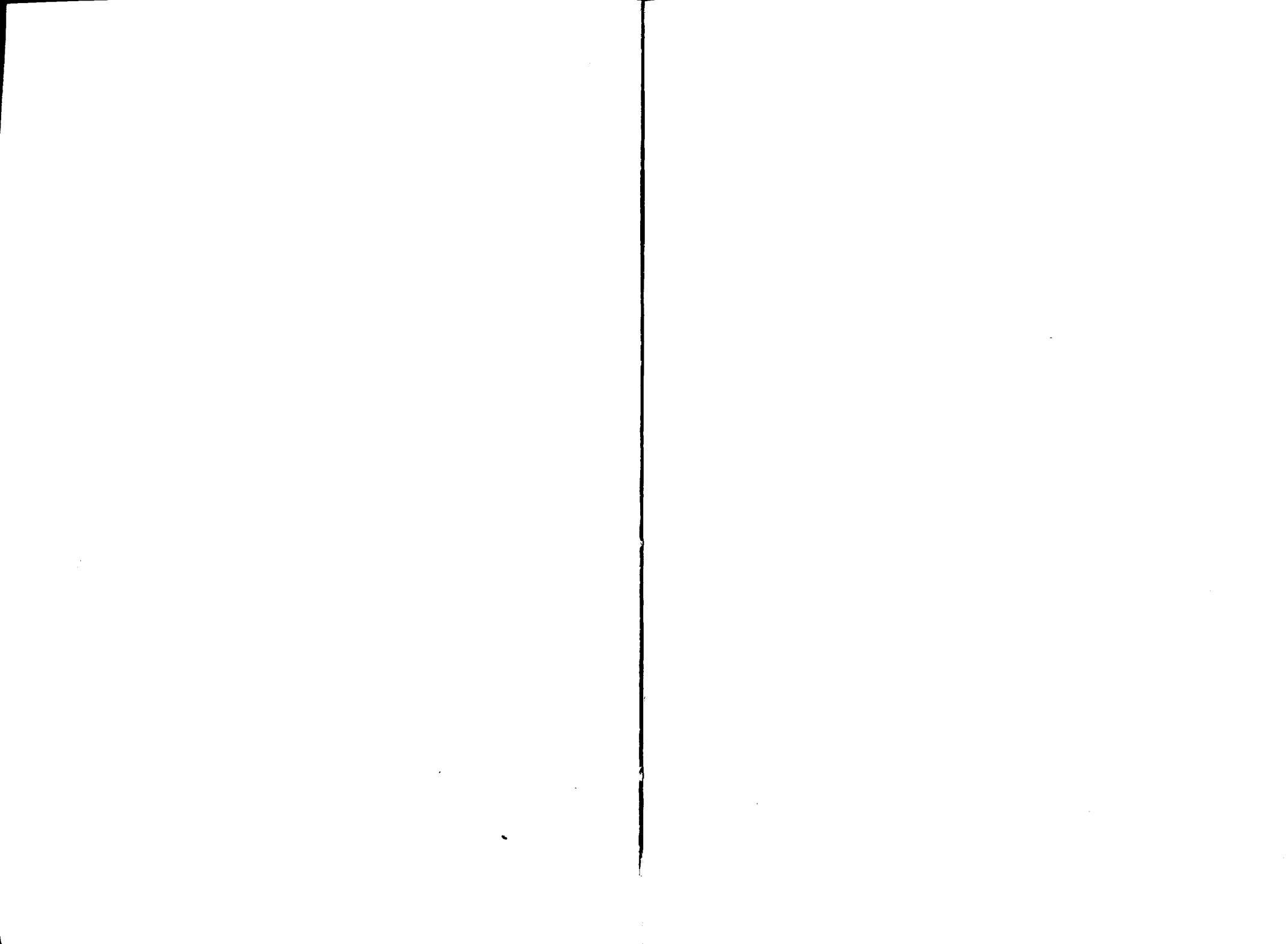




A REVOLUTIONARY OPERA

# *Tell O Forest!*



*LIBRETTO*

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***Tell O Forest!***

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## CHARACTERS

**Choe Byong Hun:** A political worker of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army and "village head"

**Bok Sun:** Choe Byong Hun's daughter

**Song Myong Sik:** Choe Byong Hun's relation by marriage; a peasant

**Yong Ho:** Song Myong Sik's son, Bok Sun's fiance. Later a soldier of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army

**Mrs. Li:** Song Myong Sik's wife

**Comrade Pak:** A commanding officer of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army

**Korean People's Revolutionary Army men and women**

**Village young man 1**

**Women 1 and 2**

**Girls 1, 2 and 3**

**Villagers**

**Pyo:** A special agent for the enemy

**Yong Tak:** Pyo's spy

**Garrison commander**

**"Punitive force" commander**

**The Japanese chief of staff and soldiers**

## PRELUDE

**Time:** A winter day in the mid-1930's.

**Place:** A mountain village on the northern border.

**Stage:** There is a dense forest of pine trees and larches covered with snow. Rugged mountain ranges stretch out in the distance. On one side of the stage we see a thousand-year-old pine tree and a big rock.

The curtain rises as the overture is played.

A blizzard is raging in all its fury over the forest.

Japanese soldiers drag people out of the village.

Among them are Bok Sun and Song Myong Sik's family.

Choe Byong Hun, the garrison commander and Pyo come out of the village at the foot of the mountain. They are all tipsy.

*Pangchang:*

Oh, snowstorm, snowstorm,

The forest is swaying.

**Pyo:** Now the garrison commander will make a speech.

**Garrison commander:** Choe Byong Hun is appointed as head of this village today. (To the villagers) You must follow his example and devote yourselves to the Empire of Japan.

The garrison commander, Pyo and Japanese soldiers exit.

The villagers are surprised.

**Myong Sik:** What's the matter with you, my in-law? You said you'd have them married in a few days, didn't you?

**Byong Hun:** In order to make Bok Sun and (Touching Yong Ho's shoulder) your son happy, I wouldn't hesitate to become a village head.

**Myong Sik:** What?!

Song Myong Sik goes out infuriated.  
The villagers curse him and go out.  
Mrs. Li and Yong Ho are also indignant. They exit.  
Bok Sun who is sobbing without attracting the villagers' attention approaches her father.

**Bok Sun:**

Why did you do it, my beloved father?  
You are going to be a village head!  
I never dreamed of such a thing.  
Father, is this the only road  
You can take,  
After having been robbed of  
Country and mother by the Japanese?

*Pangchang:*

Father darling,  
Why did you become a village head?

