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大中华文库

汉英对照

警世通言

STORIES TO CAUTION
THE WORLD

I



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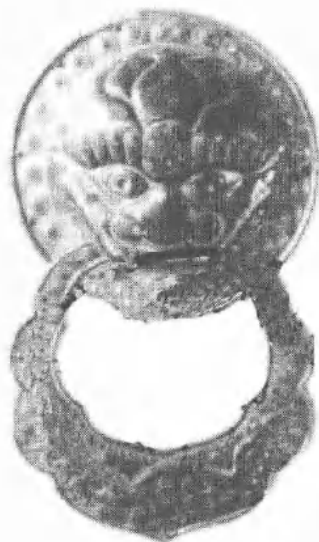
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Chinese-English

警世通言

Stories to Caution the World

I



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总 序

杨牧之

《大中华文库》终于出版了。我们为之高兴，为之鼓舞，但也倍感压力。

当此之际，我们愿将郁积在我们心底的话，向读者倾诉。

—

中华民族有着悠久的历史 and 灿烂的文化，系统、准确地将中华民族的文化经典翻译成外文，编辑出版，介绍给全世界，是几代中国人的愿望。早在几十年前，西方一位学者翻译《红楼梦》，书名译成《一个红楼上的梦》，将林黛玉译为“黑色的玉”。我们一方面对外国学者将中国的名著介绍到世界上去表示由衷的感谢，一方面为祖国的名著还不被完全认识，甚而受到曲解，而感到深深的遗憾。还有西方学者翻译《金瓶梅》，专门摘选其中自然主义描述最为突出的篇章加以译介。一时间，西方学者好像发现了奇迹，掀起了《金瓶梅》热，说中国是“性开放的源头”，公开地在报刊上鼓吹中国要“发扬开放之传统”。还有许多资深、友善的汉学家译介中国古代的哲学著作，在把中华民族文化介绍给全世界的工作方面作出了重大贡献，但或囿于理解有误，或缘于对中国文字认识的局限，质量上乘的并不多，常常是隔靴搔痒，说不到点子上。大哲学家黑格尔曾经说过：中国有最完备的国史。但他认为中国古代没有真正意义上的哲学，还处



在哲学史前状态。这么了不起的哲学家竟然作出这样大失水准的评论，何其不幸。正如任何哲学家都要受时间、地点、条件的制约一样，黑格尔也离不开这一规律。当时他也只能从上述水平的汉学家译过去的文字去分析、理解，所以，黑格尔先生对中国古代社会的认识水平是什么状态，也就不难想象了。

中国离不开世界，世界也缺少不了中国。中国文化摄取外域的新成分，丰富了自己，又以自己的新成就输送给别人，贡献于世界。从公元5世纪开始到公元15世纪，大约有一千年，中国走在世界的前列。在这一千多年的时间里，她的光照射耀全世界。人类要前进，怎么能不全面认识中国，怎么能不认真研究中国的历史呢？

二

中华民族是伟大的，曾经辉煌过，蓝天、白云，阳光灿烂，和平而兴旺；也有过黑暗的、想起来就让人战栗的日子，但中华民族从来是充满理想，不断追求，不断学习，渴望和平与友谊的。

中国古代伟大的思想家孔子曾经说过：“三人行，必有我师焉。择其善者而从之，其不善者而改之。”孔子的话就是要人们向别人学习。这段话正是概括了整个中华民族与人交往的原则。人与人之间交往如此，在与周边的国家交往中也是如此。

秦始皇第一个统一了中国，可惜在位只有十几年，来不及作更多的事情。汉朝继秦而继续强大，便开始走出去，了解自己周边的世界。公元前138年，汉武帝派张骞出使西



域。他带着一万头牛羊，总值一万万钱的金帛货物，作为礼物，开始西行，最远到过“安息”（即波斯）。73年，班超又率36人出使西域。36个人按今天的话说，也只有一个排，显然是为了拜访未曾见过面的邻居，是去交朋友。到了西域，班超派遣甘英作为使者继续西行，往更远处的大秦国（即罗马）去访问，“乃抵条支而历安息，临西海以望大秦”（《后汉书·西域传》）。“条支”在“安息”以西，即今天的伊拉克、叙利亚一带，“西海”应是今天的地中海。也就是说甘英已经到达地中海边上，与罗马帝国隔海相望，“临大海欲渡”，却被人劝阻而未成行，这在历史上留下了遗憾。可以想见班超、甘英沟通友谊的无比勇气和强烈愿望。接下来是唐代的玄奘，历经千难万险，到“西天”印度取经，带回了南亚国家的古老文化。归国后，他把带回的佛教经典组织人翻译，到后来很多经典印度失传了，但中国却保存完好，以至于今天，没有玄奘的《大唐西域记》，印度人很难编写印度古代史。明代郑和“七下西洋”，把中华文化传到东南亚一带。鸦片战争以后，一代又一代先进的中国人，为了振兴中华，又前赴后继，向西方国家学习先进的科学思想和文明成果。这中间有我们的领导人朱德、周恩来、邓小平；有许许多多大科学家、文学家、艺术家，如郭沫若、李四光、钱学森、冼星海、徐悲鸿等。他们的追求、奋斗，他们的博大胸怀，兼收并蓄的精神，为人类社会增添了光彩。

中国文化的形成和发展过程，就是一个以众为师，以各国人民为师，不断学习和创造的过程。中华民族曾经向周边国家和民族学习过许多东西，假如没有这些学习，中华民族决不可能创造出昔日的辉煌。回顾历史，我们怎么能够不对伟大的古埃及文明、古希腊文明、古印度文明满怀深深的感



激?怎么能够不对伟大的欧洲文明、非洲文明、美洲文明、澳洲文明,以及中国周围的亚洲文明充满温情与敬意?

中华民族为人类社会曾作出过独特的贡献。在15世纪以前,中国的科学技术一直处于世界遥遥领先的地位。英国科学家李约瑟说:“中国在公元3世纪到13世纪之间,保持着一个西方所望尘莫及的科学知识水平。”美国耶鲁大学教授、《大国的兴衰》的作者保罗·肯尼迪坦言:“在近代以前时期的所有文明中,没有一个国家的文明比中国更发达,更先进。”

世界各国的有识之士千里迢迢来中国观光、学习。在这个过程中,中国唐朝的长安城渐渐发展成为国际大都市。西方的波斯、东罗马,东亚的高丽、新罗、百济,南亚的南天竺、北天竺,频繁前来。外国的王侯、留学生,在长安供职的外国官员,商贾、乐工和舞士,总有几十个国家,几万人之多。日本派出“遣唐使”更是一批接一批。传为美谈的日本人阿部仲麻吕(晁衡)在长安留学的故事,很能说明外国人与中国的交往。晁衡学成仕于唐朝,前后历时五十余年。晁衡与中国的知识分子结下了深厚的友情。他归国时,传说在海中遇难身亡。大诗人李白作诗哭悼:“日本晁卿辞帝都,征帆一片远蓬壶。明月不归沉碧海,白云愁色满苍梧。”晁衡遇险是误传,但由此可见中外学者之间在中国长安交往的情谊。

后来,不断有外国人到中国来探寻秘密,所见所闻,常常让他们目瞪口呆。《希腊纪事》(希腊人波桑尼阿著)记载公元2世纪时,希腊人在中国的见闻。书中写道:“赛里斯人用小米和青芦喂一种类似蜘蛛的昆虫,喂到第五年,虫肚子胀裂开,便从里面取出丝来。”从这段对中国古代养蚕技术的描述,可见当时欧洲人与中国人的差距。公元9世纪中叶,



阿拉伯人来到中国。一位阿拉伯作家在他所著的《中国印度闻见录》中记载了曾旅居中国的阿拉伯商人的见闻：

——一天，一个外商去拜见驻守广州的中国官吏。会见时，外商总盯着官吏的胸部，官吏很奇怪，便问：“你好像总盯着我的胸，这是怎么回事？”那位外商回答说：“透过你穿的丝绸衣服，我隐约看到你胸口上长着一个黑痣，这是什么丝绸，我感到十分惊奇。”官吏听后，失声大笑，伸出胳膊，说：“请你数数吧，看我穿了几件衣服？”那商人数过，竟然穿了五件之多，黑痣正是透过这五层丝绸衣服显现出来的。外商惊得目瞪口呆，官吏说：“我穿的丝绸还不算是最好的，总督穿的要更精美。”

——书中关于茶(他们叫干草叶子)的记载，可见阿拉伯国家当时还没有喝茶的习惯。书中记述：“中国国王本人的收入主要靠盐税和泡开水喝的一种干草税。在各个城市里，这种干草叶售价都很高，中国人称这种草叶叫‘茶’，这种干草叶比苜蓿的叶子还多，也略比它香，稍有苦味，用开水冲喝，治百病。”

——他们对中国的医疗条件十分羡慕，书中记载道：“中国人医疗条件很好，穷人可以从国库中得到药费。”还说：“城市里，很多地方立一石碑，高10吋，上面刻有各种疾病和药物，写明某种病用某种药医治。”

——关于当时中国的京城，书中作了生动的描述：中国的京城很大，人口众多，一条宽阔的长街把全城分为两半，大街右边的东区，住着皇帝、宰相、禁军及皇家的总管、奴婢。在这个区域，沿街开凿了小河，流水潺潺；路旁，葱茏的树木整然有序，一幢幢宅邸鳞次栉比。大街左边的西区，住着庶民和商人。这里有货栈和商店，每当清晨，人们可以



看到，皇室的总管、宫廷的仆役，或骑马或步行，到这里来采购。

此后的史籍对西人来华的记载，渐渐多了起来。13世纪意大利旅行家马可·波罗，尽管有人对他是否真的到过中国持怀疑态度，但他留下一部记述元代事件的《马可·波罗游记》却是确凿无疑的。这部游记中的一些关于当时中国的描述使得西方人认为是“天方夜谭”。总之，从中西文化交流史来说，这以前的时期还是一个想象和臆测的时代，相互之间充满了好奇与幻想。

从16世纪末开始，由于航海技术的发展，东西方航路的开通，随着一批批传教士来华，中国与西方开始了直接的交流。沟通中西的使命在意大利传教士利玛窦那里有了充分的体现。利玛窦于1582年来华，1610年病逝于北京，在华20余年。除了传教以外，做了两件具有历史象征意义的事，一是1594年前后在韶州用拉丁文翻译《四书》，并作了注释；二是与明代学者徐光启合作，用中文翻译了《几何原本》。

西方传教士对《四书》等中国经典的粗略翻译，以及杜赫德的《中华帝国志》等书对中国的介绍，在西方读者的眼前展现了一个异域文明，在当时及稍后一段时期引起了一场“中国热”，许多西方大思想家的眼光都曾注目中国文化。有的推崇中华文明，如莱布尼兹、伏尔泰、魁奈等，有的对中华文明持批评态度，如孟德斯鸠、黑格尔等。莱布尼兹认识到中国文化的某些思想与他的观念相近，如《周易》的卦象与他发明的二进制相契合，对中国文化给予了热情的礼赞；黑格尔则从他整个哲学体系的推演出发，认为中国没有真正意义上的哲学，还处在哲学史前的状态。但是，不论是推崇还是批评，是吸纳还是排斥，中西文化的交流产生了巨



大的影响。随着先进的中国科学技术的西传，特别是中国的造纸、火药、印刷术和指南针四大发明的问世，大大改变了世界的面貌。马克思说：“中国的火药把骑士阶层炸得粉碎，指南针打开了世界市场并建立了殖民地，而印刷术则变成了新教的工具，变成对精神发展创造必要前提的最强大的杠杆。”英国的哲学家培根说：中国的四大发明“改变了全世界的面貌和一切事物的状态”。

三

大千世界，潮起潮落。云散云聚，万象更新。中国古代产生了无数伟大科学家：祖冲之、李时珍、孙思邈、张衡、沈括、毕昇……产生了无数科技成果：《齐民要术》、《九章算术》、《伤寒杂病论》、《本草纲目》……以及保存至今的世界奇迹：浑天仪、地动仪、都江堰、敦煌石窟、大运河、万里长城……但从15世纪下半叶起，风水似乎从东方转到了西方，落后的欧洲只经过400年便成为世界瞩目的文明中心。英国的牛顿、波兰的哥白尼、德国的伦琴、法国的居里、德国的爱因斯坦、意大利的伽利略、俄国的门捷列夫、美国的费米和爱迪生……光芒四射，令人敬仰。

中华民族开始思考了。潮起潮落究竟是什么原因？中国人发明的火药，传到欧洲，转眼之间反成为欧洲列强轰击中国大门的炮弹，又是因为什么？

鸦片战争终于催醒了中国人沉睡的迷梦，最先“睁眼看世界”的一代精英林则徐、魏源迈出了威武雄壮的一步。曾国藩、李鸿章搞起了洋务运动。中国的知识分子喊出“民主与科学”的口号。中国是落后了，中国的志士仁人在苦苦探



索。但落后中饱含着变革的动力，探索中孕育着崛起的希望。“向科学进军”，中华民族终于又迎来了科学的春天。

今天，世界毕竟来到了 21 世纪的门槛。分散隔绝的世界，逐渐变成联系为一体的世界。现在，全球一体化趋势日益明显，人类历史也就在愈来愈大的程度上成为全世界的历史。当今，任何一种文化的发展都离不开对其他优秀文化的汲取，都以其他优秀文化的发展为前提。在近现代，西方文化汲取中国文化，不仅是中国文化的传播，更是西方文化自身的创新和发展；正如中国文化对西方文化的汲取一样，既是西方文化在中国的传播，同时也是中国文化在近代的转型和发展。地球上所有的人类文化，都是我们共同的宝贵遗产。既然我们生活的各个大陆，在地球史上曾经是连成一气的“泛大陆”，或者说是一个完整的“地球村”，那么，我们同样可以在这个以知识和学习为特征的网络时代，走上相互学习、共同发展的大路，建设和开拓我们人类崭新的“地球村”。

西学仍在东渐，中学也将西传。各国人民的优秀文化正日益迅速地为中国文化所汲取，而无论西方和东方，也都需要从中国文化中汲取养分。正是基于这一认识，我们组织出版汉英对照版《大中华文库》，全面系统地翻译介绍中国传统文化典籍。我们试图通过《大中华文库》，向全世界展示，中华民族五千年的追求，五千年的梦想，正在新的历史时期重放光芒。中国人民就像火后的凤凰，万众一心，迎接新世纪文明的太阳。

1999 年 8 月 北京



PREFACE TO THE LIBRARY OF CHINESE CLASSICS

Yang Muzhi

The publication of the *Library of Chinese Classics* is a matter of great satisfaction to all of us who have been involved in the production of this monumental work. At the same time, we feel a weighty sense of responsibility, and take this opportunity to explain to our readers the motivation for undertaking this cross-century task.

1

The Chinese nation has a long history and a glorious culture, and it has been the aspiration of several generations of Chinese scholars to translate, edit and publish the whole corpus of the Chinese literary classics so that the nation's greatest cultural achievements can be introduced to people all over the world. There have been many translations of the Chinese classics done by foreign scholars. A few dozen years ago, a Western scholar translated the title of *A Dream of Red Mansions* into "A Dream of Red Chambers" and Lin Daiyu, the heroine in the novel, into "Black Jade." But while their endeavours have been laudable, the results of their labours have been less than satisfactory. Lack of knowledge of Chinese culture and an inadequate grasp of the Chinese written language have led the translators into many errors. As a consequence, not only are Chinese classical writings widely misunderstood in the rest of the world, in some cases their content has actually been distorted. At one time, there was a "*Jin Ping Mei* craze" among Western scholars, who thought that they had uncovered a miraculous phenomenon, and published theories claiming that China was the "fountainhead of eroticism," and that a Chinese "tradition of permissiveness" was about to be laid bare. This distorted view came about due to the translators of the *Jin Ping Mei* (*Plum in the Golden Vase*) putting one-sided stress on the raw elements in that novel,



to the neglect of its overall literary value. Meanwhile, there have been many distinguished and well-intentioned Sinologists who have attempted to make the culture of the Chinese nation more widely known by translating works of ancient Chinese philosophy. However, the quality of such work, in many cases, is unsatisfactory, often missing the point entirely. The great philosopher Hegel considered that ancient China had no philosophy in the real sense of the word, being stuck in philosophical “prehistory.” For such an eminent authority to make such a colossal error of judgment is truly regrettable. But, of course, Hegel was just as subject to the constraints of time, space and other objective conditions as anyone else, and since he had to rely for his knowledge of Chinese philosophy on inadequate translations it is not difficult to imagine why he went so far off the mark.

China cannot be separated from the rest of the world; and the rest of the world cannot ignore China. Throughout its history, Chinese civilization has enriched itself by absorbing new elements from the outside world, and in turn has contributed to the progress of world civilization as a whole by transmitting to other peoples its own cultural achievements. From the 5th to the 15th centuries, China marched in the front ranks of world civilization. If mankind wishes to advance, how can it afford to ignore China? How can it afford not to make a thoroughgoing study of its history?

2

Despite the ups and downs in their fortunes, the Chinese people have always been idealistic, and have never ceased to forge ahead and learn from others, eager to strengthen ties of peace and friendship.

The great ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius once said, “Whenever three persons come together, one of them will surely be able to teach me something. I will pick out his good points and emulate them; his bad points I will reform.” Confucius meant by this that we should always be ready to learn from others. This maxim encapsulates the principle the Chinese people have always followed in their dealings with other peoples, not only on an individual basis but also at the level of state-to-state relations.

After generations of internecine strife, China was unified by Emperor



Qin Shi Huang (the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty) in 221 B.C. The Han Dynasty, which succeeded that of the short-lived Qin, waxed powerful, and for the first time brought China into contact with the outside world. In 138 B.C., Emperor Wu dispatched Zhang Qian to the western regions, i.e. Central Asia. Zhang, who traveled as far as what is now Iran, took with him as presents for the rulers he visited on the way 10,000 head of sheep and cattle, as well as gold and silks worth a fabulous amount. In 73, Ban Chao headed a 36-man legation to the western regions. These were missions of friendship to visit neighbours the Chinese people had never met before and to learn from them. Ban Chao sent Gan Ying to explore further toward the west. According to the “Western Regions Section” in the *Book of Later Han*, Gan Ying traveled across the territories of present-day Iraq and Syria, and reached the Mediterranean Sea, an expedition which brought him within the confines of the Roman Empire. Later, during the Tang Dynasty, the monk Xuan Zang made a journey fraught with danger to reach India and seek the knowledge of that land. Upon his return, he organized a team of scholars to translate the Buddhist scriptures, which he had brought back with him. As a result, many of these scriptural classics which were later lost in India have been preserved in China. In fact, it would have been difficult for the people of India to reconstruct their own ancient history if it had not been for Xuan Zang’s *A Record of a Journey to the West in the Time of the Great Tang Dynasty*. In the Ming Dynasty, Zheng He transmitted Chinese culture to Southeast Asia during his seven voyages. Following the Opium Wars in the mid-19th century, progressive Chinese, generation after generation, went to study the advanced scientific thought and cultural achievements of the Western countries. Their aim was to revive the fortunes of their own country. Among them were people who were later to become leaders of China, including Zhu De, Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping. In addition, there were people who were to become leading scientists, literary figures and artists, such as Guo Moruo, Li Siguang, Qian Xuesen, Xian Xinghai and Xu Beihong. Their spirit of ambition, their struggles and their breadth of vision were an inspiration not only to the Chinese people but to people all over the world.

Indeed, it is true that if the Chinese people had not learned many



things from the surrounding countries they would never have been able to produce the splendid achievements of former days. When we look back upon history, how can we not feel profoundly grateful for the legacies of the civilizations of ancient Egypt, Greece and India? How can we not feel fondness and respect for the cultures of Europe, Africa, America and Oceania?

The Chinese nation, in turn, has made unique contributions to the community of mankind. Prior to the 15th century, China led the world in science and technology. The British scientist Joseph Needham once said, "From the third century A.D. to the 13th century A.D. China was far ahead of the West in the level of its scientific knowledge." Paul Kennedy, of Yale University in the U.S., author of *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, said, "Of all the civilizations of the pre-modern period, none was as well-developed or as progressive as that of China."

Foreigners who came to China were often astonished at what they saw and heard. The Greek geographer Pausanias in the second century A.D. gave the first account in the West of the technique of silk production in China: "The Chinese feed a spider-like insect with millet and reeds. After five years the insect's stomach splits open, and silk is extracted therefrom." From this extract, we can see that the Europeans at that time did not know the art of silk manufacture. In the middle of the 9th century A.D., an Arabian writer includes the following anecdote in his *Account of China and India*:

"One day, an Arabian merchant called upon the military governor of Guangzhou. Throughout the meeting, the visitor could not keep his eyes off the governor's chest. Noticing this, the latter asked the Arab merchant what he was staring at. The merchant replied, 'Through the silk robe you are wearing, I can faintly see a black mole on your chest. Your robe must be made out of very fine silk indeed!' The governor burst out laughing, and holding out his sleeve invited the merchant to count how many garments he was wearing. The merchant did so, and discovered that the governor was actually wearing five silk robes, one on top of the other, and they were made of such fine material that a tiny mole could be seen through them all! Moreover, the governor explained that the robes he was wearing were not made of the finest silk at all; silk of the highest



grade was reserved for the garments worn by the provincial governor.”

The references to tea in this book (the author calls it “dried grass”) reveal that the custom of drinking tea was unknown in the Arab countries at that time: “The king of China’s revenue comes mainly from taxes on salt and the dry leaves of a kind of grass which is drunk after boiled water is poured on it. This dried grass is sold at a high price in every city in the country. The Chinese call it ‘cha.’ The bush is like alfalfa, except that it bears more leaves, which are also more fragrant than alfalfa. It has a slightly bitter taste, and when it is infused in boiling water it is said to have medicinal properties.”

Foreign visitors showed especial admiration for Chinese medicine. One wrote, “China has very good medical conditions. Poor people are given money to buy medicines by the government.”

In this period, when Chinese culture was in full bloom, scholars flocked from all over the world to China for sightseeing and for study. Chang’an, the capital of the Tang Dynasty was host to visitors from as far away as the Byzantine Empire, not to mention the neighboring countries of Asia. Chang’an, at that time the world’s greatest metropolis, was packed with thousands of foreign dignitaries, students, diplomats, merchants, artisans and entertainers. Japan especially sent contingent after contingent of envoys to the Tang court. Worthy of note are the accounts of life in Chang’an written by Abeno Nakamaro, a Japanese scholar who studied in China and had close friendships with ministers of the Tang court and many Chinese scholars in a period of over 50 years. The description throws light on the exchanges between Chinese and foreigners in this period. When Abeno was supposedly lost at sea on his way back home, the leading poet of the time, Li Bai, wrote a eulogy for him.

The following centuries saw a steady increase in the accounts of China written by Western visitors. The Italian Marco Polo described conditions in China during the Yuan Dynasty in his *Travels*. However, until advances in the science of navigation led to the opening of east-west shipping routes at the beginning of the 16th century Sino-Western cultural exchanges were coloured by fantasy and conjecture. Concrete progress was made when a contingent of religious missionaries, men well versed in Western science and technology, made their way to China, ushering in an era of



direct contacts between China and the West. The experience of this era was embodied in the career of the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci. Arriving in China in 1582, Ricci died in Beijing in 1610. Apart from his missionary work, Ricci accomplished two historically symbolic tasks — one was the translation into Latin of the “Four Books,” together with annotations, in 1594; the other was the translation into Chinese of Euclid’s *Elements*.

The rough translations of the “Four Books” and other Chinese classical works by Western missionaries, and the publication of Père du Halde’s *Description Geographique, Historique, Chronologique, Politique, et Physique de l’Empire de la Chine* revealed an exotic culture to Western readers, and sparked a “China fever,” during which the eyes of many Western intellectuals were fixed on China. Some of these intellectuals, including Leibniz, held China in high esteem; others, such as Hegel, nursed a critical attitude toward Chinese culture. Leibniz considered that some aspects of Chinese thought were close to his own views, such as the philosophy of the *Book of Changes* and his own binary system. Hegel, on the other hand, as mentioned above, considered that China had developed no proper philosophy of its own. Nevertheless, no matter whether the reaction was one of admiration, criticism, acceptance or rejection, Sino-Western exchanges were of great significance. The transmission of advanced Chinese science and technology to the West, especially the Chinese inventions of paper-making, gunpowder, printing and the compass, greatly changed the face of the whole world. Karl Marx said, “Chinese gunpowder blew the feudal class of knights to smithereens; the compass opened up world markets and built colonies; and printing became an implement of Protestantism and the most powerful lever and necessary precondition for intellectual development and creation.” The English philosopher Roger Bacon said that China’s four great inventions had “changed the face of the whole world and the state of affairs of everything.”

Ancient China gave birth to a large number of eminent scientists, such as Zu Chongzhi, Li Shizhen, Sun Simiao, Zhang Heng, Shen Kuo and Bi Sheng. They produced numerous treatises on scientific subjects, includ-



ing *The Manual of Important Arts for the People's Welfare*, *Nine Chapters on the Mathematical Art*, *A Treatise on Febrile Diseases* and *Compendium of Materia Medica*. Their accomplishments included ones whose influence has been felt right down to modern times, such as the armillary sphere, seismograph, Dujiangyan water conservancy project, Dunhuang Grottoes, Grand Canal and Great Wall. But from the latter part of the 15th century, and for the next 400 years, Europe gradually became the cultural centre upon which the world's eyes were fixed. The world's most outstanding scientists then were England's Isaac Newton, Poland's Copernicus, France's Marie Curie, Germany's Rontgen and Einstein, Italy's Galileo, Russia's Mendeleev and America's Edison.

The Chinese people then began to think: What is the cause of the rise and fall of nations? Moreover, how did it happen that gunpowder, invented in China and transmitted to the West, in no time at all made Europe powerful enough to batter down the gates of China herself?

It took the Opium War to wake China from its reverie. The first generation to make the bold step of "turning our eyes once again to the rest of the world" was represented by Lin Zexu and Wei Yuan. Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang started the Westernization Movement, and later intellectuals raised the slogan of "Democracy and Science." Noble-minded patriots, realizing that China had fallen behind in the race for modernization, set out on a painful quest. But in backwardness lay the motivation for change, and the quest produced the embryo of a towering hope, and the Chinese people finally gathered under a banner proclaiming a "March Toward Science."

On the threshold of the 21st century, the world is moving in the direction of becoming an integrated entity. This trend is becoming clearer by the day. In fact, the history of the various peoples of the world is also becoming the history of mankind as a whole. Today, it is impossible for any nation's culture to develop without absorbing the excellent aspects of the cultures of other peoples. When Western culture absorbs aspects of Chinese culture, this is not just because it has come into contact with Chinese culture, but also because of the active creativity and development of Western culture itself; and vice versa. The various cultures of the world's peoples are a precious heritage which we all share. Mankind



no longer lives on different continents, but on one big continent, or in a “global village.” And so, in this era characterized by an all-encompassing network of knowledge and information we should learn from each other and march in step along the highway of development to construct a brand-new “global village.”

Western learning is still being transmitted to the East, and vice versa. China is accelerating its pace of absorption of the best parts of the cultures of other countries, and there is no doubt that both the West and the East need the nourishment of Chinese culture. Based on this recognition, we have edited and published the *Library of Chinese Classics* in a Chinese-English format as an introduction to the corpus of traditional Chinese culture in a comprehensive and systematic translation. Through this collection, our aim is to reveal to the world the aspirations and dreams of the Chinese people over the past 5,000 years and the splendour of the new historical era in China. Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, the Chinese people in unison are welcoming the cultural sunrise of the new century.



INTRODUCTION

Stories to Caution the World (Jingshi tongyan), more commonly known in English as *Comprehensive Words to Warn the World*, was published in Jinling, present-day Nanjing, in 1624. It is the second of three celebrated Ming-dynasty (1368–1644) collections of stories; the first is *Stories Old and New* (Gujin xiaoshuo; 1620), and the third is *Stories to Awaken the World*, or *Constant Words to Awaken the World* (Xingshi hengyan; 1627). Each collection contains forty stories, and since *Stories Old and New* is also known as *Illustrious Words to Instruct the World* (Yushi mingyan), the three books are most often referred to collectively as the *Sanyan* (Three Words), from the Chinese character *yan* at the end of each title.¹

The *Sanyan* collections were edited by Feng Menglong (1574–1646), the most knowledgeable connoisseur of popular literature of his time. He came from a well-to-do, educated family in exceptionally prosperous Suzhou Prefecture, one of the great cultural centers of Ming China. Feng acquired the preliminary academic degree of *shengyuan* when he was about twenty but apparently had no further luck in the civil service examinations, in spite of his erudition and great literary fame. Finally, in 1630, at the age of fifty-six or fifty-seven, he seemed to have lost hope that he would pass the examinations and decided instead to take the alternative route to office by accepting the status of tribute student.² He then served one term as assistant instructor in Dantu County (about ninety



miles northwest of Suzhou), probably from 1631 to 1634,³ before he was promoted to a minor official position as magistrate of Shouning County, Fujian. He held this office for four years and proved to be an honest, caring, and efficient administrator, as is registered in *County History of Shouning* (Shouning xian zhi), compiled in the early Qing period. The county history also tells us that Feng “venerated literary studies more than anything else” (*shou shang wenxue*) during his service.⁴ Feng’s last political involvement, toward the end of his life, was his association with the Southern Ming government in its desperate resistance against the crushing forces of the Manchus. He died soon afterward in 1646 at the age of seventy-two.

Feng Menglong was one of the most prolific writers of his time. The books he published could literally be “piled up to reach his own height” (*zhuzuo dengshen*), a phrase traditionally used by critics to praise exceptionally productive writers,⁵ and they covered such a wide range of interests and literary genres that Feng has been described as “presenting himself in two distinct personae, or ... in a range of personae between two extremes.”⁶ At one extreme, he appears in some of his works as the wit, the ribald humorist, the bohemian, the drinker, and the romantic lover. This is the Feng Menglong who compiled *Treasury of Jokes* (*Xiaofu*) and published two volumes of folk songs (*Guazhir* and *Hill Songs*), mostly on erotic or ribald themes, and whose passionate love affair with the famous Suzhou courtesan Hou Huiqing is revealed in some of his poems. At the other extreme is Feng Menglong the patriot, the orthodox scholar, and ardent examination candidate, who authored at least three handbooks on the Confucian classic *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, wrote a similar handbook on the Four Books, and published many patriotic tracts as a consequence of his participation in Southern Ming resistance activities.



These two personae may seem to be mutually exclusive, yet in his fiction as well as his plays, Feng Menglong often reveals elements of both in a single text.⁷

Modern scholars generally agree, however, that Feng Menglong's greatest contribution to literature is in the field of vernacular fiction, particularly his collecting and editing of the three *Sanyan* books of 120 vernacular short stories. This genre, known as *huaben*, is believed to have developed, along with the vernacular novel, during the Song (960–1279) and Yuan (1206–1368) dynasties and reached maturity in the late Ming. As a passionate champion of popular literature, Feng managed to rescue from oblivion a significant proportion of the early *huaben* stories by making them available to the public again. But preservation of existing stories was by no means Feng Menglong's only concern — he probably was more interested in giving prestige to this new literary genre and establishing it socially. In the Preface to *Stories Old and New*, he places vernacular fiction on a par with the highly esteemed classical tales of the Tang dynasty (618–907):

Literature and the arts have been so vigorously advanced by the imperial court of this Ming dynasty that each and every school is flourishing; in vernacular fiction alone, there is no lack of writings of a quality far above those of the Song. It is a mistake to believe, as some do, that such works lack the charm of those of the Tang. One who has a love for the peach need not forsake the apricot. Fine linen, silk gauze, plush, brocade — each has its proper occasion for wear.

In order to elevate the status of the vernacular story, Feng Menglong



also claims, in the same preface, that the origin of all fiction is the grand tradition of historiography, and he ascribes more educational and moral power to the *huaben* story than to *The Analects of Confucius* (Lunyu).⁸ With the aim of substantiating such claims, Feng is believed, not surprisingly, to have extensively modified some of the stories he had collected and incorporated many of his own stories and those of some friends into the *Sanyan* collections, although he does not acknowledge authorship in the preface.⁹ According to Patrick Hanan, who applied rigorous stylistic criteria in his studies of the dating and authorship of Chinese vernacular stories, Feng Menglong is the probable author of nineteen stories in *Stories Old and New*, sixteen in *Stories to Caution the World*, and one or two in *Stories to Awaken the World*.¹⁰

A less drastic but more obvious aspect of Feng's "editing" is his rearrangement into pairs of the stories in the three collections. The thematically and grammatically parallel pairs of titles may be an attempt to parody the parallelism of classical poetry and belles-lettres prose (the two most honored literary genres of Feng's time),¹¹ or may simply represent his effort to elevate the vernacular short story. However, on the textual level, it is clear that stories were composed with their pairs in mind.¹² The paired stories often share features of subject matter or plot line, and they occasionally contrast or comment on each other.

One of the most interesting and controversial characteristics of Chinese vernacular fiction is its "storyteller's rhetoric." This is part of what Patrick Hanan refers to as the "simulated context," or "the context of situation in which a piece of fiction claims to be transmitted."¹³ In the *Sanyan* stories (and in other Chinese vernacular fiction as well), this simulacrum almost always takes the form of a professional storyteller addressing his audience. The storyteller-narrator asks questions of his



simulated audience, converses with them, makes explicit references to his own stories, and intersperses his narrative with verses and poems. The narrator usually begins his talk with one or more prologue stories or poems, which supposedly allows time for his audience to gather before he presents the main piece in his performance.

Of course, in written literature, this storyteller's pose is only a pretense in which "the author and reader happily acquiesce in order that the fiction can be communicated."¹⁴ It was a way to "naturalize, by reference to the familiar situation of hearing stories told in the vernacular by professional storytellers, the unfamiliar process of writing and reading fiction in vernacular Chinese."¹⁵ But this formal feature, plus a misunderstanding of the term *huaben*, led many scholars of Chinese literature to subscribe, until a couple of decades ago, to the "prompt-book" theory, which held that the Chinese vernacular story developed directly from the prompt-books of marketplace storytellers in the Song dynasty and that the pre-*Sanyan* texts were genuine prompt-books written for performance in the Song and Yuan or early Ming periods.¹⁶ W.L. Idema, however, argues that the storyteller's manner was developed deliberately in literati imitations by Feng Menglong and others. According to Idema, the conspicuous use of this rhetorical stance in the *Sanyan* collections was "a consequence mainly of Feng Menglong's reinterpretation of the genre and due to his overall rewritings."¹⁷ In other words, Feng's editing of his collections included a systematic elaboration of this storyteller rhetoric, which became a hallmark of the *huaben* story as he conceived of it.

This, however, is not to deny the presence of elements of oral folk literature in the *Sanyan* stories. Most contain anecdotes or episodes known even to the illiterate, which suggests that the editor looked to storytelling for raw materials as well as for rhetorical formulas. And we may assume



that traces of the marketplace storyteller and the values he represented would unavoidably have remained in these *huaben* stories in spite of Feng Menglong's often meticulous editing. Idema argues that professional storytelling was but one of the many factors that helped to shape traditional Chinese fiction.¹⁸ Small wonder that the *Sanyan* collections provide for us such a vivid panoramic view of the bustling world of imperial China before the end of Ming; we see not only scholars, emperors, ministers, and generals but also a gallery of ordinary men and women in their everyday surroundings — merchants and artisans, prostitutes and courtesans, matchmakers and fortune-tellers, monks and nuns, servants and maids, thieves and impostors. We learn about their joys and sorrows, likes and dislikes, their view of life and death, and even their visions of the underworld and the supernatural.

Thus the *Sanyan* stories are necessarily overdetermined texts, historically, ideologically, and formally. They can justifiably be taken as an intersection of complex cultural determinations, with generic mixture and multiple voices making different and sometimes conflicting claims. This complexity of multiple voices in *Stories to Caution the World* has never been fully presented to the English reader. Of the forty stories in this collection, only fourteen have been published in English translation, appearing separately in journals and anthologies of Chinese literature instead of being arranged in pairs and in the original sequence. Moreover, in these previous translations, the storyteller's rhetoric, the verses, and the prologue stories often are deleted.¹⁹ The interlinear and marginal comments, generally believed to have been made by Feng Menglong himself,²⁰ are omitted even in modern Chinese editions of the collection. This volume represents the first effort to translate the second of the seventeenth-century *Sanyan* collections in its entirety. In doing so, we hope



not only to provide the English reader with a fuller picture of the complex social environment of imperial China but, more important, to show the intricate interactions among different voices in the texts, especially between the voice of the conventional storyteller-narrator and that of the literati editor Feng Menglong.

SANYAN STORIES IN THE WEST

Although it is hard to verify now the claim that the publication of three *Sanyan* stories in French, including Story 2 and Story 5 from *Jingshi tongyan*, in Paris in 1735, was the first translation of Chinese vernacular stories into a European language,²¹ it is certain that the 19th century witnessed the publication of at least seven *Jingshi tongyan* stories in English, French or German. Story 1 of *Jingshi tongyan* seems to have been European translators' most favorite one: it was translated into French by T. Pavie as "Le luth brisé" in 1839, into English by Auguste Webster as "Yue-Pe-Ya's Lute, a Chinese Tale in English Verse" in 1874, and again into English by L. M. Fay as "The Broken Lute or Friendship's Last Offering" in 1877. Story 9 was translated, also by T. Pavie, as "Le poète Ly-Tai-Pe" in 1839. The publication of Story 12 as "Fan-hy-cheu, a Tale, in Chinese and English" by Stephen Weston in 1814 appears to be the earliest translation into English in the 19th century. Story 22 was rendered into English by P. Thoms, as "The Affectionate Pair, or the History of Sung-kin, a Chinese Tale" in 1820. Story 26 was translated into French by Hervey de Saint-Denys as "Tang le Kiai-youen" in 1889. Story 32 was translated into English by Samuel Birch as "The Casket of Gems" in 1871 and into German by Eduard Grisebach as "Tu-schi-niang wirft entrüstet das Juwelenkätschen in die Fluten" in 1884. Finally, Story 34



was translated into English by Sloth (R. Thom) as “The Lasting Resentment of Miss Keaou Lwan Wang, a Chinese Tale, Founded on Fact” in 1839.²²

There was a growing interest in the Chinese vernacular story in the 20th century, particularly in the decades after the end of World War II. Of the following nine anthologies in English published between 1944 and 1978, at least five are still easily available in most East Asian libraries in Britain and North America today.

1) *Traditional Chinese Tales*, translated by Chi-chen Wang, published by Columbia University Press, New York, 1944; reprinted by Greenwood Press, New York, 1968. This collection includes five stories, all from *Xingshi hengyan*: Story 2 as “The Three Brothers,” Story 3 as “The Old Peddler and the Queen of Flowers,” Story 4 as “The Flower Lover and the Fairies,” Story 8 as “The Jade Kuanyin,” and Story 33 as “The Judicial Murder of Ts’ui Ning.”

2) *Four Cautionary Tales*, translated by Harold Acton and Yi-hsieh Lee, published by A. A. Wyn, New York, 1947. The four tales in this collection are also all from *Xingshi hengyan*: Story 9 as “The Everlasting Couple,” Story 10 as “Brothers Liu,” Story 15 as “The Mandarin-Duck Girdle,” and Story 28 as “Love in a Junk.”

3) *The Colloquial Short Story in China: a Study of the Sanyen Collections*, translated by John Lyman Bishop, published by Harvard University Press, 1956. There are four stories in this book, preceded by the translator’s long introductory essay. Three of them are from *Gujin xiaoshuo*: Story 3 as “Chin-nu Sells Love at Newbridge”, Story 16 as “Fan Chü-ch’ing’s Eternal Friendship,” and Story 26 as “Master Shen’s Bird Destroys Seven Lives.” The other one is Story 3 of *Jingshi tongyan*



as “Wang An-shih Thrice Corners Su Tung-p’o.”

4) *The Courtesan’s Jewel Box: Chinese Stories of the Xth–XVIIth Centuries*, translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, published by Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1957. This collection includes fourteen *Sanyan* stories. Four are from *Gujin xiaoshuo*: Story 10 as “The Hidden Will,” Story 27 as “The Beggar Chief’s Daughter,” Story 35 as “The Monk’s Billet-doux,” and Story 40 as “A Just Man Avenged.” Three stories are from *Jingshi tongyan*: Story 8 as “The Jade Worker,” Story 16 as “The Honest Clerk,” and Story 32 as “The Courtesan’s Jewel Box.” The remaining seven stories are all from *Xingshi hengyan*: Story 3 as “The Oil Vendor and the Courtesan,” Story 4 as “The Old Gardener,” Story 6 as “The Foxes’ Revenge,” Story 7 as “Marriage by Proxy,” Story 10 as “The Two Brothers,” Story 29 as “The Proud Scholar,” and Story 33 as “Fifteen Strings of Cash.” The other collection, *Lazy Dragon: Chinese Stories from the Ming Dynasty*, translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, published by Joint Publishing Co., Hong Kong, 1981, is a reprint of eight stories from *The Courtesan’s Jewel Box*, added with two new ones. They are Story 18 of *Gujin xiaoshuo* as “The Strange Adventures of Yang Balao,” and Story 13 of *Jingshi tongyan* as “The Ghost Came Thrice.” Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang also translated two other *Sanyan* stories: Story 28 of *Jingshi tongyan* as “The White Snake” in *Chinese Literature* (July 1959), and Story 24 of *Gujin xiaoshuo* as “Strange Encounter in the Northern Capital” in *Chinese Literature* (December, 1961).

5) *Stories from a Ming Collection: The Art of the Chinese Storyteller*, translated by Cyril Birch, published by Grove Weidenfeld, New York, 1958. This collection includes six stories from *Gujin xiaoshuo*: Story 1 as “The Pearl-Sewn Shirt,” Story 5 as “Wine and Dumplings,”



Story 8 as “The Journey of the Corpse,” Story 26 as “The Canary Murders,” Story 27 as “The Lady Who Was a Beggar,” and Story 33 as “The Fairy’s Rescue.”

6) *Eight Colloquial Tales of the Sung*, translated by Richard F. S. Yang, published by The China Post, Taipei, 1972. This collection consists of eight vernacular stories. One is from *Xingshi hengyan*: Story 33 as “The Mistaken Execution of Ts’ui Ning.” The other seven are all from *Jingshi tongyan*: Story 4 as “The Stubborn Chancellor,” Story 7 as “P’u-sa Man,” Story 8 as “Carving the Jade Goddess Kuan-yin,” Story 12 as “The Re-union of Feng Yü-mei,” Story 14 as “Ghosts in the Western Hills,” Story 16 as “Chang, the Honest Steward,” and Story 19 as “The White Hawk of Ts’ui, the Magistrate’s Son, Led to Demons.”

7) *Chinese Literature: Popular Fiction and Drama*, translated by H. C. Chang, published by Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1973. This anthology includes three stories from *Jingshi tongyan*: Story 12 as “The Twin Mirrors,” Story 13 as “The Clerk’s Lady,” and Story 28 as “Madame White.”

8) *The Perfect Lady by Mistake and Other Stories by Feng Menglong (1574–1646)*, translated with an introduction by William Dolby, published by Paul Elek, London, 1976. This collection consists of six stories. One is Story 7 of *Gujin xiaoshuo* as “Yang Jiao Throws away His Life in Fulfillment of a Friendship.” The other is Story 9 of *Jingshi tongyan* as “Li Bai, God in Exile, Drunken Drafts His ‘Letter to Daunt the Barbarians.’” The remaining four are all from *Xingshi hengyan*: Story 1 as “Two Magistrates Vie to Marry an Orphaned Girl,” Story 5 as “On Big Tree Slope a Faithful Tiger Acts Best Man,” Story 7 as “The Perfect Lady by Mistake,” and Story 33 as “A Joke over Fifteen Strings of Cash Brings Uncanny Disaster.”



9) *Traditional Chinese Stories: Themes and Variations*, edited by Y. W. Ma and Joseph S. M. Lau, published by Columbia University Press, New York, 1978. This anthology includes seventeen *Sanyan* stories. Four of them are from *Gujin xiaoshuo*: Story 1 as “The Pearl Shirt Reencountered,” Story 3 as “Han Wu-niang Sells Her Charms at the New Bridge Market,” Story 8 as “Wu Pao-an Ransoms His Friend,” Story 10 as “Magistrate T’eng and the Case of Inheritance,” and Story 36 as “Sung the Fourth Raises Hell with Tightwad Chang.” Seven of the seventeen stories are from *Jingshi tongyan*: Story 8 as “Artisan Ts’ui and His Ghost Wife,” Story 12 as “Loach Fan’s Double Mirror,” Story 14 as “A Mangy Taoist Exorcises Ghosts,” Story 21 as “The Sung Founder Escorts Ching-niang One Thousand *Li*,” Story 28 as “Eternal Prisoner under the Thunder Peak Pagoda,” Story 32 as “Tu Shih-niang Sinks the Jewel Box in Anger,” and Story 35 as “The Case of the Dead Infant.” The remaining five are all from *Xingshi hengyan*: Story 3 as “The Oil Peddler Courts the Courtesan,” Story 9 as “The Couple Bound in Life and Death,” Story 13 as “The Boot That Reveals the Culprit,” Story 33 as “The Jest That Leads to Disaster,” and Story 35 as “Old Servant Hsü.”

As can be seen from the above, none of the three *Sanyan* collections had been translated in its entirety before the end of the 20th century. Only seventeen of the forty stories in *Gujin xiaoshuo*, fifteen in *Jingshi tongyan*, and fourteen in *Xingshi hengyan* were translated into English, and they all appeared separately in journals and anthologies of Chinese literature, never arranged in pairs and in the original sequence. Even when they were presented individually, the storyteller’s rhetoric, the verses, and the prologue stories were often deleted. The interlineal and marginal



comments, generally believed to have been made by Feng Menglong himself, were omitted in all of these translations. Thus when *Stories Old and New: a Ming Dynasty Collection*, translated by Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang, was published by University of Washington Press in 2000, it was acclaimed as a work that “clearly sets a new standard for the English-speaking world,” because it was a “truly complete translation” of the 1620 Tianxuzhai edition of *Gujin xiaoshuo*,²³ including not only the twenty-three stories that had never been translated before and what was omitted in previous translations of the other stories, but also the publisher’s blurb and the preface to the collection.

In the second half of the 20th century there was also a significant increase in the publications of scholarship on the Ming-Qing vernacular fiction. The 1970s and 1980s in particular witnessed the publication of four monumental book-length studies of the development of the Chinese vernacular short story. Patrick Hanan’s *The Chinese Short Story: Studies in Dating, Authorship, and Composition* was published by Harvard University Press in 1973, and his second book *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, which devotes two chapters to the study of Feng Menglong, was published by the same publisher in 1981. Wilt L. Idema’s seminal essay “Storytelling and the Short Story in China” published in *T’oung Pao* in 1973 was reprinted in his book *Chinese Vernacular Fiction: the Formative Period* published by E. J. Brill, Leiden, in 1974. And in 1978, the first volume of André Lévy’s four volumes long book *Inventaire analytique et critique du conte chinois en langue vulgaire* saw the light of day in Paris. Finally, shortly before the end of the 20th century, there came out another book on the same subject, Shuhui Yang’s *Appropriation and Representation: Feng Menglong and the Chinese Vernacular Story*, the only monograph on Feng Menglong and his Sanyan in

English so far, published by Center for Chinese Studies, the University of Michigan, in 1998.

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1. For a detailed discussion of the *Sanyan* and its influence on Chinese fiction, as well as a bibliography of relevant works, see Feng Menglong, *Stories Old and New: a Ming Dynasty Collection*, trans. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang (Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House, 2007). Introduction 17-62, Bibliography 1820-1832.

2. Lu Shulun, "Feng Menglong," in his *Feng Menglong sanlun* (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1993), 7.

3. Pi-ching Hsu, "Celebrating the Emotional Self," (Ph.D diss, University of Minnesota, 1994), 48.

4. Quoted in Lu Shulun, "Feng Menglong," 92.

5. The facsimile edition of *Feng Menglong quanji* (Complete Works of Feng Menglong), published by Shanghai Guji Chubanshe in 1993, contains forty-three volumes that, when stacked together, are more than six feet tall.

6. Patrick Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 80-81.

7. Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, 80-81.

8. The moralistic and didactic tone of the three *Sanyan* titles (*Illustrious Words to Instruct the World*, *Comprehensive Words to Warn the World*, and *Constant Words to Awaken the World*) can probably also be understood in the same light.

9. Y.W. Ma, "Feng Meng-lung," in William Nienhauser, ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 381.

10. Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, 104; and Patrick Hanan, *The Chinese Short Story: Studies in Dating, Authorship, and Composition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 76-86.

11. In his "Preface to *Art Song Prosody*" (Qulü xu), Feng complains that "the most abused literary genres today are classical poetry and prose." In his preface to *Hill Songs*, he also says that "although there is an abundance of false poetry and prose, there are no false





folk songs." See Guo Shaoyu, *Zhongguo lidai wenlun xuan* (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1979), 3:194, 231.

12. Cyril Birch, "Feng Meng-lung and the *Ku Chin Hsiao Shuo*," in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (18) 1956: 82.

13. Patrick Hanan, "The Nature of Ling Meng-ch'u's Fiction," in Andrew Plaks ed., *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 87.

14. Hanan, "The Nature of Ling Meng-ch'u's Fiction," 87.

15. David Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 232. Rolston also says that the simulated storyteller can be seen "as a functional attempt to deal with the absence of the 'author' in early vernacular fiction."

16. The word *huaben* was adopted as the regular term for the traditional Chinese vernacular short story only in the twentieth century. On its early usage as simply "story," rather than "prompt-book," see Charles Wivell, "The Term 'Hua-pen'," in David Buxbaum and Frederick Mote, eds., *Transition and Permanence: Chinese History and Culture* (Hong Kong: Cathay Press, 1972), 295-306. The prompt-book theory has been criticized from another angle: because professional storytellers were more likely to have relied on abstracts or notes in the classical language, the earliest extant *huaben* texts were perhaps also meant for reading, rather than reciting, as were their later imitations; see André Lévy, "Hua-pen," in Nienhauser, ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, 443.

17. See W.L. Idema, "Storytelling and the Short Story in China," in *T'oung Pao* 59 (1973): 3, 35-39.

18. W. L. Idema, "Some Remarks and Speculations Concerning *P'ing-hua*," rpt. in his *Chinese Vernacular Fiction: The Formative Period* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1974), 72.

19. See, for example, Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, trans., *The Courtesan's Jewel Box* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1981).

20. See Hu Wanchuan, "Sanyan xu ji meipi de zuozhe wenti," rpt. in his *Huaben yu caizi jiaren xiaoshuo zhi yanjiu* (Taipei: Da'an, 1994), 123-38.

21. See Wen Mengfu, *Sanyan huaben yu niuhuaben yanjiu* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2005), 226.

22. See André Lévy, *Inventaire analytique et critique du conte chinois en langue vulgaire*, Vol. II (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979), 357-58, 399, 417, 476, 504, 533-34, and 542.

23. Wilt L. Idema, Review of Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang, *Stories Old and New: a Ming Dynasty Collection*, in *Review of Bibliography in Sinology*, Volume XIX (2001): 406-07.



前 言

《警世通言》于1624年在金陵（今南京）出版，是明代（1368—1644）三部著名白话短篇小说集中的第二部，第一部为《古今小说》（1620），第三部为《醒世恒言》（1627）。三部集子各收录了四十篇话本小说。由于《古今小说》也被称作《喻世明言》，这三部集子根据书名中的“言”字合起来总称“三言”。

“三言”的编撰者冯梦龙（1574—1646）是明末首屈一指的通俗文学家。他出生于富庶繁荣的苏州府一个家道殷实的书香人家，而苏州府是明代中国的文化中心之一。冯梦龙20岁左右即成了生员，但此后尽管学术渊博且享誉文坛，在科考方面却似乎时乖命蹇。最后，到崇祯三年（1630），56岁的冯梦龙似乎已不再奢望能通过乡试，他决定接受贡生的身份，走另一条道路进入仕途。他担任了苏州西北方向约150公里处的丹徒县训导一职，任期从1631到1634年，然后升任福建寿宁县知县。据清初编撰的《寿宁县志》记载，他在四年的知县任期中“政简刑清，首尚文学，遇民以恩，待士以礼”，其中“首尚文学”四字表明冯梦龙闲暇之时仍在写作。冯梦龙最后一次涉足政治是在其逝世前两年，当时清兵步步南逼，南明王朝岌岌可危。不久后，冯梦龙于1646年去世，享年72岁。

冯梦龙是当时最多产的作家之一，可谓“著作等身”，所涉及的领域及文学体裁极为广泛，因此冯梦龙被形容为“展现自己两个截然



不同的人格面貌……或者说展现介于两个极端之间的多种人格面貌”。从一个极端来看，他在一些作品中表现为机智、粗俗的幽默家，放荡不羁，嗜酒多情。这个冯梦龙编撰了《笑府》，出版了大多为男女私情的两本民歌集（《挂枝儿》和《山歌》），一些诗作更是反映了他对苏州名妓侯慧卿的恋情。另一个极端的冯梦龙是一个爱国者、一个正统的经史学家、一个孜孜不倦热衷于科举的考生。这个冯梦龙至少为儒家经典《春秋》写了三本科举考试手册，为“四书”也写了一本科举考试手册，还为自己参与南明的抗清活动出版了许多具有爱国精神的小册子。这两种人格面貌似乎水火不相容，但在他的小说和戏剧中，冯梦龙常常会在同一个作品中同时展露这两种成分。

不过，现代学者们一致认为冯梦龙对文学的最大贡献是白话小说，尤其是他收集、整理的120篇短篇话本小说，即“三言”。话本作为一种文学体裁与长篇通俗小说一起从宋（960—1279）、元（1206—1368）两代发展而来，至明末成熟。作为通俗文学的大力提倡者，他保存了大量早期短篇话本小说，并使这些作品重新为大众所知。然而，保护现存的小说显然并不是冯梦龙唯一关心的事——他更感兴趣的可能是提高这种新型文学体裁的社会地位。他在《古今小说》的前言中将话本小说与唐代（618—907）备受推崇的经典传奇相提并论：

皇明文治既郁，靡流不波；即演义一斑，往往有远过宋人者。而或以为恨乏唐人风致，谬矣。食桃者不费杏，绉縠毳锦，惟时所适。

为了提高话本小说的地位，冯梦龙在同一篇前言中还声称，所有



小说均来源于中国的修史传统，并认为话本小说的教育意义和道德力量均高于《论语》。为了证明这一观点，冯梦龙不仅对他所收集到的短篇小说进行了大刀阔斧的修改，而且还把他本人和他一些朋友的许多短篇收录到了“三言”中，虽然他本人在前言中对此只字未提。韩南教授（Patrick Hanan）曾根据作者写作风格的特点对中国白话短篇小说进行过深入研究，他认为《古今小说》中出自冯梦龙笔下的有十九篇，《警世通言》中有十六篇，《醒世恒言》中有一两篇。

冯梦龙的“编撰”中有一个比较明显的特点，他将三部集子中的短篇小说重新进行了两两配对。两篇的篇名无论是在主题上还是在语法结构上均两两对偶，这可能是为了戏仿诗文中的对仗结构（律诗和古文是冯梦龙时代最为文人崇尚的两种文学体裁），也可能仅仅是为了就此提高话本的社会地位。不过，从故事的内容上来看，冯梦龙在安排这些短篇小说时心中就已经有了这种对称的构思。配对的故事常常在主题或情节上具有相同特点，偶尔也互相形成鲜明的对比，仿佛是在互相评判。

中国白话小说最有意思也最引起争议的特点就是“说话人的艺术特点”，也就是韩南教授所说的“模拟场景”或“一部小说作品传播时的场景”。在“三言”话本小说（以及中国其他白话小说）中，这种虚构的场景几乎总是采用说书人对听众叙说的方式。说话人向虚拟的听众提问，与他们交谈，并不断用诗词打断自己的叙述，有时还提及自己曾讲述过的其他故事。说话人通常以一个或多个小故事、一首或多首诗词“入话”开始，仿佛是要让晚到的听众也能赶上听他的“正话”。

当然，在书面文学中，这种说话人讲故事的姿态只是一种假象，



为的是让“作者和读者共同接受这样一种假设，以便就小说进行交流”。这是“通过提及聆听职业说书人用白话讲述故事时熟悉的环境，来淡化用白话汉语写作和阅读小说这一过程”的一种办法。但是这种文学形式上的特征，以及对“话本”这一术语的误解，使得许多中国文学专家直到二三十年前仍然抱定其“底本”理论，即认为中国白话小说是直接从宋代瓦舍勾栏说话人的底本发展而来的，认为“三言”之前的话本只是宋、元、明初说话人所写的底本。然而，伊维德教授（W.L.Idema）认为这种说话人式的风格是冯梦龙等文人刻意模仿发展而成的。按照伊维德教授的说法，“三言”突出地采用这种艺术手法，“主要是冯梦龙对这种体裁的重新理解以及他进行整体再创作的结果”。换句话说，冯梦龙在编辑“三言”时，刻意采用了这种说话人艺术手法，因为这种艺术手法正是他心目中“话本”小说的标志。

但这并不是说“三言”中就没有口头民间文学的因素在内。大多数作品都含有连文盲都耳熟能详的轶事或典故，这表明编者不仅采纳了说书人的艺术表现手法，而且在说书人的故事里发掘原始素材。看来，尽管冯梦龙进行了悉心的编辑，但这些话本小说中仍然不可避免地留有瓦舍勾栏说话人价值观的痕迹。伊维德教授提出，说话人的故事只是造就中国传统白话小说的众多因素之一。无怪乎，“三言”所描绘的明末前古代中国的繁华世界就像一幅生动的全景图，不但文人、皇帝、大臣和将军跃然纸上，就连日常生活中形形色色的普通百姓——商人和工匠、私娼和艺妓、媒婆和相士、和尚和尼姑、男仆和女佣、小偷和骗子也都呼之欲出。我们可以窥知他们的喜怒哀乐、他们的好恶、他们的生死观乃至他们对地狱和仙境的看法。

因此，“三言”所收录的白话短篇小说文体结构多样，汇集了众多历史和意识形态的复杂因素，各种不同甚至冲突的价值观互相交



织。迄今为止，《警世通言》中所表达的价值观之丰富多样还从来没有完全向英语读者展现过。本书所收录的四十个短篇小说中，只有十四篇曾译成了英语，均散见于中国文学期刊和选集中，从来没有两两配对，更没有以其本来顺序出现过。而且，以前的译文常常删除了说话人的用语、诗词和人话部分，所有译本均省略了普遍认为出自冯梦龙本人笔下的眉批。本译作首次完整地将 17 世纪的“三言”中的第二部翻译成了英语，我们希望这不仅能使英语读者更加全面地了解明末前复杂的中国社会环境，而且更为重要的是让他们了解这些作品中各种不同价值观之间微妙复杂的关系，尤其是传统说书人所表达的观点与文人编撰者冯梦龙的观点之间的互动作用。

“三言”在西方

虽然现在很难证实 1735 年巴黎出版的法语版“三言”短篇小说（包括《警世通言》中的第二和第五篇）就是最早翻译成欧洲语言的中国白话短篇小说，但我们可以肯定 19 世纪至少有七篇《警世通言》中的故事以英语、法语或德语问世。《警世通言》中的第一篇似乎尤其受欧洲译者的青睐：1839 年由 T.Pavie 翻译成了法语版的“Le luth brisé”，1874 年由 Auguste Webster 翻译成了英语版的“Yue-Pe-Ya's Lute, a Chinese Tale in English Verse”，1877 年由 L.M.Fay 再次翻译成了英语版的“The Broken Lute or Friendship's Last Offering”。第九篇同样由 T.Pavie 于 1839 年翻译成了法语版的“Le poète Ly-Tai-Pe”。Stephen Weston 于 1814 年发表的第十二篇“Fan-hy-cheu, a Tale, in Chinese and English”可能就是 19 世纪最早的英语译本了。第二十二篇于 1820 年由 P.Thoms 翻译成了英语版的“The Affectionate Pair, or



the History of Sung-kin, a Chinese Tale”, 第二十六篇于 1889 年由 Hervey de Saint-Denys 翻译成了法语版的 “Tang le Kiai-youen”; 第三十二篇于 1871 年由 Samuel Birch 翻译成了英语版的 “The Casket of Gems”, 1884 年由 Eduard Grisebach 翻译成了德语版的 “Tu-schi-niang wirft entrüstet das Juwelenkätschen in die Fluten”。第三十四篇于 1839 年由 Sloth (R.Thom) 翻译成了英语版的 “The Lasting Resentment of Miss Keaou Lwan Wang, a Chinese Tale, Founded on Fact”。

进入 20 世纪后，尤其是在第二次世界大战结束之后的几十年里，人们对中国白话短篇小说的兴趣越来越浓。在下面所列的 1944 年至 1978 年间出版的九种英语版选集中，至少五种今天仍然可以很容易在英国和北美大多数东亚图书馆中找到。

1) 王际真 (Chi-chen Wang) 所译 *Traditional Chinese Tales*, 纽约哥伦比亚大学出版社, 1944; 纽约 Greenwood 出版社再版, 1968。这本集子收录了五个短篇, 均译自《醒世恒言》: 第二篇译作 “The Three Brothers”, 第三篇译作 “The Oil Peddler and the Queen of Flowers”, 第四篇译作 “The Flower Lover and the Fairies”, 第八篇译作 “The Jade Kuanyin”, 第三十三篇译作 “The Judicial Murder of Ts’ui Ning”。

2) Harold Acton 与 Lee Yi-hsieh 合译的 *Four Cautionary Tales*, 纽约 A.A.Wyn 出版社, 1947。这本集子收录的四个短篇也都取自《醒世恒言》: 第九篇译作 “The Everlasting Couple”, 第十篇译作 “Brothers Liu”, 第十五篇译作 “The Mandarin-Duck Girdle”, 第二十八篇译作 “Love in a Junk”。

3) John Lyman Bishop 编译的 *The Colloquial Short Story in Chi-*



na: a Study of the Sanyen Collections, 哈佛大学出版社, 1956。该书共收录了四个短篇, 并有译者介绍性的长文。其中三篇译自《古今小说》: 第三篇译作“Chin-nu Sells Love at Newbridge”, 第十六篇译作“Fan Chü-ch'ing's Eternal Friendship”, 第二十六篇译作“Master Shen's Bird Destroys Seven Lives”; 另一篇则为《警世通言》中的第三篇, 译作“Wang An-shih Thrice Corners Su Tung-p'o”。

4) 杨宪益和戴乃迭 (Gladys Yang) 所译的 *The Courtesan's Jewel Box: Chinese Stories of the Xth—XVIIth Centuries*, 北京外文出版社, 1957。该书共收录了十四篇“三言”短篇, 四篇选自《古今小说》: 第十篇译作“The Hidden Will”, 第二十七篇译作“The Beggar Chief's Daughter”, 第三十五篇译作“The Monk's Billet-doux”, 第四十篇译作“A Just Man Avenged”。有三篇译自《警世通言》: 第八篇译作“The Jade Worker”, 第十六篇译作“The Honest Clerk”, 第三十二篇译作“The Courtesan's Jewel Box”。余下的七篇译自《醒世恒言》: 第三篇译作“The Oil Vendor and the Courtesan”, 第四篇译作“The Old Gardener”, 第六篇译作“The Foxes' Revenge”, 第七篇译作“Marriage by Proxy”, 第十篇译作“The Two Brothers”, 第二十九篇译作“The Proud Scholar”, 第三十三篇译作“Fifteen Strings of Cash”。杨宪益和戴乃迭所译的另一本集子 *Lazy Dragon: Chinese Stories from the Ming Dynasty* (香港三联书店, 1981), 收录了 *The Courtesan's Jewel Box* 中的八篇, 外加两篇新的译作: 《古今小说》中的第十八篇“The Strange Adventures of Yang Balao”, 以及《警世通言》中的第十三篇“The Ghost Came Thrice”。杨宪益和戴乃迭还翻译了另外两篇“三言”中的小说: 《警世通言》中的第二十八篇“The White Snake” (刊登在 *Chinese Literature* 1959年7月期上) 和《古今小说》



的第二十四篇“Strange Encounter in the Northern Capital”（刊登在 *Chinese Literature* 1961 年 12 月期上）。

5) 白之 (Cyril Birch) 编译的 *Stories from a Ming Collection: the Art of the Chinese Story-teller*, 美国纽约 Grove Weidenfeld 出版社, 1958。这本集子收录了《古今小说》中的六个短篇: 第一篇译作“The Pearl-Sewn Shirt”, 第五篇译作“Wine and Dumplings”, 第八篇译作“The Journey of the Corpse”, 第二十六篇译作“The Canary Murders”, 第二十七篇译作“The Lady Who Was a Beggar”, 第三十三篇译作“The Fairy’s Rescue”。

6) 杨富森 (Richard F.S. Yang) 所译 *Eight Colloquial Tales of the Sung*, 台北中华邮政出版社, 1972。该书收录了八个短篇白话小说。译自《醒世恒言》的为第三十三篇“The Mistaken Execution of Ts’ui Ning”, 另外七篇均译自《警世通言》: 第四篇译作“The Stubborn Chancellor”, 第七篇译作“P’u-sa Man”, 第八篇译作“Carving the Jade Goddess Kuan-yin”, 第十二篇译作“The Re-union of Feng Yü -mei”, 第十四篇译作“Ghosts in the Western Hills”, 第十六篇译作“Chang, the Honest Steward”, 第十九篇译作“The White Hawk of Ts’ui, the Magistrate’s Son, Led to Demons”。

7) 张心伦 (H.C. Chang) 所译 *Chinese Literature: Popular Fiction and Drama*, 爱丁堡大学出版社, 1973。该书收录了《警世通言》中的三个短篇: 第十二篇译作“The Twin Mirrors”, 第十三篇译作“The Clerk’s Lady”, 第二十八篇译作“Madame White”。

8) William Dolby 编译的 *The Perfect Lady by Mistake and Other Stories by Feng Menglong (1574—1646)*, 伦敦 Paul Elek 出版公司出版, 1976。该书收录了六个短篇: 《古今小说》中的第七篇“Yang



Jiao Throws away His Life in Fulfillment of a Friendship”, 《警世通言》中的第九篇“Li Bai, God in Exile, Drunken Drafts His ‘Letter to Daunt the Barbarians’”。其余四篇皆出自于《醒世恒言》。第一篇译作“Two Magistrates Vie to Marry an Orphaned Girl”，第五篇为“On Big Tree Slope a Faithful Tiger Acts Best Man”，第七篇为“The Perfect Lady by Mistake”，第三十三篇为“A Joke over Fifteen Strings of Cash Brings Uncanny Disaster”。

9) 马幼垣 (Y.W.Ma) 和刘绍铭 (Joseph S.M.Lau) 编著的 *Traditional Chinese Stories: Themes and Variations*, 纽约哥伦比亚大学出版社, 1978。该书收录了十七篇“三言”作品, 四篇译自《古今小说》: 第一篇译作“The Pearl Shirt Reencountered”, 第三篇为“Han Wu-niang Sells Her Charms at the New Bridge Market”, 第八篇为“Wu Pao-an Ransoms His Friend”, 第十篇为“Magistrate T’eng and the Case of Inheritance”, 第三十六篇为“Sung the Fourth Raises Hell with Tightwad Chang”。有七篇译自《警世通言》: 第八篇译作“Artisan Ts’ui and His Ghost Wife”, 第十二篇为“Loach Fan’s Double Mirror”, 第十四篇为“A Mangy Taoist Exorcises Ghosts”, 第二十一篇为“The Sung Founder Escorts Chingniang One Thousand Li”, 第二十八篇为“Eternal Prisoner under the Thunder Peak Pagoda”, 第三十二篇为“Tu Shih-niang Sinks the Jewel Box in Anger”, 第三十五篇为“The Case of the Dead Infant”。剩余的五篇译自《醒世恒言》: 第三篇为“The Oil Peddler Courts the Courtesan”, 第九篇为“The Couple Bound in Life and Death”, 第十三篇为“The Boot That Reveals the Culprit”, 第三十三篇为“The Jest That Leads to Disaster”, 第三十五篇为“Old Servant Hsü”。



从上可以看出，在 20 世纪末之前，“三言”中没有一部被全部译出，已经译成英语的为《古今小说》十七篇、《警世通言》十五篇、《醒世恒言》十四篇，而且均散见于中国文学期刊和选集中，从来没有被两两配对，也没有以其本来顺序出现过。即使以单篇译文出现时，说话人的用语、诗词和入话部分也常常被删除，所有译本均省略了普遍被认为出自冯梦龙本人笔下的眉批。因此，当杨曙辉和杨韵琴所译的 *Stories Old and New: a Ming Dynasty Collection* 2000 年由华盛顿大学出版社出版时，立刻被赞誉为“显然为英语国家确定了一个新标准”的译作，因为这是 1620 年天许斋版《古今小说》“真正意义上的全译”，不仅包括二十三篇从未翻译过的短篇以及其他短篇小说以前译文中被省略的内容，而且包括了对出版者的扉页和前言的翻译。

在 20 世纪后半叶所出版的对明清白话小说研究的成果也在急剧增加。20 世纪 70 年代和 80 年代更是出现了四部里程碑式的对中国白话短篇小说研究的专著。韩南的 *The Chinese Short Story: Studies in Dating, Authorship, and Composition* 于 1973 年由哈佛大学出版社出版，他的第二部著作 *The Chinese Vernacular Story* 于 1981 年也由哈佛大学出版社出版，其中有两章专门论述冯梦龙。伊维德 1973 年在《通报》(*T'oung Pao*) 上发表了具有重大影响的论文“Storytelling and the Short Story in China”，后来被收录在 1974 年莱顿 E.J.Brill 出版社出版的他的专著 *Chinese Vernacular Fiction: the Formative Period* 中。1978 年，André Lévy 宏大的四卷本 *Inventaire analytique et critique du conte chinois en langue vulgaire* 中的第一卷在巴黎问世。最后，就在 20 世纪即将结束前，又有一部论述同一主题的专著问世，这就是杨曙辉的 *Appropriation and Representation: Feng Menglong*

and the Chinese Vernacular Story。这是到目前为止用英文论述冯梦龙和“三言”的唯一专著，1998年由密执安大学中国研究中心出版。

美国贝兹大学中国文学教授 杨曙辉

(路旦俊 译)





Translators' Note

This translation follows the text of the 1624 *Jianshantang* edition of *Jingshi tongyan* as reprinted in the 1987 facsimile edition by Shanghai Guji Chubanshe. The interlinear and marginal comments in the original text appear in italic within parentheses in roman text and in roman within parentheses in italic text.

Chinese proper names are rendered in the *pinyin* system. For the convenience of those readers who are more accustomed to the Wade-Giles system of romanization, we have provided the following short list of difficult consonants:

c = ts'

q = ch'

x = hs

z = tz

zh = ch

Information about previous translations of stories in this collection (in varying degrees of completeness and accuracy) is provided in the endnotes for individual stories.

Frequently Encountered Chinese Terms

chi, a unit of measurement, translated as "foot"

jin, translated as "catty," equals half a kilogram

jinshi, one who passed the imperial civil service examinations at the national level

li, approximately one third of a mile

liang, translated as "tael," equals one sixteenth of a *jin*

mu, roughly one sixth of an acre

shi, a married woman known by her maiden name (e.g., Wang-shi)

xiucai, translated as “scholar,” a successful candidate at the local level

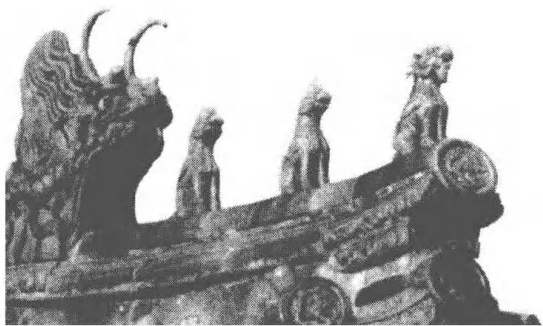
zhuangyuan, a *jinshi* who ranked first in the palace examination, in which the emperor interviewed those passed the imperial civil service examination at the national level

zi, translated as “courtesy name,” the name by which an educated person was addressed by people of his or her own generation, probably used more often than an official name



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苏知县罗衫再合



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敬言世通言

自昔博洽鴻儒兼採稗官野史而通俗演義一種尤
便於下里之耳目奈射利者罔取澄澗大傷雅道本
坊恥之茲刻出自平平閣主人手授非警世勸俗之
語不敢濫入庶幾木鐸老人之遺意或亦上君
不棄也

金陵兼善堂謹識



自昔博洽鸿儒，兼采稗官野史，而通俗演义一种，尤便于下里之耳目，奈射利者耑取淫词，大伤雅道，本坊耻之。兹刻出自平平阁主人手授，非警世劝俗之语，不敢滥入，庶几木铎老人之遗意，或亦士君□□不弃也。

金陵兼善堂谨识



Stories to Caution the World

PUBLISHER'S NOTE [IN THE 1624 EDITION]

Even those committed to the most rigorous scholarship have always included unofficial histories in their studies. It is no wonder, then, that the lower classes find popular historical romances most appealing. However, for those profit-driven individuals who offend decency by seeking out only narratives that are lewd and obscene, this publishing house has nothing but the utmost disdain. Under personal instructions from the Master of the Pingping Studio, we dare not fill these volumes with anything other than words that caution and enlighten the world. As was the wish of the late venerable one dedicated to the edification of the mind, we hope that these volumes will be looked upon favorably by members of the literati as well.

The Jianshan Publishing House of Jinling [present-day Nanjing]

叙

野史尽真乎？曰：不必也。尽贗乎？曰：不必也。然则去其贗而存其真乎？曰：不必也。《六经》《语》《孟》，譚者纷如，归于令人为忠臣、为孝子、为贤牧、为良友、为义夫、为节妇、为树德之士、为积善之家，如是而已矣。经书著其理，史传述其事，其揆一也。理著而世不皆切磋之彦，事述而世不皆博雅之儒。于是乎村夫稚子、里妇估儿，以甲是乙非为喜怒，以前因后果为劝惩，以道听途说为学问，而通俗演义一种遂足以佐经书史传之穷。而或者曰：“村醪市脯，不入宾筵，乌用是齐东娓娓者为？”呜呼！《大





Preface [to the 1624 Edition]

Do all historical romances give true accounts of history? The answer is “Not necessarily.” Are they all untrue, then? “Not necessarily.” Should all that is untrue be done away with, and only what is true be preserved? “Not necessarily, either.”

*The Six Classics*¹, *The Analects* [of Confucius], and *Mencius*, about which commentaries abound, are, in summary, nothing but exhortations for ministers to be loyal, children to be filial, officials to be judicious, friends to be trustworthy, husbands to be honorable, wives to be chaste, scholars to be paragons of virtue, and families to do good deeds. The classics state the universal truths, and the histories serve the same purpose through narrating the events. Yet, the universal truths are explained to a world inhabited not exclusively by venerable men who diligently compare notes with each other in their moral pursuits, and the histories are narrated to a world consisting not exclusively of erudite scholars of impeccable moral behavior. And since villagers, children, ordinary women, and peddlers are easily stirred to joy or wrath by what others do rightly or wrongly, take guidance in their actions from stories about the operations of karma, and gain knowledge from hearsay and gossip, popular historical romances can well serve as supplements where the classics and the histories are found lacking.

One may say, “Just as home-brewed wine and meat bought from the village market are not good enough for the banquet table, such romances are nothing but vulgar absurdities.”

Alas! The *fu* prose poems [about fictional characters] “Daren fu” (The Mighty One) and “Zixu fu” (Sir Fantasy), with the words of advice voiced toward the very end, stand unrivaled in their moral



人》《子虚》，曲终奏雅，顾其旨何如耳！人不必有其事，事不必丽其人。其真者可以补金匱石室之遗，而贗者亦必有一番激扬劝诱、悲歌感慨之意。事真而理不贗，即事贗而理亦真，不害于风化，不谬于圣贤，不戾于《诗》《书》经史。若此者，其可废乎？

里中儿代庖而创其指，不呼痛，或怪之，曰：“吾顷从玄妙观听说《三国志》来，关云长刮骨疗毒，且谈笑自若，我何痛为？”夫能使里中儿顿有刮骨疗毒之勇，推此说孝而孝，说忠而忠，说节义而节义，触性性通，导情情出。视彼切磋之彦，貌而不情；博雅之儒，文而丧质。所得竟未知孰贗而孰真也。

陇西君，海内畸士，与余相遇于栖霞山房。倾盖莫逆，各叙旅况。因出其新刻数卷佐酒，且曰：“尚未成书，子盍先为我命名？”余阅之，大抵如僧家因果说法度世之语，譬



elevation.² Real historical figures do not have to be tied to real events, nor do real historical events have to be attributed to real names. What is real can be added to the archives of the imperial libraries, and what is unreal can inspire, edify, and profoundly move the audience. There is truth in what is real, but there is also truth in what is unreal. If there is no offense against decency, no deviation from the teachings of the sages, and no breach of the morals taught by classics such as *The Book of Songs* and *The Book of History*, why should such romances be done away with?

A neighbor's boy cut his finger when helping out in the kitchen. To comments of surprise that he did not let out cries of pain, the boy replied, "I just came back from Xuanmiao Temple, where I heard a storyteller tell about how Guan Yu [d.220] of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* went on talking and laughing when a surgeon was scraping infection from a bone in his arm. Now, this little pain of mine is really nothing!" From the fact that a story about Guan Yu fills a boy with such courage, we can infer that stories about filial piety, loyalty, fidelity, and righteousness do foster these virtues in the audience, and that they strike deep chords in the audience and awaken their genuine feelings. When such stories are compared with the writings of those venerable men and erudite scholars of impeccable moral behavior, writings that are stylish and ornate but without feeling and substance, who can tell which are real and which are unreal?

I met a most extraordinary gentleman from west of the Long Mountains at the House on the Hill amid Rosy Clouds, a man with whom I formed a profound friendship the very first time we met.³ We talked about our travels, and then, in the course of drinking, he produced several newly printed volumes of books and said, "These volumes are not really complete as yet, but would you be so kind as to give them a title?" Upon reading the volumes, I found them to consist mostly of words not unlike those spoken by monks in explanation of the operations of karma to save the souls of the people in this world. Just like home-brewed wine and meat bought from the village market, they provide nourishment for the masses. I therefore gave the volumes the title *Stories to Caution the World* [lit., Comprehensive

如村醪市脯，所济者众。遂名之曰《警世通言》而从史其成。

时天启甲子腊月豫章无碍居士题



Words to Caution the World], and urged that they be published.

Recluse Sans Souci of Yuzhang [present-day Nanchang, Jiangxi]

The twelfth month of the fourth year of the Tianqi reign period
[1624]

¹ *The Six Classics* are *The Book of Songs*, *The Book of History*, *The Book of Rites*, *The Book of Music*, *The Book of Changes*, and *The Spring and Autumn Annals*.

² “Daren fu” and “Zixu fu” are by the famous poet Sima Xiangru (179–117 B.C.E.). “Daren fu,” about the fictional character Daren, is a satire of Emperor Wudi (r. 140–87 B.C. E.) of the Han dynasty. “Zixu fu,” about the fictional characters Zixu, Wuyou, and Wangchi, is a criticism of the extravagances of the imperial court.

³ Qixiashan (Hill amid Rosy Clouds) is probably a reference to the Qixiashan located to the northeast of the city of Nanjing.





第一卷

俞伯牙摔琴谢知音

浪说曾分鲍叔金，谁人辨得伯牙琴！
于今交道奸如鬼，湖海空悬一片心。

古来论交情至厚莫如管鲍。管是管夷吾，鲍是鲍叔牙。他两个同为商贾，得利均分，时管夷吾多取其利，叔牙不以为贪，知其贫也。后来管夷吾被囚，叔牙脱之，荐为齐相。这样朋友，才是个真正相知。这相知有几样名色：恩德相结者，谓之知己；腹心相照者，谓之知心；声气相求者，谓之知音，总来叫做相知。今日听在下说一桩俞伯牙的故事。列位看官们，要听者，洗耳而听；不要听者，各随尊便。正是：

知音说与知音听，不是知音不与谈。

话说春秋战国时，有一名公，姓俞名瑞，字伯牙，楚国郢都人氏，即今湖广荆州府之地也。那俞伯牙身虽楚人，官星却落于



Story 1

Yu Boya Smashes His Zither in Gratitude to an Appreciative Friend

*What a lie that Bao Shu was cheated out of his silver!
Who recognized Boya's talent in playing the zither?
An evil lot are those claiming friendship nowadays,
Unworthy of loving thoughts over seas and lakes.*

When it comes to friendship, none since ancient times has measured up to that between Guan Yiwu [d.645 B.C.E.] and Bao Shuya [also known as Bao Shu]¹. When both were engaged in business dealings, they divided their profits between them. Though Guan Yiwu took the larger share of the profits, Bao did not think of Guan as a greedy man, for he knew Guan to be poor. Later, when Guan became imprisoned, Bao went to his rescue and recommended that he be made the prime minister of the state of Qi [during the Spring and Autumn period]. Such is the stuff of which true friendships are made.

Now there are different kinds of friendships. People who are bound together by deeds of kindness are trusting friends; those who show utter devotion to each other are friends of the heart; those who find much in common with each other are friends truly appreciative of each other. They all fall into the general category of friendship.

I now propose to tell a story about a certain Yu Boya. Dear audience, those of you who would like to hear it, please lend me your ears. Those who do not want to hear it are free to do whatever you wish. Truly,

*What is meant for an appreciative ear
Is not to be wasted on just anyone.*

As the story goes, during the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States periods, there lived a man named Yu Rui, courtesy name Boya, in Yingdu, capital of the state of Chu, in what is now Jingzhou Prefecture in Huguang.²

Though a native of the state of Chu, Yu Boya was destined for a career as an official in the state of Jin, where he rose to be a senior



晋国，仕至上大夫之位。因奉晋主之命，来楚国修聘。伯牙讨这个差使，一来是个大才，不辱君命；二来就便省视乡里，一举两得。当时从陆路至于郢都，朝见了楚王，致了晋主之命。楚王设宴款待，十分相敬。那郢都乃是桑梓之地，少不得去看一看坟墓，会一会亲友。然虽如此，各事其主，君命在身，不敢迟留。公事已毕，拜辞楚王，楚王赠以黄金采缎，高车驷马。伯牙离楚一十二年，思想故国江山之胜，欲得恣情观览，要打从水路大宽转面回。乃假奏楚王道：“臣不幸有犬马之疾，不胜车马驰骤。乞假臣舟楫，以便医药。”楚王准奏，命水师拨大船二只，一正一副。正船单坐晋国来使，副船安顿仆从行李，都是兰桡画桨，锦帐高帆，甚是齐整。群臣直送至江头而别。

只因览胜探奇，不顾山遥水远。

伯牙是个风流才子，那江山之胜，正投其怀。张一片风帆，凌千层碧浪，看不尽遥山叠翠，远水澄清。不一日，行至汉阳江



grand master. By order of the king of Jin, he went on an official visit to Chu. It was actually a mission that he had solicited. He did so partly because, with his superior abilities, he was sure that he would acquit himself well as the king's emissary, and partly because he could take the opportunity to visit his hometown, thus accomplishing two purposes at the same time. So he traveled by land to Yingdu, where he had an audience with the king of Chu and transmitted to him the message from the king of Jin, whereupon the king of Chu laid out a feast in his honor, treating him with great courtesy.

Yingdu being his hometown, Boya naturally went to visit the family graves and meet with relatives and friends. However, now that he was serving another state and was bearing orders from his king, he refrained from staying longer. As soon as his official business was over, he bade a respectful adieu to the king of Chu, who gave him gifts of gold, colored silk, and a canopied four-horse carriage.

Now, because he had been away from Chu for twelve years and missed the scenic rivers and mountains of his home state, Boya wished to make a big detour by water on his return journey so as to see the sights to his heart's content. He therefore said to the king of Chu, not in all honesty, "I have an unfortunate affliction that makes the rapid speed of carriages too much for me to bear. I humbly request permission to go by boat instead, which would make it easier for me to undergo treatment." The king of Chu approved his request and ordered the navy to provide him with two big boats, one for his exclusive use as the emissary from the state of Jin and the other, of a lower ranking, for his servants and the luggage. Magnificent boats they were, with brocade canopies, tall masts, and decorated oars made of fragrant wood. The ministers of the court escorted Boya and his entourage all the way to the riverbank before they bade him farewell.

*To satisfy his wish to see the sights,
He thought nothing of the distance.*

Romantic scholar that he was, Boya found the sights to be all that he had hoped to enjoy. With the sails unfurled, the boats rode on the undulating green waves, the distant wooded mountains and clear waters within full view. Before many days had passed, he found him-



口。时当八月十五日中秋之夜，偶然风狂浪涌，大雨如注。舟楫不能前进，泊于山崖之下。不多时，风恬浪静，雨止云开，现出一轮明月。那雨后之月，其光倍常。伯牙在船舱中，独坐无聊，命童子焚香炉内：“待我抚琴一操，以遣情怀。”童子焚香罢，捧琴囊置于案间。伯牙开囊取琴，调弦转轸，弹出一曲。曲犹未终，指下“刮刺”的一声响，琴弦断了一根。伯牙大惊，叫童子去问船头：“这住船所在是甚么去处？”船头答道：“偶因风雨，停泊于山脚之下，虽然有些草树，并无人家。”[眉批]□得中情。伯牙惊讶，想道：“是荒山了。若是城郭村庄，或有聪明好学之人，盗听吾琴，所以琴声忽变，有弦断之异。这荒山下，那得有听琴之人？哦，我知道了，想是有仇家差来刺客；不然，或是贼盗伺候更深，登舟劫我财物。”叫左右：“与我上崖搜检一番。不在柳阴深处，定在芦苇丛中！”左右领命，唤齐众人，正欲搭跳上崖。忽听得崖上有人答应道：“舟中大人，不必见疑。小子并非奸盗之流，乃樵夫也。因打柴归晚，值骤雨狂风，雨具不能遮蔽，潜身



self and his entourage at the mouth of Hanyang River. It was the fifteenth night of the eighth lunar month, the night of the Mid-autumn Festival. Suddenly, a storm sprang up. With waves leaping high and rain pouring down in sheets, the boats had to be moored at the foot of a hill. A while later, the wind died down, the waves subsided, the rain stopped, and the clouds cleared, revealing a bright, rain-washed moon that shone with double its usual brightness.

Sitting alone in the cabin and feeling bored, Yu Boya told his page boy, "Put some incense in that incense burner. I'm going to play my zither to express my feelings." Thereupon, the page boy lit the incense and put the zither case on the table. Boya opened the case, took out the zither, tuned it, and began to play. Before he had finished a piece, a string broke with a sharp twang. Startled, Boya told the page boy to ask the head boatman what kind of place this was. The head boatman replied, "This is just the foot of a hill where the storm took us. There are some grass and trees around, but no houses." (*True enough.*)

Much taken by surprise, Boya thought to himself, "So, this is a deserted hill. If it were a town or a village where some intelligent person eager to learn listened secretly to my music, that would explain why the music suddenly changed in tone and why the string snapped. But in this deserted place at the foot of a hill, how can there be anyone listening to my music? Ah yes, I know. It must be an assassin sent by some enemy of mine, or it could be some robbers waiting here for the night to deepen before coming onto the boat to get my possessions." So thinking, he said to the attendants by his side, "Go ashore and look around for me. If there's no one in the depths of the willow grove, then search in the reeds."

Thus instructed, the men called out to other servants, and all of them assembled, ready to use the gangplank to get to the rocky shore. At this moment, a man's voice was heard from the shore, saying, "The gentleman in the boat need not be suspicious. I am not a robber but a woodcutter. I had finished cutting firewood for the day and was on my way home after dark when I was caught in a bad storm. My rain gear not being enough to protect me from the rain, I found shel-



岩畔。闻君雅操，少住听琴。”伯牙大笑道：“山中打柴之人，也敢称‘听琴’二字！此言未知真伪，我也不计较了。左右的，叫他去罢。”那人不去，在崖上高声说道：“大人出言谬矣！岂不闻‘十室之邑，必有忠信’。‘门内有君子，门外君子至。’大人若欺负山野中没有听琴之人，这夜静更深，荒崖下也不该有抚琴之客了。”

伯牙见他出言不俗，或者真是个听琴的，亦未可知。止住左右不要啰唆，走近舱门，回嗔作喜的问道：“崖上那位君子，既是听琴，站立多时，可知道我适才所弹何曲？”那人道：“小子若不知，却也不来听琴了。方才大人所弹，乃孔仲尼叹颜回，谱入琴声。其词云：‘可惜颜回命蚤亡，教人思想鬓如霜。只因陋巷箪瓢乐……’到这一句，就断了琴弦，不曾抚出第四句来，小子也还记得：‘留得贤名万古扬。’”伯牙闻言大喜，道：“先生果非俗士，隔崖鸾远，难以问答。”命左右：“掌跳，看扶手，请那位先生登舟细讲。”左右掌跳，此人上船，果然是个樵夫：头戴箬笠，身披蓑衣，手持尖担，腰插板斧，脚踏芒鞋。手下人那知言



ter by a rock. Then I heard the gentleman play the zither and stayed to listen.”

Boya burst into laughter. “Imagine a woodcutter in the hills having the audacity to say he listens to music! Well, I won’t even bother to find out whether that claim is true or not. Now, my men, tell him to leave.”

Instead of leaving, the man on the rocky shore said loudly, “Sir, you’ve got it all wrong! Haven’t you heard the sayings ‘In a neighborhood of ten households, there are bound to be loyal and trustworthy people’ and ‘If there is a gentleman in the room, another gentleman will come to the door’? You, sir, in your contempt for these backwoods, think that no one around here would listen to music. Well, if so, there shouldn’t be a zither-player at the foot of a deserted hill, either.”

Impressed by his refined speech, Boya began to think that this woodcutter might truly have been listening to his music. He told his men to quiet down and went to the cabin door. His displeasure having given way to delight, he asked, “Since the gentleman on the rocky shore has been standing and listening to my playing for quite some time, does he, by any chance, know what I was playing?”

“If I didn’t know,” said the man, “I wouldn’t have stayed and listened. What you were playing, sir, is a melody set to what Confucius wrote in memory of [his student] Yan Hui. The lines go like this, ‘How tragic that Yan Hui died so early; / Memories of him have whitened my hair. / By living happily in poverty,’ — and at this point, a string on your zither snapped before the fourth line could be played. But I remember the fourth line. It says, ‘A good name he left for posterity.’”

Overjoyed upon hearing this, Boya said, “You are indeed a gentleman of culture. But it is difficult to talk with you over such a distance.” Turning to his men, he said, “Put out the gangplank and the handrail and invite the gentleman to come aboard for a chat.”

The servants put out the gangplank, and the man boarded the boat. He was indeed a woodcutter, with a broad-brimmed bamboo hat, a straw cape, a carrying pole with its load, an ax tied to his



谈好歹，见是樵夫，下眼相看：[眉批] □以贵凌贱，不识好歹者，皆手下人之流也。“咄！那樵夫下舱去，见我老爷叩头，问你甚么言语，小心答应。官尊着哩！”樵夫却是个有意思的，道：“列位不须粗鲁，待我解衣相见。”除了斗笠，头上是青布包巾，脱了蓑衣，身上是蓝布衫儿；搭膊拴腰，露出布裊下截。那时不慌不忙，将蓑衣、斗笠、尖担、板斧，俱安放舱门之外。[眉批] 气象何等从容，眼中已无伯牙矣。脱下芒鞋，蹣去泥水，重复穿上，步入舱来。官舱内公座上灯烛辉煌。樵夫长揖而不跪，道：“大人施礼了。”俞伯牙是晋国大臣，眼界中那有两接的布衣。下来还礼，恐失了官体，既请下船，又不好叱他回去。伯牙没奈何，微微举手道：“贤友免礼罢。”叫童子看坐的。童子取一张杌坐儿置于下席。伯牙全无客礼，把嘴向樵夫一努，道：“你且坐了。”你我之称，怠慢可知。那樵夫亦不谦让，俨然坐下。



waist, and straw sandals on his feet. The servants, who had little appreciation for refined speech, assumed a contemptuous look at the sight of a mere woodcutter. (*Those who worship money and bully the poor and the humble don't know the good from the bad and, as such, will never rise above the servant class.*) "Hey, woodcutter!" they called out. "When you go into the cabin, be sure to kowtow to our master, and be respectful when you answer his questions. He's a highly placed official, you know."

The woodcutter was by no means of the common run. "You don't have to be so rude," he said. "Now, let me get myself ready before I go in." So saying, he took off his bamboo hat, under which was a blue cloth cap. Then he took off his straw cape, revealing a blue cloth shirt, a long bag worn around his waist, and a pair of cloth pants. All calm and collected, he put his cape and hat, his load and its carrying pole, and his ax outside the cabin door. (*What great composure! He has lost his respect for Boya by now.*) He removed his sandals, shook off the muddy water, put them on his feet again, and walked into the cabin, which was brightly lit by the candles on the emissary's writing desk.

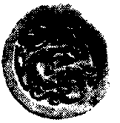
The woodcutter bowed deeply with one hand cupped in the other before his chest but did not drop to his knees. "Greetings, sir," said he.

Being a minister in the court of Jin, Yu Boya, as a rule, would not deign to glance at a common laborer who was not wearing a robe. Now, he was afraid that to leave his seat and return the greeting would be beneath his dignity as an official, and yet, since he had already invited the man onto the boat, he could not very well drive him out. Left with no alternative, Boya lifted a hand slightly and said, "You, my good man, need not stand on ceremony." He then told his page boy to bring a seat. The page boy put a small stool in a spot usually assigned to lower-ranking people. Disregarding the usual decorum due to a guest, Boya said to the woodcutter, pushing out his lips, "You may sit." By addressing the man simply as "you," he was making no secret of his unwillingness to play the good host.

Without any of the usual obligatory words of demurrals, the



伯牙见他不告而坐，微有嗔怪之意，因此不问姓名，亦不呼手下人看茶。默坐多时，怪而问之：“适才崖上听琴的，就是你么？”樵夫答言：“不敢。”伯牙道：“我且问你，既来听琴，必知琴之出处。此琴何人所造？抚他有甚好处？”正问之时，船头来禀话：“风色顺了，月明如昼，可以开船。”伯牙分付：“且慢些！”樵夫道：“承大人下问，小子若讲话絮烦，恐担误顺风行舟。”伯牙笑道：“惟恐你不知琴理。若讲得有理，就不做官，亦非大事，何况行路之迟速乎！”樵夫道：“既如此，小子方敢僭谈。此琴乃伏羲氏所琢，见五星之精，飞坠梧桐，凤皇来仪。凤乃百鸟之王，非竹实不食，非梧桐不栖，非醴泉不饮。伏羲氏知梧桐乃树中之良材，夺造化之精气，堪为雅乐，令人伐之。其树高三丈三尺，按三十三天之数，截为三段，分天、地、人三才。取上一段叩之，其声太清，以其过轻而废之；取下一段叩之，其声太浊，以其过重而废之；取中一段叩之，其声清浊相济，轻重



woodcutter sat down in a dignified manner.

Slightly annoyed that the man had sat down without saying any polite words, Boya refrained from asking the man's name, nor did he instruct the servants to serve tea. After sitting silently for quite some time, he spoke up out of curiosity, "So, you are the one who was listening to my music?"

"Yes, sir."

"Let me ask you something. Since you were listening to my playing, you must know something about the history of the zither. Who invented the zither? What good does the zither do?"

Before he had finished with his questions, the head boatman came in to report that, the wind being favorable and the moonlight as bright as day, they were ready to be on their way. But Boya said, "Wait a moment."

The woodcutter said, "I thank you, sir, for being so kind as to ask me a few questions, but if I ramble on too long, I'm afraid I will prevent you from taking advantage of the favorable wind."

Boya said with a smile, "I'm just not sure if you know anything about the zither. If what you say makes sense, I won't mind even losing my official title, let alone being delayed on my journey."

"In that case," said the woodcutter, "I will make bold to speak out of turn. The first zither was made by Fuxi.³ He saw the essence of the five planets fly through the air and fall on a *wutong* tree.⁴ Then a phoenix descended onto the same tree. The phoenix, the king of all birds, eats only bamboo seeds, perches only on *wutong* trees and drinks only from sweet springs. Knowing that *wutong* provides good timber, Fuxi thought that a musical instrument made of wood containing cosmic essences would produce the most elegant music. And so he ordered that the tree be cut down.

"The thirty-three-foot tall tree, in harmony with the thirty-three layers of heaven, was cut into three segments, representing heaven, earth, and people respectively.⁵ Fuxi tapped the upper segment, but finding the sound too delicate and soft, he put it aside. He then took up the bottom segment, tapped it, and, finding the sound too coarse and thick, put it aside as well. When he tapped the middle segment,



相兼。送长流水中，浸七十二日，按七十二候之数，取起阴干，选良时吉日，用高手匠人刘子奇斫成乐器。此乃瑶池之乐，故名瑶琴。长三尺六寸一分，按周天三百六十一度；前阔八寸，按八节；后阔四寸，按四时；厚二寸，按两仪。有金童头，玉女腰，仙人背，龙池，凤沼，玉轸，金徽。那徽有十二，按十二月；又有一中徽，按闰月。先是五条弦在上，外按五行：金、木、水、火、土；内按五音：宫、商、角、徵、羽。尧舜时操五弦琴，歌《南风》诗，天下大治。后因周文王被囚于羑里，吊子伯邑考，添弦一根，清幽哀怨，谓之文弦。后武王伐纣，前歌后舞，添弦一根，激烈发扬，谓之武弦。先是宫、商、角、徵、羽五弦，后加二弦，称为文武七弦琴。此琴有六忌，七不弹，八绝。何为六忌？



he discovered that the sound was neither too delicate and soft nor too coarse and thick. The timber was put into an ever-running stream to soak for seventy-two days, in harmony with the seventy-two divisions of the year.⁶ When the time was up, it was taken out of the water, dried in the shade, and, on a chosen auspicious hour of an auspicious day, was made by Liu Ziqi, the master craftsman, into a musical instrument.

“Because it produced the kind of music heard only in the Jasper Pool, it was named the jasper zither.⁷ It is three feet six and a tenth inches long, in harmony with the three hundred and sixty-one degrees of the cosmic circumference; eight inches wide in front, in harmony with the eight solar terms of the year;⁸ four inches wide at the back, in harmony with the four seasons; and two inches thick, in harmony with the two elements of heaven and earth. It has a Golden Boy head, a Jade Maiden waist,⁹ a fairy’s back, a dragon’s pond, a phoenix’s pool,¹⁰ jade tuning pegs, and gold frets. The frets are twelve in number, in harmony with the twelve months. There is also another fret in the middle, which stands for the leap month. There were originally five strings, which, on a cosmic scale, stand for the five phases of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth, but on the zither itself they also represent the five musical notes.¹¹

“During the time of Yao and Shun,¹² the five-string zither was played to accompany the singing of the poem ‘The South Wind,’ and peace reigned throughout the land. Later, when King Wen of the Zhou dynasty was incarcerated in Youli Prison, he added a string to his zither so as to enhance the dolefulness of the tone and express mourning for his son Boyikao. That added string came to be called King Wen’s [lit.trans. of *wen* is “civilian”] string. Thereafter, King Wu of Zhou, while surrounded by singers and dancers between campaigns against King Zhou of the Shang dynasty, added another string to the zither to enhance the forcefulness of the tone. That string came to be called King Wu’s [lit.trans. of *wu* is “military”] string. The zither with the original five strings plus the two added strings then became known as the Wen and Wu seven-stringed zither.

