
START**CHENG AI (CONT'D)**

Yi Shih, I want you to become my wife!

(There is stunned silence for a beat.
Then SHIH bursts out laughing)

SHIH

Ai, I never pegged you as a husband!

CHENG AI

A man's gotta settle down some time! And think about
WHO to settle down with!

SHIH

Oh. Ohhhh. Aren't you going a bit...overboard?

CHENG AI

Not at all! You step up and out with me!

SHIH

Step up to dirty dishes and mending moldy clothes?

CHENG AI

You know what I mean! A better life!

SHIH

I have options---

CHENG AI

Name them!

SHIH

I've...I've had other proposals.....And...and...you're
going to have to convince me that yours is the best!

CHENG AI

I have the biggest fleet!

SHIH

That's what they ALL say...

CHENG AI

YOU...

(takes a beat)

...are stalling. And need time to think. Take it! It
doesn't matter--your best destiny lies with me!

SHIH

It--does? Would you include a sister?

AI

Even better!

SHIH

Don't get any ideas!

AI

Gods forbid! I AM going to be a married man! I just offer better lives on my ship than you can get here.

SHIH

You can prove it?

AI

Come aboard, name your terms...and see for yourself!

SHIH

What if I can find a better ship AND better captain?

AI

I accept that challenge...because none is better!

END

SHIH

Well, then...done.

(AI extends a hand. Startled, SHIH takes it. Lights to WU, who peers into scrying device in frustration)

WU

The gods' chosen one is shielded from me! Yet, her destiny burns so brightly! Not even the gods could shroud that!

(XUAN NU appears)

XUAN NU

Thy attempts to play with the gods are...amusing. My hand shields my ward from the likes of thee!

WU

Great Lady! For the good of China--

XUAN NU

Thou would second guess the gods?