

**“In A Garden In China”**

THE STORY OF  
**THE WILLOW**  
**PATTERN PLATE**



**A musical play for young actors, singers and dancers**

***Theme: Money does not buy happiness***

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## Synopsis/ Teacher's Notes

**Target Age Range:** 7-11 yrs. **Cast:** Flexible. Needs a minimum of 20 children including singers and dancers. **Easy to stage and costume. The script is supported by 4 attractive songs (with vocals and without vocals.)**  
**Duration approx 25 mins.**

THE STORY: Koong-Se is the beautiful daughter of a wealthy Chinese mandarin. He wants her to marry a rich husband, but she has no interest in money and she does not approve of arranged marriages. He insists that she meets some rich young men but she finds them all vain and boring. Instead, she falls in love with Chang who is merely a gardener. A wistful song "***In a Garden in China***" is performed as the lovers meet in the scented moonlit garden. The mandarin is outraged when he discovers they have been meeting in secret. He banishes Chang from the palace and confines his daughter. His guards oversee her and (optionally) give a martial arts display then taunt her with the song "***Checking up on You***". A myriad of garden spirits visit her, and perform a gentle dance routine during the song "***All Her Lifetime***." During her confinement, the mandarin arranges her wedding, but the lovers escape. They are hunted down, and trapped in a small pagoda. The pagoda is set on fire and the lovers perish, but the garden spirits turn them into immortal white birds. The play ends with a very popular bouncy song "***The Selfish Mandarin***" which recaps the story and features a fiery dance.

### Cast:

**Narrator 1**..... **Narrator 2** .....

**Mandarin (a rich fat Chinese nobleman)** .....

**Koong-Se (his lovely daughter)** .....

**Chang (the gardener)** .....

**4 guards** .....

**4 Rich Men** .....

**Warrior (good at martial arts- e.g. judo)**.....

**Garden "spirits" (dancers in white, with white ribbons tied to wrists- portraying doves, peacocks and lovebirds)**.....

**Flames (dancers dressed in orange, yellow and red with coloured streamers tied to wrists)**

**Assorted Servants and Guests at Wedding Party** .....

**Servant with Fortune Cookies** .....

**Singers**.....

#### *Suggested Props:*

- *Fortune Cookies- simply wrap some plain sweet biscuits in foil with a message.(Do not use authentic Chinese fortune cookies unless you are certain they do not contain allergens such as nuts –or unsuitable messages!)*
- *Coloured streamers / ribbons*
- *5 Samurai swords*
- *Screen to represent a small Chinese house*
- *Optional: Two large decorated doves on sticks*

**TRACK 1: In a Garden in China (with vocals)**  
**TRACK 2: Checking Up on You (with vocals)**  
**TRACK 3: All her Lifetime (with vocals)**  
**TRACK 4: The Selfish Mandarin (with vocals)**  
**TRACK 5: In a Garden in China (no vocals)**  
**TRACK 6: Checking Up on You (no vocals)**  
**TRACK 7: All her Lifetime (no vocals)**  
**TRACK 8: The Selfish Mandarin (no vocals)**

## In a Garden in China

**Narrator 1:** Good morning everyone. *(shows picture of willow pattern)* We do not know for sure how the Willow Pattern came to this country, but about four hundred years ago ships went to China to buy tea and spices- and Chinese pottery often came back here. Our potters liked the designs on the Chinese pottery and they started to produce their own Chinese-style goods. They made plates, cups, bowls and teapots. The designs were of willow trees, bridges, pagodas, boats and birds. The story of the willow pattern comes from these designs.

**(Enter guards, and servant who is holding a plate of fortune cookies.)**

**Narrator 2:** Once, long ago in China there lived a Mandarin. He was a rich, selfish powerful man. He had a beautiful daughter named Koong-Se. *(Enter Mandarin, grandly, with daughter.)*

**Mandarin:** Daughter. I have arranged for you to meet some young men. Their fathers are wealthy and important. You must choose one of them to be your husband.

**Koong-Se:** Oh, but father! I don't want a husband! I am happy to be a single girl!

**Mandarin:** Silly child! You cannot stay single forever! You must marry a rich man at once and have a family of your own.

**Koong-Se: (sadly)** If you say so, father!

**Narrator:** So the mandarin went away **(exit Mandarin)** and sent some rich young men to meet her. They had lots of money, but Koong-Se found them all very boring!

**Rich man 1: (entering)** See how much money I have! I can buy you jewellery and beautiful clothes. Will you marry me?

**Rich man 2: (entering)** I have more money than him! I can buy you a house and a wonderful garden! Don't marry him! Choose me!

**Rich man 3: (entering)** I am even richer than him! I can buy you a palace and diamonds! Marry me!

**Rich man 4: (entering)** I am so rich I can buy you half of this city! Ignore those three fellows! Give me your hand in marriage!

**Koong-Se:** I don't care about money! Oh! What shall I do? Perhaps this fortune cookie will tell me what to do! *(Takes a fortune cookie from the plate, reads it and repeats it several times "Follow your heart and do not be ruled by others")* Very well! I don't want to marry any of you! So go away, all of you! *(Exit rich men, grumbling)*

**Narrator 1:** The rich men went away. Koong-Se was left alone. She noticed a man working in the garden. **(enter Chang)**

**Koong-Se:** Hello! Who are you?

**Chang:** My name is Chang. I am employed by your honourable father. I am the palace gardener.

**Koong-Se:** I love this garden. Can I help you look after it?

**Chang:** Oh, yes! Thank you! It would be an honour to work with such a beautiful lady! **(Exit Koong-Se and Chang, happily)**

**Narrator 2:** So Koong-Se helped Chang in the garden each day. They became very good friends and eventually they fell in love. They wanted to marry, so Koong-Se went to speak to her father.

*(Enter Mandarin, and Koong-Se)*

**Koong-Se:** Father, at last I have found the man I wish to marry!

**Mandarin:** I am most pleased, daughter! Please bring him in so I may meet him! *(Enter Chang)*

**Mandarin:** *(In a rage)* Chang! Marry my daughter? You? A common servant! Marry my daughter? How dare you! Leave my palace at once. You must never see my daughter again. *(Exit all)*

**Narrator 1:** But Koong-Se and her lover could not bear to be parted. Every evening, when the emperor was asleep, they met in secret in the moonlit garden, under the willow trees. *(Koong-Se and Chang enter)*

\*\*\*\*\* **SONG CD TRACK 1 : In a Garden in China** \*\*\*\*\*

*In a garden in China long long ago  
In a garden in China where the sweet lotus grows  
Two lovers met in the soft moonlight glow  
In a garden in China long long ago  
She was a princess. He was just poor.  
Her father said "You will see him no more"  
She didn't listen she loved him so!  
They met in secret under the willow  
In a garden in China long long ago (Repeat)*

**(Towards the end of the song, the mandarin and his 4 guards creep furtively around the stage "looking" for the two lovers)**

**Mandarin: (catching the lovers)** So! You have been meeting in secret, have you? How dare you disobey me! This servant is not fit for you! **(to Chang)** You are banished from this land! Go! Go! Before I have you executed! Guards! Take him away! **(Enter 4 guards. Guards 1 and 2 take him away offstage) (to Koong-Se)** And you! You will be locked away until I find you a suitable husband! **(Guards 3 and 4 lock her away in the corner of the stage)**

**Guard 3:** Do not try to escape! We will watch you like a hawk to make sure you obey your father.

**Guard 4 :** We will check on you every hour of the day. There is no escape.

END OF SCRIPT SAMPLE – one third complete