“About the zither, there are six things to be avoided, seven situ-

一忌大寒，二忌大暑，三忌大风，四忌大雨，五忌迅雷，六忌大雪。

何为七不弹？

闻丧者不弹，奏乐不弹，事冗不弹，不净身不弹，衣冠不整不弹，不焚香不弹，不遇知音者不弹。

何为八绝？总之，清奇幽雅，悲壮悠长。此琴抚到尽美尽善之处，啸虎闻而不吼，哀猿听而不啼。乃雅乐之好处也。”

伯牙听见他对答如流，犹恐是记问之学，又想道：“就是记问之学，也亏他了。我再试他一试。”此时已不似在先你我之称了。[眉批]须着眼看，伯牙徐徐入港处。又问道：“足下既知乐理，当时孔仲尼鼓琴于室中，颜回自外人，闻琴中有幽沉之声，疑有贪杀之意，怪而问之，仲尼曰：‘吾适鼓琴，见猫方捕鼠，欲其得之，又恐其失之。此贪杀之意，遂露于丝桐。’始知圣门音乐之理，入于微妙。假如下官抚琴，心中有所思念，足下能闻而知之





ations in which it should not be played, and eight superior qualities that it alone possesses.

“What are the six things to be avoided? They are severe cold, scorching heat, strong winds, torrential rain, sudden peals of thunder, and heavy snow.

“What are the seven situations in which the zither should not be played? When there is a death, when other musical instruments are being played, when one is busy with miscellaneous things, when one has not washed oneself clean, when one is not properly attired, when no incense is being burned, and when no appreciative listener is present.

“What are its eight superior qualities? Well, in short, they are its delicacy, uniqueness, serenity, elegance, dolefulness, grandeur, sweetness, and lingering vibrations.

“When the zither is played to perfection, a roaring tiger that hears it will quiet down and a screaming monkey that hears it will stop its cries. This is what refined music can do.”

Boya was impressed by the man’s eloquence but thought he might have been merely reciting what he had learned by rote. But then another thought struck him, “Even if he memorized all this by rote, it’s a very creditable effort. Let me test him further.”

This time not addressing the man simply as “you” (*Now, watch how Boya gradually changes his tone.*), he asked again, “Since you, my friend, know so much about music, let me ask you another question. Once, when Confucius was playing the zither in a room, Yan Hui entered from outside. Puzzled when he detected a trace of a thought about killing in the rumbling notes, Yan Hui questioned Confucius about it. Confucius replied, ‘A moment ago, when I was playing, I saw a cat chasing a rat. I hoped that the cat would get the rat and was afraid that it would miss its prey. And this thought about killing came through in the music.’ This shows what a profound master of music the sage’s student was. If I play the zither while thinking about something, would you, my friend, be able to guess what it is?”

The woodcutter replied, “I will ‘try to surmise what is in an-



否？”樵夫道：“《毛诗》云：‘他人有心，予忖度之。’大人试抚弄一过，小子任心猜度。若猜不着时，大人休得见罪。”伯牙将断弦重整，沉思半晌。其意在于高山，抚琴一弄。樵夫赞道：“美哉洋洋乎，大人之意，在高山也！”伯牙不答。又凝神一会，将琴再鼓，其意在于流水。樵夫又赞道：“美哉汤汤乎，志在流水！”只两句，道着了伯牙的心事。伯牙大惊，推琴而起，与子期施宾主之礼，[眉批]按《地理志》，伯牙台在浙江嘉兴府海盐县，台侧有闻琴桥，疑即与钟子期鼓琴处。小说大抵非实录，不过借事以见知音之难耳。连呼：“失敬！失敬！石中有美玉之藏，若以衣貌取人，岂不误了天下贤士！先生高名雅姓？”樵夫欠身而答：“小子姓钟，名徽，贱字子期。”伯牙拱手道：“是钟子期先生。”子期转问：“大人高姓？荣任何所？”伯牙道：“下官俞瑞，仕于晋朝，因修聘上国而来。”子期道：“原来是伯牙大人。”伯牙推子期坐于客位，自己主席相



other man's thoughts, ' as is said in *The Book of Songs*. Please play something, sir, and I will try my best to guess. If I fail to guess right, please do not take offense."

Boya replaced the broken string and thought for a while before playing a few strains, thinking of high mountains. The woodcutter said in praise, "How beautiful! How majestic! You, sir, were thinking of high mountains."

Boya did not reply. After another few moments of concentration, he started playing again, this time thinking of flowing water. The woodcutter again broke into praises, "How beautiful! What a magnificent torrent! You, sir, were thinking of flowing water."

Astounded that the man had guessed right both times, Boya pushed the zither aside, stood up, and exchanged formal greetings as a host with his guest, Ziqi the woodcutter. (*According to The Atlas, there is a Boya Terrace in Haiyan County, Jiaxing Prefecture, Zhejiang. To one side of the terrace is the Listening to Zither Bridge. This could very well be the place where Zhong Ziqi listened to Boya play the zither. Generally speaking, stories are not accurate records of facts. Neither is this one. It proposes only to make the point that an appreciative friend is hard to come by.*)

"How discourteous of me!" Boya exclaimed over and over again. "Buried in the rock is a piece of fine jade. If people are judged only by their appearance, wouldn't many talents of the land go unrecognized? What, may I ask, is your honorable name?"

The woodcutter raised himself slightly from his seat and replied, "My surname is Zhong, my given name Hui, and my humble courtesy name Ziqi."

With hands respectfully folded before his chest, Boya said, "Please accept my greetings, Mr. Zhong Ziqi."

"May I ask your name, sir?" said Ziqi in his turn. "And where do you serve, sir?"

"My humble name is Yu Rui. I serve as an official in the court of the state of Jin. I am here in this country as an emissary."

"So, you are none other than His Honor Yu Boya himself."

Boya moved Ziqi to a seat reserved for a guest of honor, and he



陪，命童子点茶。茶罢，又命童子取酒共酌。伯牙道：“借此攀话，休嫌简褻。”子期称：“不敢。”

童子取过瑶琴，二人入席饮酒。伯牙开言又问：“先生声口是楚人了，但不知尊居何处？”子期道：“离此不远，地名马安山集贤村，便是荒居。”伯牙点头道：“好个集贤村。”又问：“道艺何为？”子期道：“也就是打柴为生。”伯牙微笑道：“子期先生，下官也不该僭言，似先生这等抱负，何不求取功名，立身于廊庙，垂名于竹帛；却乃赍志林泉，混迹樵牧，与草木同朽？窃为先生不取也。”子期道：“实不相瞒，舍间上有年迈二亲，下无手足相辅，采樵度日，以尽父母之馀年。虽位为三公之尊，不忍易我一日之养也。”伯牙道：“如此大孝，一发难得。”二人酒杯酬酢了一会。

子期宠辱无惊，[眉批]四字评得当。伯牙愈加爱重。又问子期：“青春多少？”子期道：“虚度二十有七。”伯牙道：“下官年长一句。子期若不见弃，结为兄弟相称，不负知音契友。”[眉批]谁肯。



himself sat down as the host at the head of the table. He then bade the page boy serve tea and, after tea, some wine.

“I may be a poor host, but let’s have a chat over a cup of wine.”

“What an honor for me,” said Ziqi.

The page boy took away the zither, and the two men sat down for wine. Boya asked again, “Judging from your accent, I believe Mr. Zhong is a native of Chu, but where is your honorable residence?”

“Not far from here, in the Ma’an Mountains, there’s a place called Village of Worthy Men. That’s where my humble home is.”

Boya nodded. “Truly a village where worthy men gather,” he commented. “What is your occupation?”

“Nothing more than cutting firewood for a living.”

Boya said with a smile, “Well, Ziqi my friend, this humble official shouldn’t be speaking out of turn either, but with your ability, why not go seek fame and glory and find a position in a royal court and a place in the annals of history? My humble opinion is that you should not waste your talents among woods and rivers in the company of woodcutters and herdsmen and end up rotting with the grass and the trees.”

“To be honest,” said Ziqi, “I have my aged parents to take care of, and I have no siblings to help me do it. So I will continue to cut firewood for a living until my parents live out the rest of their days. I cannot bring myself to exchange even one day of taking care of my parents with the highest official title in the land.”

“Such great filial piety is quite exceptional,” said Boya.

They drank a while longer, toasting each other by turns.

Ziqi never lost his composure, not when he was being insulted earlier, nor when he was treated with much respect (*Good comment.*), which gained him even more respect and affection from Boya.

“May I ask your age?” asked Boya.

“I have frittered away twenty-seven years.”

“This humble official is older by ten years. If Ziqi is not disdainful, I would like us to pledge brotherhood, to do justice to our appreciation of each other and our friendship.” (*Who else would be willing to do this?*)



子期笑道：“大人差矣！大人乃上国名公，钟徽乃穷乡贱子，怎敢仰扳，有辱俯就。”伯牙道：“相识满天下，知心能几人？下官碌碌风尘，得与高贤结契，实乃生平之万幸。若以富贵贫贱为嫌，觑俞瑞为何等人乎！”遂命童子重添炉火，再熬名香，就船舱中与子期顶礼八拜。伯牙年长为兄，子期为弟。今后兄弟相称，生死不负。拜罢，复命取暖酒再酌。子期让伯牙上坐，伯牙从其言。换了杯箸，子期下席，兄弟相称，彼此谈心叙话。[眉批] 始而慢，继而疑，继而信，继而爱，而终于相亲不舍。古人交谊，真不可及。正是：

合意客来心不厌，知音人听话偏长。

谈论正浓，不觉月淡星稀，东方发白。船上水手都起身收拾篷索，整备开船。子期起身告辞，伯牙捧一杯酒递与子期，把子期之手，叹道：“贤弟，我与你相见何太迟，相别何太早！”子期闻言，不觉泪珠滴于杯中。子期一饮而尽，斟酒回敬伯牙。二人各有眷恋不舍之意。伯牙道：“愚兄馀情不尽，意欲曲延贤弟同



“You are quite mistaken, sir. You are a famous official in your country, whereas I, Zhong Hui, am but a lowly woodcutter in a poor village. How would I dare aspire to claim connections with you and make demands on your kind attention?”

“I may have acquaintances all over the land, but how many among them understand my heart? In my busy, mundane life as an official, I consider it my greatest fortune to get to know such a worthy man as you. If you think I judge people by wealth and status, you are not doing me justice!” Thereupon he bade the page boy build up the flame in the incense burner, light some joss sticks of superior quality, and, in that very cabin, the two men performed the eight-bow ritual of pledged brotherhood, Boya as the older brother and Ziqi the younger. They pledged to address each other henceforth as brothers and never to betray each other in life or in death.

The ceremony over, more wine was heated and served. Ziqi insisted that Boya take the seat of honor, a courtesy Boya did not decline. Cups and chopsticks changed places, and Ziqi left the guest’s seat. Addressing each other as brothers, they went on talking. (*From discourtesy to suspicion, to trust, to affection, and eventually to inseparable devotion, the friendship of the ancients is truly unmatched.*) Indeed,

*You never tire of a guest who shares your mind,
Nor of one with an appreciative ear.*

While they were thus engaged in animated conversation, the moon paled, the stars dimmed, and the first faint glow of dawn lit the eastern sky. All the boatmen rose, readied the ropes and the sails, and prepared to set sail. Ziqi stood up to bid Boya farewell.

Offering a cup of wine to Ziqi, Boya held the latter’s hand and said with a sigh, “My good brother, I met you too late in my life, and now we have to part in such haste!”

When Ziqi heard this, tears fell from his eyes into the cup in spite of himself. He finished the wine in one gulp, filled another cup with wine, and offered it to Boya in return. Neither of them could bear the thought of parting.

“I’m not ready to part with you yet, my brother,” said Boya. “I



行数日，未知可否？”子期道：“小弟非不欲相从。怎奈二亲年老，‘父母在，不远游’。”伯牙道：“既是二位尊人在堂，回去告过二亲，到晋阳来看愚兄一看，这就是‘游必有方’了。”子期道：“小弟不敢轻诺而寡信，许了贤兄，就当践约。[眉批]口说。万一禀命于二亲，二亲不允，使仁兄悬望于数千里之外，小弟之罪更大矣。”伯牙道：“贤弟真所谓至诚君子。也罢，明年还是我来看贤弟。”子期道：“仁兄明岁何时到此？小弟好伺候尊驾。”伯牙屈指道：“昨夜是中秋节，今日天明，是八月十六日了。贤弟，我来仍在仲秋中五六日奉访。若过了中旬，迟到季秋月分，就是爽信，不为君子。”叫童子：“分付记室将钟贤弟所居地名及相会的日期，登写在日记簿上。”子期道：“既如此，小弟来年仲秋中五六日，准在江边侍立拱候，不敢有误。天色已明，小弟告辞了。”伯牙道：“贤弟且住。”命童子取黄金二笏，不用封帖，双手捧定道：“贤弟，些须薄礼，权为二位尊人甘旨之费。斯文骨肉，勿得嫌轻。”子期不敢谦让，即时收下。再拜告别，含泪出



would like to invite you to leave with me and then stay with me for a few days. Would that be agreeable to you?"

"It's not that I don't want to go, my brother," said Ziqi, "but I have my parents to look after. 'While your parents are alive, do not travel far.'"¹³

"But you can go home, tell them about it, and come to visit me in Jinyang.¹⁴ By telling them about it, you will be 'making your whereabouts known to them.'¹⁵

"I don't want to promise lightly because I do not want to go back on my words later. If I give you my promise, I will certainly fulfill it. (*Words of* [illegible].) Should my parents not approve my request, I would only be giving you false hopes while you wait for me thousands of *li* away, and I would be committing an even greater wrong."

"What a true gentleman my good brother is! All right, then, I'll come to see you next year."

"When will you be arriving next year, my good brother?" asked Ziqi. "Tell me, so that I know when to wait for you."

Counting on his fingers, Boya said, "Yesterday was the Mid-autumn Festival. With daybreak, it's now the sixteenth day of the eighth month. My good brother, I will be coming to visit you on the fifteenth or sixteenth day of the second month of next autumn. If I fail to arrive by the twenty-first day of that month or by the last month of autumn, I'll be breaking my promise, and I'll be no gentleman." He then turned to his page boy and said, "Tell the scribe to write down in the engagement book my good brother Zhong's address and the date of my visit next year."

Ziqi said, "In that case, I will stand by the river to wait for you on the fifteenth and sixteenth day of the second month of next autumn. I will do so without fail. Now, it's already light. I should be going."

"Not so fast, my good brother," said Boya.

He bade the page boy bring over two ingots of gold, and without wrapping them, he held them in his hands and said, "My good brother, this is a small gift from me, to be used toward supporting your parents. Please don't think that this is inadequate for a scholar's parents." Ziqi did not think it appropriate to decline the offer, so he



舱，取尖担挑了蓑衣、斗笠，插板斧于腰间，掌跳搭扶手上崖。伯牙直送至船头，各各洒泪而别。

不题子期回家之事。再说俞伯牙点鼓开船，一路江山之胜，无心观览，心心念念，只想着知音之人。又行了几日，舍舟登岸。经过之地，知是晋国上大夫，不敢轻慢，安排车马相送。直至晋阳，回复了晋主，不在话下。

光阴迅速，过了秋冬，不觉春去夏来。伯牙心怀子期，无日忘之。想着中秋节近，奏过晋主，给假还乡。晋主依允。伯牙收拾行装，仍打大宽转，从水路而行。下船之后，分付水手，但是湾泊所在，就来通报地名。事有偶然，刚刚八月十五夜，水手禀复，此去马安山不远。伯牙依稀还认得去年泊船相会子期之处。分付水手，将船湾泊，水底抛锚，崖边钉橛。其夜晴明，船舱内一线月光，射进朱帘。伯牙命童子将帘卷起，步出舱门，立于船头之上，仰观斗柄。水底天心，万顷茫然，照如白昼。思想去岁



accepted the gift.

After another bow of farewell, he left the cabin with tears in his eyes. He picked up his carrying pole, put his cape and hat in the load, attached the ax to his waistband, walked up the gangplank, holding on to the handrail, and went ashore. Boya saw him off at the bow of the boat, and they bade each other a tearful farewell.

We shall say no more of Ziqi's return home for the moment but will continue our story with Boya, who sounded the drum for the boats to set sail. However beautiful the scenery along the river, Boya had lost all interest in sightseeing. All his thoughts were with the one who understood his music. Several days later, he left the boat and continued the rest of the journey on land. Wherever he stopped, he was provided with horse carriages for transportation, for local officials knew him to be a senior grand master in the state of Jin, not someone to be slighted. So he traveled in this manner all the way back to Jinyang, where he reported to the king about the mission, but of this, no more.

Time flew. Quite unnoticeably, autumn, winter and spring went by, and summer rolled around. Ziqi was never absent from Boya's thoughts, even for one day. With the Mid-autumn Festival drawing near, he asked the king of Jin for leave to return to his hometown, and the king approved the request. Boya gathered his things together and went, as before, by river in a big detour. Once on board, he told the boatmen to tell him the name of every place where the boat was to moor. As coincidence would have it, exactly on the fifteenth night of the eighth month, the boatmen came to report, "We are near the Ma'an Mountains."

Vaguely recalling the place where the boat had moored last year when he met Ziqi, Boya told the boatmen to stop there, cast the anchor to the bottom of the river and drive in a wooden stake next to the shore so they could tie the boat to it. It was a clear night, and a moonbeam shone through the portiere of the cabin door. Boya had a page boy roll up the portiere and walked out to stand at the bow, where he gazed up at the handle of the Big Dipper. The vast expanse of the water, lit as bright as day, joined the sky at the horizon. His



与知己相逢，雨止月明。今夜重来，又值良夜。他约定江边相候，如何全无踪影，莫非爽信？又等了一会，想道：“我理会得了。江边来往船只颇多。我今日所驾的，不是去年之船了。吾弟急切如何认得？去岁我原为抚琴惊动知音。今夜仍将瑶琴抚弄一曲，吾弟闻之，必来相见。”命童子取琴桌安放船头，焚香设座。伯牙开囊，调弦转轸，才泛音律，商弦中有哀怨之声。伯牙停琴不操：“呀！商弦哀声凄切，吾弟必遭忧在家。去岁曾言父母年高。若非父丧，必是母亡。他为人至孝，事有轻重，宁失信于我，不肯失礼于亲，所以不来也。来日天明，我亲上崖探望。”叫童子收拾琴桌，下舱就寝。

伯牙一夜不睡，真个巴明不明，盼晓不晓。看看月移帘影，日出山头。伯牙起来梳洗整衣，命童子携琴相随，又取黄金十镒带去：“倘吾弟居丧，可为贖礼。”踮跳登崖，行于樵径，约莫十数里，出一谷口，伯牙站住。童子禀道：“老爷为何不行？”伯牙道：“山分南北，路列东西。从山谷出来，两头都是大路，都去



thoughts went back to this time last year when, with the rain just over and the moon shining brightly, he had met his true friend, and this happened to be a glorious night as well. His friend had promised to wait for him at the riverside, but why was there no trace of him? Could he have broken his promise?

After waiting for a while longer, he thought, "Ah, I know. There are so many boats coming and going, and I'm not in the one I had last year. How can I expect my brother to see me right away? Last year, my zither playing caught his attention. Tonight, let me play my zither again. When my brother hears it, he'll surely come to greet me." So thinking, he bade the page boy bring a table to the bow of the boat and put the zither on the table.

With incense burning and his seat in place, Boya opened the zither case, tuned the strings, and started playing, but the notes sounded mournful. He stopped. "Ah," he said to himself, "the notes are so mournful. This must mean that one of my brother's parents has passed away. Last year, he did say that his parents were quite advanced in years. Either his father or his mother must have died. Being the filial son that he is, he has his priorities and would rather break a promise to me than be remiss in his duties toward his parents. That's why he chose not to come. After daybreak tomorrow, I'll go up on the rocky shore and visit him at home."

He had the page boy take away the zither table and retired to his cabin for the night. But he was awake the whole night through, waiting for a daybreak that just would not come. As soon as the moon's shadow on the portiere vanished and the sun appeared at the top of the hills, Boya rose, straightened his clothes, told his page boy to follow him, and took out two hundred taels of gold. "My brother will need this for the funeral if he's in mourning," he said to himself.

In one jump, he landed on the rocks and began walking along a woodcutters' path, which took him to the mouth of a valley more than ten *li* away. He stopped and stood still.

"Why have you stopped, Master?" asked the page boy.

"There is one mountain to the south and another one to the north, and there is one road leading to the east and another one



得。知道那一路往集贤村去？等个识路之人，问明了他，方才可行。”伯牙就石上少憩，童儿退立于后。不多时，左手官路上有一老叟，髯垂玉线，发挽银丝，箬冠野服，左手举藤杖，右手携竹篮，徐步而来。伯牙起身整衣，向前施礼。那老者不慌不忙，将右手竹篮轻轻放下，双手举藤杖还礼，道：“先生有何见教？”伯牙道：“请问两头路，那一条路，往集贤村去的？”老者道：“那两头路，就是两个集贤村。左手是上集贤村，右手是下集贤村，通衢三十里官道。先生从谷出来，正当其半。东去十五里，西去也是十五里。不知先生要往那一个集贤村？”伯牙默默无言，暗想道：“吾弟是个聪明人，怎么说话这等糊涂！相会之日，你知道此间有两个集贤村，或上或下，就该说个明白了。”伯牙却才沉吟，那老者道：“先生这等吟想，一定那说路的，不曾分上下，总说了个集贤村，教先生没处抓寻了。”伯牙道：“便是。”老者道：“两个集贤村中，有一二十家庄户，大抵都是隐遁避世之辈。



leading to the west. From the mouth of the valley, I can take either of these two thoroughfares, but I wonder which one leads to the Village of Worthy Men. Let's wait for someone who knows the area well and ask him for directions before continuing on our way."

Boya sat down on a rock to rest a little, and the page boy stood behind him. Soon, an old man came into view, walking down the road on Boya's left-hand side. His beard flowing like threads of jade, his silvery hair tied up in a knot, he wore a bamboo hat and farmers' clothes. In his left hand he carried a rattan walking stick, and in his right hand, a bamboo basket. The old man advanced slowly in Boya's direction. Boya rose, adjusted his clothes, and stepped forward with a bow.

Unhurriedly, the old man put down the basket and returned the greeting. He raised his walking stick with both hands, saying, "What can I do for you, sir?"

"Could you tell me which of these two roads leads to the Village of Worthy Men?"

"Well, the two roads lead to two different villages, both called Village of Worthy Men. The one to the left is the Upper Village of Worthy Men and the one to the right is the Lower Village of Worthy Men. They are separated by a thirty-*li* thoroughfare. You, sir, having just come out of the mouth of the valley, are at the very mid-point of the road, which stretches fifteen *li* to the east and fifteen *li* to the west. Now, which village do you have in mind?"

Boya was at a loss for words. He thought, "My brother is an intelligent man, but how could he have been so careless? That night when we met, he should have told me clearly that there are two Villages of Worthy Men, one upper and one lower."

While Boya was in the midst of these reflections, the old man said, "You look thoughtful, sir. Whoever gave you directions must have spoken only about the Village of Worthy Men, without specifying whether it's the upper one or the lower one, and that's why you, sir, are at a loss."

"Exactly," said Boya.

"There are about ten to twenty families in these two villages.



老夫在这山里，多住了几年，正是‘土居三十载，无有不亲人’。这些庄户，不是舍亲，就是敝友。先生到集贤村必是访友，只说先生所访之友，姓甚名谁，老夫就知他住处了。”伯牙道：“学生要往钟家庄去。”老者闻“钟家庄”三字，一双昏花眼内，扑簌簌掉下泪来，道：“先生别家可去，若说钟家庄，不必去了。”伯牙惊问：“却是为何？”老者道：“先生到钟家庄，要访何人？”伯牙道：“要访子期。”老者闻言，放声大哭道：“子期钟徽，乃吾儿也。去年八月十五采樵归晚，遇晋国上大夫俞伯牙先生。讲论之间，意气相投。临行赠黄金二笏。吾儿买书攻读，老拙无才，不曾禁止。旦则采樵负重，暮则诵读辛勤，心力耗废，染成怯疾，数月之间，已亡故了。”伯牙闻言，五内崩裂，泪如涌泉，大叫一声，傍山崖跌倒，昏绝于地。钟公用手搀扶，回顾小童道：“此位先生是谁？”小童低低附耳道：“就是俞伯牙老爷。”钟公道：“元来是吾儿好友。”扶起伯牙苏醒。伯牙坐于地下，口吐痰涎，双手捶胸，恸哭不已，道：“贤弟呵，我昨夜泊舟，还说你爽信，



They are mostly people who chose to live here in seclusion. I have been living in these mountains longer than others. As the saying goes, 'After thirty years of life in the same neighborhood, you form ties everywhere.' My neighbors are either my relatives or my friends. You, sir, must be visiting a friend. If you could tell me your friend's name, I'll tell you where he lives."

"I'm looking for the Zhong family."

At the mention of the Zhong family, tears fell from the old man's age-dimmed eyes. "Please visit any other household but the Zhongs," he said.

"Why?" asked Boya, startled.

"Which member of the Zhong family do you want to see, sir?"

"Ziqi."

The old man burst into loud sobs. "Ziqi, Zhong Hui, was my son. On his way home, late on the fifteenth night of the eighth month last year, he met Mr. Yu Boya, senior grand master of the state of Jin. They chatted and found that they had much in common. Before he left, he was given two ingots of gold as a gift. My son then bought books and applied himself to his studies. I am such an old and stupid man that I did not stop him. By day, he chopped firewood and carried heavy loads; by night, he labored at his studies, exhausting himself both mentally and physically until he contracted consumption and died in a few months."

At these words, Boya felt as if his insides had split open. His tears flowing like a gushing spring, he let out a loud cry, fell on the ground by the cliff, and fainted.

Mr. Zhong Senior put his hands around Boya and, turning to the page boy, asked, "Who might this gentleman be?"

The page boy whispered into the old man's ear, "He is none other than Master Yu Boya."

"So, he is my son's good friend." So saying, Mr. Zhong Senior raised Boya up. Upon coming to, Boya sat on the ground, foaming at the mouth, beating his chest with both hands, and crying bitterly. "My good brother," he wailed, "last night when I had my boat cast anchor, I blamed you for having broken your promise. Little did I



岂知己为泉下之鬼！你有才无寿了！”钟公拭泪相劝。伯牙哭罢起来，重与钟公施礼。不敢呼老丈，称为老伯，以见通家兄弟之意。伯牙道：“老伯，令郎还是停柩在家，还是出瘞郊外了？”钟公道：“一言难尽！亡儿临终，老夫与拙荆坐于卧榻之前。亡儿遗语嘱付道：‘修短由天，儿生前不能尽人子事亲之道，死后乞葬于马安山江边。与晋大夫俞伯牙有约，欲践前言耳。’老夫不负亡儿临终之言。适才先生来的小路之右，一丘新土，即吾儿钟徽之冢。今日是百日之忌，老夫提一陌纸钱，往坟前烧化，何期与先生相遇！”伯牙道：“既如此，奉陪老伯，就坟前一拜。”命小童代太公提了竹篮。

钟公策杖引路，伯牙随后，小童跟定，复进谷口。果见一丘新土，在于路左。伯牙整衣下拜：“贤弟在世为人聪明，死后为神灵应。愚兄此一拜，诚永别矣！”拜罢，放声又哭。惊动山前山后，山左山右黎民百姓，不问行的住的，远的近的，闻得朝中大臣来祭钟子期，回绕坟前，争先观看。[眉批]来看的主意就俗了。伯



know that you had already become a ghost in the Nine Springs.¹⁶ What a short life for a man of such talent!”

Mr. Zhong Senior wiped away his tears and said some comforting words.

When he finished weeping, Boya rose and saluted Mr. Zhong Senior anew, not as just any elderly man, but as an uncle, as if the two clans had been friends for generations.

“Uncle,” said Boya, “is your son’s coffin still at home or is it already buried in an open space?”

“It’s a long story. My wife and I sat by his bedside before he died, and these were his last words: ‘How long one gets to live is a matter dictated by divine will. While living, your son has failed to provide good support for you. After I die, please bury me by the river at the foot of the Ma’an Mountains because I wish to keep the promise I made to Yu Boya, grandmaster of Jin.’ I have fulfilled my son’s last wish. To the right of the path that you, sir, just traveled along is a mound of newly dug earth, and that is my son Zhong Hui’s grave. Today being the one-hundredth day after his death, here I am, carrying a string of paper coins to be burned at his grave. I certainly did not expect to run into you here, sir!”

“In that case,” said Boya, “I’ll go with you, Uncle, so that I can bow to the grave.” So saying, he instructed the page boy: “Carry the bamboo basket for Grandpa.”

Supporting himself on his walking stick, Mr. Zhong Senior led the way, followed by Boya, with the page boy bringing up the rear. Upon reentering the mouth of the valley, Boya saw that there was indeed a mound of newly dug earth to the left of the path.

Boya adjusted his clothes and bowed deeply. “My good brother,” said he, “in life you were an intelligent man. After death, you will be a deity responsive to prayers. Accept this bow from me, your unworthy brother, as my final farewell!” After bowing, he burst into loud wails again, wails that caught the attention of people all around this hilly region. Passers-by as well as local residents, hearing that a court minister was here to mourn Zhong Ziqi, flocked to the grave and vied with each other for a better view. (*How vulgar, these*



牙却不曾摆得祭礼，无以为情。命童子把瑶琴取出囊来，放于祭石台上，盘膝坐于坟前，挥泪两行，抚琴一操。那些看者，闻琴韵铿锵，鼓掌大笑而散。伯牙问：“老伯，下官抚琴，吊令郎贤弟，悲不能已，众人何为而笑？”钟公道：“乡野之人，不知音律。闻琴声以为取乐之具，故此长笑。”伯牙道：“原来如此。老伯可知所奏何曲？”钟公道：“老夫幼年也颇习。如今年迈，五官半废，模糊不懂久矣。”伯牙道：“这就是下官随心应手一曲短歌，以吊令郎者，口诵于老伯听之。”钟公道：“老夫愿闻。”

伯牙诵云：

忆昔去年春，江边曾会君。今日重来访，不见知音人。
但见一抔土，惨然伤我心！伤心伤心复伤心，不忍泪珠纷。
来欢去何苦，江畔起愁云。

子期子期兮，你我千金义，历尽天涯无足语，此曲终兮不复弹，三尺瑶琴为君死！

伯牙于衣夹间取出解手刀，割断琴弦，双手举琴，向祭石台



rubbernecker!)

Since he had not brought any sacrificial items, Boya found that he lacked the means to express his condolences. He told the page boy to take the zither from its case and put it on the stone altar. He then sat cross-legged in front of the grave and tearfully began to play. Hearing the clear, ringing notes of the zither, the onlookers clapped their hands and, laughing, went their separate ways.

“Uncle,” said Boya, “I am overcome by grief when I play the zither to mourn my brother, your son. Why did these people laugh?”

Mr. Zhong Senior replied, “These are rustic people with no understanding of music. They laughed because they thought music is for entertainment.”

“I see. Do you, Uncle, know what I’ve been playing?”

“I was quite studious when I was young, but now that I’m old and all my five senses are working only half as well as they used to, I have long since lost my ability to appreciate music.”

“In that case, let me recite to you the short lyrics that I improvised to express my condolences for your son.”

“I would be pleased to hear them,” said the old man.

So Boya began to recite:

*“I met you last spring on the riverside,¹⁷
I am here again, but where might my true friend be?
The sight of your grave gives me pangs of grief,
Pangs of grief that bring tears to my eyes.
Happily I came, sadly I go;
Gloomy clouds gather on the riverbanks.*

*“Ziqi! Ziqi! My good brother!
Our bond was worth a thousand pieces of gold;
We had more to talk about than the world could hold.
After this song of mine comes to an end,
I shall never play the zither again;
For you dies this three-foot jasper zither!”*

Boya drew a small knife from inside his robe, cut the strings of the zither, raised it with both hands, and smashed it with all his



上，用力一摔，摔得玉轸抛残，金徽零乱。钟公大惊，问道：“先生为何摔碎此琴？”伯牙道：

摔碎瑶琴凤尾寒，子期不在对谁弹！
春风满面皆朋友，欲觅知音难上难。

钟公道：“原来如此，可怜！可怜！”

伯牙道：“老伯高居，端的在上集贤村，还是下集贤村？”钟公道：“荒居在上集贤村第八家就是。先生如今又问他怎的？”伯牙道：“下官伤感在心，不敢随老伯登堂了。随身带得有黄金二镒，一半代令郎甘旨之奉，一半买几亩祭田，为令郎春秋扫墓之费。待下官回本朝时，上表告归林下。那时却到上集贤村，迎接老伯与老伯母，同到寒家，以尽天年。吾即子期，子期即吾也。[眉批] 古人交情如此，真令末世富贵轻薄儿羞杀□□。老伯勿以下官为外人相嫌。”说罢，命小僮取出黄金，亲手递与钟公，哭拜于地。钟公答拜，盘桓半晌而别。

这回书，题作《俞伯牙摔琴谢知音》。后人诗赞云：

势利交怀势利心，斯文谁复念知音！



might against the stone altar. The zither broke into pieces, and the jade tuning pegs and the gold frets scattered everywhere.

Aghast, Mr. Zhong Senior asked, “Why did you smash your zither?”

And this was Boya’s reply:

“The zither smashed, the phoenix’s tail¹⁸ grew cold.

Now that Ziqi’s gone, for whom can I play?

All call themselves friends and give you a smile,

But to find a true friend is all too hard.”

Mr. Zhong Senior said, “I see. How sad! How sad!”

“Do you, Uncle, live in the Upper Village or the Lower Village?”

“My humble home is the eighth house down the road in the Upper Village. Why do you still want to know?”

“I am too grief-stricken to follow you home, Uncle, but I have here forty [*sic*] taels of gold, half of which I wish to give to you on behalf of your son, for your daily subsistence. The other half is for you to buy a few *mu* of land with which to earn enough income to pay for the annual sacrificial rites at your son’s grave. After I return to my court, I will submit a memorial to ask for permission to retire. After I retire, I will come to Upper Village of Worthy Men to escort you and my aunt to my humble home, where you will live for the rest of your lives. I am Ziqi, and Ziqi is me. (*Such is the friendship between the ancients. The rich, frivolous men of today should be ashamed to death.*) Uncle, please don’t reject me as an outsider.” So saying, he had his page boy take out the gold, and he himself handed it to Mr. Zhong Senior. Weeping bitterly, he prostrated himself on the ground. Mr. Zhong Senior returned the courtesy with a salute. Boya lingered for a while longer before they bade farewell to each other.

This story is titled “Yu Boya Smashes His Zither in Gratitude to an Appreciative Friend.” A poet of later times had this to say in praise:

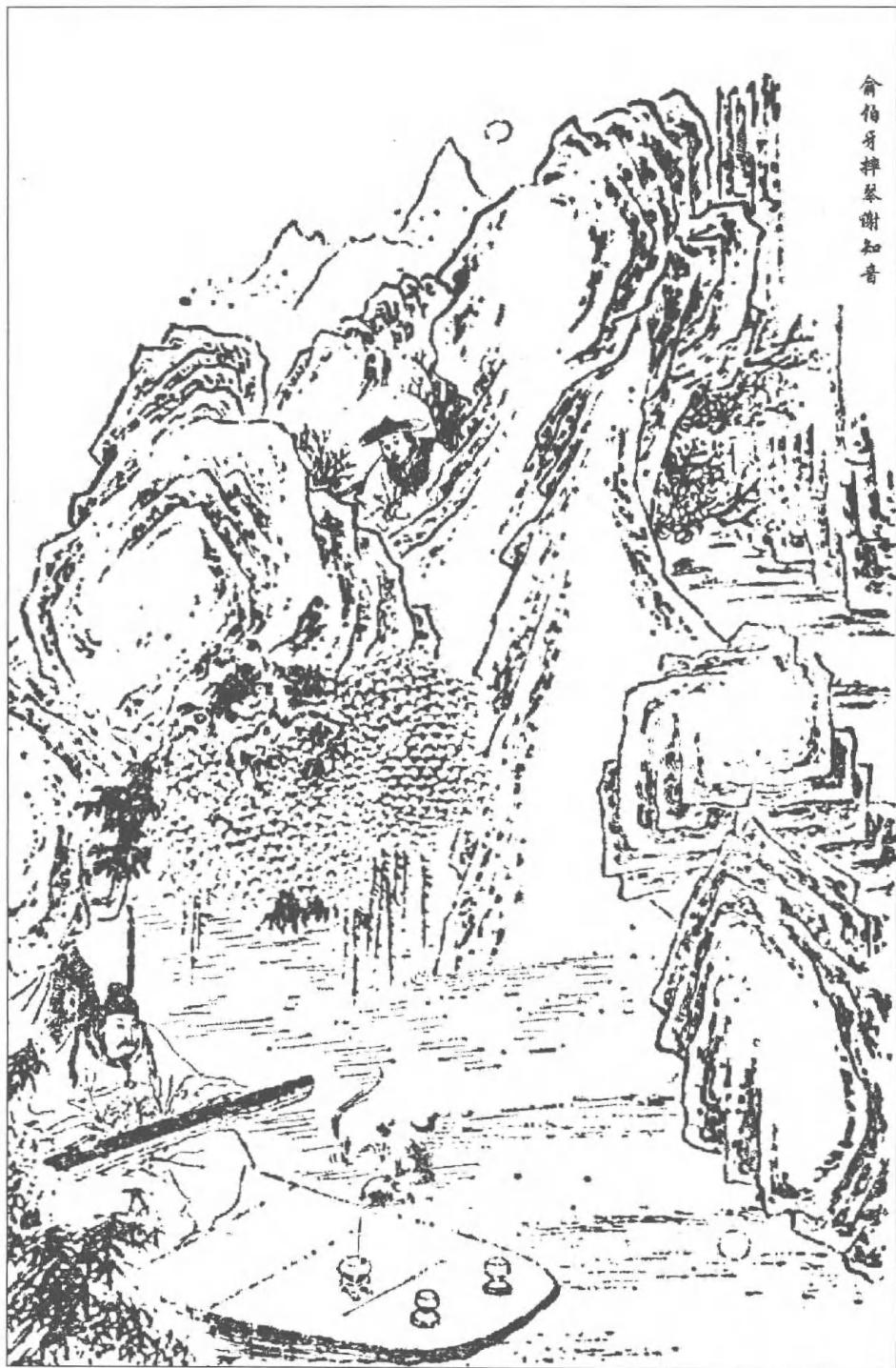
Snobs mingle with snobs,

Nor do scholars value true friends.

Boya’s loyalty after Ziqi’s death



伯牙不作钟期逝，千古令人说破琴。



俞伯牙摔琴谢知音



Lives on in the story of the smashed zither.

¹ For more on the friendship between Guan and Bao, see the prologue story of story 8 in Feng Menglong, *Stories Old and New: a Ming Dynasty Collection*, trans. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang (Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House, 2007).

² During the Ming dynasty, Huguang consisted of present-day Hubei and Hunan provinces. Yingdu was northwest of modern Jiangling, Hubei.

³ Fuxi was one of the legendary Three Sovereigns in high antiquity.

⁴ The five planets are Venus, Jupiter, Mercury, Mars and Saturn.

⁵ The thirty-three layers of heaven, *trayastrimsas*, is a Buddhist concept.

⁶ A year was divided into seventy-two units, called *hou* with each *hou* consisting of five days.

⁷ The Jasper Pool is a legendary abode of the gods at the top of the Kunlun Mountains in western China.

⁸ The eight solar terms of the year are the Beginning of Spring, the Beginning of Summer, the Beginning of Autumn, the Beginning of Winter, the Spring Equinox, the Summer Solstice, the Autumn Equinox, and the Winter Solstice.

⁹ Golden Boys and Jade Maidens are page boys and maids who serve Daoist immortals.

¹⁰ The dragon's pond and the phoenix's pool are the two holes at the back of the zither.

¹¹ Chinese musicians in ancient times used a pentatonic scale with only five notes (corresponding to 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, in Western numbered musical notation) and named them GONG, SHANG, JIAO, ZHI, and YU.

¹² Yao and Shun were legendary sage kings who ruled in high antiquity.

¹³ "While your parents are alive, do not travel far" is a quotation from *The Analects*, 4: 19.

¹⁴ Jinyang is now Jinyuanzhen to the southwest of the city of Taiyuan, Shanxi.

¹⁵ "If you do, you should always make your whereabouts known to them" is the sentence that follows "When your parents are alive, do not travel far" in *The Analects*, 4: 19.

¹⁶ The Nine Springs is a term for the underworld.

¹⁷ The reader will remember that they met in autumn.

¹⁸ "The phoenix's tail" is a reference to the zither.



第二卷

庄子休鼓盆成大道

富贵五更春梦，功名一片浮云。眼前骨肉亦非真，恩爱翻成仇恨。莫把金枷套颈，休将玉锁缠身。清心寡欲脱凡尘，快乐风光本分。

这首《西江月》词，是个劝世之言。要人割断迷情，逍遥自在。且如父子天性，兄弟手足，这是一本连枝，割不断的。儒、释、道三教虽殊，总抹不得“孝”“弟”二字。至于生子生孙，就是下一辈事，十分周全不得了。常言道得好：

儿孙自有儿孙福，莫与儿孙作马牛。

若论到夫妇，虽说是红线缠腰，赤绳系足，到底是剜肉粘肤，可离可合。常言又说得好：

夫妻本是同林鸟，巴到天明各自飞。

近世人情恶薄，父子兄弟到也平常，儿孙虽是疼痛，总比不



Story 2

Zhuang Zhou Drums on a Bowl in Attainment of the Great Dao

*Wealth and rank are but short-lived dreams;
Fame and glory are but floating clouds.
Your kith and kin may not be forever,
For tender love may change to burning hate.*

*Do not put the golden cangue on your neck,¹
Nor bind yourself with a jade padlock.
Free yourself from the desires of the mundane world;
Enjoy your days, and abide by your lot.*

The above lyric poem to the tune of “The Moon over the West River” exhorts people to sever ties of misplaced love and set themselves free, although ties between father and son and those between brothers cannot be severed because they are branches on the same tree. Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism may have their differences, but none denies the virtues of filial piety and fraternal love. As for the children and the grandchildren, well, you can’t very well make sure that everything works out exactly as you wish for the generations that come after you. There is a saying that puts it well:

*Your children will have their own share of fortune;
Don’t serve them meekly like beasts of burden.*

As for husband and wife, even though they are tied by a red thread around their waist and a red string around their ankles, they are, after all, separable, just as skin is from flesh.² As another saying puts it so well,

*Husband and wife are birds in the same woods;
When day breaks at last, they fly their separate ways.*

In our contemporary world, human relationships are at sixes and sevens. Although there isn’t much aberration in the observance of relationships between father and son and between brothers, people do dote overly on their children, and yet, the love for children is far



得夫妇之情。他溺的是闺中之爱，听的是枕上之言。多少人被妇人迷惑，做出不孝不弟的事来。这断不是高明之辈。

如今说这庄生鼓盆的故事，不是唆人夫妻不睦，只要人辨出贤愚，参破真假，从第一着迷处，把这念头放淡下来。渐渐六根清净，道念滋生，自有受用。昔人看田夫插秧，咏诗四句，大有见解。诗曰：

手把青秧插野田，低头便见水中天。

六根清净方为稻，退步原来是向前。

话说周末时，有一高贤，姓庄，名周，字子休，宋国蒙邑人也。曾仕周为漆园吏。师事一个大圣人，是道教之祖，姓李，名耳，字伯阳。伯阳生而白发，人都呼为老子。庄生常昼寝，梦为蝴蝶，栩栩然于园林花草之间，其意甚适。醒来时，尚觉臂膊如两翅飞动，心甚异之。以后不时有此梦。庄生一日在老子座间讲《易》之暇，将此梦诉之于师。却是个大圣人，晓得三生来历，向庄生指出夙世因由，那庄生原是混沌初分时一个白蝴蝶。[眉批]荒唐附会。天一生水，二生木，木荣花茂，那白蝴蝶采百花之精，



exceeded by that between husband and wife. Goodness knows how many husbands, wallowing in the pleasures of the boudoir and listening to nothing but their wives' pillow talk, have been bewitched by women and done things in violation of filial piety and fraternal love. Such men are by no means men of wisdom.

I now propose to tell a story about Zhuang Zhou drumming on a bowl.³ I do so not with the intention of provoking marital strife but simply to exhort people to know what is good from what is stupid and what is true from what is false and to tone down the passion that consumes them most. Gradually, much to their own advantage, their six senses will be purified, and Daoist thoughts will arise in their minds.⁴ A poet of olden times, watching a farmer transplanting rice seedlings, intoned a quatrain that is full of insight:

*Green seedlings in hand, you plant them one by one;
 Head bent down, you see the sky in the water.
 The six senses cleansed, you acquire the Dao;⁵
 To back up is in fact to move ahead.⁶*

As the story goes, toward the end of the Zhou dynasty, there lived a very wise man named Zhuang Zhou, courtesy name Zixiu, who was a native of Meng County in the state of Song.⁷ While serving as an official in Qiyuan,⁸ he studied under a great sage, the founder of Daoism, named Li Er, courtesy name Boyang. Born with white hair on his head, the sage was called Laozi by all and sundry.

In one of his frequent daytime naps, Zhuang Zhou dreamed that he was a butterfly merrily flapping its wings in a garden among flowers and grass. Upon waking up, he still felt that his arms were fluttering like wings. He found it all very strange, and from that time on, the dream often came back to him. One day, during a recess in a lecture by Laozi on *The Book of Changes*, he told his teacher about his dreams. Being the great sage that he was, Laozi knew all about Zhuang Zhou's previous, current, and future lives and revealed to Zhuang that in his previous life, when the primeval chaos was first separated into heaven and earth, he had been a white butterfly. (*How absurd! What a far-fetched explanation!*) Heaven begot water and then wood. When wood flourished and flowers thrived, the white



夺日月之秀，得了气候，长生不死，翅如车轮。后游于瑶池，偷采蟠桃花蕊，被王母娘娘位下守花的青鸾啄死。其神不散，托生于世，做了庄周。因他根器不凡，道心坚固，师事老子，学清净无为之教。今日被老子点破了前生，如梦初醒。自觉两腋风生，有栩栩然蝴蝶之意。把世情荣枯得丧，看做行云流水，一丝不挂。老子知他心下大悟，把《道德》五千字的秘诀，倾囊而授。庄生嘿嘿诵习修炼，遂能分身隐形，出神变化。[眉批]分身隐形，出神变化，都在《道德经》中，人自参不透耳。从此弃了漆园吏的前程，辞别老子，周游访道。

他虽宗清净之教，原不绝夫妇之伦，一连娶过三遍妻房。第一妻，得疾夭亡；第二妻，有过被出；如今说的是第三妻，姓田，乃田齐族中之女。庄生游于齐国，田宗重其人品，以女妻之。那



butterfly gathered the essences of all the hundred flowers and, nourished by the vital elements of the sun, the moon, and the climate, attained eternal life, with its wings as big as wheels. Later, while playing at the Jasper Pool,⁹ it stole some pistils from the immortal peach blossoms, for which it was pecked to death by the green phoenix, guardian of flowers serving the Queen Mother of the Immortals. But the dead butterfly's spirit did not dissolve. It was reincarnated into the body of Zhuang Zhou of the mortal world. It was with such extraordinary natural endowments, in addition to a firm determination to follow the Dao, that he was now studying, as a disciple of Laozi, the teachings of quiescence and nonaction.

Enlightened by Laozi's account of his previous life, he felt as if he had just woken up from a dream, and his arms began to feel airborne, like the fluttering wings of a butterfly. Thereafter, he looked upon the vicissitudes of life in this world as nothing more than floating clouds and flowing water and freed himself from the trammels of care and worry.

Knowing that Zhuang Zhou had attained enlightenment, Laozi imparted to him all the secrets contained in the five-thousand-character *Daodejing*.¹⁰ Zhuang Zhou assiduously intoned and studied the text, and devoted himself to the cultivation of the Dao until he acquired the magic of self-replication, body concealment, and metamorphosis. (*So, the magic of self-replication, body concealment, and metamorphosis is contained in the Daodejing. Too bad it's quite beyond the ken of average people.*)

Zhuang Zhou then resigned from his position as an official in Qiyuan, took leave of Laozi, and began a wandering life in quest of the Dao.

Though a disciple of the teachings of quiescence and purification of the senses, he had not cut himself off from the ties of marriage. In fact, he had been married to three wives, one after another. The first one had died from illness. As for the second, he had divorced her on grounds of misdemeanor. Our story is about the third wife, who was from the Tian clan that ruled the state of Qi.

During Zhuang Zhou's wanderings in the state of Qi, the



田氏比先前二妻，更有姿色。肌肤若冰雪，绰约似神仙。庄生不是好色之徒，却也十分相敬，真个如鱼似水。楚威王闻庄生之贤，遣使持黄金百镒，文锦千端，安车驷马，聘为上相。庄生叹道：“牺牛身被文绣，口食刍菽，见耕牛力作辛苦，自夸其荣。及其迎入太庙，刀俎在前，欲为耕牛而不可得也。”遂却之不受。挈妻归宋，隐于曹州之南华山。

一日，庄生出游山下，见荒冢累累，叹道：“‘老少俱无辨，贤愚同所归。’人归冢中，冢中岂能复为人乎？”嗟咨了一回。再行几步，忽见一新坟，封土未干。一年少妇人，浑身缟素，坐于此冢之傍，手运齐纨素扇，向冢连搨不已。[眉批]大奇。庄生怪而问之：“娘子，冢中所葬何人？为何举扇搨土？必有其故。”那妇人并不起身，运扇如故。口中莺啼燕语，说出几句不通道理的话来。正是：

听时笑破千人口，说出加添一段羞。

那妇人道：“冢中乃妾之拙夫，不幸身亡，埋骨于此。生时与妾



patriarch of the Tian clan was impressed by Zhuang's character and married his daughter to Zhuang. Now this Tian-shi was more beautiful than the two previous wives — her skin as fair as ice and snow and her movements as graceful as those of a fairy maiden. Though not a man who succumbed easily to feminine charm, Zhuang Zhou was very fond of her and was as happy in this union as a fish in water.

King Wei of Chu, upon hearing about Zhuang's reputation as a man of worth, sent a messenger to him with an offer of the position of chief of protocol. The messenger also brought gifts of two thousand taels of gold, a thousand bolts of colorful silk, and a carriage drawn by four horses. With a sigh, Zhuang Zhou said, "An ox raised for sacrificial purposes, finding itself covered with brocade and fed fine fodder, gloats over its glory when it sees a farm ox hard at work, plowing the fields. But by the time it is led into the temple to face the ax, how it wishes, in vain, to be a farm ox!" With that, he rejected the offer and went back with his wife to the state of Song, to live the life of a recluse in the Nanhua Mountains in Caozhou.¹¹

One day, on a tour at the foot of a mountain, Zhuang Zhou saw one deserted grave after another. He said with a sigh, "As the saying goes, 'The old and the young become undistinguishable. The wise and the foolish go the same way.' Can a body be resurrected once it is laid in the grave?" After heaving sigh upon sigh, he resumed his steps. Suddenly, he saw a new grave, with the earth at the top still wet. A young woman in mourning white was sitting by the grave, fanning it with a white silk fan in her hand. (*How very strange!*)

Zhuang Zhou asked in amazement, "Who is the person buried in the grave, madam? Why are you fanning the earth? You must have a reason for doing so."

The woman did not stand up but kept fanning away at the grave, giving, in that sweet little voice of hers, a reply that defied all reason. Truly, it was enough to

*Twist a thousand mouths from too much laughing;
And put to greater shame the one saying it.*

This is what the woman said: "Buried in the grave are my dead husband's bones. He was very much in love with me and couldn't bear



相爱，死不能舍。遗言教妾如要改适他人，直待葬事毕后，坟土干了，方才可嫁。妾思新筑之土，如何得就干，因此举扇搨之。”庄生含笑，想道：“这妇人好性急！亏他还说生前相爱。若不相爱的，还要怎么？”乃问道：“娘子，要这新土干燥极易。因娘子手腕娇软，举扇无力。不才愿替娘子代一臂之劳。”[眉批]庄生游戏。那妇人方才起身，深深道个万福：“多谢官人！”双手将素白纨扇，递与庄生。庄生行起道法，举手照冢顶连搨数扇，水气都尽，其土顿干。妇人笑容可掬，谢道：“有劳官人用力。”将纤手向鬓傍拔下一股银钗，连那纨扇送庄生，权为相谢。庄生却其银钗，受其纨扇。妇人欣然而去。

庄子心下不平，回到家中，坐于草堂，看了纨扇，口中叹出四句：

不是冤家不聚头，冤家相聚几时休？

早知死后无情义，索把生前恩爱勾。

田氏在背后，闻得庄生嗟叹之语，上前相问。那庄生是个有道之士，夫妻之间亦称为先生。田氏道：“先生有何事感叹？此扇从何而得？”庄生将妇人搨冢，要土干改嫁之言述了一遍。“此扇即搨土之物。因我助力，以此相赠。”田氏听罢，忽发忿然之



the thought of parting with me upon death. Before dying, he told me that should I want to remarry, I must wait until the funeral was over and the earth on the grave was dry. Because it takes time for the earth on a newly dug grave to dry, I'm fanning it to make it dry faster. "

Smilingly, Zhuang Zhou thought to himself, "What an impatient woman! And she had the nerve to say that they had been in love! What would she be up to if they had never been in love?" So thinking, he said, "Madam, nothing can be easier than drying some newly dug earth. Your arms are too soft and delicate. You just don't have enough strength for this fanning job. Please let my unworthy self lend you my arm." (*Naughty Mr. Zhuang!*)

It was not until this moment that the woman stood up. With a deep curtsy, she said, "Many thanks to you, sir!" With both hands, she passed the white silk fan to Zhuang Zhou, who then began to apply his Daoist magic. He fanned at the top of the grave a few times in quick succession. Immediately, all the moisture evaporated and the earth dried up.

Flashing a radiant smile, the woman said, "Thank you, sir, for all this trouble. " With her dainty hand, she took off a silver hairpin from her temple and gave it along with the silk fan to Mr. Zhuang as tokens of her gratitude. Zhuang Zhou declined the hairpin but accepted the fan, and, merrily, the woman took herself off.

Zhuang Zhou returned home, feeling quite upset. Sitting in his room and looking at the silk fan, he intoned the following quatrain:

*"If not so fated, lovers will never meet;
But once they do, when will their cursed love end?
Had you known that no love lasts beyond the grave,
You would have cut off all love before your death. "*

Hearing Zhuang Zhou's laments, Tian-shi walked up to him from behind to ask what it was all about. As he was a cultured gentleman, Mr. Zhuang was respectfully addressed by his wife as "sir. " Tian-shi said, "What are you lamenting, sir? Where did you get this fan?"

Zhuang Zhou told her about the woman fanning the grave so that the earth would dry quickly and she could remarry. "She gave me this fan as a gift," he concluded, "to thank me for helping her fan the



色，向空中把那妇人“千不贤，万不贤”骂了一顿，对庄生道：“如此薄情之妇，世间少有！”庄生又道出四句：

生前个个说恩深，死后人人欲掘坟。〔眉批〕已甚之言。

画龙画虎难画骨，知人知面不知心。

田氏闻言大怒。自古道：“怨废亲，怒废礼。”那田氏怒中之言，不顾体面，向庄生面上一啐，说道：“人类虽同，贤愚不等。你何得轻出此语，将天下妇道家看作一例？却不道歉人带累好人。你却也不怕罪过！”庄生道：“莫要弹空说嘴。假如不幸，我庄周死后，你这般如花似玉的年纪，难道捱得过三年五载？”田氏道：“‘忠臣不事二君，烈女不更二夫。’那见好人家妇女吃两家茶，睡两家床？若不幸轮到我身上，这样没廉耻的事，莫说三年五载，就是一世也成不得，梦儿里也还有三分的志气！”〔眉批〕能说嘴的定有可疑。庄生道：“难说！难说！”田氏口出詈语道：“有志妇人胜



grave. ”

Tian-shi burst into righteous indignation. “What a bad woman!” she cried over and over again, her face raised toward the sky. Then she addressed Zhuang Zhou, saying, “Such a heartless woman! The world has hardly ever seen the likes of her!”

At these words, Zhuang Zhou intoned another poem:

“Before you die, they all profess wifely love;

After you’re gone, they all rush to fan the graves. (Sheer exaggeration!)

You may draw dragons and tigers —

But how do you draw their bones?

You may know people’s faces —

But how do you know their hearts?”

Tian-shi exploded with rage. As an old saying put it, “Resentment makes you renounce ties of kinship; rage makes you forget rules of decorum. ” Carried away with anger, she cast all polite manners to the winds and spit into her husband’s face, saying, “There are good people, and there are foolish people. How can you so lightly dismiss all women as being alike? Aren’t you being unfair to good women just because of some bad ones? That was quite an offensive remark, you know. ”

“Don’t talk so big, ” countered Zhuangzi. “If I, Zhuang Zhou, should unfortunately die, am I to understand that you, in your blooming youth, will be able to get through even three to five years of widowhood?”

Tian-shi shot back, “As the saying goes, ‘A loyal minister serves only one sovereign; a chaste woman serves only one husband. ’ Have you ever seen a woman from a good family accept two offers of marriage and sleep in the beds of two households? If the misfortune you spoke of does befall me, I will never do anything so shameful, never for the rest of my life, let alone a mere three to five years! Even in my dreams I am something of a woman of moral rectitude!” (*There has to be something suspicious about those with clever tongues.*)

“You never can tell! You never can tell!” said Zhuang.

Tian-shi countered with this tirade: “Women of moral rectitude



如男子。似你这般没仁没义的，死了一个，又讨一个，出了一个，又纳一个，只道别人也是一般见识。我们妇道家一鞍一马，到是站得脚头定的，怎么肯把话与他人说，惹后世耻笑！你如今又不死，直恁枉杀了人！”[眉批]只这一句，挑动庄生机括。就庄生手中夺过纨扇，扯得粉碎。庄生道：“不必发怒，只愿得如此争气甚好！”自此无话。

过了几日，庄生忽然得病，日加沉重。田氏在床头，哭哭啼啼。庄生道：“我病势如此，永别只在早晚。可惜前日纨扇扯碎了，留得在此，好把与你搨坟！”田氏道：“先生休要多心！妾读书知礼，从一而终，誓无二志。先生若不见信，妾愿死于先生之前，以明心迹。”庄生道：“足见娘子高志，我庄某死亦瞑目。”说罢，气就绝了。田氏抚尸大哭。少不得央及东邻西舍，制备衣衾棺椁殓殓。田氏穿了一身素缟，真个朝朝忧闷，夜夜悲啼。每想着庄生生前恩爱，如痴如醉，寝食俱废。山前山后庄户，也有晓得庄生是个逃名的隐士，来吊孝的，到底不比城市热闹。



are superior to men. Now you are a heartless one. You took in another wife when your first wife died and then divorced the second one and took in a third. You assume that everyone else would stoop to your level. Now I, as a woman, am firmly committed to the one in my life, just as one saddle serves only one horse. How would I ever allow myself to be a subject of gossip and let future generations hold me up to ridicule? You certainly are not dying; what right do you have to accuse me so unjustly?" (*It was this last remark that gave Zhuangzi the idea.*) So saying, she snatched the silk fan away from him and tore it to pieces.

"All this anger is quite uncalled for," said Zhuang. "I only hope you'll be able to live up to your words." With that, the argument came to an end.

A few days later, Zhuang Zhou was suddenly taken ill, and he got worse day by day. To Tian-shi, who sat sobbingly by his bed, he said, "Being as ill as I am, I'll soon be parted from you forever. Too bad the silk fan was torn to pieces the other day. If it were still here, wouldn't it come in handy when you want to fan the grave?"

"Don't be so suspicious of me, sir," said Tian-shi. "I'm an educated woman with an understanding of decorum. I swear that I have no other wish than to serve only one man until I die. If you don't believe me, I'm more than willing to die right here before your eyes, so that you'll know for sure that I mean what I say."

"Yes, now that I do see you as a woman of moral rectitude, I can rest easy in death." With these words, he stopped breathing.

Stroking the corpse, Tian-shi burst into loud wails. Following the usual practice in such situations, she went around asking for the neighbors' help in preparing the burial clothes, the coffin, and the funeral rites. Clad in mourning white from head to toe, she was truly distraught with grief and cried bitterly day and night. Memories of Zhuang's love so overwhelmed her that she lost all desire for food and sleep.

Some of the farmers in the neighborhood, knowing that this Mr. Zhuang was a recluse living in the mountains in retirement from the world of fame, came to express their condolences, but funeral



到了第七日，忽有一少年秀士，生得面如傅粉，唇若涂朱，俊俏无双，风流第一。穿扮的紫衣玄冠，绣带朱履，带着一个老苍头；自称楚国王孙，向年曾与庄子休先生有约，欲拜在门下，今日特来相访。见庄生已死，口称：“可惜！”慌忙脱下色衣，叫苍头于行囊内取出素服穿了，向灵前四拜道：“庄先生，弟子无缘，不得面会侍教。愿为先生执百日之丧，以尽私淑之情。”说罢，又拜了四拜，洒泪而起，便请田氏相见。田氏初次推辞。王孙道：“古礼，通家朋友，妻妾都不相避，何况小子与庄先生有师弟之约！”田氏只得步出孝堂，与楚王孙相见，叙了寒温。田氏一见楚王孙人才标致，就动了怜爱之心，只恨无由厮近。楚王孙道：“先生虽死，弟子难忘思慕。欲借尊居，暂住百日。一来守先师之丧，二者先师留下有什么著述，小子告借一观，以领遗训。”田氏道：“通家之谊，久住何妨。”当下治饭相款。饭罢，田氏将庄子所著《南华真经》及老子《道德》五千言，和盘托出，



ceremonies in those parts were by no means the grand events that they were in the cities.

On the seventh day, there suddenly arrived a young scholar with a complexion as fair as if by powder and lips as red as if with rouge. A more handsome and dashing young man could hardly be found. Wearing a purple robe, a black hat, an embroidered waistband and red boots, and followed by an old servant, he claimed to be a member of the royal house of Chu, here because Mr. Zhuang had, some years before, promised to take him on as a disciple. Upon learning that Mr. Zhuang had died, he said, "What a loss!" With that, he immediately took off his purple robe, had the servant take out a white robe from their luggage, and put it on. "Master Zhuang," he said, with four bows to the coffin, "though this disciple of yours is not predestined to benefit from your teachings face to face, I wish to keep vigil for you for a hundred days to fulfill our bond as teacher and student."

After another four tearful bows, he rose and asked to see Tian-shi, who declined the request at first.

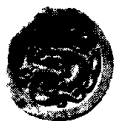
"According to tradition," said the young man, "women do not avoid the presence of their husbands' close friends, let alone their husbands' students, and I was Mr. Zhuang's student."

Resignedly, Tian-shi went out of the hall of mourning, greeted the young man of Chu, and exchanged amenities with him. The good looks of the young man stirred tender feelings in her. Too bad, she thought, that she had no excuse to get to know him better.

The young man said, "Though my teacher is gone, I admire him so much that I will never forget him. I'd like to stay in your house for a hundred days, partly to keep vigil over my deceased teacher's coffin and partly for an opportunity to read any writings he might have left behind, so that I may benefit from his teachings."

"Being a good friend of the family," said Tian-shi, "you are welcome to stay here for as long as you wish."

Right away, a meal was set out in the young man's honor. After the meal, Tian-shi offered him *The Book of Nanhua* by Zhuangzi and the five-thousand-character *Daodejing* by Laozi. The young man



献与王孙。王孙殷勤感谢。草堂中间占了灵位，楚王孙在左边厢安顿。田氏每日假以哭灵为由，就左边厢，与王孙攀话。日渐情熟，眉来眼去，情不能已。楚王孙只有五分，那田氏到有十分。所喜者深山隐僻，就做差了些事，没人传说。所恨者新丧未久，况且女求于男，难以启齿。

又捱了几日，约莫有半月了。那婆娘心猿意马，按捺不住，悄地唤老苍头进房，赏以美酒，将好言抚慰。从容问：“你家主人曾婚配否？”老苍头道：“未曾婚配。”婆娘又问道：“你家主人要拣什么样人物才肯婚配？”老苍头带醉道：“我家王孙曾有言，若得像娘子一般丰韵的，他就心满意足。”婆娘道：“果有此话？莫非你说谎？”老苍头道：“老汉一把年纪，怎么说谎？”婆娘道：“我央你老人家为媒说合，若不弃嫌，奴家情愿服事你主人。”老苍头道：“我家主人也曾与老汉说来，道一段好姻缘，只碍师弟二字，恐惹人议论。”婆娘道：“你主人与先夫原是生前空约，没有北面听教的事，算不得师弟。又且山僻荒居，邻舍罕有，谁人议论！你老人家是必委曲成就，教你吃杯喜酒。”老苍头应



thanked her heartily.

The center of the mourning hall was occupied by the memorial tablet for the deceased, so the young man took up quarters in the left section of the hall. Every day, Tian-shi went to that section of the hall, ostensibly to mourn the deceased, but actually to strike up a conversation with the young man. Gradually, a kind of familiarity began to develop between them, with exchanges of significant glances in a passion that was quite beyond control. If the young man was in love, Tian-shi was doubly so. Luckily, they were living in secluded mountains where no tongue would wag even if some impropriety were committed. But regrettably for her, the death was still too recent, and a marriage proposal could hardly be initiated by a woman.

A few more days went by. It was now about half a month after Zhuangzi's death. The woman found her passion too fiery to control. Surreptitiously, she summoned the visitor's old servant into her room, where she served him good wine, said nice things to him, and then asked, calmly, "Is your master betrothed?"

"Not yet. "

"What kind of woman does your master have in mind for a wife?"

"My master said," replied the old servant, a little under the influence of the wine, "that he would be most happy with someone as pretty as you are. "

"Did he really say that? You're not lying?"

"How can an old man like me lie?"

"In that case, I'd like to ask you to be the matchmaker. If your master doesn't object, I will gladly serve him as a wife. "

"My master has said to me that this would be a good marriage, but he was your deceased husband's student, so he's afraid people might talk. "

"My deceased husband only promised that he would teach your master. That doesn't make your master his student. Also, we have few neighbors in these deserted mountains. Who will be talking? Grandpa, you must tactfully pull off this job. You'll surely be invited to the wedding feast. "



允。临去时，婆娘又唤转来嘱咐道：“若是说得允时，不论早晚，便来房中回复奴家一声。奴家在此专等。”老苍头去后，婆娘悬悬而望。孝堂边张了数十遍，恨不能一条细绳缚了那俏后生俊脚，扯将入来，搂做一处。[眉批]描写此妇一腔欲火，可谓化工。将及黄昏，那婆娘等得个不耐烦，黑暗里走入孝堂，听左边厢声息。忽然灵座上作响，婆娘吓了一跳，只道亡灵出现。急急走转内室，取灯火来照，原来是老苍头吃醉了，直挺挺的卧于灵座桌上。婆娘又不敢嗔责他，又不敢声唤他，只得回房。捱更捱点，又过了一夜。

次日，见老苍头行来步去，并不来回复那话儿。婆娘心下发痒，再唤他进房，问其前事。老苍头道：“不成！不成！”婆娘道：“为何不成？莫非不曾将昨夜这些话剖豁明白？”老苍头道：“老汉都说了，我家王孙也说得有理。他道：‘娘子容貌，自不必言。未拜师徒，亦可不论。但有三件事未妥，不好回复得娘子。’”婆娘道：“那三件事？”老苍头道：“我家王孙道，‘堂中见摆着个凶器，我却与娘子行吉礼，心中何忍，且不雅相。二来庄先生与娘子是恩爱夫妻，况且他是个有道德的名贤，我的才学万分不及，



The old servant gave his promise. He was on the point of leaving when the woman called him back and said, "If he agrees, you will come back to my room, regardless of the hour, and let me know. I will be waiting here for a reply."

After the old servant left, the woman waited expectantly. Dozens of times she peeped into the hall of mourning. How she wished she could tie a thin string around the dashing young man's shapely feet and pull him into her room for a tight embrace! (*What a vivid description of the woman's burning desires!*)

When dusk set in, the woman's impatience got the better of her. In the darkness, she walked into the hall of mourning and listened for movements in the left section of the hall. Suddenly, she heard a noise from the table with the memorial tablet. She gave a start, thinking that it must have been the dead soul manifesting its presence. She hastened into the inner room to get a candle. By the candlelight, she saw that it was the old servant lying stiff on the table in a drunken stupor. Not daring to scold him or to wake him up, she had no choice but to return to her own room, where she passed a wakeful night, counting the hours that went by.

The following day, she saw the old servant pottering about without coming to her with a reply. Itching with suspense, she summoned the old man into her room again and asked him about the matter.

"Can't be done!" said the servant.

"Why not? Didn't you relay to him what I said last night?"

"I did, but my master does have a point. He said, 'The problem is not with her looks, of course. And, since I was never officially taken on as a student, my scruples in this connection can also be disregarded. But there are three concerns that prevent me from accepting her offer.'"

"What three concerns?"

"My master said, 'With that unlucky thing — the coffin — placed right in the middle of the hall, how can I bring myself to hold a wedding ceremony with her? And it's quite an unseemly sight, too. Second, Master Zhuang and she were a loving couple. Moreover, he was a famous man of virtue and wisdom. My learning is not anywhere



恐被娘子轻薄。三来我家行李尚在后边未到，空手来此，聘礼筵席之费，一无所措。为此三件，所以不成。”婆娘道：“这三件都不必虑。凶器不是生根的，屋后还有一间破空房，唤几个庄客抬他出去就是，这是一件了。第二件，我先夫那里就是个有道德的名贤？当初不能正家，致有出妻之事，人称其薄德。楚威王慕其虚名，以厚礼聘他为相。他自知才力不胜，逃走在此。[眉批]□□□□□□词□□豪杰。□于谗言者，皆此类也。可怜，可怜！前月独行山下，遇一寡妇，将扇搨坟，待坟土干燥，方才嫁人。拙夫就与他调戏，夺他纨扇，替他搨土，将那把纨扇带回，是我扯碎了。临死时几日还为他淘了一场气，又什么恩爱！你家主人青年好学，进不可量。况他乃是王孙之贵，奴家亦是田宗之女，门地相当。今日到此，姻缘天合。第三件，聘礼筵席之费，奴家做主，谁人要得聘礼？筵席也是小事。奴家更积得私房白金二十两，赠与你主人，做一套新衣服。你再去道达，若成就时，今夜是合婚吉日，



near his level. I'm afraid that she would look down on me. Third, my luggage has not arrived yet. I'm here quite empty-handed and unable to pay for all the expenses of betrothal gifts, the wedding feast, and so forth. These are the three reasons why I'm saying no. ”

“ But there's no need to worry about these three things, ” the woman rejoined. “ The coffin isn't rooted to the ground, is it? At the back of the house, there's a vacant room in bad condition. I'll just have a few farmhands move the coffin there. So, the first concern is taken care of.

“ About the second concern, how was my deceased husband ever a famous man of virtue and wisdom? He had failed to run an orderly household; that's why he divorced his wife and came to be called a heartless man. King Wei of Chu heard of his undeserved reputation and, out of admiration, sent him lavish gifts and invited him to be prime minister, but he himself knew all too well that he wasn't qualified for the job, and that's why he took refuge in this place. ([Illegible]... *a hero. She belongs to the kind of people with a penchant for vicious slander. How pathetic!*) Some time ago, when he was walking alone at the foot of the hill, he saw a widow fanning her deceased husband's grave so that she could remarry after the earth dried up. Taking liberties with that woman, my husband grabbed her silk fan, fanned the grave for her, and then brought the fan back home. I tore it to pieces. With such a man who exasperated me like this just a few days before he died, what love was there to speak of? Your young master, as studious as he is, will surely go far. Moreover, as he is from a royal background and I am from the distinguished Tian family, we will be well matched in status. The very fact that he's now in this place means that this is a match made in heaven.

“ As for the third concern, about expenses for betrothal gifts and the wedding feast, I will take care of everything. I have no need for betrothal gifts, and I can easily afford the feast. On top of that, I'll also give your master twenty taels of silver out of my own private savings for him to make new clothes. Now go again and tell him what I said. Today is a lucky day for a wedding. If he says yes, the wedding can be held this very evening. ”



便要成亲。”老苍头收了二十两银子，回复楚王孙。楚王孙只得顺从，老苍头回复了婆娘。

那婆娘当时欢天喜地，把孝服除下，重勾粉面，再点朱唇，穿了一套新鲜色衣。叫苍头顾唤近山庄客，扛抬庄生尸柩，停于后面破屋之内。打扫草堂，准备做合婚筵席。有诗为证：

俊俏孤孀别样娇，王孙有意更相挑。

一鞍一马谁人语？今夜思将快婿招。

是夜，那婆娘收拾香房，草堂内摆得灯烛辉煌。楚王孙簪缨袍服，田氏锦袄绣裙，双双立于花烛之下。一对男女，如玉琢金装，美不可说。交拜已毕，千恩万爱的，携手入于洞房，吃了合卺杯。正欲上床解衣就寝，忽然楚王孙眉头双皱，寸步难移，登时倒于地下，双手磨胸，只叫心疼难忍。田氏心爱王孙，顾不得新婚廉耻，近前抱住，替他抚摩，问其所以。王孙痛极不语，口吐涎沫，奄奄欲绝。老苍头慌做一堆。田氏道：“王孙平日曾有此症候否？”老苍头代言：“此症平日常有。或一二年发一次，无药可治。只有一物，用之立效。”田氏急问：“所用何物？老苍头道：“太医传一奇方，必得生人脑髓热酒吞之，其痛立止。[眉批]



The old servant took the twenty taels of silver and went to relay the message to his master, who resignedly gave his consent. When the old servant told the woman about this, she went wild with joy. With alacrity, she removed her white mourning garments, applied her makeup, put on brightly colored clothes, and told the old servant to engage farmhands in the neighborhood to carry the coffin containing Zhuang Zhou's body into the dilapidated room at the back of the house. The hall was then swept clean in preparation for the wedding feast. There is a poem that bears witness:

The pretty widow — what a charming woman!

The handsome young man — what a dashing flirt!

One saddle for one horse — whose words were they?

Her thoughts tonight — be wedded anew!

That night, the woman prepared the bridal chamber, and the hall of mourning was ablaze with lights. The couple — he wearing a hat and a robe, she in a brocade blouse and an embroidered skirt — stood by the nuptial candles, looking as resplendent as if made of jade and gilded with gold. After they made their ceremonial bows, they went lovingly hand in hand into the bridal chamber, where they drank the nuptial wine. They were heading for the bed, ready to undress for the night, when the bridegroom, his brows knit tightly in a frown, stopped short in his tracks and collapsed to the floor. His hands clutching at his chest, he complained of a sharp chest pain.

In her love for the young man, Tian-shi cast aside all the scruples of a newly-wed. She held him in her arms, rubbed his chest, and asked him how he was feeling, but in his extreme pain, speech was beyond him. Foaming at the mouth, he was on the verge of death. The old servant cowered in fear.

“Have there been attacks like this before?” asked Tian-shi.

The old servant replied on his master's behalf, “Yes, frequently, once every year or two. There's no medicine for it, but there is one cure that works in no time.”

“What is it?” Tian-shi asked eagerly.

“The physician of the royal family gave him a prescription that works wonders. As soon as he swallows the brains from a living



大顽皮。平日此病举发，老殿下奏过楚王，拨一名死囚来，缚而杀之，取其脑髓。今山中如何可得？其命合休矣！”田氏道：“生人脑髓，必不可致。第不知死人的可用得么？”[眉批]来了。老苍头道：“太医说，凡死未满四十九日者，其脑尚未干枯，亦可取用。”田氏道：“吾夫死方二十馀日，何不斲棺而取之？”老苍头道：“只怕娘子不肯。”田氏道：“我与王孙成其夫妇，妇人以身事夫，自身尚且不惜，何有于将朽之骨乎？”

即命老苍头伏侍王孙，自己寻了砍柴板斧，右手提斧，左手携灯，往后边破屋中，将灯檠放于棺盖之上，觑定棺头，双手举斧，用力劈去。妇人家气力单微，如何劈得棺开？有个缘故，那庄周是达生之人，不肯厚敛。桐棺三寸，一斧就劈去了一块木头。再一斧去，棺盖便裂开了。只见庄生从棺内叹口气，推开棺盖，挺身坐起。田氏虽然心狠，终是女流。唬得腿软筋麻，心头乱跳，



human being with some warm wine, the pain goes away. (*Naughty! Naughty!*) Every time he had an attack like this, the old prince would ask for the king's approval to have a convict awaiting execution trussed up and killed in order to get his brains. But where to get a human being's brains in these mountains? Oh, he's going to die this time, for sure!"

"A living person's brains are certainly out of the question," said Tian-shi, "but will a dead man's brains do?" (*There she goes!*)

The old servant replied, "According to the physician of the royal family, within forty-nine days of death, the brains have not yet dried up and can be used for that purpose. "

"My husband has been dead for only about twenty days. Why not open the coffin and take his brains?"

"But you, madam, may not be willing to do this," said the old servant.

"Your master and I are now husband and wife. A wife has the duty to serve her husband with every fiber of her being. Since I don't begrudge him anything I have, why should I deny him what a heap of dead bones can offer?"

So saying, she ordered the old servant to attend to the young man while she herself found a firewood ax. With the ax in her right hand and a lamp in her left, she went to the dilapidated room at the back of the house. She put the lamp above the coffin lid and, fixing her eyes on the head of the coffin, raised the ax with both hands and brought it down with all the force she could muster. How is it that a coffin yielded to a woman of little strength? Let me explain. Being a man who rose above worldly concerns, Zhuang Zhou had opted for a simple funeral with a coffin made of tung-wood planks only three-inches thick. With one hack of the ax, there went one piece of wood. Another hack, and the lid of the coffin split open. Lo and behold! With a sigh, Mr. Zhuang pushed open what remained of the lid and sat up.

However ruthless of heart, Tian-shi was, after all, but a woman. She was so frightened that her legs gave way under her, her heart pounded, and the ax fell to the floor without her knowing it.



斧头不觉坠地。庄生叫：“娘子扶起我来。”那婆娘不得已，只得扶庄生出棺。庄生携灯，婆娘随后同进房来。婆娘心知房中有楚王孙主仆二人，捏两把汗，行一步，反退两步。比及到房中看时，铺设依然灿烂，那主仆二人，阒然不见。婆娘心下虽然暗暗惊疑，却也放下了胆，巧言抵饰，向庄生道：“奴家自你死后，日夕思念。方才听得棺中有声响，想古人中多有还魂之事，望你复活，所以用斧开棺，谢天谢地，果然重生！实乃奴家之万幸也！”庄生道：“多谢娘子厚意。只是一件，娘子守孝未久，为何锦袄绣裙？”婆娘又解释道：“开棺见喜，不敢将凶服冲动，权用锦绣，以取吉兆。”庄生道：“罢了！还有一节，棺木何不放在正寝，却撇在破屋之内，难道也是吉兆？”婆娘无言可答。庄生又见杯盘罗列，也不问其故，教暖酒来饮。

庄生放开大量，满饮数觥。那婆娘不达时务，指望煨热老公，重做夫妻，紧握着酒壶，撒娇撒痴，甜言美语，要哄庄生上床同



“Wife,” said Zhuangzi, “help me get out. ”

The woman saw nothing for it but to help Zhuang out of the coffin. Holding the lamp, Zhuangzi led the way, and the woman followed him into the hall. Thinking that the young man of Chu was in the hall with his servant, the woman was breathless with fear. For each forward step, she took two steps back. Upon arriving in the hall, she saw that the decorations were still there, as splendid as before, but the master and servant were nowhere in sight. Though apprehensive, the woman felt relieved nonetheless and, trying to lie her way out of it, said to Zhuang, “Since you died, I’ve been grieving day and night. I heard a noise in the coffin just a moment ago, and, thinking of the many stories about resurrections of the dead in ancient times, I began to hope that you would also come back to life. That’s why I hacked at the coffin with an ax. Thanks to heaven and earth, you did indeed come back to life! What a lucky woman I am!”

“I thank you, wife, for your kindness. I have one question, though. The mourning period isn’t over. Why are you in a brocade blouse and an embroidered skirt?”

The woman again prevaricated, saying, “To open the coffin is a happy event. I didn’t dare let my mourning clothes clash with the good luck. That’s why I put on brocade and silk, for good luck. ”

“All right! All right! But, why is the coffin not in the main hall but discarded in that miserable room? Don’t tell me that’s also for good luck!”

The woman was struck speechless.

At the sight of the fine spread on the feast table, Zhuang Zhou asked no questions but ordered that wine be heated and brought to him. Letting himself go, he filled his horn-shaped vessel to the brim, and drank one vessel after another.

Lacking good sense, the woman still hoped to regain her husband’s affection and resume their conjugal life. She positioned herself near the wine flask and, acting the part of a spoiled coquette and mouthing tender and sweet words, tried to coax Zhuang into going to bed with her.

In a state of drunkenness, Zhuang Zhou asked for paper and a



寢。庄生饮得酒大醉，索纸笔写出四句：

从前了却冤家债，你爱之时我不爱。
若重与你做夫妻，怕你巨斧劈开天灵盖。

那婆娘看了这四句诗，羞惭满面，顿口无言。庄生又写出四句：

夫妻百夜有何恩？见了新人忘旧人。
甫得盖棺遭斧劈，如何等待掘干坟！

庄生又道：“我则教你看两个人。”庄生用手将外面一指，婆娘回头而看，只见楚王孙和老苍头踱将进来，婆娘吃了一惊。转身不见了庄生；再回头时，连楚王孙主仆都不见了。

那里有什么楚王孙、老苍头，此皆庄生分身隐形之法也。那婆娘精神恍惚，自觉无颜。解腰间绣带，悬梁自缢。呜呼哀哉！这到是真死了。庄生见田氏已死，解将下来，就将劈破棺木盛放了他，把瓦盆为乐器，鼓之成韵，倚棺而作歌。歌曰：

大块无心兮，生我与伊。我非伊夫兮，伊非我妻。偶然邂逅兮，一室同居。大限既终兮，有合有离。人之无良兮，生死情移。真情既见兮，不死何为！伊生兮拣择去取，伊死



brush-pen and wrote the following quatrain:

*We have settled the debts of our cursed love;
Now you're eager to love, but I am not.
To be your husband again is perhaps
To bring your ax down on top of my head!*

When the woman read these lines, shame was written all over her face. Speech failed her. Zhuang wrote another quatrain:

*What love is there between husband and wife?
Drawn to another man, she forgets her own.
The coffin was barely closed when down came the ax;
She beats the woman who fanned the grave dry.*

Zhuang said again, "Let me show you two men." The woman turned to look in the direction of Zhuang's pointing finger, and whom should she see but the young man of Chu and his old servant, walking into the room at a leisurely pace! She gave a start. Turning around, she found Zhuang Zhou gone. Turning back again, she realized that the young man and his servant were gone, too. In fact, there was no young man of Chu or his old servant. It was Zhuang Zhou who had assumed their forms, using his magic of self-replication and body concealment.

As if in a trance, the woman felt a burning shame. She took off her embroidered waistband, and hanged herself from a rafter. Alas! She gave up the ghost, and this time, the death was for real.

Seeing that the woman was dead and gone, Zhuangzi untied the knot, took her down, and put her body in the broken coffin. With an earthen bowl in hand to serve as a musical instrument, he leaned against the coffin and began to sing, drumming away on the bowl to keep time. And this is what he sang:

*"Nature unwittingly gave life to her and me,
I not her husband, she not my wife.
By chance we met and lived under one roof;
When the hour comes, we unite, we part.
The unkind shift their love when their spouses die;
The truth laid bare, death is the only choice.
In life, she got to pick and choose;*



兮还返空虚。伊吊我兮，赠我以巨斧；我吊伊兮，慰伊以歌词。斧声起兮我复活，歌声发兮伊可知！噫嘻，敲碎瓦盆不再鼓，伊是何人我是谁！

庄生歌罢，又吟诗四句：

你死我必埋，我死你必嫁。

我若真个死，一场大笑话！

庄生大笑一声，将瓦盆打碎。取火从草堂放起，屋宇俱焚，连棺木化为灰烬。只有《道德经》、《南华经》不毁。山中有人检取，传流至今。

庄生遨游四方，终身不娶。或云遇老子于函谷关，相随而去，已得大道成仙矣。诗云：

杀妻吴起太无知，荀令伤神亦可嗤。

请看庄生鼓盆事，逍遥无碍是吾师。



*In death, she returned to the void.
She mourned me by wielding the mighty ax;
I mourn her with this little song of mine.
The sound of the ax brought me back to life;
Do the notes of this song fall on her ears?
Well! Let me smash the bowl and stop beating time;
Who is she? And who am I?"*

After the song, he intoned a quatrain:

*"When you died, I buried your remains;
When I died, you married someone else.
If last time I had really died,
What a farce it all would have been!"*

With a hearty laugh, he smashed the bowl and lit a fire that spread from the main hall to the other rooms and burned the whole house down. The coffin was also reduced to ashes. Only the *Daodejing* and *The Book of Nanhua* were indestructible. They were picked up by some local resident in the mountains and were passed down to this day. Zhuangzi spent his time wandering over the length and breadth of the land and never married again. By some accounts, he followed Laozi after meeting him at the Hangu Pass,¹² whereupon he acquired the Dao, and became an immortal. There is a poem that says,

*Wu Qi the wife-killer should have known better;¹³
Xun Can's deep grief is just as laughable.¹⁴
Follow the example of bowl-beating Zhuang;
How free from care! How free from restraints!*

¹ The cangue is a wooden collar usually three or four feet square used in ancient China for confining the neck and sometimes also the hands of a convict.

² Zhang Jiazhen, prime minister in the Tang dynasty, wished to have Guo Tuanzhen as a son-in-law. He positioned his five daughters behind a curtain, with each daughter holding one end of a red thread and leaving the other end of the thread exposed on the other side of the curtain. Guo Tuanzhen was to pick up one of the red threads at random and take as his wife whichever girl happened to hold the other end. Hence the metaphor of red thread for marriages.

According to legend, the Old Man Under the Moon, the god of marriages, has a bag full of red strings with which he ties would-be couples together by their ankles.

³ Zhuang Zhou or Zhuangzi (ca.369–286 B.C.E.) was a leading Daoist philosopher. A Daoist classic, *Zhuangzi*, bears his name.





⁴ According to Buddhism, the six sensory organs are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind (receptors of sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and idea, respectively).

⁵ “The six senses,” pronounced “lu gen” in Feng’s native Wu dialect, is a homophone of “green roots,” a reference to the green seedlings in the first line.

Dao (the Way), also romanized Tao, is a homophone of *dao*, the word for “rice plants.”

⁶ When transplanting rice seedlings, the Chinese farmer puts the seedlings down in the rice paddy one at a time, backing up a step with each plant, and thus gradually moves backward as the seedlings are planted.

⁷ The state of Song covered what are now the eastern part of Henan and neighboring portions of Shandong, Jiangsu, and Anhui.

⁸ According to some historians, Qiyuan was located north of what is now the city of Shangqiu, Henan; according to others, it was north of what is now Dingyuan County, Anhui.

⁹ The Jasper Pool is a legendary abode of the gods atop the Kunlun Mountains in western China.

¹⁰ The *Daodejing*, also romanized *Tao te ching*, is the best-known text in classical Daoist philosophy.

¹¹ In the first year of the Tianbao reign period (742), Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang dynasty gave Zhuangzi the posthumous title Sage of Nanhua, and the Daoist classic *Zhuangzi* also came to be known as *The Book of Nanhua*.

¹² According to legend, while he was leaving China in search of some distant and secluded land, Laozi stopped at the frontier at Hangu Pass, where the warden asked the sage to write a book for him. Laozi granted the request, and the result was the five-thousand-character *Daodejing*.

¹³ Wu Qi (d. 381 B.C.E.) was a military strategist in the state of Lu during the Warring States period. When the state of Qi launched an attack against Lu, the king of Lu was inclined to make Wu commander-in-chief but hesitated because Wu’s wife was a native of Qi. Thereupon Wu killed his wife and won the promotion.

¹⁴ Xun Can, of the state of Wei in the Three Kingdoms period, died of grief soon after the death of his beloved wife.



第三卷

王安石三难苏学士

海鳖曾欺井内蛙，大鹏张翅绕天涯。
强中更有强中手，莫向人前满自夸。

这四句诗，奉劝世人虚己下人，勿得自满。古人说得好，道是：“满招损，谦受益。”俗谚又有四不可尽的话。那四不可尽？

势不可使尽，福不可享尽。

便宜不可占尽，聪明不可用尽。

你看如今有势力的，不做好事，往往任性使气，损人害人，如毒蛇猛兽，人不敢近。他见别人惧怕，没奈他何，意气扬扬，自以为得计。却不知八月潮头，也有平下来的时节。危滩急浪中，趁着这刻儿顺风，扯了满篷，望前只顾使去，好不畅快。不思去时容易，转时甚难。当时夏桀、商纣，贵为天子，不免窜身于南巢，悬头于太白。那桀、纣有何罪过？也无非倚贵欺贱，恃强凌



Story 3

Three Times Wang Anshi Tries to Baffle Academician Su

*The sea turtle scorns the frog in the well;
The roc wings its way around the heavens.
For every smart one, there's someone smarter.
Never be smug and sing your own praises.*

The above four lines exhort people to be modest and respectful of others and to guard against conceit. The ancients put it well: "Conceit spells loss; modesty brings benefit." There is also a proverb about four things that one should never do to an extreme. What are they?

*Power should not be exercised to the utmost;
Fortune should not be enjoyed to the utmost;
Advantages should not be taken to the utmost;
Clever brains should not be racked to the utmost.*

Consider how the powerful and influential people of today, instead of performing good deeds, often go wherever their whims and impulses lead them and bring affliction to other people. Seeing that others resignedly keep them at a distance out of fear, much as one would avoid going near poisonous snakes and ferocious beasts, they brim over with smugness, believing themselves to be the winners. Little do they know that there is a time when even the most furious tidal waves in the eighth month die down. Taking advantage of the favorable wind, they ride the surging waves in full sail over dangerous shoals. What a thrill it is! But they never give a thought to the fact that it is easier to go than to return.

In olden times, King Jie of the Xia dynasty and King Zhou of the Shang dynasty, Sons of Heaven though they were, ended up in disgrace.¹ One was banished to Nanchao [in present-day Chao County, Anhui], and the other was executed and his head was paraded on a Taibai banner. What crimes did Jie and Zhou commit? For the most part, they took advantage of their exalted positions to tyrannize the lowly and used their might to bully the weak. In short, they abused



弱，总来不过是使势而已。假如桀、纣是个平民百姓，还造得许多恶业否？[眉批]说得透彻。所以说“势不可使尽”。

怎么说福不可享尽？常言道：“惜衣有衣，惜食有食。”又道：“人无寿夭，禄尽则亡。”晋时石崇太尉，与皇亲王恺斗富，以酒沃釜，以蜡代薪；锦步障大至五十里；坑厕间皆用绫罗供帐，香气袭人；跟随家僮，都穿火浣布衫，一衫价值千金；买一妾，费珍珠十斛。后来死于赵王伦之手，身首异处。此乃享福太过之报。

怎么说便宜不可占尽？假如做买卖的错了分文人己，满脸堆笑。却不想小经纪若折了分文，一家不得吃饱饭，我贪此些须小便宜，亦有何益？昔人有占便宜诗云：

我被盖你被，你毡盖我毡。你若有钱我共使，我若无钱用你钱。上山时你扶我脚，下山时我靠你肩。我有子时做你婿，你有女时伴我眠。你依此誓时，我死在你后；我违此誓



power. Had Jie and Zhou been commoners, would they have done so many evil deeds? (*Good point.*) That is why the proverb says that power should not be exercised to the utmost.

How do you explain the line “Fortune should not be enjoyed to the utmost?” Well, as is often said, “Take good care of your clothes, and you shall have clothes aplenty. Waste not your food, and you shall have food galore.” Another proverb says, “Having lived out your span of life, you die; having used up your means, you perish.” In the Jin dynasty, there was a certain Grand Commandant Shi Chong, who, in a competition with Wang Kai, an imperial kinsman, to show off their wealth, had pots washed with wine, generated heat with candles instead of firewood, and erected a brocade wall that stretched for fifty *li*. Even the lavatories were embellished with satin and silk gauze curtains that gave off a fragrance that assailed the nostrils. The servants and page boys were dressed in clothes made of asbestos fabric so expensive that one article of clothing cost a thousand pieces of gold. Concubines were bought at about ten bushels of pearls each. Later, Shi Chong died at the hands of King Lun of Zhao, his head severed from his body. This was divine retribution for his excessive enjoyment of his good fortune.²

What about the line “Advantages should not be taken to the utmost?” Well, if a merchant made a calculation error in his own favor, he may very well smile with delight, but he may not know that the error can cause a lowly peddler and his family to go hungry. And how much good does it do to gain such petty advantages anyway? A poet of olden times had this to say about taking advantage of others:

*I will use your quilts as if they were mine;
At my disposal your blankets will also be.
When you have money, I'll help you use it.
If I run out of money, I will use yours.
On my way uphill, your hands support my feet.
On my way downhill, I lean on your shoulders.
If I have a son, he marries your daughter;
If you have a daughter, she sleeps by my side.
If you keep these words, I'll die after you;*



时，你死在我前。

若依得这诗时，人人都要如此，谁是呆子，肯束手相让？就是一时得利，暗中损福折寿，自己不知。所以佛家劝化世人，吃一分亏，受无量福。有诗为证：

得便宜处欣欣乐，不遂心时闷闷忧。

不讨便宜不折本，也无欢乐也无愁。

说话的，这三句都是了。则那聪明二字，求之不得，如何说聪明不可用尽？见不尽者，天下之事；读不尽者，天下之书；参不尽者，天下之理。宁可懵懂而聪明，不可聪明而懵懂。如今且说一个人，古来第一聪明的。他聪明了一世，懵懂在一时。留下花锦般一段话文，传与后生小子恃才夸己的看样。那第一聪明的是谁？

吟诗作赋般般会，打诨猜谜件件精。

不是仲尼重出世，定知颜子再投生。

话说宋神宗皇帝在位时，有一名儒，姓苏名轼，字子瞻，别号东坡，乃四川眉州眉山人士。一举成名，官拜翰林学士。此人天资高妙，过目成诵，出口成章，有李太白之风流，胜曹子建之



If I break my words, you'll die before me.

If this advice is put into practice, everyone will want to follow suit. What fool would obligingly be taken advantage of? But, unbeknownst to you, your momentary gain will compromise your fortune and shorten your span of life. Therefore, Buddhism teaches that to suffer even the least bit of loss is to be blessed with boundless fortune in return. There is a poem in testimony:

*You rejoice over every petty gain;
You grieve when things do not go your way.
If no gains and no losses,
Then no joys and no sorrows.*

Storyteller, you've explained the first three lines well enough, but as for the last line, a clever head is really more than anything one could wish for. Why can't clever brains be racked to the utmost?

Well, there are, in this world, more things than you can ever see, more books than you can ever read, and more truths than you can ever understand. It is better to appear less smart than you are than the other way around. Let me now tell a story of a man who was the smartest man there ever has been. For all his intelligence, however, he had his few moments of foolishness and left us with this jewel of a story — a story that will serve as a lesson for all young men who are inclined to boast about their talent. Who was this most intelligent man?

*He was a master of poetry and prose,
Full of humor and good at solving riddles.
If not another Confucius reborn,
He was surely a Yan Hui³ come back to life.*

As the story goes, during the reign of Emperor Shenzong [r. 1068–85] of the Song dynasty, there was a famous scholar by the name of Su Shi [1037–1101], courtesy name Zizhan, who also called himself Dongpo [Eastern Slope]. A native of Meishan in Meizhou, Sichuan, he made a name for himself by passing the imperial examinations on his first try and attained the rank of Academician in the Hanlin Academy. A highly gifted man, he was able to memorize a passage verbatim after a single reading and to speak as elegantly



敏捷。在宰相荆公王安石先生门下，荆公甚重其才。东坡自恃聪明，颇多讥诮。荆公因作《字说》，一字解作一义。偶论东坡的坡字，从土从皮，谓坡乃土之皮。东坡笑道：“如相公所言，滑字乃水之骨也。”一日，荆公又论及鮓字，从鱼从兒，合是鱼子；四马曰駟，天虫为蚕，古人制字，定非无义。东坡拱手进言：“鸠字九鸟，可知有故？”荆公认为真，欣然请教。东坡笑道：“《毛诗》云：‘鸣鸠在桑，其子七兮。’连娘带爷，共是九个。”
[眉批] 果然轻薄。荆公默然，恶其轻薄，左迁为湖州刺史。正是：

是非只为多开口，烦恼皆因巧弄唇。

东坡在湖州做官，三年任满朝京，作寓于大相国寺内。想当



as a master of literature writes on paper. With the romantic inclinations of Li Bai and a mind sharper than that of Cao Zhi, he worked under Prime Minister Wang Anshi, who later came to be enfeoffed as the Duke of Jing.⁴ Wang Anshi had a high regard for Su's talent, but Su Dongpo, made presumptuous by his own cleverness, heaped scornful remarks on the prime minister.

Prime Minister Wang had written a book titled *Etymology*, in which he gave one definition to each character. About the character *po* [slope], as in the name Su Dongpo, the definition given was that *po*, consisting of the left radical "earth" and the right radical "skin," was "the skin of earth." Dongpo commented with a grin, "By the prime minister's logic, the character *hua* [slippery], consisting of the radical 'water' and the radical 'bone,' means nothing less than 'the bone of water!'"

One day, Wang Anshi further explained that the character *ni* [salamander], composed of the radicals "fish" and "son," meant "small fish," that the character *si*, composed of "horse" and "four," meant a team of four horses, and that the character *can* [silkworm] was made up of the upper radical "sky" and the lower radical "insect." He concluded that the ancients had created new characters by grouping meaningful radicals together.

At this point, Dongpo folded his hands respectfully in front of his chest and said, "There is indeed a reason why the character *jiu* [turtledove] consists of the radicals 'nine' and 'bird.'"

The prime minister trustingly asked to be enlightened.

Dongpo replied, all affability, "*The Book of Songs* says, 'On the mulberry perch chirping turtledoves⁵ / Seven of which are little fledglings.' So, the seven little ones plus the mom and the dad do make nine!" (*Indeed as flippant as he was said to be!*)

Wang Anshi fell silent. Displeased by Su Shi's flippancy, Wang demoted him to the post of prefect of Huzhou. Truly,

A big mouth is the source of all trouble;

A glib tongue is to blame for all sorrows.