Byong Hun does not answer his daughter.  
Bok Sun, too, runs away, angry with her father.  
The snowstorm rages furiously and the forest is swaying.  
Byong Hun is standing alone, staring at the swaying forest in the raging snowstorm. To whom can he reveal his secret?

**Byong Hun:**

To whom can I reveal my secret  
Which I cannot even tell to my daughter?  
I'll keep the pledge of secrecy to the organization,  
This is more important than my own life.

*Pangchang:*

Tell o swaying forest!  
You know well what is in my mind.

Now the title is projected on the screen:

*A Revolutionary Opera*

**TELL O FOREST !**

As the stage darkens, the sound and fury of the snowstorm increase and the vast expanse of the forest is seen swaying.

## ACT I

### SCENE 1

**Time:** Toward the evening of a spring day the following year.

**Place:** On the outskirts of the village where Choe Byong Hun lives.

**Stage:** We can see the barracks of the Japanese garrison being built beyond the slope. Yonder, by the winding road along the river, batteries are also seen. Spring has come, but it is a spring stifled and crushed by the Japanese. A solitary azalea bush on the roadside is in full bloom.

*The curtain rises as pangchang is sung.*

The people herded out by the Japanese blackguards to build their barracks are carrying logs in a long queue.

Deprived of their country, the Korean people are undergoing bitter national suffering everywhere under the Japanese bayonets.

*Pangchang:*

Spring has come to our usurped homeland  
But the flowers shed bitter tears.  
The field is overgrown with weeds  
And a hard day is giving way to night.  
The sky is filled with the sadness of a people without a country,  
And their voices of resentment are heard across the land.

The garrison commander and Japanese soldiers come out with Pyo, the special agent, from the construction site.

**Garrison commander:** Hey, Communists may be operating here, too...

**Pyo:** Yes, sir.

Choe Byong Hun appears.

**Garrison commander:** Village Head Choe!

The punitive force will be here in the village soon.  
Mobilize all your people before dawn.  
Build barracks and a warehouse.  
And repair the road, too.  
Have everything ready.

**Byong Hun:** Yes, sir.

The garrison commander, Pyo and the Japanese soldiers exit. Song Myong Sik and other villagers are brought by the Japanese to the construction site.

**Byong Hun:**

Why are you loafing about?  
The punitive force will be here soon.  
You can't go home tonight.  
You must work all through the night and finish it by morning.

**Men:**

What do you mean: "We must work all through the night?"

**Women:**

When are we supposed to do the spring sowing?

**Villagers:**

We toil at the construction site throughout the day  
And farm throughout the night.  
You don't realize our position.

**Byong Hun:**

Certainly I realize it.  
But don't protest against what the garrison is doing.  
Or you'll all be thrown into the garrison jail  
And there end your days.

Byong Hun urges the villagers to start working right away.

**Myong Sik:**

I cannot tolerate the dirty running dog of the Japanese foe,  
Who wags his tail before his masters.  
How did I become his relative?  
What misfortune!  
What shame!  
What an awful mess I'm in!

Byong Hun exits.

**Myong Sik:** Now listen, wife. I think we must break off our son's engagement.

**Mrs. Li:**

Although her father is village head  
Bok Sun is really a nice girl.  
Let's ask our son again  
What he thinks about the situation.

**Women:**

He is the worst Japanese lackey  
Although his daughter is innocent.

If you become his relative

We'll have nothing to do with you either.

If you become his relative

We'll have nothing to do with you either.

Bok Sun appears.

**Woman 1:** Why, has the Dog's daughter come to work too?

**Woman 2:** Do you come to watch us like your father?

The villagers exit throwing looks full of hate at Bok Sun.

**Myong Sik:** Yong Ho, let's go.

Yong Ho is standing heartbroken and his father takes him away.  
Bok Sun is left all alone.  
Bok Sun is spotlighted as the stage darkens.  
The stage grows light as *pangchang* is sung. Bok Sun feels forlorn,  
looking at a solitary azalea under the slope.

**Pangchang:**

I'm as miserable as a lone azalea  
Mercilessly trodden underfoot and pitifully broken.  
Who would understand how desolate I am?  
I feel bitter against father who's become village head.

**Bok Sun:**

Close friends have deserted me.  
Kindhearted neighbours refuse to acknowledge me.  
Who would understand how desolate I am?  
I feel bitter against father who's become village head.

Yong Ho appears again.

**Yong Ho:** What are you thinking, Bok Sun?

Everybody distrusts you, Bok Sun,  
But still I want to trust you.  
I'll never forget our pledge  
That we'd love each other  
To the end of our days.

**Bok Sun:**

How I remember our true pledge!  
But I'm the daughter of a sinful father.  
I'm as faithful as ever  
But how can we enjoy spring on the same road?

Young people and other villagers dash in.

**Young man 1:**

I've good news for you,  
News from our guerrillas.

**Youths:**

Our guerrillas led by the General  
Attacked the garrison in Pukchon village last night.

**All of them:**

And they destroyed the Japanese battery, too.

**Women:**

Good news! Good news!  
News of the guerrillas has come.

**Yong Ho & other youths:**

Let's follow the guerrillas' example  
And set fire to the Japanese barracks.

**All of them:**

Let's go and fight!  
Let's strike the enemy a telling blow!

Amid music the youths begin whispering.  
Yong Tak, the spy, appears.

**Yong Ho:** (To some of the youths) Let's meet at my house tonight.

**Yong Tak:** If they get to know our plan, all is finished.

**Youths:** Don't worry.

Byong Hun happens to hear them and comes down the slope,  
shouting.

**Byong Hun:** (To the youth) What the hell are you doing here?

Hurry up and get to work. (To Myong Sik) Say, my in-law. Those young folks are so reckless. You should take care of them.

**Myong Sik:** What do you mean by calling me your in-law? I'm no in-law of a Japanese dog.

He spits in Byong Hun's face.  
The villagers curse Byong Hun and go out.  
Bok Sun bursts out into tears of sorrow.  
Byong Hun wipes off the spittle, grieved.  
Bok Sun approaches her father.

**Bok Sun:**

I cannot bear to see my father  
Rejected and humiliated by his friends.  
Father, please give up working as village head.  
Neither silk nor white rice do I want.

**Pangchang:**

Can't you see the tears in my eyes?  
Don't you understand my sorrow?  
Father, please give up working as village head.  
Neither silk nor white rice do I want.

Bok Sun entreats her father and runs out, sobbing.

**Byong Hun:**

Alone behind enemy lines far from my comrades-  
in-arms  
I'm hated by my daughter and neighbours as well.  
I'll endure any sorrow and suffering  
While single-heartedly performing my revolutionary  
task.

