometimes, I'll get excited enough to step out of my seat
and take over the performance
singing a little aria myself.

B

So, as a playboy, patron, critic,
amateur actor, other than asking for money,
your role in the family is basically nonexistent.

CAI

I have no interest in it.

B

How does your father think of you as his son?

CAI

He has to play the role of this patriarch
who always seems disappointed and wants me to
apply myself better, but I know he likes it.
So, he runs the family estate and does his business,
while I run the theater and hang with my actresses.

B

But this compromise is at risk,
when you send your lover to Shanghai,

where she becomes a star
soon having a premiere in western theater.

CAI

Which I'm desperate to see.

B

You never went this far.
Your father decides to put his foot down on this affair.
Do you notice anything strange about him?

CAI

Right, suddenly, he is sick
and demands me to stay by his bedside all the time.
It's such a pain. Theater for me is an addiction.
I can't live a single day without it.

B

Is that it, just pain?

CAI

I'm also afraid. It seems serious.
If it gets worse, and he actually dies,
then I'll have to take over the family
which I know nothing about,
and I can't do theater anymore.
That is scary.

B

Exactly, that's his plan.

CAI

After three days of this torture,
I finally found an excuse to sneak out and watch a show,
but, of course, he found out.

B

You come home unsettled to sit back by your father's bedside.

A comes as the father.

B

You try to be a good son.

CAI

爹，身子好些否？
(Dad, do you feel any better?)

B

Your father shakes his head,
So you try to say something comforting.

CAI

看着爹爹受苦，心里我也难受。
这才今早去庙里祈福。
(Looking at your pain, I suffer from inside too,
so this morning I went to pray at the temple.)

B

But it doesn't work on your father.
He knows what you did and were up to.

A

别装样了，那祈福是假，看戏是真罢？
(Stop pretending, you went to the theater, right?)

B

Since you are exposed, you think it's better to make a joke out of it.

CAI

真是知子莫若父啊。
(No one knows the son better than his dad.)

B

But it fails to raise a smile on your father's face,
instead he makes a long sigh.

A

若让你再折腾几日，
没准我就撑不下去，
没法，只得由你去了。

(If I let you stay longer,
you will torture me to death.
I have no choice but to let you go.)

B

He gets to the point: your trip to Shanghai.
He says he has no choice but to let you go,
but really he means he is not letting you go.

CAI

就容我几日，去去就回。
(Just a few days, then I'll be back.)

B

Your father almost gets out of character and sits up from the bed,
but he's soon in control again and lies down to be a sick old man.

A

儿啊，我不管你沾花惹草，当年你爹情人也不少。
(Son, I don't care how many women you have. I used to have many too.)

B

A big confession. Your father once had many affairs too.
He knows how it's just a game for you, but you disagree.

CAI

甚么花草，我从不说笑。
(What game, I'm serious.)

A

上次你也是这么说的。
(You said that last time.)

CAI

是知音，独一无二，非比寻常。
(But she is my soulmate.)

A

上次你也是这么说的。
(You said that last time too.)

B

After all this set up, your father breaks out the truth to you:
Shanghai is not an option.

A

儿啊, 这家你不能撒手, 那上海万万去不得。
(Son, you can not leave this family and go to Shanghai.)

CAI

这话怎讲, 不就在江下, 坐船一天就到?
(Why not? It's just down the river.)

B

How does Shanghai have anything to do with your family?

A

那我先要问你, 咱家做的是甚么买卖?
(Let me first ask you, what business do our family do?)

B

You can talk all day about the different versions of *The Romance of the Western Wing*,
but about your family business, you can't even last a second.

CAI

耕读传家。
(Farming and studying.)

B

Your father almost laughs himself out of character.

A

傻小子, 牌坊上的话还能当真吗?
若是如此, 你我早喝西北风去了。
你可见那院外的向日葵, 正开花呢?
(Stupid boy, can you take the propaganda for real?
If so, we will be starved to death long ago.
Do you see these sunflowers blooming outside?)

B

Yes, the fields of sunflowers of your family.
They are gorgeous. Other than theater, you love them the most

and wrote a poem that goes like this:

CAI

碧云天, 向日葵, 秋风荡漾, 漾里金汤醉。
花慕骄阳天连地, 江水无心, 却也化作情。

B

You and your father both love the sunflowers but for very different reasons.

A

往年, 向日葵, 炼作油, 随江运抵上海。
可今年, 没得分文, 油都堆在仓库。
(In past years, the sunflowers were made into oil and sold to Shanghai,
but this year, no one wanted to buy them and they all stuck in the warehouse)

B

He explains to you the business model of your family's vegetable oil industry,
but you are bored and just want to get out of here.

CAI

别兜圈子了, 上海有何去不得?
(Stop fucking around, why can't I go to Shanghai?)

A

那好, 摆明告诉你, 鬼子要来了。
(Fine, the truth is the Japanese are coming.)

B

Japanese are coming, but that only makes you more excited.

CAI

那上海我更是不能不去。
(Then I must go to Shanghai.)

B

You are like Achilles, when he first heard the news of Troy.
So, your father calls the help of your fiance.

C comes as Cai's fiance.

C

万福玛利亚，满被圣宠者，主与尔偕焉。

女中尔为赞美，尔胎子耶稣，并为赞美。

天主圣母玛利亚，为我等罪人，今祈天主，及我等死后。阿们。

(Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen)

B

Your fiance is kneeling outside
praying to the Holy Virgin to let you stay
Which makes you want to leave even more.

CAI

甚么圣母天主，只让讨一房媳妇。

(These Mary and Jesus only allow one wife.)

B

It's all because of her strange religion,
which demands a man can only have one wife,
that you can't marry your lover as your second wife.

A

要走，你自去同她说。

(If you want to leave, go tell her yourself.)

B

If you really want to leave, then you have to go out
and say to your fiance in the face that you don't want her.

CAI

走就走。

(So be it.)

B

You walk out into the garden and pass by your fiance.
She looks at you and wrap her arms around your legs
and repeat her prayer.

C

万福玛利亚，满被圣宠者，主与尔偕焉。

女中尔为赞美, 尔胎子耶稣, 并为赞美。

天主圣母玛利亚, 为我等罪人, 今祈天主, 及我等死后。阿们。

(Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen)

B

You can't push her away.

CAI

等我回来。

(Wait for me.)

B

But eventually, after leaving a vague promise of you'll be back, you leave her and start off your journey to Shanghai.

Your fiance wipes her tears and comes to your father, who is miraculously healthy again.

A and C return to neutral.

CAI

So, my fiance is a Catholic?

B

Yes, my great grandmother. Her dream was one day to visit Rome and the Cologne Cathedral. It was her Panama, but she never did.

The closest she got was a place in Shenzhen called the window of the world.

It's a theme park that has the copies of the all the famous sites around the world: eiffel tower, pyramid, white house and the Cologne Cathedral.

Later, I visited the real one in Germany and lit a candle for her there.

It cost me five euros. Hopefully, God will find a way to reimburse me.

CAI

Ja, hopefully.

B

So, viel glück, great grandpa,

I shall see you

after this show is over.

Break a leg.

If you need help, you know the password.
Tschüss(bye)!

B returns to neutral.

CAI

So, meine Damen und Herren,
this is the beauty of theater: it's an art
of collage, collaboration, and compromise.
That's why I'm standing here, as both Brecht's Cai
and John's great grandfather.
So, enjoy "Men Write Men Write Men Right.

Part II American.(The Play)

*Projection shows "Part II
American.(The Play)*

*D comes as a struggling American
actress.*

D

(sings)
It's a wonderful beautiful California morning.
The sun in the sky is shining.
The birds outside are singing.
I can't help but burst out laughing.
Laugh to get the air in me moving,
Laugh to get my new life going.

Yet, as I'm looking at myself in the mirror,
I realize,
here no one knows me;
no one cares where I'm from or going;
no one speaks my language or hears me;
no one ever understand how

Forgotten is a disease
that gets us at the end.
It makes you speechless;

It makes you homeless.

Forgotten is so busy
and has no time to worry.
It feels so gentle, so you don't
notice it being subtle.

Forgotten is a curse,
But
I just have to
keep laughing to get the air in me moving,
keep laughing to get my new life going,
all in this wonderful beautiful California morning.

Cai, playing Brecht, comes.

D

Is this what you're looking for, Mr. Brecht?

BRECHT

Nicht ganz.(Not quite.)

D

But I think I am the perfect fit for Polly.

Brecht

Nie, not eben Jenny.

D

Awww, you don't have to say that.

D returns to neural

BRECHT

Ach, endlich, so, meine Damen und Herren,
es ist schön euch wiederzusehen, und ich bin Bertolt Brecht.
letztes Mal war ich da, sind sie noch nicht geboren oder waren noch Babys.
(It's nice to see you again, and I am Bertolt Brecht.
Last time I was here you were not born yet or were still babies)
Hä? Don't believe me? Okay, I know, just a minute earlier,
or egal wie lang the crew of dies Theater took to change the scenery,

I looked just like a character I wrote in one of my many plays about China, aber jetzt bin ich Bertolt Brecht, 100 Prozent.

Gut, dann why I am hier?

Some of ye of little faith might think that it's nur for fun, aber nein, I'm hier to resurrect my forgotten play.

I have to thank John and my character Cai for geben mir a second Chance.

Und John sagte mir similar cases have happened in Amerika wie zum Beispiel a play called Indecent which is a resurrection of another alter play called The God of Vengeance. Und natürlich, obviously, my play is so much better, so I don't expect any Problem, ja?