When his three-year term of office came to an end, Dongpo went back to the capital and found lodging in the Great State



时因得罪于荆公，自取其咎。常言道：“未去朝天子，先来谒相公。”分付左右备脚色手本，骑马投王丞相府来。离府一箭之地，东坡下马步行而前。见府门首许多听事官吏，纷纷站立。东坡举手问道：“列位，老太师在堂上否？”守门官上前答道：“老爷昼寝未醒，且请门房中少坐。”从人取交床在门房中，东坡坐下，将门半掩。不多时，相府中有一少年人，年方弱冠，戴缠髻大帽，穿青绢直摆，搵手洋洋，出府下阶。众官吏皆躬身揖让，此人从东向西而去。东坡命从人去问，相府中适才出来者何人？从人打听明白回复，是丞相老爷府中掌书房的，姓徐。东坡记得荆公书房中宠用的有个徐伦，三年前还未冠。今虽冠了，面貌依然。叫从人：“既是徐掌家，与我赶上一步，快请他转来。”从人飞奔去了，赶上徐伦，不敢于背后呼唤，从傍边抢上前去，垂手侍立于街傍，道：“小的是湖州府苏爷的长班。苏爷在门房中，请徐老爹相见，有句话说。”徐伦问：“可是长胡子的苏爷？”从人道：



Councilor Monastery. He recalled how he had offended the prime minister years before and knew that he had only himself to blame. As the saying goes, "Before you go to see the emperor, you should first visit the prime minister." Carrying his résumé and visiting card, which he had told his attendants to prepare for him, he mounted his horse and headed for Prime Minister Wang's residence.

About a stone's throw from the Wang mansion, Dongpo dismounted and walked up to the gate. Seeing many officials standing at the gate, he raised a hand and asked, "Gentlemen, may I ask if the prime minister is in?"

The custodian stepped out and replied, "My master is taking a nap. Please sit in the custodian's room for a while." Thereupon, a servant put a recliner in the room. Dongpo sat down, leaving the door ajar.

A few moments later, a young man of about twenty years of age in a servant's big horsehair hat and a casual blue silk robe emerged from the house and strutted importantly down the steps. All the officials bowed and made way for him. After the young man had gone off in a westerly direction, Dongpo sent his servant to ask who that man was. The servant came back with the answer that the young man, named Xu, was an attendant in the prime minister's study.

Dongpo did recall, from three years before, a certain Xu Lun employed in the study, a boy who had gained much favor with the prime minister. Twenty years old now, wearing a hat befitting his age, he still looked the same as before. Dongpo said to his servant, "Well, since that's Mr. Xu, go after him quickly and ask him to come back here."

The servant ran as fast as his legs could carry him. When he caught up with the young man, he dared not call out from behind but took a few more hurried steps forward, shot past the young man, and then stopped in his tracks right there on the street, his hands respectfully at his sides. "Sir," he addressed the young man, "I am an attendant of Master Su of Huzhou Prefecture. Master Su is now in the custodian's room and wishes to have a word with you."

"Is it Master Su with a beard?" asked Xu Lun.



“正是。”东坡是个风流才子，见人一团和气，平昔与徐伦相爱，时常写扇送他。徐伦听说是苏学士，微微而笑，转身便回。从人先到门房，回复徐掌家到了。徐伦进门房来见苏爷，意思要跪下去，东坡用手搀住。这徐伦立身相府，掌内书房，外府州县首领官员到京参谒丞相，知会徐伦，俱有礼物，单帖通名，今日见苏爷怎么就要下跪？因苏爷久在丞相门下往来，徐伦自小书房答应，职任烹茶，就如旧主人一般，一时大不起来。[眉批]分疏明白。苏爷却全他的体面，用手搀住道：“徐掌家，不要行此礼。”徐伦道：“这门房中不是苏爷坐处，且请进府到东书房待茶。”

这东书房，便是王丞相的外书房了。凡门生知友往来，都到此处。徐伦引苏爷到东书房，看了坐，命童儿烹好茶伺候。“禀苏爷，小的奉老爷遣差往太医院取药，不得在此伏侍，怎么好？”东坡道：“且请治事。”徐伦去后，东坡见四壁书橱关闭有锁，文几上只有笔砚，更无馀物。东坡开砚匣，看了砚池，是一方绿色端砚，甚有神采。砚上馀墨未干。方欲掩盖，忽见砚匣下露出些



“None other. ”

Being the romantic scholar that he was, Dongpo was all geniality to everyone he met and was on quite good terms with Xu Lun, having sometimes given the young man gifts of fans with his handwriting on them. So, at the name of Academician Su, Xu Lun smiled and turned back.

The attendant reached the custodian's room first and reported that Mr. Xu was coming. Upon entering the room, Xu Lun made as if to drop to his knees, but Dongpo held out his hands and stopped him. Now, this Xu Lun, being in charge of the prime minister's private study in the mansion, was someone to whom important officials from other places sent gifts and presented visiting cards when they asked to see the prime minister. So why would he want to kneel in Master Su's presence? It was because Master Su had been a regular visitor in the prime minister's mansion for so long that Xu Lun, who had been accustomed to serving him tea and waiting on him in the study, looked on him as an old master and could not very well put on airs the moment they met. (*Good analysis.*)

Out of consideration for the young man's pride, Master Su held him and said, “Mr. Xu, don't stand on ceremony with me. ”

“A custodian's room is no place for you, ” said Xu Lun. “Please go inside and have some tea in the east study. ” The east study was where the prime minister received students and close friends.

Xu Lun led Master Su into the east study, offered him a seat, and had a page boy serve tea.

“Master Su, I have to run an errand for my master to get some medicine at the medical bureau. I won't be able to wait on you here. What's to be done?”

“Please go ahead and do whatever you need to do. ”

After Xu Lun left, Dongpo looked around the room and saw that the bookshelves along the four walls were all locked and on the desk there were only a brush-pen and an ink slab. He opened the lid on top of the ink slab and found the slab to be a green one made in Duanxi [present-day Zhaoqing, Guangdong]. A splendid ink slab it was. On it, there was still some wet ink. He was about to close the lid when



纸角儿。东坡扶起砚匣，乃是一方素笺，叠做两摺。取而观之，原来是两句未完的诗稿，认得荆公笔迹，题是《咏菊》。东坡笑道：“士别三日，换眼相待。昔年我曾在京为官时，此老下笔数千言，不由思索。三年后也就不同了。正是江淹才尽，两句诗不曾终韵。”念了一遍，“呀，原来连这两句诗都是乱道。”这两句诗怎么样写？

西风昨夜过园林，吹落黄花满地金。

东坡为何说这两句诗是乱道？一年四季，风各有名：春天为和风，夏天为薰风，秋天为金风，冬天为朔风。和、薰、金、朔四样风配着四时。这诗首句说西风，西方属金，金风乃秋令也。那金风一起，梧叶飘黄，群芳零落。第二句说：“吹落黄花满地金。”黄花即菊花。此花开于深秋，其性属火，敢与秋霜鏖战，最能耐久，随你老来焦干枯烂，并不落瓣。说个“吹落黄花满地金”，岂不是错误了？兴之所发，不能自己。举笔舐墨，依韵续诗二句：



his eyes caught the corner of a piece of paper sticking out from underneath. Lifting the ink slab, he saw that it was a folded piece of white writing paper. He picked it up and found it to be an unfinished poem with only two lines. Titled “Ode to the Chrysanthemum,” it was in the prime minister’s handwriting.

Dongpo said to himself with a smile, “As the proverb says, ‘A scholar who has been away for three days must be looked at in a different light.’ Back in the days when I was serving in the capital, that old man was able to write thousands of words as fast as his brush-pen could go without even pausing for reflection. How things have changed in three years! Like the poet Jiang Yan [444–505], whose talent ran out in his old age, he can’t even finish a poem now.” After reading the two lines, he cried out, “Even these two lines are sheer nonsense!” What were these two lines?

*The west wind swept through the garden last night,
Gilding the ground with petals of yellow.*

Why did Dongpo say these two lines were sheer nonsense? Well, the wind of each of the four seasons has its own specific name. The wind of spring is “the gentle breeze,” the wind of summer is “the southeasterly breeze,” the wind of autumn is “the metal wind,” and the wind of winter “the north wind.” The four names match the four seasons. The first line of the poem begins with mention of the west wind. Now, the west is represented by metal [one element of the five phases, which are metal, wood, water, fire, and earth], and the metal wind is the wind of autumn. When it starts to blow, the leaves of the *wutong* trees turn yellow, and flowers wilt and fall. The second line says, “Gilding the ground with petals of yellow.” The “petals of yellow” are an obvious reference to chrysanthemums, which bloom in late autumn, and match the phase of fire. Defying autumn frost, the chrysanthemums survive the longest. However withered they become in the end, the petals do not fall. Isn’t it a mistake to say that, swept by the wind, they are “gilding the ground?”

Quite carried away by his poetic mood, Dongpo took up the brush-pen, dipped it in the ink, and wrote two finishing lines in the same rhythm.



秋花不比春花落，说与诗人仔细吟。[眉批]按：此诗乃欧阳公所作，以讥荆公者，小说家不过借以成书，原非东坡仙实事也。

写便写了，东坡愧心复萌：“倘此老出书房相待，见了此诗，当面抢白，不像晚辈体面。欲待袖去以灭其迹，又恐荆公寻诗不见，带累徐伦。”思算不妥，只得仍将诗稿折叠，压于砚匣之下，盖上砚匣，步出书房。到大门首，取脚色手本，付与守门官吏嘱付道：“老太师出堂，通禀一声，说苏某在此伺候多时。因初到京中，文表不曾收拾。明日早朝赍过表章，再来谒见。”说罢，骑马回下处去了。

不多时，荆公出堂。守门官吏虽蒙苏爷嘱付，没有纸包相送，那个与他禀话，只将脚色手本和门簿缴纳。荆公也只当常规，未及观看，心下记着菊花诗二句未完韵。恰好徐伦从太医院取药回来，荆公唤徐伦送置东书房，荆公也随后入来。坐定，揭起砚匣，取出诗稿一看，问徐伦道：“适才何人到此？”徐伦跪下，禀道：“湖州府苏爷伺候老爷，曾到。”荆公看其字迹，也认得是苏学士



*In autumn, flowers don't fall as in spring,
A fact for the poet to muse upon.*

(These two lines were actually written by Ouyang Xiu⁶ to make fun of Wang Anshi. The storyteller is transplanting them to this story and falsely attributing them to the great Su Dongpo.)

After written the two lines, Dongpo began to regret what he had done. "If the old man comes here to receive me, he'll see what I've written. It'll be a breach of etiquette if I, a younger man, bandy words with him, face to face. But if I slip the sheet of paper into my sleeve and leave no trace of it, I'm afraid that when he finds it missing, Xu Lun will be in trouble." Without any idea as to the best course of action, he resignedly folded the sheet of paper as before, put the ink slab over it, closed the lid, and walked out of the study.

At the gate, he handed his résumé and visiting card to the custodian, saying, "When the prime minister comes out, tell him that Mr. Su waited for him for quite a while. Having just arrived in the capital, I haven't had time to get my documents ready. I'll come again tomorrow after I submit my documents to the morning court session." With that, he mounted his horse and returned to his lodgings.

Soon thereafter, the prime minister emerged from the mansion. Though the custodian had received instructions from Master Su, he did not bother to relay the latter's message because Master Su had not given him a gift. He just gave the prime minister Master Su's résumé and visiting card and showed him the visitors' registration book. His mind preoccupied by the unfinished poem on chrysanthemums, the prime minister did not look at what he thought were some routine documents.

It so happened that, at this moment, Xu Lun came back from his errand. The prime minister had Xu take the medicine to the east study, while he himself followed. After he sat down, he lifted the ink slab and took up the poem. After one look, he asked Xu Lun, "Who has been here?"

Dropping to his knees, Xu Lun said, "Master Su of Huzhou Prefecture was here to see you."

Now recognizing Academician Su's handwriting, the prime



之笔。口中不语，心下踌躇：“苏轼这个小畜生，虽遭挫折，轻薄之性不改！不道自己学疏才浅，敢来讥讪老夫！明日早朝，奏过官里，将他削职为民。”又想道：“且住，他也不晓得黄州菊花落瓣，也怪他不得！”叫徐伦取湖广缺官册籍来看。单看黄州府，馀官俱在，只缺少个团练副使，荆公暗记在心。命徐伦将诗稿贴于书房柱上。明日早朝，密奏天子，言苏轼才力不及，左迁黄州团练副使。天下官员到京上表章，升降勾除，各自安命。惟有东坡心中不服，心下明知荆公为改诗触犯，公报私仇。没奈何，也只得谢恩。朝房中才卸朝服，长班禀道：“丞相爷出朝。”东坡露堂一恭。荆公肩舆中举手道：“午后老夫有一饭。”东坡领命。回下处修书，打发湖州跟官人役，兼本衙管家，往旧任接取家眷黄州相会。

午牌过后，东坡素服角带，写下新任黄州团练副使脚色手本，



minister thought, without saying anything out loud, “That little beast Su Shi is as flippant as ever, not yet subdued by the setbacks in his career! With his limited talent and learning, how dare he make fun of me? At tomorrow morning’s court session, I’ll submit a memorial to the emperor and have this man stripped of all official posts!” Then a second thought struck him. “Wait! He is not really to blame, because he doesn’t know that chrysanthemums in Huangzhou [in present-day Hubei Province] do shed their petals.” So thinking, he had Xu Lun bring the list of post vacancies in Huguang.⁷ Checking for vacancies in Huangzhou prefecture, he found that there was only a vacancy for a vice-commissioner of military training [a nominal post with no power]. He made a mental note of this before ordering Xu Lun to post the poem on a pillar in the room.

At the court session the following morning, he told the emperor privately that Su Shi, of inadequate learning and ability, should be demoted to the position of vice-commissioner of military training in Huangzhou. All the other officials who had come to the court for reappointments readily accepted their promotions, demotions, or removals from office. Su Shi was the only one full of resentment. Even though he knew all too well that the prime minister was seeking revenge on account of the poem and abusing his power because of a personal grudge, he could not do otherwise than mouth some obligatory words of gratitude to the emperor.

Back in the waiting room of the court, he had just removed his ceremonial robe when an attendant called out, “The prime minister is leaving the court!”

Dongpo went out the door to pay his respects. The prime minister, sitting in his sedan chair, raised a hand and said, “Join me for lunch.” Dongpo dutifully accepted the offer.

Upon returning to his lodgings, he sent his attendants and his butler, who had followed him from Huzhou, back to Huzhou to escort his family to Huangzhou, where his new post was to be. A little after eleven o’clock, Dongpo, wearing a white robe and a belt with decorations made of rhinoceros’ horn and equipped with a visiting card and a new résumé listing his new post in Huangzhou, rode to the



乘马来见丞相领饭。门吏通报，荆公分付请进到大堂拜见。荆公待以师生之礼，手下点茶。荆公开言道：“子瞻左迁黄州，乃圣上主意，老夫爱莫能助。子瞻莫错怪老夫否？”[眉批]戴纱帽的，惯说慌话。东坡道：“晚学生自知才力不及，岂敢怨老太师！”荆公笑道：“子瞻大才，岂有不及！只是到黄州为官，闲暇无事，还要读书博学。”[眉批]气杀人。东坡目穷万卷，才压千人。今日劝他读书博学，还读什么样书！口中称谢道：“承老太师指教。”心下愈加不服。荆公为人至俭，肴不过四器，酒不过三杯，饭不过一箸。东坡告辞，荆公送下滴水檐前，携东坡手道：“老夫幼年灯窗十载，染成一症，老年举发，太医院看是痰火之症。虽然服药，难以除根。必得阳羨茶，方可治。有荆溪进贡阳羨茶，圣上就赐与老夫。老夫问太医院官如何烹服，太医院官说须用瞿塘中峡水。



prime minister's mansion for lunch. Upon being notified by the custodian, the prime minister said, "Invite him in."

In the main hall, the prime minister received him as he would a student. After the order for tea was given, the prime minister said, addressing him by his courtesy name Zizhan, "Your demotion to Huangzhou was the emperor's idea. Much as I wished to help, there was nothing I could do. You didn't blame me unjustly, did you, Zizhan?" (*Those wearing officials' gauze caps do make a habit of lying.*)

"How would your humble student dream of nursing a grudge against the prime minister? I know the limits of my learning and abilities."

The prime minister said with a laugh, "You are a great talent all right, but in Huangzhou, if you have a leisurely moment or two, you will do well to further your studies and broaden your knowledge." (*Doesn't that remark make your blood boil?*) Now, Dongpo was a man who had read tens of thousands of books and was endowed with the talent of one thousand people put together. Why would he need advice to further his studies and broaden his knowledge? What more books were there for him to read?

"I thank you, sir, for your advice," said Dongpo, inwardly more infuriated than before.

The prime minister being a frugal man, the lunch consisted of nothing more than four dishes, three cups of wine, and just enough rice to be picked up at one time with a pair of chopsticks.

When Dongpo bid him farewell, the prime minister walked him out as far as the eaves of the house and, holding his hands, said, "In my diligent studies in younger days, I contracted an illness that has come back to me in my old age. The imperial physician says that the problem is caused by excessive phlegm and internal heat. I've been taking medicine, but the medicine only alleviates the symptoms without effecting a thorough cure. Yangxian tea is my only hope for a cure.⁸ Whenever tributes of Yangxian tea are offered to the court, the emperor kindly passes them along to me. I asked the imperial physician about the correct way to make the tea, and I was told that I must



瞿塘在蜀，老夫几欲差人往取，未得其便，兼恐所差之人未必用心。子瞻桑梓之邦，倘尊眷往来之便，将瞿塘中峡水，携一瓮寄与老夫，则老夫衰老之年，皆子瞻所延也。”东坡领命，回相国寺。次日辞朝出京，星夜奔黄州道上。

黄州合府官员知东坡天下有名才子，又是翰林谪官，出郭远迎。选良时吉日公堂上任。过月之后，家眷方到。东坡在黄州与蜀客陈季常为友。不过登山玩水，饮酒赋诗，军务民情，秋毫无涉。

光阴迅速，将及一载。时当重九之后，连日大风。一日风息，东坡兀坐书斋，忽想：“定惠院长老曾送我黄菊数种，栽于后园，今日何不去赏玩一番？”足犹未动，恰好陈季常相访。东坡大喜，便拉陈慥同往后园看菊。到得菊花棚下，只见满地铺金，枝上全无一朵，唬得东坡目瞪口呆，半晌无语。陈慥问道：“子瞻见菊花落瓣，缘何如此惊诧？”东坡道：“季常有所不知。平常见此花只是焦干枯烂，并不落瓣。去岁在王荆公府中，见他《咏菊》诗



use water from the middle gorge of the Three Gorges of the Yangzi River in Sichuan. I have tried several times to send someone there to fetch the water, but it never worked out. The messengers might not have really made an effort. Now you, Zizhan, are a native of that region. If, in your travels with your family to visit your native town, you could send me a jar of water from the middle gorge, I will be most grateful to you for prolonging my life. ”

Thus instructed, Dongpo went back to the Great State Councilor Monastery. The following day, he went to the court to bid farewell and left the capital for Huangzhou, traveling by day and by night.

Having heard of Dongpo as a famous scholar and a demoted member of the Hanlin Academy, all the Huangzhou prefectural officials went quite a distance from the city gate to welcome him. An auspicious day was then chosen for his inauguration. His family arrived more than a month later.

In Huangzhou, Dongpo developed a friendship with a certain Chen Jichang, a native of Sichuan. He spent his time touring the mountains and rivers, drinking wine, and composing poems, without doing a stroke of work on military and civil affairs.

Time flew. Almost one year elapsed. After the Double Ninth Festival, a strong wind rose and lasted for several days.⁹ One day, after the wind had subsided, Dongpo was sitting alone in the study when a thought struck him. “The yellow chrysanthemums that the abbot of Dinghui Monastery gave me have been planted in the backyard. Why don’t I go take a look?” Before he had time to take one step, Chen Jichang came in. Overjoyed, Dongpo took him to the backyard to view the chrysanthemums. Upon reaching the chrysanthemum arbor, they saw that the ground was covered with golden chrysanthemum petals and that the stems were bare, without a single petal left on them. Dongpo was aghast. For a good while, he stood transfixed in speechless amazement.

“Zizhan, ” said Chen Jichang, “what made you so startled when you saw the fallen chrysanthemum petals?”

“Listen to this, Jichang: I thought that chrysanthemums usually wither and rot away without shedding their petals. Last year, in Prime



二句道：‘西风昨夜过园林，吹落黄花满地金。’小弟只道此老错误了，续诗二句道：‘秋花不比春花落，说与诗人仔细吟。’却不知黄州菊花果然落瓣！此老左迁小弟到黄州，原来使我看菊花也。”陈慥笑道：“古人说得好：

广知世事休开口，纵会人前只点头。

假若连头俱不点，一生无恼亦无愁。”

东坡道：“小弟初然被谪，只道荆公恨我摘其短处，公报私仇。谁知他到不错，我到错了。真知灼见者，尚且有误，何况其他！吾辈切记，不可轻易说人笑人，正所谓经一失长一智耳。”东坡命家人取酒，与陈季常就落花之下，席地而坐。正饮酒间，门上报道：“本府马太爷拜访，将到。”东坡分付：“辞了他罢。”是日，两人对酌闲谈，至晚而散。

次日，东坡写了名帖，答拜马太守，马公出堂迎接。彼时没有迎宾馆，就在后堂分宾而坐。茶罢，东坡因叙出去年相府错题了菊花诗，得罪荆公之事。马太守微笑道：“学生初到此间，也不知黄州菊花落瓣。亲见一次，此时方信。可见老太师学问渊博，



Minister Wang's residence, I saw two lines that he had written, saying, 'The west wind swept through the garden last night, / Gilding the ground with petals of yellow.' Believing that the old man was mistaken, I finished the quatrain with two lines saying, 'In autumn, flowers don't fall as in spring, / A fact for the poet to muse upon.' Well, what do you know! Chrysanthemums in Huangzhou do shed petals! So it was to make me witness this that the old man demoted me to Huangzhou!"

Chen Jichang said with a laugh, "The ancients put it well,
*"Whatever you know, keep your mouth shut;
 Whenever talked to, just nod your head.
 If you don't even have to give a nod,
 Your life will be free from worry and care."*

Dongpo continued, "When I first learned about my demotion, I thought that the prime minister was abusing his power to avenge himself on me because I pointed out his mistake. But as it turned out, he was right and I was wrong! Even those of true learning and insight, not to mention other people, can make mistakes. We must remember not to criticize or laugh at people too rashly. It's indeed a case of 'A fall into the pit, a gain in your wit.'" He then ordered that wine be served, and sat down with Chen Jichang on the flower-strewn ground.

In the course of their drinking, the gatekeeper came to announce, "Prefect Ma is on his way here for a visit."

"Turn him away!" said Dongpo. That day, the two men drank and chatted until late in the evening.

The next day, Dongpo wrote a visiting card and went to see Prefect Ma to return the courtesy. The prefect stepped out of the house to greet him and then led him into a back hall, for prefectural yamens at that time did not have separate guest houses. After they took their seats as guest and host, tea was served. Then Dongpo related how, in the prime minister's residence the year before, he had made a mistake in a poem about chrysanthemums and thereby offended the prime minister.

With a smile, Prefect Ma said, "When I first came here, I didn't know either that chrysanthemums in Huangzhou shed petals. I didn't



有包罗天地之抱负。学士大人一时忽略，陷于不知，何不到京中太师门下赔罪一番，必然回嗔作喜。”东坡道：“学生也要去，恨无其由。”太守道：“将来有一事方便，只是不敢轻劳。”东坡问何事。太守道：“常规，冬至节必有贺表到京，例差地方官一员。学士大人若不嫌琐屑，假进表为由，到京也好。”东坡道：“承堂尊大人用情，学生愿往。”太守道：“这道表章，只得借重学士大笔。”东坡应允。

别了马太守回衙，想起荆公嘱咐要取瞿塘中峡水的话来。初时心中不服，连这取水一节，置之度外。如今却要替他出力做这件事，以赎妄言之罪。[眉批]有意思人定有回心，决不任情到底。但此事不可轻托他人。现今夫人有恙，思想家乡。既承贤守公美意，不若告假亲送家眷还乡，取得瞿塘中峡水，庶为两便。黄州至眉州，一水之地，路正从瞿塘三峡过。那三峡？

西陵峡，巫峡，归峡。



believe that until I saw it with my own eyes. Clearly, the prime minister is a very knowledgeable man who knows all there is to know under the sun. It was in a momentary lapse that you, Academician Su, made a mistake. It might be worth your while to go to the capital to apologize to the prime minister. His anger will surely change to delight.”

“I do wish to go, but there’s no good reason for making the trip.”

“I have something coming up that might be of help to you, but I’ll have to ask a favor of you,” said the prefect.

Dongpo asked what it was.

The prefect replied, “As a rule, a local official is sent to the capital each winter solstice with a message of greetings. If you don’t find this mission too trivial, it would give you a good reason for going to the capital.”

“Thank you so much, sir, for being so thoughtful. Yes, I’ll be glad to take on the mission.”

“But I’ll have to bother you with the writing of this message, Academician Su.”

Dongpo agreed.

Back in his own residence after taking leave of Prefect Ma, Dongpo remembered that the prime minister had asked for water from the middle gorge of the Three Gorges. Full of resentment at the time, he had totally forgotten about the request. Now, he made up his mind to render this service so as to make amends for his insolence. (*Sensible people correct their mistakes. They know better than to persist in willful ways.*) But this was not a matter to be lightly entrusted to other people. Since his wife was ill and growing nostalgic for their native place, he thought he might as well avail himself of the prefect’s kind offer, ask for leave at the same time as the mission, and escort his family back to Sichuan to get water from the gorge, thus fulfilling two obligations at the same time. Because Huangzhou and Meizhou are separated by the Yangzi river, the journey to Meizhou, his native place, would take them right through the Three Gorges. Which three?

Xiling Gorge, Wu Gorge, and Gui Gorge.



西陵峡为上峡，巫峡为中峡，归峡为下峡。那西陵峡，又唤做瞿塘峡，在夔州府城之东；两崖对峙，中贯一江；滟滪堆当其口，乃三峡之门。所以总唤做瞿塘三峡。此三峡共长七百馀里，两岸连山无阙，重峦叠嶂，隐天蔽日。风无南北，惟有上下。自黄州到眉州，总有四千馀里之程，夔州适当其半。东坡心下计较：“若送家眷直到眉州，往回将及万里，把贺冬表又担误了。我如今有个道理，叫做公私两尽。从陆路送家眷至夔州，却令家眷自回。我在夔州换船下峡，取了中峡之水，转回黄州，方往东京。可不是公私两尽。”算计已定，对夫人说知，收拾行李，辞别了马太守。衙门上悬一个告假的牌面。择了吉日，准备车马，唤集人夫，合家起程。一路无事，自不必说。

才过夷陵州，早是高唐县。

驿卒报好音，夔州在前面。

东坡到了夔州，与夫人分手。嘱付得力管家，一路小心伏侍夫人回去。东坡讨个江船，自夔州开发，顺流而下。原来这滟滪堆，是江口一块孤石，亭亭独立，夏即浸没，冬即露出。因水满



Xiling Gorge is the upper one, Wu Gorge the middle one, and Gui Gorge the lower one. Xiling Gorge, to the east of Kuizhou Prefecture [in what is now Fengjie County, Sichuan], is also called Qutang Gorge, and between its two cliffs flows the Yangzi River. With the Yanyu Rock serving as a gate at the mouth of Qutang Gorge, the Three Gorges are also called the Three Gorges of Qutang.¹⁰ Stretching for more than seven hundred *li*, the section of the Yangzi River that flows between the Three Gorges is flanked on both sides by continuous, undulating, and overlapping chains of hills that block out the sky and the sun. The wind blows not horizontally but vertically.

Kuizhou being at the midpoint in the more than four-thousand-*li* journey from Huangzhou to Meizhou, Dongpo thought, "If I take the family all the way to Meizhou, the round trip will be almost ten thousand *li*, which means the delivery of the winter solstice greetings will be delayed. Why don't I take care of the official business and family duties at the same time? I can take the family to Kuizhou by land and let them go to Meizhou from there on their own while I take a boat at Kuizhou, travel down the gorges, collect some water at the middle gorge, and return to Huangzhou before I head for the Eastern Capital.¹¹ Wouldn't I be able to have it both ways?"

Having thus drawn up his plans, he explained them to his wife, packed, and took leave of Prefect Ma. He had a tablet hung over the gate of the yamen, saying that the vice-commissioner of military training was on leave. On a chosen auspicious day, he prepared the means of transportation and assembled the servants, and the whole family started on their journey. It was an uneventful journey. It hardly needs to be said that

After Yiling, they came upon Gaotang.

Then, the footman's good news: Kuizhou was near.

After arriving in Kuizhou, Dongpo said goodbye to his wife and told his competent butler to take good care of the mistress the rest of the way. He himself hired a boat and rode downstream from Kuizhou.

Yanyu Rock, you see, stands all by itself at the mouth of the gorges, submerged in water in the summer and rising from the water



石没之时，舟人取途不定，故又名犹豫堆。俗谚云：

犹豫大如象，瞿塘不可上；

犹豫大如马，瞿塘不可下。

东坡在重阳后起身，此时尚在秋后冬前。又其年是闰八月，迟了一个月的节气，所以水势还大。上水时，舟行甚迟，下水时却甚快。东坡来时正怕迟慢，所以舍舟从陆。回时乘着水势，一泻千里，好不顺溜。东坡看见那峭壁千寻，沸波一线，想要做一篇《三峡赋》，结构不就。因连日鞍马困倦，凭几构思，不觉睡去，不曾分付得水手打水。[眉批]文章误事。及至醒来问时，已是下峡，过了中峡了。东坡分付：“我要取中峡之水，快与我拨转船头。”水手禀道：“老爷，三峡相连，水如瀑布，船如箭发。若回船便是逆水，日行数里，用力甚难。”东坡沉吟半晌，问：“此地可以泊船，有居民否？”水手禀道：“上二峡悬崖峭壁，船不能停。到归峡，山水之势渐平，崖上不多路，就有市井街道。”东坡



again at the onset of winter. Because boatmen are not sure which way to go when the rock is submerged in water, the rock is also called the Rock of Hesitation. There is a saying that goes:

*With Hesitation big as an elephant,
Do not go up the Qutang Gorges.
With Hesitation big as a horse,
Do not go down the Qutang Gorges.*

Dongpo had set out after the Double Ninth Festival, and it was now late autumn, just before the onset of winter. It being a leap year with an extra eighth month and therefore another month before the end of autumn, the water was still high. Going upstream was much more time-consuming than going downstream. On his way to Kuizhou, Dongpo had chosen to travel by land instead of by boat because he had been afraid that the journey would take too long, but now that he was riding downstream, the boat glided rapidly down the river with the greatest ease. Impressed by the sight of the cliffs towering over the narrow strip of water, Dongpo waxed poetic, but his attempts at composing an "Ode to the Three Gorges" were unavailing. He sat by the table while trying to compose the poem, but, tired from successive days of travel, he ended up drifting off to sleep without leaving instructions for the boatmen to collect the water. (*Writing makes a mess of things.*)

By the time he woke up and asked where he was, they had passed the middle gorge and were at the lower gorge. "I need to collect water from the middle gorge," he said. "Turn the boat back, quick!"

The boatman said, "Sir, with the Three Gorges linked together, the water is as rapid as a waterfall, and the boat goes as fast as an arrow. If we turn the boat back, it will be going upstream, and we can only make a few *li* a day, however hard we try."

Dongpo reflected a long while before saying, "We can anchor here. Are there people living around here?"

"It's impossible to anchor the boat by the cliffs of the two upper gorges, but at Gui Gorge, the hills and the river are not as rough, and there's a town just a short distance from the shore."



叫泊了船，分付苍头：“你上崖去看有年长知事的居民，唤一个上来，不要声张惊动了。”苍头领命。登崖不多时，带一个老人上船，口称居民叩头。东坡以美言抚慰：“我是过往客官，与你居民没有统属，要问你一句话。那瞿塘三峡，那一峡的水好？”老者道：“三峡相连，并无阻隔。上峡流于中峡，中峡流于下峡，昼夜不断。一般样水，难分好歹。”东坡暗想道：“荆公胶柱鼓瑟。三峡相连，一般样水，何必定要中峡？”叫手下给官价与百姓买个干净磁瓮，自己立于船头，看水手将下峡水满满的汲了一瓮，用柔皮纸封固，亲手金押，即刻开船。直至黄州拜了马太守。夜间草成贺冬表，送去府中。马太守读了表文，深赞苏君大才。赍表官就金了苏轼名讳，择了吉日，与东坡饯行。

东坡赍了表文，带了一瓮蜀水，星夜来到东京，仍投大相国寺内。天色还早，命手下抬了水瓮，乘马到相府来见荆公。荆公



Dongpo ordered that the boat be anchored and said to his servant, "Go up the shore and if you can find someone old and knowledgeable, bring him back here, but don't say anything that might alarm him."

Thus instructed, the servant went ashore. A short while later, he brought back an old man.

"Please accept a deep bow, sir, from a local resident," said the old man.

Dongpo said to him reassuringly, "I'm just a traveler passing by here, not some official with local jurisdiction. I just want to ask you one thing: Which of the three gorges yields the best water?"

The old man replied, "The three gorges are all linked together with no break in between. The water flows nonstop, day and night, from the upper gorge to the middle one, and then from the middle one to the lower one. It's hard to say which gorge yields the best water because it's the same throughout."

Dongpo thought to himself, "What a one-track mind the prime minister has! Why does he have to ask for water from the middle gorge when the three gorges are linked and the water from all three is the same?" So thinking, he had his attendants buy a nice and clean porcelain jar from the locals at the official rate. Then he himself stood at the prow and watched the boatmen fill the jar to the brim with water from the lower gorge and wrap it up with paper. After he had affixed his own signature on the jar, the boat set sail again.

Back in Huangzhou, he called on Prefect Ma, and in the evening, he drafted the memorial of Winter Solstice greetings and had it sent to the prefect's residence. Upon reading the memorial, Prefect Ma was deeply impressed by Mr. Su's immense talent. The official in charge of matters relating to memorials to the court put Su Shi's name on the memorial, and on a chosen auspicious day, a farewell dinner was given in Dongpo's honor.

Carrying the memorial and the jar of Sichuan water with him, Dongpo traveled posthaste to the Eastern Capital before the night was out and took up lodging in the Great State Councilor Monastery. Early the next morning, he mounted his horse and, followed by his atten-



正当闲坐，闻门上通报：“黄州团练使苏爷求见。”荆公笑道：“已经一载矣！”分付守门官：“缓着些出去，引他东书房相见。”守门官领命。荆公先到书房，见柱上所贴诗稿，经年尘埃迷目。亲手于鹊尾瓶中，取拂尘将尘拂去，俨然如旧。荆公端坐于书房。却说守门官延捱了半晌，方请苏爷。东坡听说东书房相见，想起改诗的去处，面上赧然，勉强进府，到书房见了荆公下拜。荆公用手相扶道：“不在大堂相见，惟思远路风霜，休得过礼。”命童儿看坐。东坡坐下，偷看诗稿，贴于对面。荆公用拂尘往左一指道：“子瞻，可见光阴迅速，去岁作此诗，又经一载矣！”东坡起身拜伏于地，荆公用手扶住道：“子瞻为何？”东坡道：“晚学生甘罪了！”荆公道：“你见了黄州菊花落瓣么？”东坡道：“是。”



dants carrying the jar of water, went to visit the prime minister at his residence.

The prime minister was sitting idly when he heard the custodian announce, "Master Su, commissioner of military training of Huangzhou, requests an audience!"

With a smile, the prime minister said, "So, one year has already gone by!" He turned to the custodian and said, "Take your time on your way out and then lead him to the east study." And so the custodian went to carry out the order.

The prime minister was the first to reach the study. At the sight of the poem posted on the pillar, blurred with dust that had accumulated over the year, he took a fly-whisk from a magpie-tail jar and whisked off the dust to reveal the poem, which looked the same as before. He then sat down solemnly.

Meanwhile, the custodian dawdled for quite some time before he invited Master Su in. Hearing that he was to be led into the east study, Dongpo reddened at the memory of his correction of the prime minister's poem. Reluctantly, he entered the mansion. Upon reaching the study, he dropped to his knees and bowed to the prime minister. Raising Dongpo to his feet, the prime minister said, "We are not meeting in the main hall precisely because you can feel more relaxed here, since you must be tired from the long journey. So don't be overly concerned about etiquette." So saying, he had a page boy show Dongpo his seat.

After sitting down, Dongpo looked furtively at the poem posted on the pillar directly opposite him.

Pointing to his left with the fly-whisk, the prime minister said, "Zizhan, how time flies! It's been a year since this poem was written!"

Dongpo rose from his seat and prostrated himself on the floor.

Raising him to his feet, the prime minister asked, "Why are you doing this, Zizhan?"

"Your humble student pleads guilty!"

"Is it because you saw fallen chrysanthemum petals in Huangzhou?"



荆公道：“目中未见此一种，也怪不得子瞻！”东坡道：“晚学生才疏识浅，全仗老太师海涵。”茶罢，荆公问道：“老夫烦足下带瞿塘中峡水，可有么？”东坡道：“见携府外。”

荆公命堂候官两员，将水瓮抬进书房。荆公亲以衣袖拂拭，纸封打开。命童儿茶灶中煨火，用银铫汲水烹之。先取白定碗一只，投阳羨茶一撮于内。候汤如蟹眼，急取起倾入，其茶色半晌方见。荆公问：“此水何处取来？”东坡道：“巫峡。”荆公道：“是中峡了。”东坡道：“正是。”荆公笑道：“又来欺老夫了！此乃下峡之水，如何假名中峡？”东坡大惊，述土人之言“三峡相连，一般样水”，“晚学生误听了，实是取下峡之水！老太师何以辨之？”荆公道：“读书人不可轻举妄动，须是细心察理。老夫若非亲到黄州，看过菊花，怎么诗中敢乱道黄花落瓣？这瞿塘水性，出于《水经补注》。上峡水性太急，下峡太缓。惟中峡缓急相半。



“Yes. ”

“But you are not to blame, Zizhan, for not having seen this kind of chrysanthemum before. ”

“Please bear with this humble student’s lack of talent and learning. ”

After tea, the prime minister asked, “Did you bring water from the middle gorge of the Three Gorges as I asked you to?”

“Yes, the jar is right at the entrance to the mansion. ”

At the prime minister’s order, two attendants carried the jar into the study. The prime minister wiped the jar with his own sleeves and opened the seal on the paper wrappings. He then had a page boy start a fire in the tea stove and boil some water in a silver teakettle. In the meantime, he put a pinch of Yangxian tea leaves in a white porcelain bowl made by Dingzhou Kiln [in what is now Quyang, Hebei]. When the water boiled and bubbles like crabs’ eyes appeared, he quickly lifted the kettle and poured some water into the bowl. It was quite a while before the water turned the color of tea.

“Where did you get the water?”

“From Wu Gorge. ”

“The middle gorge?”

“Yes. ”

The prime minister laughed. “There you go again, making a fool of this old man! This water is from the lower gorge. How can you claim that it’s from the middle one?”

Aghast, Dongpo repeated what the local resident had said, that the three gorges were linked together, and the water was the same throughout. “I believed what I heard and indeed collected the water from the lower gorge. How can you tell?”

“A scholar devoted to learning should not be given to rash actions. Careful research is highly necessary. Had I not been to Huangzhou and seen the chrysanthemums there, how would I dare come up with a line about their shedding petals? As for the water of the Three Gorges, I read about it in the *Supplementary Commentary on the Waterways*.¹² Water from the upper gorge is too strong; water from the lower gorge is too weak. Only water from the middle one is



太医院官乃明医，知老夫乃中脘变症，故用中峡水引经。此水烹阳羨茶，上峡味浓，下峡味淡，中峡浓淡之间。今见茶色半晌方见，故知是下峡。”东坡离席谢罪。

荆公道：“何罪之有！皆因子瞻过于聪明，以致疏略如此。老夫今日偶然无事，幸子瞻光顾。一向相处，尚不知子瞻学问真正如何。[眉批]气杀人。老夫不自揣量，要考子瞻一考。”东坡欣然答道：“晚学生请题。”荆公道：“且住！老夫若遽然考你，只说老夫恃了一日之长。子瞻到先考老夫一考，然后老夫请教。”东坡鞠躬道：“晚学生怎么敢？”荆公道：“子瞻既不肯考老夫，老夫却不好僭妄。也罢，叫徐伦把书房中书橱尽数与我开了。左右二十四橱，书皆积满。但凭于左右橱内上中下三层，取书一册，不拘前后，念上文一句，老夫答下句不来，就算老夫无学。”东坡暗想道：“这老甚迂阔，难道这些书都记在腹内？虽然如此，不好去考他。”答应道：“这个晚学生不敢！”荆公道：“咳！道不得个‘恭敬不如从命’了！”东坡使乖，只拣尘灰多处，料久不看，也忘记了，任意抽书一本，未见签题，揭开居中，随口念一



neither too strong nor too weak. The imperial physician, being the wise physician that he is, knows that the source of my ailment lies in my stomach and therefore advises me to use water from the middle gorge to help the medicine work better. If water from the Three Gorges is used to brew Yangxian tea, that from the upper gorge has a strong flavor, that from the lower gorge tastes bland, and that from the middle one is neither too strong nor too bland. I can tell that your water is from the lower gorge because it took a long time for the water to turn the color of tea. ”

Dongpo left his seat and asked for forgiveness.

“What is there to forgive?” said the prime minister. “It’s because you are so brilliant that you paid no attention to those things. I’m glad that you are here, because it so happens that I have nothing to do today. I have known you for quite some time now, but I can’t say I know the extent of your knowledge. (*How humiliating!*) Now I will make so bold as to give you a little test. ”

Dongpo said with delight, “Please go ahead. ”

“Wait!” said the prime minister. “If I give you a test all of a sudden, I might be accused of bullying a younger man. Now, you give me a test first, before I benefit from your knowledge. ”

“How would I dream of doing that!” said Dongpo with a bow.

“So you don’t want to test me, but I can’t allow myself to be presumptuous. Oh well, I’ll have Xu Lun open all the bookcases in the study. All twenty-four, three selves each, are filled with books. Just pick a book at random and read any line aloud. If I can’t come up with the next line, you can call me an ignorant man. ”

Dongpo thought, “This old man does talk big! He can hardly have memorized all these books! Even though he says so, I can’t very well put him to the test. ” So thinking, he said, “I would never dream of doing that!”

“Well, haven’t you heard the saying ‘The best way to show someone respect is to follow his orders?’ ”

So Dongpo cunningly set about searching among the dusty books, thinking that if the prime minister had not read these books in a long time, he would have forgotten the lines. He picked a book at



句道：“如意君安乐否？”荆公接口道：“‘窃已啖之矣。’可是？”东坡道：“正是。”荆公取过书来，问道：“这句书怎么讲？”东坡不曾看得书上详细。暗想：“唐人讥则天后，曾称薛敖曹为如意君。或者差人问候，曾有此言。只是下文说，‘窃已啖之矣’，文理却接上面不来。”沉吟了一会，又想道：“不要惹这老头儿。千虚不如一实。”答应道：“晚学生不知。”荆公道：“这也不是什么秘书，如何就不晓得？[眉批]气杀人。这是一桩小故事。汉末灵帝时，长沙郡武冈山后有一狐穴，深入数丈。内有九尾狐狸二头。日久年深，皆能变化，时常化作美妇人，遇着男子往来，诱人穴中行乐。小不如意，分而食之。后有一人姓刘名玺，善于采战之术，入山采药，被二妖所掳。夜晚求欢，刘玺用抽添火候工夫，枕席之间，二狐快乐，称为如意君。大狐出山打食，则小狐看守。小狐出山，则大狐亦如之。日就月将，并无忌惮。酒后，



random and, without finding the name of the author, opened it at the middle and read a line out loud: “‘How is the Delightful One?’”

Without missing a beat, the prime minister said, “‘I have eaten him up.’ Is that correct?”

“Yes. ”

Taking the book from Dongpo, the prime minister asked, “What do you make of these lines?”

Dongpo had not read the lines closely and thought, “In satires about Empress Wu Zetian, people of the Tang dynasty gave Xue Ao-cao the epithet ‘The Delightful One.’¹³ Maybe the empress sent someone to inquire after him, hence the first line. But the answer ‘I have eaten him up’ doesn’t make sense.” After reflecting a while, he thought, “I’d better not irritate the old man. One phrase admitting the truth is better than a thousand far-fetched guesses.” So thinking, he said out loud, “This humble student does not know.”

The prime minister said, “This is not some book of great obscurity. How can you not know?” (*How humiliating!*) Here’s the little story: Under the reign of Emperor Ling [108–188] toward the end of the Han dynasty, there was a fox pit tens of feet deep behind Mount Wugang in Changsha Prefecture [in present-day Hunan]. In the pit lived two nine-tail foxes that, in their long lives, had acquired the magic of metamorphosis and often assumed the forms of beautiful women to lure male passersby into their pit for sexual pleasure. Those who failed to gratify them fully were eaten up between the two of them.

“Now, there was a man by the name of Liu Xi, who was accomplished in the art of lovemaking. When he was picking medicinal herbs in the mountains, the two evil spirits captured him, and at night, when they sought intimacy, he applied the same method one would use when tending a fire, adding or reducing fuel as the occasion demanded. The two foxes were so fully gratified that they called him the Delightful One. When the big fox was out on the mountain looking for food, the small fox kept watch on him. When the small fox went out, the big fox stayed with him. With the passing of time, the foxes relaxed their alertness and, one day, after drinking some



露其本形。刘玺有恐怖之心，精力衰倦。一日，大狐出山打食，小狐在穴，求其云雨，不果其欲。小狐大怒，生啖刘玺于腹内。大狐回穴，心记刘生，问道：‘如意君安乐否？’小狐答道：‘窃已啖之矣。’二狐相争追逐，满山喊叫。樵人窃听，遂得其详，记于《汉末全书》。子瞻想未涉猎？”东坡道：“老太师学问渊深，非晚辈浅学可及！”

荆公微笑道：“这也算考过老夫了。老夫还席，也要考子瞻一考。子瞻休得吝教！”东坡道：“求老太师命题平易。”荆公道：“考别件事，又道老夫作难。久闻子瞻善于作对，[眉批]气杀人。今年闰了个八月，正月立春，十二月又是立春，是个两头春。老夫就将此为题，出句求对，以观子瞻妙才。”命童儿取纸笔过来。荆公写出一对道：

一岁二春双八月，人间两度春秋。

东坡虽是妙才，这对出得跷蹊，一时寻对不出，羞颜可掬，面皮通红了。荆公问道：“子瞻从湖州至黄州，可从苏州润州经过么？”东坡道：“此是便道。”荆公道：“苏州金阊门外，至于虎



wine, they revealed their true forms, giving Liu Xi such a shock that his stamina began to wane.

“One day, when the big fox was out looking for food, the small fox in the pit asked for clouds and rain, but the man failed to gratify her.¹⁴ The small fox flew into a rage and made a meal of Liu Xi. Upon returning to the pit, the big fox asked, thinking of Liu Xi, ‘How is the Delightful One?’ The small fox replied, ‘I have eaten him up.’ The two foxes chased each other all over the mountain. A woodchopper heard their screams, and what he witnessed came to be recorded in *The Complete History of the Last Years of the Han Dynasty*.¹⁵ You have never heard of this story, Zizhan?”

Dongpo said in reply, “How can what little I know be compared to your vast learning, sir?”

“So, I have been put to the test,” said the prime minister with a smile. “Now it’s my turn to test you. Be sure to share your knowledge with me!”

“Please make it easy, sir. ”

“If I test you on other things, I’ll be accused of trying to put you on the spot, but I’ve long heard that you are good at providing a missing line to form a matching couplet [*zuodui*].¹⁶ (*Preposterous!*) This year is a leap year with an extra eighth month. We had the beginning of spring in the first month and it will come around again in the twelfth month, giving us a year with spring at both ends. With this as a theme, I will now write something for you to match, and for me to admire your talent.” Thereupon, he had a page boy bring over a piece of paper and a brush-pen and wrote the following two lines:

One year, two springs, and double eighth months;

Two years go by within the space of one.

However talented he was, Dongpo found himself unable, on the spur of the moment, to come up with another two lines to match those bizarre ones. His face went crimson in embarrassment.

The prime minister continued, “When you traveled from Huzhou to Huangzhou, did you go by Suzhou and Runzhou [present-day Zhenjiang]?”

“Yes, they do lie on the way. ”



丘，这一带路，叫做山塘，约有七里之遥，其半路名为半塘。润州古名铁瓮城，临于大江，有金山、银山、玉山，这叫做三山。俱有佛殿僧房，想子瞻都曾游览？”东坡答应道：“是。”荆公道：“老夫再将苏润二州，各出一对，求子瞻对之。”苏州对云：

七里山塘，行到半塘三里半。

润州对云：

铁瓮城西，金玉银山三宝地。

东坡思想多时，不能成对，只得谢罪而出。荆公晓得东坡受了些腌臢，终惜其才。[眉批]此老毕竟处心还好。明日奏过神宗天子，复了他翰林学士之职。

后人评这篇话道：以东坡天才，尚然三被荆公所屈，何况才不如东坡者！因作诗戒世云：

项托曾为孔子师，荆公反把子瞻嗤。

为人第一谦虚好，学问茫茫无尽期。



“The road from the Jinchang Gate of Suzhou to Huqiu is called Hill Pond Road. The midpoint of this approximately seven-*li* road is called Half Pond. Runzhou, called in ancient times the Iron Jar Town, borders on the Yangzi River, with three hills overlooking the city. They are Gold Hill, Silver Hill, and Jade Hill. All of these places have Buddhist temples and monasteries. Have you seen them all?”

“Yes, I have. ”

“Now, let me again give you a couple of lines about Suzhou and Runzhou, for you to think of lines to match. ”

The two lines about Suzhou are as follows:

*Three and a half li, and you reach Half Pond,
Midpoint in the seven-li Hill Pond Road.*

Next, the two lines about Runzhou:

*Standing to the west of Iron Jar Town,
Three piles of treasures: Gold, Silver, and Jade.*

Dongpo thought for a long time without being able to come up with matching lines. Seeing no other way, he apologized and took leave of his host.

Knowing full well that Dongpo had been treated somewhat unfairly, the prime minister was in fact, still appreciative of his talent. (*Deep down, this old man is not a bad sort, after all.*) The following day, he submitted a memorial to emperor Shenzong, by force of which Dongpo was reinstated as a Hanlin Academician.

In later times, someone commenting on these events said: Even a genius like Su Dongpo was humiliated three times by Wang Anshi, duke of Jing. Imagine what would happen to those less gifted than Su! Hence the following poem to caution the world:

*Confucius honored Xiang as his teacher,¹⁷
But Wang Anshi had to torment Dongpo.
Modesty is the best human virtue;
The pursuit of knowledge knows no end.*

This story has been translated as “Wang Anshih Thrice Corners Su Tung-p’o,” in John Lyman Bishop, *The Colloquial Short Story in China: A Study of the San-Yen Collections*,





Harvard-Yenching Institute Series 14 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956).

¹ King Jie of the Xia dynasty and King Zhou of the Shang dynasty were the last rulers of their dynasties. Both are believed to have been despots.

² For more on Shi Chong's fabulous wealth and precipitous downfall, see story 36 in Feng Menglong, *Stories Old and New: a Ming Dynasty Collection*, trans. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang (Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House, 2007).

³ Yan Hui (521–490 B. C. E.) was one of Confucius's students. He is mentioned by the woodcutter Zhong Ziqi, who recites a poem about the student in story 1.

⁴ Li Bai (701–62), also romanized as Li Po, was one of China's greatest poets.

Cao Zhi (192–232), courtesy name Zijian, was a poet of the state of Wei in the Three Kingdoms period.

Wang Anshi (1021–86) was a famous man of letters and a political reformer who, as prime minister, promulgated a series of controversial reforms in public service, agriculture, trade and commerce, governmental finance, public works, education, and the military. Story 4 in this collection is a criticism of his reforms.

⁵ "Chirping turtledoves" (*ming jiu*) appears in *The Book of Songs* as "shijiu" (cuckoo).

⁶ Ouyang Xiu (1007–72) was a great historian, epigraphist, statesman, poet, and essayist.

⁷ The term "Huguang" was used during the Ming and Qing dynasties to refer to what are now Hunan and Hubei provinces.

⁸ Yangxian is present-day Yixing, Jiangsu, a region that produces tea of superior quality.

⁹ The Double Ninth Festival falls on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month. It is a Chinese tradition to drink chrysanthemum wine on this day.

¹⁰ Yanyu Rock was dynamited in 1958.

¹¹ The Eastern Capital (Dongjing) of the Song dynasty is now Kaifeng, Henan.

¹² This is most probably a reference to *Commentary on the Waterways*, written by Li Daoyuan of the Northern Wei dynasty. Though it claims to be but a commentary on *The Waterways*, which is attributed to Guo Pu (276–324), it actually constitutes a much more important work of geography in itself.

¹³ Empress Wu Zetian (r. 684–704) of the Tang dynasty was the only female sovereign in Chinese history.

Xue Aocao, originally named Feng Xiaobao, was a much favored male companion of Empress Wu Zetian's.

¹⁴ "Clouds and rain" is a metaphor for sexual encounters. The term was first used in the prose poem "*Gao-tang fu*," attributed to Song Yu (c. 290–c. 223 B. C. E.).

¹⁵ No such book exists.

¹⁶ "Zuodui" can also mean "to be hostile and difficult."

¹⁷ Confucius was said to have honored Xiang Tuo, a seven-year-old boy, as his teacher because he had found himself unable to answer the boy's questions.



第四卷

拗相公饮恨半山堂

得岁月，延岁月；得欢悦，且欢悦。万事乘除总在天，何必愁肠千万结。放心宽，莫量窄，古今兴废言不彻。金谷繁华眼底尘，淮阴事业锋头血。临潼会上胆气消，丹阳县里箫声绝。时来弱草胜春花，运去精金逊顽铁。逍遥快乐是便宜，到老方知滋味别。粗衣澹饭足家常，养得浮生一世拙。

开话已毕，未入正文，且说唐诗四句：

周公恐惧流言日，王莽谦恭下士时。

假使当年身便死，一生真伪有谁知！

此诗大抵说人品有真有伪，须要恶而知其美，好而知其恶。第一句说周公。那周公，姓姬，名旦，是周文王少子。有圣德，辅其兄武王伐商，定了周家八百年天下。武王病，周公为册文告



Story 4

In the Hall Halfway-up-the-Hill, the Stubborn One Dies of Grief

*Try to prolong your life while you still can;
Seize the moments of joy when they come your way.
With Heaven disposing human affairs,
Why do you have to worry yourself sick?
Relax! Think nothing of the trivial things!
Life's ups and downs are more than can be told.
The lavish Gold Valley Garden turned to dust;¹
The once-mighty Han Xin died a tragic death.²
Wu Zixu, the hero of Lintong fame,³
Was reduced to playing the flute for food.
When in luck, weeds outshine the spring flowers;
When out of luck, pure gold loses to rough iron.
You're better off if happy and carefree;
This you will know when old age sets in.
Be content with simple food and clothes,
And live modestly throughout your life.*

Having thus begun, let me take more time and cite four lines from a Tang dynasty poem before I launch into the story proper:

*The Duke of Zhou lived in fear of rumors;
Wang Mang won the hearts of his followers.
If they had died before the truth came out,
Who would have known them to be what they truly were? ⁴*

This quatrain says in essence that there are honest people and there are hypocrites and that one must learn to see good in those who appear to be evil and evil in those who appear to be good.

The first line of the quatrain is about the duke of Zhou, surname Ji and given name Dan, who was a younger son of King Wen of the Zhou dynasty. A man of saintly virtue, he helped his older brother, who later became King Wu, overthrow the Shang dynasty and found the Zhou dynasty, which was to last for eight hundred years. When



天，愿以身代。藏其册于金匱，无人知之。以后武王崩，太子成王年幼。周公抱成王于膝，以朝诸侯。有庶兄管叔、蔡叔将谋不轨，心忌周公，反布散流言，说周公欺侮幼主，不久篡位。成王疑之。周公辞了相位，避居东国，心怀恐惧。一日，天降大风疾雷，击开金匱，成王见了册文，方知周公之忠，迎归相位，诛了管叔、蔡叔，周室危而复安。假如管叔、蔡叔流言方起，说周公有反叛之心，周公一病而亡，金匱之文未开，成王之疑未释，谁人与他分辨？后世却不把好人当做恶人？第二句说王莽。王莽字巨君，乃西汉平帝之舅。为人奸诈。自恃椒房宠势，相国威权，阴有篡汉之意。恐人心不服，乃折节谦恭，尊礼贤士，假行公道，虚张功业。天下郡县称莽功德者，共四十八万七千五百七十二人。莽知人心归己，乃鸩平帝，迁太后，自立为君。改国号曰新，一



King Wu fell ill, the duke wrote a prayer to heaven, asking to die in the king's place, a prayer that he hid in a golden box without anyone's knowledge. After King Wu died, the duke held the young King Cheng, King Wu's son, on his lap in court sessions with the feudal lords. The lord of Guan and the lord of Cai, both being King Wu's half brothers born of concubines, harbored designs upon the throne and, jealous of the duke of Zhou, spread rumors, accusing him of bullying the young king and planning to usurp the throne before long. King Cheng did grow suspicious. The duke resigned from his post as prime minister and went to an eastern region, where he lived in fear as a recluse.

One day, during a raging storm, a clap of thunder shook open the gold box. It was only after King Cheng saw the duke's written prayer that he realized the duke's loyalty. The duke was brought back and reinstated as prime minister. The lord of Guan and the lord of Cai were executed, and the House of Zhou regained peace. If the duke of Zhou had fallen ill and died soon after the lord of Guan and the lord of Cai had started spreading rumors that accused him of harboring designs of betrayal, and if the golden box containing the prayer had remained closed and King Cheng's suspicions had never been dispelled, who would have been there to defend the duke? Wouldn't such a man of virtue have gone down in history as a villain?

The second line of the quatrain is about Wang Mang [45 B.C.E. –23 C.E.], courtesy name Jujun, an uncle of Emperor Ping [r.1–5 C.E.] of the Western Han dynasty. He was an evil man who, emboldened by his kinship with the much favored empress, exercised enormous power as prime minister and set his sights on the throne.⁵ However, afraid of opposition from the populace, he went out of his way to present the image of a modest man respectful of decorum and worthy men. He gave every appearance of acting in the name of justice and overstated his accomplishments. Throughout the land, there were four hundred eighty-seven thousand five hundred and seventy-two people who submitted memorials in eulogy of him. Knowing that he had enough popular support, he poisoned Emperor Ping, dismissed the empress dowager, ascended the imperial throne, and

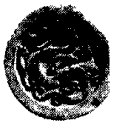


十八年。直至南阳刘文叔起兵复汉，被诛。假如王莽早死了十八年，却不是完名全节一个贤宰相，垂之史册？不把恶人当做好人么？所以古人说：“日久见人心。”又道：“盖棺论始定。”不可以一时之誉，断其为君子；不可以一时之谤，断其为小人。有诗为证：

毁誉从来不可听，是非终久自分明。

一时轻信人言语，自有明人话不平。

如今说先朝一个宰相，他在下位之时，也着实有名有誉的。后来大权到手，任性胡为，做错了事，惹得万口唾骂，饮恨而终。假若有名誉的时节，一个瞌睡死去了不醒，人还千惜万惜，道国家没福，恁般一个好人，未能大用，不尽其才，却到也留名于后世。及至万口唾骂时，就死也迟了。这到是多活了几年的不是！那位宰相是谁？在那一个朝代？这朝代不近不远，是北宋神宗皇帝年间，一个首相，姓王，名安石，临川人也。此人目下十行，书穷万卷。名臣文彦博、欧阳修、曾巩、韩维等，无不奇其才而



changed the dynastic title to Xin (New), a dynasty that lasted for eighteen years before it was overthrown by Liu Xiu [later to be Emperor Guangwu] of Nanyang, who rose in arms to restore the house of Han. Had Wang Mang died eighteen years earlier, he would very well have gone down in history as a good prime minister of impeccable integrity, and wouldn't a villain have thus passed as a good man? That is why the ancients said, "It takes time to get to know a person's heart," and also, "Only when the lid is closed on one's coffin can final judgment be passed on the person." It will never do to take someone as a gentleman on account of a few transient words of praise, nor can one condemn a man as a villain on the basis of similarly short-lived words of slander. There is a poem that bears witness:

*Never heed words of praise or slander;
Right or wrong will be made known in the end.
If idle words are given credence,
The wise will cry out at the injustice.*

I now propose to tell of a prime minister in an earlier dynasty. Before his rise to power, he enjoyed a fine reputation, but once in power, he willfully committed all manner of outrages, for which he came to be showered with curses, and in the end he died with a grievance in his heart. If he had died in peaceful slumber at the height of his reputation, people would have deeply lamented such a loss to the country. A good man like this, not yet in a position commensurate with his great ability, would have left behind a good name. But by the time he was showered with curses, even death could not have saved him. He should not have lived those extra years in the first place!

Who was this prime minister? Which dynasty was it? Well, the dynasty is not too distant from us, nor is it too near. During the reign of Emperor Shenzong [r.1068–85] of the Northern Song dynasty, there was a prime minister, a native of Linchuan [in present-day Jiangxi], by the name of Wang Anshi [1021–86]. He was able to take in ten lines at one glance and had read ten thousand books. Famous court ministers like Wen Yanbo [1006–83], Ouyang Xiu, Zeng Gong [1019–83], and Han Wei all marveled at his talent.⁶ He



称之。方及二旬，一举成名。初任浙江庆元府鄞县知县，兴利除害，大有能声。转任扬州金判，每读书达旦不寐，日已高，闻太守坐堂，多不及盥漱而往。时扬州太守，乃韩魏公，名琦者，见安石头面垢污，知未盥漱，疑其夜饮，劝以勤学。安石谢教，绝不分辨。后韩魏公察听他彻夜读书，心甚异之，更夸其美。[眉批] □自难得。升江宁府知府，贤声愈著，直达帝聪。正是：

只因前段好，误了后来人。

神宗天子励精图治，闻王安石之贤，特召为翰林学士。天子问为治何法，安石以尧舜之道为对，天子大悦。不二年，拜为丞相，封荆国公，举朝以为皋夔复出，伊周再生，同声相庆。惟李承之见安石双眼多白，谓是奸邪之相，他日必乱天下。苏老泉见安石衣服垢敝，经月不洗面，以为不近人情，作《辨奸论》以刺



was barely twenty years old when he gained instant fame upon passing the imperial examinations on the first try. He started from the post of magistrate of Yin County in Qingyuan Prefecture, Zhejiang, where he made a name for himself by fostering good practices and eliminating harmful ones and was promoted to be prefectural notary for the administrative assistant of Yangzhou.

He often read all night through without a wink of sleep, and when the sun was high and he heard that the prefect was holding a session, he would rush over without first washing his face and rinsing his mouth. The prefect of Yangzhou at the time was Han Qi, duke of Wei. Seeing Wang Anshi's unkempt appearance, he attributed this neglect of personal hygiene to nocturnal indulgence in wine and admonished Wang to devote more time to reading. Wang thanked the prefect for his advice without uttering a word in his own defense. Later, upon learning that the man often read through the night, Mr. Han was deeply impressed and grew even more enthusiastic in his praises. (*Such a man is indeed hard to come by.*) So Wang Anshi was promoted again and became the prefect of Jiangning. His good name spread far and wide, and reached the ears of the emperor. Truly,

*Through good deeds done early in his career,
 He gained fame and ruined the land for years to come.*

Now, Emperor Shenzong, the Son of Heaven, was an emperor who would go to any length to make the empire prosperous. Upon hearing of Wang Anshi's good repute, the emperor went out of his way to make Wang a Hanlin Academician in the capital. When the emperor sought his advice about ways to rule the land, his exposition on the principles of the sage kings Yao and Shun⁷ immensely pleased the Son of Heaven. Barely two years had gone by before he was made prime minister and enfeoffed as the Duke of Jing.

All in the court rejoiced over what they thought was the rebirth of Gao Yao, Kui, Yi Yin, and the duke of Zhou.⁸ There was a Li Chengzhi, however, who predicted that Wang Anshi would surely wreak havoc throughout the land because, with more white than black in his eyes, he had the look of an evil man. Su Xun, in his turn, believed that Wang Anshi's slovenliness and neglect of personal



之。[眉批]一是面相，一是貌相，俱有准，何也？此两个人是独得之见，谁人肯信！不在话下。

安石既为首相，与神宗天子相知，言听计从，立起一套新法来。那几件新法？

农田法、水利法、青苗法、均输法、保甲法、免役法、市易法、保马法、方田法、免行法。

专听一个小人，姓吕名惠卿，及伊子王雱，朝夕商议，斥逐忠良，拒绝直谏。民间怨声载道，天变迭兴。荆公自以为是，复倡为三不足之说：

天变不足畏，人言不足恤，祖宗之法不足守。

因他性子执拗，主意一定，佛菩萨也劝他不转，人皆呼为拗相公。[眉批]为恶者可转而之善，惟执拗者必不转，所以其恶更甚也。文彦博、韩琦许多名臣，先夸佳说好的，到此也自悔失言。一个个上表争论，



hygiene, to the extent of forgetting to wash his face for months on end, bespoke a lack of the human touch, and wrote an essay titled “On Recognizing Characteristics of Evil Men” to mock him.⁹ (*One judged by a facial feature, and the other judged by general appearance. Both men were proved right. Why?*) However, these two men stood alone. Who would believe them? But let us go on with the story.

Now that he was prime minister, Wang Anshi gained the favor of Emperor Shenzong, who followed all of Wang’s advice and promulgated a series of new policies. What policies were they?

*The farmland policy, the water conservancy and irrigation policy, the crop loans policy, the local goods transportation policy, the militia policy, the corvée commutation policy, the market trading policy, the horse care policy, the land grids policy, and the guild tax policy.*¹⁰

Wang followed only the advice of an evil man named Lü Huiqing [1032–1111] and of his own son Wang Pang [1044–76]. They consulted one another day and night, reprimanded and expelled those loyal to the court, and rejected remonstrations. Cries of discontent were heard throughout the country, and the occurrence of unusual natural phenomena rose in frequency. The duke of Jing, however, remained as opinionated as ever, asserting that there were three things that one would do well to ignore:

*Natural phenomena need not be feared;
Idle gossip need not be taken seriously;
The ancestors’ laws need not be observed.*

He was a stubborn man. Once his mind was made up, not even Buddha could talk him out of it. Hence his nickname “The Stubborn One.” (*It is possible to bring evil people around to doing good deeds, but the stubborn ones do not change their ways and are, therefore, greater evils.*) Many famous court ministers, such as Wen Yanbo and Han Qi, who had sung his praises, began to regret their mistake. One after another, they submitted memorials to present their views but were invariably rejected, whereupon they handed in their resignations and left the court. Henceforth, Wang Anshi became more



不听，辞官而去。自此持新法益坚。祖制纷更，万民失业。

一日，爱子王雱病疽而死，荆公痛思之甚。招天下高僧，设七七四十九日斋醮，荐度亡灵。荆公亲自行香拜表。其日，第四十九日斋醮已完，漏下四鼓，荆公焚香送佛，忽然昏倒于拜毡之上。左右呼唤不醒。到五更，如梦初觉。口中道：“诧异！诧异！”左右扶进中门。吴国夫人命丫鬟接入内寝，问其缘故。荆公眼中垂泪道：“适才昏愤之时，恍恍忽忽到一个去处，如大官府之状，府门尚闭。见吾儿王雱荷巨枷约重百斤，力殊不胜，蓬首垢面，流血满体，立于门外，对我哭诉其苦，道：‘阴司以儿父久居高位，不思行善，专一任性执拗，行青苗等新法，蠹国害民，怨气腾天。儿不幸阳禄先尽，受罪极重，非斋醮可解。父亲宜及早回头，休得贪恋富贵……’说犹未毕，府中开门吆喝，惊醒回来。”夫人道：“‘宁可信其有，不可信其无。’妾亦闻外面人言籍



determined in enforcing the new policies. Numerous changes were made to the laws established by the ancestors, resulting in unemployment on a massive scale.

One day, his beloved son Wang Pang died of an ulcer. Overcome with grief, the duke of Jing summoned eminent monks from all over the land and held a forty-nine-day prayer service to ensure that the spirit of the deceased would be spared the torments of hell. The duke personally lit the incense and presented the farewell speech.

Upon completion of the forty-ninth-day service, the duke was lighting incense to send off the Buddha at the fourth watch of the night when he suddenly fainted and collapsed on the prayer mat.¹¹ Despite the efforts of the attendants around him, he did not come to. It was at the fifth watch that he woke up as if from a dream. "How very strange!" he said. "How very strange!" The attendants raised him and helped him enter the middle door of the house. From there, his wife, Lady of Wuguo, had maidservants escort him into the bedchamber, where she asked him what had happened.

With tears in his eyes, he said, "When I was in a coma a moment ago, I was dimly aware of arriving at a place that looked like a big, imposing yamen with its gate closed. I saw our son Wang Pang in a huge cangue too heavy for him, a cangue that must have weighed a hundred catties.¹² With disheveled hair, a dirty face, and blood all over him, he stood in front of the gate and tearfully poured out his woes to me, saying, 'I'm here because the King of Hell accuses me of being the son of a highly-placed man who, instead of committing himself to good deeds, stubbornly persists in his willful ways and enacts new laws like the crop loans law — laws that bring calamity to the land and the people and cause rancor to rise all the way to heaven. Your ill-starred son's career in the human world was brought to an end before yours, and I am being punished for crimes far greater than prayer services can redeem. Father, you'd better change your ways as soon as possible. Do not cling to wealth and rank.' Before he was quite finished, the gate opened, someone shouted an order, and I woke up. "

His wife said, "Well, 'To believe is better than not to believe, '



籍，归怨相公。相公何不急流勇退？早去一日，也省了一日的咒詈。”荆公从夫人之言，一连十来道表章，告病辞职。天子风闻外边公论，亦有厌倦之意，遂从其请，以使相判江宁府。

故宋时，凡宰相解位，都要带个外任的职衔，到那地方资禄养老，不必管事。荆公想江宁乃金陵古迹之地，六朝帝王之都，江山秀丽，人物繁华，足可安居，甚是得意。夫人临行，尽出房中钗钏衣饰之类，及所藏宝玩，约数千金，布施各庵院寺观打醮焚香，以资亡儿王雱冥福。择日辞朝起身，百官设饯送行，荆公托病，都不相见。府中有一亲吏，姓江名居，甚会答应。荆公只带此一人，与僮仆随家眷同行。

东京至金陵都有水路，荆公不用官船，微服而行，驾一小艇，由黄河溯流而下。将次开船，荆公唤江居及众僮仆分付：“我虽宰相，今已挂冠而归。凡一路马头歇船之处，有问我何姓何名何官何职，汝等但言过往游客，切莫对他说实话，恐惊动所在官府，



as the saying goes. I, too, have heard many complaints against you. Why don't you resign before your career goes downhill? One less day in office is one less day of being cursed at. ”

Following his wife's advice, the duke of Jing submitted about ten memorials in succession, requesting permission to resign on grounds of ill health. The emperor, not unaware of public opinion, had also grown weary of him. The request was approved, and he was made commissioner of Jiangning Prefecture.¹³

During the Song dynasty, retired prime ministers were all given posts in local governments and were paid salaries without having to do any work. The duke of Jing was most delighted to be sent to Jiangning, because Jiangning, being the ancient city of Jinling and former capital of the Six dynasties, was an opulent place with beautiful scenery and fashionable people, a place where he could very well settle down to a comfortable life. Before departure, his wife donated all of her jewelry and other prized possessions worth thousands of pieces of gold to nunneries and monasteries, held prayer services, and burned incense to seek blessings for their son Wang Pang in the netherworld.

On a chosen day, Wang Anshi took leave of the imperial court, ready to set off on his journey. The assembly of court officials prepared farewell dinners for him, but he declined, pleading illness. In his residence, there was a clerk by the name of Jiang Ju, who was quite good at getting things done. This man he took with him, along with servants and page boys for his family.

From the Eastern Capital to Jinling, they traveled by water. The duke chose not to use boats provided by the government but, wearing commoner's clothes, took a small boat and sailed down the Yellow River.

Before the boat got under way, he summoned Jiang Ju, the servants, and the page boys, and said to them, “I have already resigned as prime minister. Wherever we moor the boat along the way, should anyone ask about my name and rank, just say that we are travelers passing by this area. Do not, on any account, tell them the truth, because I'm afraid that if the local officials hear about it,

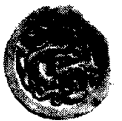


前来迎送，或起夫防护，骚扰居民不便。若或泄漏风声，必是汝等需索地方常例，诈害民财。吾若知之，必皆重责。”众人都道：“谨领钧旨。”江居禀道：“相公白龙鱼服，隐姓潜名，倘或途中小辈不识高低，有毁谤相公者，何处以之？”荆公道：“常言‘宰相腹中撑得船过’，从来人言不足恤。言吾善者，不足为喜；道吾恶者，不足为怒。只当耳边风过去便了，切莫揽事。”江居领命，并晓谕水手知悉。自此水路无话。

不觉二十馀日，已到钟离地方。荆公原有痰火症，住在小舟多日，情怀抑郁，火症复发。思欲舍舟登陆，观看市井风景，少舒愁绪。分付管家道：“此去金陵不远，你可小心伏侍夫人家眷，从水路，由瓜步淮扬过江，我从陆路而来。约到金陵江口相会。”安石打发家眷开船，自己只带两个僮仆，并亲吏江居，主仆共是四人，登岸。

只因水陆舟车扰，断送南来北往人。

江居禀道：“相公陆行，必用脚力。还是拿钧帖到县驿取讨，还是自家用钱雇赁？”荆公道：“我分付在前，不许惊动官府，只



they'll come to greet me and see me off, or even hire guards to provide protection. That would be putting the local inhabitants to too much trouble. If my identity does leak out, I'll assume that you have given out my name in order to extort bribery from the local people, and if I do hear that you've done that, you can be sure that the punishment will be severe. "

"We understand. "

Jiang Ju said, "Now that you are dressed like a commoner, traveling with a hidden identity, what if we run across people who don't know better and speak ill of you?"

The duke replied, "As the saying goes, 'A prime minister's heart is big enough to pole a boat in.' Idle gossip should never be taken seriously. Kind words about me do not make me complacent. Criticisms of me do not make me angry. Just take them as a puff of wind passing by your ears. Whatever you do, don't invite trouble. "

Jiang Ju passed the instructions on to the boatmen. And the journey went smoothly with nothing of note happening.

Before they knew it, they found themselves in Zhongli County more than twenty days later. In the past, the duke had an ailment caused by excessive phlegm and internal heat. So many miserable days spent in the small boat brought the ailment back. Wishing to go ashore to view the sights and the markets and take his mind off his misery, he told his butler, "We're not far from Jinling now. You take good care of the mistress and continue the journey by boat, crossing the river from Guabu and Huaiyang.¹⁴ I'll go by land and meet you at the mouth of the river at Jinling. " So Wang Anshi saw his family off, and they continued their journey by boat, while he went ashore, along with Jiang Ju, a servant and a page boy, forming a company of four.

*By boat on water, by carriage on land,
 Travelers get wherever they want to go.*

Jiang Ju said, "If you travel by land, sir, you will have to hire porters. Shall I go to the county courier station, present them with the official letter from the court, and get porters for free, or do you want to hire some at your own expense?"



自家雇赁便了。”江居道：“若自家雇赁，须要投个主家。”当下僮仆携了包裹，江居引荆公到一个经纪人家来。主人迎接上坐，问道：“客官要往那里去？”荆公道：“要往江宁，欲觅肩舆一乘，或骡或马三匹，即刻便行。”主人道：“如今不比当初，忙不得哩！”荆公道：“为何？”主人道：“一言难尽！自从拗相公当权，创立新法，伤财害民，户口逃散。[眉批]一次。虽留下几户穷民，只好奔走官差，那有空役等雇？况且民穷财尽，百姓饔餐不饱，没闲钱去养马骡。就有几头，也不勾差使。客官坐稳，我替你抓寻去。寻得下莫喜，寻不来莫怪。只是比往常一倍钱要两倍哩！”江居问道：“你说那拗相公是谁？”主人道：“叫做王安石，闻说一双白眼睛。恶人自有恶相。”荆公垂下眼皮，叫江居莫管别人家闲事。主人去了多时，来回复道：“轿夫只许你两个，要三个也不能勾，没有替换，却要把四个人的夫钱雇他。马是没有，止寻得一头骡，一个叫驴。明日五鼓到我店里。客官将就去得时，可付些银子与他。”荆公听了前番许多恶话，不耐烦，巴不得走



The duke replied, "I've already told you not to bother local authorities. Go hire some men with my money. "

"In that case," said Jiang Ju, "we'll have to find a broker. "

With the servant and the page boy carrying the baggage, Jiang Ju led the duke to see a broker. The host greeted them, offered them seats of honor, and asked, "Where are you going?"

"To Jiangning," said the duke. "We would like to rent a sedan-chair and three mules or horses. We'll be on our way immediately. "

"Things are not the way they were before," said the broker. "You'll have to wait a while. "

"Why?" asked the duke.

"It's a long story! Since the Stubborn One came to power, his new laws have led to such wastes of money and put the people through so much suffering that many locals have run away. (*This denunciation against him is the first of many more to come all along this journey.*) The few poor families who stay behind are so busy running errands for the government that no one is free for hire. Moreover, the local people have become so poor that they can't even fill their stomachs, not to speak of having spare money to raise horses and mules. The few there are can't meet the demand. Now you sit here, while I go find some for you. If I succeed, don't rejoice. If I fail, don't complain, but whatever I find will cost twice as much as before!"

"Who is the Stubborn One?" asked Jiang Ju.

"It's Wang Anshi. They say that he has more white in his eyes than black. That's the look of an evil man. "

The duke lowered his eyelids and told Jiang Ju not to ask too many questions.

After a long while, the broker came back and said, "You'll have to do with two sedan-chair carriers. I can't find you a third one, and those two want to be paid as four, because there will be no one to relieve them. And there's no horse. I managed to find only a mule and a donkey. You can come to my place tomorrow morning at the fifth watch to be picked up. If you agree, you must pay them a deposit now. "



路，想道：“就是两个夫子，缓缓而行也罢。只是少一个头口，没奈何，把一匹与江居坐，那一匹，教他两个轮流坐罢。”分付江居，但凭主人定价，不要与他计较。江居把银子称付主人。

日光尚早，荆公在主人家闷不过，唤童儿跟随，走出街市闲行。果然市井萧条，店房稀少。荆公暗暗伤感。步到一个茶坊，到也洁净。荆公走进茶坊，正欲唤茶，只见壁间题一绝句云：[眉批]二次了。

祖宗制度至详明，百载徐黎乐太平。

白眼无端偏固执，纷纷变乱拂人情。

后款云：“无名子慨世之作。”荆公默然无语，连茶也没兴吃了，慌忙出门。又走了数百步，见一所道院。荆公道：“且去随喜一回，消遣则个。”走进大门，就是三间庙宇。荆公正欲瞻礼，尚未跨进殿楹，只见朱壁外面粘着一幅黄纸，纸上有诗句：[眉批]三次了。

五叶明良致太平，相君何事苦纷更？

既言尧舜宜为法，当效伊周辅圣明。

排尽旧臣居散地，尽为新法误苍生。



Displeased by the bitter words against him a while earlier, the duke could hardly wait to be on his way. He thought to himself, "If we go slowly, having only two men shouldn't be a problem. But we are one animal short. The only choice is to let Jiang Ju have one. The page boy and the servant can take turns riding the other one." Thereupon, he told Jiang Ju not to haggle over the price but to pay whatever the broker asked for. Accordingly, Jiang Ju weighed out some silver and paid the broker.

As it was still early in the day and staying in the broker's house was too boring, the duke had the page boy follow him and went out for a stroll down the streets. Indeed, what he saw was a desolate place with few shops in business. The sight saddened him, but he kept his feelings to himself. His steps took him to a teahouse that looked clean enough. He walked in and was about to order some tea when his eyes fell upon a quatrain written on the wall. (*This is the second time.*)

*The old system was judicious and sound;
 For a hundred years, peace reigned in the land.
 But along came the stubborn white-eyed man,
 To force changes that bring chaos and pain.*

Written below, in lieu of the author's signature, were the words "Anonymous but indignant at the way things are."

The duke sank into silence. Losing all interest in the tea, he promptly left the place. A few hundred steps farther on, he saw a temple. "Why don't I go in to look around and while away the time?" The gate led to three halls of worship. Before he crossed the threshold to pay homage, he saw, posted on the vermilion wall, a piece of yellow paper with a poem written on it. (*The third time.*)

*The last five emperors gave the land peace.
 Why bother to bring changes here and there?
 If Yao and Shun are models to follow,
 Help the court's wise rule, as did Yi and Zhou!¹⁵
 He ousted old ministers of the court;
 His new laws brought ruin to the people.
 The Cozy Nest man, if you remember,*



翻思安乐窝中老，先识天津杜宇声。

先前英宗皇帝时，有一高士，姓邵名雍，别号尧夫，精于数学，通天彻地，自名其居为安乐窝。常与客游洛阳天津桥上，闻杜宇之声，叹道：“天下从此乱矣！”客问其故。尧夫答道：“天下将治，地气自北而南；天下将乱，地气自南而北。洛阳旧无杜宇，今忽有之，乃地气自南而北之征。不久天子必用南人为相，变乱祖宗法度，终宋世不得太平。”这个兆，正应在王安石身上。荆公默诵此诗一遍，问香火道人：“此诗何人所作？没有落款？”道人道：“数日前，有一道侣到此索纸题诗，粘于壁上，说是骂什么拗相公的。”荆公将诗纸揭下，藏于袖中，默然而出。回到主人家，闷闷的过了一夜。

五鼓鸡鸣，两名夫和一个赶脚的牵着一头骡，一个叫驴都到了。荆公素性不十分梳洗，上了肩舆。江居乘了驴子，让那骡子与僮仆两个更换骑坐。约行四十馀里，日光将午，到一村镇。江居下了驴，走上一步，禀道：“相公，该打中火了。”荆公因痰火



Once told the future by the cuckoo's cries.

During the reign of the previous emperor, Emperor Yingzong [r.1064-67], there was a wise man by the name of Shao Yong, alias Yaofu, who was well versed in the laws of the cosmos and knew everything there was to know about heaven and earth. He called his residence "The Cozy Nest." In one of his frequent walks with friends on the Heavenly Ford Bridge in Luoyang, he heard the cries of a cuckoo. With a sigh, he said, "There will be chaos throughout the land!" When asked the meaning of that remark, he said, "If the land is to enjoy peace and order, the earth's energy should travel from the north to the south. If the land is to be torn by chaos, the earth's energy travels from the south to the north. No cuckoos have ever been seen in Luoyang before, and yet today, I heard one. This is a sign that the earth's energy is going from the south to the north. Before long, the Son of Heaven is to appoint a southerner as prime minister. That man will abolish the laws our ancestors established, and the land will know no peace till the end of our Song dynasty." And that prophecy had now been borne out by Wang Anshi.

After silently reading the poem once, the duke asked an acolyte, "Who wrote this poem? There's no signature."

"A few days ago," replied the acolyte, "a monk came here and asked for a piece of paper on which to write a poem. Then he posted it on the wall, saying it was a criticism of a certain Stubborn One."

The duke peeled off the sheet of paper, hid it in his sleeve, and went out without a word. He returned to the broker's house, where he spent a none-too-cheerful night.

At the first crow of roosters at the fifth watch, the two porters arrived, along with a man leading a mule and a donkey. Without combing his hair and washing himself, as was his wont, the duke mounted the sedan-chair. Jiang Ju rode the donkey, and the servant and the page boy took turns riding the mule. Around noontime, after traveling about forty *li*, they arrived at a small town. Jiang Ju dismounted, took a step forward, and said to the prime minister, "Sir, it's time for lunch."

Because of the recurrence of the duke's ailment, his servants had



病发，随身扶手，带得有清肺干糕，及丸药茶饼等物。分付手下：“只取沸汤一瓯来，你们自去吃饭。”荆公将沸汤调茶，用了点心。众人吃饭，兀自未了。荆公见屋傍有个坑厕，讨一张手纸，走去登东。只见坑厕土墙上，白石灰画诗八句：[眉批]四次了。

初知鄞邑未升时，为负虚名众所推。

苏老《辨奸》先有识，李丞劾奏已前知。

斥除贤正专威柄，引进虚浮起祸基。

最恨邪言“三不足”，千年流毒臭声遗。

荆公登了东，虚个空，就左脚脱下一只方舄，将舄底向土墙上抹得字迹糊涂，方才罢手。众人中火已毕。

荆公复上肩舆而行，又三十里，遇一驿舍。江居稟道：“这官舍宽敞，可以止宿。”荆公道：“昨日叮咛汝辈是甚言语！今宿于驿亭，岂不惹人盘问？还到前村，择僻静处民家投宿，方为安稳。”又行五里许，天色将晚。到一村家，竹篱茅舍，柴扉半掩。荆公叫江居上前借宿，江居推扉而入。内一老叟扶杖走出，问其来由。江居道：“某等游客，欲暂宿尊居一宵，房钱依例奉纳。”



brought along some lung-clearing dried cakes, tea cakes, and pills. The duke told his men, "Just bring me a bowl of hot water. You can then go ahead and eat your lunch." The duke steeped some tea in the hot water and ate some of the dried cakes. While his men were still at lunch, he saw a lavatory by the side of a house. He asked for a piece of toilet paper and stepped inside. There, on the earthen wall, he saw an eight-line poem written in white lime (*The fourth time.*):

*When in Yin County before his time had come,
He had much support in his undeserved fame.
How wise Su Xun was in detecting evil!
How accurate Li Chengzhi's predictions!
He ousted the good and monopolized power;
He bred deception and brought on chaos.
Most odious were his words "need not be,"
Words that live in infamy down the years.*

After finishing what he had to do, the duke took advantage of a moment when no one was looking in his direction to remove the square shoe from his left foot and wipe the characters on the wall until they became blurred. When his men came back from lunch, he remounted the sedan-chair and resumed the journey.

Some thirty *li* later, they came upon a courier station. Jiang Ju said, "This government establishment looks spacious enough. Let's spend the night there."

"What did I tell you yesterday?" said the duke. "Wouldn't we be inviting probing questions if we take up quarters here tonight? It would be safer to go to the next village and pick a local resident's house in a quiet corner."

Another five *li* later, as dusk began to set in, they came upon a villager's thatched house with a bamboo fence and a firewood door left ajar. Instructed by the duke to go up to the house and ask to be put up for the night, Jiang Ju pushed open the gate and approached the door. An elderly man with a cane stepped out and asked what they wanted.

"We are travelers," replied Jiang Ju, "wishing to spend the night in your honorable house. We will pay you at the going rate."



老叟道：“但随官人们尊便。”江居引荆公进门，与主人相见。老叟延荆公上坐，见江居等三人侍立，知有名分，请到侧屋里另坐。老叟安排茶饭去了。荆公看新粉壁上，有大书律诗一首，[眉批]五次了。诗云：

文章谩说自天成，曲学偏邪识者轻。
强辨鹑刑非正道，误餐鱼饵岂真情。
奸谋已遂生前志，执拗空遗死后名。
亲见亡儿阴受梏，始知天理报分明。

荆公阅毕，惨然不乐。须臾，老叟搬出饭来，从人都饱餐，荆公也略用了些。问老叟道：“壁上诗何人写作？”老叟道：“往来游客所书，不知名姓。”公俯首寻思：“我曾辨帛勒为鹑刑，及误餐鱼饵；二事人颇晓得。只亡儿阴府受梏事，我单对夫人说，并没第二人得知，如何此诗言及？好怪，好怪！”

荆公因此诗末句刺着他痛心之处，狐疑不已，因问老叟：“高寿几何？”老叟道：“年七十八了。”荆公又问：“有几位贤郎？”老叟扑簌簌泪下，告道：“有四子，都死了。与老妻独居于此。”荆公道：“四子何为俱夭？”老叟道：“十年以来，苦为新



“Please make yourselves comfortable,” said the old man.

Jiang Ju led the duke into the house to meet the host. The old man offered the duke the seat of honor. Seeing that Jiang Ju and the other two stood to one side, he realized that he was looking at a man of exalted status, and so he took the three attendants into a side room. While the old man was away, making preparations for tea and supper, the duke saw an eight-line poem written in bold characters on the newly whitewashed wall. (*The fifth time.*) The poem said,

*Say not that his writings are divinely inspired;
Those who see through his fallacies are few.
His defense in the quail case was unjust;¹⁶
His eating of fish-bait not without motive.¹⁷
His evil plots have fulfilled his ambitions;
His stubborn ways will give him infamy after he dies.
The sight of his cangued son in the netherworld
Revealed to him the truth of heavenly justice.*

The poem plunged the duke into low spirits. In a short while, the old man served supper. The servants fell to heartily. The duke also helped himself to a little bit of the food.

“Who wrote the poem on the wall?” he asked the old man.

“It was done by a traveler passing by. I don’t know his name.”

His head bent, the duke thought to himself, “My defense in the case of the quail and my eating the fish-bait by mistake are incidents known to the public. But my son’s wearing a cangue in the netherworld is something I told only to my wife. No one else could have known about it. Why has it come up in that poem? How very strange!”

Puzzled by the poem’s last two lines, which had struck a sore spot, he asked the old man, “May I ask your venerable age?”

“I’m seventy-eight.”

“How many sons do you have?”

That question brought tears to the old man’s eyes. “I had four sons, but they all died. There’s only me and my wife living here now.”

“How did all four of them die?”



法所害。[眉批]六次了。诸子应门，或歿于官，或丧于途。老汉幸年高，得以苟延残喘，倘若少壮，也不在人世了。”荆公惊问：“新法有何不便，乃至于此？”老叟道：“官人只看壁间诗可知矣。自朝廷用王安石为相，变易祖宗制度，专以聚敛为急，拒谏饰非，驱忠立佞。始设青苗法以虐农民，继立保甲、助役、保马、均输等法，纷纭不一。官府奉上而虐下，[眉批]“奉上虐下”四字，说尽末世有司之病。日以箠掠为事。吏卒夜呼于门，百姓不得安寝。弃产业，携妻子，逃于深山者，日有数十。此村百有馀家，今所存八九家矣。寒家男女共一十六口，今只有四口仅存耳！”说罢，泪如雨下，荆公亦觉悲酸。又问道：“有人说新法便民，老丈今言不便，愿闻其详。”老叟道：“王安石执拗，民间称为拗相公。若言不便，便加怒贬；说便，便加升擢。凡说新法便民者，都是谄佞辈所为，其实害民非浅。且如保甲上番之法，民家每一丁，教阅于场，又以一丁朝夕供送。虽说五日一教，那做保正的，日聚于



“Over the last ten years, the new laws have brought us great suffering. (*The sixth time.*) My sons took on the responsibility of managing the household, but they died one after another, either in an official post or on the road. Since I’m an old man, I survived, but had I been younger, I would also be dead and gone.”

Wang Anshi asked in astonishment, “What’s so bad about the new laws that they did such harm to you?”

“That poem on the wall says enough. After the imperial court appointed Wang Anshi as the prime minister, he brought changes to the old system established by our ancestors, imposing heavy taxes, refusing to hear objections, covering up his mistakes, and ousting good officials while promoting evil ones. He started with the crop loans policy to oppress the peasants, and then went on to the militia policy, the corvée commutation policy, the horse-care policy, the local goods transportation policy, and so on and so forth. Local officials fawn on their superiors and oppress their subordinates. (*All the wrongdoings of such officials are summed up in that little phrase “fawn on their superiors and oppress their subordinates.”*) During the day, they plunder the people, their whips at the ready; at night, their lackeys yell from door to door, giving the people no peace even in their sleep. Every day, several tens of local men abandon their properties and take their wives to the mountains to find refuge. This village used to have more than a hundred households. Now only eight or nine remain. This family of sixteen has been reduced to only four!” At this point, his tears fell like rain.

The duke was also stung by a pang of grief. He asked again, “Some say the new laws benefit the people, but you say not. I’d like to hear more about this.”

“Wang Anshi is a stubborn man. People call him ‘the Stubborn One.’ He angrily denounces anyone who says anything against the new laws and promotes anyone who’s for them. Those who say that the new laws benefit the people are an evil lot and a plague on the people! Let me give you as an example the militia law, whereby every family has to send one son into the unit for training and send another one to bring him daily supplies. Even though the training is said



教场中，受贿方释。如没贿赂，只说武艺不熟，拘之不放，以致农时俱废，往往冻馁而死。”[眉批]牧民者以无事为福，即此一节可知。言毕，问道：“如今那拗相公何在？”荆公哄他道：“见在朝中辅相天子。”老叟唾地大骂道：“这等奸邪，不行诛戮，还要用他，公道何在！朝廷为何不相了韩琦、富弼、司马光、吕海、苏轼诸君子，而偏用此小人乎！”江居等听得客坐中喧嚷之声，走来看时，见老叟说话太狠，咤叱道：“老人家不可乱言，倘王丞相闻知此语，获罪非轻了。”老叟矍然怒起道：“吾年近八十，何畏一死！若见此奸贼，必手刃其头，剖其心肝而食之。”[眉批]快心快心！虽赴鼎镬刀锯，亦无恨矣！”众人皆吐舌缩项。荆公面如死灰，不敢答言，起立庭中，对江居说道：“月明如昼，还宜赶路。”江居会意，去还了老叟饭钱，安排轿马。荆公举手与老叟分别。老叟笑道：“老拙自骂奸贼王安石，与官人何干，乃怫然而去？”[眉批]



to be done once every five days, the heads of the security units don't release the men from the training grounds until they are bribed. If no bribes come their way, they just hold the young men there, saying that the young men are not yet skilled enough in the martial arts. As a result, farm work is neglected, and people die of cold and hunger." (*He rules best who leaves the people alone, as can be deduced from what is described above.*)

Having said that, the old man asked, "Where's the Stubborn One now?"

The duke replied, tongue-in-cheek, "He's still in the court, helping the emperor rule the land."

Spitting onto the ground, the old man lashed out, "Where is justice when such an evil man is still in power? He should be executed! Why doesn't the court fill the position of prime minister with good men like Han Qi, Fu Bi [1004-83], Sima Guang [1019-86], Lü Hui, and Su Shi, instead of keeping such a scoundrel!"¹⁸

Hearing all this noise coming from the guest hall, Jiang Ju and the others came in to find out what it was all about. At these harsh words spoken by the old man, Jiang Ju said sharply, "Stop this nonsense! Should Prime Minister Wang hear about this, you'll be in for some severe punishment."

Abruptly, the old man rose in anger and said, "I'm almost eighty years old. Why should I be afraid of death? If I ever see that villain, I'll cut off his head with my own hand, take out his heart and liver, and eat them. (*Bravo!*) And then, I'll have no regrets even if I end up dying in a boiling cauldron or by a sword!"

At these words, all of Wang's attendants flinched and stuck out their tongues in horror. His face turning ashen, the duke dared not venture a response. He rose and said to Jiang Ju, "The moon is as bright as day. We should be getting on with our journey." Jiang understood. He paid the old man for the meal and went about preparing the means of transportation.

When the duke waved farewell to the old man, the latter said, laughingly, "My curses against that scoundrel Wang Anshi had nothing to do with you. Why do you have to leave so soon, looking annoyed?"



更妙！莫非官人与王安石有甚亲故么？”荆公连声答道：“没有，没有！”荆公登舆，分付快走，从者跟随，踏月而行。

又走十馀里，到树林之下。只有茅屋三间，并无邻比。荆公道：“此颇幽寂，可以息劳。”命江居叩门。内有老姬启扉。江居亦告以游客贪路，错过邸店，特来借宿，来早奉谢。老姬指中一间屋道：“此处空在，但宿何妨。只是草房窄狭，放不下轿马。”江居道：“不妨，我有道理。”荆公降舆入室。江居分付将轿子置于檐下，骡驴放在树林之中。荆公坐于室内，看那老姬时，衣衫蓝缕，鬓发蓬松，草舍泥墙，颇为洁净。老姬取灯火，安置荆公，自去睡了。

荆公见窗间有字，携灯看时，亦是律诗八句。[眉批]七次了。诗云：

生已沽名炫气豪，死犹虚伪惑儿曹。
既无好语遗吴国，却有浮辞诳叶涛。
四野逃亡空白屋，千年嗔恨说青苗。
想因过此来亲睹，一夜愁添雪鬓毛。

荆公阅之，如万箭攒心，好生不乐。想道：“一路来，茶坊道院，



(*Brilliant!*) Might you be related to Wang Anshi in any way?"

"No, no!" said the duke. He mounted the sedan-chair and told the men to make haste. With the attendants bringing up the rear, they pressed on, treading the moonlit roads.

Another ten *li* or so farther on, they came upon a grove, where stood a lonesome three-room thatched cottage. The duke said, "Now, this looks like a quiet little place where we can take a good rest." So saying, he had Jiang Ju knock at the door. When an old woman answered the door, Jiang Ju said, as before, that they were travelers passing by who had been so eager to cover more distance that they had passed the last inn without stopping. They now wished to be put up for the night and would pay her thankfully the following morning.

Pointing to the middle room, the old woman said, "That's an empty room. You can stay there, but it's too small for the sedan-chair and the animals. "

"That's all right," said Jiang Ju. "I'll take care of that. "

The duke stepped down from the sedan-chair and walked into the cottage. Jiang Ju had the sedan-chair put under the eaves and the mule and the donkey led into the grove. Sitting in the room, the duke saw that the old woman was in rags and her hair disheveled, but he found her mud-walled thatched cottage quite clean inside. The old woman brought over a lamp, made sleeping arrangements for the duke, and went off to her own room to retire for the night. Some characters on the wall between two windows caught the duke's eye. He lifted the lamp and saw an eight-line poem. (*The seventh time.*) The poem said,

In life, he seeks fame and shows off his power;

In death, he tries to cheat posterity.

With no good provisions for Wuguo in his will,

He has florid rhetoric for Ye Tao.

Throughout the empire, farmers flee their homes;

Curses against crop loans echo down the years.

Passing by here and witnessing the scene,

He finds his hair white with grief overnight.

The poem gave him as much pain as if ten thousand arrows were



以至村镇人家，处处有诗讥诮。这老姬独居，谁人到此？亦有诗句，足见怨词詈语遍于人间矣！那第二联说‘吴国’，乃吾之夫人也。叶涛，是吾故友。此二句诗意犹不可解。”欲唤老姬问之，闻隔壁打鼾之声。江居等马上辛苦，俱已睡去。荆公展转寻思，抚膺顿足，懊悔不迭，想道：“吾只信福建子之言，道民间甚便新法，故吾违众而行之，焉知天下怨恨至此！此皆福建子误我也！”——吕惠卿是闽人，故荆公呼为福建子。是夜，荆公长吁短叹，和衣偃卧，不能成寐，吞声暗泣，两袖皆沾湿了。

将次天明，老姬起身，蓬着头同一赤脚蠢婢，赶二猪出门外。婢携糠秕，老姬取水，用木杓搅于木盆之中，口中呼：“啰，啰，啰，拗相公来。”二猪闻呼，就盆吃食。婢又呼鸡：“𦵏，𦵏，𦵏，𦵏，王安石来。”群鸡俱至。[眉批]看视。江居和众人看见，无不惊讶。荆公心愈不乐，因问老姬道：“老人家何为呼鸡豕之名如此？”老姬道：“官人难道不知王安石即当今之丞相，拗相公



piercing his heart. In dejection, he thought, "All along the journey, I've seen poems of satire — in a teahouse, in a monastery, and even in a villager's home. Now this is an old woman who lives alone. Who could have been here to write this poem? Clearly, complaints and curses must have spread throughout the land. 'Wuguo' in the second couplet of that poem is an obvious reference to my wife, Lady of Wuguo, and Ye Tao is a friend of mine. But the meaning of these two lines eludes me." He was about to summon the old woman for some questions when he heard snores coming from the next room. Jiang Ju and the others were already fast asleep after a tiring day.