**Pangchang:**

I'll endure any sorrow and suffering  
While single-heartedly performing my revolutionary  
task.

Byong Hun is going down but hides himself when he sees Pyo  
and Yong Tak.

**Yong Tak:** Mr. Pyo, the young fellows here are going to set  
fire to the garrison barracks tonight.

**Pyo:** What? Going to set fire? Fine! I have been unable to spot  
the Communists.

Pyo and Yong Tak whisper to each other.

**Pangchang:**

Vicious enemies are hatching a plot.  
You are the dirty lackeys of the Japanese.  
You traitors to the nation  
Are more evil and hateful than vipers.

Pyo hands a bundle of paper money to Yong Tak.

**Pyo:**

Now is the time, now is the time  
To devote our all to the Empire.

**Yong Tak:**

On their way to set fire to the barracks

**Pyo:**

We'll trap all the intruders in ambush.

**Duet:**

Now is the time to make our mark and win distinc-  
tion.

Why not? Let's do some good for ourselves and  
win promotion.

Yong Tak exits.

The garrison commander appears accompanied by Japanese military  
police.

Choe Byong Hun comes out of his hiding place.

**Pyo:** Garrison commander, the worst possible is happening.  
I've been informed that a number of young people  
intend to set fire to the garrison barracks tonight.

**Garrison commander:** What? Going to start a fire?

**Byong Hun:** I, too, have seen their plan. So I'm watching them  
closely.

**Pyo:** What should we do, commander?

**Garrison commander:** (After a few moments of thought) You must  
arrest all the rioters tonight. Post garrison troops  
around the barracks. (To Byong Hun and Pyo) And you  
keep watch for the young scoundrels.

**Pyo:** I understand, sir.

All exit following the garrison commander.

Dark clouds gather in the sky.

A bleak wind starts to blow.

Byong Hun remains alone, wondering how to save his village  
from the impending disaster.

**Byong Hun:**

The bleak evening wind is rising in the woods,  
Gloomy clouds cover the sky.

What shall I do to save  
Our young villagers from the enemy's bayonets?

Byong Hun is wrapped in deep thought.

The stage darkens.

## S C E N E 2

**Time:** That same night.

**Place:** Choe Byong Hun's house.

**Stage:** On one side of the stage there is a log cabin. On the other side stand a zelkova tree and a pear tree which is in full bloom. The garrison barracks and batteries are seen in the distance.

As the stage grows light, Bok Sun is seen beating rice in a mortar.  
An owl is heard.

**Bok Sun:**

Oh, owl, you too are crying alone.  
Stop crying or you'll make me cry too.  
I miss mother's love so much.  
I miss the hope of days gone by.

**Pangchang:**

Pitifully the lonely girl is crying late into the night,  
Scorned by the people who were once kind to her.

Bok Sun enters the kitchen.

Yong Ho comes out with the village youths.

**Young man 1:** I have obtained some explosives and kerosene.  
But how can we take them into the garrison compound?

The gate-guards are searching people thoroughly tonight.

**Yong Ho:** I have an idea! Why not ask Bok Sun to do the job?

She goes there every night to serve her father's meal.

**Young man 1:** You mean the Dog's daughter? No.

**Yong Ho:** Leave it to me, and let's meet at the time arranged.

The youths go out.

Bok Sun comes out of the kitchen to remove the mortar.

Yong Ho hides the explosives and tries to help her work.

**Bok Sun:** Go, go! Why did you come to the Dog's house? Please go!

Bok Sun cries.

Yong Ho helps her to remove the mortar.

**Bok Sun:** What if your father sees you?

**Yong Ho:** Oh, don't worry. Bok Sun, my dear, we are going to destroy the Japanese barracks tonight. No one but you can smuggle these explosives and kerosene into the compound. You can pretend you are carrying your father's evening meal. Please do so before cocks crow.

**Yong Ho:**

If you remember our promise,  
You can't refuse my request.

**Bok Sun:**

Thankful as I am for your trust,  
How dare I join you in the job?

Yong Ho hands the explosives to Bok Sun.

Byong Hun sees the scene on his arriving home.

**Bok Sun:**

**Your trust warms my heart  
When the world has forsaken me.**

**Duet:**

**We shall not follow the father,  
We will live with one mind.**

Yong Ho goes out.

Bok Sun puts the explosives in the basket and sets out, but Byong Hun stands in her way.

**Byong Hun:** Where are you going?

**Bok Sun:** I was going to take in your evening meal.

**Byong Hun:** Evening meal? Oh, I'll eat it at home. Give it to me. Come on.

Bok Sun hesitates.

Byong Hun grabs the basket of explosives from his daughter.

Bok Sun retrieves the basket from her father and runs away.

Byong Hun pursues her and takes the basket from her and goes behind the house.

Bok Sun rises to her feet and dashes up to her father but he has already poured out the kerosene.

*Pangchang:*

**Oh, how tragic! My father is so cold  
And does not understand his daughter.  
The whole village has entrusted me with an important task.  
But you are so indifferent to me.**

Byong Hun appears from behind the house.

*Pangchang:*

**How tragic! I feel such anguish, lovely daughter!  
You'll never read your father's mind.**

**You'll never know your father's intention  
To rescue our young men.**

Byong Hun goes out.

Bok Sun weeps bitterly.

The first crow of a cock is heard.

*Pangchang:*

**Oh, cocks are crowing, cocks are crowing.  
My heart's torn to shreds.  
How can I live on in this world?**

Yong Ho rushes in.

**Yong Ho:** Bok Sun. How did it go? You've kept me waiting for such a long time.

**Bok Sun:** My father took the powder...

**Yong Ho:** What?!

**In truth, I never realized you were such a girl.  
I never expected you to do such a terrible thing.  
How could you break your solemn promise?  
How could you betray our trust?**

Yong Ho is going out, when his friends rush in.

**Young man 1:** Yong Ho, what's happened?

Yong Ho does not answer and lowers his head.

Bok Sun is crying in a corner of the yard.

**Young man 1:** I told you so! We should never have trusted the daughter of the Dog. What a fine job you've done! Well, let's go.

Young man 1 takes his friends away.

Yong Ho also goes out, reproaching Bok Sun.

Bok Sun cries more bitterly as Yong Ho leaves.  
Seeing her father coming back, Bok Sun runs out.  
Byong Hun stands alone in meditation, looking in the direction  
where his daughter has disappeared.

*Pangchang:*

Unable to see into her father's mind,  
The daughter sheds bitter tears.  
How can the needed supplies be sent  
To the guerrillas tomorrow?

The stage darkens.

