

Explanatory Essay for “Claire de Lune”

Lu Bu (or Fengxian) is one of the most nuanced characters in the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Not only is he ‘two-faced’ with duplicitous and deceitful betrayals and behaviors, he also embodies traditionally conflicting personalities and characteristics. Repeatedly, Lu treads the fine line between invincibility v. weakness, authority v. submission, and traditional masculinity v. femininity. For instance, Lu Bu is “brave but shallow,” ruthless yet merciful, and invincible yet weak.¹ And perhaps, most intriguingly, Lu Bu is extraordinarily masculine yet is depicted with subtle, feminine characteristics in the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* text. In particular, though he's ridiculously strong and unbeatable in battle, he falls victim to the coy seduction of a weak and vulnerable woman. While on the one hand, Lu is an embodiment of brute physical strength, he equally expresses an unexpected emotional sensitivity towards his masters (until he's convinced to betray them) and his ill-fated lover Diaochan. However, despite this nuance in masculinity and femininity in the text, “manliness is defined by a hero’s dissociation from women, ‘especially from their perceived bad influences’” and women are often “nothing but a foil or medium to men in the Three Kingdoms canon.”² Subsequently, gender nuances between characters and even those within a single character are muted and unexplored in the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* text.

Thus, this project attempts to develop these muted and unexplored gender roles in the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, and particularly for Lu Bu, whose subtle characteristics already border traditional masculinity and femininity. To do so, this project utilizes fanfiction -- and

¹ Luo Guanzhong, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, 29, 116.

² Xiaofei Tian, “Slashing Three Kingdoms: A Case Study in Fan Production on the Chinese Web,” 232.

more specifically, gender bender fanfiction -- as a medium for exploration. As Xiaofei Tian argues in “Slashing Three Kingdoms: A Case Study in Fan Production on the Chinese Web,” fanfiction “happens in the gaps between canon, the unexplored or insufficiently explored territory.”³ These gaps include “the possibility of configuring a political and public relation in sexual and private terms,” and developing relationships beyond the few sentences allotted to them in the official text.⁴ Applied to Lu Bu’s case, the applicability of fanfiction is even more well-suited: although Lu Bu is a historical figure with little information beyond those in historical records, Luo Guanzhong (the compiler of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*) entirely fictionalized the most remembered story about Lu Bu and his tryst with Diaochan (an entirely fictitious beauty.) If, then, this story is viewed as Luo’s attempt to fill the ‘gaps between [historical] canon,’ Lu Bu’s story is already in the mode of fanfiction.

Taking Luo’s ‘fanfiction’ on Lu Bu as canon (and utilizing direct quotations from the text in order to develop the authenticity or believability of the supplementary fanfiction), this project -- a fanfiction titled “Clair de Lune” (alluding to the depiction of Diaochan as a “celestial being from the Palace on the Moon”) -- further develops the intricate emotions, motivations, and gender nuances in the story between Lu Bu and Diaochan. Instead of the traditional genders allotted to Lu Bu and Diaochan (male and female, respectively), Lu Bu becomes a woman and Diaochan, a man. By switching the two characters’ genders -- or ‘gender-bending’ -- Lu Bu’s feminine characteristics and Diaochan’s masculine characteristics become especially evident. While, for instance, Lu Bu’s position and ambition in the former half of the story demonstrate his capability as a masculine leader, Lu Bu’s encounter with Diaochan immediately subjugates him

³ Xiaofei Tian, “Slashing Three Kingdoms: A Case Study in Fan Production on the Chinese Web,” 231.

⁴ Ibid.

to a blushing and vulnerable individual. On the other hand, while Diaochan's original obedience and reverence to her adoptive father reveal a feminine sense of subordination, her response to her adoptive father's request reveals her masculine ambition and desire for power, as well as a filial responsibility that reflects the expectations between father and son. And most importantly, in the unraveling of Lu Bu and Diaochan's intimate romance, it is clear that Diaochan wields the power in the relationship. Whereas Lu Bu is too shy (and perhaps too cowardly) to directly approach Diaochan (and thus stares at her through a window), Diaochan initiates all contact -- inviting him to a midnight meeting -- and easily manipulates Lu Bu's soft and gentle emotions into those of brutal anger and violence against his father. Thus, by exploring these angles through newly gendered bodies, these traditionally masculine and feminine contradictions become exceedingly more evident and substantial.