His mind revolving on many things, the duke was seized with regret. He said to himself, stroking his chest and stamping his feet, "I trusted only one man, that man from Fujian. He said the new laws did the people good, and that's why I forced them through over objections from all quarters. How was I to know that people's rancor was running so deep? That man from Fujian ruined me!" Lü Huiqing was a native of Fujian, so the duke called him "that man from Fujian." Heaving sigh upon sigh, the duke lay on his back on the bed, not bothering to take off his clothes, and sobbed noiselessly throughout the sleepless night, soaking both sleeves with tears.

When day broke, the old woman rose and, her hair in disarray, drove two pigs out the door with the help of a barefoot, stupid-looking maid. The maid brought out some chaff while the old woman fetched water, and then, stirring a wooden ladle in a wooden basin, the old woman called out, "Lo! Lo! Lo! The Stubborn Ones! Come over here!" The two pigs trotted over to the basin and ate from it.

Then the maid called out to the chickens, "Cluck! Cluck! Cluck! Cluck! Wang Anshi, come over here!" And the flock of chickens swarmed up to her (*Look at this!*), a scene that appalled Jiang Ju and the two servants. His heart sinking lower, the duke asked the old woman, "Why do you call the chickens and pigs these names?"

"Don't you know that Wang Anshi is the incumbent prime minister, and 'the Stubborn One' is his nickname? Since he became the



是他的浑名？自王安石做了相公，立新法以扰民。老妾二十年孀妇，子媳俱无，止与一婢同处。妇女二口，也要出免役、助役等钱。钱既出了，差役如故。老妾以桑麻为业，蚕未成眠，便预借丝钱用了。麻未上机，又借布钱用了。桑麻失利，只得畜猪养鸡，等候吏胥里保来征役钱。或准与他，或烹来款待他，自家不曾尝一块肉。故此民间怨恨新法，入于骨髓。畜养鸡豕，都呼为拗相公、王安石，把王安石当做畜生。今世没奈何他，后世得他变为异类，烹而食之，以快胸中之恨耳！”[眉批]此等人言，难道亦不足恤乎！荆公暗暗垂泪，不敢开言，左右惊讶，荆公容颜改变，索镜自照，只见须发俱白，两目皆肿，心下凄惨。自己忧患所致，思想“一夜愁添雪鬓毛”之句，岂非数乎！命江居取钱谢了老姬，收拾起身。

江居走到舆前，禀道：“相公施美政于天下，愚民无知，反以为怨。今宵不可再宿村舍，还是驿亭官舍，省些闲气。”荆公口虽不答，点头道是。上路多时，到一邮亭。江居先下驴，扶荆公



prime minister, he has passed new laws to torment the people. I've been a widow for twenty years. I have no son or daughter-in-law and live with my maidservant, but even women like us two have to pay corvée commutation taxes, and yet, despite all the money we pay, we are still dragged into corvée. In my case, I grew mulberry and hemp for a living, but before the silkworms were ready, I had to borrow money against the silk. Before the hemp was put on the loom, I had to borrow against the fabric. Having failed in the mulberry and hemp business, I have no other choice but to raise pigs and chickens and wait for the government clerks and local headmen to come and collect corvée commutation taxes. I either give them the money or feed them a big meal. I myself never get to eat a piece of meat.

“So people around here hate the new laws so much that we call the chickens and pigs ‘the Stubborn Ones’ and ‘Wang Anshi’, and look on that Wang Anshi as an animal. There's nothing I can do to him in this life, but the next lifetime around, I wish he'd be reincarnated as an animal for me to cook and eat up, so that I can give vent to all this hatred pent up in me!” (*Is this also “Idle gossip that need not be taken seriously?”*)

The duke silently shed tears without daring to say a word. His men were dumbfounded as they realized that the duke's appearance had changed. He asked for a mirror and saw in it that his hair had turned all white and his eyes were swollen. Feeling wretched, he knew that this had been caused by his grief. Recalling the line “He finds his hair white with grief overnight,” he thought, “Isn't this all in my fate?” He had Jiang Ju pay the old woman and prepare for departure.

Walking up to the sedan-chair, Jiang Ju said, “Sir, your policies for the empire are excellent. It's just that those people are too ignorant and complain about you instead. We must not stay with peasants again tonight. Let's go to a government establishment to save us further humiliation. ”

Without saying anything, the duke nodded his consent. After covering quite a distance, they came upon a courier station. Jiang Ju got down first from his donkey and helped the duke out of the



出轿升亭而坐，安排蚤饭。荆公看亭子壁间，亦有绝句二首，第一首云：

富韩司马总孤忠，恳谏良言过耳风。
只把惠卿心腹待，不知杀羿是逢蒙！

第二首云：

高谈道德口悬河，变法谁知有许多。
他日命衰时败后，人非鬼责奈愁何？

荆公看罢，颀然大怒，唤驿卒问道：“何物狂夫，敢毁谤朝政如此！”有一老卒应道：“不但此驿有诗，是处皆有留题也。”荆公问道：“此诗为何而作？”老卒道：“因王安石立新法以害民，所以民恨入骨。近闻得安石辞了相位，判江宁府，必从此路经过。蚤晚常有村农数百在此左近，伺候他来。”荆公道：“伺他来，要拜谒他么？”老卒笑道：“仇怨之人，何拜谒之有！众百姓持白挺，候他到时，打杀了他，分而啖之耳。”

荆公大骇，不等饭熟，趋出邮亭上轿，江居唤众人随行。一路只买干粮充饥，荆公更不出轿，分付兼程赶路。直至金陵，与



sedan-chair and into the courier station, where the duke sat down. While Jiang Ju was making breakfast preparations, the duke saw two quatrains on the wall. The first one said,

*Fu, Han, and Sima were the few good ones¹⁹
Whose advice passed his ears like puffs of wind.
In Lü Huiqing alone he placed his trust;²⁰
Yet, remember who killed Yi but Fengmeng!²¹*

The second quatrain said,

*A glib preacher of high morality,
He pushed through more new laws than one can count.
When his luck runs out, he'll know boundless grief
Brought on by accusing humans and ghosts.*

The duke flew into a rage. He summoned the courier station clerks and said, "What madman wrote this, slandering government policies like this?"

An elderly clerk replied, "It's not just this station that has such a poem. These poems turn up everywhere."

"Why was that poem written?"

"Wang Anshi came up with new laws to torment the people. That's why the people hate him to the marrow of their bones. It is said that he recently resigned and has been transferred to Jiangning Prefecture. Because he will have to pass by this place on his way there, hundreds of peasants are gathered around from morning to night to wait for him."

"Are they going to greet him formally?" asked the duke.

"Why do that to an enemy?" said the clerk with a chuckle. "The peasants are waiting for him with clubs in their hands, and the moment he shows up, they'll beat him to death and eat him up."

The duke was horrified. Before the breakfast on the stove was ready, he hastened out of the courier station and mounted the sedan-chair. Jiang Ju gathered the other men, and they continued with their journey, buying dry provisions along the way whenever necessary to allay their hunger.

For the rest of the journey, the duke did not step out of the sedan-chair even once. By his orders, they pressed ahead at double



吴国夫人相见。羞入江宁城市，乃卜居于钟山之半，名其堂曰半山。

荆公只在半山堂中，看经佞佛，冀消罪愆。他原是过目成诵极聪明的人，一路所见之诗，无字不记。私自写出与吴国夫人看之，方信亡儿王雱阴府受罪，非偶然也。以此终日忧愤，痰火大发。兼以气膈，不能饮食。延及岁馀，奄奄待尽，骨瘦如柴，支枕而坐。吴国夫人在旁堕泪问道：“相公有甚好言语分付？”荆公道：“夫妇之情，偶合耳。我死，更不须挂念。只是散尽家财，广修善事便了……”言未已，忽报故人叶涛特来问疾，夫人回避。荆公请叶涛床头相见，执其手，嘱道：“君聪明过人，宜多读佛书，莫作没要紧文字，徒劳无益。王某一生枉费精力，欲以文章胜人。今将死之时，悔之无及。”叶涛安慰道：“相公福寿正远，何出此言？”荆公叹道：“生死无常，老夫只恐大限一至，不能发



speed until they arrived in Jinling, where the duke greeted his wife, Lady of Wuguo. Too ashamed to go into the city of Jiangning, he chose to live halfway up Mount Zhong and called his house "The Hall Halfway-up-the-Hill." There, he spent his days reading Buddhist scriptures and intoning Buddha's name, hoping to atone for his sins.

A most brilliant man able to memorize a passage verbatim after a single reading, he remembered every word of every poem he had encountered on the road. When he reproduced the poems and secretly showed them to Lady of Wuguo, he came to realize that it was no accident that their deceased son Wang Pang was suffering in the netherworld. From that time on, he never had a moment's relief from his depression.

When his ailment of phlegm and internal heat recurred, its violence complicated by a concentration of gas around his diaphragm, he could not take in food or drink. A year later, he was reduced to a bag of bones. He was sitting in his bed, propped up on a pillow and on the verge of death, when his wife, Lady of Wuguo, asked him tearfully, "Have you made any provisions by way of a will?"

"The feelings between husband and wife," said the duke, "are those that come from an accidental union. Think no more of me after I'm gone. Just give away all the family possessions and do good deeds far and wide."

Before he had quite finished, it was announced that a friend, Ye Tao, had arrived to inquire after his health. The duke's wife removed herself from this male presence. The duke had Ye Tao step over to his bedside and, holding Ye's hands, said to him, "Being an extremely intelligent man, you should study the Buddhist scriptures as much as you can instead of wasting your energy on useless writing that does no one any good. I have spent my whole life trying to excel in my writing, but all that effort has been in vain. Now that I'm dying, regrets are too late."

Trying to comfort him, Ye Tao said, "You are destined for a long and blissful life. Why do you say such a thing?"

The duke continued with a sigh, "Life and death are matters



言，故今日为君叙及此也。”叶涛辞去。荆公忽然想起老姬草舍中诗句第二联道：

既无好语遗吴国，却有浮词诳叶涛。

今日正应其语。不觉抚髀长叹道：“事皆前定，岂偶然哉！作此诗者，非鬼即神。不然，如何晓得我未来之事？吾被鬼神诳让如此，安能久于人世乎！”

不几日，疾革，发谵语，将手批颊，自骂道：“王某上负天子，下负百姓，罪不容诛。九泉之下，何面目见唐子方诸公乎？”一连骂了三日，呕血数升而死。[眉批] 诋口骂犹未足以自骂结局。那唐子方名介，乃是宋朝一个直臣，苦谏新法不便，安石不听，也是呕血而死的。一般样死，比王安石死得有名声。至今山间人家，尚有呼猪为拗相公者。

后人论宋朝元气，都为熙宁变法所坏，所以有靖康之祸，有诗为证：

熙宁新法谏书多，执拗行私奈尔何！

不是此番元气耗，虏军岂得渡黄河？

又有诗惜荆公之才：



one can never predict. I'm afraid that I won't be able to speak when my time comes. That's why I said those words to you. "

After Ye Tao took his leave, the duke suddenly recalled the second couplet of the poem he had seen in the old woman's cottage:

*With no good provisions for Wuguo in his will,
He had florid rhetoric for Ye Tao.*

What had just happened bore out the prophecy. Stroking his thigh, he said to himself with a long-drawn-out sigh, "Everything is predestined. Nothing ever happens by accident! Whoever wrote that poem must have been either a ghost or a god. Otherwise, how could one foretell what was going to happen to me in the future? Being disparaged like this by ghosts and deities, how can I expect to hang on to this mortal world any longer?"

A few days later, his condition turned critical. Becoming delirious, he slapped himself across the face and cursed himself, saying, "I let the emperor down, and at the other end, I also let the people down. How will I have the nerve to face Tang Zifang and the others in the Nine Springs?"²² The curses went on for three days in a row before he threw up liters of blood and gave up the ghost. (*To be cursed is not as good as to end up cursing himself.*)

The Tang Zifang he had mentioned was named Tang Jie, Zifang being the courtesy name, an upright official in the Song court whose remonstrations against the new laws had been ignored by Wang Anshi. Tang Jie had also vomited blood and died in the same way, although in honor rather than in disgrace.

Even now, there are farmers in mountainous villages who call their pigs "The Stubborn Ones." Popular belief in later times held that the new laws in the Xining reign period [1068–77] had depleted the vitality of the Song dynasty and led to the calamities of Jingkang.²³ There is a poem in testimony:

*Despite all the voices against the new laws,
He stubbornly went on with his own ways.
Had he not dealt such a blow to the land,
The Jurchens never would have crossed the river.*

There is another poem lamenting the duke of Jing's misplaced



好个聪明介甫翁，高才历任有清风。
可怜覆餗因高位，只合终身翰苑中。[眉批]用违其才，真是可惜。



talent:

*What a brilliant man, that Wang Anshi!
He graced his posts with integrity and talent.
What a pity he ended up a failure!*

Among scholars he should have spent his life. (A real pity that his talent was used in the wrong place.)

This story has been translated as “The Stubborn Chancellor,” in Richard F. S. Yang, ed. and trans., *Eight Colloquial Tales of the Sung, Thirteenth Century China* (Taipei: China Post, 1972).

¹ The Gold Valley Garden belonged to Shi Chong (249–300), an immensely rich man of the Jin dynasty. For more on Shi Chong with his fabulous wealth, see story 36 in Feng Menglong, *Stories Old and New: a Ming Dynasty Collection*, trans. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang (Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House, 2007).

² Han Xin (d. 196 B.C.E.) helped Liu Bang found the Han dynasty but was later killed by order of Empress Lü and Prime Minister Xiao He on suspicion of disloyalty to the court.

³ In the Spring and Autumn period, Lord Mu of the state of Qin arranged a grand gathering of the lords of seventeen states at Lintong, where Wu Zixu of the state of Chu lifted a mighty cauldron in a show of strength. Lord Mu of Qin was so awestruck that he gave up his ambitions of annexation.

⁴ This quatrain is a slightly altered version of the last four lines of “Fangyan,” a poem by Bai Juyi (772–846), a well-known Tang dynasty poet. Stories about the Duke of Zhou and Wang Mang follow in the text.

⁵ The empress, wife of Emperor Yuan (r. 48–34 B.C.E.), was Wang Mang’s aunt.

⁶ Ouyang Xiu (1007–72) was a great historian, epigraphist, statesman, poet, and essayist. Han Wei, Wen Yanbo, and Ouyang Xiu all opposed Wang Anshi’s policies.

⁷ Yao and Shun were legendary sage kings.

⁸ Gao Yao and Kui were good officials under Shun. Yi Yin and the Duke of Zhou (Ji Dan) were known as good prime ministers of the Zhou dynasty.

⁹ Su Xun (1009–66) was the father of Su Shi. For more on Su Shi, see story 3.

¹⁰ Under the crop loans policy, the government lent farmers funds in the planting season at an interest rate much lower than the usurious rate in the private market and was paid back after the autumn harvest.

The local goods transportation policy allowed products needed by the government to be bought locally, with a portion to be stored for future local needs in lean years and the rest to be transported to state depots throughout the empire. This measure was intended to adjust supply and demand and to bring down prices.

Under the militia policy, the people were supposed to ensure their own security by creating peasant militias, which were organized in units of ten families and were regularly trained and supplied with arms. This measure was supposed to reduce the swollen numbers of the regular armies.

The market trading policy made goods stored in government warehouses available to mer-





chants on credit, with interest charged when the accounts were settled. The reason for this measure was to curb the merchants' monopoly on goods.

Under the horse care law, the government assigned people to take care of the horses it provided for the military establishment in exchange for exemption from taxes.

The land grids policy specified that taxable land was to be gridded into squares of five thousand feet on each side. Within each square, soil productivity was classified into five grades, and taxes were assessed accordingly.

Under the guild tax policy, merchants belonging to guilds were allowed to pay taxes in cash rather than in kind.

¹¹ Prayer services for the dead begin with a ritual performed to invite the presence of the Buddha, and upon completion of the service, paper is burned to send the Buddha away.

¹² The cangue is a wooden collar usually three or four feet square used in ancient China to confine the neck and sometimes also the hands of a convict.

¹³ The seat of Jiangning Prefecture is present-day Nanjing.

¹⁴ Guabu, named for Mount Guabu, is located southeast of Liuhe, Jiangsu.

¹⁵ On Yao, Shun, Yi Yin, and the Duke of Zhou (Ji Dan), see notes 7 and 8.

¹⁶ Before Wang Anshi became prime minister, he defended a youngster who had killed the man who robbed him of his quail. Wang argued that the youngster did not deserve the death penalty.

¹⁷ One day, while viewing the flowers and fishing in the palace garden, Wang Anshi ate up all the fish-bait in the gold plate by mistake.

¹⁸ All the men named here — Han Qi, Fu Bi, Sima Guang, Lü Hui, and Su Shi — were officials who fiercely opposed Wang Anshi's policies. For more on Su Shi, see story 3.

¹⁹ Fu Bi, Han Qi, and Sima Guang all opposed Wang Anshi's policies.

²⁰ Lü Huiqing was much trusted by Wang Anshi but later turned against Wang and criticized him in the most severe terms.

²¹ According to Chinese mythology, Fengmeng learned archery from Yi but later killed Yi because he could not tolerate the thought that, on account of Yi, he was not the best archer in the universe.

²² Nine Springs is a term for the netherworld.

²³ During the Jingkang reign period (1126), Emperors Huizong and Qinzong were captured by the Jurchens, and the Northern Song dynasty perished.



第五卷

吕大郎还金完骨肉

毛宝放龟悬大印，宋郊渡蚁占高魁。
世人尽说天高远，谁识阴功暗里来。

话说浙江嘉兴府长水塘地方，有一富翁，姓金名钟，家财万贯，世代都称员外，性至悭吝。平生常有五恨，那五恨？

一恨天，二恨地，三恨自家，四恨爹娘，五恨皇帝。

恨天者，恨他不常常六月，又多了秋风冬雪，使人怕冷，不免费钱买衣服来穿。恨地者，恨他树木生得不凑趣，若是凑趣，生得齐整如意，树本就好做屋柱，枝条大者，就好做梁，细者就好做椽，却不省了匠人工作。恨自家者，恨肚皮不会作家，一日不吃饭，就饿将起来。恨爹娘者，恨他遗下许多亲眷朋友，来时未免费茶费水。恨皇帝者，我的祖宗分授的田地，却要他来收钱粮。不止五恨，还有四愿，愿得四般物事。那四般物事？

一愿得邓家铜山，
二愿得郭家金穴，
三愿得石崇的聚宝盆，
四愿得吕纯阳祖师点石为金这个手指头。



Story 5

Lü Yu Returns the Silver and Brings about Family Reunion

*Mao Bao freed a turtle, and he rose in rank;¹
Song Jiao saved some ants, and he passed the exams.²
They all say that heaven is far away;
None sees that good deeds quietly gain you merit.*

As the story goes, in the vicinity of Long Pond in Jiaying Prefecture, Zhejiang, there lived an immensely rich man, Jin Zhong, from a family whose heads of household had, for generations, been addressed as "Squire." A most stingy man, he had in his life five objects of hatred. Which five?

Heaven, earth, himself, his parents, and the emperor.

He hated heaven for not making summer last long enough and for generating too much autumn wind and winter snow, which force people to spend money on clothes to keep out the cold. He hated the earth for giving life to trees that lack good sense, for if they knew better, they would all grow to ideal heights so that the trunks could serve as pillars of houses, the bigger branches as beams, and the thinner ones as rafters. Wouldn't that have saved him the expense of a carpenter? He hated himself because his stomach did not know how to take care of itself but suffered from pangs of hunger after a day without eating. He hated his parents because they left behind them many relatives and friends who had to be served tea and water free of charge when they came to visit. He hated the emperor because of the taxes imposed on land that he had inherited from his ancestors.

Apart from these five objects of hatred, he also had four wishes. Which four?

*First, he wished to have Deng Tong's copper hill.³
Second, he wished to have Guo Kuang's gold vault.⁴
Third, he wished to have Shi Chong's treasures.⁵
Fourth, he wished to have Patriarch Lü Chunyang's finger
that could change stone into gold.⁶*



因有这四愿、五恨，心常不足。积财聚谷，日不暇给。真个是数米而炊，称柴而爨。因此乡里起他一个异名，叫做金冷水，又叫金剥皮。尤不喜者是僧人。世间只有僧人讨便宜，他单会布施俗家的东西，再没有反布施与俗家之理。所以金冷水见了僧人，就是眼中之钉，舌中之刺。

他住居相近处，有个福善庵。金员外生年五十，从不晓得在庵中破费一文的香钱。所喜浑家单氏，与员外同年同月同日，只不同时，他偏吃斋好善。金员外喜他的是吃斋，恼他的是好善。因四十岁上，尚无子息，单氏瞒过了丈夫，将自己钗梳二十馀金，布施与福善庵老僧，教他妆佛诵经，祈求子嗣。佛门有应，果然连生二子，且是俊秀。因是福善庵祈求来的，大的小名福儿，小的小名善儿。单氏自得了二子之后，时常瞒了丈夫，偷柴偷米，送与福善庵，供养那老僧。金员外偶然察听了些风声，便去咒天骂地，夫妻反目，直聒得一个不耐烦方休。如此也非止一次。只为浑家也是个硬性，闹过了，依旧不理。

其年夫妻齐寿，皆当五旬。福儿年九岁，善儿年八岁，踏肩



With these four wishes and five objects of hatred, he was an insatiably greedy man who devoted all his time to the accumulation of money and grain, so much so that he literally counted the grains of rice before cooking and weighed the sticks of firewood on his scales before lighting the kitchen fire. Thus, he came to be known in the village as Cold Water Jin and Skinflint Jin.

He loathed monks most of all, because, of all kinds of people in the world, the monks are the best at gaining undue advantages. They are always at the receiving end of alms, and for a monk to donate back to the lay community is something quite unheard of. Therefore, Cold Water Jin saw monks as nails in his eye and thorns in his tongue.

In his neighborhood, there was a Fushan Temple, but in his fifty years of life, Squire Jin had never donated one cent to it. Luckily, his wife Shan-shi — who had been born on the same day, in the same month and the same year, though not in the same hour, as he had been — was a woman who followed a vegetarian diet (to his delight) and was much given to good deeds (to his chagrin). When she was past forty years of age and still without issue, she gave some of her own jewelry, worth more than twenty taels of silver, to the temple without her husband's knowledge, so that the old monk could gild the Buddha's statue and hold services to pray for children on her behalf. Buddha was most responsive. She did indeed give birth to two lovely baby boys in succession. Because they owed their lives to the prayers at the Fushan Temple, the older boy was named Fu'er and the younger one Shan'er.

After becoming the mother of two sons, Shan-shi often donated firewood and rice to the temple, without telling her husband about it, to support the old monk. Whenever he heard about this from other sources, Squire Jin would burst into a torrent of curses, and the couple would quarrel until both could not take it any more. This happened quite a few times, but, being a woman with a mind of her own, the wife kept to her own ways despite the quarrels.

When husband and wife were both fifty years of age, Fu'er was nine and Shan'er, having been born close on his brother's heels, was



生下来的，都已上学读书，十全之美。到生辰之日，金员外恐有亲朋来贺寿，预先躲出。〔眉批〕薄福小人。单氏又凑些私房银两，送与庵中打一坛斋醮。一来为老夫妇齐寿，二来为儿子长大，了还愿心。日前也曾与丈夫说过来，丈夫不肯，所以只得私房做事。其夜，和尚们要铺设长生佛灯，叫香火道人至金家，问金阿妈要几斗糙米。单氏偷开了仓门，将米三斗，付与道人去了。随后金员外回来，单氏还在仓门口封锁。被丈夫窥见了，又见地下狼藉些米粒，知是私房做事。欲要争嚷，心下想道：“今日生辰好日，况且东西去了，也讨不转来，干拌去了涎沫。”只推不知，忍住这口气。一夜不睡，左思右想道：“叵耐这贼秃常时来蒿恼我家，到是我看家的一个耗鬼。除非那秃驴死了，方绝其患。”恨无计策。

到天明时，老僧携着一个徒弟来回覆醮事。原来那和尚也怕见金冷水，且站在门外张望。金老早已瞧见，眉头一皱，计上心来。取了几文钱，从侧门走出市心，到山药铺里赎些砒霜。转到卖点心的王三郎店里，王三郎正蒸着一笼熟粉，摆一碗糖馅，要



eight. Both boys were in school, and all was well with the family. On the couple's birthday, Squire Jin left home and took refuge somewhere else so as to avoid having to entertain relatives and friends who might come to offer congratulations. (*A petty man who did not know that he should be counting his blessings.*) Again, Shan-shi put together some private savings and sent the money over to the temple for a prayer service, partly in celebration of the couple's birthday and partly as a votive offering for the boys' well-being. She had suggested this to her husband a couple of days before, but he had refused. So she had to do it on the sly.

That night, while preparing for the ceremony of lighting longevity lamps, the monks sent an acolyte to the Jin household to ask Madam Jin for a few *dou* of brown rice.⁷ Shan-shi opened the granary door quietly and gave the monk three *dou*. The monk left. She was in the very act of locking up the granary door when Squire Jin came home and saw her. Noticing also some grains of rice scattered about on the ground, he realized what she had been up to. He was about to cry out when he thought to himself, "Today is our birthday, a lucky day. Besides, what's gone is gone. Since I can't get it back anyway, I might as well not waste my breath." So, he pretended not to have seen anything and tried to swallow his anger.

Throughout the sleepless night, many and varied were the thoughts that passed through his mind. He said to himself, "The way that confounded baldhead keeps pestering my household, he will soon be eating me out of hearth and home! Only if that wretch dies will I be free of all troubles." He fretted and fretted, but no plan came to his mind.

After daybreak, the old monk brought along a disciple and came to the Jin residence for a reply concerning the ritual, but dreading the sight of Cold Water Jin, he stopped at the door and peered in. But Mr. Jin saw him. Knitting his eyebrows, Mr. Jin struck upon an idea. He took a few pennies, left the house by a side door, and went to an herbal medicine shop downtown, where he bought some arsenic. He then headed for a pastry shop owned by a certain Wang Sanlang.

While some dough made of powdered sweet rice was being



做饼子。金冷水袖里摸出八文钱撒在柜上道：“三郎收了钱，大些的饼子与我做四个，馅却不要下少了。你只捏着窝儿，等我自家下馅则个。”王三郎口虽不言，心下想道：“有名的金冷水，金剥皮，自从开这几年点心铺子，从不见他家半文之面。今日好利市，也撰他八个钱。他是好便宜的，便等他多下些馅去，扳他下次主顾。”王三郎向笼中取出雪团样的熟粉，真个捏做窝儿，递与金冷水说道：“员外请尊便。”金冷水却将砒霜末悄悄的撒在饼内，[眉批] 恶甚。然后加馅，做成饼子。如此一连做了四个，热烘烘的放在袖里，离了王三郎店，望自家门首踱将进来。那两个和尚，正在厅中吃茶，金老欣然相揖。揖罢，入内对浑家道：“两个师父侵早到来，恐怕肚里饥饿。适才邻舍家邀我吃点心，我见饼子热得好，袖了他四个来，何不就请了两个师父？”单氏深喜丈夫回心向善，取个朱红碟子，把四个饼子装做一碟，叫丫鬟托将出去。那和尚见了员外回家，不敢久坐，已无心吃饼了。见丫鬟送出来，知是阿妈美意，也不好虚得。将四个饼子装做一袖，叫声聒噪，出门回庵而去。金老暗暗欢喜，不在话下。



steamed on the stove, Wang Sanlang prepared a bowl of sugar filling for the rice cakes. Cold Water Jin took out eight pennies, tossed them on the counter, and said, "Take the money, Sanlang, and make four big cakes for me. Don't be sparing with the filling. Just knead the dough into cakes, and let me put in the filling myself."

Without saying a word out loud, Wang Sanlang thought, "This famous Cold Water Jin, Skinflint Jin, has never spent even half a penny in my shop since I started this business some years ago. What a stroke of good luck that I'm getting eight pennies from him today! Now this is a man who enjoys gaining petty advantages. Let him put in as much filling as he wants, so he'll come again next time." So thinking, he plucked out a piece of the snow-white dough from the steamer, kneaded it with his fingers into an open-topped pouch, and handed it to Cold Water Jin, saying, "Squire Jin, it's all yours!"

Unobserved, Cold Water Jin sprinkled some arsenic powder into the pouch (*What an evil thing to do!*), added some filling, and shaped the dough into a round flat cake. He made four altogether and slipped them, nice and hot, in his sleeves.

After leaving Wang Sanlang's store, he walked leisurely back home and found the two monks drinking tea in the hall. Cheerfully, he greeted them with a bow and then went to the inner quarters of the house. He said to his wife, "The two monks must be hungry, coming so early in the morning. A neighbor treated me to some refreshments just a moment ago. The cakes were so nice and hot that I came home with four of them in my sleeves. Why don't we serve them to the monks?" Greatly delighted by her husband's change of heart, Shan-shi took a vermilion plate, put the four cakes on it, and had a maid take it out.

At the sight of Squire Jin returning home, the monks thought it prudent not to stay on, let alone take refreshments, but, when the maid came out with the cakes, they felt obliged not to reject these tokens of Mrs. Jin's good wishes. So they put the four cakes in one sleeve and, with some polite words of thanks, took their leave and went back to their temple. Mr. Jin rejoiced in secret, but of him, more later.



却说金家两个学生，在社学中读书，放了学时，常到庵中顽耍。这一晚，又到庵中。老和尚想道：“金家两位小官人，时常到此，没有什么请得他。今早金阿妈送我四个饼子还不曾动，放在橱柜里。何不将来煨热了，请他吃一杯茶？”当下分付徒弟在橱柜里，取出四个饼子，厨房下煨得焦黄，热了两杯浓茶，摆在房里，请两位小官人吃茶。两个学生顽耍了半晌，正在肚饥。见了热腾腾的饼子，一人两个，都吃了。不吃时犹可，吃了呵，分明是：

一块火烧着心肝，万杆枪攒却腹肚！

两个一时齐叫肚疼。跟随的学童慌了，要扶他回去。奈两个疼做一堆，跑走不动。老和尚也着了忙，正不知什么意故。只得叫徒弟一人背了一个，学童随着，送回金员外家，二僧自去了。金家夫妇这一惊非小，慌忙叫学童问其缘故。学童道：“方才到福善庵吃了四个饼子，便叫肚疼起来。那老师父说，这饼子原是我家今早把与他吃的。他不舍得吃，将来恭敬两位小官人。”[眉批]天理昭然。金员外情知跷蹊了，只得将砒霜实情对阿妈说知。单氏心下越慌了，便把凉水灌他，如何灌得醒！须臾七窍流血，呜呼哀哉，做了一对殇鬼。

单氏千难万难，祈求下两个孩儿，却被丈夫不仁，自家毒死



Let us now turn to the Jin boys, who often went to play in the temple after class at the local school. That evening, they went to the temple again. The old monk thought, "I've never had any treat to offer the Jin boys when they've been here. The four cakes that Madam Jin gave me this morning are still in the cupboard, untouched. Why don't I heat them up and offer them to the boys, along with some tea?" Right away, he had his disciple take out the cakes from the cupboard, toasted them until they turned golden brown, and put them in the room with two cups of strong tea.

Having been playing for quite a while, the two boys were hungry. As soon as they saw the steaming hot cakes, they ate them up, two each. It would have been a different story if they had not eaten the cakes, but they did, and it was unmistakably a case of

A fire burning the heart and liver;

Ten thousand spears stabbing the stomach!

Immediately, the two boys started crying and complaining of stomachaches. The page boy who was with them panicked and tried to help them go back home, but the two boys collapsed in pain, unable to move a step. The old monk was also alarmed. Without knowing what had caused this, he could do no better than have two disciples carry the boys, one on each man's back, to Squire Jin's house, with the page boy trailing behind. Upon arrival at the Jin house, the two monks turned back.

Mr. and Mrs. Jin were horrified. They immediately asked the page boy what had happened. The page boy said, "Just a moment ago, as soon as they ate some cakes in Fushan Temple, they started complaining of stomachaches. The reverend said that he had gotten the cakes from my master this morning but had saved them for the two young masters." (*The will of heaven prevails.*)

Realizing that things had gone awry, Squire Jin could not do otherwise than tell his wife about the arsenic. Horror-struck, Shan-shi forced cold water down the boys' throats, hoping to revive them, but they were already too far gone. A moment later, blood flowed from all seven apertures in their heads.

Alas! How young they died! Goodness knows how much



了。待要厮骂一场，也是枉然。气又忍不过，苦又熬不过。走进内房，解下束腰罗帕，悬梁自缢。金员外哭了儿子一场，方才收泪。到房中与阿妈商议说话，见梁上这件打秋千的东西，唬得半死。登时就得病上床，不勾七日，也死了。金氏族家，平昔恨那金冷水、金剥皮慳吝，此时天赐其便，大大小小，都蜂拥而来，将家私抢个罄尽。此乃万贯家财，有名的金员外一个终身结果，不好善而行恶之报也。有诗为证：

饼内砒霜那得知？害人番害自家儿。

举心动念天知道，果报昭彰岂有私！

方才说金员外只为行恶上，拆散了一家骨肉。如今再说一个人，单为行善上，周全了一家骨肉。正是：

善恶相形，祸福自见；戒人作恶，劝人为善。

话说江南常州府无锡县东门外，有个小户人家，兄弟三人。大的叫做吕玉，第二的叫做吕宝，第三的叫做吕珍。吕玉娶妻王氏，吕宝娶妻杨氏，俱有姿色。吕珍年幼未娶。王氏生下一个孩子，小名喜儿，方才六岁，跟邻舍家儿童出去看神会，夜晚不回。



trouble Shan-shi had gone through before these two boys were born in answer to her prayers! And now, they had been poisoned through her own husband's evil act. Giving him a tongue-lashing would not serve any purpose. Overcome with rage and despair, she walked into her private chamber, took off her waistband, and hanged herself.

After a fit of weeping over the death of the boys, Squire Jin went into the chamber to talk with his wife and was frightened out of his wits at the sight of her body swinging from a beam. Instantly, he took ill, was confined to his bed, and died before seven days had gone by. His kinsmen, who had always resented the miserly ways of Cold Water, Skinflint Jin, jumped at this heaven-sent opportunity and swarmed, old and young, to his house and looted it clean. This was how the fabulously rich Squire Jin ended his life, a victim of his own malice. There is a poem in testimony:

*Who would have guessed that cakes contained poison?
 Poison meant for others killed his own sons.
 All actions and thoughts are known to heaven;
 Divine justice never misses the mark.*

The above story is about how a certain Squire Jin destroyed his family through an evil deed. Now I propose to tell of a man who saved his family through acts of kindness. Truly,

*With the good and the evil side by side,
 You see which side is blessed and which is doomed.
 This is a warning against evil acts,
 And a word of advice to do good deeds.*

As the story goes, outside of the East Gate of Wuxi County, in Changzhou Prefecture, south of the Yangzi River, there lived a family of three brothers of modest means. The oldest brother was named Lü Yu, the second one Lü Bao, and the third one Lü Zhen. Lü Yu and Lü Bao each took a wife. The two wives, Wang-shi and Yang-shi, were both pretty. Lü Zhen, being still young, remained a bachelor.

Wang-shi gave birth to a son, whom they called Xi'er. One day, when the boy was six years old, he followed some neighbors' children to watch a religious procession. That night, he did not come



夫妻两个烦恼，出了一张招子，街坊上叫了数日，全无影响。吕玉气闷，在家里坐不过，向大户家借了几两本钱，往太仓嘉定一路，收些绵花布匹，各处贩卖，就便访问儿子消息。每年正二月出门，到八九月回家，又收新货。走了四个年头，虽然趁些利息，眼见得儿子没有寻处了。日久心慢，也不在话下。到第五个年头，吕玉别了王氏，又去做经纪。何期中途遇了个大本钱的布商，谈论之间，知道吕玉买卖中通透，拉他同往山西脱货，就带绒货转来发卖，于中有些用钱相谢。吕玉贪了蝇头微利，随着去了。及至到了山西，发货之后，遇着连岁荒歉，讨赊帐不起，不得脱身。吕玉少年久旷，也不免行户中走了一两遍，走出一身风流疮，服药调治，无面回家。捱到三年，疮才痊愈，讨清了帐目。那布商因为稽迟了吕玉的归期，加倍酬谢。吕玉得了些利物，等不得布商收货完备，自己贩了些粗细绒褐，相别先回。

一日早晨，行至陈留地方，偶然去坑厕出恭，见坑板上遗下个青布搭膊。检在手中，觉得沉重。取回下处打开看时，都是白



home. In distress, the parents posted a notice in a public place and searched the neighborhood for several days, calling out his name, but to no avail. Rather than sit gloomily at home, Lü Yu approached a rich man from whom he borrowed a few taels of silver as capital and set off for the Taichang and Jiading region, where he traded in cotton and fabric and inquired about his son as he traveled. Every year, he left in the first or second month and returned in the eighth or ninth month for replenishment of his stocks. After four years as a traveling merchant, he amassed some wealth, but his son was still nowhere to be found. With the passing of time, his hopes began to fade, but of this, for the time being, no more.

In the fifth year, Lü Yu again took leave of Wang-shi and set out on a business journey. Quite accidentally, he met in his travels a wealthy merchant who dealt in fabric. In the course of their conversation, the latter came to appreciate Lü Yu's business acumen and asked Lü Yu to go to Shanxi with him to dispose of their goods and bring back cotton flannel for sale. He promised to pay Lü Yu a commission as a token of his gratitude. Attracted by the prospect of some profit the size of a fly's head, Lü Yu accepted the offer and followed the man to Shanxi. There, they disposed of the goods but were unable to leave because the local buyers, who had been hit by crop failures for several years in succession, were too poor to pay.

Having been celibate for quite some time, Lü Yu, who was still a young man, couldn't stop himself from visiting houses of ill repute once or twice, and these visits gave him boils all over his body. He took medicine for this condition but felt too ashamed to return home. It was not until three long years had gone by that his skin healed and all the debts were collected. The fabric merchant paid him double to compensate for the delay in his departure. Lü Yu chose not to wait for the fabric merchant to wind up his business, but used the funds to do his own trading in different kinds of fabric of varying quality. He then took leave of the merchant and headed home.

One morning, he found himself in the Chenliu region, and he went to a latrine to relieve himself. There, he saw a blue cotton shoulder bag left on the frame of the latrine pit. He picked it up and



物，约有二百金之数。吕玉想道：“这不意之财，虽则取之无碍，倘或失主追寻不见，好大一场气闷。古人见金不取，拾带重还。我今年过三旬，尚无子嗣，要这横财何用？”忙到坑厕左近伺候，只等有人来抓寻，就将原物还他。等了一日，不见人来。次日只得起身。又行三五百馀里，到南宿州地方。其日天晚，下一个客店，遇着一个同下的客人，闲论起江湖生意之事。那客人说起自不小心，五日前侵晨到陈留县解下搭膊登东，偶然官府在街上过，心慌起身，却忘记了那搭膊，里面有二百两银子。直到夜里脱衣要睡，方才省得。想着过了一日，自然有人拾去了，转去寻觅，也是无益，只得自认悔气罢了。[眉批]此商亦是达者。吕玉便问：“老客尊姓？高居何处？”客人道：“在下姓陈，祖贯徽州。今在扬州闸上开个粮食铺子。敢问老兄高姓？”吕玉道：“小弟姓吕，是常州无锡县人，扬州也是顺路。相送尊兄到彼奉拜。”客人也不知详细，答应道：“若肯下顾最好。”次早，二人作伴同行。



found it quite heavy. When he brought it to his lodgings and opened it, what did he find but about two hundred taels of silver!

Lü Yu thought, "Even though there's nothing wrong if I keep this windfall for myself, the owner will be very upset if he can't find it. In ancient times, there were men who didn't pick up gold from the ground, and a man who returned the jade belts he had found to their owner.⁸ I'm more than thirty years old and still without an heir. What use do I have for all this silver that belongs to someone else?"

So thinking, he hastened back to the latrine and stood there, waiting for the rightful owner to show up so that he could return the silver. He waited for a whole day without anyone coming to look for the money. The next day, he resignedly continued on his journey.

Three or five hundred *li* farther on, he entered the Nansuzhou region. That night, in his lodgings, he struck up an idle conversation about business matters with a fellow lodger, who spoke of his own carelessness.

This is what had happened: five days earlier, upon arriving in Chenliu County at dawn, that man took off his shoulder bag and relieved himself in a latrine. At the noise of an official's entourage passing by in the street, he gave a start and got up, forgetting all about the shoulder bag, which contained two hundred taels of silver, until he undressed to go to bed at night. Because a whole day had gone by, he'd been sure that someone must have picked up the bag and walked away with it, so it would have served no purpose to turn back and look for it. There was no choice but to accept his bad luck. (*This is a merchant who takes things philosophically.*)

"What is your honorable name?" asked Lü Yu. "Where do you live?"

"My surname is Chen. I am a native of Huizhou. I run a grain shop by the Yangzhou floodgate. May I ask your honorable name?"

"My surname is Lü. I'm a native of Wuxi County in Changzhou Prefecture. I'll be passing by Yangzhou on my way home. May I accompany you back and visit your home?"

Mr. Chen had no idea why Lü Yu had offered to do that, but he agreed, saying, "I would like nothing better than for you to visit my



不一日，来到扬州闸口。吕玉也到陈家铺子，登堂作揖，陈朝奉看坐献茶。吕玉先提起陈留县失银子之事，盘问他搭膊模样，是个深蓝青布的，一头有白线缉一个陈字。吕玉心下晓然，便道：“小弟前在陈留拾得一个搭膊，到也相像，把来与尊兄认看。”陈朝奉见了搭膊，道：“正是。”搭膊里面银两，原封不动。吕玉双手递还陈朝奉。陈朝奉过意不去，要与吕玉均分，吕玉不肯。陈朝奉道：“便不均分，也受我几两谢礼，等在下心安。”吕玉那里肯受。陈朝奉感激不尽，慌忙摆饭相款，思想：“难得吕玉这般好人，还金之恩，无门可报。自家有十二岁一个女儿，要与吕君扳一脉亲往来，第不知他有儿子否？”饮酒中间，陈朝奉问道：“恩兄，令郎几岁了？”吕玉不觉掉下泪来，答道：“小弟只有一儿，七年前为看神会，失去了，至今并无下落。荆妻亦别无生育。如今回去，意欲寻个螟蛉之子，出去帮扶生理，只是难得这般凑巧的。”陈朝奉道：“舍下数年之间，将三两银子，买得一个小



humble home. ”

The next morning, they set out together on their journey. A couple of days later, they arrived at the floodgate of Yangzhou. Lü Yu followed Mr. Chen to his shop and went into the main hall, where they exchanged formal greetings. After Mr. Chen offered him a seat and served him tea, Lü Yu brought up the subject of his host's loss of silver in Chenliu County and asked what the shoulder bag looked like. Mr. Chen replied, “It's a dark blue bag, with the character *chen* embroidered in white thread at one end. ”

Knowing that this was the bag he had found, Lü Yu said, “I picked up a shoulder bag in Chenliu, one that quite fits your description. Let me show it to you. Tell me if it's yours. ”

At the sight of the bag, Mr. Chen said, “Yes, that's the one.”

With both hands, Lü Yu respectfully returned the bag to Mr. Chen with the silver therein intact. Mr. Chen could not bring himself to accept it and offered to share the silver with Lü, fifty-fifty. Lü Yu declined.

Mr. Chen said, “If not fifty-fifty, you must at least accept a few taels as a token of my gratitude, if only to make me feel better. ”

Lü Yu adamantly refused.

His heart overflowing with gratitude, Mr. Chen hastened to make arrangements for a dinner in Lü Yu's honor. He thought, “A good man like Lü is hard to come by. What can I do to repay him for giving me back the money? I can arrange to have my twelve-year old daughter engaged to his son, if he has one. ”

In the course of their drinking, Mr. Chen asked, “How old is your son, my brother?”

Lü Yu answered, tears coursing down his cheeks in spite of himself, “I have only one son, who left home one day seven years ago to watch a religious procession. He never came back. Nothing has been heard of him since. My wife has borne no other child. After I go back this time, I'll search for a boy to adopt so that he can help me in my business travels. But it's hard to find the right one. ”

“Some years ago,” said Mr. Chen, “I bought a page boy for three taels of silver from a man who came from the lower reaches of



厮，貌颇清秀，又且乖巧，也是下路人带来的。如今一十三岁了，伴着小儿在学堂中上学。恩兄若看得中意时，就送与恩兄伏侍，也当我一点薄敬。”吕玉道：“若肯相借，当奉还身价。”陈朝奉道：“说那里话来！只恐恩兄不用时，小弟无以为情。”当下便教掌店的，去学堂中唤喜儿到来。吕玉听得名字与他儿子相同，心中疑惑。须臾，小厮唤到，穿一领芜湖青布的道袍，生得果然清秀。习惯了学堂中规矩，见了吕玉，朝上深深唱个喏。吕玉心下便觉得欢喜，仔细认出儿子面貌来，四岁时，因跌损左边眉角，结一个小疤儿。有这点可认，吕玉便问道：“几时到陈家的？”那小厮想一想道：“有六七年了。”又问他：“你原是那里人？谁卖你在此？”那小厮道：“不十分详细。只记得爹叫做吕大，还有两个叔叔在家。娘姓王，家在无锡城外。小时被人骗出，卖在此间。”吕玉听罢，便抱那小厮在怀，叫声：“亲儿！我正是无锡吕大！是你的亲爹了。失了你七年，何期在此相遇！”正是：

水底捞针针已得，掌中失宝宝重逢。

筵前相抱殷勤认，犹恐今朝是梦中。

小厮眼中流下泪来。吕玉伤感，自不必说。吕玉起身拜谢陈



the Yangzi River. He's a fresh-faced boy, and well-behaved, too. Thirteen years old now, he serves my son as a companion in school. If you find him to your liking, I'll give him to you. That will be my humble way of repaying you for your kindness."

"If you would be willing to lend him to me, I'll surely pay you the full price. "

"What kind of talk is this?" said Mr. Chen. "My only fear is that you may not want him. In that case, I'll have nothing to give you in return for your kindness. "

Without a moment's delay, he told a shop clerk to go to the school and bring back Xi'er. Hearing that name, which was the same as that of his own son, Lü Yu grew apprehensive.

Soon, the page boy arrived. In a robe of Wuhu blue cotton, he was indeed a fresh-faced boy. Accustomed to school discipline, he respectfully raised his folded hands and bowed deeply in greeting. Much taken with the boy, Lü Yu looked him intently and recognized him to be none other than his son, for the boy still had the small scar by his left eyebrow caused by a fall when he was four years old.

"When did you come to the Chen family?"

"About six or seven years ago," replied the boy after a moment of reflection.

"Where are you from originally? Who sold you here?"

"I don't quite know. I remember only that my father is called Lü the Big Brother. There were also two uncles who lived with us. My mother, named Wang, is from outside the city of Wuxi. I was abducted when I was small and sold here. "

Upon hearing this, Lü Yu took the boy in his arms and cried, "My very own son! I am none other than Lü the Big Brother of Wuxi, your father! Having lost you seven years ago, I never dreamed of meeting you in this place!" Truly,

*The much sought needle rose from the riverbed;
The treasure that had slipped from the palm reappeared.
At the feast, they embraced in recognition,
Though afraid that it was all but a dream.*

Tears streamed down the boy's cheeks, and we need hardly say



朝奉：“小儿若非府上收留，今日安得父子重会？”陈朝奉道：“恩兄有还金之盛德，天遣尊驾到寒舍，父子团圆。小弟一向不知是令郎，甚愧疚慢。”吕玉又叫喜儿拜谢了陈朝奉。陈朝奉定要还拜，吕玉不肯，再三扶住，受了两礼。便请喜儿坐于吕玉之傍。陈朝奉开言：“承恩兄相爱，学生有一女年方十二岁，欲与令郎结丝萝之好。”[眉批]更见陈朝奉非俗品。吕玉见他情意真恳，谦让不得，只得依允。是夜父子同榻而宿，说了一夜的话。次日，吕玉辞别要行。陈朝奉留住，另设个大席面，管待新亲家、新女婿，就当送行。酒行数巡，陈朝奉取出白金二十两，向吕玉说道：“贤婿一向在舍有慢，今奉些须薄礼相贖，权表亲情，万勿固辞。”吕玉道：“过承高门俯就，舍下就该行聘定之礼。因在客途，不好苟且，如何反费亲家厚赐？决不敢当！”陈朝奉道：“这是学生自送与贤婿的，不干亲翁之事。亲翁若见却，就是不允这头亲事



that Lü Yu was overcome with emotion. He rose and bowed in gratitude to Mr. Chen, saying, "If you hadn't taken my little son into your care, how would it have been possible for this father and son to meet?"

"My brother," said Mr. Chen, "it was your noble act of returning the silver you had found that made heaven guide you to this humble house of mine for a reunion with your son. I'm sorry for having been neglectful of your son, but I didn't know who he is."

Lü Yu had the boy bow thankfully on his knees to Mr. Chen, who insisted on returning the bow over Lü Yu's objections, and it was only with much effort that Lü Yu stopped him from getting down on his knees and accepted two salutes from him instead.

Having asked Xi'er to sit by Lü Yu's side, Mr. Chen said, "I feel honored that you, my brother, have been so kind to me. I have a twelve-year-old daughter. I'd like her to form a binding relationship with your son." (*A further indication that Mr. Chen is not a vulgar sort.*)

Impressed by Mr. Chen's sincerity, Lü Yu, rather than mouthing words of demurral, felt obliged to give his consent. That night, the father and son shared the same bed and talked the whole night through.

The next day, when Lü Yu went to bid his host farewell, the latter kept him for a grand feast in honor of the departing new son-in-law and his father. After a few rounds of wine, Mr. Chen took out twenty taels of silver and said, "Because my good son-in-law did not receive the treatment he deserved in this house, I now offer you a small gift to mark the occasion of his redemption. Please take it as an expression of my feelings as a family member. You must not turn me down."

"Being much honored by a marriage tie with your family," said Lü Yu, "I should have offered betrothal gifts, but I can't very well do this while I'm on the road. How could I possibly receive generous gifts from you instead? I can't accept this!"

"This is a gift from me to my good son-in-law. It has nothing to do with you. If you object, I'll take it to mean that you wish to



了。”吕玉没得说，只得受了，叫儿子出席拜谢。陈朝奉扶起道：“些微薄礼，何谢之有。”喜儿又进去谢了丈母。当日开怀畅饮，至晚而散。吕玉想道：“我因这还金之便，父子相逢，诚乃天意。又攀了这头好亲事，似锦上添花。无处报答天地，有陈亲家送这二十两银子，也是不意之财，何不择个洁净僧院，采米斋僧，以种福田？”主意定了。

次早，陈朝奉又备早饭。吕玉父子吃罢，收拾行囊，作谢而别，唤了一只小船，摇出闸外。约有数里，只听得江边鼎沸。原来坏了一只人载船，落水的号呼求救。崖上人招呼小船打捞，小船索要赏犒，在那里争嚷。吕玉想道：“救人一命，胜造七级浮屠。比如我要去斋僧，何不舍这二十两银子做赏钱，教他捞救，见在功德。”当下对众人说：“我出赏钱，快捞救。若救起一船人性命，把二十两银子与你们。”众人听得有二十两银子赏钱，小船



decline the betrothal. ”

Words failing him, Lü Yu had to accept the gift. At his order, his son left the table and bowed deeply in gratitude to Mr. Chen, but Mr. Chen raised the boy up and said, “Why thank me for such a modest gift?”

Xi'er then went to the inner quarters of the house to thank his mother-in-law. That day, they drank to their hearts' content and did not leave the feast table until evening set in. Lü Yu thought, “It is by heaven's will that I got to meet my son in the midst of a mission to return some silver I had found. And now, this betrothal is like adding flowers to a piece of brocade that is already gorgeous enough. What can I do to show gratitude to heaven and earth? Since this gift of twenty taels of silver from Mr. Chen is something I never expected would come my way, why don't I pick a nice monastery, use the silver to buy some rice, and sponsor a vegetarian dinner for the monks? That would be an act of kindness that will gain me credit, like sowing in the fields of blessings. ” And so, his mind was made up.

The next morning, Mr. Chen again laid out breakfast, and afterward, Lü Yu and his son packed up their luggage and gratefully took leave of Mr. Chen. Several *li* after their small hired boat had rowed its way out of the floodgate, there came to their ears an excited hubbub of voices from the riverbank. As it turned out, a boat was sinking, and the passengers who had fallen into the river were crying for help. Those on the shore were calling out to some small boats, asking the boatmen to go to the rescue, but the boatmen were busy clamoring for a reward.

Lü Yu thought, “To save a human life is better than to build a seven-layered stupa. Rather than sponsoring a dinner for the monks, why not use the twenty taels of silver as a reward for the rescue effort? That will be a good deed here and now!” Without a moment's delay, he said to all those present at the scene, “I'm offering a reward. Go to the rescue, quick! Those who manage to save the lives of the drowning passengers will get twenty taels of silver. ”

Hearing that a reward of twenty taels of silver was being offered, the small boats swarmed over like so many ants. Even a few of the



如蚁而来。连崖上人，也有几个会水性的，赴水去救。须臾之间，把一船人都救起。吕玉将银子付与众人分散。水中得命的，都千恩万谢。只见内中一人，看了吕玉叫道：“哥哥那里来？”吕玉看他，不是别人，正是第三个亲弟吕珍。吕玉合掌道：“惭愧，惭愧！天遣我捞救兄弟一命。”忙扶上船，将干衣服与他换了。吕珍纳头便拜，吕玉答礼，就叫侄儿见了叔叔。把还金遇子之事，述了一遍，吕珍惊讶不已。吕玉问道：“你却为何到此？”吕珍道：“一言难尽。自从哥哥出门之后，一去三年。有人传说哥哥在山西害了疮毒身故。二哥察访得实，嫂嫂已是成服戴孝，兄弟只是不信。二哥近日又要逼嫂嫂嫁人，嫂嫂不从。因此教兄弟亲到山西访问哥哥消息，不期于此相会。又遭覆溺，得哥哥捞救，天与之幸！哥哥不可怠缓，急急回家，以安嫂嫂之心。迟则怕有变了。”吕玉闻说惊慌，急叫家长开船，星夜赶路。正是：

心忙似箭惟嫌缓，船走如梭尚道迟！

再说王氏闻丈夫凶信，初时也疑惑。被吕宝说得活龙活现，也信了，少不得换了些素服。吕宝心怀不善，想着哥哥已故，嫂



people on the shore who knew how to swim also jumped into the water for the rescue effort. In no time, everyone who had been on that boat was brought to the shore alive, whereupon Lü Yu dispersed the silver among the crowd. While those who had been saved were offering profuse thanks, one man among them, looking at Lü Yu, cried, "Older brother, where did you come from?"

Lü Yu looked in the man's direction and found him to be none other than his youngest brother Lü Zhen. Joining his palms together, Lü Yu said, "What a stroke of luck! Heaven made me save my brother's life."

He made haste to help his brother onto his own boat and gave him a dry change of clothes. Lü Zhen bowed deeply, a salutation Lü Yu returned before he summoned his son to greet his uncle. When Lü Yu recounted how he had returned the silver and met his son, Lü Zhen was all amazement.

"But why are you here?" asked Lü Yu.

"It's a long story. Three years after you left, rumors got around, saying that you had died of some poisonous boils in Shanxi. Second Brother investigated and confirmed the rumors. Sister-in-law put on mourning clothes, but I never believed that you had died. Recently, Second Brother began to pressure Sister-in-law to remarry, but she refuses to obey, and so I've been instructed to go to Shanxi in person to find out what had really happened to you. I never expected to run into you here. And then I almost drowned. It's by the grace of heaven that you saved my life! You don't have a moment to lose. Go home quickly to put Sister-in-law's mind at ease before something happens."

Alarmed upon hearing these words, Lü Yu hurriedly bade the boatmen to continue on their way, and pressed on posthaste, like an arrow, day and night. Truly,

Quick as an arrow, he still chafes at the pace;

Fast as a shuttle, he still grieves at the speed.

Let us retrace our steps and go back to Wang-shi when she first heard about her husband's death. She, too, was quite skeptical, but Lü Bao's eloquence convinced her, and as was the usual practice in such cases, she changed into white mourning clothes.



嫂又无所出，况且年纪后生，要劝他改嫁，自己得些财礼。教浑家杨氏与阿姆说，王氏坚意不从。又得吕珍朝夕谏阻，所以其计不成。王氏想道：“‘千闻不如一见。’虽说丈夫已死，在几千里之外，不知端的。”央小叔吕珍是必亲到山西，问个备细。如果然不幸，骨殖也带一块回来。吕珍去后，吕宝愈无忌惮，又连日赌钱输了，没处设法，偶有江西客人丧偶，要讨一个娘子，吕宝就将嫂嫂与他说合。那客人也访得吕大的浑家有几分颜色，情愿出三十两银子。吕宝得了银子，向客人道：“家嫂有些妆乔，好好里请他出门，定然不肯。今夜黄昏时分，唤了人轿，悄地到我家来。只看戴孝髻的，便是家嫂，更不须言语，扶他上轿，连夜开船去便了。”客人依计而行。

却说吕宝回家，恐怕嫂嫂不从，在他眼前不露一字，却私下对浑家做个手势道：“那两脚货，今夜要出脱与江西客人去了。我生怕他哭哭啼啼，先躲出去。黄昏时候，你劝他上轿，日里且莫对他说。”吕宝自去了，却不曾说明孝髻的事。[眉批]天使其然。



Lü Bao, in fact, was harboring an evil plan. He reasoned that, with his older brother dead and gone, leaving behind a young childless widow, he could very well make a profit by talking her into remarriage and keeping the betrothal gifts for himself. He made his wife Yang-shi do the talking, but Wang-shi turned a deaf ear. In addition, with Lü Zhen also in the way, remonstrating against him day and night, his plan did not go through.

Wang-shi thought, "As the saying goes, 'It's better to see once than hear a thousand times.' Though my husband is said to have died, I don't know that for a fact because of the thousands of *li* that separate us." So thinking, she pleaded with her husband's younger brother Lü Zhen, saying, "It looks like you'll have to go personally to Shanxi and find out everything about this. If he has indeed died, which would be too unfortunate, please at least bring back a bone."

After Lü Zhen left, Lü Bao became more reckless in his ways. For several days in a row, he lost at gambling and could not come up with the money for repayment.

It so happened that a traveler from Jiangxi, recently widowed, was looking for a new wife. Lü Bao offered him his sister-in-law. The traveler, having learned that Lü the Big Brother's widow was a woman of some attractiveness, gladly offered thirty taels of silver. After the silver changed hands, Lü Bao said to the traveler, "My sister-in-law is a demure sort. She'll refuse to come out of the door the proper way. You'll have to bring a sedan-chair quietly to my house this evening after it gets dark. The one wearing mourning white on her bun hairpiece will be my sister-in-law. You don't have to say anything. Just get her into the sedan-chair and set off in your boat under cover of night." The traveler agreed to do what he had been told.

After returning home, Lü Bao, afraid of his sister-in-law's objections, did not even breathe a word of his plans to her, but privately, he said to his wife with a meaningful gesture, "I've dumped that two-legged thing on a traveler from Jiangxi. I'm afraid that she'll make a scene, so I'll go hide somewhere. After it gets dark, urge her to get into the sedan-chair but don't tell her anything about this during the day." Without bringing up the subject of the bun hairpiece, Lü Bao



原来杨氏与王氏妯娌最睦，心中不忍，一时丈夫做主，没奈他何。欲言不言，直挨到酉牌时分，只得与王氏透个消息：“我丈夫已将姆姆嫁与江西客人，少停，客人就来取亲，教我莫说。我与姆姆情厚，不好瞒得。你房中有甚细软家私，须先收拾，打个包裹，省得一时忙乱。”王氏啼哭起来，叫天叫地起来。杨氏道：“不是奴苦劝姆姆。后生家孤孀，终久不了。吊桶已落在井里，也是一缘一会，哭也没用！”王氏道：“婶婶说那里话！我丈夫虽说已死，不曾亲见。且待三叔回来，定有个真信。如今逼得我好苦！”说罢又哭。杨氏左劝右劝，王氏住了哭说道：“婶婶，既要我嫁人，罢了，怎好戴孝髻出门？婶婶寻一顶黑髻与奴换了。”杨氏又要忠丈夫之托，又要姆姆面上讨好，连忙去寻黑髻来换。也是天数当然，旧髻儿也寻不出一顶。王氏道：“婶婶，你是在家的，暂时换你头上的髻儿与我。明早你教叔叔铺里取一顶来换了就是。”杨氏道：“使得。”便除下髻来递与姆姆。王氏将自己孝髻



turned and went away. (*This is all dictated by the will of heaven.*)

As a matter of fact, Yang-shi was on the best of terms with her sister-in-law Wang-shi. Her husband's words pained her heart, but as he had already made the decision, there was nothing she could do. She debated with herself the whole afternoon about whether or not to tell. Finally, toward evening, she said quietly to Wang-shi, "My husband has married you off to a traveler from Jiangxi. In a moment, the man will be coming to get you. My husband told me not to say anything, but the two of us are such good friends that I just can't keep you in the dark. You can go ahead and pack up any valuables you have in your room, so you won't be caught unprepared when the man comes."

Wang-shi burst into sobs and cried loudly to heaven and earth.

"It's not that I'm trying to talk you into anything," said Yang-shi, "but a young woman like you won't be able to maintain widowhood for very long. Now the water bucket has already been let down into the well, and that's the way it should be. Crying doesn't get you anywhere!"

"What kind of talk is this, Sister-in-law? Though my husband is said to be dead, I haven't seen any evidence to prove his death. I'm still waiting for Third Brother to come back with some definite news. And now you have to come after me like this!" With that, she broke into another fit of sobbing.

After much effort to calm her down on Yang-shi's part, Wang-shi stopped crying and said, "Sister-in-law, if I have to remarry, well, that would be that. But how can I go wearing a bun of mourning? Please find a black one and exchange it with mine."

Wishing to obey her husband's instructions and be nice to her sister-in-law at the same time, Yang-shi hastened to look for a black hairpiece, but, as dictated by the will of heaven, there was none to be found, not even a used one. Wang-shi said, "Sister-in-law, you'll be staying at home anyway. Why don't you give me your bun for now? Tomorrow morning, you can have your husband buy you another one."

"Right," said Yang-shi, whereupon she took off her bun hairpiece



除下，换与杨氏戴了。王氏又换了一身色服。黄昏过后，江西客人引着灯笼火把，抬着一顶花花轿，吹手虽有一副，不敢吹打。如风似雨，飞奔吕家来。吕宝已自与了他暗号，众人推开大门，只认戴孝髻的就抢。杨氏嚷道：“不是！”众人那里管三七二十一，抢上轿时，鼓手吹打，轿夫飞也似抬去了。

一派笙歌上客船，错疑孝髻是姻缘。

新人若向新郎诉，只怨亲夫不怨天。

王氏暗暗叫谢天谢地。关了大门，自去安歇。次日天明，吕宝意气扬扬，敲门进来。看见是嫂嫂开门，吃了一惊，房中不见了浑家。见嫂子头上戴的是黑髻，心中大疑，问道：“嫂嫂，你婶子那里去了？”王氏暗暗好笑，答道：“昨夜被江西蛮子抢去了。”吕宝道：“那有这话！且问嫂嫂如何不戴孝髻？”王氏将换髻的缘故，述了一遍，吕宝捶胸只是叫苦。指望卖嫂子，谁知到卖了老婆！江西客人已是开船去了。三十两银子，昨晚一夜就赌输了一大半，再要娶这房媳妇子，今生休想。复又思量，一不做，



and handed it to Wang-shi, who removed her bun of mourning and gave it to Yang-shi. Yang-shi put on her sister-in-law's bun, and Wang-shi then changed into colored clothes.

After evening set in, the traveler from Jiangxi came rushing to the Lü house with the speed of a wind-driven rainstorm, leading a team of men carrying lanterns and torches and a much decorated sedan-chair. They brought along a set of wind and percussion instruments but discreetly held back from striking up the music. Following the secret instructions that Lü Bao had given them, they pushed open the gate and went for the woman with a bun hairpiece in mourning white. Yang-shi screamed, "I'm not the one you want!" but the men could not have cared less. They pushed her into the sedan-chair, and in the midst of music, the sedan-chair carriers raced off.

*She was hustled off midst wedding music;
 The wrong hairpiece led to a marriage.
 To the groom, the bride poured out her sorrows;
 She blamed her husband rather than heaven.*

Privately, Wang-shi gave thanks to heaven and earth. She closed the gate and retired to her room.

At daybreak, a high-spirited Lü Bao came back and knocked at the gate. He gave a start upon seeing his sister-in-law open the gate. Failing to find his wife in their room and noticing the black hairpiece his sister-in-law was wearing, he grew apprehensive. "Sister-in-law," he asked, "where is my wife?"

Inwardly amused, Wang-shi replied, "Last night, some hooligans from Jiangxi took her away by force."

"What nonsense is this? And why are you not wearing your bun of mourning?"

As Wang-shi explained about the exchange of hairpieces, Lü Bao smote his chest and cried out in anguish. How was he to know that his plan to sell his sister-in-law would backfire and end up in the selling of his own wife? The traveler from Jiangxi had already left in his boat, and the bulk of the thirty taels of silver had been lost in gambling the previous night. To get himself another wife in this lifetime was an impossible dream. Then he thought again, "I might as



二不休，有心是这等，再寻个主顾把嫂子卖了，还有讨老婆的本钱。[眉批]关目甚紧。方欲出门，只见门外四五个人，一拥进来，不是别人，却是哥哥吕玉，兄弟吕珍，侄子喜儿，与两个脚家，驮了行李货物进门。吕宝自觉无颜，后门逃出，不知去向。王氏接了丈夫，又见儿子长大回家，问其缘故。吕玉从头至尾，叙了一遍，王氏也把江西人抢去婶婶，吕宝无颜，后门走了一段情节叙出。吕玉道：“我若贪了这二百两非意之财，怎勾父子相见？若惜了那二十两银子，不去捞救覆舟之人，怎能勾兄弟相逢？若不遇兄弟时，怎知家中信息？今日夫妻重会，一家骨肉团圆，皆天使之然也。逆弟卖妻，也是自作自受。皇天报应，的然不爽！”自此益修善行，家道日隆。后来喜儿与陈员外之女做亲，子孙繁衍，多有出仕贵显者。诗云：

本意还金兼得子，立心卖嫂反输妻。

世间惟有天工巧，善恶分明不可欺。



well finish what I've already started. Let me keep my eyes open and find another patron to whom I can sell Sister-in-law, so I'll have enough money to get another wife." (*How tightly-knit the plot of this story!*) He was on the point of going out the gate when a group of five people rushed in. They were none other than his older brother Lü Yu, his younger brother Lü Zhen, his nephew Xi'er, and two porters carrying their luggage. Feeling too ashamed to show his face, Lü Bao slunk out the back gate and fled no one knew whither.

Wang-shi greeted her husband, and seeing her son, now quite grown up, she asked what had happened. Thereupon, Lü Yu gave a full account from beginning to end. Wang-shi also related how a man from Jiangxi had kidnapped her sister-in-law and how Lü Bao, too ashamed to show his face, had slunk out the back gate.

Lü Yu said, "Had I greedily kept those two hundred taels of silver that I had never even expected to have, how would I have been reunited with my son? Had I begrudged those twenty taels of silver and held back from rescuing some drowning people, how would I have been reunited with my brother? Had I not met my brother, how was I to know what was happening at home? It's by the will of heaven that I'm reunited with my wife and the rest of the family. As for that treacherous brother of mine who sold his wife, he brought all this upon himself. How true it is that divine retribution never misses the mark!"

Henceforth, he devoted himself to more works of charity. His family circumstances grew more and more prosperous. Later, Xi'er married Squire Chen's daughter, and the family line thrived. Many of their descendants attained high rank and fame. As the poem says,

*He who returned silver got back his son;
He who tried to sell his in-law lost his own wife.
Nothing in this world works like divine will,
Which never fails to tell good from evil.*

¹ According to "The Biography of Mao Bao" in *The History of the Jin Dynasty*, Mao Bao, prefect of Yuzhou, had under his command a soldier who bought a white turtle, raised it, and then put it back into the river. Later, when the army to which that soldier belonged was



吕大朗送金完骨肉



defeated in a battle, the soldier threw himself into the river, only to be saved and carried to shore by the very turtle he had raised. The reference here is based on a later version of the story, *Taiping yulan*, a reference book published in 983 during the Song dynasty, in which Mao Bao himself saves the turtle and consequently receives a major promotion in his career.

² It is said that during the Song dynasty, a certain Song Jiao made a small bridge out of pieces of bamboo after a rainstorm and thus saved the many ants in the puddle in front of his house. Because of this act of kindness, he later won first honors as a *zhuangyuan* in the imperial civil service examinations.

³ Deng Tong of the Western Han dynasty was an immensely rich man who was granted permission by Emperor Wen (r. 179–157 B.C.) to mint copper coins for the use of his own family. He later lost favor with the new emperor and died of hunger in prison. For more on Deng Tong, see story 9 in Feng Menglong, *Stories Old and New: a Ming Dynasty Collection*, trans. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang (Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House, 2007).

⁴ Guo Kuang of the Eastern Han dynasty, brother-in-law of Emperor Guangwu (r.25–57), received so many gifts from the emperor that his house came to be known as “The Gold Vault.”

⁵ Shi Chong was an immensely wealthy man in the Jin dynasty. For more on Shi Chong, see story 36 in Feng, *Stories Old and New*.

⁶ Lü Yan, courtesy name Lü Dongbin, also known as Lü Chunyang, is one of the Eight Immortals in the Daoist legends.

⁷ A *dou* is a unit of dry measure for grain, now roughly equivalent to one peck.

⁸ Guan Ning and Hua Xin of the Three Kingdoms period were working in a vegetable garden when they saw an ingot of gold on the ground. Guan Ning ignored it as he would a stone. Hua Xin picked it up but just as soon put it down again.

Pei Du (765–839) was touring a temple one day when he found two waistbands made of jade and a waistband made of rhinoceros horn. They belonged to a woman who had obtained them as a loan with which to redeem her father from prison. Pei Du returned the waistbands to her, an act that was believed to have earned him merit in the other world and accounted for his attaining the post of prime minister later in his life. For more on Pei Du, see story 9 in Feng, *Stories Old and New*.

第六卷

俞仲举题诗遇上皇

日月盈亏，星辰失度，为人岂无兴衰？子房年幼，逃难在徐邳，伊尹曾耕莘野，子牙尝钓磻溪。君不见韩侯未遇，遭胯下受驱驰，蒙正瓦窑借宿，裴度在古庙依栖。时来也，皆为将相，方表是男儿。

汉武帝元狩二年，四川成都府一秀士，司马长卿，双名相如，自父母双亡，孤身无倚，凿盐自守。贯串百家，精通经史。虽然游艺江湖，其实志在功名。出门之时，过城北七里许，曰升仙桥，相如大书于桥柱上：“大丈夫不乘驷马车，不复过此桥。”所以北抵京洛，东至齐楚，遂依梁孝王之门，与邹阳、枚皋辈为友。不期梁王薨，相如谢病归成都市上。临邛县有县令王吉，每每使人





Story 6

Yu Liang Writes Poems and Wins Recognition from the Emperor

*The sun rises and sets, the moon waxes and wanes,
 And the stars shine and dim in their cycles.
 How can human lives not have their ups and downs?
 In their youth, Zhang Liang took refuge in Xiapi;¹
 Yi Yin plowed the fields of Youxin;²
 Lü Wang fished by Panxi Creek.³
 Consider how Han Xin crawled between legs,⁴
 How Lü Mengzheng lived in a cave,⁵
 How Pei Du lodged in an old temple.⁶
 When their time came, they all rose to high rank
 And showed their qualities as men of worth.*

In the second year of the Yuanshou reign period [121 B.C.E.], under Emperor Wudi of the Han dynasty, there was, in Chengdu Prefecture, Sichuan, a scholar named Sima Xiangru [d.118 B.C. E.], courtesy name Changqing, who, not having anyone to turn to for help after his parents died, lived by himself in the most straitened circumstances. He was well versed in the hundred schools of thought and knew everything there was to know about the classics and the histories. Though he wandered around the country seeking knowledge and making friends, his real ambition was to attain fame and fortune. The day he left home, he wrote the following line in big, bold characters on a pier of the Bridge from Which Immortals Ascend to Heaven, located about seven *li* north of the city: "This man of true worth will not cross this bridge again unless in a grand four-horse carriage."

In his travels, he reached the capital Luoyang in the north and the regions of Qi and Chu in the east.⁷ He then entered into the service of King Xiao of Liang and made friends with men like Zou Yang and Mei Gao.⁸ After the king of Liang died unexpectedly, Xiangru returned to Chengdu, pleading illness.

Wang Ji, the magistrate of Linqiong County [in modern



相招。一日到彼相会，盘桓旬日。谈间，言及本处卓王孙巨富，有亭台池馆，华美可玩。县令着人去说，教他接待。卓王孙资财巨万，僮仆数百，门阑奢侈。园中有花亭一所，名曰瑞仙。四面芳菲烂熳，真可游息。京洛名园，皆不能过此。这卓员外丧偶不娶，慕道修真。止有一女，小字文君，年方十九，新寡在家。聪慧过人，姿态出众。琴棋书画，无所不通。员外一日早晨，闻说县令友人司马长卿乃文章巨儒，要来游玩园池，特来拜访。慌忙迎接，至后花园中，瑞仙亭上。动问已毕，卓王孙置酒相待。见长卿丰姿俊雅，且是王县令好友，甚相敬重，[眉批]全不为长卿之才。道：“先生去县中安下不便，何不在敝舍权住几日？”相如感其厚意，遂令人唤琴童携行李来瑞仙亭安下。倏忽半月。

且说卓文君在绣房中闲坐，闻侍女春儿说：“有秀士司马长卿相访，员外留他在瑞仙亭安寓。此生丰姿俊雅，且善抚琴。”文



Qionglai, Sichuan], often sent him invitations to visit. One day, Xiangru again accepted an invitation and stayed for ten days. In the course of their conversation, they got on to the subject of the wealth of Squire Zhuo Wangsun, who lived in the area in a mansion with pavilions, terraces, ponds and belvederes. They thought it would be a most beautiful and interesting place to visit. The county magistrate thus sent a messenger to tell Squire Zhuo to be prepared for visitors.

Now, this Squire Zhuo was fabulously rich. He had hundreds of servants in his lavishly furnished mansion. On the grounds, he had a pavilion called Auspicious Fairy Pavilion, which was a riot of colors and a most pleasant place for relaxation in a garden that could hold its own with any of the famous ones in the capital.

Squire Zhuo was a widower. Determined not to marry again, he devoted himself to the cultivation of the Dao. He had only one daughter, whose name was Wenjun. Recently widowed at the age of nineteen, she was living at home with her father. She was an exceptionally intelligent girl with unusually graceful posture and was skilled in the arts of music, chess, calligraphy, and painting.

That morning, when the squire heard the announcement that the county magistrate and his friend Sima Xiangru, an eminent scholar, were there to visit and see the garden, he made haste to greet them and escorted them to Auspicious Fairy Pavilion in the back garden. After an exchange of amenities, Squire Zhuo set out wine. Deeply impressed by Xiangru's graceful bearing and his friendship with County Magistrate Wang (*Xiangru's talent did not make an impression on him.*), Squire Zhuo said, "It's not very convenient for you to take up quarters in the county yamen. Why not stay in my humble home for a few days?"

Gratefully, Xiangru sent for his page boy, who brought his luggage to Auspicious Fairy Pavilion so that he could settle in. In the twinkling of an eye, half a month went by.

Let us now turn to Zhuo Wenjun. Sitting idly in her boudoir, she heard her maid Chun'er say, "A scholar called Sima Xiangru came for a visit, and Master has kept him on as a house guest. He now stays in Auspicious Fairy Pavilion. He's a handsome young man, and he plays



君心动，乃于东墙琐窗内窃窥视相如才貌，“日后必然大贵。但不知有妻无妻？我若得如此之丈夫，平生愿足！争奈此人箠瓢屡空，若待媒证求亲，俺父亲决然不肯。倘若挫过此人，再后难得。”过了两日，女使春儿见小姐双眉愁蹙，必有所思，乃对小姐道：“今夜三月十五日，月色光明，何不往花园中散闷则个？”
[眉批] 春儿通窍。小姐口中不说，心下思量：“自见了那秀才，日夜废寝忘餐，放心不下。我今主意已定，虽然有亏妇道，是我一世前程。”收拾了些金珠首饰，分付春儿安排酒果：“今夜与你赏月散闷。”春儿打点完备，随小姐行来。

话中且说相如久闻得文君小姐貌美聪慧，甚知音律，也有心去挑逗他。今夜月明如水，闻花阴下有行动之声，教琴童私觑，知是小姐。乃焚香一炷，将瑶琴抚弄。文君正行数步，只听得琴声清亮，移步将近瑞仙亭，转过花阴下，听得所弹音曰：

凤兮凤兮思故乡，遨游四海兮求其凰。时未遇兮无所将，



the zither very well. ”

Her heart aflutter, Wenjun went to the east wall and peeped through the latticed window. Impressed by Xiangru’s graceful appearance, she thought, “This man will surely go far. I wonder if he’s married. If I could have such a man for a husband, what more would I want from life? But he’s so impoverished that Father will never agree to the marriage if a matchmaker approaches him. And yet, if I let him go, such a man may never come my way again. ”

A couple of days later, the maid Chun’er, noticing that her mistress wore a worried frown and looked as if something was on her mind, said to her, “Tonight being the fifteenth of the third month, the moon is full and shining brightly. Why don’t you go into the garden to cheer yourself up?” (*Chun’er was most perceptive.*)

Without saying a word, the young lady thought, “Ever since I laid my eyes on that scholar, he’s been so much in my thoughts day and night that I can hardly eat or sleep. My mind is made up. I may be breaking the code of behavior for women, but the well-being of my whole life is at stake. ” Thereupon, she packed some jewelry and other valuables and told Chun’er to set out wine and some tidbits to go with it, adding, “Yes, I’ll go out with you to view the moon and cheer myself up. ”

After making the arrangements, Chun’er followed her mistress to the garden.

Now, let us return to Xiangru. Having long heard of Wenjun’s beauty, intelligence, and music talents, he, on his part, was thinking of trying to win her affections. On that bright moonlit night, hearing movements near the flowers’ shadows, he had his page boy take a stealthy look and was told that it was the young lady, whereupon he lit some incense and started playing the zither. As Wenjun walked along, the clear notes of the zither struck her ears. She went to Auspicious Fairy Pavilion and stopped in the shadow of some flowers. This was what she heard in the notes:

*The phoenix, yearning for its native place,
Roams the four seas in search of a mate.
The time not yet ripe, it has nowhere to go;*



何如今夕兮升斯堂？有艳淑女在闺房，室迩人遐在我傍。何缘交颈为鸳鸯，期颉颃兮共翱翔！

凤兮凤兮从我栖，得托孳尾永为妃。交情通体心和谐，中夜相从知者谁？〔眉批〕相如早为文君决策矣。双翼俱起翻高飞，无感我思使余悲。

小姐听罢，对待女道：“秀才有心，妾亦有心。今夜既到这里，可去与秀才相见。”遂乃行到亭边。

相如月下见了文君，连忙起身迎接道：“小生梦想花容，何期光降。不及远接，恕罪，恕罪！”文君敛衽向前道：“高贤下临，甚缺款待。孤馆寂寞，令人相念无已。”相如道：“不劳小姐挂意。小生有琴一张，自能消遣。”文君笑道：“先生不必迂阔。琴中之意，妾已备知。”相如跪下告道：“小生得见花颜，死也甘心。”文君道：“请起，妾今夜到此，与先生赏月，同饮三杯。”春儿排酒果于瑞仙亭上，文君、相如对饮。相如细视文君，果然生得：



*But why not land in this hall this very night?
Here, a lovely maiden in her chamber,
So far from me, yet so close by my side.
May we never part, like a pair of mandarin ducks!
May we stay wing to wing, as we fly through the air!
O phoenix, follow me to my nest,
To roost in eternal love,
Body to body, heart to heart.*

Let's leave in the night! Who'll be the wiser? (So, Xiangru has made the decision for Wenjun.)

*Let our wings take us toward the sky!
But how sad if I pine all alone!*

Having heard this much, the young lady said to her maid, "The scholar's feelings are reciprocated. Since I'm already here tonight, I'll go up and greet him." And so, she directed her steps toward the pavilion.

At the sight of Wenjun in the moonlight, Xiangru rose with alacrity and said in greeting, "I have been picturing your beauty to myself, but I never expected that you would be here! Please forgive me for failing to meet you at a distance and bring you here."

After curtsying, Wenjun took a step forward and said, "To such an honored guest as you, the host has been less than generous. I have been worrying that you might feel lonely in this forlorn pavilion."

"Please don't trouble yourself about me. I have the zither to keep myself amused."

With a smile, Wenjun said, "You need not be evasive. Your feelings as demonstrated through the music have not been lost on me."

Xiangru fell to his knees, saying, "Now that I have had the good fortune of seeing such beauty, I can die content."

"Please rise. I am here tonight to view the moon with you over a few cups of wine."

Accordingly, Chun'er set out the wine and tidbits in the pavilion for Wenjun and Xiangru to enjoy as they sat face-to-face. Upon taking a close look at Wenjun, Xiangru saw that, indeed,

Her eyebrows as black as a kingfisher's feathers,



眉如翠羽，肌如白雪；振绣衣，披锦裳，浓不短，纤不长；临溪双洛浦，对月两嫦娥。

酒行数巡，文君令春儿收拾前去：“我便回来。”相如道：“小姐不嫌寒陋，愿就枕席之欢。”文君笑道：“妾欲奉终身箕帚，岂在一时欢爱乎？”相如问道：“小姐计将安出？”文君道：“如今收拾了些金珠在此。不如今夜同离此间，别处居住。倘后父亲想念，搬回一家完聚，岂不美哉？”当下二人同下瑞仙亭，出后园而走。却是：

鳌鱼脱却金钩去，摆尾摇头更不回。

且说春儿至天明不见小姐在房，亭子上又寻不见，报与老员外得知。寻到瑞仙亭上，和相如都不见。员外道：“相如是文学之士，为此禽兽之行！小贱人，你也自幼读书，岂不闻女子‘事无擅为，行无独出’？你不闻父命，私奔苟合，非吾女也！”欲要讼之于官，争奈家丑不可外扬，故尔中止，“且看他有何面目相



*Her skin as fair as white snow,
Her body covered in silk and brocade,
She is neither too showy nor too meek.
The very image of the River Goddess,
A replica of Chang'e, goddess of the moon.*

After a few rounds of wine, Wenjun told Chun'er to clear the table and leave them, adding, "I'll be with you soon."

"If you don't find my present position too humble," said Xiangru, "I pray that you will indulge me in the pleasures of the pillow."

With a smile, Wenjun replied, "I am determined to serve you as your wife for the rest of my life. Some momentary pleasure is not what I am after."

"What plans do you have in mind?"

"I have here some valuables that I've packed. The best thing for us to do is to leave here tonight and live somewhere else. Later, if my father misses me, we can move back and be reunited with him. Wouldn't that be nice?"

Without a moment's delay, the two stepped down from the pavilion and left the mansion through the back gate. Truly,

*The sea turtle freed itself from the golden hook,
Shook its head, wagged its tail, and vanished for good.*

At daybreak, Chun'er found that her mistress was absent from her chamber. A search in the pavilion also turned up nothing. She reported the matter to the old master, who went to the pavilion, but both the young lady and Xiangru were missing:

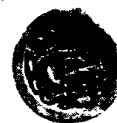
"How could a fine scholar like Xiangru be capable of such a beastly thing?" fumed Squire Zhuo. "And the little hussy! Having started your education at an early age, haven't you heard that for women, 'There's nothing they should do on their own, there's nowhere they should go unaccompanied?' Now, by eloping in defiance of your father, you are no longer my daughter!" He thought of lodging an official complaint with the yamen but abandoned the idea because a domestic scandal could not very well be made public. "We'll see whether they'll ever have the nerve to show their faces again in front of kith and kin!" he said. So he swallowed his anger and



见亲戚！”从此隐忍无语，亦不追寻。

却说相如与文君到家，相如自思囊篋罄然，难以度日：“想我浑家乃富贵之女，岂知如此寂寞！所喜者略无愠色，颇为贤达。他料想司马长卿必有发达时分。”正愁闷间，文君至。相如道：“日与浑家商议，欲做些小营运，奈无资本。”文君道：“我首饰钗钏，尽可变卖。但我父亲万贯家财，岂不能周济一女？如今不若开张酒肆，妾自当垆。若父亲知之，必然懊悔。”相如从其言，修造房屋，开店卖酒。文君亲自当垆记帐。忽一日，卓王孙家僮有事到成都府，入肆饮酒。事有凑巧，正来到司马长卿肆中。见当垆之妇，乃是主翁小姐，吃了一惊。慌忙走回临邛，报与员外知道。员外满面羞惭，不肯认女，[眉批]卓王孙自是正理。但杜门不见宾客而已。

再说相如夫妇卖酒，约有半年。忽有天使捧着一纸诏书，问司马相如名字，到于肆中，说道：“朝廷观先生所作《子虚赋》，文章浩烂，超越古人。官里叹赏，飘飘然有凌云之志气，恨不得与此人同时。有杨得意奏言：‘此赋是臣之同里司马长卿所作，



raised no fuss. Nor was any effort made to track them down.

Let us return to Xiangru and Wenjun. Now back in his home, Xiangru was troubled by thoughts of his poverty and the lack of a means of livelihood. "My wife is from a wealthy family. How was she to know that life could be so hard? But I'm glad she hasn't shown the least sign of displeasure. Quite a fine, magnanimous mind she has! She must have confidence that I, Sima Changqing, will rise in life some day."

In the midst of these none-too-happy thoughts, he found that Wenjun had drawn near to him. He said to her, "Some day, I'll have to talk with you about setting up a small business, except I have no capital."

"All my jewelry can be sold. It's quite unimaginable that my father, with all his fabulous wealth, can't help me out. The best thing to do now is to open a wineshop, with me working at the front counter. If Father hears of that, he'll surely regret what he has done."

Xiangru agreed. A house was built, and the wineshop opened for business, with Wenjun as both the server and the bookkeeper.

One day, a servant from the Zhuo residence was sent to Chengdu on some errand. As chance would have it, he walked into the very wineshop owned by Sima Xiangru for a drink. At the sight of the young mistress at the counter, he gave a start and rushed back to Linqiong to report to Squire Zhuo. With shame written all over his face, the Squire adamantly refused to acknowledge that he had such a daughter (*Squire Zhuo was right, of course.*) but did nothing more than shut his door to visitors.

After Xiangru and his wife had been selling wine for about half a year, there came one day an imperial messenger, the scroll of an imperial edict in hand, asking where to find Sima Xiangru. After receiving directions, he made his way to the wineshop and said, "The imperial court finds your prose poem titled 'Mr. Fantasy' a most splendid piece of writing, superior in style to those of the ancients.⁹ The emperor said that it had an ethereal, transcendent grandeur that rises above the clouds and wished that he could spend some time with the poet. Mr. Yang Deyi said, 'This prose poem was written by Sima



见在成都闲居。’天子大喜，特差小官来征召。走马临朝，不许迟延。”相如收拾行装，即时要行。文君道：“官人此行富贵，则怕忘了瑞仙亭上！”相如道：“小生受小姐大恩，方恨未报，何出此言？”文君道：“秀才们也有两般。有那君子儒，不论贫富，志行不移；有那小人儒，贫时又一般，富时就忘了。”相如道：“小姐放心！”夫妻二人，不忍相别。临行，文君又嘱道：“此时已遂题桥志，莫负当垆涤器人！”

且不说相如同天使登程。却说卓王孙有家僮从长安回，听得杨得意举荐司马相如，蒙朝廷征召去了。自言：“我女儿有先见之明，[眉批]卓王孙不如太史敦强项。为见此人才貌双全，必然显达，所以成了亲事。老夫想起来，男婚女嫁，人之大伦。我女婿不得官时，我先带侍女春儿同往成都去望，乃是父子之情，无人笑我。若是他得了官时去看他，教人道我趋时奉势。”[眉批]没人推举时去



Changqing, who is from the same part of the country as I am. He is now living in Chengdu, without an official post.' The emperor was greatly pleased and sent me to summon you to the court without delay."

Xiangru started packing up, ready to be on his way.

"Now that you are heading for fame and fortune," said Wenjun, "I'm afraid that you will forget your days in Auspicious Fairy Pavilion."

"My debt to you is greater than I've been able to repay. Why do you say this?"

"There are two kinds of scholars," said Wenjun. "There are the gentlemanly scholars who remain constant in their feelings and behavior whether rich or poor. There are also petty ones who act in a certain way when poor but forget about their humble days as soon as they find themselves rich."

"Don't worry, my lady!" said Xiangru.

The two could hardly tear themselves apart. As Xiangru was about to leave, Wenjun reminded him again, "Now that the wish you wrote on the bridge has come true, do not betray the one serving wine and washing dishes!"

Let us not follow Xiangru on his journey with the emperor's messenger but turn our attention to Squire Zhuo, who learned from a servant just back from Chang'an that Sima Xiangru had been summoned by the court upon the recommendation of Yang Deyi. He said to himself, "My daughter does have quite a prophetic vision! (*Squire Zhuo is not as unyielding as Grand Historian Jiao.*)¹⁰ She married him because she knew that this man, endowed with both talent and looks, would surely rise to eminence. Now that I think about it, since a marriage is a major event in human relationships, I'd better take along Chun'er the maid and go to Chengdu for a visit before my son-in-law assumes an official post. No one will laugh at me for this fatherly thing I do. But if I go after he becomes an official, I'll be accused of trying to ingratiate myself with the powerful." (*It would have been even better if he had gone before the recommendation was made in favor of Sima Xiangru.*)



看更好。次日，带同春儿径到成都府，寻见文君。文君见了父亲，拜道：“孩儿有不孝之罪，望爹爹饶恕！”员外道：“我儿，你想杀我！从前之话，更不须提了。如今且喜朝廷征召，正称孩儿之心。我今日送春儿来伏侍，接你回家居住。我自差家僮往长安报与贤婿知道。”文君执意不肯。员外见女儿主意定了，乃将家财之半，分授女儿，于成都起建大宅，市买良田，僮仆三四百人。员外伴着女儿同住，等候女婿佳音。

再说司马相如同天使至京师朝见，献《上林赋》一篇。天子大喜，即拜为著作郎，待诏金马门。近有巴蜀开通南夷诸道，用军兴法转漕繁冗，惊扰夷民。官里闻知大怒，召相如议论此事，令作谕巴蜀之檄。官里道：“此一事，欲待差官，非卿不可。”乃拜相如为中郎将，持节而往，令剑金牌，先斩后奏。相如谢恩，辞天子出朝，一路驰驿而行。到彼处，劝谕巴蜀已平，蛮夷清静。



The next day, he took Chun'er and went posthaste to see Wenjun in Chengdu. At the sight of her father, Wenjun bowed and said, "Father, please forgive me for my lack of filial piety!"

The Squire replied, "My child, I missed you so much! Why don't we let bygones be bygones? Now, this happy news from the imperial court must be what you've been waiting for. I've brought Chun'er along today to serve you and to bring you back home permanently. I will send a servant to Chang'an to let my good son-in-law know about this."

Wenjun firmly declined the offer.

Realizing that his daughter was not to be shaken in her resolve, the Squire gave her half his wealth, built an impressive mansion right there in Chengdu, and bought fertile fields and three hundred to four hundred servants. He himself stayed with his daughter while waiting for good tidings from his son-in-law.

Let us return to Sima Xiangru, who followed the emperor's messenger to the capital, where he was granted an audience with the emperor. Upon presentation of his "Ode to the Imperial Hunting Park," an immensely delighted emperor made him editorial director then and there and told him to go to Golden Horse Gate to await assignments.

At the time, claiming to be implementing the Wartime Troops Deployment and Transportation of Goods Act, some officials in areas bordering Sichuan and the southern regions inhabited by ethnic minorities were transporting provisions by land as well as by water, giving the minority peoples no peace. When he heard about this, the emperor flew into a rage. He summoned Xiangru for a consultation about the matter and authorized him to draft an official denunciation of culpable Sichuan officials. The emperor added, "This matter requires the attention of an envoy. And you are the only one suitable for the job."

Thereupon, Xiangru was honored with the title Imperial Corps Commander and equipped with tokens of authority including the official tablet, the emperor's sword of command, and golden badges, with full power to act first and report afterward. Xiangru voiced his gratitude, took leave of the emperor, and went on his way at top speed. Upon arriving at his destination, he began to exercise his skills



不过半月，百姓安宁，衣锦还乡。数日之间，已达成都府。本府官员迎接。到于新宅，文君出迎。相如道：“读书不负人，今日果遂题桥之愿。”文君道：“更有一喜，你丈人先到这里迎接。”相如连声：“不敢，不敢！”老员外出见，相如向前施礼。彼此相谢，排筵贺喜。自此遂为成都富室。有诗为证：

夜静瑶台月正圆，清风淅沥满林峦。

朱弦慢促相思调，不是知音不与弹。

司马相如本是成都府一个穷儒，只为一篇文章上投了至尊之意，一朝发迹。如今再说南宋朝一个贫士，也是成都府人，在濯锦江居住。亦因词篇遭际，衣锦还乡。此人姓俞名良，字仲举，年登二十五岁，幼丧父母，娶妻张氏。这秀才日夜勤攻诗史，满腹文章。时当春榜动，选场开，广招天下人才，赴临安应举。俞良便收拾琴剑书箱，择日起程。亲朋饯送。分付浑家道：“我去



of persuasion, and he restored peace to the region and to the lives of the minority peoples.

In less than half a month, the local people having resumed their tranquil ways of life, he set off in triumph for his hometown. In a matter of days, he arrived in Chengdu and was greeted by prefectural officials. When he approached the new mansion, Wenjun came out to greet him. "Scholarly pursuits do pay off," said he to Wenjun. "Today, I have fulfilled the wish that I wrote on the bridge."

"There's one more pleasant surprise for you," said Wenjun. "Your father-in-law is here to welcome you back."

"That is too much of an honor for me! Too much of an honor!" said Xiangru over and over again. When the old man emerged from the mansion to greet him, Xiangru took a step forward and saluted him. Both said words of gratitude to each other. A feast was laid out to celebrate the joyous occasion. Henceforth, Sima Xiangru became one of the richest men in Chengdu, as this poem testifies:

*The full moon over the terrace in the still night;
A clear wind rustling the trees in the grove.
A wistful tune of love played on the zither,
Meant only for a truly appreciative ear.*

This, then, is the story of how Sima Xiangru, a poverty-stricken scholar of Chengdu, gained instant fame and fortune because the emperor liked his writing.

I now propose to tell of a poor man of the Southern Song dynasty, also a native of Chengdu but living in Zhuojinjiang. In like fashion, he gained fame and fortune through a poem and returned to his hometown in triumph.

Yu Liang by name, courtesy name Zhongju, this man, twenty-five years of age when our story begins, had lost his parents in his youth and taken a wife, Zhang-shi. Day and night, this scholar applied himself assiduously to books of history and poetry and became a veritable fountain of knowledge and learning. When the examination grounds opened in Lin'an [capital of the Southern Song dynasty, now Hangzhou], so that talented scholars throughout the land could take the spring examinations, Yu Liang packed up his zither, sword, and



求官，多则三年，少则一载。但得一官半职，即便回来。”道罢相别，跨一蹇驴而去。不则一日，行至中途，偶染一疾，忙寻客店安下，心中烦恼。不想病了半月，身边钱物使尽。只得将驴儿卖了做盘缠，又怕误了科场日期，只得买双草鞋穿了，自背书囊而行。不数日，脚都打破了，鲜血淋漓，于路苦楚。心中想道：“几时得到杭州！”看着那双脚，作一词以述怀抱，名《瑞鹤仙》：

春闱期近也，望帝京迢递，犹在天际。懊恨这双脚底，不惯行程，如今怎免得拖泥带水。痛难禁，芒鞋五耳。倦行时，着意温存，笑语甜言安慰。争气。扶持我去，选得官来，那时赏你穿对朝靴，安排在轿儿里。抬来抬去，饱餐羊肉滋味，重教细腻。更寻对小小脚儿，夜间伴你。

不则一日，已到杭州，至贡院前桥下，有个客店，姓孙，叫做孙



boxes of books and chose a day for his departure. He was invited to send-off dinners by kith and kin. He said to his wife, "This journey of mine in quest of a career as an official will take me three years at the longest and one year at the shortest. I'll come back as soon as I obtain a position, however insignificant."

Having said that, he took leave of his wife, mounted a lame donkey, and left. The days went by. He had only gone part of the way when he contracted an illness and had to look urgently for an inn, feeling quite dejected. As it turned out, the illness lasted half a month. His money and provisions exhausted, he was reduced to selling the donkey for traveling money. Afraid that he would miss the examination dates, he resignedly bought a pair of straw sandals and, his bags of books on his back, continued with his journey. Not many days passed before his feet were lacerated and dripping blood. In the midst of all this misery, he thought, "When will I ever get to Hangzhou?" Looking at his feet, he composed a lyric poem to express his feelings. Set to the tune of "An Immortal's Auspicious Crane," it said,

*With the spring examinations drawing near,
I'm still far, far away from the capital.
How I hate my feet, so unused to travel,
As I drag them through mud and water,
While they burn in pain from the sandals' straw.
When they are tired out from too much walking,
I comfort them with words gentle and sweet;
Make a good showing, please, and get me there.
I will reward you when I gain a post.
I will put you in official's boots,
And place you in a sedan-chair,
To be carried hither and thither;
I will feed you well with fragrant mutton,
For you to regain the smoothness of your skin.
I'll also look for a pair of small feet
To keep you company throughout the night.*

A few days later, he arrived in Hangzhou. By the bridge in front



婆店，俞良在店中安歇了。

过不多几日，俞良入选场已毕，俱各伺候挂榜。只说举子们，元来却有这般苦处。假如俞良八千有馀多路，来到临安，指望一举成名。争奈时运未至，龙门点额，金榜无名。俞良心中好闷，眼中流泪，自寻思道：“千乡万里，来到此间，身边囊篋消然，如何勾得回乡？”不免流落杭州。每日出街，有些银两，只买酒吃，消愁解闷。看看穷乏，初时还有几个相识看觑他，[眉批] 初时肯看觑的，也就有一半古道了。后面蒿恼人多了，被人憎嫌。但遇见一般秀才上店吃酒，俞良便入去投谒。每日吃两碗饿酒，烂醉了归店中安歇。孙婆见了，埋怨道：“秀才，你却少了我房钱不还，每日吃得大醉，却有钱买酒吃！”俞良也不分说。每日早间，问店小二讨些汤洗了面便出门。“长篇见宰相，短卷谒公卿”，掬得几碗酒吃，[眉批] 且说如今长篇短卷何处搪酒吃？吃得烂醉，直到昏黑，便归客店安歇。每日如是。

一日，俞良走到众安桥，见个茶坊，有几个秀才在里面，俞



of the examination grounds, there was a Madam Sun's Inn. Yu Liang took up lodgings there. In another few days, he completed his examinations and began to wait for the list of successful examinees to be posted.