## A C T II

**Time:** In the morning of the May Festival.

**Place:** On the shore of Flower Lake.

**Stage:** The waters of Flower Lake are crystal clear and flowers  
are in full bloom on its edges. Luxuriant azaleas are  
seen growing even on the rocks.

As the stage grows lighter amid *pangchang*, Bok Sun appears,  
deep in thought.

Morning mist floats heavily in the air.

Birds are chirping, not caring her great sorrow.

*Pangchang:*

On the clear lake with bright azaleas all around  
Rippling waves dance like flowers.  
Why has she come to this beautiful Flower  
Lake at this hour?

The flowery ripples are covering the pond  
But her heart is plunged into deep sorrow.  
Mountains and rivers are breathtakingly beautiful  
But tears are streaming down her cheeks.

Shedding tears and in deep meditation, Bok Sun drags herself  
along the shore of Flower Lake. The merry song of the village  
girls reaches her ears.

The villagers and girls come out, carrying supplies to be sent  
to the KPRA.

One of the girls takes Bok Sun's hand and invites her to join  
them in dancing, but another girl pushes her away because she  
is the Dog's daughter.

Forsaken by her friends, Bok Sun goes out, sobbing.  
The girls start singing and dancing.

**Song & dance:**

The flower-scented breezes on May Festival blow  
Spreading their fragrance over the ripples blue.  
Let's all go to beautiful Flower Lake  
To offer our aid to our soldiers.

Pink azaleas have blossomed on the lake-side —  
A token of our loyal devotion.  
To hasten national liberation  
Let's send rice to the Revolutionary Army.

To hasten national liberation  
Let's send rice to the Revolutionary Army.

Pyo comes in, peering around with an arrogant air.  
Byong Hun appears and leads him out.  
The girls make fun of Pyo and Byong Hun.  
They resume their song and dance.

**Song & dance:**

Over the flower-scented waves a boat is sailing,  
A boat carrying our devotion to our soldiers.  
Please tell the Revolutionary Army  
That we are longing for the day of victory.

When the song and dance are over, the girls go out.

Girl 1: Look, here she comes again, the Dog's daughter.

Girl 2: Our great plan failed because of her.

Girl 3: That's why they call her the Dog's daughter.

Girls: Let's go, girls!

The girls exit, deriding Bok Sun.  
Bok Sun is so unhappy that she bursts into tears.  
She is now resolved to drown herself in Flower Lake.

**Bok Sun:**

Waves of flower, tell me where I shall go.  
No one answers in this spacious heaven and earth.  
I'd rather drown myself in the Lake of Flower  
And follow my dear mother.

*Pangchang:*

If only you gave up the job of village head,  
I could allay my torment after my death.

Bok Sun takes off her shoes and climbs up on the rock in order  
to throw herself into Flower Lake.

Byong Hun comes out, and, seeing his daughter, dashes up to  
her, blocks her way and pushes her back.

Bok Sun stamps her feet desperately, tries to escape from her  
father and plunge into the water.

Byong Hun is so heartbroken that he strikes his daughter.

Bok Sun collapses and cries her heart out, beating the ground  
with her hands.

**Bok Sun: Mother!**

Hearing her tearful voice, Byong Hun strikes his breast.  
Byong Hun soothes her and helps her to rise to her feet.

*Pangchang:*

Father, don't stop me throwing myself into Flower  
Lake  
And repent of the crime you are committing.  
Mother is gone,  
And father no longer loves this solitary daughter!

**Bok Sun:**

What's the use of living in this resentful world?  
Don't call me your daughter any longer.

Bok Sun entreats her father to give up the post of village head,  
but he keeps silent.  
Bok Sun runs out.

Byong Hun stands, gazing in the direction where his daughter has gone.

**Byong Hun:**

Should I reveal my secret  
Only to my daughter beloved?

*Pangchang:*

How can I break my solemn pledge to the revolution  
Because of sympathy and chagrin?

**Byong Hun & Pangchang:**

How can I reveal to my daughter or neighbours  
The organization's secrets more important than my life?

Byong Hun restrains his tears and reaffirms his revolutionary pledge.

The stage darkens.

### A C T III

**Time:** The same night.

**Place:** In front of the new Japanese garrison barracks on the outskirts of the village.

**Stage:** The new Japanese barracks loom gloomily beyond the slope against the nocturnal sky.

As the stage gets light, Yong Ho and other young villagers appear and look at the barracks.

*Pangchang:*

The mere sight of the Japanese barracks  
Rouses our gorge and makes our blood boil.  
How to deal with the lair of the enemy?  
Can't we find a way to destroy it at one stroke?  
How can we burn down the barracks,  
In face of the enemy's secure guard?

Byong Hun comes out from the direction of the garrison barracks and sees the young people searching for a chance to start a fire. Byong Hun sings pretending to be drunk. The young people conceal themselves.

**Byong Hun:**

Everyone's gone to welcome the "punitive force".  
They're drinking their fill.  
And here I am  
And the barracks' guard, feeling lonely and cheerless.  
*Ninani, Nanni, Nilliriyo.*  
*Ninani, Nanni, Nilliriyo.*

**Let's wait. Tomorrow evening  
When the "punitive force" is here,  
I'll treat the guard to a flagon of liquor.  
Ninani, Nanni, Nilliriyo.  
Ninani, Nanni, Nilliriyo.**

Byong Hun looks round and goes out, pretending not to see them. From Byong Hun's hint, the youths come to realize that the barracks are vacant now.

**Young man 1:** The Dog's words have been always poppycock, but tonight his drunken frolic is worth hearing.

**Yong Ho:** So there is only one sentry tonight. It's the best chance to set fire to it. After it's over let's meet at the rendezvous and leave for the Revolutionary Army. Come on!

The young people dash forward in the direction of the garrison barracks.

Soon afterwards, there is the roar of the Japanese barracks exploding. Pillars of flames shoot up.

Byong Hun comes out to look at the scene with satisfaction. He makes an exit.

As the emergency sirens wail, the Japanese soldiers rush around in confusion.

Song Myong Sik and his wife and other villagers are herded out by the armed Japanese soldiers.

*Pangchang:*

**How many years have passed since Japanese bandits  
planted their dirty feet  
On our beautiful land of 3,000 ri?  
The river flows with mournful cries.  
The silent mountain yonder towers with wrath.  
Ah, the sorrow of a homeless people  
Fills heaven and earth.**

The stage darkens, and when it grows light, the blue water of the river is seen rushing down.

The frenzied Japanese make the villagers line up on the bank of the river to shoot them down.

The people fight staunchly despite the Japanese bayonets.

