

PROLOGUE

FEI YEN an old EAST ASIAN enters the auditorium - she could already be sitting/pre set in the auditorium or she could walk into the space greeting people, chit-chatting. She makes her way to the stage and squats/sits down and takes out a small Camping stove - she begins to make dumplings.

FEI YEN:

There is a Chinese proverb - Eat first, talk later.

FEI YEN gathers what she has been cooking into a large dish she offers the dumplings to members of the audience

Good, hah? There is also another proverb -

Talk doesn't cook rice. But it makes a good companion for any story. And you are here for a story, aren't you? Enjoy the appetiser, it's on the house . . .

FEI YEN packs up her things and disappears.

ACT I

Each act is set in both a simplified reality and a modernised version of one of ten Chinese courts of Hell. Hell is a white space, internal or external. Domestic or corporate, public or private depending on the Hell that you find yourself in. Hell therefore is a state of suffering. Inhabited by the dead who are "expiating their sins" before, hopefully, going to heaven. They suffer mental anguish. Torment, torture, misery, affliction, agony, woe. It is an ordeal. A waking nightmare between realms, between death and life.

Projected title appears: MAGIC MIRROR OF RETRIBUTION

ACT 1 SCENE 1

FEI YEN:

(Suddenly appears like and jack-in-a-box)

Or hell is where the heart is.

Early morning, urban flat. MICHELLE CARTER-CHUNG is getting ready. Michelle sits, sideways on looking at herself in a dressing table mirror. Michelle talks to herself, to her reflection. The reflection the audience see is not MICHELLE's but FEI YEN. FEI YEN speaks directly to the audience, Michelle is dressed in black.

MICHELLE:

I hate funerals.

(Reading aloud)

Family and friends are invited to a service for Mary Barbara Carter nee Sandworth, to be held at St. Peter's on the green . . ."

FEI YEN:

I should have buried my daughter. I should have mourned for you.

Michelle pauses and inspects her own reflection watching herself in the mirror performing simple actions. Raising an eyebrow, frowning, smiling.

FEI YEN watches MICHELLE with grim amusement

MICHELLE:

Funerals. The only time I ever think about family.

FEI YEN:

How do you mourn for a child you've lost? How do you grieve for a daughter that has no grave?

MICHELLE:

Why does death always make me think about a past I never had?

ACT I SCENE 1

FEI YEN:

Do you think that my daughter was a happy child?

MICHELLE:

I haven't thought about - /

FEI YEN:

There are deep waters behind those eyes/

MICHELLE:

I was neither happy nor sad.

ACT I SCENE 1

FEI YEN:

She sounds more sad than happy, don't you think?

MICHELLE:

Looks at her reflection FEI YEN mirrors MICHELLE's movements. MICHELLE laughs.

Cardboard sliding, tree climbing, fishing for minnows.

FEI YEN:

Tasty little morsels to eat, bite sized/

MICHELLE:

Plopping them into a jam-jar that had a string tied around the neck.

FEI YEN:

To eat/

MICHELLE:

Then pouring them back into the beck/

FEI YEN:

What's the point in that?

MICHELLE:

Fun, was building dams, blackberry picking/

FEI YEN:

Fun?

MICHELLE:

Eating the berries, chasing the juice with my tongue
as the berry blood oozed down my chin/

FEI YEN:

My daughter caught minnows and ate wild berries for
fun! Did the people who/

MICHELLE:

My adoptive parents put a roof over my head, clothes
on my back, shoes on my feet and food in my belly/

ACT I SCENE 1

FEI YEN:

I have no right to ask let alone think. . .
But I can't help myself, once a Mother always a
Mother. Did your adopted parents love you as if you
were one of their own, were flesh of their flesh,
blood of their blood, if they did -

I will just wither and crawl away.

MICHELLE:

My life has been very "English" very undemonstrative

FEI YEN:

At least we have that in common.
I don't mean being English. My parents didn't show
affection either, even in the privacy of our own
home -

MICHELLE:

A child needs to physically feel love just as much
as they need to know love, don't they?

FEI YEN:

How I wish I could have been a fly on your wall!
Watching you learn about China and Hong Kong.

MICHELLE:

Growing up as one of a kind during the 60s was
lonely. I was four years old before I realised that
I wasn't white.

FEI YEN:
How can this be?

MICHELLE:
It was me and a local Indian take-away, the only
two, non-white things in the entire town.
Being Chinese, no one wanted to go there - so it was
just, shut out

FEI YEN:
They say,
"When children travel far from home, mothers never
stop worrying."

ACT I SCENE 1

MICHELLE:
Did my parents ever worry about me? Mothers never
stop worrying, so they say/

FEI YEN:
Never.

MICHELLE:
My birth Mother abandoned me - well that's what I
was told.

FEI YEN:
Who told you/

MICHELLE:
I was told me that my birth mother didn't want me/

FEI YEN:
You think it was easy!
Yes, I abandoned you.
Or an outsider might think.
Yes, I walked away from you.
I turned my back and I left you, my flesh, my blood.
If I'd wanted to be selfish, I would have kept you.
I would have hugged you and never let go.
What then?
A day, a week, a month at best and you would have
gone. Joining all the other young souls -
I, your Mother, would have been responsible for
killing you.

beat

How could I, a Mother, chose?
What choice was there?
Not a choice a death sentence -
Not just one, but two.

MICHELLE:
They flew me thousands of miles away into the arms
of a stranger

FEI YEN:

How could I have known that they would send you away? That they would give you to the gwei los?

MICHELLE:

Ironical. The Westerners that adopted me are called foreign devils.
But it's me that's the "foreigner".

FEI YEN:

I want you to know that abandoning you and learning that you had been adopted, altered my very being, forever.
I did not want to leave you.
I wanted only to protect you.
To love you and give you the beautiful life you deserved.

You have to know how much I loved you.
How much I still love you.

I was a frightened young mother with no money.
No home and no family for support.
No one offered me any hope that I might be able to raise you.
That you might not die, as so many other babies had died on the streets of Hong Kong.
I want you to know, that if I could change that day, I would.
I lost a part of myself when I left you.
I can cope with that loss, just.
But I also want you to know I am not a criminal...
Through my blinding grief, I picked the stairwell with care.
One that was busy.
One where you would be found.
I could not know the depth of love I would feel for you, my first child.
The day you were born, I held you, talked to you, kissed you, hugged you and never wanted to be parted from you.
It was only later that I felt it ...
Overwhelming unconditional love.
But you were gone.
I couldn't get you back.
I loved you so deeply.
It is the one absolute truth of my life.
Those feelings don't go away over time.
I have had four surviving children since you, my first daughter.
I want my children, my cousins, friends, aunts and Uncles to know that I have another child; my first child.
My children deserve to know the truth and to know their sister and to share in her friendship and love.

What kind of monster am I that I deprived them of my first beautiful child?

You deserve to know me and I deserve a chance to know you!
 I know I don't have the right to call you my child. My daughter, but what other word expresses the closeness, the importance and the bond that you are and always will be to me?

Beat

You're angry with me

MICHELLE:

Did she have other children, did she tell them about me, their older sister?

Silence

MICHELLE scrutinises her reflection/FEI YEN

ACT I SCENE 1

FEI YEN:

I could never find the right words, the right time.
 Weeks fell into months, months collapsed into years
 -

MICHELLE:

Who can promise me a tomorrow . . .

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