



Chivalry is not dead, especially when accusations of plastic surgery are involved. The entertainment press got an earful earlier this week from Chinese heartthrob **Huang Xiaoming** (黃曉明), who spoke out in defense of his girlfriend, 21-year-old Hong Kong model and otaku dreamgirl Yang Ying (楊穎), who goes by the name **Angelababy**.

The two lovebirds have been in the spotlight since publicly acknowledging their romance in Shanghai a few weeks ago, and Internet chatter speculating that Angelababy had a facelift and more to jumpstart her career prompted an angry response from Huang.

"I have seen people that have had plastic surgery, and I have seen her. She is 100 percent real!" the 32-year-old actor told reporters. "The people who say these kinds of things cause a lot of hurt to women."

Huang also shared with reporters his love for "romantic surprises." When asked if an out-of-the-blue marriage proposal would fit this category, he said: "Maybe. I do know that I would definitely bring along a big diamond ring." But he was quick to add a caveat: "I still haven't grown up yet, it's too

early to talk about marriage."

Lin Chi-ling's (林志玲) latest acting venture has, surprise, surprise, been deemed a flop. Taiwan's top supermodel starred in *Moon Lovers* (月光戀人), a Japanese soap opera that concluded earlier this week with its eighth episode.

Moon Lovers, which has yet to air in Taiwan, garnered dismal ratings in Japan, which was a surprise given the immense popularity of Lin's co-star **Tetsuya Kimura**. It was the Japanese male idol's poorest-performing show in 14 years, noted both the *Apple Daily* and our sister paper the *Liberty Times*.

In other celebrity news, **Charles Chen** (陳建州), better known as Blackie (黑人), has been keeping a low profile lately. Last month Blackie resigned as the host of a talk show after producers brought on a guest who engaged in rumor-mongering about his pop-star pal **Jay Chou** (周杰倫).

But thanks to the *Apple Daily*, we can rest assured that the basketball star-turned-entertainer has been eating well and everything is peachy with him and his girlfriend, pop singer **Fan Fan** (范瑋琪). In an article that racked up a lot of hits this week, the paper's reporters stalked

the couple in Taipei's East District as they spent an evening at a spicy hot pot restaurant — an event that brought back fond memories for the *Apple*.

The last time the couple were spotted together indulging in spicy hot pot, the night ended with Fan Fan calling off their marriage and Blackie checking into the hospital with enterogastritis.

This time around was less eventful, but the *Apple* dutifully served up the details and even managed to cook up a half-racy story of its own. For dinner, Blackie went with the non-spicy broth, on orders from Fan Fan, but loaded his pot with lots of beef slices and around 30 clams.

And, oh, those clams! The *Apple's* reporter quickly concluded that the only reason Blackie would eat such a large amount would be to boost his fertility, which led to the further conclusion that the couple was clearly in a hurry to have a child. After all, they are getting married in March next year. The reporter rushed up to the couple as they stepped out of the restaurant to confirm this theory. Uh, no, laughed Blackie. "With hot pot, you have to add tomato and clams so the broth will be sweet."

But *Apple Daily's* headline the next day said it all: "An evening feast of spicy hot pot with Fan Fan, Blackie pigs out on clams to prepare for battle (范范麻辣夜宴黑人狂吞蛤仔備戰)."

Blackie posted a response on his Sina.com.cn microblog, expressing his annoyance at getting ambushed and lamenting the *Apple Daily* article. "I'd better watch out what I eat," he wrote. "Otherwise, next time if I get caught eating a chocolate bar, they're going to say things like I'm eating shit for the sake of sex! Ha Ha Ha."

Sina.com.cn's microblogging service, dubbed Weibo (微博) in Mandarin, has suddenly emerged as the new online soapbox of the stars. China's answer to Twitter took center stage this week when pop singer **Jolin Tsai** (蔡依林) surprised fans by posting a candid photo of herself with a towel wrapped around her head sans makeup. According to the *United Daily News*, other stars actively using the social networking site include **Vivian Hsu** (徐若瑄), **Wang Lee-hom** (王力宏) and **A-hsin** (阿信) of Mayday (五月天).

There's always modelling.



PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES

TIDBITS

The Americans celebrated throwing off their oppressors' shackles on Sunday and now it's the turn of the French.

The Association des Français de Taiwan is celebrating Bastille Day with a street party tomorrow at the National Taipei University of Technology, for which DeliFrance will be providing bread, Laurent Ludwig pastries and Stephane Lorand pancakes.

Tomorrow from 6:30pm to midnight at the National Taipei University of Technology, 1 Zhongxiao E Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市忠孝東路三段1號). Admission is NT\$200. On the Net: www.taiwanaccueil.com

Over at the Palais de Chine hotel, a special menu has been devised at its La Rotisserie restaurant. Chef Sherilyn Fan's concoctions include glace of king crab with mango and coriander, abalone risotto in garlic and parsley sauce, ballotine of guinea fowl with foie gras and truffle potatoes and prime rib-eye steak. The dessert is grapefruit terrine with macadamia crumble and vanilla ice cream.

Palais de Chine's Bastille Day five-course menu is being served from tomorrow through Wednesday and costs NT\$2,500 per person. To make a reservation, call (02) 2181-9999 X3250. Palais de Chine is located at 3, Chengde Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市承德路一段3號). On the Net: www.palaisdechinehotel.com



PHOTO COURTESY OF PALAIS DE CHINE. Off with their heads.

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW

Double, double toil and trouble



PHOTO COURTESY OF NEW ASPECT

The Deer and the Cauldron was written and serialized between 1969 and 1972 by the novelist and newspaper proprietor Louis Cha (金庸) as the last and final work of his prodigious output of *wuxia xiaoshuo* (武俠小說), or chivalric novels. It has been adapted numerous times for television and cinema, and has now been brought to the stage by the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center (上海話劇藝術中心). The production, directed by He Nian (何念), one of China's most successful and prolific young directors, opened in 2008 and has toured widely to great acclaim in China. It opened yesterday in Taipei for a four-day run at the National Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall (台北國父紀念館) before moving to Taichung for a further two shows next week.

The Deer and the Cauldron tells the story of Wei Xiaobao (韋小寶), a street urchin who finds his way into the imperial palace while impersonating an eunuch and befriends the young

emperor Kang Xi (康熙). The emperor, who came to the throne at the age of 7 and was to become one of the longest-reigning of the Manchu Qing Dynasty emperors, faces pressures both inside and outside the court and must establish the political power of his government in the face of an active insurgency that wants to re-establish the Han Chinese Ming Dynasty. Having befriended Wei in a boyish scuffle, the child emperor discovers in this reprobate an ideal agent who over the many years the book covers helps the emperor in various endeavors, usually by unconventional means.

Wei is a very unconventional hero for a chivalric novel. He is above all utterly dishonest, a compulsive teller of tales, and his moral compass, if he ever had one, is often sent awry by the magnetic force of his physical appetites. The only constant in Wei's world is a sense of loyalty to those he has befriended, and unfortunately this includes both a Manchu emperor, and

later, members of the anti-Manchu resistance. Moreover, Wei's martial arts skills are mainly the product of bravado, and the thing that saves him, often only to get him into further trouble down the road, is his gift of the gab. In fact, Cha comprehensively overturns most of the rules of the chivalric novel in *The Deer and the Cauldron*, but this seems only right as he was also responsible for establishing many of them.

The Deer and the Cauldron is a picaresque novel full of incidents with a huge cast of characters. Much has had to be cut for the stage production, which focuses primarily on the relationship between Wei, the Manchu emperor and Chen Jinnan (陳近南), a leading figure in the anti-Manchu resistance who becomes Wei's *shifu* (師傅), or master. Wang Yung (王勇), who plays the role of the emperor Kang Xi, said that when they first started rehearsing, the production ran for almost four hours, and painful cuts had to be

made, with some characters being reduced from major roles to little more than extras. The show now runs for about two-and-a-half hours.

The fast-paced action of *The Deer and the Cauldron* is squarely aimed at keeping the audience in stitches, something reviews in the Chinese media suggest it managed to do entirely successfully. Gags have been re-jigged for each tour destination, making use of peculiarities of local dialects and current social and political issues. The lead actor says he had few qualms about performing in Taiwan. "We have had very successful shows all around southern China," he said. "In fact, as far as cultural differences are concerned, we're probably closer to Taiwan than to northern China."