CLAIR DE LUNE

(Tags: LuBu/Diaochan, Gender Bender, Romance of the Three Kingdoms)

By Luo Guanzhong and Grace Koh

PROLOGUE

“HERE BEGINS OUR TALE. The empire, long divided, must unite; long united, must divide. Thus it has ever been...”⁵

The age of the Three Kingdoms brought forth heroes and foes -- each guided by righteous ambition or unbridled folly. Their unsheathed halberds -- dripping with blood and sweat -- slashed bodies, empires, and loyalties between men.

In war, there is no room for either Confucian piety or mercy: the ruled slays the ruler, son murders father, friend subjugates friend. A momentary mistake of lowering one's guard leads to an eternity of suffering. Showing mercy becomes foolishness, and loving another becomes an act of hating oneself.

In this war-ridden turmoil, two star-crossed lovers become embroiled in treacherous plots, betrayal, and tragedy. Both adopted children of two powerful families, Lu Bu and Diaochan become pawns for political ambitions.

Lu Bu (or Fengxian) -- the adopted daughter of the powerful and cruel warlord Dong Zhuo -- falls in love with Diaochan -- an adopted son of Wang Yun, a duplicitous official in Dong Zhuo's company. Little does Lu Bu know that Diaochan is far different from what he portrays himself to be. Her weakness to love leads her to surely pay the price.

“From forth the fatal loins of these two foes, A pair of star-cross'd lovers take a life.”⁶

⁵ From Luo Guanzhong's *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, pg. 5.

⁶ Adapted from William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

ACT ONE

Minister of the Interior Wang Yun returned home despondent over the day's events. He bristled, remembering the warlord Dong Zhuo's rampant violence and corruption in the imperial court. How had the heavens allowed such a wicked man from achieving such power and prestige?

Late that night, strolling in his garden under a high moon, he stopped by a rose trellis and gazed at the sky. His eyes filled with tears. In the silence he heard moans and sighs over the Peony Pavilion...⁷

The incessant moans and sighs cut through the thick, heavy silence over the Peony Pavilion. Wang Yun narrowed his eyes in response, craning his head towards the sound's source. He had thought he had been alone.

In the faint moonlight, Wang Yun could make out the figure of his adopted son Diaochan. As he made his way towards Diaochan -- still oblivious to his father's looming figure -- Wang Yun recalled the moment he took the boy as his son.

Many years ago, during an excursion to a neighboring brothel, Wang Yun had run into the young Diaochan -- the illegitimate son of a courtesan and a local magistrate from Luoyang. He had been so taken with the boy's fine features, his wit, and talent -- that he had immediately suggested to the boy's mother that he would take him as a protege. He had persuaded her that a boy like Diaochan and his potential would be wasted in a brothel like that of his mother's. And having paid for the boy with a few silver coins, Wang Yun had promised that he would train the boy in the arts of dance and song. Assuring that he would not rest until he debuted the boy as an entertainer for the royal court, Wang Yun had taken the boy home -- removing all distractions and temptations that would take him away from developing his arts...

But here was Diaochan -- draped like a willow over the pavilion steps -- shamelessly weeping and wasting valuable time and energy that should have been devoted to artistic study.

Wang Yun rapped on Diaochan's shoulder with his curved walking stick.

"Wretched boy, is there someone you pine for?" he asked sharply.

⁷ From Luo Guanzhong's *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, pg. 63.

Diaochan turned, aghast. His dark curls -- wet with tears -- pressed against the sides of his petal-like cheeks. "Would this humble servant dare?" He quickly stood up, wiping his eyes with the backs of his hands.

"Then why," Wang Yun continued, "are you sighing here deep into the night?"

"Allow me to open my innermost thoughts to you," Diaochan replied.

"Keep nothing back," Wang Yun said. "Tell me the whole truth."