So, meine Damen und Herren, I'm presenting to you my play "Men Write Men Write Men Right," while explaining to you why I wanted to write dies play, und why I failed to write it in the first place. Now, notieren(notice), most playwrights hate explaining their own works, aber I'm doing dies big favor for you, so listen carefully, ja? I mean when will you hear Bertolt Brecht talk to you again, klar?

Es ist meine Meinung(opinion) that we should start with why I wanted to write about anything in general.

When I was noch a boy, referred to by meine bürgerliche Familie als Eugen which means well-born in German, I loved reading the books of Karl May. Have you heard of him, a German Autor who is famous for his Romane about Amerika?

In his stories are the Wüstland(desert) and wilderness of the great west, aber, in fackt, that he had never been to Amerika.

The closest he got was Egypt.

Moment, was that closer?

Sowieso(whatever), he spent most of his time writing in his Haus in Dresden.

A comes as Karl May.

B comes as the guest from America.

But when he got the chance, he'd interview people from Amerika.

A

So, what is it like to sail down the Mississippi?

B

But I'm from New York city.

A

Gut, dann tell me about the Appalachian mountains, nicht so weit(not so far), ja?

B

Sure, closer than Germany you mean.

You know what I can tell you about one adventure I had.

A

Ja, bitte.

B

All the way to New Jersey.

A

Ach egal, do you know any Indianer?

B

Can't say I do, but I know some Irish and Italians.

Oh let me tell you they are so much fun.

One time I walked into a bar, and there was/

A

Entschuldigung, ich muss jetzt go back to my writing.

(Excuse me, I must now)

A and B return to neutral.

BRECHT

I loved his stories as a Kind.

My friends and I would play cowboys and indians,
building tipis and treehouses in the woods of Augsburg.

I was always the chief, natürlich.

Lots of scholars and professors will tell you that I hated wars,
but, when the first world war broke out, as a Jungen, I was
enthusiastic at first, and signed up to be an aircraft spotter
stationed at a medieval tower. At the first Nacht of my duty,
an old watchman handed me the key.

A comes as the watchman.

A

Viel Spaß, aber nicht vom Turm fallen, ja?
(Have fun, but just don't fall from the tower, yes?)

BRECHT

Genau, da ist gut.
(Yes, a good one.)

A

Nie, kein Witz, falls nicht.
(No, it's not a joke. Don't fall.)

A returns to neutral.

BRECHT

Okay, egal, jetzt bin ich in einer prächtigen Nacht und ganz alleine
und ein Teil dieses großen Kampfes unseres Volkes.
Ha, da, hier kommt ein Zug! Ein Zug voller Soldaten,
die ihrem ungewissen Schicksal marschieren.
Und sie singen! Was ist das Lied? Ach, die Wacht am Rhein!

(Okay, whatever, now I am in this deep night all alone
And a part of this great fight of our nation.
Ha, there, there comes a train! A train full of soldiers,
Who are marching toward their unknown fates.
And they are signing! What's the song! Oh, die Wacht am Rhein!)

Cai sings the song "Die Wacht am Rhein."

(sings)

Es braust ein Ruf wie Donnerhall,
Wie Schwertgeklirr und Wogenprall:
Zum Rhein, zum Rhein, zum deutschen Rhein!
Wer will des Stromes Hüter sein?

(A call roars like thunder,
Like the clash of swords and the crash of waves:
To the Rhine, to the Rhine, to the German Rhine!

Who wants to be the keeper of the river?)

Lieb' Vaterland, magst ruhig sein,
Fest steht und treu die Wacht, die Wacht am Rhein!

(Dear fatherland, may you be calm,
The watch stands firm and true, the watch on the Rhine!)

Natürlich, when the war got intensiver, and I started to hear about what actually happened at the front, my opinion shifted, and I started to avoid and delay being drafted as much as possible which was why I went to study medicine in München, a subject I absolutely care nothing about.

So, ja, I was born with it. Writing is in my DNA.
And I wrote dies play and its protagonist Cai,
because I longed for him. He is not just a part of myself,
but a self I always wanted but never got to live,
genauso wie(exactly like) Karl May longed for Amerika,
so I could be Chinese and live in China.
And likewise, obwohl(although) I had been writing about China my whole life,
I had never been to China. The closest I got was America.
Moment, was that closer?
Sowieso, I started to write dies play, when I got to Amerika
which was pretty disappointing.
I'd much rather read Karl May's books.

Now, I know some of you're going to say,
but America is big, every state is so different blah blah blah.
Okay, so more specifically, Los Angeles. Remember, that song you just heard?
Nun ja, Ich hörte diese Tune in Los Angeles every once in a while.
The first time, it would cheer you up and rise a little smile, aber,
after just a few repetitions, you'll think you're going down in hell.
Ja, ja, Los Angeles is hell.
Don't tell me I don't know it
or haven't stayed there lang enough.
By Hell, I don't mean fire, garbage, robbery or gun shots,
I mean mein nett two-story Haus in Santa Monica;
I mean dahinter mein auch nett backyard as ruhig(peaceful) as Austrian cows;
I mean these tropical flowers blooming in desert as big as trees,
feeding on expensive Wasser, these blasse(pale) taillights of Autos traveling

schneller(faster) than their Schatten(shadows) where sat these happy Leute(people),
fröhlich(cheerful) while fearing nächsten Monat they would be on the street.

Der Stadt is named after angels.

Ja, they were überall, allerorts(everywhere), smell of oil and made of gold,
who build dream factories that fed the Leute with piss found in swimming pools.

Ja, schon gut, sehr nett, das ist hell,
where jeder Tag nothing changes, nichts passiert.

You kann sit on the front porch am Morgen

als ob dein ganzes Leben immer so ist.

(as if your whole life is just like that.)

B comes as a newspaper boy.

Aber when a newspaper boy hands you that day's Zeitung(newspaper),
reads the headline:

B

Los Angeles Times, new waves of German offensive at Stalingrad,
half million casualties.

A good day to you, sir.

B returns to neutral.

BRECHT

Dann you might ask why I moved to Amerika, if it was hell,
because Hitler was at my ass. I had to change countries
schneller als I changed shoes: cross Donau to Prague,
cross Rhine to France, Sanary-sur-Mer, dann Dänemark,
Schweden, Finnland, die Soviet Union. I caught ein Schiff at
Vladivostok heißt Anna. She got me over to the USA.

Natürlich, I was not the only German there.

In Los Angeles gab es a colony of Deutsche Künstler(artists),
eintausend Professoren, Dichter und Autoren,

Not far von my lieblich cage lived

as much as I want to forget, that old grandiose

bourgeois narcissist in Palisades who wrote

a little book about some sentimental bores im Urlaub(vacation)

doing nothing in a swiss nursing home called the magic mountain!

Sowieso, viel Deutschen gut oder schlecht.

Damals war Los Angeles ein bisschen Weimar.

(Whatever, many Germans good or bad.
 Bach then Los Angeles was a bit like Wiemar.)
 Es war the biggest flush of intellectuals seit Constantinople,
 aber anstatt Renaissance, Amerika, Los Angeles,
 eben Hollywood didn't change one bit.

I tried. I put in the effort.
 But it seemed like you guys back then didn't appreciate it.
 You once had so many talents from der ganzen Welt,
 yet you used them as janitors, and instatt praised another
 midwest narcissist womanizer who was obsessed
 with short dialogue, fishing in Cuba, and how the sun also rises

So, to create heaven, I must first come to dies hell.
 To destroy Fascism, first you can't be destroyed by it.
 Now that I escaped, I must find a way to produce my play.
 While these yellow shirts were burning my books,
 my words would burn them forever on stage.

Bevor I came to Amerika, I already wrote many anti-fascism plays
 such as Fear and Misery of the Third Reich and The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui,
 but then I got bored with these mellow modernist scenes and imitating
 how working class people speak. I wanted to do something staker, eben more effective.

Soon after I landed, I went to a haus party
 next to the Pacific Ozean and met
 my partner who was a German film
 director who made a corny film about
 a sexy robot and the reconciliation
 between the brain and the Herz
 called Metropolis.
 So, I thought he'd be cooperative.

*A comes as the film director. B and D come
 as the young couple. C comes as the soldier.*

I found him standing by the beach alone, looking out to the sea
 in this Casper David Friedrich melodramatic way.
 It was a special sight to see:
 Close to us was a young couple
 lying on the sand together in bathing suits, küssen(kissing).

At one point, the man was on top of the woman.
 Nicht so weit was a fully-armed Soldat
 sitting idly on his tractor seat transporting an iron colossal,
 a gun in full-kit on the wide asphalt highway by the coast.
 Dann into the blauem Wasser (blue water) of the Santa Monica bay,
 a Japanese fisherman was throwing down his net,
 while a dolphin made its leap above the waves,
 then we saw the gunboats and destroyers
 of the coast guards running military drills,
 firing machine gun shells into the air.

B, D, and C go back to neutral.

A

Ach, Herr Brecht.
 Lustig, nicht wahr? (Funny, no?)

BRECHT

Yes, but not much longer.

A

Was meinen Sie? (What do you mean?)

BRECHT

Soon, it won't be just drills but the real deal.
 Soon, that soldier in shirtsleeves will bleed.
 Soon, that Japanese fisherman is going to be sent
 to a concentration camp.

A

Was? Von wem? (What? From whom?)

BRECHT

Obviously, the Japanese.

A

Nie, kein wegs. (No, no way.)

BRECHT

To feed their war with China, they are hungry for America's oil.

I'd say anytime now.

A

Meiner Götter, dann muss ich weg. (My God, then I must run away.)

BRECHT

No, no, don't run away just yet.