Now, all those who sit for imperial examinations must go through many trials and tribulations. In Yu Liang's case, he had trudged more than eight thousand *li* to Lin'an in hopes of passing the examinations on the first try and thereby attaining instant fame. However, his time had not come. His name did not appear on the list of successful candidates. With tears in his eyes, he thought gloomily, "I've traveled here over such a long distance, and now, with so little money left, how am I going to make it home?" And so he was stranded in Hangzhou.

Every day, when he walked up and down the streets, he spent whatever money he had on wine to drown his sorrows, and all too soon, he became penniless. At first, there were still a few acquaintances who looked after him. (*Those who took the trouble of looking after him at the beginning were not uninspired by the generous spirit of the ancients.*) But later, he came to be loathed, as more and more people found him a nuisance.

Every time he saw some scholars drinking in a wineshop, he would send in his card and join the group. Every day, he drank himself into a stupor, swallowing two bowls of wine on an empty stomach, and returned to the inn to rest. The innkeeper, Madam Sun, seeing him in such a state, would grumble bitterly, "Scholar, instead of paying your bills, you get drunk every day. I wonder how you could afford the wine!" Yu Liang never said anything in his own defense. Every morning, he asked the inn clerk for some hot water, washed his face, and went out the door. By writing some "long articles for prime ministers and short ones for dukes and ministers," he earned enough to buy himself a few bowls of wine. (*Nowadays, where can you even hope to exchange articles, long or short, for a drop of wine?*) After he had gotten himself dead drunk, he would return to the inn after nightfall. Things went on this way day after day.

One day, Yu Liang went to Zhong'an Bridge, where he saw a



良便挨身入去坐地。只见茶博士向前唱个喏，问道：“解元吃甚么茶？”俞良口中不道，心下思量：“我早饭也不曾吃，却来问我吃茶。身边铜钱又无，吃了却捉甚么还他？”便道：“我约一个相识在这里等，少间客至来问。”茶博士自退。俞良坐于门首，只要看一个相识过，却又遇不着。正闷坐间，只见一个先生，手里执着一个招儿，上面写道“如神见”。俞良想是个算命先生，且算一命看。则一请，请那先生入到茶坊里坐定。俞良说了年月日时，那先生便算。茶博士见了道：“这是他等的相识来了。”便向前问道：“解元吃甚么茶？”俞良分付：“点两个椒茶来。”二人吃罢。先生道：“解元好个造物！即目三日之内，有分遇大贵人发迹，贵不可言。”俞良听说，自想：“我这等模样，几时能勾发迹？眼下茶钱也没得还。”便做个意头，抽身起道：“先生，我若真个发迹时，却得相谢。”便起身走。茶博士道：“解元，茶钱！”俞良道：“我只借坐一坐，你却来问我茶，我那得钱还？先生说早晚发迹，等我好了，一发还你。”掉了便走。先生道：“解元，命钱未还。”俞良道：“先生得罪，等我发迹，一发相谢。”先生道：



teahouse with several scholars inside. He stepped in and found a seat for himself. A waiter came up, chanted a greeting, and asked, "What kind of tea for you, scholar?"

Without saying anything out loud, Yu Liang thought, "I haven't even had breakfast, and yet he asks me about tea. Without a penny on me, how am I going to pay for it?" So thinking, he said, "I'm waiting for a friend. Come again when he's here."

The waiter turned away.

Yu Liang sat down right by the door, hoping in vain to find an acquaintance among the passers-by. Feeling melancholy, he suddenly saw a man holding a sign that said, "Divine foresight," whereupon he said to himself, "So, this is a fortuneteller. Let me ask him to tell my fortune." At Yu Liang's request, the man stepped into the teahouse and sat down. After obtaining Yu Liang's date of birth — complete with the hour, day, month and year — the man started working.

Seeing the two, the waiter said, "So, his friend is here." He walked up and asked, "What kind of tea for you scholars?"

Yu Liang said, "Bring us two cups of spiced tea."

After tea, the man said, "Scholar, you are in great luck! Within three days, you will encounter a most eminent man and gain unspeakably great fame and fortune."

Having heard these words, Yu Liang thought to himself, "As wretched as I am, when will I ever gain fame and fortune? I don't even have money for the tea." Seeing his chance, he rose and said, "If I really gain fame and fortune, sir, I will surely pay you in gratitude." With that, he headed for the door.

"Scholar, please pay for the tea!" said the waiter.

"I sat here for only a moment, and you had to come over and serve tea. How would I have any money to pay for it? That gentleman says I'll gain fame and fortune any time now, so I'll pay you when I've struck it rich!" With that, Yu Liang again turned to go.

"Scholar!" cried the fortuneteller. "You haven't paid me for telling your fortune!"

"Sorry! I'll pay you most gratefully when I do gain fame and fortune."



“我方才出来，好不顺溜！”茶博士道：“我没兴，折了两个茶钱！”当下自散。俞良又去赶趁，吃了几碗饿酒。直到天晚，酩酊烂醉，踉踉跄跄，到孙婆店中，昏迷不醒，睡倒了。孙婆见了，大骂道：“这秀才好没道理！少了我若干房钱不肯还，每日吃得大醉。你道别人请你，终不成每日有人请你？”俞良便道：“我醉自醉，干你甚事！别人请不请，也不干你事！”孙婆道：“老娘情愿折了许多时房钱，你明日便请出门去。”俞良带酒胡言汉语，便道：“你要我去，再与我五贯钱，我明日便去。”孙婆听说，笑将起来道：“从不曾见恁般主顾！白住了许多时店房，到还要诈钱撒泼，也不像斯文体面。”俞良听得，骂将起来道：“我有韩信之志，你无漂母之仁。我俞某是个饱学秀才，少不得今科不中来科中。你就供养我到来科，打甚么紧！”[眉批]说得甚通理，其如不信何。乘着酒兴，敲台打凳，弄假成真起来。孙婆见他撒洒风，不敢惹他。关了门，自进去了。俞良弄了半日酒，身体困倦，跌倒在床铺上，也睡去了。[眉批]无聊光景。五更酒醒，想起前情，自觉



“I’m new in this business,” said the fortuneteller. “What a lousy beginning!”

“I’m not any luckier!” said the waiter. “I served the tea for nothing!” With that, they went their separate ways.

Yu Liang continued his freeloading and drank a few more bowls of wine on his empty stomach. At nightfall, he stumbled in an inebriated state back to Madam Sun’s Inn and lay down in a stupor. Upon seeing him, Madam Sun exploded, “What a shameless man this scholar is! Instead of paying me what you owe, you spend your money getting drunk day in and day out. You say that you were treated to the wine as a guest, but how do you manage to get invitations every day?”

“What business is it of yours if I get drunk? Whether I get invitations or not is none of your business either!”

“If you clear out of here tomorrow, I’ll gladly cancel all your bills.”

Under the influence of wine, Yu Liang ranted, “If you want me to go, give me five strings of cash, and I’ll be gone tomorrow.”

Madam Sun burst into laughter. “I’ve never seen such a patron! You’ve been staying here for free all this time, and now you turn around and demand money from me. What a horrible man! Where’s your scholar’s sense of decency?”

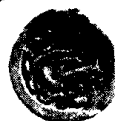
At these words, Yu Liang snapped back, “I have the aspirations of Han Xin, but you lack the kindness of the woman washing clothes.¹¹ I’m a learned scholar, and I may have failed the exams this time, but I’ll make it the next time. That’s only to be expected. What’s the big deal even if you support me until the next examination comes around?” (*He does have a point there. How can one not follow his logic?*) Exhilarated by the wine, he started banging the tables and pounding the stools, getting so carried away that what he had begun half-heartedly turned into a big scene. Seeing the man acting like a crazy drunkard, Madam Sun dared not provoke him further. She closed the door and went to her own room.

This wild outburst exhausted Yu Liang. He collapsed onto his bed and drifted off to sleep. (*A veritable scene of boredom.*) When he



惭愧。欲要不别而行，又没个去处，正在两难。

却说孙婆与儿子孙小二商议，没奈何，只得破两贯钱，倒去陪他个不是，央及他动身。若肯轻轻撒开，便是造化。俞良本待不受，其奈身无半文。只得忍着羞，收了这两贯钱，作谢而去。心下想道：“临安到成都，有八千里之遥，这两贯钱，不勾吃几顿饭，却如何盘费得回去？”出了孙婆店门，在街坊上东走西走，又没寻个相识处。走到饭后，肚里又饥，心中又闷。身边只有两贯钱，买些酒食吃饱了，跳下西湖，且做个饱鬼。当下一径走出涌金门外西湖边，见座高楼，上面一面大牌，朱红大书“丰乐楼”。只听得笙簧缭绕，鼓乐喧天。俞良立定脚打一看时，只见门前上下首立着两个人，头戴方顶样头巾，身穿紫衫，脚下丝鞋净袜，叉着手，看着俞良道：“请坐！”俞良见请，欣然而入。直走到楼上，拣一个临湖傍槛的阁儿坐下。只见一个当日的酒保，便向俞良唱个喏：“覆解元，不知要打多少酒？”俞良道：“我约一



woke up from the wine-induced sleep at the fifth watch of the night, he remembered what he had done and felt ashamed. He thought of leaving without saying goodbye to the innkeeper, but there was no place for him to go.

While he was debating with himself as to how to get out of this scrape, Madam Sun was consulting her son, Sun Xiao'er. They saw nothing for it but to offer Yu Liang two strings of cash along with an apology and beg him to vacate the premises. They would thank their lucky stars as long as he agreed to leave quietly.

Yu Liang wanted to reject this offer, but being penniless, he could do no better than swallow his pride and take the two strings of cash. With a few words of gratitude, he went on his way, thinking to himself, "It's eight thousand *li* from Lin'an to Chengdu. These two strings of cash will buy me only a few meals. How am I going to get enough money to make it to Chengdu?"

After leaving Madam Sun's Inn, he wandered around in the neighborhood without running into any acquaintances. He walked until it was well past the usual mealtime. Stung by the pangs of hunger and feeling morose, he decided to buy some wine and food with his two strings of cash and, with his stomach full, throw himself into West Lake. If he had to become a ghost, at least he would not be a hungry one.

Right away, he headed straight for West Lake. After passing through Yongjin Gate and arriving at the shore of the lake, he saw a tall building with a large sign. Written in vermilion on the sign were the bold characters "Hall of Bounty and Bliss." There came to his ears the melodious notes of wind instruments amid drum music that rose to the skies. He stopped in his tracks to look. There, standing on both sides of the door with their hands folded across their chests were two men wearing square hats, purple robes, silk shoes, and white stockings. "Please come in and take a seat!" they said to Yu Liang.

At this invitation, Yu Liang joyfully stepped inside. He went all the way upstairs and sat down in a private booth near the railing with a nice view of the lake. A waiter on duty came up to him and asked, after chanting a greeting, "Scholar, how much wine shall I serve



个相识在此。你可将两双箸放在桌上，铺下两只盏，等一等来问。”酒保见说，便将酒缸、酒提、匙、箸、盏、碟，放在面前，尽是银器。俞良口中不道，心中自言：“好富贵去处，我却这般生受！只有两贯钱在身边，做甚用？”少顷，酒保又来问：“解元要多少酒，打来？”俞良便道：“我那相识，眼见的不来了。你与我打两角酒来。”酒保便应了，又问：“解元，要甚下酒？”俞良道：“随你把来。”当下酒保只当是个好客，折莫甚新鲜果品，可口肴馔，海鲜、案酒之类，铺排面前，般般都有。将一个银酒缸盛了两角酒，安一把杓儿，酒保频将酒荡。俞良独自一个，从晌午前直吃到日晡时后。面前按酒，吃得阑残。俞良手抚雕栏，下视湖光，心中愁闷。唤将酒保来：“烦借笔砚则个。”酒保道：“解元借笔砚，莫不是要题诗赋？却不可污了粉壁，[眉批] 污粉壁的真可恶。本店自有诗牌。若是污了粉壁，小人今日当直，便折了这一日日事钱。”俞良道：“恁地时，取诗牌和笔砚来。”须臾之间，酒保取到诗牌笔砚，安在桌上。俞良道：“你自退，我教你便来。



you?”

“I’m waiting for a friend. You can put two pairs of chopsticks and two plates on the table for now and come back later. ”

Thus instructed, the waiter laid before Yu Liang wine cups, a wine ladle, spoons, chopsticks, plates, and saucers — all of silver. Without saying anything out loud, Yu Liang thought, “What a place of luxury! And yet I’m in such a wretched state! What good can those two strings of cash do?”

A moment later, the waiter appeared again. “Scholar, how much wine do you want? Shall I bring it to you now?”

“It looks like that friend of mine is not coming after all. Bring me two measures of wine anyway. ”

The waiter took the order and asked again, “Scholar, what do you want to go with the wine?”

“Bring me whatever you see fit.”

Taking Yu Liang to be a rich patron, the waiter brought over as many plates of fresh fruit, delicacies, and seafood as he could carry and laid out a fine spread, with every kind of food imaginable. He filled a silver wine jar with two measures of wine and placed on the table a ladle for Yu’s use.

The waiter heated one serving of wine after another, and Yu Liang drank all by himself from morning till late afternoon until little was left on the table. His hand stroking the carved railings, his eyes resting on the shining surface of the lake, he felt his heart torn with grief. He summoned the waiter and said, “May I borrow a brush-pen and an ink slab?”

“Scholar,” said the waiter, “in borrowing a brush-pen and an ink slab, are you thinking of writing a poem? Please don’t spoil our whitewashed walls. (*Those who spoil whitewashed walls be cursed!*) We have tablets for writing down poems. If you write on the wall, I’ll lose a day’s wages. ”

“In that case, bring me a poem tablet along with the brush-pen and ink slab. ”

In the twinkling of an eye, the waiter laid a poem tablet, a brush-pen, and an ink slab on the table.



不叫时，休来。”当下酒保自去。

俞良拽上阁门，用凳子顶住，自言自语道：“我只要显名在这楼上，教后人知我。[眉批]大丈夫直想在酒楼上显名，可怜虫。你却教我写在诗牌上则甚？”想起身边只有两贯钱，吃了许多酒食，捉甚还他？不如题了诗，推开窗，看着湖里只一跳，做一个饱鬼。当下磨得墨浓，蘸得笔饱，拂拭一堵壁子干净，写下《鹊桥仙》词：

来时秋暮，到时春暮，归去又还秋暮。丰乐楼上望西川，
动不动八千里路。青山无数，白云无数，绿水又还无数。
人生七十古来稀，算恁地光阴，能来得几度！

题毕，去后面写道：“锦里秀才俞良作。”放下笔，不觉眼中流泪。自思量道：“活他做甚，不如寻个死处，免受穷苦！”当下推开槛窗，望着下面湖水，待要跳下去，争奈去岸又远，倘或跳下去不死，颠折了腿脚，如何是好？[眉批]到底自惜一死。心生一计，解下腰间系的旧绦，一搭搭在阁儿里梁上，做一个活落圈。俞良



“You may withdraw now,” said Yu Liang. “Don’t come again until I call you.” Immediately, the waiter withdrew.

Yu Liang pulled the partition door shut and put a stool against it, saying to himself, “I’m going to make myself famous in this wineshop and make my name known to posterity. (*What a miserable wretch! He wishes for nothing more than to make himself famous in a wineshop!*) Writing on the tablet is not going to serve my purpose.” Then another thought struck him, “With only two strings of cash, how am I going to pay for all the wine and food that I’ve had? I might just as well write the poem, push the windows open, and jump into the lake. If I’m going to be a ghost, I’d better be one with a full stomach.” Then and there, he rubbed the ink stick against the ink slab until the ink was the right thickness. After dipping the brush-pen well in the ink, he dusted a stretch of the wall and wrote on it a lyric poem to the tune of “Immortal at the Magpie Bridge”:

*I left in late fall, arrived in late spring;
Now, on my way home, it’s again late fall.
Looking west from the Hall of Bounty and Bliss,
I see eight thousand li from here to home.
Endless are the blue hills, white clouds, and green waters,
But few ever live beyond seventy.
Given the allotted spans of life,
How long can one ever aspire to live?*

With the poem finished, he added at the end, “By Yu Liang, scholar of Chengdu, Sichuan.”

As he lay down the pen, tears coursed down his cheeks before he knew it. He thought, “What’s the point of going on living? I’d be better off dead, so as not to suffer anymore from all this poverty and misery!” Then and there, he pushed open the windows above the railings and was on the verge of jumping into the lake when a thought struck him: “The water is quite a distance away. What if I don’t die but just end up breaking a foot or a leg?” (*He’s not ready to die, after all.*)

He hit on a plan. He took off his old, worn waistband, threw it over the beam in the private booth, and made a slipknot in it. With a



叹了一口气，却待把头钻入那圈里去。你道好凑巧！那酒保见多时不叫他，走来阁儿前，见关着门，不敢敲，去那窗眼里打一张，只见俞良在内，正要钻入圈里去，又不舍得死。酒保吃了一惊，火急向前推开门，入到里面，一把抱住俞良道：“解元甚做作！你自死了，须连累我店中！”声张起来，楼下掌管、师工、酒保、打杂人等，都上楼来，一时嚷动。众人看那俞良时，却有八分酒，只推醉，口里胡言乱语不住声。酒保看那壁上时，茶盏来大小字写了一壁，叫苦不迭：“我今朝却不没兴，这一日事钱休了也！”道：“解元，吃了酒，便算了钱回去。”俞良道：“做甚么？你要便打杀了我！”酒保道：“解元，不要寻闹。你今日吃的酒钱，总算起来，共该五两银子。”俞良道：“若要我五两银子，你要我性命便有，那得银子还你！我自从门前走过，你家两个着紫衫的邀住我，请我上楼吃酒。我如今没钱，只是死了罢。”便望窗槛外要跳，唬得酒保连忙抱住。当下众人商议：“不知他在那里住，忍悔气放他去罢。不时，做出人命来，明日怎地分说？”便问俞良道：“解元，你在那里住？”俞良道：“我住在贡院桥孙婆客店里。我是西川成都府有名的秀才，因科举来此间。[眉批]亏他还说。若我回去，路上颠在河里水里，明日都放不过你们。”众人道：“若真个死了时不好。”只得忍悔气，着两个人送他去，有个下落，



sigh, he prepared to stick his head into the knot, but, as coincidence would have it, the waiter, wondering why he had not been called for quite some time, went to the booth. Finding the door closed, he dared not knock but peeped through an aperture in the window. What did he see but Yu Liang on the point of sticking his head through the knot yet unable to bring himself to do it! With a violent start, the waiter frantically turned to the door, pushed it open, rushed in, and, in one sweep of his arms, held Yu Liang tight. "Scholar," said he. "What are you doing? If you kill yourself, this wineshop will be in trouble!"

Hearing the commotion, the manager, chefs, waiters, and handy men hurried up the stairs, raising quite a clamor. There for all to see was Yu Liang raving and ranting, making himself out to be even more inebriated than he was. At the sight of the wall now covered with characters, each the size of a teacup, the waiter cried out in anguish, "Woe is me! I can forget about today's wages!" He continued, "Scholar, please pay for the wine and food before you go."

"Why?" shot back Yu Liang. "Go ahead and beat me to death if you want the money!"

"Scholar, be reasonable. You owe me five taels of silver in total for the wine and the food."

"Five taels of silver, you said? I'll gladly offer you my life, but silver I have none! I was passing by this place when your two men in purple stopped me and invited me in for a drink upstairs. I have no money. Let me die!"

So saying, he made as if to jump out the window. Horrified, the waiter held him fast. Some onlookers gave this advice: "Why don't we just accept our bad luck and let him go back to wherever he lives? If we end up with a death on our hands, we'll have a lot of explaining to do." Someone asked Yu Liang, "Scholar, where do you live?"

"I'm staying in Madam Sun's Inn by the bridge near the examination grounds. I'm a famous scholar from Chengdu Prefecture in Sichuan, here for the imperial examinations. (*The audacity!*) If I fall in some river on my way back, I won't let you off easy!"

"It won't reflect well on us if he really dies," said the crowd.



省惹官司。当下教两个酒保，搀扶他下楼。出门迤迳上路，却又天色晚了。两个人一路扶着，到得孙婆店前，那客店门却关了。酒保便把俞良放在门前，却去敲门。里面只道有甚客来，连忙开门。酒保见开了门，撒了手便走。俞良东倒西歪，踉踉跄跄，只待要颠。孙婆讨灯来一照，却是俞良。吃了一惊，没奈何，叫儿孙小二扶他入房里去睡了。孙婆便骂道：“昨日在我家蒿恼，白白里送了他两贯钱。说道：‘还乡去。’却元来将去买酒吃！”俞良只推醉，由他骂，不敢则声。[眉批]可怜。正是：

人无气势精神减，囊少金钱应对难。

话分两头。却说南宋高宗天子传位孝宗，自为了太上皇，居于德寿宫。孝宗尽事亲之道，承颜顺志，惟恐有违。自朝贺问安，及良辰美景父子同游之外，上皇在德寿宫闲暇，每同内侍官到西湖游玩。或有时恐惊扰百姓，微服潜行，以此为常。忽一日，上



Accepting their bad luck, they had two men accompany him back to his lodgings, so as to make sure that he reached his destination, lest he bring a lawsuit against them. And so, two waiters helped him down the stairs.

The day was already drawing to a close by the time they started off. The two men supported him all the way until they arrived at Madam Sun's Inn, only to find the door closed. They propped Yu Liang against the wall by the door and knocked. Thinking some guests had arrived, those inside quickly answered the door. As soon as they saw the door opening, the waiters let go of Yu Liang and raced off, leaving him staggering and swaying every which way, looking as if he was about to fall. Madam Sun took a lamp and was aghast to see by its light that it was none other than Yu Liang. Resignedly, she had her son Sun Xiao'er help Yu Liang into his room to retire for the night.

"Yesterday, he raised hell in my inn," said Madam Sun bitterly, "and got two strings of cash from me for doing nothing. He said he was going back home, but now I see that he spent the money on wine!"

As he was supposed to be drunk, Yu Liang had to let her carry on and dared not make a sound. (*Poor thing.*) Truly,

Without dignity, he looked crestfallen;

With no money, he had to bite his tongue.

But our story forks at this point. Let me now tell of Emperor Gaozong [r.1127-62] of the Southern Song dynasty. Having passed his throne to Xiaozong [r.1163-89] and making himself Imperial Patriarch, he took up residence in the Hall of Virtue and Longevity. Emperor Xiaozong proved to be a most filial son, gingerly fulfilling the Imperial Patriarch's every desire, lest he find anything contrary to his wishes. Every morning, Emperor Xiaozong went to pay his respects to his father. The Imperial Patriarch not only toured the scenic sites with his son but also, not infrequently in his leisurely life in the Hall of Virtue and Longevity, sought the company of eunuchs in his tours of West Lake. In order not to disturb the people, he made a habit of going incognito.



皇来到灵隐寺冷泉亭闲坐。怎见得冷泉亭好处？有张舆诗四句：

朵朵峰峦拥翠华，倚云楼阁是僧家。

凭栏尽日无人语，濯足寒泉数落花。

上皇正坐观泉，寺中住持僧献茶。有一行者，手托茶盘，高擎下跪。上皇龙目观看，见他相貌魁梧，且是执礼恭谨。御音问道：“朕看你不像个行者模样，可实说是何等人？”那行者双行流泪，拜告道：“臣姓李名直，原任南剑府太守。得罪于监司，被诬赃罪，废为庶人，家贫无以糊口。本寺住持是臣母舅，权充行者，觅些粥食，以延微命。”[眉批]罢官后遂至依僧胡（糊）口，其廉可知，监司诬以赃罪，岂不诚冤。上皇恻然不忍道：“待朕回宫，当与皇帝言之。”是晚回宫，恰好孝宗天子差太监到德寿宫问安，上皇就将南剑太守李直分付去了，要皇帝复其原官。过了数日，上皇再到灵隐寺中，那行者依旧来送茶。上皇问道：“皇帝已复你的原官



One day, the Imperial Patriarch went to Lingyin Monastery and sat idly in Cold Fountain Pavilion. How do we know about the charms of Cold Fountain Pavilion? There is a quatrain by Zhang Yu that describes the place:

*Hills upon hills surround the royal canopy;
Towers that touch the clouds serve as homes to monks.
No human sound heard all day along the railings,
My feet in the cold spring, I count the falling petals.*

While the Imperial Patriarch was sitting and looking at the spring, the abbot of the monastery ordered that tea be served. An acolyte, holding a tray high above his head, got down on his knees. Turning his royal eyes upon the man, the Imperial Patriarch was impressed by his imposing physique and polite manners. In his royal voice, he said, "We do not believe you have the looks of an acolyte. Tell us the truth. Who are you really?"

With tears falling thick and fast, the acolyte said respectfully, "Your subject's name is Li Zhi, formerly prefect of Nanjian. I offended the inspector and, as a result, was convicted of accepting bribes on the basis of some trumped-up charges. Deprived of all official posts, I was reduced to such poverty that I had nothing to live on. The abbot of this monastery is my uncle, so I am here working as an acolyte in exchange for some porridge to keep me alive." (*To be so poor as to have to make a living in a monastery after dismissal from office bespeaks his spotless record as an incorrupt official. How unjust for the inspector to charge him of bribery!*)

Saddened by these words, the Imperial Patriarch said, "After we return to the palace, we shall tell the emperor about this. "

It so happened that upon his return to the palace that night, Emperor Xiaozong sent a eunuch to the Hall of Virtue and Longevity to inquire after the Imperial Patriarch's health. The Imperial Patriarch accordingly told the eunuch to convey to the emperor a message about the case of Li Zhi, the former prefect of Nanjian, asking that Li be reinstated.

A few days later, the Imperial Patriarch visited Lingyin Monastery again, and the same acolyte served tea.



否？”那行者叩头奏道：“还未。”上皇面有愧容。次日，孝宗天子恭请太上皇、皇太后，幸聚景园。上皇不言不笑，似有怨怒之意。孝宗奏道：“今日风景融和，愿得圣情开悦。”上皇嘿然不答。太后道：“孩儿好意招老夫妇游玩，没事恼做甚么？”上皇叹口气道：“‘树老招风，人老招贱。’朕今年老，说来的话，都没人作准了。”孝宗愕然，正不知为甚缘故，叩头请罪。上皇道：“朕前日曾替南剑府太守李直说个分上，竟不作准。昨日于寺中复见其人，令我愧杀。”孝宗道：“前奉圣训，次日即谕宰相。宰相说：‘李直赃污狼藉，难以复用。’既承圣眷，此小事，来朝便行。今日且开怀一醉。”上皇方才回嗔作喜，尽醉方休。第二日，孝宗再谕宰相，要起用李直。宰相依旧推辞，孝宗道：“此是太上主意。昨日发怒，朕无地缝可入。便是大逆谋反，也须放他。”遂尽复其原官。此事阁起不题。



“Has the emperor reinstated you?” asked the Imperial Patriarch.

“Not yet,” replied the acolyte with a kowtow.

The Imperial Patriarch looked embarrassed.

The next day, while in Jujing Garden with his wife at the respectful invitation of Emperor Xiaozong, the Imperial Patriarch kept his lips tight, saying not a single word, giving not a single smile, and wearing a sullen look on his face. Emperor Xiaozong said, “I do wish that such nice and balmy weather would cheer you up, sire.”

His father remained silent.

The empress dowager said, “Our boy invited us for this excursion with the best of intentions. There’s surely no reason for you to sulk like this.”

With a sigh, the Imperial Patriarch replied, “As the saying goes, ‘An old tree invites the wind; an old person invites contempt.’ Now that I am an old man, nobody takes my words seriously.”

Emperor Xiaozong was aghast. Having no idea what had led to this remark, he kowtowed and begged for forgiveness.

His father continued, “The other day, I put in a good word for Li Zhi, the former prefect of Nanjian, but you brushed it aside. Yesterday, when I saw him again in the monastery, I was embarrassed to death!”

“I told the prime minister about this the very day after I received your message, sire. The prime minister said, ‘Li Zhi was a notorious bribe taker and should not be reinstated.’ But since you care so much about this case, I’ll do something about it tomorrow. It’s really a trivial matter. But now, please drink to your heart’s content.”

Only then did the Imperial Patriarch’s expression soften. Regaining his cheerful mood, he drank until he was tipsy. The next day, Emperor Xiaozong again instructed the prime minister to reinstate Li Zhi, but again, the prime minister refused. Emperor Xiaozong said, “This is the Imperial Patriarch’s idea. Yesterday, he had such an outburst of anger that I wished I could have disappeared through some crack in the floor. Even if that man is guilty of plotting a rebellion, he has to be set free.” Consequently, Li Zhi was reinstated as prefect, and we shall speak no more of this.



再说俞良在孙婆店借宿之夜，上皇忽得一梦，梦游西湖之上，见毫光万道之中，却有两条黑气冲天，竦然惊觉。至次早，宣个圆梦先生来，说其备细。先生奏道：“乃是有一贤人流落此地，游于西湖，口吐怨气冲天，故托梦于上皇，必主朝廷得一贤人。应在今日，不注吉凶。”上皇闻之大喜，赏了圆梦先生。遂入宫中，更换衣装，扮作文人秀才，带几个近侍官，都扮作斯文模样，一同信步出城。行至丰乐楼前，正见两个着紫衫的，又在门前邀请。当下上皇与近侍官，一同入酒肆中，走上楼去。那一日楼上阁儿恰好都有人坐满，只有俞良夜来寻死的那阁儿关着。上皇便揭开帘儿，却待入去，只见酒保告：“解元，不可入去，这阁儿不顺溜！今日主人家便要打醋炭了。待打过醋炭，却教客人吃酒。”上皇便问：“这阁儿如何不顺溜？”酒保告：“解元，说不可尽。夜来有个秀才，是西川成都府人，因赴试不第，流落在此。独自一个在这阁儿里吃了五两银子酒食，吃的大醉。直至日晚，身边无银子还酒钱，便放无赖，寻死觅活，自割自吊。没奈何怕惹官司，只得又赔店里两个人送他归去。且是住的远，直到贡院



Now, let us return to Yu Liang. The night Yu Liang was brought back to Madam Sun's Inn, the Imperial Patriarch had a dream in which he was touring West Lake when, in the midst of the myriad fine rays of light, there arose two tall black columns. He woke up with a start. The next morning, he summoned an interpreter of dreams and gave a full description of the dream. The dream interpreter said, "There must be a worthy man who is stranded in this place, unable to go home. When he was touring West Lake, his bitter sighs rose to heaven in breaths of rancor and appeared in Your Majesty's dream. This is an omen that, as of today, the imperial court will gain the services of a worthy man. Whether this portends good or ill, it is not for me to say."

Greatly delighted, the Imperial Patriarch paid the dream interpreter and went into his room, where he changed into a scholar's robe. Taking with him a few eunuchs, all dressed like scholars, he walked leisurely out into the streets. Their steps took them to the Hall of Bounty and Bliss, where they saw two men in purple at the entrance, inviting people in. Readily, the Imperial Patriarch and his retinue entered the wineshop and mounted the stairs to the second floor.

That day, it so happened that all the booths on the second floor were occupied, except the one where Yu Liang had attempted suicide the night before. Pushing aside the curtain, the Imperial Patriarch was on the point of stepping in when the waiter said, "Scholar, don't go in! That booth is unlucky! My master is going to fumigate it with vinegar today.¹² The booth won't be ready for you until after it's been treated."

"Why is this booth unlucky?" asked the Imperial Patriarch.

"Scholar, that's a long story. Yesterday, a scholar from Chengdu in Sichuan came here. He was stranded in this town after failing the examinations. Well, in this very booth, all by himself, he had wine and food worth five taels of silver and got himself dead drunk. At around dusk, he said he had no money to pay for the wine and the food, and he made a terrible scene, trying to kill himself and all that. We were afraid of getting involved in some legal trouble, so we had no choice but to have two of our men escort him back as far as



桥孙婆客店里歇。因此不顺溜，主家要打醋炭了，方教客人吃酒。”上皇见说道：“不妨，我们是秀才，不惧此事。”遂乃一齐坐下。上皇抬头只见壁上茶盏来大小字写满，却是一只《鹊桥仙》词。读至后面写道“锦里秀才俞良作”，龙颜暗喜，想道：“此人正是应梦贤士，这词中有怨望之言。”便问酒保：“此词是谁所作？”酒保：“告解元，此词便是那夜来撒赖秀才写的。”上皇听了，便问：“这秀才见在那里住？”酒保道：“见在贡院桥孙婆客店里安歇。”上皇买些酒食吃了，算了酒钱，起身回宫。一面分付内侍官，传一道旨意，着地方官于贡院桥孙婆店中，取锦里秀才俞良火速回奏。内侍传将出去，只说太上圣旨，要唤俞良，却不曾叙出缘由明白。地方官心下也只糊涂，当下奉旨飞马到贡院桥孙婆店前，左右的一索扭住孙婆。因走得气急，口中连唤“俞良”“俞良”，孙婆只道被俞良所告，惊得面如土色，[眉批] 孙婆忠厚人。双膝跪下，只是磕头。差官道：“那婆子莫忙。官里要西川秀才俞良，在你店中也不在？”孙婆方敢回言道：“告恩官，有却有个



Madam Sun's Inn by Examination Grounds Bridge, where he lives. That's why I said this booth is unlucky. Don't use it until it's been treated with vinegar. "

After hearing these words, the Imperial Patriarch said, "That's all right. We are learned scholars and have no fear of such things. " So saying, he and his attendants all sat down. Raising his head, he saw the wall covered with characters, each the size of a teacup. Upon reading, he found it to be a lyric poem¹³ to the tune of "Immortal at the Magpie Bridge. " When he reached the end, he came upon the line "By Yu Liang, scholar of Chengdu, Sichuan. " Inwardly rejoicing, the Imperial Patriarch thought, "So, this must be the worthy man in my dream because this poem does have a bitter tone."

"Who wrote this poem?" he asked the waiter.

"Scholar, it was written by none other than the scholar who made a terrible scene here last evening."

"Where is he staying?"

"At Madam Sun's Inn by Examination Grounds Bridge. "

The Imperial Patriarch had some wine and food, paid the bill, and returned to the palace. In the meantime, he had the eunuchs issue an imperial edict ordering the local yamen to go to Madam Sun's Inn and bring Yu Liang, scholar from Chengdu, to him posthaste.

When relaying the edict, the eunuchs said only that Yu Liang was to be summoned by the Imperial Patriarch without specifying the reason. Knowing nothing about what had led to this edict, the local official charged with the mission sped on horseback with his men to Madam Sun's Inn. Upon arriving, they threw a rope around Madam Sun and, still breathless from their frantic riding, cried out, "Yu Liang! Yu Liang!"

Thinking that Yu Liang must have lodged a complaint against her with the yamen, Madam Sun was seized with fear and her face turned ashen. (*An honest woman she was.*) She fell on both knees and began kowtowing nonstop.

"Easy, woman!" said the official. "Yu Liang, scholar from Sichuan, is wanted by the emperor. Is he or is he not in this inn?"

It was only then that Madam Sun mustered up enough courage to



俞秀才在此安下，只是今日清早起身回家乡去了。家中儿子送去，兀自未回。临行之时，又写一首词在壁上。官人如不信，下马来看便见。”差官听说，入店中看时，见壁上真个有只词，墨迹尚然新鲜，词名也是《鹊桥仙》，道是：

杏花红雨，梨花白雪，羞对短亭长路。东君也解数归程，遍地落花飞絮。胸中万卷，笔头千古，方信儒冠多误。青霄有路不须忙，便着纳草鞋归去。

元来那俞良隔夜醉了，由那孙婆骂了一夜。到得五更，孙婆怕他又不去，教儿子小二清早起来，押送他出门。俞良临去，就壁上写了这只词。孙小二送去，兀自未回。

差官见了此词，便教左右抄了，飞身上马。另将一匹空马，也教孙婆骑坐，一直望北赶去。路上正迎见孙小二。差官教放了孙婆，将孙小二扼住，问俞良安在。孙小二战战兢兢道：“俞秀才为盘缠缺少，踌躇不进，见在北关门边汤团铺里坐。”当下就带孙小二做眼，飞马赶到北关门下。只见俞良立在那灶边，手里拿



reply, "Sir, there was indeed a Scholar Yu here, but early this morning he left for his hometown. My son went to see him off but hasn't come back yet. Yu Liang wrote a poem on the wall before leaving. If you don't believe me, you can dismount and come see it."

And so, the official went into the house and saw that, there, written on the wall, was indeed a poem, with the ink still wet. Set also to the tune of "Immortal at the Magpie Bridge," it read,

*In the pink rain of apricot blossoms,
Among the snowflakes of white pear petals,
I face with shame the road that leads to home.
The Spring Fairy on a return journey,
Willow catkins fly, flowers strew the ground.*

*Ten thousand books I have learned by heart;
All history lies at the tip of my pen.
But a scholar's career is not in my fate.
Rush not! There are other ways to rise to the clouds.
In my straw sandals, I now return.*

What had happened was that Madam Sun, finding Yu Liang in a drunken stupor again the previous night, had yelled at him throughout the night. At the fifth watch, afraid that he would again try to stay on, she woke her son Xiao'er and had him escort Yu Liang out the door. Before his departure, Yu Liang wrote that poem on the wall. Sun Xiao'er had not yet returned from his mission.

After reading the poem, the official had his men copy it down before jumping back onto his horse. He gave Madam Sun an extra horse so she could ride with them and pressed ahead in a northerly direction. On the road, they ran head-on into Sun Xiao'er. The official let go of Madam Sun but grabbed Sun Xiao'er, asking, "Where is Yu Liang?"

Trembling with fear, Sun Xiao'er replied, "Scholar Yu is reluctant to go on because he has no traveling money. He's now sitting in the dumpling shop by the North Gate."

Straight away, the official raced off to the North Gate, taking Sun Xiao'er along as a guide. Lo and behold, there was Yu Liang,



着一碗汤团正吃哩，被使命叫一声：“俞良听圣旨。”唬得俞良大惊，连忙放下碗，走出门跪下。使命口宣上皇圣旨：“教俞良到德寿宫见驾。”俞良不知分晓，一时被众人簇拥上马，迤迳直到德寿宫。各人下马，且于侍班阁子内，听候传宣。地方官先在宫门外叩头复命：“俞良秀才取到了。”上皇传旨，教俞良借紫入内。

俞良穿了紫衣软带，纱帽皂靴，到得金阶之下，拜舞起居已毕。上皇传旨，问俞良：“丰乐楼上所写《鹊桥仙》词，是卿所作？”俞良奏道：“是臣醉中之笔，不想惊动圣目。”上皇道：“卿有如此才，不远千里而来，应举不中，是主司之过也。卿莫有怨望之心？”俞良奏道：“穷达皆天，臣岂敢怨！”上皇曰：“以卿大才，岂不堪任一方之寄？朕今赐卿衣紫，说与皇帝，封卿大官，卿意若何？”俞良叩头拜谢曰：“臣有何德能，敢膺圣眷如此！”上皇曰：“卿当于朕前，或诗或词，可做一首，胜如使命所



standing by the stove of a wineshop and eating dumplings from a bowl he was holding in his hands. At the emissary's cry of "Yu Liang, hark the imperial edict!" he gave a violent start. Hastily putting down the bowl, he stepped out the door and dropped to his knees.

"Yu Liang is hereby ordered to repair to the Hall of Virtue and Longevity for an audience with the Imperial Patriarch," said the emissary, reading the edict.

Before Yu Liang could figure out what it was all about, he was hustled onto a horse and led all the way to the Hall of Virtue and Longevity, where everyone dismounted and went to the reception office to await instructions. The local official kowtowed at the palace entrance, announcing, "Scholar Yu Liang is here!" At an order from the Imperial Patriarch, Yu Liang was allowed to borrow a purple robe and enter the palace.

Wearing a purple robe, a waistband, a gauze cap, and a pair of black boots, Yu Liang proceeded to the flight of steps leading to the throne and, prostrating himself on the ground, performed the necessary ritual of homage to the Imperial Patriarch. "Did you write the poem to the tune of 'Immortal at the Magpie Bridge' in the Hall of Bounty and Bliss?" asked the Imperial Patriarch.

"I wrote it in an inebriated state. Never did I expect that the Imperial Patriarch would lay eyes on it."

"You undertook such a long journey to this place. That you, with your talent, failed the examinations was the fault of the examination supervisor. Do not be resentful."

"To be poor or to be rich is a matter of heavenly will. I would never dream of being resentful."

"With your great talent, you are more than equal to any official post in any locality. Take the purple robe you are wearing as a gift from me. I will have the emperor appoint you to an important post. What do you say to that?"

Yu Liang kowtowed, saying gratefully, "What virtues and ability do I have to deserve such kindness?"

"Now, write a poem or a lyric poem for me right here, and make it better than the one that the emissary copied from the wall of



抄店中壁上之作。”俞良奏乞题目。上皇曰：“便只指卿今日遭遇朕躬为题。”俞良领旨，左右便取过文房四宝，放在俞良面前。俞良一挥而就，做了一只词，名《过龙门令》：

冒险过秦关，跋涉长江，崎岖万里到钱塘。举不成名归计拙，趁食街坊。命蹇苦难当，空有词章，片言争敢动吾皇。敕赐紫袍归故里，衣锦还乡。

上皇看了，龙颜大喜，对俞良道：“卿要衣锦还乡，朕当遂卿之志。”当下御笔亲书六句：

锦里俞良，妙有词章。高才不遇，落魄堪伤。敕赐高官，衣锦还乡。

分付内侍官，将这道旨意，送与皇帝，就引俞良去见驾。孝宗见了上皇圣旨，因数日前为南剑太守李直一事，险些儿触了太上之怒，今番怎敢迟慢？[眉批]亦是机会凑巧。想俞良是锦里秀才，如



the wineshop. ”

To Yu Liang’s request for a topic, the Imperial Patriarch said, “Just write about your encounter with us. ”

Thus ordered, Yu Liang took the four treasures of the scholar’s study¹⁴ that the palace attendants held out to him and, with never a moment’s hesitation, wrote a lyric poem to the tune of “Over the Dragon Gate:”

*I crossed the Qinguan Pass, risking my life,
And trudged along the Yangzi River
Over a rugged ten thousand li,
Until here I am in Qiantang.
Failing to gain fame, unable to return,
I ended up living off my neighbors.*

*What ill luck! What a hard life!
My art in poetry and writing quite useless, till
A little poem of mine caught the emperor’s eyes.
And now, with a purple robe bestowed on me,
To my hometown I return,
Resplendent in honor and glory.*

The Imperial Patriarch found the poem delightful. “If it’s your wish to return to your hometown in glory, we shall grant it. ” Then and there, wielding his royal brush-pen, he wrote six lines:

*Yu Liang of Chengdu,
Fine poet and scholar.
His talent unrecognized,
He lamented his ill fate.
Hereby granted a high post,
In glory he returns home.*

The Imperial Patriarch then ordered that the eunuchs convey the message to the emperor and bring Yu Liang into the latter’s presence. Now, Emperor Xiaozong had just nearly missed provoking an outburst of rage from his father over the case of Li Zhi, prefect of Nan-jian. How could he fail to give this matter proper attention? (*The timing happened to be just right.*) He thought that since his father wanted



今圣旨批赐衣锦还乡，若用他别处地方为官，又恐拂了太上的圣意，即刻批旨：“俞良可授成都府太守，加赐白金千两，以为路费。”[眉批]孝宗所以为孝。次日，俞良紫袍金带，当殿谢恩已毕。又往德寿宫，谢了上皇。将御赐银两备办鞍马仆从之类，又将百金酬谢孙婆。前呼后拥，荣归故里，不在话下。

是日孝宗御驾亲往德寿宫朝见上皇，谢其贤人之赐。上皇又对孝宗说过：传旨遍行天下，下次秀才应举，须要乡试得中，然后赴京殿试。今时乡试之例，皆因此起，流传至今，永远为例矣。

昔年司马逢杨意，今日俞良际上皇。

若使文章皆遇主，功名迟早又何妨。



the scholar from Chengdu to return to his hometown in glory, he would very likely be contradicting his father's wish if he assigned Yu Liang somewhere else. Thereupon, he wrote, "Yu Liang is hereby appointed prefect of Chengdu and granted a thousand taels of silver to cover his traveling expenses." (*Emperor Xiaozong was indeed a filial son* ["*xiao*" means "*filial piety*"].)

The next day, Yu Liang, in his purple robe and golden waistband, was brought into the court, where he thanked the emperor for his imperial bounty and then went to the Hall of Virtue and Longevity to offer his thanks to the Imperial Patriarch. With the silver bestowed upon him by the emperor, he engaged servants and saddled horses and gave Madam Sun a hundred taels of silver as a reward.

How he returned home in style amid a grand procession is of no concern to us here, but on that very day, Emperor Xiaozong went in person to the Hall of Virtue and Longevity to thank his father for having brought him a worthy man. The Imperial Patriarch replied, "Issue an edict and let it be known throughout the land that in future, scholars sitting for imperial civil service examinations must first pass examinations at the provincial level before coming to the capital for the last round of examinations in the palace."

That is how examinations at the provincial level came into being. The practice is still alive and well unto this day, and this is the story that is passed down in history to explain its origin.

*Sima of old had Yang Deyi to thank;
Yu Liang of today chanced upon the emperor.
If all talents are recognized in the end,
Why worry, when it's only a matter of time?*

¹ Zhang Liang, courtesy name Zifang (d. 189 B.C.E.), took refuge in Xiapi, Xuzhou, after a failed attempt to assassinate the First Emperor of the Qin dynasty. Later, he served as advisor to Liu Bang, founder of the Han dynasty.

² Yi Yin, an advisor to King Tang, founder of the Shang dynasty, was of humble origin and a native of the state of Youxin near what is now Kaifeng, Henan.

³ Lü Wang — popularly known as Taigong Wang, Jiang Taigong, or Jiang Ziya — was a military strategist who did not rise to eminence until he was accosted by King Wen of the Zhou dynasty (ca. 1027–256 B.C.E.) while fishing by Panxi Creek, which flowed into the Wei River.





He was already about eighty years old.

⁴ In his youth, Han Xin (d. 196 B.C.E.) was challenged by a ruffian and made to crawl between his legs. Han Xin later helped Liu Bang found the Han dynasty. For more on Han Xin, see note 2 of story 4.

⁵ Lü Mengzheng of the Song dynasty was a *zhuangyuan* (winner of highest honors in the civil service examinations).

⁶ Pei Du (765–839) was prime minister during the Tang dynasty. For more on Pei Du, see note 8 of story 5 of this collection and story 9 in Feng Menglong, *Stories Old and New*, trans. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang (Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House, 2007).

⁷ Qi and Chu were states during the Warring States period. Qi covered present-day northern Shandong and southeastern Hebei, and Chu comprised present-day Hubei, northern Hunan, and other regions along the lower and middle reaches of the Yangzi (Yangtze) River.

⁸ Zou Yang and Mei Gao were famous men of letters of the Western Han dynasty.

⁹ “Mr. Fantasy” (*Zixu fu*) is a criticism of the extravagances of the imperial court.

¹⁰ During the Warring States period, the state of Qi came under attack by Chi of the state of Chu, and Fazhang, the crown prince of Qi, was disguised as a servant and took refuge in Grand Historian Jiao’s household. Jiao’s daughter, impressed by the prince’s refined looks, surreptitiously gave him clothes and extra portions of food. In 279 B.C., General Tian Shan retook more than seventy towns in Qi and made Fazhang the new king of Qi; Grand Historian Jiao’s daughter became queen. Jiao said, “She is no longer my daughter, for she brought disgrace to the family by marrying herself off without the proper match-making procedures.” He never saw his daughter again.

¹¹ This comment refers to the story of Han Xin (see note 4), who was fishing when an old woman washing clothes by the river noticed that he looked hungry and gave him some food. After he rose to power and became commander-in-chief under Liu Bang, Han Xin sought out the old woman and gave her a reward of a thousand pieces of gold.

¹² In a vinegar fumigation ritual, red-hot coal is thrown into vinegar, and the resulting vapors supposedly drive away bad luck.

¹³ A “lyric” (*ci*) poem differs from a “poem” (*shi*) mainly in that it is written to fit an existing tune.

¹⁴ The four treasures of the scholar’s study are brush-pen, ink slab, ink stick, and rice paper.



第七卷

陈可常端阳仙化

利名门路两无凭，百岁风前短焰灯。
只恐为僧僧不了，为僧得了尽输僧。

话说大宋高宗绍兴年间，温州府乐清县，有一秀才，姓陈名义，字可常，年方二十四岁。生得眉目清秀，且是聪明，无书不读，无史不通。绍兴年间，三举不第，就于临安府众安桥命铺，算看本身造物。那先生言：“命有华盖，却无官星，只好出家。”陈秀才自小听得母亲说，生下他时，梦见一尊金身罗汉投怀。今日功名蹭蹬之际，又闻星家此言，忿一口气，回店歇了一夜，早起算还了房宿钱，雇人挑了行李，径来灵隐寺投奔印铁牛长老出家，做了行者。这个长老，博通经典，座下有十个侍者，号为“甲、乙、丙、丁、戊、己、庚、辛、壬、癸”，皆读书聪明。陈可常在长老座下做了第二位侍者。

绍兴十一年间，高宗皇帝母舅吴七郡王，时遇五月初四日，



Story 7

Chen Kechang Becomes an Immortal during the Dragon Boat Festival

*Fame and fortune he was not meant to have;
His life a lamp flickering in a draft;
Not much chance, either, with life as a monk,
For a luckless monk he turned out to be.*

The story goes that during the Shaoxing reign period [1131–62] of Emperor Gaozong of the great Song dynasty, there lived, in Yueqing County, Wenzhou Prefecture, a scholar named Chen Yi, courtesy name Kechang. Twenty-four years of age at the time our story begins, he was a young man of refined looks and keen intelligence. There was no book that he did not read, and no history with which he was not familiar.

During the Shaoxing reign period, he sat three times for the imperial civil service examinations, but all three times he failed. He went to a fortuneteller by Zhong'an Bridge in Lin'an Prefecture to find out what lay in store for him. The fortuneteller said, "You were born under the wrong star. You are not meant to be an official. Your only choice is to become a Buddhist monk."

Ever since childhood, Scholar Chen had heard his mother say that when he was born, she dreamed of a gilded arhat entering her belly. Mortified by the fortuneteller's words now that his prospects of fame and fortune looked dim, he went back to his inn to retire for the night. Early the next morning, he rose, paid for his lodging, and, with a hired hand carrying his luggage, went straight to Lingyin Monastery to become a monk under Abbot Iron Ox Yin, who was well versed in all the classics. The abbot's ten acolytes, named after the ten Heavenly Stems, were all brilliant students, and Chen Kechang took the position of the second acolyte in this succession.¹

When the fourth day of the fifth month was drawing near,² in the eleventh year of the Shaoxing reign period [1141], and *zongzi*³ were being prepared in the mansion of Prince Wu Yi, Emperor Gaozong's



府中裹粽子。当下郡王钧旨分付都管：“明日要去灵隐寺斋僧，可打点供食齐备。”都管领钧旨，自去关支银两，买办什物，打点完备。至次日早饭后，郡王点看什物，上轿，带了都管、干办、虞候、押番一千人等，出了钱塘门，过了石涵桥、大佛头，径到西山灵隐寺。先有报帖报知，长老引众僧鸣锣擂鼓，接郡王上殿烧香，请至方丈坐下。长老引众僧参拜献茶，分立两傍。郡王说：“每年五月重五，入寺斋僧解粽，今日依例布施。”院子抬供食献佛，大盘托出粽子，各房都要散到。

郡王闲步廊下，见壁上有诗四句：

齐国曾生一孟尝，晋朝镇恶又高强。

五行偏我遭时蹇，欲向星家问短长。

郡王见诗道：“此诗有怨望之意，不知何人所作？”回至方丈，长老设宴管待。郡王问：“长老，你寺中有何人能作得好诗？”长老：“覆恩王，敝寺僧多，座下有甲、乙、丙、丁、戊、



maternal uncle,⁴ the prince gave an order to the butler, saying, "Tomorrow, I'll be going to Lingyin Monastery to take some donations to the monks. Get some vegetarian food ready for me." Thus instructed, the butler proceeded to make arrangements for money and all the miscellaneous items that would be needed.

After breakfast the next morning, the prince checked all the items and mounted his sedan chair. He took along the butler, a few administrative assistants, his personal guards, and a number of low-ranking military officers. They went through Qiantang Gate, past Shihan Bridge and the Big Buddha Head, and proceeded toward Lingyin Monastery on West Hill. Having received a visiting card in advance, the abbot had the monks strike the chimes and beat the drums to welcome the prince. After the prince was led into the main hall and invited to light incense, he was ushered into the abbot's cell, where he sat down. Following the abbot's lead, the monks saluted the prince and served him tea, after which they withdrew and stood against the wall in two rows, one on the left, one on the right.

The prince said, "On every fifth day of the fifth month, I come to make donations to the monastery and bring you *zongzi*. Today is no exception."

Some young attendants carried in food offerings to the Buddha and then went to all the monks' rooms, distributing *zongzi* from the large trays they held on their palms.

While walking leisurely along the corridors, the prince saw a quatrain written on the wall:

*In the state of Qi was born Lord Mengchang;
During Jin lived that powerful Zhen'e.
Only I was born under the wrong star;
Let me call the fortune-tellers to account!*

After reading it, the prince commented, "This poem has a bitter tone. I wonder who wrote it." He returned to the abbot's cell where the abbot had set out dinner, and asked, "Abbot, who in your monastery writes good poems?"

"Your Excellency," replied the abbot, "of the many monks in this monastery, the ten acolytes named after the ten Heavenly Stems



己、庚、辛、壬、癸十个侍者，皆能作诗。”郡王说：“与我唤来！”长老：“覆恩王，止有两个在敝寺，这八个教去各庄上去了。”只见甲乙二侍者，到郡王面前。郡王叫甲侍者：“你可作诗一首。”甲侍者禀乞题目，郡王教就将粽子为题。甲侍者作诗曰：

四角尖尖草缚腰，浪荡锅中走一遭。

若还撞见唐三藏，将来剥得赤条条。

郡王听罢，大笑道：“好诗，却少文采。”再唤乙侍者作诗。乙侍者问讯了，乞题目，也教将粽子为题。作诗曰：

香粽年年祭屈原，斋僧今日结良缘。

满堂供尽知多少，生死工夫那个先？

郡王听罢大喜道：“好诗！”问乙侍者：“廊下壁间诗，是你作的？”乙侍者：“覆恩王，是侍者做的。”郡王道：“既是你做的，你且解与我知。”乙侍者道：“齐国有个孟尝君，养三千客，他是五月五日午时生。晋国有个大将王镇恶，此人也是五月五日午时生。小侍者也是五月五日午时生，却受此穷苦，以此做下四句自叹。”[眉批]命之理微，多有八字同而贫富贵贱不同者，相法亦然。郡王



are all capable of writing poetry. ”

“Summon them for me. ”

“Only two are in the monastery. The other eight are out in the villages. ”

Thereupon, the first two acolytes, Heavenly Stems Number One and Number Two, were brought before the prince. Addressing himself to the first acolyte, the prince said, “Compose a poem for me.”

The acolyte asked for a topic. The prince designated *zongzi* as the topic, and so the acolyte produced these lines:

*With four sharp corners and a string around its waist,
It dances in the boiling water in the pot.
Should it bump into the Monk of Tang,⁵
He will surely strip it all naked.*

The prince burst into laughter. “Good!” he said, “but it lacks literary grace. ”

Next, he ordered the second acolyte to make a poem. The acolyte saluted the prince and asked for a topic. He was also given the topic of *zongzi*. His poem went:

*Fragrant zongzi are offered yearly to Qu Yuan;⁶
Today, with the monks, they fulfill their happy fate.
Of the array set out in every hall,
Which ones will go first in moments of life and death?*

An immensely delighted prince exclaimed, “Good poem!” He asked the acolyte, “Did you write the poem on the wall of the corridor?”

“Yes, sir, it was written by me. ”

“Since you wrote it, explain it to me. ”

“In the state of Qi, there was a Lord Mengchang [d.297 B.C. E.] who supported three thousand retainers in his household. He was born around noon on the fifth day of the fifth month. In the state of Jin, there was a general named Wang Zhen’e, who was also born around noon on the fifth day of the fifth month. My humble self was born in the same hour on the same day of the same month, and yet I suffer from such poverty. That is why I wrote those four lines lamenting my fate.” (*The principles of fortune-telling work in most subtle ways. Cases abound of people who are far apart in wealth and status*



问：“你是何处人氏？”侍者答道：“小侍者温州府乐清县人氏，姓陈名义，字可常。”郡王见侍者言语清亮，人才出众，意欲抬举他。当日就差押番，去临安府僧录司讨一道度牒，将乙侍者剃度为僧，就用他表字可常，为佛门中法号，就作郡王府内门僧。郡王至晚回府，不在话下。

光阴似箭，不觉又早一年。至五月五日，郡王又去灵隐寺斋僧。长老引可常并众僧接入方丈，少不得安办斋供，款待郡王。坐间叫可常到面前道：“你做一篇词，要见你本身故事。”可常问讯了，口念一词名《菩萨蛮》：

平生只被今朝误，今朝却把平生补。重午一年期，斋僧只待时。主人恩义重，两载蒙恩宠。清净得为僧，幽闲度此生。

郡王大喜，尽醉回府，将可常带回见两国夫人说：“这个和尚是温州人氏，姓陈名义，三举不第，因此弃俗出家，在灵隐寺做侍



sharing the same eight characters of the astrological chart.⁷ It is the same with physiognomy.)

“Where are you from?” asked the prince.

“I am a native of Yueqing County in Wenzhou Prefecture. My surname is Chen, given name Yi, and courtesy name Kechang.”

Impressed by the acolyte’s clear enunciation and air of distinction, the prince decided to do something for him. That very day, he sent a guard to the Bureau of Religion in Lin’an to request an ordainment certificate for Chen Yi. The prince then had Chen Yi take the tonsure and, using Chen’s courtesy name Kechang as his ordained name, pronounced Chen his protégé. After evening set in, the prince returned home, and there we shall leave him.

Time flew like an arrow. Quite unnoticeably, one year went by. On the fifth day of the fifth month, the prince again paid a visit to Lingyin Monastery to make a donation of food. The abbot led Kechang and other monks in welcoming the prince into the abbot’s cell, where a vegetarian dinner was set out in his honor, as was the usual practice.

After sitting down, the prince called Kechang to him and said, “Compose a lyric poem for me, and make it the story of your life.” Kechang saluted the prince and recited a lyric poem he composed on the spot to the tune of “Deva-like Barbarian”:

*“The day of my birth is the bane of my life,
But today’s bliss makes up for all past woes.
The Double Fifth comes around once a year,
A day of bounty that monks eagerly await.*

*“For two years now, my lord, in his kindness,
Has shown me much gracious favor.
In quiet and peaceful seclusion
Shall this monk live out the rest of his life.”*

An immensely delighted prince did not return home until he was quite inebriated. He brought Kechang with him and presented the monk to his wife, a twice-titled lady, saying, “This monk, Chen Yi, a native of Wenzhou, forsook the world and joined the Buddhist



者。我见他作得好诗，就剃度他为门僧，法号可常。如今一年了，今日带回府来，参拜夫人。”夫人见说，十分欢喜，又见可常聪明朴实，一府中人都欢喜。郡王与夫人解粽，就将一个与可常，教做“粽子词”，还要《菩萨蛮》。可常问讯了，乞纸笔写出一词来：

包中香黍分边角，彩丝剪就交绒索。樽俎泛菖蒲，年年五月初。主人恩义重，对景承欢宠。何日玩山家？葵蒿三四花！

郡王见了大喜，传旨唤出新荷姐，就教他唱可常这词。那新荷姐生得眉长眼细，面白唇红，举止轻盈。手拿象板，立于筵前，唱起绕梁之声。众皆喝采。郡王又教可常做新荷姐词一篇，[眉批]和尚预内席已异，又使咏新荷，如是诲淫也。还要《菩萨蛮》。可常执笔便写，词曰：

天生体态腰肢细，新词唱彻歌声利。一曲泛清奇，扬尘



order after failing the exams three times. He was serving in Lingyin Monastery as an acolyte when I found out that he was a good poet and had him take the tonsure and become a monk and my protégé. His ordained name is Kechang. A year has passed since then. I've brought him home to see you. "

His wife was most pleased. All the other members of the household were also much taken with Kechang's intelligence and guilelessness. When they were untying the strings that bound the *zongzi*, the prince and his wife gave one to Kechang and asked for another lyric poem set to the tune of "Deva-like Barbarian," this time on the subject of *zongzi*.

Kechang saluted them, asked for paper and a brush-pen, and wrote the following:

*The sweet rice all wrapped into nice shapes,
Colorful threads all twisted into strings,
In the wine cups float calamus leaves —
All signs that the fifth month of the year is here.*

*In this setting, my lord, in his kindness,
Shows me much gracious favor.
When is the best time to tour the mountains?
When hollyhocks and wormwood begin to bloom.*

In a glow of joy, the prince ordered that Sister Fresh Lotus be brought in to sing what Kechang had just written.

The girl called Fresh Lotus had long eyebrows, narrow eyes, a fair complexion, red lips, and a light and airy gait. Ivory clappers in hand, she stood before the dinner table and started singing in her sweet voice. After an enthusiastic ovation from the audience, the prince told Kechang to write a lyric poem on the girl, again to the tune of "Deva-like Barbarian." (*It is already quite unusual for a monk to join female company at dinner. And now, to have him dedicate a poem to a girl called Fresh Lotus is nothing short of encouraging debauchery.*) Without a moment's hesitation, Kechang wrote:

*Born with a narrow waist and filled with grace,
She sings the lyrics in her dulcet voice.*



簌簌飞。主人恩义重，宴出红妆宠。便要赏新荷，时光也不多！

郡王越加欢喜。至晚席散，着可常回寺。

至明年五月五日，郡王又要去灵隐寺斋僧。不想大雨如倾，郡王不去，分付院公：“你自去分散众僧斋供，就教同可常到府中来看看。”院公领旨去灵隐寺斋僧，说与长老：“郡王教同可常回府。”长老说：“近日可常得一心病，不出僧房，[眉批]关目。我与你同去问他。”院公与长老同至可常房中。可常睡在床上，分付院公：“拜覆恩王，小僧心病发了，去不得。有一柬帖，与我呈上恩王。”院公听说，带来这封柬帖回府。郡王问：“可常如何不来？”院公：“告恩王，可常连日心疼病发，来不得。教男女奉上一简，他亲自封好。”郡王拆开看，又是《菩萨蛮》词一首：

去年共饮菖蒲酒，今年却向僧房守。好事更多磨，教人



*The clear and sublime notes of the song
Send specks of dust floating around.*

*At the feast, my lord in his kindness,
Favors me with the presence of beauty.
To admire the lotus in its freshness,
There is not a moment to lose!*

The prince was all the more delighted. It was evening before the feast came to an end, and Kechang was released back to the monastery.

On the fifth day of the fifth month of the following year, the prince was about to go to Lingyin Monastery to treat the monks again when a pouring rain began. Instead of going himself, the prince told a senior servant, "You go ahead and distribute the food among the monks, and then bring Kechang over for a visit."

Thus instructed, the senior servant went to the monastery and said to the abbot, "The prince wants me to bring Kechang to see him."

The abbot replied, "Kechang has been afflicted with a heart ailment for the last few days and hasn't left his room. (*A twist in the plot.*) Let's go and ask him."

Thereupon, the servant and the abbot went to Kechang's room and found him lying in bed. "Please tell the prince," said Kechang to the servant, "that this humble monk cannot go because of a heart condition. Please give this letter to my benefactor, the prince."

So the servant went back with the letter. When the prince asked why Kechang had not come, the servant replied, "My master, Kechang cannot come because of a heart ailment, but he gave me a letter that he sealed with his own hands."

The prince broke the seal and saw that it was another lyric poem to the tune of "Deva-like Barbarian":

*Last year, we drank calamus wine together;
This year, I'm confined to the monk's cell.
The journey to happiness never goes smoothly,
And the way things are can hardly be changed!*



没奈何。主人恩义重，知我心头痛。待要赏新荷，争知疾愈么？

郡王随即唤新荷出来唱此词。有管家婆禀：“覆恩王，近日新荷眉低眼慢，乳大腹高，出来不得。”郡王大怒，将新荷送交府中五夫人勘问。新荷供说：“我与可常奸宿有孕。”五夫人将情词覆恩王。郡王大怒：“可知道这秃驴词内都有赏新荷之句，他不是害什么心病，是害的相思病！今日他自觉心亏，不敢到我府中！”教人分付临安府，差人去灵隐寺，拿可常和尚。临安府差人去灵隐寺印长老处要可常。长老离不得安排酒食，送些钱钞与公人。常言道：“官法如炉，谁肯容情！”可常推病不得，只得挣囟起来，随着公人到临安府厅上跪下。府主升堂：

冬冬牙鼓响，公吏两边排；

阎王生死案，东岳摄魂台。

带过可常问道：“你是出家人，郡王怎地恩顾你，缘何做出这等没天理的事出来？你快快招了！”可常说：“并无此事。”府尹不



*My lord, in his kindness to me,
Knows the pain in my heart.
How I wish to admire the fresh lotus,
But when will I ever recover?*

Immediately the prince ordered that Fresh Lotus be brought in to sing the lyrics, but a female attendant appeared and said, "Master, Fresh Lotus doesn't look quite herself these days. With her breasts swollen and her belly protruding, she can't very well appear in public."

The prince flew into a rage and ordered that Fresh Lotus be sent to his fifth wife for questioning. Fresh Lotus confessed, "I had an affair with Kechang and got pregnant."

When the Fifth Lady reported this to the prince, he exploded, saying, "That bald donkey did write about 'admiring the fresh lotus' each time in his lyrics. So, it's not some heart condition he has, but lovesickness! It's out of a guilty conscience that he doesn't dare show his face around here! Get someone to tell officers at the Lin'an prefectural yamen to arrest Monk Kechang!"

When officers from Lin'an Prefecture went to Lingyin Monastery to apprehend Kechang, the abbot set out the obligatory wine and food and gave them some money. As the proverb says, "Expect no leniency from the laws, for they are as merciless as a red-hot furnace!"

Realizing that he was not going to be excused for his illness, Kechang dragged himself out of bed, followed the officers to the prefectural yamen, and knelt down in the courtroom. As the prefectural magistrate called the court to order,

*Boom, boom went the drums;
Officers lined up on both sides.
King Yama was to try the cases,⁸
The God of Mount Tai was to snatch away the souls.⁹*

Kechang having thus been brought into the court, the magistrate began the interrogation, saying, "Being a monk and a much favored protégé of the prince's, how could you have done such an evil thing? Confess!"

"I am not guilty," replied Kechang.



听分辨，“左右拿下好生打！”左右将可常拖倒，打得皮开肉绽，鲜血迸流，可常招道：“小僧果与新荷有奸。一时念头差了，供招是实。”将新荷勘问，一般供招。临安府将可常、新荷供招呈上郡王。郡王本要打杀可常，因他满腹文章，不忍下手，[眉批]有此一念，还是贤王。赖有此一念不曾枉杀可常也。监在狱中。

却说印长老自思：“可常是个有德行和尚，日常山门也不出，只在佛前看经，便是郡王府里唤去半日，未晚就回，又不在府中宿歇，此奸从何而来？[眉批]官府不细察理，不知枉了多少人。内中必有跷蹊！”连忙入城去传法寺，央住持槁大惠长老同到府中，与可常讨饶。郡王出堂，赐二长老坐，待茶。郡王开口便说：“可常无礼！我平日怎么看待他，却做下不仁之事！”二位长老跪下，再三稟说：“可常之罪，僧辈不敢替他分辨，但求恩王念平日错爱之情，可以饶恕一二。”郡王请二位长老回寺，“明日分付临安府



Turning a deaf ear to Kechang's protests of innocence, the magistrate said to his men, "Give him a good thrashing!" And so they did. They threw him on the ground and beat him until his skin split, his flesh tore, and his blood flowed.

"I did have an illicit affair with Fresh Lotus in a moment of weakness," said Kechang. "I do confess that the charges are true."

Fresh Lotus, also summoned for interrogation, stuck to her story. Consequently, the Lin'an prefectural yamen presented the confessions of Kechang and Fresh Lotus to the prince. The prince wanted to have Kechang put to death, but out of his high regard for the monk's literary talent, he could not bring himself to give the order. *(To have such scruples means that the prince is still a good man — scruples that spared Kechang from an unjust death.)* Instead, Kechang was put in prison.

In the meantime, Abbot Yin thought to himself, "Kechang is a monk of moral rectitude. He spends all his time reading the scriptures in front of the Buddha's image without ever taking a step outside the monastery gate. Even when he's called to the prince's residence, he returns promptly enough and has never stayed there overnight. How could he have had any illicit affairs? *(The yamen officials' failure to conduct careful investigations has resulted in injustice for goodness knows how many innocent people.)* There must be something wrong here." He hurried to Chuanfa Monastery in the city and persuaded Abbot Gao Dahui to follow him to the prince's residence to beg for mercy on Kechang's behalf.

The prince came out to the reception hall and offered seats to the two abbots. While waiting for tea to be served, the prince spoke up, "How impertinent Kechang is! I had such high regard for him, and look what a filthy thing he did!"

The two abbots dropped to their knees and said over and over again, "We would not dream of defending him in his guilt, but please forgive him a little, considering how you, sir, have had such affection for him, however little he deserves it."

The prince told the two abbots to go back to their monasteries, adding, "Tomorrow, I'll have the Lin'an prefectural yamen give him a



量轻发落”。印长老开言：“覆恩王，此事日久自明。”郡王闻言心中不喜，退入后堂，再不出来。二位长老见郡王不出，也走出府来。槁长老说：“郡王嗔怪你说‘日久自明’，他不肯认错，[眉批]不肯认错，正是大错。富贵人作恶业，多坐此病。便不出来。”印长老便说：“可常是个有德行的，日常无事，山门也不出，只在佛前看经，便是郡王府里唤去，去了半日便回，又不曾宿歇，此奸从何而来？故此小僧说‘日久自明’，必有冤枉。”槁长老说：“‘贫不与富敌，贱不与贵争’，僧家怎敢与王府争得是非？这也是宿世冤业，且得他量轻发落，却又理会。”说罢，各回寺去了，不在话下。次日郡王将封筒子去临安府，即将可常、新荷量轻打断。有大尹禀郡王：“待新荷产子，可断。”郡王分付，便要断出。府官只得将僧可常追了度牒，杖一百，发灵隐寺，转发宁家当差；将新荷杖八十，发钱塘县转发宁家，追原钱一千贯还郡王府。



lighter sentence. ”

Abbot Yin said, “Your Highness, the truth will out in due course. ”

Displeased at these words, the prince withdrew to the interior of the house and did not reemerge. The two abbots, after waiting in vain for him to reappear, also left the hall and went out of the mansion. Abbot Gao said, “The prince must be angry because of what you said about the truth coming out in due course. He is not one to admit having made a mistake. (*Refusal to admit to a mistake is a major mistake in itself, and highly placed people who commit evil deeds are mostly guilty of it.*) That’s why he refused to come out again. ”

“Kechang is a man of moral rectitude,” said Abbot Yin. “He spends his time reading the scriptures in front of the Buddha’s image and never steps outside the monastery gate without a good reason. Even when he was called to the prince’s mansion, he always returned soon enough and never spent a night there. How could he have had any illicit affairs? That’s why I said, ‘The truth will out in due course.’ He must have been unjustly accused. ”

Abbot Gao said, “As the saying goes, ‘The poor are no match for the rich; the lowly do not fight the highly placed.’ How would a monk dare fight a prince? This is just another case of injustice carried over from a previous life. Let’s see if he gets a lighter sentence before we decide on the next thing to do. ” With that, they went their separate ways, each to his own monastery, and of this, no more.

The next day, the prince sent a letter to the Lin’an prefectural yamen with the order that Kechang and Fresh Lotus be given light sentences. The magistrate reported to the prince, “The sentencing should be postponed until after Fresh Lotus gives birth, ” but the prince ordered that the sentences be given without delay. The prefectural yamen had no choice but to revoke Kechang’s ordainment papers, give him a hundred thrashings with the rod, and send him back to Lingyin Monastery, where he was to be dismissed from service and returned home to resume life as a commoner with corvée duties. Fresh Lotus was given eighty thrashings with the rod and sent back to Qiantang County before being returned to her parents and ordered to



却说印长老接得可常，满寺僧众教长老休要安着可常在寺中，玷辱宗风。长老对众僧说：“此事必有蹊蹊，久后自明。”长老令人山后搭一草舍，教可常将息棒疮好了，着他自回乡去。

且说郡王把新荷发落宁家，追原钱一千贯。新荷父母对女儿说：“我又无钱，你若有私房积蓄，将来凑还府中。”新荷说：“这钱自有人替我出。”张公骂道：“你这贱人，与个穷和尚通奸，他的度牒也被追了，却那得钱来替你还府中。”新荷说：“可惜屈了这个和尚！[眉批]日久自明。我自与府中钱原都管有奸，他见我有孕了，恐事发，‘到郡王面前，只供与可常和尚有奸。郡王喜欢可常，必然饶你。我自来供养你家，并使用钱物’。说过的话，今日只去问他讨钱来用，并还官钱，我一个身子被他骗了，先前说过的话，如何赖得？他若欺心不招架时，左右做我不着，你两个老人家将我去府中，等我郡王面前实诉，也出脱了可常和尚。”父母听得女儿说，便去府前伺候钱都管出来，把上项事一一说了。钱都管到焦躁起来，骂道：“老贱才！老无知！好不识廉耻！自



give back to the prince the one thousand strings of cash he had paid for her.

Now, Abbot Yin brought Kechang back to the monastery, and all the monks advised the abbot not to keep Kechang there because he was a disgrace to the monastery. The abbot said to them, "There's something fishy about this matter. The truth will come out in due course." The abbot ordered that a thatched hut be set up at the back of the hill where Kechang could stay until his wounds had healed and he was ready to return home.

In the meantime, the prince sent Fresh Lotus back to her parents, demanding a refund of the one thousand strings of cash he had paid for her. Fresh Lotus's parents said to her, "We have no money. If you have private savings, you can use them to pay the prince back."

"There *is* someone willing to pay for me," said Fresh Lotus.

Her father lashed out, "What a cheap hussy! The person you carried on with is but a penniless monk whose ordainment papers have been revoked. How could *he* have any money to pay the prince on your behalf?"

"Too bad I wronged that monk! (*So, the truth does come out in due course.*) My man is the prince's butler, Qian Yuan. Seeing that I was pregnant, he was afraid of a scandal and said to me, 'When you confess to the prince, just say that you did it with Monk Kechang. The prince is fond of Kechang and will surely let you off. I'll take care of you and pay for everything you need.' With that promise, I can very well go ahead and ask him for money and for repayment of the one thousand strings of cash. He is the one who sullied my body. How can he go back on his word? If he denies everything, well, I have nothing to lose anyway. You can take me to the prince. I'll tell him everything, and Monk Kechang's name can be cleared, too."

Having heard these words, her parents went to the prince's residence and asked to see Butler Qian. At their account of what their daughter had told them, Butler Qian flared up and growled, "You old bums! You old fools! Don't you have any sense of decency? Your



家女儿偷了和尚，官司也问结了，却说恁般鬼话来图赖人！你欠了女儿身价钱，没处措办时，好言好语，告个消乏，或者可怜你的，一两贯钱助了你也不见得。你却说这样没根蒂的话来，傍人听见时，教我怎地做人？”[眉批]恶人偏口硬。骂了一顿，走开去了。张老只得忍气吞声回来，与女儿说知。新荷见说，两泪交流，乃言：“爹娘放心，明日却与他理会。”至次日，新荷跟父母到郡王府前，连声叫屈。郡王即时叫人拿来，却是新荷父母。郡王骂道：“你女儿做下迷天大罪，到来我府前叫屈！”张老跪覆：“恩王，小的女儿没福，做出事来，其中屈了一人，望恩王做主！”郡王问：“屈了何人？”张老道：“小人不知，只问小贱人便有明白。”郡王问：“贱人在那里？”张老道：“在门首伺候。”郡王唤他人来，问他详细。新荷入到府堂跪下。郡王问：“贱人，做下不仁之事，你今说屈了甚人？”新荷：“告恩王，贱妾犯奸，妄屈了可常和尚。”郡王问：“缘何屈了他？你可实说，我到饶你。”新荷告道：“贱妾犯奸，却不干可常之事。”郡王道：“你先前怎



daughter carried on with some monk, and the yamen has already settled the case, and yet you're trying to shift the blame to me with this pack of lies! If you can't come up with the money for your daughter's redemption, you could have put it nicely, saying you are too poor to afford the payment. I might have helped you out of pity with a couple of strings of cash. But as it is, how am I going to face the world if your lies are overheard by other people?" (*It just so happens that the evil ones know best how to deny what they did.*) After this outburst, he turned away.

Swallowing the insult, Mr. Zhang returned home and told his daughter about it. With gushing tears, Fresh Lotus said, "Don't worry, father and mother. We'll let him have it tomorrow!"

The next day, Fresh Lotus followed her parents to the prince's residence, where they cried at the gate, "Injustice! Injustice!" The prince promptly ordered that those making the noise be brought in. Seeing that they were none other than Fresh Lotus's parents, the prince said severely, "Your daughter committed a heinous crime. What grievances could you have to cry injustice here?"

Falling to his knees, Mr. Zhang said, "Your Highness, my accursed daughter did do an evil thing, but she wronged a man. Please make sure that justice is done!"

"Whom did she wrong?" asked the prince.

"I don't know," replied Mr. Zhang, "but you can easily find out if you question the little hussy."

"Where is that cheap hussy?" asked the prince.

"She's waiting at the gate."

The prince had Fresh Lotus brought in for thorough questioning. Once inside the hall, she dropped to her knees.

"You wanton woman," said the prince, "a fine thing you did! Now tell me, whom did you wrong?"

"Your Highness, I wronged Monk Kechang by naming him."

"Why did you wrong him? If you tell the truth, I'll be lenient with you."

"I did have an illicit affair, but it had nothing to do with Kechang."



地不说？”新荷告道：“妾实被干办钱原奸骗。有孕之时，钱原怕事露，分付妾：‘如若事露，千万不可说我！只说与可常和尚有奸。因郡王喜欢可常，必然饶你。’”郡王骂道：“你这贱人，怎地依他说，害了这个和尚！”新荷告道：“钱原说，‘你若无事退回，我自养你一家老小，如要原钱还府，也是我出。’今日贱妾宁家，恩王责取原钱，一时无措，只得去问他讨钱还府中，以此父亲去与他说，到把父亲打骂，被害无辜。妾今诉告明白，情愿死在恩王面前。”郡王道：“先前他许供养你一家，有甚表记为证？”[眉批] □□（疑为“问得”二字）有理，当初冤可常时，有何表记为证，何不问而轻信乎？新荷：“告恩王，钱原许妾供养，妾亦怕他番悔，已拿了他上直朱红牌一面为信。”郡王见说，十分大怒，跌脚大骂：“泼贱人！屈了可常和尚！”就着人分付临安府，拿钱原到厅审问拷打，供认明白。一百日限满，脊杖八十，送沙门岛牢城营料高。新荷宁家，饶了一千贯原钱。随即差人去灵隐寺取可常和尚来。



“Why didn’t you say so earlier?”

“Butler Qian Yuan is the one who seduced me. When I found out I was pregnant, he became afraid of being exposed. He told me, ‘If this comes out, be sure not to mention me! Just say that you had an affair with Monk Kechang. The prince is fond of Kechang and will surely let you off.’”

The prince lashed out, “You cheap hussy! How could you have done as he said and ruined that monk’s life!”

Fresh Lotus continued, “Qian Yuan said, ‘If you are acquitted, I’ll support your whole family, old and young. If you have to pay for your redemption, I’ll take care of that, too.’ After I was sent home and Your Highness demanded the money, I had no other choice but to turn to him for help. So my father approached him, only to be beaten up by him and accused of trying to incriminate the innocent. Now that I have come out with the truth, I shall have no regrets if I die this moment in front of Your Highness.”

“When he promised to support you and your whole family,” said the prince, “did he give you anything, as a token of his good faith?” *(Good question, but when false accusations were made against Kechang, why did he readily believe the story without asking for evidence?)*

“Your Highness, when Qian Yuan promised to support me, I was afraid that he might not make good on his word, so I took one of his vermilion badges of duty as evidence.”

The prince fumed with anger. Stomping his feet, he roared, “You slut! What a thing you did, accusing Monk Kechang so unjustly!”

Straightway, he sent a messenger to Lin’an Prefecture and had Qian Yuan brought under guard to the prefectural yamen for interrogation. Under torture, Qian Yuan confessed. A hundred days later, he was given eighty thrashings of the rod on his back and sent to Shamen Island to work as prison labor under surveillance.¹⁰ Fresh Lotus, sent back home, was forgiven the money for her redemption. Then, a messenger was sent to Lingyin Monastery to bring Monk Kechang to the prince.



却说可常在草舍中将息好了，又是五月五日到。可常取纸墨笔来，写下一首《辞世颂》：

生时重午，为僧重午，得罪重午，死时重午。为前生欠他债负，若不当时承认，又恐他人受苦。今日事已分明，不若抽身回去。[眉批]一首《辞世颂》，收拾一回小说。

五月五日午时书，赤口白舌尽消除；

五月五日天中节，赤口白舌尽消灭。

可常作了《辞世颂》，走出草舍边，有一泉水。可常脱了衣裳，遍身抹净，穿了衣服，入草舍结跏趺坐圆寂了。道人报与长老知道，长老将自己龕子，妆了可常，抬出山顶。长老正欲下火，只见郡王府院公来取可常。长老道：“院公，你去禀覆恩王，可常坐化了，正欲下火。郡王来取，今且暂停，待恩王令旨。”院公说：“今日事已明白，不干可常之事。皆因屈了，教我来取，却又圆寂了。我去禀恩王，必然亲自来看下火。”院公急急回府，将



In the meantime, Kechang had recovered from his wounds in the thatched hut. When the fifth day of the fifth month rolled around, he took up a brush-pen, a piece of paper, and some ink, and wrote a poem, "On Departing from This World":

*Born into this world on the Double Fifth,
Ordained as a monk on the Double Fifth,
Accused of crime on the Double Fifth,
Departed this life on the Double Fifth.*

I owe that one a debt from a previous life.

Had I denied the charge at the time,

I would have made the other one suffer.

The truth now made known to all,

I'd fain return to whence I came. (With the poem "On Departing from This World," the story thus comes to an end.)

A note written at noon on Double Fifth

Ends all strife that wagging tongues lead to.

With the Double Fifth Dragon Festival

Goes all strife that wagging tongues lead to.

After writing the poem, Kechang walked up to a spring by the thatched hut, removed his clothes, washed himself clean, put the clothes on again, and entered the hut, where he assumed a lotus position and willed himself to death in meditation.

Upon hearing the news from a monk, the abbot had Kechang's body put in a wooden coffin that he had prepared for himself and had it carried to the top of the hill. The abbot was about to light the cremation fire when a senior servant from the prince's mansion came for Kechang. The abbot said to the servant, "Tell the prince that Kechang has passed into nirvana. I was about to light the cremation fire when you came on behalf of the prince. So I will stop and wait for the prince's instructions."

The servant said, "The truth is now known. Kechang had nothing to do with that case. Because he was wronged, the prince told me to come and get him, but now that he has passed away, let me tell the prince. He will surely come here in person for the cremation ceremony." Hurriedly the servant went back, reported the matter to the



上项事并《辞世颂》呈上，郡王看了大惊。

次日，郡王同两国夫人去灵隐寺烧化可常，众僧接到后山。郡王与两国夫人亲自拈香罢，郡王坐下。印长老带领众僧看经毕。印长老手执火把，口中念道：

留得屈原香粽在，龙舟竞渡尽争先。

从今剪断缘丝索，不用来生复结缘。

恭惟圆寂可常和尚，重午本良辰，谁把兰汤浴？角黍漫包金，菖蒲空切玉。须知《妙法华》，大乘俱念足。手不折新荷，枉受攀花辱。目下事分明，唱彻阳关曲。今日是重午，归西何太速！寂灭本来空，管甚时辰毒？山僧今日来，赠与光明烛。凭此火光三昧，要见本来面目。[眉批]印长老文理甚通。咦！唱彻当时《菩萨蛮》，撒手便归兜率国。

众人只见火光中现出可常，问讯谢郡王、夫人、长老并众僧：“只因我前生欠宿债，今世转来还，吾今归仙境，再不往人间。吾是五百尊罗汉中名常欢喜尊者。”[眉批]罗汉名亦佳。正是：

从来天道岂痴聋？好丑难逃久照中。



prince, and showed him the poem. The prince was astounded.

The next day, the prince and his wife went to Lingyin Monastery for the cremation ceremony. The assembly of monks led them to the back of the hill, where the prince and his wife personally lit the incense. After the prince sat down, Abbot Yin led the monks in reading the scriptures, after which the abbot took up a torch and intoned:

*“He left behind zongzi in Qu Yuan’s honor
And dragon boats in their merry races.
The green silk ties are now all cut,
Not to be used to form bonds in his next life.*

“To the respectful memory of Monk Kechang: On the Double Fifth, a lucky day, who bathed in perfumed water? The *zongzi*, however expensively wrapped in gold, are gone, as are the calamus leaves, although as pure as jade. You, who know all there is to know about the *Lotus Sutra* and all the scriptures of *Mahayana*, who never touched Fresh Lotus, bore a wrongful insult. Now that the truth is out, the occasion calls for a joyful song. Today being the fifth day of the fifth month, why head for the west in such haste? ¹¹ Life being nothing but emptiness, why lament one’s bitter fate? This monk of the hills is here now to give you the flame of brightness, to see, by the light of the *samadhi* fire, what your true nature would be.¹² (*Abbot Yin’s words are well said.*) Yi!

*“While singing the ‘Deva-like Barbarian,’
He returned to the Tusita Heaven.” ¹³*

In the midst of the flames, Kechang emerged for all to see. With a salute of gratitude to the prince and his wife, the abbot, and the assembled monks, he said, “I have repaid a debt that I incurred in a previous life and am now bidding farewell to the mortal world, to go to the land of the immortals. I am, in fact, one of the five hundred arhats. I am the one named Always Happy.” (*A nice name for an arhat.*)

Truly,

*Has Heaven ever been hard of hearing?
Good and evil will be found out in the end.*

说好劝人归善道，算来修德积阴功。





*All are exhorted to perform good deeds,
To practice virtues and accrue credit.*

This story has been translated as “P’u-sa Man,” in Richard F.S. Yang, ed. and trans., *Eight Colloquial Tales of the Sung, Thirteenth Century China* (Taipei: China Post, 1972).

¹ Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches are two sets of signs. One is taken from each set to form sixty pairs designating years, months, and days.

² This is the eve of the Dragon Boat Festival, which falls on the fifth day of the fifth month every year.

³ *Zongzi* is a pyramid-shaped dumpling made of glutinous rice that is wrapped in bamboo or reed leaves; it is eaten during the Dragon Boat Festival.

⁴ Prince Wu Yi was actually Empress Wu-shi’s brother.

⁵ The Monk of Tang was Tripitaka Xuanzang (602–664). A great translator of Buddhist scriptures, he studied in India and had a major influence on the development of Buddhism in China. In this context, however, “the Monk of Tang” is a reference to any monk.

⁶ Qu Yuan (ca.340–278 B.C.E.) is the model loyal minister in traditional Chinese culture. Frustrated because his ruler repeatedly ignored his strategic advice, he drowned himself in Miluo River.

⁷ The eight characters of the astrological chart are two characters for the hour of birth (one for the Heavenly Stem, one for the Earthly Branch), two for the day, two for the month, and two for the year.

⁸ In Buddhist mythology, King Yama is the king of hell and judge of souls.

⁹ The God of Mount Tai, or the East Mountain God, is the Daoist counterpart of King Yama.

¹⁰ During the Song dynasty, Shamen Island, located to the east of what is now Shandong Province, was a place of exile for most convicts whose death sentences had been commuted.

¹¹ In Buddhist terminology, to go to the west is to die.

¹² The fire of *samadhi* is the fire that consumed the body of Buddha when he entered nirvana.

¹³ Tusita Heaven is the fourth layer of heaven in the Buddhist belief.

第八卷

崔待诏生死冤家

宋人小说题作《碾玉观音》

山色晴岚景物佳，暖烘回雁起平沙。东郊渐觉花供眼，
南陌依稀草吐芽。堤上柳，未藏鸦，寻芳趁步到山家。
陇头几树红梅落，红杏枝头未着花。

这首《鹧鸪天》说孟春景致，原来又不如仲春词做得好：

每日青楼醉梦中，不知城外又春浓。杏花初落疏疏雨，
杨柳轻摇淡淡风。浮画舫，跃青骢，小桥门外绿阴笼。
行人不入神仙地，人在珠帘第几重？

这首词说仲春景致，原来又不如黄夫人做着季春词又好：

先自春光似酒浓，时听燕语透帘栊。小桥杨柳飘香絮，
山寺绯桃散落红。莺渐老，蝶西东，春归难觅恨无穷。





Story 8

Artisan Cui's Love Is Cursed in Life and in Death

*A fine mist shrouds the scenic sunlit hills;
The warm day sees returning wild geese rise from the sand.
The eastern suburbs delight the eyes with budding flowers;
The southern footpaths are faintly green with tender grass.*

*Before crows build their nests in the willows by the shore,
My quest for flowers leads me to a mountain cottage.
Around the edge of the fields, red plum petals fall,
But apricot branches remain bare of red blossoms.*

The above lyric poem to the tune of "Partridge Sky," which describes a scene in early spring, is not as well written as the following "Ode to Mid-spring":

*I spend my days midst courtesans and drunken dreams,
Unaware that outside the city, another spring is at its height.
The first apricot blossoms spin down in sprinkles;
The willow twigs sway softly in the gentle breeze.*

*Afloat in a pleasure boat, astride a piebald horse,
I enjoy the greenness by the bridge outside the gate.
This is a fairyland not meant for mortal beings.
Behind which beaded portiere in the house is she?*

The above lyric poem describing mid-spring scenery is, in its turn, not as well written as the poem by Lady Huang titled "Ode to Late Spring":¹

*The charms of spring are as mellow as wine,
Swallows' songs filter through curtains from time to time.
Fragrant willow catkins float over the small bridge;
Red peach blossoms fall by the mountain temple.*

*The orioles grow old, the butterflies flit about;
Spring departs, to one's profound sorrow.*



侵阶草色迷朝雨，满地梨花逐晓风。

这三首词，都不如王荆公看见花瓣儿片片风吹下地来，原来这春归去，是东风断送的。有诗道：

春日春风有时好，春日春风有时恶。
不得春风花不开，花开又被风吹落。

苏东坡道：“不是东风断送春归去，是春雨断送春归去。”有诗道：

雨前初见花间蕊，雨后全无叶底花。
蜂蝶纷纷过墙去，却疑春色在邻家。

秦少游道：“也不干风事，也不干雨事，是柳絮飘将春色去。”有诗道：

三月柳花轻复散，飘飏澹荡送春归。
此花本是无情物，一向东飞一向西。

邵尧夫道：“也不干柳絮事，是蝴蝶采将春色去。”[眉批]此等闲语是宋元人胜过今人处。有诗道：

花正开时当三月，蝴蝶飞来忙劫劫。
采将春色向天涯，行人路上添凄切。

曾两府道：“也不干蝴蝶事，是黄莺啼得春归去。”有诗道：

花正开时艳正浓，春宵何事恼芳丛？



*The morning rain wets the grass before the terrace;
The dawn wind spreads pear blossoms all over the ground.*

None of the above three poems is as well written as the one by Wang Anshi, Duke of Jing.² Watching wind-scattered flower petals spinning to the ground, he concluded that it was the east wind that precipitated spring's departure. His poem says,

*The wind on a spring day sometimes is blissful;
The wind on a spring day sometimes does mischief.
Without the spring wind, flowers do not bloom;
But after they bloom, the wind blows them away!*

Su Dongpo³ said, "It's not the east wind but the spring rain that sends off the spring." His poem says,

*Before the rain, tender pistils are in full view;
After the rain, the leaves are stripped of all flowers.
The bees and butterflies cross over my walls;
Could spring have moved on to my neighbor's yard?*

Qin Shaoyou⁴ said, "Neither the wind nor the rain is to blame. It's the willow catkins that send spring away." His poem says,

*Willow catkins of the third month lightly scatter;
They dance in the sky as they send spring away.
Fickle and heartless in their caprice,
One flies to the east, one to the west.*

Shao Yaofu⁵ said, "The willow catkins have nothing to do with it. The butterfly is the culprit." (*People of the Song and Yuan dynasties are better than we are in making such idle comments.*) His poem says,

*In the third month, the flowers are in bloom;
Busily, the butterflies flit to and fro.
Taking the delights of spring to the end of the world,
They add to the sorrows of the traveler on the road.*

Zeng of the Grand Secretariat and the Privy Military Council⁶ said, "The butterflies have nothing to do with it. It's the orioles' songs that send spring on its way." His poem says,

*The flowers in full bloom, at the height of their charm,
What could have saddened them one spring night?*



黄鹂啼得春归去，无限园林转首空。

朱希真道：“也不干黄莺事，是杜鹃啼得春归去。”有诗道：

杜鹃叫得春归去，吻边啼血尚犹存。

庭院日长空悄悄，教人生怕到黄昏！

苏小小道：“都不干这几件事，是燕子衔将春色去。”有《蝶恋花》词为证：

妾本钱塘江上住，花开花落，不管流年度。燕子衔将春色去，纱窗几阵黄梅雨。斜插犀梳云半吐，檀板轻敲，唱彻《黄金缕》。歌罢彩云无觅处，梦回明月生南浦。

王岩叟道：“也不干风事，也不干雨事，也不干柳絮事，也不干蝴蝶事，也不干黄莺事，也不干杜鹃事，也不干燕子事。是九十日春光已过，春归去。”曾有诗道：

怨风怨雨两俱非，风雨不来春亦归。腮边红褪青梅小，口角黄消乳燕飞。蜀魄健啼花影去，吴蚕强食柘桑稀。[眉批]好词科。直恼春归无觅处，江湖辜负一蓑衣！

说话的，因甚说这《春归词》？绍兴年间，行在有个关西延州



*The orioles' songs send the spring on its way;
In a trice, the gardens are swept of all flowers.*

Zhu Xizhen⁷ said, "The orioles have nothing to do with it. The cuckoo is the culprit." His poem says,

*The cuckoo's cries send spring on its way out;
The drops of blood still fresh around its beak.⁸
The day is long in the quiet and empty courtyard;
Giving one fears of the coming of dusk!*

Su Xiaoxiao⁹ said, "None of these is to blame. It's the swallows that carry spring away in their beaks." There is, in testimony, her lyric poem to the tune of "Butterflies Linger over Flowers":

*I live by the Qiantang River, where
Flowers bloom and fall, year in and year out.
The swallows carry spring away in their beaks;
Flurries of "plum rain" beat on the window screens.¹⁰*

*A horn comb atilt halfway in my cloudlike hair,
I click the sandalwood clappers and sing "The Gold Threads."
The song over, I find the rosy clouds all gone;
I wake up to see the moon at the southern shore.¹¹*

Wang Yansou¹² said, "This has nothing to do with the wind, the rain, the willow catkins, the butterflies, the orioles, the cuckoos, and the swallows. The fact of the matter is, the ninety-day spring season must come to an end, hence the departure of spring." He once wrote a poem that reads,

*Blame neither the wind nor the rain;
Spring departs with no help from wind or rain.
Red blossoms fading, the plums are green and small;
The yellow gone from their beaks, the young swallows fly.
As the cuckoos cry, the flowers wither away;
As the silkworms feed, the mulberry leaves vanish. (Good*

lines for a poem.)

*How sad that spring is gone and nowhere to be found,
Disappointing the angler in his straw rain cape.*

Storyteller, why all this citing of poems on the demise of spring?



延安府人，本身是三镇节度使咸安郡王。当时怕春归去，将带着许多钩眷游春。[眉批]来脉甚逶迤。至晚回家，来到钱塘门里车桥，前面钩眷轿子过了，后面是郡王轿子到来。则听得桥下裱褙铺里一个人叫道：“我儿出来看郡王！”当时郡王在轿里看见，叫帮窗虞候道：“我从前要寻这个人，今日却在这里。只在你身上，明日要这个人入府中来。”当时虞候声诺，来寻这个看郡王的人，是甚色目人？正是：

尘随车马何年尽？情系人心早晚休。

只见车桥下一个人家，门前出着一面招牌，写着“璩家装裱古今书画”。铺里一个老儿，引着一个女儿，生得如何？

云鬓轻笼蝉翼，蛾眉淡拂春山，朱唇缀一颗樱桃，皓齿排两行碎玉。莲步半折小弓弓，莺啭一声娇滴滴。

便是出来看郡王轿子的人。虞候即时来他家对门一个茶坊里坐定。婆婆把茶点来。虞候道：“启请婆婆，过对门裱褙铺里请璩大夫来说话。”婆婆便去请到来，两个相揖了就坐。璩待诏问：“府干



Well, in the Shaoxing reign period [1131–62], there lived in the provisional capital Lin'an [present-day Hangzhou] a man who was a native of Yan'an Prefecture in Yanzhou west of the Tong Pass [in present-day Shanxi Province]. He was, in fact, the prince of Xian'an and lord of three commanderies.¹³ One day, afraid that spring would soon be over, he took many of his family members on a spring outing. (*What a roundabout way of starting a story!*) On their way back late in the afternoon, they came to Carriage Bridge inside Qiantang Gate. The sedan-chair carrying the prince approached the bridge after those of the family members had crossed, and at this moment, a man in a picture-mounting shop called out, "My child, come out and look at the prince!"

At the sight of the girl who came out, the prince said to the officer marching next to the window of his sedan-chair, "I've been trying to find a girl like the one over there, and now here she is. Be sure to bring her to my place tomorrow. "

Thus ordered, the officer set out on his mission. What kind of a person was the one who had come out to look at the prince? Truly,

*The dust of traffic never settles,
But the bonds of love sooner or later break off.*

By Carriage Bridge stood a house with a signboard on which was written "The Qu Family Shop: We Mount Painting and Calligraphy Old and New." In the shop was an old man with his daughter. How did the girl look?