**Chorus:**

**We'll never surrender to you blackguards,  
But fight on even if we die a thousand deaths.  
The beacon of liberation held aloft on Mt. Paekdu-san  
Leads us to triumph.**

**Chorus & Pangchang:**

**The beacon of liberation held aloft on Mt. Paekdu-san  
Inspires us with hope.**

**Garrison commander:** Very well. Who set fire to the barracks?  
Tell the truth, or you'll all be shot.

The villagers are silent.

**Garrison commander:** Machine gunner! Prepare to fire!

The machine gunner opens the percussion lock and the Japanese soldiers get their rifles ready to fire.

**Byong Hun:** Wait. I'll point him out!

Byong Hun dashes forward shouting.

The garrison commander gives the order to hold their fire.

Byong Hun pulls Song Myong Sik out of the crowd and slaps him in the face.

**Byong Hun:** This man is surely the offender. His son ran away last night. He had promised to marry his son to my daughter. But he broke his promise when I became village head.

**Myong Sik:** You contemptible mongrel of the Japanese blackguards!

There is a stir among the villagers cursing the village head.

**Garrison commander:** Answer, did your son run away?

**Myong Sik:** Certainly, he did.

**Garrison commander:** Did your son set fire to the barracks?

**Myong Sik:** I don't know.

**Garrison commander:** What?

**Byong Hun:** You mean you don't know? You bastard.

Having found Yong Tak, Byong Hun runs up to him and pulls him out, seizing him by the neck.

**Byong Hun:** This fellow here also went with Yong Ho to start the fire yesterday.

**Yong Tak:** No, I didn't. I...

**Byong Hun:** Don't feign ignorance. I saw you with my own eyes. Now you try to deny it, son of a bitch.

**Yong Tak:** Mr. Pyo... Mr. Pyo...

Byong Hun strikes Yong Tak in the face.

**Yong Tak:** Yong Ho set fire to the barracks, then ran away.

The villagers are enraged.

**Byong Hun:** See? Interrogate only these two fellows, and you'll find out all the secrets of the communist organization in our village. (Pointing to the people) But, if you kill all of these people here, you'll end up with a shortage of labour and won't be able to re-build the barracks.

**Garrison commander:** Now, listen! Arrest these two and send the others to the construction site.

Song Myong Sik and Yong Tak are marched off by the Japanese soldiers.

Byong Hun forces the villagers to go to the construction site. The village elders run up to Byong Hun and curse him.

**Elder 1:** You Japanese dog!

**Elder 2:** You traitor! Aren't you afraid of Heaven? (Gives Byong Hun a violent slap in the face.)

An old woman thrusts her stick at Byong Hun.

Cursed and denounced by all the villagers, Byong Hun stands, head dropped.

The Japanese soldiers drag out the old people.

There is a flash of lightning and a roar of thunder in the sky. It pours down.

All alone on the stage, Byong Hun strikes his breast with clenched fists and cries bitterly.

*Pangchang:*

The man beats his breast in sorrow,

The grief of national ruin pains him to the marrow.

**Byong Hun:**

I can't bear to see the misery of my villagers,  
Though I can endure any personal insult.

When will the spring of national liberation come?  
I long for the day when I'll be embraced by the General.

*Pangchang:*

Tell o swaying forest,

When shall I be embraced by the General?

Byong Hun is standing in the storm, looking at the chain of mountains stretching far away.

The stage darkens.

## ACT IV

### SCENE 1

**Time:** Some time later.

**Place:** In the mountain not far from the village.

**Stage:** There are a few larch trees in a small valley. Rugged mountains are seen in the distance.

As it grows light, Byong Hun is coming down from backstage, rounding the hill.

Then he strikes a tree.

There is a reply signal soon afterwards.

Yong Ho in plain clothes and Comrade Pak, a KPRA officer, appear.

**Yong Ho:** Father!

**Byong Hun:** Why, you are Yong Ho!

**Comrade Pak:** Comrade Choe!

The three are overjoyed.

*Pangchang:*

They are happier to see revolutionary comrades  
Than to see kinsmen.

Nothing gives them greater joy

Than to greet each other on the road of revolution.

**Byong Hun:** Is the General well?

**Comrade Pak:** Yes, he is. He greatly appreciates your distinguished service in the enemy area despite all hardships.

Byong Hun is deeply touched.

Comrade Pak produces a watch and hands it to Byong Hun.

**Comrade Pak:** The General asked me to give you this watch.

Byong Hun receives it.

**Byong Hun:** General!

Though surrounded by the enemies,

I am always beside the General in my thoughts.

Despite all trials I fight on

Inspired by his deep kindness and trust.

Byong Hun reverently puts the priceless gift from the General into his bosom.

*Pangchang:*

The General is always concerned

For the revolutionary comrades

Fighting behind enemy lines.

In his warm heart and love

Soldiers are filled with hope wherever they may be.

**Trio:**

There is no greater happiness for us

Than to be General Kim Il Sung's soldiers.

**Comrade Pak:** Comrade Choe, sit down here and talk. You must have a lot of things to discuss.

Comrade Pak goes out to stand guard.

The twitter of mountain birds and the tender murmur of a stream are heard

**Byong Hun:** You've heard about the village?

**Yong Ho:** Yes indeed.

**Byong Hun:** Don't worry about your father. Bok Sun is also well.

**Yong Ho:** Father, she is not aware of the facts, is she?

**Byong Hun:** How painful it must be for her! But one day she will surely be happy.

**Pangchang:**

Wind is raging over the village laden with wrath,  
We always cherish the star in our hearts.

Under the General's Star high above Mt.

Paekdu-san

We're living with hope and faith.

Amid *pangchang*, Byong Hun is wrapped in fantasy.

The radiant General's Star rises and sheds its brilliant rays across the night sky and over the sea of forests.

Mt. Paekdu-san reflects the rays of the General's Star.

Star fairies float out and start dancing.

**Pangchang:**

A star is rising, a star is rising,

The General's Star is rising

High above Mt. Paekdu-san.

Our hearts swell with hope

At the sight of that bright star.

The star twinkles, the star twinkles,

Luminously penetrating the thick forest.

There is always hope and delight,

Wherever that bright star, the General's Star is shining.

Byong Hun, together with Bok Sun and Yong Ho, looks up at the General's Star, filled with hope.

Bok Sun in Revolutionary Army uniform gives a salute to the Headquarters with Yong Ho.

Byong Hun wakes up from his fantasy as *pangchang* is sung.

**Byong Hun:**

Our struggle led by the General

Will certainly bring the day of national liberation.

**Byong Hun & Yong Ho:**

With our firm faith in that glorious day,  
Loyal to the General we'll always be.

**Pangchang:**

With our firm faith in that glorious day,  
Loyal to the General we'll always be.