"My lord," Diaochan began, "I am obliged to you for your unstinting care, for having me instructed in the arts of music and dancing, and for treating me with the utmost kindness and generosity. No sacrifice on my part could repay even one ten-thousandth of what I owe you. Recently you have been looking terribly sad, as if burdened by some great affair of state, but how could I inquire into such matters? This evening again I saw you pacing uneasily, and it brought a sigh to my lips. I never thought my lord would take notice. But if there is any way I can serve you, I would welcome death ten thousand times before declining."⁸

Diaochan's lips twitched nervously. He had never spoken to his adoptive father in this way since he first arrived in the Wang household, and he had never outwardly questioned his father's motivations or his directives for him to solely pursue the arts. Despite his outward obedience, however, Diaochan was admittedly growing increasingly frustrated and deeply unhappy. Over time, as he watched his father and his brothers attend to the matters of the state and the court, he could not help but become inordinately envious of what he deemed as meaningful work in comparison to his dancing and singing. While he was, of course, grateful for Wang Yun's generosity and the opportunity to make something of his life beyond his mother's brothel, he felt incredibly unfulfilled. Was he not a son (albeit, an adopted one) of the Han dynasty's Minister of the Interior? Did his origin as a son of a courtesan discount him from becoming more than an entertainer? Could he not dream to become someone who personally wielded authority -- and not merely entertained the powerful?

To Diaochan's surprise, Wang Yun struck the ground with his walking stick and cried out, "It never occurred to me that you could be the one to save the Han!" Wang Yun knelt before a bewildered Diaochan, who immediately prostrated himself in response.

⁸ From Luo Guanzhong's *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, pg. 63.

As he knelt, Diaochan's heart began to beat wildly in anticipation -- would this be the moment his father would allow him to join the court and become involved in state affairs? Would this be the beginning of his career and ambition?

Then, contrary to his expectations for an official position or apprenticeship, his father suddenly pleaded, "You may be the only one who can save us. Here is how matters stand: the traitor Dong Zhuo is preparing to seize the throne, and our civil and military officials have no means to prevent him. Now then, Dong Zhuo has an adopted daughter, Lu Bu, a woman of extraordinary courage and might, but, like her stepfather, a slave to her passions. I would like to catch them in a double snare by first promising you in marriage to Lu Bu and then offering you to Dong Zhuo, thus putting you in a perfect position to turn them against one another. Drive Lu Bu to kill Dong Zhuo, and you will have eliminated a great evil, stabilized the dynastic shrines, and restored our ruling house. It lies in your power. But are you willing?"⁹

Diaochan pulled back in shock from the degrading request. He could hardly believe what he was hearing. Was his father actually instructing him to bait the treacherous Dong Zhuo and his daughter in pseudo-romantic relationships? He gazed into his father's face, searching for clues to whether this was the actual request -- perhaps he had misunderstood. However, as his father avoided his gaze and instead knelt lower with his tears dripping into the dirt below him, Diaochan fully understood.

Before he could open his trembling lips to respond, Diaochan racked his mind -- would he even be able to accomplish this task? He had never had a friendship--let alone, a relationship--with anyone outside of the Wang household since he had been adopted. Perhaps he could bait Lu Bu into a relationship -- but Dong Zhuo? How could he seduce an ugly old pig? He decided he could not do it.

As he opened his mouth to refuse, however, he saw how his father's wrinkled and feeble hands curled into the dirt below him. His heart ached -- how had those hands fed him, clothed him, and trained him in the years past? How gentle those hands had been when comforting him after a fall or a fight? His heart suddenly became emboldened. While this was not the way he had desired to serve, perhaps this was the only way to do so for a lowly son of a courtesan. Perhaps he could truly have an impact beyond mere entertainment and superficial laughter.

"I have already agreed to serve," replied Diaochan, with conviction. "I am eager to be presented to Lu Bu and Dong Zhuo. Leave all the rest to me."¹⁰

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ From Luo Guanzhong's *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, pg. 64.

ACT TWO

Across the Peony Pavilion where Diaochan made his pact, Lu Bu stood in smug reflection as she gazed upon the moonlight upon the shining waters. She had just left her adoptive father Dong Zhuo's beautiful palace rooms which were adorned with gold and jade, colored silks and rare pearls that he had confiscated from the commoners.¹¹ In her honest opinion, these rooms were far more beautiful than the moon or the shining waters -- simply put, the rooms reminded her of her success.

As she stroked her millefleurs robe and golden belt bearing a motif of lions and reptiles, she could not help but feel pleased at herself for joining Dong Zhuo's family and improving her prospects. Only a few months before, she had been an adopted daughter of Ding Yuan -- who had been so easy to eradicate and was now worthless to her. Now, as an adopted daughter of Dong Zhuo -- the "Heavenly Father" -- who was even more powerful than the Emperor himself, her life seemed to be on the right path. After all, success for a subordinate depended on the quality of the master.