*Her cloud-like hair arranged like cicada wings,
Her lightly painted eyebrows the color of spring hills;
Her lips a red cherry,
Her teeth two rows of white jade,
Her dainty feet curved like tiny bows,
Her voice trilling sweetly like that of an oriole.*

So she was the one who had stepped out to look at the prince. The officer sat down in the teahouse across the street. When the old woman of the teahouse brought him tea, he said, "Granny, please go to the mounting shop across the street and invite Master Qu over. I'd like to talk with him." The woman did as she was told. After saluting



有何见谕？”虞候道：“无甚事，闲问则个。适来叫出来看郡王轿子的人是令爱么？”待诏道：“正是拙女，止有三口。”虞候又问：“小娘子贵庚？”待诏应道：“一十八岁。”再问：“小娘子如今要嫁人，却是趋奉官员？”待诏道：“老拙家寒，那讨钱来嫁人，将来也只是献与官员府第。”虞候道：“小娘子有甚本事？”待诏说出女孩儿一件本事来，有词寄《眼儿媚》为证：

深闺小院日初长，娇女绮罗裳。不做东君造化，金针刺绣群芳。斜枝嫩叶包开蕊，唯只欠馨香。曾向园林深处，引教蝶乱蜂狂。

原来这女儿会绣作。虞候道：“适来郡王在轿里，看见令爱身上系着一条绣裹肚。府中正要寻一个绣作的人，老丈何不献与郡王？”璩公归去，与婆婆说了。到明日写一纸献状，献来府中。郡王给与身价，因此取名秀秀养娘。

不则一日，朝廷赐下一领团花绣战袍。当时秀秀依样绣出一



each other, the two men sat down. “What can I do for you, sir?” asked Artisan Qu.

“Oh, nothing in particular. I just wanted to chat. The girl who just came out to look at the prince — is she your daughter?”

“Yes. There are only three of us in the family. ”

“How old is your daughter?”

“Eighteen. ”

“Are you going to marry her off or have her serve some official?”

“Being as poor as I am, how could I come up with the money to marry her off? When the time comes, there’ll be nothing for it but to offer her up to some official.”

“What skills does she have?”

Artisan Qu’s reply as to her skills has as testimony the following lyric poem set to the tune of “Enticing Eyes”:

*In her secluded room, as the days grow,
She embroiders on silk and brocade.
Though not a life-giving goddess of spring,
She makes flowers with her needles.
With tilting stems, tender leaves, buds, and pistils,
Her flowers lack only a sweet fragrance;
If placed in the depths of the garden,
They attract bees and butterflies galore.*

So this girl was skilled in the art of embroidery. The officer said, “Just a moment ago, the prince saw from his sedan-chair that your daughter was wearing an embroidered apron around her waist. It so happens that we need someone who is good at embroidery in the prince’s establishment. Why don’t you offer her to the prince?”

Mr. Qu went home and told his wife about this. The next day, he drew up a statement declaring his intention of offering his daughter to the prince and took her to the prince’s residence. The latter paid the price and named her Xiuxiu the Maid.

Some days later, the prince received a flower-patterned embroidered warrior’s robe from the imperial court. Then and there, Xiuxiu took up her embroidery needles and soon produced another warrior’s



件来。郡王看了欢喜道：“主上赐与我团花战袍，却寻甚么奇巧的物事献与官家？”去府库里寻出一块透明的羊脂美玉来，即时叫将门下碾玉待诏，问：“这块玉堪做甚么？”内中一个道：“好做一副劝杯。”郡王道：“可惜恁般一块玉，如何将来只做得一副劝杯！”又一个道：“这块玉上尖下圆，好做一个摩侯罗儿。”郡王道：“摩侯罗儿，只是七月七日乞巧使得，寻常间又无用处。”数中一个后生，年纪二十五岁，姓崔，名宁，趋事郡王数年，是升州建康府人。当时叉手向前，对着郡王道：“告恩王，这块玉上尖下圆，甚是不好，只好碾一个南海观音。”郡王道：“好，正合我意。”就叫崔宁下手。不过两个月，碾成了这个玉观音。郡王即时写表进上御前，龙颜大喜。崔宁就本府增添请给，遭遇郡王。

不则一日，时遇春天，崔待诏游春回来，入得钱塘门，在一个酒肆，与三四个相知方才吃得数杯，则听得街上闹吵吵，连忙推开楼窗看时，见乱烘烘道：“井亭桥有遗漏。”吃不得这酒成，



robe with identical patterns.

Delighted, the prince said, "His Majesty gave me this nice robe, but what can I give him in return? And it must be something out of the ordinary, too." From his treasury, he picked out a piece of translucent mutton-fat jade. Without losing one moment, he summoned his personal jade carvers and asked them, "What can you make out of this piece of jade?"

One of the carvers replied, "I'd say a pair of wine cups. "

"It would be a waste to make wine cups out of such a fine piece of jade," said the prince.

Another carver suggested, "Being pointed at the top and round at the bottom, it can be made into a muhurta doll."¹⁴

"But muhurta dolls are of no use except on the Double Seventh Festival when girls pray for better skills in sewing," said the prince.

Among the carvers was a twenty-five-year-old youth, Cui Ning by name. A native of Jiankang [present-day Nanjing] in Shengzhou, he had been in the prince's service for a number of years. With his hands respectfully folded across his chest, he stepped forward and said to the prince, "Your Highness, a piece that is pointed at the top and round at the bottom is not fit for anything else but a statue of the bodhisattva Guanyin of the Southern Sea. "

"Good!" exclaimed the prince. "That's exactly what I've been thinking!" Then and there, he ordered that Cui Ning start on the carving.

In less than two months, the jade bodhisattva was completed. The prince promptly submitted a memorial and presented the jade statue to the emperor, to the latter's great joy. As for Cui Ning, having thus won the prince's good graces, he received a raise in his salary and provisions.

The days went by, and spring rolled around again. On his way back from a spring excursion, Artisan Cui stepped into a wineshop by Qiantang Gate. He had just downed a few cups of wine with three or four acquaintances when a commotion in the streets became audible. Swiftly, he pushed open the window and heard people beneath shouting amid all the noise, "There's a fire at Well Pavilion Bridge!"



慌忙下酒楼看时，只见：

初如萤火，次若灯光，千条蜡烛焰难当，万座糝盆敌不住。六丁神推倒宝天炉，八力士放起焚山火。骊山会上，料应褒姒逞娇容；赤壁矶头，想是周郎施妙策。五通神牵住火葫芦，宋无忌赶番赤骡子。又不曾泻烛浇油，直恁的烟飞火猛。

崔待诏望见了，急忙道：“在我本府前不远。”奔到府中看时，已搬掣得罄尽，静悄悄地无一个人。崔待诏既不见人，且循着左手廊下入去，火光照得如同白日。去那左廊下，一个妇女，摇摇摆摆，从府堂里出来，自言自语，与崔宁打个胸厮撞。崔宁认得是秀秀养娘，倒退两步，低身唱个喏。原来郡王当日，尝对崔宁许道：“待秀秀满日，把来嫁与你。”这些众人，都撺掇道：“好对夫妻！”崔宁拜谢了，不则一番。崔宁是个单身，却也痴心。秀秀见恁地个后生，却也指望。当日有这遗漏，秀秀手中提着一帕子金珠富贵，从左廊下出来，撞见崔宁便道：“崔大夫，我出来得迟了。府中养娘各自四散，管顾不得，你如今没奈何只得将



Leaving the table in haste, he rushed down the stairs, and this is what he saw:

*What started out like a glowing firefly
Brightened into the glare of lamp flames;
With a thousand candles ablaze,
And ten times more braziers afire,
The Fire God pushed over the heavenly furnace;
The celestial guards set whole mountains aflame.
Had this been the beacon on Mount Li,
Baosi must be looking as charming as could be.¹⁵
Had this been the fire in the Red Cliff battle,
It must be Zhou Yu masterminding it all.¹⁶
The Wutong god held on to the fire gourd;¹⁷
Song Wuji hastened on his fire-red donkey.¹⁸
With no candle drippings, no fuel added,
The smoke swirled up and the flames burned high.*

At the sight, Cui cried out in alarm, "That's not far from the prince's mansion!" And he dashed off in that direction.

By the time he arrived, he found the mansion quiet and deserted, with everything removed and everybody gone. There being no one in sight, Cui walked down the left corridor, which was lit as bright as day by the flames. As he did so, a woman emerged from the hall and staggered into the corridor, muttering something to herself. When she bumped into Cui Ning, he recognized her to be Xiuxiu the Maid. He took a few steps back, bowed, and mumbled a greeting. As a matter of fact, the prince had once said to Cui Ning, "After Xiuxiu has served out her term, I'll marry her to you." Everyone present at the time chimed in, "What a fine couple they'll make!" More than once, Cui Ning had thanked the prince for this promise. Being a bachelor, Cui Ning was quite taken with the idea. Xiuxiu, impressed by the young man, also looked forward to the marriage.

And now, as she bumped into Cui Ning in the corridor while a fire was raging, carrying in her hand a kerchief full of jewelry and other valuables, she said, "Master Cui, I came out too late. The other maids have run off in all directions. No one stopped to take care of



我去躲避则个。”当下崔宁和秀秀出府门，沿着河，走到石灰桥。秀秀道：“崔大夫，我脚疼了走不得。”崔宁指着前面道：“更行几步，那里便是崔宁住处，小娘子到家中歇脚，却也不妨。”到得家中坐定。秀秀道：“我肚里饥，崔大夫与我买些点心来吃。我受了些惊，得杯酒吃更好。”当时崔宁买将酒来，三杯两盏，正是：

三杯竹叶穿心过，两朵桃花上脸来。

道不得个“春为花博士，酒是色媒人”。秀秀道：“你记得当时在月台上赏月，把我许你，你兀自拜谢。你记得也不记得？”崔宁叉着手，只应得“喏”。[眉批]此节见崔宁小心。秀秀道：“当日众人都替你喝采，‘好对夫妻’，你怎地到忘了？”崔宁又则应得“喏”。秀秀道：“比似只管等待，何不今夜我和你先做夫妻？不知你意下何如？”崔宁道：“岂敢。”秀秀道：“你知道不敢，我叫将起来，教坏了你，你却如何将我到家中？我明日府里去说。”崔宁道：“告小娘子，要和崔宁做夫妻不妨。只一件，这里住不得了，要好趁这个遗漏人乱时，今夜就走开去，方才使得。”秀秀



others. Now you'll have to take me to a safe place." Whereupon, the two left the mansion and walked along the riverbank until they came to Limestone Bridge.

"Master Cui, my feet hurt. I can't walk another step. "

Pointing ahead, Cui Ning said, "My place is right there, just a few steps ahead. You can rest there. "

So they went to Cui Ning's house. After sitting down, Xiuxiu said, "I'm hungry, Master Cui. Please buy me some refreshments. After such a shock, I'd also appreciate a cup of wine. " Right away, Cui Ning went out to buy some wine. After a few drinks, it was truly a case of

*Three cups of green bamboo-leaves down the throat,
 Two pink peach blossoms on the cheeks.*

As the saying goes, "Spring breathes life into flowers; wine brings lust in its wake." Xiuxiu said, "Do you remember how, when we were looking at the moon on the balcony one night, you were promised to me in marriage? And you kept on thanking the prince. Remember?"

With his hands respectfully folded in front of his chest, Cui Ning made a vague sound. (*This detail shows that Cui Ning is a cautious man.*)

Xiuxiu continued, "At the time, everyone cheered, 'What a fine couple they'll make!' How could you have forgotten?"

Cui Ning again made a vague sound.

Xiuxiu continued, "Rather than waiting for that to happen, why don't we become husband and wife this very night? What do you say to that?"

"I wouldn't presume," replied Cui Ning.

"You wouldn't presume? Then I'll scream and ruin you. Why did you bring me to your home in the first place? I'll report you to the prince tomorrow!"

"Young lady, if you want to be my wife, that's fine with me, but there's one thing. We can't live in this place anymore. Let's take advantage of all the commotion and get out of here tonight. That's the only way to go about it. "



道：“我既和你做夫妻，凭你行。”当夜做了夫妻。[眉批]立志不终，崔宁性命断送在此。

四更已后，各带着随身金银物件出门。离不得饥餐渴饮，夜住晓行，迤迳来到衢州。崔宁道：“这里是五路总头，是打那条路去好？不若取信州路上去，我是碾玉作，信州有几个相识，怕那里安得身。”即时取路到信州。住了几日，崔宁道：“信州常有客人到行在往来，若说道我等在此，郡王必然使人来追捉，不当稳便。不若离了信州，再往别处去。”两个又起身上路，径取潭州。不则一日，到了潭州，却是走得远了。就潭州市里讨间房屋，出面招牌，写着“行在崔待诏碾玉生活”。崔宁便对秀秀道：“这里离行在有二千馀里了，料得无事，你我安心，好做长久夫妻。”潭州也有几个寄居官员，见崔宁是行在待诏，日逐也有生活得做。崔宁密使人打探行在本府中事。有曾到都下的，得知府中当夜失火，不见了一个养娘，出赏钱寻了几日，不知下落。也不知道崔宁将他走了，见在潭州住。

时光似箭，日月如梭，也有一年之上。忽一日方早开门，见



Xiuxiu said, "Since we're going to be husband and wife, I'll do whatever you say." And so, they became husband and wife that very night. (*Failure to follow through with his resolve was to be the death of Cui Ning.*)

They left after the fourth watch of the night, each carrying some gold, silver, and other valuables. They traveled by day and rested by night, eating and drinking when necessary, and thus wended their way to Quzhou.

Cui Ning said, "Here is an intersection of five roads. Which one shall we take? We might just as well take the road to Xinzhou, where I have a few acquaintances. With my skills as a jade carver, we may be able to settle down there." So they took the road that led to Xinzhou.

After they had been there a few days, Cui Ning said, "There are a lot of travelers between here and the capital. If word gets out that we two are living here, the prince will surely send men to hunt us down. So this isn't a safe place. I say we leave Xinzhou for somewhere else."

The couple again set out on a journey, heading, this time, for Tanzhou. Some days later, they arrived in Tanzhou, finally far enough from the capital. There, they acquired a house and put up a signboard that said "Artisan Cui, Jade Carver from the Capital."

"We are now more than two thousand *li* from the capital," Cui Ning said to Xiuxiu. "I don't think we're in any danger. Let's forget all our worries and settle down as a regular wedded couple." In Tanzhou, there lived a number of officials who had retired from the imperial court. Impressed because Cui Ning was a jade-carver from the capital, they gave him enough work to keep him occupied every day. Secretly, Cui Ning made inquiries about happenings in the prince's establishment. Someone who had been to the capital told him that a maidservant had disappeared during the fire of that night. A reward had been announced for her return, but after several days of searching, her whereabouts remained a mystery. No one knew that she had followed Cui Ning and was now living in Tanzhou.

Time flew like an arrow. The sun and the moon shot back and



两个着皂衫的，一似虞候府干打扮。人来铺里坐地，问道：“本官听得说有个行在崔待诏，教请过来做生活。”崔宁分付了家中，随这两个人到湘潭县路上来。便将崔宁到宅里相见官人，承揽了玉作生活，回路归家。正行间，只见一个汉子头上带个竹丝笠儿，穿着一领白段子两上领布衫，青白行缠找着裤子口，着一双多耳麻鞋，挑着一个高肩担儿，正面来，把崔宁看了一看，崔宁却不见这汉面貌，这个人却见崔宁，从后大踏步尾着崔宁来。正是：

谁家稚子鸣榔板，惊起鸳鸯两处飞。

这汉子毕竟是何人？且听下回分解。

竹引牵牛花满街，疏篱茅舍月光筛。琉璃盏内茅柴酒，
白玉盘中簇豆梅。休懊恼，且开怀，平生赢得笑颜开。
三千里地无知己，十万军中挂印来。

这只《鹧鸪天》词是关西秦州雄武军刘两府所作。从顺昌大战之后，闲在家中，寄居湖南潭州湘潭县。他是个不爱财的名将，家道贫寒，时常到村店中吃酒。店中人不识刘两府，灌呼啰吨。刘两府道：“百万番人，只如等闲，如今却被他们诬罔！”做了这



forth like a shuttle. More than one year went by. One day, Cui Ning's shop had just opened for business when two men in black robes, looking like yamen runners, stepped in, sat down, and told him, "Our master has heard about an Artisan Cui from the capital and wishes to invite him over to do a job."

After leaving some instructions with his wife, Cui Ning followed the two men to Xiangtan County. They brought him to their master's residence and the official gave Cui Ning some jade to work on.

On his way home, Cui Ning saw coming in his direction, a man who wore a bamboo hat, a cotton shirt with a lined collar of white satin, blue and white leggings tying up his trousers, and a pair of hemp sandals on his feet. The man was carrying a load across his shoulders and gave Cui Ning a look as he passed. Cui Ning did not quite see the man's face, but the man recognized Cui Ning. Taking big strides, he turned back and followed Cui Ning. Truly,

*Whose child banged the side of the boat,
And made the frightened mandarin ducks fly apart?*

Who was this man? Let me tell you in the next session.

*Bamboo-trellised morning glories fill the streets,
Moonlight filters through the fence of my hatched hut.
In the finely glazed cup, crude home-brewed wine;
On the white jade plate, salt-preserved plums.*

*Grieve not! Be of good cheer!
A lifetime of achievements deserves a smile!
Within three thousand li, there is no friend
For the one who once led a hundred thousand men.*

The above lyric poem to the tune of "Partridge Sky" was written by a General Liu, a native of Xiongwu County, Qinzhou Prefecture, west of the Tong Pass.¹⁹ After the big battle at Shunchang, he retired to Xiangtan County, Tanzhou Prefecture, in Hunan.²⁰ Albeit a famous commander, he attached no importance to money and lived in poverty. On his frequent visits to the village wineshop, people who did not know who he was yelled at him. He said, "A million Jurchen invaders did not intimidate me, and yet today, I find myself humiliated



只《鹧鸪天》，流传直到都下。当时殿前太尉是杨和王，见了这词，好伤感，“原来刘两府直恁孤寒！”教提辖官差人送一项钱与这刘两府。今日崔宁的东人郡王，听得说刘两府恁地孤寒，也差人送一项钱与他，却经由潭州路过。见崔宁从湘潭路上来，一路尾着崔宁到家，[眉批]来脉又逶迤。正见秀秀坐在柜身子里，便撞破他们道：“崔大夫，多时不见，你却在这里。秀秀养娘他如何也在这里？郡王教我下书来潭州，今日遇着你们。原来秀秀养娘嫁了你，也好。”当时唬杀崔宁夫妻两个，被他看破。

那人是谁？却是郡王府中一个排军，从小伏侍郡王，见他朴实，差他送钱与刘两府。这人姓郭名立，叫做郭排军。当下夫妻请住郭排军，安排酒来请他。分付道：“你到府中千万莫说与郡王知道！”郭排军道：“郡王怎知得你两个在这里。我没事，却说甚么。”当下酬谢了出门，回到府中，参见郡王，纳了回书。看着郡王道：“郭立前日下书回，打潭州过，却见两个人在那里住。”郡王问：“是谁？”郭立道：“见秀秀养娘并崔待诏两个，请郭立吃了酒食，教休来府中说知。”[眉批]郭立朴实，说也不妨，却不该许崔



by these people!" So he wrote the above lyric poem, and the poem came to be circulated in the capital.

Prince Yang of He, commander of the imperial guards at the time, felt distraught upon reading the poem.²¹ "So, General Liu lives in such loneliness and poverty!" Then and there, he ordered the treasurer to have some money sent to General Liu. Cui Ning's former master, the prince of Xian'an, had heard about Liu's straitened circumstances and also sent a messenger with an offer of money. It was this messenger, passing by Tanzhou, who ran into Cui Ning on his way back from Xiangtan. He followed Cui Ning all the way home. (*Another roundabout way of getting to the point.*)

At the sight of Xiuxiu sitting behind the counter, the messenger confronted them, saying, "I haven't seen you in a long time, Master Cui! So you live here! But why is Xiuxiu the Maid here, too? The prince sent me to Tanzhou to deliver a letter. Fancy meeting you two here! So Xiuxiu the Maid is now your wife. That's just as well."

Realizing that the man had guessed the situation, Cui Ning and his wife were frightened out of their wits.

Who was that man? Well, he was a guard in the prince's establishment and had been in the prince's service ever since childhood. It was on account of his honesty that he had been charged with delivering money to General Liu. Guo Li by name, he was called Guard Guo. At this point, the couple invited him to stay and offered him wine, saying to him, "When you go back, please don't say anything about this to the prince!"

"How would the prince ever know that the two of you are here?" said Guard Guo. "Don't I have better things to do? Why should I say anything?"

He thanked them, bade them farewell, and returned to the prince's establishment, where he presented the prince with the letter of reply. Then, looking the prince in the face, he said, "When I passed by Tanzhou on my way back, I ran into two people living there."

"Who are they?" asked the prince.

"Xiuxiu the Maid and Artisan Cui. They treated me to wine and food and told me not to tell you about them." (*As an honest man,*



宁不说，这又是不朴实处。郡王听说便道：“叵耐这两个做出这事来，却如何直走到那里？”郭立道：“也不知他仔细，只见他在那里住地，依旧挂招牌做生活。”

郡王教干办去分付临安府，即时差一个缉捕使臣，带着做公的，备了盘缠，径来湖南潭州府，下了公文，同来寻崔宁和秀秀，却似：

皂雕追紫燕，猛虎啖羊羔。

不两月，捉将两个来，解到府中。报与郡王得知，即时升厅。原来郡王杀番人时，左手使一口刀，叫做“小青”，右手使一口刀，叫做“大青”。这两口刀不知剁了多少番人。那两口刀，鞘内藏着，挂在壁上。郡王升厅，众人声喏。即将这两个人押来跪下。郡王好生焦躁，左手去壁牙上取下“小青”，右手一掣，掣刀在手，睁起杀番人的眼儿，咬得牙齿剥剥地响。当时唬杀夫人，在屏风背后道：“郡王，这里是帝辇之下，不比边庭上面，若有罪过，只消解去临安府施行，如何胡乱凯得人？”郡王听说道：“叵耐这两个畜生逃走，今日捉将来，我恼了，如何不凯？既然夫人



Guo Li does nothing wrong in volunteering the truth, but he should not have promised Cui Ning that he would not tell the prince. That is dishonest.)

Immediately, the prince said, "A fine thing they did! But how did they end up there?"

"I don't know the details. I only saw that they were living there and taking orders for work under a shop sign."

The prince had a messenger deliver instructions to the Lin'an prefectural yamen. An inspector was dispatched to Tanzhou right away, along with some runners and money for traveling expenses. After delivering the official documents to the Tanzhou prefectural yamen, they set out to find Cui Ning and Xiuxiu in a manner not unlike

*Black eagles hunting young swallows,
Fierce tigers preying on little lambs.*

Within two months, the two captives were brought to the prince's establishment. When informed of their arrival, the prince called his tribunal to order.

Now, in his battles against the Tartars, the prince had wielded in his left hand a sword called "Small Green" and in his right hand one called "Big Green". Goodness knows how many Tartars had been cut down by these two swords, which were now hanging in their sheaths on the wall. As the prince ascended to his seat, everyone called out in salutation, and the couple were brought in and made to kneel down. Furiously, the prince took Small Green from the peg on the wall with his left hand and unsheathed it with one swipe of his right hand. Sword in hand, he opened his eyes wide as he had done when slaying the Tartars and gnashed his teeth so hard that the sound was loud and clear.

Horrified, the prince's wife said to him from behind the screen, "Your Highness, this is the capital of the empire, not the frontier. If they are guilty, you need only send them under guard to the Lin'an prefectural yamen for justice to be done. You must not kill people at will."

Hearing this, the prince said, "It was an outrage that these two lowlifes escaped in the first place. Now that they've been brought



来劝，且捉秀秀入府后花园去，把崔宁解去临安府断治。”当下喝赐钱酒，[眉批]今吴中赏人，亦云“喝赐”，是古来之语。赏犒捉事人。解这崔宁到临安府，一一从头供说：“自从当夜遗漏，来到府中，都搬尽了，只见秀秀养娘从廊下出来，揪住崔宁道：‘你如何安手在我怀中？若不依我口，教坏了你！’要共崔宁逃走。崔宁不得已，只得与他同走。只此是实。”临安府把文案呈上郡王，郡王是个刚直的人，便道：“既然恁地，宽了崔宁，且与从轻断治。崔宁不合在逃，罪杖，发还建康府居住。”

当下差人押送。方出北关门，到鹅项头，见一顶轿儿，两个人抬着，从后面叫：“崔待诏，且不得去！”崔宁认得像是秀秀的声音，赶将来又不知恁地？心下好生疑惑。伤弓之鸟，不敢揽事，且低着头只顾走。只见后面赶将上来，歇了轿子，一个妇人走出来，不是别人，便是秀秀，道：“崔待诏，你如今去建康府，我却如何？”崔宁道：“却是怎地好？”秀秀道：“自从解你去临安府断罪，把我捉入后花园，打了三十竹篦，遂便赶我出来。我知道你建康府去，赶将来同你去。”崔宁道：“恁地却好。”[眉批]



back, why can't I kill them, as angry as I am? But since you intervene on their behalf, let Xiuxiu be taken to the back garden and Cui Ning sent under guard to the prefecture yamen for sentencing and punishment." He then ordered that meed, in the form of money and wine, be given to those who had brought back the captives. (*Even to this day, this archaic word "meed" is used in the Wu region to refer to rewards for service.*)

After being brought under guard to the Lin'an prefectural yamen, Cui Ning gave a detailed confession, starting from the beginning. "On the night of the fire, I went to the mansion and found that everything had been carried off. Xiuxiu the Maid came out from the corridor and grabbed me, saying, 'Why do you put your hand on my breast? If you don't do what I say, I'll ruin you!' She wanted me to escape with her. I saw nothing for it but to do as she said. And that is the truth."

The Lin'an yamen submitted the confession to the prince, who, being of a frank and straightforward nature, said, "In that case, I'll let Cui Ning off easy. But he shouldn't have run away. So he shall be beaten and banished to Jiankang Prefecture [present-day Nanjing]."

Right away, Cui Ning was taken under guard out of the mansion and to the road. After leaving the North Gate and reaching Gooseneck Point, he saw behind him a sedan-chair carried by two men and heard a voice calling, "Master Cui, wait for me!" Cui Ning recognized the voice of Xiuxiu and wondered why she had come after him. Being, as it were, a bird wounded by an arrow, he dared not bring any more trouble upon himself. He hung his head and kept walking. Soon the sedan-chair caught up with him. After it was put down, who should step out but Xiuxiu!

"Master Cui," said she, "now that you're going to Jiankang, what is to become of me?"

"Indeed, what is there to do?" asked Cui Ning.

Xiuxiu replied, "After you were taken to the yamen for trial, I was taken into the back garden, where they gave me thirty thrashings with a bamboo stick and threw me out. I learned that you were on your way to Jiankang, and so I rushed over, hoping to catch up with



崔宁又若迷了。讨了船，直到建康府。押发人自回。若是押发人是个学舌的，就有一场是非出来。因晓得郡王性如烈火，惹着他不是轻放手的。他又不是王府中人，去管这闲事怎地？况且崔宁一路买酒买食，奉承得他好，回去时就隐恶而扬善了。[眉批] 针线甚密。

再说崔宁两口在建康居住，既是问断了，如今也不怕有人撞见，依旧开个碾玉作铺。浑家道：“我两口却在这里住得好，只是我家爹妈自从我和你逃去潭州，两个老的吃了些苦。当日捉我入府时，两个去寻死觅活，今日也好教人去行在取我爹妈来这里同住。”崔宁道：“最好。”便教人来行在取他丈人丈母，写了他地理脚色与来人。到临安府寻见他住处，问他邻舍，指道：“这一家便是。”来人去门首看时，只见两扇门关着，一把锁锁着，一条竹竿封着。问邻舍：“他老夫妻那里去了？”邻舍道：“莫说！他有个花枝也似女儿，献在一个奢遮去处。这个女儿不受福德，却跟一个碾玉的待诏逃走了。前日从湖南潭州捉将回来，送在临



you and join you. ”

“That’s good,” said Cui Ning. (*There he goes again, not knowing what’s good for him.*)

They traveled by boat for the rest of the journey, and when they arrived at Jiankang, the guard escorting them turned back. Had he been the gossipy kind, the couple would have been in for some trouble again, but the guard knew that the prince, with his fiery temper, would never relent once he found himself provoked. Besides, not being a member of the prince’s household, why should he meddle in other people’s affairs? Also, throughout the journey, Cui Ning had generously treated him to wine and food. So, after returning, the guard said only nice things and made no mention of what could have done Cui Ning harm. (*Good detail, like the fine stitches of a good piece of needlework.*)

So Cui Ning and his wife took up residence in Jiankang. Now that his case had been closed, he was no longer afraid of being spotted by old acquaintances. As before, he opened a jade carving shop.

One day, his wife said, “The two of us are living comfortably here, but my parents have been through a lot since you and I fled to Tanzhou. The day I was seized and taken to the prince, they tried to kill themselves. How about sending someone to the capital to bring them here so that they can live with us?”

“That would be nice indeed,” Cui Ning agreed, whereupon he sent a man to the capital to bring his parents-in-law over.

Equipped with the address, names, and other relevant information given to him by Cui Ning, the man made his way to Lin’an and found the house. He checked with a neighbor, who said, pointing to the house, “That’s the house all right.” The man walked up to the door, only to find the two panels locked and bolted with a bamboo pole. He asked the neighbors, “Where have the old couple gone?”

“You may well ask! They have a daughter as pretty as a flower, whom they sent to live in a wonderland of a place. But instead of enjoying her good fortune, the girl eloped with some jade carver. Some time ago, they were caught and brought back from Tanzhou in Hunan. The man was taken to the Lin’an prefectural yamen for trial,



安府吃官司，那女儿吃郡王捉进后花园里去。老夫妻见女儿捉去，就当下寻死觅活，至今不知下落，只恁地关着门在这里。”来人见说，再回建康府来，兀自未到家。

且说崔宁正在家中坐，只见外面有人道：“你寻崔待诏住处？这里便是。”崔宁叫出浑家来看时，不是别人，认得是璩公璩婆。都相见了，喜欢的做一处。那去取老儿的人，隔一日才到，说如此这般，寻不见，却空走了这遭，两个老的且自来到这里了。两个老人道：“却生受你，我不知你们在建康住，教我寻来寻去，直到这里。”其时四口同住，不在话下。

且说朝廷官里，一日到偏殿看玩宝器，拿起这玉观音来看，这个观音身上，当时有一个玉铃儿，失手脱下。即时问近侍官员：“却如何修理得？”官员将玉观音反覆看了，道：“好个玉观音！怎地脱落了铃儿？”看到底下，下面碾着三字：“崔宁造。”“恁地容易，既是有人造，只消得宣这个人来，教他修整。”敕下郡王府，宣取碾玉匠崔宁。郡王回奏：“崔宁有罪，在建康府居住。”即时使人去建康，取得崔宁到行在歇泊了。当时宣崔宁见驾，将



and the girl was taken into the prince's back garden. After hearing about what had happened to their daughter, the old couple tried to kill themselves. They haven't been heard from since then. What we see is only the closed door. "

At these words, the man started back to Jiankang, but one day, while this messenger was still on the road, Cui Ning was sitting at home when he heard someone outside saying, "You are looking for Master Cui's house? It's right here." Cui Ning had his wife go outside to see who it was, and who should be there but her parents, old Mr. and Mrs. Qu! So happy were they at the reunion that they fell on each other's shoulders.

The man who had been sent to get the old couple did not return until the following day. He gave an account of what had happened and added, "I didn't find them and made the trip for nothing, not knowing that they were already here. "

The old couple said, "We are really sorry to have put you to so much trouble." Addressing their daughter and son-in-law, they continued, "We didn't know that you live in Jiankang now, so we asked all around until we finally found ourselves here. " The four began to live under the same roof, and there we shall leave them for now.

Let us turn to the emperor, who went one day to a side hall to view the collection of treasures. As he picked up a jade statue of the bodhisattva, his hand slipped and knocked a jade bell off the statue. Immediately, he asked an attendant, "How can it be fixed?"

The attendant examined the statue front and back and commented, "What a nice jade statue! Too bad the bell fell off!" Then he saw a few characters carved on the bottom: "Made by Cui Ning. " "That's easy," he said. "Since we have the name of the artisan, we need only summon him here and have him fix it. "

A decree was duly sent to the prince, ordering him to bring Cui Ning the jade carver to the imperial court. In reply, the prince said, "Cui Ning has committed a crime and is now living in Jiankang Prefecture." Right away, an envoy was sent to Jiankang to get Cui Ning.

After arriving in the capital and depositing his luggage at an inn, Cui Ning was called into the emperor's presence. The emperor handed



这玉观音教他领去，用心整理。崔宁谢了恩，寻一块一般的玉，碾一个铃儿接住了，御前交纳。破分请给养了崔宁，令只在行在居住。崔宁道：“我今日遭际御前，争得气。再来清湖河下寻间屋儿开个碾玉铺，须不怕你们撞见！”

可煞事有斗巧，方才开得铺三两日，一个汉子从外面过来，就是那郭排军。见了崔待诏，便道：“崔大夫恭喜了！你却在这里住？”抬起头来，看柜身里却立着崔待诏的浑家。郭排军吃了一惊，拽开脚步就走。浑家说与丈夫道：“你与我叫住那排军，我相问则个。”正是：

平生不作皱眉事，世上应无切齿人。

崔待诏即时赶上扯住，只见郭排军把头只管侧来侧去，口里喃喃地道：“作怪，作怪！”没奈何，只得与崔宁回来，到家中坐地。浑家与他相见了，便问：“郭排军，前者我好意留你吃酒，你却归来说与郡王，坏了我两个的好事。今日遭际御前，却不怕你去说。”郭排军吃他相问得无言可答，只道得一声：“得罪！”相别了，便来到府里，对着郡王道：“有鬼！”[眉批]又多嘴。郡



him the jade bodhisattva and told him to take it home and fix it with care. Cui Ning thanked the emperor and went to find a piece of jade of the same kind. He then carved it into a bell, affixed it to the statue, and returned the statue to the emperor. The emperor thereupon ordered that an exception be made, allowing Cui Ning to live in the capital as a jade carver under the patronage of the imperial court.

Cui Ning said to himself, "Now that I've won favor from the emperor, I can hold my head up again. I'm going to find a house by Qinghu River and open a jade carving shop there. What do I have to fear now if I'm seen?"

And, as coincidence would have it, less than three days after the shop was open for business, who should step in but Guard Guo! At the sight of Cui Ning, he said, "Congratulations, Master Cui! So you're living here now!" Raising his head, he saw that behind the counter stood Master Cui's wife. Quite shaken by the sight, Guard Guo turned and took to his heels.

Xiuxiu said to her husband, "Stop that man for me. I have a few questions for him." Truly,

*One who does nothing to raise a frown
Has no enemy in the whole wide world.*

Straightway, Jade Carver Cui gave chase and grabbed the man. Shaking his head, Guard Guo mumbled to himself over and over again, "How very strange! How very strange!" But he could not do otherwise than follow Cui Ning back.

After he sat down in Cui Ning's home, Xiuxiu greeted him and said, "Guard Guo, the last time I saw you, I served you wine with the best intentions, but you told the prince about us and ruined our happy situation. Now that we've won favor from the emperor, you may very well go ahead and report on us again for all we care."

Unable to come up with a response, Guard Guo said only, "I am sorry!"

With that, he took leave of the couple and returned to the prince's residence. To the prince, he said, "I saw a ghost!" (*There he goes again, shooting off his big mouth.*)

"What's wrong with this man?" said the prince.



王道：“这汉则甚？”郭立道：“告恩王，有鬼！”郡王问道：“有甚鬼？”郭立道：“方才打清湖河下过，见崔宁开个碾玉铺，却见柜身里一个妇女，便是秀秀养娘。”郡王焦躁道：“又来胡说！秀秀被我打杀了，埋在后花园，你须也看见，如何又在那里？[眉批] 关目。却不是取笑我？”郭立道：“告恩王，怎敢取笑！方才叫住郭立，相问了一回。怕恩王不信，勒下军令状了去。”郡王道：“真个在时，你勒军令状来！”那汉也是合苦，真个写一纸军令状来。郡王收了，叫两个当直的轿番，抬一顶轿子，教：“取这妮子来。若真个在，把来凯取一刀；若不在，郭立，你须替他凯取一刀！”郭立同两个轿番来取秀秀。正是：

麦穗两歧，农人难辨。

郭立是关西人，朴直，却不知军令状如何胡乱勒得？三个一径来到崔宁家里，那秀秀兀自在柜身里坐地。见那郭排军来得恁地慌忙，却不知他勒了军令状来取你。郭排军道：“小娘子，郡王钧旨，教来取你则个。”秀秀道：“既如此，你们少等，待我梳洗了同去。”即时入去梳洗，换了衣服出来，上了轿，分付了丈夫。两个轿番便抬着，径到府前。郭立先入去，郡王正在厅上等



“Your Highness, I saw a ghost!”

“What ghost?”

“I was just passing by Qinghu River when I saw Cui Ning’s jade carving shop. Behind the counter stood a woman. And she was none other than Xiuxiu the Maid!”

The prince snapped impatiently, “What nonsense is this? I had Xiuxiu beaten to death and buried in the back garden. You must have seen it, too. How could she have been there in the shop? (*Nice plot.*) Are you trying to make fun of me?”

“How would I ever dare to make fun of Your Highness? She stopped me some moments ago and talked to me. If Your Highness doesn’t believe what I say, I can write you a military pledge.”²²

“If she’s really still alive, yes, write me the pledge!”

That ill-starred man did draw up a military pledge. The prince put it away and summoned two sedan-chair carriers on duty to bring over a sedan-chair, adding to Guo Li, “Get me that woman. If she’s really still alive, I’ll cut her down with my sword. If not, you will be put to the sword in her place!” Thereupon, Guo Li and the two sedan-chair carriers set out to get Xiuxiu. Truly,

*Two ears of wheat grow from the same stalk;
The farmer finds them hard to tell apart.*

Guo Li, a native of the region west of the Tong Pass, was a simpleminded man. Little did he know that a military pledge was not something to be given so lightly. Upon arrival at Cui Ning’s house, the three men found Xiuxiu sitting behind the counter. She had no inkling that Guard Guo, coming in such haste, was here to get her on a military pledge.

“Young woman,” said Guard Guo, “we are here to arrest you by order of the prince.”

“In that case,” said Xiuxiu, “wait for a while. I need to do my toilette before joining you.” So saying, she disappeared into the interior of the house and changed her clothes before reemerging to mount the sedan-chair. After she bid farewell to her husband and left him with a few words of instruction, the two sedan-chair carriers carried her all the way to the prince’s mansion.



待。郭立唱了喏，道：“已取到秀秀养娘。”郡王道：“着他入来！”郭立出来道：“小娘子，郡王教你进来。”掀起帘子看一看，便是一桶水倾在身上，开着口，则合不得，就轿子里不见了秀秀养娘。[眉批]郭立多事，自取其祸。问那两个轿番道：“我不知，则见他上轿，抬到这里，又不曾转动。”那汉叫将入来道：“告恩王，恁地真个有鬼！”郡王道：“却不叵耐！”教人：“捉这汉，等我取过军令状来，如今凯了一刀。先去取下‘小青’来。”那汉从来伏侍郡王，身上也有十数次官了。盖缘是粗人，只教他做排军。这汉慌了道：“见有两个轿番见证，乞叫来问。”即时叫将轿番来道：“见他上轿，抬到这里，却不见了。”说得一般，想必真个有鬼，只消得叫将崔宁来问。便使人叫崔宁来到府中。崔宁从头至尾说了一遍。郡王道：“恁地又不干崔宁事，且放他去。”崔宁拜辞去了。郡王焦躁，把郭立打了五十背花棒。

崔宁听得说浑家是鬼，到家中问丈人丈母。两个面面厮觑，



Guo Li went in first. He chanted a greeting to the prince, who was waiting in the main hall, and said, "Xiuxiu the Maid has been brought here."

"Bring her in!" said the prince.

Guo Li went out and said, "Young woman, the prince wants you to come in." But when he lifted the curtain of the sedan-chair, he felt as if a bucketful of water had been poured all over him. He stood there, mouth agape, for there was no Xiuxiu to be seen. (*Guo Li the busybody is to suffer consequences of his own making.*) When asked, the two sedan-chair carriers said, "We have no idea what happened. We saw her get into the sedan-chair, we carried her all the way here, and we never moved from this spot."

Shouting his way into the hall, Guo Li said, "Your Highness, she's indeed a ghost!"

"This is too much!" said the prince. Calling forth his men, he ordered, "Seize this man! Bring me the pledge he wrote, and let me put him to the sword!" With that, he turned to take his "Small Green" from the wall.

In all his life serving the prince, there had been more than ten opportunities for Guo Li to earn a promotion, but because he was quite an uncouth fellow, he never rose above the rank of guard. In panic, he said, "I have the two sedan-chair carriers as witnesses. Please call them in and ask them."

Right away, the carriers were summoned into the hall. "We did see her mount the chair," they said. "But she disappeared after we arrived here."

Hearing the same story, the prince thought, "Could she really be a ghost? I need only question Cui Ning." Accordingly, Cui Ning was brought into the prince's presence. At Cui Ning's account of the whole thing from start to finish, the prince concluded, "Cui Ning had no hand in this. Let him go." Cui Ning bowed and went off. In a rush of anger, the prince ordered that Guo Li be given fifty strokes of the rod on his back.

Having heard that his wife was a ghost, Cui Ning went home to question his parents-in-law. The old couple looked at each other in



走出门，看着清湖河里，扑通地都跳下水去了。当下叫救人，打捞，便不见了尸首。原来当时打杀秀秀时，两个老的听得说，便跳在河里，已自死了。这两个也是鬼。崔宁到家中，没情没绪，走进房中，只见浑家坐在床上。崔宁道：“告姐姐，饶我性命！”秀秀道：“我因为你，吃郡王打死了，埋在后花园里。却恨郭排军多口，今日已报了冤仇，郡王已将他打了五十背花棒。[眉批]有得好结闲冤家的看样。如今都知道我是鬼，容身不得了。”道罢起身，双手揪住崔宁，叫得一声，匹然倒地。邻舍都来看时，只见：

两部脉尽总皆沉，一命已归黄壤下。

崔宁也被扯去，和父母四个，一块儿做鬼去了。后人评论得好：

咸安王捺不下烈火性，郭排军禁不住闲磕牙。

瓌秀娘舍不得生眷属，崔待诏撇不脱鬼冤家。



dismay and then walked out the door and threw themselves with a splash into Qinghu River. Cui Ning lost no time in calling for help, but a search turned up no corpses.

Here's what had happened: Upon hearing that Xiuxiu had been beaten to death, her parents threw themselves into the river and drowned. So these two were also ghosts. A dejected Cui Ning returned home, and who should be sitting on the bed in his chamber but his wife! Cui Ning said, "Sister, please spare my life!"

"All because of you, I was beaten to death at the prince's orders and buried in the back garden. How hateful that busybody Guard Guo! Now I've had my revenge. The prince has ordered fifty strokes of the rod on his back. (*Busybodies who are likely to incur hatred, take warning!*) Now that everybody knows I'm a ghost, I can't live here anymore." As she rose to go, she grabbed Cui Ning with both hands. With a cry, he fell to the ground. When neighbors came in for a look, they saw that —

*The pulses of both his wrists had stopped;
His life gone back under the yellow earth.*

So Cui Ning was also dragged along to make a group of four ghosts. A later poet put it well:

*The prince of Xian'an couldn't curb his rage;
Guard Guo couldn't help shooting off his mouth.
Xiuxiu couldn't bear to part from her man;
Cui Ning couldn't break free from his ghost of a wife.*

Story 8 has been translated by C. Lung as "Artisan Ts'ui and His Ghost Wife" in *Traditional Chinese Stories: Themes and Variations*, ed. Y.W. Ma and Joseph S.M. Lau (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) and as "The Jade Worker" in *The Courtesan's Jewel Box: Chinese Stories of the Tenth-Twelfth Centuries*, trans. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1981). In the original edition, a note appended to the title reads "The Song dynasty text was titled 'The Jade Bodhisattva.'"

¹ Lady Huang is often identified as Sun Daoxun, a Song dynasty poet.

² Wang Anshi (1021–86) was a famous man of letters and political reformer. For more on Wang Anshi, see stories 3 and 4.

³ Su Shi, or Su Dongpo (1037–1101), was one of China's greatest men of letters. For more on Su Shi, see story 3.

⁴ Qin Guan (1049–1100), courtesy name Shaoyou, was a famous *ci* poet.





⁵ Shao Yong (1011–77), courtesy name Yaofu, was a Northern Song philosopher.

⁶ This is probably a reference to Zeng Gongliang, courtesy name Zhongming, who held posts in the Grand Secretariat and the Privy Military Council under Emperor Renzong of the Song dynasty.

⁷ Zhu Dunrun (1081–1159), courtesy name Xizhen, was a Southern Song *ci* poet.

⁸ Legend has it that the soul of Du Yu, king of Sichuan in high antiquity, changed into a cuckoo and would not stop its mournful cries until it coughed up blood.

⁹ Su Xiaoxiao of Suzhou was a famous courtesan with literary talents during the Southern Song dynasty.

¹⁰ “Plum rain” refers to the kind of intermittent drizzle that occurs during the rainy season in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangzi River.

¹¹ “The southern shore” (*nanpu*) is an expression taken from “Nine Songs” by Qu Yuan (ca.340–ca.278 B.C) and is often used in reference to places where lovers part.

¹² Wang Yansou (1042–92), courtesy name Yanlin, was an official in the Privy Military Council.

¹³ The Prince of Xian’an was the famous general Han Shizhong (1089–1151), who repelled invading Jurchen troops.

¹⁴ During the Tang, Song, and Yuan dynasties, the muhurta doll, usually made of clay, wood, or wax in the shape of a child — was often offered as a gift on the Double Seventh Festival. The festival is held on the seventh day of the seventh and celebrates the annual meeting of the Herdboy and Weaving Maiden stars, which are said to cross the Milky Way on a bridge formed by magpies. The term muhurta is derived from Mahoraga, a Buddhist deity with a human body and a snake’s head.

¹⁵ Baosi was the favorite concubine of King You (r.781–771 B.C.E.) of the Zhou dynasty. In order to win a smile from her, King You lit the beacon fires on Mount Li, which were intended to signal distress to the feudal lords. Believing the king to be in danger, the lords came rushing to the rescue with their troops, only to find upon arrival that nothing was amiss. Baosi exploded with mirth. Later, when western tribes raised armies and invaded the empire, none of the lords bothered to come to the king’s aid, and King You perished at the foot of Mount Li.

¹⁶ Zhou Yu was a military strategist under Sun Quan (182–252), king of Wu, who once reigned over the entire region southeast of the Yangzi River. In a famous battle at Red Cliff, Sun Quan joined forces with Liu Bei, an adversary, and routed their common enemy, the powerful Cao Cao.

¹⁷ The Wutong god is a fire god in Daoist beliefs.

¹⁸ Song Wuji is revered in Daoism as a fire god who rides a red donkey.

¹⁹ General Liu is Liu Qi (1098–1162), a famous general known for his valor in fighting the Jurchen invaders. He was a native of Deshun County in what is now Jingning, in Gansu Province, not a native of Xiongwu County, as the storyteller asserts.

²⁰ In the summer of 1140, Liu Qi led 37,000 soldiers in a major battle against the Jurchen army at Shunchang, present-day Fuyang in Anhui Province, and routed the invaders.

²¹ Prince Yang of He was Yang Cunzhong, a well-known commander of the Southern Song army. He was posthumously awarded the title Prince of He.

²² A military pledge is a usually voluntary written statement signed by a military officer that pledges willingness to be executed if the pledger is unable to accomplish a given mission.



第九卷

李谪仙醉草吓蛮书

堪羨当年李谪仙，吟诗斗酒有连篇；
蟠胸锦绣欺时彦，落笔风云迈古贤。
书草和番威远塞，词歌倾国媚新弦；
莫言才子风流尽，明月长悬采石边。

话说唐玄宗皇帝朝，有个才子，姓李，名白，字太白，乃西梁武昭兴圣皇帝李暹九世孙，西川锦州人也。其母梦长庚入怀而生。那长庚星又名太白星，所以名字俱用之。那李白生得姿容美秀，骨格清奇，有飘然出世之表。十岁时，便精通书史，出口成章，人都夸他锦心绣口，又说他是神仙降生，以此又呼为李谪仙。有杜工部赠诗为证：

昔年有狂客，号尔谪仙人；
笔落惊风雨，诗成泣鬼神。
声名从此大，汨没一朝伸。



Story 9

“Li the Banished Immortal” Writes in Drunkenness to Awe the Barbarians

*How enviable Li the Banished Immortal!
Between cups of wine, he poured out poem after poem.
In talent, he outshone scholars of the day;
In writing style, he surpassed worthy men of old.
His letter to the barbarians inspired awe;
His lines praising Consort Yang graced the zither strings.
Say not that the gifted poet is no more;
The bright moon still hangs over the Caishi Cliffs.¹*

The story goes that during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong [712–56] of the Tang dynasty, there lived a gifted poet, Li Bai [also spelled Li Po or Li Bo] by name, courtesy name Taibai, who was a ninth-generation descendant of Emperor Li Hao of Western Liang² and a native of Jinzhou, Sichuan. Before giving birth to him, his mother dreamed that the star Taibai [the god of the planet Venus] had fallen into her abdomen. Hence, Bai for his given name and Taibai for his courtesy name. He turned out to be a comely boy with an air of refinement that was quite out of this world. At age ten, he was already well versed in history and the classics, and words that flowed from his mouth had the literary grace of well-composed essays. All and sundry praised him for his remarkable talent, saying that he was a reincarnated immortal from heaven, hence the nickname “Li the Banished Immortal.” There is, in testimony, a poem Du Fu wrote for him:³

*In days gone by, there was that free spirit
Called “Immortal Banished from Heaven,”
Whose pen summoned the winds and rain,
Whose poems moved ghosts and deities to tears.
From oblivion, he rose to sudden fame,
And his name began to spread far and wide;
His talent now widely recognized,*



文采承殊渥，流传必绝伦。

李白又自称青莲居士。一生好酒，不求仕进，志欲遨游四海，看尽天下名山，尝遍天下美酒。先登峨眉，次居云梦，复隐于徂徕山竹溪，与孔巢父等六人，日夕酣饮，号为竹溪六逸。有人说湖州乌程酒甚佳，白不远千里而往，到酒肆中，开怀畅饮，旁若无人。时有迦叶司马经过，闻白狂歌之声，遣从者问其何人。白随口答诗四句：

青莲居士谪仙人，酒肆逃名三十春。

湖州司马何须问，金粟如来是后身。

迦叶司马大惊，问道：“莫非蜀中李谪仙么？闻名久矣。”遂请相见，留饮十日，厚有所赠。临别，问道：“以青莲高才，取青紫如拾芥，何不游长安应举？”李白道：“目今朝政紊乱，公道全无，请托者登高第，纳贿者获科名。非此二者，虽有孔孟之贤，晁董之才，无由自达。[眉批]此风久矣，可叹，可叹！白所以流连诗



His name goes down in history, unrivaled.

Li Bai, who called himself the “Blue-Lotus Recluse,” had a lifelong passion for drinking. His ambition was not to have a career as an official but to ramble around all the four seas and famous mountains and taste all kinds of good wine that could be found in the land. After climbing Mount Emei, he took up residence in the Yunmeng Marshes. After that, he went to live as a hermit at Bamboo Creek on Mount Zulai, where he drank to his heart’s content day in and day out with Kong Chaofu and four other men. They called themselves “The Six Men of Leisure of Bamboo Creek.” When he heard about the superior quality of the Wucheng wine of Huzhou, Li Bai readily undertook the long journey to Huzhou, where he went on drinking bouts in wineshops, totally oblivious of people around him.

One day, Mr. Jiaye, the deputy magistrate, was passing by a wineshop when he heard Li Bai’s wild singing. He sent an attendant to find out who the man was. Without missing a beat, Li Bai came up with a quatrain by way of reply:

*“Blue Lotus Layman, Banished Immortal,
For thirty years, in wineshops have I taken shelter.
The magistrate of Huzhou need not ask;
A Vimalakirti born again am I.”⁴*

Much taken aback, Magistrate Jiaye asked, “Might he be Li of Sichuan, the Banished Immortal? I have long heard of his fame.” Thereupon, he asked to see Li Bai. He kept Li Bai for ten days, during which time much wine was consumed. At their parting, he showered gifts upon Li Bai and said, “With your talent, gaining a career as an official would be as easy for you as picking up a blade of grass. Why don’t you travel to Chang’an to sit for the examinations?”

Li Bai replied, “With the imperial court in such a confused state, there’s no fairness to speak of. Those who pull strings and pay bribes left and right are given high honors in the exams. Those who don’t resort to such means get nowhere, even if they are as virtuous as Confucius and Mencius or as talented as Chao Cuo and Dong Zhongshu.⁵ (*Such have been the ways of the world for all too long. How lamentable!*) It’s precisely to avoid being bullied by stupid examiners that I’ve been



酒，免受盲试官之气耳。”迦叶司马道：“虽则如此，足下谁人不知？一到长安，必有人荐拔。”李白从其言，乃游长安。一日到紫极宫游玩，遇了翰林学士贺知章，通姓道名，彼此相慕。知章遂邀李白于酒肆中，解下金貂，当酒同饮。至夜不舍，遂留李白于家中下榻，结为兄弟。[眉批]旧小说谓李白为贺家婢出，得此正之。次日，李白将行李搬至贺内翰宅，每日谈诗饮酒，宾主甚是相得。

时光荏苒，不觉试期已迫。贺内翰道：“今春南省试官，正是杨贵妃兄杨国忠太师，监视官乃太尉高力士，二人都是爱财之人。贤弟若无金银买嘱他，便有冲天学问，见不得圣天子。此二人与下官皆有相识，下官写一封札子去，预先嘱托，或者看薄面一二。”李白虽则才大气高，遇了这等时势，况且内翰高情，不好违阻。贺内翰写了柬帖，投与杨太师、高力士。二人接开看了，冷笑道：“贺内翰受了李白金银，却写封空书在我这里讨白人情，到那日专记，如有李白名字卷子，不问好歹，即时批落。”时值三



indulging myself in the pleasures of poetry and wine.”

“What you say may all be very true,” replied the magistrate, “but who hasn’t heard of your name? Once you’re in Chang’an, there will surely be someone to recommend you for a position.”

Li Bai followed his advice and traveled to Chang’an.

One day, he was touring the Heavenly Palace when he ran into Hanlin Academician He Zhizhang.⁶ After learning each other’s names, each expressed admiration for the other’s talent, whereupon He Zhizhang invited Li Bai to a wineshop. There, he took off the ornament on his official’s cap and exchanged it for wine to share with Li Bai. By night, still unwilling to part from Li Bai, he took Li to his house for the night and, there, they pledged brotherhood. (*In some old novels, Li Bai is said to be a son of He Zhizhang’s by one of his maidservants. And now, this account debunks that falsehood.*)

The next day, Li Bai moved his luggage into Academician He’s residence, where host and guest talked about poetry every day over cups of wine and enjoyed each other’s company.

Time sped by. Before they knew it, the date of the examinations drew near. Academician He said, “The chief examiner appointed by the Imperial Secretariat this spring is Grand Preceptor Yang Guozhong, Consort Yang’s older brother, and the supervisor is Grand Commandant Gao Lishi. Both of them are of the greedy sort. If you have nothing with which to bribe them, you, my good brother, won’t ever get to see the emperor, however learned you are. Being an acquaintance of both of them, I’ll write them a letter and put in a few words for you. They may do something for you out of their regard for me.”

However proud Li Bai was, he found it hard to reject the Academician’s kind offer under the circumstances. Thereupon, Academician He wrote the letter and had it delivered to Grand Preceptor Yang and Grand Commandant Gao Lishi.

Upon reading the letter, the two men said with sardonic smiles, “So, Academician He has kept Li Bai’s bribes for himself and has written this worthless letter to ask for a favor, free of charge. On the day of the exams, whatever the circumstances, let’s flunk that man Li Bai the moment we see his name on the exam paper!”



月三日，大开南省，会天下才人，尽呈卷子。李白才思有馀，一笔挥就，第一个交卷。杨国忠见卷子上有李白名字，也不看文字，乱笔涂抹道：“这样书生，只好与我磨墨。”高力士道：“磨墨也不中，只好与我着袜脱靴。”喝令将李白推抢出去。正是：

不愿文章中天下，只愿文章中试官。

李白被试官屈批卷子，怨气冲天，回至内翰宅中，立誓：“久后吾若得志，定教杨国忠磨墨，高力士与我脱靴，方才满愿。”贺内翰劝白：“且休烦恼，权在舍下安歇。待三年，再开试场，别换试官，必然登第。”终日共李白饮酒赋诗。

日往月来，不觉一载。忽一日，有番使赍国书到。朝廷差使命急宣贺内翰陪接番使，在馆驿安下。次日阁门舍人接得番使国书一道。玄宗敕宣翰林学士，拆开番书，全然不识一字，拜伏金阶启奏：“此书皆是鸟兽之迹，臣等学识浅短，不识一字。”天子闻奏，将与南省试官杨国忠开读。杨国忠开看，双目如盲，亦不



On the third day of the third month, the Grand Secretariat opened wide its doors for talented men from all over the empire to sit for the examinations. Li Bai, in an exuberance of brilliant imagination, composed his essay with never a pause of his brush-pen and was the first to hand in the paper. Seeing the name Li Bai on the paper, Yang Guozhong wrote sloppily, without even a single glance at the essay itself, "Such a student is only good for helping me grind an ink stick to make ink." Gao Lishi, in his turn, wrote, "This man is not even good enough for making ink. He's only good enough for taking boots off my feet and putting socks on them." By their order, Li Bai was pushed out of the examination grounds. Truly,

*It was better to please the examiners
Than to gain excellence in writing.*

His examination paper having been thus unjustly failed by the examiners, Li Bai returned to Academician He's residence in a blazing rage, swearing to himself, "If I ever rise to power in future, I won't rest until I make Yang Guozhong grind ink for me and Gao Lishi take off my boots."

Academician He tried to placate him, saying, "Calm down for now. Stay here with me until the next examination three years from now under different examiners. You'll surely make it."

Day in and day out, the two of them spent their time drinking wine and composing poems. The days stretched to months, and quite unnoticeably, the months stretched to a year.

Suddenly, one day, an envoy from a foreign country arrived to deliver a message. The imperial court urgently summoned Academician He to greet the foreign envoy, who was then escorted to an inn. The next day, the official greeter of the court received the letter from the envoy. The Hanlin Academicians whom Emperor Xuanzong had summoned opened the letter but found themselves unable to decipher even one word. Prostrating themselves on the floor, they said, "This letter is written in an alien script completely unknown to these Academicians of little learning."

Hearing this, the Son of Heaven told Yang Guozhong, Examiner of the Imperial Secretariat, to read the letter. When he unfolded



晓得。天子宣问满朝文武，并无一人晓得，不知书上有何吉凶言语。龙颜大怒，喝骂朝臣：“枉有许多文武，并无一个饱学之士与朕分忧。此书识不得，将何回答发落番使？却被番邦笑耻，欺侮南朝，必动干戈，来侵边界，如之奈何！敕限三日，若无人识此番书，一概停俸；六日无人，一概停职；九日无人，一概问罪。别选贤良，共扶社稷。”圣旨一出，诸官默默无言，再无一人敢奏。天子转添烦恼。

贺内翰朝散回家，将此事述于李白。白微微冷笑：“可惜我李某去年不曾及第为官，不得与天子分忧。”[眉批]落第中埋没了多少忠义有用之才。贺内翰大惊道：“想必贤弟博学多能，辨识番书，下官当于驾前保奏。”次日，贺知章入朝，越班奏道：“臣启陛下，臣家有一秀才，姓李名白，博学多能，要辨番书，非此人不可。”天子准奏，即遣使命，赍诏前去内翰宅中，宣取李白。李白告天使道：“臣乃远方布衣，无才无识，今朝中有许多官僚，都



the letter, Yang Guozhong's eyes stared like those of a blind man, recognizing none of the words. The Son of Heaven asked the whole assembly of civilian and military officials, but none of them could read the letter. None knew whether it boded ill or well. In a towering rage, the Son of Heaven lashed out at the court ministers, "What use is there in having such a multitude of civilian and military officials when none of you knows enough to relieve us of vexation! If this letter cannot be read, how shall we respond to it? What shall be done with this envoy? We shall end up being laughed at by his country, which will then bully us and raise an army to cross our borders. What is to be done then? We give you three days. If no one can read this letter, all of you will be paid no more salaries. If no one can do this in six days, all of you will lose your posts, and in nine days, all of you will be convicted of a crime. We shall select worthier men than you to work for the empire."

The assembly of officials found themselves speechless at this imperial decree. No one dared venture a word again, which upset the Son of Heaven even more.

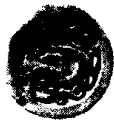
Upon returning home after the court session, Academician He related to Li Bai what had happened at court. Smiling ever so slightly in a sarcastic way, Li Bai said, "Too bad I failed last year's exams and missed the opportunity to help the Son of Heaven." (*Goodness knows how many loyal and useful men have been consigned to oblivion by the imperial examinations!*)

Academician He gave a start and said, "So, I take it that you, my good brother, with your versatile learning, are able to read that foreign language. I will surely report this to the emperor."

During the next day's court session, He Zhizhang approached the throne and said, "Your Majesty, I have a houseguest, a scholar called Li Bai, who is a man of versatile learning. He is the only one able to translate the letter."

The emperor gave his assent to He's proposal and sent a messenger to Academician He's residence to summon Li Bai.

"I am but a commoner from afar, with neither talent nor learning," said Li Bai to the messenger. "With so many learned scholars



是饱学之儒，何必问及草莽？臣不敢奉诏，恐得罪于朝贵。”说这句“恐得罪于朝贵”，隐隐刺着杨、高二人，使命回奏。天子初问贺知章：“李白不肯奉诏，其意云何？”知章奏道：“臣知李白文章盖世，学问惊人。只为去年试场中，被试官屈批了卷子，羞抢出门，今日教他白衣入朝。有愧于心。乞陛下赐以恩典，遣一位大臣再往，必然奉诏。”玄宗道：“依卿所奏。钦赐李白进士及第，着紫袍金带，纱帽象简见驾。就烦卿自往迎取，卿不可辞！”贺知章领旨回家，请李白开读。备述天子惓惓求贤之意。李白穿了御赐袍服，望阙拜谢。遂骑马随贺内翰入朝，玄宗于御座专待李白。

李白至金阶拜舞，山呼谢恩，躬身而立。天子一见李白，如贫得宝，如暗得灯，如饥得食，如旱得云，开金口，动玉音，道：“今有番国贻书，无人能晓，特宣卿至，为朕分忧。”白躬身奏道：“臣因学浅，被太师批卷不中，高太尉将臣推抢出门。今有番书，



serving in the court, why bother asking me, a crude commoner? I dare not comply with the decree for fear of giving offense to the noble officials.”

The last phrase was a veiled reference to Yang Guozhong and Gao Lishi. The messenger duly reported back to the emperor, who then asked He Zhizhang, “What does Li Bai mean by not complying with the imperial decree?”

He Zhizhang replied, “To my knowledge, Li Bai’s literary talent is unrivaled throughout the land, and his learning is also truly astounding. But in last year’s examinations, the examiners unjustly failed his paper, and he was pushed out of the examination grounds in humiliation. So he is now too ashamed to come into the court in commoner’s clothes. If Your Majesty will be so kind as to send a court minister to him, he will surely comply.”

“We shall do as you say,” said Emperor Xuanzong, “and make Li Bai a *jinshi*. He will come here in proper attire, complete with a purple robe, a gold waistband, a gauze cap, and an ivory tablet in hand. We shall trouble you with the mission. Do not refuse us.”

Equipped with the imperial decree, He Zhizhang returned home and had Li Bai spread the scroll and read it for himself. He then conveyed to Li Bai in detail the emperor’s sincere wishes for enlisting the services of worthy men. Having donned the robe bestowed upon him by the emperor, Li Bai made thankful obeisances in the direction of the palace gate. Then, he mounted a horse and followed Academician He to the court, where Emperor Xuanzong had been waiting on his throne for him. Li Bai prostrated himself at the foot of the steps leading to the throne and chanted words of gratitude three times before he rose to stand, his head bowed.

At the sight of Li Bai, the emperor was as delighted as a poor man who acquires some treasure, as a dark room that is given light, as a hungry man who finds food, and as a drought-ravaged place that sees clouds. Moving his royal lips, he said in his august voice, “There is a letter from a foreign country that no one is able to read. So we have summoned you, to relieve us of this vexation.”

With a bow, Li Bai said, “I am but a man of little learning. The



何不令试官回答，却乃久滞番官在此？臣是批黜秀才，不能称试官之意，怎能称皇上之意？”天子道：“朕自知卿，卿其勿辞！”遂命侍臣捧番书赐李白观看。李白看了一遍，微微冷笑，对御座前将唐音译出，宣读如流。番书云：

渤海国大可毒书达唐朝官家：自你占了高丽，与俺国逼近，边兵屡屡侵犯吾界，想出自官家之意。俺如今不可耐者，差官来讲和，可将高丽一百七十六城，让与俺国，俺有好物事相送。太白山之菟，南海之昆布，栅城之鼓，扶馀之鹿，郑颌之豕，率宾之马，沃州之绵，湄沱河之鲫，九都之李，乐游之梨，你官家都有分。若还不肯，俺起兵来厮杀，且看那家胜败？

众官听得读罢番书，不觉失惊，面面相觑，尽称“难得”。天子听了番书，龙情不悦。沉吟良久，方问两班文武：“今被番家



Grand Preceptor failed my examination paper, and Grand Commandant Gao had me pushed out of the examination grounds. Why does Your Majesty not have the examiners translate the letter? Why keep the foreign envoy here day after day? How can I, a failure at the examinations, ever hope to please Your Majesty when I have failed to please the examiners?"

The Son of Heaven said, "We know who you are. Do not turn us down!" So saying, he ordered that an attendant present Li Bai with the letter. Li Bai read it over and, a hardly perceptible haughty smile hovering on his lips, he translated the letter into Chinese, right there in the emperor's presence, and the words fell trippingly from his tongue like a stream of water. The letter said,

"From the kodu⁷ of Parhae ["Bohai" in modern Chinese] ⁸ to the house of Tang:

"Since you occupied Koguryo, thus bringing your border close to that of my country, your troops have repeatedly violated our border, actions that must have been authorized by you. Finding such encroachments more than we can bear, we have therefore sent an envoy with the proposal that the one hundred and seventy-six walled towns of Koguryo be ceded to my country. In return, we have the following gracious gifts for you: tigers of the Taibai Mountains [now the Changbai Mountains], Kunbu herbs of Nanhai [in present-day Korea], drums of Shancheng, deer of Fuyu [present-day Songyuan in China's Jilin Province], hogs from Moji, horses of Shuaibin [in present-day Russia], the cotton of Wozhou [in present-day Korea], the carp of Meituo Lake [now Xingkai Lake, in China's Heilongjiang Province], plums of Jiudu, and pears of Leyou — all of which are to be shared with you. If you refuse our offer, we shall resort to force to see who will come out the winner."

Having heard the translation of the letter, the assembly of officials stared at one another in amazement, saying, one and all, "Extraordinary!"

The Son of Heaven was displeased. He reflected for a long while before asking the civilian and military officials standing in rows on



要兴兵抢占高丽，有何策可以应敌？”两班文武，如泥塑木雕，无人敢应。贺知章启奏道：“自太宗皇帝三征高丽，不知杀了多少生灵，不能取胜，府库为之虚耗。天幸盖苏文死了，其子男生兄弟争权，为我乡导。[眉批]高丽事详见此。高宗皇帝遣老将李勣、薛仁贵统百万雄兵，大小百战，方才殄灭。今承平日久，无将无兵，倘干戈复动，难保必胜。兵连祸结，不知何时而止？愿吾皇圣鉴。”天子道：“似此如何回答他？”知章道：“陛下试问李白，必然善于辞命。”天子乃召白问之。李白奏道：“臣启陛下，此事不劳圣虑，来日宣番使人朝，臣当面回答番书，与他一般字迹，书中言语，羞辱番家，须要番国可毒拱手来降。”天子问：“可毒何人也？”李白奏道：“渤海风俗，称其王曰可毒。犹回纥称可汗，吐番称赞普，[眉批]音博。六诏称诏，诃陵称悉莫威，各从其俗。”



both sides of the throne, “Now that a foreign country is trying to occupy Koguryo by force, what plans do you have to meet the challenge?”

The civilian and military officials stood as still as if they were statues made of mud and wood. None ventured to say a word, but He Zhizhang spoke up. “When Emperor Taizong led three expeditions against Koguryo, goodness knows how many lives were lost, but victory remained as elusive as ever and the imperial treasury was depleted. By a stroke of good luck sent from Heaven, General Yon Kaesomun died. His son Namsaeng, in fighting his brother for power, served as our guide.⁹ (*A detailed description of the Korea incident.*) It was not until Emperor Gaozong had the elderly generals Li Ji and Xue Rengui lead a mighty million-strong army in a hundred battles, big and small, that the war was won. After enjoying so many years of peace, the empire has no competent commanders or soldiers at its disposal. Should hostilities be resumed, there is no guarantee that we will win. And who knows how long the miseries of war will last? I wish Your Majesty will lend your divine wisdom to the consideration of this matter!”

“If things are as you say, what reply should we give?” asked the emperor.

“Your Majesty can ask Li Bai,” suggested He Zhizhang. “He will surely come up with some nicely crafted language.”

Thereupon, the emperor put the question to Li Bai. And this was Li Bai’s reply: “Your Majesty does not need to worry over this matter. Tomorrow, if the foreign envoy is called to the court, I shall write a reply in their language, using insulting words to shame their *kodu* into humble submission.”

“What is a *kodu*?” asked the Son of Heaven.

Li Bai explained, “In the Parhae custom, their ruler is called *kodu*, in the same way a Uighur ruler is called *khan*, a Tibetan chief *btsanpo* (*In this case, the character pu [in btsanpo] is pronounced “po”*), the six Wuman [in present-day Yunnan Province and the southwestern areas of Sichuan Province] tribal chiefs *zhao*, and the Walaing [in present-day Java, Indonesia] woman chief *ximo*. Each



天子见其应对不穷，圣心大悦，即日拜为翰林学士。遂设宴于金銮殿，宫商迭奏，琴瑟喧阗，嫔妃进酒，彩女传杯。御音传示：“李卿可开怀畅饮，休拘礼法。”李白尽量而饮，不觉酒浓身软。天子令内官扶于殿侧安寝。次日五鼓，天子升殿。

净鞭三下响，文武两班齐。

李白宿醒犹未醒，内官催促进朝。百官朝见已毕，天子召李白上殿，见其面尚带酒容，两眼兀自有矇眊之意。天子分付内侍，教御厨中造三分醒酒酸鱼羹来。须臾，内侍将金盘捧到鱼羹一碗。天子见羹气太热，御手取牙箸调之良久，赐与李学士。[眉批]亦个爱才皇帝。李白跪而食之，顿觉爽快。是时百官见天子恩幸李白，且惊且喜。惊者怪其破格，喜者喜其得人。惟杨国忠、高力士愀然有不乐之色。圣旨宣番使人朝，番使山呼见圣已毕。李白紫衣纱帽，飘飘然有神仙凌云之态，手捧番书立于左侧柱下，朗声而



tribe has its own customs.”

Immensely delighted at Li Bai’s fluent answer, the emperor granted him the title Hanlin Academician that very day. A feast was then set out in the Palace of Golden Bells, music was struck up, and court ladies served wine while colorfully clad maidens passed the cups. The emperor said, “Mr. Li, you may drink to your heart’s content. Never mind the rules of etiquette.” Li Bai drank as much as he could, and before he knew it, his body had gone limp under the effects of the wine. The emperor ordered that court attendants help him to the side of the hall and put him up for the night.

At the fifth watch the next morning, the emperor opened the court session.

*The whip ordering silence cracked three times;
The officials lined up in two neat rows.*

Li Bai had not quite wakened from his wine-induced sleep when the court attendants urged him to present himself at the court. After the salutations were completed, the emperor called forth Li Bai but, seeing his wine-sodden eyes and the tipsy look on his face, turned to a court attendant and said, “Have the imperial chef make some sour fish chowder to sober him up.”

Soon, the attendant came back with a golden tray on which was a bowl of fish chowder. Seeing that the soup was too hot, the emperor picked up the ivory chopsticks with his royal hand and stirred the soup for quite some time to cool it down before handing the bowl over to Academician Li. (*Another one of those emperors who cherished talent.*) Li Bai dropped to his knees and ate the soup. Immediately, he felt much better. Witnessing the emperor’s kindness to Li Bai, all those present were astonished at this disregard of rank but also delighted that the imperial court had obtained the services of a worthy man—all except Yang Guozhong and Gao Lishi, who wore sullen looks on their faces.

By the emperor’s order, the foreign envoy was summoned to court, where he went through the usual salutations. In a purple robe and a gauze cap, looking as ethereal as an immortal rising above the clouds, Li Bai stood by the post on the left side of the hall. Holding



读，一字无差，番使大骇。李白道：“小邦失礼，圣上洪度如天，置而不较，有诏批答，汝宜静听！”番官战战兢兢，跪于阶下。天子命设七宝床于御座之傍，取于闾白玉砚，象管兔毫笔，独草龙香墨，五色金花笺，排列停当。赐李白近御榻前，坐锦墩草诏。
[眉批] □罢极矣，唯其人足当之。李白奏道：“臣靴不净，有污前席，望皇上宽恩，赐臣脱靴结袜而登。”天子准奏，命一小内侍：“与李学士脱靴。”李白又奏道：“臣有一言，乞陛下赦臣狂妄，臣方敢奏。”天子道：“任卿失言，朕亦不罪。”李白奏道：“臣前入试春闱，被杨太师批落，高太尉赶逐，今日见二人押班，臣之神气不旺。乞玉音分付杨国忠与臣捧砚磨墨，高力士与臣脱靴结袜，臣意气始得自豪。举笔草诏，口代天言，方可不辱君命。”天子用人之际，恐拂其意，只得传旨，教“杨国忠捧砚，高力士脱靴”。



in his hand the letter that the envoy had delivered, he read it aloud in the original language with never a mispronounced word, much to the envoy's amazement. Li Bai then added, "His Majesty the emperor, in his boundless magnanimity, chooses to overlook the breach of etiquette committed by your insignificant country. Now listen quietly to His Majesty's reply."

In trepidation, the envoy fell to his knees at the foot of the steps. The emperor ordered that a bejeweled couch be placed by the side of the throne. After an ink slab made of white Yutian jade, a rabbit-hair brush-pen with an ivory shaft, a fragrant ink stick, and five-colored stationery paper with golden flower patterns were duly laid out, the emperor called Li Bai to the couch and told him to sit on a brocade-covered cushion and draft the imperial letter of reply. (*None but this man deserves such honor.*)

"My boots being not clean enough for me to approach Your Majesty," said Li Bai, "I beg for Your Majesty's permission for me to take them off and tie up my socks before I mount the steps."

The emperor granted his request, saying to a junior court attendant, "Take off Academician Li's boots."

Li Bai spoke up again, "I have another request, but I dare not say it unless Your Majesty forgives me my presumptuousness."

"Whatever you say, however presumptuous, will be forgiven," said the emperor.

"I sat for the imperial examinations in spring last year," began Li Bai, "but I was failed by Grand Preceptor Yang, and Grand Commandant Gao had me driven from the examination grounds. As these two gentlemen are the masters of ceremony today and I feel a lack of inspiration, I beg that Your Majesty have Yang Guozhong hold the ink slab and grind the ink stick for me and Gao Lishi take off my shoes and tie up my socks so that I may find inspiration and do justice to my mission of drafting the imperial reply on behalf of Your Majesty."

In his eagerness to enlist the services of a worthy man, the emperor did not wish to turn him down and resignedly ordered Yang Guozhong to hold the ink slab and Gao Lishi to take off Li Bai's



二人心里暗暗自揣，前日科场中轻薄了他，“这样书生，只好与我磨墨脱靴。”今日恃了天子一时宠幸，就来还话，报复前仇。出于无奈，不敢违背圣旨，正是敢怒而不敢言。常言道：

冤家不可结，结了无休歇。

侮人还自侮，说人还自说。

李白此时昂昂得意，跣袜登褥，坐于锦墩。杨国忠磨得墨浓，捧砚侍立。论来爵位不同，怎么李学士坐了，杨太师到侍立？因李白口代天言，天子宠以殊礼。杨太师奉旨磨墨，不曾赐坐，只是侍立。李白左手将须一拂，右手举起中山兔颖，向五花笺上，手不停挥，须臾，草就吓蛮书。字画齐整，并无差落，献于龙案之上。天子看了大惊，都是照样番书，一字不识。传与百官看了，各各骇然。天子命李白诵之。李白就御座前朗诵一遍：

大唐开元皇帝，诏谕渤海可毒：自昔石卵不敌，蛇龙不



boots. Privately, the two men knew that this was all because they had humiliated Li Bai at the examinations with their remarks that such a student was only good for grinding ink sticks and taking off boots for them. And now he was taking advantage of the emperor's momentary partiality to him to settle an old score. Out of necessity more than choice, they complied with the emperor's order. It was truly a case of "choking with silent fury," as the idiom goes. In the words of a proverb,

*Never create enemies for yourself,
 For a feud, once started, will know no end.
 Bully others, and you shall be bullied;
 Malign others, and you shall be maligned.*

At this point, an exalted Li Bai went up to the couch, his socks sagging at the heels, and sat down on the brocade cushion. Having ground the ink stick until the ink achieved the right texture, Yang Guozhong stood to one side, ink slab in hand. Given such a difference in rank, how could Academician Li be seated while Grand Preceptor Yang had to stand? Well, that was because the Son of Heaven had granted an exception for Li Bai, who was writing on behalf of the emperor, and Grand Preceptor Yang, who had been ordered to make the ink, had to stand to one side because he had not been given permission to sit.

Li Bai stroked his beard with one swipe of his left hand and with his right hand picked up the brush-pen made of Zhongshan rabbit hair. He began writing on the floral-patterned stationery with never a pause. In a moment, the letter to strike terror in the barbarians' hearts was finished. The scroll, in neat penmanship with never a misplaced stroke, was spread out on the emperor's desk. Much to the emperor's amazement, it was written in the same foreign language used in the letter delivered by the envoy, not a word of which was comprehensible to the emperor. As the letter was passed among the assembly of officials, everyone was awestruck. At the emperor's bidding, Li Bai started reading it aloud, right there by the emperor's throne:

"From the emperor of the kaiyuan period of the great Tang dynasty to the kodu of Parhae:



斗。本朝应运开天，抚有四海，将勇卒精，甲坚兵锐。颉利背盟而被擒，弄赞铸鹅而纳誓。新罗奏织锦之颂，天竺致能言之鸟，波斯献捕鼠之蛇，拂菻进曳马之狗。白鸚鵡来自河陵，夜光珠贡于林邑。骨利幹有名马之纳，泥婆罗有良酢之献。无非畏威怀德，买静求安。〔眉批〕善铺张。高丽拒命，天讨再加，传世九百，一朝殄灭，岂非逆天之咎征，衡大之明鉴与！况尔海外小邦，高丽附国，比之中国，不过一郡，士马刍粮，万分不及。若螳怒是逞，鹅骄不逊，天兵一下，千里流血，君同颉利之俘，国为高丽之续。方今圣度汪洋，怒尔狂悖，急宜悔祸，勤修岁事，毋取诛僇，为四夷笑。尔其三思哉！故谕。

天子闻之大喜，再命李白对番官面宣一通，然后用宝入函。李白仍叫高太尉着靴，方才下殿，唤番官听诏。李白重读一遍，



“Just as eggs cannot be used to fight stones, snakes do not fight dragons. This dynasty, in conformity with its mandate from Heaven, has since its beginning years pacified all the four seas with its army of valiant commanders, well-trained soldiers, and superior weaponry. The Turk khan Jili was captured because of his breach of treaty obligations. Sron btsan sgambo of Tibet was granted a title because of his kind gift of a gold goose to the emperor. The kingdom of Silla offered tributes of brocade; India offered a parrot that talked; Persia offered a snake capable of capturing mice; the Eastern Roman Empire presented us with a dog that could pull horses. A white parrot came from Walaing, a giant luminous pearl from Vietnam, a prized horse from Guligan [a region north of Lake Baikal], and superior vinegar from Nepal. All these tributes were offered for the sake of peace and security in recognition of the might and the benevolence of this empire. (What a long list!) However, against Koguryo, which rose in rebellion, the Son of Heaven dispatched punitive expeditions and wiped out overnight the nine-hundred-year-old kingdom. That serves as a lesson for those who attempt to resist the powerful and go against the will of heaven.

“Being a vassal state of Koguryo, your tiny state is no bigger than a county in China, with less than one ten-thousandth of China’s troops and grain storage. If the angry little mantis tries to stop a chariot, if the fighting goose gets carried away with arrogance, the imperial army shall sweep over your land and leave it awash with blood. Your king will fall a prisoner like Jili, your country will go the way of Koguryo. While the emperor, in his boundless magnanimity, is still willing to forgive your insolence, you will do well to show remorse and assiduously acquit yourself of the duties of annual tributes so as not to court self-destruction and become an object of ridicule to other foreign states. Be advised to think thrice before any action is taken!”

The emperor was most pleased. He told Li Bai to read the letter again to the envoy and affixed the imperial seal to the letter. Commandant Gao had to put Li Bai’s boots back on before Li Bai went



读得声韵铿锵，番使不敢则声，面如土色，不免山呼拜舞辞朝。贺内翰送出都门，番官私问道：“适才读诏者何人？”内翰道：“姓李名白，官拜翰林学士。”番使道：“多大的官，使太师捧砚，太尉脱靴？”内翰道：“太师大臣，太尉亲臣，不过人间之极贵。那李学士乃天上神仙下降，赞助天朝，更有何人可及！”[眉批]会赞口（疑为“扬”字）。番使点头而别，归至本国，与国王述之。国王看了国书，大惊，与国人商议，天朝有神仙赞助，如何敌得。写了降表，愿年年进贡，岁岁来朝。此是后话。

话分两头，却说天子深敬李白，欲重加官职。李白启奏：“臣不愿受职，愿得逍遥散诞，供奉御前，如汉东方朔故事。”天子道：“卿既不受职，朕所有黄金白璧，奇珍异宝，惟卿所好。”李白奏道：“臣亦不愿受金玉，愿得从陛下游幸，日饮美酒三千



down the steps and ordered the envoy to listen to the imperial reply. When Li Bai reread the letter of reply in his resonant voice, the envoy's face turned deathly pale. Without venturing a word, the envoy made repeated prostrations, called out three times "Ten thousand years to the emperor!" and bid the emperor farewell. On his way out, in a subdued voice, he asked Academician He, who saw him as far as the city gate, "Who was the man who read the imperial letter of reply?"

"That was Li Bai, a Hanlin Academician."

"How highly-placed can an Academician be to have the Grand Preceptor hold the ink slab for him and the Grand Commandant take off his boots?"

"Grand preceptors, court ministers, grand marshals, and the emperor's favorite courtiers — however highly placed they may be — belong to this mortal world. But Academician Li is an immortal being that heaven has sent down to assist the dynasty. Where can he find an equal?" (*He certainly knows how to praise.*)

With a nod, the envoy bid Academician He adieu and returned to his own country, where he related everything to his king. Much startled after reading the letter, the king consulted his men and concluded that they were no match for a dynasty blessed with the support of an immortal. The king wrote a letter of surrender, promising to pay yearly tributes to the Tang dynasty, but that is a story for another time.

To continue with this story of ours, the Son of Heaven was about to grant Li Bai an important post out of his high regard for him when Li Bai said, "I have no wish for an official post. My wish is to serve Your Majesty while living a leisurely and carefree life, much in the same way as did Dongfang Shuo of the Han dynasty."¹⁰

"Since you have no wish to assume a post," said the emperor, "you may pick any gold, silver, jade, and other prized possessions of ours that are to your liking."

"Gold and jade do not interest me, either," said Li Bai. "I will be content to follow Your Majesty in your travels and drink three thousand vessels of fine wine every day!"



觞，足矣。”天子知李白清高，不忍相强。从此时时赐宴，留宿于金銮殿中，访以政事，恩幸日隆。一日，李白乘马游长安街，忽听得锣鼓齐鸣，见一簇刀斧手，拥着一辆囚车行来。白停驂问之，乃是并州解到失机将官，今押赴东市处斩。那囚车中，囚着个美丈夫，生得甚是英伟，叩其姓名，声如洪钟，答道：“姓郭名子仪。”李白相他容貌非凡，他日必为国家柱石，遂喝住刀斧手：“待我亲往驾前保奏。”众人知是李谪仙学士，御手调羹的，谁敢不依？李白当时回马，直叩宫门，求见天子，讨了一道赦敕，亲往东市开读，打开囚车，放出子仪，许他带罪立功。子仪拜谢李白活命之恩，异日衔环结草，不敢忘报。此事阁过不题。

是时，宫中最重木芍药，是扬州贡来的。如今叫做牡丹花，唐时谓之木芍药。宫中种得四本，开出四样颜色，那四样？

大红、深紫、浅红、通白。

玄宗天子移植于沉香亭前，与杨贵妃娘娘赏玩，诏梨园子弟奏乐。



Realizing that Li Bai was a man above worldly considerations, the emperor could not bring himself to exert any pressure on him. Henceforth, every so often, the emperor would grant him a seat at feast tables, keep him for the night in the Palace of Golden Bells, and seek his opinion on affairs of the empire. The emperor's kindness to him grew deeper with each passing day.

One day, Li Bai was touring the Avenue of Eternal Peace on horseback when he heard the sound of drums and gongs. Then, a tumbrel surrounded by a team of executioners came into view. He stopped in his tracks and, upon inquiry, found out that the prisoner was a military officer convicted of incompetence, being brought under guard from Bingzhou to the East Marketplace for execution. The prisoner in the tumbrel was a handsome man of powerful physique. When asked his name, he replied in a ringing voice, "I am Guo Ziyi." ¹¹

Impressed by his distinguished bearing, which bespoke a future career as a pillar of the empire, Li Bai sharply ordered the executioners to come to a halt, adding, "Wait until I come back from a trip to the palace to make a plea for clemency."

Recognizing him to be Academician Li, the Banished Immortal, to whom the emperor had served fish chowder, the executioners readily obliged. Li Bai turned his horse back, raced off to the palace, knocked at the palace gate, and requested an audience with the emperor, from whom he obtained a decree of pardon. Upon returning to the East Marketplace, Li Bai read the decree aloud, unlocked the tumbrel, and released Guo Ziyi, bidding him to render meritorious service in atonement for the crime of which he had been convicted. In thanking Li Bai for saving his life, Guo Ziyi said, "I will not fail to repay you for your kindness some day." But of this, no more need be said.

In those days, the most prized flowers in the palace gardens were what we now call "tree peonies", known in the Tang dynasty as wood peonies, which were sent from Yangzhou as tribute. There were in the palace gardens four kinds in four colors.

Which four? *Bright red, deep purple, light red, and pure white.*

Emperor Xuanzong had some transplanted in front of the Eagle-



天子道：“对妃子，赏名花，新花安用旧曲？”遽命梨园长李龟年召李学士入宫。有内侍说道：“李学士往长安市上酒肆中去了。”龟年不往九街，不走三市，一径寻到长安市去。只听得一个大酒楼上，有人歌云：

三杯通大道，一斗合自然。

但得酒中趣，勿为醒者传。

李龟年道：“这歌的不是李学士是谁？”大踏步上楼梯来，只见李白独占一个小小座头，桌上花瓶内供一枝碧桃花，独自对花而酌，已吃得酩酊大醉，手执巨觥，兀自不放。龟年上前道：“圣上在沉香亭宣召学士，快去！”众酒客闻得有圣旨，一时惊骇，都站起来闲看。李白全然不理，张开醉眼，向龟年念一句陶渊明的诗，道是：

我醉欲眠君且去。

念了这句诗，就瞑然欲睡。李龟年也有三分主意，向楼窗往下一招，七八个从者，一齐上楼，不由分说，手忙脚乱，抬李学士到于门前，上了玉花骢，众人左扶右持，龟年策马在后相随，直跑到五凤楼前。天子又遣内侍来催促了，敕赐“走马入宫”。龟年遂



wood Pavilion for Consort Yang to enjoy and engaged a group of singers and dancers for some entertainment. The emperor said, "In the company of the Imperial Consort amid prized flowers, we need fresh melodies for the fresh flowers." He ordered that Li Guinian, head of the singing and dancing group, call Academician Li into the palace.

A court attendant said, "Academician Li is in a wineshop in the Chang'an marketplace." And so, forsaking any other possible route, Li Guinian headed straight for the Chang'an marketplace. There came to his ears from a storied restaurant a man's voice singing the following lyrics:

*Three cups lead you to the great Way;
One liter makes you blend with nature.
The pleasures derived from wine
Are not to be shared with the sober.*

"Who else could it be but Academician Li?" said Li Guinian. In big strides, he mounted the stairs, and whom did he see but Li Bai, sitting all by himself at a small table, on which was a vase with a sprig of flowering peach. Pouring himself cup after cup in front of the flowers, he had already drunk himself into a stupor, but his hand still held on tightly to the giant wine goblet. Guinian walked up to him and said, "His Majesty wants you, sir, to go to the Eaglewood Pavilion. You have no time to lose!"

The mention of His Majesty so shocked the other patrons that they stood up to look. Totally oblivious to their curious stares, Li Bai opened his wine-sodden eyes and replied to Guinian by quoting a line by Tao Yuanming: "Be gone, and let me drift into wine-rapt sleep."¹²

With that, he drifted off to sleep. Li Guinian, quite the man of action, motioned through the window to his attendants downstairs, and up came seven or eight of them. Without further ado, they busily hustled Academician Li out the door and put him on the horse, holding him steady from left and right, and off they went, with Li Guinian bringing up the rear on his horse.

At the Five Phoenixes Tower, they ran into the court attendant sent by the emperor to hurry them along. Instructed by the emperor to let Li Bai enter the palace grounds without dismounting the horse, Li



不扶李白下马，同内侍帮扶，直至后宫，过了兴庆池，来到沉香亭。天子见李白在马上双眸紧闭，兀自未醒，命内侍铺紫氍毹于亭侧，扶白下马少卧。亲往省视，见白口流涎沫，天子亲以龙袖拭之。[眉批]真知遇。贵妃奏道：“妾闻冷水沃面，可以解醒。”乃命内侍汲兴庆池水，使宫女含而喷之。白梦中惊醒，见御驾，大惊，俯伏道：“臣该万死！臣乃酒中之仙，幸陛下恕臣！”天子御手挽起道：“今日同妃子赏名花，不可无新词，所以召卿，可作《清平调》三章。”

李龟年取金花笺授白，白带醉一挥，立成三首。其一曰：

云想衣裳花想容，春风拂槛露华浓。
若非群玉山头见，会向瑶台月下逢。

其二曰：

一枝红艳露凝香，云雨巫山枉断肠。
借问汉宫谁得似？可怜飞燕倚新妆。



Guinian, instead of helping Li Bai get off his horse, joined the court attendant in leading Li Bai all the way into the private sections of the palace grounds. After passing Xingqing Pond, they arrived at the Eaglewood Pavilion.

At the sight of Li Bai asleep on the horse with his eyes tightly closed, the Son of Heaven ordered that court attendants spread a purple woolen carpet outside the pavilion and carry Li Bai off the horse so that he could lie down and rest. When approaching Li Bai for a closer look, the emperor noticed a trickle of saliva at a corner of the Academician's mouth. With his royal sleeve, the emperor wiped off the saliva. (*What a true admirer of talent!*)

Consort Yang said, "I have heard that a splash of cold water on the face can dispel the effects of wine." Accordingly, a court attendant was told to bring water from Xingqing Pond. A court lady then held some water in her mouth and squirted it in a fine sprinkle onto Li Bai's face.

With a start, Li Bai woke up from his dreams. At the sight of the emperor, he was seized with alarm and prostrated himself, saying, "I deserve ten thousand deaths! Your Majesty, please forgive this wine-nurtured free spirit!"

With his royal hands, the emperor raised Li Bai to his feet and said, "We called you because we need new lyric poems today when viewing some prized flowers in the company of the Imperial Consort. Write us three lyric poems to the tune of 'Pure Serene Music.'"

Promptly, Li Guinian brought over stationery in gold-traced floral patterns. With a single flourish of the brush-pen, the wine-inspired Li Bai produced three poems. The first one said,

*Her clothes seen in clouds, her face in flowers;
 A beauty in the spring breeze by the dew rails.
 If not a goddess atop the Jewel Mountains,
 She must be from the Jasper Terrace by the moon.*

The second one said,

*The red sprig's fragrance frozen by the dew,
 Her charm outshines the Clouds and Rain Fairy.¹³
 Who in the Han palace matched her beauty?*



其三曰：

名花倾国两相欢，长得君王带笑看。

解释春风无限恨，沉香亭北倚栏杆。

天子览词，称美不已：“似此天才，岂不压倒翰林院许多学士。”即命龟年按调而歌，梨园众子弟丝竹并进，天子自吹玉笛以和之。歌毕，贵妃敛绣巾，再拜称谢。天子道：“莫谢朕，可谢学士也！”贵妃持玻璃七宝杯，亲酌西凉葡萄酒，命宫女赐李学士饮。天子敕赐李白遍游内苑，令内侍以美酒随后，恣其酣饮。自是宫中内宴，李白每每被召，连贵妃亦爱而重之。

高力士深恨脱靴之事，无可奈何。一日，贵妃重吟前所制《清平调》三首，倚栏叹羨。高力士见四下无人，乘间奏道：“奴婢初意娘娘闻李白此词，怨入骨髓，何反拳拳如是？”贵妃道：“有何可怨？”力士奏道：“‘可怜飞燕倚新妆’，那飞燕姓赵，乃西汉成帝之后。则今画图中，画着一个武士，手托金盘，盘中有



*Not even Zhao Feiyan in all her finery!*¹⁴

The third one said,

A beauty amidst the flowers, what a sight!

For the smiling sovereign's eyes, what a delight!

All regrets gone in the gentle spring breeze,

Against the railings of the pavilion she leans.

After reading the poems, the emperor was effusive in his praise. "Doesn't this genius put many a Hanlin Academician to shame?" said he. Immediately, he had Li Guinian sing out the lyrics while the ensemble of singers struck up their music to the accompaniment of a jade flute played by the emperor himself. The singing over, Consort Yang held her embroidered shawl and made bows of gratitude.

"Don't thank me," said the emperor. "Direct your thanks to Academician Li!"

Holding a bejeweled glass cup in her hand, Consort Yang filled it with wine made of grapes from Western Liang and had a court lady offer it to Academician Li. The emperor then granted Li Bai the privilege of touring the length and width of the royal gardens and ordered court attendants to follow behind and ply Li with fine wine. Henceforth, Li Bai received frequent summons to join the emperor at his private dinners. Even Consort Yang grew to be fondly respectful of him.

Gao Lishi still nursed a bitter grudge against Li Bai for having made him take off his boots, but there was nothing he could do about it. One day, he came upon the Imperial Consort, who was leaning against the railings and reciting in admiration the three lyric poems to the tune of "Pure Serene Music." After first looking in every direction to make sure that no one was around, he said, "I thought Your Ladyship would be deeply offended by those poems of Li Bai's. Why does Your Ladyship seem to enjoy them?"

"What is there to be offended about?" asked Consort Yang.

"It's the line 'Not even Zhao Feiyan in all her finery,'" said Gao Lishi. "Zhao Feiyan was the wife of Emperor Cheng of the Western Han dynasty. In one of the paintings of our day, there is a warrior with a golden plate in his hand. On the plate is a woman dancing with



一女子，举袖而舞，那个便是赵飞燕。生得腰肢细软，行步轻盈，若人手执花枝颤颤然，成帝宠幸无比。谁知飞燕私与燕赤凤相通，匿于复壁之中。成帝入宫，闻壁衣内有人咳嗽声，搜得赤凤杀之。欲废赵后，赖其妹合德力救而止，遂终身不入正宫。今日李白以飞燕比娘娘，此乃谤毁之语，娘娘何不熟思？”原来贵妃那时以胡人安禄山为养子，出入宫禁，与之私通，满宫皆知，只瞒得玄宗一人。高力士说飞燕一事，正刺其心。贵妃于是心下怀恨，每于天子前说李白轻狂使酒，无人臣之礼。天子见贵妃不乐李白，遂不召他内宴，亦不留宿殿中。李白情知被高力士中伤，天子存疏远之意，屡次告辞求去，天子不允。乃益纵酒自废，与贺知章、李适之、汝阳王璿、崔宗之、苏晋、张旭、焦遂为酒友，时人呼为饮中八仙。

却说玄宗天子心下实是爱重李白，只为宫中不甚相得，所以疏了些儿。见李白屡次乞归，无心恋阙，乃向李白道：“卿雅志



flowing sleeves. That woman is Zhao Feiyan, a woman with a lithe and narrow waist and a light and airy gait, as fragile as a blossoming sprig held in the hand. She was, beyond all comparison, Emperor Cheng's most favored woman. But in fact, Feiyan had an adulterous relationship with Yan Chifeng [an attendant in the palace] and used to hide him in a double wall. During one of Emperor Cheng's visits, the emperor heard a man coughing from behind the curtains, and a search was made. Chifeng was found and executed. Thanks to her younger sister Hede's frantic efforts to intercede on her behalf, the emperor stopped short of deposing her but banned her from entering the empress's quarters in the palace for the rest of her life. Now Li Bai is comparing Your Ladyship to Feiyan. How can Your Ladyship ignore such vicious slander?"

The fact of the matter was that Consort Yang was having an adulterous relationship with An Lushan the Tartar, whom she had claimed as her adopted son. An Lushan's constant visits to her private chambers and the true nature of their relationship were known to everyone in the palace except Emperor Xuanzong. The connection Gao Lishi made with Feiyan struck her right on her sore spot.

Out of spite, she began to complain to the emperor against Li Bai, saying that he was a wild drunkard disrespectful of the throne. Seeing that Consort Yang was displeased with Li Bai, the emperor stopped calling him to private dinners and keeping him in the palace overnight. Having guessed that Gao Lishi's malice must have caused the emperor's estrangement from him, Li Bai repeatedly asked for permission to leave, requests that the emperor denied. Henceforth, he abandoned himself to wine with even greater gusto, making friends at the wine table with He Zhizhang, Li Shizhi, Wang Jin of Ruyang, Cui Zongzhi, Su Jin, Zhang Xu, and Jiao Sui. The eight men came to be called by contemporaries "The Eight Immortals of Wine."

Meanwhile, Emperor Xuanzong was, deep down, still as appreciative of Li Bai as before. He distanced himself a little from Li Bai only because of Consort Yang's displeasure. Observing that Li Bai had no wish to stay on at the court but repeatedly asked for permis-



高蹈，许卿暂还，不日再来相召。但卿有大功于朕，岂可白手还山？卿有所需，朕当一一给与。”李白奏道：“臣一无所需，但得杖头有钱，日沽一醉足矣。”天子乃赐金牌一面，牌上御书：“敕赐李白为天下无忧学士，逍遥落托秀才，[眉批]官衔甚新。逢坊吃酒，遇库支钱，府给千贯，县给五百贯。文武官员军民人等，有失敬者，以违诏论。”又赐黄金千两，锦袍玉带，金鞍龙马，从者二十人。白叩头谢恩，天子又赐金花二朵，御酒三杯，于驾前上马出朝，百官俱给假，携酒送行，自长安街直接到十里长亭，樽罍不绝。只有杨太师、高太尉二人怀恨不送。内中惟贺内翰等酒友七人，直送至百里之外，流连三日而别。李白集中有《还山别金门知己诗》，略云：

恭承丹凤诏，欵起烟萝中。
一朝去金马，飘落成飞蓬。
闲来东武吟，曲尽情未终。



sion to leave, he said to Li Bai, "Since you have nobler interests to pursue, we will let you go for now but will call you back soon. However, with your impressive record of distinguished service to the court, how can we let you go empty-handed? Every need that you have shall be gratified."