Comrade Pak comes out.

**Comrade Pak:** Comrade Choe, Headquarters received your information and is now preparing for a new operation. You are ordered to make use of this letter to decoy a large Japanese unit into the valley of Hongsan-gol. Sing *Arirang* as a signal.

Byong Hun receives Yong Ho's letter.

**Byong Hun:**

Please tell the dear General

That I'll fulfil my revolutionary mission come what may.

**Trio:**

Neither snowstorm nor blizzard will dampen our true devotion.

**Pangchang:**

May the General live long in good health  
For the victory of the revolution.

Byong Hun firmly shakes hands with Comrade Pak.

Yong Ho says good-bye to Byong Hun.

Comrade Pak and Yong Ho go out.

Pyo emerges from the bush and tries to shoot Yong Ho, but Byong Hun shoots Pyo.

**Pyo:** Village head Choe?!

Pyo falls.

The stage darkens.

## S C E N E 2

**Time:** The following day.

**Place:** At the Japanese garrison headquarters.

**Stage:** The garrison commander's room. There is a large map on the wall. A staircase is seen on one side of the stage. There is also a door.

As the stage brightens, the "punitive force" commander, the garrison commander and Japanese officers are seen gathered in the room.

Japanese officers and soldiers frequently come in, making reports and submitting documents. They are discussing the "punitive operation".

*Pangchang:*

Many Japanese troops have arrived, bragging  
That they'll "annihilate" the guerrillas at one fell swoop.

With blood in their eyes, many Japanese troops  
are here to search for the guerrillas.

With blood in their eyes, many Japanese troops  
are here to search for the guerrillas.

The "punitive force" commander throws a set of documents on the desk and shouts.

**"Punitive force" commander:** You mean you haven't yet found the Communists?

The Japanese surgeon appears.

**"Punitive force" commander:** Is Pyo conscious yet?

**Japanese surgeon:** Not yet, sir.

**"Punitive force" commander:** Bring our agent to consciousness quickly so that we can get all his information.

**Garrison commander:** Yes, sir. We are taking emergency measures.

**"Punitive force" commander:**

Another regiment arrived today.

All planes and guns have been mobilized.

Once we spot the Communists,

We'll just wipe them out.

But we must know their whereabouts.

Bring the arrested Reds in here.

**Japanese soldiers:** Yes, sir.

Myong Sik and Yong Tak are brought in.

**Garrison commander:** (To Myong Sik) Do you still refuse to say where your son is? Where are the guerrillas?

**Myong Sik:** I don't know.

In a pitiful voice Yong Tak pleads with the garrison commander and "punitive force" commander for mercy.

**Yong Tak:**

Commanders, please listen to me.

I'm a landlord's son,

Truly a landlord's son.

I'm not lying.

I've informed against many Reds to Mr. Pyo

And have helped him to arrest them.

That's the truth! I swear I'm not lying!

**Garrison commander:** Shut up!

Byong Hun comes in hurriedly and shouts.

**Byong Hun:** Commander, a guerrilla political worker was here in the village.

**"Punitive force" commander:** What?!

Byong Hun produces and waves a letter.  
The garrison commander grabs the letter and reads it.

**Garrison commander:** What? Hongsan-gol?!

The "punitive force" commander snatches away the letter and reads.

**"Punitive force" commander:** Hongsan-gol?!

**Byong Hun:** (Pointing to Myong Sik) This man will tell you all about it.

**Garrison commander:** Are you sure this is a letter from your son?

Myong Sik reads the letter and sings proudly.

**Myong Sik:**

Good! Splendid, my son!  
You joined the Revolutionary Army at last.  
Now that I've heard from you,  
I have nothing to regret  
Even should I die right here on this spot.

**Garrison commander:** (Showing Yong Ho's letter to Yong Tak) Are you sure this is Yong Ho's handwriting?

**Yong Tak:** Yes, sir. But, really I'm a secret agent of Mr. Pyo.  
I follow the track of seditious elements...

**Byong Hun:** (Pushes Yong Tak aside and tells the garrison commander)

This scoundrel has passed our secrets on to the Communists whilst pretending to be on our side.

The Japanese soldiers and surgeon bring in Pyo.

**Japanese surgeon:** Sir, special agent Pyo is recovering consciousness.

The "punitive force" commander and other Japanese flock around Pyo.

Byong Hun is thunderstruck.

*Pangchang:*

Oh, what is to be done? What is to be done?  
The vicious enemy is still alive.  
What if all the secrets are exposed?  
I'm not afraid should I die a thousand times.  
But what shall I do if I fail in my revolutionary task?

Pyo murmurs something.  
The "punitive force" commander and garrison commander listen to Pyo with strained ears.

**Garrison commander:** What did you say? Che? What do you mean by Che?

**Byong Hun:** Oh, you mean Choe? Here I am Choe, the village head.

Byong Hun goes to Pyo, shakes him and bends over him, trying to hear.

**Byong Hun:** Mr. Pyo, Mr. Pyo, I'm Choe, the village head. What? Hong, hong...? Oh, you mean Hongsan-gol. I see.

Byong Hun drops Pyo on the floor.

**Byong Hun:** He means the valley of Hongsan-gol. There is no doubt.

**"Punitive force" commander:** Now it's certain that the Communists are in the valley of Hongsan-gol.

**Japanese surgeon:** He is dead, sir.

**Garrison commander:** Take him away.

**Yong Tak:** Oh, Mr. Pyo! My God! Now I must also die. Ah!

Japanese soldiers take Pyo's body out.

**Garrison commander:** Now shoot them both!

The Japanese take out Song Myong Sik and Yong Tak.  
Byong Hun whispers to the garrison commander.

**Garrison commander:** What? Yong Ho's father?

**Byong Hun:** His son may appear here again.

**Garrison commander:** Good. But, if you miss him, you'll be hanged. Leave Yong Ho's father alone for the time being.

**M.P.:** Yes, sir.

The M.P. exits.

**"Punitive force" commander:** Where is Hongsan-gol?

The valley of Hongsan-gol?

**Officers:**

The valley of Hongsan-gol.

**"Punitive force" commander:**

Where is Hongsan-gol?

**Officers:**

Where is Hongsan-gol?

**"Punitive force" commander:**

Let's find out.

**Officers:**

And hurry to Hongsan-gol.

**"Punitive force" & garrison commanders:**

The communist headquarters is located at Hongsan-gol.

**Officers:**

Where is Hongsan-gol?

Where is Hongsan-gol?

Where is it?

**"Punitive force" commander:** There's no such a valley on the map.

**Byong Hun:**

The only way to get to Hongsan-gol is through the sky.

