

# Chrysanthemum Tea

Stephen Sondheim

It's the Day of the Rat, my Lord  
There are four days remaining  
And I see you're entertaining  
But we should have a chat, my Lord

To begin, if I may, my Lord  
I've no wish to remind you  
But you'll notice just behind you  
There are ships in the bay  
They've been sitting there all day  
With a letter to convey  
And they haven't gone away  
And there's every indication  
That they're planning to stay, my Lord

Have some tea, my Lord  
Some chrysanthemum tea  
It's an herb that's superb  
For disturbances at sea

Is the Shogun feeling better?  
Good! Now what about this letter?  
Is it wise to delay, my Lord?  
With the days disappearing  
Might we benefit from hearing  
What the soothsayers say, my Lord?

Wood star  
Water star  
All celestial omens are  
Excellent

Deer bones  
Turtle shells  
Each configuration spells  
Victory

Ah!  
Spider on the wall!  
Signifies success  
Whose success I cannot guess  
Unless

It's the Day of the Ox, my Lord  
With but three days remaining  
And today already waning  
I've a few further shocks, my Lord

To begin, let me say  
At the risk of repetition  
There are ships in the bay  
And they didn't ask permission  
But they sit there all day  
In contemptuous array  
With a letter to convey  
And they haven't gone away  
And there's every indication

They they still plan to stay  
And you look a little gray, my Lord □

Have some tea, my Lord  
Some chrysanthemum tea  
While we plan, if we can  
What our answer ought to be

If the tea the Shogun drank will  
Serve to keep the Shogun tranquil  
I suggest, if I may, my Lord  
We consult the Confucians □  
They have mystical solutions  
There are none wise as they, my Lord □

Night waters do not break the moon  
That merely is illusion  
The moon is sacred

No foreign ships can break our laws  
That also is illusion  
Our laws are sacred

It follows there can be no ships  
They must be an illusion

Japan is sacred

It's the Day of the Tiger, my Lord  
Only two days remaining  
And I'm tired of explaining  
There are ships in the bay  
With a letter to convey  
They're on permanent display  
And we must take some position  
Or the Southern Coalition  
Will be soon holding sway, my Lord □  
And we'll all have to pay, my Lord □

Have some tea, my Lord  
Some chrysanthemum tea  
It's a tangled situation  
As your father would agree  
And it mightn't be so tangled  
If you hadn't had him strangled □  
But I fear that I stray, my Lord  
I've a nagging suspicion  
That, in view of your condition  
What we should do is pray, my Lord □

Blow, wind  
Great wind  
Great Kamikaze  
Wind of the gods

Blow, wind  
Build the waves  
Hurl the infection  
Out of the ocean  
Blow, wind!  
Blow, wind!  
Blow, wind!

It's the Day of the Rabbit, my Lord  
There's but one day remaining  
And beside the fact it's raining  
There are ships in the bay  
Which are sitting there today  
Just exactly where they sat  
On the Day of the Rat  
Oh, and speaking of that, my Lord  
When the ships came our way  
On that first disturbing day  
And I gave consideration  
To this letter they convey  
I decided if there weren't  
Any Shogun to receive it  
It would act as a deterrent  
Since they'd have no place to leave it  
And they might go away, my Lord  
Do you see what I say, my Lord?

In the tea, my Lord  
The chrysanthemum tea ☐  
An informal variation  
On the normal recipe  
Though I know my plan had merit  
It's been slow in execution  
If there's one thing you inherit  
It's your father's constitution  
And you're taking so long, my Lord  
Do you think I was wrong, my Lord?  
No, you must let me speak:  
When the Shogun is weak  
Then the tea must be strong, my Lord  
My Lord?

(Shogun dies.)

The blossom falls on the mountain  
The mountain falls on the blossom  
All things fall