Li Bai replied, "I have no wish other than to have enough money to buy myself some wine to get drunk on every day."

Thereupon, the emperor gave Li Bai a gold badge on which he wrote, "By imperial order, Li Bai, the Carefree Academician and Blithe-spirited Scholar (*What novel official titles!*) shall be paid, upon demand, five hundred strings of cash by the county and a thousand strings of cash by the prefecture to defray his wineshop bills. Any military or civilian official, soldier, or commoner who shows him disrespect shall be punished for disobeying an imperial decree." The emperor also granted him a thousand taels of gold, a brocade robe with a jade belt, a fine horse with a gold saddle, and twenty attendants. As Li Bai kowtowed in gratitude, the Son of Heaven added two gold flowers and offered him three cups of wine, after which Li Bai mounted the horse and left the court.

The assembly of officials were all given leave to take along some wine and see him off. An unbroken line of wine vessels stretched from the Avenue of Eternal Peace all the way to the Farewell Pavilion ten *li* away. Only Grand Preceptor Yang and Grand Commandant Gao did not show up because of their grudge against him. His seven friends of the wine table, including Academician He, accompanied him for a distance of a hundred *li* and stayed with him for three days before bidding him farewell.

In the collection of Li Bai's poems, there is one entitled "To My Good Friends upon Leaving the Palace for the Mountains." In brief, the poem says,

*Favored by imperial grace,
I rose to sudden fame as in a dream.
Once I leave the palace gate,
I drift like withered fleabane grass.
In leisure, I shall intone Dongwu poems;*¹⁵



书此谢知己，扁舟寻钓翁。

李白锦衣纱帽，上马登程，一路只称锦衣公子。果然逢坊饮酒，遇库支钱。不一日，回至锦州，与许氏夫人相见。官府闻李学士回家，都来拜贺，无日不醉。日往月来，不觉半载。一日白对许氏说，要出外游玩山水，打扮做秀才模样，身边藏了御赐金牌，带一个小仆，骑一健驴，任意而行。府县酒资，照牌供给。忽一日，行到华阴界上，听得人言华阴县知县贪财害民，李白生计，要去治他。来到县前，令小仆退去，独自倒骑着驴子，于县门首连打三回。那知县在厅上取问公事，观见了，连声：“可恶，可恶！怎敢调戏父母官！”速令公吏人等拿至厅前取问。李白微微诈醉，连问不答。知县令狱卒押入牢中，待他酒醒，着他好生供状，来日决断。狱卒将李白领入牢中，见了狱官，掀髯长笑。狱官道：



*The poems may end, but my feelings will linger.
With these lines, I thank my good friends;
In my boat, I search for fellow anglers.*

Wearing his brocade robe and gauze hat, Li Bai mounted his horse and set out on his journey, presenting himself as “Gentleman of the Brocade Robe” all along the way. And, sure enough, his wine bills were duly paid from local government treasuries.

In a matter of days, he was back in Jinzhou and reunited with his wife Xu-shi. Having heard of Academician Li’s return, the local officials all came to greet him. Not a day passed without his drinking himself into a stupor. The days and the months went by, and quite unnoticeably, half a year elapsed.

One day, Li Bai told his wife that he was going out on a sight-seeing trip. Dressed like a scholar, with the emperor’s gold badge hidden on him, he brought along a page boy and, riding a strong donkey, went wherever his whim took him. All along the way, his wine bills were paid out of county and prefectural treasuries in accordance with the imperial decree on the badge.

One day, he found himself in Huayin County. Hearing that the county magistrate was a greedy man who had brought much affliction to the people, Li Bai devised a plan to punish him.

When he arrived at the county yamen, he told his page boy to go away. All by himself, he sat facing backward on his donkey and rode around the yamen gate three times.

While attending to business in the main hall, the magistrate saw Li Bai and said over and over again, “What an insult! What an insult! How dare that man make fun of an official whom he should respect as he does his parents!”

Straightway, he had runners bring Li Bai into the hall for questioning. Li Bai pretended to be slightly tipsy with wine and ignored all the questions. The magistrate ordered that a warden take him to the lockup and, on the next day, after the effects of the wine wore off, have him write a confession before judgment of his case. Accordingly, the warden led Li Bai into the lockup. At the sight of the officer in charge of the lockup, Li Bai broke into such hearty laughter that



“想此人是风颠的?”李白道:“也不风,也不颠。”狱官道:“既不风颠,好生供状。你是何人?为何到此骑驴,搪突县主?”李白道:“要我供状,取纸笔来。”狱卒将纸笔置于案上,李白扯狱官在一边说道:“让开一步待我写。”狱官笑道:“且看这风汉写出甚么来!”李白写道:

供状锦州人,姓李单名白。弱冠广文章,挥毫神鬼泣。
长安列八仙,竹溪称六逸。曾草吓蛮书,声名播绝域。玉辇每趋陪,金盞为寝室。啜羹御手调,流涎御袍拭。高太尉脱靴,杨太师磨墨。天子殿前尚容乘马行,华阴县里不许我骑驴入?请验金牌,便知来历。

写毕,递与狱官看了,狱官唬得魂惊魄散,低头下拜道:“学士老爷,可怜小人蒙官发遣,身不由己,万望海涵赦罪。”李白道:“不干你事,只要你对知县说,我奉金牌圣旨而来,所得何罪,拘



his beard shook. The officer said, "Is this man a lunatic?"

"Not at all," replied Li Bai.

"If not, then write a good confession for me. Who are you? Why did you ride facing backward on the donkey to make fun of the magistrate?"

"If you want me to write a confession, bring me paper and pen."

When the warden brought paper and a brush-pen and set them on the table, Li Bai pulled the officer aside, saying, "You step aside so that I can write!"

The officer said with a chuckle, "Let's see what this lunatic will come up with!"

And this is what Li Bai wrote:

This confession is written by Li Bai, a native of Jinzhou. By the age of twenty, I was already a master of prose, moving ghosts and gods to tears with flourishes of my pen. In Chang'an, I was named one of the Eight Immortals; by the Bamboo Creek, I was called one of the Six Carefree Souls. My letter of warning to the barbarians spread my fame to the far ends of the world. A constant companion of the emperor, I took the Hall of Golden Bells in the palace as my bedchamber. The royal hand has stirred my soup to cool it down for me; the royal sleeve has wiped drool away from my mouth. Grand Commandant Gao has helped me take off my boots; Grand Preceptor Yang has helped me grind the ink stick. The Son of Heaven allowed me to ride a horse through the palace grounds. Why can't the Huayin County Magistrate let me enter on a donkey's back? Read my gold badge, and you shall know who I am!

Upon finishing, he handed the paper to the officer. Frightened out of his wits, the officer bent low in obeisance and said, "Your Highness the Academician, please forgive me in your magnanimity. I had to follow my superior's orders."

Li Bai said, "I have no quarrel with you. Just put this question to your magistrate for me: I am here with a gold badge bearing an imperial decree. What crime have I committed to deserve this deten-



我在此？”狱官拜谢了，即忙将供状呈与知县，并述有金牌圣旨。知县此时如小儿初闻霹雳，无孔可钻，只得同狱官到牢中参见李学士，叩头哀告道：“小官有眼不识泰山，一时冒犯，乞赐怜悯！”在职诸官，闻知此事，都来拜求，请学士到厅上正面坐下，众官庭参已毕。李白取出金牌，与众官看，牌上写道：“学士所到，文武官员军民人等，有不敬者，以违诏论。”——“汝等当得何罪？”众官看罢圣旨，一齐低头礼拜：“我等都该万死。”李白见众官苦苦哀求，笑道：“你等受国家爵禄，如何又去贪财害民？如若改过前非，方免汝罪。”众官听说，人人拱手，个个遵依，不敢再犯。就在厅上大排筵宴，管待学士饮酒三日方散。自是知县洗心涤虑，遂为良牧。此事闻于他郡，都猜道朝廷差李学士出外私行观风考政，无不化贪为廉，化残为善。[眉批] 游戏中原又造福，此才人作用之妙。



tion?"

The officer bowed in gratitude. With all the speed he could muster, he went to the magistrate and presented the confession to him, adding that Li Bai had in his possession a gold badge bearing an imperial decree. As stunned as a child hearing a thunderbolt for the first time, the magistrate wished there was a hole somewhere for him to disappear into, but he could not do otherwise than go with the officer to see Academician Li. He pleaded plaintively with deep bows, "This humble official failed to recognize in you a person as important as the great Mount Tai. Please forgive me for the offense!"

All the other officials of the local yamen, hearing about the matter, rushed to the scene to plead on the magistrate's behalf. At their invitation, Li Bai sat down in the seat of honor in the main hall. After they had finished their salutary obeisances, Li Bai took out the gold badge and showed it to them. On the badge was written: "Any military and civilian official, soldier, and commoner who shows him disrespect shall be punished for disobeying an imperial decree."

"Now, do you know what punishment such an offense carries?" demanded Li Bai.

The assembly of officials said in unison, with lowered heads, "We deserve to die ten thousand deaths."

Amused by the sight of a group of officials pleading piteously for clemency, Li Bai said, "Aren't you all paid by the imperial court? How can you so greedily fleece the people? You'll be forgiven only if you mend your ways."

With hands respectfully folded across their chests, the officials voiced their readiness to do as Li Bai bade and to never revert to their old ways. A grand feast was laid out in the hall in honor of the Academician. The wining and dining lasted for three days. Henceforth, the magistrate turned over a new leaf and became an exemplary official.

When the story spread around to other counties, speculations arose that Academician Li was on a secret court-assigned mission to inspect the work of local governments. Consequently, all the corrupt and merciless officials changed their ways. (*He brought benefit to the people with his playful ways, something only talented men can do.*)



李白遍历赵、魏、燕、晋、齐、梁、吴、楚，无不流连山水，极诗酒之趣。后因安禄山反叛，明皇车驾幸蜀，诛国忠于军中，缢贵妃于佛寺。白避乱隐于庐山。永王璘时为东南节度使，阴有乘机自立之志。闻白大才，强逼下山，欲授伪职，李白不从，拘留于幕府。未几，肃宗即位于灵武，拜郭子仪为天下兵马大元帅，克复两京。有人告永王璘谋叛，肃宗即遣子仪移兵讨之。永王兵败，李白方得脱身，逃至浔阳江口，被守江把总擒拿，把做叛党，解到郭元帅军前。子仪见是李学士，即喝退军士，亲解其缚，置于上位，纳头便拜道：“昔日长安东市，若非恩人相救，焉有今日？”即命治酒压惊，连夜修本，奏上天子，为李白辨冤，且追叙其吓蛮书之功，荐其才可以大用，此乃施恩而得报也。正是：

两叶浮萍归大海，人生何处不相逢。

时杨国忠已死，高力士亦远贬他方，玄宗皇帝自蜀迎归为太上皇，



Li Bai toured the regions of Zhao, Wei, Yan, Jin, Qi, Liang, Wu, and Chu, enjoying the scenic mountains, rivers, and lakes and indulging in the pleasures of poetry and wine.

Later, when An Lushan rose in rebellion, Emperor Xuanzong fled to Sichuan and, on the way there, had Yang Guozhong executed and Consort Yang strangled in a Buddhist temple. In all this upheaval, Li Bai sought the tranquility of the Lushan Mountains and took up residence there as a hermit. Prince Ling of Yong, commander of the southeast region, harbored designs on the throne and, having heard of Li Bai's great talent, forced him down the mountains. The prince offered Li Bai a post in his illegitimate regime. Li Bai turned down the offer and ended up a detainee in Prince Ling's establishment. Soon thereafter, Emperor Suzong succeeded to the throne at Lingwu [in present-day Ningxia Autonomous Region]. Honored as the new grand commandant, Guo Ziyi recovered Chang'an and Luoyang.

At reports of Prince Ling of Yong's rebellious intentions, Emperor Suzong dispatched Guo Ziyi on an expedition against the prince. It was not until the prince's troops were routed that Li Bai found himself free. He took flight, but upon reaching the mouth of Xunyang River, he was captured by sentinels and brought as a rebel before Grand Commandant Guo. Recognizing him to be Academician Li, Guo Ziyi sharply ordered the guards to step aside. With his own hands, he freed Li Bai from the ropes, sat the latter in the seat of honor, and said with a deep bow, "If you, my savior, had not saved my life years ago at the East Marketplace of Chang'an, I wouldn't be here today!" At once, he ordered that wine be served to help Li Bai get over his shock. Before the night was out, he submitted to the emperor a memorial in which he defended Li Bai and, recalling Li Bai's letter of warning to the barbarians, recommended that his talent be put to good use. Now, this was a man who repaid a kindness. Truly,

Two leaves of duckweed meet in the ocean;

You never know whose path you're bound to cross.

By now, Yang Guozhong was dead and Gao Lishi had been banished to a remote place. Emperor Xuanzong returned to the capital from Sichuan as the Imperial Patriarch and recommended the extraor-



亦对肃宗称李白奇才。肃宗乃征白为左拾遗。白叹宦海沉迷，不得逍遥自在，辞而不受。别了郭子仪，遂泛舟游洞庭岳阳，再过金陵，泊舟于采石江边。是夜，月明如昼。李白在江头畅饮，忽闻天际乐声嘹亮，渐近舟次，舟人都不闻，只有李白听得。忽然江中风浪大作，有鲸鱼数丈，奋鬣而起，仙童二人，手持旌节，到李白面前，口称：“上帝奉迎星主还位。”舟人都惊倒，须臾苏醒。只见李学士坐于鲸背，音乐前导，腾空而去。明日将此事告于当涂县令李阳冰，阳冰具表奏闻。天子敕建李谪仙祠于采石山上，春秋二祭。

到宋太平兴国年间，有书生于月夜渡采石江，见锦帆西来，船头上有白牌一面，写“诗伯”二字。书生遂朗吟二句道：

谁人江上称诗伯？锦绣文章借一观。

舟中有人和云：

夜静不堪题绝句，恐惊星斗落江寒。

书生大惊，正欲傍舟相访，那船泊于采石之下。舟中人紫衣纱帽，



dinary talent of Li Bai to the new emperor Suzong. Thereupon Emperor Suzong conferred upon Li Bai the post of remonstrance official, which Li Bai declined, lamenting that life as an official required too much commitment to fit his carefree style of life.

After bidding Guo Ziyi farewell, he toured Lake Dongting in Yueyang by boat. He passed Jinling and moored the boat by the Caishi Cliffs. That night, the moon shone as brightly as day. Li Bai was merrily drinking by the river when he heard clear notes of music drawing nearer and nearer, audible to none but him. Suddenly, a windstorm sprang up. From the sprouting waves leaped a whale several tens of feet in length. There appeared in front of Li Bai two celestial youths holding official tablets who said to him, "The Lord on High invites you to return to your rightful position among the constellations." All the boatmen fainted from the shock. When they came to a moment later, what did they see but Li Bai riding on the back of the whale, wafting toward the sky, following the lead of the music!

The next day, they reported what they had seen to Li Yangbing, magistrate of Dangtu County, and Li Yangbing duly reported their account to the court. By the emperor's order, a temple in honor of Li Bai, the Banished Immortal, was erected on top of Mount Caishi, where memorial services were henceforth held twice a year, in spring and in autumn.

In the Taipingxingguo reign period [976-84] of the Song dynasty, a scholar was passing the Caishi Cliffs one moonlit night when he saw, coming from the west, a boat with a brocade sail. At the bow was a white placard on which was written "Poet of Poets." The scholar intoned two lines:

"Who on the river claims to be 'Poet of poets?'

Let them be shown, the poems as good as jewels!"

Someone in the boat added two lines to make it a quatrain:

"I make no poems in the still of the night,

Lest the stars fall into the cold river in awe."

Agape with astonishment, the scholar was about to approach the boat when it moved away to moor by the bank. Then, a man wearing a purple robe and a gauze hat wafted with the floating lightness of an

飘然若仙，径投李谪仙祠中。书生随后求之祠中，并无人迹，方知和诗者即李白也。至今人称“酒仙”、“诗伯”，皆推李白为第一云。

吓蛮书草见天才，天子调羹亲赐来。
一自骑鲸天上去，江流采石有馀哀。





immortal from the boat and into the temple of Li Bai, the Banished Immortal. The scholar followed him into the temple but, finding no trace of a human being, came to realize that the man who had completed his poem was none other than Li Bai himself. To this day, Li Bai is still revered as an unrivaled “wine god” and “poet of poets.”

*His talent shown in the letter of warning,
The emperor served him soup — what an honor!
Astride a whale's back, he rose to Heaven,
Leaving sorrows behind on the Caishi Cliffs.*

Story 9 has been translated by William Dolby as “Li Bai, God in Exile, Drunken Drafts His Letter to Daunt the Barbarians” in his *The Perfect Lady by Mistake and Other Stories by Feng Menglong (1574–1646)* (London: Paul Elek, 1976).

¹ The Caishi Cliffs, or Caishi Ji, are east of what is now Ma'anshan, Anhui Province. This is where Li Bai is believed to have drowned when, in a drunken state, he tried to embrace the moon's reflection in the water.

² Li Hao (351–417) was the founder of the Western Liang State in western Gansu. He ruled from 400 to 417.

³ Du Fu (712–770) was one of the most celebrated poets in the history of Chinese literature.

⁴ Vimalakirti is said to have been a contemporary of Sakyamuni and to have visited China.

⁵ Chao Cuo (200–154 B. C. E.) was an eminent political figure of the Western Han dynasty.

Dong Zhongshu (179–104 B. C. E.) was an important philosopher.

⁶ He Zhizhang (659–circa 744) was a famous Tang dynasty poet.

⁷ “Kodu” is possibly the Korean equivalent of the Chinese term “*jutou*” (huge head).

⁸ The center of Parhae, which was overrun by the Khitan in the 10th century, was in the Songhua River drainage of northeast China; its capital was the present-day city of Dunhua in China's Jilin Province.

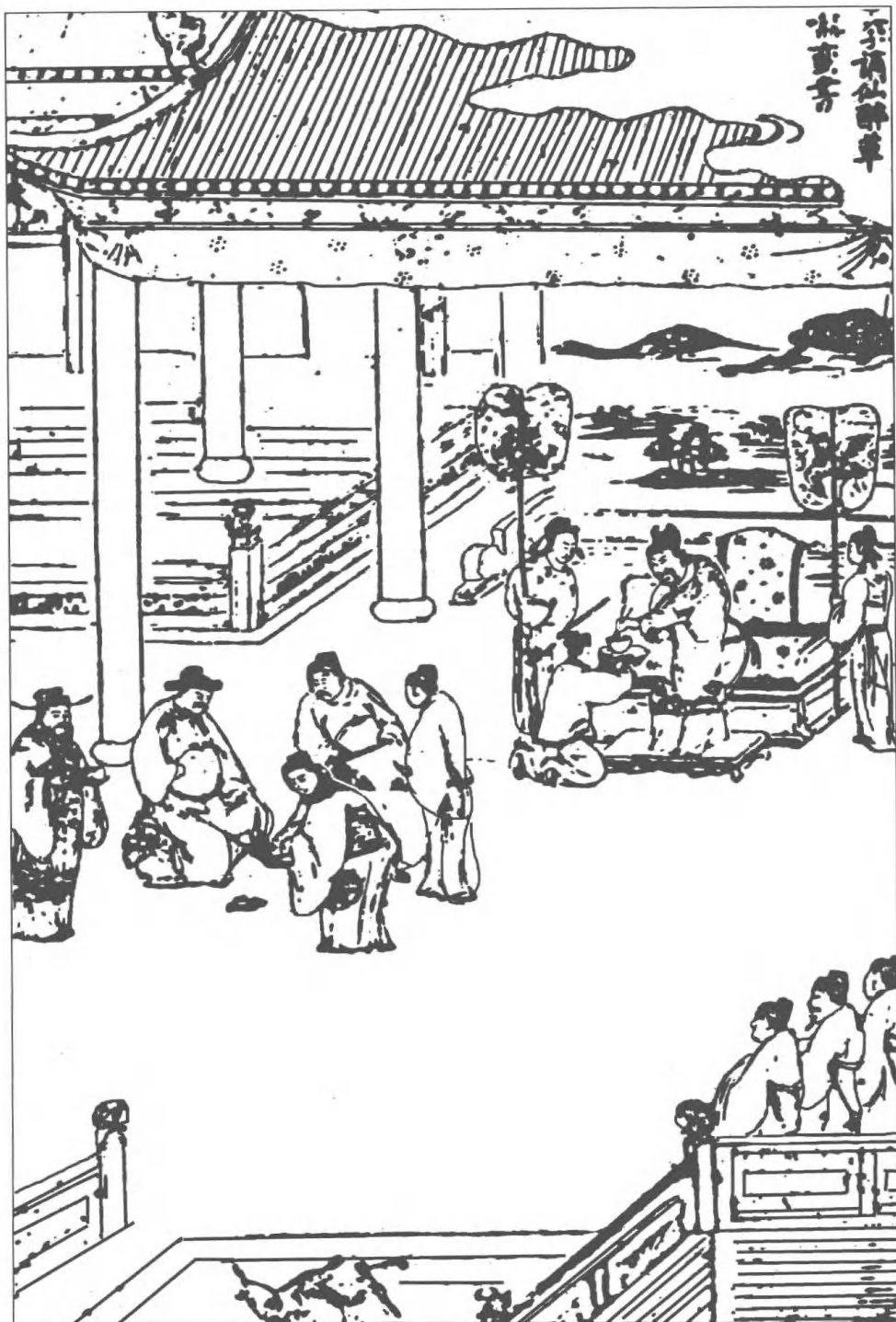
⁹ When Yon Kaesomun died in 666, he was succeeded by his son Namsaeng but, while he was on a tour of inspection, his younger brothers Namgon and Namsan took over the court. Afraid to return to Pyongyang, Namsaeng appealed to the Tang emperor, who, with the support of Silla, sent troops and subdued Koguryo.

¹⁰ Dongfang Shuo (154–93 B. C. E.) was a great man of letters of the Western Han dynasty. Stories about his wisdom and fortune-telling skills abound.

¹¹ Guo Ziyi (697–781) later became prime minister.

¹² Tao Qian, courtesy name Yuanming (365–427), was a famous poet and essayist. Refusing to “stoop low for the sake of five piculs of rice,” he resigned from his post and spent the rest of his life as a recluse, farming in his native village.

“Be gone, and let me drift into wine-rapt sleep” was written not by Tao Yuanming but by



Li Bai himself. It appears in the poem “A Drink with My Hermit Friend in the Mountains.”

¹³ “Clouds and rain” is a metaphor for sexual encounters. The term was first used in the prose poem “Gao tang fu,” attributed to Song Yu (c. 290–c. 223 B. C. E.).

¹⁴ Zhao Feiyan (d. 1 B. C. E.) was a court lady in the service of Emperor Cheng (r. 32–6 B. C. E.) of the Han dynasty and was later made empress.

¹⁵ “*Dongwu*” or “*Dongwu yinxing*” is the name of a tune used in poems collected by Yue-fu, an official conservatory set up during the Han dynasty. Dongwu poems often lament the brevity of life and the transience of fame and glory.



第十卷

钱舍人题诗燕子楼

烟花风景眼前休，此地仍传燕子楼。
鸳梦肯忘三月蕙？翠颦能省一生愁。
柘因零落难重舞，莲为单开不并头。
娇艳岂无黄壤瘞？至今人过说风流。

话说大唐自政治大圣大孝皇帝谥法太宗开基之后，至十二帝宪宗登位，凡一百九十三年，天下无事日久，兵甲生尘，刑具不用。时有礼部尚书张建封做官年久，恐妨贤路，遂奏乞骸骨归田养老。宪宗曰：“卿年齿未衰，岂宜退位？果欲避冗辞繁，敕镇青徐数郡。”建封奏曰：“臣虽非才，既蒙圣恩，自当竭力。”遂敕建封节制武宁军事，建封大喜。平昔爱才好客，既镇武宁，拣选才能之士，礼置门下。后房歌姬舞妓，非知书识礼者不用。

武宁有妓关盼盼，乃徐方之绝色也。但见：





Story 10

Secretary Qian Leaves Poems on the Swallow Tower

*The charming sights and sounds of spring are gone,
But the Swallow Tower stands to this day.
Could spring orchids fade from dreams of love?
Memories of the beauty's frowns last a lifetime.
With few dancers left, the zhe cannot start afresh;¹
Of the twin lotus flowers, only one blossoms.
No beauties are spared burials in the yellow soil,
But their stories never cease to be told.*

The story goes that for one hundred and ninety-three years after the founding of the great Tang dynasty by Emperor Taizong, until Emperor Xianzong, the twelfth Tang emperor, ascended the throne, peace reigned throughout the land. Weapons collected dust, and instruments of corporal punishment lay idle. There was a certain Zhang Jianfeng, secretary of the ministry of rites, who asked the emperor for permission to retire from his long career and spend the rest of his days in his native town, so as to make way for the advancement of worthier people. Emperor Xianzong said to him, "You are hardly past your prime. How can you be talking about retirement? If you really want to seek a quiet life free of complications, we shall make you commander of counties like Qingzhou and Xuzhou."

Jianfeng replied, "However untalented I am, I shall surely do my best to be worthy of Your Majesty's kindness to me." Thereupon, Jianfeng, to his immense delight, was made military commander of Wuning District.²

Being much drawn to talented men and given to hospitality, Zhang Jianfeng, in his new position, selected many men of ability to enter into his service. As for the singing and dancing girls for his private entertainment, he recruited only those with some claim to learning and proper decorum.

In Wuning, there was a courtesan named Guan Panpan, a beauty matchless in the Xuzhou region. Behold:



歌喉清亮，舞态娉婷。调弦成合格新声，品竹作出尘雅韵。琴弹古调，棋覆新图。赋诗琢句，追风雅见于篇中；搦管丹青，夺造化生于笔下。

建封虽闻其才色无双，缘到任之初，未暇召于樽俎之间。忽一日，中书舍人白乐天，名居易，自长安来，宣谕兖郛，路过徐府，乃建封之故人也。喜乐天远来，遂置酒邀饮于公馆，只见：

幕卷流苏，帘垂朱箔。瑞脑烟喷宝鸭，香醪光溢琼壶。果劈天浆，食烹异味。绮罗珠翠，列两行粉面梅妆；脆管繁音，奏一派新声雅韵。遍地舞裙铺蜀锦，当筵歌拍按红牙。当时酒至数巡，食供两套，歌喉少歇，舞袖亦停。忽有一妓，抱胡琴立于筵前，转袖调弦，独奏一曲，纤手斜拈，轻敲慢按。满座清香消酒力，一庭雅韵爽烦襟。须臾弹彻韶音，抱胡琴侍立。



*Singing with a sweet, clear voice,
 She danced with light, airy steps.
 She played her zither with a refreshing tone,
 And her flute with ethereal beauty.
 In music, she followed old melodies;
 In chess, she created new strategies.
 In poetry, she sought nuanced refinement;
 In painting, she captured life's best moments.*

Although he had heard of her unrivaled talent and beauty, Jianfeng, being new in his post, had not yet found time to call for her services at the dinner table.

One day, there arrived in Xuzhou an old friend of Jianfeng's, a man named Bai Juyi, courtesy name Letian, who was a secretary in the Imperial Secretariat.³ He was passing through Xuzhou on his way from Chang'an to Yanzhou and Yuncheng to deliver an imperial decree. Delighted by this visit of a guest from afar, Jianfeng set out wine in his residence in honor of Bai Juyi. Behold:

*The tasseled curtains are drawn,
 The red shades are lowered.
 Wisps of smoke rise from the duck-shaped incense burner;
 Fragrant wine sparkles in jade cups filled to the brim.
 The fruit juices are as sweet as nectar;
 The food is as delicious as ambrosia.
 Bedecked in jewels and fine silks, the beauties
 Stand in two rows in all their finery.
 The orchestra, in crisp notes,
 Strikes up sweet and fresh music.
 Brocade carpets are spread out for the dancers;
 Rosewood clappers are beaten to the song's rhythm.*

After several rounds of wine and two food courses, the singing came to a halt, and the sleeves of the dancers stopped waving. There emerged in front of the feast table a courtesan holding a lute in her arms. After tuning the instrument, she began playing solo, her dainty fingers gently tapping, pressing, and plucking at the strings. A delicate fragrance dispelled the effects of the wine, and the refined notes



建封与乐天俱喜调韵清雅，视其精神举止，但见花生丹脸，水剪双眸，意态天然，迥出伦辈。回视其馀诸妓，粉黛如土。遂呼而问曰：“孰氏？”其妓斜抱胡琴，缓移莲步，向前对曰：“贱妾关盼盼也。”建封喜不自胜，笑谓乐天曰：“彭门乐事，不出于此。”乐天曰：“似此佳人，名达帝都，信非虚也！”建封曰：“诚如舍人之言，何惜一诗赠之？”乐天曰：“但恐句拙，反污丽人之美。”盼盼据卸胡琴，掩袂而言：“妾姿质丑陋，敢烦珠玉？若果不以猥贱见弃，是微躯随雅文不朽，岂胜身后之荣哉！”乐天喜其黠慧，遂口吟一绝：

凤拨金钿砌，檀槽后带垂。

醉娇无气力，风袅牡丹枝。

盼盼拜谢乐天曰：“贱妾之名，喜传于后世，皆舍人所赐也。”于是宾主欢洽，尽醉而散。翌日乐天车马东去。自此建封专宠盼盼，



of the music dissolved all worries. In a short while, she stopped playing and stepped to one side, her lute in her arms.

Charmed by the sweet music, Jianfeng and Bai Juyi took a good look at the player and saw that, with rosy cheeks and bright, sparkling eyes, she had a far more refined and natural air than her peers. Turning their eyes to the other courtesans, Jianfeng and Bai Juyi found them all as unworthy as dirt. They called the lute player forth and asked, "What is your name?"

The lute aslant in her arms, the courtesan took a few delicate, mincing steps forward and replied, "My humble name is Guan Panpan."

Beside himself with joy, Jianfeng said to Bai Juyi with a laugh, "What greater pleasure does the whole city of Xuzhou have to offer?"

Bai Juyi rejoined, "So, what I've heard in the capital about this beauty is no fiction!"

"It is indeed as you say," said Jianfeng. "You will not begrudge composing a poem in her honor?"

"I'm afraid only that my clumsy lines will be an insult to her beauty."

Guan Panpan put down the lute and said, shielding her face with her sleeves, "With my uncomely looks, I would not dream of winning a jewel of a poem in my name, but if you, sir, do not find it beneath your dignity to write on such a lowly subject, your immortal poem will lend me some glory after I am gone, however insignificant I am."

Impressed by her eloquence, Bai Juyi intoned a quatrain:

*"The phoenix plucks at the bejeweled zither,
With ribbons behind the sandalwood grooves.
In soft breezes, as if tipsy with wine,
The wind flutters the peony on the branch."*

With a bow, Panpan said gratefully to Bai Juyi, "Should I be so fortunate as to have my name go down to posterity, I have you, sir, to thank for the honor."

The host and the guest went merrily on with their drinking and did not part company until quite inebriated. The next day, Bai Juyi continued his journey east.



遂于府第之侧，择佳地创建一楼，名曰“燕子楼”，使盼盼居之。建封治政之暇，轻车潜往，与盼盼宴饮；交飞玉斝，共理笙簧，璨锦相偎，鸾衾共展。绮窗唱和，指花月为题，绣阁论情，对松筠为誓。歌笑管弦，情爱方浓。不幸彩云易散，皓月难圆。建封染病，盼盼请医调治，服药无效，问卜无灵，转加沉重而死。子孙护持灵柩，归葬北邙，独弃盼盼于燕子楼中。香消衣被，尘满琴箏，沉沉朱户长扃，悄悄翠帘不卷。盼盼焚香指天誓曰：“妾妇人，无他计报尚书恩德，请落发为尼，诵佛经资公冥福，尽此一世，誓不再嫁。”[眉批]真节妇，难得，难得。遂闭户独居，凡十换星霜，人无见面者。乡党中有好事君子，慕其才貌，怜其孤苦，暗暗通书，以窥其意。盼盼为诗以代柬答，前后积三百馀首，编缀成集，名曰《燕子楼集》，镂板流传于世。

忽一日，金风破暑，玉露生凉，雁字横空，蛩声喧草。寂寥



Henceforth, Jianfeng showered his favor exclusively on Panpan. He picked a lot near his establishment and had a tower built for her, which he named "The Swallow Tower." In moments of leisure after official business was done, he would go there discreetly, unaccompanied, for a few drinks with Panpan. They toasted each other with jade cups and played musical instruments together. Holding each other in tender embrace, they shared the same quilt of love. By the gauze window, they intoned poems on flowers and the moon. Pouring out words of love in her exquisite boudoir, they pledged vows with pine trees as witnesses. Amid joyful songs and music, their love knew no bounds.

But, rosy clouds disperse all too quickly, and the bright full moon wanes all too soon. Jianfeng became ill. Panpan engaged a physician, but the medicine did not work, nor did the oracles bode well. His illness grew worse, and he died. His children and grandchildren escorted his coffin to the burial ground, leaving Panpan alone in the Swallow Tower.

Her clothes and her quilts lost their fragrance, and her musical instruments gathered dust. The silent vermilion doors remained closed, and the quiet green curtains stayed drawn. Lighting an incense stick, Panpan pointed to heaven and pledged an oath: "With no other means to repay the secretary of rites' kindness to me, I shall enter the Buddhist order as a tonsured nun, read the scriptures, and pray for his well-being in the netherworld. I vow never to marry for the rest of my life." (*Such chastity is truly hard to come by.*)

Henceforth, she lived all alone behind closed doors and did not show her face again in public for ten years in a row. Some of the restless men in the neighborhood wrote surreptitious notes to her out of admiration for her talent and her beauty as well as pity for her forlornness. To their attempts at sounding her out, she replied in poems, which came to total more than three hundred. They were later compiled in a volume titled *The Swallow Towers Collection*, which circulated in a woodblock edition.

One day, the autumn wind sent summer away, and the jade-like drops of dew grew chilly. Formations of migrating wild geese spread



院宇无人，静锁一天秋色。盼盼倚栏长叹，独言曰：“我作之诗，皆诉愁苦，未知他人能晓我意否？”沉吟良久，忽想翰林白公必能察我，不若赋诗寄呈乐天，诉我衷肠，必表我不负张公之德。遂作诗三绝，缄封付老苍头，驰赴西洛，诣白公投下。白乐天得诗，启缄展视，其一曰：

北邙松柏锁愁烟，燕子楼人思悄然。
因埋冠剑歌尘散，红袖香消二十年。

其二曰：

适看鸿雁岳阳回，又睹玄禽送社来。
瑶瑟玉箫无意绪，任从蛛网结成灰。

其三曰：

楼上残灯伴晓霜，独眠人起合欢床。
相思一夜知多少？地角天涯不是长。

乐天看毕，叹赏良久。不意一妓女能守节操如此，岂可弃而不答？亦和三章以嘉其意，遣老苍头驰归。盼盼接得，拆开视之，其一曰：



across the sky, and the chirps of crickets echoed through the grass. In the loneliness of her courtyard, which served as a frame for the autumn scene, Panpan heaved a deep sigh as she stood leaning against the balustrade. "My poems," said she to herself, "tell of nothing but my sorrows. I wonder if my feelings are understood by others." She reflected for a long while, and then a sudden thought struck her: "Mr. Bai of the Hanlin Academy should be able to understand me. Let me send him some poems so as to express my true feelings and let him know that I shall not betray Mr. Zhang's kindness to me." Then and there, she wrote three quatrains, which she sealed up and gave to an old servant for him to deliver to Mr. Bai in the capital.

Bai Juyi opened the seal and saw that the first one said:

*Doleful mists hover over the pines by his grave;
She of the Swallow Tower mourns him in silence.
Since his hat and swords were buried, the songs stopped;
Ten years have gone by as beauty fades.*

The second one said:

*Behold! The wild geese return from Yueyang;
The swallows escort the new season here.
In no mood for the zither and the flute,
I let them gather dust amid the spiderwebs.*

The third one said:

*In the lamp's last flicker over the morning frost,
She who sleeps alone rises from the conjugal bed.
Goodness knows how deep the nightly longings;
How long the night that stretches to the end of the earth!⁴*

After reading the poems, Bai Juyi sighed in admiration for quite a while. Who would have expected a courtesan to have observed the virtue of chastity so scrupulously? He could not very well ignore the poems and send no reply. So he wrote three poems in response in commendation of her good will and had the old servant carry them back to Panpan posthaste.

Upon opening the seal, Panpan saw that the first poem said:

*The color of the silk robes fades away;
Each look at them brings tears to the eyes.*



钿晕罗衫色似烟，一回看着一潸然。
自从不舞《霓裳曲》，叠在空箱得几年？

其二曰：

今朝有客洛阳回，曾到尚书冢上来。
见说白杨堪作柱，争教红粉不成灰。

其三曰：

满帘明月满庭霜，被冷香销拂卧床。
燕子楼前清夜雨，秋来只为一人长。

盼盼吟玩久之，虽获骊珠和璧，未足比此诗之美。笑谓侍女曰：“自此之后，方表我一点真心。”正欲藏之篋中，见纸尾淡墨题小字数行，遂复展看，又有诗一首：

黄金不惜买蛾眉，拣得如花只一枝。
歌舞教成心力尽，一朝身死不相随。

盼盼一见此诗，愁锁双眉，泪盈满脸，悲泣哽咽，告侍女曰：“向日尚书身死，我恨不能自缢相随，恐人言张公有随死之妾，使尚书有好色之名，是玷公之清德也。我今苟活以度朝昏，乐天不晓，故作诗相讽。我今不死，谤语未息。”〔眉批〕此乃常事，独非取以护盼盼耳。遂和韵一章云：

独宿空楼敛恨眉，身如春后败残枝。



*"The Rainbow Feathers" no longer put to the dance,
How many years will they stay folded in the trunks?*

The second one said:

*A friend arriving today from Luoyang
Has visited Secretary Zhang's grave.
The white poplars have grown into mighty pillars;
To keep beauty from turning to dust.*

The third one said,

*With moonlight over the shades and the frosty yard,
She dusts the bed, the quilt cold, the fragrance gone.
The autumn night rain over the Swallow Tower
Drips without end, so it seems to her.*

Reading the poems out loud, Panpan pondered them for a long while and concluded that no precious object of art could ever match their beauty. Smiling, she said to her maid, "These are poems that truly lay my heart bare."

She was about to put them away in her small suitcase when her eyes chanced to rest upon several lines of small characters in pale ink at the bottom of the paper. Spread out again, the scroll revealed another poem:

*He spent a fortune on the beauty,
Fresh as a flower in bloom.
After all the pains taken training her to sing and dance,
He dies, and she chooses not to follow.*

After she read this poem, Panpan's brow furrowed in grief. Her face awash with tears, she sobbed to her maid, "When the Secretary died, I did want to hang myself so I could follow him, but I was afraid that if a concubine died with him, he would be spoken of as a lecherous man and his good name would be tarnished. Mr. Bai wrote this satirical poem without knowing how miserable I am trying to keep myself alive from day to day. If I don't kill myself, slanderous words will never cease." (*Such things happen all too often. Panpan's case is presented here not only to seek sympathy for her alone.*)

She then wrote a poem in response:

My brows knit in grief, I live all alone;



舍人不解人深意，讽道泉台不去随。

书罢掷笔于地，掩面长吁。久之，拭泪告侍女曰：“我无计报公厚德，惟坠楼一死，以表我心。”道罢，纤手紧褰绣袂，玉肌斜靠雕栏，有心报德酬恩，无意偷生苟活，下视高楼，踊跃奋身一跳。侍女急拽衣告曰：“何事自求横夭？”盼盼曰：“一片诚心，人不能表，不死何为？”侍女劝曰：“今损躯报德，此心虽佳，但粉骨碎身，于公何益？且遗老母，使何人侍养？”盼盼沉吟久之曰：“死既不能，惟诵佛经，祝公冥福。”自此之后，盼盼惟食素饭一盂，闭阁焚香，坐诵佛经，虽比屋未尝见面。久之鬓云懒掠，眉黛慵描，倦理宝瑟瑶琴，厌对鸳衾凤枕。不施朱粉，似春归欲谢庾岭梅花；瘦损腰肢，如秋后消疏隋堤杨柳。每遇花辰月夕，感旧悲哀，寝食失常。不幸寝疾，伏枕月馀，遽尔不起。老母遂卜吉葬



My body like a dry twig after spring is gone.

Mr. Bai knows not the misery in my heart,

But scorns me for not following the one who has gone.

Having finished writing, she threw her brush-pen to the floor and, covering her face with her hands, let out a prolonged sigh.

A considerable while later, she wiped away her tears and said to the maid, "The only way I can repay the Secretary for his kindness is to throw myself from the tower to show my sincerity." With that, she rolled up her sleeves with her delicate hands and leaned her soft body against the carved balustrades, ready to pay her debt of gratitude rather than hang on to a miserable life. Looking down from the tower, she was about to jump when the maid frantically tugged at her clothes, pleading, "Don't kill yourself like that!"

"With no one to appreciate my good faith, what else can I do but die?"

The maid continued trying to talk her out of the idea, saying, "However good your intentions are in killing yourself to repay a debt of gratitude, how would smashing your body into pieces help my deceased master in any way? Also, who is to take care of your aged mother?"

Panpan thought for a moment before saying, "Since I can't die, I'll chant the scriptures and pray for his well-being in the nether-world."

From then on, Panpan sustained herself on one vegetarian meal a day and spent her days burning incense and chanting the Buddhist scriptures in her seat. Even the neighbors did not get to see her. Gradually, she began to leave her hair uncombed and her eyebrows unpainted. Her musical instruments lay idle, and she loathed the sight of her pillows and quilts embroidered with love birds and phoenixes. Her unpowdered and unrouged face looked like a fading plum blossom on Mount Yu at the end of spring.⁵ Her waist was like the withered willows on the Sui Dyke after autumn is gone. At the sight of blooming flowers and the full moon, she was consumed with nostalgia and grief. Her sleeping and eating habits disrupted, she came down with an illness that confined her to bed for more than a month until she



于燕子楼后。

盼盼既死，不二十年间，而建封子孙，亦散荡消索。盼盼所居燕子楼遂为官司所占。[眉批] 可怜可怜，比公孙东阁废为马厩更惨。其地近郡圃，因其形势改作花园，为郡将游赏之地。星霜屡改，岁月频迁，唐运告终，五代更伯。当周显德之末，天水真人承运而兴，整顿朝纲，经营礼法。顾视而妖氛寝灭，指挥而宇宙廓清。至皇宋二叶之时，四海无犬吠之警。当时有中书舍人钱易，字希白，乃吴越王钱镠之后裔也。文行诗词，独步朝野，久住紫薇，意欲一历外任。遂因奏事之暇，上章奏曰：“臣久据词掖，无毫发之功，乞一小郡，庶竭驽骀！”上曰：“青鲁地腴人善，卿可出镇彭门。”遂除希白节制武宁军，希白得旨谢恩。下车之日，宣扬



died. Her aged mother picked an auspicious day and buried her behind the Swallow Tower.

Within twenty years after Panpan's death, Zhang Jianfeng's descendants were dispersed and the family fortunes declined. The Swallow Tower where Panpan had lived became government property. (*How pitiable! Even more tragic than the story of Gongsun Hong's "East Hall" being reduced to a stable.*⁶) Because of the property's topographical features and its proximity to the county park, it was converted into a garden for the exclusive use of the commanders of the county.

The stars moved in the heavens; frost came and went. The years that went by witnessed the demise of the Tang dynasty and the rise and fall of the Five dynasties. Toward the end of the Xiande reign period [954-60] of the Later Zhou dynasty, the Sage from Tianshui followed the dictates of destiny and rose to power. He cleaned up the imperial court and revived the rituals and the laws. Wherever he turned his eyes, the miasma of evil vanished. Wherever he directed a finger, the air was purified. By the time the second emperor of the dynasty came to the throne, no dogs needed to bark in warning throughout the land.

In the Imperial Secretariat, there was a secretary named Qian Yi, courtesy name Xibai, who was a descendant of Qian Liu, King of Wu and Yue, and a fine poet and a master of prose.⁷ Since he had long worked in the Grand Secretariat, he wished to be given a post in the provinces. Taking advantage of an opportunity to submit a memorial to the emperor on another matter, he wrote, "Never having rendered the least bit of useful service in all my years in this position, I plead that I be given a small county where I may put to use what little ability I have."

The emperor replied, "The Qing-Lu area in Shandong is a place with fertile land inhabited by kind-hearted people. You may take the post of the commander of Pengmen." He then conferred upon Secretary Qian the title Regional Commander of Wuning District. Qian thanked the emperor for the decree.

As soon as he arrived at his new post, he set about publicizing



皇化，整肃条章；访民瘼于井邑，察冤枉于囹圄；屈己待人，亲耕劝农；宽仁惠爱，劝化凶顽，悉皆奉业守约，廉谨公平。听政月馀，节届清明。既在暇日，了无一事，因独步东阶。天气乍暄，无可消遣，遂呼苍头前导，闲游圃中。但见：

晴光霭霭，淑景融融，小桃绽妆脸红深，嫩柳袅宫腰细软。幽亭雅榭，深藏花圃阴中，画舫兰桡，稳缆回塘岸下。莺贪春光时时语，蝶弄晴光扰扰飞。

希白信步，深入芬芳，纵意游赏。到红紫丛中，忽有危楼飞槛，映远横空，基址孤高，规模壮丽。希白举目仰观，见画栋下有牌额，上书“燕子楼”三字。[眉批]一片精诚，虽妇人不泄，况男子乎？希白曰：“此张建封宠盼盼之处，岁月累更，谁谓遗踪尚在。”遂摄衣登梯，径上楼中，但见：

画栋栖云，雕梁耸汉，视四野如窥目下，指万里如睹掌



the emperor's policies, cleaned up the rules and regulations, visited the local people in their homes to learn about their grievances, and reviewed prison cases in which injustices had been done. Treating the people better than he treated himself, he personally took part in the tilling of the land to promote farming. Lenient and benevolent, he resorted only to gentle exhortations to make the delinquent change their ways. All and sundry applied themselves assiduously to their work and fulfilled every obligation, and all official business was conducted prudently, fairly, and without corruption.

More than a month into his administration, the Clear and Bright Festival rolled around. As it was a holiday and he had no business to attend to, he took a leisurely walk on the east terrace. With nothing better to do on such a fine day, he summoned a servant and had the latter guide him on a tour of the park. Behold:

*A glorious sunny day!
A charming scene of spring!
The fresh peach blossoms wear a deep blush;
The tender willows bend their narrow waists.
The quiet pavilions and the elegant terraces
Stand embowered among thick foliage.
The small painted pleasure boat
Lies safely moored by the bank of the lake.
Enchanted by the spring, the orioles sing;
Playing with sunlight, the butterflies flit about.*

Qian Xibai's leisurely steps took him deep into the flower beds. While he was walking around and admiring the riot of colors, he suddenly caught sight of a magnificent railed tower that stood on a high point, soaring into the sky. Xibai lifted his head and saw that under the painted beams hung a placard inscribed with the characters "The Swallow Tower." (*If a woman could have such loyalty in her, imagine what a man could do!*) Xibai said to himself, "This was where Zhang Jianfeng lived with his beloved Panpan. Who would have thought that the site still remains after so many years!" Adjusting his clothes, he mounted the stairs, and saw:

The painted rafters nestling in the clouds;



中。遮风翠幕高张，蔽日疏帘低下。移踪但觉烟霄近，举目方知宇宙宽。

希白倚栏长叹，言曰：“昔日张公清歌对酒，妙舞邀宾，百岁既终，云消雨散，此事自古皆然，不足感叹。但惜盼盼本一娼妓，而能甘心就死，报建封厚遇之恩，虽烈丈夫何以加此！何事乐天诗中，犹讥其不随建封而死？实怜守节十馀年，自洁之心，泯没不传。我既知本末，若缄口不为褒扬，盼盼必抱怨于地下。”〔眉批〕谁人有此热肠，我愿□□□。即呼苍头磨墨，希白染毫，作古调长篇，书于素屏之上，其词曰：

人生百岁能几日？荏苒光阴如过隙。
樽中有酒不成欢，身后虚名又何益？
清河太守真奇伟，曾向春风种桃李。
欲将心事占韶华，无奈红颜随逝水。
佳人重义不顾生，感激深恩甘一死。
新诗寄语三百篇，贯串风骚洗沐耳。



*The carved beams rising to the sky.
One sweeping glance takes in all the land below;
You see distant objects as clearly as your palm.
To keep out the wind, the curtains are hung high;
To block the sun, the shades are let down low.
One step forward brings you closer to the clouds;
One look tells you how vast the universe is.*

Leaning against the balustrades, Xibai heaved a deep sigh and said, "In days gone by, Mr. Zhang used to entertain guests with wine and singing and dancing. With his death, all the joviality came to an end, just as clouds eventually disperse and rain eventually lets up. This is nothing to lament, for it has always been so. But what is remarkable is the fact that a courtesan like Panpan was willing to die in repayment of Jiangfeng's kindness. A worthy gentleman could not have done more. How could Bai Juyi have scorned her for not having killed herself when Jianfeng died? How tragic that nothing has been written about her chastity in observing her widowhood for more than ten years. Since I know the whole story, Panpan in her grave will surely think ill of me if I fail to make her virtues widely known." (*To everyone who has as much compassion as he had, I wish to [illegible].*)

Right away, Xibai called a servant to prepare the ink for him and, after dipping his brush-pen in the ink, he wrote a long poem to an ancient melody on a white screen. The poem said:

*How long can human lives last?
Time flies by all too quickly!
With the wine cups full, why not make merry?
Empty fame after death — what good does it do?
Prefect Zhang, an extraordinary man,⁸
Planted peaches and plums in the spring wind
To preserve the good times in memory.
But, alas, the beauty perished, like water gone.
She valued honor more than her own life,
And chose death to repay her debt of gratitude.
Her three hundred poems that conveyed her feelings
Vie with the classics in pleasing the ear.*



清楼十二横霄汉，低下珠帘锁双燕。

娇魂媚魄不可寻，尽把阑干空倚遍。

希白题罢，朗吟数过，忽有清风袭人，异香拂面。希白大惊，此非花气，自何而来？方疑讶间，见素屏后有步履之声。希白即转屏后窥之，见一女子，云浓绀发，月淡修眉，体欺瑞雪之容光，脸夺奇花之艳丽，金莲步稳，束素腰轻。一见希白，娇羞脸黛，急挽金铺，平掩其身，虽江梅之映雪，不足比其风韵。[眉批]生时虽比□（屋？）未尝见面，死后肯轻见人耶？当是为知己出头。希白惊讶，问其姓氏。此女舍金铺，掩袂向前，叙礼而言曰：“妾乃守园老吏之女也。偶因令节，闲上层楼，忽值公相到来，妾荒急匿身于此，以蔽丑恶。忽闻诵吊盼盼古调新词，使妾闻之，如获珠玉，遂潜出听于素屏之后，因而得面台颜。妾之行藏，尽于此矣。”希白见女子容颜秀丽，词气清扬，喜悦之心，不可言喻。遂以言挑之曰：“听子议论，想必知音。我适来所作长篇，以为何如？”女曰：



*On the tower that soars to the heavens,
The curtains are let down to lock up the swallows.
Her enchanting soul nowhere to be found,
I search through the balustrades, but in vain.*

After finishing the poem, Xibai read it aloud several times. All of a sudden, a soothing breeze sprang up, bringing with it an extraordinary fragrance. Xibai gave a start. It was not the fragrance of flowers. And where could it have come from?

He was full of misgivings when he heard footsteps from behind the white screen. Xibai walked around the screen to take a peek, and there he saw a woman with hair as thick as a cloud, eyebrows plucked into the shape of a crescent moon, skin as fair as glistening snow, a face that would put the most prized flower to shame, a light but steady gait on feet as dainty as golden lotuses, and a waist as lithe as a thin bundle of silk. At the sight of Xibai, she colored deeply. In haste, she grabbed the door and tried to hide herself behind it. Even plum blossoms amidst shining white snow were no match for her charms. (*While alive, she shunned even her neighbors. After death, how would she readily show her face to a stranger? If she had to, she would do so only to someone who truly understood her heart.*)

In astonishment, Xibai asked for her name. Emerging from behind the door, she stepped forward, shielding her face with her sleeves, and said with a greeting, "I am the gardener's daughter. I was in the tower amusing myself on this festival day when you, sir, made your appearance. Hurriedly, I hid my ugly self here. But then, I heard your poem in the ancient style in memory of Panpan. As delighted as if acquiring some prized jewelry, I came out quietly to listen behind the screen, and that, in detail, is how I came into your presence, sir."

Impressed by her beauty and her refined speech, Xibai found himself overwhelmed by a joy greater than he could express in words. Flirtatiously, he said, "Judging from what you said, I take it you have much knowledge of poetry. What do you think of the poem I just wrote?"



“妾门品虽微，酷喜吟咏，闻适来所诵篇章，锦心绣口，使九泉衔恨之心，一旦消释。”希白又闻此语，愈加喜悦曰：“今日相逢，可谓佳人才子，还有意无？”女乃款容正色，掩袂言曰：“幸君无及于乱，以全贞洁之心。惟有诗一首，仰酬厚意。”遂于袖中取彩笺一幅上呈。希白展看其诗曰：

人去楼空事已深，至今惆怅乐天吟。

非君诗法高题起，谁慰黄泉一片心？

希白读罢，谓女子曰：“尔既能诗，决非园吏之女，果何人也？”女曰：“君详诗意，自知贱妾微踪，何必苦问？”

希白春心荡漾，不能拴束，向前拽其衣裾，忽闻槛竹敲窗，惊觉，乃一枕游仙梦，伏枕于书窗之下。但见炉烟尚袅，花影微欹，院宇沉沉，方当日午。希白推枕而起，兀坐沉思，“梦中所见者，必关盼盼也。何显然如是？千古所无，诚为佳梦。”反复再三叹曰：“此事当作一词以记之。”遂成《蝶恋花》词，信笔书于案上，词曰：

一枕闲欹春昼午，梦入华胥，邂逅飞琼侣。娇态翠颦愁



“Though of humble origin, I take great delight in poetry. The poem I just heard is so admirable that even the rancor of someone under the Nine Springs would melt away in an instant.”⁹

These words added further to Xibai’s delight. “With you such a beauty and me such a gifted poet, the two of us truly make an ideal couple. Would you be similarly inclined, by any chance?”

The woman’s face fell. Covering her face with her sleeves, she said, “I am glad that you, sir, have not done anything to tarnish my chastity. I have here a poem in gratitude for your kindness.” So saying, she took out of a sleeve a scroll of colored stationery and presented it to Xibai, who spread it out and saw on it a poem that said,

*The tower long empty since I was gone,
 Mr. Bai’s words sadden my heart to this day.
 But for your magnificent lines,
 Who would comfort the one in the Nine Springs?*

After reading the poem, Xibai said to her, “Someone capable of such poems is no daughter of a gardener. Who are you?”

“If you read the poem closely, you should be able to figure out who I am. Why do you have to press for an answer?”

Unable to control his desire, Xibai took a step forward and pulled at her clothes, but all of a sudden, he heard the wind-blown bamboos knock against his window. He woke up with a start and, finding that his head was resting on a pillow by the window of his study, realized that it had been but an amorous dream.

The lingering smoke from the incense burner and the shortened shadows of flowers in the quiet courtyard told him that it was already high noon. Pushing away the pillow, he rose to a sitting position, thinking to himself, “The woman I saw in the dream must have been Guan Panpan. How vivid it was! This was truly a good dream the likes of which have never been heard of in all history.” Heaving sigh upon sigh, he said, “I should write a poem to record what happened.” There and then, he wrote a lyric poem to the tune of “Butterflies Linger over Flowers”:

*Sleeping through noon on a lazy spring day,
 I dreamt of the land of the immortals,*



不语，彩笺遗我新奇句。 几许芳心犹未诉，风竹敲窗，
惊散无寻处。惆怅楚云留不住，断肠凝望高唐路。

墨迹未干，忽闻窗外有人鼓掌作拍，抗声而歌，调清韵美，声入帘栊。希白审听窗外歌声，乃适所作《蝶恋花》词也。希白大惊曰：“我方作此词，何人早已先能歌唱？”遂启窗视之，见其人顶翠冠珠珥，玉佩罗裙，向苍苍太湖石畔，隐珊珊翠竹丛中，绣鞋不动芳尘，琼裾风飘袅娜。希白仔细定睛看之，转柳穿花而去。希白叹异，不胜惆怅。后希白官至尚书，惜军爱民，百姓赞仰，一夕无病而终，这是后话。正是：

一首新词吊丽容，贞魂含笑梦相逢。

虽为翰苑名贤事，编入稗官小史中。



*Where I encountered a fairy maiden.
 Full of charms, she said little, her brows knit in grief.
 On colored paper, she left me wonderful lines.
 Before she could pour out her heart,
 The wind-blown bamboo knocked against the window.
 Startled, I looked back, only to find her gone.
 Sadly, the offer of love failed to make her stay.
 In grief, I gaze at the road that leads to romance.*

Before the ink was dry, he heard someone singing sweetly and clapping hands in time outside the window. Listening closely to the clear notes that penetrated the window, he realized that it was his lyrics being sung. Much taken aback, he said, "How can anyone be singing what I have just written down?"

As he opened the window to look, his eyes came to rest upon a woman wearing an emerald headdress, pearl earrings, a jade pendant hanging from the waist, and a silk skirt, walking in the direction of the misty green bamboo grove by the dark mass of Taihu rockery. Her feet in their embroidered shoes kicked up no dust. Her clothes fluttered, blown by the wind, lending more grace to her bearing. Staring more intently, Xibai watched her disappear through the willows and flowers. As he marveled at what he had witnessed, a great sadness stole over him.

Later, Xibai rose to be the secretary of a ministry. With his deep concern for the military and compassion for the people, he came to be much loved and respected among the populace. He died of old age, unafflicted by illness, but that is a story for another time. Truly,

*A good poem mourning the beauty
 Led him in a dream to meet her smiling chaste soul.
 What happened to the learned and famous
 Came to be recorded as tales for commoners.*

¹ The *zhe*, or *zhezi*, a dance introduced from Central Asia, was popular during the Tang dynasty.

² Wuning was a commandery during the Tang dynasty. Its seat was Xuzhou in what is now Shandong Province.

³ Bai Juyi (772–846) was one of the most influential poets of the mid-Tang.





⁴ These three poems, with slight variations, were written not by Guan Panpan but by Zhang Zhongsu, a male contemporary of Bai Juyi's.

⁵ Mount Yu, located on the border of Jiangxi and Guangdong, is famous for its abundance of plum blossoms.

⁶ According to "The Biography of Gongsun Hong" in *Han shu* (The history of the Han), Gongsun Hong, while serving as prime minister under Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty, was in the habit of admitting his untitled friends through an eastern door (*dongge*), which can also be understood as "The East Hall." There is no record of Gongsun's "East Hall" being reduced to a stable.

⁷ Qian Yi (ca. 978–1034) was a Song dynasty man of letters.

Qian Liu (852–932), a native of Hangzhou, was King of Wu and Yue from 907 to 932. For more on his life, see story 21 in Feng Menglong, *Stories Old and New: a Ming Dynasty Collection*, trans. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang (Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House, 2007).

⁸ This is a reference to Zhang Jianfeng.

⁹ "Nine Springs" is a term for the netherworld.



第十一卷

苏知县罗衫再合

早潮才罢晚潮来，一月周流六十回。
不独光阴朝复暮，杭州老去被潮催。

这四句诗，是唐朝白居易杭州钱塘江看潮所作。话中说杭州府有一才子，姓李名宏，字敬之。此人胸藏锦绣，腹隐珠玑，奈时运未通，三科不第。时值深秋，心怀抑郁，欲渡钱塘，往严州访友。命童子收拾书囊行李，买舟而行。棹出江口，天已下午。李生推篷一看，果然秋江景致，更自非常。有宋朝苏东坡《江神子》词为证：

凤凰山下雨初晴，水风清，晚霞明。一朵芙蓉，开过尚盈盈。何处飞来双白鹭，如有意，慕娉婷。忽闻江上弄哀筝，苦含情，遣谁听。烟敛云收，依约是湘灵。欲待曲终寻问取，人不见，数峰青。

李生正看之间，只见江口有一座小亭，匾曰“秋江亭”。舟人道：“这亭子上每日有游人登览，今日如何冷静？”李生想道：

Story 11

A Shirt Reunites Magistrate Su with His Family

*The morning tide gone, the evening tide comes;
Sixty times in one month, they flow back and forth.
The days go by, the mornings and the nights;
Hangzhou grows older, hastened by the tides.*

This quatrain was written by Bai Juyi¹ of the Tang dynasty when he was watching the tides by the Qiantang River in Hangzhou. The story goes that in Hangzhou Prefecture, there lived a talented scholar by the name of Li Hong, courtesy name Jingzhi, who was able to write beautifully in the most exquisite diction and elegant style. He sat for the imperial civil service examinations three times, but, his destined time having not yet come, all three times he failed. In late autumn after his third failure, he decided, with a heavy heart, to cross the Qiantang River and pay a visit to a friend in Yanzhou. He had his page boy pack up his book bags and other personal belongings, rented a boat and set out on the journey. When the boat had passed beyond the mouth of the river, he pushed open the mat shade and saw a spectacular afternoon autumn river scene. A poem by Su Dongpo² of the Song dynasty, to the tune of "River Goddess," bears witness:

*The rain has just let up by the Phoenix Hill,
The water clean, the wind fresh, the sunset clouds bright.
A lotus, still lovely though past its bloom,
Attracts two white egrets, struck with its charm.*

*Suddenly, one hears sad zither notes on the river;
The mist and clouds disperse to unveil the river goddess.
I wish to go up and talk once the music is gone,
Yet, no humans are seen, only green peak after green peak.*

Mr. Li was admiring the scenery when his eyes came to rest upon a small pavilion at the mouth of the river. It bore a placard with the inscription "Pavilion by the Autumn River."

"Every day, there are visitors touring the pavilion," said the





“似我失意之人，正好乘着冷静时去看一看。”叫：“家长，与我移舟到秋江亭去。”舟人依命，将船放到亭边，停桡稳缆。李生上岸，步进亭子。将那四面窗榻推开，倚栏而望，见山水相衔，江天一色。李生心喜，叫童子将桌椅拂净，焚起一炉好香，取瑶琴横于桌上，操了一回。曲终音止，举眼见墙壁上多有留题，字迹不一。独有一处连真带草，其字甚大。李生起而观之，乃是一首词，名《西江月》，是说酒、色、财、气四件的短处：

酒是烧身硝焰，色为割肉钢刀。财多招忌损人苗，气是无烟火药。四件将来合就，相当不欠分毫。劝君莫恋最为高，才是修身正道。

李生看罢，笑道：“此词未为确论，人生在世，酒色财气四者脱离不得，若无酒，失了祭享宴会之礼；若无色，绝了夫妻子孙之事；若无财，天子庶人皆没用度；若无气，忠臣义士也尽委靡。我如今也作一词与他解释，有何不可。”当下磨得墨浓，蘸得



boatman. "But it's so quiet today."

Mr. Li thought, "A man as luckless as I am had better see it when there's no one around." So he cried out to the boatman, "Please get me to that pavilion."

Thus instructed, the boatman rowed the boat to one side of the pavilion, laid down the oars, and tied up the ropes. Mr. Li went ashore and stepped into the pavilion. He pushed open the windows on all four sides and leaned against the railings for a look out. He saw the hills along the river stretching to the horizon where the water and the sky merged in one color. In delight, Mr. Li had the page boy wipe the table and the chairs clean and light some incense of superior quality. He then laid his zither across the table and played a few strains. When he finished playing, he raised his eyes and saw on the wall many scribbles done by different hands. In one place, a few lines written in large characters in a mixture of the regular and cursive styles caught his eye. He rose for a closer look and saw that it was a lyric poem to the tune of "Moon over the West River," listing the evils of wine, lust, money, and *qi* [anger, life force, breath, etc.]:

*Wine is the flame that burns the body;
 Lust is a sword that cuts away the flesh.
 Money brings envy and leads to trouble;
 And qi is dynamite without the smoke.*

*If one is to compare these four evils,
 None falls short of the other three.
 The best approach for self-cultivation
 Is to stay away from all four of them.*

After reading the poem, Mr. Li commented with a laugh, "This is not quite true. Wine, lust, money, and *qi* are indispensable for life in this world. Without wine, sacrificial ceremonies and feasts would be lacking in formality. Without lust, married couples produce no offspring. Without money, the Son of Heaven and the populace would all live in deprivation. Without *qi*, officials of integrity and righteous men of courage will lose all fighting spirit. Why don't I also write a lyric poem as a commentary to this one?"



笔饱，就在《西江月》背后，也带草连真，和他一首：

三杯能和万事，一醉善解千愁。阴阳和顺喜相求，孤寡
须知绝后。 财乃润家之宝，气为造命之由。助人情性反
为仇，持论何多差谬。

李生写罢，掷笔于桌上。见香烟未烬，方欲就坐，再抚一曲，
忽然画檐前一阵风起。

善聚庭前草，能开水上萍，
惟闻千树吼，不见半分形。

李生此时，不觉神思昏迷，伏几而卧。朦胧中，但闻环佩之声，
异香满室，有美女四人，一穿黄，一穿红，一穿白，一穿黑，自
外而入，向李生深深万福。李生此时似梦非梦，便问：“四女何
人？为何至此？”四女乃含笑则言：“妾姊妹四人，乃古来神女，
遍游人间，前日有诗人在此游玩，作《西江月》一首，将妾等辱
骂，使妾等羞愧无地。今日蒙先生也作《西江月》一首，与妾身
解释前冤，特来拜谢！”李生心中开悟，知是酒色财气四者之精，



Then and there, he ground the ink until it was nice and thick, dipped his brush-pen well into the ink, and wrote next to the first poem another lyric poem also to the tune of “Moon over the West River” and in the same mixture of the regular and cursive styles:

*Three cups of wine settle ten thousand disputes;
One drunken moment dispels a thousand sorrows.
Union of yin and yang — what a happy event!
A life of abstinence ends the family line.*

*Money, a wonder that nurtures the family;
Qi, a source of vitality to life.
Such good qualities are taken as foes,
How wrong and how absurd such assertions!*

Upon finishing, Mr. Li threw his brush-pen down on the table. Noticing that the incense had not yet burned out, he was about to sit down and play the zither some more when a gust of wind sprang up from under the painted eaves.

*It brings together the leaves of grass in the yard;
It sends floating duckweeds drifting apart.
It roars with the voice of a thousand trees.
But how does it look? No one ever sees.*

At this point, Mr. Li unwittingly drifted off into a trance. He bent his head over the table and went to sleep. While he was in this drowsy state, the clinking of jade pendants came to his ears, and an extraordinary fragrance assailed his nostrils. There came in from outside four beautiful maidens, one in yellow, one in red, one in white, and one in black. All bowed deeply in greeting to Mr. Li. Feeling as if in a dream, Mr. Li asked, “Who are the four of you? Why are you here?”

The four maidens replied affably, “We four are sisters. We are immortals roaming the human world. The other day, a poet touring this place wrote a poem to the tune of ‘Moon over the West River.’ It insults us with such abominable words that we were overcome with mortification. But you, sir, kindly wrote another ‘Moon over the West River’ to redress the injustice done to us. We are here to thank



全不畏惧，便道：“四位贤姐，各请通名。”四女各言诗一句，穿黄的道：

杜康造下万家春，

穿红的道：

一面红妆爱杀人；

穿白的道：

生死穷通都属我，

穿黑的道：

氤氲世界满乾坤。

原来那黄衣女是酒，红衣女是色，白衣女是财，黑衣女是气。

李生心下了然，用手轻招四女：“你四人听我分割：

香甜美味酒为先，美貌芳年色更鲜。

财积千箱称富贵，善调五气是真仙。”

四女大喜，拜谢道：“既承解释，复劳褒奖，乞先生于吾姊妹四人之中，选择一名无过之女，奉陪枕席，少效恩环。”李生摇手，连声道：“不可，不可。小生有志攀月中丹桂，无心恋野外闲花。请勿多言，恐亏行止。”四女笑道：“先生差矣。妾等乃巫山洛水之侍，非路柳墙花之比。汉司马相如文章魁首，唐李卫公开国元勋，一纳文君，一收红拂，反作风流话柄，不闻取讥于后世。况



you.”

Realizing that he was in the presence of the spirits representing wine, lust, money and *qi*, Li said without the least fear, “Please tell me your names, my four gentle sisters.”

The four maidens each came up with one line of a poem. The one in yellow began,

“Du Kang³ gave me life to bring joy to the world.”

The one in red said,

“I have charms that inspire fervent love.”

The one in white said,

“Life, death, poverty, and wealth are all in my hands.”

The one in black said,

“I am what fills the whole universe.”

So, the maiden in yellow represented wine; the maiden in red, lust; the one in white, money; and the one in black, *qi*. Now that their identities were known, Li beckoned to them with a slight movement of his hand: “Now listen to my comments, all four of you.

“Of all that please the palate, wine comes first;

To youthful beauty, lust adds greater charm.

Wealth stored in thousands of trunks brings honor and rank;

A sage is one who regulates qi best.”

Immensely pleased, the four maidens bowed in gratitude, saying, “We are much obliged to you for your comments and praises. Now, please choose from the four of us sisters one who is flawless, to serve you in bed in repayment for your kindness.”

Waving his hand in a gesture of refusal, Li said over and over, “This won’t do! This won’t do! I have my eyes on high honors in the civil service examinations. I have no interest whatsoever in wild flowers in the open fields. Say no more, lest my integrity be compromised.”

The four maidens laughed. “You’ve got it wrong, sir. We are no ‘wayside willows or flowers,’ so to speak, but river goddesses of the Wu Mountains. ⁴ Sima Xiangru of the Han dynasty, a scholar of the finest caliber, eloped with Zhuo Wenjun.⁵ Li Jing, the duke of Wei, who helped found the Tang dynasty, eloped with Hongfo.⁶



佳期良会，错过难逢，望先生三思。”李生到底是少年才子，心猿意马，拿把不定，不免转口道：“既贤姐们见爱，但不知那一位是无过之女？小生情愿相留。”

言之未已，只见那黄衣酒女急急移步上前道：“先生，妾乃无过之女。”李生道：“怎见贤姐无过？”酒女道：“妾亦有《西江月》一首：

善助英雄壮胆，能添锦绣诗肠。

神仙造下解愁方，雪月风花玩赏。”

又道：“还有一句要紧言语，先生听着：

好色能生疾病，贪杯总是清狂。

八仙醉倒紫云乡，不羨公侯卿相。”

李生大笑道：“好个‘八仙醉倒紫云乡’，小生情愿相留。”

方留酒女，只见那红衣色女向前，柳眉倒竖，星眼圆睁，道：“先生不要听贱婢之言！贱人，我且问你：你只讲酒的好处就罢了，为何重己轻人，乱讲好色的能生疾病？终不然三四岁孩儿害病，也从好色中来？你只夸己的好处，却不知己的不好处：



Both men have become romantic figures of whom much is told. Throughout the years, no scornful words have ever been uttered about them. Moreover, if you miss the opportunity for such a nice rendezvous, it is unlikely ever to come your way again. Please think thrice before you make up your mind."

Mr. Li being, after all, in the prime of his youth, his desires were aroused. But still unable to make up his mind, he changed his tune and said, "Since you show me such kindness, may I ask who among you is flawless? I'll be glad to take her."

Before he had quite finished what he was saying, the wine maiden in yellow quickly took a step forward to say, "Sir, I am flawless."

"How do I know that?"

"Listen to this poem to the tune of 'Moon over the West River':

*"I help mighty heroes gain more courage;
I lend gifted poets more inspiration.
The gods made the brew to dispel sorrows,
To enjoy better the moon, snow, winds and flowers."*

She added, "Listen to another important thing:

*"Lust leads to illness,
Wine only turns you heady.
The Eight Immortals,⁷ tipsy in Purple Cloud Land,
Envy not the princes and the dukes."*

Laughing heartily, Li said, "I like that line 'The Eight Immortals, tipsy in the Purple Cloud Land.' Yes, I'll take you."

Hardly had he finished saying that when Lust, the one in red, came forward. Her willow-leaf shaped eyebrows arched with rage, her starry eyes wide open, she said, "Don't listen to that cheap hussy. Let me ask that slut something: If you had just said nice things about wine, well and good. Why did you have to speak ill of others while praising yourself and assert that lust leads to illness? Don't tell me that the illness of a three-or four-year-old child is also caused by lust? You compliment yourself on your good qualities, but what about your flaws?

"Emperor Ping died from poisoned wine;"⁸



平帝丧身因酒毒，江边李白损其躯。

劝君休饮无情水，醉后教人心意迷。”

李生道：“有理。古人亡国丧身，皆酒之过，小生不敢相留。”只见红衣女妖妖娆娆的走近前来，道：“妾身乃是无过之女，也有《西江月》为证：

每羡鸳鸯交颈，又看连理花开。无知花鸟动情怀，岂可人无欢爱。君子好逑淑女，佳人贪恋多才，红罗帐里两和谐，一刻千金难买。”

李生沉吟道：“真个‘一刻千金难买’。”

才欲留色女，那白衣女早已发怒骂道：“贱人，怎么说‘千金难买’？终不然我到不如你？说起你的过处尽多：

尾生桥下水涓涓，吴国西施事可怜。

贪恋花枝终有祸，好姻缘是恶姻缘。”

李生道：“尾生丧身，夫差亡国，皆由于色，其过也不下于酒。请去！请去！”遂问白衣女：“你却如何？”白衣女上前道：

收尽三才权柄，荣华富贵从生。纵教好善圣贤心，空手



Li Bai drowned himself, a drunken man. ⁹

Stay away from that ruthless brew!

It boggles your mind after a drop too much!"

Mr. Li said, "That's right. Wine has toppled kingdoms and killed all too many ancients. I wouldn't presume to take you."

At this point, lo and behold, the one in red drew near him, walking seductively. "I am flawless," said she. "I also have a 'Moon over the West River' in testimony:

"The love birds — what an enviable couple!

Twin lotus blossoms — what a lovely pair!

Even birds and flowers can be seized with desire,

How can humans be deprived of love?"

"Gentlemen fancy pretty women,

Beauties love talented scholars.

A union in the red gauze canopy is

More precious than a thousand pieces of gold."

Li said pensively, "'More precious than a thousand pieces of gold.' How true!"

He was about to take the Lust maiden when the one in white flew into a rage. "You whore!" she cursed. "How can you say that's 'More precious than a thousand pieces of gold'? Am I to understand that I am inferior to you? Let me list some of the harm you do:

"Weisheng was drowned while holding onto the bridge; ¹⁰

Xishi of Wu had a sad story to tell. ¹¹

A weakness for women leads to calamity;

Even destined good marriages can go awry."

Li said, "It is true that lust caused the death of Weisheng and the end of Fuchai's kingdom. It's not any better than wine. Now go away! Be gone!" He turned to the one in white and asked, "What have you got to say for yourself?"

The one in white stepped forward and said,

"I hold all the powers of heaven, earth, and humans;

Riches, rank, and honor, I have them all.

To practice charity and compassion,



难施德行。 有我人皆钦敬，无我到处相轻。休因闲气斗和争，问我须知有命。

李生点头道：“汝言有理，世间所敬者财也。我若有财，取科第如反掌耳。” [眉批] 从来有此，可叹可叹！

才动喜留之意，又见黑衣女粉脸生嗔，星眸带怒，骂道：“你为何说‘休争闲气’？为人在世，没了气还好？我想着你：

有财有势是英雄，命若无时枉用功。

昔日石崇因富死，铜山不助邓通穷。”

李生摇首不语，心中暗想：“石崇因财取祸，邓通空有钱山，不救其饿，财有何益？”便问气女：“卿言虽则如此，但不知卿于平昔间处世何如？”黑衣女道：“像妾处世呵：

一自混元开辟，阴阳二字成功。舍为元气散为风，万物得之萌动。 但看生身六尺，喉间三寸流通。财和酒色尽包笼，无气谁人享用？”

气女说罢，李生还未及答，只见酒色财三女齐声来讲：“先



Empty hands hardly ever suffice.

*“With me comes respect from everyone;
Without me, there is nothing but contempt.
Do not fight to vent your qi [anger];
Ask me, and you’ll know what lies in store for you.”*

Nodding his head, Li said, “You do have a point. What commands respect in this world is wealth. If I were a rich man, to win honors in the examinations would have been as easy as turning over a hand.” (*It has always been like this. How lamentable!*)

He was about to take her joyfully when who but the one in black should say with a scowl on her powdered face and anger in her starry eyes, “Why did you say ‘Do not fight to vent your qi?’ How can life on earth do without qi? In fact, as far as wealth is concerned,

*“Heroes those with riches and power may be,
But those not so destined work hard to no avail.
Wealth brought death to Shi Chong of old;¹²
Deng Tong’s copper hill offered him no help.”¹³*

Li shook his head and kept silent while thinking to himself, “Shi Chong was ruined by wealth, and Deng Tong’s copper hill failed to save him from starvation. What good does wealth do, indeed?” Whereupon he asked the qi maiden, “That was all very well said, but how do you conduct yourself in the world as a rule?”

The maiden in black replied, “Well, this is how I conduct myself:

*“After the primal chaos came yin and yang;
When static, qi is vitality.
When let loose, it becomes the wind
That breathes life into all beings.*

*“In humans who measure six feet in height,
It flows up and down the three-inch throat.
Wealth, wine and lust, none can do without qi;
In its absence, what is there to enjoy?”*

Before Li could say a word in response, the wine, lust and



生休听其言，我三人岂被贱婢包笼乎？且听我数他过失：

霸王自刎在乌江，有智周瑜命不长。

多少阵前雄猛将，皆因争气一身亡。

先生也不可相留！”李生踌躇思想：“呀！四女皆为有过之人。四位贤姐，小生褥薄衾寒，不敢相留，都请回去。”四女此时互相埋怨，这个说：“先生留我，为何要你打短？”那个说：“先生爱我，为何要你争先？”话不投机，一时间打骂起来：

酒骂色，盗人骨髓；色骂酒，专惹非灾；财骂气，能伤肺腑；气骂财，能损情怀。直打得酒女乌云乱，色女宝髻歪，财女捶胸叫，气女倒尘埃。一个个蓬松鬓发遮粉脸，不整金莲撒风鞋。

四女打在一团，搅在一处。

李生暗想：“四女相争，不过为我一人耳。”方欲向前劝解，被气女用手一推，“先生闪开，待我打死这三个贱婢！”李生猛然一惊，衣袖拂着琴弦，当的一声响，惊醒回来，擦磨睡眼，定睛看时，那见四女踪迹？李生抚髀长叹：“我因关心太切，遂形于梦



money maidens said in unison, "Don't listen to her! How is it possible that the three of us cannot do without her! Let us enumerate some of her offenses:

*"Xiang Yu killed himself by the Wu River, ¹⁴
The brilliant Zhou Yu died in his prime. ¹⁵
All too many valiant warriors
Breathed their last in moments of qi [anger].*

"You must not take her!"

In weighing his choices, Li thought, "Good grief! None of the four is without flaws." He then said aloud, "My four good sisters, I wouldn't presume to keep you, because my quilt is too thin and too humble for you. Please go back."

At this point, the four maidens started reproaching one another. One said, "The gentleman was about to take me. Why did you have to stop him?" Another one said, "I am the one he loves. Why did you push me aside?" Bitter words soon led to blows.

*Wine cursed Lust for sapping one's energy;
Lust cursed Wine for leading to trouble.
Wealth cursed Qi for ruining human health;
Qi cursed Wealth for corrupting the mind.
They fought till Wine's hair was all disheveled,
Till Lust's well-combed bun went awry,
Till Wealth screamed, her fists pounding her chest,
And Qi collapsed onto the ground.
Their loose hair came down over their faces,
Their phoenix shoes flew off their gold lotus feet.*

As the four maidens fell in a tangle, Li thought, "All this fighting is for my sake." He was about to step forward to say some pacifying words when the *qi* maiden gave him a push. "Step aside, sir," said she, "and let me beat those three cheap hussies to death!"

As Li gave a violent start, his sleeves brushed against the zither strings. The loud twang woke him up. Rubbing eyes still heavy with sleep, he looked around, but not even a trace of the four maidens could be found. Giving his thigh a stroke, he said to himself with a deep sigh, "They appeared in my dreams because they had been too



寐之间。据适间梦中所言，四者皆为有过，我为何又作这一首词赞扬其美？使后人观吾此词，恣意于酒色，沉迷于财气，我即为祸之魁首。如今欲要说他不好，难以悔笔，也罢，如今再题四句，等人酌量而行。”就在粉墙《西江月》之后，又挥一首：

饮酒不醉最为高，好色不乱乃英豪。

无义之财君莫取，忍气饶人祸自消。

这段评语，虽说酒色财气一般有过，细看起来，酒也有不会饮的，气也有耐得的，无如财色二字害事。但是贪财好色的又免不得吃几杯酒，免不得淘几场气，酒气二者又总括在财色里面了。今日说一桩异闻，单为财色二字弄出天大的祸来。后来悲欢离合，做了锦片一场佳话，正是：

说时惊破奸人胆，话出伤残义士心。

却说国初永乐年间，北直隶涿州，有个兄弟二人，姓苏，其兄名云，其弟名雨。父亲早丧，单有母亲张氏在堂。那苏云自小攻书，学业淹贯，二十四岁上，一举登科，殿试二甲，除授浙江



much in my thoughts. As was revealed in the dream, all four have their flaws. Why did I have to write that poem in their praise? Should readers of later generations be led by my poem into excessive indulgence in wine, lust, money and *qi*, I'll be held accountable as an instigator of crime. But now, I can't very well change what I've already written, even though I do have bad things to say about them. Well, well, let me add another quatrain and exhort moderation."

After his first poem to "Moon over the West River" on the whitewashed wall, he wrote another poem with a flourish of his brush-pen:

*A master drinks but does not get drunk;
A hero admires women but shuns lust.
Stay away from ill-gotten wealth;
Forgive, curb your qi [anger], and all will be well.*

In the above story, wine, lust, money and *qi* are equally undesirable. But a closer examination tells us that because there are those who find no enjoyment in wine and those who easily contain their *qi*, money and lust are the greater evils. But then again, the avaricious and lustful ones are more than likely to have a weakness for wine and have anger to vent, thus subsuming wine and *qi* under wealth and lust.

I propose now to tell an extraordinary story in which money and lust lead to a grievous tragedy. The sorrows and the subsequent joys, the partings and the subsequent reunions are the stuff of a wonderful story. Truly, the story

*Frightens the treacherous out of their wits,
And breaks the hearts of the kind and righteous.*

The story goes that in the Yongle reign period [1403-24] at the beginning of this dynasty, two brothers lived in Zhuozhou, in the northern district directly under the jurisdiction of the imperial court. The older one was called Su Yun and the younger one Su Yü [Rain]. Their father having died a long time ago, they had only their mother Zhang-shi with them.

Su Yun, a hardworking student since a tender age, was a most accomplished scholar. At the age of twenty-four, he passed the impe-



金华府兰溪县大尹。苏云回家，住了数日，凭限已到，不免择日起身赴任。苏云对夫人郑氏说道：“我早登科甲，初任牧民，立心愿为好官，此去止饮兰溪一杯水。所有家财，尽数收拾，将十分之三留为母亲供膳，其余带去任所使用。”当日拜别了老母，嘱咐兄弟苏雨：“好生侍养高堂，为兄的若不得罪于地方，到三年考满，又得相见。”[眉批]可惜一个好官，不曾大任。说罢，不觉惨然泪下。苏雨道：“哥哥荣任是美事，家中自有兄弟支持，不必挂怀。前程万里，须自保重。”苏雨又送了一程方别。苏云同夫人郑氏，带了苏胜夫妻二人伏事，登途到张家湾地方。苏胜禀道：“此去是水路，该用船只，偶有顺便回头的官座，老爷坐去稳便。”苏知县道：“甚好。”原来坐船有个规矩，但是顺便回家，不论客货私货，都装载得满满的，却去揽一位官人乘坐，借其名号，免他一路税课，不要那官人的船钱，反出几十两银子送他，为孝顺



rial examinations upon the first try. After winning second honors at the palace examinations, he was assigned the post of magistrate of Orchid Creek County, Jinhua Prefecture, Zhejiang. Su Yun thereupon returned home and stayed for several months before the time came for him to choose an auspicious day and leave for his post. He said to his wife, Zheng-shi, "Having passed the examinations so early in my life, I am determined to be a good official in my very first post. Water from the Orchid Creek will be the only thing I take from the local people during my stay there. Everything else that I will need, I shall take with me from home. So, take good stock of all our family possessions, leave one third for Mother's subsistence, and let me take the rest to my post."

That day, he respectfully took leave of his aged mother and gave his brother Su Yu this advice, "Take good care of mother. If I don't give offense to the locals and am able to complete my three-year term and pass the first performance appraisal, I'll see you again upon expiration of the term." ¹⁶ (*Too bad such a potentially good official did not get to assume greater responsibilities.*) With these remarks, sad tears rolled down his cheeks.

"My brother," said Su Yu, "your assumption of an official post should be a joyous occasion. I'll take care of the household. Don't worry. You have a bright future ahead of you. Take good care of yourself!"

Su Yu accompanied him some distance farther before bidding him farewell. With the help of Su Sheng the servant and his wife, Su Yun and his wife Zheng-shi embarked on their journey. When they came upon a place called the Zhang Family Bay, Su Sheng said to his master, "We need to go by water from here. If we can find some government-owned boat that happens to be going our way on its return journey, that would be most convenient for you, sir."

"All right," said Magistrate Su.

Now, it was established practice that cargo boats on their return journeys, fully laden with goods belonging to either the boat owners or others, find an official and transport him for free, so that the cargo, now under that official's name, would be exempt from taxes and



之礼，谓之坐舱钱。苏知县是个老实的人，何曾晓得恁样规矩，闻说不要他船钱，已自勾了，还想甚么坐舱钱。那苏胜私下得了他四五两银子酒钱，喜出望外，从旁撺掇。苏知县同家小下了官舱。一路都是下水，渡了黄河，过了扬州广陵驿，将近仪真。因船是年远的，又带货太重，发起漏来，满船人都慌了。苏知县叫快快拢岸，一时间将家眷和行李都搬上岸来。只因搬这一番，有分教苏知县全家受祸。正合着二句古语，道是：

漫藏诲盗，冶容诲淫。

却说仪真县有个惯做私商的人，姓徐名能，在五坝上街居住。久揽山东王尚书府中一只大客船，装载客人，南来北往，每年纳还船租银两。他合着一班水手，叫做赵三、翁鼻涕、杨辣嘴、范剥皮、沈胡子，这一班都不是个良善之辈。又有一房家人，叫做姚大。时常揽了载，约莫有些油水看得入眼时，半夜三更悄地将船移动，到僻静去处，把客人谋害，劫了财帛。如此十馀年，徐能也做了些家事。这些伙计，一个个羹香饭熟，饱食暖衣，正所谓“为富不仁，为仁不富”。你道徐能是仪真县人，如何却揽山东



tolls for the duration of the journey. And, on the official's part, instead of having to pay for the ride, he would receive a gift of several tens of taels of silver as a token of gratitude for his presence in the boat. Being an honest man, Magistrate Su knew nothing about such tricks. He was content enough upon hearing that he did not have to pay. The expectation of compensation did not even cross his mind. As for Su Sheng, he was beside himself with joy over the four to five taels of silver that he had received as a tip. At his urging, Magistrate Su and his family boarded such a boat.

They went downstream all the way, crossed the Yellow River, went past Guangling of Yangzhou, and approached Yizhen. Since the boat was old and overloaded, it began to leak, to the panic of everyone aboard. Magistrate Su called out for the boat to pull in toward the shore. Before long, his family members and all the baggage were transported ashore. Because of this move, alas, Magistrate Su's whole family came to grief. This bore out two lines of ancient origin that say,

*One who fails to hide things well invites thieves;
 She who overly bedecks herself invites lust.*

Now on Upper Five Dams Street in Yizhen County, there lived a man called Xu Neng. A smuggler by profession, he had long been transporting people up and down the river in a big passenger boat owned by Secretary Wang of Shandong, to whom he paid an annual fee for renting the boat. He had under him a group of sailors, all unsavory characters, named Zhao Three, Runny Nose Weng, Sharp Tongue Yang, Skinflint Fan, and Beardie Shen. Together with Yao Da the servant, this group of men, whenever they set their eyes on something valuable, would quietly move the boat to a deserted place in the middle of the night, kill the passenger, and take his possessions. After more than ten years in this business, Xu Neng had accumulated quite some wealth, and his group of men also lived a comfortable life with bountiful supplies of food and clothing. This is truly a case of "To be rich is not to be good. To be good is not to be rich."

But, you may well ask, why would Xu Neng, a native of Yizhen County, be operating on a boat that belonged to Secretary



王尚书府中的船只？况且私商起家千金，自家难道打不起一只船？是有个缘故，王尚书初任南京为官，曾在扬州娶了一位小奶奶，后来小奶奶父母却移家于仪真居住，王尚书时常周给。后因路遥不便，打这只船与他，教他赁租用度。船上竖的是山东王尚书府的水牌，下水时，就是徐能包揽去了。徐能因为做那私商的道路，到不好用自家的船，要借尚书府的名色，又有势头，人又不疑心他，所以一向不致败露。〔眉批〕大人家切□□□。

今日也是苏知县合当有事，恰好徐能的船空闲在家。徐能正在岸上寻主顾，听说官船发漏，忙走来看，看见搬上许多箱笼囊篋，心中早有七分动火。结末又走个娇娇滴滴少年美貌的奶奶上来，徐能是个贪财好色的都头，不觉心窝发痒，眼睛里迸出火来。又见苏胜搬运行李，料是仆人，在人丛中将苏胜背后衣袂一扯。〔眉批〕如画。苏胜回头，徐能陪个笑脸问道：“是那里去的老爷，莫非要换船么？”苏胜道：“家老爷是新科进士，选了兰溪县知县，如今去到任，因船发了漏，权时上岸。若就有个好船换得，省得又落主人家。”徐能指着河里道：“这山东王尚书府中水牌在上的，就是小人的船，新修整得好，又坚固又干净。惯走浙直水



Wang of Shandong? What's more, with all the wealth he had gathered as a smuggler, couldn't he afford to buy a boat for himself? Well, here's the reason: When Secretary Wang first assumed his post in Nanjing, he took a young concubine from Yangzhou. Later, the young woman's parents relocated to Yizhen, but Secretary Wang still often sent them money. However, Yizhen being too far away, Secretary Wang decided to give them a boat instead, so that they could make a living by leasing the boat out. It was that boat, displaying Secretary Wang's banner, that came to be engaged by Xu Neng the first time it was put into the water. Being in the smuggling business, Xu Neng could not very well use his own boat. With Secretary Wang's title and influence, his operations never came under suspicion and had remained undiscovered so far. (*Wealthy families, be sure to... [illegible] !*)

Because something was destined to happen to Magistrate Su that day, Xu Neng's boat happened to be lying idle. Xu Neng was walking along the shore, looking for a client, when he heard that a boat carrying a government official was leaking. Rushing over for a look, he saw quite a few trunks and cases being carried ashore, a sight that stirred his greed. And, to top it all off, he saw stepping onto the shore a beautiful young woman of the freshest looks. Xu Neng being a greedy and lecherous sort, his lust got the better of him, making his heart itch and his eyes blaze with fire. At the sight of Su Sheng carrying the baggage, he assumed that Su was a servant and, making his way through the crowd, tugged at Su Sheng's clothes from behind. (*Described like a picture.*) As Su Sheng turned around, Xu Neng flashed him an ingratiating smile and asked, "Where is your master going? Is he changing boats here?"

"My master has just won a *jinshi* degree and is on his way to take up his post as the magistrate of Orchid Creek County. But the boat is leaking, so he has to go on shore for now to look for a good boat so as not to end up at some inn."

Pointing at the river, Xu Neng said, "That boat there displaying the banner of Secretary Wang of Shandong is my boat. It's been newly renovated and is clean and sturdy. We ply the river in this area all the



路，水手又都是得力的。今晚若下船时，明早祭了神福，等一阵顺风，不几日就吹到了。”苏胜欢喜，便将这话禀知家主。苏知县叫苏胜先去看了舱口，就议定了船钱，因家眷在上，不许搭载一人。徐能俱依允了。当下先秤了一半船钱，那一半直待到县时找足。苏知县家眷行李重复移下了船。徐能慌忙去寻那一班不做好事的帮手，赵三等都齐了，只有翁范二人不到。买了神福，正要开船，岸上又有一个汉子跳下船来道：“我也相帮你们去。”[眉批]要紧关目。徐能看见，呆了半晌。原来徐能有一个兄弟，叫做徐用，班中都称为徐大哥，徐二哥。真个是“有性善有性不善”，徐能惯做私商，徐用偏好善。但是徐用在船上，徐能要动手脚，往往被兄弟阻住，十遍到有八九遍做不成，所以今日徐能瞒了兄弟不去叫他。那徐用却自有心，听得说有个少年知县换船到任，写了哥子的船，又见哥哥去唤这一班如狼似虎的人，不对他说，心下有些疑惑，故意要来船上相帮。徐能却怕兄弟阻挡他这番稳善的生意，心中嘿嘿不喜。正是：

泾渭自分清共浊，薰莸不混臭和香。

却说苏知县临欲开船，又见一个汉子赶将下来，心中到有些



time, and the boatmen are all quite capable. If you board my boat tonight, we'll make some offerings to the gods tomorrow morning to pray for their blessing. If the wind is favorable, we'll be able to get to your destination in just a couple of days."

Delighted, Su Sheng relayed the message to his master. Magistrate Su had Su Sheng go to look at the boat first. Then and there, an agreement was made on the fee. Xu Neng also agreed not to take on board any more passengers out of respect for the magistrate's family. Right away, half the fee was measured out on a scale, with the balance due upon arrival.

After Magistrate Su's family and the baggage were all aboard, Xu Neng hurriedly went to gather his gang of depraved cohorts. Zhao Three and some others showed up, with only Weng and Fan missing. Having bought some items of offering for the gods, Xu Neng was about to start the boat when a man jumped from the shore onto the boat, saying, "Let me help you!" (*Important twist of the plot.*)

Xu Neng froze at the sight of this man and stared vacantly for quite a while before he came to himself again. Xu Neng, you see, had a younger brother called Xu Yong [Useful]. The brothers were called by the gang "Big Brother Xu" and "Second Brother Xu." As the saying goes, "By nature, there are some who are good and some who are evil." Xu Neng had chosen to be a smuggler, but Xu Yong was, on the contrary, much given to good deeds. Whenever Xu Yong was on board, he would thwart Xu Neng's shenanigans eight or nine times out of ten. That was why Xu Neng had kept this journey a secret from his brother, who, however, was very much alert. After hearing that a young magistrate had changed to his brother's boat on the way to assume an official post and witnessing his brother assembling those wolves and tigers of men without telling him a word about it, he grew suspicious and joined them, ostensibly to offer help. Afraid that Xu Yong would ruin his otherwise sure-fire plan, Xu Neng was none too happy. Truly, they were like

*The Jing and Wei Rivers, one clear, one muddy;*¹⁷

The xun and the you herbs, one sweet, one smelly.

Now, Magistrate Su was about to have the boat get under way



疑虑，[眉批]疑虑中多少冤枉。只道是趁船的，叫苏胜：“你问那方才来的是甚么人？”苏胜去问了来，回复道：“船头叫做徐能，方才来的叫做徐用，就是徐能的亲弟。”苏知县想道：“这便是一家了。”是日开船，约有数里，徐能就将船泊岸，说道：“风还不顺，众弟兄且吃神福酒。”徐能饮酒中间，只推出恭上岸，招兄弟徐用对他说道：“我看苏知县行李沉重，不下千金，跟随的又止一房家人，这场好买卖不可挫过，你却不要阻挡我。”徐用道：“哥哥，此事断然不可！他若任所回来，盈囊满篋，必是贪赃所致，不义之财，取之无碍。[眉批]徐用堪坐忠义堂一把交椅。如今方才赴任，不过家中带来几两盘费，那有千金？况且少年科甲，也是天上一位星宿，哥哥若害了他，天理也不容，后来必然懊悔。”徐能道：“财采到不打紧，还有一事，好一个标致奶奶！你哥正死了嫂嫂，房中没有个得意掌家的，这是天付姻缘，兄弟这番须作成做哥的则个。”徐用又道：“从来‘相女配夫’。既是奶奶，必然也是宦家之女，把他好夫好妇拆散了，强逼他成亲，到底也不和顺，



when he saw that last man rushing onto the boat. He felt a little apprehensive (*How wrong of him to be apprehensive in this case!*), but then he thought that the man might have been a passenger. To Su Sheng he said, "Go ask who that man is who just came on board."

Su Sheng did as he was told and came back to report, "The man who just came is named Xu Yong, brother of the head boatman Xu Neng."

"So, they are family," thought Magistrate Su.

That day, the boat started on its way. Several *li* farther on, Xu Neng moored the boat by the shore, saying, "We don't have a favorable wind yet. Let's share among us the wine offerings to the gods."

In the course of the drinking, Xu Neng went ashore, pretending he had to relieve himself. He motioned to his brother Xu Yong to follow him and said, "As far as I can judge from Magistrate Su's heavy baggage, he should be worth no less than a thousand pieces of gold, and there's only one servant following him. This good opportunity is not to be missed. Do not stop me."

"My brother," said Xu Yong, "You must not do this! If he were leaving office laden with ill-gotten treasures that he most probably gained through corruption, it wouldn't matter if you took them. (*Xu Yong deserves a seat in the Hall of Loyalty and Justice.* ¹⁸) But, as it is, he is on his way to take up his first post. He can't have more than just a few taels of silver for travel expenses. How can there be a thousand pieces of gold? Also, for such a young man to be a *jinshi*, he must be the incarnation of a star in heaven. If you do him harm, heaven will not forgive you. You'll surely regret it in the future."

"The money doesn't matter very much," rejoined Xu Neng, "but what a beautiful wife he has! Since my wife just died, I need a replacement to take good care of the household, and she is a god-send! You must not ruin this marriage bond!"

Xu Yong shot back, "It's always been said that 'The status of a husband-to-be must match that of the woman.' Being an official's wife, she must have come from an official's family herself. To break up the well-matched couple and force her to marry you won't make yours a harmonious marriage. This can never be done!"