Listen, this'd be our opportunity to take on the fascists.

A

Spinnst du, die Faschisten? (You crazy, the fascists?)

BRECHT

I know it's not yet popular to speak against Fascism in America.

They all think it's none of their business, somewhere far away.

A

Genau, haben Sie von Chaplins Film gehört? Total Katastrophe.
(Exactly, haven't you heard about Chapin's film? A total catastrophe.)

BRECHT

Yes, his Great Dictator is a little too preemptive,
but there will be a 180 turn, once the Japanese attacks.

A

Ja, das stimmt. (Yeah, you're right.)

BRECHT

And I have just the right story that will flood the cinema seats.

If you want a piece of it, you can turn it into a film.

A

Ja, natürlich, sag mir, was ist die Geschichte?
(Yeah, sure, tell me, what is the story?)

BRECHT

As we are speaking now, Shanghai is in a peculiar position.

A

Wieso? Es kam gerade ein Schiff von dort.

BRECHT

Exactly, that ship from Shanghai shouldn't be here,
 since Japan's invasion of China has lasted for three years,
 but it has shown no sign of aggression toward the West yet.
 As a result, all the western colonies in Shanghai remain intact,
 while the rest of the city ravaged by war was in ruins.
 As the cannonballs fly, cinemas and casinos run on.
 Burning houses and neon lights shine side by side.
 It is a exotic island surrounded by the Japanese ocean.

*Projection shows the
 historical image.*

A

So wie die Schweiz im letzten Krieg. (So like Switzerland in the last war.)

BRECHT

No, trust me,
 Shanghai is much more interesting than Zurich.
 There even the cheese has bored themselves to grow holes
 which is why that old fool Thomas Mann loves writing about it,
 but in Shanghai, many people, businesses and industry
 sought refuge because of its safety. Production, sale, import, export,
 everything has double, triple. The rich bought up mansions
 and bank their money, while the poor come to work in factories.
 Even the transport is still open in a strange way: you can't travel
 a hundred miles west to Wuhan, but you can travel ten thousands miles
 to London, Paris, New York and here: Hollywood never forgets to sell its films.
 That's why you could see that ship coming from Shanghai.

A

Ach so.

BRECHT

Among these refugees who settled in this wild dream is my protagonist Cai,
 a landlord's son from a little town, looking for his mistress, who is a famous actress.

Oh, and for those of you that are lost, this is now the beginning
 of the play I wanted to write, klar?

When you see China, Shanghai, at that time,
you will know what it's like to be in heaven.

A

Was meinen Sie? (What do you mean?)

BRECHT

When Cai first arrives at Shanghai,
He stays with an old friend of his father
who owns a factory and does business with him.
He and his family live in a western mansion
within the French colony, but he had it
completely refurbished into a cheap
Chinese style, like the one of Chinatown here.
So, he gets inspired and wrote a play for his lover,
hoping that they can work together once again.

A

Klingt nach Ihnen damals in Berlin. (Like you back then in Berlin.)

BRECHT

Yeah, it's my story after all.

A

Und es ist ein Stück im Stück? (And it's a play within a play?)

BRECHT

Yes, this is a play written by the character Cai in my play,
again, for those of you that are lost.

A

Okay, dann?

D comes and plays Cai's lover.

BRECHT

So, he tells the play to his lover
by sneaking into her dressing room,
the same way as I did with my ladies,
where she changes into Nora in the China's premier of A Doll's House.

Now, she just finished that long sentimental monologue toward the end.

Projection shows the historical image.

D

(Nora's monologue at Act III)

我俩成家已八年，
但你可曾想过，
这夫妻一场
又何曾互诉衷肠？

八年竟如萍水相逢，
八年竟如过眼云烟，
这到底是家还是场？

我一片真心，
你从未曾知晓！
我全部真情，
你统统当成撒娇！

先是爸爸再是你，
对我从来不讲理！
把爱天天挂嘴边，
心里不剩一点点！
就你做事有品位，
就你做事有道理！

那我呢？
难道是乞丐！
难道是奴隶？

我要控诉你，
因为你一无所有；
因为你我无处可去！

(Isn't there one thing that strikes you as strange in our sitting here like this? We have been married now eight years. Does it not occur to you that this is the first time we two, you and I, husband and wife, have had a serious conversation? In all these eight years-longer than that-from the very beginning of our acquaintance, we have never exchanged a word on a serious subject. I'm not speaking about business matters. I say that we have never sat down in earnest together to try and get at the bottom of anything.

You have never understood me. I have been greatly wronged, Torvald-first by papa and then by you. You have never loved me. You have only thought it pleasant to be in love with me. I was simply transferred from papa's hands into yours. You arranged everything according to your own taste, and so I got the same tastes as you-or else I pretended to, I am really not quite sure which-I think sometimes the one and sometimes the other. When I look back on it, it seems to me as if I had been living here like a poor woman-just from hand to mouth. I have existed merely to perform tricks for you, Torvald. But you would have it so. You and papa have committed a great sin against me. It is your fault that I have made nothing of my life.)

A

Wow, toll.

BRECHT

And busy too, since he has a new play for her to try on.
To be clear, now I am going to play a section of the play
and the character Cai for you.

*Brecht plays Cai(Cai is
already playing Brecht)*

你演够了没啊？(Aren't you tired of this?)

D

别着急，等这戏完再说。(Stop, let me finish this play first.)

BRECHT

She is not out of her role yet.

等不急了，我写了部戏要给你看。(I can't wait. I got to show you a play I wrote.)

D

那真是不巧了，下一场他们已经约我作海达了。
(That's really unfortunate, they have asked me to be Hedda next time.)

BRECHT

Not interested? The western company already signed her to play Hedda,
but we will see about that.

唉，又是一个怨妇。(Another whining woman.)

D

怨妇? (Whining woman?)

BRECHT

These westerners like that Ibsen are interesting:
they want to explore women, but they don't want them to be happy.

难道不是, 中年已婚爱发牢骚?
(Isn't she: middle-age, married, whining?)

D

是啊。(Yeah.)

BRECHT

Now, she's ready to hear.

但我这部戏里, 你是个浪漫无暇的青春少女。
(But in my play, you are a romantic teenage girl.)

D

哦真的?(Oh really?)

BRECHT

See, she's interested.

当然, 你看。(Of course, look at it yourself.)

D

它叫肥皂? (It's called "Soap.")

BRECHT

Yes, it's called "Soap" and all about a piece of soap.
Just like most of western plays, all about an important piece of prop,
a letter, a gun, a house; that dollhouse play you're in is all about a check.

Now, remember that funny mansion I talked about in the French colony?

还记得那个陆先生和他那个四不像的公馆吗?
(Do you remember Lu and his funny mansion?)

D

怎么忘得了？他家还有位千金小姐。
(How can I forget? He has a spoiled daughter too.)

BRECHT

Yes, she remembers too.
没错，你就是要演她。(Exactly, you are going to play her.)

D

演？我要是真是她就好了。(Play? I wish I really was her.)

BRECHT

This Monsieur Lu has a daughter who lives the perfect life
every girl in China dreams, studying English while riding horses.
But her father doesn't like it. He already hates modern education.
When it's for women, he hates it even more.

A

Ja, auch Deutsche. (Yeah, Germans too.)

D

但也不得不，赶时髦。(But he has to follow the trend.)

BRECHT

Correct, otherwise, he will be seen as uncivilized to his western master,
but he is always waiting for the chance to cancel this foreign intrusion.

A plays as Monsieur Lu.

D

然后呢？(And then?)

BRECHT

One day, he finally finds it; he finds the opening
to prove the education you have is all wrong.
He storms into the house, tries to find you,
but you're not in the room, so he calls your name
over and over.

A

秀儿，秀儿，你哪去呀？(Daughter, daughter, where are you?)

BRECHT

While calling you, he reaches and tries to get something out of the innermost corner of his pocket, as if it's his deepest, darkest secret. In his hand is a box of soap.

The projection shows the close-up of the soap.

D

一盒肥皂？(A box of soap?)

BRECHT

Yes, your father just bought a box of soap, a huge deal. His first ever western product with a cursive inscription. Meanwhile, you finally hear the call and come to him in a leotard.

A

刚才做什么去了，如此慢慢吞吞的？
叫了多少遍了，为何听不见？
(Where were you, responding this slow?
How many times have I called you? Why didn't you hear?)

D

我刚刚在花园练体操去了。
(I was practicing gymnastics in the garden.)

BRECHT

You were practicing gymnastics in the garden, another thing your father absolutely hates. He gives the soap to you and unleashes his attack.

A

秀儿，我要问你，一个词。
(Daughter, I want you to tell me the meaning of an English word.)

BRECHT

He wants you to tell him the meaning of an English word.

D

“Karlowitz” 这是店的招牌。
(Karlowitz is the name of the shop.)

A

不是它, 这我知道。
(No, I don't mean this one.)

BRECHT

He doesn't mean the name of the shop but another word.

A

我问你, 饿打嗝, 饿打嗝, 是什么?
(Answer me, what is “E Da Ge, E Da Ge?”)

D

饿打嗝? 是你饿了, 还打嗝?
(E Da Ge? Doesn't that mean you are hungry?)

A

胡说, 胡闹, 难道我打嗝了吗?
(Bullshit, nonsense, I am not hungry!)

BRECHT

What English word is “饿打嗝”?
After the distortion of your father's
creative Chinese interpretation,
you can't recognize the actual word at all.

D

不知道, 英文怕没有这词吧?
(I don't know. It's probably not an English word.)

A

有的, 有的, 不知道就给我去查。
(It is, it is, if you don't know, then look it up.)

