

WHO WAS IN THE SHADOWS? (TRADE)

By Carole L. Cooney

Definitions

Trade: an occupation

Trade: a craft

Trade: to exchange places

Trade: to exchange one thing for another

Joe's trade was selling houses.

Jack's trade was sculpting horses.

Jill traded her seat for Sandy's seat.

Judy trades silver beads for precious gems.

Setting: The Chinese Village of Wu

Characters:

Narrator

Bai

Moi-li, the Stepmother

Ragman

Narrator: Once a Chinese master named Wu married and live happily with his wife, Ai-li and daughter, Bai. One day, Ai-li suddenly became very ill and died. A year later, Wu married Moi-li, a very beautiful but mean woman. Every day she could be heard mistreating Bai.

Moi-li: Bai, go to the woods to gather branches of the poison oak bush.

Bai: Stepmother, I dare not. Father has said the poison oak bush is dangerous and will cause a horrible rash if it is touched.

Moi-li: What does your father know? Do as I say!

Narrator: Bai slowly walked into the woods.

Bai: I don't think my Stepmother knows one bush from another. So, if I trade Manzanita branches for poison oak branches she will not know the difference.

Narrator: And so the trade was made and Bai was right. Her Stepmother did not know the difference. One day, the Ragman walked through the town collecting rags and selling his wares.

Ragman: (singing) Rags to riches! Trading riches! Trading rags!

Moi-li: Bai, take my cheap silver necklace and trade it for some *real* diamonds. The Ragman will not know the difference.

Narrator: But Bai knew the difference. She took the cheap necklace and spoke to the Ragman.

Bai: Most honorable Ragman, I have a necklace made of (whispers) *cheap silver*. What kind of diamonds will be best for a trade?

Ragman: Ahhh, Bai. This is the wish of your Stepmother, hum? Let me see it. (examining it carefully) Bai, this necklace is real silver! What shall we do?

Bai: I think we should do as my Stepmother wishes.

Ragman: All right. Let's give her what she wants. Yes, let us pretend the diamonds are real just as she has pretended that the necklace is real silver. In my trade, I never have *real* diamonds. However, I have a clever friend whose trade is to create diamonds out of mere glass. Shall I find him and ask him to make some glass diamonds for the trade?

Bai: Yes, Honorable Ragman. I shall tell my Stepmother that you were going to make a trade later today for diamonds and that you shall return at dusk.

Narrator: The Ragman left to visit his clever friend to make a trade of the cheap necklace for the glass diamonds. Bai went to town to do the many errands her Stepmother demanded. As it grew dusk, she walked back into the house and saw a shadow by the window.

Moi-li: Bai, why are you so late? Where are my diamonds?

Narrator: Just as Bai was about to answer, a figure came out of the shadows and walked toward Moi-li. She was startled because she recognized who it was. Bai smiled.

What happened next?

Using as many definitions of trade as you can, end the play.