此事一发不可。”这里兄弟二人正在唧唧啾啾，船艄上赵三望见了，正不知他商议甚事，一跳跳上岸来。徐用见赵三上岸，洋洋的到走开了。赵三问徐能：“适才与二哥说甚么？”徐能附耳述了一遍。赵三道：“既然二哥不从，到不要与他说了，只消兄弟一人便与你完成其事。[眉批] 好人孤立，歹人多助，奈何？今夜须如此如此，这般这般。”徐能大喜道：“不枉叫做赵一刀。”原来赵三为人粗暴，动不动自夸道：“我是一刀两段的性子，不学那粘皮带骨。”因此起个异名，叫做赵一刀。当下众人饮酒散了，权时歇息。看看天晚，苏知县夫妇都睡了，约至一更时分，闻得船上起身，收拾篷索。叫苏胜问时，说道：“江船全靠顺风，趁这一夜风使去，明早便到南京了。老爷们睡稳莫要开口，等我自行。”那苏知县是北方人，不知水面的勾当，听得这话，就不问他了。

却说徐能撑开船头，见风已不顺，正中其意，拽起满篷，倒使转向黄天荡去。那黄天荡是极野去处，船到荡中，四望无际。姚大便去抛铁锚，杨辣嘴把定头舱门口，沈胡子守舵，赵三当先



From the stem of the boat, Zhao Three saw the two brothers whispering to each other. Wondering what they were talking about, he went ashore with one jump. At the sight of Zhao Three, Xu Yong slowly walked away.

“What were you and Second Brother talking about?” asked Zhao Three.

Xu Neng whispered everything into his ear. “Since Second Brother doesn’t agree,” said Zhao Three, “then don’t tell him anything more. You need only me to do the job for you. (*Alas! Good men stand alone, whereas bad men get plenty of help.*) Tonight, this and this need to be done.”¹⁹

Overjoyed, Xu Neng said, “You are not called ‘Sharp Knife Zhao’ for nothing.” As a matter of fact, Zhao Three was a brutal man who would often say, boasting about his prowess, “I am a sharp knife that cuts clean, leaving no skin and bone on the edge.” Hence his nickname “Sharp Knife Zhao.”

By now, the drinking had come to an end, and everyone retired for the night. The hour being late, Magistrate Su and his wife also went to bed.

At about the first watch of the night, the magistrate heard movements about the boat and the sound of ropes being prepared to set sail. He had Su Sheng ask the boatman what was happening, and this was the reply Su Sheng got: “Sailing in the river depends entirely on a favorable wind. If we take advantage of the all-night wind, we should be in Nanjing tomorrow morning. Now you all sleep tight and ask nothing. I’ll take care of everything.” Being a northerner with little knowledge about sailing, Magistrate Su stopped asking.

Xu Neng had punted the bow of the boat away from the shore and was pleased that the wind was going in the other direction, just as he had been hoping. He unfurled the sail to its fullest and directed the boat back into Huangtian Lake, which was a totally deserted place. Once in the middle of the lake, where the water stretched as far as the eye could see in every direction, Yao Da cast the iron anchor, Sharp Tongue Yang stood guard at the door of the cabin, Beardie Shen positioned himself at the helm, and Zhao Three, carrying



提着一口泼风刀，徐能手执板斧随后，只不叫徐用一人。却说苏胜打铺睡在舱口，听得有人推门进来，便从被窝里钻出头向外张望，赵三看得真，一刀砍去，正劈着脖子，苏胜只叫得一声“有贼”，又复一刀砍杀，拖出舱口，向水里摔下去了。苏胜的老婆和衣睡在那里，听得嚷，摸将出来，也被徐能一斧劈倒。姚大点起火把，照得舱中通亮。慌得苏知县双膝跪下，叫道：“大王，行李分毫不要了，只求饶命！”徐能道：“饶你不得！”举斧照顶门砍下，却被一人拦腰抱住道：“使不得！”却便似：

秋深逢赦至，病笃遇仙来。

你道是谁？正是徐能的亲弟徐用。晓得众人动掸，不干好事，走进舱来，却好抱住了哥哥，扯在一边，不容他动手。徐能道：“兄弟，今日骑虎之势，罢不得手了。”徐用道：“他中了一场进士，不曾做得一日官，今日劫了他财帛，占了他妻小，杀了他家人，又教他刀下身亡，也忒罪过。”徐能道：“兄弟，别事听得你，这一件听不得你，留了他便是祸根，我等性命难保，放了手！”徐用越抱得紧了，便道：“哥哥，既然放他不得，抛在湖中，也得个全尸而死。”徐能道：“便依了兄弟言语。”徐用道：“哥哥撇下



a sword, headed for the cabin, with Xu Neng following behind, armed with an ax. Xu Yong was the only one who was not notified.

Now, Su Sheng was sleeping on the floor by the cabin door. Hearing the door being pushed open, he poked his head out from under the quilt to take a look. Aiming well at his target, Zhao Three swung his sword right into Su Sheng's neck. Su Sheng managed to cry out, "Burglar!" before he was cut dead by a second swing of the sword. The body was dragged out of the cabin and dumped into the water. Su Sheng's wife, sleeping in her clothes, groped her way out upon hearing the commotion and was cut down by Xu Neng's ax. Yao Da lit a torch that brightened up the entire cabin. In panic, Magistrate Su knelt down on both knees, crying, "Chief! I don't want the least bit of my baggage. Just spare our lives!"

"No!" said Xu Neng. He raised his ax and was about to bring it down on Su's head when a man held him around the waist, yelling, "You can't do this!" It was like

*A convict getting a pardon in late fall;*²⁰

A gravely sick man being saved by a fairy.

Who, you may ask, was this man? He was none other than Xu Neng's very own brother Xu Yong. Hearing movements on board, he knew the men were up to no good, and so he entered the cabin. Now he held his brother around the waist and pulled him aside to prevent him from striking. Xu Neng said, "My brother, now that I'm already riding on the back of a tiger, so to speak, I can't very well let go."

Xu Yong reasoned, "He just won the degree of *jinshi* and has not worked even one day as an official. Robbing him of his property, his wife, and his children, killing his servants, and taking his life as well, that's going too far."

"My brother," said Xu Neng, "I can do what you say in every other thing except this one. To spare his life is to leave a source of trouble. Our own lives will be in danger. Let me go!"

But Xu Yong tightened his clasp. "My brother, if you can't let him go, why don't you just throw him into the lake so that he can at least keep his body whole?"

"All right, I'll do as you say."



手中凶器，兄弟方好放手。”[眉批]节节见徐用精细。徐能果然把板斧撇下，徐用放了手。徐能对苏知县道：“免便免你一斧，只是松你不得。”便将棕缆捆做一团，如一只馄饨相似，向水面扑通的擗将下去，眼见得苏知县不活了。夫人郑氏只叫得苦，便欲跳水。徐能那里容他，把舱门关闭，拨回船头，将篷扯满，又使转来。原来江湖中除了顶头大逆风，往来都使得篷。

仪真至邵伯湖，不过五十馀里，到天明，仍到了五坝口上。徐能回家，唤了一乘肩舆，教管家的朱婆先扶了奶奶上轿，一路哭哭啼啼，竟到了徐能家里。徐能分付朱婆：“你好生劝慰奶奶，‘到此地位，不由不顺从，不要愁烦。今夜若肯从顺，还你终身富贵，强似跟那穷官。’说得成时，重重有赏。”朱婆领命，引着奶奶归房。徐能叫众人将船中箱笼，尽数搬运上岸，打开看了，作六分均分。杀倒一口猪，烧利市纸，连翁鼻涕、范剥皮都请将来，做庆贺筵席。徐用心中甚是不忍，想着哥哥不仁，到夜来必然去逼苏奶奶，若不从他，性命难保，若从时，可不坏了他名节。虽在席中，如坐针毡。众人大酒大肉，直吃到夜。徐用心生一计，



“Throw down your ax before I let go of you.” (*Every detail shows what a cautious man Xu Yong is.*) Sure enough, Xu Neng threw down his ax, and Xu Yong let go of him.

To Magistrate Su, Xu Neng said, “I spare you the ax, but I can’t set you free.” He bound the magistrate with coir ropes and threw him, with a splash, like a wonton into the lake.

To all appearances, Magistrate Su had no chance of survival. His wife Zheng-shi gave a mournful cry and tried to jump into the water, but how would Xu Neng let her do that? Closing the cabin door, he turned the boat around, unfurled the sail to its fullest, and went back. Now, sails were useful both up and down the rivers and lakes, except when going dead against a strong wind. It being but fifty *li* from Yizhen to Zhaobo Lake, they found themselves back at Five Dams at dawn.

Back home now, Xu Neng hired a sedan-chair and made Granny Zhu, his housekeeper, help the young woman into it. The young woman wept all the way as the sedan-chair carriers took her straight to Xu Neng’s home. Xu Neng told Granny Zhu, “Now you try to calm her down and say to her, ‘Things being the way they are, there’s nothing you can do but obey. Don’t be so miserable. Tonight, if you give in, you’ll be rich the rest of your life. Wouldn’t that be better than living with that pauper of an official?’ If you bring her around, you’ll get a handsome reward.”

Thus instructed, Granny Zhu took the young woman to her room. Xu Neng, in the meantime, ordered that all the trunks and boxes in the boat be carried to shore. After they were opened and examined, they were divided into six equal portions. For the occasion, a pig was slaughtered and some paper horses were burned as a sacrifice to the gods. Runny Nose Weng and Skinflint Fan were also invited over for a celebration feast.

Xu Yong was in a great deal of anguish. He knew his evil brother would surely force himself on Magistrate Su’s wife by nightfall. If she refused to submit, her life would be in danger, but if she gave in, wouldn’t her name be tarnished? Even though he was seated at the feast table, he felt as if he were on pins and needles.



将大折碗满斟热酒，碗内约有斤许。徐用捧了这碗酒，到徐能面前跪下。[眉批]徐能大有作用。徐能慌忙来搀道：“兄弟为何如此？”徐用道：“夜来船中之事，做兄弟的违拗了兄长，必然见怪。若果然不怪，可饮兄弟这瓯酒。”徐能虽是强盗，弟兄之间，到也和睦，只恐徐用疑心，将酒一饮而尽。[眉批]不和睦的，强盗不如。众人见徐用劝了酒，都起身把盏道：“今日徐大哥娶了新嫂，是个大喜，我等一人庆一杯。”此时徐能七八已醉，欲推不饮。众人道：“徐二哥是弟兄，我们异姓，偏不是弟兄？”徐能被缠不过，只得每人陪过，吃得酩酊大醉。徐用见哥哥坐在椅上打瞌睡，只推出恭，提个灯笼，走出大门，从后门来，门却锁了。徐用从墙上跳进屋里，将后门锁裂开，取灯笼藏了。厨房下两个丫头在那里烫酒，徐用不顾，径到房前。只见房门掩着，里面说话声响，徐用侧耳而听，[眉批]精细。却是朱婆劝郑夫人成亲，正不知劝过几多言语了，郑夫人不允，只是啼哭。朱婆道：“奶奶既立意不



The group of men went on drinking wine and eating meat to their hearts' content until deep into the night. An idea suddenly occurred to Xu Yong. He filled a big bowl with about a catty of warm wine and, bowl in hand, went to kneel at Xu Neng's feet. (*Xu Yong is indeed most useful.*) In alarm, Xu Neng raised him to his feet and said, "Why are you doing this, my brother?"

"You must have been angry with me because I contradicted you earlier tonight in the boat. If you are not angry, please drink up the wine."

Xu Neng may have been a robber, but he had at least a good relationship with his brother. Not wanting to hurt Xu Yong's feelings, he drank up the wine in one gulp. (*Brothers who fall out with each other are thus worse than robbers.*)

Seeing Xu Yong offering wine, the other men all rose and said, holding wine cups, "With Big Brother Xu taking on a new wife, let each of us offer him a drink in celebration of this festive occasion!" By this time, Xu Neng was already more than half inebriated and tried to turn them down, but the men said, "Second Brother Xu is your brother all right, but what about those of us with different surnames? Aren't we your brothers as well?"

Succumbing to the pressure, Xu Neng had no choice but to accept a drink from each one and soon drank himself into a stupor. Seeing that his brother had fallen asleep in a chair, Xu Yong took a lantern and, giving the excuse of having to relieve himself, went out the main gate and headed straight for the back door, only to find it locked. He then jumped over the fence wall, got into the house, broke open the lock on the back door, hid his lantern, and, passing the kitchen where two maids were heating more wine, headed directly for the chamber.

He found the door of the chamber ajar, and the voices within were quite audible. Xu Yong strained his ears to listen. (*A meticulous man.*) It was Granny Zhu trying to talk Lady Zheng, Magistrate Su's wife, into marriage. Goodness knows how hard she had been trying, but Lady Zheng still would not listen and kept weeping. Granny Zhu said, "Since you are so determined not to give in, why didn't you



顺从，何不就船中寻个自尽？今日到此，那里有地孔钻去？”郑夫人哭道：“妈妈，不是奴家贪生怕死，只为有九个月身孕在身，若死了不打紧，我丈夫就绝后了。”朱婆道：“奶奶，你就生下儿女来，谁容你存留？老身又是妇道家，做不得程婴、杵臼，也是枉然。”徐用听到这句话，一脚把房门踢开，吓得郑夫人魂不附体，连朱婆也都慌了。徐用道：“不要忙，我是来救你的。我哥哥已醉，乘此机会，送你出后门去逃命，异日相会，须记的不干我徐用之事。”郑夫人叩头称谢。朱婆因说了半日，也十分可怜郑夫人，情愿与他作伴逃走。徐用身边取出十两银子，付与朱婆做盘缠，引二人出后门，又送了他出了大街，嘱咐“小心在意”，说罢，自去了。好似：

捶碎玉笼飞彩凤，掣开金锁走蛟龙。

单说朱婆与郑夫人寻思黑夜无路投奔，信步而行，只拣僻静处走去，顾不得鞋弓步窄。约行十五六里，苏奶奶心中着忙，到也不怕脚痛，那朱婆却走不动了。没办法，彼此相扶，又捱了十馀里，天还未明。朱婆原有个气急的症候，走了许多路，发喘起来，道：“奶奶，不是老身有始无终，其实寸步难移，恐怕反拖



kill yourself when you were on the boat? Now that you are already here, you can't very well find a hole in the ground to crawl into!"

Lady Zheng replied between sobs, "Granny, it's not that I fear death and want to hang onto life. The fact is, I am nine months pregnant. I don't mind if I die, but my death will mean an end to my husband's family line."

"Madam, let's suppose you do give birth to a child. Who will take care of it for you? I am just a woman. I can't do what Cheng Ying and Gongsun Chujiu did."²¹

Upon hearing this remark, Xu Yong kicked the door open with a swift movement of his foot. Lady Zheng was shocked out of her senses. Even Granny Zhu was unnerved. Xu Yong said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to save you. My brother is quite drunk. I'll take this chance and lead you out the back door. Then you run for your life. If ever we should meet again, remember I had no hand in all this."

Lady Zheng kowtowed in gratitude. Having talked with her for quite a while, Granny Zhu felt deeply for the young woman and offered to flee with her, as a companion.

Xu Yong took out ten taels of silver and gave them to Granny Zhu as travel money. He led the two women out the back door and escorted them to a major thoroughfare. "Take care!" said he, and with that, he went his own way. It was like

*A phoenix flying from the smashed jade cage;
 A dragon freed from a broken gold lock.*

With nowhere to go in the darkness of the night, Granny Zhu and Lady Zheng thought it best to pick their way only through places that looked quiet and deserted. After they walked for about fifteen to sixteen *li* on their small bound feet, even though Madam Su, in her state of fright, did not mind her foot-ache, Granny Zhu could not move another step. There being no other choice, they supported each other and covered another ten *li* or more, but daybreak still did not come. After so much walking, Granny Zhu succumbed to an attack of asthma, an old ailment of hers. "Madam," she said, "it's not that I'm a person who doesn't finish what I've started. It's just that I can't move another step. I don't want to be a burden to you. Luckily, day



累奶奶。且喜天色微明，奶奶前去，好寻个安身之处。老身在此处途路还熟，不消挂念。”郑夫人道：“奴家患难之际，只得相撇了。只是妈妈遇着他人，休得漏了奴家消息。”朱婆道：“奶奶尊便，老身不误你的事。”郑夫人才回得身，朱婆叹口气想道：“没处安身，索性做个干净好人。”望着路旁有口义井，将一双旧鞋脱下，投井而死。[眉批]浣纱女又有配享。郑夫人眼中流泪，只得前行。又行了十里，共三十馀里之程，渐觉腹痛难忍。此时天色将明，望见路傍有一茅庵，其门尚闭。郑夫人叩门，意欲借庵中暂歇。庵内答应开门。郑夫人抬头看见，惊上加惊，想道：“我来错了！原来是僧人，闻得南边和尚们最不学好，[眉批]亦未必。躲了强盗，又撞了和尚，却不晦气。千死万死，左右一死，且进门观其动静。”那僧人看见郑夫人丰姿服色，不像个以下之人，甚相敬重，请入净室问讯。叙话起来，方知是尼僧。郑夫人方才心定，将黄天荡遇盗之事，叙了一遍。那老尼姑道：“奶奶暂住几日不妨，却不敢久留，恐怕强人访知，彼此有损……”说犹未了，郑夫人腹痛，一阵紧一阵。老尼年逾五十，也是半路出家的，晓得



will be breaking soon. You go ahead and find a shelter for yourself. I know this area well. Don't worry about me."

"In this time of misery, there's nothing I can do but part company with you. However, when you meet people, don't say a word about me!"

"Go ahead, Madam. I won't do anything to harm you."

Lady Zheng had hardly turned around than Granny Zhu heaved a sigh and thought to herself, "With no place to go, I might as well put an end to my life while my name is still good and clean." Seeing a public well by the roadside, she took off her worn old shoes and threw herself into the well and died. (*The gauze-washing maiden has one more follower.* ²²)

A teary Lady Zheng saw nothing for it but to press on with her journey. After covering another ten *li*, making it more than thirty *li* altogether, she began to feel the spasms of unbearable abdominal pain. By the first faint light of the dawn, she saw a thatch cottage by the roadside with its door still shut. She knocked at the door, hoping to rest in the cottage. As the door was opened, she raised her eyes, and what she saw added to her alarm. "I've come to the wrong place," she thought. "It's a monk! I've heard that monks in the south are the worst. (*Not necessarily.*) I fled from a robber only to run into a monk. What back luck! Oh well, I'm as good as dead anyway, by whatever means. Why don't I go in first and then see what happens?"

Impressed by Lady Zheng's looks and clothes, which bespoke a woman of the upper class, the monk respectfully led her into a lounge before asking her name. Only then did Lady Zheng realize that the person she was talking to was a nun. In relief, Lady Zheng told her about the robbery at Huangtian Lake. The old nun said, "You may stay here for a few days, madam, but I don't dare to keep you long, because if the robbers get word of this, both of us will be in trouble." Before the nun had quite finished her sentence, Lady Zheng began having abdominal spasms again, each one worse than the one before.

Having joined the Buddhist order rather late in life, the nun, now more than fifty years of age, was not unaware of some of the



些道儿，问道：“奶奶这痛阵，到像要分娩一般？”郑夫人道：“实不相瞒，奴家怀九个月孕，因昨夜走急了路，肚疼，只怕是分娩了。”老尼道：“奶奶莫怪我说，这里是佛地，不可污秽。奶奶可往别处去，不敢相留。”郑夫人眼中流泪，哀告道：“师父慈悲为本，这十方地面不留，教奴家更投何处？想是苏门前世业重，今日遭此冤劫，不如死休！”老尼心慈道：“也罢，庵后有个厕屋，奶奶若没处去，权在那厕屋里住下，等生产过了，进庵未迟。”郑夫人出于无奈，只得捧着腹肚，走到庵后厕屋里去。虽则厕屋，喜得不是个露坑，到还干净。郑夫人到了屋内，一连几阵紧痛，产下一个孩儿。老尼听得小儿啼哭之声，忙走来看，说道：“奶奶且喜平安。只是一件，母子不能并留。若留下小的，我与你托人抚养，你就休住在此；你若要住时，把那小官人弃了。不然佛地中啼啼哭哭，被人疑心，查得根由，又是祸事。”郑夫人左思右量，两下难舍，便道：“我有道理。”将自己贴肉穿的一件罗衫脱下，包裹了孩儿，拔下金钗一股，插在孩儿胸前，对天拜告道：“夫主苏云，倘若不该绝后，愿天可怜，遣个好人收养此儿。”祝罢，将孩儿递与老尼，央他放在十字路口。老尼念声



ways of the world. "Madam," she asked, "might you be having labor pains?"

"To be frank with you, I am nine months pregnant. I did too much frantic walking last night, and now, I'm afraid I am having labor pains."

"Now, don't take amiss what I'm going to say, madam. This is a sacred Buddhist nunnery. It must not be sullied by childbirth. Please go somewhere else. I can't keep you here."

With tears flowing from her eyes, Lady Zheng begged plaintively, "Reverend Mother, mercy is the guiding principle of the Buddhist order. Where can I go for help if this nunnery doesn't keep me? The Su family must have done many evil deeds in a previous generation to deserve such misfortune. I'd be better off dead!"

The old nun softened. "Oh well, there is a lavatory behind the nunnery. If you have nowhere else to go, you may go there and come back into the nunnery after you give birth."

Resignedly, Lady Zheng went to the lavatory behind the nunnery, her hands over her belly. A lavatory though it was, luckily the pit had a cover, and it was tolerably clean. Barely had she stepped inside when a series of spasms set in, and the baby was born.

Hearing the baby's cries, the old nun rushed over for a look. "I'm so glad you're all right, madam. But there's one thing: I can't keep both mother and son. If you leave the baby here, I'll have someone take care of him for you, but you can't stay. If you want to stay, you'll have to give the little boy up. Otherwise, people will get suspicious if they hear a baby crying in a nunnery. If this whole thing is found out, there'll be trouble."

Turning her thoughts this way and that, Lady Zheng found it hard to come to a decision. "I have an idea," she said. She took off a silk blouse that she was wearing next to her skin and wrapped the baby up in it. Then, she took a gold hairpin from her hair and laid it on the baby's chest. Looking up to heaven, she prayed on her knees: "If my husband Su Yun is meant to have a child to continue the family line, please take pity on me, oh Heaven, and send a good person to adopt my baby." With that, she handed the baby to the nun to



“阿弥陀佛”，接了孩儿，走去约莫半里之遥，地名大柳村，撒于柳树之下。

分明路侧重逢弃，疑是空桑再产伊。

老尼转来，回复了郑夫人，郑夫人一恸几死。老尼劝解，自不必说。老尼净了手，向佛前念了《血盆经》，送汤送水价看觑郑夫人。郑夫人将随身簪珥手钏，尽数解下，送与老尼为陪堂之费。等待满月，进庵做了道姑，拜佛看经。过了数月，老尼恐在本地有是非，又引他到当涂县慈湖老庵中潜住，更不出门，不在话下。

却说徐能醉了，睡在椅上，直到五鼓方醒。众人见主人酒醉，先已各散去讫。徐能醒来，想起苏奶奶之事，走进房看时，却是个空房，连朱婆也不见了。叫丫鬟问时，一个个目瞪口呆，对答不出。看后门大开，情知走了，虽然不知去向，也少不得追赶。料他不走南路，必走北路，望僻静处，一直追来。也是天使其然，一径走那苏奶奶的旧路，到义井跟头，看见一双女鞋，原是他先前老婆的旧鞋，认得是朱婆的，疑猜道：“难道他特地奔出去，到于此地，舍得性命？”巴着井栏一望，黑洞洞地，不要管他，再



have him placed at a crossroads.

Chanting "Amitahba," the nun took the baby. She walked for about half a *li* and left the baby at the foot of a willow tree in a place called Big Willow Village.

*It was another Qi by the roadside;*²³

*Another Yi born in a hollow tree.*²⁴

The nun returned and reported to Lady Zheng, who almost died from grief. How the nun tried to console her need not be described here. The nun washed her hands and chanted a section of the sutra on childbirth before serving Lady Zheng liquids and attending to her other needs. Lady Zheng gave up all her jewelry to pay for living in the nunnery. When a full month had elapsed, she entered the nunnery as a nun and spent her days paying homage to Buddha and reading the scriptures. Several months later, out of fear that trouble might arise in the local area, the nun took Lady Zheng to Mercy Lake Nunnery in Dangtu County, where she clandestinely took up residence, never stepping outside the door, but of this, we shall speak no further.

Let us return to Xu Neng, who, in a drunken stupor, fell asleep in the chair and did not wake up until the fifth watch of the night. In the meantime, with the host in such a besotted condition, the other men had dispersed. When he awoke, Xu Neng remembered Madam Su and walked into the chamber, only to find her gone. Even Granny Zhu was nowhere to be seen. He called the maids for questioning, but they were unable to give him an answer, their eyes unblinking and mouths agape. Then, noticing that the back door was wide open, he realized Madam Su had escaped. Even though he had no idea where she could have gone, he felt bound to give chase. Guessing that she must have taken a northerly rather than southerly direction, he headed north, wending his way through quiet, secluded places.

As heaven willed it, he took exactly the same route that Madam Su had taken. Coming upon the well, he saw a pair of woman's shoes, which he recognized as Granny Zhu's because they had belonged to his deceased wife. "Could it be that they ran all the way here just to drown themselves in this place?" he wondered. Peering



赶一程。又行十馀里，已到大柳村前，全无踪迹。正欲回身，只听得小孩子哭响，走上一步看时，那大柳树之下一个小孩儿，且是生得端正，怀间有金钗一股，正不知什么人撇下的，心中暗想：“我徐能年近四十，尚无子息，这不是皇天有眼，赐与我为嗣？”
[眉批] 皇天真个有眼。轻轻抱在怀里，那孩儿就不哭了。徐能心下十分之喜，也不想追赶，抱了孩子就回。到得家中，想姚大的老婆，新育一个女儿，未及一月死了，正好接奶。把那一股钗子，就做赏钱，赏了那婆娘，教他好生喂乳，“长大之时，我自看顾你”。不在话下。有诗为证：

插下蔷薇有刺藤，养成乳虎自伤生。

凡人不识天公巧，种就殃苗待长成。

话分两头。再说苏知县被强贼擗入黄天荡中，自古道“死生有命”，若是命不该活，一千个也休了。只为苏知县后来还有造化，在水中半沉半浮，直活到响水闸边。恰好有个徽州客船，泊于闸口。客人陶公夜半正起来撒溺，觉得船底下有物，叫水手将篙摘起，却是一个人，浑身捆缚，心中骇异，不知是死的活的？正



through the railings of the well, he saw nothing but a black hole. "Well, never mind," he thought to himself, "let me walk some more."

Another ten or so *li* later, he came to Big Willow Village but still could find no trace of the women. He was on the point of turning back when he heard a baby crying. He took a step forward and saw that at the foot of the big willow tree lay a comely baby with a gold hairpin on its bosom. Wondering who could have left the baby, he said to himself, "I'm going on forty and am still childless. Does this mean that Heaven, in all its fairness, has given me an heir?" (*Heaven is indeed fair.*) As soon as he picked the baby up, it stopped crying. Wildly overjoyed, Xu Neng abandoned all thoughts of giving chase and turned back, the baby in his arms.

After arriving home, he recalled that Yao Da's wife had been nursing a baby daughter who died before she was one month old and Mrs. Yao could therefore serve as a wet nurse. He gave the hairpin to Mrs. Yao as a reward and told her to nurse the baby with good care. "After he grows up, I'll take care of you," he promised. Of this, no more need be said. There is a poem in testimony:

*Plant a rose, and it will grow thorns to prick you;
 Nurse a tiger cub, and it will kill you.
 Those who know little of heaven's power
 Sow the seeds of trouble and watch them grow.*

Let us follow another thread of the story and return to Magistrate Su at the moment when the robbers dropped him into Huangtian Lake. As an ancient saying goes, "Life and death are preordained by fate."

If one is meant to die, a thousand opportunities to live will not help. But Magistrate Su was meant to enjoy heaven's bounty later in life. He sank and rose in the water until he was carried by the current to Xiangshui Floodgate. It so happened that a boat belonging to a traveling merchant from Huizhou was moored by the floodgate. Mr. Tao, the traveling merchant, was relieving himself when he felt that there was something underneath the boat. At his bidding, a boatman retrieved the object with his pole and found it to be a man all trussed up. Shocked at the sight and wondering if the man was dead or alive,



欲推去水中，有这等异事，那苏知县在水中浸了半夜，还不曾死，开口道：“救命！救命！”陶公见是活的，慌忙解开绳索，将姜汤灌醒，问其缘故。苏知县备细告诉，被山东王尚书船家所劫，如今待往上司去告理。陶公是本分生理之人，听得说要与山东王尚书家打官司，只恐连累，有懊悔之意。苏知县看见颜色变了，怕不相容，便改口道：“如今盘费一空，文凭又失，此身无所着落，倘有安身之处，再作道理。”陶公道：“先生休怪我说，你若要去告理，在下不好管得闲事；若只要个安身之处，敝村有个市学，倘肯相就，权住几时。”苏知县道：“多谢！多谢！”陶公取些干衣服，教苏知县换了，带回家中。这村名虽唤做三家村，共有十四五家，每家多有儿女上学，却是陶公做领袖，分派各家轮流供给，在家教学，不放他出门。看官牢记着，那苏知县自在村中教学，正是：

未司社稷民人事，权作“之乎者也”师。

却说苏老夫人在家思念儿子苏云，对次子苏雨道：“你哥哥



Mr. Tao was about to have him dropped back into the water when something quite extraordinary happened: Still alive despite having soaked in the water for a good part of the night, Magistrate Su said, "Help! Help!"

Seeing that the man was alive, Mr. Tao hastened to untie the ropes. After feeding him some ginger soup to bring him back to full consciousness, Mr. Tao asked him what had happened, whereupon Magistrate Su gave a detailed account of how some boatmen working for Secretary Wang of Shandong had robbed him, adding that he intended to file a lawsuit. Being a law-abiding man who minded only his own business, Mr. Tao was a little vexed at the mention of a lawsuit against Secretary Wang of Shandong because he was afraid of being involved. Observing that Mr. Tao's face had darkened, Magistrate Su changed his tone, afraid that Tao would not keep him, and said instead, "Now that I'm out of all travel money and my papers are gone, I have nowhere to go. If I could have a place to stay, I'll think of what to do next."

"Don't blame me for speaking out of turn," said Mr. Tao, "but if you are going to file some lawsuit, I don't think I should meddle in your affairs. But if you just want a place to stay, there is a school in my humble village. Should you be willing, you may very well stay there for some time."

"Thank you so much! So much!"

Mr. Tao took out some dry clothes for Magistrate Su and then brought him home. The village, although called Village of Three Households, was actually inhabited by fourteen or fifteen families, each with children in school. By order of Mr. Tao, the village leader, the families took turns providing for the new schoolmaster, who taught only at home, never taking a step outside his door. Dear audience, remember well that Magistrate Su now began to teach in the village. Truly,

*Before working in the public service,
He first taught the basics of the classics.*

Let us turn now to old Madam Su in her home. Missing her son Su Yun, she said to her younger son Su Yu, "It's been three years



为官，一去三年，杳无音信，你可念手足之情，亲往兰溪任所，讨个音耗回来，以慰我悬悬之望。”苏雨领命，收拾包裹，陆路短盘，水路搭船，不则一月，来到兰溪。那苏雨是朴实庄家，不知委曲，一径走到县里。值知县退衙，来私宅门口敲门。守门皂隶急忙拦住，问是甚么人。苏雨道：“我是知县老爷亲属，你快通报。”皂隶道：“大爷好利害，既是亲属，可通个名姓，小人好传云板。”苏雨道：“我是苏爷的嫡亲兄弟，特地从涿州家乡而来。”皂隶兜脸打一啐，骂道：“见鬼，大爷自姓高，是江西人，牛头不对马嘴！”正说间，后堂又有几个闲荡的公人听得了，走来帮兴，骂道：“那里来这光棍，打他出去就是。”苏雨再三分辨，那个听他。正在那里七张八嘴，东扯西拽，惊动了衙内的高知县，开私宅出来，问甚缘由。苏雨听说大爷出衙，睁眼看时，却不是哥哥，已自心慌，只得下跪禀道：“小人是北直隶涿州苏雨，有亲兄苏云，于三年前，选本县知县，到任以后，杳无音信。老母在家悬



since your older brother left for his post, but nothing has been heard from him. Now, for your brother's sake, won't you make a trip to Orchid Creek where he is? You can then bring me back a message so as to put my worries to rest."

Thus instructed, Su Yu packed and set out on his journey. He went by land, stopping to rest along the way, as well as by water, in a boat. Before many days had passed, he arrived at Orchid Creek. Being a simple-minded farmer who knew little about social decorum, he headed straight for the county yamen. As the magistrate had already dismissed the day's session, he went around to the magistrate's private quarters and knocked at the door.

With alacrity, the janitor stopped him and demanded to know who he was. Su Yu replied, "I am a member of the magistrate's family. Announce me, quick!"

"You've certainly got some spirit in you, sir," said the janitor. "Since you are a relative, please give me your name so that I can announce you."

"I am Magistrate Su's brother by flesh and blood, and I've come all the way from our native town Zhuozhou."

Spitting in contempt, the janitor cursed, "Go to hell! The Magistrate's surname is Gao. He's a native of Jiangxi. You are trying to match horses' mouths with cows' heads!"

The commotion drew the attention of a few idle officers who were hanging around in a back hall nearby. They came over to join the fun, yelling, "That lowlife from nowhere, beat him and drive him out!"

To Su Yu's words defending himself, they turned a deaf ear. All the yelling and the tugging and pulling caught the attention of Magistrate Gao. Emerging from his residential quarters, he asked what it was all about. Hearing that the magistrate was before him, Su Yu opened his eyes wide but saw that it was not his brother. In panic, he dropped to his knees and said, "My humble name is Su Yu, a native of Zhuozhou in the northern district directly under the jurisdiction of the imperial court. My older brother Su Yun was appointed three years ago to be the magistrate of this county, but nothing has been heard



望，特命小人不远千里，来到此间，何期遇了恩相。恩相既在此荣任，必知家兄前任下落。”高知县慌忙扶起，与他作揖看坐，说道：“你令兄向来不曾到任，吏部只道病故了，又将此缺补与下官。既是府上都没消息，不是覆舟，定是遭寇了。若是中途病亡，岂无一人回籍？”苏雨听得哭将起来道：“老母家中悬念，只望你衣锦还乡，谁知死得不明不白，教我如何回覆老母！”高知县傍观，未免同袍之情，甚不过意，宽慰道：“事已如此，足下休得烦恼。且在敝治宽住一两个月，待下官差人四处打听令兄消息，回府未迟。一应路费，都在下官身上。”便分付门子，于库房取书仪十两，送与苏雨为程敬，着一名皂隶送苏二爷于城隍庙居住。苏雨虽承高公美意，心下痛苦，昼夜啼哭，住了半月，忽感一病，服药不愈，呜呼哀哉。

未得兄弟生逢，又见娘儿死别。

高知县买棺亲往殓殓，停柩于庙中，分付道士，小心看视。不在话下。



from him since he left home to take up his post. My mother is still eagerly waiting for news and has sent me here despite the thousand-*li* distance. I did not expect to see Your Honor. Since Your Honor is the incumbent magistrate, you must know what has happened to your predecessor, my brother.”

Magistrate Gao quickly raised him to his feet, bowed to him with clasped hands, and showed him a seat before saying, “Your brother never came to take up the post. The Ministry of Personnel thought he had died of some illness and assigned the vacant post to my humble self. But since even you have had no news of him, his boat must have capsized, or he must have run into robbers. If he had died of an illness during the journey, how could no other traveling companions, not even one, have returned home?”

At these words, Su Yu burst into tears, saying, “Mother is still waiting for him to return home in glory. Who would have guessed that he had died? And it was a mysterious death, too! Now what am I going to tell Mother?”

Watching him, Magistrate Gao was overcome with sympathy for the misfortunes of a fellow official. He said, trying to console Su Yu, “Now that things have already come to this, please calm down. Stay with me for a couple of months while I have messengers search for clues of your brother’s whereabouts. You can stay until they return. I’ll take care of all their traveling expenses.”

So saying, he told an attendant to take out ten taels of silver from the treasury and offer it to Su Yu for his travel expenses. An officer escorted the younger Mr. Su to the temple of the city god, where he took up residence. However kindly Mr. Gao treated him, he was still so distraught that he wept from morning to night. Half a month later, he suddenly caught an illness. Medicine failed to work, and he died.

*He did not meet his brother in life,
 But bid his mother farewell in death.*

Magistrate Gao bought a coffin and attended the funeral himself. When the coffin was placed in the temple, he told the monks to keep a good watch over it, but of this, no more.



再说徐能，自抱那小孩儿回来，教姚大的老婆做了乳母，养为己子。俗语道：“只愁不养，不愁不长。”那孩子长成六岁，聪明出众，取名徐继祖，上学攻书。十三岁经书精通，游庠补廪。十五岁上登科，起身会试。从涿州经过，走得乏了，下马歇脚。见一老婆婆，面如秋叶，发若银丝，自提一个磁瓶向井头汲水。徐继祖上前与婆婆作揖，求一瓯清水解渴。[眉批]情节好。老婆婆老眼朦胧，看见了这小官人，清秀可喜，便留他家里吃茶。徐继祖道：“只怕老娘府上路远！”婆婆道：“十步之内，就是老身舍下。”徐继祖真个下马，跟到婆婆家里，见门庭虽像旧家，甚是冷落。后边房屋都被火焚了，瓦砾成堆，无人收拾，只剩得厅房三间，将土墙隔断，左一间老婆婆做个卧房，右一间放些破家伙，中间虽则空下，傍边供两个灵位，开写着“长儿苏云，次儿苏雨”。厅侧边是个耳房，一个老婢在内烧火。老婆婆请小官人于中间坐下，自己陪坐，唤老婢泼出一盏热腾腾的茶，将托盘托将出来道：“小官人吃茶。”老婆婆看着小官人，目不转睛，不觉两泪交流。徐继祖怪而问之。老婆婆道：“老身七十八岁了，就说错



To pick up another thread of our story, after carrying home the baby he had found, Xu Neng made Yao Da's wife the wet nurse and raised the child as his own. As the proverb says, "Worry not about your children's growth but about their education." When the boy grew into an exceptionally brilliant six-year-old, he was given the name Xu Jizu and went to school. By the age of thirteen, he was already well versed in the classics. He passed the examinations at the local level and became a government-supported student. At fifteen, he became a *juren* and left home for the next round of examinations in the capital.²⁵

While passing by Zhuozhou, he felt tired and dismounted his horse for a rest. Catching sight of an old woman drawing water from a well with a porcelain jar, her face like an autumn leaf, her hair like silvery threads, he walked up to her and, with a bow, asked for some clear water to allay his thirst. (*Good detail.*) With her age-blurred eyes, she saw a pleasant, refined-looking young man and invited him for tea at her home. Xu Jizu said, "But Granny, your house might be too far from here."

"It's only ten steps away," said the old woman.

Thereupon, Xu Jizu got off his horse and followed her to her home. The house looked as if it had seen its days of glory, but it was now quite dilapidated. A fire had reduced the rooms at the back to nothing but heaps of rubble. Only three rooms were left, partitioned by earthen walls. The room on the left was the old woman's bedroom; the one on the right was a storage room for some miscellaneous items that were sadly in disrepair. The one in the middle was empty except for two spiritual tablets set to one side bearing the inscriptions "Older Son Su Yun" and "Younger Son Su Yu."

In a side room, an old maidservant was making a fire. The old woman made the young man sit down in the middle room. She herself also sat to keep him company before ordering the maidservant to bring out a cup of hot tea on a tray.

"Young man, please have some tea," said the old woman. As the old woman fixed her eyes on the young man, her tears fell thick and fast. Surprised, Xu Jizu asked why she was crying.

"As I am a seventy-eight-year-old woman, I hope you will not



了句言语，料想郎君不怪。”徐继祖道：“有话但说，何怪之有！”老婆婆道：“官人尊姓？青春几岁？”徐继祖叙出姓名，年方一十五岁，今科侥幸中举，赴京会试。老婆婆屈指暗数了一回，扑簌簌泪珠滚一个不住。徐继祖也不觉惨然道：“婆婆如此哀楚，必有伤心之事！”老婆婆道：“老身有两个儿子，长子苏云，叨中进士，职受兰溪县尹，十五年前，同着媳妇赴任，一去杳然。老身又遭次男苏雨亲往任所体探，连苏雨也不回来。后来闻人传说，大小儿丧于江盗之手，次儿没于兰溪。老身痛苦无伸，又被邻家失火，延烧卧室。老身和这婢子两口，权住这几间屋内，坐以待死。适才偶见郎君面貌与苏云无二，又刚是十五岁，所以老身感伤不已。今日天色已晚，郎君若不嫌贫贱，在草舍权住一晚，吃老身一餐素饭。”说罢又哭。徐继祖是个慈善的人，也是天性自然感动，心内到可怜这婆婆，也不忍别去，就肯住了。老婆婆宰鸡煮饭，管待徐继祖。叙了二三更的话，就留在中间歇息。次早，老婆婆起身，又留吃了早饭，临去时依依不舍，在破箱子内取出一件不曾开折的罗衫出来相赠，说道：“这衫是老身亲手做的，男女衫各



take my words amiss if I speak out of turn.”

“Please go ahead and say whatever you have on your mind. I won’t take anything amiss.”

“What is your name? How old are you?”

Xu Jizu gave his name, adding, “I am fifteen years old. By a stroke of good luck, I passed the civil service exams at the provincial level and am on my way to the capital for the next round of exams.”

The old woman bent her fingers and counted to herself, the tears never ceasing to flow down her cheeks. Without knowing why, Xu Jizu also felt upset. “Granny,” he said, “you must be thinking of something very sad to be crying like that.”

“Well, I had two sons. Fifteen years ago, the older one, Su Yun, was appointed as a *jinshi* to be magistrate of Orchid Creek County. He went with his wife to take up the post and has never been heard from since. I sent my second son, Su Yu, to the county where his brother had been assigned, and he never came back either. Later, I heard rumors that my older son had been killed by some robbers along the river and that my younger son had died at Orchid Creek. I was heart-broken. And then, my neighbor’s house caught fire, and the fire spread to my house. Now, my maidservant and I have to make do with these rooms while waiting for death to come. When I saw you some moments ago, I was struck by your resemblance to Su Yun. And you happen to be fifteen. That’s what saddened me so much. But it’s getting late now. If you don’t object to these humble circumstances, please stay here tonight and let me serve you a simple meal.” With these words, she broke down in tears again.

Being of a kindly nature easily moved to compassion, Xu Jizu felt pity for the old woman. Unable to bring himself to take leave of her, he agreed to stay. The old woman slaughtered a chicken and cooked a meal for Xu Jizu. They talked until it was sometime between the second and third watch of the night before the young man was made to sleep in the middle room.

The old woman rose the next morning and served him breakfast. Before reluctantly letting him go, she took out from a well-worn trunk a silk shirt that looked as if it had never been unfolded. “I made



做一件，却是一般花样。女衫把与儿妇穿去了，男衫因打摺时被灯煤落下，烧了领上一个孔。老身嫌不吉利，不曾把与亡儿穿，至今老身收着。今日老身见了郎君，就如见我苏云一般。郎君受了这件衣服，倘念老身衰暮之景，来年春闹得第，衣锦还乡，是必相烦，差人于兰溪县打听苏云、苏雨一个实信见报，老身死亦瞑目。”说罢放声痛哭。〔眉批〕□得可怜。徐继祖没来由，不觉也掉下泪来。老婆婆送了徐继祖上马，哭进屋去了。

徐继祖不胜伤感。到了京师，连科中了二甲进士，除授中书。朝中大小官员，见他少年老成，诸事历练，甚相敬重。也有打听他未娶，情愿赔了钱，送女儿与他做亲。徐继祖为不曾禀命于父亲，坚意推辞。在京二年，为急缺风宪事，选授监察御史，差往南京刷卷，就便回家省亲归娶，刚好一十九岁。徐能此时已做了太爷，在家中耀武扬威，甚是得志。正合着古人两句：

常将冷眼观螃蟹，看你横行得几时？



this shirt myself," she said. "I made two of them of the same pattern — one in man's style, the other in woman's style. My daughter-in-law was wearing the other one when she left. As for this one, some burned lamp wick fell on it when I was folding it and burned a hole in the collar. I thought that was a bad omen, so I didn't give it to my now deceased son and have kept it here all this time. Now that you make me feel as if I am looking at my own son, I'd like to give this shirt to you. If you still remember this old woman by the time you return home in glory after passing next spring's examinations, please do me a favor: Send someone to Orchid Creek County to find out what happened to Su Yun and Su Yu and let me know about it. I'll be able to find peace then even in death." With that, she burst into loud sobs. (*How sad!*) Xu Jizu, also, for no apparent reason, shed some tears in spite of himself. After watching Xu Jizu mount his horse, the old woman wept her way back into the house. Xu Jizu was also stricken with grief.

In the capital, he passed the examinations, won the *jinshi* degree with second-grade honors, and was given the post of a secretary in the Imperial Secretariat. All the officials of the court, whatever their positions in the hierarchy, showed him much respect, impressed as they were by his maturity in spite of his youth and his skillfulness in handling matters. Some learned, upon inquiry, that he was not betrothed and offered to betroth their daughters to him, even if they had to offer much larger dowries than what was deemed appropriate by convention. But Xu Jizu firmly declined all such offers because he had not consulted his father.

In his second year in the capital, he was made an imperial inspector so as to fill a vacancy on an urgent basis and was sent to Nanjing to review criminal cases. This was an opportunity for him to return home and get married. He had just had his nineteenth birthday.

Being now the father of a court-appointed official, Xu Neng threw his weight around in the neighborhood, all puffed up with pride. As a poet of olden times put it:

*With a scornful eye, I watch the crabs run wild;
 For how much longer is the insolence to last?*



再说郑氏夫人在慈湖尼庵，一住十九年，不曾出门。一日照镜，觉得庞儿非旧，潸然泪下。想道：“杀夫之仇未报，孩儿又不知生死，就是那时有人收留，也不知落在谁手？住居何乡？我如今容貌憔悴，又是道姑打扮，料无人认得。况且吃了这几年安逸茶饭，定害庵中，心中过意不去。如今不免出外托钵，一来也帮贴庵中，二来往仪真一路去，顺便打听孩儿消息。常言‘大海浮萍，也有相逢之日’，或者天可怜，有近处人家拾得，抚养在彼，母子相会，对他说出根由，教他做个报仇之人，却不了却心愿。”当下与老尼商议停妥，托了钵盂，出庵而去。一路抄化，到于当涂县内，只见沿街搭彩，迎接刷卷御史徐爷。郑夫人到一家化斋，其家乃是里正，辞道：“我家为接官一事，甚是匆忙，改日来布施罢。”却有间壁一个人家，有女眷闲立在门前观看搭彩，看这道姑，生得十分精致，年也却不甚长，见化不得斋，便去叫唤他。郑氏闻唤，到彼问讯过了。那女眷便延进中堂，将素斋款待，问其来历。郑氏料非贼党，想道：“我若隐忍不说，到底终无结末。”遂将十九年前苦情，数一数二，告诉出来。谁知屏后那女眷



Let us return to Lady Zheng. Nineteen years had gone by since she had taken up residence in Mercy Lake Nunnery, and in all these years, she had never taken a step outside the gate. One day, she looked into a mirror and saw that her face was not what it had been. Tears rolled down her cheeks. She thought, "The death of my husband remains unavenged, nor do I have any idea if my child is dead or alive. Even if someone had picked him up and raised him, I have no way of knowing that person's identity and place of residence. Now that I am so emaciated, and in a nun's clothes, I don't think anyone would recognize me. Moreover, I feel uneasy for having lived off the nunnery all these years without doing anything in return for the trouble I gave them. Let me take a trip to Yizhen to beg for alms, partly to help support the nunnery, partly to inquire about my son along the way. As it's often said, 'Even duckweeds floating apart on the ocean will get to meet someday.' If, by Heaven's compassion, the baby was picked up and raised by a family living nearby, I may even get to see him. If so, I'll tell him about the circumstances of his birth and have him seek revenge, and thus take a load off my mind." Then and there, she consulted the old nun, and with everything agreed upon, she left the nunnery, an alms bowl in hand.

She begged her way to Dangtu County, where she found the streets colorfully decorated for the arrival of Imperial Censor Xu. As she approached a house, which happened to be that of the local head man, she was rejected and told by a member of the household, "This family is too busy preparing to greet the imperial censor. Come here for alms some other day."

At the next house, a woman stood idly by the door watching the decorations being put up. When she saw the middle-aged refined-looking nun begging unsuccessfully for alms, she called her over. Hearing someone call her, Lady Zheng went over and exchanged a greeting with the woman, who then invited her into the main hall, served her a vegetarian meal, and asked about her background. Thinking that the woman could not have been a member of some criminal gang, she said to herself, "If I go on keeping my secret, I'll never find out anything." Thereupon she gave a detailed account of the tragedy that had



的家长伏着，听了半日，心怀不平，转身出来，叫道姑：“你受恁般冤苦，见今刷卷御史到任，如何不去告状申理？”郑氏道：“小道是女流，幼未识字，写不得状词。”那家长道：“要告状，我替你写。”[眉批]如此闲事，何妨多管。便去买一张三尺三的绵纸，从头至尾写道：

告状妇郑氏，年四十二岁，系直隶涿州籍贯。夫苏云，由进士选授浙江兰溪县尹。于某年相随赴任，路经仪真，因船漏过载。岂期船户积盗徐能，纠伙多人，中途劫夫财，谋夫命，又欲奸骗氏身。氏幸逃出，庵中潜躲，迄今一十九年，沉冤无雪。徐盗见在五坝街住。恳乞天台捕获正法，生死衔恩，激切上告。

郑氏收了状子，作谢而出。走到接官亭，徐御史正在宁太道周兵备船中答拜，船头上一清如水。郑氏不知利害，径踏上船。管船的急忙拦阻，郑氏便叫起屈来。

徐爷在舱中听见，也是一缘一会，偏觉得音声凄惨，叫巡捕官接进状子，同周兵备观看。不看犹可，看毕时，唬得徐御史面



occurred nineteen years ago.

Little did she know that her account had been overheard by the woman's father, who was hiding behind the screen. His indignation aroused by the story, he emerged and addressed the nun. "With such an injustice done to you, why don't you file a complaint with the visiting imperial censor?"

"Being a woman, I never learned to read, so I can't write a complaint."

"If you want to," said the man, "I can help you write it." (*This is a case in which sticking one's nose into others' affairs is a good thing to do.*) He went out to buy a sheet of tissue paper three feet and three inches long and, after coming back, wrote the following:

From the plaintiff, Zheng-shi, age forty-two, a native of Zhuozhou in the district directly under the jurisdiction of the court:

My husband Su Yun, a jinshi appointed as magistrate of Orchid Creek County, Zhejiang, took me on a journey years ago to assume his post. When we passed Yizhen, the boat leaked because of excessive weight. Boatman Xu Neng, an old hand at robbery, in collaboration with other members of his gang, stole my husband's money in the middle of the journey, killed him, and tried to take advantage of me. Fortunately, I escaped and took refuge in a nunnery. Nineteen years have elapsed, but the injustice remains unavenged. As Robber Xu is a current resident on Five Dams Street, please bring him to justice. If this is done, I shall be eternally grateful, in life and in death.

Zheng-shi took the paper and left, with thanks. When she arrived at the pavilion of reception for new officials, Censor Xu was in the boat cabin exchanging greetings with Commander Zhou of the Ningtai Circuit. As the bow of the boat was quiet and unguarded, Zheng-shi, unaware of proper decorum, tottered onto the boat. When the boatman rushed over to stop her, she began to cry out her grievances.

Inspector Xu, who was predestined to meet her at this time, found her voice especially heartrending. He had a guard take in the letter of complaint, which he and Commander Zhou then read together.



如土色。屏去从人，私向周兵备请教：“这妇人所告，正是老父，学生欲待不准他状，又恐在别衙门告理。”周兵备呵呵大笑道：“先生大人，正是青年，不知机变，此事亦有何难？可分付巡捕官带那妇人明日察院中审问。到那其间，一顿板子，将那妇人敲死，可不绝了后患。”[眉批]□人心。徐御史起身相谢道：“承教了。”辞别周兵备，分付了巡捕官说话，押那告状的妇人，明早带进衙门面审。当下回察院中安歇，一夜不睡。想道：“我父亲积年为盗，这妇人所告，或是真情。当先劫财杀命，今日又将妇人打死，却不是冤上加冤。若是不打杀他时，又不是小可利害。”[眉批]说得是。蓦然又想起三年前涿州遇见老姬，说儿子苏云被强人所算，想必就是此事了。又想道：“我父亲劫掠了一生，不知造下许多冤业，有何阴德，积下儿子科第？我记得小时上学，学生中常笑我不是亲生之子，正不知我此身从何而来？此事除非奶公姚大知其备细。”心生一计，写就一封家书，书中道：“到任忙促，不及回家，特地迎接父叔诸亲，南京衙门相会。路上乏人伏侍，可先差奶公姚大来当涂采石驿，莫误，莫误！”次日开门，将家书分付承



It would have been another story had he not read it, but as he did, he became so frightened that his face turned ashen. Dismissing all attendants, he privately sought Commander Zhou's advice, saying, "The man accused by this woman is none other than my father. If I reject this letter of complaint, I'm afraid she might go to some other yamen."

Commander Zhou roared with laughter. "Mr. Inspector," he said, "you're too young to know how to deal with contingencies. This is by no means a difficult situation. You can have your guard take the woman to your court tomorrow for questioning. That woman can be beaten to death right there in the court. Wouldn't that stop all future troubles?" ([Illegible] *the human heart.*)

Inspector Xu rose and said, "Thank you for your advice." He took leave of Commander Zhou and told his guard to take the complainant to his court the next morning for a face-to-face questioning. He then went back to his court to retire for the night. But he stayed awake the whole night through, thinking, "My father has indeed been a robber for many years. The woman's story just might be true. To beat her to death in addition to the robbery and killing would be to add injustice to injustice. But if she is not to be beaten to death, I'll be in for big trouble." (*Valid point.*)

Suddenly he remembered that the old woman he had met in Zhuozhou three years ago had told him that her son Su Yun had been killed by some robbers. "So, this must be what the complaint is all about." He continued thinking to himself, "Goodness knows how much karmic sin my father has committed in his life as a robber. How could he have accumulated any merit in the netherworld for his son to pass the imperial examinations? I remember that in school when I was small, schoolmates often laughed at me, saying that I was not my parents' flesh and blood. I wonder where I came from. Only Yao Da, my nurse's husband, knows the truth." Hitting on a plan, he wrote a letter home, saying, "I am too busy with work to come back home, but I shall meet Father, my uncles, and others at my yamen in Nanjing. As I need someone to help me in my journey, please send Yao Da to Caishi Station, Dangtu. Please do not fail me."



差，送到仪真五坝街上太爷亲拆。巡捕官带郑氏进衙。徐继祖见了那郑氏，不由人心中惨然，略问了几句言语，就问道：“那妇人有儿子没有？如何自家出身告状？”郑氏眼中流泪，将庵中产儿，并罗衫包裹，和金钗一股，留于大柳村中始末，又备细说了一遍。徐继祖委决不下，分付郑氏：“你且在庵中暂住，待我察访强盗着实，再来唤你。”郑氏拜谢去了。

徐继祖起马到采石驿住下，等得奶公姚大到来。日间无话，直至黄昏深后，唤姚大至于卧榻，将好言抚慰，问道：“我是谁人所生？”姚大道：“是太爷生的。”再三盘问，只是如此。徐爷发怒道：“我是他生之子，备细都已知道。你若说得明白，念你妻子乳哺之恩，免你本身一刀。若不说之时，发你在本县，先把你活活敲死！”姚大道：“实是太爷亲生，小的不敢说谎。”徐爷道：“黄天荡打劫苏知县一事，难道你不知？”姚大又不肯明言。徐爷大怒，便将宪票一幅，写下姚大名字，发去当涂县打一百讨气绝缴。姚大见拿了宪票，着了忙，连忙磕头道：“小的愿说，



The next day, as soon as the yamen gate was opened, he gave the letter to a courier, instructing him to deliver the letter to Five Dams Street, Yizhen, into his father's hands. Upon seeing Zheng-shi, who had been brought into the yamen by a guard, Xu Jizu could not help but feel saddened. After the first few standard questions, he asked, "Don't you have a son? Why do you have to file this complaint yourself?" Thereupon, a tearful Zheng-shi gave a detailed account of how she had given birth to a baby in a nunnery, wrapped up the baby and a golden hairpin in a silk shirt, and left the baby in Big Willow Village.

Unable to come to a decision, Xu Jizu told Zheng-shi, "You may go back to the nunnery and stay until I call you. I must first hunt down the robbers and verify the facts." Zheng-shi bowed her thanks and left. Xu Jizu also left the yamen and went to Caishi Station, where he stayed at an inn until Yao Da, husband of his wet nurse, arrived.

Nothing of note happened on the day Yao Da arrived. After evening had set in, he called Yao Da to his room and, after some nice words to put Yao Da at ease, asked, "Who is my birth father?"

"The old master," replied Yao Da.

However often Xu Jizu pressed the question, Yao Da held his ground. Mr. Xu Junior flared up. "I know all the facts. I was adopted. If you tell the truth, I will spare you from the sword, considering what I owe your wife for having nursed me. But if you don't come out with the truth, I'll send you to the county yamen and have you beaten to death!"

"The old master is indeed your birth father. I wouldn't dare lie."

"Don't tell me that you know nothing about the violence done to Magistrate Su on Huangtian Lake!"

Yao Da still prevaricated.

In a towering rage, Inspector Xu took out a form for the punishment of convicts and wrote on it Yao Da's name as well as the remark, "This man is to be given a hundred strokes. Report his death *ex post facto*." The form was to be delivered to the Dangtu County yamen.



只求老爷莫在太爷面前泄漏。”徐爷道：“凡事有我做主，你不须惧怕！”姚大遂将打劫苏知县，谋苏奶奶为妻，及大柳树下拾得小孩子回家，教老婆接奶，备细说了一遍。徐爷又问道：“当初裹身有罗衫一件，又有金钗一股，如今可在？”姚大道：“罗衫上染了血迹，洗不净，至今和金钗留在。”此时徐爷心中已自了然，分付道：“此事只可你我二人知道，明早打发你回家，取了钗子、罗衫，星夜到南京衙门来见我。”姚大领命自去。徐爷次早一面差官：“将盘缠银两，好生接取慈湖庵郑道姑到京中来见我。”一面发牌起程，往南京到任。正是：

少年科第荣如锦，御史威名猛似雷。

且说苏云知县在三家村教学，想起十九年前之事，老母在家，音信隔绝，妻房郑氏怀孕在身，不知生死下落，日夜忧惶。将此情告知陶公，欲到仪真寻访消息。陶公苦劝安命，莫去惹事。苏云乘清明日各家出去扫墓，乃写一谢帖留在学馆之内，寄谢陶公，收拾了笔墨出门。一路卖字为生，行至常州烈帝庙，日晚投宿。



Witnessing the signing of the form, Yao Da panicked. With a series of kowtows, he said, "I will tell the truth but, Master, please don't let on about any of this to the old master."

"I'll take care of everything. You have nothing to fear!"

Thereupon, Yao Da gave a detailed account of how Magistrate Su had been robbed, how Madam Su had been made Xu Neng's wife, and how the baby had been picked up at the foot of the big willow tree and given to his wife for wet-nursing.

Inspector Xu asked further, "There was a silk shirt wrapped around the baby and also a gold hairpin. Are those things still there?"

"The shirt has blood stains that can't be washed off, but both the shirt and the gold hairpin are still there."

Now that he had learned the truth, Inspector Xu said, "This is to be kept a secret between you and me. Tomorrow morning, I'll send you home. Take the hairpin and the shirt and go posthaste to the Nanjing yamen to see me."

Thus instructed, Yao Da went his way. The next morning, Mr. Xu told his subordinates, "Prepare some silver as travel money and bring the nun Zheng from the Mercy Lake Nunnery to the capital to see me." At the same time, he ordered that his journey to Nanjing for his post commence right away. Truly,

As a young jinshi, he enjoyed great fame.

As an inspector, his name inspired awe.

In the meantime, Magistrate Su Yun, while teaching in the Village of Three-Households, thought of what had happened nineteen years ago. Day and night, he brooded over the fact that he had no way of communicating with his aged mother at home and that he knew nothing about whether his pregnant wife Zheng-shi was dead or alive. He told Mr. Tao about his worries, adding that he wished to go to Yizhen to look them up and make inquiries. Mr. Tao tried desperately to talk him into accepting his fate rather than looking for trouble.

But while all the families in the neighborhood were out on the day of the Clear and Bright Festival, paying their respects at their ancestors' graves, Su Yun left a letter of gratitude for Mr. Tao at the school, packed his writing implements, and set out on his journey.



梦见烈帝庙中，灯烛辉煌，自己拜祷求签，签语云：

陆地安然水面凶，一林秋叶遇狂风。

要知骨肉团圆日，只在金陵豸府中。

五更醒来，记得一字不忘，自家暗解道：“江中被盗遇救，在山中住这几年，首句‘陆地安然水面凶’已自应了。‘一林秋叶遇狂风’，应了骨肉分飞之象，难道还有团圆日子？金陵是南京地面，御史衙门号为豸府。我如今不要往仪真，径到南都御史衙门告状，或者有伸冤之日。”天明起来，拜了神道，讨其一笞：“若该往南京，乞赐圣笞。”掷下果然是个圣笞。苏公欢喜，出了庙门，直至南京，写下一张词状，到操江御史衙门去出告，状云：

告状人苏云，直隶涿州人，忝中某科进士。初选兰溪知县，携家赴任，行至仪真。祸因舟漏，重雇山东王尚书家船



All along the way, he supported himself by selling his writing services.

When he came upon the temple to Emperor Lie in Changzhou one night, he took up lodging there.²⁶ That night, he dreamed he was praying and drawing a bamboo divination slip in the brightly lit temple. The divination said,

*Safe by land but disastrous by water,
Fierce winds blow apart the autumn leaves in the woods.
To know when the family reunites,
Go no further than the yamen of Jinling.*

When he awoke at the fifth watch of the night, he still remembered every word in these four lines. In trying to explain these lines, he said to himself, "It was on a lake that the robbery happened, and after I was rescued, I've kept to the mountains all these years. This bears out the meaning of the first line 'Safe by land but disastrous by water.' 'Fierce winds blow apart the autumn leaves in the woods' is a reference to my family being broken up. Can it be that the family will one day reunite? Jinling being another name for Nanjing, where the imperial inspector's yamen is located, I shouldn't go to Yizhen but instead to the imperial inspector's yamen in Nanjing to file a complaint. I may find vindication there."

At daybreak, he rose, prayed to the gods, and picked two bamboo slips, which served as means of divination. "If I should be going to Nanjing, please give me a sign," he prayed. He threw the two slips on the floor three times, and sure enough, all three times, both slips fell smooth side up. Delighted, Mr. Su went out the temple gate and headed straight for Nanjing. Once there, he wrote a letter of complaint and filed it with the local inspector's yamen. The complaint read:

From the plaintiff, Su Yun, a jinshi and a native of Zhuozhou in the district directly under the jurisdiction of the court:

Upon receiving my first assignment to the post of magistrate of Orchid Creek County, I took along my family and set out on the journey to assume the post. All my misfortunes began when



只过载。岂期舟子徐能、徐用等，惯于江洋打劫。夜半移船僻处，缚云抛水，幸遇救免，教授糊口，行李一空，妻仆不知存亡。势宦养盗，非天莫剿，上告！

那操江林御史，正是苏爷的同年，看了状词，甚是怜悯。即刻行个文书，支会山东抚按，着落王尚书身上要强盗徐能、徐用等。刚刚发了文书，刷卷御史徐继祖来拜。操院偶然叙及此事。徐继祖有心，别了操院出门，即时叫听事官：“将操院差人唤到本院衙门，有话分付。”徐爷回衙门，听事官唤到操院差人进衙磕头，禀道：“老爷有何分付？”徐爷道：“那王尚书船上强盗，本院已知一二。今本院赏你盘缠银二两，你可暂停两三日，待本院唤你们时，你可便来，管你有处缉拿真赃真盗，不须到山东去得。”差人领命去了。

少顷，门上通报太爷到了。徐爷出迎，就有跼踖之意。想着养育教训之恩，恩怨也要分明，今日且尽个礼数。当下差官往河



my boat started to leak upon reaching Yizhen. I changed to the boat that belonged to Secretary Wang of Shandong, little knowing that the boatmen Xu Neng, Xu Yong, and others were in fact robbers who operated on the rivers and lakes. In the middle of the night, they moved the boat to a deserted place, tied me up, and threw me into the water. Luckily, I was rescued and have been teaching for a living, but all of my belongings are gone, and I have no idea if my wife and servants are dead or alive. Any incumbent powerful official who supports robbers should be eliminated by divine justice.

The local inspector, Mr. Lin, happened to be a *jinshi* who had gained his degree in the same year that Mr. Su had. In great sympathy, he immediately notified the governor and inspector of Shandong to apprehend the robbers Xu Neng, Xu Yong, and others through Secretary Wang. No sooner had he sent out the notification than Xu Jizu, the visiting imperial inspector, came to call on him. In their conversation, Inspector Lin brought up the subject by chance. Xu Jizu took a mental note of that remark and, when leaving the yamen after bidding farewell to Inspector Lin, called the messenger and said, "Summon an officer of the local yamen to my court to receive my instructions."

After Inspector Xu returned to his yamen, an officer from the local yamen came in response to the messenger's order. With a kowtow, he said, "What instructions do you have for me, sir?"

Mr. Xu said, "I have learned something about the robbers on Secretary Wang's boat. I will award you two taels of silver to use toward your travel expenses. Don't do anything for a couple of days and then come here when I call for you. I guarantee that you'll be able to capture those robbers with their loot without having to make a special trip to Shandong." The officer took the order and left.

A moment later, the arrival of Master Xu Senior was announced. In trepidation, Inspector Xu went to greet him, determined to exercise proper decorum to the fullest extent out of gratitude for his upbringing, because gratitude and grievance should be kept distinct and separate. Then and there, he sent subordinates to the riverside to



下接取到衙。原来徐能、徐用起身时，连这一班同伙赵三、翁鼻涕、杨辣嘴、范剥皮、沈胡子，都倚仗通家兄弟面上，备了百金贺礼，一齐来庆贺徐爷。这是天使其然，自来投死。姚大先进衙磕头。徐爷教请太爷、二爷到衙，铺毡拜见。徐能端然而受。次要拜徐用，徐用抵死推辞，不肯要徐爷下拜，只是长揖。赵三等一伙，向来在徐能家，把徐继祖当做子侄之辈，今日高官显耀，时势不同，赵三等口称“御史公”，徐继祖口称“高亲”，两下宾主相见，备饭款待。

至晚，徐继祖在书房中，密唤姚大，讨他的金钗及带血罗衫看了。那罗衫花样与涿州老婆婆所赠无二。“那老婆婆又说我的面庞与他儿子一般，他分明是我的祖母，那慈湖庵中道姑是我亲娘，更喜我爷不死，见在此间告状，骨肉团圆，在此一举。”

次日，大排筵宴在后堂，管待徐能一伙七人，大吹大擂介饮酒。徐爷只推公务，独自出堂，先教聚集民壮快手五六十人，安排停当，听候本院挥扇为号，一齐进后堂擒拿七盗。又唤操院公



bring the gang of robbers to court. It so happened that when Xu Neng and Xu Yong were about to set out on their journey, the other members of the gang — Zhao Three, Runny Nose Weng, Sharp Tongue Yang, Skinflint Fan, and Beardie Shen — equipped with lavish gifts for Inspector Xu, came to join them as nonconsanguineous uncles to congratulate Master Xu Junior on his new post. They were, indeed, sent by heaven to meet their death.

Yao Da was the first to step into the yamen and offer his kowtows. Inspector Xu then invited Master Xu Senior and his uncle into the yamen, where carpets were laid out for the occasion. Inspector Xu prostrated himself on the ground in homage to Xu Neng, who readily accepted the honor, but when Inspector Xu turned to Xu Yong, the latter vigorously declined the honor, insisting that the inspector only bow from the waist rather than fall on his knees. Zhao Three and the others had always treated Xu Jizu as a junior in the Xu household, but now, with the young man in such an exalted position, things were quite different. With Zhao Three and the others calling him “Your Honorable Inspector” and Xu Jizu calling them “my dear uncles,” the host and the guests greeted each other and sat down to a feast.

After night fell, Xu Jizu secretly summoned Yao Da to his study and asked him to produce the gold hairpin and blood-stained silk shirt. True enough, the pattern on the fabric was the same as that of the shirt given to him by the old woman of Zhuozhou. He thought, “The old lady also commented that I looked exactly like her son. Clearly, she is my grandmother, and the nun of Mercy Lake Nunnery is my own mother. Even more happily, my father is far from being dead. He’s the very person who has filed a complaint at the yamen. Now is the time for a family reunion.”

The next day, a fine feast was laid out in the back hall in honor of Xu Neng and the other six men. Much wine was consumed to the accompaniment of loud music. Claiming that he had official business to attend to, Inspector Xu left the hall alone to assemble fifty to sixty able-bodied militiamen. When the preparations had been completed, he said to them, “Wait for a signal from me. As soon as you see me



差，快快请告状的苏爷，到衙门相会。不一时，苏爷到了，一见徐爷便要下跪。徐爷双手扶住，彼此站立，问其情节，苏爷含泪而语。徐爷道：“老先生休得愁烦，后堂有许多贵相知在那里，请去认一认。”苏爷走入后堂。一者此时苏爷青衣小帽，二者年远了，三者出其不意，徐能等已不认得苏爷了。苏爷时刻在念，到也还认得这班人的面貌，看得仔细，吃了一惊，倒身退出，对徐爷道：“这一班人，正是船中的强盗，为何在此？”徐爷且不回话，举扇一挥，五六十个做公的蜂拥而入，将徐能等七人，一齐捆绑。徐能大叫道：“继祖孩儿，救我则个！”徐爷骂道：“死强盗，谁是你的孩儿？你认得这位十九年前苏知县老爷么？”徐能就骂徐用道：“当初不听吾言，只叫他全尸而死，今日悔之何及！”又叫姚大出来对证，各各无言。徐爷分付巡捕官：“将这八人与我一总发监，明日本院自备文书，送到操院衙门去。”发放已毕，分付关门，请苏爷复入后堂。苏爷看见这一伙强贼都在酒席上擒



wave a fan, all of you will go into the back hall to arrest the seven robbers." He then turned to the officer from the local inspector's yamen and said, "Bring Mr. Su, the one making the complaint, to meet me at the yamen gate."

A moment later, Mr. Su showed up. He was about to drop to his knees at the sight of Inspector Xu when the latter held him with both hands and stopped him from doing so. Inspector Xu then asked Mr. Su some questions, both of them standing upright. After Mr. Su's tearful replies, Inspector Xu said, "Cheer up, sir. Please go to the back hall. Many of your acquaintances are there. See if you can recognize them."

Thus, Mr. Su went into the back hall. Partly because Mr. Su was now dressed in the blue robe and small hat of a commoner, partly because many years had gone by, and partly because Mr. Su's appearance had been least expected, Xu Neng and the others failed to recognize him, whereas Mr. Su, who had never forgotten the event, still remembered the men's faces. He took a good look at them and was so startled that he withdrew from the hall and said to Inspector Xu, "These men are none other than the robbers I ran into on the boat. Why are they here?"

Instead of replying, Inspector Xu waved his fan. About fifty to sixty officers swarmed in and tied up all seven men. "Jizu my son," yelled Xu Neng, "come and save me!"

"You cursed robber," Inspector Xu cried out, "who is your son? Do you recognize Magistrate Su from nineteen years ago?"

Xu Neng swung on Xu Yong and said furiously, "You refused to listen to me at the time and insisted that his body be kept intact. Now it's too late to have regrets!"

Yao Da was called forth to bear testimony. None of the men had anything to say. Inspector Xu told the officers, "Put all eight men in jail for now. Tomorrow, I will have documents ready and have them sent to the local inspector's yamen."

After giving the proper instructions, Inspector Xu ordered the gate closed and invited Mr. Su into the back hall again. Wondering why the gang of robbers had been apprehended right at the feast



拿，正不知甚么意故，方欲待请问明白，然后叩谢。只见徐爷将一张交椅，置于面南，请苏爷上坐，纳头便拜。苏爷慌忙扶住道：“老大人素无一面，何须过谦如此？”徐爷道：“愚男一向不知父亲踪迹，有失迎养，望乞恕不孝之罪！”苏爷还说道：“老大人不要错了，学生并无儿子。”徐爷道：“不孝就是爹爹所生，如不信时，有罗衫为证。”徐爷先取涿州老婆婆所赠罗衫，递与苏爷，苏爷认得领上灯煤烧孔道：“此衫乃老母所制，从何而得？”徐爷道：“还有一件。”又将血渍的罗衫，及金钗取来。苏爷观看，又认得：“此钗乃吾妻首饰，原何也在此？”徐爷将涿州遇见老母，及采石驿中道姑告状，并姚大招出情由，备细说了一遍。苏爷方才省悟，抱头而哭。事有凑巧，这里恰才父子相认，门外传鼓报道：“慈湖观音庵中郑道姑已唤到。”徐爷忙教请进后堂。苏爷与奶奶别了一十九年，到此重逢。苏爷又引孩儿拜见了母亲。痛定思痛，夫妻母子，哭做一堆，[眉批]好会合。然后打扫后堂，重排



table, Mr. Su was about to ask before expressing his thanks when Inspector Xu placed a chair in a south-facing position and asked Mr. Su to sit in that seat of honor. As he dropped to his knees, his head bent low, Mr. Su rushed to hold him and said, "Your Honor and I have never met before. Why do me such honor?"

Inspector Xu replied, "I am your unworthy son. But, never having heard anything about you, Father, I have failed to perform my filial duties. Please forgive me for my failure as a son!"

Mr. Su said, "Your Honor is quite mistaken! I don't have a son."

"But I *am* your own son. If you don't believe me, I'll show you the silk shirt as proof." So saying, Inspector Xu produced the silk shirt given to him by the old woman of Zhuozhou and handed it to Mr. Su.

Recognizing the hole burned in the collar by the lamp wick, Mr. Su said, "This shirt was made by my old mother. How did it get here?"

"There's more," said the inspector while producing the blood-stained silk shirt and the gold hairpin.

Mr. Su examined the objects and recognized the hairpin. "This is my wife's hairpin," he said. "Why is it also here?"

It was after Inspector Xu gave a detailed account of his encounter with his grandmother at Zhuozhou, the nun's complaint at Caishi Station, and Yao Da's confession that Mr. Su came to know the truth. Father and son fell upon each other's shoulders and broke down in tears. As coincidence would have it, while father and son were thus reunited, the drum at the yamen gate was struck, and the announcement came that the nun from Mercy Lake Nunnery had arrived as requested.

"Invite her into the back hall," said Inspector Xu promptly.

After a separation of nineteen years, Mr. Su and his wife were now reunited in this place. Mr. Su had the young man bow to his mother, and then husband, wife, and son hugged one another in a flood of tears brought on by the memory of the painful experience. (*Good reunion.*)The back hall was then cleaned up for another celebra-



个庆贺筵席。正是：

树老抽枝重茂盛，云开见月倍光明。

次早，南京五府六部六科十三道，及府县官员，闻知徐爷骨肉团圆，都来拜贺。操江御史将苏爷所告状词，奉还徐爷，听其自审。徐爷别了列位官员，分付手下，取大毛板伺候。于监中吊出众盗，一个个脚镣手杻，跪于阶下。徐爷在徐家生长，已熟知这班凶徒杀人劫财，非止一事，不消拷问。只有徐用平昔多曾谏训，且苏爷夫妇都受他活命之恩，叮嘱儿子要出脱他。[眉批] 是好人何曾吃亏。徐爷一笔出豁了他，赶出衙门。徐用拜谢而去。山东王尚书鸾远无干，不须推究。徐能、赵三首恶，打八十。杨辣嘴、沈胡子在船上帮助，打六十。姚大虽也在船上出尖，其妻有乳哺之恩，与翁鼻涕、范剥皮各只打四十板。虽有多寡，都打得皮开肉绽，鲜血迸流。姚大受痛不过，叫道：“老爷亲许免小人一刀，



tion feast. Truly,

The old tree bursts into new leaves again;

The clouds disperse to let the moon shine through.

The next morning, officials of the five commanderies, the six departments of personnel, revenue, rites, defense, justice, and public works, the six bureaus and the imperial inspectors of Nanjing as well as officials from the prefectural and county yamen, having heard about Mr. Xu's reunion with his parents, all came to offer their congratulations. The local inspector returned Mr. Su's letter of complaint to Inspector Xu so that he could conduct the trial himself.

Inspector Xu took leave of the assembly of officials and told his men to arm themselves with big bamboo rods and wait on one side of the hall. The robbers were summoned from jail and, in foot chains and handcuffs, dropped on their knees at the foot of the steps leading to the dais. Having grown up in the Xu household, Inspector Xu knew all too well that this evil gang had killed and committed robbery more than once. There was no need for interrogation. Among the gang members, Xu Yong was the only one who had often raised objections and offered words of remonstrance. Moreover, Mr. Su and his wife, both feeling indebted to him for what he had done to save their lives, urged their son over and over again to pardon him. (*When have good people ever gone unrewarded?*)

With one stroke of his brush-pen, Inspector Xu pardoned Xu Yong and ordered him out of the yamen. Xu Yong bowed his thanks and left. Secretary Wang of Shandong being unrelated to the case, no action against him was deemed necessary. The two ringleaders, Xu Neng and Zhao Three, were each given eighty strokes. Sharp Tongue Yang and Beardie Shen were each given sixty strokes for their part in the crimes. Because Yao Da's wife had, after all, been Inspector Xu's wet nurse, Yao Da, although also a willing accomplice on the boat, was only given forty strokes, as were Runny Nose Weng and Skin-flint Fan. Whatever the number of strokes, they were all beaten so hard that the skin split, the flesh tore, and the blood flowed. Unable to hold out any longer, Yao Da cried out in pain, "Your Honor promised to save me from the sword. How could you have gone back



如何失信？”徐爷又免他十板，只打三十。打完了，分付收监。徐爷退于后堂，请命于父亲，草下表章，将此段情由，具奏天子。先行出姓，改名苏泰，取否极泰来之义；次要将诸贼不时处决，各贼家财，合行籍没为边储之用；表尾又说：“臣父苏云，二甲出身，一官未赴，十九年患难之余，宦情已淡。臣祖母年逾八秩，独居故里，未知存亡。臣年十九未娶，继祀无望。恳乞天恩给假，从臣父暂归涿州，省亲归娶。”云云。奏章已发。

此时徐继祖已改名苏泰，将新名写帖，遍拜南京各衙门。又写年侄帖子，拜谢了操江林御史。又记着祖母言语，写书差人往兰溪县查问苏雨下落。兰溪县差人先回报，苏二爷十五年前曾到，因得病身死。高知县殡殓，棺寄在城隍庙中。苏爷父子痛哭了一场，即差的当人，贲了盘费银两，重到兰溪，于水路雇船装载二爷灵柩回涿州祖坟安葬。不一日，奏章准了下来，一一依准，仍封苏云为御史之职，钦赐父子驰驿还乡。刑部请苏爷父子同临



on your word?" Whereupon Inspector Xu reduced his number of strokes to thirty. After the beating was finished, he ordered that the men be sent back to prison.

Inspector Xu then withdrew to the back hall, where he asked for his father's permission and wrote a memorial to the emperor in which he gave an account of these happenings and announced that his name would be changed to Su Tai [Bliss], taking the character *tai* from the idiom "Out of the depth of misfortune comes bliss." Next, he requested that the criminals be executed before autumn and that their property be registered and confiscated and diverted for use in national defense at the borders. He ended the memorial by saying, "My father Su Yun, a *jinsi*, rendered unable to assume a single official post, has lost interest in a public career after nineteen years of suffering. My grandmother, in her eighties, has been living alone in our native town, but I do not know if she is still alive or not. I, at nineteen years of age, stand a poor chance of continuing the family line if I remain unmarried. I therefore request a short leave to follow my father to Zhuozhou and contract a marriage."

The memorial sent, Xu Jizu changed his name to Su Tai. With his new name written on visiting cards, he called at every yamen in Nanjing. He also paid a grateful visit to Mr. Lin, the local inspector, presenting a card that referred to himself as the son of Mr. Lin Senior's friend who had passed the examinations the same year that Mr. Lin Senior had.

Recalling his grandmother's words, he wrote an order for inquiries to be made at Orchid Creek County as to Su Yu's whereabouts. Reports came back saying that Second Master Su had indeed been there fifteen years before but had died of illness and that his coffin, bought by County Magistrate Gao, was for the time being in the temple of the city god. The Su father and son wept with abandon. They then sent a reliable servant, equipped with some travel money, to Orchid Creek to hire a boat and carry Second Master Su's coffin back to Zhuzhou to be buried in the ancestral burial ground.

Soon, the emperor granted all the requests presented in the memorial. Moreover, Su Yun was appointed an imperial inspector,



法场监斩诸盗。苏泰预先分付狱中，将姚大缢死，全尸也算免其一刀。徐能叹口气道：“我虽不曾与苏奶奶成亲，做了三年太爷，死亦甘心了。”各盗面面相觑，延颈受死。[眉批]凶人之性，有甚无悛。但见：

两声破鼓响，一棒碎锣鸣。监斩官如十殿阎王，刽子手似飞天罗刹。刀斧劫来财帛，万事皆空；江湖使尽英雄，一朝还报。森罗殿前，个个尽惊凶鬼至；阳间地上，人人都庆贼人亡。

在先上本时，便有文书知会扬州府官，仪真县官，将强盗六家，预先赶出人口，封锁门户，纵有金宝如山，都为官物。家家女哭儿啼，人离财散，自不必说。只有姚大的老婆，原是苏御史的乳母，一步一哭，到南京来求见御史老爷。苏御史因有乳哺之恩，况且丈夫已经正法，罪不及孥。又恐奶奶伤心，不好收留，把五十两银子赏他为终身养生送死之资，打发他随便安身。



and the father and son were given permission to return to their native town. The Ministry of Justice invited the Su father and son to go to the execution ground to witness the execution of the criminals. Su Tai had, in advance, told prison wards to have Yao Da hanged so as to spare him the sword and keep his body intact. Xu Neng said with a sigh, "Although I didn't get to have Madam Su as my wife, I have no regrets in death after three years of life as the father of an official." The criminals looked at each other in despair and stuck out their necks for the swords to be brought down. (*It is not in the nature of evildoers to repent.*) Behold:

*Amid the thundering beats of the drum,
 Amid the deafening clanging of the gong,
 The overseer stood like King Yama of Hell,
 The executioners like yakshas, one and all.²⁷
 The wealth obtained by their swords and axes
 Now all gone, as was everything else.
 The awe they had inspired on the rivers and lakes
 Now all vanished into thin air.
 In the Palace of Darkness,
 They trembled at the sight of the demons.
 In the World of Light,
 All rejoiced over the criminals' deaths.*

Before the inspector's memorial had been sent, an order was given to officials of Yangzhou prefecture and Yizhen County to drive out the families of the six criminals and seal their houses. Their mountains of gold and treasure were confiscated by the government. That the children cried and the families were broken up and reduced to poverty goes without saying. Yao Da's widow, Inspector Su's former wet nurse, was the only one who went to Nanjing, sobbing every step of the way, to ask to see His Honor the inspector. Now, Inspector Su was still grateful to her for having nursed him. Moreover, the wife and children of the executed should not be held accountable for the crimes committed. However, he could not very well keep her for fear of upsetting his mother, so he gave her fifty taels of silver with which to live out the rest of her life in comfort and told her to take up resi-



京中无事，苏太爷辞了年兄林操江，御史公别了各官，起马前站，打两面金字牌，一面写着“奉旨省亲”，一面写着“钦赐归娶”。旗幡鼓吹，好不齐整，闹嚷嚷的从扬州一路而回。道经仪真，苏太爷甚是伤感，郑老夫人又对儿子说起朱婆投井之事，又说亏了庵中老尼。御史公差地方访问义井。居民有人说，十九年前，是曾有个死尸，浮于井面，众人捞起三日，无人识认，只得敛钱买棺盛殓，埋于左近一箭之地。地方回复了，御史公备了祭礼，及纸钱冥锭，差官到义井坟头，通名致祭。又将白金百两，送与庵中老尼，另封白银十两，付老尼启建道场，超度苏二爷、朱婆及苏胜夫妇亡灵。这叫做以直报怨，以德报德。苏公父子亲往拈香拜佛。

诸事已毕，不一日行到山东临清，头站先到渡口驿，惊动了地方上一位乡宦，那人姓王名贵，官拜一品尚书，告老在家。那徐能揽的山东王尚书船，正是他家。徐能盗情发了，操院拿人，闹动了仪真一县，王尚书的小夫人家属，恐怕连累，都搬到山东，



dence wherever she chose.

There being no other business to attend to in Nanjing, Mr. Su Senior took leave of his friend Inspector Lin, and Inspector Su said farewell to the local officials. With two placards raised high in front, one bearing the inscription "Visiting parents by imperial order" and the other "Returning to hometown by imperial grace for matrimonial purposes," the grand procession marched south, complete with flying banners and loud drum-and-wind music. After passing Yangzhou, they came to Yizhen, a place that evoked painful memories for Mr. Su Senior. Lady Zheng again related to her son how Granny Zhu had thrown herself into a well and how indebted she was to the old nun of the nunnery. The inspector sent a local headman to make inquiries in the vicinity of the well. The local inhabitants said that nineteen years ago, a corpse had indeed floated to the surface of the water. After it was retrieved, no one came forward to claim it. Three days later, the local people resignedly collected some money, bought a coffin for the corpse, and buried it in a spot to the left of the well, within an arrow's shot of it.

After hearing this report from the headman, the inspector ordered that some sacrificial offerings, paper coins and imitation ingots of silver, be prepared so a messenger could conduct a memorial service by the well. He also gave a hundred taels of silver to the old nun and another ten taels of silver with which to hold a Buddhist service for the souls of Second Master Su, Granny Zhu, and Su Sheng and his wife. This is a case of returning justice for injustice and repaying kindness with kindness. The Su father and son attended the service, where they picked incense sticks and paid homage to Buddha. And so, all that needed to be done was done.

In a matter of days, they found themselves in Linqing, Shandong, and stopped for a rest at the first courier station they saw at the ferry. Their arrival caught the attention of a noted personality in the area. Named Wang Gui, he was a retired first-grade secretary of a ministry, the very owner of the boat rented out to Xu Neng. When Xu Neng's crimes were exposed, the local inspector sent for the gang, causing quite a stir in the whole county of Yizhen. Secretary



依老尚书居住。后来打听得苏御史审明，船虽尚书府水牌，止是租赁，王府并不知情。老尚书甚是感激。今日见了头行，亲身在渡口驿迎接，见了苏公父子，满口称谢，设席款待。席上问及：“御史公钦赐归娶，不知谁家老先儿的宅眷？”苏云答道：“小儿尚未择聘。”王尚书道：“老夫有一末堂幼女，年方二八，才貌颇称，倘蒙御史公不弃老朽，老夫愿结丝萝。”[眉批]此转情节更妙，又是忠厚之报，被株连结亲，可得心口。苏太爷谦让不遂，只得依允。就于临清暂住，择吉行聘成亲，有诗为证：

月下赤绳曾绾足，何须射中雀屏目。

当初恨杀尚书船，谁想尚书为眷属。

三朝以后，苏公理欲动身，王尚书苦留。苏太爷道：“久别老母，未知存亡，归心已如箭矣。”王尚书不好担阁。过了七日，备下千金妆奁，别起夫马，送小姐随夫衣锦还乡。一路无话，到



Wang's young concubine and other family members moved to the secretary's residence in Shandong to stay out of trouble. Later, upon learning from inquiries that Inspector Su had determined that the Wang family was not part of the conspiracy, since the boat flying his flag had been on loan, old Secretary Wang was filled with gratitude. Now that the inspector's procession was here, he went out to the ferry to welcome them. As he greeted the Su father and son, he uttered profuse words of thanks. At the feast table he laid out in honor of the visitors, he asked, "May I ask whose daughter the inspector is going to marry?"

"My son has not yet made a choice," replied Su Yun.

"My youngest daughter," said Secretary Wang, "is a talented and beautiful sixteen-year-old. If the inspector is not disdainful of this old man, I would be glad to form a marriage alliance between the two families." (*A wonderful twist in the plot. This is, again, a case of an act of kindness being repaid with an act of kindness. From the fear of being implicated in the case to a marriage alliance, what more could he ask?*)

Mr. Su Senior's demurrals unavailing, the marriage proposal was accepted. The Su family took up temporary residence at Linqing and chose auspicious days for the betrothal and wedding ceremonies. There is a poem that bears witness:

*A red thread had been tied to their feet;*²⁸

*Why bother hitting the peacock in the eye?*²⁹

The secretary's boat, how hateful it had been!

The secretary's now an in-law, who would have guessed!

On the third day after the wedding, Mr. Su Junior wished to continue his journey. To Secretary Wang's pleas for them to stay, Mr. Su Senior said, "After so many years of separation from my old mother, without knowing whether she was dead or alive, I can't wait to go back." Secretary Wang could not very well keep him any longer. Seven days later, he engaged horse carriages, loaded them with a lavish dowry, and saw his daughter off as she set out with her husband to return to his native place in glory.

Nothing of note occurred along the journey. Upon arrival at their



了涿州故居，且喜老夫人尚然清健，见儿子媳妇俱已半老，不觉感伤，又见孙儿就是向年汲水所遇的郎君，欢喜无限。当初只恨无子，今日抑且有孙。两代甲科，仆从甚众，旧居火焚之馀，安顿不下，暂借察院居住。起建御史第，府县都来助工，真个是“不日成之”。苏云在家，奉养太夫人直至九十馀岁方终。苏泰历官至坐堂都御史。夫人王氏所生二子，将次子承继为苏雨之后，[眉批]情节毫无渗漏。二子俱登第。至今闾里中传说苏知县报冤唱本。后人有诗云：

月黑风高浪沸扬，黄天荡里贼猖狂。
平陂往复皆天理，那见凶人寿命长？



home in Zhuozhou, they rejoiced to find the old lady still in good health. Seeing that her son and daughter-in-law were both past their prime, she felt distraught with grief, but at the sight of her grandson, whom she recognized as the very young man she had met years before while fetching water, her sadness turned to boundless joy. She had grieved over the loss of her sons, but now she had a grandson. What was left of the burned house being too small to accommodate the two generations of *jinshi* and their many servants, they found temporary lodging at the yamen instead. As construction of the inspector's residence began, the prefectural and county yamen sent men to help. Within a matter of days, the house was completed.

Su Yun stayed at home and supported his mother, who lived to be more than ninety years old. Su Tai rose in the echelon of officialdom until he became chief inspector of the Upper Inspectorate. Of the two sons born to his wife, Lady Wang, the younger one became Su Yu's adoptive son. (*There are no ties left loose.*) Both sons passed the imperial civil service examinations. To this day, stories are still being told in the villages about how County Magistrate Su found vindication for his suffering. A later poet had this to say:

*The moon dim, the wind strong, the waves spouting high,
The robbers on Huangtian Lake wreaked havoc.
Divine justice prevails in the end;
Has any evil man ever lived long?*

¹ Bai Juyi (772–846) was one of the most influential poets of the mid-Tang. For more on Bai Juyi, see story 10.

² Su Shi (1037–1101), or Su Dongpo, was one of China's greatest men of letters. For a poem by Su Dongpo, see story 8, and for a story about the scholar, see story 3.

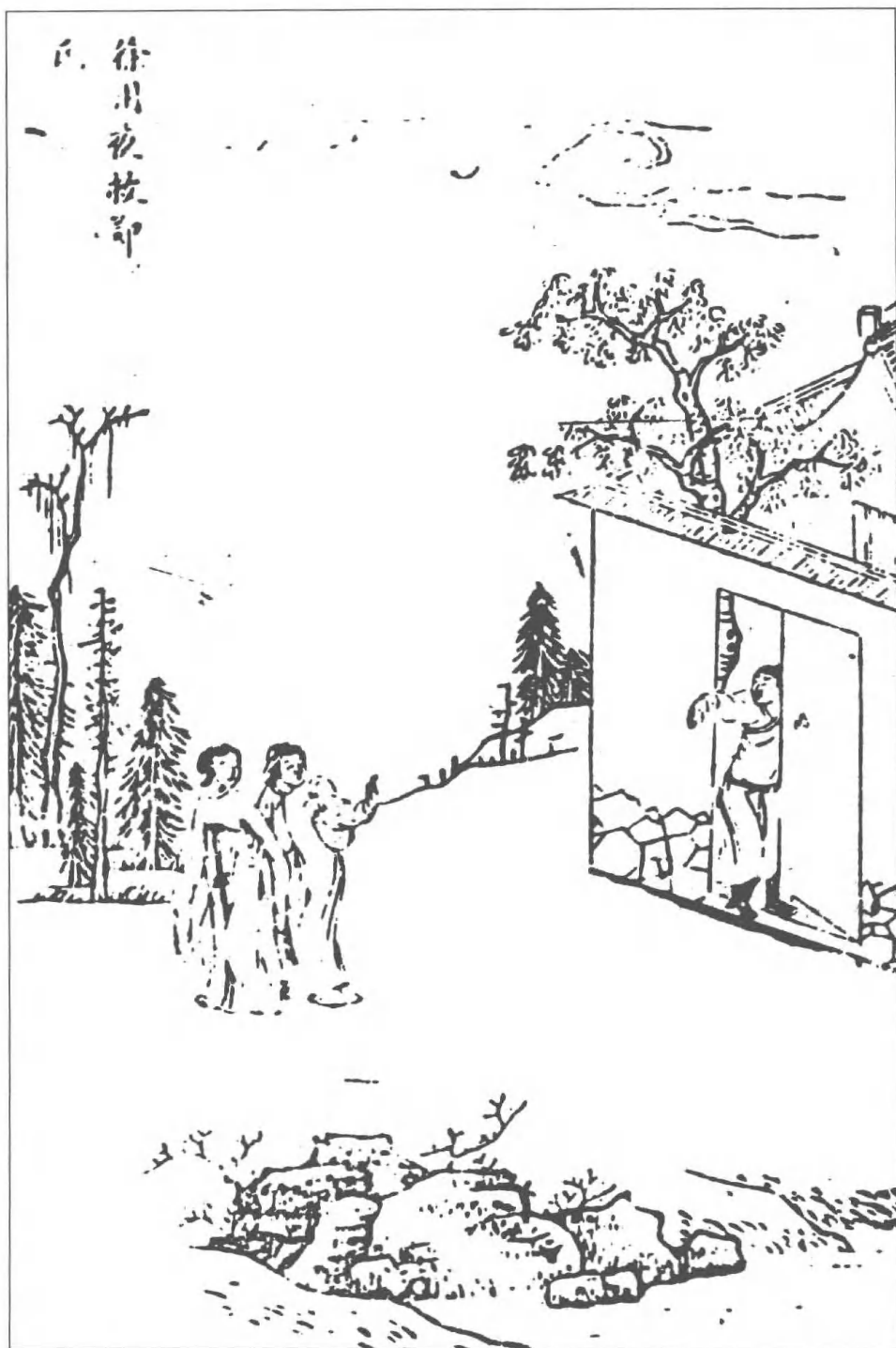
³ Du Kang is believed to have been the earliest brewer of wine in China.

⁴ The goddess of the Wu Mountains is the one who conjures up "clouds and rain." The term is a metaphor for sexual encounters.

⁵ Sima Xiangru (179–117 B. C. E.), one of the most celebrated prose poem (*fu*) writers in the history of Chinese literature, is also known for his romance with Zhuo Wenjun. The two eloped after their first meeting. See the prologue story of story 6.

⁶ Li Jing (571–649) was a military strategist who helped Emperor Taizong conquer the western tribes and found the Tang dynasty.

⁷ These are the eight immortals (seven male and one female) in popular Daoist legends.





⁸ Liu Kan, Emperor Ping (r. 1 B. C. E.— 6 C. E.) of the Western Han dynasty, was poisoned by Wang Mang, usurper of the throne.

⁹ Li Bai (701–762) was one of the greatest poets of China. For more on Li Bai, see story 9.

¹⁰ Legend has it that a young man called Weisheng, waiting in vain for his loved one at their agreed-upon spot under a bridge, held on to the bridge post even after the water began to rise and drowned.

¹¹ Xishi, a beauty of the state of Yue in the Warring States period, is believed to have caused the defeat of Fuchai, King of Wu.

¹² On Shi Cong, see note 5 of story 5.

¹³ On Deng Tong, see note 3 of story 5.

¹⁴ Xiang Yu (232–202 B. C.) was a major rival of Liu Bang's in contending for the throne. Liu Bang later became the first emperor of the Han dynasty.

¹⁵ On Zhou Yu, see note 16 of story 8.

¹⁶ Ming dynasty officials underwent performance appraisals once every three years. Promotions or demotions were based on the results.

¹⁷ The Jing and Wei Rivers are both tributaries of the Yellow River. Where they merge, the clear water of the Jing does not mix with the muddy water of the Wei.

¹⁸ The Hall of Loyalty and Justice is the gathering place of the outlaws depicted as heroes in the Ming dynasty novel *Outlaws of the Marsh*, traditionally attributed to Shi Nai'an.

¹⁹ A narrative that trails off in phrases such as "This and this must be done" is a convention used in vernacular stories to create suspense until the actions to which they allude take place.

²⁰ In ancient China, convicted criminals were usually executed in autumn.

²¹ Cheng Ying and Gongsun Chujiu are characters in the famous play *Orphan of the Zhao Clan* set during the reign of Duke Ling of the state of Jin in the Spring and Autumn period. Tu'an Gu killed the entire clan of Prime Minister Zhao Dun except Zhao Dun's daughter-in-law, who fled and gave birth to a son, Zhao Wu. Cheng Ying and Gongsun Chujiu, retainers of the Zhao family, saved the orphan, who later sought revenge against Tu'an Gu. This play was rewritten in French by Voltaire in 1754 as "L'Orphelin de la Chine". It was performed on stage in Paris in 1775.

²² When he was a fugitive from the state of Chu during the Spring and Autumn period, Wu Zixu once begged for food from a girl washing gauze by the river. As he took leave of her, he told her not to tell anyone that she had seen him. As proof of her trustworthiness, she threw herself into the river and drowned. For more on Wu Zixu, see note 3 of story 4.

²³ Legend has it that Qi was conceived when his mother Jiang Yuan was standing on the footprints of a giant. Out of fear, she abandoned the newborn baby boy in the fields, only to take him back after three days when he was found to be still alive, protected by the wings of a hundred birds. Hence, his name Qi (The Abandoned). Later, King Yao appointed him to take charge of agricultural matters, and he came to be known as Houji.

²⁴ Legend has it that Yi Yin, prime minister under King Tang of the Shang dynasty, was born in a hollow mulberry tree and that his mother had changed into this tree after she had drowned.

²⁵ A *ju ren* is one who has passed the imperial civil service examinations at the provincial



level.

²⁶ Emperor Lie is most probably Emperor Zhaolie, the posthumous title of Liu Bei (162–223), founder of the kingdom of Shu in the Three Kingdoms period.

²⁷ A *yaksha* is usually a malevolent spirit in the Buddhist belief.

²⁸ For the meaning of tying a red thread to the feet, see note 2 of story 2.

²⁹ When selecting sons-in-law, Dou Yi, an official in the Sui dynasty, had two peacocks drawn on his door. Those candidates who were able to hit the peacocks in the eye with their arrows stood a good chance of being selected.