BRECHT

But your father believes it
that it's a real English word.
So, you have to take out a thick dictionary

with gold gilded edges to try to find the word
“饿打囔” While you're searching, your father
starts to dismantle your education paid by his money.

A

看来我那学费是白花了，
果然是，只有口号，没有实料，
学了好几年英文，竟连“饿打囔”都不知道。
什么洋学校，应该给我统统关掉。
(Looks like my tuition was wasted,
sure enough, there are only slogans, no facts,
after studying English for many years, you don't even know "E Da Ge."
All these foreign schools should be shut off.)

BRECHT

Somehow, the entire value of your education
is determined by knowing this “English” word.
Thankfully, you seem to have found the answer.

*Projection shows the close-up
of the dictionary.*

D

是这个词，“Oddsmaker?” (Is it this word “Oddsmaker?”)

A

不对，不对，不是这个，
“饿打囔”是句坏话，是骂人的。
(No, no, wrong word,
“E Da Ge” is an insult.)

BRECHT

Oh, so not only is he certain of its pronunciation,
he is equally certain that it is an insult against him.
Where did he learn this word? Who said it to him?

D

先说清楚，谁跟你说的？知道那是在骂你？
(Let's be clear first, who said this word to you? And how did you know it was an insult?)

A

在买肥皂，那店里，有个洋小鬼冲我说的，

他一说，别人都笑了，可见一定是在骂我。

(When I was buying that soap in the shop, a foreign boy yelled at me.
When he said it, people all laughed, so it must be an insult.)

BRECHT

So, a foreign boy in the store said the word to him.

Soap, Karlowitz, “饿打囍”

There are now enough clues.

D

他说的是Alte Kaker, 对不对? (He said “Alte Kaker” right?)

A

对，对，就是这个，你英文总算没白学。

(Yes, yes, that’s it. I guess your English is not that bad.)

D

它不是英文。那小孩是犹太人，他说的是意第绪。

(It’s not English. That kid is Jewish. He was speaking Yiddish.)

BRECHT

Correct, it’s not English, it’s Yiddish.

Alte Kaker, a jewish boy, called him a fussy old man.

You know Shanghai now has many Jewish refugees
running away from Nazis.

*Projection shows the historical
image.*

And it’s these Jews who defeat your father

And save your education. What do you say, my love, how’s the script?

D

喜欢，我爱死它了，我死也要当你的秀儿。

*D returns to neutral.
A plays the film director.
Cai plays Brecht.*

A

Episch.

BRECHT

Yeah, and that is what heaven feels like
which never would happen in America.
Soon, the couple produce this play on stage,
after Nora, she now becomes the famous Chinese
young rebellious woman, who is actually happy.
However, this fame is also leading them toward danger.

A

Wieso?

BRECHT

Their success gets the attention of the Japanese commander.

A

Warum?

BRECHT

Because this exotic island is the perfect
ground to launch their propaganda war on China.

A

Hä, wieso?

BRECHT

Come on, don't we Germans know all about propaganda?
The island is the center of all attention,
in fact, a stage with many possibilities.
Everything that happens there will be blown out of proportion.
Fake news is older than it seems, ja?

So, again, my protagonist Cai runs to his lover with a new play.
It's just that this time it is commissioned by the German consulate.

A

Die Deutschen? Sie schon da?
(The Germans? They are still there?)

BRECHT

Yes, Germany and Japan are allies.

The German Counselor at Shanghai
invites Cai to his house politely, much nicer
than an American immigration officer
and commission him to write a play.
Knowing next nothing about European politics,
except the fact that Germany is the country that made
his bicycle, he gladly accepts the offer.

Now, I'm going to play Cai again and show you
another section of the play I wrote.

Brecht plays Cai
D comes as Cai's lover.

D

喂, 出事了, 出大事了! (Hey, something happened, something terrible happened!)

BRECHT

That's right. That German Counselor just commissioned a play from me.

D

不是, 是比这更大的事! (No, it's more important than that!)

BRECHT

No, nothing is more important than my play.
You'll see, just wait till I tell you about it.
It's so funny. I couldn't stop laughing when I first heard it.

D

好吧, 快说。 (Okay, say it fast.)

BRECHT

So, they want me to write a parody of a German play written
by a degenerate artist called Bertolt Brecht who has run to Los Angeles.
And his story is about four Russian communists coming to China to start a revolution.

D

这俄国人怎么革中国的命呢? (How do Russians start a revolution in China?)
难道别人认不出他们是洋人吗? (Can't we tell they are foreigners?)

BRECHT

Guess what, because they wear masks.

D

那他们还带了什么设备？(What do they bring with them?)
车床, 生产线？(Equipment, production line?)

BRECHT

No, nothing.

D

那至少带了拖拉机吧？(What about tractors?)

BRECHT

No, nothing.

D

武器弹药, 冲锋枪？(Weapons?)

BRECHT

No, nothing.

D

那到底带了什么呢？(Then what do they actually bring?)

BRECHT

They bring nothing but propaganda and ideology!
That's so funny. People will love this.

D

来不及了, 你还是看看窗外吧。(Too late, see outside the window)

BRECHT

Why is it too late? And what's outside the window?

D

你就去看吧。看了你就知道了。
(You'll know, if you just look outside.)

*ABCD come as Chinese
students in Shanghai*

protesting on the street.

*Projection shows the
historical image.*

ABCD

抗日民族统一战线！ (Anti-Japanese alliance!)
中国人不打中国人！ (Chinese don't fight Chinese!)

C and B return to neutral.

A

Entschuldigung, Herr Brecht, was ist passiert?
(Excuse me, Mr. Brecht, what just happened?)

BRECHT

It's somewhat complicated, but let me explain
that these Chinese students are protesting against
the latest outcome of the most important negotiation
in China's war against the Japanese invasion.

A

Wovon? (About what?)

BRECHT

The Chinese communists and capitalists are negotiating
to stop the civil war and form an alliance against the Japanese
which is China's only hope to win this war, but both sides
don't trust each other, and the negotiation is on the verge of collapse.

A

Warum? (Why?)

BRECHT

Because of the sabotage of the Japanese, of course, they don't want
the alliance to happen, since it'd be like the one
between Britain and the Soviet Union against Hitler.
And this so-called "commission" is one of these Japanese sabotages.

A

Wieso? (How so?)

BRECHT

Don't you see? My communist play "Die Maßnahme" is about how the communists will do anything to achieve the revolution at all cost against the capitalists, so it's the perfect play to make communists and capitalists hate each other, while Japan will be the biggest winner.

A

Ach so, ich verstehe. (Oh, I understand.)

BRECHT

Thankfully, my protagonist Cai and his lover are quick to realize that too and start to trying their best to delay the production, until a letter is sent to them from his hometown, written by his catholic fiance. It'll be another section of the play I wrote.

C comes as Cai's fiance.

C

亲爱的先生, 请允许我这样称呼你, 虽然我们尚未完婚。
(Dear husband, allow me to call you that, even though we haven't married yet.)

BRECHT

Sure, but I don't know if I can make it back alive to marry you.

C

在你不在的这些日子里, 我想了很多事情。
我自然知道你是跟那女艺人在一起。
(When you are not by my side, I have thought of many things.
Of course, I know you are with that actress.)

D

“女艺人”, 还算客气。 (“Actress,” she is still nice about it.)

BRECHT

Yeah, she always is, too nice.

C

算了, 篇幅有限, 还是跟你说说家里的近况吧。
伯父的身体是一天不如一天了。
(Anyway, I can't write too much, so let me tell you about things back home.

Your father's health is getting worse every day.)

BRECHT

Really, my father is getting sick, again?

Remember, how he did it last time?

Obviously, he is pretending again.

C

仗打起来后, 我们两家的产业,
轮渡, 炼油和杂货铺子都停了。
伯父已经让佃户改种庄稼了,
我家的内宅也堆了不少东洋货。
希望你能早日归来。
爱你的妻子敬上。

(After the war broke out, our family business,
Ferries, oil refineries and grocery stores all stopped.
Your father has already asked the peasants to plant crops instead.
There are also a lot of Japanese goods in my house.
Hope you can come back soon.
Sincerely love your wife.)

C returns to neutral.

BRECHT

Then suddenly my lover gets an inspiration from the letter.

D

对了, 她家开的那个东洋货铺子。(Right, her family's shop that sells Japanese goods.)

BRECHT

Yeah, my fiance's family runs a shop that sells Japanese products.

But what about it?

D

那剧里不是有个租来的党部吗? (Isn't there a party headquarter in that German play?)

BRECHT

Right, there is a party headquarter in that German play.

D

没错, 我们不是要改编它吗?

那个党部就是她家的铺子！
 (Exactly, aren't we making a parody?
 That headquarter is that shop!)

BRECHT

I see. I see.
 It's my lover's idea that we can set this German play
 at my fiance's the Japanese shop as the party headquarter
 which will turn this propaganda against itself and unite
 the communists and capitalists of China!

D

不用谢。(You're welcome.)

A

Sehr schön. (Beautiful.)

BRECHT

Soon comes the grand opening night
 of our Brecht-rewrite parody play.
 And the mastermind behind all this glamor,
 the Japanese commander of the occupation zone
 comes to the island as a "guest."

*A plays the Japanese commander. D plays
 the shopkeeper's daughter.*

A

Ikimasho.(let's start.)

BRECHT

The play opens with my lover as the daughter of the shopkeeper,
 sobbing in her bedroom, wearing only undergarments
 while sorting through her wardrobe.