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The next morning, this self-congratulatory sentiment perpetuated in Lu Bu's mind. *What a wonderful choice I made in joining Dong Zhuo!*

Wang Yun, an official of Dong Zhuo's court, had sent a lovely golden headpiece studded with priceless pearls to Lu Bu's quarters. Lu Bu was enthralled with the sudden gift -- and decided to visit in person to thank Wang Yun.

"Delighted with the gift, Lu Bu came to Wang Yun's home to express her appreciation. The minister received her outside the main gate and ushered her into his private apartment, where he prepared a feast of choice delicacies. Then Wang Yun led Lu Bu to the seat of honor."¹²

Then, during the process of being wined and dined, Wang Yun suddenly dismissed the attendants and called for his son. Diaochan entered the room, his face flushed with tinges of pink.

Lu Bu was immediately enamored -- she had never seen such a beautiful boy while in the company of either Ding Yuan or Dong Zhuo. She had been so used to seeing burly, hairy, and smelly men on the battlefield -- she had never seen such a soft and lovely man. And even

¹¹ Ibid., 62.

¹² From Luo Guanzhong's *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, pg. 64.

considering herself (she thought herself to be relatively good-looking -- albeit, more handsome than pretty), Lu Bu believed Diaochan was far more beautiful than herself.

Lu Bu, slightly startled by Diaochan's sudden entrance, turned to Wang Yun.

"Who is this?" Lu Bu asked.

"My son Diaochan," was the reply. "I would like to present him to you in marriage." Wang Yun ordered Diaochan to pour Lu Bu a drink.

Lu Bu's eyes never left Diaochan. His grace, his gentle air. What could hurt in an arranged marriage with a beautiful son of a minister? Her good fortune seemed abundant, anyway.

Before she could stop herself, Lu Bu stood up in appreciation to Wang Yun. "For that, I would be bound to you in loyalty."¹³

Lu Bu's glance clung to Diaochan, who reciprocated with his own gaze. Lu Bu's heart shook violently within him -- it had been so long since she had received a gaze like Diaochan's...

Returning to her palace quarters, Lu Bu could not help but keep thinking about Diaochan's peachy-white hands and his curls as dark as the night sky. For the first time in her life, she looked with disgust at her room, decorated with gold and jade, colored silks, and rare pearls. Even Wang Yun's gold headpiece appeared to grow dull as she thought about Diaochan's heavenly beauty. Though she could not create an apt comparison for Diaochan's loveliness, she could not help but see Diaochan's face as a bright moon in an ebony sky.

"Those black brows caused the rover's heart to ache,
Those looks have pierced the souls of all who sued.

...

No elmseed coin could buy those golden smiles;
No gem or jewel need gild his willow waist."¹⁴

Lu Bu smiled to herself -- how deeply she had fallen for Diaochan! This had never been the case before; she had always been the one to play with men's hearts.

Little did she know that Wang Yun would offer Diaochan to Dong Zhuo -- her adoptive father -- as a kept man only a few days later.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ From Luo Guanzhong's *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, pg. 65.

ACT THREE

A few days later, Lu Bu was given a message from one of her maidservants. She had requested that she watch over the Wang Yun house -- and particularly, Diaochan -- and report to her anything out of the ordinary. She imagined that Diaochan would need something - she would hear of it - and then provide the desired trinket. Though she was busy with court affairs, she could not help but think constantly of ways to woo Diaochan amidst her work.

To her chagrin, her maidservant revealed that her own adoptive father -- the fat, ugly Dong Zhuo -- had been promised Diaochan as a kept man. She had known that Dong Zhuo indiscriminately pursued both men and women; to him, all sex was power. She had heard horrible stories of Dong subjugating men -- stripping away their manhood -- and making them feel like women. Lu Bu vomited just thinking about the disgusting pig violating Diaochan.

Lu Bu got up -- now desperate to visit Wang Yun and demand an explanation.

Approaching Wang Yun's home and seeing Wang taking a walk outside, Lu Bu's anger rose within her. How dare he stroll leisurely when his son was about to be abused?

She grabbed a hold of Wang Yun's robe. "You promised Diaochan to me," she snarled. "Now you give him to the imperial preceptor. What kind of game are you trying to play?"¹⁵

Wang Yun paled and pulled back. "This is not the place to talk," he responded. "Come to my house. Please." Lu Bu accompanied Wang Yun home.