If anyone had been there, it would be marked on the map.

Even if there was a man who could manage to return from hell,

He could not reach the valley of Hongsan-gol unless he had magic wings.

**"Punitive force" commander:** (Banging the desk) There is no place that the Imperial Army cannot go to.

**Byong Hun:** Except Hongsan-gol.

**"Punitive force" commander:** You know where it is?

**Byong Hun:**

To dig wild *insam* in autumn

**Pangchang:**

And hunt deer in winter

**Byong Hun:**

In puttees and straw sandals,

With rice-balls,

**Pangchang:**

And an axe and a sickle,

Byong Hun:

Hearing the roars of tigers nearby,  
I've been there quite often.

Pangchang:

Though I know the way,

Byong Hun:

I won't go.

Byong Hun & Pangchang:

Because there are guerrillas there,

Byong Hun:

I won't go.

A gunshot rings out, followed by Yong Tak's cry.

**"Punitive force" commander:** Hear that? Stop your idle babbling. Guide the Imperial Army troops.

Byong Hun: Yes, sir.

**"Punitive force" commander:** Chief of Staff! Mobilize all the reserves after our departure and follow the main force.

Chief of staff: All right, sir.

**"Punitive force" commander:** If you hinder the Imperial Army operation even to the slightest degree, you and your daughter shall die.

Byong Hun: I understand, sir.

With the decisive hour approaching, Byong Hun makes a solemn pledge.

Pangchang:

He resolves to sacrifice even his dear daughter and his own precious life.

There can be no easy way in the revolutionary struggle.

He must undergo trials and storms.

The stage darkens amid pangchang.

## A C T V

### S C E N E 1

**Time:** That night.

**Place:** At Byong Hun's house.

**Stage:** On one side of the stage is the log cabin. Behind it there is the road leading to the village.

As the stage grows light, countless stars twinkle on both sides of the Milky Way in the sky.

Bok Sun is alone, doing needlework late at night. An owl is hooting dolefully.

Pangchang:

Dear mother will never come again,

My father's old love will not return.

To whom shall I confide my miserable plight?

I'm sewing stitch by stitch with tears.

Bok Sun:

There is no way to soften my deep grief.

Owls in the wood are going to bed after their mournful screeching.

I cannot expect my father's old love to return.

My sadness grows as the night wears on.

Bok Sun falls asleep, face down on the table.

Byong Hun comes in and sees his daughter asleep.

**Pangchang:**

Even the Milky Way has stopped flowing.  
The far-away baby stars have faded.  
A sleepless night he is passing  
As he is leaving his dear daughter behind.

I'm parting with my daughter tonight probably  
forever.  
But still I've the dilemma in my heart.  
Shall I reveal my secret to her?  
I am at a loss what to do.

**Byong Hun:**

You feel so bitter against your father  
That you sob even in your slumber.  
The tears flow down your cheeks  
And sear my bleeding heart.

When Byong Hun is going to cover Bok Sun with his coat, she  
wakes up.

**Byong Hun:** Bok Sun, I've something to tell you.

Bok Sun sits down by her father's side; she was going to the next  
room.

**Byong Hun:** You have suffered great agony on my account.  
I'm setting out for a long journey tonight. Perhaps  
I will never return home.

Bok Sun is perplexed.

**Byong Hun:** Dearest, leave at once for the cabin in Tiger Valley  
and tell them "The cock crowed."

Bok Sun is astonished and gazes at her father.

**Byong Hun:** Bok Sun, there is no one but you left to do the job.  
I'm asking you because I trust you not only as my  
daughter but also as a revolutionary comrade.

Bok Sun begins to realize what sort of man her father is.

**Bok Sun:** Then, you are...

**Byong Hun:** I have been working true to the General's lofty in-  
tentions.

Bok Sun is so happily surprised that she stands blankly for some  
moments, before throwing herself into her father's arms.

**Bok Sun:** Father! Why didn't you tell me earlier? Why?

Bok Sun sobs, shaking her father's chest.  
The orchestra reaches a climax.

**Bok Sun:**

Father, please forgive your daughter.  
Forgive me for worrying you.  
How anguished you must have felt  
When I tried to drown myself in Flower Lake.

**Byong Hun:**

Bereaved of your mother and living in loneliness  
How many tears you have shed!

**Bok Sun:**

In spite of all manner of insult and contempt,  
You never revealed the truth, even to your own  
daughter.

**Pangchang:**

The secrets of the organization are the life-blood  
of the revolution.

He couldn't utter a word about them, even to his  
daughter, even in his dream.

Bok Sun picks up a needle and mends torn seams of her father's coat.

There is the crow of a cock. Byong Hun gets ready for departure.

**Bok Sun:**

Why must I part with father perhaps for ever  
At the moment of our reconciliation?  
When will I see you again if you leave me tonight?  
I wish this moment would last a thousand years.

**Byong Hun:** (Producing the watch out of his bosom) Bok Sun, I received this watch from the General as a gift.

Bok Sun takes it and presses it to her breast. She is moved to tears.

**Bok Sun:** General!

**Byong Hun:** You'll keep it for all generations.

Let's travel the thorny path of revolution  
To liberate the homeland.

**Byong Hun & Bok Sun:**

As the General's soldiers we will fight  
With single-minded loyalty, generation after generation.

**Pangchang:**

Whoever follows the road of revolution  
Will be crowned with glory, alive or dead.  
Revolution is not made in comfort.  
Both father and daughter are now leaving home.

Bok Sun is reluctant to leave. Byong Hun urges her to go immediately.

Bok Sun bows to her father and leaves.

Byong Hun gazes at his daughter leaving to fulfil her first revolutionary assignment. He also sets out.

In the yard after their departure, only the trees remain standing.

The stage darkens.

## S C E N E 2

**Time:** The next day.

**Place:** In the forest.

**Stage:** Tall trees stand so closely that not a fraction of the sky can be seen. Fallen trees lie here and there.

As the stage brightens, in the background the frightened and tired Japanese troops come in panting, after trekking through a sea of forests and over steep cliffs. Byong Hun is walking with his stick in front of them.

**"Punitive force" commander:**

Where are you taking us?

**All the Japanese:**

Where are you taking us?

Steep hills are on this side, ravines on that side.

Where are we going, where are we going?

If the "punitive operation" fails,

We'll never forgive you.

We'll never forgive you, will never forgive you.

**Byong Hun:** It's just across that hill there.

The Japanese continue to follow Byong Hun.

He leads them deeper into the forest.

The "punitive force" commander again presses him with a question.