D

不行，不成，这不能穿，那也不能穿，
 统统都是东洋货。叫我明天上学穿什么？
 (No, no, I can't wear this, I can't wear that.
 They are all Japanese. What should I wear for school?)

BRECHT

All of her dresses from Japan are no longer presentable,
because Japan has just invaded China. People are burning
Japanese products on the streets. Her family shop is out of business.

A

Yoi.(Nice.)

D

这日本没事打什么东三省，
害得班里的同学都笑话我。
除了东洋货，就剩这件旧棉袄，
穿出去他们还是要笑话我。
(Why the Japanese has to invade China
to make my classmates laugh at me?
Other than Japanese clothes, I just have this old rag,
and they will still laugh at me.)

BRECHT

As she is complaining, four agitators from Moscow
come to teach her the ABCD of Communism.

ABCD come as the four agitators.

ABCD

(sings)
那无比光荣正确的教导
就是阶级斗争的思考。

BRECHT

How righteous and beautiful
is the doctrine of class struggle.

ABCD

(sings)
共产主义思想告诉我们，
不要把问题归咎到日本，
反而中国的官僚和资本
才是真正要打倒的敌人。

BRECHT

Theory of Communism informs us:
 Don't be distracted by the Japanese.
 The Chinese bureaucrats and capitalists
 are the true enemies of the revolution.

A

綺麗(Nice.)

D plays the shopkeeper's daughter.

D

我不懂，日本人打的仗，怎么是他们的错？
 (I don't understand, why is Japan's war their fault?)

D plays one of the four agitators.

ABCD

(sings)

因为你只是一个人，
 而我们四个代表了党。
 因为你只有一双眼睛，
 而党的耳目成千上万。
 因为你只有一个地址，
 而党领导着七个政府。

BRECHT

Believe in us,
 you are only an individual,
 but the four of us are the party.
 You have only a pair of eyes,
 but the party has thousands.
 You have only one address,
 but the party controls seven states.

D

那你们要我怎么办？ (Then what should I do?)

ABCD

(sings)

同志们，跟我走，

扔掉零钱和镣铐，
明天你们不需要。
走上街头来战斗，
别等南墙再回头。

BRECHT

Follow me, my comrade.
Empty your pocket of pennies
Tomorrow's world doesn't need.
Walk out and fight on the streets.
Don't wait till it's too late.

A

Subarashī(Very nice.)

*D plays the shopkeeper's daughter.
Cai plays the young comrade.*

D

好，我这就去革命！（Alright, I will join the revolution!）

BRECHT

For her pretty Japanese dresses, she is willing to risk her life,
but a young comrade, played by me, who just joined the local branch of
the party steps in. As a native and the son of a landlord family,
I have a different idea than these Russians.

A

Nani?

BRECHT

(Sings)
同志们来听我说，
革命不仅要动嘴，还要动脑。
不要去和官府斗，
而日本是我们的摇钱树。

Come on, let's be smart about it.
Instead of a revolution, why not just make money out of the Japanese?

D

你这个大少爷，鬼点子就是多。(You, a playboy, have the best ideas.)

BRECHT

Of course, I, the young comrade, can jump out of ideology and think freely, because I am the son of a landlord family, because the landlord is the perfect medium between the communists and capitalists: he is neither a employer nor a employee but only watches the crops grow and do nothing.

He neither oppresses nor exploits, cares no wage or profit.

His heart is as simple as a farmer but does no labor,

so he has all the time to dream about a better world.

A

Dō shita no?(What's happening?)

BRECHT

And instead of empty propaganda and ideology,

I, the young comrade, have an actual plan.

It has three steps.

First step, whitewashing.

别人怎么认得

你穿得是东洋货？(How do they know these clothes are Japanese?)

D

还用说，上面的商标。(From the tags.)

BRECHT

Yes, so, except the tags nothing distinguishes

Japanese products from the Chinese ones,

since they are made in China anyway.

All we need to do is to change the tags.

That'd be enough to clear the inventory

the shop already has.

Second step, mergers and acquisitions.

这些东洋货都是打哪来的？

东京, 大阪, 名古屋?

(Where do these Japanese clothes come from? Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya?)

D

哪里, 就在我们村, 江边的织厂,

不过是日本人投的资罢了。(No, it's right in our village.)

BRECHT

Yes, all these products are made in a factory right in our village,
but it's just owned by the Japanese. Now, the war against Japanese,
instead of a crisis is a great opportunity. We can just seize that factory
as our property.

A

Muridayo.(Not possible.)

BRECHT

Third step, marketing and sales.

D

可这些货要卖给谁呢? (But who should we sell them to?)

BRECHT

Good question, because of the war,
many rich city people from Shanghai
all travel through this town and want to buy fashionable clothes.
There won't be any shortage of customers for a long time.
So, this shop first suffered from the Japanese,
but with the help of me, the young comrade,
without any revolution, flourish from the Japanese.

A

Yamete, yamete! (Stop, stop!)

BRECHT

Before the play finishes, the Japanese commander
stands up from his seat and leaves. Instead of division,
this play makes the call of uniting against Japan
even stronger, since people realize the Japanese is rich
enough to feed everyone without the need of revolution.
Soon, the negotiation succeeded,

the alliance is achieved, and China is saved.

A

I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you!

A plays the film director. D return to neutral. Cai plays Brecht.

BRECHT

Yeah, that's from Shakespeare. I once wrote an adaptation of it and so did John, in iambic pentameter, then we all got bored.

A

Ausgezeichnet, Herr Brecht. (Excellent, Mr. Brecht.)

BRECHT

Now you think of the promotion.

A

Ja, auf jeden Fall. (Yes, absolutely.)

A returns to neutral.

BRECHT

When the film is at its editing phase,
I enjoy a bit of leisure.
When I'm trapped with boredom at my house,
in the eye of this great typhon called World War II,
I would. Lach mich nicht aus, ja?
I would look at the trees and plants in my garten.

C comes as an evergreen tree. D comes as the flower. C and D sing together Brecht's poem "Kalifornischer Herbst" composed by Hanns Eisler.

C/D

(sings)

Die Leiter blieb noch unterm Feigenbaume stehen,
Doch er ist gelb und schon längst leergegessen
Von Schnäbeln und von Mündern, wem's zuerst geglückt.

Wird ihn der nächste Sommer grün und reich beladen sehn,
 Und kommt der Friede unterdessen,
 Mag es ein anderer sein, der hier die Feigen pflückt.

(The ladder stayed under the fig tree
 But it is yellow and has long been eaten empty
 Of beaks and of mouths, whoever succeeds first.
 Next summer will see it green and richly laden
 And meanwhile comes peace,
 May it be someone else who picks the figs here.)

Wir wären dann in kältere Breiten heimgegangen:
 Da wächst kein Feigenbaum,
 Aber der Wein.
 Fällt dort der Schnee,
 Werden wir umso frischer sein
 Und gern im wieder befreiten Winter wohnen.

(We would then have gone home to colder latitudes:
 No fig tree grows there,
 But the wine.
 If the snow falls there,
 We'll be all the fresher
 And like to live in the liberated winter.)

BRECHT

Ja, I might not be a biologist,
 aber I went to the Gymnasium
 and read a lot of Horace in Latin.

There are two kinds of plants in my garten.
 One is a evergreen tree,

C

Ich blieb immer grün. (I always remain green.)

BRECHT

While the other is a sensitive flower.

D

Ich brauche Pflege, sonst verdorre ich. (I need care or I wither.)

BRECHT

The evergreen who needs no attention is common
and lives on with rain water, but it has no flowers.

C

Ja, leider. (Yeah, unfortunately.)

BRECHT

It lives on and on, in the same way,
no matter winter or summer.

C

Ja, das stimmt. (Yeah, it's true.)

BRECHT

The sensitive flower needs a gardener,
a certain temperature, humidity and soil,
needless to say, expensive.

D

Ja, teuer, aber es wert. (Yeah, expensive, but it's worth it.)

BRECHT

And no matter how much I spent,
it would wither anyway in the winter,
so, everyday, I look at it, it changes.

D

Ja, auf Wiedersehen, Bert. (Yeah, farewell, Bert.)

C

Ja, krass. (Yeah, cool.)

C and D return to neutral.

BRECHT

Think, meine Damen und Herren,
which plant would you rather keep,
and what do the two plants criticize, estrange and represent?

*B comes as the newspaper
boy.*

B

Los Angeles Times, Reinhard Heydrich, was assassinated in Prague.
A good day to you, sir.

*B returns to neutral.
The projection shows the
historical image.*

BRECHT

Ach, Hangmen also die,
and a film director can change his mind.
After he heard about the news, he went ahead
and changed the entire film from Shanghai to Prague!

*A comes as the film director.
B comes as the spy. D comes
as the professor's daughter.*

A

Aktion.

D

What are you going to do?

B

Nothing.

D

Nothing? You are the only one who can save my father.

B

I can not surrender to the Germans.

D

But they will kill him for what you did!

B

Let me explain,

D

Explain? Explain why the man who saved you was taken away, while you sit here silent? But don't think I'll keep silent, because I won't. I won't let you kill my father. I tell you, I won't!

A

Pause.

B and D return to neutral.

BRECHT

Let me be clear, that is not my story.

A

Ach, Herr Brecht, Sie kommen. (Oh, Mr. Brecht, here you are.)

BRECHT

Ach so, very smart of you.
So, the Japanese are now the German,
Cai, the landlord's son is now the spy,
and the shopkeeper's daughter is now
the professor's daughter.

A

Genau, tatsächlich ist es immer noch Ihres. (Exactly, it's technically still yours.)

BRECHT

Mine? But you stole it and made it yours.