The moment they entered Wang Yun's private chambers, Lu Bu hissed, "It was reported to me that you delivered Diaochan to the prime minister's residence in a felt-lined closed carriage. What is the meaning of this!"¹⁶

Wang Yun explained, "Dong Zhuo said that he wanted to confirm and approve Diaochan as a suitable husband for you. I led him out to pay his respects to his future father-in-law, but Dong Zhuo decided to take Diaochan home with him! I had no idea any of this would happen."

Lu Bu's anger swelled within her. She left Wang Yun in a hurry -- desperate to reach Dong Zhuo's quarters. She stole close to the outside of Dong Zhuo's bedroom and peered in -- craning her neck to see Diaochan.

¹⁵ Ibid., 66.

¹⁶ From Luo Guanzhong's *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, pg. 66.

Diaochan, who was combing his hair by the window, saw a reflection in the pool outside -- that of a woman with a golden headpiece and her hair in a high knot. Assuming it was Lu Bu, he puckered his brows, feigning sorrow and dabbing at his eyes with a filmy scarf. Lu Bu observed him a good while before moving away. Moments later she entered the main hall where Dong Zhuo was seated.¹⁷

Dong Zhuo's fat folds around his eyes puckered as he saw Lu Bu enter the room. Lu Bu, his adoptive daughter, had been a pleasant addition to his court -- she reminded him quite a bit of himself. Dong Zhuo smiled, baring his tea-stained teeth.

"Lu Bu, is everything all right?"

"No problems," Lu Bu answered. She glanced around, spotting Diaochan's figure behind a damask curtain, peeking out now and then and letting a corner of his face show. His eyes bespoke his affection. Lu Bu knew her to be Diaochan, and the soul within her fluttered. Dong Zhuo noticed Lu Bu's distraction, and, pricked by jealousy and suspicion, said, "If there is nothing else, you may go."¹⁸

Lu Bu left, her heart heavy within her.

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That night, Lu Bu decided to visit Diaochan in violation of all court protocol. After all, she reasoned, Diaochan had been hers first.

Only moments after Dong Zhuo dismissed her from his presence, Diaochan had approached her and said, "Wait for me in the back garden by the Phoenix Pavilion." He had given her hand a gentle press -- and smiled as he turned away. Lu Bu's heart had crumbled within her.

She had never experienced a man leading her before; in every single one of her previous relationships, men had been stupid, senseless brutes that needed to be tamed. And she had liked it that way. But here, with Diaochan -- a polished gentleman with a soft voice and even softer hands -- she felt herself desire to be tamed. Could Diaochan quell the fire within her?

¹⁷ Ibid., 67.

¹⁸ Ibid.

That night, in the back garden by the Phoenix Pavilion, Lu Bu went where she was told and stood by the curved railing that surrounded the little belvedere. After a long while she saw him coming, a celestial being from the Palace on the Moon.¹⁹

Diaochan grasped Lu Bu's hand. "The moment I saw you, my lifelong prayers were answered. I can't believe that the preceptor's conscience could permit him to stain my purity, so that I now despair of life itself. I have borne my shame and prolonged my worthless existence only for the chance to say good-bye to you. Our fortunate meeting today answers my wish. But never again, disgraced as I am now, could I serve a woman such as you. I shall die before your eyes to show my earnest heart."²⁰

Diaochan let go of Lu Bu's hand and began to fall into the lotus pool.

Lu Bu, now weeping, grabbed the back of Diaochan's robes. She had never felt so helpless like this before -- and all for a single man.

Through her tears, she said, "I have long known your real feelings, but alas, we could never speak."²¹

Diaochan smiled softly, his eyes brimming with tears. "Since I can never be your husband in this world," he said, "I want to arrange to meet you in the next."²²

Lu Bu's heart dropped. "If I cannot have you as my husband in this world, then what is there to live for? But now, I must go back to the 'old villain' Dong Zhuo. He may suspect something if he sees both of us missing."

Diaochan's smile faded. "Oh, Lu Bu. Even in the seclusion of my boudoir your name resounded like thunder. I thought you the foremost woman of the age and never imagined another could subjugate you."²³

Lu Bu's face flushed. She was embarrassed by Diaochan's disappointment. "Diaochan," she pleaded. "What then can I do?"

¹⁹ From Luo Guanzhong's *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, pg. 66.

²⁰ Ibid., 67.

²¹ Ibid., 68.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

Diaochan turned away slightly. "Only death can bring us together." As he turned, he smiled slightly -- his father's plan was finally bearing fruit.