**"Punitive force" commander:** Are you certain this is the way to Hongsan-gol?

**Byong Hun:**

I'm sure it is. I'm sure.  
When a white tiger roared on the rock yonder,  
The whole valley trembled, trees shook off their leaves,  
Squirrels, badgers and foxes dashed madly,  
Skipping away in all directions to save their skin,  
And hid in that cave, with heads and tails all mixed up,  
And I caught them just a year ago.

The Japanese officers and soldiers laugh.  
The "punitive force" commander goes up to Byong Hun and yells at him.

**"Punitive force" commander:** What the hell are you talking about? Is Hongsan-gol still far from here?

**Byong Hun:** It's not far now.

**"Punitive force" commander:** Then let's rest a while, till the reinforcements arrive.

Words of command for a break are heard here and there.  
Japanese soldiers limp away to rest. The "punitive force" commander gives an order to the garrison commander.

**"Punitive force" commander:** There is something suspicious about the village head. Watch him closely.

The "punitive force" commander goes out.  
The garrison commander gives an assignment to an M.P. before going out.  
The M.P. is watching Byong Hun.  
The forest is swaying.

**Pangchang:**

Comrades are awaiting the signal.  
What has happened to the enemy reinforcements?  
Once they are all driven into Hongsan-gol  
The Revolutionary Army will deal them an annihilating blow.  
The moment of decisive battle is at hand.  
I'll sing as a signal for attack.

The reinforcements are seen arriving in the backstage.  
The chief of staff brings in the reinforcements.

**Chief of staff:** Where is the commander?

**M.P.:** He's over there.

The "punitive force" commander appears.

**M.P.:** Sir, the reinforcements have arrived.

**Chief of staff:** We followed you, searching every valley, but there was not a shadow of a Communist. What's the matter?

**"Punitive force" commander:** Erh... It's strange. Choe, where the hell are the Communists?

**Byong Hun:** I'm not sure.

**Japanese:** What?!

**"Punitive force" commander:** We are in a dilemma. Let's cross another hill.

**Garrison commander:** Yes, sir. Be ready to start!

The Japanese soldiers go out.

**Byong Hun:** Wait a minute. Let me check the terrain. There must be guerrillas here.

Byong Hun climbs up a huge rock.  
All the Japanese soldiers stare at Byong Hun.  
In front of the armed Japanese, Byong Hun watches round in

splendid unconcern and sings *Arirang* as a signal to his comrades-in-arms.

**Byong Hun:**

*Arirang, Arirang, Arariyo*  
I'm now crossing *Arirang Pass*.

**"Punitive force" commander:** Garrison Commander!

**Garrison commander:** Shut your mouth!

The garrison commander and Japanese officers shout at Byong Hun.  
The "punitive force" commander fires his pistol at him.  
Byong Hun continues to sing, although wounded.

**Byong Hun:**

**Mt. Paekdu-san is yonder,**  
**Over it rise the sun, moon and stars.**

In response to the song of *Arirang* the KPRA troops sound an attack.  
The enemies are in a panic.

**"Punitive force" commander:** Choe, who the hell are you?

**Byong Hun:** I'm a revolutionary soldier of General Kim Il Sung.

Byong Hun shoots the "punitive force" commander and garrison commander. He, too, is shot and falls.  
The Japanese troops are thrown into confusion.  
The KPRA begins its attack.  
The Japanese are mown down.  
Byong Hun rises to his feet with a great effort.

**Pangchang:**

**Oh, the forest is swaying,**  
**As if stirred by the soldier's loyalty.**

**Revolutionary fighter fallen in the forest,**  
**Listen to the trumpet of victory.**  
**The primeval forest is waving**  
**Touched by the soldier's loyalty.**

The forest is swaying. The trees are revolving.

Comrade Pak and Yong Ho come out in a hurry to find Byong Hun.

**Comrade Pak:** Comrade Choe Byong Hun, you fought well. The enemy troops you decoyed have been annihilated.

**Yong Ho:** Father, our village's liberated. Let's go down.

Amid the thunderous shouts of *manse*, the scene changes into the liberated village.

With the Japanese troops wiped out, the people and the KPRA soldiers meet in the village.

Yong Ho comes rushing in and is reunited with his father and mother.

**Yong Ho:** Where is Bok Sun?

**Myong Sik:** I haven't seen her. The Dog took his daughter somewhere.

**Yong Ho:** You don't know the truth. (Addressing the crowd)  
Neighbours, Bok Sun's father is, in fact, not the village head. He is the political worker sent from our People's Revolutionary Army.

There is a stir among the crowd.

**Young man 1:** Is that true? Forgive me, please.

At this moment someone informs them of the arrival of Bok Sun.  
Women members of the KPRA bring in Bok Sun.  
Yong Ho sees Bok Sun.

**KPRA member 1:** Villagers! Let all of us dance and enjoy this happy day.

The KPRA members and the people dance to the revolutionary song "For A Decisive Battle".

**Song & dance:**

**Masses of the proletariat, exploited and oppressed,**  
**Rise in the decisive battle of revolution.**

The time of proletarian revolution has come  
All over the world.  
Smash bourgeois society,  
Shatter the citadel of imperialism.

Rise you workers with hammers over your shoulders,  
Rise you peasants with hoes over your shoulders  
In the final decisive battle  
To destroy the bourgeoisie,  
As one in mind and body.  
Smash bourgeois society,  
Shatter the citadel of imperialism.

Comrade Pak comes in shouting.

**Comrade Pak:** Look, here comes Comrade Choe Byong Hun.

Bok Sun is overjoyed to meet Byong Hun.

**Bok Sun:** Father!

**Byong Hun:** You must have had a hard time, darling.

**Myong Sik:** Now, my old in-law, why did you treat me as a stranger, eh? What pain you must have felt when you slapped me in the face (Mopping the tears)!

**Byong Hun:** I had no choice in order to protect secrets.

**KPRA officer:** Comrade Choe Byong Hun, the General greatly appreciated your services and asked me to admit Comrade Bok Sun and Youth League members of the village to the People's Revolutionary Army.

All the people are profoundly moved.  
Bok Sun, embraced by her father, sheds tears of joy.  
The red sun rises.  
Under its warm rays the forest, too, dances and sways.

**Grand chorus:**

Tell o swaying forest,  
Tell this glory and joy forever,

**Byong Hun:**

This glory was given us by the fatherly General  
Whom we miss awake or asleep.

**Byong Hun & Bok Sun:**

We'll be always faithful to the revolution,  
Feeling his deep parental love.

**Grand chorus:**

Tell o swaying forest,  
Tell this glory and joy forever,  
Tell o forest!

At the climax of the grand chorus manifesting their resolve to render devoted service to the leader throughout all generations, the curtain falls.

**The End**

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