A

Nichts Persönliches, Herr Brecht, sondern nur Geld.
(Nothing personal, Mr. Brecht, but only money.)

A returns to neutral.

BRECHT

Money, money, it's all about money.
Money makes my brilliant story about China
into a crappy petty bourgeoisie film about Prague called Hangmen Also Die

featuring the world's richest professor who lives in a palace.
 Now you see, I failed to write this play
 because of money,
 because of Capitalism,
 because of Fascism!

*Brecht sings a song from the
 Hollywood-Elegien: Jeden Morgen,
 mein Brot zu verdienen.*

BRECHT

(sings)
 Jeden Morgen, mein Brot zu verdienen
 Gehe ich auf den Markt, wo Lügen gekauft werden.
 Hoffnungsvoll
 Reihe ich mich ein zwischen die Verkäufer.

(Every morning to earn my bread
 I go to the market where lies are bought.
 hopeful
 I line up between the sellers.)

In Hollywood, Bach has to write Jingles;
 Dante must show off his legs;
 I, too, had to sell my ideas like a whore.

Well, what can I do? I can have a lawsuit against him.
 Even though I know next to nothing about American laws,
 but I read about it in the newspaper.

*A comes as the judge. B comes as an
 Italian immigrant.*

Once in Los Angeles there was a democratic judge.

A

Oyez, oyez, oyez.

BRECHT

He had a case that an immigrant from Italy
 wanted to become a citizen of the United States.

So, he asked the Italian questions about America.

A

What is the meaning of the 8th amendment?

BRECHT

But the Italian only knew how to say:

B

Fourteen ninety two.

A

How long is a presidential term?

B

Fourteen ninety two.

BRECHT

The result couldn't be any clearer,
but the democratic judge decided
to rule against the fact and asked this question instead.

A

When did Christopher Columbus discover America?

B

Fourteen ninety two!

A

Correct, congratulations, sir,
you are now an U.S citizen.

B returns to neutral.

BRECHT

Get it? Columbus was an Italian.
However, before I can find my justice,
the U.S justice first finds me.

A

Mister Bertolt Brecht, you are subpoenaed
to testify before the House of Unamerican Activities Committee.

BRECHT

So, I have to travel to Washington D.C.
Sadly, my judge won't be so democratic.

*The projection shows the
historical image.*

A

Mister Bertolt Brecht, is it true that you are adapting a play of yours
into a film in Hollywood, and the film is in support of Communism?

BRECHT

No, it is in fact a parody of fascism.

A

But isn't it true that the film includes, and I here quote,
"four Russian communists coming to China to start a revolution"?

BRECHT

Yes, yes, but that is a play that the characters made in the film.
However, it is not the film itself.

A

But the play is about communism? In Russia?

BRECHT

No, again, it is a parody of fascism, and it takes place in Shanghai, China.
Supposedly, at least, before my film director changed it to Prague.

A

Can you please explain why this film of yours is a parody of fascism
instead of a propaganda of communism? Because in the film,
there is a line, and here I quote, "Follow me, my comrade.
Empty your pocket of pennies that tomorrow's world doesn't need.
Walk out and fight on the streets."

BRECHT

Then let me give you some context to this story you are quoting.
 Once Japan declares war on America, its army occupies Shanghai.
 The Japanese commander, eager for revenge,
 orders the arrest of Cai and his lover.
 Cai, like me, always finds a way to escape,
 but they capture his lover and put her on trial.

*D comes as Cai's lover. A plays the
 Japanese judge.*

A

Answer the marital court of the empire of Japan,
 why did you participate in a subversive activity
 against Japan and its legitimate occupation of China,
 namely acting in a play which is a parody of Japan?

D

I did not participate in any subversive activity,
 and that play I acted in is not a parody of Japan either.

A

You are lying. It is a parody, or how can you explain this line in the play,
 and here I quote "So, this shop first suffered from the Japanese,
 but with the help of me, the young comrade,
 without any revolution, flourish from the Japanese."
 And I quote "I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you!"

BRECHT

The judge would be speaking Japanese in reality, of course,
 but, considering that Americans are putting me on trial,
 the language, English, fits better than you would think.
 And Cai's lover answers the question skillfully.

D

But isn't it true that this play is commissioned
 by the German consulate, your ally?

A

Yes.

D

Then how could your ally commission a subversive activity?

A

No, it couldn't. Wait, I'm supposed to question you.

BRECHT

However, despite having no evidence, they still go on to execute her,
Just like how in the original play written by me these Russian communists
murder their passionate and innocent young comrade.

D returns to neutral.

A plays the American judge.

Now, your honor, are you American or Japanese?
Are you a human or a fascist?
Do you finally see how this is a parody of fascism?

A

Yes, you are dismissed, mister Bertolt Brecht.

A returns to neutral.

BRECHT

Right after the hearing, I went back to Europe,
first to Switzerland then Germany, Berlin,
as the war was now over.
Now, you might think this is all very funny and a victory for me,
but when I got back to East Berlin, it was too late.
I was as old, broken, and in ruins as the city.
Nevertheless, I tried. During the last years of my life,
I have tried three times to tell people around me about the play and Cai.
The first time was with my wife.

C comes as Brecht's wife.

C

Nimm dir Zeit! (Take your time!)

BRECHT

She is always interrupting me.
She thinks I still haven't wasted enough time.

C

Es ist Zeit fürs Bett.
Schlaf gut, ja? (Time for bed, sleep good, yes?)

BRECHT

Warte, bitte. (Wait, please?)

C

Was ist los? (What's wrong?)

BRECHT

I want a Spiel(play).

C

Ja, ich weiß.(Yeah, I know.)
Next time when you don't want a Spiel,
you kann tell me, klar?

BRECHT

No, you don't know. In China gibt es

C

Ja, ich weiß. (Yeah, I know.)
Next time when you don't write about China,
you kann tell me, klar?

BRECHT

No, you don't know. Es ist anders. (It's different.)

C

Ja, "anders", natürlich, und "fremd(strange)" auch?
Next time when you write something not other or strange,
you kann tell me, klar?

BRECHT

Aber you don't

C

Schlaf gut, bis Morgen. (Sleep good, see you tomorrow.)

C returns to neutral.

BRECHT

Nun ja, she knows me so well that she stopped knowing me,
and so do the others. Everyone says they know me, especially after my death.
All these memoirs, "Arbeit mit Brecht", "Verehrter Brecht", "Brechts Lai-Tu",
"Living for Brecht" are autobiographies that kindly included me.
The last person who knew me was a young Italian director
Who produced my Dreigroschenoper in Millian.

B comes as the Italian director.

He tried etwas ganz Neues (totally new) on stage.

*B sings the song Hochzeitslied für
ärmere Leute, but in a sincere, non
ironic way.*

B

(sings)

Bill Lawgen und Mary Syer
Wurden letzten Mittwoch Mann und Frau.
Hoch sollen sie leben, hoch, hoch, hoch!
Als sie drin standen vor dem Standesamt,
Wusste er nicht, woher ihr Brautkleid stammt,
Aber sie wusste seinen Namen nicht genau.

(Bill Lawgen and Mary Syer
Became husband and wife last Wednesday.
They shall live high, high, high, high!
When they stood in front of the registry office,
he didn't know where her wedding dress was from,
while she didn't know his name exactly.)

*A, C, D come as critics and
confront B.*

BRECHT

No wonder all these experts of Brechtian theater
jumped to their feet, fiery in their accusation.

A

Was machst du das? (What are you doing?)

C

Spinnst du? (You crazy?)

D

How can I feel emotions? Das ist falsch. (That's false!)

A/C/D:

Das ist nicht Brechtian.

BRECHT

Nicht Brechtian?

Since when do they get to say what is Brechtian?

I defended him.

I said this is the most beautiful performance
of this play ich je gesehen habe(I ever seen).

A, C, D come to neutral.

I invited him to bring his production to my Berliner Ensemble,
Aber dann natürlich I died.

Now, it's even worse.

All these scholars and professors are earning their tenures
out of studying me, inventing me, killing me.

B plays Brecht's assistant.

The second time, I tried to tell my Assistant
about das Spiel, at my Sommerhaus.

B

Herr Brecht, tut mir sehr Leid. (Mr. Brecht, I'm sorry.)

BRECHT

Wie bitte? (What's that?)

B

Tut mir sehr Leid, aber ich kann dem,
was Sie gesagt haben, nicht folgen.
(I'm very sorry, but I can
do not follow what you said.)

BRECHT

“Nicht folgen”? (Not follow?)

B

Richtig, Herr Brecht, was meinen Sie,
dass dieses Spiel chinesisch ist?
(That's right, Mr. Brecht, what do you mean
that this play is chinese?)

BRECHT

It's a Chinese play.

B

Herr Brecht, aber I don't understand.
What does it criticize, estrange or represent?

BRECHT

Ja, it does all of them. Now just imagine, okay?
See that lake außerhalb(outside)?

B

Ja, I see the lake, klar.

BRECHT

Gut, dann imagine it as a Chinese harbor on the Yangtze river.

B

Hä, wieso? (Howso?)

BRECHT

Imagine!

B

Okay, a Chinese harbor.

BRECHT

It's a busy day. The harbor is packed with people. Who are they?

B

Keine Ahnung. (No idea.)

BRECHT

Imagine! Now see that boat?

B

Ja, the boat.

BRECHT

Dann imagine it as a larger Schiff they have to embark to get to Shanghai down the river.

B

Ja, aber, Herr Brecht.

BRECHT

Aber?

B

Aber I still don't understand what it criticizes, estranges or represents?