If the lightning-fast dialogue of He's production is too much to follow, *The Deer and the Cauldron* is available in a three-volume English-language translation by John Minford.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

WHAT: *The Deer and the Cauldron* (鹿鼎記) by the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center (上海話劇藝術中心)
WHEN: Today and tomorrow at 7:30pm and Sunday at 2:30pm in Taipei, Wednesday and Thursday at 7:30pm in Taichung
WHERE: Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall (台北國父紀念館), 505, Renai Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市仁愛路四段505號2樓) and Chungshing Concert Hall, Taichung (台中中興堂), 291-3 Cingwu Rd, Taichung City (台中市精武路291-3號)
ADMISSION: NT\$500 to NT\$2,500, available through ERA ticketing or online at www.ticket.com.tw

RESTAURANTS

BY CATHERINE SHU

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW

Hsin Chichou 新濟州韓式豆腐鍋之家

Address: 55, Ln 190, Dunhua 5 Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段190巷55號)
Telephone: (02) 2777-3008 **Open:** 11am to 11pm **Average meal:** NT\$140
Details: Chinese picture menu, credit cards not accepted



PHOTOS: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Hsin Chichou's tofu stew is the star of its brief menu.

pleasantly springy, a good contrast to the melt-in-your-mouth silken tofu.

Hsin Chichou's bibimbap, on the other hand, was bland compared to the tofu stew. It looked promising, served in a stone bowl with a gleaming raw egg yolk in the center of ingredients including slices of pork, kimchi bean sprouts, bok choy and julienned carrots on top of white rice. But the only things that really added any flavor to the dish were the two first ingredients, and after the meat and kimchi were gone, the carrots, cabbage and other veggies blended into one flavorless bunch. The rice was also surprisingly oily. When I got to the crispy layer of rice on the bottom of the bowl, it was so greasy that the texture and color reminded me of pork crackling — and not in a good way.

Mr Goose 鵝肉先生

Address: 259 Zhongshan Rd, Hualian City (花蓮市中山路259號)
Open: 11am to 12:30am **Telephone:** (03) 833-1902 **Average meal:** NT\$300
Details: Chinese menu, credit cards not accepted

Eateries specializing in goose are not uncommon, but I have always found them to look more tempting than they actually are. Whatever the merits of the other dishes they serve, the goose itself is either tough, stringy, or flavorless, or a combination of all three. I had all but sworn off goose, but Mr Goose, a popular restaurant on the high street of Hualian City, has changed all that.

Mr Goose offers a pretty comprehensive breakdown of the goose, starting with the essential order of goose meat, which sells for NT\$300 for a *jin*, about 600g. An order of NT\$200 is ample for two people, and can be made up of either the leaner forequarters or the fatty hindquarters. It should be pointed out that fatty at Mr Goose does not equate with greasy, and for both texture and flavor, the hindquarters win hands down. Just don't think about the cholesterol.

As an obvious out-of-towner, one of the wait staff asked solicitously whether the meat was too my taste. She explained that Mr Goose used locally raised goose — as opposed to the famous Yilan goose. She was worried that being unused to the free-range goose, I might find it tough. The meat certainly had body, and it hadn't the loose texture that is often mistaken for tenderness, but "tough" was a word that never crossed my mind. It was best described as "meaty."

Other bits of the goose were equally good, with heart (NT\$100), giblets (NT\$100), intestine (NT\$100), liver (NT\$30) and pancreas (NT\$50) all available. The heart is particularly to be recommended, and while the pancreas had novelty value, its texture took a bit of getting used to, and tasted like rather bland liver. All of these are served as cold plates, and can accompany a range of dry or soup noodles (NT\$40). Goose blood mixed with glutinous rice is served dry or in soup form (NT\$30 and NT\$35). For aficionados of chicken blood, the chicken blood soup (NT\$30) is particularly fine, with an excellent texture and flavor to the jelly. All these are very simple dishes, many available at street corners and night markets around the country, but Mr Goose understands flavor and clearly has a solid grasp of all the ins and outs of poultry.

What is also remarkable is that



A portion of goose meat, left, and chicken blood soup, above.

