

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