BRECHT

Ach scheiße, scheiße! (Shit, shit!)

B

Tut mir sehr Leid ist es einfach (I'm sorry, it's just)

BRECHT

Los! Ich sage Los! (Out, I say, out!)

B returns to neutral.

Es ist unglaublich(unbelievable), that he was the best talent East Germany has to offer!
No wonder it failed!

Can you imagine, it was this “Herr Brecht” “Herr Brecht” Assistant who later managed my theater Berliner Ensemble, “an established Figur”, so established that the Stasi found him to be a reliable source of information.

If it was the Nazi’s time, I’d long be dead.
He wouldn’t even hesitate, when the Gestapo reached out to him.

D comes as Brecht’s actress, just coming back from swimming in the lake.

The third time, also at my Sommerhaus, I tried to tell my most talented actress, my Shen Te, the love of my life.

D

Das Wasser ist so schön. Was machst du? (Water is nice. What are you doing?)

BRECHT

Kom. Ich möchte dir etwas sagen. (Come, I want to tell you something.)

D

Aber erste lass uns (But let us first)

D kisses Brecht, but Brecht pushes her away.

BRECHT

Nie, es ist noch daytime.

D

What’s there to hide? Jeder schon weiß.(Everyone already knows.)

BRECHT

Ja, aber etwas besser than kiss have I for you.

D

Besser, is it your Herz?

BRECHT

Nicht ganz, I just thought of a perfect role for you.

D

Ach why don't you Anders a chance geben?

BRECHT

Nie, it has to be you, only you. She is a Chinese Schauspielerin.

D

Nun ja, didn't know I have a Chinese Schauspielerin inside me.

BRECHT

You are so delicate genauso wie eine Chinese Schauspielerin.
 Ich habe Angst, dass ich eben dieses Spiel nicht genug Zeit habe.
 Ich sterbe.
 (I'm afraid I won't have enough time for this play. I'm dying.)

D

Ach sagst du nicht! (Oh, don't say that!)

BRECHT

Vergessen nicht. (Don't forget.)

D

Du? Nie, niemand! (You? No, never!)

BRECHT

Nein, das Spiel. Es gibt keine Zeit zu schreiben.
 Ich sterbe.
 (No, it's the play. There's no time to write it. I'm dying.)

D

Ach sagst du nicht! (Oh don't say it!)

BRECHT

Versprich mir, nicht vergessen. (Promise me, forget not.)

D

Nie, niemand. (No, never.)

*Brecht and D kiss. D returns
to neutral.*

BRECHT

But after my death, she never mentioned it, niemand.
She sure remembered, dann warum?
I think about the reason wieder, wieder und wieder.
As you know, a dead man has plenty of time to think.
Am Ende I came up with a theory that she wanted me to be hers.
She must have thought that it was romantisch.

D comes as the actress.

D

I know something about Brecht that only I know!
I won't tell anyone, so he forever belongs to me!
Ich werde dieses Secret von Herr Brecht in mein Grab bringen!
(I will bring this secret of Brecht to my grave!)

*The ensemble form an acapella and starts to
hum the melody of "Moritat vom Mackie
Messer."*

(Pure Music Version)

Jedoch überhaupt(afterall) I failed.
I tried, but it was vergessen.
I wasn't forgotten, but I was lost,
becoming a figure, a quote,
a photo, a symbol.

The acapella switches style.

(Jazz Burgie Version)

I had been disturbing and criticizing
mein ganzes Leben,
aber wer weiß am Ende (but who knows at the end)
I was suffocated by praise.
Praised by everyone
for different reasons,
so they all canceled out.

The acapella switches style.

(English)

I played a role of love
and brought art to many,
but they treated it
as a highway to arrogance,
or as an autobahn to wealth.

The acapella switches style.

(Techno Version)

Leider, leider, Cai, I'm sorry.
I never brought you on stage.
I never made you alive but vergessen.
Es ist schade, Schäden, Schade.
So be it, I need no gravestone.

Brecht sings the song himself.

The ensemble returns to neutral.

Applause, alright, let me check with John.

Projection shows the login page of John's Geist again.

password, "Panama"

B comes as John's Geist.

B

Hallo, great grandpa.

BRECHT

What do you think? Have we done the job?

B

Yeah, pretty good, but I feel it's still missing something.

BRECHT

What?

B

You need to be more Chinese, more like my real great grandfather,
and to do so, we will need more truth.

B returns to neutral.

BRECHT

Alright, you hear him, meine Damen und Herren,
enjoy the last part of our show.

Cai returns to neutral.

Part III Chinese. (The Truth)

C comes as John's great grandmother.

The projection shows "Part III Chinese.(The Truth)"

C

(sings)

绿草苍苍 白雾茫茫
有位佳人 在水一方
绿草萋萋 白雾迷离
有位佳人 靠水而居

我愿逆流而上
依偎在她身旁
无奈前有险滩
道路又远又长

我愿顺流而下
找寻她的方向
却见依稀仿佛
她在中央

我愿逆流而上

与她轻言细语
 无奈前有险滩
 道路曲折无已

我愿顺流而下
 找寻她的踪迹
 却见仿佛依稀
 她在水中伫立

绿草苍苍 白雾茫茫
 有位佳人 在水一方

(Green grass and white mist
 There is a beautiful woman on the side of the water
 Green grass luxuriant white mist
 There is a beautiful woman who lives by water

I would like to swim against the current
 snuggle next to her
 There is a dangerous shoal before helplessness
 the road is long and long

I would like to go down the river
 find her direction
 but see vaguely as if
 she is in the middle of the water)

Yes, it's me. Are you surprised?
 I suppose by now you have heard a lot
 from my husband Cai and my great grandson John.
 Have you wondered where these stories come from?
 My husband didn't live long enough to meet John,
 so I was his closest access to his legendary great grandfather.
 He and I agree that it's best for me to tell the last part of this story.
 Sorry, I suppose you won't be hearing much German from me.
 A lot of what you have seen in this play come from the stories
 I told him, when he was a child, which usually went like this.

B comes as John.

B

所以打仗的时候，他一直待在上海？(So during the war, he stayed in Shanghai?)

C

Yes, he stayed in Shanghai throughout most of the Japanese invasion.
Don't know what he did there. He never told me about it.

B

既然他喜欢戏, 那他在上海一定有个情人, 还是个演员。
(Since he loved theater, then he must have had a lover who was an actress in Shanghai.)

C

See, John just knows that because my husband loved theater,
he must have had a lover in Shanghai who was an actress.
He has such a flexible mind and loves to embellish reality.
And I don't know what your impression of my family is now,
but we didn't own a radio, automobile, or refrigerator,
as many of middle class American families did at that time,
but we had land and servants that functioned much better
than a refrigerator, vacuum or microwave.
And John's favorite phrase, when I was telling him these stories, was

B

然后呢? (And then?)

C

You know the purpose of me telling him these stories
was to make him fall asleep, but it always ended up making him more awake.

And then when your great grandfather was on his way home from Shanghai,
his father, your great great grandfather died. I was by his bed.
But I'd say he was lucky to not suffer from the communists.

B

他们干了什么啊? (What did they do?)

C

Oh the communists, I will tell you about it, when you are older.

B returns to neutral.

But I never had the chance to tell him.
These stories stopped coming when he turned a teenager.

Not because of his teenage rebellion, but because I died.
 Don't be sad, I've lived long enough, but I only knew fragments
 of my husband's life, and I could only tell the fragments of these fragments
 to John who must make these flat black and white photographs
 into fully rounded humans again, including me talking to you now.
 Theater, for a religious person like me, seems like an art of cruelty,
 because theater can only approximate: the writer approximates,
 then the actors approximate, then the designers approximate,
 and finally the audience like you approximate.

And do you remember that letter he told you earlier,
 I think, in Part I German(The Essence), before going on a trip,
 he thought he was going to die and asked his mom,
 my granddaughter-in-law to carry out his last will?
 What he hasn't told you is that this trip happened,
 in 2009, when he was nine years old, to Sichuan
 where Bertolt Brecht's gods try to find a good person at.
 And a year before that, in 2008, Sichuan just suffered
 from a major earthquake, during which 69,227 people were dead,
 and John followed the news and saw everything on TV,
 so, no wonder, he was scared and thought he was going to die.

*The projection shows the
 historical image.*

It was no paranoia, and you would react the same way.
 So, why did his father have to get on this trip?
 Now, this might sound terrible to you, since I heard from John
 that Americans love to express their opinions, free speech, right,
 but as bad and tragic as that earthquake was, it was also a rare
 business opportunity, more specifically for real estate.
 It makes sense, right, since most of the buildings were destroyed.
 And one can argue that it was this investment
 that later paid for John's education in America,
 and one can also argue that it paid for this very play.
 See, my friends, that's what the truth feels like.
 John doesn't want say it himself,
 but I can, since I'm already dead.
 With that being said, John ended up loving the trip.
 He was drawn to all the ruins, that sublime feeling,

similar to what Brecht felt, when he saw Berlin after the war.
 And I imagine his mom must've been waiting for him,
 the same way how I waited for my husband on the top of
 our village's watch tower where I looked out to the horizon everyday.
 Many people, including some members of both his and my family
 thought he was dead and asked me to remarry, but I had hope.
 I knew that God would protect him.
 And one early morning, while most of the land was covered in fog,
 I saw him crossing the bridge, coming back to his village, to me.

Cai comes as Cai.

CAI

我回来了。(I'm back.)

C

And the first thing he asked me was

CAI

我自行车呢？(Where's my German bicycle?)