Oblivious to Diaochan's duplicity, Lu Bu nodded to herself, as if falling into hypnosis. "Yes," she repeated. "Only death."

A C T F O U R

For the next several days, Diaochan's words festered in Lu Bu's mind. Though her conviction to kill Dong Zhuo had been emboldened during the midnight meeting with Diaochan, Lu Bu now felt unsure.

To kill her newly adoptive father? History would brand him as an unfilial daughter.²⁴ The one who provided her stability and material success? Even if she killed Dong Zhuo, where would she go? Would she become an orphan -- stripped of community and wealth -- once more?

Amidst her inner turmoil, however, Wang Yun suddenly paid her a visit in her palace quarters.

After they had exchanged greetings, Wang Yun said, "A slight indisposition has kept me indoors the past few days -- that's why we haven't seen each other-- but I felt I had to get myself out to see you. Diaochan has written to me about Dong Zhou's abuse. The preceptor has violated my son -- your husband! We stand shamed and mocked before the world. *He* is not mocked -- only you and I. I am nothing but a useless old man, and I suppose I will have to swallow the insult. What a pity, though, for you, Lu Bu -- for a highly woman, head and shoulders above them all, to suffer such disgrace!"²⁵

Lu Bu's anger could have lifted her to the heavens. So the rumors about Dong Zhuo's disgusting behavior was true! She had given him the benefit of the doubt. But now, it was certain. Dong Zhuo had crossed the river in terms of betrayal -- after all, he had known that Diaochan was promised to her as her husband.

As if Wang Yun could read her mind, he said, "You are a Lu. He is a Dong. Where was his fatherly feeling when he stole your husband away from you?"

²⁴ From Luo Guanzhong's *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, pg. 71.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

Lu Bu's temper flared again. "Thank you for reminding me of my conviction," she seethed. She quickly left her quarters -- her eyes scouring the palace for Dong Zhuo. He would die -- it was heaven's judgment.

A C T F I V E

Burning with newfound rage, Lu Bu ran across the garden, her flowery robes trailing behind her. In her hand, she grasped a glinting dagger.

Across the way, Dong Zhuo's carriage was standing still -- and she could make out Dong's pudgy head behind the carriage's silk curtains.

It was time to punish the wicked, immoral squab.

Lu Bu stepped onto the carriage, her eyes meeting Dong Zhuo's. Dong gave her a faint grin -- his hands about to grasp hers. She pulled back in disgust -- and immediately plunged her dagger into Dong Zhuo's throat. Blood spurted out in a putrid mist -- his endless folds of fat had clearly been an immense pressure on his veins. Lu Bu covered her mouth with her clean hand -- not only to protect herself from the unsightly spew but also in shock.

For Dong --

"Success would have placed him on the throne itself;
Failing that, he meant to have an easy life of wealth.
What he forgot is that gods ordain a path so strict:
His palace newly done, his enterprise wrecked."²⁶

Lu Bu had murdered Dong Zhuo -- her adoptive father, her source of stability and wealth. But immediately, regret faded as she remembered Diaochan's petal-like cheeks and hands. He was now hers -- only hers.

As the palace guards began to flood the premises after hearing Dong Zhou's high-pitched squeals, Lu Bu made a getaway to her palace chamber, where Diaochan awaited. Diaochan rose slowly -- seeing the blood on Lu Bu's dagger and her flowered robe -- and realized it was over.

²⁶ From Luo Guanzhong's *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, pg. 73.

Lu Bu grabbed Diaochan -- who was slowly slinking away from her. "Diaochan, we need to leave now! The palace guards are about to come. We cannot take anything with us -- we don't have time! But I need you to come with me."

Diaochan slowly pulled herself away from Lu Bu's grasp. Lu Bu's eyes widened as she saw Diaochan's beautiful face contort into a demented grin. "I will not go with you, Lu Bu," Diaochan snarled. "You are one and the same with that pig, Dong Zhuo."

Lu Bu turned a deep red and her legs began to shake violently underneath her. What was happening? She looked again into Diaochan's face -- and saw the evil glint in his eyes.

Lu Bu stumbled back. She had given up everything -- her adoptive family, wealth, status, success -- for this boy who had reminded her of moonlight. But now, she knew it had all been a midsummer's night dream -- a fantasy that could never come to pass.

As Lu Bu burst out her chambers with tears spilling down her face, she realized that the beautiful moonlight had faded into the night -- never to be seen again.

E N D.