C

“Where's my German bicycle?” Come on, what about your dad?
 His bicycle was still there, but his father lay in the grave which I told him about.
 At this point, the Japanese had already occupied our village,
 but they paid little attention to us, since they had bigger targets to loot.
 Some of their soldiers actually complimented how authentic my family shop was.

But he seemed like a different person: didn't react much when he heard about his father
 and never said anything about his time in Shanghai or how he made it back.
 He hosted another funeral for his father, gathering all villagers who had been
 farming on his family's land for generations and made a big announcement.

CAI

各位, 这个时代, 这个国家已经到头了,
 所以现在我要把全部家业都分给你们,
 只求今后我们能和睦共处, 不要争斗。
 (Ladies and gentlemen, this era, this country has come to an end,
 So now I will divide the whole family property among you,
 I just hope that in the future we can live together in harmony and not fight.)

C

It was shocking for everyone including me.
 He gave up all his land to the villagers
 and said that our time is now over.
 This was more generous than any communist in history.
 All the villagers cheered and thanked him.
 Later he told me that it was his best acting experience.
 Normally, this would be the end of the story,
 but of course, John could never be satisfied.

B comes as John.

So he kept asking me.

B

然后呢？(And then?)

C

Then, as we all know, the Japanese surrendered to America.
 Without their common enemy, the communists and capitalists
 started fighting each other again. The communists won the civil war
 and took over our village. They put all landlords on trials including us,
 but because your great grandfather already gave up all his land,
 the trial was almost as hilarious as Bertolt Brecht's testimony.

*A comes as the Chinese
 communist judge. Cai comes
 as Cai. B and D as the
 villagers.*

A

现在进行对万恶地主蔡扒皮的批斗。
 乡亲们尽管诉苦，有话直说。
 (Let's start the prosecution of the evil landlord Cai.
 Folks speak honestly and tell us everything.)

CAI

你们说吧。(Say whatever you want to say.)

C

The villagers were the jury who answered the judge's questions.

A

说, 这个地主平时是怎么剥削你们的?
(Say, how does this landlord usually exploit you?)

B/D

没有。(No, nothing.)

A

没有? (No, nothing?)

C

No, nothing, he had never exploited them.

A

但你们不是给他家当过奴仆吗? (But haven't you been slaves to his family?)

B/D

没有。(No, nothing.)

A

没有? (No, nothing?)

C

No, nothing, he had never treated them like slaves.
In fact, serving in his family as servants was considered as an honor,
and he always paid them wages and fed them the best food.

A

那...那他难道不是汉奸走狗吗? (Then...then isn't he a traitor?)

B/D

没有! (No, nothing!)

A

没有? (No, nothing?)

C

No, nothing, he had never cooperated with the Japanese.
Remember, he even wrote a play that ridiculed their propaganda.

A

休庭。(The court is adjourned.)

CAI

各位, 多谢。(Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.)

B plays John.

*A, D and Cai return to
neutral.*

C

So, the charges were dismissed, and we were not considered as a landlord family anymore, but, of course, they took away all the money, jewelry, anything that worth anything, including that German bicycle and confiscated our shop and factory, but at least, we survived.

B

然后呢? (And then?)

C

Then, things just got boring. We married, worked and lived on, and he never did anything related to theater again. It was basically forbidden anyway, except the model dramas.

B

那然后呢? (And then?)

C

Then, I just know that your great grandfather died, leaving me with three children including your grandfather. He was buried next to his father in the family cemetery.

B

然后呢? (And then?)

C

Then, I died, okay? Stop asking me.
Go ask your grandfather.

儿子, 过来, 你孙子找你。(Come here, son, your grandson needs you.)

*A comes as John's
grandfather.*

A

What, mom? You ran out of stories to tell?

C

Yes, now you go deal with your grandson, okay?

B

那然后呢？(And then?)

A

Where did you get to?

C

I died and was buried next to my husband.

A

I see. A good point to start.

So, remember every year we will visit our family cemetery?

B

记得, 还有烧纸片！(I do, and burn papers!)

A

That's right, and one year, when you were still a baby,
we came as a whole family, with all my children including your father,
and all their children like you. I wanted to give my parents a update
of how we are doing now.

Cai comes as Cai

C

My husband was right next to me.

Hey, look at them, our children,
they are coming!

CAI

Yeah, I can tell. They are here every year.
Oh, there is a new baby.

B

就是我。(That was me.)

A

Mom and dad, we are back to visit you
and tell you about our family after you left.
Now all your children, and my children
have grown up, married, and gave birth to their children.

C

Our first great grandson.
Honestly, I love being in grave next to you
much better than being alive. You know,
even though, we were a couple, we only
spent about ten years together.
By the way, my husband died around the same time
as Brecht did, but unlike him, who had an anniversary
every five years, no one heard about it.

CAI

Yeah.

C

After we are dead, we can now spend
all the time next to each other.

CAI

Yeah.

C

Fifty years, we get to spend much more time dead than alive.
This is the best life.

CAI

Yeah.

B plays John's uncle.

A

Let me start with my children, your grandchildren.
My oldest son grew up to be one of the first generations
of university students after the Cultural Revolution.

B

实践是检验真理的唯一标准。(Practice is the sole criterion for testing truth.)

C

How nice!
And of course, in reality, updates like this would happen
bit by bit over the years, but since it's a show for you,
we are going to show you everything at once.

A

He went to Beijing and protested at Tiananmen Square.
Then he moved to Shenzhen and worked as an investigative journalist.
One time, he disguised himself as a migrant worker, these who John
was scared of a child.

*Projection shows the
historical image.
A plays the boss.*

A

Here's your paycheck.

B

But that's below the minimum wage.

A

Minimum wage? Where do you think you are? America?

*B returns to neutral. A plays
John's grandfather.*

A

So, he got badly beaten but wrote a great article out of it.

D comes as John's aunt.

Then, my daughter, she is the first insurance agent of our village and tried to sell people car insurance even before anyone even drives a car.

D

But you will need it, one day.

*D returns to neutral.
B comes as John's second
uncle.
Projection shows the
historical image.*

A

Then, my second son, he is a big fan of karaoke and gambling, particularly in a Chinese game called 麻将(Mahjong).

B

喏, 胡了。(Yeah, I won.)

A

So he rented our family's old factory from the government and changed to a factory that produces Mahjong tables, instantly the richest and most popular guy in town.

CAI

A playboy. I'm glad.

B plays John's father.

A

And my third son, he wanted to be a rock star.

B

(sings)

Is this the real life?
 Is this just fantasy?
 Caught in a landside,
 No escape from reality

B returns to neutral.

A

Then he found he had no real talent,
 so he became a businessman and married his accountant.
 Instead of a German bicycle, he drives a Volvo.

C

That's so lovely.

CAI

But no theater, no one is doing theater.

B plays John.

A

Together they gave birth to a son, Yide
 who will have an English name called John,
 who will study theater and German in America.

B

In a university called Emory.

A

He is also a Christian, and so is our whole family.

C

Oh God bless us.

A

Now, everything the communists took away from us,
 everything you once had, mom and dad,
 we worked hard and earned them back.

We will join you, one day, in heaven.

C and Cai sing happy birthday in Chinese and German.

C

(sings)

祝你生日快乐
祝你生日快乐
祝你幸福祝你健康
有个温暖家庭

CAI

(sings)

Zum Geburtstag viel Glück!
Zum Geburtstag viel Glück!
Zum Geburtstag lieber Johann,
Zum Geburtstag viel Glück!

A, B and Cai return to Neutral.

C

Don't know what they said but it sounds good to me.
Before Brecht's character asked John to adopt him,
he did research, including interviewing his grandfather,
over zoom actually because of the pandemic.

*B comes as John.
A comes as John's grandfather.*

B

So, was what great grandmother told me true,
or just bedtime stories for children?

A

三年自然灾害的时候, 我们家有时连顿饭都吃不上。
(During the famine, our family sometimes couldn't even get a meal.)

B

Right, the famine, it must be hard.

A

于是爸爸把家里最后值钱的东西，
就是家里戏台镀金的柱子卖了。
(So my father took the last valuable thing in the house,
the gold-plated pillars of the theater and sold it.)

B

Really, these pillars of his theater, he sold them for food?
They were his most precious things.

A

他对我们说什么东西都可以再有，
但是人一死就什么都没了。
(He told us that we can have everything again,
But when a person dies, nothing is left.)

B

Yes, first we have to survive.

C

And it is this philosophy that lets the Chinese people
survive for thousands of years.
That's why the pyramids and Sphinx are there,
but where are the ancient Egyptians?
That's why the Colosseum and Hadrian's wall are there,
but where are the ancient Romans?
That's why many Chinese temples and palaces are gone,
but the Chinese people are still here,
learning German and talking to you in English.

B

How do you want me to write this play, grandpa?

A

想怎么写就怎么写吧。(Write whatever you want to write.)

Cai comes as Cai.

CAI

Yeah, write whatever you want.
Don't know about Brecht, but I like it a lot.

C

Yes, my love, that means you are not a character anymore.

CAI

No, I am just playing a character.

B

Hey, it's you, great grandpa, here you are, on the other side.
It seems the audience haven't abandoned you this time.

CAI

Thank you, John, for adopting me into your family.

B

And I thank Brecht for writing you.

Cai plays Brecht.

BRECHT

Ja, bitte.

C

And Mr. Brecht, I always want to ask you a question.

BRECHT

Ja, bitte.

C

What is your biggest source of inspiration?

BRECHT

Ach, you may lacht(laugh) ja, but it is the Bible.

C

Oh, that all makes sense now.

B

We, men write men, write men right.

The End of Play